

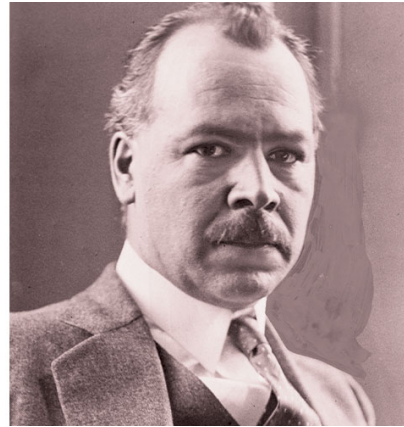


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Lysenkoism: The Danger of Politicized Science

It was the summer of 1940 and Nikolai Vavilov, along with biologists and geneticists from his staff, was on a botanical expedition to Ukraine to collect plant and seed samples. Considering the political turmoil and Communist Party scheming taking place at the time, it must have been liberating for Vavilov and his fellow scientists to escape the Moscow hothouse and be out in the great outdoors doing what they loved most. He probably didn't see his arrest coming. The NKVD (predecessor of the Soviet KGB) swooped down on him and "disappeared" him into Stalin's police-state labyrinth.



Vavilov had to know he was in serious trouble. But he likely had no idea just how serious. The terror of Joseph Stalin's Moscow Purge Trials of 1936-1938 were not such a distant memory. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Yagoda, Radek, and other former top Soviet leaders had been rounded up, tortured, forced to "confess" to crimes against the Soviet Union, and then executed. But they were all political apparatchiks who had run afoul of Stalin; Vavilov, on the other hand, was a scientist. Indeed, at the time, Vavilov was arguably Soviet Russia's top scientist, and her most celebrated scientist worldwide at that. Nevertheless, he was destined to play a central role in a conflict with the deadliest scientist in history. Vavilov was sentenced to death in July 1941. For reasons unknown, his sentence was commuted to 20 years imprisonment. It was obviously not a gesture of mercy, for he was allowed to starve to death in prison. The tragic irony is that he had spent his life on research aimed at solving the world's food problems and boosting Russia's food production to avoid the cycle of famines the nation was experiencing. He died of starvation in 1943 at age 55, at the height of his career.

So, what was Nikolai Vavilov's putative crime? He was falsely charged with sabotaging Soviet food production. His real "crime" was standing in the way of an ambitious, conniving, ruthless "scientist" by the name of Trofim Lysenko, who wheedled his way into Stalin's favor with ludicrous promises of huge new crop yields — if his fraudulent methods of "science" were employed on a mass scale. Vavilov, a real scientist, was an obstacle who had to be removed. Not only that — his removal must strike terror into all scientists who might be tempted to criticize Lysenko and his crackpot theories. This was the epitome of science politicized and weaponized.

The "Barefoot Scientist"

Trofim Denisovich Lysenko was tailor-made for the megalomania of the communist total state, and especially for its chief megalomaniac, Joseph Stalin, who dubbed himself the "Great Scientist." Lysenko was born into a peasant family in Ukraine in 1898, obtained only a meager education, and, as a young man, worked at the Kiev Agricultural Institute. The eminent British biologist/geneticist and Oxford professor Cyril D. Darlington wrote that Lysenko was "obviously ill-educated, quite shallow, very cunning and a little deranged." Lysenko rejected the budding field of genetics based on the rules of



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inheritance developed in the 19th century by Augustinian friar and polymath Gregor Johann Mendel. Rejecting the idea of genes as the vector for the transfer of information, Lysenko embraced Lamarckism and the belief that plants could be “educated” to transfer positive traits to the next generation. One of his most famous education methods involved “vernalization” of wheat and other grains. Lysenko claimed that by soaking the seeds in freezing water he could greatly increase crop yields in cold climates. Moreover, he said, future generations of crops from these seeds would retain this robustness and the barren wastelands of Russia would flourish. And he could do it without adding fertilizer or minerals! In fact, he bragged, he could grow orange trees in Siberia.



Trofim Denisovich Lysenko

Lysenko’s message was precisely what an impatient Stalin wanted to hear. He wanted immediate results. Vavilov and Russia’s leading plant geneticists told him this was impossible; developing the cultivars and hybrids to solve Russia’s food challenges would be a painstaking process that would take years, they explained. Lysenko said he could do the impossible, so the “Great Scientist” threw his support behind him. Lysenko’s added value was that he fit the image that the communist regime wanted to project: the heroic Soviet peasant triumphing over foreign “bourgeois science.” Further, Lysenko’s environmental theories bolstered the Marxist-Leninist idea that the same processes could be applied to changing the nature of man. Radically alter society and transform it into the “correct” Soviet environment, and *voilà*, the new Soviet Man will be born, capable of creating the revolutionary Worker’s Paradise on Earth.

Pravda, the main Soviet propaganda organ, began singing Lysenko’s praises. Nikolai Vavilov was removed as director of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences in 1935, and Lysenko soon took his place. Lysenko’s “miracle” crops, however, proved to be colossal failures: Virtually everything he touched — peas, wheat, corn, beets, potatoes — died or were stunted and blighted with disease and pests. This piled additional disasters upon the desolation already wrought by Stalin’s man-made Ukrainian famine. But Lysenko was undaunted. He doubled down, claiming the failures were the result of sabotage, or of incompetence by those who failed to follow his prescriptions.



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Prelude to Persecution

The Vavilov-Lysenko conflict is a prime case study in the fatal dangers of science funded and controlled by the state. In the early years of Bolshevik Russia, Nikolai Vavilov was the fair-haired boy of Soviet Science. He is described as a romantic, Indiana Jones-type character, an adventurous scientist searching the Earth not for archeological treasures but for botanical treasures. Vavilov was made director of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences and was also named president of the Soviet All-Union Geographical Society. To top it off, he was elevated to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and was awarded the Lenin Prize, the Soviet Union's highest honor for achievements in science, technology, arts, and literature.

He seemed destined for continued greatness. Other factors were in play, however. This time period coincided not only with Stalin's above-mentioned purge trials, but also with his great famine, one of the greatest tragedies — and crimes — in human history. From 1917-1921, Lenin's Red Army had carried out a brutal war against Ukraine, finally conquering it in 1922. The Soviets' iron grip on Ukraine under Lenin intensified further under Stalin. Ukraine, known as "the breadbasket of Europe," was famous for its fertile soil, prosperous farms, and abundant production of wheat, oats, barley, and other cereal grains. Stalin sent the Red Army and the NKVD in to "collectivize" Ukraine's agriculture, which entailed forcing all the small farmers (kulaks) into mass Soviet commune farms. Ukrainians, understandably, were not at all keen on this program and resisted it heroically. In retaliation, Stalin had hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians imprisoned, sent to Siberia, tortured, and/or shot. His troops stripped the nation of virtually everything edible: livestock, grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Genocide and Famine

It was genocide by starvation, known to history as the Holodomor. At the time it was happening (1932-1933), however, Stalin and his propagandists denied that it was occurring at all. He succeeded in hiding this horrendous crime from the rest of the world thanks to the help of the *New York Times* and its "Man in Moscow," Walter Duranty, a degenerate "journalist" who slavishly toed the Stalinist line in exchange for drugs, alcohol, orgies, and "news" scoops generously provided by the NKVD. The kulaks were healthy, happy, and well-fed, Duranty and the *Times* assured the world.

Millions of Ukrainians were thus murdered, although scholars continue to quibble over the grand total. Was it 2.8 million, 7.5 million, or 10 million? Accurately quantifying genocide is never made easy by the totalitarian regimes that practice it — or by their ideological comrades in our media and academia who are ever ready to make excuses. But the Holodomor dead were not the only victims; millions more of Ukraine's survivors were physically and psychologically devastated, and its cities, villages, and whole regions were decimated. That, of course, did not bother Stalin and the Soviet leadership in the least — until, that is, the consequences of their mass-extermination policies boomeranged on them. Russia's agricultural production plummeted, and the Soviet utopia faced rolling famines. Stalin demanded solutions — and scapegoats. Lysenko promised both.

Arrogance Empowered

Nikolai Vavilov was but one of many famous Russian scientists who fell victim to Lysenko. He was born into a comfortable, bourgeois family, a fact Lysenko exploited to Vavilov's fatal disadvantage. By Lysenko's reasoning, this obviously tainted Vavilov with bourgeois tendencies that predisposed him



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against “true” science and the heroic tasks of the Soviet State. As quickly as he could, Lysenko began evicting scientists from Soviet institutions and replacing them with myrmidons who would unquestioningly follow his lead. Among those liquidated in Lysenko’s reign of terror were the celebrated geneticists G.D. Karpechenko, Solomon Levit, Nikolai Koltsov, G.K. Meister, and A.I. Muralov. They were “enemies of the people” and they had to be exterminated!

In the annals of politicized science, Trofim Lysenko provides a supreme example of ignorance and ignominy wedded to power.

The fates of Vavilov, Karpechenko, Muralov, et al., demonstrate the truism that when state power is unchecked, today’s peacock is tomorrow’s feather duster. They were replaced with new peacocks: Lysenko’s disciples, which turned out to be a motley collection of dodo birds and venomous vipers who compounded the Holodomor tragedy.

Sam Kean, writing in *The Atlantic* in 2017, commented that “deaths from the [Stalin] famines peaked around 1932 to 1933, but four years later, after a 163-fold increase in farmland cultivated using Lysenko’s methods, food production was actually lower than before.”



The terror famine: During the “Holodomor” — Ukrainian for murder by hunger — as many as 10 million or more Ukrainians were starved to death in 1932-33 by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin’s communist regime.

Lysenkoism in China

Even worse than Lysenko’s deadly impact on Russia and Ukraine was his mega-deadly impact on Communist China. Lysenko’s pseudoscience spread to other communist countries, and especially enjoyed Mao Tse-tung’s favor in Red China, greatly contributing to that country’s Great Famine, which killed as many as 55 million Chinese between 1958 and 1962. Even after Stalin’s death and after Lysenko had been denounced and toppled from his throne at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Lysenkoism continued to reign supreme in Chairman Mao’s totalitarian “People’s Republic.”

Mao declared that China would not be bound by outmoded bourgeois science. The Chinese peasants, under the leadership of the Party, would utilize the new “socialist science” to catapult China to new undreamed-of heights of industrial and agricultural achievement. He called his wondrous plan the Great Leap Forward. Following Stalin’s great biologist Lysenko, the Party ordered farmers to plow very deep



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and plant seeds close together. The peasant farmers were not scientists, but they knew from long experience that the Lysenkoist nostrums were madness. But, as Mao famously said, “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,” and they knew Mao had all the guns, so they had no choice but to go along with the madness. Not surprisingly, Mao’s Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) ended up being a Great Leap Backward for China’s already backward economy. The result was famine and death by starvation on a horrific scale. Jasper Becker (*Hungry Ghosts*, 1996) pegged the death toll at 30 million. R.J. Rummel (*China’s Bloody Century*, 1991) put it at 38 million. Frank Dikotter (*Mao’s Great Famine*, 2010) estimated 45 million, while Yu Xiguang (*The Great Leap Forward and the Years of Bitterness*, 2005) said the total is likely 55 million. Even Becker’s lower totals are stupefying. And, as with the Ukrainian Holodomor, the colossal death toll doesn’t even begin to measure the incredible suffering and psychological scars of the hundreds of millions of survivors.

Lysenko in America

“Although it’s impossible to say for sure, Trofim Lysenko probably killed more human beings than any individual scientist in history,” wrote Sam Kean in his piece for *The Atlantic*. Kean is probably correct, but an awful lot of scientists are following in Lysenko’s footsteps today. In fact, Kean and *The Atlantic* are cheering them on. In the closing paragraphs of his critique of Lysenkoism, Kean smugly warned of the shades of Lysenko that he perceives among global-warming skeptics, darkly warning that “nearly 60 percent of Republicans attribute global temperature changes to nonhuman causes.” This is far from being a singular example. In recent years, liberal-left “progressives” have taken to expropriating Lysenkoism as a warning against the “anti-science” Neanderthals on the Right, whom they have labeled “climate-change deniers.”

This is beyond ironic, of course, because it is the politically driven pseudo-science of anthropogenic (human-caused) global warming (AGW) that is the biggest Lysenkoist fraud of modern times. Thanks to government funding and politicized science, the AGW Lysenkos of today have taken over our political, educational, media, philanthropic, and business institutions, and are employing Stalinist tactics of censorship, intimidation, defamation, death threats, reputational destruction, and loss of employment.



“The Great Scientist”: Megalomaniac mass-murderer Joseph Stalin elevated crackpot “scientist” Trofim Lysenko, allowing him to run roughshod over and persecute genuine scientists, setting back



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Russian science by several decades.

However, as we have reported in these pages and in online articles many times in the past, many highly credentialed, heavily published, world-renowned scientists — including Nobel Prize recipients — have been labeled as “deniers” and “Big Oil lackeys,” censored, threatened, refused publication, fired, or dismissed from positions for the heresy of challenging one jot or tittle of AGW Holy Writ: Dr. Richard Lindzen of MIT, Dr. Judith Curry at Georgia Tech, Dr. Patrick Moore (a Greenpeace founder), Dr. Willie W.H. Soon of the Smithsonian Institution, and many more too numerous to mention. The “Climategate” e-mail scandal of 2009 showed that a global network of AGW fanatics, a veritable Lysenkoist climate Mafia, was carrying out a vicious campaign to suppress dissenting views of fellow scientists and destroy their careers. Many additional examples of ethical and criminal malfeasance have come to light in the 11 years since that giant scandal broke, including numerous cases of AGW “scientists” hiding data, changing data, destroying data, and inventing data.

These fanatics in science smocks were, and are, being aided by leftist politicians, the United Nations, and well-funded NGO activists. NASA’s James Hansen testified before a congressional committee in 2008 that “CEO’s of fossil energy companies ... should be tried for high crimes against humanity and nature.” “At what point do we jail or execute global warming deniers?” asked the editorial Jacobins at Talking Points Memo as they readied the guillotine.

Unfortunately, it is not only “climate science” that is infected with Lysenkoism. The same viral Marxist contagion runs through the now-obligatory course content of Critical Race Theory, Feminist Studies, LGBTQ Studies, Social Justice Studies, Environmental Justice Studies — and more — all of which claim to be based on “scientific consensus” that may be challenged only at risk to public “cancelation,” expulsion from school, and/or loss of employment. To this we must add, of course, the new global medical Mafia that has sprung up in the past 18 months with the advent of the COVID-19 “pandemic.”

Fortunately, tens of thousands of scientists and medical experts in virtually all fields are coming forward to battle these dangerous Lysenkoist attacks on true science and the human liberty that is essential to genuine scientific pursuit. But more scientists must break free from fear and join their ranks if Lysenko’s disciples are to be dislodged from their institutional bases of power before they can go full Stalinist.

In a blistering 2019 post on Anthony Watts’ climate website [WattsUpWithThat.com](#), Dr. Patrick Frank of Stanford University took aim at the scientists and the professional organizations that have caved in and sold out to the AGW Lysenkoists.

“From the American Physical Society right through to the American Meteorological Association, they all abandoned their professional integrity, and with it their responsibility to defend and practice hard-minded science,” Dr. Frank charged. “Willful neglect? Who knows? Betrayal of science? Absolutely for sure. The institutional betrayal could not be worse; worse than Lysenkoism because there was no Stalin to hold a gun to their heads. They all volunteered.”

William F. Jasper is senior editor of The New American.



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