

tinuous touch with persons under detention. Nor must this be read as merely a plea for the "soft" treatment of offenders. If the weaker vessels need the protection of a kindly environment, there are others for whom a more demanding regime is certainly indicated; and the response of a single individual to different types of treatment is not necessarily constant throughout his history.

In a world as deeply traditionalist as that of the law, there can be no question of sudden radical change. The crucial issue is to determine the direction in which we are, or should be, travelling.

Here the choice is plain. We can continue to define and redefine the limits of responsibility in an attempt to keep pace with the increasingly subtle pronouncements of psychiatry. In that event, if past experience is anything to go by, the ranks of the blameless will be steadily expanded; and, paradoxically the decision, at any given moment, as to an individual's personal guilt will be contingent upon the contemporary state of medical science. The guilty of today may, a generation later, be safely bracketed with the blameless. Alternatively, the criminal courts may shift their gaze from past guilt to future prospects, and may come to see themselves as agencies for the prevention of criminal behavior.

Such a function would, I imagine, be dismissed by Professor Goldstein as "social engineering"—which prompts the reflection that perhaps the fundamental difference between us is that to him this term appears to carry pejorative overtones.

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Twenty Letters to a Friend. By *Svetlana Alliluyeva* (tr. by Priscilla Johnson McMillan). New York: Harper & Row, 1967. Pp. 246. \$5.95.

Miss Stalin both demonstrates and helps to perpetuate one of the myths of the modern world, the belief that the explanation of what is puzzling on the public stage lies in the realm of private life. There is a small grain of truth here. Sometimes a man's relations with his wife or friends may suggest a new light in which to see his actions as a revolutionary or a statesman. But in general what is crucial in the relationship of private to public life is the irrelevance of the one to the other.

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That Himmler detested cruelty to animals does nothing to explain the politics of the Final Solution. Miss Stalin's revelation that her father was exceptionally good at handling domestic servants is quite as uninteresting, and obviously so. Less obvious and therefore more dangerous is the suggestion that two of Stalin's personal relationships may explain at least in part the development and character of his tyranny.

The first of Miss Stalin's suggestions is that her mother's suicide may have played a decisive role in Stalin's development. "What was the effect of my mother's death? Did it simply leave my father free to do what he would have done in any case? Or was it that her suicide broke his spirit and made him lose his faith in all his old friends?" The second suggestion is that the author of the essential evil in Stalin's career was Beria. Kirov's murder, for example, so Miss Stalin says, was far more probably the work of Beria than of Stalin. The two suggestions are linked, for Beria's ascendancy followed, on Miss Stalin's interpretation, the death of her mother. It is true that she claims that she is not trying to shift blame from Stalin to Beria; nonetheless she writes that "The spell cast on my father by this terrifying evil genius was extremely powerful, and it never failed to work."

Her metaphor is at once revealing and inapposite. Everything we know about Stalin makes the notion of him as somehow spell-bound extremely unconvincing. But Miss Stalin has no other terms in which to think of her father. In particular she seems incapable of thinking in political terms. Hence those of Stalin's political actions which impinged upon her—the imprisonment of Alexander Svanidze or that of Polina Molotov—appear in her narrative as arbitrary and unrelated actions. This appearance of arbitrariness infects even her account of her mother's suicide. She says of her mother's suicide note that she has been told by those who saw it that "It was a terrible letter, full of reproaches and accusations. It wasn't purely personal; it was partly political as well." But either she does not know or she is unwilling to say what the political content of the note was. Her comments are as follows:

People shot themselves fairly often in those days. Trotskyism had been defeated. Collectivization of the farms had just gotten under way. The Party was torn by opposition and factional strife. One leading Party member after another did away with himself. Mayakovsky had shot himself only a short time before. People couldn't make sense of this, and the memory was still very fresh. I think all this couldn't fail to have had its effect on my mother, im-

pulsive and susceptible as she was. The Alliluyevas were all sensitive and high-strung . . . .<sup>1</sup>

In other words, suicide was breaking out all over and her mother was peculiarly liable to contagion. But there is in fact no reason for believing that Nadezhda Alliluyeva was peculiarly vulnerable to suicide, except that she did in fact kill herself; and suicide was relatively frequent at that period for highly specific reasons, on which her remarks about party strife throw no light. Party strife had been bitter for many years without bringing comrades to self-destruction.

The hypothesis I would advance about Nadezhda Alliluyeva's suicide is suggested partly by its date, November 1932. It occurred, that is, when the consequences of Stalin's politics of forced collectivization and speeded-up industrialization had already become clear, but when the repression and the purges in the Party had yet to begin. Terror in the countryside and increased exploitation of the working-class had become central facts of Soviet social life, but the mass-killing of Communists would still have seemed novel and horrific even to those who were about to carry it out. Stalinism had laid its economic foundation, to use a different idiom, but it had not yet erected its political superstructure. What was the relationship between these two periods?

The key lies in the nexus between Stalin's economic policies—which were directed toward problems for which, as Trotsky never fully understood, there were no *socialist* solutions—and the political need for purges created by the failure to acknowledge that socialist theory had perforce been left behind when these policies were adopted. In the final analysis Stalin succeeded not so much because of the ruthlessness of his tactical maneuvers as because there was no alternative to the substance of the economic policies he pursued during both periods. Certainly there was a gratuitous inhumanity in the implementation of those policies. But the capitulation of so many principled and tough Old Bolsheviks cannot be explained in terms only of weakness, torture or bribery. It is explicable in terms of the incoherence of Stalin's adversaries who could not by applying their socialist and democratic principles frame any more adequate solution. Moreover, many of Stalin's supporters were sufficiently principled to discover in time the gap between their socialist desires and ideals and the form of state which Stalin was actually bringing to birth. Indeed, when the purges came, Stalin's own earlier supporters were decimated as much as were the ranks of the old Trotskyists and Bukharinites.

1. S. ALLILUYEVA, TWENTY LETTERS TO A FRIEND 114 (1967).

But though there may have been no alternative of substance to the economic policy which Stalin had pursued since before 1932, what could have been admitted was that what was being built was not socialism. One can imagine that if Lenin had survived to 1930 he would have pursued in a more radical way the approach he followed when he defended the NEP not as socialist, but as necessary. What led to the corruption of socialism was Stalin's insistence that what he was doing was socialist. A whole redefinition of Marxism thereby became necessary. To secure that redefinition a whole generation of Marxists was to be obliterated. Briefly and perhaps cryptically, it is often supposed that Bolshevik history has had to be rewritten in Russia because the purges and the trials made unpersons of so many Old Bolsheviks. The truth is, I suggest, that the purges and the trials were necessary because the history of the Bolsheviks, including the history of their theoretical positions, had to be rewritten so that the true nature of socialism could be forgotten and the Stalinist redefinition could reign unchallenged in a society where not the working-class but the bureaucracy ruled.

In 1932 the task of ideological redefinition was only beginning and the gap between Stalinist deeds and Marxist words was at its most obvious. It was at this point that Syrtsov, Lominadze and Riutin, all of them Stalinists, hoped to depose Stalin; all were imprisoned. In this year Skrypnik, also a Stalinist, committed suicide when Stalin discovered the opposition to him in the Ukrainian government, in which Skrypnik was Commissar for Education. Suicide is indeed a much more intelligible reaction among the disillusioned Stalinists than it would have been then among the adherents of Trotsky or those of Bukharin, who must for some years have lost most, if not all, of their illusions. Thus Nadezhda Alliluyeva's suicide falls into its tragic place in the historical sequence. Miss Stalin, who sees only the sequences of personal biography, thus deprives her mother's action of one possible meaning it may have held. Equally she sees Beria as a private author of evil; she does not see that the unfolding of Stalinism created a role for Beria and those like him. The role and not the man determined the scale of the evil.

Nonetheless, to treat the weaknesses of Miss Stalin's memoirs as simply symptoms of a defective point of view, without inquiring about the social roots of that point of view, would merely duplicate her error. Miss Stalin has a religious perspective upon the world, albeit a rather indefinite one, and her devotion to Russia has religious overtones. Indeed when she wrote her memoir she believed that she would