

## GF Parvini interview 08.12.25 transcript

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niEp25WIHgM>

[NP: = Neema Parvini; GF: = Grover Furr]

NP: I said I said to my wife, "One thing about Stalin?" And her immediate response was, "Oh, well, he killed 30 million people." I mean, I've seen figures as high as 60 million people bandied about. I think Robert Conquest had it at 20 million people. Yes. So, my question to you is, what is the real number and what embellishments have been made by mainstream historians over the years?

GF: Well, just one word about Stalin. Stalin was not a dictator. That's part of the Anti-Stalin Paradigm. Okay? You can't say that. All right? It's not considered appropriate to say that. And you've asked another interesting question is how many people did Stalin kill? And I think the answer is zero. Stalin didn't kill anybody.

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NP: Well, hello everyone and welcome. I have a special guest today, Professor Grover Furr, who's written many books concentrating on the Stalin era in Soviet history.

And just as I was saying before we came on air, I made a video a couple of weeks back that has already had over 90,000 views. It was called what if everything about Stalin is a lie. and I've been kind of interested in how one how kind of much interest there is in this topic and two how relatively open-minded most of the comments were. I was expecting a huge kind of backlash. I there were comments from people all around the world saying yeah parts of this story don't add up.

So I might as well ask my first question which is you have coined the term Anti-Stalin Paradigm to describe the way in which most

mainstream history of the Soviet Union is done. Can you explain what this anti Stalin paradigm is and how it came about?

GF: Yes, that's a great question. I think it's important to start with the Russian revolution. there was scholarship in the west and on Russia before the revolution. But once the revolution took place the scholarship in the west that began basically was focused or became focused on anti-communist propaganda sort of providing fuel providing information for the anti-communist political tendencies directions of western capitalist countries and their rulers.

And that has remained the main focus of what you might call Russian history, Soviet history ever since. there are certain periods when it kind of seems to ebb and flow but the primary function in academia as well as outside academia of Soviet historiography has been to provide ammunition negative stories that can function as propaganda for the anti-communist politics of western capitalist imperialist countries and that remains the case today.

surprisingly I guess to some people -- initially it was to me -- it remains just as strong here more than 30 years after the end of the Soviet Union than it was during the Soviet period itself. And after Khrushchev, Nikita Khrushchev's famous or infamous Secret Speech attacking Stalin at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956, the Anti-Stalin Paradigm becomes the mainstream and really the only tolerated viewpoint within the Khrushchev and post Khrushchev Soviet Union too.

So it's a very powerful current that has been [with us] for generations now and what it means is [this]: that all research on the Stalin period, which we might define as from the late 20s to Stalin's death in 1953, all research has to fit what might be called the Procrustean bed of anti-Stalin tendency. It has to be fitted into a very hostile framework. and it doesn't mean that that some good historiography doesn't go on, but that historiography has to be framed in a very anti-Stalin manner. And

without that kind of framing you're just not going to get published, if you're in that field.

NP: And I remember you said in one of the talks of yours that I've seen at some point that it's a little bit like when Galileo was doing research after the after Copernicus. Do you want to explain that analogy a little bit and how?

GF: Well, I don't ... I guess I did say that once or twice. Upon reflection, I think it's immodest, to put it mildly, to compare myself to Galileo. So I try to [tell] everybody [to] forget that particular analogy.

But there's some validity in it, which means that Galileo's issue was the evidence, right? he pointed his telescope at the moons of Jupiter or something along those lines and saw that they went around Jupiter and hypothesized that maybe Copernicus had been right a century before. the evidence appeared to demolish the geocentric theory of the universe. And all of the authorities in his day said you can't do that, you can't question the Bible, you can't question the authorities whether Protestant or Catholic, in all these countries; you can't do it and we're going to punish you horribly if you do it. and so he backed off. but he supposedly made the famous statement: well but that's the way it is anyway. No matter what I say, no matter what you say, that's reality.

So, what I try to focus on is primary source evidence. And the evidence demolishes the horror stories about Stalin and the Stalin period. And conversely, if you go into something with a preconceived notion that Stalin was a monster, as an example, you're going to find evidence to confirm that pre-existing bias, or you're going to see things that aren't there.

I have been in touch with a number of Soviet scholars of the Soviet Union who are more or less in the mainstream but are honest people and two of them over the years have told me that I should put some anti-

Stalin stuff into my books because they will not be accepted, they will not be credible unless I do that. And I have not done that.

But I have the luxury of not being in the field of professional Soviet history. I am a professor of English medieval literature. and so I don't have to worry about being excluded from mainstream journals and publications, not being invited to conferences and all of these things that someone in the professional field of Soviet studies would need to be very careful about, because that's how you maintain your job and your career in that field. So if you want to be in that field and you want to have a career, you simply have to toe the line, so to speak. I'm in a very different and more favorable position.

Also, I don't aim my research at the scholars in the field of professional Soviet studies. I'm not really writing for them. That doesn't mean that none of them ever read it, but that's not my primary audience. So I don't have to worry about stuff like that.

NP: Very interesting. I mean one of the things just as I was preparing to do this interview I was I was wondering has anybody kind of reviewed your books from the field. I found one incredibly hostile review was full of name calling and ad homonyms and things

And there was one there was one part where this person I think was a French author quoted Stalin [This is Jean-Jacques Marie, a renowned French Trotskyist. See my refutation of his dishonesty at [https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/reply\\_to\\_marie\\_12.21.html](https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/reply_to_marie_12.21.html)] and from learning from you I immediately went to the speech that they quoted from and saw: Hold on. There a whole section of this speech that you've omitted which gives a different set of dates. So they weren't even talking about the right incident. And the whole part where Stalin says, "Yeah, all of these things went too far and we've stopped them." I said the complete opposite of what the person who was supposedly refuting you said.

And I just thought that's really interesting. But most people just won't bother to do that basic bit of source checking where you can immediately see that the person has dishonestly framed something. Anyway, I'll ask my second question here, which is:

My understanding of the basic overarching thesis across all of your books is that the ultimate sources of the Anti-Stalin Paradigm are. And this is where it gets a bit tricky because you're kind of following a trail really. First, you have the diatribes against Stalin written by Trotsky in the 1930s while he was in Mexico and elsewhere, which are almost all lies. And you wrote a big thick book on that which was later turned into three books as I understand them. Second is the repetition of those lies with further embellishments by Khrushchev in the Secret Speech of 1956. Third, there [are] then the historians and other profession professional ideologists who repeated what he said in the speech and then added further details to the claim. Fourth is the work of Robert Conquest who's a famous historian of the 60s and 70s a kind of cold warrior who uncritically copied almost all of those claims. And finally there are western mainstream historians working after Conquest who then repeat his claims during the Cold War era which then get passed uncritically down into modern scholarship, and there's almost like a kind of lattice of these footnotes of people quoting each other.

Does this accurately describe the process? And why do you think these different groups of people built this edifice of lies about Stalin? And I asked that question because the neutral observer may say, well, some of these people were kind of against each other, too. For example, the cold warriors were against Khrushchev and Khrushchev, they'd say, never rehabilitated Trotsky or allowed Trotskyites back into the back into the Communist Party. So, how do you, like, [explain] why are all these different people making up lies about Stalin?

GF: Sure. Well, I think you have a good outline there of the what you might call the various stages or even generations of the Anti-Stalin Paradigm, anti-Stalin propaganda. You've omitted one very important

stage and that is the period of Mikhail Gorbachev, the last chairman of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union who came to his position in 1985 and remained until 1991. Gorbachev's campaign against Stalin was at least as vigorous and as negative as that of Khrushchev. Gorbachev picked up a lot of the Khrushchev-era falsifications and then his people working you know under him, historians and others, multiplied them and invented new falsehoods.

So the Gorbachev stage is is very important too. I just want to mention very briefly that after the the end of the Soviet Union Gorbachev and what you might call his right-hand man Alexander Yakovlev who was a close associate of Gorbachev and whom Gorbachev promoted to be in charge of propaganda in the Soviet Communist Party.

Gorbachev and Yakovlev admitted that they had a kind of conspiracy to get rid of Soviet socialism, to demolish or the Soviet Union, and that they would start as Khrushchev had started by attacking Stalin but then go on to attack other figures like Lenin and even Marx and Engels, but the Soviet Union came to an end and Soviet socialism was put to the sword before it got to that stage.

That having been said, if you insert the Gorbachev period into your chronology, I think that's correct. And I've already dealt with very briefly the generation of the Anti-Stalin Paradigm and the need to ferment anti-communist propaganda beginning virtually with the Russian revolution itself.

Trotsky. Well, briefly put, Trotsky wanted to be the leader of the Soviet Union. it's well known that there was an ideological struggle in the 1920s which Trotsky and his supporters did not win. They lost. In 1921 Lenin was still alive. The 10th Party Congress of the Communist Party passed a resolution against factionalism that [stated] you couldn't have a faction promoting its own political line within the Communist Party, that [factionalism] was in contradiction to democratic centralism. Once the

[Party's] line had been established at a Party conference or Party Congress then everybody had to put that forward.

But Trotsky and his followers repeatedly violated this. Ultimately Trotsky was expelled, and he spent the rest of his life doing a number of things but always vilifying Stalin as strongly as he possibly could. So he had his own motives.

Now, in one of your questions you asked why did Khrushchev attack Stalin the way he did? And Khrushchev never told us. Khrushchev 's accusations against Stalin were accepted in the Soviet Union because of the influence of the Communist Party which repeated them and which made them really obligatory in the textbooks and historical writing.

And it was gratefully accepted in the anti-communist capitalist countries. I mean, why look a gift horse in the mouth? Here's Khrushchev attacking Stalin and making the communist movement under Stalin look terrible. Why not just go with that? That's really what Conquest and many others did. They just accepted that he [Khrushchev] must be telling the truth.

With Trotsky it's likewise. Many of the accusations of crimes that Khrushchev and then his acolytes, his men, set forward were either the same as or similar to the accusations that Trotsky had made. And so an attack on Stalin, whether Khrushchev intended it or not, tended to rehabilitate Trotsky to a large extent. And so the Trotsky movement which by the middle 1950s was small and getting smaller all the time received a tremendous shot in the arm and exploded not only in Europe but the United States [and] all over the world. And the Trotsky movement continues to repeat anti-communist falsehoods about Stalin because they sustain the Trotsky cult.

Now I haven't dealt with Yezhov. I know you have another question coming up about him, but when it comes to Gorbachev and Gorbachev's right-hand men, so to speak, it seems clear to me that they believed

what Khrushchev had said, and they drew certain logical conclusions from it. Namely that the whole notion of building a socialist society, the whole notion of having a socialist revolution relying on the working class and so forth must be poisoned at the root. Okay? Had to be illegitimate, something that could lead only to criminal consequences, and therefore had to be destroyed.

That was the conclusion that Gorbachev and Yakovlev and others drew. And they after the end of the Soviet Union they admitted it. They could not admit that while the Soviet Union still existed, while Gorbachev was working his way up the Party ranks and even after he became Party chairman. As Gorbachev and Yakovlev both said, they had to pretend to be good Leninists while the Soviet Union was still in existence. So they concentrated their fire on falsifying Soviet history during the Stalin period. But I believe that that they believed it, that they themselves credited Khrushchev's lies and the lies of the Khrushchev era about Stalin.

And that that leads to a further question, which is: why did Khrushchev do what he did? And I believe you have another question about that, but the short answer is, we really are not sure.

NP: Well, before we get back on to Khrushchev, a lot of the right-wing or conservative cold warriors, yes, what are today called neocons or neoconservatives, are known to have been former Trotskyists. I mean, James Burnham famously, Irving Kristol, I mean the list goes on and on. The line they told people is that they were mugged by reality and now miraculously Trots have become conservatives. But do you think it's actually significant that these men who were basically the bulwark of American anti-communism were actually Trotskyites? So in a strange way, America or the American popular imagination gets the Trotsky narrative of what happened. Is that significant do you think?

GF: Well, sure. when you have a figure who is famous for being one of the most prominent Bolshevik leaders during the period of the October



revolution in 1917 and then during the period of the civil war -- Trotsky was the commissar of the army and the navy -- and then in the Political Bureau, the leading group of the Communist Party for a number of years after the civil war -- when somebody like that starts to accuse the leader of the Soviet Union, Stalin, of all kinds of terrible crimes and acts of dishonesty and so forth, this is bound to appeal to ideological anti-communists.

And ideological anti-communism is very powerful in western countries including the United States and other western societies. So the pressure on people who are attracted to the communist movement, who avow the goals of the communist movement, the pressure on them to improve their careers their living conditions, their, well their careers, to abjure all of that is very great, and some people did.

So Trotskyism can be regarded as a kind of a halfway house, right? you're a communist. And then, well, Trotsky criticizes Stalin, so now you sidle up to the Trotskyites and now you're a critical communist. And then at a certain point that becomes too much and you become a champion of capitalism. So that is, I think, the general trajectory of Trotskyis,. that is to say [because] they believed Trotsky.

One of the books that I wrote some years ago now that you alluded to a few minutes ago called *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* and the genesis of that book was [that] I wrote a book about Khrushchev's Secret Speech, and by discovering, studying, and analyzing the primary source documents that have come out of the Soviet archives since the end the Soviet Union I discovered that Khrushchev lied. That's the name of the book.

And immediately it occurred to me: Well, at some point I'm going to have to do something about Trotsky, because Trotsky basically said very similar things -- in a few cases even the same thing. So if Khrushchev lied, that implies that Trotsky lied too.

But you can't just leave it at that. You've got to go look for the evidence. So I looked at the evidence and found that that Trotsky lied to an extent that's hard to believe until you looked carefully into it. He just lied all the time. And so since that book I've written four -- I think it's four now -- books about Trotsky.

Because Trotskyists sound like revolutionaries, like strong anti-capitalists. But they just accept what Trotsky said -- which is an error right there, right? You should never accept what some authority says. You should never accept what Khrushchev said. You should never accept what Grover Furr says. Okay, but not only do the Trotskyites accept that, but they accept any and all anti-Stalin accusations that come from overtly anti-communist pro-capitalist writers as well.

So Trotskyism has sort of devolved into an organization that critiques and attacks Stalin and the Stalin period while claiming to be the true communists. And that I think appeals to some people who are attracted to the goals of communism and socialism but have been made a little gun-shy maybe by all of the anti-Stalin propaganda.

NP: Yes. So just to briefly come back on Khrushchev. I mean one of the things that is very striking about the Secret Speech is the enormous PR damage it did to the USSR. I mean it kind of killed -- I mean in the West people who were committed Marxists and so on felt the need to disavow it or to apologize for ever having supported the Soviet Union. So given that he was the leader of the USSR, why like what was he thinking? Why did he do this?

GF: Well, we don't know. He wrote memoirs, but he insisted in his memoirs, often in a very contradictory way, that what he said about Stalin was true. He doubled down on all of his lies and even invented some more. So, we don't really know. It's not like Khrushchev admitted, Hey, I lied and here's why I lied.

if you look at Khrushchev's policies, the ones he's most famous for, and I've not done any special research on this, but if you look at those policies, I think that it's clear that Khrushchev had sharp disagreements with the policies that Stalin stood for. Certainly with the notion of violent revolution in capitalist countries in order to bring about socialism -- he didn't agree with that. Khrushchev became famous for his position of peaceful coexistence. Peaceful coexistence and somehow or other conquering, overcoming capitalism in a peaceful manner. I think that was his main issue.

And I think that Khrushchev saw socialism as essentially a mechanism for industrialization and modernization. That is, he had an economic determinist notion of socialism. By the way, it wasn't just him. Lots of people, particularly perhaps in the colonial and former colonial countries where the urge for modernization and to build a strong society economically, politically, militarily was a very powerful urge.

Many people in the world communist movement and others who were around the world communist movement had a similar idea that communism was perhaps the best tool around to build a strong national state. And that is not the same as viewing communism as the way of building a classless society that is based upon the power of working people.

So without going into details about other disagreements that Khrushchev had with the policies identified with Stalin. I think that that's a kind of first-order approximation of Khrushchev's disagreements. But clearly Khrushchev wasn't, could not have been, the only person in the Soviet leadership to have these ideas, or his Secret Speech would not have gone down. He would probably never have made it. Most of the delegates to the 20th Party Congress in 1956 who heard Khrushchev's Secret Speech had to have known that at least some of what Khrushchev said about Stalin was false. But they did not rebel against it. They didn't question it.

Now in the few years, in the next six or seven or eight years after Khrushchev's speech, the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong did question it, did question Khrushchev's policies. But they did not have the evidence that we have now. They did not know, when they criticized Khrushchev as a phony communist for example -- that was the title of one of the essays in the so-called Sino-Soviet dispute of the late 50s and early 60s -- they did not know, they could not know, that Khrushchev had simply lied.

They didn't have the evidence. They didn't have the documentation that we now have, thanks to the Soviet Union having come to an end. But they did see that the general tendency of Khrushchev's attack on Stalin as a kind of cover of abandoning the struggle for socialist revolution.

NP: Just before we move off Khrushchev, do you think that his Ukrainian background is of any relevance to any of his actions?

GF: No, I don't. I don't think that. I haven't run across anything that would lead me to that conclusion.

NP: And I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, but Khrushchev was actually involved himself in implementing many of the things that he accused Stalin of. Right?

GF: Sure. Khrushchev was promoted to the Politburo in early 1938. I'm not sure which month, but he was promoted to the Politburo in early 1938. And before that, he had been the first secretary of the Party in Moscow, which obviously was an extremely important position. And after that he was first secretary of Ukraine which is another very important territory of the Soviet Union. So Khrushchev was a significant Party leader during the 1930s and during Stalin's lifetime. And so Stalin must have had some confidence in him. So whatever process it was that produced Khrushchev had to have been functioning, had to have been in operation, at least during the 1930s if not even earlier.

NP: Now one of the most interesting aspects of your work is the time and space that you give to seriously considering the charges made in the Moscow trials. In fact, you have a whole book on this. Now, these are usually dismissed. And I have to admit before I read your book, this was my view, too. You know, I just remember being taught in school these were show trials. These were just nonsense, . Can you explain what exactly the defendants were accused of at the Moscow trials and why mainstream historians typically just dismiss these charges? And what would it mean to Soviet history if it could be shown that the men were guilty?

GF: Sure. Well, the trials were part of the uncovering and exposure of the underground, that is the clandestine, conspiracy by Trotsky and his supporters. Trotsky had been forced out of the country. But he had prominent supporters within the Soviet and also [in] the what were called the Rights, that is, people like Bukharin, Alexei Rykov and others who were opposed to crash industrialization, crash and forced collectivization of agriculture, who opposed those policies.

Before I go on to say some critical things about the defendants in the Moscow trials and the clandestine conspiratorial groups within the Soviet Union, let me just say that from the get-go, from the end of the Civil War, if not before, but certainly from the end of the Russian Civil War, 1921 or so, when it became clear that the Soviet Union was going to survive, was not going to be crushed by either the Tsarist forces, the White armies, or by the Western imperialist powers who had intervened in a kind of half-hearted way to try to crush the Soviet the Russian revolution, it became clear that the Soviet Union was going to survive.

A strong tendency in the Bolshevik Party had always been and in fact in all Marxist groups had always been to believe that socialism was going to come in an advanced industrial society something like England, France, Germany an advanced industrial society. And here socialism had been won in a society like Russia, the Soviet Union, which had some very important industrial centers unquestionably, but which was at least

80% poor peasants working under virtually medieval conditions, really a feudal polity.

There were some abortive attempts at revolution after the First World War. They were all defeated. And then the question became, can the Soviet Union survive? Because it appeared that one way of reading Marxism was that the Soviet Union would not be able to survive without the support of a socialist revolution in one or more advanced industrial societies.

Now to say that is one reading of the Marxism of the early 20th century, no question about it, you can read it that way and many people did. But to say that is very disillusioning. I mean what what's the road to the future? there is no road to the future for the Soviet Union, right? It can't persist. And that was a strong tendency in the Bolshevik Party. I've mentioned the Rightists. I've mentioned Trotsky.

Stalin and others developed a different projection of the future which is something like this. Well, the capitalists did not complete their historical purpose in Russia. They did not industrialize the country. They did not create an advanced industrial society with a large working class. Therefore, we have to do it. We have to do it and we can do it. We, meaning the Soviet people under the proper leadership in the communist Party.

So that was that essence of that debate. It essentially characterizes the economic aspect of the political debates of the 1920s. It's not surprising that the perspective that socialism can be built in one country which is associated with Stalin, and rightly so -- it's not surprising that that [position] won out because, I mean, what did all of these Bolsheviks, all these communists, make a revolution for? That's what they made it for. So that was the position that won out. Now I'm leaving personalities and the kinds of quarrels that took place in the Party Conferences and Party Congresses during the 1920s. I'm leaving all that aside. but that's the basic situation.

Now let's suppose that you are not a follower of Stalin, the Stalin line that says: Yes, we can build a powerful socialist state by our own efforts, by crash industrialization, by collectivizing agriculture. Let's suppose you are one of those who has a more traditional view in some ways of Marxism, that says that cannot be done. And therefore one way of thinking is that to pursue the policies associated with Stalin is going to doom socialism not only in Soviet Union, but also perhaps in the world communist movement.

And that becomes more important than anything, more important than democratic centralism, more important than whatever it is Lenin may have said, and certainly more important than anything that Stalin has to say. That justifies plotting against the Party leadership. that justifies clandestine conspiracies to get rid of the Soviet regime led by Stalin. That justifies collaboration with the foreign capitalists who also want to get rid of Stalin and Soviet socialism. That goal justifies stepping backwards, backtracking, maybe [even] inviting the capitalists to come back, maybe actually building capitalism within the Soviet Union so that at some point in the distant future, when the Soviet Union has industrialized along the lines of Western capitalist societies, maybe then there could be a revolution that meets the traditional Marxist requirements.

So I think that the conspiracies and the crimes of the of the Trotskyite and Rightist and other conspirators in in the '20s and particularly the '30s in the Soviet Union were motivated by those kinds of goals. Okay, [so initially] they weren't evil people as such. They simply thought that the Stalin program would be a disaster for the socialist movement within the Soviet Union and worldwide.

Now during the '30s briefly these conspiracies, which nobody disagrees with -- I mean we have so much evidence that they really existed that you'd have to be -- well no serious student says that there were none -- these conspiracies continued. And in 1934 in December 1934 the first

secretary of the Leningrad Communist Party, Sergey Kirov, was assassinated. And the assassin [Leonid Nikolayev] who tried to commit suicide but failed named other conspirators with whom he was associated, with whom he had organized. And those people were connected to some of these former Party leaders who had been the brightest Gregory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev. And eventually evidence was obtained to indict them and that led to the first Moscow trial, the first so-called show trial of August 1936.

And the investigations arrests and interrogations investigations continued and led to the second Moscow trial, the so-called Trotskyite trial of January 1937. and then the third Moscow trial in March 1938 of the Rightists Bukharin, Rykov, and others and Trotskyites. and now today, after the end of the Soviet Union, we have hundreds of confessions, interrogations, statements that were made by conspirators to the investigators. We have a tremendous amount of evidence that shows that these people were in fact guilty.

But in the 1930s, in fact, up until the end of the Soviet Union, we didn't have this evidence. It was not available. It was secreted away in Soviet archives that no one could see except a small number of trusted archivists and historians. And so it was easy to claim by anti-communists, by Trotskyites of course, [and] by supporters of the Rightists that these people had been forced in some way or other to confess. There was never any evidence that they had been forced to confess. In fact, there's lots of evidence that they were not.

There's one more thing. Just let me mention this. The transcript of the 1936 trial is actually quite short. It's abbreviated, it was published in an abbreviated form. The outcry from the Trots and the anti-communists and the social democrats was: This is no good. We don't accept this. [So] the transcript of the January 1937 trial is 600 pages long. The transcript of the March 1938 Moscow trial is 800 pages long. And [even] these too are [somewhat] abbreviated transcripts, but there's still an awful lot of it.



Very few people bother to read, to study those transcripts. If you do, that the evidence is very convincing.

There has never been any evidence that these confessions given by the people in these trials were coerced and there's plenty of evidence that they could not possibly have coerced. Let me give you one example.

In the 1938 trial, the trial of the Rights and Trotskyites, Nikolai Bukharin, a very prominent Bolshevik, a prominent conspirator, confessed to certain crimes that he was accused of. But he spent most of his testimony denying in the strongest possible language some of the most significant accusations that the prosecution made against him.

Now if he were fearful of torture, if he had been fearful that his family would be persecuted, he would never have done that. He would just simply never have fought tooth and nail against the prosecutor Vyshinsky to deny some of the major charges that Vyshinsky brought against him.

And in his final statement at the trial, Bukharin said, "Well, people are going to wonder why I'm confessing." And the first thing he says is obviously the evidence against me play a very major role.

So a careful reading of the texts of these Moscow trials I think dispels any suspicion that you might have that these people were coerced. But as I've said, we now have hundreds of documents of testimony in the case of all of these trials against all of these people and against many others. We have the evidence now. There's an awful lot more evidence that's still in the archives because nobody is looking for it, but we have a tremendous amount.

Now, as for why people believed it, believed that they were fraudulent, I think Khrushchev had a lot to do with that. Trotsky clearly said it's all fake. And then Khrushchev picked that up and it fit the Anti-Stalin Paradigm very well. It was very convenient to the anti-communist

scholarly world to simply accept what Khrushchev said. In fact, a number of the scholars of Soviet history of the '60s, '70s, '80s, and '90s would make statements like, well, for what happened next, we can turn to Nikita Khrushchev's Secret Speech, as though that were somehow or other primary source evidence for anything. Well, now we know that it wasn't, but it should have been obvious from the get-go that Khrushchev and his historians, and then Gorbachev and his historians, had no evidence. They could not cite any evidence.

NP: I mean, one of the things that I found quite convincing is you actually showed a few examples of where defendants had actually lied in the testimony. I they said they hadn't been in touch with various people like Trotsky for example and then letters have turned up showing that they were in fact in in touch. So if it was a coerced confession, they were coerced to tell lies. It doesn't really stack up.

GF: In that book I also point out that there is some non-Soviet evidence that confirms some of these accusations. You know, for example, the accusations against Yuri Pyatakov in the January 1937 trial. There was this American engineer, John Littlepage, who during the Depression, when it was hard to get a job for engineers, went to the Soviet Union to work there as an expert. And he testifies that he knew for a fact that some of the charges against Pyatakov were true.

I went to the trouble years ago. oh, 45 years ago now, of tracking down a gentleman, at that time quite elderly, who had been a student of Littlepage's in the 1930s. And I asked him. I said Littlepage wrote these articles and then this book saying that the charges in the 1937 trial against Pyatakov were accurate. Was Littlepage any kind of a communist sympathizer? Is there any reason to think that he would try to defend, you know, the Soviet line? And this professor that I interviewed said no. He was a real straight shooter, a real all-American western guy. He had no interest at all in communism. He just went to the Soviet Union to get a job during the Depression.

And so there is extra Soviet evidence, evidence from outside the Soviet Union that supports the genuineness of some of the charges in the Moscow trials.

NP: All right. Now, for argument's sake, let's just take it as read that the men were guilty, was it really necessary for Stalin to purge what he called the left deviation and then the right deviation? I read a book called *Molotov Remembers* where it's a series of interviews, I'm sure you're familiar with it, with Molotov that he gave after he was exiled to Mongolia or whatever. and Molotov in that book seems to suggest that the Soviet Union would not have survived had they not carried out these measures i.e. the purges.

But my question is why? What was the specific threat posed by each faction both ideologically and practically? I.e. let's say just they just found them guilty and said well, you just go to jail now or we're going to exile you to Mongolia, like they did to Molotov. Why couldn't they have done that? Why was it necessary to to outright execute them, in your view?

GF: Well, in the second Moscow trial, four of the defendants were in fact given prison terms, were not executed. In the third Moscow trial, how many? At least four or five were imprisoned, not executed. So as I said, it's very helpful to actually study the transcripts. Not everybody was executed.

But let me just back up a little bit. Nobody in the Moscow trials and basically nobody during the 1930s in any of the trials that we [know about] -- well nobody was executed for anything other than a capital offense. So in the first Moscow trial, some of the defendants were directly involved in the assassination of Kirov. The other defendants in the first Moscow trial were Nazi spies. They were in the pay of Germany, and so they were all executed.

In the second Moscow trial the Trotskyists ... by the time of the second Moscow trial, Trotskyism had been outlawed. It was no longer considered a simply a political tendency in the Bolshevik Party. Once the defendants in the first Moscow trial had been convicted of plotting to assassinate some of the Soviet leaders, including Stalin and some others, it was against the law to be a Trotskyist. It wasn't a it wasn't a capital offense to be a Trotskyist, but it was it was illegal to be a Trotskyist.

But if you read the transcript, you'll see that the accusations against the major Trotsky defenders in the second Moscow trial were that they were involved with not only with the Nazis, German spies, but they were involved in sabotage within the Soviet Union itself. And some of these acts of sabotage resulted in people being killed in train accidents or mining explosions ... So the people who were involved in those kinds of acts were executed.

But some of the others who had, we're not quite sure exactly why, but evidently they were they had proven either to be more peripherally involved or had given evidence that the investigators did not already know about. Anyway, four of the defendants were not executed, were sentenced to prison terms. Karl Radek, who was probably the best known of these figures, clearly after a certain point cooperated with the prosecution and was given a sentence of 10 years and so was Gregory Sokolnikov. likewise, Radek was a committed Trotskyite. Sokolnikov was an oppositionist but he was not committed to any particular faction.

Now in the third Moscow trial a number of the defendants were given prison sentences. and the reasons for that are given in in the court's summing up. If you read the transcripts, you can see that that they were either not involved in capital crimes, as the case of a defendant named Dr. Pletnev, or had given significant help to the prosecution in the case of of Rakovsky -- Khristian Rakovsky, who was a major supporter of Trotsky. But the other defendants were involved with conspiracies with the Nazis, with other oppositionists, with sabotage and these were capital offenses.

So the idea that Stalin purged people is incorrect. Let me just say a word about the term “purge.” The term purge is a translation of the Russian word “chistka” which means a cleaning or a purge. And what a purge was that periodically during the 1930s Party members had to pass through a purge, which meant that they were investigated by the Party, by their Party collectives, to see if they had paid their dues, if they had done Party work, if they had behaved properly, if they were good communists. And if they passed the purge, they were accepted. If they were not, they could be put on probationary status or even expelled. And that's what a purge was.

So it is misinformation and very much confuses the understanding of this period to call the trials of the oppositionists who were involved in these conspiracies, to call those purges. They were not purges. They were criminal trials with criminal penalties at stake.

NP: You know, just while we're on this topic of the left and right deviation, we're jumping around a little bit, but I think it's worth asking this. Do you think it's fair to say that once Khrushchev embarked on elements of both left and right deviation that he doomed the USSR? And I realize we're kind of going a bit beyond your period here, but could Brezhnev have done anything to restore the USSR from revisionism after he basically replaced Khrushchev in the 60s?

GF: Well, Brezhnev was one of the people who supported Khrushchev and in 1964 was one of the people who was central in voting him out in the central committee meeting of October 1964. So he was with Khrushchev and I don't think he was going to turn the Party around. Let's put it that way. As I mentioned, I think that when Khrushchev gave that Secret Speech in 56, clearly the Party leadership was already behind him. And that implies that Stalin was politically isolated. and elements of that political isolation within the Party – pardon, elements of Stalin's political isolation within the Party are evident even into the late 1930s.

For example, Stalin initiated the drafting of a new Soviet constitution which was finally published and passed by the Soviet government and by the Party [and] by the Soviet government in 1936. It's often called the Stalin Constitution. And the Stalin Constitution called for secret and competitive elections, universal secret competitive elections. It foresaw nominations of candidates for the government, for the Soviets, on various levels, who are not from the Communist Party. and Stalin and some of his supporters argued strongly for this.

But it never happened. Stalin was unable to win the Central Committee. There's some evidence that he was unable to even win the Politburo, which was this much smaller leading group, to that position. Now I'm not suggesting that that that would have been a good idea or a bad idea. But it was Stalin's idea and he did not manage to win that in the in the Party.

Also at the February-March 1937 Central Committee meeting Stalin announced that there would be political classes. Stalin thought that the problem with the Soviet Communist Party was that people didn't understand Marxism-Leninism. The leaders, the Party leadership, did not understand Marxism, and they needed to do this. So Stalin announced that there were going to be schools, there were going to be classes in Moscow and that Party leaders on all levels would go, in shifts obviously, to Moscow to take these courses. And in the meanwhile they needed to appoint some people to take their places while they were gone, to perform their Party functions in their localities while they themselves were at these classes in Moscow. And he [Stalin] made a big point of this in his speech in March 1937.

And these classes never took place. Clearly the Party leaders on all levels did not want to do this. We don't know exactly the details of how that played out, but the classes never took place. One could speculate that these Party leaders did not want to abandon their leadership posts and turn them over to other people and go to Moscow for months at a

time to study. Perhaps they thought that by the time they finished their studies they wouldn't be needed anymore. They would lose those posts.

And you could speculate that that was the same thing with the idea of elections. Stalin even said in his famous interview in 1935 with Roy Howard of the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain that it would be good for the Communist Party if some non-communist candidates who ran against communist candidates were elected [and] Communist Party members defeated, because that would be demonstration that they had not done good communist work, that would help them to improve their work.

So Stalin did not get his own way and was met with opposition even as early as the mid-'30s. But this is opposition from people who were not Trotskyite or right-wing conspirators, much less Nazi and Japanese spies. These were people who were loyal Stalinist Bolsheviks who just did not agree with these policies that Stalin advocated.

So Stalin didn't get his way. And this tendency clearly got stronger as time went on. So that by the time we get to the postwar period, the last few years of Stalin's life, I think it's clear that Stalin was isolated within the Party.

In October 1952 there was the 19th Party Congress. This is the last congress which took place when Stalin was still alive. And the theme of the 19th Party Congress was basically: Forward to communism, forward to the next stage towards building communism. The text that everyone referred to and read was Stalin's last book, *Economic Problems Of Socialism in the USSR*. It was referred to many times. It sort of marked this next stage of progress towards communism.

Then a central committee meeting was held right after the congress, also in October 1952. And evidently at Stalin's insistence the structure of the Party leadership was was reorganized.

And -- to make a long story short -- Stalin dies in March 1953 and within a very short period of time Stalin's book basically disappears off the shelves. No one refers to it anymore. No one refers to the resolutions passed at the 19th Party Congress anymore. The new Party program and the changes in the leadership of the Party were simply ignored. So clearly the initiatives that were supported by Stalin were not supported by the leadership. And this is more demonstration that Stalin was politically isolated within the Party by the time he died and evidently for quite a number of years before that.

NP: Yeah, I have to say because one of the things I wanted to do is just read around myself and another book I picked up again partly in preparation for this interview was a book of letters from Stalin to Molotov. I thought well I'd have to get it the other way. And this theme of Stalin kind of being a little bit isolated within the Party I think comes through in some of those letters. There's one point where Molotov wants to take a holiday. He was like, I want to take six weeks off. And Stalin like, you can't leave Moscow for six weeks because you can't leave Kaganovich, you know, iron Lazar, which in any mainstream history book is known as like Stalin's like trusted henchman, you know, you can't leave him in Moscow on his own for six weeks.

So it was clear that even people who you think were well trusted, in Stalin's circle, he clearly didn't trust him enough to leave him alone without Molotov for 6 weeks.

There's another thing that struck me reading that which is that Stalin is complaining about Rykov. As early as the as the mid '20s. And he's constantly writing letters saying like we're still going to leave this guy Rykov there. He's up to something. And I was checking it. It literally took him 10 years. I was like, "What happened to Rykov?" Oh, yeah. They put him in charge of telecoms until 1936. I was like, "Well, what I'm saying is this doesn't seem like the totalitarian dictator." You know, it wouldn't have taken like any, I don't know, Saddam Hussein or



something, it wouldn't have taken him 10 years to work an enemy out of the Party. You know what I mean? So that struck me, reading that.

In the interest of time, I want to get on to the one thing that everybody says. If you say the word Stalin to anybody, like I mentioned, like I started reading these books on Stalin. I said to my wife, "[Tell me] one thing about Stalin." And her immediate response was, "Oh, well, he killed 30 million people." I mean, I've seen figures as high as 60 million people bandied need about. I think Robert Conquest had it at 20 million people. Yes. So my question to you is what is the real number and what embellishments have been made by mainstream historians over the years.

GF: Well just just one word about Stalin. Stalin was not a dictator. I've given you a couple of examples where he didn't get his own way and there are others.

When Stalin died the American CIA actually issued a report which has since been published. I mean, you can now read it. It's been declassified. And the CIA's conclusion was, Don't expect any big changes. There's always been collective leadership in the Soviet Union, and they'll continue to be collective leadership. This business of Stalin being, you know, all powerful has never been true.

So there's lots of evidence that Stalin was not a dictator. Nobody ever said about Hitler for example, who was certainly a dictator, that Hitler was stopped from doing what he wanted to do by the leadership of the Nazi Party or something like that. Hitler was a dictator. What he said goes. That was not the case with Stalin. But Stalin is called a dictator because "dictator" is bad. We want to call Stalin bad things. So let's call him a dictator.

Interestingly enough, in in the second volume of his projected three volume biography of Stalin Stephen Kotkin, who until recently was a full professor at Princeton but has now gone full-time to the Hoover

Institution in Stanford, California, the Hoover Institution being the largest and best funded anti-communist research center in the world. Stephen Kotkin starts off his book, volume two, by saying Stalin was a “tyrant” and then later on saying words to that effect. He never actually calls Stalin a dictator. He calls him a tyrant. It's not clear what a “tyrant” is. But in any case, Stalin was not a dictator. That's part of the Anti-Stalin Paradigm. You can't say that. All right? it's not considered appropriate to say that.

And you've asked another interesting question is how many people did Stalin kill? And I think the answer is, zero. Stalin didn't kill anybody. if you look at the periods of time or the incidents which those who say Stalin was a mass murderer site you'll see that this charge melts away.

Some years ago I wrote a book called *Blood Lies*, which is a response to this very popular and very dishonest book by Yale historian Timothy Snyder, who wrote a book called *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, where Snyder makes all kinds of outrageous accusations against Stalin.

if you're going to come up with a figure -- well you can't come up with a figure like 20 million. Snyder who is completely dishonest and also not a historian of the Soviet Union so he knows very little about it, he's copying what other scholars have said, he comes up with some number like eight or 10 million but he doesn't really even justify that.

If you're going to come up with any kind of large number you have to include as Stalin's victims the people who died during the 1932-1933 famine. So, there's been very good scholarship on the 1932-1933 famine, and it's very clear that not only not was Stalin not responsible for it, the Communist Party was not responsible for it. And once they figured out that they were facing a very widespread famine they instituted all kinds of efforts to send aid to the famine-stricken areas of Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan to alleviate the famine. There's excellent research on this by Professor Mark Tauger of West Virginia University. Most if not all of his

research is available here and there online, on the internet. It's wonderful stuff I have summarized it in two chapters of my book *Blood Lies* and then again in the first chapter of my book *Stalin Waiting For ... the Truth* which is a critique of Stephen Kotkin's volume two. But Tauger has continued since then to do yet more research.

So you can't write down the people who died in the 1932-33 famine as victims of Stalin. That's just anti-communist propaganda. And specifically it's propaganda that has its inception in German Nazi propaganda of the mid-1930s and then gets picked up after World War II by the Ukrainian nationalist movement. the people who fought on the side of the Germans and then fled to the West when Germany was losing the war, and became firmly ensconced in the secret services of England, Germany and United States and particularly Canada, and also in academia. And then when Ukraine became an independent country in the early 1990s [August 24, 1991] they streamed back to Ukraine and ensconced themselves in academia and politics to the point whereby the notion that there was a deliberate famine against Ukrainians instituted by Stalin and the communists in the 1930s -- this is essential, this is required in Ukrainian schools and universities. It's the myth of the "Holodomor," which is how it has been christened by the Ukrainian Nationalists. It is simply taken as a given in right-wing historiography and also in Ukraine. And there's never been any evidence for it at all.

But going on just to complete the answer [to] your question: the people who were executed in the 1930s during the 1930s fall into two categories. One, there were those who were arrested, interrogated, convicted of conspiracy, espionage, sabotage, and so forth. and imprisoned or executed by the Soviet institutions.

The second is this: in September 1936 a man named Nikolai Yezhov was appointed to be the head of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the NKVD, which includes the political police. And Yezhov had his own conspiracy. And that conspiracy involved killing lots of loyal Soviet

citizens who were completely innocent of anything, not even bothering to investigate.

The Stalin leadership eventually figured out [that] this was what was going on. Yezhov was removed from power. He and his followers were tried. We have lots of evidence against them. They were convicted and executed in 1939 and 1940. And I have a book on this, not a very long book, pretty easy to read, called *Yezhov versus Stalin*.

But Yezhov was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Virtually all of whom -- almost all of whom -- we don't really know the details, but almost all of whom must have been completely innocent. And Yezhov and his men agreed that that was the case. They also had a conspiracy to kill Stalin, but that never that never came off.

So there was a large-scale massacre of let us say 680,000 people under Yezhov, really a catastrophe. and the evidence for that has been forthcoming since the end of the Soviet Union and more evidence comes out all the time. But even as early as 2010 I put many of Yezhov 's confessions and the confessions of one or two of his right-hand men on my web page, published them, retyped them, put them on there in the Russian original and then in English translation, and this material is out there. It's ignored by mainstream scholarship, but it's ignored in defense of the Anti-Stalin Paradigm, It's convenient to blame Stalin for these illegal executions.

So that that's an important issue. If you want to demonize Stalin and thereby the communist movement and Party and so forth, if you want to do that, you need some major crimes to lay at Stalin's doorstep. And Khrushchev did that, and Gorbachev did that. And that is what was picked up by the anti-communist scholars and researchers of the West and continues to be to be published as though it were supported by evidence. But it's not.

NP: Yeah know one of the things that interested me is that I believe -- I mean correct me if I'm wrong -- but my understanding is [this]: Beria did a report on the activities of Yezhov in preparation for the trial where he was finally executed. And my understanding is that Khrushchev relied on that report for the evidence that the NKVD used forced confessions. It was actually Beria's report that provides the evidence for the idea that the NKVD were known to use torture or kind of techniques that would go against human rights or something like this. Is that true?

GF: I believe it's the document you're referring to that I reprint in my book *Yezhov versus Stalin*. I believe the report is by Malenkov Andreev, who was also an old Stalinist, and Beria. [In it] they report that they have carried out an investigation on what went on, what Yezhov did while he was head of the NKVD and conclude that he massacred a huge number of people, executed a huge number of people without trial, without any evidence, and so forth. That document has been published, and I translated it and put it in my book. [See Chapter 10 of *Yezhov vs Stalin*] I don't believe it's translated anywhere else -- I haven't seen it anywhere else. Certainly I put it in my book eight or nine years ago now: *Yezhov versus Stalin*. Read about it there.

So we know about Khrushchev's attack on Stalin in 1956 20th Party Congress. In 1961 there was the 22nd Party Congress, in October 1961. It was basically, much of it, devoted to various high-ranking Party members, leading Party members of the Party, attacking Stalin ... After the 22nd Congress of late 1961 Khrushchev appointed a commission, which is called the Shvernik Commission after an old Bolshevik named Shvernik who had been a prominent second rank union bureaucrat for many years. And their job was to investigate the defendants of trials and the military defendants of the so-called Tukhachevsky Affair who had been accused of conspiring with the Germans and Japanese and so forth, and to investigate -- to go into the archives and investigate and find the evidence that these people were innocent. But the investigators were unable to do that. I mean, they went into the archives, all right. They wrote these very long reports, but they were unable to find the evidence

that Khrushchev wanted them to find. And as a result, those reports were never published -- they were not published until after the end of the Soviet Union. They were published in 1993 or 1994 for the first time and they have been republished since. Gorbachev ... he and his men found those reports and used them dishonestly to try to gin up some evidence against [Stalin] but they were not able to [do so], were not able to come up with the kind of evidence [they needed].

There's an interesting conference that takes place in late 1962, a conference of Party historians. You have to understand [that] during this period, [we're] talking about the Khrushchev period, every school and university had a specialist in Party history, not just Soviet history, Russian history -- Party history. And this was a conference of Party historians. And interesting papers were given by leading [people?] and some others at this Party conference.

One of the papers, one of the talks that was given was by Piotr Pospelov, who was one of Khrushchev's right-hand men and who had drafted the first draft of what became the Secret Speech back in 1956. Pospelov took questions and answers from the floor and he was asked, and this is in the transcript, one of the students, one of the Party historians asks: "Why don't they let us into the Party archives?" and Pospelov says: Anything you need you can find in the transcript of the 22nd Party Congress. And somebody else, another person, asks essentially the same question and gets the same answer ...

So they [the Party historians] were not allowed into the Party archives. And now we know why -- because the evidence in the Party archives disproves all of these lies about Stalin and about the Stalin period. We didn't have any of this evidence until end of the Soviet Union. Had the Soviet Union not come to an end we wouldn't have that evidence still.

NP: So I have to come back to the famine, the famine in Ukraine. I picked up this very hard to find book called *The Stalin Era* by Anna Louise Strong from 1956. I had to I had to find some Irish communist

website and it took weeks to arrive and things like this. but in this book, Anna Louise Strong claims that the famine in Ukraine in 1932 -- I mean she was actually there. There are bizarre tales in there about -- there's this this one passage where there's mass plowing of the fields and they have this woman singing opera on the side of the field. I was like, this stuff is so bizarre it can't be made up. But anyway in that in that book she says that -- a little like a story that doesn't really make its way into the version that you might see on TV -- she claims that the kulaks who resisted collectivization and destroyed their tools and killed their livestock, all the all their cows and pigs and so on, chickens, they just killed them all because they didn't want to give up their property to the collectivization effort. And she argues that this caused a significant problem because, as you mentioned before, it was basically a medieval kind of peasant technology they were using.

Stalin wanted to bring in modern machinery. But then at this time where the Soviet Union needed a lot of food and they were already having problems producing that food and this famine came along. On top of it all, the kulaks basically destroyed the tools that were there and killed the livestock which massively exacerbated the problem.

Now, is that your understanding of what happened? And is there any evidence that you found to suggest that this is really what happened?

GF: Well, let me just repeat that. I have not personally gone into the primary sources on the famine. Years ago, over 20 years ago now, I ran across the research, such as it was at that time, by Mark Tauger of West Virginia University and I saw that he had gone into the primary sources. In fact Mark Tauger has devoted his professional life since graduate school in the late 1980s to studying Soviet agriculture and Russian agriculture more broadly, but particularly Soviet agriculture, and has always gone back to the primary sources. He's not a leftist at all just, I'd say, an ordinary principled academic.

And I got to know Mark over the years. I became a big fan of his research and his research is first rate primary source research and he has no political acts to grind. He's certainly not, you know, a leftist, a communist, pro-Stalin, any of that stuff. And Mark points out that there had been serious famines in Russia every three or four or five years, but on a regular basis going back at least a thousand years, back into the Middle East, deep into the Middle Ages.

The geographical situation of Russia is not favorable to the kind of agriculture you get let's say in the American Midwest or even in the Canadian Midwest because Canada is more northerly than the United States. It's subject to droughts and floods, short summers, infestations of insects, plant disease, and so forth. And Mark delineates some of these famines. Of course, there had been a lot of writing about them in the 19th century and the early 20th century. This was a huge problem for Russia

And there were four famines, serious famines, in the 1920s alone, four of them. So Mark's research points out that in the late 1920s the Stalin leadership sent some agricultural experts to the United States to investigate some large scale American Midwestern farms that they knew about which were relying on mechanization, heavily mechanized farms, [using] relatively little labor and very widespread [mechanization], and then came back and the Soviets set up some what they called Soviet farms, a small number of experimental farms to try out this American style of agriculture in Russia.

They decided that that was a good model and therefore decided to collectivize agriculture. And they decided to do this because every few years there was a devastating famine. And who suffered? Well, everybody suffered except for the wealthy. Everybody suffered to some extent but the poor peasants and the poor workers suffered the most. They were the ones who overwhelmingly died either directly of famine or of diseases that result from malnutrition.



And also it was clear that the Soviet Union could never become a modern nation, could never industrialize and could never defend itself against the threats from Western imperialist powers. At that time the Soviets weren't clear who was going to attack them. There wasn't Nazi Germany yet. Hitler hadn't taken power yet. But France, England, Japan, or Poland could attack and would attack. Stalin gave a speech in 1931 where he said, "We've got 10 years to industrialize. Either that or they will crush us." That's a pretty famous speech.

So they instituted forced collectivization. You didn't have a choice because to continue with the medieval form of agriculture was to doom not only the poor peasants and the poor workers. It was to doom the Soviet Union itself. It could never industrialize. It could never build a strong enough society, a big enough army to fight off the invasion that everybody was sure would come sooner or later from some direction or other. And it couldn't support the international communist movement either which was centered right in Moscow.

So they did this collectivization in that rapid form [and it] was basically complete by the beginning of 1932.

So the famine of the fall of '32 into the fall of into the late summer of '33 was not directly caused by collectivization. As you point out, the killing of livestock and particularly draft animals like oxen and horses would have been, certainly was, a serious blow. The crash industrialization had begun and there was an emphasis on building machinery for agriculture, tractors especially because tractors can do an awful lot. could, you know, tractors can pull all kinds of farm implements, from plows to reapers and weeders and all kinds of stuff. Of course the Soviet Union bought tractors from Western countries, but by 1932 there were not sufficient tractors to replace all of the draft animals.

Okay, the industrialization of agriculture had not proceeded enough and then as Tauger points out in his research there was a series of natural disasters. There were plant diseases. These are called rust and smut. You

can look them up. I looked them up. They are real plant diseases which particularly attack grain products. There was flooding in some areas, drought in other areas and actually a very well documented infestation of mice, field mice.

So the [failure of the ] crop of the fall of 1932 was actually caused by natural causes. However, it was not obvious to the political leadership in Moscow that that was the cause until perhaps January [1933]. Initially Stalin and the other leaders believed it was because of ineffective political organization and leadership by the local communist leadership. And there was lots of sending Kaganovich and others down there to browbeat the local communists. But it turned out that that was not the primary cause at all. The primary cause was these natural disasters.

Once the Soviet leadership realized this, around January '33, they started to provide extra rations and extra manpower in the areas most affected. And before that, when they realized there were localized famines, they didn't realize the extent of the famines, they sent people to go around to the farms to all the farms, particularly the better off farms, but really all the farms, and simply confiscate grain in order to divide it up more equally, in a more egalitarian fashion.

The natural order [of things] would have been to let the farmers who had somehow or rather managed to have a decent crop go out there and sell their crop, sell their grain at a very high price. And what would be the result? The result would be the people in the cities -- cities don't grow crops, they don't grow grain -- and the poor in the countryside would suffer the brunt of this. They would pay the price of this famine, they would sicken and die disproportionately as had been the case throughout Russian history.

So the Soviets sent in teams to go around to the farms and sniff out what grain was available, what they could find that had been hoarded, that had been saved, and confiscated it so it could be redistributed in a more

egalitarian fashion. Now this caused a lot of resentment among the people whose grains had been confiscated.

It's hard to know whether they could have done anything different. That was their initial response. And then later on, starting in January '33, they sent teams of organizers into the countryside. They redistributed the grain to some extent. And as a result, the harvest in 1933 was successful. And it's important to note that the harvest in 1933 was brought in by a peasantry who had been weakened by the famine, many of whom had died as a result of the famine. But they were able to bring in a successful harvest, which once again suggests not man-made causes but natural causes for the famine.

At any rate, I recommend Mark Tauger's research on this and it's really first-rate stuff. Mark is writing a book -- I hope it'll be more than one book -- on Soviet agriculture. I was in touch with him, I don't know, sometime in the last couple of months and he's one of these meticulous scholars who takes years to write his great book, but I certainly hope he comes out with it as soon as possible. It will be very important.

NP: Now I don't want to get off on too much of a tangent about this and it's all right to say if you don't know if you haven't come across it but I've seen it suggested that the famine was exacerbated by Lysenko that the that the plant diseases that you mentioned was caused by, like, you know, Stalinist Lysenkoism. Is that mentioned in any of the stuff that you've read or is any truth to that?

GF: Mark Tauger has looked into Lysenko -- he calls him "crazy Lysenko." Lysenko had had a success [in creating good seeds] -- according to Mark; I have not researched Lysenko. If you want to know about Lysenko, contact him. But I don't believe that Lysenko's experimentation with seed grain was a factor in the 1932-33. It becomes significant a little later on when Lysenko opposes the agronomists, the agricultural experts who follow Mendelian genetics and Lysenko denounced Mendelian genetics. We know that he was wrong to do so,

but that's another issue. I don't believe from my reading of the literature that it had any direct impact on the famine of '32-'33.

NP: So on the subject of industrialization most even mainstream historians, even most kind of lay people in the street, they'll kind of do this thing where they say, "Well, yeah, he's a monster. He killed millions of people." But the USSR did achieve significant economic and industrial growth, a huge increase in output during that period. I think it's 400% increase in industrial output. How do these historians reconcile the belief that so many millions of people died with this fact? How did Stalin achieve in 10 years what it took Britain almost 200 years to do?

And I have to be honest, this is what got me down this line of inquiry because I'm like, hold on a second. He's posting six to 10% GDP growth year on year with losing 20 million people and they won World War II and they got a man into space. I mean, like some part of this is ringing the alarm bell. It doesn't make sense. So, how did he actually do that? It does seem miraculous.

GF: There's a very good book by Robert Allen called *From Farm To Factory*. Allen is a British historian. He did not study agricultural collectivization or these other issues. So he kind of accepts [the stories about it]. But he writes about this economic miracle, if you want to call it that, of rapid industrialization. And it's a pretty good book about that.

I think that at this point in our discussion today, [we should] recognize that the story of Stalin killing 20 million people is nonsense. It didn't happen. The figure 20 million by the way I think primarily comes from Alexander Solzhenitsyn and I believe it may originate in the anti-communist émigrés of the '40s and '50s. But I first encountered it in Conquest, and Conquest just repeats all that stuff.

Just as an aside, what really got me started doing research on the Stalin area Soviet Union was Robert Conquest's book called *The Great Terror. Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*. This book came out already when I was in

graduate school in 1968 or '69, but I didn't have time to read it right then. But a couple of years later, after I'd gotten out of graduate school and started teaching and my dissertation was well underway, I did sit down and read it, and it's still his best-known book.

And by that time I had gone through graduate school to study medieval literature and medieval history. I was fortunate to have professors who they had their own views, but they really stressed the need to use primary source evidence and not to pay any attention to scholars, no matter how famous, who did not support their conclusions with references to primary source evidence. Now, I took that for granted at the time. I've discovered since then that that I was pretty fortunate to have professors who drummed that into us and who insisted upon it in our papers and dissertations.

So I read Conquest's book. You're talking about sometime in the early 1970s. And it's horrifying. I mean it's just one horror story about Stalin after another. But Conquest does have footnotes. And I recognized, or I thought I recognized, pretty much from the get-go, that he didn't have any evidence. He just quoted other people who had written books, sometimes articles, but mainly books. You know, if Alexander Orlov said something, then that was Conquest's evidence, and so on.

So when my dissertation was pretty well in hand and I didn't have a family yet, I had [some] time. For a year or more I would catch the bus from northern New Jersey where I live to go to Manhattan to the New York Public Library which has a really excellent Russian collection. At that time they had a Russian research room just devoted to Russian research. I don't know if they have that anymore, but they certainly still have the materials. And what I did was [this]: I made up 3x5 cards of all of Conquest's footnotes. And then I went and checked his footnotes to see if there was any evidence in any of these footnotes.

And there was no evidence in any of these footnotes. Conquest would cite not only Khrushchev but Khrushchev-era books and articles and

they didn't have any kind references to evidence [either]. He would cite any anti-communist source. He would cite any source that said anything that shed a bad light on Stalin or on the Soviet Union during his time. But he had no evidence. Now the Soviet writers under Khrushchev and then later under Gorbachev didn't have any evidence either. They weren't allowed into the archives. But I did recognize that what Conquest said was just not just not supported by evidence. Why should you believe this?

Then I went to read the reviews of Conquest's book in the scholarly journals, because when a book like that comes out by a famous scholar, it's going to get reviewed. None of those reviewers pointed out that Conquest didn't have any evidence. They all praised it. One or two of them would say, well, you know, I don't know about this; I'm not sure about that. But they all praised his book. And I'm thinking: How could they praise his book when he doesn't have any evidence?

So I decided I would when time permitted I would do a little research on my own and I wrote an article that ultimately took a long time. I wrote an article on the "military purge." The mainstream story then and now is that Marshal Tukhachevsky and the other high-ranking military officers tried and executed alongside him in 1937 were all framed. They were all innocent. Stalin killed them. Who knows why? Was he crazy? Was he jealous of them? Was he afraid of them?

And I wrote an article pointing out that we don't have any evidence. We don't know. We can't say that Tukhachevsky was guilty or was innocent because we don't have the evidence. And that article was accepted by the reviewers of a of a Soviet studies journal, Russian History.

And then the publisher of that journal turned it down. And he turned it down because he said it makes Stalin look good. Well, it didn't make Stalin look good. It just said that we don't have enough evidence to prove that Stalin framed these people or that he didn't frame them, that they were innocent or that they were guilty. The reviewers of my article,

who worked for and reviewed it for the journal, scholars, insisted that it be published. And finally one of them, Arch Getty, who died recently, in May [2025], [and] who later on became a major scholar in the field, told me that he threatened to resign from being one of the readers for this journal if they didn't publish my essay because the essay had gone through all the expert vetting and gone through the process and should be published.

So it was published in the journal *Russian History*, which is still around, it's a major Russian history journal. But when that issue came out 1988 I think, '87 or '88, there was an introduction to the issue, a few pages at the beginning of the issue, [with] a paragraph about every article a sort of introduction to each article -- except mine. [There was] no paragraph about mine! It was just omitted as though it wasn't there, although it was there.

So that was my first introduction to what I have since come to call the Anti-Stalin Paradigm. I didn't know there was such a thing as an ideological requirement that you conclude that Stalin committed some crime. If he's been accused of a crime, you can't conclude that he might not have been guilty of that crime. I didn't know that there was this ideological imperative that I have called the Anti-Stalin Paradigm, but that was my first encounter [with it].

NP: Just a couple of things on Robert Conquest. I mean, one of the things that I concluded from reading your stuff and also just reading around in some other books is that what whatever Conquest doing was not -- whatever he was doing was not history. Because one of the things that stands out to me is that at one point I think he like asks an emigré who'd been to the GULAG how many people have been in the GULAG? "Oh, probably about 5%." And then he takes that 5% and then and then estimates from that -- literally, just a guy telling an anecdote. Oh, it's probably about 5% of the population. Then he just makes an estimate from that and puts it straight in the book. I couldn't believe couldn't

believe how shoddy that little one little bit of work from Conquest was. Do you see how?

The other thing I'll mention about Conquest, kind of a little tangentially, I read a book a couple of years back called *Who Paid the Piper?* I don't know if you're familiar with it, [it's] by Francis Stoner Saunders. [It] kind of blew my mind, but basically [it] was showing how involved the CIA were with really quite obscure academic journals. For example, I was really surprised to learn that the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper was on the CIA payroll and at one point he wrote kind of a furious character assassination on the historian Arnold Toynbee. And I was like, what? Why is the CIA involved in this? Like this is such a weird thing.

But anyway, one of the things that this book reveals is that there was this journal called *Encounter* or "The Encounter," right? which I since has become kind of well-known and it was it was a kind of stronghold for what would become the neoconservatives, Irving Kristol and so on. But Robert Conquest was more or less the kind of court historian of this journal, *Encounter*.

And it's subsequently been suggested that a lot of the stuff that Robert Conquest did was probably at the behest or at least on the tacit payroll of -- this was actually like official American state propaganda, which is why it got reviewed everywhere, why everybody's heard of him, etc., because he was essentially just doing the bidding of the CIA. That that's just something I kind of I'm kind of putting together in [bits and] pieces here.

But in the interest of time I should try to wrap this up here.

Why is Stalin in your view singled out as the monster in Soviet history? It kind of strikes me that the quote unquote evil is kind of seems like localized and personified and almost like just everything's put onto him. you've talked about the myth of the twin monsters, the kind of Hannah Arendt idea of the two totalitarianisms. There's Hitler and then there's



Stalin and they're two sides of the same coin. Why do you think this happens? Why all this attention just on the figure of Stalin?

GF: Well, if you're going to apologize for capitalism and imperialism you have to make the alternatives look bad. As bad as possible. I guess it's as simple as that. It starts back by the time of the Russian Revolution, as I mentioned. And then you have Trotsky, and then you have Khrushchev and it's all too -- I mean, you might say it's too good to be true, but I mean, it's all exactly what is necessary, what is useful, to make the alternatives to capitalism and imperialism look bad, make the communist movement look bad. I think it's really as simple as that.

And after a certain point the lies achieve a kind of life of their own, as you've mentioned. You know people go around mentioning these tremendous figures and they say that everybody was framed at the in the Moscow trials. And when you turn to the legitimated scholarship, all of which is shaped by this Anti-Stalin Paradigm, you can't really criticize these falsehoods about Stalin or even point out that there's no evidence to support them. You turn to the scholarship and the scholarship either supports it or at least does not dispute it.

You know, what else is there? Most -- not only most people but really everybody -- is affected by this propaganda. It becomes part of the groundwater as the saying goes. It's something that everybody accepts and nobody really asks what the evidence is for it. So we've been in that world for a very long time now.

And when I write my books and articles and cite evidence, I am inevitably attacked. Because I'm, well, I'm often called a Stalinist. If Stalin is accused of some crime, [like] starving the Ukrainians and the famine, and you cite the evidence that says this can't be true, this is not true, then you must be a Stalinist and therefore you're not trying to discover the truth. You're heavily biased and therefore we can ignore what you have to say.

So I get called a Stalinist all the time. It's kind of a litmus test. If somebody calls me a Stalinist, I know that there's something wrong with that person. Okay? That person is not really after the truth. If somebody says, "Oh, that's interesting. Let's look into the evidence. Let's talk about evidence." Which is what you should be talking about, evidence, right? then that's a different matter and that's what we should be paying attention [to].

If somebody says, "Well, folks, I think in my experience, you could ignore anything they have to say," -- these people are not out for the truth. They're out They're out to praise people who support the mainstream anti-Stalin view and denigrate anybody who does not.

I get called [a Stalinist] by Trotskyists because the Trotsky cult is completely dependent on a demonized view of Stalin But by others too who are just plain out and out anti-communists. So that's the situation.

NP: So I mean with all that said I mean another I should mention another thing that got me down this line. is that I've always heard these stories. You know, every once in a while we're told, but the thing is in Russia, Stalin's still popular, right? We we're always told this and in fact, I saw just it wasn't that long ago that they've now put a statue in Moscow subway station of Stalin, right? So, do you see a time in the future, near, medium, [or] long-term future, when the Anti-Stalin Paradigm might fall? And do you have any insight into why, despite all that has been said about him, and, like you said, Gorbachev obviously grew up believing these things about him, why despite it all does he remain popular in Russia?

GF: Well, it was the Russians who made the revolution. So unlike any other country except maybe China or Cuba except perhaps China, certainly unlike all of Eastern Europe, the Russian Revolution was always has been very popular within Russia, although much less so among the intelligentsia who tend to be the people who have access to the media and to Western writers and so forth. But certainly among

working people. that's number one. The Russians made the revolution and so it's an essential part of their history.

Secondly, nationalism. everybody knows that it was under Stalin that Russia industrialized, became a became a world power in a short period of time, and beat the Nazi Wehrmacht, the strongest most successful army in the history of the world.

And thirdly, there is still a powerful communist movement or self-styled communist movement in Russia. I mean the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which is not a revolutionary Party but calls itself communist, openly avows the goals of communism, of socialism, is very anti-Khrushchev, anti-Gorbachev, and very pro-Stalin.

There's a widespread -- not a universal by any means but widespread -- recognition that Gorbachev and Khrushchev greased the skids for the destruction of the Soviet Union and therefore lied about Stalin pretty broadly. I think there's a widespread feeling -- not based on primary source research but it's a widespread feeling in Russia -- that that is the case.

So Russia I think is the only country -- again I'm not talking about Cuba or China but leaving Cuba and China aside -- Russia is the only country where even in academia there is a space for, let's say, people who write the kind of stuff that I write. Okay, it's not the mainstream view in academia -- the mainstream view of academia is very critical of Stalin -- but there is enough support, still enough popularity for Stalin and the goal of communism and the Soviet Union and the success of the Soviet Union in industrializing and collectivizing and in the war, so that there is a space [for this].

There are plenty of books published that could be described as pro-Stalin. Some of my books have been published in Russian translation. There are some academics who are associated with either the Communist Party of the Russian Federation or with some of the other

left-wing groups and they can get published even in mainstream journals.

And that is not true outside of Russia. In fact, the opposite is true. in in places like Poland, Hungary, Latvia, and the Czech Republic, spreading communist propaganda -- which basically means saying anything positive about communism and anything positive about Stalin at all -- is literally a crime, literally subjects you to criminal prosecution. But not in Russia.

NP: And I mean it be it'd be remiss of me not to ask because a lot of people would, I mean does Putin's government or Vladimir Putin, does he ever suppress any of this stuff? or does he encourage it? or does he just kind of turn a blind eye? Like, what is -- is there any kind of official relationship?

GF: Well, Putin's a politician. But Putin has given talks vigorously defending the policy of the Soviet Union in the 1930s to try to build an anti-Hitler coalition which was rejected by Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania, but particularly Britain and France. And it is in fact true that the Soviet Union was the only country in Europe that tried desperately to form an anti-Hitler coalition and when the west refused then they had to sign the non-aggression pact with Germany to make sure that they were not left alone to fight Hitler by themselves.

So Putin has defended the role of Soviet diplomacy in the pre-war period and he's right. He's accurate. And that view can be supported by all kinds of evidence. And he defends the role of the Soviet Union in World War II as being the main force for liberation in Eastern Europe, including Eastern Germany but all of Eastern European countries. He defends the Soviet role in World War II and thereafter.

He does not to my knowledge defend collectivization of agriculture. He's criticized that. So I don't think he is pro-Stalin.

He also has a funny relationship with the Communist Party of the Russian Federation which is a very large Party and has numerous members in the Soviet Duma, the parliament, has a lot of political power in various localities. In fact, according to several experts -- I'm not one of them -- the CPRF actually won the 1996 presidential election. There's evidence, evidently, that the 1996 presidential election in Russia was fraudulently given to Yeltsin but that the Communist Party candidate actually won. So I think Putin is careful about this.

By the way, the head of the -- I believe it was military archive -- but in any case, one of the high-ranking military officers a few years ago actually stated in an interview that the Marshal Tukhachevsky and company were guilty, [that] there's good evidence that they were guilty. He could not have made that statement without clearing it with the government

NP: So yeah, there's this funny, this very ambiguous attitude towards Stalin and the achievements of the Stalin period. But it's a capitalist country, right?

I mean well this has been fascinating, professor. If people are interested to find your books where can they find them and where would you recommend people start, because you've written quite a few of them. I mean what would you recommend?

GF: I would start with *Khrushchev Lied*. It's the one that's been published in the most foreign languages, 14 or 15 by now. and the reason is that in a certain way, almost everything else that we've talked about and almost everything else that I've researched kind of flows from that. Once Khrushchev lied, once you once you really see that he did that, not just that he said things that were not true but he was deliberately falsifying, it makes you wonder what else about Soviet history is a lie. It makes you curious. You want to look into the Moscow trials and collectivization of agriculture, the death of Solomon Mikhoels, or the

Katyn massacre, or the famine of 1932-1933. It makes you wonder well, if the experts, if even Khrushchev was lying about this, what else are they lying about? How far does this falsification go?

And that's really what I've been doing. I've been investigating allegations of crimes by Stalin for many years now. And if I ever find one, if I ever find a crime by Stalin that can be proven by primary source evidence, I will publish on it and I'll say, "Hey, Stalin really did this criminal act." But I haven't found one so far.

Where should they start? [With] *Khrushchev Lied*. All of my books are available on Amazon. Just go to Amazon and type in "Grover Furr" you see them all. I have a Homepage. If you go to Google and type in "Grover Furr homepage" it'll come right up. And you could download all of my articles. I have them there for download. [And there too] you can see the titles of all of my books which, as I said, are on Amazon.

You could also send me an email. You could inform your viewers of my email. Although frankly if they just Googled "Grover Furr homepage" you'll have my email there. And I welcome people to send me emails.

And thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

NP: Yeah, it's been it's been absolutely fascinating. I won't take up any more of your time, but thank you very much for being so generous with your time and your knowledge. I'll let people make their own conclusions.

Well, one person we didn't get into too much is this: his name is Kotkin. In the other video I did, one of the most common objections was just people saying: "Read Kotkin. Oh, if you haven't mentioned Kotkin, you haven't dealt with it." But then I was fascinated to learn that you've actually written a whole book-length rebuttal to Kotkin, volume two.

GF: Volume two of Kotkin. Stephen Kotkin. At Princeton, now at the Hoover Institution, a student of Stalin from his days as a graduate student and also a student of the now deceased famous liberal anti-communist historian Stephen Cohen.

Kotkin's first volume, which goes from Stalin's birth to 1929, is actually pretty interesting. It's anti-communist but it has a lot of interesting stuff in it. Judging by the standard of other works, it's less bad than a lot of them.

But his second volume which goes from 1929 to 1941 is basically falsehoods from beginning to end. So I read that, and it's very long. It's 700 pages or 800 pages of text plus couple of hundred pages of footnotes in tiny print.

I think very few people read that book. I decided I had to go through it with a fine-toothed comb. I had to isolate all of the accusations he makes of crimes or misdeeds by Stalin. investigate the evidence, investigate what he read, investigate his footnotes, investigate the other evidence that he doesn't cite.

And I wrote that book, *Stalin Waiting For ... The Truth*. His book is a monument, if you want, to the Anti-Stalin Paradigm, and my book is a refutation of his book and also of the Anti-Stalin Paradigm. It shows to what desperate dishonest lengths the anti-Stalinists will go.

NP: Well, fantastic. Well, I could I could easily speak to you all night, but thank you. Thank you so much for your time. I hope people will check out your work and hope a lot of people get to see this. Thank you very much.

Appreciate it very much. Bye-bye. If you like this video, be sure to like and subscribe. You can join the channel for thousands of hours of past shows in the archive and hundreds of videos. If you have any questions, you can leave a super chat or a super thanks and I'll be sure to pick it up

during my weekly office hours which run every Tuesday afternoon. I also provide courses at the academic agency which I encourage people to buy. Thousands of students now have taken the time to improve their skills in writing, logic, and rhetoric. Just three of many courses available. Buy it now. But most importantly of all, friends, get out.