Red Army Opposition to Forced Collectivization, 1929–1930: The Army Wavers

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Some years ago, in his biography of Nikolai Bukharin, Stephen Cohen postulated that there was a reservoir of latent support in the Party's rural and urban cadres for Bukharin's moderate alternative to Stalin's rapid industrialization and the forced collectivization of agriculture of the first five-year plan.[1] Cohen did not suspect that potential support for Bukharin and his policies of gradual industrialization and retention of private farming also existed in the Red Army's company and battalion party cells, as well as among some regimental leadership of the political administration of the Red Army (PUR). At first glance, Cohen's seems to have been a natural omission; after all, the army, with its hierarchy of commissars and political officers (*politruki*) ostensibly dedicated to the general line of the Party, appeared obedient and loyal to the dictates of the party Central Committee. PUR showed apparently little interest in the struggle between Stalin and Bukharin over future industrial policy. If anything, rapid industrialization would naturally seem to have been the most attractive alternative for the military because it would enable rearmament sooner rather than later. In addition, throughout the 1920s the Red Army had been demobilizing politicized soldiers whom it hoped would serve as cadres for the modernization and socialization of the countryside. That the regime had produced militant soldier cadres furthered the impression among historians of a pro-stalinist outlook in the military. In reality, however, many of the enlisted men and officers, both peasant and non-peasant, in the primary party organizations (cells) supported voluntary collectivization, higher fixed prices for state grain purchases and continued acceptance of individually owned private farms, if not outright state support for individual farming as Bukharin had argued for in 1928.[2]

Another reason that historians may have overlooked the army as a potential pro-Bukharin stronghold is that Stalin attempted to employ the army to promote socialized agriculture and create collective farms.

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1. Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 322, 323 and fn. 219, 222. Nikolai Bukharin was born in 1888, joined the Bolshevik Party in 1906 and rose to Politburo member soon after the revolution. He was executed on Stalin's orders in 1938 as an "enemy of the people" after a show trial.

2. D. Fedotoff-White, *The Growth of the Red Army* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 332.

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Paradoxically, this very attempt to involve the army in collectivization revealed sentiments among many officers and men which can be identified as anti-stalinist and pro-bukharinist in nature, although in army party cell discussions of regime policy recorded by *politruki*, people rarely mentioned the two men's names. Bukharin himself seems to have assumed that the army would remain loyal to Stalin, even if called upon to violently suppress the peasantry as in 1920, when he remarked to Lev Kamenev in 1929, after hearing Stalin's suggestion to again collect grain using emergency measures, that "He will have to drown the risings in blood."[3] It is this presumed loyalty that has, I think, diverted historians from taking a more penetrating approach to the study of the army and collectivization. Mark von Hagen has provided a useful study of the state's successful campaign to train soldiers for work on collectives in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but we still lack a deeper understanding of the oppositional activities and negative potential of the army in the crucial years of collectivization.[4]

The Red Army did play a crucial role in the drama of collectivization, but one in many ways hostile to the goals and methods of the regime. It turned out not to be the bulwark of support for socialized agriculture the regime had expected. Moreover, the regime had hoped to strengthen the army through collectivization but weakened it instead. That the army's loyalty wavered in 1930—officially denied by the Commissar of Defense Kliment Voroshilov in 1936[5]—has often been alluded to; this article will demonstrate that fear of military vacillation was entirely justified.[6] Even more interesting for the historian is that the clues necessary for predicting soldiers' antagonistic behavior

3. Bukharin to Kamenev in *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, no. 9 (1929): 10, quoted by Moshe Lewin in "The Immediate Background of Soviet Collectivization," *Soviet Studies* 17 (October 1965): 172.

4. Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 308–25.

5. Kliment E. Voroshilov, *Stat'i i rechi* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1936), 442, 443.

6. D. Fedotoff-White, *The Growth of the Red Army*, 278; J.M. Mackintosh, "The Red Army, 1920–1936," in B.H. Liddell Hart, ed., *The Red Army, 1918–1945, The Soviet Army, 1946 to the Present* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), 63; John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History 1918–1941* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), 357; Jonathan Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1930–33: The Impact of the Depression* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1983), 121–22; Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*, 319. The United States' military attachés in Warsaw and Riga, beginning in 1928, reported numerous instances of soldier unrest in the regular and territorial forces ranging from grumbling to outright mutiny throughout the USSR, but most especially in the Ukraine and central Volga region through 1936. Unfortunately, their information is all secondhand and is therefore highly impressionistic. The impression they give is, however, consonant with the one I derived from the Russian archives, that the army was in turmoil over collectivization, the Party was not solid and the leadership was unsure of its control over the troops. See *U.S. Military Intelligence Division Reports 1919–1941: Russia Military Intelligence Division War Department General Staff Military Attache Reports: Soviet Union*, National Archives and Record Service, Washington, DC: Record Group no. 165, Military Intelligence Files: Russia. Published by University Microfilms of America.

had been provided in 1929 as the Red Army participated in and was adversely affected by the *khlebozagotovka* campaign, which initiated the use of the Ural-Siberian method of coerced grain requisitioning. The effect on the army of this campaign has previously been unnoticed but soldiers' opposition to the socialization of agriculture extended from existing peasant resentment which became manifest in early 1929 if not before. The soldiery experienced a far greater degree of disaffection than has been suspected, extending to the party cadres in the army. The resulting pressure from below on the generals created a very real potential for cooperation between the high command and Bukharin against Stalin.

In the Russian State Military Archives[7] (RGVA) only PUR reports from the Siberian military district (SMD) and the Leningrad military district (LMD) were available for my use. When I requested similar reports listed in the *fondy* from the Moscow, Ukrainian and Urals military districts, I was informed without explanation that they were classified as secret. Still, these two quite contrasting military districts, one densely populated and highly industrialized and the other sparsely inhabited and overwhelmingly agricultural, seem to provide a fairly representative picture of both peasant and worker attitudes and state

7. Formerly the Central State Archives of the Soviet Army (TsGASA). I conducted my research in the RGVA in summer 1993, the second year that these archives were open to "unrestricted" access by foreigners. The five *fondy* from which I gathered evidence were: *fond* 9, *Politicheskoe upravlenie RKKA; fond* 887, *Upravlenie XVIII Strelkovo Korpusa, fond* 1293, *Upravlenie XXI Permskoi Strelkovoi Divizii; fond* 25893, *Sibirskii voennyi okrug*; and *fond* 37837, *Upravlenie po nachal'stvuiushchemu sostavu RKKA*. I used political reports from all levels of PUR, from military district headquarters down to party cells namely reports (*doneseniia*) from PUR military district chiefs to the Central Committee, accounts of cell meetings and special events (*otchety*), orders (*prikazy*) from district and division level to subordinate political agencies, and reports (*doklady*) from regimental commissars to division chiefs and from division chiefs to district chiefs. The accuracy of these reports is an important question. My sense is that they are quite accurate, that is they closely—certainly not perfectly—reflect conditions in the units as interpreted by the men making the reports. Each report was destined for the next higher level of PUR so, on the one hand, one may speculate that men would want to paint as good a picture as possible to keep themselves in the good graces of their superior; on the other hand, they would not want to cover up bad situations to such a degree that, if trouble became unconcealable, the superior would find out about it anyway and they would be in greater trouble than if they had been truthful all along. What makes me think that these reports are fairly representative is that the reports at the very top—those from the military district chiefs to the Central Committee—do reflect what the reports at the bottom sent up. Division political chiefs' reports to the district chiefs do reflect what the regimental commissars passed up to them; and the regimental reports on the whole were representative of the reports from battalion commissars, company *politruki* and cell secretaries. Therefore, if there was a problem of distortion it would be with cell secretaries not reporting unfavorable conditions or at least attempting to minimize their extent and then having troubles watered down as reports went up the political chain of command. Because cell secretaries and their superiors did send forward information that was very negative, even after having been criticized for not getting things under control, I tend to believe distortion was not a major problem.

successes and failures in the army when compared to Union-wide studies of the civilian populace.[8] I will discuss only the years 1929 and 1930 for the SMD and LMD because the *dela* for 1931 through 1934 were also designated secret. This was indeed a most distressing limitation because without these reports it is impossible to determine for how long there existed potential support for a moderate alternative to Stalin.

Months before forced collectivization traumatized the army, the state's campaign of forced grain requisitioning, using the Ural-Siberian method of coercion, intimidation and arbitrary arrest, caused outcries of protest from the soldiery. Throughout the Red Army, PUR organized soldiers who were members of the Party to help local party agencies with grain requisitioning, or *khlebozagotovka*. Soldiers expressed their objections with such comments as "Grain requisitioning rakes the peasants! Under the tsar life was better." One soldier exclaimed, "*Khlebozagotovka* is the same as *prodrazverstka*! (requisitioning)" evoking memories of bolshevik oppression of the peasantry during the civil war.[9] Such statements foreshadowed the pervasive alienation and resistance that would resurface during the collectivization drive, and should have alerted the Party and army to the danger of alienating the soldiers. Indeed, the peasantry's reaction to the Ural-Siberian method employed in the first half of 1929 brought the conflict between Bukharin and Stalin to a head. Stalin defended the tactics before the Central Committee in April 1929, apparently unafraid of the challenge pursuing these tactics would represent.[10]

Just as collectivization later would, the *khlebozagotovka* drive of early 1929 relied heavily on propaganda condemning kulaks and those who resisted grain requisitioning and later collectivization. Despite the danger of being labeled a "defender of kulaks," soldiers spoke on their behalf, characterizing them as helpers of Soviet power because they produced large amounts of wheat and helped poor peasants. During the *khlebozagotovka* middle peasants (*seredniak*) felt particularly vulnerable and victimized; they would feel the same during the drive to collectivize. The *khlebozagotovka* of 1929 foreshadowed the violence and danger that soldiers would endure in collectivization: numerous soldiers had been shot by angry peasants while agitating for *khlebozago-*

8. See Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study in Collectivization* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975); R.W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); and Danilov and Ivanitskii, *Dokumenty svidetl'stvuiut: Iz istorii derevni nakanune i v khode kollektivizatsii 1927–1932 gg.* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1989), 23, 32, 297.

9. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 15–16; f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, ll. 8, 44–46. *Prodrazverstka* is a reference to the bolshevik grain requisitioning campaign during the civil war 1918–1920.

10. Joseph Stalin, "The Right Deviation in the CPSU (B) (Excerpt from a Speech Delivered at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU (B), April 1929" reprinted in *Problems of Leninism* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1940), 289.

tovka; and danger lurked in the barracks as well, soldiers sometimes reacted with physical violence against their peers who participated in *khlebozagotovka*.[11]

The chief of the political section of the 21st Rifle Division was keenly aware of the problems that the *khlebozagotovka* caused among his troops. He reported in June 1929 that, after six months of grain requisitioning, the four main topics of discussion among the troops were, in order of soldiers' priority: grain requisitioning, kolkhoz construction, the sowing campaign and agricultural tax, and training in summer camp. The consensus of the soldiers, he said, was that agriculture and relations with kulaks was "peasant business and does not concern us [PUR]." Ominously, even party members complained of the unfairness and arbitrariness of the requisitioning; the division political chief concluded that the political-moral situation of the enlisted men with regard to grain requisitioning and kolkhoz construction was "unhealthy."[12] Nevertheless, the campaign continued into the autumn, further alienating soldiers. Simultaneously, the regime began preparations for campaigns of mass collectivization and "dekulakization" (the arrest and deportation of the head of household of a kulak family and the confiscation of his property), which began in winter 1929–1930.

Perhaps Stalin, who should have been well aware of the potential for increased resistance, proceeded with "dekulakization" in autumn 1929 because the "new method," as the Siberian party agencies called the Ural-Siberian method, had been overwhelmingly successful in acquiring grain for the state. As James Hughes has shown, the "new method" of social coercion brought poor and landless peasants into the service of the state in assuring that the cost of collective responsibility for meeting state tax levies of grain would fall hardest on wealthier peasants, which in spring 1929 resulted in a one-third increase in procurements over the previous year.[13] The new method also helped weaken village solidarity and promoted class warfare à la the *kombedy* (committees of the poor peasants) of 1918. So, although there had been both passive and active resistance by civilians and soldiers, the benefits to the state of coercion and intrusion into village life appeared to outweigh the risks.

Promoting Collectivization

In the army the task fell to PUR to act on Stalin's intention to socialize the existing system of capitalist agriculture. PUR accepted as

11. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 2; f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, ll. 22, 29–33, 61, 164–170.

12. RGVA f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, ll. 112–117. To use the term "unhealthy" was quite out of the ordinary. All other reports from the XXI Rifle Division and from every other unit in the army that I read would begin their assessment thus, "The political-moral situation of unit X is healthy. However, . . ." and then go on to explain the problems it was experiencing.

13. James Hughes, "Capturing the Russian Peasantry: Stalinist Grain Procurement Policy and the Ural-Siberian Method," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 1 (1994): 76–103.

a normal part of its duty to use the Red Army as a vehicle for molding the young peasant or worker into the "New Soviet Man," that is to "modernize" him. According to PUR doctrine, "Instilling in each Red Armyman the discipline of a citizen-soldier and selfless devotion to our Party is the basic task of all political work in the Red Army."[14] This fit naturally with PUR's political education of the soldiery, the purpose of which essentially was not to explain marxism-leninism but to emphasize the benefits of Soviet power and to convince soldiers of the necessity of obeying the Soviet regime. According to one high-ranking PUR leader in 1928, "The real backbone of the worker and peasant army is the young peasant, who comes into the ranks of the Red Army with all the prejudices which exist in the countryside, who receives letters from the countryside fostering these prejudices."[15] Thus the rationale for promoting collectivization in the army: to create a more efficient agricultural sector, eliminate traditional peasant prejudices and loosen the peasant's ties to the village.

Through PUR, the regime sponsored a multifaceted movement to involve soldiers in collectivization. Most, but not all, of the collectivization effort in the army concentrated on what soldiers would do when they left the army and returned to their villages. It included having demobilized peasant soldiers establish collective farms on land given them by the state, and encouraging soldiers who owned independent farms to join their village collectives upon their discharge. PUR used soldiers still on active duty who had accepted the idea of collectivization to persuade civilians to join collectives; and finally, the movement called for training peasant soldiers in various agricultural trades so they upon discharge could work on collective farms, machine tractor stations (MTSes) or in rural administration. Another facet of collectivization included having soldiers join teams for "dekulakizing" rich peasants or forcing unwilling peasants to join kolkhozes. PUR did not control these teams; rather they were led by the special sections (*Osobyi Otdel*) of the secret police (OGPU) assigned to each division. PUR assisted in recruiting volunteers for these teams. As transmitter of the regime's values, PUR perhaps suffered its greatest failure in the collectivization movement: not only did it fail to win over a sizeable number of peasant soldiers to the idea of collectivization or dekulakization as had been envisioned by the state, but it aggravated an already tense discipline and morale situation in the army. Many peasants conscripted into the army in 1928–1930, when the often violent and arbitrary Ural-Siberian method of forced grain procurement was in use and massive collectivization and dekulakization had begun, favored neither the goals of the regime nor the means employed to achieve them. Soldiers faced a choice between what the state mandated and what they personally wanted, creating conflict within and between in-

14. Pavlovskii, *Kak Krasnaia armiia gotovit boitsa-grazhdanina* (Moscow/Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1929), 12.

15. *Krasnaia zvezda*, 15 November 1928.

dividuals, and between individuals and the Soviet state. In political terms this raised the question of alternative policies.

The first phase of the movement to collectivize soldiers was the "soldiers' collectivization movement," by which PUR sought to persuade peasant soldiers to form special "initiative collective farms" that would show the benefits of collectivization and inspire peasants to form kolkhozes on their own. Soldiers who participated would not return to their home villages after their discharge but would start anew wherever they established their kolkhoz. Their wives joined them there. This movement attracted soldiers who had little hope of reintegrating into their old villages, especially poor (*bedniak*) and landless (*batrak*) peasants. Besides being poor or landless, most men who joined these agricultural collectives shared the distinction of having either party or Komsomol membership.[16]

The state enticed enlisted men of the Red Army, OGPU and border guards to organize agricultural collectives by promises that they would receive special rights to a share of the government's resources allotted to the overall collectivization effort. By order of the peoples' commissariat of land RSFSR in 1929, Red Armymen's collectives were to be given privileges at *oblast'* credit sources for supplies of machinery, seeds, etc. The state also promised them preference in the allocation of free land from the government's common-use land reserve. The government also promised farm implements free of charge from stocks earmarked for collective farms, and they supposedly could get loans and had first choice of agricultural machinery as it became available.[17] Military units sponsored the soldiers' collectives and founded them in the vicinity of the garrison whenever possible.

These collective farms, by and large, did not fulfill the promise of being model farms. Many collectives failed before their first harvest due to poor organization and lack of support from the state. Some farms never actually began because of disagreements between soldiers. In one instance the head of a farm wasted the start-up funds on drink and debauchery.[18] Because of poor preparation, lack of support and misconceptions about collective farming, many soldiers' collectives failed rather quickly and did not serve as the shining examples the Party had intended. Instead they served to discredit the idea of collectivization.

PUR exerted a more intense effort to get soldiers among the army's territorial forces to form or join collective farms, and for good reason. There were more peasants in the territorial forces than in the regular

16. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 69, 70; Vasilii I. Varenov, *Pomoshch' krasnoi armii v razvitii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva 1929–1933 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 88–89.

17. V. Varenov, "Uchastie krasnoi armii v sotsialisticheskom pereustroistve derevni," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 10 (1972): 80; *Krasnaia zvezda*, 20 October 1929; V.A. Kozlov, *Dozornye Zapadnykh Rubezhei* (Kiev: Politizdat Ukraine, 1972), 69–70.

18. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, l. 25; f. 1293, op. 5782, d. 6, l. 28; *Krasnaia zvezda*, 25 Oct 1929.

army and greater results could presumably be obtained more quickly. PUR therefore made a major effort in 1929 and 1930 to draw peasants of the territorial forces into the collectivization movement.[19] As with regular soldiers, the first stage of collectivization consisted of encouraging landless peasants to found collectives on government land. A campaign to enlist middle peasants in local kolkhozes followed as the Party realized that, because of their numbers, enlisting middle peasants was the key to the success of collectivization. Yet, the middle peasants held back from collectivization. For example, when a commissar of a territorial artillery regiment surveyed new recruits in 1929, he asked if they approved of collectivization and if they were willing to join a collective. Of the 70 respondents, 23 approved, 40 were undecided and 7 were adamantly opposed.[20] The same year, 135 soldiers of the 12th Territorial Rifle Division's sapper battalion volunteered for agricultural instruction conducted by *politruki* and local party officials. After their discharge 74 men joined together to organize a commune; the other 61 returned to their homes to improve their land holdings with their newly acquired skills. As the movement progressed, PUR discovered to its dismay that men frequently took the courses, but then did not join a kolkhoz and instead used their new knowledge to benefit themselves.[21]

Not only did PUR have trouble with territorial soldiers but it also had difficulty with men conscripted but not brought into regular or territorial units, who trained in periodic assemblies near their homes (*vnevoiskoviki*). At one training assembly in the Siberian military district (SMD) in 1929, not one of several hundred peasant *vnevoiskoviki* agreed to join collective farms. PUR SMD declared that these men had a "kulak stench" about them, that is, they objected to collectivization. As the efforts to promote collectivization increased, the state frequently labeled those who actively or passively resisted collectivization "kulaks" or "kulak lackeys" (*podkulachnik*), regardless of their socio-economic status. Even in a training assembly consisting entirely of non-peasants, the *politruki* reported that the men had developed a "peasant sentiment," a preference for private farming and non-interference in agriculture by the state, because of a close relationship of many to the rural population. In contrast, they supported peasant soldiers in their resistance to PUR's pressure and openly questioned the Party's policies in the countryside.[22]

PUR continued to emphasize collectivization the following year. In spring and summer 1930 PUR ordered *politruki* of territorial units to intensify their work during training assemblies and the periods be-

19. RGVA f. 9. op. 26, d. 487, l. 50; Iosif I. Geller, *Pod krasnoi zvezdoi: krasnaia armiia na fronte kollektivizatsii* (Samara: Gosizdat, 1931), 40–53.

20. Varenov, *Pomoshch' krasnoi armii v razvitii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva*, 32, 33, 50, 51.

21. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 78; *Krasnoarmeets* 1 Nov 1929; Geller, *Pod krasnoi zvezdoi*, 47–48.

22. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, ll. 34, 41.

tween assemblies with the goal of having soldiers found kolkhozes in their villages. The 61st Rifle Regiment, for example, held a brief training assembly over Easter; during training the *politruk* announced that at the end of the assembly all peasant soldiers had to join kolkhozes, which caused the desertion of 21 men. From the beginning of 1930, PUR's reports in the Leningrad and Siberian military districts alluded to the "peasant sentiments" of territorial soldiers, new recruits and even officers.[23]

Even PUR's work during the second stage of collectivization, merely soliciting promises from soldiers that they would join kolkhozes upon discharge, created much trouble for the army. The chief of the political administration of the Leningrad military district reported in summer 1930 that: "There is active resistance by Red Armymen, especially among those who have family sympathetic to kulaks. . . . Coincidentally, one can observe a growing sympathy for kulaks, which is most widespread in territorial units and only a little less so in regular divisions."[24] In the course of 1929 and 1930 political sections throughout the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (RKKA) reported the development of "peasant sentiments" in regular units and among cadres in territorial units, even among the select recruits picked to be junior commanders (analogous to non-commissioned officers in western armies). In this sense, both "kulak sentiments" and "peasant sentiments" refer to attitudes hostile to forced collectivization and dekulakization. When commissars fully explained the policy to the men, the reaction was often extreme, as exemplified by one soldier's exclamation, "I would sooner shoot myself than join a kolkhoz!"[25]

The least publicized participation of the army in collectivization was that of small teams of soldiers, otherwise known as brigades (*brigady*), sent to dekulakize and force peasants to collectivize. These brigades were organized on a temporary and voluntary basis by the special sections and PUR, and were manned almost entirely by party members or Komsomols. When on assignment to dekulakize, the special sections exercised complete control over the soldiers, circumventing the military chain of command. The special sections attempted to keep the identities of brigade members secret—and for good reason. In cases where their fellow soldiers found they had been out dekulakizing or collectivizing, brigade workers often received rather rough treatment.[26]

In addition to regular units, military schools sent teams of students to work in the countryside during school vacations and holidays. The Omsk infantry school, for example, sent eleven brigades to help collectivize peasants in winter 1929/1930. Seven of these brigades consisted exclusively of Komsomols. While so engaged, they exposed ku-

23. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 85, 120; d. 490, ll. 41, 44, 52.
24. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 109.
25. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 26; d. 490, l. 44; f. 37837, op. 21, d. 23, l. 143.
26. *Ibid.*, 4–5.

laks who had attempted to conceal their wealth and their "protectors," and summoned some kulaks to court for having destroyed livestock. Although the Omsk infantry school actively participated in collectivization, the territorial regiment stationed there did not. In contrast to the enthusiasm shown by cadets, the entire Omsk Territorial Rifle Regiment could only organize one brigade of sixteen men for collectivization work in Omsk *raion* in winter 1930. The average peasant territorial soldier showed a great reluctance to participate in such activities.[27]

One of the most dangerous political tasks was direct agitation for collectivization among the peasants. Again, this was purely voluntary and almost exclusively engaged in by party members. It was not unusual for peasants to ambush soldier agitators, killing or wounding them as they walked or rode between villages on their itinerary. Working alone or in very small groups made the soldiers particularly vulnerable.[28] The same held true for civilian agitators, of whom hundreds were killed by peasants.

Correspondence with friends and family left behind in the countryside greatly affected soldiers' attitudes toward collectivization. PUR discovered that this could have extremely negative ramifications when it attempted to use soldiers to pressure civilians into forming kolkhozes. During fall 1929 and spring 1930 when mass forced collectivization began, PUR sponsored a campaign to have soldiers write to their relatives in the villages touting the advantages of socialized agriculture and encouraging them to form collective farms. PUR asked poor and landless peasant soldiers to write letters to socially similar civilian groups.[29] For the most part, the only soldiers who volunteered to do this were those who had already agreed to form or join collective farms on their discharge. In some cases this seems to have been effective. A letter from a Red Armyman and future *kolkhoznik* sometimes convinced the rest of his family to support the collectivization of their village. In many cases, however, fellow villagers heaped considerable and sharp rebuke on soldiers who wrote such letters. For example, one soldier's wife sent him a letter denouncing his decision to join a kolkhoz, writing, "Because you have joined a kolkhoz you are no longer my husband and I am no longer your wife." Another family told a soldier, "You are a hooligan, an enemy of the whole village, to the devil with kolkhozes and Soviet power!"[30] Whether these men reconsidered their decisions is not known, but it certainly illustrates the personal and emotional conflicts collectivization forced on soldiers.

Civilian peasants conducted their own letter-writing campaign

27. Geller, *Pod krasnoi zvezdoi*, 30–32; Varenov, *Pomoshch' Krasnoi Armii v razvitii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva*, 159, 161.

28. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 31; f. 37837, op. 21, d. 23, l. 28.

29. Varenov, *Pomoshch' krasnoi armii v razvitii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva*, 139–145.

30. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, ll. 21, 22, 30.

against collectivization. As the mass collectivization drive grew in intensity, families wrote more and more frequently to their soldier relatives of the difficulties in the countryside. In sympathy with their families, many soldiers wrote home swearing they would never join a kolkhoz and went so far as to agitate against collectivization among their peers in the barracks. One soldier told his friends, "My mother left the kolkhoz she was in and I will not volunteer to join one. The Party is worse than the kulaks in its exploitation of the peasants!" His mother had informed him that the kolkhoz leadership were all party members who only gave orders and did no work. Another soldier, hearing of the ongoing disaster in the villages, not only forbade his wife to enter the kolkhoz being formed in their village, but ordered her to leave the countryside altogether, abandon their land holdings and seek work in the city. Still another was told that "There is no bread available because of the kolkhozes. If there were no kolkhozes we would have bread."[31] Such letters were common and the anti-collectivization talk that they engendered prevailed in the barracks at this time, despite all PUR's efforts to promote the opposite. One soldier passed on the disaffection of his village to his platoon members saying, "The elders say life was better before; before there was only one tax, now we are bled with several taxes, taxes on the harvest, on chickens, on eggs, etc.," and "Previously the *batraki* did no work, now with collectivization they work even less."[32]

PUR reported numerous statements expressing hatred for collectivization such as, "The best have lain to rest in coffins rather than join the kolkhoz," and "Our farm was damaged yet we got nothing for it." Some soldiers expressed quite militant attitudes about reversing collectivization. A *bedniak* was quoted as saying: "Kolkhozes are not needed. Rifles are needed to get proper treatment, we need rifles to organize a struggle against kolkhozes!" This was quite an ironic statement considering that the army loaned civilian party agencies rifles in order to aid their dekulakization and collectivization work.[33] The special sections did their best to censor soldiers' mail and quickly suppressed dissemination of the negative content of such letters.[34] Surely PUR's propaganda must have fallen on deaf ears when presented to soldiers whose families, friends and relatives had become victims of socialized agriculture. Rather than turning them into "new Soviet men," collectivization turned many men against the Soviet regime and discredited PUR for years to come. Finally, it created disunity among the soldiers, officers and party members, instead of uniting them in the service of the state.

31. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 51, 56–58; f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, ll. 27, 82, 113.
32. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, l. 51.
33. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 55, 88.
34. *Krasnaia zvezda*, 15 October 1929; Varenov, *Pomoshch' krasnoi armii v razvitii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva*, 43–46.

Soldiers and Dekulakization

The regime's campaign to eliminate the kulaks as a class, which coincided with forced collectivization, presented the most serious problem for the Party's collectivization campaign. The question of what to do with kulaks, once excluded from kolkhozes, became very divisive, tearing apart party cells and causing confusion in the ranks of PUR. The division and uncertainty were so great that for a time the higher levels of PUR were unable to force many regimental party bureaus and party cells to conform to the general party line in support of dekulakization. Indeed, many cells called for a reversal of policy.

Many servicemen, whether peasant or worker, party or non-party, enlisted or officer, did not agree that kulaks should be arrested and transported to internal exile or suffer other harsh fates. For the most part they did not object to the elimination of kulaks as a class (although some did oppose this, too) but instead thought that as individuals and families they should be allowed to join kolkhozes. Many soldiers objected openly and unequivocally to Stalin's self-proclaimed "new policy," which split party cells into opposing factions and indeed created an army-wide phenomenon identified by PUR as a "right opportunist deviation" in party agencies and the ranks of the administration itself. Like Bukharin's right opposition in 1928–1929, this "deviation" included the attitude that kulaks should no longer be considered class enemies after their dispossession. It was opportunist in that it supposedly represented an attempt to create a political faction that could make a bid for power. Finally, the phenomenon was deviant because it strayed from the Party's general line of rapid mass collectivization. A parallel "deviation" arose in rural civilian party agencies as well.[35]

Stalin apparently interpreted the success of his Ural-Siberian method as permission from the poor and middle peasantry not only to strip the better-off peasants of their wealth but to physically eliminate them from their villages. Stalin had gone beyond leveling income to killing people and many, including peasant party members were not prepared for that. The question of whether to admit former kulaks into collective farm membership had arisen in the latter half of 1929 and Stalin, who considered the question "ridiculous," answered it thus in December 1929: "Of course not, for he is a sworn enemy of the collective-farm movement. Clear, one would think."[36] Evidently, Stalin

35. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 26–29; f. 1293, op. 5782, d. 6, l. 27; A.A. Govorkova, ed., *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziastva zapadnoi sibiri 1927–1937 gg.* (Tomsk: Zapadnosibirskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1972), 87, 88; *Za liniiu partii protiv opportunisticheskikh shatanii: liniia partii v voprosakh kollektivizatsii v dokumentakh i materialakh* (Kharkov: Proletarii izdatel'stvo, 1930), 5–10; N.N. Panov and F.A. Karev, eds., *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistva v Srednem Povolzh'e (1927–1937gg.)* (Kuibyshev: Kuibyshevskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1970), 165.

36. J.V. Stalin, "Problems of Agrarian Policy in the USSR" (Speech delivered at the Conference of Marxist Students of the Agrarian Question, 27 December 1929), reprinted in *Problems of Leninism*, 326.

assumed that the Party would loyally and unquestioningly support his policies.

In some instances the military pursued dekulakization with a vengeance, but with particularly selfish motives that further discredited the practice. For example, in the Leningrad military district the 10th Rifle Division's special section formed a dekulakizing brigade of fourteen men, most of them officers, from a rifle battalion stationed at Khlomogorsk. In the course of the operation the officers stole six divans, fifty chairs, four lamps and four horse collars for the battalion. A terrific quarrel with the *kolkhozniki* resulted, that subsided only when the officers relented and turned the horse collars over to the collective farmers. To make matters worse, after the brigade had completed the dekulakization and divided the property, two soldiers, a company commander and his senior enlisted man (*starshina*) ransacked the kulaks' houses in search of gold and silver—presumably for themselves. This was the last straw for the battalion commissar who filed a formal complaint against the two for setting a bad example for their subordinates.[37] In other instances officers took it upon themselves to dispossess peasants in the name of dekulakization and sell property for their own gain. This was a punishable offense, as was organizing dekulakizing expeditions without permission of the special section. A *politruk* of the 29th Rifle Regiment learned this the hard way when he ordered soldiers to go with him on an unauthorized dekulakizing outing. The unwilling soldiers protested to their officers and the regimental commissar. The *politruk* was arrested and punished with five days confinement in the guardhouse.[38] Soldiers, then, protested not just the idea of dekulakization, but the practice of it.

The Right Opportunistic Deviation

The Siberian military district is a case in point of the development of the "right opportunistic deviation" in the Red Army. Beginning in May 1930 reports from regiment party bureaus and division political sections began to note "peasant moods," i.e., unrest among soldiers in reaction to collectivization and dekulakization. By August the chief of the political administration of the Siberian military district (PUR SMD) began commanding, in scathing language, that the four division political chiefs bring into line their regimental bureaus and primary party organizations. He excoriated the chiefs for improperly teaching and enforcing the party line on collectivization and dekulakization. Identifying most aspects of the "right opportunist deviation" as an education problem, PUR SMD specified two ideas that it thought had not been sufficiently explained to the soldiers: the benefits of socialized agriculture; and that kulaks were, without exception, dangerous class

37. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 30.
38. *Ibid.*, l. 31.

enemies.[39] Quite possibly to get him to show more zeal in overcoming the opposition, the district political chief accused the chief of the political section of the 40th Rifle Division of political opportunism, that is, siding with the rightists, for not personally taking a tough line with non-conformists.[40] From August through December 1930, when the reports cease, it is clear that PUR had lost control of the primary party organizations; that is, it had utterly failed to convince the men to support the party line and could not stop their agitating against it. The most serious aspect of this deviation, despite the claim that it was an education problem, was that the cell members must have known that they were promoting an anti-stalinist line because Stalin himself had introduced the slogan "eliminate the kulaks as a class" in a speech in December 1929 and then reiterated it in an article directed at the common soldier published in *Krasnaia zvezda*, the army daily, in January 1930.[41]

In September 1930 the military district political chief admitted in a report to the chief of PUR that the political agencies of the Siberian district were confronted with a factional split, that of right-opposition versus the party line, which had become manifest almost a year earlier in October 1929. The civilian party agencies in Siberia mirrored this split and the center of the "deviation" appeared to be Omsk, where the garrison also objected to the tempo of forced collectivization and dekulakization.[42] A September PUR SMD report labeled the men involved as deviationists (*uklonist*) and counterrevolutionaries. A subsequent report described the attempted murder of a party cell secretary by two middle peasants, said to be kulak sympathizers.[43] Reports made in November directly associated the district's "right opportunism" with the failed policies of the discredited trio of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskii. In the last report dated 2 December 1930, the political chief again inveighed the division political leaders to bring their people into line.[44]

Soldiers challenged their *politruki* and commissars with some powerful logic as they questioned the Party's self-proclaimed "new policy in the countryside." One soldier at a meeting of his party cell asked, "Why is it impossible to accept good Soviet kulaks in kolkhozes; if we can keep old officers, who were former class enemies, in our army, then just why is it impossible for kulaks to enter kolkhozes?" At a similar meeting an officer questioned the party line saying, "Explain

39. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, l. 57; f. 1293, op. 5782, d. 6, l. 27; f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, l. 22.

40. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, ll. 78–81.

41. Joseph Stalin, "The Policy of Eliminating the Kulaks as a Class," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 21 January 1930, reprinted in *Problems of Leninism*, 328–32.

42. "Iz postanovleniia biuro sibkraikoma VKP (b) 'O proshenii fraktsii soiuza soiuzov o dopushchenii kulakov v kolkhozy.' 4 oktiabria 1929 g." in A.A. Govorkova, *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziastva zapadnoi sibiri 1927–1937gg*,. 87–88.

43. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, ll. 104–10, 112–115.

44. *Ibid.*, 121–22, 123–28. Ths was the final *delo* in the RGVA available on the SMD.

why the Party, under current conditions in the Soviet Union, has labeled the kulaks a class. Lenin taught that there are only two classes, the proletariat and working peasants," thereby denying that kulaks, as working peasants, constituted an alien, enemy class. Still another said, "The kulaks do not need to be annihilated, they need to be taken into the kolkhozes so they can show the poor people how they ought to work." Such opinions were widely held in the army and roundly condemned to no avail by higher officials in PUR from fall 1929 through the whole of 1930.[45]

The differences over the proper fate of kulaks caused considerable rancor not only within primary party organizations but within whole military units. In the cells vehement arguments erupted in which soldiers challenged and even threatened each others' party membership for being "soft on kulaks." One communist soldier termed such threats "political hooliganism" and declared them unacceptable.[46] Not surprising, with party members in disagreement over the correctness of the party line, PUR was ineffective in communicating a coherent message to the soldiers justifying collectivization. According to one *starshina*, of one hundred peasants in his company, only one "understood" the socialist reconstruction of the countryside. Although the *starshina* did not elaborate on what exactly the men did not "understand," one might speculate that he meant either the process of or the need for collectivization. Yet, understanding the process should not have been difficult as it was happening all around them and PUR circulated abundant propaganda on this issue. Not "understanding" the need, however, can also be interpreted as disagreement with the necessity of socializing agriculture. Claiming ignorance of new ideas or technology was a well established tactic of the Russian peasantry to avoid or resist change without confrontation.[47] The soldiers who did not "understand" presumably opposed party policy.

PUR frequently exhorted military party organizations to work especially hard to overcome the "peasant sentiments" of the soldiers. Such sentiments proved to be hostile to all things connected with collectivization. In many units the political cadres and unit leaders ap-

45. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, ll. 10, 22, 121–128; d. 487, ll. 26, 29; f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, l. 22; D. Fedotoff-White, *The Growth of the Red Army*, 278, 284.

46. RGVA f. 1293, op. 5782, d. 6, ll. 39–41.

47. According to Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Among the [resistance] strategies Russian peasants used to cope with collectivization were those forms of 'everyday resistance' (in James C. Scott's phrase) that are standard for unfree and coerced labor all over the world, viz: foot dragging, failure to understand instructions, refusal to take initiative . . . and so on. This was a behavioral repertoire familiar to Russian peasants from serfdom. . . ." (*Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994], 5). She cites James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and refers readers to Steven L. Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), ch. 5; and George M. Frederickson and Christopher Lasch, "Resistance to Slavery," in Ann J. Lane, ed., *The Debate over Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press., 1971), 223–44.

peared reluctant to push collectivization after meeting resistance from their men. In many cases they could not even get their own cell members to agree to join kolkhozes on discharge. That PUR could not always depend on the party cells to conform is amply illustrated by the case of the deputy commander of the 36th Rifle Regiment who was sent to his home area to agitate for the Party's policies but instead denounced the new policies while drinking with a bunch of "kulaks," one of whom was his brother. This episode resulted in his expulsion from the Party and discharge from the army. Numerous peasant party members and Komsomols refused to join kolkhozes and wrote home to forbid wives to join, as did non-party soldiers, as shown.[48]

As a result of their "ignorance" and despite the possibility of arrest by the special sections, soldiers quite brazenly and specifically criticized dekulakization and collectivization in general. In many instances soldiers opposed to collectivization harangued and even threatened pro-collectivization soldiers with bodily harm or even death. The issue of dekulakization even resulted in cases of attempted murder of party cell leaders by *seredniak* soldiers. Rural-urban tensions surfaced as well. One *politruk* quoted a soldier saying, "Workers love to walk around with their briefcases giving orders. Workers have no right to be in the countryside dekulakizing working peasants, taking everything. Now, because of it, people are facing starvation!" Hostility to collectivization and dekulakization came mostly from middle peasants but even many *bedniaki* voiced opposition.[49]

In an effort to eliminate opposition to the socialization of agriculture, the army discharged nearly ten thousand soldiers and officers from the regular and territorial forces between 1 November 1929 and 31 October 1930. Reasons for discharge included being a kulak or the son of a kulak, the boycotting of state grain purchases or state goods by one's family, associating with class enemies or exhibiting counter-revolutionary tendencies.[50] This was not an especially thorough or harsh combing out of dissenters, considering that the regular and territorial forces together comprised nearly a million and a half men and the number discharged represented only about 0.66 percent of the armed forces. Many openly anti-collectivization soldiers suffered no consequences whatsoever.

The army simultaneously conducted a party membership purge (*chistka*) with the aim of cleaning out all class aliens, specifically kulaks and speculators. Contrary to what one might expect in this atmosphere of protest and political deviation, and considering that party members made up most of the actively pro-collectivization soldiers, the Party did not expel many soldiers and few of those were discharged from

48. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 57; d. 490, l. 24; f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, l. 127; f. 1293, op. 5782, d. 6, l. 51; *Krasnaia zvezda*, 3, 5 January 1930, 7 February 1930.

49. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 77, 78; d. 490, ll. 3, 9, 16, 113–115.

50. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, l. 17; Oleg F. Suvenirov, "Narkomat oborony i NKVD v predvoennye gody," *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 6 (1991): 26.

the army. *Politruki* reported a reluctance among soldiers to accuse each other of infractions or to recommend people for expulsion. The Siberian military district, as of March 1930 for example, had identified, and reprimanded or expelled from the party 115 officers as having dealings or other connections with enemy elements such as kulaks or NEPmen. Very few were discharged from the service.[51]

Other soldiers left the Party or Komsomol out of conviction that the Party's policies were unjust. Two students of the Tomsk Artillery School, for example, submitted resignations from the Party because "they did not understand the new policies of the Party in the countryside,"[52] safely voicing opposition to party policy. One of these students, a *batrak*, represented quite a failure for PUR because the Party had expected the poorest peasants to be the most supportive of collectivization and dekulakization. One soldier, years later when asked by the Harvard University Refugee Project why and when he left the Komsomol replied:

> In 1930. I was in a village, working in a bank. One day they gathered all the peasants who owned any stores or lived well at all, you know, the kulaks, in a shed, which stood opposite my house. In each corner of the shed stood Komsomols with guns over their shoulders, regarding [sic] the people. I don't know what they did to them, but it wasn't a pretty picture at all. Women and children were crying, and the whole thing was very frightening. It was clear to me that the Komsomol was helping the Party in the de-kulakization. After this event I had nothing more to do with the Komsomol.[53]

As it turned out, army communists generally treated each other quite leniently when it came to *chistki*. For example, between December 1929 and August 1930, 18th Rifle Corps expelled only 33 men of whom 12 were also recommended for discharge. After appeals, 32 were expelled, of whom 10 were also discharged; and this in a corps consisting of three divisions and supporting elements which numbered at least 20,000 men.[54] Similarly the 21st Rifle Division conducted a *chistka* in 1929 and 63 of 837 party members examined were expelled. Of these, the division expelled only 17 for associations with class enemies (kulaks); the rest were expelled for drunkenness and various inefficiencies.[55] In the 1929 *chistka* the 35th Rifle Division purged just 9 men, all officers; only 2 were expelled from the Party for questioning policy. Platoon commander Ermolenko was expelled because he "disagrees with party policies . . . with regard to kulaks" and Platoon Commander Kotolykov, formerly a trotskyite, was "doubtful about the social posi-

51. RGVA f. 887, op. 1, d. 86, l. 6; f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, ll. 40, 47–49, 75.

52. *Harvard University Refugee Interview Project* #18, RF, A3, 8, 28–30; RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 490, ll. 23–24.

53. *Harvard University Refugee Interview Project* #18, RF, A3, 28.

54. RGVA f. 887, op. 1, d. 86, ll. 6, 7, 9, 11–13, 24, 25.

55. RGVA f. 25893, op. 1, d. 292, l. 104.

tion of the workers." The army did not discharge either officer.[56] Because it was up to party members themselves to recommend each other for expulsion, they may have been reluctant to condemn rightist tendencies which many may have shared but kept quiet about, or did not think were especially dangerous.

In the end, despite major efforts at indoctrination, neither the Communist Party nor PUR could bring the "right deviationists" into line or quash the anti-collectivization sentiments of many soldiers. How the situation finally eased is not clear from the available documents. Stalin's "Dizzy with Success" article of March 1930 seems to have bought the regime a respite while it regrouped for another try. With this speech Stalin called for a relaxation of the pace of collectivization, leading the peasant masses to think it would in the future be voluntary. He blamed the excesses that had occurred during mass collectivization and dekulakization on "overzealous socializers" at the local level. The immediate effect of the speech in the army was for thousands of soldiers who had promised to join collectives on their discharge to cross their names off those lists. Similarly, thousands of kolkhozes broke up as civilian peasants left them in droves.[57]

Following "Dizzy with Success," PUR drastically cut back its emphasis on collectivization among the soldiers. The political cadres continued to train soldiers for work in the countryside but in much smaller, almost insignificant, numbers than before. The struggle with kulaks faded from the pages of the military press. On the surface, the peasant soldiers' and communists' "right opportunistic deviation" seemed to have persevered despite the regime. The soldiers' resistance had caused the regime to no longer view the Red Army as an important or useful tool in promoting its "new policy" in the countryside. Indeed, in combination with civilian resistance, they had contributed to the moderation of the pace of collectivization but not in the determination of the regime to eventually socialize all of agriculture. Theirs was a short-lived victory. In summer and fall 1930 forced collectivization began again but with a much less overt participation of the army. For several months PUR made little effort to enlist men into kolkhozes; instead the Party left it to the civilian sector to collectivize, although at a slower, if more thorough, pace, which again elicited protest from the soldiers. As more and more *kolkhozniki* were conscripted there became little or no need to promote collectivization among the soldiery. After 1930 the army contributed to the success of collectivization primarily by encouraging voluntary work by soldiers in the sowing and harvesting on kolkhozes.

For the rest of 1930 PUR seems to have wrestled with how much to emphasize collectivization. In some units commissars kept up the

56. RGVA f. 887, op. 1, d. 86, ll. 6, 7.

57. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, ll. 78, 87; Aleksandr Vrublevskii and Tat'iana Prot'ko, *Iz Istorii Repressii protiv Belorusskogo Krest'ianstva 1929–1934 gg.* (Minsk: Navuka i Tekhnika, 1992), 121–23.

pressure but in many others they dropped the issue completely. Political reports from the regiment level to military districts made little mention of it. The collectivization campaign in the army did intensify just slightly in 1931; in May, for example, a survey revealed that only a minority of territorial soldiers of the SMD's 21st Rifle Division had as yet joined kolkhozes. Of its four regiments, the least collectivized had only 14.4 percent of its soldiers in collective farms, the most collectivized had 37.5 percent, a relatively weak showing after the great efforts expended in 1929–1930. By the end of the training assembly the majority of soldiers had agreed to join collectives when they returned home, yet a substantial minority, from 24.8 percent to 35.4 percent depending on the regiment, still did not succumb to PUR's pressure.[58]

One month and a day after Stalin wrote "Dizzy with Success" he reaffirmed in *Pravda* his policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class, "The kulak is an enemy of the Soviet government. There is not and cannot be peace between him and us. . . . That is why the policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class must be pursued with all the persistence and consistency of which bolsheviks are capable."[59] Inevitably, as the army demobilized the 1929 and 1930 draft cohorts and replaced them with conscripts who had already been collectivized, protest became pointless as collectivization became a fact.

A Bukharinist Alternative?

Due to rank-and-file disaffection, for a short period of time, the winter of discontent of 1929–1930, the army may be considered to have been unreliable as defender of the nation. Pressure from below opened the door for a military foray into politics. That there was opposition among soldiers to collectivization and dekulakization did not come as a surprise to the army or to Stalin; what seems to have been the surprise was the extent and persistence of the resistance and resentment of party members in defiance of party instructions. The soldiers' reactions must have alerted Bukharin and his allies not only of the dangers inherent in Stalin's proposed mass collectivization but also of the potential for support from the military. Sensing a potential loss of control over their troops, the generals understood the need for a policy change in order to secure the national defense.

What then were the implications of the resistance in the army for a bukharinist alternative to stalinism? First, the division in the army along pro- and anti-collectivization lines is significant because the army recruited politically reliable men whom it hoped would accept the socialization that military service was intended to promote. On discharge they would become the avant-garde of socialist construction

58. Varenov, *Pomoshch' krasnoi armii v razvitii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva*, 109.

59. Joseph Stalin, "Reply to Collective Farm Comrades," *Pravda*, 3 April 1930, reprinted in *Problems of Leninism*, 355–56.

throughout the USSR. With this objective in mind, the most literate men and men from the working class were inducted out of proportion to their numbers in the population. Peasants, who were expected to be the most resistant to many Soviet social policies, were underrepresented in the active army compared to their numbers in society, yet constituted the largest bloc of soldiers. The exception to this were poor landless peasants, *batraki*, who were conscripted into the regular army in preference to *seredniaki*. Even so, they represented a minority of all peasant soldiers. The Red Army's desire for politically reliable soldiers was impossible to achieve, given its dependence on the peasantry for recruits including those from areas affected by *khlebozagotovka* and collectivization. While the army forbade kulaks from serving, the army's conscription commissions did not always thoroughly screen conscripts and some kulaks did succeed in illegally entering the military, especially in connection with collectivization. For all its publicity, PUR's active collectivization efforts actually involved a minority of soldiers: few participated in brigade work, only small numbers formed soldiers' collectives. It seems, therefore, that many, non-party rank and file, and officers as well, would have preferred a moderate, pro-peasant, bukharinist line to the stalinist anti-peasant, rapid-industrialization line.[60]

Second, that collectivization split the party apparatus in the army must have been particularly troubling to Stalin. PUR intended to impart the party line not just to communists but to indoctrinate the soldiery in general. PUR relied heavily on communist party members to help in this effort, yet they were always in the minority, especially among the enlisted ranks.[61] The Party expected much of its members and Komsomols, that they be active in party cells and agitate among the non-communists and involve them in political activities.[62] The first to be recruited for brigade work, in the 1920s PUR expected them to help with grain requisitioning; in the 1930s they were the first to be enlisted to "help" the peasants collectivize. Yet, during collectivization

60. In a comparison of the Harvard Refugee Interview Project, work by Inkles and Bauer and more recent interviews and surveys of Russians and Ukrainians, Donna Bahry concludes that from the Stalin era to the present an absolute majority of people preferred that agriculture remain in private hands in an NEP-like economy ("Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika," *Slavic Review* 52, no. 3 [1993]: 524–25).

61. Enlisted men usually accounted for only a quarter of army party members; officers made up the majority. Despite the fact that most soldiers were peasants, most party members were from the working class. In 1930, more than 58% of army party members were workers, only 29% were peasants and 12% were classified as "others." Of the peasants that did join the Party, the majority were *bedniaki*. *Batraki* were classified as workers. The Komsomol, in contrast, had higher peasant representation than the party. See "Partorganizatsiia i politprosvetrabota k XVI s"ezdu VKP(b): statisticheskii material," *Voennyi Vestnik* 10, no. 14 (1930): 80; A. Korobchenko, "Voprosy Komsomol'skoi raboty," *Voennyi Vestnik* 10, no. 22 (1930): 39, 40.

62. Semen Belitskii, *Besedy o voennom dele i Krasnoi Armii: Sbornik dlia kruzhkov voennykh znanii na fabrikakh, zavodakh, pri klubakh i shkolakh* (Moscow: Voennyi Vestnik, 1926), 68.

party organizations in the military, party members and Komsomols proved to be unreliable in their support of the party line and even, as we have seen, openly opposed party policy. In the eyes of many soldiers, the Party's victimization of the peasantry discredited it so that it was not unusual not only for men to refuse to join the Party, but also for members and Komsomols to leave their respective organizations out of opposition to the Party's collectivization policy.[63] In contrast to oppositionists who quit the Party or Komsomol, those who deviated from the general line but remained in the Party were not so easily ousted. The *chistki* of 1929 and 1930 failed to substantially remove the deviationists, perhaps because of widespread sympathy for the plight of the peasants or because the average party member did not consider it to be a serious offense.

Thus, if the Red Army high command had wanted to deliver the army into Bukharin's camp, it had an identifiable constituency to which it could appeal for support. Party unreliability in the army combined with disaffection among non-party soldiers made Stalin's claim to power insecure at a critical juncture. Cohen says that Bukharin had the impression that Voroshilov, commissar of defense, wavered in his support for Stalin's program in 1930 and that Bukharin felt betrayed when Voroshilov finally sided with Stalin.[64] Certainly, due to their deleterious effect on the army, Voroshilov was in the uncomfortable position of supporting Stalin while opposing his policy and methods of socialist reconstruction of the countryside. Jonathan Haslam presents two versions of the military leadership's reaction to the effects of mass collectivization: the first, from British and French diplomatic sources, is that Voroshilov warned Stalin against continuing rapid collectivization out of concern that the army was becoming unreliable; the second, from Italian diplomats, is that Ian Gamarnik, head of PUR, convinced Stalin to slow the pace of collectivization because its disruption of cohesion and discipline in the army's party agencies was making the army potentially unreliable.[65]

63. RGVA f. 9, op. 26, d. 487, l. 9.

64. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, 287, 289.

65. Jonathan Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1930–33*, 121–22. John Erickson denies that the generals, as a group, opposed Stalin saying, "The private fears and the genuine anxieties of the [high] command, aware of the impact of collectivisation on morale, never reached at this stage the proportions of a collective protest," and calls reports of opposition by the high command "unsubstantiated rumours" (*The Soviet High Command*, 356–57). He was most likely referring to J.M. Mackintosh, who in 1956 wrote: The professional soldiers watched with increasing alarm the morale of the peasant soldiers deteriorate, and called upon the Government to modify collectivization of the land in defence of the country. In this stand the commissars, many of them peasants themselves in origin, supported the soldiers' demands." He went on to claim that Bliukher, commander of the far eastern army, managed to "wring some concessions out of the Party," delaying collectivization in his domain, and that other generals asked that their districts likewise be spared but were denied. Despite this rejection, he says, "The Army leaders continued to press their case" ("The Red Army, 1920–1936," in B.H. Liddell Hart, ed., *The Red Army* [New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956], 63).

It appears then, that during collectivization, social and economic concerns overpowered most PUR attempts to convert peasant soldiers. Without a leader, opposition to Stalin and collectivization could not and, of course, did not become a political movement. Oppositionists limited their protest mostly to passive resistance such as refusing to join collectives or to join collectivizing and dekulakizing brigades, and speaking out against the "new policy" in cell meetings. Active resistance took the form of threats or even attacks on collectivizers and dekulakizers, and denunciations of the Party's "new policy" in the barracks and in letters. While none of these threatened Stalin's position in the Politburo, unorganized protest and unwillingness to promote party policy did put pressure on the PUR hierarchy to change policy.

Why Bukharin did not ally himself with the generals is a question that cannot yet be answered with any certainty. If anything, it may have come down to a matter of personality. Bukharin was an intellectual, not a forceful leader, who did not promote a dynamic program of industrialization, but instead cautious, uninspiring progress in the economy. While the high command wanted an end to the turmoil in the countryside, it is not clear that they thought a change in party leadership was necessary or even desirable to accomplish it. Their opposition to the immediate results of rapid collectivization does not automatically translate into anti-stalinism or complete disapproval of the idea of collectivization. Perhaps Bukharin understood that if the generals were willing to oppose Stalin it would be due to the current situation and would therefore be shallow and temporary. Without their or PUR's support, Bukharin could not take advantage of the discontent of the rank and file soldiers. Thus, for want of a link between the men in the units and oppositionist politicians, the soldiers' "right opportunist deviation" never became a movement but remained a sentiment in need of leadership.