**The Dynamics of Mass Purges: Assessing Micro-Level Data from the Stalinist Case**

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Mass purges are puzzling for political scientists: why would a regime purposefully incur the costs of eliminating and then replacing experienced, valuable state officials? The mass purge in Stalin’s Soviet Union from 1937 to 1939, known as the “Great Terror,” is a source of open questions for historians: was the purge a deliberate action by Stalin and his inner circle, a consequence of center-periphery tension and bureaucratic competition, or a wave of fevered mass participation? This project maps victims of Stalin’s purges and explores spatial variation in purge targeting. I use publically available individual-level data on purge victims, their residence at the time of arrest, and a number of covariates like education, occupation, and nationality. I hope to use the spatial distribution of purge victims to shed light on open questions not yet answered, or hypotheses insufficiently tested, by existing archival sources: did the Soviet political police (NKVD) choose arrest targets based on civilian denunciations? Did the composition of purge victims differ in urban/industrial versus rural regions? Were the purges more or less intense in regions known to be the personal prerogative of key political lieutenants like Andrei Zhdanov or Lazar Kaganovich? Eventually, I hope to use these data to learn about cross-national variation in the consequences of the purges for the character of the Soviet state – whether the purges “professionalized” Soviet bureaucracies or entrenched patron-client networks.