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“Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work”: Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context*

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Information is the alpha and omega of our work.

Our work should concentrate on the information apparatus, for only when the Cheka is sufficiently informed and has precise data elucidating organizations and their individual members will it be able . . . to take timely and necessary measures for liquidating groups as well as the individual who is harmful and dangerous. (Cheka circulars, 1920–21)¹

With the opening of the Russian archives, scholars finally have open access (more or less) to materials generated by the Soviet regime. One particular kind of document has sparked interest more than any other: reports by surveillance organs in the form of summaries of popular moods, excerpts made from intercepted letters, and accounts of overheard conversations. The reasons for such interest are not far to seek. These reports promise answers to a question scholars in this field had been asking for several decades: What did people really think about the Soviet order?² (While I cannot examine the question itself here,

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¹ As cited in Vladlen Izmozik, *Glaza i ushi rezhima: Gosudarstvennyi politicheskii kontrol' za naseleniem sovetskoi Rossii v 1918–1928 godakh* (Eyes and ears of the regime: State political control of the population of Soviet Russia, 1918–1928) (St. Petersburg, 1995), p. 71; Iu. D'iakonov and T. Bushueva, eds. *Fashistskii mech kovalsia v SSSR* (The fascist sword was forged in the USSR) (Moscow, 1992), p. 40.

² For works employing surveillance materials, see nn. 20 and 22 below. Long before this material was available, however, some works provided important insights into this question. A source that has not received the attention it deserves is V. Zenzinov, *Vstrecha s Rossiei: Kak i chem zhivut v Sovetskom Soiuzie—pis'ma v Krasnuiu Armiu* (A meeting with Russia: How and by what people live in the Soviet Union—letters to the Red Army) (New York, 1945), a compilation and analysis of letters and autobiographical materials collected from the bodies of Red Army soldiers who fell during the Russo-Finnish War.

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it should be noted that this problematic operates with assumptions drawn from our own society, assumptions that may not have been operative in Soviet Russia.)³

Surveillance materials, however, should serve not only to answer questions posed prior to open archival access and formulated in the context of the Cold War; they also provide an opportunity for reconceptualizing the nature of the regime in general and the meaning of such surveillance materials in particular. Otherwise we will merely be appending new footnotes to old paradigms.

In addition to providing raw data on people's moods, then, these eagerly sought-after surveillance materials should cause us to ponder what kind of system would produce information in such amounts and in this manner. A reevaluation of this type requires comparative study, if only to avoid considering what may be general, pan-European features as something specific either to Russia or to its incarnation of socialism (both of which have been invoked to account for Soviet Russia's "exceptionalism" or *sui generis* nature). In short, surveillance as a project (rather than simply as a source) requires analysis. And such analysis requires that the surveillance project be situated in both its longitudinal and its comparative contexts. (By longitudinal, I mean synchronic study within the course of Russian history; by comparative, I mean diachronic analysis within a pan-European or, indeed, worldwide political environment.)

This article seeks, first, to describe the underlying ethos that motivated the Soviet state to engage in surveillance, that practice responsible for generating the materials which now so interest historians, and, second, to situate surveil-

³ This is particularly true for the application of such concepts as "public support" and the distinctions between state and society, public and private. Studies of, e.g., Nazi Germany have suggested that the regime channeled participation to sculpt behavior rather than seeking to elicit support; see Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society* (Oxford, 1991). On the untenability for totalitarian regimes of the state/society dichotomy that informs many treatments of surveillance material, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995); Michael Geyer, "The State in National Socialist Germany," in *Statemaking and Social Movements*, ed. Charles Bright and Susan Harding (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1984); and Gellately's *The Gestapo and German Society*. For critiques of the tendency to transpose Western notions of private and public to Stalinist Russia, see Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubny, 1931–1939," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44 (1996): 344–73; Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time*, updated ed. (Durham, N. C., 1990), pp. 59–74; and Svetlana Boym, *Common Places* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 73–95. There is an extensive literature on the "new man" emerging in the wake of the First World War in Germany (Jünger's *Typus*), a being who emphatically rejected the "bourgeois" and "petty" notion of a "personal sphere"; see, among many others, Brigitte Werneburg, "Ernst Jünger and the Transformed World," *October* 62 (1992): 43–64; and Bernd Hüppauf, "Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of a New Man in Germany after the First World War," *War and Society* 6 (1988): 70–103.

lance within its broader, pan-European context. It contends that the desire to generate such material is in fact of far greater significance than the material itself. For, as Robert Gellately has shown for Nazi Germany, a regime that is deeply concerned about what the population thinks and feels does not necessarily seek or even require the support of all or most of its citizens. For Nazi Germany, and no doubt for Stalinist Russia as well, “the crucial factor was not the ‘popularity’ of the system.”⁴ And “popularity” and “public opinion” (or, rather, these terms as they are understood in late twentieth-century America) were certainly not the primary factors motivating surveillance.⁵ The Soviet and Nazi regimes did not collect such information to determine which policy to pursue in conformity with public opinion or to win support. The attitudes described in surveillance reports did not operate within systems that recognized popular support or public opinion (again, as we understand the terms today). These systems were concerned instead with sculpting and “gardening” (to use Zygmunt Bauman’s evocative term) a better, purer society while simultaneously molding society’s human material into a more emancipated, conscious, and superior individual—the “new man.” Surveillance, then, was not designed to uncover popular sentiments and moods, nor was it intended merely to keep people under control; its whole purpose was to act on people, to change them.⁶ So the surveillance project encompasses both the at-

⁴ Robert Gellately, “Enforcing Racial Policy in Nazi Germany,” in *Reevaluating the Third Reich*, ed. Thomas Childers and Jane Caplan (New York, 1993), pp. 50, 57–58, and *The Gestapo and German Society*, esp. pp. 259–61.

⁵ Tellingly, surveillance organs in Russia and throughout Europe described their topic of inquiry as the “spiritual” and “moral” sphere and people’s “consciousness” (as in *dukhovnoe, moral’noe* or *nravstvennoe sostoianie*, and later *soznatel’nost’*; compare the German *das geistige Leben* for the First World War and *geistige und seelische Betreuung* for World War II). They rarely described their task as identifying “public opinion” (*obshchestvennoe mnenie*) or “popular support.” For an analysis of the problematics of studying public opinion, see Pierre Laborie, “De l’opinion publique à l’imaginaire social,” *Vingtième Siècle* 18 (1988): 101–17.

⁶ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, expanded ed. (Ithaca, N. Y., 1991), pp. 13, 18, 70–82. For arguments that the Soviet regime was fundamentally about transforming society and individuals, see Kotkin; Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, 1995); Aleksandr Etkind, *Eros nevozmozhno: Istoriia psikhooanaliza v Rossii* (Eros of the impossible: The history of psychoanalysis in Russia) (St. Petersburg, 1993); and Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism* (Princeton, N. J., 1992). Martin Malia (*The Soviet Tragedy* [New York, 1994]) has forcefully argued that this ideological aspiration defined the sui generis nature of the Soviet experiment. While one may agree with him that ideology indeed underlay the Soviet project, it does not necessarily follow that the aspiration to mold society was unique to socialism (Clark’s book is a useful corrective here). Despite Malia’s insistence on Bolshevik uniqueness, note his many references to comparable developments in Germany (pp. 210–11, 246, 249, 253, 291, 306).

tempt to gather information on popular moods and the measures intended to transform them.⁷

Surveillance may be best understood, then, not as a Russian phenomenon but as a subfunction of the modern form of politics, of which totalitarianism is one expression.⁸ From this perspective, Bolshevism can indeed be seen as distinct. But this distinctiveness was historically conditioned within its particular European context. So, while Bolshevism was a specific type of civilization, it was hardly unique or *sui generis*.⁹

The Don territory (a province in southern Russia) in the period of the Russian Revolution and Civil War provides an ideal locus for a study of surveillance as a political practice, for it permits comparative analysis. (By “political practices” I mean the repertoire of measures a state employs to realize the goals it has set for itself.) The Don territory did not merely pass under intermittent Red and White military control but alternated for long periods under the civil control of each side. In addition, all sides left behind an extensive and diverse source base documenting their activities. This is important, for analyses of the Soviet experience have often argued for the absolute primacy of “ideology.” Yet few studies have sought, in any rigorous way, to identify what was specific to Bolshevism. Often it is a case of “what the Bolsheviks did was Bolshevik because it was the Bolsheviks who did it”—that is, a tautology.¹⁰ Bolshevism’s

⁷ Peter Kenez (*The Birth of the Propaganda State* [Cambridge, 1985]) notes the Bolshevik aspiration to transform how people think and the central place knowledge and information occupied on the regime’s agenda. Yet, as his title suggests, he identifies this aspiration with the Bolsheviks alone.

⁸ On this point, see Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*; Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing and Representation* (New York, 1996); George Mosse, *Nationalization of the Masses* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1975); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1977); Jacob Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York, 1952); and Michael Halberstam, *Totalitarianism, Liberalism and the Aesthetic* (New Haven, Conn., in press). All these works treat totalitarianism as an ethos very problematically related to the modern form of politics and stand in contrast to the more traditional, social science definition of totalitarianism, best typified by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski’s *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York, 1956).

⁹ For the most developed formulation of the Bolshevik project as a subfunction of modernity, both in terms of a concretization of certain strands of Enlightenment thought and as a form of socialist welfare state, see Kotkin.

¹⁰ Scholars have most often studied Bolshevism and its ideological competitors in isolation from one another. Thus John Keep’s study, *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (London, 1976), focuses entirely on the Soviet side. But camps other than the Bolsheviks were certainly also mobilizing people. The compilation *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War*, ed. Diane Koenker, William Rosenberg, and Ronald Suny (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), contains no article on any nonsocialist political movement, and, except for Ronald Suny’s article on the Georgian Mensheviks, there

specificity is often asserted but seldom demonstrated. One gets a very different view by examining how some Soviet practices elaborated on actions of the tsarist regime (particularly in its total war manifestation) and paralleled similar measures by contemporaneous anti-Soviet movements.

What is surveillance? As used here, surveillance refers to information gathering and handling of a particular type: that which observes the population's attitudes, in aggregate, for political purposes (politics being understood as the endeavor intended par excellence to transform the world). That is, surveillance is the collection of information for the purpose not of reporting the population's collective mood but of managing and shaping it.¹¹ As such, surveillance must be seen as part and parcel of a larger shift in the goal of ruling, a shift from a territorial concept to a governmental one. A governmental state seeks to manage populations, not just to rule territories.¹² Of course, the people who made up "the population" had always existed, but they had not always been conceptualized as a discrete, aggregate object. A governmental state seeks to manage its population not so much legitimately or righteously as effectively and economically. Once the Russian political elite began to conceptualize the body politic in terms of a "population" (instead of, say, a divinely established order of estates), its duty became serving the aspirations and needs of this new focus of legitimacy.¹³ In the process of investigating these needs through varied

are no articles on any non-Bolshevik political movements. Works such as those by Richard Pipes (*The Russian Revolution* [New York, 1990]) and Vladimir Brovkin (*Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War* [Princeton, N.J., 1994]) attempt to cover both sides but only in a most schematic manner (in particular, both these works replicate stereotypes of the White movement). A rare exception is Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War* (New York, 1989).

¹¹ See Anton Kaes ("The Cold Gaze: Notes on Mobilization and Modernity," *New German Critique* 59 [1993]: 105–17), who emphasizes the "nexus between warlike mobilization, surveillance and social control" (p. 116).

¹² My views on the emergence of the governmental state have been influenced by Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (London, 1991). Historians of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany have also noted the state's emerging concern for the population as the object of policy. See Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic* (New York, 1993); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between Unification and Nazism* (Cambridge, 1989); and Elisabeth Domansky, "Militarization and Reproduction in World War One Germany," in *Society, Culture and State in Germany, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996). While these works focus largely on the sociobiological management of society, states were equally concerned with managing their populations' psyches—hence surveillance.

¹³ For important changes in the goals, meaning, and practices of ruling for an earlier period, see Mark Raeff's seminal article, "The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe," *American Historical Review* 80 (1975): 1221–43.

mechanisms (censuses, agricultural studies, statistics), the political elite summoned “the population” (as a discrete entity) into being.¹⁴

In Russia, the Revolution brought into sharp focus this shift from an administrative, territorial state to a governmental one. Nicholas II had been emperor of “all the Russias, Tsar of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, etc., etc., etc.” He ruled territorial entities rather than a collectivity of citizens. After 1917 all political movements (the Provisional Government, the Constituent Assembly, the Soviet Council of People’s Commissars, and nearly all anti-Soviet movements in the Civil War) claimed to represent not a territory, but the people living within it. And to engage the population most productively, states required a new discipline of popular attitudes: surveillance.

It is important to note that the concept of surveillance is not something thought up, after the fact, by historians. Contemporaries, by the terms they used, distinguished policing (reporting on delinquents, malcontents, and even revolutionaries as individuals in order to protect an established order) from surveillance (reporting on the whole population to amass aggregate rather than individual data on attitudes in order better to act upon society).¹⁵ Policing was concerned with maintaining public order: its goal was to protect people from exposure to contaminants, be they heresies, books, or ideas.¹⁶ While it contin-

¹⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick (“Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” *Journal of Modern History* 65 [1993]: 745–70) shows how the Soviet state sought to quantify its society through a class prism. For works demonstrating the various mechanisms by which states and disciplines order society, see Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, *Déchiffrer la France* (Paris, 1988); Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge, 1990); and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York, 1991), pp. 164–70.

¹⁵ Policing involved oversight (*nadzor*) as carried out by the Security Agency (*Okhrana*), whose very title denotes the negative goal of safeguarding an extant society from threats. Russians employed a different term for the surveillance endeavor, which was identified as information collection and dissemination (*osvedomlenie*, a term invariably implying a two-way circuit of information), through organs explicitly termed “political” (as in the “secret political departments” of the “Unified State Political Administration” [*OGPU*]). A similar distinction existed in the intelligence and military fields between “intelligence departments” (*razvedyvatel’noe otdelenie*), which gathered traditional military and diplomatic intelligence (*razvedka*), and the “political sections” (*politotdel*), which practiced political surveillance. Two separate agencies existed because each was seeking different kinds of information.

¹⁶ For an excellent treatment of the police organs in the earlier Nicholaevan period, see Sidney Monas, *The Third Section* (Cambridge, 1961), which is attentive both to the more general European context and to the specific meaning of police in cameralist and *Rechtsstaat* thought (see pp. 22–23, 294 on the difference between nineteenth- and twentieth-century meanings of “police”). For the later period, see Frederic Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police and Russian Society, 1880–1917* (New York, 1996); and Jonathan Daly, “The Watchful State: Police and Politics in Late Imperial Russia, 1896–1917” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992). On Germany, see Wolfram Siemann,

ued to have a policing function, surveillance went far beyond this purely negative agenda. The governmental ideal was for the state, armed with the proper information and employing it correctly, to transform both society and individual citizens for the better.¹⁷ Where policing sought to order society, surveillance, as part of the governmental project, sought to transform it.

The state went about collecting the knowledge it required to meet this newly conceived task through two primary mechanisms. First, it constructed surveillance bureaucracies to conduct regularized reporting on the population's attitudes. And second, the state engaged in the routine perustration of correspondence (perustration being the interception and reading of mail for the express purpose of discovering what people were writing and thinking—in contrast to censorship, which has as its goal the control of content). The creation of organs for the express purpose of quantifying and analyzing the population's attitudes (be they progovernment, antigovernment, or indifferent) was a qualitatively new endeavor. Indeed, categories such as “popular support” and especially “apathy” simply were not part of the mental universe of tsarist bureaucrats (at least until early in the twentieth century). Subjects were either obedient or not. The administrative goal was compliance rather than belief. In sharp contrast to this, Soviet officials expressed a burning interest not so much in people's behavior as in what they thought and believed.¹⁸

Surveillance is important, then, not so much because it generated all sorts of material on public opinion or national morale, but because it demonstrates the state's emerging concern for this sphere. Thus we must examine not only the materials themselves but also the project that first required and then generated them. Studying surveillance is not being trendy or anachronistic. Surveillance was the pursuit for which contemporaries were busy devising new terms and building new bureaucracies.

I. SURVEILLANCE IN 1913 AND IN 1920

To demonstrate the explosive emergence of surveillance as a practice of governing, one can simply compare how it was practiced at two points in time,

“*Deutschlands Ruhe, Sicherheit und Ordnung*”: *Die Anfänge der politischen Polizei, 1806–1866* (Tübingen, 1985), the title of which accurately sums up the negative, prophylactic agenda of policing.

¹⁷ For an expression of this precise ideal from a Russian administrative text, see V. F. Deriuzhinskii, *Politseiskoe pravo* (Police law), 3d ed. (St. Petersburg, 1911), p. 15. For the Stalinist period, Hellbeck's “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul” (n. 3 above) shows how citizens themselves participated in this process of individual subjectivization within the larger totalitarian project.

¹⁸ Kenez (n. 7 above), pp. 10–11, insightfully compares the Bolshevik agenda to that of the Catholic church.

first under the Imperial and then under the Soviet regime. In 1913 the tsarist regime most definitely engaged in perustration, practiced in so-called Black Offices.¹⁹ However, the autocracy limited the opening and perusing of mail to the correspondence of suspected revolutionaries and opponents of the regime (plus, of course, diplomatic correspondence). That is, the autocracy practiced perustration for purposes of policing and intelligence. The number of surveillance technocrats serving in such Black Offices throughout the entire Empire came to a grand total of forty-nine people.

Seven years later, in 1920, we find a very different type of surveillance being practiced. The Soviet regime was intercepting and reading not just the letters of individual suspects but nearly all correspondence passing through the post. The goal of this massive effort was not simply to destroy those letters reflecting poorly on the regime or even to identify dissidents: it was in addition to compile “summary reports” complete with extensive excerpts from representative letters. To this end, the Soviet regime, in the midst of a civil war contesting its very existence, was employing somewhere in the neighborhood of ten thousand officials—ten thousand trusted and trained officials—for opening and analyzing citizens’ mail. And when the Civil War ended in 1921, responsibility for perustration passed from military postal boards to Cheka and OGPU information departments. Throughout the 1920s the regime continued to scrutinize letters passing through the mail, making ever more extensive extracts and ever more detailed summaries.²⁰

¹⁹ See S. Maiskii, “‘Chernyi kabinet’: Iz vospominanii byvshego tsenzora” (“The Black Office”: From the reminiscences of a former censor), *Byloe* (The past), no. 13, kn. 7 (July 1918), pp. 185–97; R. Kantor, “K istorii ‘chernykh kabinetov’” (Toward a history of the “black offices”), *Katorga i ssylka* (Hard labor and exile), no. 37 (1927), pp. 90–99.

²⁰ On the Soviet perustration of the 1920s, see Vladlen Izmozik, “Perliustratsiia v pervye gody sovetsoi vlasti” (Perustration in the first years of Soviet power), *Voprosy istorii* (Problems of history), no. 8 (1995), pp. 26–35; and Viktor Chentsov, “Tabu—na dumky, zaborona—na slovo: Za materialamy roboty politkontroliu NK-DPU u 20-ti roky” (A taboo on thought, a prohibition on speech: Behind the materials of the NK-DPU’s political control in the 1920s), *Z arkhiviv VUChK, GPU, NKVD, KGB*, no. 1 (1994), pp. 12–23. For examples of summaries compiled from excerpts from letters, see Vladlen Izmozik, “Voices from the Twenties: Private Correspondence Intercepted by the OGPU,” *Russian Review* 55 (1996): 287–308, “Soviet Jewry as Reflected in Letters Intercepted by the Leningrad OGPU, 1924–25,” *Jews in Eastern Europe* 23 (Spring 1994): 32–45, “Perepiska cherez GPU” (Correspondence by way of GPU), *Rodina* (Motherland), no. 9 (1994), pp. 78–83; “S pitaniem delo plokhoe” (Things are bad with the food situation), *Staraiia ploshchad’: Véstnik* (Old Square: Bulletin), no. 3 (1995), pp. 142–44; I. Davidian and V. Kozlov, “Chastnye pis’ma epokhi grazhdanskoi voiny” (Private letters from the epoch of the Civil War), in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia* (The unknown Russia), ed. V. A. Kozlov et al. (Moscow, 1992), 2:200–250; and O. Danilov, “Pis’ma iz proshlogo” (Letters from the past), *Svobodnaia mysl’* (Free thought), no. 15

We see an identical picture regarding surveillance bureaucracies. In Imperial Russia, governors' reports and secret police reports intermittently touched on the population's general moods. But the Imperial administration evinced little interest in what the population thought, so long as it did not support the revolutionary movement.²¹ Needless to say, the tsarist autocracy did not feel it necessary to have anything akin to the Soviet state's OGPU information subsections (in the 1920s) or the NKVD secret political departments (in the 1930s), whose primary purpose was to compile regular reviews of the population's political sentiments.²²

(1992), pp. 50–57 and no. 6 (1993), pp. 79–87. For summaries compiled by the Ninth Army and the Military Council of the Northern Caucasus for 1919–21, see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (hereafter cited as RGVA), f. 25896, op. 2, d. 11, ll. 1–11, 41–43, 47–48, 94–95, 132–33, 145, 149; and RGVA, f. 192, op. 2, d. 385, ll. 2, 11, 17, 27–28, 38.

²¹ On the negative agenda of the Security sections, see Dominic Lieven, "The Security Police," in *Civil Rights in Russia*, ed. Olga Crisp and Linda Edmondson (Oxford, 1989); Nurit Schleifmann, "The Internal Agency: Linchpin of the Political Police in Russia," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 24 (1983): 152–77; Richard J. Johnson, "Zagranichnaia agentura: The Tsarist Political Police in Europe," in *Police Forces in History*, ed. George Mosse (London, 1975). For governors' reports, see George Yaney, *The Systemization of Russian Government* (Urbana, Ill., 1973), pp. 295–301; and Richard G. Robbins, *The Tsar's Viceroy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987), pp. 65–71.

²² Izmozik's *Glaza i ushi rezhima* (n. 1 above) will become the standard reference work on Soviet surveillance infrastructure for the 1920s. On Soviet surveillance practices, see also Andrea Romano, "L'armée rouge, miroir de la société soviétique: Aperçu des sources d'archives," *Communisme* 42/43/44 (1995): 35–43; Nicolas Werth, "Une source inédite: Les *svodki* de la Tcheka-OGPU," *Revue des études slaves* 66 (1994): 17–27; Viktor Danilov and Alexis Berelowitch, "Les documents de la VChK-OGPU-NKVD sur la campagne soviétique, 1918–1937," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 35 (1994): 633–82; Viktor Dniprovets, "'Katerynoslav. GubChK': Sustil'no-politychne ta ekonomichne zhyttia kraiu v dokumentakh organiv derzhavnoi bezpeky" ("Katerynoslav GubChK": Sociopolitical and economic life of the region in the documents of the state security organs), *Z arkhiviv VUChK, GPU, NKVD, KGB*, no. 1 (1994), pp. 12–23; A. I. Kudinov, "Organy gosudarstvenno-politicheskoi bezopasnosti v zakrytoi informatsionnoi sisteme (20-e gody)" (The organs of state-political security in the closed information system [the 1920s]), *Izvestiia sibirskogo otdeleniia AN SSSR: Seriia istoriia, filologiiia i filosofiiia* (Proceedings of the Siberian section of the Soviet Academy of Sciences: Series on history, philology, and philosophy), no. 1 (1991), pp. 62–64; and Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*, esp. chap. 8. Among the many ongoing studies employing materials generated by Soviet surveillance organs, see Andrea Grazioli, "Collectivisation, révoltes paysannes et politiques gouvernementales à travers les rapports du GPU d'Ukraine," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 35 (1994): 437–632; Jean-Paul Depretto, "L'opinion ouvrière (1928–1932)," *Revue des études slaves* 66 (1994): 55–60; Markus Wehner, "'Die Lage vor Ort ist unbefriedigend': Die Informationsberichte des sowjetischen Geheimdienstes zur Lage der russischen Bauern (1921–1927)," *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung* 2 (1994): 64–87; Mordechai Altshuler and Tat'iana Chentsova, "The Party and Popular Reaction to the 'Doctor's Plot' (Dneprope-

The Soviet regime's desire for information was so voracious and all-encompassing that it came to establish "information networks" (*osvedomitel'naia set'*) to keep track of shifting moods even among inhabitants of the GULAG and POW camps. The extent of these networks is truly stunning. According to one report, by 1944 the information network in the GULAG camp system came to encompass nearly 8 percent of the total detained population. According to another report, every third German being held in the postwar POW camps contributed at some point to the information network.²³ In this case, "information"

trovsk Province, Ukraine)," *Jews in Eastern Europe* 21 (Fall 1993): 49–63; L. Kosheleva and N. Teptsov, "Smert' Lenina: Narodnaia molva v spetsdoneseniakh OGPU" (Lenin's death: Popular gossip in the OGPU special reports), in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia* (The unknown Russia), ed. V. A. Kozlov et al. (Moscow, 1993), 4:9–24; V. Kozlov, "'Svergnut' vlast' nespravedlivosti': Svodka donesenii mestnykh organov NKVD ob antisovetskikh i khuliganskikh proiavleniakh, 1945–46" ("To overthrow the power of injustice": A summary of reports of the local NKVD organs on anti-Soviet and hooligan manifestations, 1945–46), in Kozlov et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, 4:468–75; V. Lebedev, "'Ob'ediniates' vokrug Khrista—bol'sheviki povysili tseny': Otnoshenie naseleniia SSSR k povysheniiu tsen na produkty pitaniia v 1962 g." ("Rally around Christ—the Bolsheviks raised prices": The attitude of the population of the USSR to the increase in food prices in 1962), in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, ed. V. A. Kozlov (Moscow, 1993), 3:145–76; N. Teptsov, "Monarkhiia pogibla, a antisemitizm ostalsia: Dokumenty informatsionnogo otdela OGPU 1920-kh godov" (The monarchy has passed away, but anti-semitism remained: Documents of the OGPU information department from the 1920s), in Kozlov et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, 3:324–60; V. Lazarev, "Poslednaia bolezn' Stalina: Iz otchetov MGB SSSR o nastroeniakh v armii vesnoi 1953" (Stalin's last illness: From reports of the USSR's Ministry of State Security on moods in the army in the spring of 1953), in Kozlov et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia* 2:253–60; V. Khaustov, "Demokratiia pod nadzorom NKVD: Obsuzhdenie proekta konstitutsii 1936 g." (Democracy under the NKVD's observation: The discussion of the draft for the 1936 Constitution), in Kozlov et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, 2:272–81; A. Kraishkin and N. Teptsov, "Kak snizhali tseny v kontse 40-kh-nachale 50-kh godov i chto ob etom govoril narod" (How prices were lowered at the end of the 1940s—beginning of 1950s and what the people said about that), in Kozlov et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, 2:282–96; John Barber, "Popular Reactions in Moscow to the German Invasion of June 22, 1941," *Soviet Union/Union Soviétique*, nos. 1–3 (1991), pp. 5–18; Mark von Hagen, "Soviet Soldiers and Officers on the Eve of the German Invasion," *Soviet Union/Union Soviétique*, nos. 1–3 (1991), pp. 79–101. For extensive examples of such reports through the entire course of Soviet history, see Nicolas Werth and Gaël Moullec, eds., *Les rapports secrets soviétiques: La société russe dans les documents confidentiels, 1921–1991* (Paris, 1995).

²³ For the information network in the GULAG during the Second World War, see "GULAG v gody voiny: Doklad nachal'nika GULAGa NKVD SSSR, Avgust 1944" (The GULAG in the war years: Report of the head of the GULAG of the USSR's NKVD, August 1944), *Istoricheskiĭ arkhiv* (Historical archive), no. 3 (1994), pp. 60–86, esp. p. 74. V. N. Zemskov ("'Kulatskaia ssylka' nakanune i v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny" ["'Kulak exile' on the eve and in the years of the Great Fatherland War], *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* [Sociological investigations], no. 2 [1992], p. 23) gives

was obviously not needed to identify potential enemies (these populations had already been deemed hostile) or even to forestall their actions (they were already under detention). These figures testify instead to the regime's intense desire to have all-encompassing (one is tempted to say total) information on "political moods"—not in order to control people or to protect itself, but to put it to use in refashioning even these detained—but still redeemable—people.

Moreover, the regime valued equally information about those determined to be incorrigible. The Soviets massacred the Polish detainees at Katyn in 1940, but they retained the judicial proceedings and other material on these people until 1959. Likewise, when the Soviets retreated before the German Army in 1941, they deliberately removed many files on the people they were holding. Many of the prisoners whom the files documented they simply shot.²⁴ One cannot escape the conclusion that the information about these people was more important to the regime than the people themselves. And here again this information had no prophylactic use whatsoever, as the people who were documented were already dead. For the Soviet state, then, surveillance and information-gathering cannot have been primarily a defensive endeavor.

In any case, figures such as forty-nine bureaucrats occupied with opening citizens' mail in 1913 versus ten thousand of them in 1920 would seem to suggest a convenient and simple explanation: that it is Bolshevism (however one may define it) that accounts for the institutionalization of surveillance. Indeed, scholars have frequently invoked surveillance as the classic manifestation of totalitarianism and a marker of Bolshevik Russia's uniqueness.

This view of Russia's exceptionalism is in fact quite widespread, although there exist many different explanations for it. Most frequently this exceptionalism has been traced to purported anomalies in certain areas of Russia's de-

a lower percentage of convicts participating in the information network (roughly 3 percent). For reports on the "political mood" in the camps of deported kulaks for 1930–31, see V. P. Danilov and S. A. Krasil'nikov, eds., *Spetspereseleny v zapadnoi sibir, 1930–31* (The special settlers in Western Siberia, 1930–31) (Tomsk, 1992), pp. 114–23, 149–51, 195–96, 233–35. For reports on the GULAG for the period 1928–68, see Werth and Moullec, pp. 355–430. On the activities of the information network in the postwar POW camps, see M. E. Erin and N. V. Baranova, "Nemtsy v sovetskom plenu (po arkhivnym materialam Iaroslavskoi oblasti)" (Germans in Soviet captivity [on the basis of archival materials from the Iaroslavl' region]), *Otechestvennaia istoriia* (National history), no. 6 (1995), pp. 133–42, esp. pp. 135–36.

²⁴ For documentation on the 1940 Katyn massacre, see *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1993), pp. 3–22. On the execution of prisoners in 1941, see "Chtob ne dostalis' vragu" (In order that they not fall into the enemy's hands), *Rodina*, no. 7 (1993), p. 61; and "Tragediia v medvedevskom lesu: O rasstrele politzakliuchennykh Orlovskoi tiur'my" (Tragedy in the Medved' forest: On the execution of the Orel prison's political prisoners), *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* (Proceedings of the CC of the CPSU), no. 11 (1990), pp. 124–31.

velopment, be they economic, social, political, or cultural.²⁵ Recently, an emergent orthodoxy has argued that socialism, not Russia, made the Soviet experience unique.²⁶ Yet it makes little difference here whether scholars find the origins of Bolshevik specificity in Russia's backwardness or in its socialism. Depending on the scholar, surveillance testifies either to how a hopelessly decrepit autocratic political order perverted technology to retain its control over society (the Russian *Sonderweg* argument), or to surveillance as the inevitable product of the modern if surreal project of realizing socialism in practice (the Marxist *Sonderweg* thesis). Whether it involves some form of backwardness or its unique attempt to implement socialism, Soviet Russia is portrayed as exceptional. And surveillance testifies to the exceptional nature of this Bolshevik—or, at the very most, totalitarian—system.

II. SURVEILLANCE IN 1915 AND IN 1920

A very different picture emerges, however, merely by selecting different years for comparison. Instead of contrasting the Imperial regime of 1913 and its Soviet successor, it is instructive to compare Soviet Russia with the Imperial order in its total war configuration.²⁷ Surveillance aspirations did not begin with socialism, nor did they emerge only during the war period. In the years preceding the outbreak of the First World War, both the Imperial regime and zemstvo society²⁸ had begun their own halting steps in the direction of govern-

²⁵ This view extends across ideological boundaries. Leon Trotsky's influential work, *The Russian Revolution* (New York, 1959) argues that Russia occupied a peculiar, if not unique, place in the world politicoeconomic order. Members of the modernization school (Theodore von Laue, Cyril Black, and Alexander Gerschenkron) also point to the particular nature of Russia's economic development. Richard Pipes, in works on both Imperial and Soviet Russia, identifies Russia as having a specifically patrimonial political culture; see Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York, 1974), and his two-volume work, *The Russian Revolution* (n. 10 above), and *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York, 1993). Moshe Lewin (*The Making of the Soviet System* [New York, 1985]) identifies Russia's sociopolitical backwardness (particularly that of the peasantry) as the source of Russian specificity, and indeed as a cause of Stalinism. For the highly original and provocative thesis that Russia lacked the legal framework for protecting the autonomy of professional disciplines, see Laura Engelstein, "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia," *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 338–53.

²⁶ Here I am thinking first and foremost of Malia (n. 6 above); but also influential textbooks such as Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich, *Utopia in Power* (New York, 1986).

²⁷ Michael Geyer's comments on the forms of total mobilization in Germany are very suggestive for Russia; see his "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914–1945," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J., 1986).

²⁸ Zemstvos were the self-governing units that were established by the Great Reforms in the 1860s and that employed the fabled "Third Element." They presented themselves as society's antipode to the autocratic state.

mental surveillance. The autocracy moved from concern only about court opinion and the revolutionary movement and increasingly sought to probe the “mood” of zemstvo and industrial circles through a network of secret reporting. Yet the tsarist state held no monopoly on such aspirations. Zemstvos in the Ufa region, for instance, took up a project on the eve of the war to establish an entire network of “reading huts” (*izba-chital'nia*) at the village level—all, of course, in order to transform benighted peasants into enlightened citizens.²⁹

So prior to 1914 Russian officials had certainly conceived of surveillance as a project, and they had even taken some tentative steps to realize their aspirations. However, it was during the First World War that these embryonic plans for social management were massively translated into practice. Thirteen months into a war that was rapidly becoming total, the Imperial administration reevaluated its conduct of the war and came to the conclusion that it could no longer rely only on commands but must instead seek to harness the country’s “vital forces.”³⁰ Accordingly, in October 1915 the Russian interior minister ordered provincial and district officials to compile regular monthly reports on

²⁹ Surveillance materials on political-industrial circles may be found in B. B. Grave, *Burzhuaziiia nakanune fevral'skoi revoliutsii* (The bourgeoisie on the eve of the February Revolution) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927); see also the documents on attitudes among political, Duma, opposition, revolutionary, and urban circles from early 1917 in “V ianvare i fevrale 1917: Iz donesenii sekretnykh agentov Protopopov” (In January and February 1917: From the reports of Protopopov’s secret agents), *Byloe*, no. 13, kn. 7 (July 1918), pp. 91–123. In December 1915 the department of police issued a circular instructing all local gendarme sections to compile reports on “right wing organizations” and indicating what information was to be submitted; see Iu. K. Kir’ianov, “Mestnye organizatsii pravyykh partii v Rossii nakanune fevralia 1917” (Local organizations of the right-wing parties in Russia on the eve of February 1917), *Otechestvennyye arkhivy* (National archives), no. 6 (1995), pp. 52–59, and “Perepiska pravyykh i drugie materialy ob ikh deiatel'nosti v 1914–1917” (Correspondence of the rightists and other materials on their activity in 1914–1917), *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1996), pp. 113–15. For the tsarist surveillance of zemstvo circles and the Ufa reading hut project, see Charles Steinwedel’s forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation, “The Local Politics of Empire: State, Religion and National Identity in Ufa Province, 1865–1917” (Columbia University). Yanni Kotonis, in “Making Peasants Backwards” (privately circulated MS), shows how agronomists sought to transform the countryside’s “dark human mass” into enlightened citizens.

³⁰ For a description of this period and various measures introduced, see Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (New York, 1939); W. Bruce Lincoln, *Passage through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution* (New York, 1986); and Lewis Siegelbaum, *The Politics of Industrial Mobilization in Russia, 1914–17* (New York, 1983). For a reflection of this view in the military press, see E. Krivtsov, “Kniga i gazeta na voine” (The book and newspaper at war), *Voennyi sbornik* (Military compilation), no. 11 (1915), pp. 85–92, which calls on the army to recognize the need for informed, dedicated citizen-soldiers—and “only the newspaper can serve the role of the unbreakable link between the army and people” (p. 86). Such talk has long been identified solely with the Red Army; its origins obviously lay earlier.

the population's "moods" and issued a standardized set of questions to be addressed ("attitude of workers and peasants to the war and any changes in their mood"; "mood of zemstvo personnel and officials"; "mood of pedagogic personnel and students"; and so on). Due to the different nature of their previous institutional culture, local officials proved to be ill prepared for such concerns. Officials somewhat laconically noted that "the mood is satisfactory" and thereafter merely submitted updates noting that "no changes have occurred" month after month, right up to the February 1917 Revolution.³¹ But the bureaucracy's unfamiliarity with its new task should not cause us to overlook a significant shift: the government was now concerned with the collection of such information and was pursuing institutional measures to secure it.

Zemstvo circles too attempted to plumb the popular mood of the countryside. In 1915 the Kostroma zemstvo circulated its own questionnaires asking correspondents, among other things, to "write in detail how the war has generally affected the condition and mood [*nastroenie*] of the population . . . what do they think and say in the village about the war?" Information gathered from nearly six hundred responses was then used to determine "how village consciousness is comprehending the war" and what the countryside's "predominant moods" were.³² The purpose of this zemstvo project was not just to gather information but also to use the collected information to determine the most appropriate measures for maximizing the utilization of the village's resources—economic, physical, and spiritual—in the war effort.

But it was in the Russian Army that the practice of surveillance was most

³¹ On the interior minister's circular no. 976 and sample reports from Moscow and Petersburg, see M. Pokrovskii, "Politicheskoe polozhenie Rossii nakanune fevral'skoi revoliutsii v zhandarskom osveshchenii" (Russia's political situation on the eve of the February Revolution as revealed by the gendarmerie), *Krasnyi arkhiv* (Red archive) 17 (1926): 3–35; and A. M. Anfimov, "Tsarskaia okhranka o politicheskom polozhenii v strane v kontse 1916 g." (The tsarist Okhrana on the political situation in the country at the end of 1916), *Istoricheskii arkhiv* 1 (1960): 203–9. For the standardized form to be employed and a run of monthly reports from Ufa province, see Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv respubliki Bashkortostan, f. 87, op. 1, d. 551, ll. 12–13, 28, 90–91, 95, 99; f. 554 in this archive holds reports from the district level on which the monthly provincial report was compiled. (I thank my colleague Charles Steinwedel for generously sharing this material from Ufa with me.) Thus Hubertus Jahn (*Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* [Ithaca, N.Y., 1995], pp. 4–5) is right to claim that "no opinion polls, of course, were conducted in World War I Russia"; opinion polling, in Russia or anywhere else, was several decades away. In claiming that "very little is known about patriotic convictions in the Russian countryside," however, he is right only insofar as this information was not made public; but the regime was interested in the countryside's convictions and generated much material on it. Surprisingly, Izmozik also overlooks this significant endeavor.

³² Otsenочно-statisticheskoe biuro kostromskoi gubernskoi upravly (Evaluative-statistical bureau of the Kostroma zemstvo board), *Voina i Kostromskaia derevnia* (po

advanced. By 1915, the army began compiling its own “summaries on the mood” (*svodki o nastroenii*) of soldiers in the ranks as well as among the population in general.³³ But its main source of information on popular moods came from the military postal censorship departments (*voenno-tsenzurnye otdeleniia*). At the beginning of the First World War, the army established postal censorship departments to open all mail passing through the post.³⁴ This was a major task. A single field postal censorship office in one army corps opened, read, and analyzed over thirteen thousand letters in the course of two weeks.³⁵ Postal censorship boards opened, read, and evaluated fifty thousand letters per day from Russian POWs alone (and this figure does not even cover the regular internal post). To meet demand, authorities pressed postal employees and interior ministry officials into service as censors. Things got so desperate that, after more than two years of war, the authorities finally relented and in April 1916 permitted women to perform this sensitive duty.³⁶

The task of these organs was not to control content but to describe and, insofar as possible, explain people’s attitudes. On the basis of literally tens of

dannym ankety statisticheskogo otdeleniia) (The war and the Kostroma village [based on materials of the statistical department’s questionnaire]) (Kostroma, 1915).

³³ For Russian Army questionnaires soliciting information on “the conduct of Jews in the Army” and also on “the attitude of the Jewish population to the war,” see “Dokumenty o presledovanii evreev” (Documents on the persecution of the Jews), *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii* (Archive of the Russian Revolution) 19 (1928): 253, 259, 263–65. The German Army engaged in an analogous survey on the distribution of its own Jewish troops; see Werner Angress, “The German Army’s ‘Juden-zählung’ of 1916: Genesis-Consequences-Significance,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23 (1978): 117–37. For more general Russian Army reports on the troops’ “mood” from 1916–17, see N. N. Golovin, *Voennye usiliia Rossii v mirovoi voine* (Russia’s military efforts in the world war), 2 vols. (Paris, 1939), 1:229–30, 232–36; and A. L. Sidorov, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v armii i na flote v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny* (The revolutionary movement in the army and fleet in the years of the First World War) (Moscow, 1966), pp. 170–72, 290–92.

³⁴ For the “Temporary Statute on Military Censorship,” see O. I. Averbakh, *Zakonodatel’nye akty vyzvannnye voinoiu 1914 goda* (Legislative acts caused by the war of 1914) (Vilna, 1915), pp. 17–39. On the history of military censorship departments, see Davidian and Kozlov (n. 20 above), pp. 200–202; L. G. Protasov, “Vazhnyi istochnik po istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v tsarskoi armii perez fevral’skoi revoliutsii” (An important source for the history of the revolutionary movement in the tsarist army before the February Revolution), in *Istochnikovedcheskie raboty* (Source study papers), ed. L. G. Protasov et al. (Tambov, 1970), 1:3–18; and N. A. Varkhrusheva, “Soldatskie pis’ma i tsenzorskie otchety kak istoricheskii istochnik,” in *Oktiabr’ v povolozh’e i priural’e* (October in the Volga and Urals regions), ed. I. M. Ionenko (Kazan’, 1972), pp. 67–89. See also comments on military censorship in the memoirs of M. Lemke, *250 dnei v tsarskoi stavke* (250 days in the tsar’s headquarters) (St. Petersburg, 1920); and Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army*, 2 vols. (New York, 1921).

³⁵ Sidorov, ed., p. 292.

³⁶ Lemke, pp. 405, 436–37, 442.

thousands of perused letters, officials in every army formation and each military district throughout the Russian Empire compiled “summaries” (using mimeographed forms) and categorized (in statistical percentages) all correspondence as “patriotic,” “depressed,” and “indifferent.” One such summary from 1916, with comic precision, recorded 30.25 percent of all letters “patriotic,” 2.15 percent “depressed,” and 67.6 percent “indifferent.”³⁷ And, like their associates in Britain, authorities in Russia sought not only to record but also to shape soldier-correspondents’ means of self-expression—and indeed their identities—through standardized form letters and postcards.³⁸

Soldiers were aware that the authorities had a newfound interest in their letters. Many refrained from using the military postal system and tried to use only the civil post instead.³⁹ One soldier tried another tack and appealed to the censor directly, by appending a PS to his letter: “Dear Sir, Mr. Censor: let this letter through, because you yourself know that we are being slaughtered like cattle to no purpose.”⁴⁰ Thus surveillance involved not only collecting material but also had begun to shape how people thought they could express themselves—while at the same time suggesting to them that their views mattered.

Tellingly, postal censorship departments were not abolished with the February 1917 Revolution but continued their activity throughout 1917 under the Provisional Government. They were abolished only with the Soviet Revolution in October 1917. Yet the Soviets found they could not do without the information generated by postal censorship organs, and in 1918 they reintroduced these organs in the Red Army. This is not to say that there were not important differences. The Soviet regime, with its larger definition of the political sphere, was concerned with a much broader spectrum of issues than the tsarist regime had been. But the task and structure of the Soviet organs did not fundamentally

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 545; see also Sidorov, ed., pp. 296–97, 309. The Kostroma zemstvo likewise sought to quantify the village’s mood in statistical categories: the compilers reported that 44 percent of the responses indicated a mood they characterized as “depressed” or as involving a view of the war as a calamity; 39 percent were classified “inspired” or “confident”; and 17 percent were considered “indifferent” or “apathetic” (*Voina i Kostromskaia derevnia*, pp. 66–77).

³⁸ Clearly, my interest in how the First World War shaped Russians’ methods and forms of expression is indebted to Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York, 1975). On the employment of printed form letters and postcards (in England, the Field Service Post card), which limited the senders’ ability to express themselves to one of several cheery, official formulations, see Fussell, pp. 183–86. For Russia in the First World War, see L. V. Evdokimov, “Narodnoe soldatskoe pis’mo” (The common soldier’s letter), *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 3 (1914), pp. 149–64, citing German, French, and Italian models; and Jahn, pp. 47–48. For Soviet service postcards from the Second World War, see Mikhail Zabochen’, “Stoletie otkrytok” (A century of postcards), *Istochnik* (Source), no. 6 (1995), pp. 54–60.

³⁹ See Protasov, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁰ Sidorov, ed., p. 281.

differ from that of their prerevolutionary predecessors. Again, the purpose was less to forestall unrest than to measure opinion so as to act on it. Soviet military censors copied out excerpts from all letters indicating in any way—positive, negative, or apathetic—the author’s political attitudes. These excerpts were then codified and served as the source for regular bimonthly thematic and regional reports. There were desertion summaries, supply summaries, summaries on abuse of office—but the most prevalent was the political summary.⁴¹

It is not difficult to demonstrate the Soviet concern for surveillance. It became suffused throughout virtually the entire Soviet apparatus. In the course of the Civil War, every major Soviet institution—the army, the Party, the Soviet civil apparatus, the Cheka—generated “summaries on the population’s mood” (*svodki o nastroenii naseleniia*). The Cheka not only demanded regular summaries; it also circulated critiques of incomplete or unsatisfactory reports, indicating the specific error and what was expected in the future. In particular, the Cheka sternly admonished its officials that it was not enough merely to describe attitudes; they should also “indicate what *explains*” these attitudes.⁴² Similarly, the postal censorship departments not only issued “summaries” but also invariably included interpretative analyses of their contents in an accompanying cover letter.⁴³ These ubiquitous “summaries on the population’s mood” and the standardized categories drawn up to typify those moods (categories which historians now employ so casually) became a virtual genre in Soviet administrative literature and represent the classic artifacts of surveillance.⁴⁴

⁴¹ For examples of political and desertion summaries from mid-1920, see RGVA (n. 20 above), f. 25896, op. 2, d. 11, ll. 1–11, 41–43, 47–48, 94–95, 132–33, 145, 149; for military summaries from mid-1919 to early 1920, see RGVA, f. 192, op. 2, d. 385, ll. 2, 11, 17, 27–28, 38.

⁴² Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rostovskoi oblasti (henceforth, GARO), f. R-97, op. 1, d. 772, ll. 19–21 (emphasis in original). For a standardized Cheka form for regular reports from late 1918, see L. P. Gordeeva, V. A. Kazakov, and V. V. Smirnov, eds., *Zabveniiu ne podlezhit* (Not to be forgotten) (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1994), 2:158–60.

⁴³ RGVA, f. 25896, op. 2, d. 11, ll. 46, 98 (Northern Caucasus Military District explanatory memoranda to summaries for June 25–July 10 and July 10–25, 1920).

⁴⁴ While most scholars date Soviet surveillance to its institutionalization in such high-profile organs as the Cheka or OGPU (e.g., Werth [n. 22 above], p. 18; Wehner [n. 22 above], p. 69), the first widespread Soviet surveillance effort was begun by the military. In autumn 1918 political departments in military units (in regions of the front) and military commissariats (throughout the rest of the Republic) began compiling regular reports on the population’s attitudes. Even more significant, the descriptive categories within which all popular moods would henceforth be fitted were worked out at this time by the statistical section of the Soviet Inspection Agency, headed by M. S. Kedrov. It was on this descriptive grid that all future reports of popular mood would be fitted. See M. A. Molotsygin, *Raboche-krest’ianskii soiuz* (The worker-peasant alliance) (Moscow, 1987), pp. 36–37. Only later was surveillance concentrated exclusively in the hands of Soviet state security organs, which in 1922 were instructed to establish secret

Yet this “Soviet” practice merely extended aspirations that had been prevalent during the First World War and that had already been institutionalized in state structures. The practices of the autocracy’s total war regime thus stood not so much in stark contrast to Soviet ones, but rather at midpoint along a continuum between the prewar Imperial administrative order and the Soviet governmental state. Hence comparisons of Soviet surveillance practices with those of the tsarist secret police (particularly its Black Offices), while fashionable, are misguided. In terms of purview, extent, and even genealogy, Soviet surveillance should be set against the practices of World War I.⁴⁵ Indeed, throughout the 1920s, the Soviets themselves recognized the First World War as the relevant context for discussing their elaboration of techniques in political work and economic planning.⁴⁶

bureaus “in every state, public, cooperative and private institution or enterprise”; see “Khoroshii kommunist v to zhe vremia est’ i khoroshii chekist” (A good communist is at the same time a good Chekist), *Staraia ploshchad’*: *Vestnik*, no. 1 (1996), pp. 115–19.

⁴⁵ While the First World War has often been treated merely as a catalyst for Revolution, several scholars are now investigating how the war refigured both attitudes and practices; see Alessandro Stanziani, “Spécialistes, bureaucrates et paysans: Les approvisionnements agricoles pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale, 1914–1917,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 36 (1995): 71–94, and “Rationalité économique et rationalisation de la production en Russie, 1892–1930,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales*, no. 1 (1996), pp. 215–39; Andrea Graziosi, “G. L. Piatakov (1890–1937): A Mirror of Soviet History,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 16, nos. 1/2 (1992): 102–66; Mark von Hagen, “The Great War and the Emergence of Modern Ukraine,” in *Empire, Nations, Regions: Political Order and Change in the Former Soviet Space*, ed. Richard Barnett (in press); and Ronald G. Suny, “Nation-Making, Nation-Breaking and the End of Empire: New Perspectives on the Events of 1915” (paper presented at the Fourth Annual Vardanants Day Armenian Lecture, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., May 1, 1996).

⁴⁶ On the lessons the Soviets drew from the First World War about “political work,” see F. Blumental’, *Burzhuznaia politrabota v mirovuiu voinu 1914–1919 gg.: Obrabotka obshchestvennogo mneniia* (Bourgeois political work in the world war, 1914–1919: Working upon public opinion) (Moscow, 1928); S. Denisov and V. Rzhzhnikov, *Politicheskaia obrabotka soldat v burzhuznykh armiakh: Nashi zapadnye sosedii* (Political work upon soldiers in bourgeois armies: Our Western neighbors) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1929); Iu. Aliakritskii and S. Lemeshhevskii, *Propaganda v armiakh imperialistov* (Propaganda in the armies of the imperialists) (Moscow, 1931); A. Verkhovskii, “Propaganda kak boevoe sredstvo v imperialisticheskoi voine 1914–1918” (Propaganda as a tool of battle in the imperialist war), *Voennyi vestnik* (Military courier) 43 (1924): 5–9; Iu. T., “Kul’turno-prosvetitel’skaia rabota v pol’skoi armii” (Cultural-enlightenment work in the Polish army), *Armiia i revoliutsiia* (The army and revolution), no. 2 (1925), pp. 72–75 (on measures in the Polish Legion during the First World War). On the concept of a managed economy, based on the principles of a *Kriegswirtschaft*, see G. Binshtok, *Voprosy proizvod’stvennogo snabzheniia v voennom khoziaistve Germanii* (Questions of food supply in Germany’s military economy) (Moscow, 1918); Ia. M. Bukshpan, *Voенно-khoziaistvennaia politika: Formy i organy regulirovaniia narodnogo khoziaistva za vremia mirovoi voiny, 1914–1918* (Military-economic policy:

III. RED SURVEILLANCE, WHITE SURVEILLANCE

Hitherto, surveillance has been treated longitudinally, within the chronological current of Russian history. But it can also be viewed comparatively. One may first analyze the role of surveillance in opposing Russian political movements in the course of the Russian Revolution and Civil War. If surveillance was somehow intrinsically Bolshevik (even if one admits that its origins lay earlier), one would expect that Bolshevism's opponents would not have resorted to it, or at least would not have employed it as extensively.

Here one is confronted with a major surprise, however. Recalling Stalin's explicit claim that the Bolsheviks aspired to be engineers of the human soul, scholars are prepared for the fact that the Soviet regime would seek knowledge of people's inner lives. Yet how is one to explain entire caches of reports on the populace's moods generated by surveillance bureaucracies of the anti-Soviet movements?⁴⁷

It could be argued that the Whites merely sought to counter Soviet surveillance activities. Certainly this was a consideration. But White movements embarked on surveillance projects of their own even before the Soviets got their apparatus up and running. In the Don territory, for instance, even localized anti-Soviet insurgencies felt it necessary to form their own surveillance organs.⁴⁸ And the Whites evinced an identical concern for knowing about and

Forms and organs of regulating the economy during the world war, 1914–1918) (Moscow, 1929); E. Khmel'nitskaia, *Voennaia ekonomika Germanii 1914–1918: Opyt teorii analiza voen. khoziaistva* (Germany's military economy, 1914–1918: An attempt at a theory of analysis of the military economy) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1929). The first Russian edition of John Maynard Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace* appeared in 1922, the same year a translation of Hindenberg's memoirs appeared; a second translated edition of Keynes appeared in 1924. This is only a sampling of the Soviet literature (both original and in translation) analyzing various issues "based on the experience of the world war" (*po opytu mirovoi voiny*).

⁴⁷ Peter Kenez was the first to focus attention on the myriad White counterintelligence and surveillance agencies in *The Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920: The Defeat of the Whites* (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 65–78; on these organs, see also Viktor Bortnevskii, "White Intelligence and Counter-intelligence during the Russian Civil War," *Carl Beck Papers*, no. 1108 (1995); and Bortnevskii's documentary publications: "K istorii osvedomitel'noi organizatsii 'Azbuka'" (Toward a history of the surveillance organization "Alphabet"), *Russkoe Proshloe* (Russian past) 4 (1993): 160–93, "Iz dokumentov belogvardeiskoi kontrrazvedki: Sekretnaia svodka o rabote Khar'kovskogo osvaga" (From the documents of White counterintelligence: A secret summary report on the work of the Khar'kov Osvag), *Russkoe Proshloe* 2 (1991): 339–47, and "Iz dokumentov belogvardeiskoi kontrrazvedki 1919 g." (From the documents of White counterintelligence, 1919), *Russkoe Proshloe* 1 (1991): 150–72.

⁴⁸ The anti-Soviet Don government formed its surveillance organ, the Don Information Agency, in May 1918 (see below), whereas the Soviets began compiling regular reports on the population's moods only in the late summer of 1918. For a local anti-

fostering the population's consciousness (not "public opinion" or "popular support"). This was the goal, after all: one couldn't act on people's consciousness (however that consciousness might be defined) unless one had first determined at what level it already stood. All political movements had passed through the experience of the First World War and all had emerged from it thinking of surveillance as indispensable to governing. For while the various movements in the Civil War all appealed to different constituencies and sought to realize different views of the world, they all operated within the governmental paradigm. That is, they all practiced a form of politics predicated on the social theory of representation and deriving legitimacy from the idea of popular sovereignty. And while they differed significantly over the precise form the world should take, they all viewed politics as a tool for both sculpting society and operating on populations to realize this blueprint.⁴⁹

For the anti-Soviet movements surveillance was just as routinized and well-established as it was for the Bolsheviks. Among the very first acts of the anti-Soviet Don government was to establish a "Don Information Agency" (what I shall only half-facetiously term the DIA). In informing the population about the new agency, the authorities described its task as twofold. First, it was to inform the population "about the military and political situation and also about the government's activity"; and second, it was to inform the government about "life, events and sentiments in the territory."⁵⁰ This agency came to encompass a network of roughly two hundred subcenters, sixty centers, and nine district departments, in addition to the central administration.⁵¹ The DIA's network for

Soviet movement that spontaneously formed its own "political department" for "informing" the population of the movement's goals and character, see GARO, f. 856, op. 1, d. 73, l. 3 (resolution no. 5 of the Ust'-Medveditsa Soviet of free khutors and stantsias, May 17, 1918).

⁴⁹ On the propensity to sculpt populations in the late Imperial and Soviet period, see Peter Holquist, "Conduct Merciless Mass Terror: Decossackization on the Don, 1919," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 38, nos. 1–2 (1997): 103–38. Stanziani ("Rationalité économique") notes corresponding aspirations among agrarian specialists. For features of this modern form of politics, see Keith Michael Baker, "Introduction" and "Representation," in *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (New York, 1986), pp. xi–xxiv, 469–92.

⁵⁰ *Donskoi kraï* (The Don Country), May 14, 1918. This aspiration was nearly universal. One official of OSVAG, the propaganda branch of Denikin's anti-Soviet government, described OSVAG's agenda in these terms: "The work of the Information department can be divided into two components: information 'upwards' (to the authorities) and information 'downwards' (to the population). The first component encompasses preparing summaries on all expressions of local social and political life and sending [this information] up the chain of command" (Bortnevskii, "Iz dokumentov osvaga," pp. 341–42).

⁵¹ GARO, f. 861, op. 1, d. 107, ll. 52–62, 77, 80 ("report on work of the Don Information Agency, April–August 1919").

a single province was thus comparable in numbers and extent to what the tsarist secret police had had for the entire Empire. And this was so not because the Whites had more resources to commit than the tsarist regime, but because the White surveillance organs served a fundamentally different purpose than the tsarist security divisions.

“Information”—the coin of the new political realm—was meant to circulate in two directions: from the authorities to the population, and from (or rather about) the population to the authorities. The first task, informing the population, was meant to engage citizens and, ultimately, to aid in transforming them. To this end, the DIA published several of its own newspapers, controlled the content of all other press reporting, and established a network of information subcenters throughout the region.⁵² Most intriguing, however, was another tool for keeping the population abreast of the government’s activity: the reading hut (*izba-chital’nia*), a humble cabin in some small, out-of-the-way community equipped with newspapers and political pamphlets.⁵³ This intended redoubt of political knowledge in the benighted countryside has hitherto been identified only with the Bolsheviks.⁵⁴ As we have seen, however, *zemstvo* activists before the First World War and Whites in the course of the Civil War also established information networks for enlightening the population. And, very significantly, both Reds and Whites described their task not as “propaganda” but as “enlightenment.”⁵⁵ The propaganda state—or more accurately, the Enlightenment state—was not solely a Bolshevik ideal.

⁵² See Al. Drozdov, “Intelligentsiia na Donu” (The intelligentsia on the Don), *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii*, no. 2 (1921), pp. 45–58; and Roz-v., “Belaia pechat’ na Iuge Rossii” (The White press in the South of Russia), *Byloe* 34 (1925): 206–21; also GARO, f. 861, op. 1, d. 107, l. 55 (“report on work of DIA”). On OSVAG’s identical endeavor, see Bortnevskii, “Iz dokumentov Osvaga,” pp. 342–43. It is important to emphasize that “censorship” did not just seek to prevent harmful information from “infecting” the population; censorship equally sought to ensure that people received the proper information necessary for their political development. On the activist, constructive side of censorship in the Soviet period, see Kotkin (n. 3 above), pp. 226, 358. I obviously believe this outlook was not limited to the Bolsheviks alone.

⁵³ Under the Whites, Kamenskaia stanitsa had two separate reading huts, one established by the DIA and another by OSVAG (*Vechnnee vremia* [Evening times] [Rostov], August 8, 1919; *Donetskaia zhizn’* [Donetsk life] [Kaledinsk-b. Millerovo], November 15, 1919).

⁵⁴ Kenez (*The Birth of the Propaganda State* [n. 7 above], pp. 137–42) identifies reading huts as something particularly Bolshevik. Similarly, the agitational trains he describes as “an unusual and yet typical Bolshevik method” (p. 58) also were employed in the immediate prewar period to spread “agronomic enlightenment” among the dark masses (Kotsonis, “Making Peasants Backwards” [n. 29 above]).

⁵⁵ On cultural enlightenment work in the Red Army, see Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990); and *Kratkii ocherk kul’turno-prosvetitel’noi raboty v krasnoi armii za 1918 god* (A short sketch of the cultural-enlighten-

But information was equally meant to flow in the other direction, informing the government of the population's "mood." For this task, the DIA established an entire network of secret informers and set up special courses to train them. These agents then traveled undercover throughout the Don territory in the guise of actors, refugees, students, railway workers, teachers, and even obstetricians. It was from the regular reports of these agents and employees working in its subcenters that the central administration compiled its own daily summaries.⁵⁶ These summaries were organized topically, with each topic assigned a letter. It is no coincidence that the first letter of the alphabet was reserved for reports "on the population's mood."

Nor did the Whites share only the practice of surveillance. White surveillance technocrats also shared a concern about people's "consciousness" (a condition that officials in the late tsarist period had increasingly also sought to foster). Thus the project of transforming ignorant subjects into emancipated and enlightened citizens derived not from socialism alone, but also from a much larger tectonic shift in the nature of politics (from territorial to governmental), of which socialism was merely the most successful and forceful representative.

The White surveillance project, like its Red counterpart, was concerned at least as much with thought as with action. For instance, a White report on one recently liberated region reads, "Most of the rural population quite sincerely submit to the lawful Russian authority, but remain primarily in a state of obedience and sympathy. The broad masses in the village welcomed [our] units, since with their arrival they were delivered from the Bolsheviks' arbitrary rule and violence . . . but now they relate to their liberators entirely passively. . . . One often hears in conversations among peasants: 'your guys [*vashi*] did so and so, and the Bolsheviks did such and such.' They don't say 'our guys [*nashi*].'"⁵⁷ What this official bemoans is precisely the attitude earlier tsarist officials would have desired most: obedient, sympathetic submission. But the concern now is with people's beliefs, not just with how they behave. In another

ment work in the Red Army for 1918) (Moscow, 1919). On similar activities among the Whites, see Kenez, *The Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920*, pp. 75–78 (described, however, only as "propaganda") and Bortnevskii, "Iz dokumentov Osvaga," pp. 344–45. For the argument that the term "propaganda" fails to convey the true meaning of such efforts, see Mosse (n. 8 above), pp. 10–11.

⁵⁶ RGVA, f. 39456, op. 1, d. 60, holds a fairly complete run of the DIA's daily summaries for June–August 1918. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (henceforth, GARF), f. 452, op. 1, d. 14, has fairly complete holdings of DIA daily summaries for mid-1919; for late 1919, GARO (n. 42 above), f. 861, op. 1, d. 107, holds nearly a full run of summaries.

⁵⁷ Wrangel Military Archive, Hoover Institution, box 38, folder 18 (summary no. 118 of Armed Forces in South Russia intelligence department's Khar'kov branch, August 1919).

report, an official complained that “the attitude to conscription is varied: some are conscious of the need for a struggle to complete victory, while others . . . respond unwillingly to the summons. . . . The percentage of draft-dodgers nevertheless comprises only two to three percent of the total.”⁵⁸ This agent is discussing a region that had an almost unbelievably high degree of compliance with conscription for a period of civil war: 97–98 percent of those eligible responded to the mobilization summons, a response rate higher than that enjoyed by the tsarist regime in 1914. Yet our surveillance technocrat is not satisfied with his success at procuring bodies: he is concerned instead with the state of the recruits’ hearts and minds.

And people could not avoid knowing that the authorities had a newfound interest in what they thought, felt, and said. Not all welcomed the incessant gaze of this new mechanism of governing. One DIA report noted that in Chernyshevskaia stanitsa “the entire population has been mobilized”; that the “mood is firm”; that “relations between Cossacks and outlanders are strained”; and, inter alia, that “the attitude of both the stanitsa ataman and the stanitsa members to the formation of an information office is negative.”⁵⁹ Many became increasingly reticent to express their opinions. The DIA (as would later the OGPU-NKVD) of course found significance even in people’s reluctance to express themselves, and therefore duly reported that the population “fears to express its views openly”; “engages in political discussions only very reluctantly”; “expresses itself very reservedly, unwillingly, cautiously.”⁶⁰ Such reports do not mean that people had ceased to talk about politics, only that they now had to temper their expressions with the knowledge that the authorities—Red and White—were listening.

Although White and Red shared some common practices, there were also significant differences. Without doubt, the Soviets had a much broader definition of the political sphere, and their surveillance endeavor was correspond-

⁵⁸ GARF, f. 452, op. 1, d. 14, l. 5 (DIA summary no. 31 for July 1, 1919). For similar reports, see GARF, f. 452, op. 1, d. 32, l. 9 (agitational summary no. 6 of OSVAG’s Don branch, June 22, 1919); *Donskie vedomosti* (Don gazette), June 18, 1919; GARF, f. 452, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 19, 26 (DIA summaries no. 41 from July 12, 1919, no. 44 from July 16, 1919); GARF, f. 452, op. 1, d. 19, l. 21 (summary no. 89 of DIA’s bureau no. 6 from September 18, 1919); *Donskie vedomosti*, October 19, 1919; GARO, f. 861, op. 1, d. 107, l. 89 (DIA summary no. 281 from December 24, 1919).

⁵⁹ RGVA, f. 39456, op. 1, d. 60, l. 7; similarly, l. 14.

⁶⁰ GARF, f. 452, op. 1, d. 32, l. 18 (agitational summary no. 7 of OSVAG’s Don branch, June 29, 1919); *Donskie vedomosti*, June 20, 1919; GARO, f. 861, op. 1, d. 107, l. 115 (DIA summary no. 314 from January 2, 1920). See also above on how soldiers in the First World War knew their mail was being intercepted and read. And as is evident from their letters, many (certainly not all) Soviet citizens also were aware that they too were being “surveilled”; see Izmozik, “Voices from the Twenties” (n. 20 above) pp. 303–4.

ingly more all-encompassing. However, the aspirations for surveillance and the concrete institutionalization of this desire cannot be chalked up to Bolshevism alone. Bolshevism was more important in determining the ends to which surveillance would be used.

IV. SURVEILLANCE IN RUSSIA, SURVEILLANCE IN EUROPE

Thus surveillance cannot be ascribed solely to socialism or to Bolshevism as an ideology. Yet some might still argue that it was a peculiarly Russian predilection—Russian authoritarianism merely taking on a new, more efficient guise.⁶¹ So I will shift the comparative lens one final time to measure Russia's surveillance projects against those of other Great Powers in that same period.

It should be noted from the outset that while the tsarist security agency (*Okhrana*) is often portrayed as the poster boy for Russian authoritarianism, its Black Offices were modeled on and even took their titles from the French "Cabinets noirs," elaborated by Napoleon and perfected throughout the nineteenth century by the French state.⁶² The compilation of a state filing system on troublemakers, complete with "mug shots"—the very photos that are now used to embellish biographies of leading revolutionaries—also did not develop spontaneously in Russia. This improved form of human archive emerged only when the Russian state decided to coordinate its information better by introducing the French Bertillon system of filing.⁶³ (Incidentally, the Bertillon-type filing system was yet another practice that did not fall neatly within chronological or ideological boundaries—it, too, began under the tsarist regime and was

⁶¹ This argument is untenable from the outset, in that surveillance required absolutely no technological innovations. Surveillance demanded only a bureaucrat, a form, and a file drawer, the very same technology the Lutheran Church required nearly four hundred years earlier for its church visitations. Surveillance relied instead on a different politico-social environment, one that made each citizen into an agent and that treated the actions of each citizen as significant. Gellately has stressed that totalitarianism differed from its predecessors not in its technology, but in its ability to elicit popular participation and to evoke an "individual Gleichschaltung" ("Enforcing Racial Policy in Nazi Germany" [n. 4 above], pp. 45, 51). That is, totalitarianism results more from a change in orientation than from any technological transformation.

⁶² Jean Tulard, "Le 'cabinet noir' de Napoleon," *L'histoire* 32 (1991): 81–83. On surveillance, reportage, and policing under Napoleon I and III, see E. K. Bramstedt, *Dictatorship and Political Police* (1945; reprinted, London, 1976), pp. 16–23, 38–47. Monas (n. 16 above) admirably situates Nicholaevan practices within a more general European context.

⁶³ Allen Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 3–64, esp. 34–35. Bertillon's system was superseded by Dalton's system of cataloging people by their fingerprints rather than by photographs. See Sekula; and Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," *History Workshop* 9 (1980): 5–36.

carried over into the Soviet period.) So policing-style surveillance—gathering information on individual troublemakers as a preventive measure—was hardly unique to the Russian autocracy. But what of governmental surveillance on an aggregate scale for knowing about and managing the population's moods? Here the boundary runs not so much between Russia and Europe as between pre-1914 and postdeluge Europe, Russia included.

In the course of the war, all major states came to engage in massive, routinized perustration of the internal mails, and all did so for the purpose of surveillance. As the First World War progressed, German military authorities, like their Russian counterparts, “busily read the letters soldiers sent back home [and] were often deeply disturbed by what they found.” And German authorities were likewise intercepting and analyzing letters to and from the army in order to compile regular reports on attitudes (*Stimmung*) and morale (*Geist*).⁶⁴ For a single ten-day reporting period, one army postal censorship board sifted through over fifty-four thousand letters, all in order to compile its regular bimonthly overview of morale.⁶⁵ The German reports, it should be noted, were nearly identical in form to those compiled by the Russian Army's censorship departments.

The French command did not come to rely extensively on surveillance until early 1917, when it became deeply concerned about morale and mood both within the army and among the population. Seeking better to anticipate and manage *opinion publique* (the French equivalent of Russian *nastroenie* and

⁶⁴ Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford, 1993), p. 45; for official concern about the content of letters, see Wilhelm Deist, ed., *Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg, 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf, 1970), 1:295–97. On German censorship and *Feldpostbriefe*, see Bernd Ulrich, “Feldpostbriefe im Ersten Weltkrieg: Bedeutung und Zensur,” in *Kriegsalltag: Die Rekonstruktion des Kriegsalltags als Aufgabe der historischen Forschung*, ed. Peter Knoch (Stuttgart, 1989), pp. 40–75; and “‘Eine wahre Pest in der öffentlichen Meinung’: Zur Rolle von Feldpostbriefen während des Ersten Weltkrieges und der Nachkriegszeit,” in *Lernen aus dem Krieg? Deutsche Nachkriegszeiten, 1918 und 1945*, ed. Gottfried Niedhart and Dieter Riesenberger (Munich, 1992), pp. 319–30; Peter Knoch, “Erleben und Nacherleben: Das Kriegserlebnis im Augenzeugenbericht und im Geschichtsunterricht,” in *Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch . . . : Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld et al. (Essen, 1993), pp. 199–219; and, for the public uses to which *Feldpostbriefe* were put, see Manfred Hettling and Michael Jeismann, “Der Weltkrieg als Epos: Philipp Witkops ‘Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten,’” in Hirschfeld et al., eds., pp. 175–98.

⁶⁵ This example can be found in Herbert Michaelis, ed., *Ursachen und Folgen: Vom deutschen Zusammenbruch 1918 und 1945 bis zur staatlichen Neuordnung Deutschlands*, vol. 2, *Der militärische Zusammenbruch und das Ende des Kaiserreichs* (Berlin, n.d.), pp. 300–304. For a similar kind of report from the Second World War, see O. Buchbender and R. Sterz, eds., *Das Andere Gesicht des Krieges: Deutsche Feldpostbriefe, 1939–1945* (Munich, 1982), pp. 16–24.

German *Stimmung*), the French Army established its own postal censorship boards “for the express purpose of reading and analyzing the mail that passed through their hands.”⁶⁶ And from mid-1917 the French Army General Staff’s central intelligence section took to compiling regular “confidential bulletins on internal morale,” drawing primarily on materials generated by postal censorship boards at the front and throughout the country.⁶⁷

The British Army also resorted to this measure, albeit later than the other major powers (this delay being due less to some innate liberalism than to the fact that universal conscription was introduced only in the course of the war; morale, both at home and in the ranks, becomes a far greater concern for a citizen army). Here one can clearly distinguish between censorship and surveillance. Almost from the opening of the war, Paul Fussell reminds us, officers had censored the letters of men in their units (and soldiers knew this attention was being paid to their letters).⁶⁸ The size of the postal censorship staff in Britain mushroomed from 170 at the end of 1914 to 1,453 in 1915 and 4,861 by November 1918—that is, the British used about half the number the Soviets were employing for their much larger population in the early 1920s.⁶⁹ But it was only in early 1918 that the British Army began true government-style surveillance, as the censorship department at GHQ started compiling three-month summaries of soldiers’ moods on the basis of excerpts from intercepted letters.⁷⁰

Throughout Europe, just as in the Russian Empire and the later U.S.S.R., the First World War witnessed the emergence of surveillance bureaucracies such as the Don Government’s DIA and the Soviet regime’s Cheka and GPU Information section. And as in the USSR, the goal of collecting such information was to put it to use in constructing particular conceptions of society.

The French, like the Russians, did not enter the war with a systematic surveillance system. We do have some material on popular moods already from the first months of the war, but only because the minister of public education

⁶⁶ Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People* (Dover, N.H., 1985), pp. 217–18. See also P. J. Flood, *France, 1914–1918: Public Opinion and the War Effort* (New York, 1990), pp. 147, 200; J. N. Jeanneney, “Les archives des commissions de contrôle postale aux armées (1916–1918),” *Revue histoire moderne et contemporaine* 15 (1968): 209–33; David Englander, “The French Soldier, 1914–1918,” *French History* 1 (1987): 49–67. I am uncomfortable with translating “opinion publique” as “public opinion,” since the French term encompasses the same purview and techniques as those employed by the Russian and German postal departments, and later the OGPU and Nazi surveillance organs.

⁶⁷ Becker, *The Great War and the French People*, p. 236.

⁶⁸ Fussell (n. 38 above), pp. 47, 87, 175, 181–83.

⁶⁹ Nicholas Hiley, “Counter-Espionage and Security in Great Britain during the First World War,” *English Historical Review* 101 (1986): 635–70; quote at 640.

⁷⁰ John Terraine, *Impacts of War, 1914 and 1918* (London, 1970); pp. 170–76.

asked all teachers under his authority to keep records of the population's response to the war's outbreak and subsequent mobilization.⁷¹ For some time, however, official reportage on the population's mood focused only on the working population—largely in Paris. But by 1916 some prefects were sporadically keeping track of the population's general mood of their own accord, and from mid-1917 the interior minister began soliciting regular reports from all prefects on the population's mood in their districts.⁷² Meanwhile, generals in command of military districts throughout the country began compiling monthly bulletins surveying the population's morale based on reports from subordinates in the military and civilian hierarchy. Henceforth, “the various civil and military authorities never ceased sounding French public opinion”—a pursuit that by the end of the 1930s would produce the Service du Contrôle Technique.⁷³

In England, as in France, 1917 witnessed the emergence of an “elaborate intelligence system for the surveillance and monitoring of opinion.” Security agencies shifted their focus from counterintelligence proper to political reporting. From the close of 1917 until the start of 1920, intelligence officers attached to headquarter commands compiled “Weekly Intelligence Summaries,” which were then forwarded to the intelligence branch of the General Staff Headquarters. The weekly summaries were composed of three parts. The first concerned the workings of the Defense of the Realm Acts (DORA), while the third dealt exclusively with industrial unrest. The second part was analytical in character, with information organized under eight headings. As with the summaries of the DIA and the German military (see below), the first rubric to be addressed was “General Public Opinion Concerning the War” (and after the war, “General Public Opinion Concerning Demobilisation”). Indeed, rather than witnessing a winding down of surveillance, demobilization in fact “enlarged the scope for surveillance.”⁷⁴ The information so gathered was then employed instrumentally to manage manpower, to counteract “sedition,” and gen-

⁷¹ Jean-Jacques Becker, “Voilà le glas de nos gars qui sonne . . .,” in *1914–1918: L'autre front*, ed. Patrick Fridenson (Paris, 1977); see also his *The Great War and the French People*, pp. 125–31; and Flood, pp. 7–34.

⁷² Becker, *The Great War and the French People*, pp. 132–33, 195, 226.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁷⁴ David Englander, “Military Intelligence and the Defense of the Realm: The Surveillance of Soldiers and Civilians in Britain during the First World War,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labor History* 52 (1987): 24–32, quotes at 24, 28. This is a remarkably informative article, but Englander, too, sees intelligence reports solely as “an extremely rich source for the social history of Britain,” claiming that they “tell us precious little about decision-taking at the highest levels” (p. 31). I would argue that the desire to compile such reports does indeed tell us a great deal about how ruling had come to be conceived. See also Nicholas Hiley, “Counter-Espionage and Security in Great Britain,” p. 656, and “British Internal Security in Wartime: The Rise and Fall of P.M.S.2, 1915–1917,” *Intelligence and National Security* 1 (1986): 395–415.

erally to shape popular sentiment. By 1918, the British Ministry of Information had embarked on home propaganda of an active sort, a field the government had never before concentrated on (the Press Bureau having been restricted previously to a negative function of suppressing news that might be useful to the enemy).⁷⁵

In Germany, the political police had sporadically collected aggregate information on political attitudes from the 1850s, but here too the First World War marked a qualitative shift.⁷⁶ In November 1915, the War Ministry ordered commanders of military districts throughout Germany to report on the general situation in their districts. Three months later, in March 1916, the German command further elaborated on this instruction, directing commanders to report explicitly on the population's mood or morale. The first rubric military governors were to address in their regular reports was the "mood of the civilian population."⁷⁷ (Recall that the Russian Imperial government had instructed its civilian administrators to collect such information in October 1915, thereby anticipating the Germans by several months.)

Not coincidentally, soon afterward the German command implemented a new way of acting on both soldiers and civilians, a practice very significantly termed "enlightenment activity" (*Aufklärungstätigkeit*) and subsequently rechristened "patriotic instruction." This practice was conceived of as something distinct from propaganda (spreading one's own account to foreign audiences and counteracting enemy propaganda), which Germany had practiced since the war's outbreak. "Enlightenment activity" sought instead to nurture the spiritual resources of one's own soldiers and civilians, in order to transform them from subjects occupying a given role in an established order into better, more conscious agents.⁷⁸ In sum, "enlightenment activity" set itself a task not at all

⁷⁵ John Williams, *The Other Battleground* (Chicago, 1972), p. 258.

⁷⁶ On the development of political surveillance in Germany, see Siemann (n. 16 above), pp. 428–30; and Richard Evans, ed., *Kneipengespräche im Kaiserreich: Stimmungsbereiche des Hamburger Politischen Polizei, 1892–1914* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1989).

⁷⁷ Deist, ed., *Militär und Innenpolitik* (n. 65 above), 1:378–79, describes the origins of these reports; for examples, see 1:378–82, 402–6. See also Wilhelm Deist, "Censorship and Propaganda in Germany during the First World War," in *Les sociétés européennes et la guerre de 1914–1918*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau (Paris, 1990); and Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society, 1914–1918* (Warwickshire, 1984), pp. 121–23, 241.

⁷⁸ In general, see Geyer (n. 27 above); and Deist, "Censorship and Propaganda in Germany during the First World War." On *Aufklärungstätigkeit* and the subsequent *Vaterländischer Unterricht*, see Max Schwarte, ed., *Der Grosse Krieg*, vol. 10, *Die Organisationen für das geistige Leben im Heere* (Leipzig, 1923), pp. 356–59, 386–89; also Deist, ed., *Militär und Innenpolitik*, 1:328–38, 2:816–24, 835–37, 841–46, 961–66. The Soviet works by Blumental' (n. 46 above) and by Aliakritskii and Lemeshevskii (n. 46 above) make extensive reference to Schwarte's work.

unlike the Red Army's "political enlightenment work" (*politicheskoprosvetitel'naiia rabota*).⁷⁹ Significantly, both states cast their task as being the "Enlightenment" (*Aufklärung/prosveshchenie*) of citizens. And both the German "enlightenment activity" and the Soviet "political enlightenment work" were extensions of the surveillance project. Surveillance was intended not just to probe "public opinion" but also to describe the people's spiritual state so it could be transformed by such state-sponsored enlightenment practices.

V. SURVEILLANCE AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STATE

Thus surveillance was hardly unique to Russia or to its socialist revolution. Denounced as one of the most pernicious manifestations of a totalitarian mindset, surveillance is not a specifically Bolshevik, Marxist, or even totalitarian practice—it is a modern one. By the comparisons I have chosen, I obviously see the First World War as a major watershed in the methods states used to govern their populations.⁸⁰

In addition to the introduction of mass, industrial killing, the Great War also saw the institutionalization of a particular type of modern governmental politics in the form of the national security state. While this governmental concept certainly did not originate at the beginning of the twentieth century, the period of the First World War and its aftermath permitted its implementation, both on a large scale and in state form. These aspirations to manage society, and the practices to implement them, were most certainly not simply a response to wartime exigencies, summoned forth by the exceptional circumstances of war. But, significantly, war was the context within which states massively implemented these practices.⁸¹ For the first time, populations unavoidably experienced the political consequences of this governmental style of ruling in its

⁷⁹ On enlightenment work in the Red Army, see von Hagen (n. 55 above).

⁸⁰ This argument is hardly original. For current work on Russia emphasizing this point, see Stanziani, "Spécialistes, bureaucrates et Paysans" (n. 45 above), and "Rationalité économique et rationalisation de la production en Russie, 1892–1930" (n. 45 above); Graziosi (n. 45 above); von Hagen, "The Great War and the Emergence of Modern Ukraine" (n. 45 above); and Suny (n. 45 above). For treatment of this issue in the context of other European countries, see Fussell (n. 38 above); Kaes (n. 11 above); Bartov (n. 8 above); Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York, 1981); Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe* (Princeton, N.J., 1975); Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston, 1989); and Michael Geyer, "The Militarization of Europe, 1914–1945," in *The Militarization of the Western World*, ed. John Gillis (New Brunswick, N.J., 1989).

⁸¹ Geyer, "The Militarization of Europe, 1914–1945." Many of these aspirations and practices still exist today (one might suggest opinion polling as an elaboration of surveillance). What distinguished the interwar national security states was that such measures were concentrated almost exclusively in the hands of the state.

statist manifestation, in actual policies and concrete institutions, day in and day out. Populations, however they felt about it, simply could not avoid the state's new pretensions. States imposed themselves in ever newer spheres and on ever greater numbers of people through their aspirations to organize large sectors of the economy and society (whether this be called *Kriegswirtschaft*, War Communism, or "Defense of the Realm Act" [DORA]); through their universal tendency to deploy the population itself as a resource (reflected in the use of terms such as *Menschenmaterial*, the Russian "human power" (*liudskaia sila*), or the British government's concept of an "economy of manpower"); and, most tellingly, through various states' attempts to engage the population not just as an object but also as a subject in its own right by managing a newly conceived resource—the national will or psyche, as quantified and described through a new endeavor, surveillance.

Nor did these measures pass into history with the end of the war. Surveillance was by no means geographically limited to Russia and its revolution nor chronologically circumscribed by the Great War. National security states that emerged to manage the practices of total war did not pass from war to peace, but from war to preparation for future wars. National security states throughout Europe found the measures implemented during war to be equally useful in managing their populations in peace. In Weimar Germany, "strategies of surveillance that were originated in the war were eagerly introduced into civilian life after the war."⁸² Later, Germans found themselves under the surveillance of the myriad Nazi institutions as well as those of the regime's "ideological" opponent, the German Social Democratic Party (which engaged in this project from exile, no less).⁸³ During the Second World War, just as in World War I, German authorities pursued not only the negative agenda of censoring soldiers' letters but also the activist, constructive agenda of sculpting their positive content, seeking through soldiers' letters to foster a certain vision of the national community and to inculcate particular forms of self-expression and indeed self-identity within the soldiers themselves.⁸⁴ In Vichy France, Pétain put to

⁸² Kaes, p. 115.

⁸³ Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich* (London, 1983); also David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). On Nazi surveillance, with its very suggestive parallels to Soviet practices, see the introduction and collection of documents in Heinz Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich: Auswahl aus den geheimen Lageberichten des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS, 1939–1944* (Munich, 1968); Arthur Smith, "Life in Wartime Germany: Colonel Ohlendorf's Opinion Service," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (Spring 1972): 1–7; Lawrence Stokes, "Otto Ohlendorf, the SD and Public Opinion in Nazi Germany" in Mosse, ed. (n. 21 above). Intriguingly, the Nazi idea for a secret public opinion service was modeled not on the Soviet OGPU, but on a rather fanciful reading of English espionage fiction from the turn of the century (Stokes, p. 242)!

⁸⁴ There is a very developed literature on the meaning, content, and significance of *Feldpostbriefe*. For the First World War, see Bessel (n. 64 above); Ulrich, "Feldpost-

his own use information that the Service du Contrôle Technique had gathered from opening citizens' letters, reading their telegrams, and tapping their phones. (In December 1943 alone the Service read 2,448,554 letters, inspected 1,771,330 telegrams, and intercepted 20,811 telephone calls.) But the Service had been established under the Third Republic.⁸⁵ Even England, home of empiricism and good sense, saw the establishment of "mass observation," the express purpose of which was "the observation of everyone by everyone, including themselves."⁸⁶ Nor can it be any coincidence that public opinion polling (as we understand the term today, not as it was practiced by the French Army in 1917) began in the late 1930s and early 1940s.⁸⁷ Such projects, it should be noted, arose not in response to any actual outbreak of war, as had been the case in the First World War. The prospect of total war, and the national security regimes that emerged to manage it, required mobilization of and information on one's own population in peace as much as during war.⁸⁸

briefe im Ersten Weltkrieg" (n. 64 above), and "Eine wahre Pest in der öffentlichen Meinung" (n. 64 above); Knoch (n. 64 above); and Hettling and Jeismann (n. 64 above). For some suggestive thoughts on the trajectory of German soldiers' views of the East and its population in the First and Second World Wars as reflected in such letters, see Klaus Latzel, "Tourismus und Gewalt: Kriegswahrnehmungen in Feldpostbriefen," in *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht, 1941–1944*, ed. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (Hamburg, 1995). For the Second World War, see Buchbender and Sterz (n. 65 above); Detlef Vogel, "Der Kriegsalltag im Spiegel von Feldpostbriefen, 1939–1945," in *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes*, ed. Wolfram Wette (Munich-Zurich, 1992); Klaus Latzel, "'Freie Bahn dem Tüchtigen' —Kriegserfahrung und Perspektiven für Nachkriegszeit in Feldpostbriefen aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," in Niedhart and Riesenberger, eds. (n. 64 above); and Alf Lüdtke, "German Workers and the Limits of Resistance," *Journal of Modern History* 64, suppl. (1992): S46–S67.

⁸⁵ See Pierre Laborie, *L'opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris, 1990); also Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy and the Jews* (New York, 1981), pp. 181, 393; and John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France* (New York, 1994), pp. 147–69.

⁸⁶ Alan Brownjohn, "A Mosaic of War in Radio Sound: Mass-Observation and Other Memories," *Times Literary Supplement* (May 5, 1995), p. 18. On "MO" in general, see Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London, 1991); Penny Summerfield, "Mass-Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?" *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1985): 439–52; and Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (London, 1979). British officials themselves explicitly identified such practices as "totalitarian"—but used them anyway; see Temple Willcox, "Projection or Publicity? Rival Concepts in the Pre-War Planning of the British Ministry of Information," *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983): 97–116, quote at 103.

⁸⁷ Laborie (*L'opinion française*, p. 52) has noted that the first "soundings" by the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP) were undertaken in the late 1930s, focusing on the Munich accords—and not long before the Service du Contrôle Technique was established.

⁸⁸ Surveillance projects in the interwar years were intimately related to changing conceptions of warfare. As military theorists came to view airpower as targeting not so much a country's economic resources as its psychological ones, states increasingly felt the need to know the psychic resources of their own populations so as to brace for the

Throughout Europe, as Michael Geyer has noted, the “encompassing and comprehensive mobilization of the nation for war was a common feature of all the major belligerents in World War One. . . . All the nations resorted to a tangled web of compulsion and suasion, developed national forms of management.”⁸⁹ The First World War was the matrix within which states nurtured their own particular aspirations and developed the mechanisms to realize them. And Geyer’s observations on Europe in general apply fully to Russia. In Russia’s case, however, the 1917 Revolution has obstructed our view of the changes that took place in the course of the war. Indeed, if the Russian Civil War is seen as an extension of Europe’s general 1914–18 deluge, the Russian Revolution, far from ending the war in 1918 at Brest-Litovsk, might instead be seen as having extended Russia’s own deluge experience until 1921, three years longer than for the rest of Europe. That extension is significant because it provided a rationale for the continued existence of a wartime national security (total war) regime that carried Russia through the Revolution: Russia now had a different *ex post facto* explanation for the changes it had undergone along with other European societies. That is, the 1917 Revolution suggested that Russia’s national security style of state modernization—a style of modernization common to many other European powers—originated not in the shared experience of the Great War but in the unique experience of Russia’s Revolution. In discussing the changed world, Europe and Russia now had different short answers to describe the deluges they had undergone. Europe ascribed the changed world to the Great War; Russia, to its Revolution.

What then of ideology? Was Bolshevik Russia like every other European state in the post-1918 period? Clearly it was not. And the difference between Russia’s and Europe’s political and institutional development was not just a matter of the rhetorical explanation attached to some generic form of modernization. Russia’s institutionalization of modernity, in its statist form, was conceptually telescoped into the Revolution—and the Revolution (in its Bolshevik configuration, of course) then came to shape the conceptual ends to which these practices were directed. Instead of operating on nation-states (both its own and others) and seeking national security, the Soviet Union employed these common tools on classes (outside but especially within its own borders) in an attempt to bring about socialism.⁹⁰ “The Revolution” simultaneously be-

anticipated assault. See Nicholas Rose, *Governing the Soul* (London, 1990); McLaine; Peter Fritzsche, “Machine Dreams,” *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 685–709; Phillip S. Meilinger, “Trenchard and ‘Morale Bombing,’” *Journal of Military History* 60 (1996): 243–70; and Klaus Meier, “Total War and German Air Doctrine before the Second World War,” in *The German Military in the Age of Total War*, ed. Wilhelm Deist (Dover, N.H., 1985).

⁸⁹ Geyer, “The Militarization of Europe, 1914–1945,” p. 81.

⁹⁰ On the particularities of socialist forms for sculpting society and its individuals, see Kotkin (n. 3 above); Clark (n. 6 above); Groys (n. 6 above); and Malia (n. 6 above).

came the matrix for the development of, as well as the explanation for, all the novel features that had arisen in the 1914–21 period. Hence it is not just historians who came to treat reading huts and reportage on moods as products of the Revolution; contemporaries too identified such developments as “revolutionary.”

But a comparative study of state practices demonstrates that what is specific to Bolshevism is not that which is frequently claimed for it: the use of particular practices, as in the Friedrich-Brzezinski model of totalitarianism, for instance. Rather, Bolshevism was distinct in how and to what ends it used these practices. For example, the Soviets’ broader definition of the political sphere—a definition that ultimately encompassed virtually all others—led to a much broader spectrum of surveillance interests than that of the Whites (or of their French, German, and English counterparts, for that matter).

If the Bolsheviks shared a common governmental sensibility that the state could shape the world and defined revolutionary politics as the tool par excellence for this project, Marxism as ideology furnished the specific articulation of that world. It established a particular moral urgency for changing it. More concretely, Marxism provided the precise goals of political action and described both who the beneficiaries and who the targets of state activity were to be. And, perhaps of particular significance, it delineated a time frame for its proclaimed goal, the creation of a socialist society and the making of a new man (and this was a highly gendered model).⁹¹ What particularly distinguished the Soviet project was its use of a common repertoire of practices in its endeavor to perfect citizens in a fundamental manner and within a specified time span. That is, Bolshevism had a closed, rather than open, model of historical progress.⁹²

And this Marxist outlook influenced how the Bolsheviks deployed practices of governing. In the area of food supply, for instance, both the Red and White camps sought to manage the economy and rationalize the market through planning and control (just as the Russian Empire and other European powers had done during World War I).⁹³ The Bolshevik regime’s specificity lay not in its pretension to manage the economy (an aspiration it shared with many others), but in how it sought to do so. For, unlike other states, the object of Soviet practices in food supply was not so much to manage the actual shortfall itself as to deal with the individual who had failed to meet his assignment. Given the

⁹¹ Victoria Bonnell, “The Representation of Women in Early Soviet Political Art,” *Russian Review* 50 (1991): 267–88, and “The Peasant Woman in Stalinist Political Art of the 1930s,” *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 55–82.

⁹² See Igal Halfin, “From Darkness to Light: Student Communist Autobiographies in the 1920s,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* (in press).

⁹³ See Lars Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914–1921* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990); for Germany, see Gerald Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany, 1914–1918* (Princeton, N.J., 1966).

belief that people who so desired could, as Stalin later put it, “storm any fortress,” failure necessarily testified to one’s unwillingness rather than to one’s inability to do so. A greater sense of human agency brought with it greater (and often nearly unrealizable) responsibilities. In the regime’s eyes, any shortfall testified not to a shortage of grain but to a shortage of will: it presumed recalcitrant farmers were choosing not to turn over their grain, not that the grain was simply not there. Hence, during the 1920–21 food supply campaign the Soviet state simply refused to accept drought as a legitimate cause for a farmer’s inability to hand over grain to the state, hauling such people before revolutionary tribunals and often shooting them for this “crime.”⁹⁴ Attempting to manage the economy and market was common at the time; to do so in this way was not. So the Soviet system was not distinct because of its practices, its technical tools, or even its aspirations. It was distinct because of the particular configuration those aspirations took: to move society toward socialism while seeking simultaneously to mold humanity, both as a collective and as individuals. Surveillance then was only part of the larger project to build communism and the new man simultaneously.

This article has sought to make two main points. First, while surveillance materials are of tremendous import, their true significance is lost if they are merely strip-mined to reveal manifestations of “public opinion” or in an attempt to measure “popular support.” Here I have argued that such an approach to these sources, treating them only as a repository of information, misses the fundamental purpose of these documents and the society of which they were a part. For the collection of information was not an end in itself: surveillance was not primarily intended to reflect public opinion, nor was it meant merely for the preventive, protective task of forestalling any possible opposition (although it was most certainly put to that use, too). Surveillance was an instrumental endeavor,⁹⁵ aimed at reshaping society and transforming every individ-

⁹⁴ See Peter Holquist, “A Russian Vendée: The Practice of Politics in the Don Countryside” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995), chap. 6. This highly ideological approach was evident not only during the Civil War and Collectivization. It equally colored the supposedly less ideological, more pragmatic NEP period, when policies were equally predicated on assumptions about the class nature of the countryside and were equally directed toward bringing about socialism. See D’Ann Penner, “Pride, Power and Pitchforks: A Study of Farmer-Party Interaction on the Don, 1920–1928” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1995). Both Kotkin (n. 3 above) and Malia (n. 6 above) emphasize the ideological nature of the Soviet state’s insistently anticapitalist policies.

⁹⁵ To see this, one need merely peruse at random Smolensk Archive, WKP 166, containing hundreds of excerpts from OGPU surveillance reports forwarded to the Krasninskii regional Party secretary so that he could then act on them. Many slips bear handwritten notations of measures taken in response to the proffered information. According to Izmozik (“Voices from the Twenties” [n. 20 above], p. 288), excerpts from fully

ual in it. And it was only as part of this larger project of transforming each and every individual that surveillance was used to recognize the recalcitrant (so they could be singled out for special attention) and, later, to identify those impervious to improvement (so they could be eliminated and no longer pollute the body politic).⁹⁶ Thus, using surveillance materials only for data on popular moods (significantly, the documents themselves do not describe their general object of inquiry as either “opinion” or “support”) neglects the purposes for which this information was collected and the context in which it was generated. This is not a minor or semantic distinction. Soviet citizens knew surveillance was instrumental. They knew (though how extensively most could not guess) that, through surveillance, the state was not only reporting what they said and wrote but also seeking to use this information to change and correct them and their views. Surveillance was not a passive, observational endeavor; it was an active, constructivist one.

But this article has also sought to show that such measures, and the projects they served, cannot be treated as an anomaly unique to Russia, or even to totalitarian regimes in general. For better or for worse, scholars are simply not confronted with good states that refrained from using surveillance versus bad states that resorted to it. Throughout the interwar period all states employed surveillance. We confront instead differences—crucial differences—in how and to what ends all regimes practiced surveillance. And these differences in practice were profound, both for the historian and even more for the citizens

70–90 percent of letters subject to perustration in the 1920s were forwarded to various Soviet agencies for further action. The instrumental nature of surveillance is also indicated by the fact that central and local secret political sections of the OGPU, established in 1931 and carried over into the NKVD, had two tasks which the regime obviously considered to be related: combating counterrevolutionary elements and gathering information on the political moods of all layers of society (Khaustov, “Demokratia pod nadzorom NKVD” [n. 22 above], p. 281).

⁹⁶ Throughout the 1920s, the regime resorted primarily to “Corrective Labor Camps” for rehabilitating those who proved resistant to other means of transforming them. By the 1930s, with the announcement that class struggle had ended and Communism was around the corner, people’s recalcitrance could no longer be ascribed to their environment, and they were increasingly identified simply as incorrigible—hence, elimination was the only remaining solution. This is reflected in the fact that the two years after the announced end of class struggle (1937–38) witnessed 86 percent of all death sentences that were carried out for the entire 1929–52 period (J. Arch Getty, Gabor Rittersporn, and Viktor Zemskov, “Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of the Archival Evidence,” *American Historical Review* 98 [1993]: 1023). The fifteen thousand Polish officers at Katyn were executed, in the very words of the decree ordering the massacre, “proceeding from the fact that they all are inveterate and incorrigible foes of Soviet power.” That is, since they could not be reformed, the only solution left was to kill them. See the documents in *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1993), pp. 3–22, quote at p. 18.

who were subject to them. There was a vast difference between being under surveillance by British Mass Observation or by the NKVD's secret political departments. But to determine how different it was, and in what ways, one must situate the Bolshevik surveillance project both in the current of Russian history and within its more general pan-European context.

Ian Kershaw, writing about the ethics of treating Nazi Germany from a comparative perspective, argues that "not only is it legitimate (and necessary) to deploy a 'longitudinal' and also a comparative perspective . . . but such a perspective contributes directly to a clearer definition of the peculiarly Nazi essence of social policy. . . . The longitudinal approach highlights precisely the political-ideological-moral framework."⁹⁷ And for this very reason studies of Soviet surveillance materials and the institutions that generated them can benefit greatly from Gellately's and Kershaw's work on Nazi Germany, as well as from the extensive German literature on *Feldpostbriefe*. Nor should such comparisons be limited to totalitarian regimes. Becker's work on France during the Great War, Laborie's work on Vichy France, and McLaine's work on the British "Ministry of Morale" also have much to tell us about the pan-European tendency of states to manage not just their population's economic, social, and physical resources but their psychic and spiritual resources as well.

In Soviet Russia we see neither some unique socialist case nor a Russian exception to European norms, but instead a highly specific manifestation of a new governmental modality of politics. This article has emphasized the significance of the First World War, which provided the context within which many of these features took on their particular forms. What set the Soviet regime apart was not "ideology" in a general sense, nor some totalitarian essence, but the intersection of a particular ideology with the simultaneous implementation of a particularly modern understanding of politics—put succinctly, an understanding that views populations as both the means and the goal of some emancipatory project.⁹⁸ This vantage point can serve to shift the focus of debate away from all-or-nothing propositions about totalitarian regimes to a study of how states might (or might not) employ certain practices in a totalitarian manner. The task, then, is not to seek reasons to dismiss Russia as anomalous but to identify what was specific about Russia's particular constellation of more general European features. The Soviet experience cannot be limited either to a case of Russian backwardness or to some surreal attempt to build socialism in practice. Insofar as Soviet Russia represents a problem, it is a problem of the modern project itself.

⁹⁷ Ian Kershaw, "'Normality' and Genocide: The Problem of 'Historicization,'" in Childers and Caplan, eds. (n. 4 above), p. 28.

⁹⁸ On this, see Bauman (n. 6 above), chap. 3; and Bartov (n. 8 above), pp. 105–6.