in the tens of millions, with most families providing a victim, must mean a far more
devastating psychological blow at the population than the smaller figure—quantity, as we
are told, can change into quality. So the research is very far from being without signifi-
cance.

ROBERT CONQUEST
Hoover Institution, Stanford University

TO THE EDITOR:

For his own polemical purposes, Stephen G. Wheatcroft has suddenly dragged me into
his long-running dispute with Steven Rosefielde over the number of unnatural deaths
under Stalin's rule. Wheatcroft uses me as an example of western scholars who wrongly
and "uncritically" accept high figures. He writes: "Stephen Cohen has twice recently cited
Conquest, Antonov-Ovseenko, Maksudov, Diadkin, and Kurganov as authorities for the
statement that '20 million is a conservative estimate' for the number of excess deaths
under Stalin before 1929."

Wheatcroft misrepresents me in three ways. First, I wrote the passage to which he
refers only once, not twice—in my essay "The Stalin Question Since Stalin"; the other
source he gives is actually an abridged reprint of that essay. Second, he distorts what I
wrote, which was this: "No one has yet managed to calculate the exact number of deaths
under Stalin. Among those who have tried, twenty million is a conservative estimate." Both
sentences accurately report the state of scholarship when I was writing (1981), and
both are more tentative than Wheatcroft leads readers to think. Third, the figure I gave
did not refer to the period "before 1929," as Wheatcroft claims, but to deaths that resulted
from collectivization and police terror, particularly from 1929 to 1939.

I lack sufficient expertise to decide who is closer to the historical truth in this dispute,
Wheatcroft or Rosefielde. But in trying to evaluate their rival assertions, can I assume
that Wheatcroft is more careful with his demographic data than he was with my two
sentences?

STEPHEN F. COHEN
Princeton University

TO THE EDITOR,

I regret that Stephen Cohen has made the accusation that I dragged him into my dispute
with Steven Rosefielde for my own polemical purpose. The reason that I mentioned
Stephen Cohen was simply as an example of what I considered to be an incorrect assess-
ment of the state of western scholarship on evaluations of the scale of excess mortality
(above some, usually undefined, normal level) under Stalin. I was disturbed that Stephen
Cohen and others were beginning to accept that western scholarship regarded 20 million
as a conservative estimate of excess deaths under Stalin before 1939.

I did not attempt to analyse Stephen Cohen's statements in detail because they did
not appear to warrant it. They used a popular but rather imprecise and inaccurate expres-
sion. No one was claiming to calculate an "exact number" as Cohen suggests and Cohen's
reference to "deaths under Stalin" presumably was meant to refer to some kind of measure
of excess mortality. (I assume that Cohen was not holding Stalin responsible for the
Russian population not being immortal!)

The important thing for me was to correct what I considered to be an incorrect,
selective historiography of the problem. By restricting his survey to Conquest, Antonov-