

The
DEATH OF STALIN

An Investigation by
'MONITOR'

London

ALLAN WINGATE

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CHRONOLOGY

THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE OF EVENTS is the subject of our investigation:—

- | | | |
|----------------|------|--|
| January 13th | 1953 | The 'Doctors' Plot' Exposed — nine Kremlin physicians arrested. |
| March 4th | „ | Moscow radio announces Stalin's illness. |
| March 5th | „ | The death of Stalin. |
| March 6th | „ | Beria's tanks surround Moscow. |
| March 9th | „ | Stalin's funeral. |
| March 20th | „ | Malenkov released from his duties as Secretary General of the Communist Party. |
| April 3rd | „ | Kremlin doctors freed. |
| July 10th | „ | Beria dismissed from the Communist Party. |
| September 12th | „ | Krushchev elected First Secretary of the Communist Party. |
| December 23rd | „ | Beria tried, found guilty and shot. |
| February 8th | 1955 | Malenkov released from his duties as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. |
| February 24th | 1956 | Krushchev's 'Secret' Speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party. |
| February 29th | „ | Krushchev appointed Chairman of the newly created Bureau of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party for the affairs of the Russian Federal Republic. |
| June 2nd | 1957 | Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich disgraced. |
| August 16th | 1958 | Bulganin exiled from Moscow. |

It is a paradox that while the details of his final illness were broadcast to the whole world, the atmosphere of mystery shrouding the circumstances of the death of Stalin has never been dispersed.

A number of people, satisfied with the information given, accept the fact that Stalin died of cerebral haemorrhage. Many, suspecting that his end was altogether too opportune, speak of it as a miracle that saved Russia from a new reign of terror. Some are of the opinion that the 'course of nature was assisted'. Others, dismissing his illness as fictitious, believe that Stalin was murdered.

The purpose of our investigation is to discover from the evidence available whether or not Stalin died a natural death.

Chapter I

THE SETTING

ON JANUARY 13TH, 1953, the TASS News Agency reported the 'arrest of a terrorist group of physicians, uncovered by the State Security Organs of the USSR'.

Why physicians? And Kremlin physicians at that? Was it possible that Stalin, once again, suspected that he was being poisoned? And was he? Let us investigate these questions.

Amongst those arrested were Doctor G. I. Mayorov, and the Professors M. S. Vovsi, V. N. Vinogradov, M. B. Kogan, B. B. Kogan, P. I. Yegorov, Y. G. Etinger, A. I. Feldman and A. M. Grinstein.

According to the report 'most of the members of this terrorist group were in the pay of the American intelligence service, and received their instructions through the medium of JOINT, the international Jewish bourgeois nationalist organization set up by the American intelligence service, allegedly for rendering material aid to Jews in other countries, but which actually conducts espionage, terroristic, and other subversive activities in a number of countries including the Soviet Union.

'Other members', said the statement, 'have proved to be British intelligence agents of long-standing. All the criminals have confessed to causing the deaths of Zhdanov by false diagnosis and injurious treatment, and investigation has shown that they shortened the life of Shcherbakov, and had tried to disable Marshals Vassilevsky, Govorov and Koniev, General Shetemenko, Admiral Levenchko and others.

'Their aim was first of all to undermine the health of Soviet leading military cadres, to disable them, and so weaken the defence of the country. They have failed in this purpose but

have succeeded in murdering A. A. Zhdanov and A. S. Shcherbakov . . .'

Zhdanov was regarded as one of the most powerful members of the Politburo after Stalin. Up to the time of his death in 1948, due to *angina pectoris* and *cardiac asthma*,* it was widely considered that he would succeed Stalin as President of the Council of Ministers.

Shcherbakov, who died in 1945 of 'paralysis of the heart', was Director of the political administration of the Soviet Army.

All those named to be 'disabled' were elderly and very senior officers with the exception of one, General Shetemenko, a comparatively young man, who in 1948 had succeeded Marshal Vassilevski as Chief-of-Staff to the Soviet Army.

On the same day, *Pravda* wrote: 'The fact that this group of cheap monsters, recruited amongst scientists, was able to go about unpunished shows that some of our Soviet authorities and leaders have forgotten about vigilance'. This article referred to the 'shortcomings' of the State Security services.

Five days later, on January 18th, *Pravda* wrote in an editorial of: 'the fight for the fulfilment of the tasks laid down in Stalin's work of genius, *Economic Problems of the USSR*', and called for 'stricter discipline, high political vigilance, and an irreconcilable attitude towards shortcomings'. The article quoted the new Party Statutes obliging 'all members to keep Party and State Secrets'. 'A carefree, smug, and complacent mood has penetrated the Party ranks', *Pravda* stated. 'Vigilance has been blunted and such unpleasant facts as capital encirclement and plots have begun to be forgotten. Party members are losing sight of the fact that the imperialists, especially the Americans, in developing preparations for the new war, attempt to send into our country and other countries of the socialist camp twice and three times more agents, spies and diversionists, than into the rear of any bourgeois country'.

* Author's italics. See Menzhinsky Trial: Chapter III.

On the last day of January *Pravda* published a list of officials said to have been guilty of criminal carelessness or deliberate espionage. An editorial on the same day stated that important documents were being badly guarded in the Economic Bank, the Ministry of Health, and the State Supply System, and that the imperialist countries were spending huge sums of money in their efforts to gather secret information. It announced that 'a group of rootless cosmopolitans and Jewish-bourgeois nationalists have been unmasked in Lithuania'.

On February 6th, *Pravda* announced the arrest of four Russians for spying for foreign powers.

Three days later, the main offices of the Soviet Legation at Tel Aviv were wrecked by a bomb thrown through a window, and the Minister's wife and two members of the legation staff were injured. As a result of this outrage, a note was sent from Moscow severing diplomatic relations with Israel. The note declared that the bomb explosion had been engineered with the obvious connivance of the Israeli police, and that, in spite of the Israeli Government's condemnation of the outrage, 'the participation of Israeli Government members in the systematic fanning of hatred and enmity towards the Soviet Union and in incitement to hostile actions against the Soviet Union, is universally known and indisputable'.

An Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the decision to break off diplomatic relations was the culmination of a campaign of 'open animosity and poisonous slander by the USSR against Israel, Zionist organisations, and the Jews, which had been carried on by the Soviet bloc for a long time, and had increased during the past two months, the real aim of which is to isolate and frighten the Jews in Soviet Russia, whose fate arouses deep concern'.

On February 13th, the day following the incident at Tel Aviv, Moscow Radio reported the death 'after a long and serious illness' of Lev Zaharovich Mekhlis, one of the

two Jewish members of the Communist Central Committee.

On February 21st, the invitations issued for the Soviet Army Day reception revealed that Marshal Sokolovsky had replaced General Shetemenko as Chief of Staff to the Army. The latter was one of those whom the 'doctor-plotters' had allegedly 'tried to disable'.

In the early hours of March 4th, Moscow Radio broadcast the news that Stalin had been elected to the Moscow City Soviet. That morning, the usual light music programme was replaced by a women's choir and a Beethoven concert. *Pravda* and the other newspapers were four hours late.

At 8 a.m. (Moscow time) the following announcement was made over the radio:—"The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union notify the misfortune which has overtaken our Party and our people—the serious illness of Comrade J. V. Stalin.

'In the night of March 1st-2nd, while in his Moscow apartment, Comrade Stalin suffered a cerebral haemorrhage affecting vital areas of the brain. Comrade Stalin lost consciousness and paralysis of the right arm and leg set in. Loss of speech followed. There appeared to be serious disturbances in the functioning of the heart and breathing.

'The best medical brains have been summoned for Comrade Stalin's treatment: Professor-Therapist P. E. Lukomsky, permanent member of the Academy of Medical Science of the USSR; Professor-Neuropathist N. V. Konovalov; Professor-Therapist A. L. Miasnikov; Professor-Therapist E. M. Tareyov; Professor-Neuropathist I. N. Filimov; Professor-Neuropathist R. A. Tkachev; Professor-Neuropathist I. S. Glazuhov; Reader-Neuropathist V. I. Ivanov-Neznamov.

'Comrade Stalin's treatment is being carried out under the guidance of the Minister of Health, Dr. A. F. Tretyakov,

together with L. I. Kuperin, Chief of the Medical Health Board of the Kremlin.

'The treatment is conducted under the constant supervision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet and the Soviet Government.

'In view of the serious condition of Comrade Stalin's health, the Council of Ministers of the Union of the SSR have recognized the necessity of publishing medical bulletins on the condition of Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin's health as from today.

'The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the Union of the SSR as well as our whole Party and the whole Soviet people fully recognize that the serious illness of Comrade Stalin will lead to his more or less prolonged absence from the activities connected with his leadership.

'The Central Committee and the Council of Ministers leading the country take with all seriousness into consideration all the circumstances connected with the temporary withdrawal of Comrade Stalin from the leadership of the Government and Party activity.

'The Central Committee and the Council of Ministers express their conviction that our Party and the whole Soviet people will in these difficult days display the greatest unity, solidarity, fortitude of spirit and vigilance; that they will redouble their energy for the building of Communism in our country and rally round the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Government of the Soviet Union even more closely than hitherto.'

There followed this announcement, the first medical bulletin, which was repeatedly broadcast throughout the day:—

'In the night of March 1st-2nd, 1953, Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin suffered from a sudden cerebral haemorrhage, affecting vital areas of the brain, as a result of which there set in paralysis

of the right leg and right arm with loss of consciousness and speech.

'In the course of March 2nd and 3rd, appropriate medical measures were taken for the purpose of improving the affected functions of breathing and blood circulation, which came to no substantial crisis in the course of the illness. Towards 2 a.m. on March 4th, the condition of J. V. Stalin remains serious. Considerable disturbances in breathing are observed, the rate being up to 36 a minute and the rhythm irregular with periodic long pauses. Pulse had increased up to 120 times a minute. There was a full arhythmia. Blood pressure was at a maximum of 220 and a minimum of 120. Temperature was 38·2 centigrade. In connection with the affected breathing and blood circulation a lack of oxygen was observed. The degree to which the functioning of the brain is affected has somewhat increased. A number of therapeutic measures for the purpose of restoring vital functions of the organism are being carried out now.'

This bulletin was signed by all the doctors attending Stalin and by Tretyakov and Kuperin.

The second medical bulletin was issued at 2 a.m. (Moscow time) on March 5th, and was as follows:—

'During the past twenty-four hours the state of health of Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin has remained grave.

'The haemorrhage in the left hemisphere of the brain, which developed during the night of March 1st-2nd, as the result of hypertonic disease and arteriosclerosis, has, in addition to paralysis of the right extremities and loss of consciousness, affected the *truncus cerebri* section of the brain, accompanied by disturbances of the most important functions—respiration and circulation.

'During the night of March 3rd-4th, the disturbances of respiration and circulation continued. The greatest changes were observed in the respiratory functions; the intermittent

phenomena of so-called Cheyne-Stokes breathing became more frequent. As a result of this, the state of circulation deteriorated and the extent of lack of oxygen increased. By the systematic administration of oxygen and drugs, to regulate respiration and the action of the heart vessels, there was a gradual slight improvement of the condition, and by the morning of March 4th, the degree of lack of respiration had been somewhat reduced.

'Subsequently, during the day of March 4th, the serious respiratory disturbances reappeared. The rate of breathing was 36 per minute. Blood pressure continued high (210 maximum—110 minimum) with a pulse rate of 108/116 a minute, irregular (fluctuating arrhythmia). The heart is enlarged to a moderate degree.

'During the past 24 hours no substantial changes have been observed in the lungs or in the organs of the abdominal cavity. The normal ratio of albumen and red blood corpuscles was found present in the urine. A blood test showed an increase in the number of white blood corpuscles (17,000). During the morning and afternoon, the temperature was high, reaching 38.6 degrees C.

'Treatment carried out during March 4th consisted of the administration of oxygen and camphor preparations, caffeine, *strophanthin** and glucose. Leeches were used to draw blood for the second time.

'In view of the high temperature and high leucocytosis, penicillin therapy, which has been applied for prophylactic purposes from the beginning of the illness, was intensified.

'Late in the evening of March 4th, the state of Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin's health remained grave. The patient is in a soporific (deeply unconscious) state. The nervous regulation of respiration, as well as cardiac activity, continues gravely disturbed.'

* Author's italics.

This bulletin was also signed by all the doctors, the Minister of Health and the Chief of the Medical Health Board of the Kremlin.

The third bulletin was issued on the evening of March 5th, and stated:—

‘In the morning of March 5th, phenomena of heavy respiratory deficiency was observed. This submitted to corresponding therapeutical treatment with difficulty. By 8 a.m., phenomena of acute cardiac disturbance decreased. The pulse became more regular. Pallor increased. Under the influence of extraordinary measures applied, these phenomena were removed.

‘An electro-cardiogram taken at 11 a.m. on March 5th, showed acute disorder of blood circulation in the coronary artery of the heart with the seat of the changes in the back wall of the heart.

‘The electro-cardiogram taken on March 2nd, did not establish these changes.

‘At 11.30 a.m., a heavy collapse took place a second time, which was liquidated with difficulty by corresponding medical treatment. Later on, the cardio-vascular changes eased somewhat, although the general condition continues to remain grave.

‘At 4 p.m., the blood pressure was maximum 160—minimum 100; pulse 120 per minute; arhythmic breathing 36 per minute; temperature 37·6 C.; leucocytes 21,000.

‘The treatment is at present directed mainly towards combating irregularities in breathing and blood circulation, in particular the coronary zone.’

In the early hours of March 6th, the news that Stalin had died at 9.50 p.m. on March 5th was broadcast by Moscow’s chief announcer, Yuri Levitan.

While the USSR prepared to pay its last tribute to Stalin, the world beyond the Iron Curtain, sensing the atmosphere of mystery enhanced by the strict censorship imposed by the

Soviet Government on all but official communiqués, became rife with rumour and speculation. There were some who declared that Stalin had died long before the first bulletin about his illness had been issued. Others, noting two such apparently conflicting conditions as high blood pressure and leukaemia, doubted the verity of the bulletins. Still others, while accepting the bulletins at their face value, wondered at their wealth of medical detail and the fact that the Minister of Health and the Chief of the Medical Health Board of the Kremlin had signed them as well as the nine doctors attending the patient. There were even those who asked themselves whether it was just fate that Stalin should have died but a few weeks after the arrest of the Kremlin physicians charged with plotting the deaths of the Soviet Party hierarchy.

Was there any connection between these 'doctor-assassins' and the death of Stalin?

Chapter II

THE BELEAGUERED CITY

BY ANNOUNCING STALIN'S ILLNESS, the Soviet Government created a precedent, for never before had the people of the USSR been given any information concerning the health of a Soviet leader. No news of Lenin's stroke was announced in 1924, and Zhadanov's illness was not made known until after his death in 1948.

But from 8 a.m. on March 4th until 9.50 p.m. on March 5th, when he died, the detailed bulletins concerning Stalin's illness were broadcast almost hourly, And after every one of the statements it was repeated that the patient was being attended by the 'best medical brains in the country, under the supervision of members of the Soviet Government'. Also, the appeal for 'unity, solidarity, fortitude of spirit and vigilance' was almost ceaselessly reiterated in the newspapers and over the radio. In offices and factories throughout the country the workers were called to meetings at which the bulletins were read and the speakers urged them to rally round the Party and the Government in 'their hour of mourning'.

Fostered, no doubt, by the first official statement's reference to his 'temporary withdrawal' from the leadership of the Party, many cherished the belief that Stalin would recover. And in Moscow, the people appeared stunned by the news of his death.

The few people in the streets in the early hours of March 6th, went about their business in silence. Here and there, a man or a woman wept quietly. In the buses and on the underground, people spoke in whispers or not at all. The Red Square was deserted save for gangs of women sweepers clearing the light snow that had fallen during the night.

Then, at about six o'clock, convoys of MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) trucks and tanks converged on the city. These vehicles, with their troops, under direct orders from Lavrenti Beria, took up strategic positions at the intersections of all the main streets and boulevards.

For the benefit of those who do not know Moscow, it should be explained that the city is built in a number of concentric circles which follow roughly the old city walls. At the hub of these circles stands the Kremlin with its great squares. Beyond these at a distance of about a mile is the first circular boulevard. A little further off—possibly, half a mile—is the Sadovaya Circle. Crossing these circles and radiating from the hub like the spokes of a wheel, run the avenues leading to the heart of the city.

By ten o'clock that morning, a large crowd of several thousand people had gathered in the Red Square in the hope of seeing Stalin's coffin being carried through the Spassky Gate, since it had been announced that he had died in the Kremlin. But the MVD troops, who had already thrown up barricades to prevent entry to the Square, gradually dispersed the crowd.

By midday, the special troops of the MVD had taken over the complete control of the city; their trucks and tanks, parked side by side at every crossroads, had brought all traffic to a standstill. No one could enter or leave Moscow except by permission of the MVD. Notices at the booking-offices in the railway stations informed travellers that, while trains out of the city were running as usual, no trains, except a few long-distance ones, were arriving in Moscow. Thus, the capital was closed from the outside as well as from within.

At the time of Lenin's death in January 1924, thousands had travelled to Moscow—even on the tops of railway carriages in the bitter cold—to attend his lying-in-state. But due to Beria's foresight no such demonstrations were possible when Stalin died, for the city was completely sealed off from the outside

world. And so it was to remain for three days, until after Stalin's funeral on March 9th.

Astonishingly, it was several weeks before the details of this manoeuvre reached the outside world. As Minister of State Security and Internal Affairs, Beria sent his minions to destroy the connections of the International telephone switchboard, and ensured that all references to his activities by foreign correspondents were censored.

What manner of man was Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria who organized this three-day siege of Moscow? Trotski described him as 'a ruthless Chekist and one of Stalin's most trusted lieutenants'. Certainly, few men were closer to Stalin for so long a time as Beria. Having joined the Party in 1917, he had been connected with the secret police apparatus CHEKA—the Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-revolution and Sabotage—since 1921. For the next ten years, he was in charge of the entire Caucasian network. In 1934, he was elected a member of the Central Committee.

In spite of the fact that he was an Old Bolshevik, he managed to survive the great purge following Kirov's assassination, to become head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs—the NKVD—in 1938, succeeding Yezhov, who shortly before had vanished from the political scene without trace. During the war, he was a member of the Committee of State Defence, a body responsible for the maintenance of military and civil 'morale', which numbered amongst its other functions the deportations of whole communities. For such services he was created a Marshal of the USSR in June 1945, and awarded five Orders of Lenin, the Order of Surorov First Class, as well as two Orders of the Red Banner.

In 1946, he ostensibly relinquished his post as head of the NKVD, when it was split into two ministries, the MGB and the MVD—respectively the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But even then, contrary to

what was said, there was no question of Beria having fallen from grace. He remained until the end Stalin's *eminence grise*, as will be made clear later in this investigation.

Within a few hours of Stalin's death, when the new Government of the USSR was formed, Beria became once again head of the MGB and MVD. As such, he was virtually the most powerful man in Russia, for he controlled an army of more than five hundred thousand of the best trained, best equipped, and best fed troops in the country. His secret police infiltrated into the Party and the State, as well as the Services. Russia's nuclear research plants were under his immediate supervision.

Such then was the man by whose orders the encirclement of Moscow had been carried out with clockwork precision within a few hours of Stalin's death.

What was the object of this manoeuvre? Had it been prompted by fear? Fear lest the sudden shock of Stalin's death should release those 'dark forces' which had so often in the past caused civil war in Russia. Certainly, the repeated stress laid on the theme of unity—unity of the People, the Party, and the Armed Forces—in the official communiqués, the broadcasts and the newspapers, indicated the Party leaders' preoccupation with the mood of the populace at the time of Stalin's death. And no one knew better than Beria and his secret police what the people were thinking.

Or was this demonstration of strength staged as a timely warning to all those marshals and generals assembled for the funeral against attempting a *coup d'état*? On the other hand, was it an audacious bid by Beria to set himself up in Stalin's shoes as dictator? At the time there were many who believed this to have been true. And later, he was to stand accused of such ambitions. Yet, if indeed he did have such a plan in mind, why did he not carry it out? There was nothing to prevent him doing so at any moment during those three days and

nights when Moscow, the Kremlin, and virtually all Russia were his for the taking.

In fact, it is reasonable to assume that at that moment Beria never considered stepping into Stalin's shoes. As an old Bolshevik, he had followed Stalin's rise to power from the very beginning and was familiar with every twist and turn of its intricate pattern. Indeed, as head of the secret police, he had been more directly associated with its design than any of the men gathered around Stalin's deathbed. Better than all of them, he must have known that the old dictator's death had left a vacuum which could only be filled, as after Lenin's death, by a collective leadership.

Nevertheless, if at that moment neither the Party nor the people would have tolerated another dictatorship, the struggle for power had already begun. The Kremlin was already a house divided by intrigues and factions into Stalinists and anti-Stalinists. And the advance guard of the latter's forces were the MVD troops who, under Beria's command, held Moscow in their power during those fateful seventy-six hours.

Chapter III

‘TO BURY CAESAR . . .’

ON MARCH 6TH, Stalin's coffin was conveyed by motor ambulance from his private apartments in the Kremlin to the Hall of Columns, the former Club of Nobles, where for three days his body was to lie in state.

The coffin was left open, as was the practice with those of the Tzars, so that the people might see they had died peacefully and had not been victims of foul play.

But now the vast crowds that converged on the Red Square were not allowed by the MVD troops to enter the Hall until leaders of the Government and the high officials of the Soviet régime had paid their last respects to Stalin as he lay in his open coffin banked by flowers on the same spot where Lenin's bier had rested. And so by the morning of March 7th, the queues of patiently waiting people stretched five miles beyond the Red Square.

On the eve of the funeral, the arrangements for which were organized by a commission under the chairmanship of Krushchev, special orders of the day were broadcast by the War Minister, Marshal Bulganin, and the Navy Minister, Vice-Admiral Kuzetsov, appealing to the forces to ‘close their ranks even more tightly around the Party and the Government, to strengthen battle-preparedness and increase their vigilance’.

At 10.5 a.m. the following morning, Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Krushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich and Mikoyan, followed by Marshals and Generals carrying Stalin's orders and medals on scarlet satin cushions, bore the bier from the Hall of Columns to the waiting gun carriage.

At 10.45 a.m., the cortège halted before the mausoleum,

and the coffin was lifted from the gun carriage and placed on a high catafalque draped in red and black. Then, Krushchev called upon Malenkov, the newly appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Secretary of the Central Committee, to make his funeral oration.

Malenkov said: 'Our Party, the Soviet people, the whole of mankind have suffered a most grievous, irreparable loss. The glorious life of our teacher and leader, the greatest genius of humanity, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, has come to an end. In these bitter days the Soviet people's profound grief is shared by the whole of advanced and progressive mankind. The name of Stalin is immeasurably dear to Soviet men and women, to the broad masses of people in all parts of the world. Boundless is the greatness and significance of Comrade Stalin's activity for the Soviet people and for the working people of all countries. Stalin's work will live throughout the ages and grateful posterity will pay homage to his name, just as we all do. Comrade Stalin, the great thinker of our epoch, creatively developed the teaching of Marxism-Leninism in the new historical traditions. The name of Stalin rightly stands alongside the names of the great men of history—Marx, Engels and Lenin.

'Our Party is following the great teaching of Marxism-Leninism which give the Party and the people invincible strength and ability to blaze new trails in history . . .

'Under the direct leadership of Comrade Stalin, the Soviet Army was founded, grew and gained strength. Enhancing the defence capacity of the country and strengthening the Soviet Armed Forces was the object of Comrade Stalin's tireless concern. Led by this great commander, Generalissimo Stalin, the Soviet Army achieved its historic victory in the second world war and delivered the nations of Europe and Asia from the menace of fascist slavery . . .

'As a result of Comrade Stalin's indefatigable labours, and in accordance with the plans drawn up by him, our Party

transformed our formerly backward country into a mighty industrial and collective-farm estate, created a new economic system which knows neither crisis nor unemployment . . .

‘Lenin and Stalin founded and steered our Party as the great transforming force in society. Throughout his life Comrade Stalin always taught us that there is nothing loftier than the title of Member of the Communist Party. In hard-fought struggle against enemies, Comrade Stalin upheld the unity, firmness and solidarity of our party ranks . . .

‘It is our sacred duty to strengthen further the great Communist Party . . . The great Stalin has educated us in the spirit of boundless devotion to service in the peoples’ interests. We are the servants of the people . . .’

Then followed the speech by Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria, first Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. He said:

‘The entire life and work of the Great Stalin are an inspiring example of fidelity to Lenin, an example of selfless service to the working class . . .

‘After Lenin’s death, Stalin led our Party and country along the Lenin path for wellnigh thirty years . . .

‘Stalin upheld Leninism against numerous enemies. The enemies of the Soviet State calculate that the great loss we have sustained will lead to confusion and disarray in our ranks. But in vain are their calculations; bitter disappointment awaits them. Anyone who is not blind can see that in these sad days the Party is closing its ranks still more, and our Party is united and steadfast . . .

‘The Soviet people responded with unanimous approval to the decision of the Central Committee of the Party, the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR concerning the extremely important decisions designed to ensure the uninterrupted and correct leadership of the entire life of the country.

'One of these important decisions is the appointment of Georgi Maximilianovich Malenkov, talented pupil of Lenin and loyal colleague of Stalin, to the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

'The decisions adopted by the highest Party and State organs of our country were a vivid manifestation of the complete unity and solidarity in Party and State leadership. The unity and solidarity in the country's leadership are the guarantees of the successful implementation of the home and foreign policy worked out over the years by our Party and Government under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin . . .

'The great Stalin trained and rallied around himself a cohort of battle-trying leaders who have mastered the Lenin-Stalin skill of leadership, on whose shoulders has fallen the historic responsibility of leading to the victorious end the great cause begun by Lenin and successfully continued by Stalin.

'The peoples of our country can rest assured that the Communist Party and the Government of the Soviet Union will spare neither strength nor life to preserve the iron unity of the ranks of the Party and its leadership . . .'

The final oration was spoken by Molotov. He said: 'In these days all of us are grief-stricken at the death of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, at the loss of a great leader and at the same time a close, beloved and infinitely dear friend. We, his old and close friends, and the millions and millions of Soviet people, and the working people of all countries throughout the world, say a last farewell today to Comrade Stalin whom we all loved so dearly and who will forever live in our hearts . . .

'We can be justly proud that for the last thirty years we have lived and worked under the leadership of Comrade Stalin . . . And we shall always remember what Stalin, to the last of his days, taught us, for we want to be true and worthy pupils and disciples of Stalin . . .

'Comrade Stalin's whole life is a life of example to us . . .

His brilliant mind, profound study of the theory of Marxism, extraordinary talent as the incomparable organiser of our Party and the Soviet State, and as a Marxist-Leninist theoretician of genius, Comrade Stalin played a gigantic part . . .

'Stalin personally guided the formation and organization of the Red Army's glorious battles at the most decisive fronts in the Civil War. As Supreme Commander in the years of the great patriotic war, Stalin led our country to victory over fascism, fundamentally altering the situation in Europe and Asia . . .

'In these difficult days we shall see with special clarity, and constantly feel what a powerful, unshakable and reliable mainstay of the Soviet people our Communist Party is; its iron unity, its indissoluble bonds with the masses of the working people . . .

'The immortal name of Stalin will forever live in our hearts, in the hearts of the Soviet people and all progressive mankind.'

After the funeral orations, the artillery fired a military salute as the coffin was borne into the mausoleum. Then, as the clock on the Spassky Tower of the Kremlin struck twelve, for the space of three minutes, factory, locomotive and ships' sirens sounded all over the USSR; for five minutes all work ceased and the country came to a standstill.

Of the three men selected by the Committee in charge of the funeral to speak the panegyrics over Stalin's bier, Malenkov and Molotov have been expelled from membership of the Communist Party. The third, Beria, has been shot.

Did Krushchev, the arch-anti-Stalinist, as chairman of the funeral committee, personally choose these men so that by praising Stalin they might publicly condemn themselves as Stalinists? Such labyrinthian scheming would have been in the true Kremlin tradition and worthy of the man whose embalmed body had been laid to rest beside that of Lenin in the mausoleum in the Red Square.

Chapter IV

IN SEARCH OF MOTIVE

WE HAVE SAID THAT IMMEDIATELY after the death of Stalin the Soviet Party hierarchy were greatly preoccupied with the mood of the people. However, it soon became clear that there was no danger of any kind of popular disorder anywhere in the country. In Moscow itself it was evident that many of the people took Stalin's death as a personal loss. Broadly speaking, it could be said that the reaction of a considerable section of the populace was similar to their reaction to the death of a Tsar. On the other hand, many of the more politically conscious were apprehensive. Absurd as it may seem, there were those who feared that now the Great Leader had gone, America might attack Russia. There was apprehension, too, that with Stalin dead, the leaders would start fighting for succession.

But the men in the Kremlin, men like Beria who had their fingers firmly on the pulse of the people, intuitively sensed such fears and misgivings. And it was in order to allay them that they lost no time in announcing the formation of a new Government. And they elected Malenkov as Prime Minister. This they did because, ever since the 19th Party Congress in 1952, the majority of the people had looked upon Georgi Maximilianovich Malenkov as Stalin's heir and successor.

The 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union would be important if only by virtue of the fact that it had been the first to be convened by Stalin for thirteen years. It was also the last he attended. When in August, *Pravda* announced that a congress was to be held in Moscow in two months' time, the air at once became thick with rumours.

Why, everyone asked, after flouting the Party rules concerning the holding of congresses for so long, had Stalin suddenly called this one? Was it because he was nearly seventy-three and felt that it was time that he nominated his successor. Or had he some special announcement to make to the Party concerning the new Five-Year Plan?

Shortly before the Congress opened on October 5th, Stalin wrote an article in *Bolshevik* in which he forecast a deepening crisis of capitalism resulting from a decline in the world markets through the war. He declared that, of the two opposing markets which had developed, that formed by the Soviet Union, China and eastern Europe with the help of the western blockade would expand, while the capitalist markets would shrink, due to constant heightening antagonisms. It was wrong to believe that West Germany, England, France, Italy and Japan would endlessly tolerate United States domination. First England, and then France, would be forced to break loose from the American yoke. The modern peace movement might prevent or postpone a given war, Stalin prophesied, but would not destroy the inevitability of war between capitalist states.

Such an article from the pen of the Secretary General would have been enough to set the tone of the forthcoming Congress. But, as if not satisfied, Stalin further stressed his growing contempt for the capitalist countries. On the eve of the Congress, the Soviet Foreign Office declared Mr. George Kennan, the United States Ambassador to Moscow, *persona non grata*, and requested his immediate recall on the grounds that he had been a 'spy of long standing'. Mr. Kennan, one of the State Department's leading experts on Russian affairs, had first gone to Moscow in 1933 as assistant to Mr. William Bullitt, the then U.S. Ambassador. Two years later, he was appointed Counsellor and, in 1951, became Ambassador.

Such unprecedented diplomatic action on the part of the Soviet Foreign Office caused U.S.-Soviet relations, already

tense under the stress of the Korean war, to become strained almost beyond their limits. But whatever may have been the private views of the members of the Presidium attending the Congress of such undiplomatic conduct, it was unthinkable that any of them would stand up and bandy words with their leader. Instead, without exception and as one voice they rose to denounce the 'capitalist aggressors'.

In his opening speech, Molotov, the Deputy Prime Minister, told the delegates that 'it must not be forgotten that the imperialist countries, who were responsible for the Korean war, the seizure of Formosa, the revival of aggressive militarism in Germany and Japan, and the foundation of aggressive coalitions such as the Atlantic Pact, are preparing for war'.

Having sensationally set the tone of the Congress, the Secretary General showed so little interest in the proceedings that he left the delivery of the Political Report on the work of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to Malenkov. This action, which, incidentally, appeared to give substance to the unconfirmed rumours that he had been ill and had suffered a stroke, also strengthened the conviction that Stalin would name Malenkov his heir. But he did nothing of the kind.

Malenkov began his speech with a tirade against the United States: 'Is it the Communists or the American billionaires who have seized Canada, who are seizing Australia and New Zealand, who are pushing Britain out of the Suez Canal Zone . . . who are laying their hands on the oil regions in the possession of Britain?' he asked the Congress.

'As regards such "free" countries as Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia', he went on, 'they have already been converted into American colonies, and the rulers of Yugoslavia, long ago signed up as American agents, are carrying out against the USSR and the People's Democracies the espionage and sabotage tasks set them by their American chiefs'.

Turning to internal affairs, Malenkov said that it was an indication of the signal achievements of Soviet science and technology that the honourable title of Stalin Prize winner had been conferred on 8,470 workers in science, industry, transport and agriculture.

Later in his speech, he made an attack on Krushchev's brain-children, the big collective-farm townships and agrotowns. 'It must be noted', he said, 'that some of our leading workers have, in this respect, displayed a wrong, consumer approach to questions of collective-farm development'.

Towards the end of his long speech, he stressed the importance of criticism and self-criticism in the life of the Party. 'A spirit of negligence has penetrated our Party organisations', he said. 'There are cases of Party and other executives relaxing their vigilance and failing to see what is going on around them; there are cases of divulgence of Party and State secrets . . . Some workers allow their heads to be turned by successes, and begin to forget that we are still in a capitalist encirclement, that the enemies of the Soviet State are working persistently to smuggle their agents into our country and to utilise unstable elements in Soviet society for their own malignant ends'.

Malenkov spoke too of the past struggles within the Party and of those 'capitulators and traitors who tried to split its ranks'. 'It has been proved', he said, 'that the Trotskyite and Bukharinite degenerates, those infamous traitors and renegades, were waiting for an armed attack upon the Soviet Union, counting on stabbing the Soviet State in the back in its hour of trial . . . By demolishing the Trotskyite and Bukharinite underground and by purging our Party and Soviet organisations of enemies of the people, the Party destroyed all possibility of the appearance of a "fifth column" in the USSR'.

At the conclusion of Malenkov's report all the delegates rose to acclaim, not Malenkov, but Stalin with loud and

prolonged cheers. There were cries from all parts of the Hall of 'Long live our Great Stalin! Hurrah for our dear Stalin! Long live our beloved leader and teacher, Comrade Stalin!'

On October 7th, Beria addressed the Congress. His speech consisted for the most part of a paean of praise for Stalin, and was greeted by loud and prolonged applause. But Beria, like Malenkov, ended his speech on a note of warning against the spies and saboteurs who were being smuggled into the country.

'The vigilance of the Soviet people is the keenest weapon in the struggle against enemy spies', he said, 'and there can be no doubt that, by enhancing and sharpening their vigilance, the Soviet people will succeed in rendering ineffective the agents of the imperialist warmongers, no matter how many are sent amongst us, and no matter how they are disguised'.

When, on October 14th, Stalin rose to speak, the entire audience jumped to its feet to cheer him, and the hall echoed to shouts of 'Long live Stalin! Glory to our great Stalin!'

He spoke briefly of the role played by the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries.

'When, in 1918-19, at the time of the armed attack of the British bourgeoisie on the Soviet Union, the British workers organised a struggle against war under the watchword of "Hands off Russia!", this was support', Stalin told the Congress. 'Support for the struggle of their own people for peace, support for the Soviet Union. When Comrade Thorez or Comrade Togliatti declare that their peoples will not fight the peoples of the Soviet Union, that is support—for the workers and peasants of France and Italy who are fighting for peace, and support also for the peaceful aspirations of the Soviet Union . . .

'Naturally, our Party cannot remain indebted to the fraternal parties, and it must in its turn render support to them and also

to their people in their struggle for emancipation, and in their struggle for the preservation of peace. As you know, that is exactly what we are doing . . .'

This, the shortest speech he had ever made at a Party Congress, was greeted with cheers and further cries of 'Down with the warmongers!' 'Long live Stalin! Long live the great leader of the working people of the world, Comrade Stalin!'

It is true to say that after all the excitement and speculation heralding it, for many the 19th Congress proved something of an anti-climax. Much had been expected of it, but little had happened. And having convened it and staged as a sensational curtain-raiser Ambassador Kennan's expulsion, Stalin himself appeared so disinterested in the whole proceedings that he often did not even bother to attend.

Far from delegating his authority to anyone else, he had seemed bent upon curtailing what little authority the Party still possessed. For, before the Congress ended, the Politburo and the Orgburo were abolished and replaced by a single body, the Presidium of the Central Committee. This new group consisting of thirty-six full members and eleven alternative members seemed likely to be even less effective than the smaller Politburo of eleven.* But, perhaps that was precisely what Stalin had intended.

However, observers attending that 19th Congress were all struck by the repeated warnings given by the deputies about the infiltration of spies and saboteurs into the Soviet camp, the calls for further vigilance, and the references to negligence by Party members, and the instability of Soviet society. Particularly did Malenkov's remarks about the Trotskyite-Bukharinite underground give cause for reflection, since it was generally agreed that the speaker was making the Party Report on Stalin's behalf rather than in his stead. Therefore,

*The day after Stalin's death, the Presidium was reduced to ten members and four alternative members.

there were those who left the Congress Hall with the conviction that these repeated warnings were the overtures to a new purge within the Party. And in the months to follow there occurred a number of incidents to strengthen this conviction.

A group of businessmen were arrested in Kiev, in the Ukraine, for black market dealing and embezzlement. They were tried by a specially convened military court, and three of them sentenced to death and shot for 'Counter-revolution wrecking'. The others were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. As the majority of these men were of Jewish origin, it seemed that a new wave of anti-Semitism was sweeping the country.

Now, the Ukraine was, so to speak, Krushchev's territory, for until 1949 when he was elected a Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, he had been Party Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party. And so the men who were shot or sent to prison, were men who had been closely associated with Krushchev. Since they were businessmen and traders, they came directly under the authority of Mikoyan as Minister of Foreign Trade. That they were tried before a military court and not a civil one, indicated that someone had overruled Beria's authority. Thus, the Kiev case reflected upon these and other high Party officials in a none too favourable light.

But these incidents in the provinces were quite obscured by the blaze of publicity marking the exposure of the 'Doctor's Plot' at the beginning of 1953, on January 13th. These doctors, six of whom were Jewish, were not merely at the very top of their profession, but amongst them were those in actual attendance upon the Kremlin; men responsible for Stalin's health.

Shortly after this alarming news had been made public, it was announced that a certain woman doctor, Lidya Fedoseyevna Timashuk, had been awarded the Order of Lenin for

'her assistance in the matter of exposing the doctor-assassins'.

This announcement proved conclusively that the doctors were arrested on the direct orders of Stalin himself. More than that, it leaves no doubt that somehow Lidya Timashuk had been able to convince Stalin that these nine doctors were engaged in poisoning him.

At this stage of our investigation, the question can be legitimately asked: 'Were they?'

Chapter V

SOME POISONERS

STALIN HAD EVERY REASON to act swiftly upon the information given by Lidya Timashuk since he lived in constant fear of being poisoned. Moreover, he undoubtedly remembered Henry Yagoda and the 'medical assassinations' that had taken place under his supervision in the thirties.

It was Yagoda who had brought pressure to bear on the Kremlin physicians, amongst them Lev Grigorievich Levin, doctor to Lenin and Stalin, to murder Vyacheslav Menzhinsky. The latter had been Yagoda's predecessor as head of the OGPU, and three doctors besides Levin were charged with his murder in May, 1934. One of them was Ignaty Nikolayevich Kazakov, whose testimony at the trial is worth recalling.

'My crimes', he told Vyshinsky, the then Assistant Attorney, 'are connected in particular with the murder of Vyacheslav Rudolfovich Menzhinsky. My relations with Menzhinsky may be divided into two periods. The first period, up to November, 1933, during which I gave him proper treatment and achieved definite results. The second period, when I applied a wrong method of treatment, after my meeting with Levin and Yagoda. Menzhinsky had been in a serious condition before my meetings with them, and had not quit his bed for six or seven months. I was called to treat a very sick man. He suffered from *angina pectoris** and at the same time *bronchial asthma*.* He had attacks of the latter particularly during the night. As for the attacks of angina, these came on periodically, now stronger, now weaker, after the initial attack which he had suffered in 1926, finally culminating in a serious case of infarction of the myocardium, as corroborated by the

*Author's italics.

*electro-cardiogram** which is to be found in the files. This showed the presence of *thrombosis of one of the branches of the arteria coronaria** . . .

'After he had taken treatment under me in April, 1932, Menzhinsky recovered and returned to work . . . While Menzhinsky was under my observation, I noticed certain peculiarities in Dr. Levin's behaviour towards me. His manner was disparaging towards me, and I realised that I was being discredited, and at the end of November, 1932, I was for some reason removed as physician to Menzhinsky when he was feeling well.

'On March 5th, 1933, I was again summoned to Menzhinsky and found him in a grave condition. After he had been down with the grippe, he developed chronic sepsis, and attacks of asthma were followed by attacks of angina pectoris. At that time I disagreed with Dr. Levin about the patient's condition, with the result that I was again removed from treating Menzhinsky.

'I met Dr. Levin in May, and he expressed a certain amount of sympathy with me in connection with the negative attitude towards me of a group of physicians with whom I was carrying on a scientific controversy. He also said I was fussing over Menzhinsky to no purpose, that nothing would come of it and I would not benefit my career through him. Then he said: 'Well, we'll talk it over some other time'.

'I began to give treatment to Menzhinsky again on June 19th. At the end of July he was able to resume work. We spent August and September together in Kislovodsk . . .

'At the end of October I met Dr. Levin and this time we had a frank conversation. He said to me: "I'm surprised that you have undertaken Menzhinsky's treatment with so much zeal and that you are improving his health. You should not have allowed him to go back to work. It is to no purpose

*Author's italics.

that you are fussing about with this living corpse. By doing so, you are only irritating Yagoda and it will lead to no good". I was dumbfounded by this.

'Levin continued: "You must realise that Menzhinsky is in Yagoda's way, and that Yagoda is only interested in getting him out of the way as soon as possible. I'm warning you that if you mention this to Menzhinsky, Yagoda will, of course, destroy you. And you will not escape Yagoda no matter where you hide. He is a man who does not stop at anything and forgets nothing".

'This conversation for its frankness exceeded all bounds. Of course, it was my duty to inform somebody about it immediately, but I did not do so because I thought that this was some kind of provocation on Dr. Levin's part, and so I decided to wait to find out what Yagoda would say to me . . .

'Events developed. For a time, I stopped treating Menzhinsky . . . On November 6th—I remember the date exactly—the Chief of the Medical Service of the OGPU, with whom I usually went, came for me in a car. I was not taken to Shestie Gorki, where I normally went, but to a newly decorated house in one of the Meshchanskaya streets. When we came into this one-storey house we were literally suffocated. The smell was stifling. We could clearly discern the smell of turpentine, but there was also the odour of some other substance. Members of Menzhinsky's family explained that he and they had been transferred to the house on the previous day. The house had been repainted and, inasmuch as in the autumn paint takes a long time to dry, some substance had been added to the paint, a siccativ, to make it dry faster. This siccativ had a very pungent smell. Even we healthy people were gasping for breath on account of it. So you can imagine what was Menzhinsky's condition, suffering as he was from bronchial asthma! When I entered his room, I found him in

a forced sitting position, he spoke with great difficulty, and during the night he had become all swollen.

'I listened to his lungs. Everywhere there was a distinct, typically asthmatic, dry crepitation, prolonged exhalation, and laboured breathing. I and the chauffeur put him in a chair and together carried him on to the verandah and opened all the windows immediately. Before carrying him out, I gave him an injection in order to relieve him from a very serious attack of asthma. I kept him on the verandah for about three hours. Then I went home . . .

'Shortly afterwards, the telephone rang, and I was told that a car was being sent to take me to Yagoda's . . .

'He asked me: "Did you see Vyacheslav Rudolfovich?"

' "Yes, I saw him today."

' "What condition did you find him in?"

' "In a very serious condition."

'After a short interval, Yagoda said: "Properly speaking, everyone has given up Menzhinsky."

'I was somewhat surprised by this. Then, Yagoda said: "Tell me, please have you spoken to Levin?"

' "Yes, I have."

'Then he went beyond the bounds of common courtesy, and I saw the real unrestrained *satrap*. "Why are you fiddling about?" he shouted. "Why don't you act? Who asked you to butt into somebody else's business?"

'I understood then that he knew what had happened three or four hours before.

' "What do you want me to do?" I asked.

'Yagoda said that together with Dr. Levin I must work out a method of treatment whereby we would bring about a quick end to Menzhinsky's useless life. "I warn you", he said, "that if you attempt to disobey me I shall find means of dealing with you. You cannot escape me".

'If the Procurator would ask me whether I recognized

Yagoda, I would say that I do not. That is to say, there is a great difference between the Yagoda I met then and the Yagoda sitting in this court . . .

'I realized I was caught in a terrible vice . . . Two days later, I saw Menzhinsky, on November 8th. By then, he had developed a complication in his kidneys, so I suggested that Dr. Levin and some urologists should be called, because that was not my speciality. Perhaps I should have intervened, because I knew Menzhinsky very well . . .

'At the end of November I met Levin and together with him we worked out a method which consisted in the following; first of all we took advantage of the two main properties of albumen and albuminous products. First, the products of hydrolytic decomposition of albumen possess the property of stimulating the effect of medicines. Second, lysates increase the sensitivity of the organism. These two properties were taken advantage of. Thirdly, advantage was taken of the peculiarities of Menzhinsky's organism, of the combination of bronchial asthma and angina pectoris. It is a well-known fact that in a case of bronchial asthma the so-called para-sympathetic section of the vegetative nervous system is excited. Therefore, in cases of bronchial asthma, substances are prescribed which excite the contrasting section; that is to say, the sympathetic, the thyroid gland. Such a preparation is the extract of the suprarenal gland, a preparation of the medullar stratum. In a case of angina pectoris it is just the sympathetic section which starts from the subjugular plexus of the sympathetic ganglion that is excited. That is the fine point which was taken advantage of.

'If you ask me whether it was necessary to give Menzhinsky sympathicotropous preparations, I must answer, yes, if there were only bronchial asthma, but it should not be given because he suffered from angina pectoris. Only an ignoramus could permit the administering of preparations of medullar stratum

of the suprarenal gland when there was a combination of the two illnesses.

Vyshinsky: "An ignoramus or . . .?"

Kazakov: "Or with deliberate purpose."

Vyshinsky: "With criminal purpose?"

Kazakov: "Yes."

Vyshinsky: "Perhaps this was a case of both ignorance and criminal intent?"

Kazakov: "No, it was crime pure and simple. Gradually one set of preparations was introduced, while another was put aside. It was necessary to introduce a number of heart stimulants—digitalis, adonis, *strophanthus**, which stimulated the activity of the heart. These medicines were administered in the following order. First, lysates, then there was an interval in the treatment with lysates, then heart stimulants were given. As a result of this 'treatment' a thorough weakening was brought about, and Menzhinsky died during the night of May 10th, 1934".'

Later in the trial, a special Commission of Experts, consisting of five Scientists and Doctors, stated that: 'Such a combination of methods of treatment could but lead to the exhaustion of the heart muscles of the patient V. R. Menzhinsky and thereby to the acceleration of his death'.

Stalin's fear of being poisoned may well have been based on his personal knowledge of poisons and his very close association with Henry Yagoda, who had worked in the Cheka and the OGPU for sixteen years, at first as an assistant chief and later as the head. In 1933 Stalin rewarded Yagoda with the Order of Lenin, and two years later elevated him to the rank of General Commissar of State Defense, that is, Marshal of the Political Police.

In order fully to understand the close connection between Stalin and Yagoda it is necessary to turn to Trotsky's book

* Author's italics.

'Stalin' in which he poses the questions: What was Stalin's actual role at the time of Lenin's illness? Did not the disciple do something to expedite his master's death?

'I realise more than anyone else the monstrosity of such a suspicion', Trotsky wrote. 'But that cannot be helped, when it follows from the circumstances, the facts and Stalin's very character. In 1922, the apprehensive Lenin had warned: "That cook will prepare nothing but peppery dishes". They proved to be not only peppery but poisoned, and not only figuratively but *literally* so. Two years ago (Note by Trotsky's translator Charles Malmuth; *Probably 1937, for this portion was written by Trotsky in or about 1939, in the form of a magazine article*) I wrote down for the first time the facts which in their day—1923-1924—were known to no more than seven or eight people, and then only in part. Of that number, besides myself, only Stalin and Molotov are still among the living. But these two—even allowing that Molotov was among the initiated, of which I am not certain—have no motives for confessing that which I am about to tell. I should add that every fact I mention, every reference and quotation, can be substantiated in my archives. I had occasion to give oral and written explanations before Dr. John Dewey's commission investigating the Moscow trials, and not a single one of the hundreds of documents that I presented was ever impugned.

'The iconography, rich in quality (we say nothing about its quality) produced in the last few years, invariably portrays Lenin in Stalin's company. They sit side by side, take counsel together, gaze upon each other in friendly fashion. The obtrusiveness of this motif, reiterated in paintings, in sculpture, on the screen, is indicated by the desire to make people forget the fact that the last period of Lenin's life was filled with an intense conflict between him and Stalin, which culminated in a complete break between them. As always, there was nothing in any way personal about Lenin's hostility toward Stalin.

'Undoubtedly he valued certain of Stalin's traits very highly; his firmness of character, his persistence, even his ruthlessness and conniving—attributes indispensable in struggle, and consequently at Party headquarters. But as time went on, Stalin took increasing advantage of the opportunities his post presented for recruiting people personally devoted to him, and for revenging himself upon his opponents. Having become in 1919 the head of the people's Commissariat of Inspection, Stalin gradually transformed it into an instrument of favouritism and intrigues. He turned the Party's General Secretariat into an exhaustible fountainhead of favours and dispensations. He likewise misused his position as a member of the Orgburo and Politburo for personal ends. A personal motive could be discerned in all his actions. Little by little Lenin became convinced that certain of Stalin's traits, multiplied by the political machine, were directly harmful to the Party. From that matured his decision to remove Stalin from the machine and thereby transform him into a rank and file member of the General Committee. In present-day USSR Lenin's letters of that time constitute the most tabu of all his writings. Fortunately, copies and photostats of a number of them are in my archives, and some of them I have already published.'

It is interesting to recall that, on the night of November 7th, 1936, a burglary took place at the Institute of Social History in Paris and a part of Trotsky's archives, deposited there for safekeeping, was stolen. Only the GPU could have had a motive for organising this theft.

Trotsky continues: 'Lenin's health took a sudden turn for the worse towards the end of 1921. The first stroke came in May of the following year. For two months he was unable either to move, speak or write. Beginning with July, he started to convalesce slowly. In October he returned from the country to the Kremlin and took up his work again. He was literally shaken by the spread of bureaucracy, arbitrariness and intrigue

in the institutions of the Party and the Government. In December he opened fire against Stalin's persecutions along the line of the nationalities policy, especially as enforced by him in Georgia, where the authority of the General Secretary was openly defied. He came out against Stalin on the question of foreign trade monopoly, and was preparing for the forthcoming Party Congress an address which Lenin's secretaries, quoting his own words, called "a bombshell against Stalin".

'On January 23rd, to the great trepidation of the General Secretary, Lenin proposed the project for organizing a control commission of workers that would check the power of the bureaucracy. "Let us speak frankly", wrote Lenin on the 2nd of March, "the Commissariat of Inspection does not today enjoy the slightest authority . . . There is no worse institution among us than our People's Commissariat of Inspection". At the head of the Inspection was Stalin. He well understood the implications of such language.

'In the middle of December, 1922, Lenin's health again took a turn for the worse. He was obliged to absent himself from conferences, keeping in touch with the Central Committee by means of notes and telegrams. Stalin at once tried to capitalize on this situation, hiding from Lenin much of the information which was concentrating in the Party Secretariat . . . Measures of blockade were instituted against persons closest to Lenin. Krupskaya did whatever she could to shield the sick man from hostile jolts from the Secretariat. But Lenin knew how to piece together a complete picture of the situation from stray and scarcely perceptible indications.

"Shield him from worries", the doctors insisted. Easier said than done. Chained to his bed, isolated from the outside world, Lenin was aflame with alarm and indignation. His chief source of worry was Stalin. The behaviour of the General Secretary became bolder as the reports of the physicians about Lenin's health became less favourable. In those days Stalin was morose,

his pipe firmly clenched between his teeth, a sinister gleam in his jaundiced eyes, snarling back instead of answering. His fate was at stake. He had made up his mind to overcome all obstacles. That was when the final break between him and Lenin took place.

“The former Soviet diplomat Dimitrievsky, who is very friendly towards Stalin, tells about this dramatic episode as it was bandied about in the General Secretary’s entourage: “When Krupskaya, of whom he was thoroughly sick because of her constant annoyances, telephoned him in the country once more for information, Stalin upbraided her in the most outrageous language. Krupskaya, all in tears, immediately ran to complain to Lenin. Lenin’s nerves already strained to breaking point by the intrigues, could not hold out any longer. Krupskaya hastened to send Lenin’s letter to Stalin . . . “But you know Vladimir Ilyich”, Krupskaya said triumphantly to Kamenev, “He would never have ventured to break off personal relations if he had not thought it necessary to crush Stalin politically”.

‘Krupskaya did really say that, but far from triumphantly; on the contrary, that thoroughly sincere and sensitive woman was frightfully apprehensive and worried by what had taken place. It is not true that she “complained” about Stalin; on the contrary, as far as she was able, she played the part of a shock-absorber. But in reply to Lenin’s persistent questioning, she could not tell him more than she had been told by the Secretariat, and Stalin concealed the most important matters.

“The letter about the break, or rather the note of several lines dictated on March 6th to a trusted stenographer, announced dryly the severance of “all personal and comradely relations with Stalin”. This note, the last surviving Lenin document, is at the same time the final summation of his relations with Stalin. Then came the worst stroke of all and loss of speech.

'A year later, when Lenin was already embalmed in his mausoleum, the responsibility for the break, as is clearly apparent from Dimitrievsky's story, was openly placed on Krupskaya. Stalin accused her of "intrigues" against him. The notorious Yaroslavsky, who usually carried out Stalin's dubious errands, said in July, 1926, at a session of the Central Committee: "They sank so low that they dared to come to the sick Lenin with their complaints of having been hurt by Stalin. How disgraceful to complicate policy on such major issues with personal matters!" Now "they" was Krupskaya. She was being vengefully punished for Lenin's affronts against Stalin. Krupskaya, for her part, told me about Lenin's deep distrust of Stalin during the last period of his life. "Volodya was saying: "He" (Krupskaya did not call him by name, but nodded her head in the direction of Stalin's apartment) "is always devoid of the most elementary honesty, the most simple, human honesty".

'The so-called Lenin "Testament" was written in two instalments during his second illness: on December 25th, 1922, and on January 4th, 1923 . . .

'After all that had taken place during the preceding months, the Testament could not have been a surprise to Stalin. Nevertheless, he took it as a cruel blow. When he first read the text, which Krupskaya had transmitted to him for the forthcoming Party Congress, in the presence of his secretary, Mekhlia, later the political chief of the Red Army, and of the prominent Soviet politician, Syrsov, who has since disappeared from the scene, he broke into Billingsgate against Lenin, giving vent to his true feelings about the master in those days. Bazhanov, another former secretary of Stalin's, has described the session of the Central Committee at which Kamenev first made the Testament known.

' "Terrible embarrassment paralyzed all those present. Stalin sitting on the steps of the Presidium's rostrum, felt

small and miserable. I studied him closely; notwithstanding his self-possession and show of calm, it was clearly evident that his fate was at stake . . . Radek, who sat beside me at that memorable session, leaned over with the words: "Now they won't dare go against you". He had in mind two places in the letter; one, which characterized me as "the most gifted man in the present Central Committee", and the other, which demanded Stalin's removal in view of "his rudeness, disloyalty and tendency to misuse power". I told Radek: "On the contrary, now they will have to see it through to the bitter end, and, moreover, as quickly as possible". Actually, the Testament not only failed to terminate the internal struggle, which was what Lenin wanted, but, on the contrary, intensified it to a feverish pitch. Stalin could no longer doubt that Lenin's return to activity would mean the political death of the General Secretary. And, conversely, only Lenin's death could clear the way for Stalin.

'During Lenin's second illness, towards the end of February, 1923, at a meeting of the Politburo members Zinoviev, Kamenev and the author of these lines, Stalin informed us, after the departure of the secretary, that Lenin had suddenly called him in and had asked him for poison. Lenin was again losing the faculty of speech, considered his situation hopeless, foresaw the approach of a new stroke, did not trust his physicians, whom he had no difficulty in catching out in contradictions. His mind was perfectly clear and he suffered unendurably. I was able to follow the course of Lenin's illness day by day through the physician we had in common, Dr. Guetier, who was also a family friend of ours.

' "Is it possible, Fedor Alexandrovich, that this is the end?" my wife and I would ask him time and again.

' "That cannot be said at all. Vladimir Ilyich can get on his feet again. He has a powerful constitution".

' "And his mental faculties?"

“Basically, they will remain untouched. Not every note, perhaps, will keep its former purity, but the virtuoso will remain a virtuoso.”

‘We continued to hope. Yet here I was unexpectedly confronted with this disclosure that Lenin, who seemed the very incarnation of the will to live, was seeking to poison himself. What must have been his inward state!

‘I recall how extraordinary, enigmatic and out of tune with the circumstances Stalin’s face seemed to me. The request he was transmitting was tragic; yet a sickly smile was transfixed on his face, as on a mask. We were not unfamiliar with the discrepancy between his facial expression and his speech. But, this time, it was utterly insufferable. The terror of it was enhanced by Stalin’s failure to express any opinion about Lenin’s request, as if he were waiting to see what others would say; did he want to catch the overtones of our reactions to it, without committing himself? . . . I see before me the pale and silent Kamenev, who sincerely loved Lenin, and Zinoviev, bewildered, as always at difficult moments. Had they known about Lenin’s request even before the session? Or had Stalin sprung this as a surprise on his allies in the triumvirate as well as on me?

“Naturally, we cannot even consider carrying out this request”! I exclaimed. “Guetier has not lost hope. Lenin can still recover.”

“I told him all that”, Stalin replied, not without a touch of annoyance. “But he wouldn’t listen to reason. The Old Man is suffering. He says he wants to have the poison at hand. He’ll use it only when he is convinced that his condition is hopeless.”

“Anyway, it’s out of the question”, I insisted—this time, I think, with Zinoviev’s support. “He might succumb to a passing mood and take the irrevocable step.”

“The Old Man is suffering”, Stalin repeated, staring

vaguely past us, and as before, saying nothing one way or the other. A line of thought parallel to the conversation, but not quite in consonance with it, must have been running through his mind.

'It is possible, of course, that subsequent events have influenced certain details of my recollection, though, as a general rule, I have learned to trust my memory. However, this episode is one of those that leave an indelible imprint on one's consciousness for all time. Moreover, upon my return home, I told it in detail to my wife. Ever since, each time I mentally review this scene, I cannot help repeating to myself: Stalin's behaviour, his whole manner, was baffling and sinister. What does it mean? What does the man want? And why doesn't he take that insidious smile off his mask?

'No vote was taken, since this was not a formal conference, but we parted with the implicit understanding that we could not even consider sending poison to Lenin.

'Here naturally arises the question: How and why did Lenin, who at the time was extremely suspicious of Stalin, turn to him with such a request which, on the face of it, presupposed the highest degree of personal confidence? A mere month before he had made this request of Stalin, Lenin had written his pitiless postscript to the Testament. Several days after making this request, he broke off all personal relations with him. Stalin himself could not have failed to ask himself the question: why did Lenin turn to him of all people? The answer is simple: Lenin saw in Stalin the only man who would grant his tragic request, since he was directly interested in doing so. With his faultless instinct, the sick man guessed what was going on in the Kremlin and outside its walls, and how Stalin really felt about him. Lenin did not even have to review the list of his closest friends in order to say to himself that no one except Stalin would do him this "favour". At the same time, it is possible that he wanted to test Stalin; just

how eager would the chef of the peppery dishes be to take advantage of this opportunity? In those days, Lenin thought not only of death but of the fate of the Party. Lenin's revolutionary nerve was undoubtedly the last of his nerves to surrender to death . . .'

Trotsky then turns to Stalin's vengeful nature, and to the Moscow trials, the last of which was staged in March, 1938.

'A special place in the prisoner's dock was occupied by Henry Yagoda', Trotsky writes, 'who had worked in the Cheka and the OGPU for sixteen years, at first as an assistant chief, later, as the head, and all the time in close contact with the General Secretary, as his most trusted aid in the fight against the Opposition. The system of confessions to crimes that had never been committed is Yagoda's handiwork, if not his brainchild. In 1933, Stalin rewarded Yagoda with the Order of Lenin, in 1935, elevated him to the rank of General Commissar of State Defense, that is, Marshal of the Political Police, only two days after the talented Tukhachevsky was elevated to the rank of Marshal of the Red Army . . . The old revolutionaries must have exchanged looks of indignation! Even in the submissive Politburo an attempt was made to oppose this. But some secret bound Stalin to Yagoda—apparently for ever. Yet the mysterious bond was mysteriously broken. During the great "purge" Stalin decided to liquidate at the same time his fellow-culprits who knew too much. In April, 1937, Yagoda was arrested. As always, Stalin thus achieved several supplementary advantages: for the promise of a pardon, Yagoda assumed at the trial personal guilt for crimes rumour had attributed to Stalin. Of course, the promise was not kept. Yagoda was executed, in order the better to prove Stalin's irreconcilability in matters of law and morals.

'But extremely illuminating circumstances were made public at that trial. According to the testimony of his secretary and confidant, Bulanov, Yagoda had a special poison chest, from

which, as the need arose, he would obtain special vials and entrust them to his agents with appropriate instructions. The Chief of the OGPU, a former pharmacist, displayed exceptional interest in poisons. He had at his disposal several toxicologists for whom he organized a special laboratory, providing it with means without stint and without control. It is, of course, out of the question that Yagoda might have established such an enterprise for his own personal needs. In this case, as in others, he was discharging his official functions. As a poisoner, he was merely *instrumentum regni*, even as old Locusta at Nero's court—with this difference, that he had far outstripped his ignorant predecessor in matters of technique!

'In the 1938 Moscow trial, Yagoda's secretary, Bulanov, testified: "To put it plainly, he—Yagoda—decided to assassinate Yezhov. I know from what Yagoda told me in the summer of 1936 that he instructed other persons, not implicated in the present trial, to have poison laid in the apartment in which Yezhov lived. How, when, by what means and under what circumstances this was done he did not tell me, and I do not know. But that it was done, I am certain, because I know that with Yagoda word and deed very rarely diverge.

"When he was removed from his post of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs (Yezhov took over his job. Yezhov, in turn, was later destroyed by Stalin. Beria took his place) he directly set about laying poison in the office and in those rooms which adjoined the office in the building of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs which Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov was to occupy. He instructed me personally to prepare the poison, namely to take mercury and to dissolve it in acid. I know nothing of chemistry or medicine, and perhaps I am mixing up terms, but I recall that he cautioned me against sulphuric acid, against burns, odour and more of that kind. This was on September 28th, 1936. I carried out these instructions, and Yagoda made the solution. The spraying of the

office, carpets and curtains was done by Savolainen in the presence of Yagoda and myself. This was September 29th. Yagoda told me that this spraying must be done five, six or seven times, which was done. Two or three times I prepared large flasks of this solution and gave them to Savolainen. He did the spraying with a spray. I recall that it was a large metallic cylinder with a large bulb. I knew this spray; it was kept in Yagoda's dressing room. It was a foreign-made spray. The second and third spraying were done by Savolainen in my presence, the others in my absence. He told me about everything, and reported to Yagoda.

"I must add that on September 28th, when this conversation took place, Yagoda took two ampoules from a small cupboard where he kept a lot of various things, particularly phials, and gave them to me. Judging by their external appearance, they were not of Russian manufacture. He said that these were poisons which should be sprayed simultaneously with the mercury solution. What it was, what it was called, I do not know. I gave it to Savolainen, who sprayed it together with the mercury solution".

Vyshinsky: "Tell us, please, was Yagoda interested in poisons generally?"

Bulanov: "Exceptionally. He acquired this interest in approximately 1934. I repeat, Citizen Procurator, that I can judge of this not only from conversations, but also from actions which I knew. I knew, for example, that he formed a very close acquaintanceship with a number of chemists, and gave direct instructions to build, or rather to arrange, a chemical laboratory . . . I know that he employed a number of people on this work. The setting up of this laboratory was an actual fact. I know this because he ordered me personally to find proper premises and to hand them over to definite persons. This I did. I found the premises and handed them over. It is true that I was never there myself, but I heard from these people

everything was done for the setting up of this laboratory. Yagoda warned me that this was a matter so important that the people mentioned must be allowed unlimited funds and that no accounts were to be demanded . . .”

‘At Yagoda’s side in the prisoners’ dock sat four Kremlin physicians, charged with the murder of Maxim Gorky and of two Soviet cabinet ministers. “I confess that . . . I prescribed medicines unsuited to the given illness . . .” “I was responsible for the untimely death of Maxim Gorky and Kuibyshev . . .”

‘During the days of the trial, the basic background of which consisted of falsehood, the accusations, like the confessions of poisoning the aged ailing writer, seemed fantasmagoric to me. Subsequent information and a more attentive analysis of the circumstances forced me to alter that judgement. Not everything in the trials was a lie. There were the poisoned and the poisoners. Not all the poisoners were sitting in the prisoners’ dock. The principal poisoner was conducting the trial by telephone.

‘Gorky was neither a conspirator nor a politician. He was a soft-hearted old man, a defender of the injured, a sentimental protester. Such had been his role during the early days of the October Revolution. During the first and second five-year plan famine, discontent and repressions reached the utmost limit. In that atmosphere Gorky constituted a serious menace. He corresponded with European writers, he was visited by foreigners, the injured complained to him, he moulded public opinion. But, most important, it would have been impossible for him to acquiesce in the extermination, then being prepared, of the Old Bolsheviks, whom he had known intimately for many years. Gorky’s public protest against the frame-ups would have immediately broken the hypnotic spell of Stalin’s justice before the eyes of the whole world.

‘In no way was it possible to make him keep still. To arrest

him, to exile him, not to say to shoot him, was even less possible. The thought of hastening the liquidation of the sick Gorky through Yagoda without "bloodshed" must have seemed to the boss of the Kremlin as the only way out under the circumstances. Stalin's mind is so constituted that such decisions occur to him with the impact of reflexes. Having accepted the assignment, Yagoda turned to his "own" physicians. He did not risk anything. Refusal, according to Dr. Levin's own words, "would spell ruin for me and my family".

'But why did not the authoritative and respected Kremlin physicians complain to members of the Government, whom they knew as well as their own patients? On Dr. Levin's list of patients alone were twenty-four high-ranking officials, including members of the Politburo and of the Council of People's Commissars. The answer is, that Dr. Levin like everyone else in and around the Kremlin, knew perfectly well whose agent Yagoda was. Dr. Levin submitted to Yagoda because he was powerless to oppose Stalin . . .

'As for Gorky's discontent, his efforts to go abroad, Stalin's refusal to grant him a foreign passport—that was common knowledge in Moscow and was discussed in whispers. Suspicion that Stalin had somewhat aided the destructive forces of nature sprang up directly after the great writer's death. A concomitant task of Yagoda's trial was to clear Stalin of that suspicion. Hence, the repeated declarations by Yagoda, the physicians, and the other accused, that Gorky was "a close friend of Stalin's", "a trusted person, a "Stalinist", fully approved of the "Leader's policy", spoke "with exceptional enthusiasm" of Stalin's role. If only half of this were true, Yagoda would not have taken it upon himself to kill Gorky, and still less would he have dared to entrust such a plot to a Kremlin physician, who could have destroyed him by simply telephoning to Stalin . . .

'Here is a single "detail" taken from a single trial. There

were many trials and no end of "details". All of them bear Stalin's imprint. The work was basically his. Pacing up and down his office, he painstakingly considers sundry schemes wherewith he might reduce anyone who displeases him to the utmost degree of humiliation, to lying denunciations of his dearest intimates, to the most horrible betrayal of his own self. For him who fights back, in spite of everything, there is always a little vial. It is only Yagoda who has disappeared; his poison chest remains . . .

Returning to Lenin's last days, Trotsky writes: 'I imagine the course of affairs somewhat like this. Lenin asked for poison at the end of February, 1923. At the beginning of March he was again paralyzed. The medical prognosis at the time was extremely unfavourable. Feeling more sure of himself, Stalin began to act as if Lenin were already dead. But the sick man fooled him. His powerful organism, supported by his inflexible will, reasserted itself. Towards winter, Lenin began to improve slowly, to move around more freely, listened to reading, and read himself; his faculty of speech began to come back to him. The findings of the physicians became increasingly more hopeful. Lenin's recovery could not, of course, have prevented the supercedure of the Revolution by the bureaucratic reaction. Krupskaya had sound reasons for observing in 1926, "if Volodya were alive, he would now be in prison".'

'For Stalin himself it was not a question of the general course of development, but rather of his own fate; either he could manage at once, this very day, to become boss of the political machine and hence of the Party and the country, or he would be relegated to a third-rate role for the rest of his life. Stalin was after power, all of it, come what may. He already had a firm grip of it. His goal was near, but the danger emanating from Lenin was even nearer. At this time Stalin must have made up his mind that it was imperative to act without delay. Everywhere he had accomplices whose fate was

completely bound to him. At his side was the pharmacist, Yagoda. Whether Stalin sent the poison to Lenin with the hint that the physicians left no hope for his recovery or whether he resorted to more direct methods I do not know. But I am firmly convinced that Stalin could not have waited passively when his fate hung by a thread and the decision depended on a small—very small—motion of his hand . . .

‘Sometime after the middle of January, 1924, I left for Sukhum, in the Caucasus, to try to get rid of a dogged, mysterious infection, the nature of which still remains a mystery to my physicians. The news of Lenin’s death reached me en route. The coded telegram about Lenin’s death found my wife and me at the railway station in Tiflis. I immediately sent a coded note by the direct wire to the Kremlin; “I deem it necessary to return to Moscow at once. When is the funeral?” The reply came from Moscow in about an hour: “The funeral will take place on Saturday. You will not be able to return on time, you must proceed to Sukhum at once. Stalin”. I did not feel that I should request postponement of the funeral for my sake alone. Only in Sukhum, lying under blankets on the verandah of a sanatorium, did I learn that the funeral had been changed to Sunday. The circumstances connected with the previous setting and ultimate changing of the date of the funeral are so involved that they cannot be clarified in a few lines. Stalin manoeuvred, deceiving not only me but, so it appears, also his allies of the triumvirate (Zinoviev and Kamenev). In distinction to Zinoviev, who approached every question from the standpoint of its immediate effectiveness as agitation, Stalin was guided in his risky manoeuvres by more tangible considerations. He might have feared that I would connect Lenin’s death with last year’s conversation about poison, and demand of the doctors whether poisoning was involved, and ask for a special autopsy. It was, therefore, safer in all respects to keep me away until the body had been

embalmed, the viscera cremated and a post mortem examination inspired by such suspicions no longer feasible.

'When I asked the physicians in Moscow about the immediate cause of Lenin's death, which they had not expected, they were at a loss to account for it. I did not bother Krupskaya, who had written me a warm letter to Sukhum, with questions on that theme. I did not renew personal relations with Zinoviev and Kamenev until two years later, after they had broken with Stalin. They were obviously anxious to avoid all discussion concerning the circumstances of Lenin's death, answering in monosyllables and avoiding my eyes. Did they know anything or were they merely suspicious? Anyway, they had been so closely involved with Stalin during the preceding three years that they could not help being apprehensive lest the shadow of suspicion should fall on them as well . . .'

Stalin, one summer's night in 1923, opened his heart to Dzerzhinsky, the then head of the Cheka GPU, and Kamenev. 'To choose the victim', he told them, 'prepare the blow down to the minutest detail, satisfy an implacable vengeance, and then to go to sleep . . . there is nothing in the world sweeter'.

Chapter VI

A NEW TERROR

THERE WERE THOSE WHO READ the doctors' 'confessions' in 1953 and remembered the 'confessions' which Yagoda had extracted from those other doctors nearly twenty years before.

Now, as then, the doctors' proposed victims were persons in high places; Generals, Admirals and Party members. The assassins admitted having murdered Shcherbakov and Zhdanov. Was it mere coincidence that the latter, like Menzhinsky, was a sufferer from angina pectoris and cardiac asthma? Was there something in the air of Soviet Russia that caused such illnesses?

There were, too, those who read the list of distinguished men whom the doctors' plotted to 'disable', and remarked upon those whose names were absent from the list; amongst them Marshals Voroshilov and Bulganin. For to be a victim, or a prospective victim, of such plots was often an indication of good standing with the Leader. Conversely, the absence from the list was sometimes a reflection upon one's importance or even a pointer to the fact that one was under suspicion and, perhaps, implicated in the plot in some way.

Since this 'Doctors' Plot' was so obviously the beginning of a projected purge among the Party hierarchy, by analogy with the Moscow trials, its scope would widen with every fresh set of arrests and with each new trial.

It must be remembered that the Moscow trials were the direct result of the assassination of one man: Sergi Mironovich Kirov, in December, 1934. Kirov, who had joined the Bolsheviks in 1904, replaced Zinoviev as secretary of the Leningrad Communist Party organization in 1926. In the

following year, when the Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition was defeated at the 15th Party Congress, he became a strong supporter of Stalin, and in 1930 was elected a member of the Politburo. He played an active role in the carrying through of the first Five-Year Plan, and was in charge of the building of the Baltic-White Sea Canal, and controlled the concentration camps on the Kem and Murmansk coast. But when the first Five-Year Plan was completed, he was amongst those Party members who favoured a relaxation of the terror and the semi-military operations against the peasantry. Although still a staunch supporter of the 'Stalin line', Kirov became known in the Party for his 'liberal' tendencies.

In February, 1934, when he was elected a secretary of the Central Committee at the 17th Party Congress, he said in a speech: 'Our successes are truly enormous. The devil knows—to speak simply as a human being, one wants just to live on and on. Look! Look around at what is being accomplished!'

Ten months later, Kirov, whose popularity in the Party almost rivalled Stalin's, was shot through the head in his office in the Smolny Institute by a member of the Communist Party named Leonid Nikolayev.

As the immediate result of Kirov's murder, 104 White Guardists, who were in prison at the time for illegally entering Russia, were shot; Medved, the chief of the Leningrad GPU, and eleven of his staff, were arrested, tried in secret, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Zinoviev, Kamenov and other old members of the Party were also sent to prison for their 'moral responsibility' for Kirov's murder. And altogether nearly 200,000 inhabitants of Leningrad alone were deported to concentration camps 'under suspicion'.

There followed the eight Moscow trials at each of which, as Trotsky pointed out, 'different persons organized the assassination of Kirov by different means and for different political objectives'.

No one really knows how many died or disappeared without trace as the result of the Moscow trials. But by July 30th, 1938, it was estimated that some seven million prisoners were held in the concentration camps alone. Many more were exiled and sentenced to life imprisonment. Such figures would appear incredible until one recalls the mass deportations from Leningrad, Georgia and the Ukraine where, first Yezhov, and later, Beria 'mowed in large armfuls of political prisoners' under Stalin's orders.

In the last year of the trials, 1938, there died or disappeared almost all the eighty members of the Council of War constituted four years before to assist the Commissar of Defence. Marshals and Generals, Admirals and Vice-Admirals were sentenced to death, as were thousands of other officers of all ranks. In that single year, there were more than 30,000 victims of the purge in the 'Red' Army and Navy. In his 'Secret' speech Krushchev stated that '5,000 of Russia's best officers were murdered during the blood-baths that followed the secret trial for treason of Marshal Tukhachevsky.' There perished, too, Assistant Commissars of Foreign Affairs, as well as ambassadors, plenipotentiaries, and consul-generals. Almost the entire staffs of *Pravda* and *Izvestia* disappeared, together with hundreds of authors, critics, directors of theatres and actors and actresses, as step by step Stalin methodically passed from the Party to the Armed Forces, from the diplomatic corps to the secret police, from industry to agriculture and commerce, and from commerce to the arts.

Now, in 1953, history repeated itself. Every day the newspapers throughout the country announced new arrests, fresh exposures of groups of diversionists, saboteurs and capitalist spies. In January, most of the victims were Jews, businessmen, writers, lawyers and doctors. Once again, the Ukraine, Krushchev's country, was the centre of an outbreak of anti-Semitism. Then, the Ukrainian Party organization was

attacked for 'corruption and subversion'. Other provincial Party organizations were brought into disrepute, and in every case their leaders came under suspicion.

Pogrom is a Russian word meaning the organized massacre of a body or class of people. With the arrest of the doctors—six of whom were Jewish—the dismissals, sudden deaths by heart failure, suicides, and disappearances of Jews all over Russia, it was easy to see which way the seering wind of this new pogrom was sweeping. Three years later, shortly after he had made his 'secret' speech, Krushchev told a smaller Party meeting how after the 'Doctors' Plot', Stalin became inflamed with hatred against the Jews. His rage grew until, shortly before his stroke in March, 'he told a meeting of Soviet leaders that he had decided to gather all the community together and transport them to a northern region within a new pale'. Krushchev told his audience that when Mikoyan and Voroshilov protested and said that such conduct was worthy of Hitler, Stalin worked himself into a fury.

By February, it was Moscow's turn again to be gripped by the new 'terror'. Palgunov, the head of the Tass News Agency, vanished without trace. There were arrests in Molotov's Foreign Office, members of which 'confessed' to having connections with the bourgeois-imperialists. Even Madame Molotov was arrested for no other reason than that she was a Jewess. Professors disappeared from the Moscow University and the Academy of Science. Doctor Frumkin, famous for his regenerative grafting of male sex organs, suffered a severe heart attack, and there were fresh rumours that a number of other physicians had been arrested in connection with the 'Doctors' Plot'.

In that same month, Doctor Saifrudin Kitchlu, the Stalin Peace Prize winner, visited the Kremlin and reported Stalin to be in vigorous health and carrying his seventy-three years lightly. Señor Bravo, the Argentinian Ambassador, and other

diplomats presenting their credentials, also remarked that Stalin looked fit and well. Mr. K. P. S. Menon, the Indian Ambassador, who went to the Kremlin on February 17th, reported finding Stalin in the best of health. But throughout his interview, he remarked that Stalin kept doodling on a pad of paper, as was his habit. Mr. Menon noticed that he was drawing wolves one after another. And after a while, Stalin spoke about wolves. He said that the Russian peasant knew how to deal with these beasts by exterminating them. Wolves, Stalin said, realised this and behaved accordingly. The Ambassador stated that he thought perhaps Stalin was referring to American capitalist 'wolves'. There were those who, when they heard this story, interpreted it differently.

The trouble was that during those first months of 1953, nobody knew who were the 'wolves' destined to be exterminated. The Jews, of course. But who else? The members of the disbanded Politburo? The Marshals named as the prospective victims of the doctor-assassins? The men in the Kremlin? Men like Kaganovich who was a Jew, and even Beria, whose mother was said to have been Jewish?

On March 5th, when the first bulletin of Stalin's illness was published, the new 'terror' was momentarily forgotten. On that day, Alexis, Patriarch of All Russia, Solomon Schiffer, the Chief Rabbi, and the clergy of all denominations bade the people pray for Stalin's recovery. And during those anxious hours the churches were crowded with the faithful. One wonders whether all their prayers were offered up with the same intention?

Chapter VII

THE MEDICAL EVIDENCE

THE SOVIET NEWSPAPERS, possibly to please Stalin, to whom the idea of death was said to be anathema, frequently published articles concerning the longevity of Georgians, many of whom were reported as living to a hundred and twenty and more years of age. Scientists and doctors of medicine—men like Dr. Frumkin mentioned in the preceding chapter—devoted much time and energy towards the prolongation of human life. And in the past twenty-five years the Soviets claimed to have made great strides with their experiments in this direction.

At seventy-three, Stalin was not old. Older than Lenin when he had suffered a stroke, but still not old, certainly by Georgian standards. If Lenin had recovered, then why should not Stalin, particularly as medicine had progressed so much since Lenin's day? If there was any truth in the rumour that Stalin had survived a stroke in 1947, there was no reason why he should not recover from this latest attack. Such were the immediate reactions of many to the first news of Stalin's illness.

Even western medical specialists, while agreeing that his condition as described in that bulletin was serious, commented that his excellent physical condition, rugged constitution, and his great will to live, would help his doctors. And the fact that he had survived the initial attack, greatly impressed western experts. However, some of them expressed surprise that not one of the nine doctors mentioned as attending Stalin appeared to be Jewish, although the Russian medical journals frequently gave the names of Jewish doctors as the recognized brain specialists in the Soviet Union.

Before writing this book, the author submitted all the bulletins issued during Stalin's illness to a distinguished English doctor for comment. The latter reported as follows:—

'I have studied the bulletins. My opinion is that these are perfectly consistent with the view that Stalin died primarily of the results of a cerebral haemorrhage complicated by the effects of coronary disease (the coronary arteries are those which supply the heart itself with blood). The irregularity of his pulse may have suggested that an electro-cardiogram be done (this test was apparently performed at 11 a.m. on March 5th). The unfavourable results were apparently broadcast at 8 p.m. on that day.

'Earlier (apparently at 2 a.m. on March 5th) it had been reported that the cerebral haemorrhage had not been arrested; in addition to lesions in the cortex (affecting speech and the right side of his body) new signs were appearing which suggested that the medulla was being affected (what they call the *truncus cerebri*). Here are located what are termed vital centres regulating respiration and circulation. The disturbances of circulation may have suggested the desirability of doing an electro-cardiogram.

'The treatment reported as having been carried out seems to me logical and appropriate. They gave him oxygen (to aid respiration), camphor, strophanthin and caffeine (to aid and strengthen the heart) and penicillin because he had a raised temperature and an excess of leucocytes (white corpuscles) in his blood. (There is always a risk of a blood clot in the brain or anywhere else becoming infected).

'The use of leeches strikes us as archaic, but is remarkable till how late these were kept in stock in London hospitals. Their intended effect is to reduce congestion and in the past they were used in congested heart failure. They could not possibly have done him any harm, and the doctors may have decided to use leeches (or announce that these had been used)

because this form of treatment may still be regarded in the USSR (especially amongst the rural populations) as a time-honoured remedy, the omission of which might conceivably have provoked adverse comment among the people to whom the description of modern treatments would be meaningless. It may well be that leeches were thought to wield some magical effect such as sucking the poison out of one's system.'

It is inconceivable that this doctor, or any other, for that matter, would be able to fault the medical bulletins. For even if, as some suspect, these bulletins were without foundation because Stalin did not die of a cerebral haemorrhage, they would still have been irrefutable. The Russians, who as liars are without peer, would never have been so clumsy as to issue any 'facts' about Stalin's fatal illness that could be suspect.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note one similarity between the treatment given to Stalin, and that administered to Menzhinsky by Dr. Levin and Dr. Kazakov, as described by the former at his trial for murder.* This similarity is the use of the drug strophanthus or strophanthin. This drug, which is derived from the *Nombe* plant of Central Africa, and, incidentally, used by the natives for arrow poison, acts as a cardiac tonic and a diuretic (an agent which increases the flow of urine). It is one of the most highly poisonous drugs known to the medical profession, and, consequently, can only be injected in the minutest quantities. An overdose, however small, would prove lethal.

Stalin's body, like that of Lenin, was embalmed and the viscera cremated. But unlike Lenin's, his remains were the subject of a post mortem. On March 7th, Moscow radio announced that 'the examination established a large centre of haemorrhage in the left hemisphere of the brain, and this haemorrhage had destroyed vital parts of the brain and

* See Chapter III.

affected breathing and blood circulation. The examination confirmed that the doctors' diagnosis was correct and all the measures taken could not have prevented the fatal outcome of Marshal Stalin's illness.'

This announcement, like the bulletins that had gone before it, was without precedent, as also was the carrying out of the post mortem.

In order to make such an autopsy, the pathologists would have had to remove the top of the skull so that the brain could be extracted and dissected. Such, however, must have been the skill of the embalmers that no traces of this major surgical operation were visible to those viewing Stalin's body as it lay in state in the Hall of Columns forty-eight hours later.

Mr. Harrison Salisbury, the Moscow correspondent to the *New York Times*, in his book, *Stalin's Russia and After*, described his visit to the Hall of Columns on March 7th, as follows: '... together with the Diplomatic Corps, I joined the fantastic procession that was hurried and jostled, sixteen abreast, past the open coffin where Stalin lay, his face as waxen as a calla lily. I stumbled in the blinding glare of the klieg lights as I was forced at a half-trot past the bier, and, now, when I try to bring back the picture in my mind I see only the masses of flowers, the guard of honour half-hidden by the greenery, and the face of Stalin, blanched as an almond, and his old hands which seemed still clutching, in pain or terror, at the edge of his coverlet.'

Chapter VIII

THE NEW ORDER

IF THIS INVESTIGATION was concerned with the political trend in Russia after March 5th, 1953, our task would have been easy, for in a matter of weeks, if not days, after Stalin's death, the clues were thick upon the ground. At the same time, too, it would have been almost as simple to have gathered enough circumstantial evidence—in Soviet Russia there is seldom any other kind—to prove which side would eventually win the battle for power being waged in the Kremlin.

With almost indecent haste Stalin's name disappeared from the newspapers. It was replaced, not by the name of any one man, but by those of Malenkov, Molotov, Krushchev and Bulganin. Curiously—or so it seemed at the time—Beria's name was not so prominent as the others, although he was again back as head of State Security and Internal Affairs, merged together once more.

If one member of the Party appeared slightly more in the foreground than any other, it was Malenkov, with the result that the western world talked of 'the new Malenkov Government.' But that, of course, was a misnomer, for from its very outset the opposition to Malenkov was as strong as it was sure of its success.

On March 14th, after holding office for less than ten days, Malenkov, whom Beria in his funeral oration had called 'the talented pupil of Lenin and loyal colleague of Stalin', resigned his post as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR.

On March 20th, the following communiqué confirming this was issued:—

At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held on March 14th, 1953, the following decisions were adopted:

1. To accede to the request made by Comrade G. M. Malenkov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, that he be released from his duties as Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU.
2. To elect as the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Comrades N. S. Krushchev, M. A. Suslov, P. N. Pospelov, N. N. Shatalin, S. D. Ignatyev.
3. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to transfer Comrade N. N. Shatalin from the status of an alternative member to that of a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

So, on March 14th, Krushchev became First Secretary of the Party, although he was not referred to yet as Secretary General or General Secretary, since that had been Stalin's title. But that, in fact, is what he became when he took over the key position by means of which Stalin had consolidated his power after Lenin's death.

On March 15th, the IVth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was held in the Great Kremlin Palace in Moscow. It was opened by Deputy M. A. Yasnov, Chairman of the Soviet Union. He proposed that the deputies rise in tribute to the 'bright memory of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin'. In sorrowful silence, in tribute to the great Stalin, the deputies and guests rose in their places.

A little later in the session, Comrade Krushchev moved that Comrade Voroshilov be elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Comrade Krushchev's motion was unanimously adopted.

Then, Beria submitted the proposal that Comrade Malenkov be appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the

USSR, and requested Malenkov to submit to the Supreme Soviet his proposal for the composition of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

In his speech Beria repeated almost word for word what he had said about Malenkov at Stalin's funeral, and again referred to his candidate as 'the talented pupil of Lenin and loyal colleague of Stalin.'

The session unanimously resolved to appoint Comrade Malenkov Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, amidst tumultuous applause.

The new Chairman then submitted the names of the Council of Ministers to the assembly as follows: First Vice-Chairman and Minister of Internal Affairs—Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria; Minister of Foreign Affairs—Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov; Minister of Defence—Marshal of the Soviet Union Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin; President and Chairman of the Supreme Council Presidium—Marshal Voroshilov; Minister of Home and Foreign Trade—Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan.

There then followed a list of the remaining ministers appointed, including the Minister of State Control, Vsevolod Merkulov.

The newly elected Presidium lost no time in declaring its policy of leniency towards many of those who had been harshly punished by the former régime. On March 27th, a Decree of Amnesty was adopted which stated: 'As a result of the consolidation of the Soviet social and State system, the rise in the material and cultural standards of the population, the growth of consciousness of the citizens, and their honesty in carrying out their civic duty, law and order have been strengthened and crime has considerably declined in the country.'

These flattering remarks were an overture to a decision to release 'from places of detention persons who have committed crimes which do not represent a great danger to the State'.

A week later, there occurred an event of the greatest possible

significance to our investigation. On April 3rd, the Soviet Press published a communiqué issued by Lavrenti Beria's Ministry of Internal Affairs, which read:

'The Ministry has made a thorough investigation of all the materials of the preliminary investigation and other data in the case of a group of physicians accused of wrecking, espionage and terrorist activities against leaders of the Soviet State.

'As a result of verification it has been established that Professors M. S. Vovsi, V. N. Vinogradov, M. B. Kogan, B. B. Kogan, P. I. Egorov, A. I. Feldman, Y. G. Etinger, V. H. Vasilenko, A. M. Grinstein, V. F. Zelenin, B. S. Preobrazhensky, N. A. Popova, V. V. Zakusov, N. A. Shereshevsky and Doctor G. I. Mayorov implicated in this case were wrongly arrested by the former Ministry of State Security of the USSR through the use of methods of investigation which are inadmissible and most strictly forbidden by Soviet law.

'On the basis of the finding of the investigation commission specially set up by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR to verify the case, the above-mentioned and others implicated in this case have been fully cleared of the charges preferred against them and, in conformity with Article 4, Point 5 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the RSFSR, have been released from custody.

'The persons guilty of the improper conduct of the investigation have been arrested and are criminally held responsible.'

The communiqué also stated that the award of the Order of Lenin to Doctor Lidya Timashuk, the woman doctor who had accused the physicians, had been annulled.

It should be noted that the fact that the communiqué gave the name of fifteen professors and doctors and referred to 'others implicated in this case' confirmed the rumours that other doctors had been arrested in connection with the 'plot'.

The release of the doctors and the official pronouncement

that they had been wrongfully arrested, inspired *Pravda* to publish a leader headed 'Soviet Socialist Law Is Inviolable'. In this the onus of the scandal was laid on 'the former leaders of the Ministry of State Security', amongst them Ignatyev and Ryumin. The former was dismissed from the Secretariat of the Central Committee, while the latter, who had been Deputy Minister and Chief of the Investigation Section of the Ministry, was arrested.

Pravda denounced Ryumin as 'a contemptible adventurer' who had framed the Kremlin physicians, and then went on to declare that the new régime's courage in unmasking such villains was proof of its internal unity and strength.

From having been "hired assassins of JOINT, 'spies', and 'saboteurs', the released doctors were once more 'honest Soviet citizens' and 'eminent scientists', the 'victims of criminals who dared to ride rough-shod over the inalienable rights of Soviet citizens inscribed in our Constitution'.

Thus, the doctors were set free and exonerated from their alleged crimes. Yet, the 'Doctors' Plot' which was the spark that set alight the new purge that threatened the lives of countless numbers of Russians, is a mystery and is likely to remain such for generations.

Who was its instigator? Who conceived this tortuous intrigue that incited Stalin's rage to the pitch when he vowed to exterminate the entire Jewish community in Russia?

When Krushchev referred to the plot in his 'secret' speech, he threw his huge audience into a state of consternation.

'Let us recall the "*Affair of the Doctor-Plotters*",'* he said. 'Actually, there was no "affair" outside the declaration of the woman doctor, Timashuk, who was probably influenced or ordered by someone to write Stalin a letter in which she declared that the doctors were applying supposedly improper methods of medical treatment.'

* Author's italics.

It is incredible that those ambiguous words were used by the best-informed man in Russia to explain away a scandal that had shaken the Soviet Party and the USSR to its foundations.

Again, it may be asked: 'Who was that someone to whom the First Secretary referred in such vague or evasive terms?'

Someone, it is logical to assume, of importance in the Party and close to Stalin, since Krushchev admitted: 'Such a letter was *sufficient** for Stalin to *reach an immediate conclusion** that there were doctor-plotters in the Soviet Union. He issued orders *at once* to arrest a group of eminent Soviet medical specialists. He personally gave advice on the conduct of the investigation and the method of interrogation of the arrested persons. He said that Academician Vinogradov should be put in chains; another beaten. Present at this Congress as a delegate is the former Minister of State Security, Comrade Ignatiev. Stalin told him: 'If you do not obtain confessions from the doctors we will shorten you by a head!'

So Stalin was sufficiently convinced by the letter of the woman doctor 'who was probably influenced or ordered by someone' to reach the immediate conclusion that these distinguished physicians, who were personally known to him since they attended upon the Kremlin, were a gang of murderers. It does not make sense.

And what of Comrade Ignatiev, the man whom *Pravda* had accused of riding rough-shod over the inalienable rights of Soviet citizens? Surely he could have thrown some light on the mystery or even identified the nebulous someone who appeared to have been responsible for the affair that never existed outside the declaration of Lidya Timashuk? But, perhaps, once again he had saved his head from being shortened by obeying the orders of the First Secretary? Was silence the price he had paid for his reinstatement to the membership of the Party?

Krushchev's explanation of the 'Doctors' Plot' was no ex-

* Author's italics.

planation at all. He merely blamed Stalin for everything.

'Stalin,' he said, 'personally sent for the investigation Judge, gave him instructions and advised him as to the methods he should use. These methods were simple—beat, beat, and, once again, beat!'

'This ignominious case was set by Stalin,' Krushchev told his hushed audience. 'But,' he added, 'he did not have time to bring it to an end—as he conceived that end—and for that reason the doctors are still alive.'

It may well be asked: 'And how many others?'

Chapter IX

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

IT IS TRUE TO SAY that from April 3rd, after the release of the Kremlin doctors, the purge begun during the last days of Stalin's life went into reverse. From that date it was the persecutors who became the persecuted. But at the time the machinations of this new purge were bewildering in their complexity. One thing only was apparent; that it was the sensational *dénouement* of the 'Doctors' Plot' that had caused this new wave of arrests and dismissals.

However, in the light of what happened afterwards, it is clear that it was the Party members who had been deeply implicated in that plot who were responsible for the purge. It started in Georgia in April, in Beria's territory, where Mgeladze, the local first secretary, was arrested for having 'fabricated an entirely false and provocative case' against certain ministers and other loyal officials.

Two months later, on June 6th, General Chuikov was relieved of his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in East Germany. He was replaced by General Grechko, who had been a member of the Ukrainian Communist Party under Krushchev. On June 12th, Moscow radio announced that Melnikov, whom Krushchev had appointed First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, had been dismissed and replaced by Kirichenko, one of Beria's henchmen.

Less than a fortnight after General Chuikov had been replaced, the anti-Communist riots broke out in East Germany. There are those who believe that Lavrenti Beria was the instigator of this uprising. But such accusations cannot be proved. Nevertheless, it is significant that ten days after the rioting

began, on June 26th, Beria was arrested, charged with, amongst other crimes, 'attempting to liquidate the Soviet system'.

It was not until July 10th, when once again the morning papers were late in appearing in the kiosks, that the news of Beria's downfall was made public. Then, at the same time, TASS News Agency stated that General Kruglov, who had been head of the MVD when the doctors were arrested, had been appointed Minister of Internal Affairs in Beria's stead.

A communiqué issued by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party stated that on the basis of a report *made by Comrade Malenkov** Beria had been accused of 'criminal anti-Party and anti-State actions in a bid to subvert the Soviet State in the interests of foreign capital, and of *perfidious attempts to place the Ministry of Internal Affairs above the Government and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*'.*

Later that day, Moscow radio reported that meetings had been held in Kiev and other cities at which decisions were taken to 'strengthen the Party and fight against traitors of the Beria type'.

Pravda in an editorial wrote: 'Beria, the people's enemy who has been unmasked, by various careerist machinations wormed himself into their confidence and threaded his way to leadership. First, his criminal, anti-Party and anti-State activities were deeply concealed and masked, but, lately, having become impudent and letting himself go, Beria started to disclose his true character and face; the face of a criminal enemy of the Party and the Soviet people. *His ignominious machinations aimed at seizing power.** He had been putting persons loyal to him into the Ministry, which he attempted to put before the Government. International imperialism is becoming more active, and so are its agents . . .

'Irrefutable facts prove that Beria lost the face of a Communist and changed into a bourgeois renegade and became an

* Author's italics.

agent of international imperialism. He hatched plans to grab the leadership of the Party and the country with the aim of destroying the Communist Party by a capitulatory policy which would have ultimately brought about the restoration of capitalism . . .

'The liquidation of Beria's venture shows that any anti-Soviet plans of foreign imperialism have been shattered, and will be shattered, against the indestructible might of the great unity of Party, Government and the Soviet People. The strength of our leadership lies in its collectivity, solidarity and monolithicity . . .'

Thus Beria stood accused of those very evils against which he had warned all those who had attended the 19th Congress. Now he himself was numbered among 'the agents of the imperialist warmongers, who no matter how many are sent amongst us, and no matter how they are disguised', were rendered ineffective by the Soviet people who had followed his advice by 'enhancing and sharpening their vigilance'.

Five months elapsed before Beria was brought to trial during which time his criminal activities were the subject of a special investigation. In the interim, his supporters all over the country, particularly in Georgia, were either dismissed or arrested, and in every case replaced by Krushchev's nominees.

Moscow radio announced that 'millions of Russians' throughout the Union had denounced Beria at specially convened meetings at which Party members had expressed their approval of the Government's action. Such meetings were attended by senior officers of the army who were unanimous in claiming Beria's downfall as a personal victory. In Moscow there was a particularly large gathering at which Marshal Bulganin was the chief speaker. With him on the platform were Marshals Vassilevsky, Zhukov, Gorovov and many other high-ranking officers.

The Army's delight at Beria's arrest was natural enough since he had placed his own private army—the MVD—above the

military. And the Marshals and Generals could neither forgive nor forget the former Minister's high-handed action in Moscow at the time of Stalin's death.

On August 10th, TASS announced that the Supreme Soviet had confirmed the decree removing Beria from public office, and that his case had been transferred to the Supreme Court.

About a month later, on September 12th, Nikita Krushchev was elected First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and also assumed the supreme control of the Ministeries of Agriculture and Food Production.

It was probably more than coincidence that shortly afterwards the purge in Georgia reached its climax with the dismissal of the Premier and the first secretary of the local Central Committee. Indeed, it was obvious that Krushchev was using his key position—just as Stalin had done—to assure himself friends and at the same time gradually weaken the power of his rivals.

Chapter X

THE TRIAL OF BERIA

LAVRENTI BERIA'S TRIAL opened on December 18th, 1953. The Special Session of the Supreme Court of the USSR was presided over by Marshal I. S. Konev, and was composed of the following members: N. M. Shvernik, Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions; E. L. Zeidin, first Deputy President of the Supreme Court; Army-General K. S. Moskalenko; N. A. Milhailov, Secretary of the Moscow Regional Committee of the CPSU; M. I. Kuchava, Chairman of the Council of Trade Unions of Georgia; L. A. Gromov, President of the Moscow City Court; K. L. Lunev, first Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

The case was heard *in camera*, in accordance with the Law of December 1st, 1934.

Those brought to trial in conformity with the indictment were: L. P. Beria, former Minister of the Interior; V. N. Merkulov, former Minister of State Security and subsequently Minister of State Control; V. G. Dekanozov, recently Minister of Internal Affairs in Georgia; B. Z. Kobulov, formerly deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Georgian Republic; S. A. Goglidze, former Commissar of Internal Affairs in Georgia; P. Y. Meshik, former Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs; L. E. Vlodzimirsky, ex-head of a special investigation branch of the Ministry of the Interior.

The official decision ran as follows:

'The court fully confirmed the materials of the preliminary investigation and the charges against the accused stated in the indictment.

'The court has established that, having betrayed his country

and acting in the interests of foreign capital, the accused Beria formed a traitorous group of conspirators hostile to the Soviet State, composed of the other accused linked with Beria by many years of joint criminal activities. The criminal aim of the accused was to utilize the organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs against the Communist Party and the Government of the USSR, to place the Ministry above the Party and the Government in order to seize power and to liquidate the Soviet system of workers and peasants, to restore capitalism and bring back the role of the bourgeoisie'.

It is interesting to compare the court's decision with the *Pravda* editorial quoted in the previous chapter. From this comparison it is apparent that there is no such indictable offence as contempt of court in the USSR.

After finding Beria guilty of criminal activities and establishing secret contacts with foreign intelligence services in Baku during the 'days of the Civil War, in 1919' and of 'clandestine connections with the Menshevik secret police, a branch of the British intelligence service, in Georgia, in 1920', the court passed judgment on his more recent activities.

'After the death of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, and banking on the general activation of reactionary imperialist forces against the Soviet State, L. P. Beria began to intensify his activities with the aim of carrying out his criminal anti-Soviet designs, and it was this that led in a brief space of time to the exposure of L. P. Beria and his accomplices, and to the cutting short of their criminal activities . . .'

Thus, on and on the indictment ran; a diatribe of obtuse and abusive accusations against the former Minister of Internal Affairs and his conspirators. 'Beria and his associates took reprisals against honest workers in the Ministry who refused to carry out their criminal directives . . . Beria and his conspirators chose slander, intrigue and all manner of provocations against honest workers of the Party and Soviet organizations who

stood in their way . . . Beria and his associates, taking advantage of their positions in the organs of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, committed a series of heinous crimes aimed at physically exterminating honest people loyal to the Cause of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union . . .'

Needless to say, all the accused 'confessed' to their crimes and pleaded guilty. For Beria's trial followed precisely the familiar pattern of all those other trials which had gone before; Zinoviev's, Kamenev's, Doctor Lavin's, Henry Yagoda's, and countless others. Trials at which the bourgeois-imperialists stood in the dock with the men who were their 'agents'. Trials which proved again and again that but for the devoted vigilance of the Party, the honest, loyal workers would have been physically exterminated by the capitalist monsters. Trials which, in fact, proved nothing; nothing except those points pre-determined by the men who had staged them.

Neither in the findings of the investigation committee nor in the indictment is there any reference to Beria having been connected either with the 'Doctors' Plot' or the MVD's activities at the time of Stalin's death. One wonders why?

According to the indictment, 'Having become Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR in March, 1953, and getting ready to seize power, L. P. Beria spared no efforts to place his fellow conspirators in key positions . . .' But that was *after* Stalin's death, when with the approval of Krushchev, Melnikov and the rest, Beria once again officially controlled the MGB and the MVD.

Let us now turn to Krushchev's 'secret' speech in which the First Secretary denounced Beria. 'In organizing various dirty and shameful cases, a very base role was played by that rabid enemy of our Party, an agent of a foreign intelligence service, Beria,' Krushchev said. Then he asked: 'The question arises why Beria, who had liquidated tens of thousands of Party and Soviet workers, was not unmasked during Stalin's lifetime? He

was not unmasked earlier because he had utilized very skilfully Stalin's weaknesses; feeding him with suspicions, he assisted Stalin in everything and acted with his support'.

Suspicious against whom? Perhaps, after all, Lavrenti Beria was that mysterious 'someone' who had influenced or ordered Lidya Timashuk to write Stalin that letter.

'Stalin', Krushchev said, 'was a very distrustful man—sickly suspicious. We knew this from our work with him. He would look at a man and ask: "Why are your eyes so shifty today? Why do you turn away and avoid looking me straight in the face?" This sickly suspicion caused him to distrust even eminent Party workers who he had known for years. Everywhere he saw enemies, two-facers and spies . . .'

And poisoners?

Yet, on Krushchev's own admission, Stalin trusted to the very end the man who had inherited the poison chest from Yagoda and Yezhov.

Chapter XI

THE DEATH OF A 'TRAITOR'

'THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE SUPREME COURT of the USSR find the accused, Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria guilty of high treason, of organizing an anti-Soviet group of conspirators in order to seize power and restore the rule of the bourgeoisie . . . and in subsequent years continuing to maintain and extend his criminal clandestine connections with foreign intelligence services up to the moment of his exposure and arrest . . .'

Fifteen years before, in 1938, Henry Yagoda had been found guilty of the same crimes. And like his predecessor, Beria might have answered his Judges: 'I am not jesting when I say that if I had been a spy, dozens of countries would have closed down their intelligence services!'^{*} But, unlike Yagoda, Beria probably realized that such a cynical protest from the dock would have been waste of breath, for he and his accomplices had 'pleaded guilty to a series of the most grave crimes against the State'.

On December 23rd, 1953, the Court sentenced Beria and his six confederates to the supreme penalty—'to be shot, with the confiscation of their personal property, and the deprivation of all military titles and decorations'.

This sentence was carried out immediately.

So ended Beria's life in the tradition of his predecessors in the secret police—Vyacheslav Menzhinsky, Henry Yagoda, and Nikolai Yezhov—at the hands of his enemies.

Why was he shot?

His trial, like the notorious Moscow trials which, later,

^{*}Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites": Moscow 1938, page 786.

Krushchev declared to be frame-ups, was a travesty of justice. Nevertheless, the verdict gave rise to a spate of rumours, one of the wildest being published in the American press to the effect that Beria had 'made an overture to the British' in 1953, after Stalin's death, and five years before had privately approached a 'high American official with a view to putting an end to the Soviet blockade of Berlin'.

If, in fact, Beria had been an enemy agent throughout the greater part of his career, it is incredible that his activities never aroused Stalin's suspicions, or that he should have survived the great purges in the thirties to become, as Trotsky called him, 'one of Stalin's most trusted lieutenants'.

Countless theories have been put forward as to why Beria was liquidated. It has even been said that he was a 'liberal', who after Stalin's death, advocated a foreign policy of appeasement in which he was supported by Malenkov. If this was so, why did Malenkov denounce him?

It is claimed, too, that Beria had not engineered the 'Doctors' Plot' since, as Minister of Internal Affairs, it was by his orders the doctors were released and MVD officials, like Ignatiev and Ryumin, dismissed and put to death. Yet he was found guilty of putting the interests of the MVD above the Party and the Government. Such theories do not bear scrutiny.

What of his 'plans to grab the leadership of the Party and the country?' Certainly, no man had a better opportunity to do so than Beria who commanded an army of five hundred thousand men, units of which had encircled Moscow and the Kremlin for seventy-six hours after Stalin's death. But why did he not do so?

Let us consider one more possible solution to the mystery that has surrounded Beria's end for so long.

Shortly before the death of Stalin and just prior to the 'Doctors' Plot', there were rumours that, contrary to what Krushchev stated later, Beria's star was in the descent. He was

not any longer officially head of either the MGB or the MVD. Together with Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, Krushchev, and a score of others, he had been elected a member of the Presidium. It will be remembered that this body had been formed at the 19th Congress to replace the Politburo. Formed, so many observers maintained, at Stalin's instigation to reduce still further the powers of his associates.

At that time, as we have seen, there had been talk of Stalin nominating his successor. Talk, too, about the Secretary General growing old. As if to give the lie to such gossip, Stalin dissolved the Politburo of twelve members, replacing it by the Presidium of twenty-five.

He meted out the same high-handed treatment to the Party Secretariat by increasing it to a total of ten with himself at its head. Could it have been that 'his general distrust even towards eminent Party workers' led him to believe the old adage that there was safety in numbers? Whatever his motive, the fact remains that after the 19th Congress Stalin had still further strengthened his position at the expense of the Party machine. Colossus had gained in stature by reducing the size of those around him.

It is argued that Beria, since he was a member of the Presidium, suffered equally with the others; with Malenkov, Molotov, Krushchev, and the rest. And when the new purge started with the arrest of the Kremlin physicians, Beria had just as much reason to feel afraid as anyone else. We have seen how that purge spread. First, to the Jewish community, then to Molotov's Foreign Office, the Universities, the Press. To the Ukraine into Krushchev's country, and to Georgia, where Beria's men were in power. To the Secret Police and the Army.

It is possible that no one—no one except Stalin—knew where it would end. But Stalin died. And, as Krushchev said in the case of the doctors, 'he did not have time in which to bring it to an end, as he conceived that end'.

Before Stalin's body had had time to grow cold, Beria was officially back in his old job and his troops had surrounded Moscow. The rabid enemy of the Party, the agent of a foreign intelligence service, was now a member of the new 'collective-leadership' that ruled the USSR in the dictator's stead. Nearly four months were to pass before he was 'unmasked'. One wonders why? A further six months went by before he was finally brought to trial. Again, one wonders why?

After what Krushchev said about Beria, it is difficult to understand why the arch-enemy of the people not only retained his place in the Party but was immediately given back his job. But it is even more difficult to understand why so much time was allowed to elapse between his arrest and his trial. Since it is out of the question that Beria's enemies needed six months to concoct their case against him, why did they wait so long?

There are those who maintain that no one would have dared strike down Beria without the support of the Army. Such a theory is worth considering, for there is no gainsaying the fact that Krushchev rose to power with the aid of the Army, and it may well have been that Beria's life was the price he paid for that aid. Moreover, there is plenty of evidence to substantiate such a theory. There is, for instance, Marshal Zhukov's appearance in Moscow at the moment of Stalin's death. One of the outstanding generals in the second world war, Zhukov's personality had caught the popular fancy in Russia as had Field-Marshal Montgomery's in this country, with the result that there were many who expected him to play a leading part in the affairs of post-war Russia. Instead, due to jealousy, or perhaps astuteness, Stalin had banished him into obscurity in 1946. Beyond the fact that he was commanding a provincial branch of the army in the Black Sea area, nothing was heard of him until he stepped out of the shadows at Stalin's funeral. From then on, with Krushchev's, his star was in the ascendant,

and when Bulganin replaced Malenkov as Prime Minister, he succeeded the former as Minister of Defence.

Assuming such theorists to be correct in that the support of the Army was necessary before Beria could be liquidated, the question why he was not immediately disposed of remains unanswered. Zhukov and the other Marshals must have been in Moscow when the city was occupied by the MVD and when Beria was re-appointed to the Ministries of Security and Internal Affairs. Why did they sit in silence while these things were happening? Surely the moment that Stalin died it would have been possible for Beria to have disappeared, just as did General Poskrebyshv, Stalin's enigmatic *aide-de-camp*? None had better reason to wish the head of the secret police a sudden death than those Marshals of the Red Army, thousands of whose comrades had been murdered by him in the blood-bath in 1937.

But, Army or no Army, Beria had to be publicly disgraced as a traitor before he paid the supreme penalty.

Later on, when the time came for Krushchev to rid himself of those other funeral orators—Malenkov and Molotov—he was content merely to expel them from membership of the Presidium of the Central Committee. But Beria had to die . . .

Chapter XII

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

THE WESTERN WORLD expressed astonishment that in Russia the Beria scandal was scarcely more than a nine days' wonder.

Harrison Salisbury, who was in Moscow at the time, remarks in his book*: 'The only surprise about Beria's end was that . . . it created such a small ripple . . . I was perfectly convinced that there was going to be a show-down over Beria, as were a number of other persons in Moscow'.

There was not a ripple when Beria went for the simple reason that personalities play no role in Russian politics. There was not a ripple when Yagoda went or when the generals went or when the Old Bolsheviks disappeared—if by a ripple one means a movement of protest, a demonstration of public opinion.

Indeed, there would not be a ripple if Krushchev went, for Soviet political leadership is not backed by the popular support of the people. There is no party in Russia in the Western sense of the word. There is no free press. There are no free elections. There are no trade unions to support any one particular leader. There are only manoeuvres for power amongst a handful of men—a clique; any member of which can be eliminated—just as Beria and hundreds of others before him were eliminated—without causing any disturbance amongst the masses. For the workers in the factories, the collective farmers, and the intelligentsia are without a voice. Should they ever find a voice, undoubtedly it would be raised against all leaders. And that is what the men in the Kremlin most feared when Stalin died, and, for that matter, still must fear.

* *Stalin's Russia and After*: Macmillan.

So Beria went and Kruglov took his place, and the Party purge continued.

In February, 1954, Tiflis radio announced that more than three thousand members had been expelled from the Party in the past seventeen months. In the Ukraine, where the local Party's First Secretary, Kirichenko, spoke of the need 'for vigilance against the hostile activities of the subversive organization of Ukrainian nationalists', there were mass arrests and dismissals.

In Moscow, too, where it was becoming more and more apparent that the First Secretary was courting the support of the Army, there were changes. On March 2nd, it was announced that Tretyakov, the Minister of Health, who had been one of the signatories of the Stalin medical bulletins, had been 'replaced by Mrs. Kovrigina, the deputy Minister of Health'.

At the end of April, the Supreme Soviet re-elected Malenkov Prime Minister, and Marshal Voroshilov State President. It also approved, with a few minor exceptions, Malenkov's list of ministers. The same meeting decided to establish a new Committee for State Security under I. A. Serov, which was distinct from the MVD which remained under the control of Beria's successor. However, it was clear that the primary purpose of this new committee was to clip the wings of the MVD in order that it should give no further demonstrations of its power by occupying Moscow.

The chronicle of events throughout the autumn and winter of 1954 provides evidence in plenty that, while the new Government of Soviet Russia presented a united front to the world, the struggle for supremacy within the Party continued relentlessly. But little of what was taking place behind the high walls of the Kremlin was allowed to become public.

One aspect of this inner conflict was apparent; that all those who had associated themselves in any way with Lavrenti Beria were to be liquidated. The organization he had so assiduously built up in the Ukraine was completely destroyed and rebuilt;

Ryumin, his associate and deputy Minister of State Security, having been tried by a military court and found guilty of 'falsifying evidence leading to unfounded arrests, including those of the innocent Kremlin doctors', was executed.

On Christmas eve, almost a year after they had taken place, the executions of Abakumov, former head of the MGB, and three other of Beria's accomplices, were made known.

But if the events at the time were shrouded by censorship, it is now clear that the struggle for power in the Kremlin was between First Secretary Krushchev, supported by Marshal Zhukov, representing the Army, and the Malenkov-Molotov-Kaganovich Stalinist faction, which had, until a short while before, included Beria in its ranks.

The second round of the struggle for power went to the anti-Stalinists, when at a meeting in Moscow, on February 8th, the Supreme Soviet accepted Malenkov's resignation as Prime Minister.

In tendering this, he said: '... my request is prompted by businesslike considerations of the need to strengthen the leadership of the Council of Ministers and the expediency of having a comrade with more experience of statesmanship occupying the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. I clearly see that my insufficient experience of local work and the fact that I did not have direct charge of individual branches of the national economy in a Ministry or any economic body, adversely affect my satisfactorily discharging the complex and responsible duties of Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

'I feel it my duty to declare in my statement that now, when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the working people of our country are exerting special efforts for the most rapid advance of agriculture, I very clearly realize my guilt and responsibility for the unsatisfactory state of affairs in agriculture, because over a number of years I was entrusted with the responsibility of controlling and directing the work of the central

agricultural bodies and the work of the local Party and Soviet organizations in the field of agriculture. On the initiative and under the leadership of the Central Committee, the Communist Party has worked out and is putting into practice a number of extensive measures to overcome the lag in agriculture . . . It is clear now what an important part this reform has played in the development of agriculture. Now, as is known, on the initiative and under the leadership of the Central Committee, a general programme has been drafted for overcoming the lagging behind of agriculture and its speedy recovery. This programme is based upon the only correct foundation—the further all-round development of heavy industry—and only the realization of this programme will provide the necessary conditions for a real increase in the production of all the necessary consumer goods.

‘It is expected that various bourgeois neurotics will fabricate slanders about the present statement and the very fact of my resignation from the post of Chairman. But we Communists and the Soviet people will disregard such lies and slander. The interests of the homeland, the people and the Communist Party are above everything for every one of us . . .’

One would have to be blind not to recognize whose hand was behind this pathetic self-indictment. It was not necessary to be a ‘bourgeois neurotic’ to realize that Malenkov’s toadying praise of ‘the leadership of the Central Committee’, whose brilliant programme was to save the country’s agriculture, was but a desperate effort to save his own face and, possibly, his neck. And this, for a time, he managed to do, for on the proposal of Marshal Bulganin, who stepped into his shoes as Chairman, the Supreme Soviet decided to appoint him Minister of Power Stations.

As Marshal Zhukov succeeded Marshal Bulganin as Minister of Defence, Krushchev had good reason to be satisfied with that February meeting of the Supreme Soviet.

Chapter XIII

THE FALLEN IDOL

THE THEME OF THE 20TH CONGRESS of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which opened in Moscow on February 14th, 1956, was the repudiation of the leader cult. There was nothing surprising about that. From the day Stalin died, collective-leadership had been the Party's slogan. Three years after his death, his name had vanished from the newspapers, and the Stalin cult was crumbling just as visibly as were the countless statues of him that littered the Russian countryside. For three years, the Party propaganda machine had played down the old conception of the rule of the individual in favour of rule by the Party. And if this anti-Stalinist propaganda had not been exactly subtle, it had been meted out to the people gradually. Its underlying fugue was that of the two mummified corpses in the Mausoleum in the Red Square but the important one was Lenin's. Lenin was the real father of the Soviet people—the collective farmers, the factory workers, and the intelligentsia, just as the Marxist-Leninist doctrines were the true and real foundations upon which the indestructible monolith of Communism had been built. When Lenin died, he left a will naming no single individual, but the Party and the Soviet people as his rightful heirs. That was the basis of all the propaganda handed out in the press, over the air, and in the speeches made by the Party leaders all over the country ever since Stalin's death. Collective-leadership, collective-security, collective-unity, and collective-solidarity were the slogans emblazoned on the Party's new banners. And, as the date of the 20th Congress drew nearer, so did such banners grow larger, and the articles in the press, the broadcasts, and the speeches

become more to the point. It was not merely by coincidence that Bulganin, Malenkov, Molotov, and Krushchev addressed the same meetings, appeared together on the same platforms, visited the same factories, and stood side by side in the same photographs, one never more prominent than another, but sharing the limelight equally between them. And the backcloth was always Lenin's portrait.

Thus, after the curtain rose on the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR in the white and gold assembly room of the Kremlin Palace, it seemed only natural to the thousand delegates present that one speaker after another should repudiate individualism.

The trend of the Congress was succinctly summed up by a resolution passed during the proceedings, which stated:

'The 20th Congress and the entire policy of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party of the USSR since Stalin's death clearly show that, within the Central Committee of the Party, there was a Leninist core of leaders who correctly understood the immediate requirements of both internal and foreign policies . . . And immediately after Stalin's death, this Leninist core of the Central Committee began a resolute struggle against the personality cult and its grave consequences.'

At the same time, this resolution could have left no doubt in the minds of the delegates that the rumours of internal Party strife at the time of Stalin's death were well-founded. That reference to 'a Leninist core' plainly indicated the existence of turbulent factions within the Central Committee. It was obvious too from the wording of the resolution that these factions had become involved in a 'resolute struggle' the moment Stalin died.

And as one speaker followed another, it became comparatively easy to judge who belonged to which faction. Comrades Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, and Shepilov were ranged

against First Secretary Krushchev, Comrades Kikoyan and Pospelov, *Pravda's* editor, and the soldiers, represented by Marshals Bulganin, Voroshilov, and Zhukov. However, it was not quite so easy at the outset of the Congress to pinpoint the cause of the trouble.

On the face of it, it seemed absurd to divide the members of the Central Committee into 'Stalinists' and 'anti-Stalinists'. They had all been 'Stalinists', at least, ostensibly, until March 5th, 1953. With the possible exception of Comrade Mikoyan, they had all referred to one another as faithful 'pupils', 'disciples', and 'loyal supporters' of the great Stalin. One had only to recall those funeral orations to prove that. Unlike Lavrenti Beria, none of them could be an out-and-out individualist and, therefore, openly opposed to this new doctrine of collective-leadership for, unlike Beria, they were all present at this Congress.

When Comrade Mikoyan rose to speak, he severely censured the old régime, condemning its architecture as obsolete; fit only to be demolished and rebuilt. In his suave manner, Mikoyan, who always dressed like a bourgeois capitalist rather than a Party worker, even ventured to criticise Stalin by name. And since his speech was reported in the newspapers and over the radio, it made history. For never before had Soviet citizens read or listened to Stalin's name in a critical connection. But those who read their papers intelligently were not wholly unprepared for such a shock, for shortly before the Congress opened, *Pravda* had come out with an editorial headed, 'The Cult of the Individual' that clearly showed which way the wind was blowing.

Nevertheless, even for those delegates who had suspected him of anti-Stalinist tendencies, Mikoyan's speech must have sounded surprisingly outspoken. Yet it could not have prepared them for what was to come.

On the last day, February 24th, the Congress went into

secret session, and it was after midnight when First Secretary Nikita Krushchev rose to address the delegates. The speech he delivered is now known to the whole world as the 'secret' speech. We have already quoted from it in these pages. Now, we must examine it in detail. It was a long speech and lasted for three and a half hours. But since, to say the least, it is relevant to this investigation, we offer no excuse for quoting long passages from it. However, it is important they should be read in the light of what has already been written.

The First Secretary began:

'Comrades! In the report of the Central Committee of the Party at the Twentieth Congress, in a number of speeches by delegates to the Congress, and also during recent plenary sessions of the Central Committee, quite a lot has been said about the cult of the individual and about its harmful consequences.

'After Stalin's death, the Central Committee of the Party began to implement a policy of explaining concisely and consistently that it is impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics akin to those of a god. Such a man supposedly knows everything, sees everything, thinks for everyone, can do anything, is infallible in his behaviour.

'Such a belief about a man—and specifically about Stalin—was cultivated among us for many years.

'The object of the present report is not a thorough evaluation of Stalin's life and activity. Concerning Stalin's merits, an entirely sufficient number of books, pamphlets and studies have already been written in his lifetime . . . At present we are concerned with a question which has immense importance for the Party now and for the future. With how the cult of the person of Stalin has been gradually growing, the cult which became at a certain specific stage

the source of a whole series of exceedingly serious and grave perversions of Party principles, of Party democracy, of revolutionary legality.

'Because of the fact that not all as yet have fully realised the practical consequences resulting from the cult of the individual, the great harm caused by the violation of the principle of collective direction of the Party, and because of the accumulation of immense and limitless power in the hands of a person—the Central Committee of the Party considers it absolutely necessary to make this material pertaining to this matter available to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.'

With these words Krushchev began his indictment of Stalin, thus placing the responsibility for everything he was to say upon the Central Committee. He spoke in its name, with its connivance, as its First Secretary. What is more, as he told the delegates—not at the beginning but almost at the end of his speech—everything he had said was confidential and for their ears alone.

'We cannot', he warned them, 'let this matter get out of the Party, especially to the Press. It is for this reason that we are considering it here at a closed Congress session. We should know the limits; we should not give ammunition to the enemy; we should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes . . .'

Incredible as it may seem, that is what he said! Could he really have been so naïve as to believe that his indictment of Stalin would never be heard outside the gilded walls of the Kremlin Palace? Did he not realise that he was providing his enemies with a whole arsenal of ammunition with which to sabotage Communism all over the world?

Chapter XIV

THE STALINIST-LENINIST MYTH

EARLY IN HIS SPEECH Krushchev set about destroying 'the iconography' as Trotsky had called it, which portrayed Stalin in Lenin's company; in other words, the hyphenate of 'Stalinist-Leninism', which Stalin himself had invented and so skilfully used in his early days to impose himself upon the Central Committee. (It is worth noting that throughout his career, which has so faithfully followed the Stalin pattern, Krushchev has shown a marked tendency to do exactly the same.)

'During Lenin's life', the First Secretary went on, 'the Central Committee of the Party was a real expression of collective leadership of the Party and the nation. Being a militant Marxist-revolutionist, always unyielding in matters of principle, Lenin never imposed by force his views upon his co-workers. He tried to convince some; he patiently explained his opinions to others.

'In addition to the great accomplishments of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin . . . His great mind expressed itself also in that he detected in Stalin in time those negative characteristics *which resulted later in grave consequences.**

'Fearing the future fate of the Party and of the Soviet nation, Lenin made a completely correct characterisation of Stalin, pointing out that it was necessary to consider the question of transferring Stalin from the position of the Secretary-General because of the fact that Stalin is excessively rude, that he does not have a proper attitude towards his comrades, that he is capricious and abuses his power.

*Author's italics.

'In December, 1922, in a letter to the Party Congress Vladimir Ilyich wrote:—

"After taking over the position of Secretary-General Comrade Stalin accumulated in his hands immeasurable power, and I am not certain whether he will always be able to use this power with the required care."

'This letter—a political document of tremendous importance, known in the Party history as Lenin's "Testament"—was distributed among the delegates to the Twentieth Party Congress.

'You have read it, and will undoubtedly read it again more than once.

'You might reflect on Lenin's plain words, in which expression is given to Vladimir Ilyich's anxiety concerning the Party, the people, the State, and the future direction of Party policy.'

It must be remembered that the Lenin 'Testament' was banned during Stalin's lifetime, and it says much for the internal security in Russia under Stalin that there were many delegates to the Congress who had never heard of the famous document. If they had, it would not have been necessary for Krushchev to break off in the middle of reading it to explain what it was. He went on reading it:—

"Stalin is excessively rude, and this defect, which can be freely tolerated in our midst and in contacts among us Communists, becomes a defect which cannot be tolerated in one holding the position of the Secretary-General. Because of this, I propose that the comrades consider the method by which Stalin would be removed from this position and by which another man would be selected for it, a man who, above all, would differ from Stalin in only one quality, namely, greater tolerance, greater loyalty, greater kindness and more considerate attitude towards comrades, a less capricious temper, etc."

'This document of Lenin's was made known to the

delegates at the Thirteenth Party Congress, who discussed the question of transferring Stalin from the position of Secretary-General. The delegates declared themselves in favour of retaining Stalin in this post, hoping that he would heed the critical remarks of Vladimir Ilyich and would be able to overcome the defects which caused Lenin serious anxiety.

'Comrades! The Party Congress should become acquainted with *two new documents*,* which confirm Stalin's character as already outlined by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin in his 'Testament'. These documents are a letter from Nadezhda Konstantinova Krupskaya (Lenin's wife) to Kamenev, who was at that time head of the Political Bureau, and a personal letter from Vladimir Ilyich Lenin to Stalin.

'I will now read these documents:—

'Lev Vorisovich! Because of a short letter which I had written in words dictated to me by Vladimir Ilyich by permission of the doctors, Stalin allowed himself yesterday an unusually rude outburst directed at me. This is not my first day in the party. During all these thirty years I have never heard from any comrade one word of rudeness. The business of the party and of Ilyich are not less dear to me than to Stalin. I need at present the maximum of self-control. What one can and what one cannot discuss with Ilyich—I know better than any doctor, because I know what makes him nervous and what does not, in any case I know better than Stalin. I am turning to you and to Gregory as to much closer comrades of V.I. and I beg you to protect me from rude interference with my private life and from vile invectives and threats. I have no doubt as to what will be the unanimous decision of the Control Commission, with which Stalin sees fit to threaten me; however, I have neither the strength nor the time to waste on this foolish quarrel. And I am a living person and my nerves are strained to the utmost.'

* Author's italics.

'Nadezhda Konstantinovia wrote this letter on December 23rd, 1932. After two and a half months, in March, 1923, Lenin sent Stalin the following letter:—

To Comrade Stalin. Copies for: Kamenev and Zinoviev.
Dear Comrade Stalin:

You permitted yourself a rude summons to my wife to the telephone and a rude reprimand of her. Despite the fact that she told you that she agreed to forget what was said, nevertheless Zinoviev and Kamenev heard about it from her. I have no intention of forgetting so easily that which is being done against me, and I need not stress here that I consider as directed against me that which is being done against my wife. I ask you, therefore, that you weigh carefully whether you are agreeable to retracting your words and apologising or whether you prefer the severance of relations between us.'

These two letters caused a commotion in the assembly hall.

'Comrades!' Krushchev continued, laying them aside, 'I will not comment on these documents. They speak eloquently for themselves. Since Stalin could behave in this manner during Lenin's life, could thus behave towards Nadezhda Konstantinova Krupskaya, whom the Party knows well and values highly as a loyal friend of Lenin and as an active fighter for the cause of the Party since its creation—we can easily imagine how Stalin treated other people. These negative characteristics of his developed steadily and *during the last years* acquired an absolutely insufferable character* . . .'

What, one wonders, would have happened in the assembly hall had Krushchev seen fit to quote Trotsky's account of the strange incident of Stalin, Lenin and the poison? Even if he scorned to quote Trotsky, with what dramatic effect he could have reminded his audience how in 1922, the apprehensive

* Author's italics.

Lenin had spoken of 'That cook who will prepare nothing but peppery dishes.' What an opportunity missed! But, perhaps, the subject of poison was too delicate to be mentioned! Krushchev continued: 'When we analyse the practice of Stalin in regard to the direction of the Party and of the country, when we pause to consider everything which Stalin perpetrated, we must be convinced that Lenin's fears were justified. The negative characteristics of Stalin, which, in Lenin's time, were only incipient, *transformed themselves during the last years into grave abuse of power by Stalin,** which caused untold harm to our Party.

'We have to consider seriously and analyse correctly this matter in order that we may preclude any possibility of a repetition in any form whatever of what took place during the life of Stalin, who absolutely did not tolerate collegiality in leadership and in work, and who practised brutal violence, not only towards everything which opposed him, but always towards that which seemed, to his capricious and despotic character, contrary to his concepts . . .

'Whoever opposed these concepts or tried to prove his viewpoint, and the correctness of his position—was doomed to removal from the leading collective and to subsequent moral and physical annihilation. This was especially true during the period following the Seventeenth Party Congress, when many prominent Party leaders and rank-and-file workers, honest and dedicated to the cause of Communism, fell victim to Stalin's despotism.'

Krushchev then described at length the struggle between Leninism and the Trotskyite-Zinoviev and the Bukharinites. Even when this struggle was at its height, he said that it was worth noting that extreme measures were never taken against the opposition. That began later, in 1935-1938.

'It was precisely during this period,' Krushchev said,

*Author's italics.

'that the practice of mass repression through the Government apparatus was born . . . Stalin originated the concept "enemy of the people". The term automatically rendered it unnecessary that the ideological errors of a man or men engaged in a controversy be proven; this term made possible the usage of the most cruel repression, violating all norms of revolutionary legality, against anyone who in any way disagreed with Stalin, against those who were only suspected of hostile intent, against those who had bad reputations. This concept, "enemy of the people", actually eliminated the possibility of any kind of ideological fight or the making of one's views known on this or that issue, even those of a practical nature. In the main, and in actuality, the only proof of guilt used, against all norms of current legal science, was the "confession" of the accused himself; and, as subsequent probing proved, "confessions" were acquired through physical pressures against the accused.

'This led to glaring violations of revolutionary legality, and to the fact that many entirely innocent persons, who in the past had defended the Party line, became victims.'

Here, we must pause to ask what methods were used to make Beria and his confederates 'confess' to their crimes? Are we to believe that no 'physical pressure' was exerted in their case because it was investigated under the new regime of collective-leadership? If so, what other means were used to make a man of Beria's calibre admit to treason, espionage, and plotting against the State?

However, since Krushchev had spoken of the former Minister of Internal Affairs as an 'enemy of the people', it may have been considered in accordance with 'revolutionary legality' to resort to such methods in his case. Perhaps Krushchev was excusing what happened to Beria three years before when he went on to say that 'arbitrary behaviour by one person encouraged and permitted arbitrariness in others.'

Chapter XV

AN ENEMY OF THE PARTY

WHILE DESTROYING THE IDOL OF STALIN, the First Secretary went to great pains to restore that of Lenin to its former place. Like Stalin, he must have realised that the only way to supreme power was by declaring his abject devotion to Vladimir Ilyich.

'Our Party,' Krushchev declared, 'fought for the implementation of Lenin's plans for the construction of Socialism. This was an ideological fight. Had Leninist principles been observed during the course of this fight, had the Party's devotion to principles been skilfully combined with a keen and solicitous concern for people, had they not been repelled and wasted but rather drawn to our side—we would certainly not have had such a brutal violation of revolutionary legality and many thousands of people would not have fallen victim of the method of terror. Extraordinary methods would then have been resorted to only against those people who had committed criminal acts against the Soviet system.' Still delving deep into the past, Krushchev harked back to the days of the October Revolution when two members of the Central Committee—Kamenev and Zinoviev—had opposed Lenin's plan for an armed uprising. Lenin, always the humanitarian, forgave them. Then, Krushchev cited the case of the Trotskyites as another instance of Lenin's tolerance.

'At present, after a sufficiently long historical period,' Krushchev said, 'we can speak about the fight with the Trotskyites with complete calm and can analyse this matter with sufficient objectivity. After all, around Trotsky were people whose origin cannot by any means be traced to

bourgeois society. Part of them belonged to the Party intelligentsia and a certain part were recruited from among the workers. We can name many individuals who in their time joined the Trotskyites; however, these same individuals took an active part in the workers' movement before the Revolution, during the Socialist October Revolution itself, and also in the consolidation of the victory of this greatest of all revolutions. Many of them broke with Trotskyism and returned to Leninist positions. Was it necessary to annihilate such people? We are deeply convinced that had Lenin lived such an extreme method would not have been taken against any of them.'

Almost in the same breath, Krushchev posed another question to the Congress.

'But can it be said that Lenin did not decide to use even the most severe means against enemies of the Revolution when this was actually necessary? No, no one can say this. Vladimir Ilyich demanded uncompromising dealings with the enemies of the Revolution and of the working class, and when necessary resorted ruthlessly to such methods.'

By this method of question and answer, Krushchev struck a sinister note of warning. Evidently, there was a subtle difference between 'enemies of the people' and 'enemies of the Revolution.' And in the name of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, it was right and proper to annihilate the latter by the most ruthless methods.

But what Lenin did in the name of the Revolution, Stalin continued to do when the Revolution had been won and domestic peace reigned over the Soviet State.

'Then,' said Krushchev, 'Stalin showed in a whole series of cases his intolerance, his brutality and his abuse of power. Instead of proving his political correctness and mobilising the masses, he often chose the path of repression and physical annihilation, not only against actual enemies,

but also against individuals who had not committed any crimes against the Party or the Soviet Government. Here we see no wisdom, but only a demonstration of the brutal force which had once so alarmed Lenin.'

It was at this point in his speech that Krushchev mentioned Beria's name for the first time.

'Lately,' he said, 'especially after the unmasking of the Beria gang, the Central Committee looked into a series of matters fabricated by this gang. This revealed a very ugly picture of brutal wilfulness connected with the incorrect behaviour of Stalin. As facts prove, Stalin, using his unlimited power, allowed himself many abuses, acting in the name of the Central Committee, not asking for the opinion of the Central Committee members nor even of the members of the Central Committee's Political Bureau; often he did not inform them about his personal decisions concerning very important Party and Government matters.'

Could anything be more vague? No attempt is made to enlighten the Congress concerning the nature of that series of matters fabricated by the gang or to describe the very ugly picture. Why did not Krushchev give his audience chapter and verse, quote from actual documents as he had done in the case of the Lenin 'Testament'? Surely if the picture was so very ugly it should have been used in evidence against Stalin? But the Congress had to be content with these nebulous phrases, for, a moment later, the First Secretary was once more busy proving that Lenin would never have dreamt of riding roughshod over the Central Committee as Stalin had done.

'During Lenin's lifetime,' he said, 'Party Congresses were convened regularly; always, when a radical turn in the development of the party and the country took place. It was very characteristic of Lenin that he addressed to the Party Congress his last articles, letters and remarks. He meticulously observed the principles of the Party.'

'Were our Party's holy Leninist principles observed after the death of Vladimir Ilyich?' Krushchev asked the Congress. '. . . when Stalin began to abuse his power, these principles were brutally violated. This was especially evident during the last fifteen years of his life. Was it a normal situation when over thirteen years elapsed between the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Party Congresses, years during which our Party and our country had experienced so many important events? . . . Even after the end of the war a congress was not convened for over seven years.

'Central Committee plenums were hardly ever called. It should be sufficient to mention that during all those years of the patriotic war (World War II) not a single Central Committee plenum took place.

'It is true that there was an attempt to call a Central Committee plenum in October, 1941, when Central Committee members from the whole country were called to Moscow. They waited two days for the opening of the plenum, but in vain. Stalin did not even want to meet and to talk to the Central Committee members. This fact shows how demoralised Stalin was in the first months of the war and how haughtily and disdainfully he treated the Central Committee members.'

Krushchev then went on to prove that Stalin could be other things besides haughty and disdainful. Having at its disposal data showing brutal wilfulness, the Central Committee had set up a Party Commission charged with investigating the mass repressions against the majority of the members of the Central Committee and candidates elected at the Seventeenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). This Commission, Krushchev said, had become acquainted with a large quantity of material in the NKVD archives and with other documents.

'It has established many facts pertaining to the fabrication

of cases against Communists, to false accusations, to glaring abuses of Socialist legality—which resulted in the death of innocent people. It became apparent that many Party, Soviet and economic activists, who were branded in 1937–1938 as ‘enemies’ were actually never enemies, spies, wreckers, etc., but were always honest Communists; they were only so stigmatised, and often, no longer able to bear the barbaric tortures, they charged themselves—at the order of the investigating judges—as falsifiers, with all kinds of grave and unlikely crimes . . .

‘It was determined that of the 139 members and candidates of the Party’s Central Committee who were elected at the Seventeenth Congress, ninety-eight, i.e., 70 per cent, were arrested and shot . . .

‘The same fate met not only the Central Committee members, but also the majority of the delegates to the Seventeenth Party Congress. Of the 1,966 delegates with either voting or advisory rights, 1,108 persons were arrested on charges of anti-revolutionary crimes, i.e., decidedly more than a majority. This very fact shows how absurd, wild and contrary to common sense were the charges of counter-revolutionary crimes made out, as we now see, against a majority of participants at the Seventeenth Party Congress . . . This was the result of the abuse of power by Stalin, who began to use mass terror against the Party cadres.’

This *dénouement* brought forth cries of indignation from the delegates, as, of course, the speaker intended that it should. He was approaching one of the highlights of his speech—the mysterious assassination of Sergi Mironovich Kirov, which, as we have already seen, was made the excuse for the infamous Moscow trials and the great purges that followed them.

‘What,’ Krushchev asked, ‘is the reason that mass repression against activists increased more and more after the Seventeenth Party Congress? It was because at that time Stalin had

so elevated himself above the Party and above the nation that he ceased to consider either the Central Committee or the Party . . . Stalin thought that now he could decide all things alone and all he needed were statisticians; he treated all others in such a way that they could only listen and praise him.

'After the criminal murder of S. M. Kirov, mass repression and brutal acts of violation of Socialist legality began. On the evening of December 1st, 1934, on Stalin's initiative—without the approval of the Political Bureau, which was obtained two days later, casually—the Secretary of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, Yenukidze, signed the following directive:—

1. Investigative agencies are directed to speed up the cases of those accused of the preparation or execution of acts of terror.
2. Judicial organs are directed not to hold up the execution of death sentences pertaining to crimes of this category in order to consider the possibility of pardon, because the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR does not consider as possible the receiving of petitions of this sort.
3. The organs of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs are directed to execute the death sentence against criminals of the above-mentioned category immediately after the passage of sentences.'

'This directive became the basis of mass acts of abuse against Socialist legality. During many of the fabricated court cases the accused were charged with 'the preparation' of terrorist acts; this deprived them of any possibility that their cases might be re-examined, even when they stated before the court that their 'confessions' were secured by force, and when, in a convincing manner, they disproved the accusations against them.

'It must be asserted that to this day the circumstances surrounding Kirov's murder hide many things which are inexplicable and mysterious and demand a most careful examination. There are reasons for the suspicion that the killer of Kirov, Nikolayev, was assisted by someone from among the people whose duty it was to protect the person of Kirov. A month and a half before the killing, Nikolayev was arrested on the grounds of suspicious behaviour, but he was released and not even searched. It is an unusually suspicious circumstance that when the Chekist assigned to protect Kirov was being brought for an interrogation, on December 2nd, 1934, he was killed in a car 'accident' in which no other occupants were harmed. After the murder of Kirov, top functionaries of the Leningrad NKVD were given very light sentences, but in 1937 they were shot. We can assume that they were shot in order to cover the traces of the organisers of Kirov's killing.'

Krushchev's account of Kirov's end caused considerable excitement amongst the audience in the great hall. Strange as it may seem, it was news to many of them. Stranger still that the First Secretary made so much of the mystery surrounding the murder and spoke obscurely about the organisers covering their traces. As we have already explained, Sergi Kirov was known in the Party for his 'liberal' leanings. He was the most popular political figure in Leningrad. At the ill-fated Seventeenth Congress, his speech had received greater applause even than Stalin's. From the latter's point of view, Kirov's murder was both timely and convenient.

Why did not Krushchev say so? Perhaps, like poison, timely and convenient deaths were subjects to be avoided.

Perhaps, too, Krushchev was being cautious for he had reached one of those points in his speech when he was skating over thin ice. In a few minutes, he had to mention by name that dispenser of poisons, Yagoda.

'Mass repression grew tremendously,' Krushchev continued, 'from the end of 1936 after a telegram from Stalin and Zhdanov, dated from Sochi on September 25th, 1936, was addressed to Kaganovich, Molotov and other members of the Political Bureau. The content of the telegram was as follows:—

'We deem it absolutely necessary and urgent that Comrade Yezhov be nominated to the post of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. Yagoda has definitely proved himself to be incapable of unmasking the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc. The OGPU is four years behind in this matter. This is noted by all Party workers and by the majority of the representatives of the NKVD.'

It should be noted how Krushchev went out of his way to mention both Kaganovich and Molotov by name. Since he was to get rid of both of them later, he took this opportunity of linking their names with the terrorism of the thirties.

Although Krushchev was telling a large section of his audience something about which they knew little or nothing, he apparently considered it unnecessary to explain that Yagoda and Yezhov were both 'liquidated' and that Lavrenti Beria succeeded them. Indeed, the more one reads of this 'secret' speech, the more one is struck by the amount of relevant information that the First Secretary kept secret from the delegates.

The dirtiest linen—the blood-stained linen—remained in the clothes-basket.

Chapter XVI

THE TERROR AND THE SECRET POLICE

IN BUILDING UP HIS CASE AGAINST STALIN, Krushchev produced a wealth of evidence from the past and presented it to his audience in detail. Thus, he followed the formula always used by the prosecution in the Soviet courts of Justice. It was used throughout the Moscow trials and it was used at Beria's trial. Although they were never brought to trial, it would have been applied to the case of the 'doctor-assassins.'

Doctors Kazakov and Lavin continued to attend the Kremlin for nearly four years before they were arrested and charged with the murder of Menzhinsky. Henry Yagoda, the poisoner, after being twice arrested, was finally convicted for crimes he had committed at least three years before. In 1953, the Kremlin doctors were arrested and charged with murdering Shcherbakov in 1945 and Zhdanov in 1948. Beria was shot because he had had 'criminal contacts with foreign intelligence services in 1919 and 1920.' Of course, it was admitted that he was guilty of other crimes. But, in accordance with the formula, such crimes were never specified nor were the dates when they were committed ever disclosed.

Thus, it appears that there has always been a marked reluctance on the part of the Soviet prosecutors to produce that evidence which must, in fact, have led to the arrest of the accused. And such reluctance arouses one's suspicions as to the validity of the case for the prosecution. If, one asks, the accused behaved as he did all those years ago—if he murdered this one or that, or was known to be a traitor—why was nothing done about it before? Why wait so long before seeing justice done?

Krushchev in his indictment of Stalin faithfully adhered to the formula. Up to a point, his speech is littered with dates and detail and his evidence against Stalin supported by documents. But beyond that point, his evidence becomes either nebulous or backed by hearsay. What is more, a great deal of the evidence, and, as we shall see, the most damning part of it, is withheld.

Let us now continue to examine what the First Secretary said in so far as his remarks concern our investigation.

At great length he set out to prove to the Congress that the Moscow trials were frame-ups. They were not even, he said, directed against the Trotskyites, for the latter had long since ceased to be a danger.

'This terror,' he said, 'was actually directed not at the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes (the Trotskyites), but against honest workers of the Party and the Soviet States; against them were made lying, slanderous and absurd accusations concerning "two-facedness", "espionage", "sabotage", preparation of fictitious "plots", etc. . . .

'Now when the cases of some of these so-called "spies" and "saboteurs" were examined it was found that all their cases were fabricated. Confessions of guilt of many arrested and charged with enemy activity were gained with the help of cruel and inhuman tortures.

'At the same time, Stalin, as we have been informed by members of the Political Bureau of that time, did not show them the statements of many accused political activists when they retracted their confessions before the military tribunal and asked for an objective examination of their cases. There were many such declarations, and Stalin knew of them.'

Undoubtedly this is an attempt by Krushchev to answer the very question we asked just now: Why was nothing done about it before? Inevitably, it must have been in the minds of

his listeners. Indeed, it has been reported that some delegates actually shouted at the First Secretary: 'Why didn't you do something about it?' But we can find no proof of such an incident. But, whether or not this question was asked, Krushchev answered it. 'Stalin never told us . . . So far as we knew, these people were guilty,' was in effect, his reply! So, like the Nazis, the members of the Politburo—the men closest to Stalin—had no idea that innocent people were being liquidated! But, now that these terrible crimes had at last come to light as the result of investigations made by the new regime, Krushchev said:

'The Central Committee considers it absolutely necessary to inform Congress of many such fabricated "cases" against members of the Party's Central Committee elected at the Seventeenth Congress.'

He then went on to cite as an 'example of vile provocation, of odious falsification' the case of Comrade Eikhe, who had been a member of the Party since its earliest days. He was arrested in 1938 on false charges and forced under torture to sign a protocol of his confessions prepared by the investigating judges, accusing him of anti-Soviet activity.

Krushchev read to the delegates Eikhe's long and heart-rending declaration of innocence written to Stalin, and which the latter withheld from the members of the Central Committee. Eikhe was eventually shot. But, Krushchev told Congress, amidst cries of indignation, it had since been definitely established that the case against him was fabricated, and the guiltless victim had since been 'posthumously rehabilitated.'

Krushchev then went on to cite further cases as proof of Stalin's inhuman brutality, because of which 'thousands have died innocent'. Throughout a greater part of this reign of terror, Krushchev said that Yezhov was head of the NKVD.

'But,' he asked, 'could Yezhov have decided such important

matters as the fate of such eminent Party workers? No, it would be a display of naïveté to consider this the work of Yezhov alone. It is clear that these matters were decided by Stalin, and that without his orders and his sanction Yezhov could not have done this . . . Stalin decided everything. He was the chief prosecutor in these cases. Stalin not only agreed to, but on his own initiative issued arrest orders. We must say this so that the delegates to the Congress can clearly understand and themselves assess this and draw the proper conclusions . . .

‘Possessing unlimited power, Stalin indulged in great wilfulness and choked a person morally and physically. A situation was created where one could not express one’s own will.

‘When Stalin said that one or another should be arrested, it was necessary to accept on faith that he was an “enemy of the people”. Meanwhile, Beria’s gang, which ran the organs of State Security, outdid itself in proving the guilt of the arrested and the truth of the materials which it falsified. And what proofs were offered. The confessions of the arrested, and the investigative judges accepted these “confessions”. And how is it possible that a person confesses to crimes which he has not committed? Only in one way—because of application of physical methods of pressuring him, tortures bringing him to a state of unconsciousness, deprivation of his judgment, taking away his human dignity. In this manner were “confessions” acquired . . .

‘Not long ago—only several days before the present Congress—we called to the Central Committee Presidium Session and interrogated the investigative judge Rodos, who in his time investigated and interrogated Kossior, Chubar, and Kosaryev.* He is a vile person, with the brain of a bird, and morally completely degenerate. And it was this

*Kossior and Chubar, both members of the Politburo, disappeared in 1938.

man who was deciding the fate of prominent Party workers; he was making judgments also concerning the politics of these matters, because, having established their "crime", he provided therewith materials from which important political implications were drawn.

"The question arose whether a man with such an intellect could alone make such investigations? No, he could not have done it without proper directives. At the Central Committee Presidium Session he told us: "I was told that Kossior and Chubar were enemies of the people and for this reason I, as an investigative judge, had to make them confess that they were enemies."

'He could do this only through long tortures, which he did, receiving detailed instructions from Beria. We must say that at the Central Committee Presidium Session he cynically declared: "I thought that I was executing the orders of the Party." In this manner Stalin's orders concerning the use of methods of physical pressure against the arrested were in practice executed.

'These and many other facts show that all norms of correct Party solution of problems were invalidated and everything was dependent upon the wilfulness of one man.' These facts also lead one to ask why and how under the new régime Lavrenti Beria was ever again raised to high office and placed in charge of the secret police?

Chapter XVII

THE GENERALISSIMO:

WE DO NOT INTEND TO CONSIDER in detail Krushchev's passionate denunciation of Stalin's military genius. By that long, savage and merciless attack, Krushchev's purpose was to prove that the real heroes of the 'patriotic war' were the Marshals and Generals of the Soviet Army as well as its soldiers. This part of his speech was the dividend paid to Zhukov and his comrades for having morally and physically financed the First Secretary in his battle for power. It also gave him the opportunity to discredit Malenkov and at the same time build up Mikoyan in the eyes of the delegates to the Congress.

Of course, it was highly embarrassing for men like Malenkov and Molotov, who had so praised the mighty Caesar at his funeral, to have to sit through this fearful exposure. It was painful for them to hear the laughter in the hall when the First Secretary announced that the man they had acclaimed the founder of the Soviet Army and who had led that Army to glorious victory, had in fact planned operations by remote control with the aid of a globe in his study. But what made it even more embarrassing was that the First Secretary left his audience in no doubt that Comrade Malenkov had known all along that Stalin, 'this great commander' under whom 'the Soviet Army achieved its historic victory . . . and delivered the nations of Europe and Asia from the menace of fascist slavery', was not a military genius at all!

Krushchev made this quite clear in his graphic description of the disaster at Kharkov.

'I telephoned Stalin at his villa,' Krushchev said. 'But

Stalin did not answer the telephone and Malenkov was at the receiver.

'I told Comrade Malenkov that I was calling from the front and wanted to speak personally to Stalin. Stalin informed me through Malenkov that I should speak to Malenkov. I stated for the second time that I wished to inform Stalin personally about the grave situation which had arisen for us at the front. But Stalin did not consider it convenient to raise the telephone and again stated that I should speak to Malenkov, although he was only a few steps from the telephone.

'After "listening" in this manner to our plea Stalin said, "Let everything remain as it is!"

'And what was the result of this? The worst that we had expected. The Germans surrounded our army concentrations and consequently we lost hundreds of thousands of our soldiers.'

That story caused 'movement in the hall' according to the reports. One can well imagine that it must have caused Malenkov to fidget in his seat.

As the movement in the hall subsided, Krushchev, as if recalling those funeral orations, remarked: 'This is Stalin's military "genius"; this is what it cost us!'

Then, he went on to show what a different manner of man Mikoyan was to Malenkov.

'On one occasion after the war', he told them, 'during a meeting with members of the Political Bureau, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan mentioned that Krushchev must have been right when he telephoned concerning the Kharkov operation, and that it was unfortunate that his suggestion had not been accepted.

'You should have seen Stalin's fury! How could it be admitted that he, Stalin, had not been right! He is after all a "genius", and a genius cannot help being right!'

While this little episode is a nice illustration of Mikoyan's courage, one cannot help but doubt the truth of it. If, in Krushchev's own words, 'whoever tried to prove his viewpoint . . . was doomed to removal from the leading collective, and to subsequent moral and physical annihilation', it is hard to believe that Mikoyan would have risked his own neck—or Krushchev's—by thus boldly questioning Stalin's judgment on such a sore point. However, by 1956, it was improbable that any one would have dared to question the truth of First Secretary Krushchev's little story.

'Everyone can err', Krushchev declared, 'but Stalin considered that he never erred, that he was always right . . . After the Party Congress we shall have to re-evaluate many wartime military operations and to present them in their true light.'

'The tactics on which Stalin insisted without knowing the essence of the conduct of battle operations cost us much in blood until we succeeded in stopping the opponent and going over to the offensive.'

'The military know that already by the end of 1941 instead of great operational manoeuvres flanking the opponent and penetrating behind his back, Stalin demanded incessant frontal attacks and the capture of one village after another. Because of this we paid with great losses until our generals on whose shoulders rested the whole weight of conducting the war, succeeded in changing the situation and shifting to flexible manoeuvre operations, which immediately brought serious changes at the front favourable to us.'

'All the more shameful was the fact that after our great victory over the enemy which cost us so much, Stalin began to down-grade many of the commanders who contributed so much to the victory over the enemy, because Stalin excluded every possibility that services rendered at the front should be credited to anyone but himself.'

'Stalin was very much interested in the assessment of Comrade Zhukov as a military leader. He asked me often for my opinion of Zhukov. I told him then, "I have known Zhukov for a long time; he is a good general and a good military leader".'

'After the war Stalin began to tell all kinds of nonsense about Zhukov, among others the following; "You praise Zhukov, but he does not deserve it. It is said that before each operation at the front Zhukov used to behave as follows: He used to take a handful of earth, smell it and say, 'we can begin the attack' or the opposite, 'the planned operation cannot be carried out.'" I stated at that time, "Comrade Stalin, I do not know who invented this, but it is not true".'

'It is possible that Stalin himself invented these things for the purpose of minimising the role and the military talents of Marshal Zhukov.'

It is equally possible that Krushchev himself invented these things for the opposite reason, as well as to show what a fine fellow he was for defending the Marshal. But like the other story about Mikoyan, it does not ring true.

Krushchev then went on to talk about the film, 'The Fall of Berlin'.

'Here only Stalin acts, he issues orders in the hall in which there are many empty chairs and only one man approaches him and reports something to him—that is Poskrebyshch, his loyal shield-bearer.'

This set off a wave of laughter through the hall. But, curiously enough, Krushchev did not take the opportunity to give any explanation as to what happened to the sinister shield-bearer, who vanished, apparently, into thin air the day that his master died.

Having de-bunked the film epic, Krushchev proceeded at considerable length to place the credit for winning the 'patriot

war' where it belonged—with the whole of the working class, the Kolkhoz peasantry, the Soviet intelligentsia, the Soviet soldiers, the commanders, and political workers of all ranks. And by the time he had finished, Stalin lay as stripped of his honours and decorations as did the corpse of Beria and those others who had been proved 'enemies of the people'.

But Krushchev had only finished with 'Generalissimo' Stalin.

'The main role and the main credit for the victorious ending of the war belonged to our Communist Party, to the armed forces of the Soviet Union, and to the tens of millions of Soviet people raised by the Party.

'Comrades! Let us reach for some other facts. The Soviet Union is justly considered as a model of a multi-national State because we have in practice assured the equality and friendship of all nations which live in our great fatherland.

'All the more monstrous are the acts whose initiator was Stalin and which are rude violations of the basic Leninist principles of the nationality policy of the Soviet State. We refer to the mass deportations from their native places of whole nations, together with all Communists and Kom-somols without any exception.'

There followed a description of the mass deportations during 1943 and 1944. The Ukrainians, Krushchev said, amidst laughter, avoided meeting such a fate only because there were 'too many of them and there was no place to which to deport them'. Then, becoming serious again, he turned to the 'so called Leningrad affair', which was born at this time.

'Facts prove,' he said 'that the "Leningrad affair" was also the result of wilfulness which Stalin exercised against Party cadres . . .

'We must state that after the war the situation became even more complicated. Stalin became even more capricious, irritable and brutal; in particular his suspicion grew. His persecution mania

*reached unbelievable dimensions. Many workers were becoming enemies before his very eyes.** After the war, Stalin separated himself from the Collective even more. Everything was decided by him alone without any consideration for anyone or anything.

'This unbelievable suspicion was cleverly taken advantage of by the abject provocateur and vile enemy, Beria.'

*Author's italics.

Chapter XVIII

STALIN'S LITTLE FINGER

HAVING ESTABLISHED BERIA'S VILLAINY in connection with the 'Leningrad affair' and the deaths of distinguished Party men such as Popkov Rodionov and Kuznetsov, Krushchev went on to deal with Stalin's treatment of his fellow Georgians. 'On the basis of falsified documents', Krushchev said, 'it was proved that there existed in Georgia a supposedly nationalistic organisation whose objective was the liquidation of the Soviet power in that republic with the help of the imperialist Powers'.

Such documents showed that Georgia planned on breaking away from the Soviet Union and joining Turkey.

'This is, of course, nonsense', the First Secretary said. 'It is impossible to imagine how such assumptions could enter anyone's head . . . As it developed, there was no nationalistic organisation in Georgia. Thousands of innocent people fell victim of wilfulness and lawlessness. All of this happened under the "genial" leadership of Stalin, "the great son of the Georgian nation", as Georgians like to refer to Stalin', Krushchev said amidst animation in the assembly hall.

'The wilfulness of Stalin showed itself not only in his decisions concerning the internal life of the country', he went on, 'but also in the international relations of the Soviet Union.

'The July plenum of the Central Committee studied in detail the reasons for the development of the conflict with Yugoslavia. It was a shameful role which Stalin played here. The "Yugoslav affair" contained no problems which could not have been solved through Party discussions among comrades. There was no significant basis for the development of

this "affair", it was completely possible to have prevented the rupture of relations with that country. This does not mean, however, that the Yugoslav leaders did not make mistakes or did not have shortcomings. But these mistakes and shortcomings were magnified in a monstrous manner by Stalin, which resulted in a breakdown of relations with a friendly country.

'I recall the first days when the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began artificially to blow up. Once, when I came from Kiev to Moscow, I was invited to visit Stalin who, pointing to the copy of a letter lately sent to Tito, asked me, "Have you read this?"

'Not waiting for my reply, he answered, "I will shake my little finger—and there will be no more Tito. He will fall".

'We have dearly paid for this "shaking of the little finger". This statement reflected *Stalin's mania** for greatness, but he acted just that way: "I will shake my little finger—and there will be no Kossior"; "I will shake my little finger once more and Postyshev and Chubar will be no more"; "I will shake my little finger again—Voznesensky, Kuznetsov and many others will disappear."

'But this did not happen to Tito. No matter how much or how little Stalin shook, not only his little finger, but everything else that he could shake, Tito did not fall. Why? The reason was that . . . Tito had behind him a State and a people who had gone through a severe school of fighting for liberty and independence, a people which gave support to its leaders . . .'

And which, presumably, Stalin had not! The State and the people were not behind him, so he had to 'shake his little finger' over and over again. It is a matter for speculation who else might have disappeared besides those mentioned by

*Author's italics.

Krushchev if Stalin had lived to go on 'shaking his little finger'.

'You see to what *Stalin's mania** for greatness led', the First Secretary exclaimed. 'He had completely lost consciousness of reality; he demonstrated his suspicion and haughtiness not only in relation to individuals in the USSR but in relation to whole parties and nations . . .'

That, strangely enough, was all that Krushchev chose to say concerning Stalin's foreign policy between 1948-1953; a policy directed to the expansion of the Soviet Empire without necessarily involving Russia in war—but, nevertheless, taking grave risks. By February, 1948, after the Czechoslovakian *coup*, the limit of this expansion had been reached, so far as the Soviet satellites were concerned. There followed the Berlin blockade, which because of the Air-lift, failed. At the same time, it brought Russia to the very edge of war.

As if to off-set this failure, Stalin ostracized Yugoslavia, and when Tito displayed his independence, Stalin did his best to engineer an internal upheaval in that country. After yet another failure with the civil war in Greece, Stalin turned his attention to the Far East by giving aid to the Communists in Manchuria. Finally, in 1950, with a view to containing large American forces in the Far East, he instigated the Korean war, which continued without success until after his death, when the new régime immediately supported armistice negotiations.

Why was it Krushchev never mentioned these escapades of Stalin's, any one of which could have involved the USSR in a third world war? Why did he refer only to Tito and the Yugoslavian affair, which, after all, took place within the Communist orbit? Again and again during the last years of his life Stalin's conception of a Soviet Empire maintained by Soviet Armies, threatened the peace of the world. Yet we

*Author's italics.

find no mention of this suicidal policy in the 'secret' speech, other than those few sentences quoted above. Surely, to have proved to the Congress that Stalin's wilfulness and haughtiness was leading the country towards war would have given strength to Krushchev's argument against the cult of the individual? Why, then, did he refrain from making this telling point? Was he afraid that by so doing he would over-play his hand and so foster the suspicion that Stalin's death was a 'miracle' that had saved the Soviet people from the horrors of a third World War?

Whatever his reasons, Krushchev dropped the subject of Stalin's foreign policy after assuring his listeners as follows:

'We have carefully examined the case of Yugoslavia and have found a proper solution which is approved by the peoples of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia as well as by the working masses of all the people's democracies and by all progressive humanity. The liquidation of the abnormal relationship with Yugoslavia was done in the interest of the whole camp of Socialism, in the interest of strengthening peace in the whole world.'

Now, the wording of that last sentence cannot but strike the reader as odd. How better to liquidate that abnormal relationship than by liquidation of the man whose mania for greatness had created it?

Chapter XIX

THE BUREAUCRAT OF TERROR

WE HAVE NOW REACHED THAT POINT in Krushchev's speech when he startled his audience by suddenly referring to 'the affair of the doctor-plotters.'

In Chapter 6 we have already quoted a part of the First Secretary's brief and extremely ambiguous explanation of this famous scandal. He continued as follows:

'Shortly after the doctors were arrested we members of the Political Bureau received protocols with the doctors' confessions of guilt. After distributing these protocols Stalin told us, "You are blind like young kittens; what will happen without me? The country will perish because you do not know how to recognize enemies".'

'The case was so presented that no one could verify the facts on which the investigation was based. There was no possibility of trying to verify facts by contacting those who had made the confessions of guilt.

'We felt, however, that the case of the arrested doctors was questionable. We knew some of these people personally because they had once treated us. When we examined this "case" after Stalin's death, we found it to be fabricated from beginning to end.

'This ignominious "case" was set up by Stalin; he did not, however, have the time in which to bring it to an end—as he conceived that end—for this reason the doctors are still alive. Now all have been rehabilitated; they are working in the same places they were working before; they treat top individuals, not excluding members of the

Government; they have our full confidence; and they execute their duties honestly as they did before.

'In organising the various dirty and shameful cases, a very base role was played by the rabid enemy of our Party, an agent of a foreign intelligence service—Beria, who had stolen into Stalin's confidence. In what way could this provocateur gain such a position in the Party and the State, so as to become the first Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union and a member of the Central Committee Political Bureau? It has now been established that this villain had climbed up the Government ladder over an untold number of corpses.'

Let us dissect this statement and examine it thoroughly in the light of what has been written.

At the time of the doctor's arrest Stalin was in good health. Indeed, we have the evidence of Doctor Kitchlu, Señor Bravo, Mr. Menon and others to prove that he was perfectly well; in fact, in vigorous health and carrying his seventy-three lightly, in February, less than three weeks before he died. Seventy-three is no great age for a Georgian. Moreover, as we have said, it is a well-known fact that, like many old men, Stalin hated the mere thought of death, and it was never mentioned in his presence. Is it likely, then, that he would have spoken as Krushchev states? Would this man, to whom the very word death was anathema, have said, in effect; 'What will happen to you all when I die? When I am dead you will perish.'

Remember, Krushchev had said that 'Stalin was a very distrustful man—sickly suspicious . . . This sickly suspicion caused him to distrust even eminent Party workers whom he had known for years.' Yet Krushchev would have us believe that Stalin talked about what would happen when he was gone in front of members of the Political Bureau whom he did not trust further than he could see them.

Like the First Secretary's other anecdotes about Malenkov and Mikoyan, this story does not ring true. But, like those others, Krushchev told it with an ulterior motive. He wanted to create the impression in the minds of the delegates that at the time of the 'Doctors' Plot' Stalin was an old man; a vain old man preoccupied with death, yet fearing what would happen to Russia when the blind young kittens ruled in his stead.

Why could the facts on which the investigation into the 'Doctors' Plot' were based not be verified? According to Krushchev, neither he nor Mikoyan were cowards where Stalin was concerned. They had questioned his decisions and contradicted his opinions in the past. Yet, now, when the lives of these doctors, who had once treated them, were at stake, they never said a word. They believed in the innocence of these unfortunate men, but made no protest when they were handed the protocols of their 'confessions' which were in the familiar pattern of all those other 'confessions'. But, perhaps, Krushchev really expected to be believed when he said that it was not until they examined the 'case' after Stalin's death that they found it was fabricated from beginning to end.'

Having found out, why not clean up such a dirty and shameful case once and for all by telling the whole truth about it? Why not tell the delegates that far from being murdered by the Kremlin physicians, Comrade Zhdanov had died of angina pectoris and cardiac asthma in 1948, and Comrade Shcherbakov of a 'paralysis of the heart' in 1945? Surely, since the doctors were once more treating top individuals and members of the Government, amongst whom these particular diseases appeared so prevalent, the true facts should have been made known?

Would it not have cleared the air if Krushchev had told his listeners that, amongst Stalin's other manias, and sickly suspicions, was the one that his enemies were trying to poison him? It would have been so easy to have laid the blame on

Beria for the whole business. It would have been so convincing—not to say reassuring for their patients—if the First Secretary had handed out protocols from the rehabilitated physicians stating precisely what had really happened. But since he did none of these things, the ‘Doctors’ Plot’ must continue to remain a mystery.

It will remain a mystery, too, how Beria not only retained his position in the Party and the State after Stalin’s death, but was given back his old job at the head of the Ministries of State Security and Internal Affairs. Krushchev offers no explanation for that extraordinary situation. Yet, this is what he had to say about ‘the rabid enemy of the Party’:

‘Were there any signs that Beria was an enemy of the Party? Yes, there were. Already in 1937 at a Central Committee plenum, former People’s Commissar of Health Protection Kaminsky said Beria worked for the Mussavat intelligence service. But the Central Committee plenum had barely concluded when Kaminsky was arrested and then shot. Had Stalin examined Kaminsky’s statement? No, because Stalin believed in Beria, and that was enough for him. And when Stalin believed in anyone or anything, then no one could say anything which was contrary to his opinion; any one who would dare express opposition would have met the same fate as Kaminsky . . .’

It is only necessary to remark that this statement seems inconsistent with Krushchev’s previous statements about Stalin’s suspicious and distrustful nature.

As further proof of Beria’s duplicity, Krushchev followed his usual formula by quoting at length from the pages of Soviet Party History. He first read a long declaration made to the Central Committee by Snegov who, after being in prison for seventeen years, had been rehabilitated. This proved that in 1931 Beria had been directly responsible for the death of a certain Comrade Kartvelishvili.

Krushchev cited at great length and with a wealth of detail two further cases; that of the old Communist and friend of Lenin, Kedrov, shot at Beria's orders, and Ordzhonikidze, once a close associate of Stalin's, who after attempting to expose Beria, committed suicide.

These cases are only of interest to our investigation because they clearly illustrate how faithfully Krushchev stuck to the formula of producing evidence from the distant past in proving his case.

All that he had to say about Beria's recent criminal activities—about those 'heinous crimes aimed at physically exterminating honest people' and his 'criminal anti-Soviet designs' is contained in the following two sentences:

'Beria was unmasked by the Party's Central Committee shortly after Stalin's death. *As a result of the particularly detailed legal proceedings it was established that Beria had committed monstrous crimes and Beria was shot.*'*

That was all! Not a word of explanation. No mention of the seventy-six hour siege of Moscow. No reason given why Lavrenti Beria remained in high office for four months after the death of Stalin. Not a single quotation from those 'particularly detailed legal proceedings'. Nothing!

To paraphrase Krushchev's own words: the question arises why Beria, who had liquidated tens of thousands of Party and Soviet workers, was not unmasked *immediately after the death of Stalin?*

That question still remains unanswered. And probably it always will.

* Author's italics.

Chapter XX

TOWARDS THE MOTIVE

TIRELESSLY, RELENTLESSLY, the First Secretary's speech went on as the clock in the Spassky Tower of the Kremlin chimed out the hours of a new day.

'Comrades! The cult of the individual acquired such monstrous size chiefly because Stalin himself, using all conceivable methods, supported the glorification of his own person . . . Was it without Stalin's knowledge that many of the largest enterprises and towns were named after him? Was it without his knowledge that Stalin monuments were erected in the whole country—these "memorials to the living?" . . . Comrades! The cult of the individual has caused the employment of faulty principles in Party work and in economic activity . . . Comrades! If we sharply criticise to-day the cult of the individual which was so widespread during Stalin's life and if we speak about the many negative phenomena generated by this cult, which is so alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, various persons may ask: "How could it be? Stalin headed the Party and the country for thirty years and many victories were gained during his lifetime! Can we deny this?" In my opinion, the question can be asked in this manner only by those who are blind and hopelessly hypnotised by the cult of the individual, only by those who do not understand the essence of the revolution and of the Soviet State, only by those who do not understand, in a Leninist manner, the role of the Party and of the nation in the development of the Soviet society . . .'

Stalin was to blame for everything. That was the essence

of this part of the First Secretary's speech. And now that Stalin was dead, conditions were improving everywhere; on the collective farms, in the factories, and in Russia's relationship with foreign countries. Then, Krushchev said:

'Some comrades may ask us; where were the members of the Political Bureau and the Central Committee? Why did they not assert themselves against the cult of the individual in time? And why is this being done only now?'

The questions were pertinent. But the answers could scarcely have been less apposite.

'First of all', Krushchev explained, 'we have to consider the fact that the members of the Political Bureau viewed these matters in a different way at different times. Initially, many of them backed Stalin actively because Stalin was one of the strongest Marxists and his logic, his strength and his will greatly influenced the cadres and Party work.

'It is known that Stalin, after Lenin's death, especially during the first years, actively fought for Leninism against the enemies of the Lenin theory and against those who deviated . . . Later, however, Stalin, abusing his power more and more, began to fight eminent Party members and Government leaders and to use terrorist methods against honest Soviet people . . . Attempts to oppose groundless suspicions and charges resulted in the opponent falling victim to repression . . . It is clear that such conditions put every member of the Political Bureau in a very difficult situation. And when we also consider the fact that in the last years the Central Committee plenary sessions were not convened and that sessions of the Political Bureau occurred only occasionally, from time to time, then we will understand how difficult it was for any member of the Political Bureau to take a stand against one or another unjust or improper procedure against serious errors and shortcomings in the practices of leadership . . .'

In other words, none of the Party hierarchy dared to stand up to Stalin at the risk of being liquidated.

Krushchev then treated the delegates to another anecdote to illustrate the precarious position of members of the Central Committee at that time.

'In the situation which then prevailed', he told them, 'I have talked often with Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin. Once when we two were travelling in a car, he said, "It has happened sometimes that a man goes to Stalin on his invitation as a friend, and when he sits with Stalin, he does not know where he will go next—home or to gaol".'

If, in fact, Bulganin really did say that, one wonders whether he recalls the remark now as he sits, a lonely exile, discredited and dishonoured for having wavered in his support of First Secretary Krushchev in the latter's battle against Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich in 1957: Banished from Moscow, does the Marshal reflect upon how similar has been Krushchev's rise to power with that of Stalin's? If so, he must feel grateful that the new Master prefers to banish his old comrades instead of liquidating them.

However, to return to Krushchev's vindication of himself and his comrades for tolerating Stalin's monstrous behaviour.

'The importance of the Central Committee's Political Bureau,' he said, 'was reduced and its work was disorganised by the creation within the political Bureau of various commissions—the so-called "Quintets", "Sextets", "Septets" and "Novenaries"'. Here is, for instance, a resolution of the Political Bureau of October 3rd, 1946:—

'Stalin's proposal:—

1. The Political Bureau Commission for Foreign Affairs (Sextet) is to concern itself in the future, in addition to foreign affairs, also with matters of internal construction and domestic policy.
2. The Sextet is to add to its roster the Chairman of the

State Commission of Economic Planning of the USSR, Comrade Vozesensky, and is to be known as a Septet.

'Signed: Secretary of the Central Committee, J. Stalin.'

'What a terminology of a card player!' Krushchev exclaimed, amidst laughter. 'It is clear that the creation within the Political Bureau of this type of commission—"Quintets", "Sextets", "Septets" and "Novenaries"—was against the principle of collective leadership. The result of this was that some members of the Political Bureau were in this way kept away from participation in reaching the most important State matters.

'One of the oldest members of our Party, Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov, found himself in an almost impossible situation. For several years he was actually deprived of the right to participate in Political Bureau sessions. Stalin forbade him to attend the Political Bureau sessions and to receive documents. When the Political Bureau was in session and Comrade Voroshilov heard about it, he telephoned each time and asked whether he would be allowed to attend. Sometimes Stalin permitted it, but always showed his dissatisfaction.

'Because of his extreme suspicion, Stalin toyed also with the absurd and ridiculous suspicion that Voroshilov was an English agent.'

This revelation was greeted with laughter.

'It is true—an English agent!' Krushchev assured the delegates. 'A special tapping device was installed in his home to listen to what was said there', he added.

At the time of writing, Voroshilov is still in power. But, when we consider what has since become of the subject of Krushchev's other anecdotes, we cannot but ask: For how much longer?

'By unilateral decision', the First Secretary continued, 'Stalin had also separated one other man from the work of

the Political Bureau—Andrev Andreyevich Andreyev. This was one of the most unbridled acts of wilfulness.

'Let us consider the first Central Committee plenum *after** the Nineteenth Party Congress when Stalin, in his talk at the plenum, characterised Vyacheslav Ivanovich Molotov and Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan and suggested that these old workers of our Party were guilty of *some baseless charges*.

'It is not excluded that had Stalin remained at the helm for another several months, Comrades Molotov and Mikoyan would probably have not delivered any speeches at this Congress.

*'Stalin evidently had plans to finish off the old members of the Political Bureau. He often stated that Political Bureau members should be replaced by new ones.**

'His proposal, *after* the Nineteenth Congress, concerning the selection of twenty-five persons to the Central Committee Presidium was *aimed at the removal* of the old Political Bureau members and the bringing in of less-experienced persons so that these would extol him in all sorts of ways.

'We can assume that this was also a design for *the future annihilation** of the old Political Bureau members and in this way the cover for all shameful acts of Stalin, acts which we are now considering.'

Let us consider these revealing words with the greatest care.

Firstly, let us examine Krushchev's statement that at a plenum of the Central Committee *after* the Nineteenth Congress in October 1952, Stalin laid some 'baseless charges' against Molotov and Mikoyan. Since he did not say what these charges were, it is useless to speculate as to their character. However, according to Krushchev, Stalin 'suggested that these old Party workers were guilty'. How is it then that they not only escaped punishment but retained their positions in the Government? Having made such accusations against them in

*Author's italics.

the presence of the Central Committee, it seems most unlikely that Stalin would have taken no further action.

Krushchev states that these charges were laid at the plenum of the Central Committee; that is on October 17th, 1952. Therefore, his sinister speculation as to what might have happened to Molotov and Mikoyan had Stalin 'remained at the helm for another several months' is pointless.

Stalin, in fact, lived for more than four months after that meeting.

Secondly, let us examine Krushchev's statements that Stalin 'evidently had plans to finish off the old members of the Political Bureau' and that he had 'a design for the future annihilation' of the old members of that body.

Since Krushchev did not see fit to offer a shred of evidence in support of those astonishing accusations, let us accept them as they stand.

Krushchev himself has already made it palpably clear that Stalin had rendered the members of the Political Bureau ineffectual by splitting them into 'Quintets' and 'Septets'. Their posts were mere sinecures. None of them had any voice in the Government of their country. None of them dared to express an opinion unless it echoed Stalin's views.

Yet, Stalin had planned to 'finish them off'.

If Krushchev is to be believed, Stalin was determined to rid himself of the very men whom he had trained into submission and to replace them by others.

Why?

In all the years they had served him, these old members of the Political Bureau had never questioned his judgment or protested against his despotism. But now, suddenly, *after* the plenum of the Central Committee on October 17th, 1952, Stalin made up his mind to 'finish off' the 'blind young kittens' whose eyes were so conveniently shut to all his wilfulness and brutalities.

Why?

Krushchev would have us believe that having gone to all the trouble of splitting them up into harmless little groups, Stalin immediately decided to annihilate them all.

Why?

Is it possible that those little 'Sextets' and 'Novenarics' were not so harmless? Could it have been that, smarting under the Secretary-General's open contempt, the old members of the Political Bureau had begun intriguing behind his back? Is it not within the bounds of probability that another several months *after* the plenum of the Central Committee, in January, 1953, to be precise, Stalin discovered that these slighted and moody men were planning to poison him with the connivance of certain doctors in attendance on the Kremlin?

Chapter XXI

AN ANALYSIS

'COMRADES! The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had manifested with a new strength the unshakable unity of our Party, its cohesiveness around the Central Committee, its resolute will to accomplish the great task of building Communism.

'And the fact that we present in all their ramifications the basic problems of overcoming the cult of the individual which is alien to Marxism-Leninism, as well as the problem of liquidating its burdensome consequences, is evidence of the great moral and political strength of our Party.

'We are absolutely certain that our Party, armed with the historical resolutions of the Twentieth Congress, will lead the Soviet people along the Leninist path to new successes, to new victories.

'Long live the victorious banner of our Party—Leninism!' With those words, amidst prolonged and tumultuous applause, ending in a standing ovation, Nikita Krushchev concluded his speech.

It may well be asked, why did he ever make it?

The wishful thinking which he indulged in that it would remain a secret was short-lived. Less than a month after the Twentieth Congress, as a direct result of the shock of the 'secret' speech, there were riots in Tiflis. Within a matter of weeks, the speech was fully reported by the foreign Press, and having read it, thousands of loyal Communists all over the world, who until then had given blind allegiance to the Party, renounced Communism for ever.

To claim as Krushchev did that in order to destroy the cult

of the individual it was necessary to make such a fearful indictment of Stalin, is not true.

We have seen how quickly Stalin's name was forgotten in the USSR. We have seen how calmly and with what few tears the Russian people received the news of his death. After their brief moment of mourning, they went about the State's business as if nothing had happened. Incredibly, Stalin's death made scarcely a ripple on the waters. Indeed, the new leaders who, as we have also seen, so greatly feared that the shock of Stalin's passing might cause popular demonstrations, had good reason to be thankful for the fact that nowhere in the whole of the USSR was there the slightest sign of unrest.

If more workers than usual queued patiently to enter the mausoleum in the Red Square now that Stalin lay beside Lenin, it was probably out of curiosity to see in the flesh the man known to them only through his photographs. The novelty would soon wear off.

Left to the Russian climate, the statues of Stalin would crack and crumble. Except culturally, they did no harm to the people.

In numerous ways, the new régime had already demonstrated that under collective leadership terrorism was ended. Beria, the arch-assassin, had been publicly discredited and shot. The wings of the dreaded secret police had been clipped. Under the Decree on Amnesty, the thousands released from places of detention had returned to their homes all over the country as living evidence of the tolerance of the new rulers of the USSR. After Stalin's death, the whole vast machinery of Soviet propaganda went to work to spread the doctrine of Leninism and collegiality at home. While abroad, Lenin's own phrase 'peaceful co-existence' was freely used to express the new Government's foreign policy. And to foster this illusion, first Malenkov, and then Krushchev and Bulganin set out on a round of visits to shake hands with bourgeois imperialists.

Then, suddenly and without a word of warning, three years after Stalin's death Krushchev launches his bitter, recriminating attack.

To what purpose?

So far as the delegates to the Congress were concerned, the large majority must have been aware of the terror that had dominated Russia for thirty years, even if there were not many left who knew the awful details as revealed by Krushchev.

If we accept the fact that Krushchev was not really so naïve as to think his speech would remain a secret from the outside world, why did he go to such lengths to confirm what Stalin's enemies had so long believed?

Why, then, and with what object did Krushchev make his speech?

We believe he delivered it to prove a case of justifiable homicide—the killing of Stalin.

We believe that he delivered it so that if at any time he and his accomplices should stand accused of Stalin's murder, he could answer: 'I have proved to you all what manner of man he was. Had we not the right to kill him?'

It must be remembered that at the time when Krushchev made the 'secret' speech, in February, 1956, the battle for power still raged in the Kremlin and, although he was gaining ground, his position was not yet secured. The opposition was still strong. Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, Shepilov and Bulganin still had some fight left in them. And all of them knew what had happened to Stalin. Any one of them could have used that knowledge as a weapon to destroy Krushchev. That is why in his speech he was at pains to implicate them all. That was the purpose of the little anecdotes, not only about the opposition but about his supporters as well—Mikoyan, Voroshilov and Zhukov—in fact, all the members of the old

Politburo. It was imperative to establish that every one of them had a motive for murdering Stalin.

Let us therefore consider the salient points of the 'secret' speech together with what we have already written in this light.

Chapter XXII

RECONSTRUCTION

WHENEVER POSSIBLE IN THIS CHAPTER we will use Krushchev's own words together with the evidence previously presented in our endeavour to solve the mystery of the death of Stalin.

As far back as 1922, after he had suffered his first stroke, Lenin began worrying about his protégé, Stalin. Since becoming General Secretary, Joseph Vissarionovich had accumulated immeasurable power into his hands, and it was not at all certain whether he always used that power with the required care. There were times—and they were becoming more frequent—when Stalin was not only excessively rude, but intolerant and capricious. So, Lenin thought fit to write a letter to the Tenth Party Congress, which he was too ill to attend, warning the members about Stalin's negative characteristics.

The Congress thought that Lenin's 'Testament', as they called it, would prove a sufficient warning to Stalin to mend his ways. Instead of replacing him by another kinder and more loyal man, as Lenin had suggested, they allowed him to continue as General Secretary.

But far from mending his manners, Stalin became more rude and more capricious as the years went by. He did not mellow with age. The negative characteristics which, in Lenin's time, were only incipient, developed steadily. And during the last years of his life they acquired an absolutely insufferable character.

Stalin ceased to tolerate colleguality in leadership and began to practise brutal violence towards anyone who opposed his capricious and despotic character or who ran contrary to his

concepts. Anyone who tried to prove his viewpoint was doomed to removal from the leading executive and to subsequent moral and physical annihilation.

This despotism displayed itself at the Seventeenth Party Congress and after, when Stalin ordered no fewer than ninety-eight innocent members and candidates to be arrested and shot as 'enemies of the people'—a phrase he himself had originated.

From then on, Stalin, using his unlimited power, did not even trouble to inform the Central Committee of his decisions. Indeed, plenums of the Committee were hardly ever called. Not once during all the years of the patriotic war did a single meeting take place.

After the war the situation became even more complicated. Stalin became ever more capricious, irritable and brutal; in particular his suspicion grew. His persecution mania reached unbelievable dimensions, so that many workers were becoming enemies before his very eyes. Worse still, Stalin separated himself from the Collective even more. Everything was decided by him alone, without any consideration for anyone or anything.

It is true to say that Stalin was sickly suspicious, and those who worked with him knew it. He would look at a man and say: 'Why are your eyes so shifty to-day? Why are you turning so much to-day and avoiding looking me directly in the eyes?'

This sickly suspicion created in him a general distrust even towards eminent party workers whom he had known for years. Everywhere and in everything he saw 'enemies', 'two-facers' and 'spies'.

Because of his extreme suspicion, Stalin toyed with the absurd and ridiculous idea that Voroshilov might be an English agent. A tapping device was installed in his home to listen to what was said there. Voroshilov found himself in an almost

impossible position. Stalin forbade him to attend the Political Bureau sessions.

Consider what happened at the meeting of the Political Bureau in 1946. It was then that the importance of the Central Committee was reduced by the creation of various commissions—the so-called ‘Quintets’, ‘Sextets’, ‘Septets’ and ‘Novenaries.’ Stalin proposed these innovations, with the result that some members of the Political Bureau were kept away from participation in reaching most important State decisions.

Again, consider what took place just after the Nineteenth General Congress, in October, 1952, the first to be convened for thirteen years. Stalin’s proposal concerning the selection of twenty-five persons to the Central Committee Presidium was aimed at the removal of the old members of the Political Bureau and the bringing in of less-experienced persons so that these would extol him in all sorts of ways.

Indeed, it can be assumed that this was also designed for the future annihilation of the old Political Bureau members.

At the first Central Committee plenum after the Nineteenth Congress, in his talk at the plenum, Stalin characterised Molotov and Mikoyan and suggested that these old workers were guilty of some baseless charges. Indeed, had Stalin remained at the helm for another several months Molotov and Mikoyan would probably not have made speeches at the Twentieth Congress. It is evident that Stalin had plans to finish off the old members of the Political Bureau.

That, then, was the situation in the autumn of 1952, according to Krushchev, as he described it in his own words.

We now come to January, 1953, and the ‘affair of the doctor-plotters’. It will be recalled that the woman doctor Timashuk, who was probably influenced by someone, wrote Stalin a letter in which she declared that the doctors were applying supposedly improper methods of medical treatment.

Having received this letter, Stalin reached an immediate conclusion that there were doctor-plotters in the Soviet Union. He issued orders to arrest a group of eminent Soviet medical specialists, some of who had personally treated Krushchev and others in the Kremlin. More than that, Stalin issued advice on the conduct of the investigating of the plot and the methods of interrogation to be used against the doctors. He instructed that one of them, Professor Vinogradov, was to be put in chains, and another beaten. He told the then Minister of State Security, Comrade Ignatiev, curtly: 'If you do not obtain confessions from the doctors we will shorten you by a head.'

Shortly after the arrest of the doctors, Stalin distributed protocols of their confessions of guilt to the members of the Politburo, including Krushchev, and told them: 'You are blind like young kittens; what will happen without me? The country will perish because you do not know how to recognise enemies.'

Here, we will pause to ask the question: Does that anecdote ring true? We do not think that it does. Like Krushchev's others, we believe it to be a lie. In this instance, its purpose was to draw a red-herring across the scent by suggesting that Stalin did not suspect any of the old members of the Politburo of being involved in the 'Doctors' Plot'. They were merely helpless creatures and because their eyes were shut, they had no idea there were evil workers in the Party who were planning to poison the General Secretary.

So far as Stalin was concerned, the 'Doctors' Plot' was not a matter for jest. The moment he heard about it, he acted immediately, and made it his personal business to find out the truth. He even threatened to hang his Minister of State Security if he did not obtain confessions from the doctors. And it is reasonable to suppose Ignatiev wasted no time in executing his orders.

Who was the mysterious 'someone' who influenced or ordered Lidya Tamashuk to write to Stalin?

It will be recalled that when Krushchev was discussing the Soviet war films, the theme of whose propaganda, he declared, was praising Stalin as a military genius, he said: 'Let us recall the film "The Fall of Berlin". Here Stalin alone acts, he issues orders in the hall in which there are many empty chairs and only one man approaches him and reports something—that is Poskrebyshev, his loyal shield-bearer.' Now, that remark caused laughter in the hall, as we believe Krushchev intended. He wanted to de-bunk not only the film but Poskrebyshev; to turn him into a figure for ridicule, so that those few who knew him would forget what he had really been like. A sinister, shadowy figure, never far from his master's side—a grey, ghost of a man, who had disappeared like a ghost without trace the day that Stalin died.

We believe the loyal shield-bearer disappeared because he was liquidated by the very men whom he had unmasked as the instigators of the 'Doctors' Plot'.

What other reason could there have been for Poskrebyshev's disappearance except that he knew too much? Nor even Krushchev questions his loyalty to Stalin, nor since the latter had chosen him as his personal aide-de-camp, could it possibly be doubted.

As we have already said, it is extremely unlikely that Stalin would have planned to finish off all the old members of the Politburo unless they had given him cause. And what better cause could they have given him than by plotting his murder aided by his own doctors? Can it be doubted that, having discovered such a plot, Stalin's persecution mania would not have reached such dimensions that he would attempt to annihilate the entire Politburo?

He had done it before, when he had ordered those ninety-eight members and candidates to the Seventeenth Congress to

be shot, and he would do it again—if he remained at the helm . . .

And in January, 1953, there was no reasoning for supposing that Stalin would not. We have the evidence of Mr. Menon, Doctor Kitchlu and others to prove that the capricious, irritable, and distrustful old man of seventy-three was in vigorous health. The members of the Politburo had the evidence of their own eyes.

Seven weeks elapsed between the announcement of the 'Doctors' Plot' and that of Stalin's death. Time enough, it may be thought, to mete out summary justice to the plotters.

Yet Krushchev had stated that Stalin did 'not have time' in which to bring the case of the Kremlin doctors to an end—'as he conceived that end'. But even if Stalin had died a fortnight before March 5th, which is possible, he would still have had the time. On the evidence of Mr. Menon, we know that he was alive and well on February 17th, more than five weeks after the announcement of the exposure of the plot. During that period, it should be recalled, several prominent people had already died suddenly, suffered heart attacks, or disappeared into thin air, including Mekhliis, the Minister of Security, Doctor Frumkin, and General Shetemenko. The latter, mentioned as one of the proposed 'victims' of the doctor-assassins, was Chief of the Soviet General Staff. Twelve days before Stalin's death, he was relieved of his post, and then vanished. During that period, too, countless others had been arrested.

When Krushchev said that time had saved the doctors' lives, he was deliberately confusing the issue. His conjecture that Molotov and Mikoyan might not have addressed the Congress had Stalin lived for 'another several months' was made with the same intent. He wanted to allay the suspicion lurking in the minds of many of the delegates that the members of the Politburo were involved in either the 'Doctors' Plot' or

Stalin's timely demise. His purpose was to justify Stalin's murder; not to reveal who did it.

In any attempt to solve the mystery of Stalin's death, time must play an important part. From the moment the doctors were arrested, time was running short for a great many people. Indeed, nothing could save them except a miracle—of time.

If the doctors had hatched their plot amongst themselves, let us suppose, to bring about such a miracle by poisoning Stalin, they would have been liquidated immediately. The very fact that they were not is proof that Stalin needed time to find out how many were actually implicated. And the greater the number, the more time he would have needed.

Paradoxically, Krushchev's own words can be used to prove our point. Stalin did not have time to end the case—*'as he conceived that end.'*

Stalin conceived not merely the deaths of a dozen or so Kremlin physicians who were ostensibly plotting to kill a number of ageing Marshals. He conceived the unmasking and finishing off of Beria, Krushchev, Mikoyan, Voroshilov, and the rest of the old members of the Politburo.

But they did not give him time.

Chapter XXIII

THE DEATH OF STALIN

AT THIS POINT we must state that on the evidence of Krushchev's speech we can no longer accept the belief that Stalin died a natural death. We cannot even accept as true the statement that he suffered a cerebral haemorrhage, or the theory that his enemies seized upon his illness as a heaven-sent chance to hasten his end. If such had been the case, Krushchev's speech would never have been delivered.

But it was delivered. If it is a damning indictment of Stalin, it is an equally damning indictment of Krushchev and his confederates, for Stalin's murder. We have said that it was a plea of justifiable homicide. However, as such we are not concerned with it, for we are not concerned with the ethics of the case. Although we must confess in our opinion ethics played no part in the killing of Stalin. In the final analysis, if he had lived, his assassins would have died. It was their lives or his. That is a succinct summing up of the case.

Who killed Stalin? The answer can only be that it is improbable that we shall ever know the identity of his executioner. He must have been someone who was in the habit of visiting Stalin regularly and therefore unlikely to arouse his sickly suspicions.

A doctor? In the circumstances, we think not.

A close friend, whom he trusted? Lavrenti Beria, for example? Perhaps.

A genial companion, with whom he might sometimes drink a glass of vodka? Nitika Krushchev, possibly? Again, perhaps.

Both men aspired to take Stalin's place. And while one

failed where the other succeeded, undoubtedly both were deeply involved in the murder.

How was Stalin murdered? Again, we shall probably never know. It may be assumed, however, that the method used was governed by the fact that the body would be embalmed and placed on exhibition. Therefore, it is likely that Stalin was poisoned.

To a lesser degree than either Beria or Krushchev, a large number of others were involved, for the murder of Stalin, carried out with immediacy, was nevertheless perfectly organised. A trifle too perfectly, perhaps. In their anxiety to make their victim's death appear natural, we cannot help but feel that, as is so often the case, the murderers overplayed their hand. For, as we have said, with their many signatories, wealth of detail, and frequency, the bulletins did give rise to doubt in cynical minds.

It must be admitted, too, there was something suspicious about the timing and precision with which Beria's MVD troops surrounded Moscow. But even more dubious was the alacrity with which Beria was restored to office as head of the Secret Police.

Indeed, it is time to reconsider Beria's role in the light of the 'secret' speech.

There is no need to stress with what bitterness and savagery Krushchev attacked Beria's memory. The speech was almost as much an indictment of the late Minister of State Security as it was of his master the General Secretary.

It remains to ask why?

Unlike his master's, Beria's name had been publicly blackened before death.

Why, then, the stream of invective and abuse? Why the recriminations? Why the use of such phrases as 'Beria who murdered thousands of Communists', 'this rabid enemy of our Party', 'this villain who climbed up the Government ladder

over an untold number of corpses', 'this abject provocateur', 'this vile enemy?'

Why?

In his determination that the evil that Beria did will live after him, we are left with the feeling that Krushchev harbours a great personal hatred against the dead man. And we wonder why?

It is not impossible that Beria was restored to his former office in recognition for his part in Stalin's murder, after which he may or may not have attempted to seize power by surrounding Moscow with his troops. We are inclined to the theory that this was, in fact, a demonstration of strength staged to deter the Army from attempting a *coup d'état*. However, there is not the slightest doubt that afterwards—and very soon afterwards—Beria began to use his immeasurable power for his own ends. The struggle between him and Krushchev was to the death. At some point in that struggle—possibly when Krushchev had won the alliance of the Army—realising he was losing, it may well be that Beria threatened to expose Krushchev as Stalin's murderer and it would have been to his advantage whether the allegation were true or not. And for this reason, he was shot.

What evidence can we offer in support of this? The evidence of Krushchev's own words. The evidence that he considered it necessary to go to such lengths in reiterating Beria's *past* crimes when they were well-known to all the delegates at the Congress. The evidence of Krushchev's insistence that until the very end Beria was at one and the same time Stalin's faithful servant and evil genius.

'Why was not Beria unmasked during Stalin's life?' he cries in horror. And then immediately answers his own question: 'Because he utilised very skilfully Stalin's weaknesses; feeding him with suspicions, he assisted Stalin in everything, and acted with his support'.

So, no man dared to lay a finger on Beria until Stalin was dead!

What else did Krushchev say? Only this: 'Beria was unmasked *shortly* after Stalin's death. As a result of the particularly detailed legal proceedings it was established that Beria had committed monstrous crimes, and Beria was shot'.

More red herrings across the scent. More generalization about time! However, from this vague and unsatisfying statement it can be gathered that the lapse of time between Beria's arrest and his trial was intended to prove that the new Government's methods of justice were different from those of Stalin. Many months, therefore, were needed for the 'particularly detailed legal proceedings' in order that Beria's trial, heard in camera, should be a just one. No 'protocols' of these proceedings were, of course, supplied to the delegates.

If further evidence should be needed, we would cite the fact that of all those who were involved in any way as accomplices to the murder, Beria was the only one to be shot. His fate, as Krushchev no doubt intended, acted as a deterrent to others who might have attempted to play his game.

Nevertheless, it is possible that in 1956, Krushchev feared that in the heat of the struggle for power or in the moment of defeat, one or another of his opponents would emulate Beria. And so, to safeguard himself and, at the same time, to implicate his friends and enemies alike in Stalin's murder, he delivered his 'secret' speech.

He achieved his objective.

A few days after the 20th Congress, on February 29th, 1956, Krushchev was appointed Chairman of the newly created Bureau of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party for the Affairs of the Russian Federal Republic. Thus, his powers were extended far beyond those even of Stalin.

Fifteen months later, at a plenary session of the Central

Committee, it was found that 'the anti-Party group Malenkov-Kaganovich-Molotov had for the past three to four years run counter to the course of the Party policy. These comrades had entered upon a path of group struggle against the leadership of the Party. Having discussed among themselves on an anti-Party basis, they aimed to change the policy of the Party and to lead the Party back to those incorrect methods of leadership which were condemned by the 20th Party Congress'.

The Committee resolved, first, 'to condemn the factional activities of the anti-Party group of Malenkov-Kaganovich-Molotov, and of Shepilov who joined them, as incompatible with the Leninist principles of the Party. Second, to expel these comrades from membership of the Presidium and from the Central Committee . . .

This resolution was passed unanimously by all members of the Central Committee, with one abstention—in the person of Comrade Molotov.'

Marshal Bulganin has since followed these comrades into the wilderness.

Having branded them all potential murderers, Krushchev could afford to treat them with magnanimity now that he himself had climbed to the top of the Government ladder, not over an untold number of corpses, but certainly over that of Beria and, in all probability, that of Stalin as well.