

THE GREAT INTERPRETER:  
WALTER DURANTY'S VIEW OF THE SOVIET UNION  
1921-1949

BY

RUTH CONSTANCE WAWRUCK-HEMMETT

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History  
University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

(c) August, 1989



National Library  
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service    Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-54841-X

Canada

THE GREAT INTERPRETER: WALTER DURANTY'S VIEW  
OF THE SOVIET UNION 1921-1949

BY

RUTH CONSTANCE WAWRUCK-HEMETT

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

© 1989

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVER-  
SITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to  
the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this  
thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY  
MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the  
thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or other-  
wise reproduced without the author's written permission.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the "Canons of Journalism" which govern the American Society of Newspaper Editors, journalists must be intelligent and knowledgeable, and be able to use both "natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning" so as to function not only as chroniclers of the news, but also as teachers and interpreters for their audience.<sup>1</sup> The role of interpreter is particularly important when reporters are assigned to countries with cultures, social mores, and political systems which are unfamiliar or incomprehensible to the average Westerner.

Walter Duranty, the New York Times' foreign correspondent in Moscow during the 1920s and 1930s, believed that his primary responsibility was to interpret events which, due to the gigantic crucible that the revolutionary country was undergoing, were often beyond the understanding of the general public. Because of the techniques he adopted to fulfil that responsibility, Duranty became a controversial figure who was charged with being one of those reporters who in "covering the political news of a country also helped to shape it."<sup>2</sup> Those

<sup>1</sup>"Code of Ethics," in The Responsibilities of the Press, ed. Gerald Gross (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), 405.

<sup>2</sup>Theodore Edward Kruglak, The Foreign Correspondents: A Study of the Men and Women Reporting for the American Information Media in Western Europe (Westport: Greenwood, 1974), 84.

techniques also led to his receiving one of the most notable awards bestowed upon journalists.

In 1932, Duranty received a Pulitzer Prize for his articles on Russia, and especially those dealing with Stalin's First Five-Year Plan. According to the announcement of award, those articles demonstrate

profound and intimate comprehension of conditions in Russia and of the causes of those conditions. They are marked by scholarship, profundity, impartiality, sound judgement and exceptional clarity, and are excellent examples of the best type of foreign correspondence.<sup>3</sup>

Duranty's expertise was acknowledged once more in 1933 when he was included in an honour roll published by the Nation.<sup>4</sup>

Duranty's success was probably due at least in part to the advantages he possessed over most of his colleagues. In the first place, the Times' editors allowed him to dispatch 1000 words per article, more than any of his fellow journalists were allowed. Second, his education in the Classics allowed him to use analogies which most of the Russian censors would not understand. Third, he was able to use the imposing vocabulary that his education had furnished him to cloud his interpretations and further puzzle the censors. Last, but not

<sup>3</sup>New York Times, 3 May 1932. [This newspaper will hereafter be cited as NYT.]

<sup>4</sup>George Seldes, Freedom of the Press (New York 1936), 341; quoted in Marco Carynnyk, "Making the News Fit to Print: Walter Duranty, the New York Times and the Ukrainian Famine of 1933," in Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933, ed. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), 83.

least, his facility with languages allowed him very quickly to learn enough Russian to dispense with interpreters who could act as censors; through their choice of words they could change the context of an interview completely.

Despite these advantages---and perhaps even because of them---Duranty's journalism was subjected to divers criticism. Some of his colleagues were foremost among his critics, but for the most part they were newspapermen who made only occasional trips to Moscow, not long-time residents of the city. The main reason for their censure was their condemnation of Duranty's obfuscated coverage of the famine which ravaged the Ukrainian agrarian community in the early 1930s. Because they blamed Duranty for the ignorance of the Western world regarding that famine, a journalistic war of words arose that found expression in the Western press.

The war of words that developed in the mid-thirties has been revived in recent years. As a result, Duranty is usually treated as a pariah by those who study this controversial area of Soviet history. Except for a biographical essay by Sally Taylor in American Newspaper Journalists, 1926-1950,<sup>5</sup> all other studies of Duranty concentrate on his coverage of the famine period. The sole major work currently available is that written by James William Cowl, Angels in Stalin's

<sup>5</sup>Sally Taylor, "Walter Duranty," in American Newspaper Journalists, 1926-1950, ed. Perry J. Ashley (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark, 1984).

Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia 1917-1937, A Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty.<sup>6</sup> Although this book deals with most of the period during which Duranty was the Times' Moscow correspondent, its focus is on Duranty as an apologist for Stalin and as a major participant in the alleged famine "cover-up." Marco Carynnyk, a Ukrainian-Canadian writer, has published two articles---"The Famine the 'Times' Couldn't Find"<sup>7</sup> and, more recently, "Making the News Fit to Print: Walter Duranty, the New York Times and the Ukrainian Famine of 1933"---both of which deal strictly with Duranty's articles on the famine.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Walter Duranty remains for many the fiend who conspired with Stalin to make the famine "recondite."<sup>9</sup>

Yet this judgement ignores the fact that Duranty's coverage of the famine period encompasses only two years of his two decades as a Times correspondent. In order to arrive at a fuller understanding of Duranty's role and abilities as

<sup>6</sup>James William Crowl, Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia, 1917 to 1937, A Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty (Washington: University Press of America, 1982).

<sup>7</sup>Marco Carynnyk, "The Famine the 'Times' Couldn't Find," Commentary 76.5 (1983): 32-40.

<sup>8</sup>These two articles are, in fact, basically the same article; they are reprints, with some revisions, of Carynnyk's 1983 privately printed pamphlet which was published under the same title as the latter. All citations will refer to the latest edition found in Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933, ed. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko, 67-95.

<sup>9</sup>Carynnyk, 90.

a reporter--and an interpreter--of the news, one must take into account the historical background of the Soviet Union, the tenor of the times in which he wrote, and the political and ideological pressures that guided his pen. Furthermore, it is essential that not only his articles of the early 1930s, but also those published before and after the ones on which attention has focused to date be scrutinized.

An examination of Duranty's journalistic career over a period of three decades shows that he came to a thorough, individualistic understanding of the Soviet Union, and that he made a substantial contribution to Western knowledge of that country. This was particularly true during the 1920s, but even in the thirties, when his journalism was adversely affected by circumstances and restrictions beyond his control, Duranty proved capable of relaying his personal vision of Soviet society to his readers in a very distinctive manner. In his fictional and non-fictional books about the Soviet Union, written both before and after his retirement in 1941, Duranty continued in his efforts to explain the events which occurred while he was a resident reporter in Moscow and to educate his readers as to the imperfections as well as the strengths of Soviet Communism. Despite some refinement of his earlier point of view, these books show that he maintained his conviction that Russia needed communism to develop as a world power which could co-exist with the USA despite ideological differences.



CHAPTER 1  
INTO THE CRUCIBLE

Walter Duranty was born in Liverpool, England on 25 May 1884. As a young man he enjoyed a classical education which augmented the future journalist's natural flair for writing and languages. After his graduation from Cambridge with honours in 1903, the young scholar travelled to New York City, Marseilles, and finally Paris, where he began his career with the New York Times just before the outbreak of World War I.<sup>10</sup> During this period his journalistic talent became more and more obvious as his dramatic style brought the war into the reading rooms of the public, and by 1917, when all Western eyes were turning to Russia, Duranty had made his mark in journalism. In 1919 he was chosen by the Times to go to Riga, Latvia to get a closer look at the results of the Russian Revolution, an opportunity which greatly pleased the ambitious young reporter because he was becoming bored with his position as "second man" in the newspaper's Paris office.<sup>11</sup> His proximity to the nascent socialist state in 1921 led to

<sup>10</sup>NYT, 3 May 1932.

<sup>11</sup>Walter Duranty, I Write as I Please (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935), 12. [Hereafter cited as I Write.]

further opportunities when a disastrous famine forced the men in the Kremlin to open Russia's borders not only to Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration (ARA), but also to the Western press.<sup>12</sup>

Duranty spent most of the next three years in Moscow, honing his skills as a journalist and making a valiant effort to keep his Western readers up to date on what was happening in Soviet Russia when the situation often seemed to change daily. His articles between 1921 and 1924, dealing with the effects of the famine on the people and on the State, Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), the civil liberties question, Communism as a quasi-religion, and the men in the Kremlin show that during this period he not only matured as a journalist, but also came to a definite appreciation of what the Bolsheviks were trying to accomplish as well as a pragmatic acceptance of their methods.

On 13 July 1921 Maxim Gorky, the celebrated Russian author, voiced a personal appeal to "all honest people" to send food and medicine to save the Russian people who were dying from the effects of one of the worst famines in Russian

<sup>12</sup>Until 1921, only those reporters who were sympathetic to the Bolshevik cause were welcome in Russia. See Robert W. Desmond, Crisis and Conflict: World News Reporting Between Two Wars 1920-1940 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1982), 30, for a comprehensive list of those British and American journalists who had been jailed in or expelled from Russia prior to 1921. [Hereafter cited as Crisis.]

history.<sup>13</sup> Three weeks later the Soviet government released an official communique signed by Georgi Chicherin, Commissar of Foreign Affairs, which solicited the assistance of foreign organizations in resisting the "unusual conditions" that threatened the lives of about eighteen million people.<sup>14</sup> The United States quickly answered these pleas for aid, and on 20 August 1921 an agreement was reached between Walter L. Brown, an ARA spokesman, and Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet government's deputy foreign commissar. Under this agreement American relief workers would be allowed to enter Russia regardless of their political orientation so long as they did not involve themselves in internal politics.<sup>15</sup> Within days, relief workers who had been involved in post-war humanitarian work in Central and Eastern Europe began to move into the Soviet state.

The "mission of mercy" was of great interest to the Western world which was almost totally dependent on its newspapers for information from Soviet Russia. Fortunately, Hoover had instructed the ARA negotiators at Riga to insist that the relief force be accompanied by representatives of the Western press so that accurate reports of the catastrophic

<sup>13</sup>Benjamin M. Weissman, Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia: 1921-1923 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1974), 17; Louis Fischer, Russia's Road from Peace to War: Soviet Foreign Relations 1917-1941 (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 56.

<sup>14</sup>Weissman, 4.

<sup>15</sup>Robert Paul Browder, The Origins of Soviet-American Diplomacy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 20.

conditions could be relayed to the world.<sup>16</sup> Before the famine became world news, these journalists reported as best they could from relatively nearby vantage points and endeavoured to cover the events occurring in the revolutionary country without actually witnessing them.<sup>17</sup> Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz proved that this type of long-distance reporting left much to be desired in their article, "A Test of the News," which questioned the accuracy of dispatches published in the New York Times from 1917 to 1920.<sup>18</sup> With the opening of the Soviet borders, the foreign correspondents were able to dispatch on-the-spot accounts from Moscow; the Times' editors who recognized the validity of the Lippmann/Merz

<sup>16</sup>H. H. Fisher, The Famine in Soviet Russia 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 143.

<sup>17</sup>E. Malcolm Carroll, Soviet Communism and Western Opinion 1919-1921 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 6-7. There were some exceptions to this rule--those journalists like John Reed and Arthur Ransome who made no secret of their Bolshevist sympathies--but American opinion was particularly affected by the journalistic endeavours of George F. Kennan and Prof. Samuel Northrup Harper who were considered authorities on Russia. Harper, however, has been accused of "the conscious distortion of the news" during the period of the provisional government when the pressure he exerted on the American press kept the truth of Russia's weak position from the public. See also John Hohenberg, Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 232 [Hereafter cited as Foreign]; and William Appleman Williams, American Russian Relations 1781-1947 (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 87-88.

<sup>18</sup>Walter Lippman and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News," New Republic 23.296.2 (4 Aug 1920): 1-42.

critique took advantage of this opportunity to send Walter Duranty from Riga to Moscow.<sup>19</sup>

When Duranty and his colleagues arrived in Moscow, they were graciously received by the Foreign Office press department. This graciousness quickly dissipated, however, when an American-born press chief recognized Duranty as the author of a Times article in which the reporter disclosed the circumstances surrounding the capture of a Soviet agent in Latvia.<sup>20</sup> The article had caused a certain amount of furor in the West, and some suspicion was concomitantly cast upon the future Soviet official, almost leading to his own arrest.<sup>21</sup> The antagonistic attitude of this official caused some delay in the reporters' being allowed to visit the famine area and, as Duranty later mentioned in his autobiography, they were

<sup>19</sup>Robert W. Desmond, The Press and World Affairs (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 265n. [Hereafter cited as Press.] See also Desmond, Crisis, 31-32 for a list of the journalists who went to Russia with the ARA as well as those who arrived in Moscow in late 1921 and early 1922. Among the former, in addition to Duranty, was Francis McCullagh of the Manchester Guardian who had been jailed during an earlier visit; among the latter were William Henry Chamberlin of the Christian Science Monitor, Louis Fischer of the New York Evening Post and the Nation, and Paul Scheffer of the Berliner Tageblatt.

<sup>20</sup>Duranty, NYT, 5 Jan 1920.

<sup>21</sup>Crowl, 27-28, suggests that the animosity of this press chief caused Duranty to curry the favour of the Soviets rather than return to his role as "second man" in Paris; he also asserts that the official's hostility manifested itself in probationary status and travel restrictions for Duranty, neither of which was lifted until the spring of 1922. The first point is debatable since it cannot be proved; the second, however, is definitely refutable since Duranty did get permission to visit the famine area in the fall of 1921.

forced to remain in Moscow, "fighting vermin and Soviet inertia," and awaiting official permission to visit the famine area.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, after a couple of weeks in the city, Duranty was on his way to Samara in the company of members of the Near East Relief's Commission.<sup>23</sup>

In the dispatches that he filed from Samara Duranty painted a vivid picture for his readers of the horrors which were to be witnessed in the famine region.<sup>24</sup> Everywhere he looked he saw starving people dressed in rags similar to sackcloth, and shrouded with ashes from the charred fields. He wrote of women who preferred that their children should die from cholera rather than suffer the pain of starvation, and

<sup>22</sup>Duranty, I Write, 122. One of their members, Floyd Gibbons of the Chicago Tribune, did manage to escape the net of red-tape, and succeeded at scooping his colleagues during an unauthorized visit to the Volga area.

<sup>23</sup>Duranty's difficulty in attaining authorization to visit the famine area is confirmed in a letter written to the Times by Paxton Hibben, a former American Red Cross official and member of the Near East Relief's Commission. This letter also invalidates the suggestion that the reporter did not manage to visit the famine area until 1922. Hibben assured the Times' editors and their readers that Duranty did accompany the Commission to Samara in September of 1921, and that his descriptions of conditions in the area were based on "first-hand observations." See NYT, 5 Mar 1922.

<sup>24</sup>Duranty to NYT, 5 and 6 Sept 1921. Reprinted in Walter Duranty, Russia Reported, ed. Gustavus Tuckerman, Jr. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1934), 32-34 and 27-32 respectively. [Hereafter cited as Russia.] Since the dates of the articles reprinted in this volume are sometimes the dates of dispatch rather than the dates of publication in the Times, references to the reprints will be noted as "Duranty to NYT" as above.

reported cases of outright infanticide.<sup>25</sup> The seasoned war correspondent who had witnessed the horrors of World War I battlefields, was particularly struck by the effects of the famine on the children of the region. He brought the brutal truth of their everyday existence into the lives of his readers through descriptions such as the following:

a child of three or four lies half naked beside the dead body of a kitten, upon which its eyes are fixed sorrowfully but tearlessly. Round these eyes so blue and sad fat black flies are crawling. The child does not even raise a hand to brush them away.

Moreover, Duranty was appalled by the apparent futility of the efforts being made to help the children. In a collecting station set up by relief agents he saw the miseries of starvation worsened by diseases like cholera, typhus and tuberculosis. In Duranty's opinion, death would be a blessing for these pitiful examples of Russian youth.<sup>26</sup>

Another aspect of the famine which particularly caught Duranty's attention was its psychological effect on the people: he was amazed by the docile acceptance and fatalistic resignation that he observed.<sup>27</sup> In one dispatch the reporter described how the dying dragged themselves to the cemetery to ensure their final resting places in consecrated ground.<sup>28</sup> He

<sup>25</sup>Duranty, Russia, 27 and 29.

<sup>26</sup>Duranty, Russia, 27-28, and 32-34.

<sup>27</sup>Duranty, Russia, 28.

<sup>28</sup>Duranty to NYT, 9 Dec 1921; in Russia, 34-36.

also wrote of hearing no complaints or cries for help, just pathetic reiteration of the belief that help would come too late to save them. Duranty came to the conclusion, however, that there was a certain advantage in the inherent stamina and unprotesting nature of the peasants. Despite their hopeless fatalism, those few who managed to procure seed grain planted it instead of using it for food. These cases were, of course, few and far between since poor transportation facilities made it impossible for the majority of the peasants, and especially those in the outer reaches of the provinces, to obtain seed grain.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the famine period Duranty stressed what he saw as the major obstacle to efficient food distribution, the inadequate Russian transportation facilities.<sup>30</sup> Relief workers were plagued by such disadvantages as substandard rolling stock, antiquated locomotives, and poorly maintained roadbeds; in many areas the ARA had to resort to animal transport for food distribution. This form of transportation was, however, endangered by the lack of fodder and by the actions of the starving populace which began to slaughter the animals for food, thus causing a vicious circle in the relief process. Duranty saw only one solution to the problem in the availability of tractors and an adequate reserve of fuel for those

<sup>29</sup>Duranty, Russia, 29 and 31-32.

<sup>30</sup>See for example Duranty, NYT, 15 and 22 Jan 1922.



tractors; this fact, however, did not bring him much hope for a significant decrease in the projected mortality figures. The only real chance for the rescue of the starving rural masses that Duranty could see was for the ARA to carry its relief work deeper into the countryside; if it did not, he foresaw an "immense rush cityward from all sides"---despite the apparent passivity of the peasants---which could only make a bad situation in the urban areas worse.<sup>31</sup>

In one dispatch from Moscow Duranty described the vast number of migrants that he had witnessed in the countryside:

One of the strangest features of Russian life today is the wanderers---wandering children, wandering soldiers, wandering families, wandering villages, wandering tribes---driven from their homes by the war or revolution to move interminably across the vast Russian plains.<sup>32</sup>

This wave of humanity had begun during the war when millions of refugees left villages threatened by the invading Germans, following the Tsar's retreating army eastward. It swelled just after the Revolution when many soldiers joined those trying to return to their homes. Eventually, "the panic migration from the famine" caused the swell to become a tidal wave no less destructive than those originating in the ocean as a major part of the rural community moved towards the cities to find food. Duranty recognized the problems that such a mobile mass of people could cause for the Soviets. For

<sup>31</sup>Duranty, Russia, 32.

<sup>32</sup>Duranty to NYT, 30 Sept 1921; in Russia, 23-26.

one thing, it intensified the predicament of an inadequate transportation system already overworked by the relief effort; for another, if the migration was not checked, the famine conditions could not be alleviated and disease would continue to spread through the countryside and into the cities.<sup>33</sup> Duranty firmly believed that the "wanderers" had to be settled on the land, but he also knew that it would be no easy task.

In Duranty's estimation, the "nomadic habit" was a permanent part of the peasant way of life, generally caused by the situation of the moment, but also based in a "reversion to ancestral custom."<sup>34</sup> More than a decade later, in his autobiographical I Write as I Please, Duranty would recall this particular effect of the famine, and write of it in the following words:

That's what happens in Russian famines. . . . When they see that the crops have failed they drift away from their villages, not ravenous like locusts, but helpless like sheep, without goal or purpose, knowing only that it is death to remain, and perhaps a hope, however slim, of life if they move away.<sup>35</sup>

It was obvious that drastic measures were needed if this suffering, yet mobile, mass of humanity was to be saved from starvation and the relative stability of urban life maintained. Duranty found hope, especially for the wanderers, in

<sup>33</sup>Duranty, Russia, 23-24.

<sup>34</sup>Duranty, Russia, 24.

<sup>35</sup>Duranty, I Write, 129.

the fact that the famine had compelled the Soviet leaders to allow Western relief agents and observers into the hitherto closed society.

In an article which appeared in the Times under the headline RUSSIA OPENED UP BY FAMINE CRISIS,<sup>36</sup> Duranty discussed what he saw as probably the most significant effect of the famine: that it had forced the USSR to open its doors to a group of "independent non-Socialist foreigners" who would foster better East/West relations while observing the progress made by the maturing socialist society. Duranty suggested that if any good could possibly arise from the horrors of 1921, it would be that the famine had established contact between Russia and the "one great country" that could help the nascent state to survive despite their basic differences. In this he was in complete agreement with Professor Vernon Kellogg, Hoover's special representative in Russia, who declared,

Above all, contact between Russia and the outer world has been established. For us, we see that not everything in Russia is bad or to be condemned. The Russians on their side realize that not every man's hand is against them.<sup>37</sup>

If all went well, this initial contact would eventually lead to the official recognition of the Soviet regime by the

<sup>36</sup>Duranty to NYT, 6 Oct 1921; in Russia, 26-27.

<sup>37</sup>The reprint of this article, like the majority of those found in Duranty, Russia, are expurgated versions of the originals. This quotation is from the original dispatch.

American government, and the two countries could form a mutually beneficial relationship.

In addition, if East/West co-existence should be realized and the Soviets should overcome their many problems, Duranty saw a bright future for Russia. This view was articulated by Colonel William N. Haskell, head of the ARA mission, in words which Duranty cited in one of his articles: "I for one am willing to go on record as an optimist on Russia."<sup>38</sup> No doubt, one of the reasons for the optimism of both Haskell and Duranty was Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) which appeared to be a compromise between socialism and capitalism aimed at the reconstruction of an economy that had been devastated by war, both international and civil, and by peasant unrest.

The inception of NEP led to much controversy, both in Russia and abroad. On the one hand, there were those who saw in NEP the victory of capitalism because of its emphasis on individualism.<sup>39</sup> On the other, there were those who saw it as an "enforced retreat according to communist principles, and a pause which must be accepted before again moving forward."<sup>40</sup> Duranty recognized the reasons for the disgruntlement of those Party members who saw the policy as a "sweeping reversal" of

<sup>38</sup>Duranty to NYT, 12 Jun 1922; in Russia, 38-39.

<sup>39</sup>Michael Hrushevsky, A History of Ukraine, ed. O. J. Frederiksen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 564.

<sup>40</sup>Alexander Uralov [pseud. A. Avtorkhanov], The Reign of Stalin (Westport: Hyperion, 1975), 122.

their most sacred ideals; he also recognized that the "rank and file" had little to say when it came to policy-making, and that it would be the men in the Kremlin who would institute such procedures as they deemed necessary to overcome the economic problems at hand.<sup>41</sup>

In Duranty's opinion the acceptance of NEP as a cure for Russia's economic malaise was ruled by a number of factors.<sup>42</sup> In the first place, the famine worked as an "object lesson" in that it drove home the need to placate the peasants, who had not consistently supported the Bolshevik revolution, by allowing them to sell their produce in order to buy manufactured goods.<sup>43</sup> Second, the Bolsheviks recognized that the proletarians were their principal support group and that, to retain their support, the standard of living in urban areas would have to be improved through better wages, increased private trade, and the encouragement of petty industry.<sup>44</sup> Third, Duranty stated that the traditional idea of the Bolshevik responsibility to achieve a world-wide socialist revolution was under siege: revolutionary internationalism was being replaced to a great extent, at least temporarily, by

<sup>41</sup>Duranty to NYT, 8 Sept 1921; in Russia, 88-91.

<sup>42</sup>Duranty, NYT, 5 Oct 1921.

<sup>43</sup>Duranty to NYT, 6 Oct 1921; in Russia, 26-27. See also Duranty, NYT, 22 Oct 1921.

<sup>44</sup>Duranty to NYT, 8 Sept 1921; in Russia, 88-91.

Russian nationalism in the country, and even within the Party itself.<sup>45</sup>

All in all, Duranty saw NEP as a true and vital promise for Russia's future economic, political and social stabilization, and many of his dispatches dealing with the social and industrial improvements that he witnessed supported his belief in that promise. In Moscow he was struck by the "marked change" which was evidenced by a new spirit of optimism among the people, due primarily to the fact that under NEP individualism and private effort were once more not only sanctioned, but also encouraged.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the stimulation of petty industry, as he had foretold in late 1921, appeared to be leading to the reorganization and rejuvenation of big industry. Duranty believed that the cottages industries which he witnessed in the countryside representative of "industrial reconstruction right from the foundations."<sup>47</sup>

To back up his theory of big industry dependence on the stability of petty industry, Duranty put the situation into historical perspective. In the first place, he explained that Imperial Russia had never been truly industrialized, and that what industry there was had been artificially stimulated by

<sup>45</sup>Duranty, NYT, 5 Oct 1921.

<sup>46</sup>Duranty to NYT, 10 Sept 1921; in Russia, 91-96.

<sup>47</sup>Duranty to NYT, 8 Sept 1921; in Russia, 88-91. See also Alex DeJonge, Stalin and the Shaping of the Soviet Union (Great Britain: Fontana, 1987), 121.

government subsidies and tariffs. Second, he said that the malfunction of Russian industry during the revolution was due to its innate debility as much as to Bolshevik activities, despite the fact that "so great an authority as Mr. Hoover" had attributed the malfunction wholly to communism. Finally, he cited "social indiscipline" as the coup de grace which wiped the slate clean and made it necessary for Lenin to rebuild Russian industry from scratch.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, Lenin became a hero in Duranty's eyes, first because he re-established discipline with the help of Trotsky and ended the anarchy of the Civil War, and second because, through NEP, he could "resuscitate Russian industry despite the handicaps of civil and foreign war, treachery and incompetence." As Duranty saw it, the "Russian giant" which had been stunned by seven years of war and famine was "stirring with the return of life force," and he hoped that in the future historians would do justice to Lenin's efforts to revitalize industry in Russia and recognize him for the hero he was.<sup>49</sup> In addition, if Duranty saw Lenin as a hero because of the apparent success of NEP, he also saw the Bolshevik leader as a champion of civil liberty when the police force and the judicial system were restructured in an attempt to put an end to the "Red Terror."

<sup>48</sup>Duranty to NYT, 10 Sept 1921; in Russia, 91-94.

<sup>49</sup>Duranty, Russia, 92 and 94.

Duranty's analysis and explanation of the "Red Terror" period shows the way in which his mind was beginning to work, and the way in which he was able to justify--to himself as much as to his readers--the extraordinary happenings in the revolutionary country, while he questioned the information which had previously been relayed to the West. In 1917, the Soviets had established the Cheka, a state police force which in its battle against counter-revolution and sabotage enjoyed remarkably autonomous powers not only as the constabulary, but also as judge, jury and executioner. While Duranty admitted that the Cheka and its independent activities had been a necessity in wartime Russia, and recognized the "Terror" which this necessity had led to, he also wondered if all of the "bogey" stories of executions en masse which had so disturbed the Western world, and caused that world to look with horror at the new Soviet state, were in fact absolutely accurate.<sup>50</sup>

For instance, Duranty doubted the estimated numbers of Cheka executions, and based his own estimation of roughly 50,000 deaths on the fact that some "bitterly anti-Bolshevik" Britons had observed the Terror first-hand and estimated a mortality figure of 20,000. Further, he suggested that the "wholesale slaughter" which was reported to the West could not have been a fact since, if true, it could only have served to defeat, not further, the purpose of the Soviets. Finally, the

<sup>50</sup>Duranty to NYT, 7 Feb 1922; in Russia, 119-123.



reporter could not accept that the men in the Kremlin were "bestial butchers" even though he added the following Communist quotation:

it is better to execute ten, twenty, or even a hundred persons immediately at a critical moment than by hesitation, either merciful or anxious, to allow a rebellion to break out, which would cost thousands of lives before it was suppressed.

Yet, while Duranty apparently could accept this pragmatic assessment of the executions during the "Red Terror," this is not to say that he condoned what was done, and when Lenin announced the restructuring of the state police force, the reporter was happy to report that the "Terror" was over, and "the wartime wolf that was kept to slay the black sheep in the Soviet fold" was about to be converted into "a peaceful watchdog."<sup>51</sup>

In early 1922, when the wartime circumstances which had as their natural concomitant the restriction of individual liberties seemed to disappear with the end of the Civil War, Duranty reported that the Cheka was to be replaced by a "detective force" called the GPU, or "Gay Pay Oo," which would answer to the Ministry of the Interior unlike its all-powerful predecessor.<sup>52</sup> This restructuring was possible now that the circumstances which spawned the "Red Terror" of the state police were eliminated; it was not possible as long as the

<sup>51</sup>Duranty, Russia, 121-122.

<sup>52</sup>Duranty, Russia, 123. The name was changed in 1924 to the OGPU, in 1934 to the NVKD, and in 1953 to the KGB.

Bolshevik revolutionary government was struggling to hold on to its tenuous position in the face of White Guard hostility and ambivalent peasant support.<sup>53</sup> With the establishment of the GPU, Duranty saw "the dawn of a new and less violent epoch" for Soviet Russia, and noted that the new police force should elicit no more fear than that invoked by the American Department of Justice.<sup>54</sup> With hindsight, this enthusiastic point of view may seem absurd, or at least naive; however, taking into account the horrors that Duranty had heard of, and even seen for himself, it is easy to understand how the restriction of the powers of the police could have been seen as a sign of better days to come, especially when it accompanied a modification of the Soviet judicial system.

Duranty was very critical of the Soviet wartime justice system under which defendants could do little to defend themselves except "to try and rally their exhausted, terrified brains to meet the hail of pitiless questions and accusations." In the new system, "extraordinary tribunals" and "star chamber" courts in which one man could be judge and prosecutor were to be a thing of the past; defendants would be able to employ all of the defensive conventions which were standard practice in most Western judicial systems, except

<sup>53</sup>The Whites were the right-wing anti-Bolshevik forces that fought against the Reds in the Civil War.

<sup>54</sup>Duranty, Russia, 122-123.

that "lay judges" would sit in place of a jury.<sup>55</sup> With this restructuring of the courts, as well as the constabulary system, Duranty saw important progress being made by the Soviet leaders toward an open and just society; any move toward a more democratic form of government, however, he believed to be far in the future.

Duranty informed his readers that Russian politics, and particularly the electoral system, would likely make the New York Tammany bosses "weep with envy."<sup>56</sup> Elections were fixed, perhaps not by manipulation of votes, but surely by manipulation of voters by "spellbinders" of the Party who were not loath to use force where verbal persuasion failed. Any delegates who should have the audacity to put forward a list of candidates other than those chosen by the caucus would be "marked men for the future," but Duranty believed that "such untoward incidents" seldom occurred. He went on to say, too, that the Bolsheviki found no need to defend the system; rather, they had informed the reporter that it was "expedient and even necessary" in a politically-backward country like Russia. Since Duranty agreed that the masses were in great need of political education, he based his hopes for the future on the Kremlin's assurances that democratic government would

<sup>55</sup>Duranty, Russia, 122-123.

<sup>56</sup>These political bosses dominated New York City politics from 1854 to Mayor La Guardia's victory in 1934. An extremely aggressive political machine, Tammany Hall was noted for its corruption, ruthlessness, and greed for power.

be instituted when things became "more settled" and the people more politically enlightened.<sup>57</sup>

Duranty also recognized that the establishment of the Russian federation in 1923 did not herald a move toward democratization, and stated this fact and the reasons for it in no uncertain terms. He described how the Soviet political system worked in the country as a whole, and concluded that "the roots of the Communist Party machine" were planted deep in the Russian soil because the Bolsheviks were, "like Tammany, in close touch with the masses." Thus, they knew without a doubt that the masses were still "quite incapable of democratic self-government as understood in the United States or England." Duranty stated that the Bolsheviks were simply governing on behalf of the people until such time as they were able to take the reins themselves; the test of their sincerity, however, would come when the masses were sufficiently educated politically for self-government in the Western style.<sup>58</sup> In the meantime, he was willing to keep faith with Lenin, who had proved himself to be an able, astute, and perhaps even compassionate leader.

As time passed, Duranty's articles more and more often mirrored his growing respect for Lenin. The reporter was particularly impressed by the forceful leader's apparent

<sup>57</sup>Duranty to NYT, 24 Dec 1921; in Russia, 48-51.

<sup>58</sup>Duranty, NYT, 6 Sept 1923.

rejection of the use of force against the backward masses, and delineated the Bolshevik leader's apparently conciliatory attitude after terror as a "necessity" had subsided. To Duranty, Lenin was a man who wished to utilize a "policy of appeal" rather than violent measures to convince the masses to work toward a socialist society. The journalist also believed that the leader's success was due to this preference as well as to his remarkable insight and knowledge of the Russian people.<sup>59</sup> Thus Duranty produced a picture of a man who had the confidence to oppose those of his associates who advocated the use of force, the humility to admit when he made a mistake, and the sense to try and rectify it<sup>60</sup>—a man to be respected in his lifetime and mourned after his death. That the Russians agreed with this point of view, Duranty illustrated in his articles dealing with Lenin's death, which even Crowl has to cite as models of "detail and accuracy."<sup>61</sup>

In January 1924 the New York Times carried on its front page Duranty's report of the major news story of the day—the death of Lenin.<sup>62</sup> Beginning with a short statement regarding the time and immediate cause of Lenin's death, the article went on to describe Michael Kalinin's tearful announcement to

<sup>59</sup>Duranty to NYT, 19 Sept 1922; in Russia, 95-96.

<sup>60</sup>Duranty to NYT, 22 Oct 1921; in Russia, 86-88.

<sup>61</sup>Crowl, 52.

<sup>62</sup>Duranty to NYT, 23 Jan 1924; in Russia, 129-133.

the All-Russian Soviet Congress and its impact on the Party members, putting into sharp relief their acute and passionate grief. In addition, Duranty's dispatches in the following days showed how much of a hold Lenin had on all of the Russian people, not just his Bolshevik followers.<sup>63</sup> For instance, he reported that applications for Party membership were flooding in from near and far after Lenin's death bringing with them new vigour, eagerness, and solidarity to the Party. But what impressed Duranty most was the almost messianic vision that the people held of the Father of the Revolution as evidenced in the "climax of an amazing week of national emotion"-- Lenin's funeral.<sup>64</sup>

Duranty put all of his descriptive skills and his talent for elocution into his verbal sketches of the Soviet leader's funeral. The reader could almost hear the bells tolling and the guns thundering as Lenin, in a red-draped coffin, was carried by his heirs to his final resting place. One could easily visualize the scene when "from a vast multitude in the Red Square rose in the icy air a fog of congealed breath, like a smoke sacrifice." Duranty also wrote of how people stood in queues for hours on end to view the dead leader's body. This he saw as a strong symbol of the quasi-religiosity of Bolshevism, with Lenin at its centre. The reporter could find

<sup>63</sup>Duranty to NYT, 26 Jan 1924; in Russia, 139-140.

<sup>64</sup>Duranty to NYT, 28 Jan 1924; in Russia, 141-147.

no other explanation for the "gigantic mass movement" not only of registered communists, but of the Russian people as a whole.<sup>65</sup> A new religion had been born.

Duranty made every effort to educate his readers as to the strange new religion taking root in Russia. As early as September 1921 the reporter described its adherents in the following words:

they have the virtues as well as the faults of the religious enthusiasts they really are. Like all fanatics they are ruthless, narrow minded, and self-centred[sic], but like fanatics they are nevertheless without thought of self. In a country rotten with corruption the communists are honest. In a country where they are all-powerful they live meagrely and, like Lenin, work themselves beyond the limit of physical endurance.<sup>66</sup>

These were the men who were trying to replace the Orthodox religion of Russia with their own; and there were visible signs of extensive acceptance, especially by the young.

In January 1923, Duranty described the scene which he had witnessed on Christmas Day in Moscow's Red Square.<sup>67</sup> On one hand he saw the devotees of traditional religion passively standing beside a now closed shrine and occasionally "crossing themselves against the blasphemers." On the other he saw the Young Communist League, the youthful supporters of the new

<sup>65</sup>Duranty to NYT, 27 Jan 1924; in Russia, 140-141.

<sup>66</sup>Duranty to NYT, 10 Sept 1921; in Russia, 91-96.

<sup>67</sup>Even to this day, Christmas is celebrated by Orthodox Russians and other Slavic peoples according to the old calendar; thus, while the Western world observed the birth of Christ on 25 Dec 1921, Christmas in Russia fell on 7 Jan 1922.

religion, taking part in a symbolic rite: the "burning of all gods."<sup>68</sup> However, it was the young woman who preached the new "gospel" that the reporter found most interesting; also, it was in her words that he found the basis of the new religion of the Communists--and a parallel with the old.

The woman who spoke to the Young Communists beneath the Kremlin's walls was, in Duranty's words, "moving, pathetic--ignorant, if you will--but not irreligious." The reporter noted the "spiritual fire" in her eyes and voice, as she spoke out "against idols, priests, and church" without saying a single word against religion. Instead, he found parallels between her speech and the bible when she said

that the temple made without hands was superior to the gorgeous fanes around us, built in blood for godless tyrants; that lascivious, self-seeking priests could not point out the road to heaven, and that self-sacrifice and the assuaging of human ills were better than lip-service and churchly rites.

Duranty had to agree with an old priest who had once told him, "Communism or the old religion, it is all the same--there is belief and faith in God behind both."<sup>69</sup> For the Communists, however, God was not in heaven, but in the Kremlin, and his followers were not above borrowing the conventions of the old religion to generate the conversion of the Russian population to Communism. It was their responsibility to ensure that the

<sup>68</sup>Duranty to NYT, 7 Jan 1923; in Russia, 75-79.

<sup>69</sup>Duranty, Russia, 78-79.



new religion could fill the void left in the life of the citizens.

Towards the end of 1923 Duranty described one way that the Soviets had found to fill the gap left by the abolition of church ceremonies.<sup>70</sup> Duranty began this article with the statement,

Since the French revolutionists feted the Goddess of Reason in the Champs de Mars, Europe has seen no stranger spectacle than the first public "civil christening" performed last night in the Russian Free Opera House.

At this ceremony, a baby girl was pledged to Communism by her parents; the "offering" was acknowledge by Clara Zetkin, "aged priestess of the Red International," and by the Nicholas Ivanovich Bukharin, high priest of Russian Marxism. The reporter voiced his opinion of the proceedings in these words:

Anywhere but Russia the scene would have been banal, even ridiculous, but here it was not. Atmosphere, innate dramatic sense--call it what you will--it was simple, natural, and terribly impressive.

Obviously, if a Westerner could be so impressed with the rites of Communism, how much more so would they have moved those who were true adherents of the new religion. Duranty was quick to notice the effect on the audience, especially on the young followers of the "messiah" of socialism, and restated his belief that Communism was indeed a religion "of an extremely fanatic and militant character." He backed this up

<sup>70</sup>Duranty to NYT, 27 Nov 1923; in Russia, 51-55.

by saying that, despite their refusal to recognize any supreme being, the Communists could not be termed truly atheistic because their new religion contained a utopian element. Instead of a life in the hereafter, its adherents believed in a future of peace and prosperity for a society in which there would be no oppression or profit or class differences.

Duranty also saw the struggle between Church and State as being "logically inevitable" because of the historical connection between the Orthodox church and the Tsarist regime, and the added complication of the ancestral wealth of the Church. The Communists were obliged to destroy this link to the past if they were to build a socialist future, and Duranty believed that they were aided in this endeavour by two factors: the "moral deadness" of Orthodoxy and the schism within the church itself which could only reduce its power.<sup>71</sup> In any event, the Patriarchate had to be abolished to make way for the Soviet Priesthood in the Red Church which was making way for its own Trinity: Lenin as the Father, Marx as the Holy Ghost, and Stalin as the Son.<sup>72</sup>

The first time that Duranty singled out Stalin from among Lenin's prospective heirs was in an article which appeared in the Times in 1923 under the headline FIVE MEN DIRECTING

<sup>71</sup>Duranty to NYT, 14 Sept 1923; in Russia, 81-85.

<sup>72</sup>John Fischer, Why They Behave Like Russians (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 63.

DESTINY OF RUSSIA.<sup>73</sup> This report stated that Lenin, although not as ill as had been reported abroad, was resting in the country, as was Grigory Zinoviev who had accompanied the Bolshevik leader back from exile in 1917. With these two members of the Central Executive Committee incapacitated, and Michael Kalinin, despite his position as President of the USSR, not taking an active part in its government, the actual running of the country fell heavily on the shoulders of five men.

Four of these five received scant notice from Duranty. Aleksei Rykov was "worn out" and just managing to keep going, while Lev Kamenev was labouring to maintain his positions both on the Inner Council and as President of the Moscow Soviet, and any influence that he had on his colleagues was due simply to their belief "that he most accurately interpreted to them Lenin's thought"; both were, in Duranty's opinion, "first class administrators, and hardly more." Lev Trotsky and Felix Dzerzhinsky received slightly better ratings from Duranty; both seemed "made of iron," and the reporter praised the former for his executive abilities and the latter for his dedication and perseverance. Neither, however, could be compared to Lenin in "analytical power" or in "analytical capacity."<sup>74</sup> All this would hardly lead one to suppose, as

<sup>73</sup>Duranty to NYT, 16 Jan 1923; in Russia, 104-106.

<sup>74</sup>Duranty, Russia, 104, 106 and 108.

does Crowl, that Duranty spent more time flattering the men in the Kremlin than analyzing their "leadership qualities."<sup>75</sup> In any case, the man who was obviously of most interest to Duranty, and who appeared to have the necessary qualities to follow in Lenin's footsteps, was the fifth--"the Georgian"--Joseph Stalin.

Stalin in 1923 was actually a relatively obscure member of the Kremlin group with few conspicuous leadership qualities. Alex DeJonge, one of the dictator's biographers, has stated that John Reed, the American Communist newsman who wrote Ten Days that Shook the World, "was exceptional in his ability to foresee Stalin's rise," while "others who met him at this time were much less impressed." On the other side, DeJonge mentions Robert Bruce Lockhart who "did not think a lot of Stalin" and Victor Serge who "did not consider him officer material."<sup>76</sup> Roy Medvedev, in Let History Judge, states that "Stalin was the least prominent figure in the Politburo," that he enjoyed little public support because he was "closemouthed and reserved," and that he "was generally to be found somewhere behind the scenes" in 1922. Medvedev goes on to say that only the "Party apparatus," the group that

<sup>75</sup>Crowl, 31.

<sup>76</sup>DeJonge, 142.

worked "behind the scenes," recognized Stalin's exceptional organizational talents.<sup>77</sup>

When Duranty and his colleague, Louis Fischer, met Stalin, they were both impressed. Fischer wrote that the man in the Kremlin did not at first "sweep one off one's feet," and that he created "an impression not with the magic wand of a magnetic personality but slowly, steadily, by laying on brick after brick."<sup>78</sup> Duranty, as he later stated in his autobiography, was most likely impressed by this man who seemed so unimpressive to so many simply because Stalin was the "first big political leader" that he had personally met.<sup>79</sup> Yet, even before Lenin's death, the reporter was astute enough to recognize in the man something of what only the inner circle of the Kremlin recognized, and to realize that there was more in him than met the eye; as early as 1923 Duranty recognized Stalin as "one of the most remarkable men in Russia and perhaps the most influential."<sup>80</sup>

Duranty's analysis of Stalin was indeed flattering, but not effusively so, and it does give credence to his later

<sup>77</sup>Roy A. Medvedev, Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism, trans. Colleen Taylor, ed. David Joravsky and Georges Haupt (Toronto: Random House, 1973), 17.

<sup>78</sup>Louis Fischer, Machines and Men in Russia (New York: Harrison Smith, 1932), 273.

<sup>79</sup>Duranty, I Write, 200.

<sup>80</sup>Duranty, Russia, 104.

claim that he picked "the right horse on which to bet in the Russian race."<sup>81</sup> In his article on the "Council of Five," he described his "horse" in the following words:

during the last year Stalin has shown judgment and analytical power not unworthy of Lenin. It is to him that the greatest part of the credit is due for bringing about the new Soviet Union, which history may regard as one of the most remarkable constitutions in human history. Trotsky helped him in drawing it up, but Stalin's brain guided the pen.<sup>82</sup>

It would seem therefore that Duranty carefully evaluated the potential of each of the men in the Kremlin, and came to a significant conclusion regarding the future leadership of the Soviet Union based on his intuitive analysis of Stalin. Whatever crimes can be laid at the totalitarian leader's door, there can be no doubt that Stalin was an extraordinary administrator,<sup>83</sup> and he did eventually win the Kremlin horse race, at first against Trotsky, and then against anyone who dared to oppose his will.

When Lenin died, Duranty made a statement which must seem the ultimate in naivete for today's readers, but which is understandable given Duranty's observations of the men in the Kremlin: "No one who knows them both doubts that Trotsky and Stalin will bury the hatchet over his grave." This optimistic outlook was, of course, soon dispelled as a major power

<sup>81</sup>Duranty, I Write, 200.

<sup>82</sup>Duranty, Russia, 106.

<sup>83</sup>DeJonge, 157.

struggle erupted causing an irreparable rift in the Party, the expulsion of Trotsky, and Stalin's taking a firm seat in the saddle of authority.

Certainly when Pravda on the day of Lenin's death printed what Duranty referred to as a "furious attack by Stalin, the chief machine leader," against Trotsky, Radek, Preobrazhensky and other "insurgents," the foreign correspondent should have realized that there was a major problem in the Kremlin. But Duranty saw in the fact that this attack had been printed at all a sign that the death of Lenin would not cause a schism in the Party apparatus; moreover, he stated that the "general opinion" was that it would instead "unify and strengthen the Communist Party as nothing else could do."<sup>84</sup> When he noted Trotsky's absence from Lenin's funeral,<sup>85</sup> Duranty could not have known that the main heir was absent due to a ruse of Stalin. Trotsky had been sent a telegram which contained the date of the funeral, but the date was incorrect because Stalin wanted to make certain that his major rival would be conspicuous by his absence,<sup>86</sup> and that observers at the funeral would accept the future Father of Soviet Totalitarianism and his supporters as the dead leader's only successors.<sup>87</sup> The

<sup>84</sup>Duranty to NYT, 23 Jan 1924; in Russia, 129-133.

<sup>85</sup>Duranty to NYT, 28 Jan 1924; in Russia, 141-147.

<sup>86</sup>DeJonge, 198.

<sup>87</sup>Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, Trotsky: 1921-1929 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1959), 133.

race for power had truly started, but Duranty appeared to be left standing at the gate instead of watching the contest.

During the spring and summer of 1924, Duranty was strangely silent on the political crisis which was taking place behind the Kremlin walls. As Crowl has noted, in the months following Lenin's death he almost totally ignored the struggle which was becoming increasingly public.<sup>88</sup> What Crowl fails to take into account is that, during this period, Duranty was not a well man; by the fall of 1924 he was forced to spend two months in France on sick leave due to a heart condition. Whether or not this had anything to do with his insufficient coverage of the Kremlin conflict is a debatable point, but one which must at least be considered, not ignored, if one is to reach a fair conclusion regarding Duranty's success as a Moscow foreign correspondent in the first three years of his assignment.

The years from 1921 to 1924 were years of fantastic change for both the Soviet Union and for Duranty himself. As early as the end of his first half-year in the Soviet Union, Duranty was making a sincere attempt to understand the aims and methods of the men in the Kremlin during a period when changes appeared to be occurring daily, and to set forth his observations in as clear and concise a manner as was humanly

<sup>88</sup>Crowl, 53.



possible. While Russia was struggling to overcome the effects of a terrible famine, revolution and war, both internal and external, it could not have been an easy task to cover the news when circumstances shifted like sand under one's feet. Duranty decided, therefore, that the most anyone could do was try to present the facts in as fair, honest and straightforward a manner as possible and leave it up to his readers to come to their own conclusions.<sup>89</sup>

Yet, because of the special writing and analytical skills that Duranty's education had afforded him, and his natural talent for description, he was able to present those facts in such a way that a vivid picture of life in the Soviet Union emerged. In addition, as his journalistic skills and powers of observation matured, and as he became more comfortable with the Russian language and his environment, his articles mirrored that maturation. He often showed a rare ability to understand and analyze the system around him without condoning it--or really condemning it--in any way. This perhaps is not the best road to truly incisive or investigative journalism as we know it today, but Duranty in these early years was able to demonstrate unsurpassed journalistic abilities, and make the New York Times "one of the most informative sources on events in the Soviet Union," thus reversing the charges made

<sup>89</sup>Duranty, NYT, 5 Oct 1921.

against it by Lippmann and Merz in 1920.<sup>90</sup> In the future, those same abilities would help him when he needed to be an interpreter, not a verbatim reporter of the news. Before Duranty could carry on with his career, however, he had to face and overcome personal tragedy such as he had never known before.

<sup>90</sup>Desmond, Press, 46.

CHAPTER 2  
WITHIN THE CRUCIBLE

In November 1924, after a lengthy convalescence due to his heart problem, Duranty was involved in a railway accident which had a permanent effect on his life; when the train compartment in which he was riding across France was "smashed to matchwood" in the accident, the reporter suffered not only head and hand injuries, but also two compound fractures of the left leg.<sup>91</sup> While these injuries did not appear to be life-threatening, gangrene set in and his leg had to be amputated. Duranty was given opium to ease the excruciating pain, and an addiction to the drug caused him even more pain--although of a different nature--when he had to break the habit.<sup>92</sup> Thus the Duranty who returned to the Soviet Union in 1925 must have been a very different man from the one who entered the USSR only four years earlier: the young reporter of 1921 had only witnessed the pain and misery of others in the Great War and in the Russian famine, the mature journalist of 1925 had personally experienced them.

<sup>91</sup>NYT, 8 Nov 1924.

<sup>92</sup>Taylor, 100.

It is possible that Duranty's personal experiences in the mid-1920s deeply affected his reportage of the news from Moscow between 1925 and 1934, the period in which Stalin's dictatorship was firmly established and the Soviet Union experienced yet another revolution--this time a revolution from above. And yet, Duranty's articles on the crisis in the Kremlin, the establishment of Stalinism and particularly the impact of the first Five-Year Plan show that he did the best he could to interpret the situation for his readers under increasingly difficult circumstances. Moreover, his efforts were so successful that they netted him a Pulitzer Prize in 1932 which was well-deserved, despite some opinions to the contrary; even Crowl who says that the Duranty's reportage in the late twenties and early thirties was only moderately successful has to admit that the articles for which he was awarded the prize were "remarkably complete."<sup>93</sup>

However, when a new famine ravaged the Ukraine and North Caucasus in the early-thirties--a famine which the men in the Kremlin wished to hide from the West for their own reasons--Duranty, along with his fellow foreign journalists, was faced with an almost impossible situation. It was Duranty's coverage of this famine that became the basis for the controversy which enveloped him in the mid-thirties, despite the fact that he was no more remiss in his responsibilities as a

<sup>93</sup>Crowl, 47 and 88.

journalist or his coverage of the famine than the majority of his colleagues, and was simply trying to present the achievements of the period as well as the problematic effects of rapid industrialization and collectivization. In doing this, he played a major role in fostering East/West relations and helped to bring about the official recognition of the Soviet regime by the United States.

Duranty's articles dealing with the clash in the Kremlin in the late twenties show that he had achieved a remarkable understanding of the conflict and its historical background. For instance, he found the direct cause for the conflict in the long-standing difference of focus between the Trotskyites and the Stalinists. For one thing, the former were "inclined to champion the cause of the urban proletariat," while the latter were "committed to the policy of improving the position of the peasant."<sup>94</sup> Secondly, the reporter reiterated a difference which he had previously noted between the two factions: a commitment to the Marxist spirit of internationalism in Trotsky's camp compared to rising nationalism in Stalin's because of his aim to build "socialism in one country."<sup>95</sup> Even with these disagreements, Duranty suggested that a major schism in the Kremlin was highly unlikely in

<sup>94</sup>Duranty, NYT, 23 Jun 1926.

<sup>95</sup>Duranty, NYT, 27 Jun 1927.

light of the "rigid discipline" which the Party required of all its members,<sup>96</sup> but he also recognized that something would have to be done to ensure unanimity in the Kremlin.

While Duranty was worried that any hope for harmony among the leaders could be "gravely menaced" by continuing strife within the Party,<sup>97</sup> he also reported that the necessary steps to remove all opposition to Stalin's power were being taken because "a house divided against itself cannot stand."<sup>98</sup> Thus the expulsion of Evgeny Preobrazhensky, one of the old guard, together with more than sixty "malcontents," was essential if the men in the Kremlin were to form a solid and unified government. In Duranty's opinion only the "final elimination of the Opposition" would ensure stability, and the economic difficulties which plagued the USSR would be solved only when the "crisis of policy" raised by the conflict between Trotsky and Stalin had passed.<sup>99</sup>

Even after Trotsky's expulsion from the Party in 1927, Duranty cited the threat of conflict between Trotsky and Stalin as a significant danger to the stability of the Soviet State, and placed the blame fully at Trotsky's door. Because Trotsky had not "rallied to Lenin's Bolshevik banner" until

<sup>96</sup>Duranty, NYT, 23 Jun 1926.

<sup>97</sup>Duranty, NYT, 27 Jun 1927.

<sup>98</sup>Duranty, NYT, 16 Oct 1927.

<sup>99</sup>Duranty, NYT, 30 Jan 1928.

1917, Duranty believed that he never learned "the essential wrongness of heretical deviations from the party line which had been stamped upon the older school of Bolsheviki by Lenin himself."<sup>100</sup> The only recourse for Stalin and his followers was to rid themselves conclusively of this disruptive influence. In mid-January 1929 Duranty reported that the "doubters" had been either silenced or won over, and that Stalin was "firmly in the saddle" in the Kremlin;<sup>101</sup> this assumption was confirmed with Trotsky's deportation the following month.

Duranty assured his readers that, once their leader was deported, the Trotskyists had little to fear from Stalin. The reporter was convinced that Trotsky's followers would not be "slain or evilly entreated," and that the worst they could expect was to lose their posts and be allowed to withdraw to some "humble retreats of rest." Duranty portrayed an image of tired old men being put out to pasture for their own good, blessed with Stalin's generosity and good will. Any reports to the contrary he believed came from gossiping members of Moscow's "foreign circle," or from Muscovites who wished to accentuate the seriousness of the conflict because of their petty grievances against the men in the Kremlin in general,

<sup>100</sup>Duranty to NYT, 31 Dec 1928; in Russia, 153-156.

<sup>101</sup>Duranty to NYT, 11 Jan 1929; in Russia, 162-165.

and Stalin in particular.<sup>102</sup> But Duranty, with no reason to think otherwise at the time, believed that Stalin was a leader who could be merciful to his enemies, while at the same time having the strength of will, like Lenin, to use extreme measures to solve extreme problems.

Stalin's Piatiletka, the first Five-Year Plan, was an extreme economic response to the extreme economic difficulties caused by Russia's relative industrial and agricultural backwardness. It was designed by Gosplan, the Soviet State Planning Commission, to transform Russia "from a country primarily agrarian into one predominantly industrial."<sup>103</sup> The successful accomplishment of the Plan was threatened, however, by the peasants' apparent inability, or even unwillingness, to help build a socialist state, and by the supply and distribution difficulties which had been obvious since Duranty's earliest days in the Soviet Union. The Soviets believed that the two threats were inextricably linked, but Duranty did not totally blame the peasants for the latter predicament. While he did mention that dissenting elements in the countryside were fostering "economic unrest" through sabotage, and thus causing at least a part of the "goods famine" in the urban areas, the distribution problem he

<sup>102</sup>Duranty, NYT, 28 Apr 1929.

<sup>103</sup>The Soviet Union Looks Ahead: The Five-year Plan for Economic Construction (London: George Allen & Unwin for the Presidium of the State Planning Commission, 1930), 18.



attributed to the increasing bureaucratization of the Soviet system. Duranty also predicted that, if the weather should be unfavourable and precipitate more of a decrease in crop production than was already expected due to a reduction in the amount of grain being sown, the chickens would indeed "come home to roost in the Kremlin," whether Stalin was right or wrong in his methods.<sup>104</sup>

One of Stalin's methods of dealing with the shortages in the urban sector with which Duranty was in total agreement was the introduction of "bread cards." For one thing, the coupon system prevented speculators from taking advantage of the shortages; second, since the cards were only given to "bona fide workers," the industrial sector was assured a proper standard of living; and finally, those who were not doing their share to further the aims of the men in the Kremlin would be penalized for their idleness in that they would have to pay double for their daily needs.<sup>105</sup> Again Duranty was able to look at the problem and the Soviet solution pragmatically, and with the shortages thus attended to in the cities, he decided that it was time to visit the countryside.

In June 1929 Duranty revisited the Volga agrarian region which had been so ravaged by famine in the early twenties. He was happy to report from that area that there

<sup>104</sup>Duranty, NYT, 18 May 1929.

<sup>105</sup>Duranty, NYT, 24 Mar 1929.

was no comparison to be made between what he had seen there almost eight years earlier and what he viewed on this trip. In addition, he came to the conclusion that because of the rise in the standard of living the Soviet regime enjoyed the loyal support of 90 percent of the rural population, and surmised that the "alleged hostility" of the peasants toward the Kremlin was mostly a myth. Any complaints that there were, he said, had to be attributed to "the abuse of power by local officials," but this did not mean that the abuse was sanctioned by the men in Moscow, or that those peasants who were displeased with the local government were displeased with the Soviet regime as a whole.<sup>106</sup> To use one of Duranty's favourite analogies regarding forests and trees, it would appear that at this time he believed that the "trees" (the local government officials) were totally detached from the "forest" (the central government) in the minds of the peasants--or at least wanted to believe so. With this in mind, his decision that the peasantry was ripe for collectivization, and even welcomed it, becomes understandable.

Whether or not Duranty's trip to the Volga was made, as Crowl suggests, with the precise object of showing that the peasants were ready for collectivization is a debatable point; what is certain is that the articles which that trip produced were written by a true proponent of Stalin's Plan, and one who

<sup>106</sup>Duranty, NYT, 11 Jun 1929.

believed that it was off to a "flying start."<sup>107</sup> By this time Duranty's articles for the most part presented outright praise for collectivization, and he attributed the achievements thus far to the able leadership of Stalin--the man who had the strength of purpose not only to declare open war on the kulaks and priests who resisted collectivization, but also to rid himself of another opponent, Nicholas Bukharin. Bukharin had been one of Stalin's supporters against Trotsky, but later he had the temerity to disagree with his new leader, to speak out against the new policy of rapid industrialization, and to recommend a compromise with the so-called "class enemies."<sup>108</sup> The increasingly pragmatic Duranty concluded that any compromise was unthinkable once the "class war" began; he believed that, if the Five-Year Plan was to succeed, the men in the Kremlin could give no quarter to their enemies, whoever they were.

On October 5 Duranty asked the question--"What is a kulak?"--and then proceeded to give his readers a short history lesson of the word's use that revealed his understanding of the many changes which had affected the Russian economy since the Revolution. The literal translation of the Russian word, as Duranty noted, is "fist," and historically the term was used by poorer peasants to describe their more prosperous

<sup>107</sup>Crowl, 104.

<sup>108</sup>Duranty, NYT, 23 Aug 1929.

neighbours, those who exploited the labour of the less fortunate "worse than any landlord." The Bolsheviki applied the term after the Revolution, during the period of "militant communism," to those peasants who hid their grain rather than give it up to the government; but later, under NEP, the term was once more generally restricted to those who employed labour for profit.<sup>109</sup> Duranty, in his survey of how the word "kulak" was used over the years captured the very problem which has beset many historians--what indeed is a kulak? There can be no doubt that the definition of the word, as Duranty realized, depended very much on the political, ideological and economic motives of the various groups which used the term in various ways over time.

Duranty went on to give the Communists' subjective definition of "kulak" as it particularly related to collectivization and the Five-Year Plan--"an anti-social element which places individual profit higher than the common weal"--and to explain to his readers why the men in the Kremlin had designated the members of this group as "class enemies" at this particular time. By the end of the twenties, the Communists were using the word, as they had before under NEP, to designate those farmers who endorsed capitalist rather than socialist ideals because they preferred to sell their grain on the open market rather than accept the significantly lower

<sup>109</sup>Duranty to NYT, 5 Oct 1929; in Russia, 231-232.

"fixed prices" of the state collection agents. Under NEP this form of private enterprise was acceptable, but it did not fit in with the aims of the Five-Year Plan. The kulak who merely wanted to go his own way and indulge in private trade was, therefore, an enemy who had to be "attacked and eliminated" along with those who committed arson and even murder to show their displeasure with the regime and its new economic plan.<sup>110</sup>

At the beginning of 1930, Duranty reported "the brutal truth" to his readers: that not only kulaks, but also "Nepmen" and "servants of the religious cults" were to be put "up against a wall."<sup>111</sup> This policy, as far as Duranty could see, was not particularly unpopular with the general population; in fact, he found that the support for Stalin's Plan was basically unflagging, as was his own, despite some grumbling about the unreasonable expectations and extreme methods of the Planners.

Stalin's "Dizzy with Success" speech in March 1930, which called for more moderation in both expectations and methods, reinforced the generally positive opinion which Duranty already had of him. He cited Stalin's speech as "the most

<sup>110</sup>Duranty, Russia, 232.

<sup>111</sup>Duranty to NYT, 26 Jan 1930; in Russia, 233-234. Minor capitalists or "private traders" of the mid-twenties were referred to as "Nepmen"; anyone who retained his or her Orthodox beliefs could be accused of belonging to a "religious cult," whether priest or layperson.

important pronouncement made in Russia for several years,<sup>112</sup> and praised the Soviet leader for his wisdom in curbing the "super-zealous" local officials who had caused great misery for the peasants by using undue force to collectivize them.<sup>113</sup> Like Lenin who had turned from the "Red Terror" of militant communism to social appeasement and NEP, Stalin appeared to recognize that force was no answer when it came to the peasants, and was advocating nonviolent persuasion to achieve collectivization. This apparent adherence to Leninist beliefs and methodology strengthened Duranty's faith in Stalin's leadership qualities, and bolstered his conviction that if only the peasants would voluntarily take part in the Plan a mutually advantageous circumstance would be the result: the Plan itself would have a better chance of success while the peasants reaped the benefits of a more stable economy.

Within a month, however, Duranty disappointedly reported that Stalin's retreat had created even more problems to stand in the way of the success of the Plan. On the one hand, many Party members were "startled" and even "disgruntled" by the suggested modifications of the policy, just as they had been by Lenin's apparent retreat from socialism into NEP in the early-twenties; on the other, the peasants were "popping in and out of collective farms as rabbits appear and disappear

<sup>112</sup>Duranty to NYT, 2 Mar 1930; in Russia, 235-236.

<sup>113</sup>Duranty, NYT, 8 Mar 1930.

in the fields."<sup>114</sup> But Duranty was still convinced that the Plan could and would succeed; in addition, he predicted that other plans would follow, because Five-Year Plans had "mystic functions" in that they represented "the ideal of heaven--unattainable but always to be aimed at."<sup>115</sup> In other words, they were to become an integral part of another new religion of the Soviet Union, the aim of which was to change superstitious peasants into agrarian proletarians; this religion would not only further unseat Orthodox Christianity, but also replace Marxist-Leninism, and would be known as Stalinism.

Stephen F. Cohen has cited Duranty as possibly the first writer to claim that the "dominant principle" in Russia of the 1930s should be termed Stalinism, not Marxism or Leninism.<sup>116</sup> This fact, Duranty suggested, made it very difficult for the West to understand what was occurring in the Soviet Union because it made judgement or interpretation by Western terms and standards impossible.<sup>117</sup> He therefore set out to interpret the concept of Stalinism and its application for his readers.

First of all, Stalin had "re-established the semi-divine, supreme autocracy of the imperial idea," and Duranty believed

<sup>114</sup>Duranty, NYT, 6 Apr 1930.

<sup>115</sup>Duranty, NYT, 17 Aug 1930.

<sup>116</sup>Stephen F. Cohen, Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 174n. See Duranty, NYT, 14 Jun 1931.

<sup>117</sup>Duranty to NYT, 13 Jun 1931; in Russia, 237-241.

that this suited the Russians and was "as familiar, natural and right" to them as it would be "abominable and wrong" to Westerners. This then, according to Duranty, was Stalin's primary "key to power": despite his Georgian roots, like Lenin he recognized and appreciated the Russian character and its need for a strong, and even despotic leader. The means the leader adopted to modernize his backward people included the Piatiletka which Duranty saw as "applied Stalinism" and a "practical expression of the dominant principle." The Plan would help transform "driven slaves" into "a nation of eager, conscious workers" by creating a socialistic collective-conscience in the workers, whether agrarian or industrial.<sup>118</sup>

Duranty's point of view regarding the Five-Year Plan was highlighted not only in his newspaper articles, but also in an important survey of Soviet economics when he joined with several of his colleagues and a number of other experts to produce a collection of articles which was published under the title Red Economics.<sup>119</sup> In the introduction to the book, Duranty discussed three phases of Soviet economic history which, though "separate and distinguishable from each other," he believed to be "welded indissolubly by a single political purpose"---the creation of a socialist State. In the first phase, the Revolution and Civil War, Tsarism was smashed and

<sup>118</sup>Duranty, Russia, 239-241.

<sup>119</sup>Gerhard Dobbert, ed, Red Economics, Introduction by Walter Duranty (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1932).



its economic system totally destroyed; in the second, Lenin adopted NEP in an attempt to construct a new economy which, while it relied to a certain extent on capitalist methods, was eventually to serve as a base for the furtherance of the socialist ideal; and in the third phase, the Piatiletka, the ideal was well on its way to being established. It was this third phase which was to serve as the "blueprint" for the eventual fulfilment of the Bolshevik aim, "not only to create a new economic system, but to remake the minds of men."<sup>120</sup>

Since Duranty wrote the introduction for Red Economics, it may be suggested that he was considered to be exceptionally expert in the field;<sup>121</sup> yet, his generally positive vision of the Five-Year Plan was to some extent contradicted by one of his fellow contributors. While Duranty saw in the Five-Year Plan the primary means for the realization of the Bolshevik dream, Otto Auhagen, a former agricultural adviser to the German embassy in Moscow, saw in it a fundamental and inescapable problem: the "land problem" which was a major factor in the fall of the Romanovs, had been chiefly responsible for

<sup>120</sup>Duranty, Introduction to Red Economics, ed. Gerhard Dobbert, v, viii and xxi.

<sup>121</sup>It may be argued that Duranty was chosen because of his Pulitzer Prize, but two details nullify this argument. In the first place, H. R. Knickerbocker won the Prize for his articles on Russia the year before Duranty, thus the latter was not alone in this distinction among the writers; in the second, since the book was published in the same year that Duranty received the Pulitzer, the plans for the book and Duranty's being chosen to write the introduction must have been finalized long before the Prize was awarded.

the Bolsheviki's early failures, and constituted a major hindrance to the successful execution of Stalin's Plan.<sup>122</sup>

The Bolsheviki had secured peasant support by promising them ownership of the land they worked; now it seemed that Stalin wanted to take this "gift" away, an action which the illiterate agrarian agent of Russian society saw as equivalent to a declaration of war. The peasants would not, therefore, willingly accept collectivization--and this was as true for many of the most destitute peasants as it was for the more affluent. Auhagen saw this fact manifest in the destruction of livestock that otherwise would have been peacefully given up to the collectives; he also mentioned that the result of this slaughter was under-nourishment and even famine.<sup>123</sup> Both the land question and the famine were subjects to which Duranty paid little attention in his articles on the Five-Year Plan, but it must be remembered that the Plan's ramifications were very convoluted and far-reaching; the journalist did his best to explain this to his Western readers in an overview.

When Duranty tried to outline the implications of Stalinism and the Five-Year Plan not only for the agricultural and industrial sectors of Russia, but also for its foreign relations and trade, he found it impossible to separate the various aspects to be considered. In dealing with the

<sup>122</sup>Otto Auhagen, "Agriculture," in Red Economics, ed. Gerhard Dobbert, 111-133.

<sup>123</sup>Auhagen, 129 and 132.

economic aspect of agriculture, for example, there were other things besides plain economics to be considered, such as the fact that the Kremlin deemed it far more important to collectivize 60 percent of the peasants holdings in 1931, than to generate any surplus goods for export.<sup>124</sup> All in all, the emphasis appeared to be on national, rather than international aspirations. By this time Duranty was fully convinced that Stalin had abandoned traditional Bolshevik, or Trotskyist internationalism and that this would lead to increased trade and a friendlier relationship between Russia and the West.

Besides the fact that the Plan left no excess time, money, or energy for propaganda in the West, Duranty told his readers that the Soviets would wish to avoid such subversive activity because it could lead to another war which, as "a force of social destruction," would be fatal to the Plan as "a force of social construction." Furthermore, Duranty saw no need for the Soviets to indulge in subversive activities abroad while the Plan held such promise for being "the best possible propaganda for the rest of the world," especially when the world was suffering from the effects of a major economic depression.<sup>125</sup>

When the New York stock market collapsed in 1929, the crash was felt around the world, and especially in Europe

<sup>124</sup>Duranty to NYT, 15 Jun 1931; in Russia, 242-245.

<sup>125</sup>Duranty to NYT, 18 Jun 1931; in Russia, 245-250.

where "peasants were left without markets and industrial workers without employment."<sup>126</sup> Russia, because of its economic isolation since the Revolution, felt the reverberations of the crash less than countries like France, Britain and Germany, but nonetheless it was affected. For one thing the depression could be used by the men in the Kremlin to highlight the imperfection of capitalism. But the Soviets, in Duranty's eyes, were not taking advantage of the plight in which the capitalist world found itself; despite the accusations being levied against the USSR--that it was aggravating the situation by "dumping" goods on a disabled market at ridiculous prices<sup>127</sup>--Duranty informed his readers that the Kremlin was showing its willingness "to meet the rest of the world half way" in its foreign trade policies.<sup>128</sup> If only America could relieve itself of the paranoia that was fostered by those who saw any collaboration with the "Red menace" as anti-American, the men in Moscow and Washington might be able to assist each other in easing the economic difficulties of their respective countries. This line of reasoning was, of course, very unpopular with those in the United States who wished to maintain the status quo in Russo-American relations and who sincerely felt that Duranty was too pro-Soviet to

<sup>126</sup>James Joll, Europe Since 1870: An International History (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 324.

<sup>127</sup>Desmond, Crisis, 432.

<sup>128</sup>Duranty to NYT, 19 Jun 1931; in Russia, 250-252.

write objectively about the Soviet Union despite his being honoured with a Pulitzer Prize for foreign correspondence.

The Pulitzer Prize for newspaper reporting is awarded yearly "for the best example of a reporter's work during the year; the test being strict accuracy, terseness, and accomplishment of some public good commanding public attention and respect."<sup>129</sup> By 1930 the events in the Soviet Union were certainly commanding a great deal of attention, and in 1931, H. R. "Red" Knickerbocker of the New York Evening Post received a Pulitzer for his series on "The Red Menace."<sup>130</sup> The following year, Duranty received his own award for outstanding achievement in covering the news from Moscow, and in the New York Times' announcement of the award, Duranty's own words regarding the evolution of his pro-Soviet and pro-Stalin convictions were recorded.

Although Duranty admitted that he had been "viciously anti-Bolshevik" on his arrival in Moscow, the reporter said that he had come to appreciate the sincerity and enthusiasm

<sup>129</sup>John Hohenberg, The Pulitzer Prizes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 20. [Hereafter cited as Pulitzer.]

<sup>130</sup>Hohenberg, Pulitzer, 82. See also Hohenberg, Foreign, 318 and Desmond, Crisis, 357. The articles for which Knickerbocker received his Prize were published in book form in 1931; in America the title of the book was The Red Trade Menace, while in Britain it was released as The Soviet Five-Year Plan and Its Effect on World Trade. The difference between the two titles is indicative of the distinct difference between the societies to whom the publishers catered. In America, the title had to follow the "Red Menace" line so that the author would not be considered too sympathetic to the Bolsheviks.

of the Bolsheviks, and to feel that they deserved a "fair break" in the Western press. As for Stalin, Duranty saw him as "a really great statesman" whose economic plan had to be appreciated despite its "imperfections." The reporter then went on to state that, while he fully believed in Bolshevism "for Russia," he was just as convinced that it was totally unsuitable for the West.<sup>131</sup> This last statement, however, did not in any way temper the growing controversy regarding Duranty's work in general, and his apparent pro-Sovietism in particular.

Duranty's foreign correspondence after 1929 was a matter of some debate in his personal mail as well as in the New York Times' letters to the editor page, and this debate mirrored the public feelings, both pro and con, regarding the Soviet Union and Communism. In one article Duranty told of having received letters from anonymous champions of both sides. He cited one note from a "Communist nut in Cleveland" who called him "a capitalist hireling," while a "capitalist nut in New York" claimed that he was "bought out by the Bolsheviks."<sup>132</sup> Such diverse opinions were to be found in his newspaper's letters pages as well. On the one hand there were those who, while they professed the necessity of an "impartial attitude"

<sup>131</sup>NYT, 3 May 1932.

<sup>132</sup>Duranty, NYT, 29 Dec 1929.

toward the USSR, decried Duranty's "one-sidedness,"<sup>133</sup> and others whose main concern was the reporter's attempts through his journalism to foster better relations between "his native capitalistic and democratic country" and a country whose leaders wished to establish "an international cheka."<sup>134</sup> On the other hand there were those who found Duranty's daily dispatches to be "enlightening," who agreed with the "eminent men" who "testified to Mr. Duranty's ability and high journalistic integrity," who welcomed rather than denounced the "respect and admiration" that the reporter showed for the accomplishments of the Bolsheviki. One letter ended with a question which Duranty must have read with some of satisfaction: "Have we in America reached such a state of perfection that we have nothing to learn from the gigantic social experiment now taking place in Russia?"<sup>135</sup> Duranty by this time had decided to ignore the letter writers and "give a whole picture, not just the dark corners," of what was happening in the Soviet Union.<sup>136</sup> The problem was that it was becoming increasingly difficult for the journalists to include

<sup>133</sup>NYT, 8 Oct 1930. This letter was jointly signed by "Plechanoff's New York Group of Russian Social Democrats," the "auxiliary Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Party," and "'Bund' in Russia of New York Group of the Social Revolutionary Party of Russia."

<sup>134</sup>Letter from M. Weinstein, NYT, 5 Oct 1930.

<sup>135</sup>Letter from Thomas M. Turner, NYT, 28 Jun 1931.

<sup>136</sup>Duranty to NYT, 22 Jun 1931; in Russia, 255-258.

any "dark corners" in their verbal paintings due to inflexible censorship and other restrictions on their activities.

Duranty was no stranger to the problems of censorship for the foreign correspondents whom Maxim Litvinov saw as a "necessary nuisance."<sup>137</sup> As early as 1923 he stated that, although what the foreign reporters wrote rarely reached the Russian public, and despite Litvinov's personal guarantee that only "military matters" would be censored, censorship was a fact of life in Moscow.<sup>138</sup> What the authorities did not understand, said Duranty, was that an unrestricted Western Press could be more beneficial than harmful to the reputation of the USSR in the West as the internal situation improved.<sup>139</sup>

For the next couple of years things did appear to improve, and the journalists enjoyed relative freedom from censorship. By 1925 it appeared that the only censorship was self-censorship; that is, the newsmen were expected to make sure that their stories were absolutely accurate, and if they did not, they would find that they were no longer welcome in the Soviet Union.<sup>140</sup> But it was not long before the Soviet

<sup>137</sup>Duranty, I Write, 103. Litvinov, as Deputy Foreign Commissar, controlled the Soviet Press Department of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, and thus the censors.

<sup>138</sup>Duranty, NYT, 13 Sept 1923.

<sup>139</sup>Duranty, NYT, 15 Sept 1923.

<sup>140</sup>Sylvia R. Margulies, The Pilgrimage to Russia: The Soviet Union and the Treatment of Foreigners, 1924-1937 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 137.



censors were once more hard at work, and in 1926 Duranty voiced a "serious complaint" to Litvinov, whose reply was that the censors' main purpose was to protect the newsmen from "misinformation."<sup>141</sup> The form that this "protection" took, however, seems to have been more coercive than cooperative.

The Soviets used various methods to control the output of the foreign press community, from official "requests"<sup>142</sup> to psychological ploys.<sup>143</sup> A favourite tactic was to question the accuracy of a reporter's information, thereby shaking his self-confidence; another was to postpone permission to send a story until the reporter finally accepted the changes proposed to him. Often, too, the adversaries would bargain one story against another, but in such transactions the reporter predictably lost. Furthermore when Anglo-Russian relations were severed in 1927 after the so-called "Arcos raid"<sup>144</sup> and the GPU arrested several local people who were

<sup>141</sup>Paul Scheffer, Seven Years in Soviet Russia, trans. Arthur Livingston (Westport: Hyperion, 1973), ix.

<sup>142</sup>Scheffer, viii-ix, recounted how he had been kept from sending a story because of a "request" from Theodor Rothstein, chief of the Soviet Press Department, who was on the executive staff of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, Narkomindel, but had been London Daily News reporter for years.

<sup>143</sup>Margulies, 137.

<sup>144</sup>See George F. Kennan, Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin (Toronto: Mentor, 1961), 226. The Arcos raid was performed by the British government against the building housing the Soviet Trade Delegation in London. Diplomatic relations were broken off based on the proof of subversive endeavours which was supposedly unearthed during this raid.

directly or indirectly connected with the British Embassy, newsmen like Duranty who travelled on British passports were particularly liable to expulsion.<sup>145</sup>

By the end of the twenties, the foreign journalists had to walk a "reportorial tightrope,"<sup>146</sup> and employ "cryptic and ambiguous phrases"<sup>147</sup> to inform their readers as to the true state of affairs in the Soviet Union if they were to retain their residency in Moscow. In other words they had to create a new journalistic art:

the art of telling three-quarters, a half, still smaller fractions, of the truth; the art of not telling the truth in such a way that the truth would be made apparent to a thoughtful reader; or conversely, the art of telling the whole truth up to the point where its negative or positive significance would become apparent.<sup>148</sup>

Duranty became such a master of this type of journalism that his colleagues referred to him as "Walter Obscuranty,"<sup>149</sup> a complimentary name which would later be used pejoratively by his critics. In the meantime, however, his skilful manipulation of the news became more notable as the journalists were allowed less and less freedom of movement and expression.

<sup>145</sup>Scheffer, xi. In general, foreigners were not arrested; either they were expelled or the authorities simply refused to renew their visas.

<sup>146</sup>Desmond, Press, 46.

<sup>147</sup>William Henry Chamberlin, "Russia Through Coloured Glasses," The Fortnightly (Oct 1934): 386.

<sup>148</sup>Scheffer, x.

<sup>149</sup>Desmond, Press, 37.

At the end of the 1920s, with the total victory of Stalin over all of his opposition, the foreign reporters were told "that considerations of State and nothing else determined just what the censorship would allow to pass."<sup>150</sup> The seriousness of this statement was brought home to the journalists by the boycott, and sometimes even expulsion, of those colleagues who dared to offend the government in their dispatches.<sup>151</sup> Duranty would have wanted to avoid expulsion not only because of the success he was enjoying, but also because of his personal involvement with a Russian woman who became the mother of his child. This situation could only be worsened when the GPU stepped up its involvement in the Soviet Press office.

When Theodor Rothstein, the chief Soviet Press official, was replaced in 1930 by Jean Arens, a prominent member of the GPU, the journalists were more intimidated by the "element of implied menace" than they had been by threats of expulsion. Even when a reporter left the USSR--whether voluntarily or through expulsion--the effects of his unpopularity with the officials was felt by those he left behind, to the point that they were often imprisoned.<sup>152</sup> Naturally Duranty would have been concerned that his Russian common-law wife might suffer such a fate in his absence. Eventually, even the social life

<sup>150</sup>Scheffer, xi.

<sup>151</sup>Will Irwin, Propaganda and the Press (New York: Whittlesey House, 1936), 230.

<sup>152</sup>Scheffer, x and xiii.

of the journalists was subject to scrutiny by the GPU; it was not unusual for police spies to attend parties and other social events hosted by the journalists and attended by both foreigners and Russians.<sup>153</sup> Since Duranty was considered one of the leaders of the foreign community, his activities would have been very closely policed, and when he formed a social club for the foreign community, the authorities were particularly upset because they could not imagine that its purpose was anything but subversive.<sup>154</sup>

This type of constant scrutiny must have affected Duranty's journalism just as much as the restrictions of movement that forced him and his colleagues to rely more and more on official sources for information. These sources were not ideal, but they were of utmost importance when Duranty and his colleagues were for the most part restricted to Moscow and could not view the situation in the countryside--especially the effects of the "man-made" famine--first hand.<sup>155</sup>

Duranty's first major report on the problematic effects of the Five-Year Plan on the rural sector--effects which blossomed into a full-blown famine in the Ukraine and North Caucasus--appeared in August 1932. At that time, unlike Louis Fischer who later stated that "the peasants brought the

<sup>153</sup>Margulies, 129.

<sup>154</sup>Duranty, NYT, 13 May 1931; see also Margulies, 134-135.

<sup>155</sup>Duranty, NYT, 2 Sept 1932.

calamity upon themselves,"<sup>156</sup> Duranty placed a major portion of the blame for the difficulties on the efforts from 1921 to 1931 "to put collectivization over" which eventually led to shortages of food and goods.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, Duranty was truly concerned by reports from the Ukraine of peasants who, unlike

<sup>156</sup>Louis Fischer, Soviet Journey (Westport: Greenwood, 1973), 171.

<sup>157</sup>Duranty, NYT, 9 and 10 Aug 1932. The extent and causes of the famine have been highly debated by Western scholars, particularly since the fact that there was indeed such a famine has been accepted by the majority of the academic community. Speculations regarding the mortality factor place the numbers dead anywhere from one to fifteen million. It is probably safe to say that between five and seven million died, either from starvation or disease, and that the higher estimates take into account a decrease in population due to migration and deportation. As for the causes, theories range from a natural disaster caused by drought, to a genocidal warfare aimed at the total extinction of the Ukrainian people. In reality, the famine was caused and exacerbated by a number of factors including climatic problems, the zeal of the collectivizers, the Soviet leaders' fear of attack from Japan or Germany, the reluctance of the peasants to give up the land which the Bolsheviks had promised them in return for their support, the migration of starving and diseased people, and the slaughter of livestock. For various opinions regarding the famine, see Conquest, The Harvest of Sorrow; Serbyn and Krawchenko, Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933; Alexander Erlich, The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Alec Nove, Was Stalin Really Necessary? Some Problems of Soviet Political Economy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964); Douglas Tottle, Fraud, Famine and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard (Toronto: Progress, 1987); Frank Lorimer, The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects (Geneva: League of Nations, 1946); Steven Rosefielde, "Excess Collectivization Deaths 1929-1933: New Demographic Evidence" and "New Demographic Evidence on Collectivization Deaths: A Rejoinder to Stephen Wheatcroft," Slavic Review 43.1 (Spring 1984) and 44.3 (Fall 1985); Stephen Wheatcroft, "A Note on Steven Rosefielde's Calculations of Excess Mortality in the USSR 1929-1949" and "New Demographic Evidence on Excess Collectivization Deaths: Yet Another Kliukva from Steven Rosefielde?" Soviet Studies 36 (April 1984) and 44 (Fall 1985).

their Volga equivalent in 1921, ate a large portion of their seed grain instead of sowing it, and it was not long before the reporter was comparing the difficulties with those which had arisen in 1921.<sup>158</sup>

This last, of course, would have been very unpopular with a government which believed that its foreign reputation depended to a great extent on the improvements that it had brought to the Soviet people, and which would therefore resent any comparison to that earlier, very difficult period. But for the time being, the Soviets did not try to curtail Duranty's freedom of expression since he did not yell "famine" at the top of his journalistic voice, and he did relay to his readers the positive aspects of the news from the USSR. For instance, he reported that internal political strife had disappeared, that the urban proletarians were receiving sufficient food supplies, and that the USSR since 1928 had risen from fifth to second place in world industrial production, "next to the United States, but ahead of Great Britain and Germany."<sup>159</sup> But amid these glowing reports, there was always the "dark corner" to be reckoned with, of which the following is a sample:

Two-thirds of the Soviet population will be lucky if it gets more than bread, potatoes and cabbage this Winter as a regular diet, with fish three times a week, say, and meat perhaps once a week.

<sup>158</sup>Duranty, NYT, 11 Aug and 6 Sept 1932.

<sup>159</sup>Duranty, NYT, 3 and 7 Nov 1932 and 14 Jan 1933.

And that in quantities below the people's wants and probably below their needs.<sup>160</sup>

Thus, Duranty risked the government's displeasure almost daily as he tried to relay the true situation to his readers through "veiled references to the suffering and hints of criticism about the human cost"<sup>161</sup> which allowed the West at least glimmers of the truth. When he did attempt, finally, to relay the whole truth to his readers, the government quickly stepped in to ensure that Duranty continued with the "fair" reportage for which he was known, and often criticized.

In October 1932, William Strang, a British embassy counsellor, reported to his superiors in Britain that Duranty had "at last awakened to the agricultural situation,"<sup>162</sup> and was trying to "let the great American public into the secret" which had been guarded so closely by the Soviet government. But the Soviets were not about to allow one of their favourite reporters to blow the whistle on them, and it was not long before Duranty was berated by some highly placed officials who warned him of the serious consequences that could result from his actions. The reporter took this to mean that he, like Paul Scheffer, might be refused a re-entry visa if he did not

<sup>160</sup>Duranty to NYT, 24 Nov 1932; in Russia, 313-318.

<sup>161</sup>Crowl, 159.

<sup>162</sup>Public Record Office, London, FO.371/16336 N 6494. Cited in Carynyk, 68.

toe the line.<sup>163</sup> Since Duranty not only valued his position in Moscow, but also must have had some concerns regarding the safety and well-being of his common-law wife and child if he should be barred from Moscow, the reason for his helping the Soviets to downplay the famine becomes quite plain, as does the reason for the journalistic war of words which had the newspapers of the world as its main battlefield.

From the beginning of the 1930s the West had been inundated with rumours regarding the escalating famine in many parts of the USSR, rumours that often found voice in the letters pages of its press but were virtually ignored by its readers. Ironically, in the spring of 1933, when spring planting and the harvesting of winter wheat appeared to be extremely successful, newspapers in the United States and elsewhere began to pay more attention to the famine. This was probably due to the fact that despite the travel restriction placed on the foreign correspondents when the Ukraine was declared "out of bounds,"<sup>164</sup> there was "a handful of outsiders who found out and reported the acute food shortages at the time"<sup>165</sup> because they somehow managed to visit the famine area.

<sup>163</sup>Public Record Office, London, FO. 371/16323 N 7289. Cited in Carynyk, 71. Scheffer was refused re-entry in 1926.

<sup>164</sup>William Henry Chamberlin, The Ukraine: A Submerged Nation (New York: Macmillan, 1944), 60.

<sup>165</sup>Paul Hollander, Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba 1928-1978 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 119.



Those journalists and foreign observers, like Malcolm Muggeridge and Gareth Jones, who eluded the travel ban and spent time in the famine area, witnessed and wrote about the horror in the countryside. In March 1933, the Manchester Guardian printed an article in which Muggeridge stated flatly, "The population is starving." The reporter then went on to describe people with swollen bellies due to a lack of food and to note the same apathy in the victims as Duranty had in 1921. He also wrote about the profusion of dead cattle and horses and the spread of neglected fields.<sup>166</sup>

Shortly after Muggeridge's report appeared, Gareth Jones gave a press conference in which he described what he had seen while on a walking tour of the famine area.<sup>167</sup> In essence Jones reiterated what Muggeridge had written: no bread, potatoes and beets almost gone, dead cattle and horses, and children with swollen stomachs.<sup>168</sup> But it was this report, not Muggeridge's that marked the onset of the war of words which involved both resident and transient journalists, and which found Duranty in the middle of the battlefield.

<sup>166</sup>Cited in Carynnyk, 72.

<sup>167</sup>Jones was not a journalist; he was a young Welshman who had been a student of the prominent historian of Russia, Sir Bernard Pares and may have had some connection with the British Mission in Moscow during this period.

<sup>168</sup>Cited in Carynnyk, 75.

On 31 March 1933, the Times published what Crowl calls the "most notorious article" of Duranty's career.<sup>169</sup> And yet, a close look at this article reveals that Duranty agreed with Jones' report that the villagers were without bread and added a telling statement: that although there was "no actual starvation or deaths from starvation," there was "widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition." If one remembers that this was a predominant factor which the veteran reporter found in the famine areas in 1921, it is easy to read between the lines and see that Duranty was admitting that there was indeed famine in the countryside. The problem is that Duranty not only justified the conditions in the villages with one of his most pragmatic and oft-quoted statements--"you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs"--he also accused Jones of perpetrating a "big scare story," and insinuated that the young man's account had been motivated by a British desire for revenge over the Metro-Vickers trial.<sup>170</sup> The first shot in the war of words had been fired.

It was not long before Jones' retaliated by sending a letter to the New York Times, which was published under the

<sup>169</sup>Duranty, NYT, 31 Mar 1933.

<sup>170</sup>The Soviet regime had arrested six foreign engineers working for the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company on construction projects in the Soviet Union, and accused them of sabotage and espionage. This appears to have been done mainly to embarrass a nation of the capitalist community.

heading "Mr. Jones Replies."<sup>171</sup> After thanking Duranty "for his continued kindness and helpfulness" to Western visitors in Moscow, the young Welshman proceeded to enlighten the veteran newsman. His own report, Jones said, was based not only on first-hand observations, but also on discussions with "between twenty and thirty consuls and diplomatic representatives of various nations"; and it was from these supposedly objective foreign observers that he had gleaned his "first evidence." As for the journalists--Duranty included--Jones accused them of being "masters of euphemism and understatement," and by implication of being less than veracious reporters. Duranty's ego may have been wounded by this barrage, but he remained on the battlefield, launching a counterstrike while he waited for his fellow journalists to answer the young outsider's charges by entering the war on the side of their veteran colleague.

Duranty's counterstrike took the form of a defensive article in which he tried, as he had done before, to explain to his readers the difficulties encountered by the foreign journalists in the Soviet Union.<sup>172</sup> The situation was worsened for them, the newsman said, by "the perpetual misunderstanding among people at home" regarding the loyalties of the resident reporters. Going one step farther, he stated that accusations

<sup>171</sup>NYT, 13 May 1933.

<sup>172</sup>Duranty, NYT, 11 Jun 1933.

printed in the New York Forward and the Chicago Tribune that correspondents who were "friendly" with the regime received some sort of "concessions," and that Duranty himself got "a two-third rebate on cable tolls from the Soviet Government," were preposterous. Since all of Duranty's cables were sent to the New York Times from the USSR collect, and thus paid for on the receiving not the sending end, the latter suggestion was especially ludicrous. As for the former, Duranty stated that he was not guilty of "prostituting" his "professional integrity," but was merely trying to do his job as he saw it: "to write facts and not consider his own prejudices or those of his newspaper or the home public." One would expect that this would have been the aspiration of all the foreign journalists in Moscow, and as a community they would therefore have been disturbed by Jones' attack--especially when they recognized the truth of his accusations. This was, perhaps, part of the reason why they joined Duranty's side against Jones; but it was not the whole reason.

Jones' report of famine in Russia had caused some turmoil in the press rooms of the West, and the home offices began to question their respective foreign correspondents regarding the validity of the report. The Metro-Vickers trial was in the spotlight at this time, however, and as Eugene Lyons later said it was "a compelling professional necessity" for the foreign press to maintain an amicable relationship with the censors at least until the trial was over. If they were not

"friendly"---that is, if they did not help to discredit the Welshman who had dared to air the Soviet's dirty linen in the West---they would be denied access to the trial. According to Lyons, "it would have been professional suicide to make an issue of the famine at this particular time."<sup>173</sup> This was brought home to the journalists in a meeting with Konstantin Umansky, the head Soviet censor during this period. Umansky, "the soul of graciousness," met with the reporters in a hotel room where they worked out a "formula of denial" which would put Jones in his place.<sup>174</sup> Years later, when he could afford to be candid about this embarrassing episode, Lyons wrote that

throwing down Jones was as unpleasant a chore as fell to any of us in years of juggling facts to please dictatorial regimes---but throw him down we did, unanimously and in almost identical formulas of equivocation. Poor Gareth Jones must have been the most surprised human being alive when the facts he so painstakingly garnered from our mouths were snowed under by our denials.<sup>175</sup>

Distasteful as the task might have been, at the time it was simply a "professional necessity," and the resident foreign journalists thus won the first battle in the war of words.

With Jones vanquished, the men in the Kremlin probably thought that their secret was safe once more, but Cardinal Inmitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, soon added his voice to the

<sup>173</sup>Eugene Lyons, "The Press Corps Conceals a Famine" in Verdict of Three Decades, ed. Julien Steinberg, 275. [Hereafter cited as "Press."]

<sup>174</sup>Lyons, "Press," 275-276.

<sup>175</sup>Lyons, "Press," 275.

battle by reporting to the West that "infanticide and cannibalism" were not unknown in the famine areas.<sup>176</sup> "Infanticide" and "cannibalism"! Could this be possible? Of course the Foreign Office in Moscow was quick to deny the allegations in an official statement which called the charges "pure fabrications"; and Duranty, possibly under pressure, was just as quick in coming to the defense of the Soviets. In his articles, he refused to countenance any comparison between 1932-33 and the famine of 1921--although he had earlier made the same comparison--saying that "the badness was exaggerated abroad" and that "most of the pessimistic reports" were fabricated by anti-Soviets who were "naturally the most hostile to the Soviet Union."<sup>177</sup> But, while the reporter scorned all famine reports, he had to admit that there had been a "heavy loss of life" in the grain producing areas. Furthermore, he took a chance and mentioned in passing "a growing tendency" in the Soviet Union "to cover up or minimize the difficulties--for foreign consumption." Perhaps it was this passing comment which forced the authorities shortly thereafter to allow Duranty to visit the famine area, or at least those parts of it that they wanted him to see.

For some months the foreign correspondents had been officially restricted from travelling to the areas in which

<sup>176</sup>NYT, 20 Aug 1933.

<sup>177</sup>Duranty, NYT, 21 Aug 1933.

the famine was said to be most catastrophic. But finally, in September, Duranty was able to set off with Stanley Richardson of the Associated Press for a car tour of the North Caucasus and the Ukraine, the two areas said to be hardest hit. From Rostov-on-Don, Duranty relayed an "optimistic picture" of peasants selling all sorts of foodstuffs at low rates in the stations and "large quantities" of grain being shipped and stored along his route;<sup>178</sup> he also wrote of "plump babies" and "husky girls and women" in an area where there was "not famine but abundance" and where the peasants denied that there had been "anything like famine conditions." Duranty went on to state that he could not understand why the Kremlin would have restricted travel to this land of "milk and honey."<sup>179</sup>

And yet, even in these articles, the reporter managed to slip in the dark corner, saying that there was "evidence of a past struggle" in some empty villages, and that "the pinch must have been tighter" than the officials were willing to admit.<sup>180</sup> Writing from Kharkov, Duranty included another telling statement:

all talk of famine now is ridiculous. . . . this 'now' is significant. It contrasts with 'then'---

<sup>178</sup>Duranty, NYT, 10 Sept 1933.

<sup>179</sup>Duranty, NYT, 14 Sept 1933. Robert Conquest in Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine (Edmonton: University of Alberta in Association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986), 319, claims that it was this dispatch which Litvinov found "useful" in his negotiations for American recognition of the USSR.

<sup>180</sup>Duranty, NYT, 14 Sept 1933.

last Winter--which, they tell you, 'was hard.'  
Hard it was.<sup>181</sup>

Thus it appears that the Soviet officials were not successful in completely controlling what the journalist dispatched to his home office; they had even less success in controlling his private conversations with other members of the foreign diplomat corps who could relay the truth to the Western world.

On 26 September 1933, William Strang dispatched another confidential report to Whitehall, based almost entirely on information which the counsellor had received from Duranty when the latter returned to Moscow after his car trip into the famine area.<sup>182</sup> The report contained a lengthy account of the situation in the North Caucasus and the Ukraine, as well as some of the reporter's personal impressions of the intensity of the famine. For instance, it was Duranty's opinion that "as many as 10 million people may have died directly or indirectly from lack of food in the Soviet Union" in the space of one year.<sup>183</sup> Since the report was probably sent directly to Britain by courier, and consequently not subject to Soviet scrutiny, the government officials could not have known that

<sup>181</sup>Duranty, NYT, 16 Sept 1933.

<sup>182</sup>Public Record Office, London, FO.371/17253 N 7182/114/38. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Davis Daycock, Political Science Department, University of Manitoba, who supplied me with a photocopy of this document.

<sup>183</sup>Duranty told a member of Strang's staff that the population of the North Caucasus and Lower Volga decreased by three million, and the Ukraine by four to five.



Duranty was "leaking" the truth to the West through his local contacts.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, they probably believed that their secret was safe and that the reputation of the Soviet Union had not been damaged by the appearance of the famine.<sup>185</sup>

Duranty definitely helped protect the Soviet Union's reputation in the West by taking part in the famine cover-up; but to say that he did it deliberately, for purely avaricious reasons, seems unjust when one considers that his actions were the results of various factors which do not excuse his actions, but do to some degree challenge the allegations that Duranty was merely an iniquitous careerist, or at least a fellow traveller who was duped by the Soviet leaders. First of all, during the early thirties Duranty and his colleagues were subjected to the most stringent censorship that the foreign journalists' community in Moscow had ever experienced.

<sup>184</sup>Carynnyk, 61n, p94.

<sup>185</sup>The Soviet leaders could not control the increasing openness of their "secret" in the years to come, as more and more groups and individuals began to offer their own particular versions of the "truth" about the famine to the Western public. It was not until recently, more than fifty years after the fact, that Soviet authorities were willing to use the term "famine" to describe the difficulties encountered in the Ukraine in the early 1930s, to allow personal accounts of the period to be published in the Soviet press, and to permit Soviet historians to deal with that portion of Soviet history. See, for example, Serhiy Dibrova, "Famine of 1933: Political profiteering or search for truth?" in News from Ukraine, No. 39.1027 (Sept 1988), 5; "Soviet paper publishes account of Ukrainian famine" in the Winnipeg Free Press, 21 May 1988, 74; and V.P Danilov, "Diskussiiia v zapadnoi presse o golode 1932-33 gg. i 'demograficheskoi katastrofe' 30-40-kh godov v SSSR," Voprosy istorii, No. 3 (1988), 116-121.

Second, although rumours were rife regarding the extent of the famine, there were just as many speculations as to the veracity of those rumours. Duranty could not print the rumours without verification; however, he could, and did make his personal conviction that millions were threatened known through his talks with members of the diplomatic corps. Third, at the same time as the population of the Ukraine was hardest hit by the effects of the famine, the Soviet authorities were doing their best to keep foreign observers, and particularly foreign journalists from viewing the situation in the countryside first-hand. It was not until the worst was over that Duranty received permission to visit the famine area, and then it is doubtful that he was allowed to see for himself the true effects of the disaster.

Yet, one must not overlook the fact that Duranty also had personal reasons for his role in the cover-up. In addition to his concern for the safety of his common-law wife and child, he lived with an unremitting threat of expulsion from the Soviet Union which was aggravated by constant State police surveillance. Furthermore, the reporter maintained a long-standing belief that the Americans and the Russians should help each other in their respective hours of need.<sup>186</sup> This could happen consistently only if diplomatic relations between

<sup>186</sup>The USA was still suffering from the effects of the depression, the USSR from a backward economy despite the supposedly successful Five-Year Plan.

the USA and the USSR were resumed. As Dana Dalrymple says, "if the story of the famine were made known, Russia's cause would not have been enhanced";<sup>187</sup> in this case, Russia's cause was also Duranty's: a desire for the official recognition of the Soviet regime by the foremost capitalist country in the world, the United States.

Immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, Trotsky, as Commissar of Foreign Affairs, sent communiques to all of the foreign diplomats in Russia, requesting official recognition of the new regime from the various governments that they represented. The American ambassador, David Francis, disregarded the communication, and for the next sixteen years there were no official diplomatic relations between the two countries. The American press had much to do with the continuation of this state of affairs during the 1920s because it fostered the "Great Red Scare" by constantly publishing stories of Bolshevik atrocities, regardless of the veracity of the stories or their sources.<sup>188</sup> The men in the Kremlin became "convenient monsters to be dressed with one's favorite prejudices or fears," which included everything from Germanophobia to the rumoured nationalization of Russian women.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>187</sup>Dana Dalrymple, "The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934," Soviet Studies 15.3 (1964): 278.

<sup>188</sup>Browder, 3 and 12.

<sup>189</sup>Peter G. Filene, Americans and the Soviet Experiment 1917-1933 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 46.

Even the concentrated American effort to relieve the famine sufferers in the early twenties did nothing to change the majority view, though there were some pro-recognition voices beginning to be heard.<sup>190</sup> For the next ten years, the Soviets refused to make any direct requests for American acknowledgment, even though France and Britain officially recognized the regime in the mid-twenties and pro-recognition group in the United States was steadily gaining strength.<sup>191</sup>

By this time, too, Duranty was emphasizing his own pro-recognition stance in his articles, as well as that of Stalin, whom the reporter cited as being "willing" to "resume normal relations."<sup>192</sup> It would appear that Duranty had decided by 1930 to use his influence in both the USA and the USSR and become "instrumental in bringing the two nations together."<sup>193</sup> This aim was facilitated in the spring of 1932 when Duranty met Alexander Gumberg, an American politician who had been born in Russia and was a major advocate of recognition.<sup>194</sup> Gumberg arranged a meeting that summer between the reporter and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Democratic nominee for the American presidency, who "displayed a keen interest in Russian

<sup>190</sup>Browder, 21.

<sup>191</sup>Filene, 211.

<sup>192</sup>Duranty, NYT, 1 Dec 1930.

<sup>193</sup>Taylor, 101.

<sup>194</sup>William Appleman Williams, American Russian Relations 1781-1947 (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 235.

affairs and exhibited an unprejudiced approach to the issues involved."<sup>195</sup> Once Roosevelt was elected in November 1932, Duranty knew that he had a firm ally in the White House, and their summer meeting became "an encouraging sign" for other American pro-recognitionists.<sup>196</sup>

On 17 November 1933, after almost a year of negotiations between Roosevelt and Commissar for Foreign Affairs Litvinov, the United States officially recognized the Soviet Union. Duranty's role in furthering the resumption of relations was acknowledged even before the event by Stalin himself who praised the reporter in the following words:

You have done a good job in your reporting of the USSR, although you are not a Marxist, because you tried to tell the truth about our country and to understand it and explain it to your readers.<sup>197</sup>

And Duranty was further honoured when he was invited to accompany Litvinov to the United States to cover the negotiations, an invitation which would have been coveted by any member of the foreign press community in Moscow. Back home in the USA, Duranty's role in bringing the two nations together was acknowledged when the Nation included his name in its annual honour roll, and cited his articles as "the most enlightening, dispassionate, and readable dispatches from a

<sup>195</sup>Browder, 75-76. See also Duranty, I Write, 320-321; NYT, 26 Jul 1932.

<sup>196</sup>Browder, 80.

<sup>197</sup>Duranty, I Write, 166-167.

great nation in the making which appeared in any newspaper in the world."<sup>198</sup> But the ultimate honour came at the celebration banquet after the fruitful completion of the negotiations. Alexander Woollcott of the New Yorker described what happened when the names were read of those who had most advanced the cause of the pro-recognitionists:

For each name in the roll, whether Russian or American, there was polite applause from the 1,700 [guests], but the one really prolonged pandemonium was evoked by the mention of a little Englishman who was an amused and politely attentive witness of these festivities. Indeed, one quite got the impression that America, in a spasm of discernment, was recognizing both Russia and Walter Duranty.<sup>199</sup>

Shortly after this momentous occasion, Duranty returned to his post in Moscow where he continued to report on the news from the USSR to a Western public which recognized his expertise as a foreign correspondent and classified him as an authority on Soviet society.

When Walter Duranty returned to the Soviet Union after his train accident in 1924, a new chapter in his life began. From 1925 to 1933 his reputation as a journalist and as an expert on Soviet affairs was truly established as he covered one of the most disruptive periods in Russian history. If it

<sup>198</sup>G. Seldes, Freedom of the Press (New York 1936), 341. Cited in Carynnyk, 93.

<sup>199</sup>A. Woollcott, "A Personal Note on Walter Duranty," in Walter Duranty, Duranty Reports Russia (New York 1934), v. Cited in Carynnyk, 83.

is accepted that during this period the situation in the Soviet Union became increasingly more confusing and less open to simple explanations than it had been since the Revolution, and that with Stalin's consolidation of power the Western journalists were faced with more and more obstacles in their search for the truth, Duranty's reportage must be recognized to have been at least as successful as that of his fellow resident reporters, and in some ways even more so.

In the late twenties, as the various factions in the Kremlin jockeyed for power, Duranty was one of the first Westerners to recognize the potential of Stalin. Even before 1925, the reporter had begun to appreciate what the Bolsheviks were trying to accomplish, to pragmatically accept the need for extraordinary answers to extraordinary problems, and to recognize the absolute necessity of a strong leader to follow in Lenin's footsteps. When Stalin appeared to possess the qualities that Lenin's heir must possess and the ability to bring the Bolshevik dream to fruition, Duranty became his firm supporter.

The articles that Duranty wrote interpreting Stalinism for his readers and explaining how it was applied in the first Five-Year Plan led to his being honoured by the Pulitzer jury. These articles were not, however, written in series, as for instance were those written by Knickerbocker on the "Red Menace." In fact, Duranty covered the Plan right from its inception in October 1928 to its premature conclusion in

December 1932. Moreover, his 1930 articles for which he received the Prize included not only coverage of the Plan, but also reports on Stalinism as the new state religion of the Soviet Union, on the continuing problems between the USA and the USSR, and on the quality of life in Russia both for the local people and for the foreign community. Some of his best and most intuitive articles dealt with Stalin himself, especially after his personal interview with the Soviet leader in December. Thus, it was not only Duranty's coverage of the Five-Year Plan in 1930, but also his attention to various other subjects of interest to the American people that earned him the respect of many of his peers and readers.

However, as censorship increased significantly during the late twenties, and with the travel restrictions that were put into effect during the early thirties, Duranty and his colleagues found it more and more difficult to adequately report the news from Moscow to their Western readers. Thus, straightforward reportage had to give way to a more obfuscated form of journalism. Duranty became particularly adept at this type of writing; so much so that he was attacked by those transient reporters and visitors to the Soviet Union who could have no idea of the problems faced by the resident newsmen in Moscow. For one thing, they could not fully appreciate the apprehension which some of the journalists felt regarding the safety of Russian nationals with whom they had established close relationships once the GPU began to exercise more



control over their lives in general, and their journalism in particular. In Duranty's case, that this problem was intensified with the birth of his son must be taken into account when one considers his part in the famine cover-up.

As for Duranty's efforts to further the cause of the pro-recognitionists, it may be suggested that he was motivated not only by the pressures of life in the Soviet Union, but also by a conviction that capitalism and communism could co-exist peacefully and for the mutual benefit of their respective home countries. In addition, once the United States officially recognized the Soviet state, there was a chance that further co-operation between the two powers would lead to a more open Soviet society, a relaxation of the restrictions and secretiveness of the Soviet government, and a deeper understanding of the Russians by the American people. In 1933, Duranty could not have known that Stalinism would not become more democratic, that Stalin himself would become a tyrannical dictator who was capable of murdering millions to safeguard his own position, and that the majority of the Western newspapers would eventually find it impossible to cover the news from Stalin's Russia.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE CRUCIBLE REVISITED

With the recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States, Walter Duranty saw one of his major hopes realized; but, shortly after the establishment in 1934 of an American Embassy in Moscow, his term as the New York Times' resident reporter in that city ended.<sup>200</sup> By 1934, he had spent the best part of thirteen years in Soviet Russia, and had earned--in some quarters at least--the title, "King of Reporters."<sup>201</sup> For the next seven years he maintained his association with the Times, travelling to different countries such as Spain and Japan, and returning periodically to Moscow to substitute for his replacement, Harold Denny, whenever the latter was on leave. Most of his time, however, was spent writing books and stories, as well as analytical magazine articles, for publishers not necessarily associated with the New York Times.

<sup>200</sup>Eugene Lyons and William Henry Chamberlin also gave up their resident reporter status at this time. See Filene, 279.

<sup>201</sup>Robert Bruce Lockhart, The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, ed. Kenneth Young (New York: St. Martin's, 1973), 291. According to Lockhart who met Duranty in May 1934, Duranty had "a swell new job: four months a year in Moscow, eight months free or special work on special pay for his paper."

Although Duranty was never recognized as a masterful writer of fiction, some of his fictional works are highly significant for a study of his view of Bolshevism and Soviet justice. In his later, non-fictional works, Duranty often referred back to the major events of his Moscow period, such as the 1920s famine, NEP, Stalin's rise to power, the first Five-Year Plan, and the 1930s "man-made" famine. These works show that, although his earlier convictions were sometimes modified because of on-going changes in the Soviet state, in general his support of socialism for Russia and his promotion of mutually beneficial relations between the communists and the capitalists remained unchanged through the years, as did his praise for Stalin and his belief in the promise of Stalinism. However, as Duranty looked back at the Great Purge in which Stalin inexorably and conclusively rid himself of any and all opposition, or even threats to his position of power, he was forced to reconsider and to see the man in the Kremlin for the cruel despot that he really was.

The literary works that Duranty produced during his long writing career show evidence of the influence exerted upon him by the Manchester Guardian correspondent, William Bolitho Ryall, who was his colleague in Paris and a good friend. After Duranty's train accident, Bolitho had advised him to write as part of his rehabilitation process, and Duranty quoted his friend's words to this effect:

Write a book. . . . Any book, provided that it is your book, that's to say, the book that comes from you out of your consciousness and is not something that you are writing as you think you ought to write or as someone else wants you to write. . . . write what you want to write, as you want to write it.<sup>202</sup>

The crippled reporter took this friendly advice and wrote an autobiography covering his journalistic career up to 1934 which was published under the title I Write as I Please. This was not, however, Duranty's first foray outside of newspaper journalism, nor was it to be his last.

Duranty's career as a writer began in New York City before he became a newspaper journalist, and recommenced in the early thirties when he and his friend Knickerbocker ran "a fiction factory in Moscow."<sup>203</sup> In 1937, Duranty's first full-length novels, One Life, One Kopek and Solomon's Cat, were published. These were followed in 1943 by a fictionalized pseudo-autobiography, Search for a Key, and in 1945 by a collaborative effort with Mary Loos, Return to the Vineyard. It is, nevertheless, Duranty's first novel that is of particular interest because it tells us much of his opinion of Bolshevism and the value of life in the Soviet Union.

The hero of One Life, One Kopek, Ivan Petrovich Petrov --peasant, soldier, worker--is the perfect combination for a study of the evolution of the revolutionary character. Sent

<sup>202</sup>Duranty, I Write, 258.

<sup>203</sup>Lockhart, 291.

to Siberia for trying to protect a young aristocrat from arrest, Ivan reads Marx's Das Kapital, and his education as a revolutionary begins; after his escape, he is trained as a Bolshevik, first in the army and then in a Moscow factory. During the Civil War, Ivan shows how completely he has been Bolshevized: he knows that "the revolution is a mistress who allows no rival" and that "to Bolshevik discipline there are no exceptions."<sup>204</sup> Called upon to destroy a White Army headquarters, Ivan sacrifices the young man for whom he suffered exile, a young gentlewoman with whom he had been in love since childhood, and even himself, all for the Cause--the destruction of the old order and the creation of a socialist State.

One Life, One Kopek received mixed reviews from the American literary community. Duranty's critics complained that the story was too contrived, like something out of Hollywood; his champions applauded his interpretation and humanization of revolutionary history. But only one of the reviewers recognized the real significance of the story and of its authorship: that the book was not really a novel and that the author was "too good a reporter to handle fiction."<sup>205</sup> Duranty once told Parker F. Enwright that he had his own method for writing fiction; he would take the seed of an idea,

<sup>204</sup>Walter Duranty, One Life, One Kopek (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1937), 123 and 253. [Hereafter cited as One Life.]

<sup>205</sup>Fletcher Pratt, Saturday Review of Literature 16:5 (14 Aug. 1937).

let it germinate in his mind, and then report on it as though it were a news story.<sup>206</sup> In a sense, this was what he did with One Life, One Kopek; the reporter took his observations of the Bolsheviks and merged them into a peasant/worker/soldier fictional hero. The climactic death of that character highlighted the cheapness of life in Russia, each person's life being worth but a kopek;<sup>207</sup> it also underlined the absolute discipline and self-sacrifice required of the Bolsheviki. These elements were more fully delineated in Duranty's treatment of Russian justice.

In the late-twenties and early-thirties Duranty wrote a number of short stories, mostly based on actual events, which were published in three volumes: The Curious Lottery and Other Tales of Russian Justice in 1929, Babies Without Tails in 1937, and The Gold Train and Other Stories in 1938; of these stories, the most notable are those which dealt with the Soviet jurisprudence system. In one of the so-called "tales," Duranty showed how the Soviet state strove to protect its young women from sexual abuse by declaring war on "youthful violence and depravity," and sentencing rapists to death for "hooliganism" because rape was not officially a capital

<sup>206</sup>This information was offered by Dr. Enwright, Duranty's stepson and a retired professor of English, in a telephone conversation with myself on 7 Mar 1989.

<sup>207</sup>The frontispiece of One Life carries a notation that the title is a rough translation of Zhizn Kopeika, a Russian saying which means that "Life is a little kopeck," or "not worth a rap."

offense.<sup>208</sup> Duranty also showed how the Bolshevik judges viewed traditional religiosity, or "gross superstition," along with any form of individualism or private gain at the expense of Soviet society, as a crime more serious than murder.<sup>209</sup> One of the most significant stories, however, was that which dealt with the Shakhti trial.

Duranty covered the Shakhti trial in 1928, and his articles in the New York Times offered a straightforward description of the proceedings and of the Russian and German specialists accused of sabotage and counter-revolution; one year later, his "Shadows of Shakhta" story embellished his previous coverage with all the colour of a sensational puppet show. Here was the chief prosecutor Nikolai Krylenko, puppet-master and "revolutionary fanatic," "prowling like a wolf about the stage." Here too were the defendants, men guilty of ascribing to a "bourgeois capitalist mentality," each a "doomed puppet of success." But Duranty also used his "Shakhta" story, as he did the others, to show the vast difference between Soviet jurisprudence and the Western institution. He concluded that, while the focus of Western law was on the individual--"the protection of person and

<sup>208</sup>Walter Duranty, The Curious Lottery and Other Tales of Russian Justice (Freeport: Books for Libraries, 1969), 73. [Hereafter cited as Lottery.] DeJonge, 222, also cites a case in which of fifteen workers who raped a young woman five were sentenced to death for "banditry."

<sup>209</sup>Duranty, Lottery, 16-17, 30-31, 44-45, and 71-72.

property"--Russian law concentrated on the community and the protection of the State. Under this system, Duranty said, "The state is everything, the individual nothing." In addition, he found that, unlike Western courts where the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty, in the Soviet Union the mere fact that the accused had been brought to trial led to a presumption of guilt.<sup>210</sup> This last detail was further highlighted in one of Duranty's short pieces of fiction.

In "The Parrot," an allegorical study of Russian justice which earned Duranty an O. Henry literary award,<sup>211</sup> the hunter/prosecutor becomes the "Baba Papagai," the Parrot Woman; the judge and jury are bound together in the Baba Papagai's familiar: "a parrot red and grey, in a wire cage; and when it bit you, you were guilty; and when it didn't, you were innocent; but it always bit you, and so you were always shot."<sup>212</sup> And yet, despite the vividness and apparent censure of this particular allegory, Duranty noted a kernel of merit in Russian "parrot justice" when he compared it to that of the West:

<sup>210</sup>Duranty, Lottery, 138, 141, 144-146, 230, 232 and 234; see also I Write, 204.

<sup>211</sup>Published in Babies Without Tails (New York: Modern Age, 1937) and in The Gold Train and Other Stories (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938). Citations are from the latter, under "Parrot."

<sup>212</sup>Duranty, "Parrot," 258.



it can fairly be said that in no other country in the world is it so hard for a guilty person to evade punishment as in Russia today. Every one who is familiar with the delays, laxities and loopholes of American criminal procedure must sometimes wish that the guilty were punished more surely and swiftly, even though that should involve in rare cases hardship to the innocent.<sup>213</sup>

It was not often that Duranty made such a direct comparison between the East and the West, but his habit of reporting something positive in even the most negative elements and events, and something negative in what he appeared to most approve of, was a major element which can be found in the majority of his writings, from his newspaper articles of the 1930s to his analytical, non-fictional examinations of Soviet society.

In addition to the introduction and article that he wrote for Red Economics in 1932, a collection of his newspaper articles entitled Russia Reported in 1934, and his autobiographical I Write as I Please in 1935, Duranty published a number of explanatory and analytical works after his departure from Moscow in 1934. These included a pamphlet for the American Foreign Policy Association, Europe: War or Peace?, which appeared in 1935, and three magazine articles: "The Riddle of Russia: What Lies Behind Recent Events in the USSR?" in 1937, "The Russo-German Partnership" in 1940, and "Stalin: Dealer in Destiny" in 1943. His major works--The Kremlin and the People, USSR: The Story of Soviet Russia, and Stalin & Co.:

<sup>213</sup>Duranty, Lottery, 236-37.

The Politburo--the Men Who Run Russia--were published when he was no longer associated with the New York Times, in 1941, 1944, and 1949 respectively. In these works he often returned to the events of his early years in the USSR, sometimes to reinforce what he had previously written, and occasionally to add retrospective opinions of those events.

One of the early Soviet ventures that Duranty dealt with in his later writings was the institution of Lenin's New Economic Policy. Duranty maintained that it had been set up, not to herald the victory of capitalism over socialism, but as a "temporary expedient" meant "to stimulate paralyzed initiative and revive moribund commerce, to renew the confidence and loyalty of the peasants, and to set turning again the motionless wheels of industry."<sup>214</sup> If it was meant to be a panacea for all the ills of Soviet society, there can be no doubt that it produced some ills of its own in the form of what Duranty referred to as the "froth and scum" of "gambling and debauchery." Although Duranty's articles during the NEP period were generally approving in nature, he now voiced his regret that he and other "ill-informed" members of the foreign community had concentrated too much on "corruption and license," to the exclusion of the major societal and economic

<sup>214</sup>Duranty, I Write, 116, 121, and 198.

benefits accrued from the policy--especially those which brought about the end of the 1920s famine.<sup>215</sup>

After 1934, Duranty restated many of the same points he made in his earlier newspaper articles regarding the famine of the early twenties. He again pointed out that when the direct causes of death were discussed, disease could not be ignored;<sup>216</sup> nor could one forget the role of the "wanderers" in spreading disease and thus causing those areas which were not directly touched by the famine to become afflicted.<sup>217</sup> What he added was that the famine had been caused not only by the imperialist, interventionist and civil wars--as most Soviet historians would have their readers believe--but also by the "stagnation and resentment" which resulted from Lenin's policy of "Militant Communism."<sup>218</sup>

<sup>215</sup>Duranty, I Write, 140 and 150.

<sup>216</sup>Walter Duranty, USSR: The Story of Soviet Russia (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1944), 74. [Hereafter cited as USSR.] This point has also been made regarding the 1930s famine by Ian Grey in his The First Fifty Years: Soviet Russia 1917-67 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), 188; and regarding the famine of the 1890s by Richard G. Robbins Jr. in his Famine in Russia 1891-1892: The Imperial Government Responds to a Crisis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 170.

<sup>217</sup>Duranty, I Write, 129. According to Robbins, 170, this was also a problem in the 1890s when "the movement of peasants in search of jobs and food helped to spread sickness."

<sup>218</sup>Duranty, USSR, 68; see also I Write, 116-19, for Duranty's opinion regarding the material and psychological stimulation which led to the policy of militant communism, and the cost of that policy.

As for the impact of his first-hand observations on himself and his reportage, Duranty described his feelings of sickness and self-hatred "for being healthy and well fed" in the face of starving children, and the helpless conclusion to which he came: that there was nothing he could do but try to portray the "naked ugliness" of the situation to his readers through his articles.<sup>219</sup> Finally, he re-emphasized the importance of the famine and the admission of the ARA into the USSR for Russo-American relations; not only did the relief programme save many lives, it also showed that friendly relations between East and West were possible and even desirable.<sup>220</sup>

It took more than a decade after the famine of the twenties for the USA to resume diplomatic relations with the USSR; but in all that time Duranty never wavered in his belief that the two countries were destined to be friends and allies. He was

convinced that the Kremlin was the firmest citadel of power in Europe, that the USSR would henceforth play a great and growing part in world affairs and that the absence of diplomatic relations between it and the U.S.A was illogical and absurd.<sup>221</sup>

Furthermore, he believed that "the United States of America and the Soviet Union should form an ideal combination for

<sup>219</sup>Duranty, I Write, 132.

<sup>220</sup>Duranty, USSR, 74.

<sup>221</sup>Duranty, I Write, 318.

mutually profitable business relations."<sup>222</sup> But Duranty could not ignore the fact that, once formalized, the Russo-American relationship did not live up to his expectations. Too many disagreements over debt repayments and the spread of Communist propaganda in the Western world rose up to complicate a relationship which Duranty originally viewed as a simple "horse trade."<sup>223</sup> Ten years later, after Russia and the United States seemed to prove his theory of East/West mutually beneficial co-operation by cooperating against Hitler, Duranty still found it strange that, while they supported each other "in time of need," the two countries continued to misunderstand and mistrust each other.<sup>224</sup> Again, albeit with the added benefit of hindsight, he tried to explain the paradoxical relationship to his readers.

Duranty believed that the major problem between East and West was to be found in the "cross-purposes" which led the USSR and the USA to accuse each other of trying to dominate the world.<sup>225</sup> This state of affairs could only be alleviated if the Americans realized that the East/West conflict was

<sup>222</sup>Walter Duranty, "The United States and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics," in Red Economics, ed. Gerhard Dobbert, 311.

<sup>223</sup>Duranty, I Write, 526.

<sup>224</sup>Duranty, USSR, 123.

<sup>225</sup>Walter Duranty, Stalin & Co.: The Politburo--the Men Who Run Russia (Toronto: George T. McLeod, 1949), 225. [Hereafter cited as Politburo.]

really only a "diplomatic struggle," and not a war, "cold or otherwise."<sup>226</sup> Like George F. Kennan, Duranty appreciated the vast difference between the "attitude of war" which existed and an actual "state of war."<sup>227</sup> The former would not become the latter, Duranty suggested, if the West would recognize three things: that the "Communist tide" on the international stage had decisively lessened after 1947; that the Soviet Union was too immersed in post-war reconstruction to even consider a future war; and that the Soviets signed a number of treaties and trade agreements after the war which the Kremlin evidently intended to honour and maintain since none of them had been "protested" in any way. Furthermore, Duranty thought it highly unlikely that Stalin would risk a war with America which was equal, if not superior to Russia in military strength.<sup>228</sup> Long after he left the Soviet Union, Duranty was still betting on Stalin, the "horse" that he had backed for over two decades.

Duranty habitually used the "horse" metaphor to describe his attitude towards Stalin.<sup>229</sup> In one instance he told of how

<sup>226</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 236-237.

<sup>227</sup>Kennan, 367.

<sup>228</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 238.

<sup>229</sup>Duranty, I Write, 165-66 and 200. See also Walter Duranty, The Kremlin and the People (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), 11-12; "Stalin: Dealer in Destiny," Coronet (Jun. 1943): 13. [Cited hereafter as Kremlin and "Stalin" respectively.]

Stalin himself had once told him that he "bet on the right horse."<sup>230</sup> Duranty explained that Stalin was ostensibly speaking of Russia, but went on to say that they both understood the Kremlin leader was really referring to himself. For the reporter, the two were inextricably linked and deserved equal support:

I backed Stalin the way you back a horse, until you think of it as "your" horse: though it may belong to Whitney or Widener or someone, you think of it as your horse because you always backed it. That's how I felt about Russia, that's how I feel about Stalin.<sup>231</sup>

The link between leader and country is also obvious in another instance, when Duranty changed the metaphor slightly to portray Stalin as a legendary Centaur, both horse and rider, indivisible and indispensable to the Cause.<sup>232</sup>

Although Duranty believed that much of the Stalin legend was the result of the aura of mystery which surrounded the leader, he also believed that "no man achieves greatness and retains it but by unusual qualities of mind or body." Stalin could not really be compared to Lenin, "one of the very rare and greatest of men," but Duranty saw certain traits in the Georgian that entitled him to Lenin's mantle of leadership: perseverance, patience, will power, unflinching courage, and

<sup>230</sup>Duranty, "Stalin," 13; Kremlin, 11.

<sup>231</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 11-12; see also USSR, 165-166.

<sup>232</sup>Duranty, USSR, 168-169.

ruthlessness.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, Stalin had acquired self-control when he learned to harness his "explosive temperament" and more efficiently use his energy. These were attributes, Duranty believed, which also belonged to the Tammany bosses who dominated New York City politics and "fought with cold unscrupulousness for position and power" in that city.<sup>234</sup>

Duranty compared Stalin to Charles Murphy, one of the Tammany bosses, almost as often as he used the "horse" metaphor. He saw them as "shrewd and tenacious" statesmen who started out with little prestige or even popularity and ended up in positions of supreme power because they had the ability to manipulate those around them with the skill of master chess players.<sup>235</sup> There was, however, one thing that bothered Duranty about Stalin: not that he always managed to maintain his position "by hook or by crook," but that he would find it difficult, if not impossible, to give up the dictatorship he had worked so long and hard to acquire and maintain once the masses were sufficiently educated for self-government. As Duranty put it, "the tutor abandons his position of authority only with reluctance." But this was a worry for the future;

<sup>233</sup>Duranty, USSR, 136, 163, 168-169, and 171-172.

<sup>234</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 46-47; see also Kremlin, 15.

<sup>235</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 32; Politburo, 16; I Write, 200-201; and USSR, 169.



in the meantime Duranty was content to deal with the past and Stalin's "labours of Hercules."<sup>236</sup>

There can be no doubt that, while the totalitarian leader committed some of the worst crimes in the history of Russia or the Soviet Union, Stalin's accomplishments must be weighed against those crimes;<sup>237</sup> and Duranty's treatment of those accomplishments, because he was a first-hand observer of many of them, merits some discussion. Like Isaac Deutscher, Duranty saw both the negative and the positive sides of the "tragic, self-contradictory, but creative revolution,"<sup>238</sup> and especially when it came to the Five-Year Plan. He referred to the Plan, in retrospect, as "the biggest, boldest, newest thing in the whole wide world,"<sup>239</sup> unlike Eugene Lyons who, also in retrospect, referred to it as a "saturnalia of death, hunger, and unexampled exploitation."<sup>240</sup>

In recent years the first Five-Year Plan and the social disruption that it produced has been examined and discussed by many notable scholars. One hypothesis offered is that the

<sup>236</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 17, 27 and 67.

<sup>237</sup>William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Enigma: An Interpretation (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), 120. [Hereafter cited as Enigma.]

<sup>238</sup>Isaac Deutscher, Stalin: A Political Biography (Markham: Penguin, 1984), 612.

<sup>239</sup>Duranty, USSR, 152.

<sup>240</sup>Eugene Lyons, Workers' Paradise Lost: Fifty Years of Soviet Communism: A Balance Sheet (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1967), 126.

disruption and the excesses which led to that disruption were the natural consequence of the rush to modernize Russia under a plan which could not allow any "countervailing forces" or waste time on the "coordination of ends and means."<sup>241</sup> Duranty accepted that for the Bolsheviks any revolution must be a "sweeping" and "violent upheaval."<sup>242</sup> He also believed that speed was of the utmost importance because a spectre of war with Japan or Germany hung over the Kremlin.<sup>243</sup> Russia had to modernize, industrialize, and revolutionize its backward agrarian sector if it was to safeguard itself against foreign invasion.<sup>244</sup> If this entailed war on the home front, so be it.

Another suggestion put forth by Sovietologists is that for Russia to be modernized "under the communist flag," the Five-Year Plan had to be mythified.<sup>245</sup> For a nation which had been at war, in one form or another, for the better part of a quarter-century, the easiest way to accomplish this was to give the Russians a new enemy to fight in a mythical war. In his retrospective analyses of the events of the late 1920s and

<sup>241</sup>Moshe Lewin, "The Disappearance of Planning in the Plan," Slavic Review 32.2 (Jun 1973): 287.

<sup>242</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 74.

<sup>243</sup>Duranty, I Write, 315. The first time that Duranty referred to this particular problem was in his NYT articles of September 1933.

<sup>244</sup>Duranty, USSR, 151.

<sup>245</sup>Nicolas Berdyaev, The Origin of Russian Communism, trans. R. M. French (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), 145.

early 1930s, Duranty often alluded to the "war atmosphere" of the period, especially in the countryside. The Kremlin's propaganda, he wrote, had created "an emotional sturm und drang" not unlike that which the Great War had evoked in the West.<sup>246</sup> Thus, the Kremlin presented the Five-Year Plan to the people "as a war with all that war demands in devotion and self-sacrifice."<sup>247</sup> The "rural revolution," and especially the campaign against the kulaks which could only be described in combat terms, completed the analogy.

Duranty was always of two minds about the kulaks, and recognized the dilemma which the group held for the agrarian planners.<sup>248</sup> On the one hand he saw them as a "possessing or dominating class or group" which would not passively give up its privileged position;<sup>249</sup> as the symbol of "land-hunger in its sharpest form," with a corresponding desire to exploit their less fortunate neighbours;<sup>250</sup> and as a "stubbornly individualistic and reactionary" group, steeped in private trade and "petty capitalism," with no idea of what socialism meant since they would rather destroy what they had than share

<sup>246</sup>Duranty, I Write, 314-315.

<sup>247</sup>Duranty, USSR, 157.

<sup>248</sup>The dual point of view, as stated in this and the following paragraph, was first delineated by Duranty in a major newspaper article, NYT, 6 Feb 1933.

<sup>249</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 75.

<sup>250</sup>Duranty, USSR, 129.

it with the poorer peasants or the State.<sup>251</sup> The kulaks, therefore, had to be "eliminated as a class" in "a battle to the death" if the Plan was to succeed.<sup>252</sup>

On the other hand, Duranty recognized that the kulaks had been the major producers of a marketable food surplus because they were "more energetic and intelligent" than the majority of the peasants,<sup>253</sup> and therefore more efficient farmers.<sup>254</sup> He also stated that they "were not all villains and squeezers," and that many were actually "kindly helpful neighbors," open to victimization because of the greed and envy of the destitute peasants who became the central government's allies in the "class war."<sup>255</sup> The problem was that, once the kulaks were "crushed" and the remaining peasants were collectivized "willy-nilly," the agricultural expertise which the kulaks brought to the economy was missing; this--along with the wholesale destruction of livestock, peasant sabotage, the appalling inefficiency of the collective farms, the shocking mismanagement of promising harvests, and inadequate distribution--Duranty suggested, was a major cause of the 1930s

<sup>251</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 71 and 74; USSR, 185.

<sup>252</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 75.

<sup>253</sup>Duranty, I Write, 196.

<sup>254</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 76.

<sup>255</sup>Duranty, USSR, 129.

famine.<sup>256</sup> While he firmly believed that the blame had to be shared by collectivizers and recalcitrant peasants alike, Duranty also suggested that the international situation of the period was a major factor to be considered.

In Duranty's opinion, two external difficulties played a role in Russia's famine problem in the early 1930s: the World Depression and the Japanese menace. Nevertheless, it was the latter situation which he emphasized because it altered the objective of the Five-Year Plan from "peaceful development" to defensive preparation in case of war.<sup>257</sup> Faced with what Duranty believed to be a "desperate situation"--the Kremlin feared that Japan was gearing up to invade the USSR and knew that the Red Army did not have sufficient food reserves to fight a war--Stalin stepped up grain collections and gasoline rationing at a time when both were badly needed in the countryside and a natural disaster became a "man-made famine." Duranty insisted, however, that millions died, not because of Stalin's "brutal determination," but because their food and fuel reserves had been seized by a leadership under duress because of their fear of Japan.<sup>258</sup>

This particular aspect of the famine question has been virtually ignored, especially in recent studies; but, as Max

<sup>256</sup>Duranty, USSR, 179 and 283; Politburo, 76-78.

<sup>257</sup>Duranty, I Write, 282.

<sup>258</sup>Duranty, USSR, 192. See also NYT, 16 Sept 1933.

Beloff states in his study of Soviet foreign policy,

Even if some of the repeated warnings that the Soviet Union was on the brink of war may be ascribed to the needs of internal propaganda, there can be no doubt that the military needs of the Soviet Union were influential.<sup>259</sup>

Duranty's suggestion of military motivation cannot, therefore be ignored. It merits at least as much attention as the suggestion of a "famine-genocide"<sup>260</sup> since one of the immediate effects of the Plan was that it highlighted the necessity of peace.<sup>261</sup> The fact that Japan did not attack, Duranty believed, was because Stalin's "bluff" worked; the dictator convinced the world, and especially the Japanese, that the Soviet Union, and particularly its Red Army, was a major force to be reckoned with. In Duranty's words, "Stalin had won his game against terrific odds, but Russia had paid in lives as heavily as for war."<sup>262</sup> The reporter also suggested that the mortality figures could have been lower if it had not been

<sup>259</sup>Max Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1941 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1947), 15-16.

<sup>260</sup>This theory has been highlighted most recently by such scholars as Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko, the editors of Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933. What began as an effort to bring the famine to the attention of the public, to make it less "recondite," has blossomed into a full-scale debate of Stalin's ethnic motivation and his culpability in the deaths of millions of Ukrainians.

<sup>261</sup>Beloff, 27. That the Kremlin recognized this need is evidenced by its attempts to come to a non-aggression agreement with Japan in 1933--a proposal which was promptly rejected by the Japanese--and later, as a member of the League of Nations, to promote collective security.

<sup>262</sup>Duranty, USSR, 193.

for the peasants' ignorance, or at least their misinterpretation of Stalin's attempts to alleviate their plight.

Duranty believed that, as early as 1930, Stalin had perceived the problems incurred by the "exaggerated and unwise" haste towards the completion of the Plan, and that it was this plus "the pressure of public opinion" which had led to the "Dizziness from Success" speech.<sup>263</sup> It appeared to Duranty, however, that the peasants did not fully understand the intent of the speech--that "super-industrialization" and collectivization would continue, but with less speed and more care. They immediately supposed that they were being told that they did not have to remain in the collectives, or to enter them if they had not yet done so. They did not realize that, henceforth, individualism would have to give way to collectivism. While Russia feared the imminence of war, this fact had to be brought home to the peasants in no uncertain terms--and it was when millions died in the famine; but once the threat was lifted, Stalin was free to ease their burden, and Duranty was thoroughly impressed with at least one of the methods that the leader chose to help the peasants.<sup>264</sup>

According to Duranty, the most effective method that Stalin chose to change the situation in the countryside was to send in "political sections" made up of members of the

<sup>263</sup>Duranty, USSR, 23 and 182; Politburo, 75.

<sup>264</sup>Duranty, USSR, 183, 186 and 194.

Communist Party who had the ability to educate the masses in modern agricultural methods, especially in the sowing of crops, and to correct the mismanagement of the collective farms which had been so detrimental to the success of the Plan. Duranty believed that Stalin's decision to send in groups of what may be termed agrarian storm troopers, "tardy" as it might have been, "literally snatched victory from defeat in the cause of rural socialization."<sup>265</sup>

For one thing, the peasants were subjected to the benefits of expert guidance and supervision. For another, the sections had the authority to remove local officials who were to blame for much of the peasants' plight and the appalling state of affairs in the kolkhozi, the collective farms. And finally, the sections initiated the establishment of the artel, a system which encouraged the interaction of "communal enterprises" with private projects such as kitchen gardens and minor animal husbandry. The success of the sections led Duranty to believe that, after "a long and cruel struggle, almost as costly in human suffering and actual loss of life as a foreign war," Stalin had truly accomplished one of his greatest achievements, "his conquest of the Russian villages for socialism."<sup>266</sup> Whether the means used to reach this end were justifiable or not was another matter entirely.

<sup>265</sup>Duranty, I Write, 284, 322, and 324; Politburo, 138.

<sup>266</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 72 and 79; I Write, 285.



When Duranty sat down to write of Stalin's first Five-Year Plan and its effects, and to deal with the question of justifiable means, he ran into a major problem: he could only give "a second-hand description" of what he saw as the "tragic yet wonderful years from 1928 to 1933" because he, like his colleagues, had not been allowed to view the situation first-hand. Furthermore, he looked back at his coverage of the period "with mingled regret and pride." Limited as he had been by censorship and travel restrictions, he had still been able to gauge the "Party Line" and to predict some of the events accurately. What he regretted was that he simultaneously allowed his "critical faculty" to decrease, and therefore did not adequately consider the consequences and cost of what he had foreseen.<sup>267</sup>

But even in retrospect Duranty would not admit that the cost of progress, "in blood and tears and other terms of human suffering," was inexcusable because he believed that any plan was better than no plan at all and that, perhaps, the end justified the means. His opinion of the latter he voiced in a poem which was written in the style of e e cummings:

i sat and wondered whether the End justified the  
Means  
as many another reporter has wondered before me  
and whether that meant any end justified any means  
i decided it didnt  
or whether a noble end justified any means  
i wasnt so sure about that  
and finally whether a noble end justified somewhat  
doubtful means

<sup>267</sup>Duranty, I Write, 277-278 and 301.

at this point i fancied it might

But Duranty only "wondered"; he never presumed to judge the right or the wrong of the programme that led to so many deaths because he refused, as a reporter, "to sit in moral judgement" on men of conviction like the Bolsheviks.<sup>268</sup>

Duranty came to the conclusion that, when it came to ends and means, a firm decision required "belief" and "passionate single-minded earnestness." He decided that the Bolsheviks possessed these traits, and that he himself did not--nor did he want to. He was quite content to sit in the middle of the road and "see too many sides of a question to be quite sure which one of them is true." As for his coverage of the famine, as he said to his old friend Knickerbocker,

I don't see that I have been any less accurate about Russia because I failed to stress casualties so hard as some of my colleagues, than I was in reporting battles on the French Front when I said more about the importance of the victory than the lives it cost. . . . I'm a reporter, not a humanitarian, and if a reporter can't see the wood for trees he can't describe the wood.<sup>269</sup>

Thus, to Duranty, it was more important to report who won the battles on the agrarian front than to list the casualties or shout "famine" at the top of his literary voice. He could look at collectivization as "Stalin's hardest battle" in a more pragmatic manner than could many of his cohorts, and even consider the conclusion of the war as a victory for the

<sup>268</sup>Duranty, I Write, 197, 303 and 305.

<sup>269</sup>Duranty, I Write, 167 and 309.

Russians and Stalin's "major contribution to the establishment in Russia of a socialist state."<sup>270</sup> This victory he deemed to be more important even than Stalin's consolidation of a socialist State made up of various nationalities, but ruled by a single, strong, quasi-religious leader.

As Commissar of Nationalities under Lenin, Stalin had played a major part in the unification of "dozens of diverse and formerly hostile peoples with different languages, cultures, and religions" into a cohesive whole, the Soviet Union;<sup>271</sup> to maintain this cohesion Stalin had to give the masses a new religion to follow and a new "God" to worship. The question of whether or not Communism should be termed a religion has been a matter of some debate for churchmen and philosophers.<sup>272</sup> There have been those who were convinced that Communism was not a religion because it involved no belief in a "supernatural order";<sup>273</sup> on the other side have been those who were just as certain that it was a religion because it contained the "significant attitudes" of a religion.<sup>274</sup>

<sup>270</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 98.

<sup>271</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 67.

<sup>272</sup>See for example Ivan Levisky, "Communism and Religion," and Reinhold Niebuhr, "Christian Politics and Communist Religion," in Christianity and the Social Revolution, ed. John Lewis, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchin (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), 262-296 and 442-472 respectively.

<sup>273</sup>Levisky, 278.

<sup>274</sup>Niebuhr, 460-461.

Nicolas Berdyaev's answer to the question was different from both of the above. He believed that Communism wanted to be a religion which would replace Christianity in the minds and hearts of the Russian people; and that the totalitarian Soviet state was "founded on an orthodox faith" which offered the people "a political catechism" that satisfied many of their "deep religious and social instincts." In conclusion, he stated that Communism was "the profession of a definite faith, a faith which is opposed to Christianity." Not the least of the reasons for his conclusion was his staunch belief that the Russian people, denied "the true and living God," had set up "false gods, images and idols" to worship.<sup>275</sup> Lenin was the first of these, but he was not the last.

From his earliest days in Soviet Russia, Duranty viewed Communism as a religion, or at least as a "faith," and he continued to refer to the religious elements of Soviet society in his books as he had done in his earlier articles. He wrote of dialectic materialism as one of the "sacraments of the Marxist religion," the base on which the Kremlin as a Church was erected, and stated that the adherents were bound by "a chain of logic no less strong and binding than is the chain

<sup>275</sup>Berdyaev, 143, 158, 160 and 166. See also Martin C. D'arcy, Communism and Christianity (New York: Devin-Adair, 1957), 218. D'arcy says that to call the two "rival religions" is an abuse of words, and that "it is better to speak of rival faiths."

of faith to believers in supernatural religions."<sup>276</sup> Further, while Ivan Levisky stated that the Russian people were never expected "to venerate Lenin for himself alone,"<sup>277</sup> Duranty wrote of how the Bolsheviki deified their dead leader, and used "the utmost of their science to immortalize his mortal clay" so that the masses could congregate in Red Square to honour and adore him--or at least his remains.<sup>278</sup> To Duranty Lenin's tomb was "one star for all to follow," and it was this symbol which was the determining factor when he made up his own mind regarding the Stalinist faith.

Any Westerner visiting the Soviet Union even today would be overwhelmed by the number of public memorials to Lenin--in pictures, statues and immense posters which bear his words--and by the number of people who still line up daily at his tomb. There is no parallel display devoted to Stalin; all of the "icons" have been removed since Khrushchev's so-called "secret speech" in 1956 which denounced Stalin as a major criminal. In Duranty's time such a display did exist, and it symbolized the modification of Marxist-Leninism to Stalinism because it was Stalinism which had reestablished a "semidivine supreme autocracy."<sup>279</sup>

<sup>276</sup>Duranty, USSR, 215.

<sup>277</sup>Levisky, 278.

<sup>278</sup>Duranty, I Write, 334.

<sup>279</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 64.

Stalin was, of course, the embodiment of this autocracy; he was "the symbol of the Communist Party faith" and was supported by a "civilian army" of quasi-religious fanatics. Duranty likened Stalin to the autocratic Popes of days gone by, whose thunder of ex-communication often was enforced by the lightning of war." This was the religious "angle" that Duranty felt should "not be denied nor neglected": as Supreme Guardian of the "mystic" Party Line, Stalin could allow no opposition to the "deified" State or to his own position as leader of that State.<sup>280</sup> Thus, he had the prerogative to excommunicate, or even to execute any "sinners" who should rise against him, and this he did in his battles against a number of his fellow revolutionaries.

Duranty believed that the "Kremlin-Opposition conflict" could be examined through three chronological phases: the 1923-28 "Open Controversy," the 1928-34 "Reconciliation," and the 1934-38 "Secret Conspiracy."<sup>281</sup> In the first phase, Stalin did all he could to rid himself of the "Western exiles" who spent most of the pre-1917 years in the West as absentee revolutionaries, while Stalin--along with Voroshilov, Molotov, and many others--remained in Russia where they were persecuted by the Tsar's secret police, double-crossed by imperial

<sup>280</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 64; "Stalin," 14; USSR, 167. See also Walter Duranty, "The Riddle of Russia: What Lies Behind Recent Events in the USSR?" New Republic 91 (14 Jul 1937): 272. [Hereafter cited as "Riddle.]"

<sup>281</sup>Duranty, "Riddle," 270.

agents, incarcerated, deported and even hanged.<sup>282</sup> Lenin was one of the "Westerners," but according to Duranty he was never considered such, and therefore had no problems driving his "unruly team."<sup>283</sup> Furthermore, Stalin's real battle for supremacy in the Kremlin did not begin until after Lenin's death; it was only then that Stalin could fully utilize his Tammany-like talents and his position as General Secretary to get rid of Trotsky and those who followed him.<sup>284</sup>

Looking back at his reportage of the first phase, from the vantage point of the second when the conflict appeared to have cooled, Duranty admitted that he had not really comprehended what was going on, even while he maintained that he had been "better informed than most foreigners." In retrospect, he felt that it was "easy to be wise" and to identify many clues which he had missed that could have indicated the real course of events, such as rumours of dissension in the Kremlin ranks. But at the time, he had learned to reject such rumours and believed that, although arguments were not unknown among the leaders, Bolshevik discipline would never allow outright conflict.<sup>285</sup>

<sup>282</sup>Duranty, USSR, 55; "Stalin," 17.

<sup>283</sup>Duranty, USSR, 174; Politburo, 17.

<sup>284</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 44.

<sup>285</sup>Duranty, I Write, 213 and 215.

In addition, the Kremlin and the official sources did a good job of keeping the true nature of the dispute hidden from the journalists' community; as Duranty said, "the importance of the personalities involved tended to make for secrecy, and although the fact of disagreement might leak out, its details were studiously withheld." The one detail which might have indicated the true gravity of the situation, and which Duranty believed he should have noted, was the announcement that the Party was to be expanded by 100,000 "workers from the bench" who would be "hand-picked by the Secretariat."<sup>286</sup> Since Stalin was in control of the Secretariat, Duranty should have recognized that the deck was being stacked in the Georgian's favour.

To use Duranty's own metaphor, though in a different context, the horse race was "fixed." And yet, during the "Reconciliation" phase, the political breathing space before Stalin's methods of consolidating his power through manipulation and "fixing" became more vicious and deadly, Duranty found something positive in the conflict and its apparent resolution: Stalin was able to concentrate on the clash in the countryside and the threatened military contest with Japan without worrying about a confrontation in the Kremlin.<sup>287</sup> In 1935, when it appeared that Stalin had truly vanquished all

<sup>286</sup>Duranty, I Write, 214-215.

<sup>287</sup>Duranty, USSR, 164.



of his opponents at home and the Japanese war had not materialized, Duranty wrote of the Kremlin campaign:

The intra-Party controversy occupied the time and energy of the Soviet leaders for nearly four years and left scars that are not yet healed, but in the end its credit balance far outweighed the debit, because it settled things . . . by the survival of the fittest in a conflict without mercy.<sup>288</sup>

Duranty, content in his belief that his horse had won, could not have known that the race was not over, that the conflict was far from settled, and that the wounds, rather than being allowed to heal, would soon be reopened in one of the most merciless and bloody Purges in history.

Although Duranty had left his post in Moscow at the time of the Purges, he spent a great deal of time in the Soviet Union observing the trials and discussing them with the foreign community, both reporters and diplomats. Joseph E. Davies, the US Ambassador to the USSR from 1936 to 1938, spent many an evening in the American embassy discussing the trials with Duranty and the other foreign correspondents whom he considered his "unofficial advisers."<sup>289</sup> Of what he saw as "an exceptionally brilliant group of men"---prominent reporters like Harold Denny, Joe Barnes, Joe Phillips, Charles Nutter and Henry Shapiro, who were considered experts on Soviet affairs---Davies seemed most impressed by Duranty's accuracy, lucidity, and common sense. In Davies' opinion, Duranty

<sup>288</sup>Duranty, I Write, 271.

<sup>289</sup>Hohenberg, Foreign, 320.

always "told the truth as he saw it" through "the eyes of a genius." Moreover, the American diplomat applauded the "fine loyalty" and "indefatigable industry," along with the insight regarding the Soviet system, that Duranty had gained during his long stay in Moscow. The reporter's experience made him a valuable asset to the American Mission and to the foreign community as a whole when it came to their understanding of the situation at hand and its historic significance.<sup>290</sup>

The Great Purge of the 1930s was significantly different from those which preceded it in Soviet history, and Russian observers of the political trials in the mid-thirties probably would not have used the term "purge," or the Russian chistka, to describe what was happening.<sup>291</sup> The literal translation for the Russian term chistka is "cleaning" or "clean-up" and, when used in the context of the periodic screenings and expulsions of Communist Party members, does not carry the same stigma as has been applied to the word "purge" by Western scholars since the 1930s. Duranty himself had witnessed one of the early chistki shortly after the inception of NEP when twenty-five percent of the Party membership was ejected or put on proba-

<sup>290</sup>Joseph E. Davies, Mission to Moscow (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1941), 275 and 352.

<sup>291</sup>J. Arch Getty, Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 38.

tionary status.<sup>292</sup> This purge was followed by others, almost on a yearly basis, all of which were followed by more readmissions than executions.<sup>293</sup> Nonetheless, Duranty's articles which appeared in 1933 indicate that he was aware of, and probably concerned about the involvement of the State Police in the proceedings, just as he had been during the Shakhti trial.<sup>294</sup> This involvement, however, was nothing compared to that of the OGPU after Kirov's assassination in late 1934.

According to Duranty, Sergei Kirov was not only a loyal supporter of Stalin, he was also one of the leader's closest friends. But Kirov proposed a more lenient treatment of the oppositionists than either Stalin or the OGPU leader, Genrikh Yagoda, was willing to accept. Duranty suggested that Yagoda was directly involved in Kirov's murder because the OGPU chief could not accept the latter's pacifistic point of view;<sup>295</sup> the reporter did not, however, make any mention of the likelihood of Stalin's complicity in the assassination.<sup>296</sup> Whether the latter hypothesis is true or not, there can be no doubt that

<sup>292</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 116. Duranty believed that the number purged was closer to one third of the membership, but Getty, 45, states that "one in four" were purged.

<sup>293</sup>Getty, 56.

<sup>294</sup>See Duranty, Russia, 335-340.

<sup>295</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 28.

<sup>296</sup>According to Joll, 356, Stalin might have engineered the assassination to act as a catalyst for his own future plans.

the assassination did indeed end the Reconciliation stage and open the door for Yagoda's witch-hunt and its successor--the Yezhovshchina, or Great Purge, which claimed the lives of so many of the Old Bolsheviks.

The Treason Trials of the mid-thirties began when Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinoviev, who had been close associates of Lenin and long-time threats to Stalin's power, were tried for the murder of Kirov. But they were not accused only of murder; according to the prosecution they were guilty of planning to assassinate Stalin and his supporters, of being in cahoots with Trotsky, and of dealing secretly with the Germans. Nonetheless, what they were really guilty of was heresy: they had dared to question the legitimacy of Stalin as Lenin's true heir and had thus committed a mortal sin. The very fact that they had been brought to trial, according to Soviet justice, meant that they were damned; and, as Duranty noted, the only purpose of their trial was "to decide the degree of guilt and punish it."<sup>297</sup> They were, of course, executed. The same held true in all of the following trials from that of Karl Radek and sixteen others in January 1937, through that of the Red Army Generals six months later, to that of Nicholas Bukharin, Aleksei Rykov and Genrikh Yagoda in March 1938.

<sup>297</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 42.

The Radek trial brought forth what Duranty believed to be one of the "silliest assertions" ever made: that the defendants had been subjected to hypnosis, torture or drugs and thus forced to falsely confess their crimes. Duranty's answer to this charge--"What preposterous nonsense!"---can only be termed naive, as was his opinion that to suggest that men like Radek and the others would capitulate under any such devices "against their own strong hearts" was ridiculous.<sup>298</sup> The journalist suggested that the dyed-in-the-wool Bolsheviki had come to recognize that, in opposing Stalin, they were opposing the sacred Party Line; somehow they were convinced of the error of their ways and recognized their "cardinal sin." Although Duranty could not explain exactly how or why this was so, he certainly believed that it was true of Radek and his co-defendants just as it had been of Zinoviev, Kamenev and the others.<sup>299</sup> He seemed to imply that they were more

<sup>298</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 48-49. Duranty was not alone in his naivete; see Arthur Upham Pope, Maxim Litvinoff (New York: L. B. Fischer, 1943), 421. Pope cites Quentin Reynolds, a foreign correspondent who "found no British or American correspondent in Russia who thought that the famous confessions . . . had been extorted by torture."

<sup>299</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 43 and 50. According to Robert Conquest, The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties (London: Macmillan, 1968), 147, "The principle had become established that a confession was the best result obtainable." Conquest goes on to say that "over and above the rational motives for the extraction of confession, one seems to sense an almost metaphysical preference for it." For a fictionalized account of the Bukharin trial which supports this theory, see Arthur Koestler, Darkness at Noon, trans. Daphne Hardy (Markham: Penguin, 1984).

victims of the system, and of the Bolshevik faith, than culpable villains.

Duranty maintained that, unlike the others, Yagoda was a "real villain." It was he who, as OGPU chief, had directed the "bloody drama." Duranty had always been concerned about the OGPU's involvement in the Russian judiciary system, and particularly so after Yagoda became its head. The only problem was that, when Yagoda was caught like a spider in his own web and arrested in the fall of 1937, he was replaced by a man Duranty saw as "a bloodthirsty fanatic who slew by thousands where Yagoda had slain his dozens."<sup>300</sup> It was under Nicholas Yezhov that the Purge turned into a real bloodbath. For eighteen months the new Red Terror, the Yezhovshchina, swept through the Soviet Union, destroying the so-called "enemies of the people" on trumped-up charges of espionage, treason and any other crime that could be imagined. But it was not long before Yezhov met the same fate as Yagoda. With the former's execution--and the disappearance from the stage of the puppet-master, Nikolai Krylenko, in what might be termed the purge of the purgers because of their roles in the earlier trials<sup>301</sup>--the Great Purge finally came to an end. Its effects, however, were to be felt for a very long time.

<sup>300</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 39, 41, 47 and 76. Chamberlin saw the involvement of the OGPU in the political trials as a symbol of their totalitarian nature and cited Duranty's comments as proof of his own theory in Enigma, 141.

<sup>301</sup>Chamberlin, Enigma, 141.

Duranty offered his evaluation of the long-term impact of the Great Purge in his 1941 publication, The Kremlin and the People, a book which John N. Hazard called "a dramatic and plausible picture of the trials."<sup>302</sup> Within the USSR itself, Duranty believed that the trials fostered "suspicion-phobia" in the masses, and that this psychological effect led to many innocents being accused as enemies of the people because the people themselves "thought that a traitor might be hiding under every bed." Consequently, the Great Purge was self-perpetuating. Yet, what was more important to Duranty than the internal impact was the effect that the trials had on the Western World's opinion of the Soviet Union. The Purge demolished all he had done to nurture a sympathetic understanding within his readers of the uniqueness of Soviet society; the reputation and prestige of the USSR was ruined, perhaps irrevocably. Moreover, Duranty feared that the "ugly impression" left by the Purge had served Hitler well because Communism, at least in Stalinist terms, was no longer viewed in the West as a preferable alternative to Fascism.<sup>303</sup>

Duranty finally came to realize that the "horse" which he had backed for so many years was a dark one indeed. He saw that Stalin, in the end, abandoned the crafty machinations

<sup>302</sup>John Hazard, "Review article," American Historical Review 47.4 (Jul 1942): 864. Hazard was an American Professor of Law who studied at the Moscow Juridicial Institute. See Margulies, 91.

<sup>303</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 22 and 87.

which had brought him to power, and turned to "the brutal, physical method of killing the opposition" to ensure the permanence of that power. Lenin's heir may have "polished and perfected" Leninism, as Duranty had predicted in 1930; but he had also turned away from the gospel of Lenin and used "physical force against his fellow-communists."<sup>304</sup>

When Stalin died, almost a decade after the onset of the Great Purge, Duranty wrote a less than mournful article for the Orlando Morning Sentinel which was published under the headline STALIN, THE RED TYRANT, DIES.<sup>305</sup> In it Duranty returned to his old habit of letting harsh adjectives like "cold and tough and hard and inhuman" tell the true story. Gone was the "horse" analogy; instead, Stalin was reduced to a "machine of steel" and a symbol of "modern war" who had killed Lenin's friends "without mercy." As for the tyrant's remains, Duranty hoped that the Soviet people would be "smart" and "build a shrine for his ashes" far from Moscow because, after all, Stalin was not a true Russian.

Many former Moscow correspondents have produced books dealing with Soviet society after their departures from the Soviet Union. In recent years, for example, three studies of daily life in Russia have been published: Hedrick Smith's The

<sup>304</sup>Duranty, Politburo, 21. See also NYT, 30 Nov 1930.

<sup>305</sup>Orlando Morning Sentinel, 6 Mar 1953.



Russians, David K. Shipler's Russia: Broken Idols, Solemn Dreams, and David K. Willis' Klass: How Russians Really Live.<sup>306</sup> Those journalists who were resident in Moscow at the same time as Duranty--such as William Henry Chamberlin and Eugene Lyons--also produced "tell-all" books dealing with their Soviet experiences, and were careful not to abuse the hospitality of their Bolshevik hosts until after they had relinquished their positions in the Soviet Union.<sup>307</sup>

Duranty, however, maintained a strong link to the USSR even after his departure in 1934; not only did he return periodically to relieve his replacement, Harold Denny, during the mid-thirties, he also retained a strong interest in Soviet affairs for the rest of his life. For Duranty to have written a "tell-all" study in the same terms as Chamberlin and Lyons would have been impossible because he never experienced the same degree of disillusionment with the Soviet system as his two former colleagues. Instead, Duranty used his talents as a writer of stories and books to educate his readers about the Soviets and their society. He used the genre of fiction to interpret what otherwise might have been incomprehensible:

<sup>306</sup>Hedrick Smith, The Russians (Toronto: Random House, 1976); David K. Shipler, Russia: Broken Idols, Solemn Dreams (Markham: Penguin, 1984); and David K. Willis, Klass: How Russians Really Live (New York: Avon, 1987). Smith and Shipler were affiliated with the New York Times, Willis with the Christian Science Monitor.

<sup>307</sup>See for instance Lyons, Workers' Paradise Lost, also William Henry Chamberlin, Collectivism: A False Utopia (New York: Macmillan, 1937).

Bolshevism, the Bolsheviks, and Soviet justice. In his non-fictional works--when Duranty discussed the 1920s famine, NEP, the rise of Stalinism, its application in the Five-Year Plan, the famine and the purges of the 1930s--he tried to "go back to what went before, to seek and find the cause, in order to know the effect."<sup>308</sup> Generally, the opinions that Duranty had formed during his tenure in Moscow were reiterated in his later works; but he was also able to add some retrospective insights which showed his continuing interest in, and awareness of Russian society and Soviet politics, both internal and external. And finally, it was only when Stalin was dead that Duranty felt safe enough in his Florida retirement home to let his feelings for the vicious totalitarian leader be known.

<sup>308</sup>Duranty, Kremlin, 7.

## CONCLUSION

In a recent article, the eminent Sovietologist Stephen F. Cohen--who is not only a Princeton scholar, but also writes a column for the Nation--severely reprimanded the American news media for its "one-dimensional, distorted, silly, and factually wrong" coverage of the Soviet Union.<sup>309</sup> According to Robert Karl Manoff--co-director of New York University's Center for War, Peace, and the News Media--this type of criticism "has a tradition almost as long as the reporting itself."<sup>310</sup> The diatribe began as early as 1917 when the only foreign reporters allowed into revolutionary Russia were those whose political orientation was at least "pink," if not Red, while all others had to be satisfied with long-distance observations. The latter journalists were the focus of the Lippman/Merz critique; but the former also came in for their share of sharp criticism because their reportage was based on "seeing not what was, but what men wished to see."<sup>311</sup>

<sup>309</sup>Stephen F. Cohen, "The Media's Russia," Harper's (Mar 1985), 25. [Hereafter cited as "Media's."]

<sup>310</sup>Robert Karl Manoff, "The Media's Moscow," AAASS Newsletter 26.5 (Nov 1986), 1.

<sup>311</sup>Lippman and Merz, 3.

The common denominator of the various condemnations which have been directed at the Press corps, from that of Lippman and Merz to that of Cohen, is their broad point of view: that is, generally the censure has been aimed at the corps as a whole, not at individual newsmen. One of the exceptions to this generality is found in the case of Walter Duranty who has been subjected in recent years to what may be termed a "blackwash." With the current increased interest in the 1930s famine and the role of Western journalism in keeping the truth of its severity from the public, Duranty has been accused of everything from being a "Soviet hireling"<sup>312</sup> to being "an apologist for Stalin."<sup>313</sup>

The main reason for these accusations is the wide-spread belief among many scholars that Duranty almost single-handedly perpetrated the cover-up even though other journalists of the period, like William Henry Chamberlin and Eugene Lyons, have admitted to taking part in the establishment of the "big lie." The main problem is that those who have been most disparaging in their analyses of Duranty's journalism not only have focused almost solely on the articles he wrote in the early thirties, they also have tried to use his personal life to corroborate their accusations.

<sup>312</sup>Crowl, 142.

<sup>313</sup>Gay Talese, The Kingdom and the Power (New York: World Publishing, 1969), 523.

One piece of circumstantial evidence against Duranty offered by his critics is his flamboyant lifestyle, not only after his return to Moscow in 1925, but even as early as his first year in Soviet Russia. On their arrival in Moscow Duranty and his colleagues were assigned vermin-ridden rooms in one of the decrepit hotels of the city. Duranty's lodging was soon replaced courtesy of the city Soviet by what has been termed a "cottage" by some,<sup>314</sup> but which the reporter described in his autobiography as "a small apartment which had been a ruined restaurant."<sup>315</sup> It was given to him free of charge with the provision that he and Herbert Pulitzer, who shared the accommodations, undertake the necessary renovations to make it at least habitable. The two journalists were apparently very successful in this venture and eventually they managed to turn the run-down apartment into an intellectual Mecca for the foreign community.

During the rest of his stay in Moscow Duranty was known to be "not only a generous host" but also "perhaps the cleverest conversationist and the social leader of the foreign colony."<sup>316</sup> This reputation, of course, has led to his being suspected by some of leading a profligate life which made him

<sup>314</sup>Crowl, 34. Crowl fails to mention the fact that Pulitzer, the owner of The New York World, shared in the venture, and that theirs was not a unique situation. See Duranty, I Write, 149.

<sup>315</sup>Duranty, I Write, 148.

<sup>316</sup>Crowl, 34.

susceptible to bribery or blackmail; but since no hard evidence of his being a recipient of financial inducements or a victim of extortion has been unearthed, both charges must be considered to be at least unproven, if not untrue, and his social success attributed to his popularity, despite claims to the contrary.

Another argument that has been used to bolster the charges laid against Duranty is that he was unpopular with his colleagues because of his alleged collusion with the Soviets and the special privileges that it afforded him. Submitted in evidence for this claim is an incident recorded by Samuel N. Harper, an American scholar who visited the Soviet Union many times during the period in question. Harper wrote in his memoirs that a "somewhat antagonistic attitude developed at times toward Duranty and his methods among his colleagues," and went on to describe an occasion during which he found this to be the case. At a luncheon in 1926 Duranty made a comment regarding his own "cultivation" of contacts in the Kremlin. The other guests, as Harper related, "in chorus and with vigor, almost shouted at him: 'You certainly do cultivate them!'"<sup>317</sup> The suggestion that this was a vitriolic attack on the reporter's integrity is probably best negated by Harper's inclusion of Hubert Knickerbocker in the group, because

<sup>317</sup>Samuel N. Harper, The Russia I Believe In, ed. Paul V. Harper and Ronald Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 231.

"Knicks" was Duranty's good friend and writing collaborator. This episode, instead of proving that enmity towards Duranty was rife in the foreign community, takes on an entirely different connotation when their friendship is considered; it becomes simply an incident of good-natured heckling towards a member of the community, a sign of camaraderie not conflict.

As for those journalists who did make seriously disparaging remarks about Duranty's journalism, the suggestion must be made that their comments could be attributed to the all-too-common custom of speculation when it comes to those who are difficult to understand, or even to resentment in the face of superior abilities and success. A great part of Duranty's success was directly due to the linguistic, scholarly and professional advantages which he had over most of his fellow-journalists, and which helped him to make his dispatches to the Times fuller and more interesting than many of those submitted by his colleagues to their respective newspapers.

With these advantages in mind, it is no wonder that John Hohenberg, a noted authority on American journalism, says that "it was Duranty's destiny to be the most imposing of all the foreign correspondents who worked in the shadow of the Kremlin between the wars," and that the New York Times was "fortunate" to have him as their Moscow correspondent.<sup>318</sup> Another accolade comes from Meyer Berger, a Pulitzer Prize winner for his own

<sup>318</sup>Hohenberg, Foreign, 268.

journalism and author of The Story of the New York Times 1851-1951. In Berger's estimation,

Duranty's reports from Russia not only gave the constantly shifting economic and social changes, . . . but were threaded with local color and thumbnail portraits to provide historians with a living image of a violently troubled land.<sup>319</sup>

Robert W. Desmond, another foreign correspondence specialist, is less effusive in his praise. Nevertheless, he credits the reporter with making the New York Times "one of the most informative sources on events in the Soviet Union,"<sup>320</sup> because, "so far as concerned Russian news in the United States, the change for the better began in August, 1921, when Walter Duranty went to Moscow."<sup>321</sup>

Very little is known about Duranty's political beliefs before he was assigned to Soviet Russia except that he was a self-professed intense anti-Bolshevist who shared the view "that the Bolsheviks were enemies of God and Man."<sup>322</sup> Once in direct contact with the people who were involved in one of the most expansive social modification experiments in history, the young reporter became intrigued with, and even sympathetic to their cause. This change was due not only to Duranty's inveterate interest in atypical people, places and situations,

<sup>319</sup>Meyer Berger, The Story of the New York Times 1851-1951 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1951), 328.

<sup>320</sup>Desmond, Crisis, 46.

<sup>321</sup>Desmond, Press, 266.

<sup>322</sup>Duranty, I Write, 6. See also Kremlin, 8.



but also to the fact that, in a land ravaged by war and famine, everything seemed to be against the success of the experiment. Only Lenin and his New Economic Policy held out any hope for the future, especially if one considered NEP to be a compromise between capitalism and communism as Duranty did at the time. Lenin, therefore, became a genuine hero in the reporter's eyes.

Duranty was also impressed with the Bolsheviks attempts to ensure increased civil liberties and to replace the hierarchal religion based on the supernatural with a quasi-religion based on classlessness and complete equality on earth. As he observed the changes taking place, his articles mirrored his growing respect for the aims of the Bolsheviks and his pragmatic acceptance of the methods which had to be used to achieve their goals. By 1924, the maturing journalist no longer had to fight his own prejudices or "lean over backwards" to write anything positive about the Bolsheviks. He had come to the conclusion that "the Red Star was destined to rise high and shine bright in the international heavens,"<sup>323</sup> and he was determined to go along for the ride and report on its progress.

Duranty decided that if he was to remain in Russia as a resident reporter he would have to ensure the continued support of his employers, the editors of the New York Times;

<sup>323</sup>Duranty, I Write, 163 and 166.

to do so, it was absolutely necessary that he become one of the most knowledgeable and capable journalists in Moscow's foreign community. But he could also maintain that support by catering to the needs of the newspaper's readers. Because life in the Soviet crucible that was Stalin's Russia "was so remote from American habit and comprehension,"<sup>324</sup> Western readers would have little chance of comprehending what was happening unless someone explained each event and its significance to them. Thus, Duranty took it upon himself to become an interpreter, rather than a mere narrator of the news so that his readers could better understand Soviet society.

This interpretive form of journalism, augmented by his natural descriptive talent, helped establish Duranty's reputation as a foreign correspondent, and was a particular advantage for his coverage of the news as Marxist-Leninism gave way to Stalinism. He was so successful in interpreting the first Five-Year Plan and explaining the pros and cons of its application for his reading public that he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his efforts. But the Prize could not help him salvage his reputation when he succumbed to the pressures put on the foreign community to cover up the famine which was caused, at least in part, by the rapid industrialization and collectivization measures that were a major part of Stalin's Plan and by the "class war" that was aimed at the creation of

<sup>324</sup>Duranty, I Write, 164.

a fully classless socialist society.

During Stalin's rise to power and the onset of the "man-made" famine, the Moscow correspondents found their freedom of expression controlled more and more every day. As time passed, restrictions on their movements, severe censorship, threat of expulsion, and the menace of the state police affected their journalism in such a way that they found it impossible to be "entirely forthright in their observations." This resulted in the creation of a form of journalism which depended on euphemisms and half-truths.

Duranty was singularly proficient when it came to this new style of reportage. His articles of the Stalinist era may best be described as mosaics, pictures made up of little pieces in all the colours of the spectrum, as well as black and white. Frequently there appeared to be too many white--or Red--pieces for the reporter's critics, but there was always the speckling of black which could not be overlooked. Even in those articles in which he absolutely denied the existence of the 1930s famine, the truth could be found if one read between the lines. Any other way of getting the truth across to his readers was closed to Duranty, as it was to his colleagues.

Soviet censorship became more severe at the same time that the GPU became more rigorous in its direct pressure on the foreign community. The journalists were coerced into covering up the famine and taking part in a war of words in

the Western newspapers, a war which came close to irrevocably damaging the reputation for veracious and interpretive journalism that Duranty had worked so long and hard to establish. What saved his reputation in 1934 was his role in furthering another cause of the men in the Kremlin--the official recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States.

Throughout his tenure as the Times' Moscow correspondent Duranty had believed that the USSR and the USA should be able to interact for their mutual benefit. This could not happen, however, until the American government officially recognized the Soviet regime, and when it finally did Duranty was lauded for his journalistic efforts to further the successful negotiations of the agreement. With this triumph in hand, Duranty left his resident post in Moscow but continued to work for the Times as a transient foreign reporter and began to spend an increasing amount of time writing books, magazine articles, and stories. Nevertheless, the spectre of Stalinist retribution continued to haunt his writing.

In addition to the pressures placed on the entire foreign press corps, while he was in Russia Duranty lived with the fear that the Soviets could hold his son hostage if he should overstep their bounds. This is an important point since, as William Henry Chamberlin wrote when dealing with the Great Purge confessions, "A man who might be able to resist any kind of pressure against himself may break down if the future of

his family is at stake."<sup>325</sup> Nor was this dilemma alleviated when Duranty left the Soviet Union, since he could not take his Russian common-law wife and son with him. Thus his literary works after 1934, and even after his retirement in 1941, were very close in content and in tone to the articles which he had written while he was a resident reporter in Moscow.

As an author, Duranty continued to produce verbal mosaics. His works of fiction contained many of the insights that he had gained during his time in Soviet Russia, particularly regarding his interpretation of the Bolshevik character and the supreme self-discipline that Bolshevism-as-religion required of its adherents; but they also depicted the true nature of the Soviet judicial system as it worked in the trials of the Great Purge--what may be termed the injustice of "Parrot justice." His non-fiction books and articles which dealt with the many events and social modifications that he had witnessed while a resident reporter in Moscow--from the 1920s famine, through Marxist-Leninism, to Stalinism at its best and its worst--are masterpieces of recall, but with smatterings of hindsight thrown in for good measure. None of these works can be compared to the exposes that some of his extremely disillusioned ex-colleagues produced after their departures from Moscow, because he maintained his support of

<sup>325</sup>Chamberlin, Collectivism, 56.

Stalinism as a viable and even proper system for Russia until Stalin died. Only then did Duranty write an article which described the totalitarian leader as the Man of Steel that he was. And yet, Duranty's post-Moscow works exhibit the talent and erudition of an author who possessed the verbal dexterity to allow his readers to see through his eyes, and whose profound knowledge and understanding of Soviet society was based on years of observation, analysis and conscientious interpretation.

There can be no doubt that Walter Duranty fully deserves to be called "the Great Interpreter." From the beginning of his Moscow residency when he was a fledgling reporter, through his maturation as a foreign journalist, to his retirement years as an author, he never abandoned his quest to comprehend fully the unique and distinctive society that inhabits the Soviet Union and to explain that phenomenon to his Western readers. But even after years of concentrating on the factors of the Soviet Union's genesis, maturation and establishment as a world power, Duranty still felt that while he could interpret what he had observed during his years in the heat of the crucible, the essence of Soviet society had escaped him. It remained an intrinsic unknown, a puzzle which could be elucidated only if one recognized that the Soviet Union is "utterly different from the Western world, and that our

standards of comparison cannot be applied to it."<sup>326</sup> Until such time as the mystery is resolved, serious Sovietologists must study and consider the past interpretations of such on-the-spot observers as Walter Duranty, and even resort to interpretation themselves as a means toward understanding.

<sup>326</sup>Duranty, USSR, 11.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### I. Primary Sources:

#### A. Works of Walter Duranty

##### i) Newspaper articles

New York Times, 1916-1941.

Orlando Morning Sentinel, 1953.

##### ii) Other Articles and Books (in chronological order):

The Curious Lottery and Other Tales of Russian Justice. Freeport: Books for Libraries, 1969.

Introduction to Red Economics, ed. Gerhard Dobbert. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1932.

"The United States and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics." In Red Economics, ed. Gerhard Dobbert: 311-327.

Russia Reported. Selected and arranged by Gustavus Tuckerman, Jr. London: Victor Gollancz, 1934.

I Write as I Please. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935.

"The Riddle of Russia: What Lies Behind Recent Events in the USSR?" New Republic 91 (14 July 1937): 270-272.

One Life, One Kopek. New York: Literary Guild of America, 1937.

Babies Without Tails. New York: Modern Age, 1937.

The Gold Train and Other Stories. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938.

The Kremlin and the People. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941.



"Stalin: Dealer in Destiny." Coronet (June 1943): 13-18.

USSR: The Story of Soviet Russia. New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1944.

Stalin & Co.: The Politburo--the Men Who Run Russia. New York: W. Sloane, 1949.

B. Works by Duranty's Contemporaries (in alphabetical order):

i) Published Documents:

The Soviet Union Looks Ahead: The Five-year Plan for Economic Construction. London: George Allen & Unwin for the Presidium of the State Planning Commission, 1930.

ii) Books:

Chamberlin, William Henry. Collectivism: A False Utopia. New York: Macmillan, 1937.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Russian Enigma: An Interpretation. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Ukraine: A Submerged Nation. New York: Macmillan, 1944.

Davies, Joseph E. Mission to Moscow. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1941.

Dobbert, Gerhard ed. Red Economics. With an Introduction by Walter Duranty. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1932.

Fischer, Louis. Machines and Men in Russia. New York: Harrison Smith, 1932.

\_\_\_\_\_. Russia's Road from Peace to War: Soviet Foreign Relations 1917-1941. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. Soviet Journey. Westport: Greenwood, 1973.

Harper, Samuel N. The Russia I Believe In. Edited by Paul V. Harper, assisted by Ronald Thompson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945.

Lockhart, Robert Bruce. The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart Volume One: 1915-1938. New York: St. Martin's, 1973.

Lyons, Eugene. Workers' Paradise Lost: Fifty Years of Soviet Communism: A Balance Sheet. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1967.

Scheffer, Paul. Seven Years in Soviet Russia. Translated by Arthur Livingston. Westport: Hyperion, 1973.

Uralov, Alexander [A. Avtorkhanov]. The Reign of Stalin. Westport: Hyperion, 1975.

iii) Articles:

Auhagen, Otto. "Agriculture." In Red Economics, ed. Gerhard Dobbert: 111-133.

Chamberlin, William Henry. "Russia Through Coloured Glasses." The Fortnightly (October 1934): 385-397.

Lippman, Walter and Charles Merz. "A Test of the News." New Republic 23.296.II (4 August 1920): 1-42.

Lyons, Eugene. "The Press Corps Conceals a Famine." In Verdict of Three Decades, ed. Julien Steinberg: 269-292.

II. Secondary Sources:

A. Books:

Ashley, Perry J., ed. American Newspaper Journalists, 1926-1950. Detroit: Bruccoli Clark, 1984.

Beloff, Max. The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1941 Volume 1: 1929-1936. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Berdyaev, Nicolas. The Origin of Russian Communism. Translated by R. M. French. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948.

Berger, Meyer. The Story of the New York Times 1851-1951. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1951.

- Browder, Robert Paul. The Origins of Soviet-American Diplomacy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.
- Carroll, E. Malcolm. Soviet Communism and Western Opinion, 1919-1921. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965.
- Cohen, Stephen F. Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Conquest, Robert. The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties. London: Macmillan, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press in association with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986.
- Crowl, James William. Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia 1917 to 1937, A Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty. Washington: University Press of America, 1982.
- D'arcy, Martin C. Communism and Christianity. New York: Devin-Adair, 1957.
- DeJonge, Alex. Stalin and the Shaping of the Soviet Union. Great Britain: Fontana, 1987.
- Desmond, Robert W. Crisis and Conflict: World News Reporting Between Two Wars 1920-1940. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Press and World Affairs. New York: Arno, 1972.
- Deutscher, Isaac. The Prophet Unarmed, Trotsky: 1921-1929. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Stalin: A Political Biography. Markham: Penguin, 1984.
- Erlich, Alexander. The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Filene, Peter G. Americans and the Soviet Experiment 1917-1933. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- Fischer, John. Why They Behave Like Russians. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947.

- Fisher, H. H. The Famine in Soviet Russia 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration. New York: Macmillan, 1927.
- Getty, J. Arch. Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Grey, Ian. The First Fifty Years: Soviet Russia 1917-67. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967.
- Gross, Gerald, ed. The Responsibilities of the Press. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966.
- Hohenberg, John. Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Pulitzer Prizes. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.
- Hollander, Paul. Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba 1928-1978. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Hrushevsky, Michael. A History of Ukraine. Edited by O. J. Frederiksen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941.
- Irwin, Will. Propaganda and the Press. New York: Whittlesey House, 1936.
- Joll, James. Europe Since 1870: An International History. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- Kennan, George F. Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin. Toronto: Mentor, 1961.
- Koestler, Arthur. Darkness at Noon. Translated by Daphne Hardy. Markham: Penguin, 1984.
- Kruglak, Theodore Edward. The Foreign Correspondents: A Study of the Men and Women Reporting for the American Information Media in Western Europe. Westport: Greenwood, 1974.
- Lewis, John, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchin, eds. Christianity and the Social Revolution. London: Victor Gollancz, 1935.
- Lorimer, Frank. The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects. Geneva: League of Nations, 1946.

- Margulies, Sylvia R. The Pilgrimage to Russia: The Soviet Union and the Treatment of Foreigners, 1924-1937. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968.
- Medvedev, Roy. Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism. Translated by Colleen Taylor; edited by David Joravsky and Georges Haupt. Toronto: Random House, 1973.
- Nove, Alec. Was Stalin Really Necessary? Some Problems of Soviet Political Economy. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964.
- Pope, Arthur Upham. Maxim Litvinoff. New York: L. B. Fischer, 1943.
- Robbins, Richard G., Jr. Famine in Russia 1891-1892: The Imperial Government Responds to a Crisis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Serbyn, Roman and Bohdan Krawchenko, eds. Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies in association with the University of Alberta, 1986.
- Shipler, David K. Russia: Broken Idols, Solemn Dreams. Markham: Penguin, 1984.
- Smith, Hedrick. The Russians. Toronto: Random House, 1976.
- Steinberg, Julien, ed. Verdict of Three Decades: From the Literature of Individual Revolt Against Soviet Communism: 1917-1950. Freeport: Books for Libraries, 1971.
- Talese, Gay. The Kingdom and the Power. New York: World, 1969.
- Tottle, Douglas. Fraud, Famine and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard. Toronto: Progress, 1987.
- Weissman, Benjamin M. Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia: 1921-1923. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1974.
- Williams, William Appleman. American Russian Relations 1781-1947. New York: Octagon Books, 1971.
- Willis, David K. Klass: How Russians Really Live. New York: Avon, 1987.

B. Articles:

- Carynnyk, Marco. "The Famine the 'Times' Couldn't Find." Commentary 76.5 (1983): 32-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Making the News Fit to Print: Walter Duranty, the New York Times and the Ukrainian Famine of 1933." In Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933, ed. Roman Serbyn and Bohdan Krawchenko: 67-96.
- "Code of Ethics." In The Responsibilities of the Press, ed. Gerald Gross: 405-406.
- Cohen, Stephen F. "The Media's Russia." Harper's Magazine (Mar 1985): 25-26.
- Dalrymple, Dana. "The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934." Soviet Studies XV.3 (1964): 250-284.
- Danilov, V. P. "Diskussia v zapadnoi presse o golode 1932-33 gg. i 'demograficheskoi katastrofe' 30-40-kh godov v SSSR." Voprosy istorii No. 3 (1988): 116-121.
- Dibrova, Serhiy. "Famine of 1933: Political profiteering or search for truth?" News from Ukraine No. 39.1027 (Sept 1988): 5.
- Hazard, John. "Review Article." American Historical Review 47.4 (Jul 1942): 864.
- Levisky, Ivan. "Communism and Religion." In Christianity and the Social Revolution, ed. John Lewis, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchin: 262-296.
- Lewin, Moshe. "The Disappearance of Planning in the Plan." Slavic Review 32.2 (Jun 1973): 271-287.
- Manoff, Robert Karl. "The Media's Moscow." AAASS Newsletter 26.5 (Nov 1986): 1-3.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Christian Politics and Communist Religion." In Christianity and the Social Revolution, ed. John Lewis, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchin: 442-472.
- "Soviet paper publishes account of Ukrainian famine." Winnipeg Free Press (21 May 1988): 74.
- Rosefielde, Steven. "Excess Collectivization Deaths 1929-1933: New Demographic Evidence." Slavic Review 43.1 (Spring 1984): 83-88.

\_\_\_\_\_. "New Demographic Evidence on Collectivization Deaths: A Rejoinder to Stephen Wheatcroft." Slavic Review 44.3 (Fall 1985): 509-516.

Taylor, Sally. "Walter Duranty." In American Newspaper Journalists, 1926-1950, ed. Perry J. Ashley: 96-103.

Wheatcroft, Stephen. "A Note on Steven Rosefielde's Calculations of Excess Mortality in the USSR, 1929-1949." Soviet Studies 36 (April 1984).

\_\_\_\_\_. "New Demographic Evidence on Excess Collectivization Deaths: Yet Another Kliukva from Steven Rosefielde?" Soviet Studies 44 (Fall 1985).