

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF STALIN' S DEATH

There is much confusion in history regarding the question how Stalin really died. Perhaps this treatise can explain some important details. Unfortunately it is questionable if the truth of Stalin's death really will come out, because, similar to Karl Marx,¹ but to an incomparably larger extent, many tracks have been covered up and a lot of sources destroyed.²

1) LITERATURE

Many books dealing with Stalin have of course been written. Perhaps still the most famous one is that written by Dmitri Volkogonov, "Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy."³ A recent book giving a lot of new information is that just mentioned (footnote 1) of the twin brothers Roy and Zhores Medvedev, "The Unknown Stalin." Also very important is the Khrushchev-biography of William Taubman, "Khrushchev."⁴ Perhaps the best work written so far (2004) in the twenty first century⁵ is that of Anne Applebaum: GULAG.⁶ But however brilliant it may be: there can be no doubt that the author knows even (much???) more than she reports in her book.⁷ Unfortunately, for this topic it can only be used marginally.

But, may be, the most important work until now regarding Stalin's death (and perhaps also of his life) is published by Edvard Radzinsky: Stalin.⁸ It seems that that author gives the most exact explanations about this case. However: Radzinsky's book

¹ Letter from August Bebel to Karl Kautsky: "Wir haben ja die schlimmsten dieser Briefe beseitigt, die andern stark gemildert." ("We have in fact eliminated the worst of these letters, the others strongly modified.") More details: Loew, Konrad, Der Mythos Marx und seine Macher (The Legend Marx and its Doers), Munich: Langen Mueller 2000, pp. 153-163, 351-358.

² Many details: Medvedev, Roy and Medvedev, Zhores, The Unknown Stalin. New York Overlook, 2004, pp. 65-101.

³ Volkogonov, Dmitri, Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1988

⁴ Taubman, William, Khrushchev. New York: Norton, 2003.

⁵ I.e. regarding history, human geography, politics and ethnology combined

⁶ Applebaum, Anne, GULAG. A History. New York: Doubleday 2003. There has been also published a shortened German publication: Der GULAG, Berlin, Siedler 2003. One wonders why the German version has been shortened.

⁷ Applebaum, Anne, Between East and West. New York: Pantheon Books 1994.

⁸ Radzinsky, Edvard, Stalin. New York: Anchor Books 1996. The playwright Edvard Radzinsky has written at least two more non-fiction books: "The Last Tsar," New York, Anchor Books 1992 and "The Rasputin File," New York, Doubleday 2000.

is heavily controversial.

Zhores and Roy Medvedev, state:

“A more detailed,⁹ although one-sided, negative biography of Stalin has been attempted by the well-known Soviet playwright Edvard Radzinsky. This book, with the straightforward title *Stalin*, was published in 1997, but as the author explains in the introduction, he first began writing it in 1969. Like Volkogonov, Radzinsky was given access to all the archives, including the APRF.¹⁰In short, the book does not contain any fundamentally new material.”¹¹

Some lines below Zhores and Roy Medvedev point out:

The best new biography of recent years is that by Yevgeny Gromov, *Stalin, Power and Art*, published in 1998.¹² Its approach is original and it is a truly serious work, interesting and objective and based on a comprehensive use of both archival and previously published materials. The book covers the entire course of Stalin's working life but deals with only one aspect of his activity: his role in the formation of Soviet culture as a distinct phenomenon, different in form and content from what was then called Western or 'bourgeois' culture. We are given a comprehensive picture of Stalin as a young poet, as an author and editor, and as a harsh censor and critic of plays and films, music and literature. The book virtually ignores the major events of Soviet history – the Party battles of the 1920s, collectivization, industrialization, terror, the war – where Stalin played a rather more direct and decisive role than in music or ballet. The author set himself a quite different task and has succeeded admirably in accomplishing it.”¹³ One question may be allowed: Can there really be written a good Stalin-biography ignoring all these just mentioned facts?

2) HOW OLD WAS STALIN< AS HE DIED?

That is surely a very important question. Still, in most encyclopedias and Almanacs there is to be read that Stalin was born in 1879.¹⁴ But Edvard Radzinsky knows

⁹ Compared with Dmitri Volkogonov

¹⁰ Presidential Archive: Medvedev, Stalin p. 327.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 74.

¹² Yevgeny Gromov, *Stalin. Vlast i iskusstvo* (Moscow: Respublika, 1998). Medvedev, Stalin pp. 74, 320.

¹³ Medvedev Zhores and Roy, Stalin pp. 74-75.

¹⁴ PEARS cyclopaedia 2003 – 2004, London 2003, p. B57.

TIME Almanac 2004, p. 312.

The WORLD Almanac and Book of Facts 2004, p. 219.

otherwise:

“I am sitting in the famous Central Party Archive. I have before me a photocopy of the entry in the records of the Cathedral of the Assumption at Gori registering the birth of Joseph Dzhugashvili. ‘1878. Born December 6.¹⁵ Christened December 17, parents Vissarion Ivanovich Dzhugashvili, peasant, and his lawful wedded wife, Ekaterina Georgievna, residents of the township of Gori. Godfather – Tsikhitatrishvili, peasant, resident of Gori.’ The sacrament was performed by Archpriest Khakalov, assisted by Subdeacon Kvinikidze.”¹⁶

Radzinsky further:

“The date given here is no mistake. The same archive contains young Joseph Dzhugashvili’s school-leaving certificate, issued by the Gori Junior Seminary. It reads: ‘Born on the sixth day of the month of December 1878,’ Here too we find a curriculum vitae written by Stalin himself in 1920. The year 1878 is given in his own handwriting.”¹⁷

Roy Medvedev confirms this date of birth:¹⁸

Only in 1990 were historians able to obtain access to documents from church archives and other local sources. They were quite surprised to discover that Stalin was not born on 21 December 1879, as stated in all the biographies, but in fact a year earlier. In the first part of the register of births, marriages and deaths of the Uspensky church in Gori, it is recorded that on 6 December 1878 a son, Joseph, was born to the Orthodox Christian peasant Vissarion Ivanovich Dzhugashvili and his lawful wife Yekaterina Gavrilovna, residents of Gori,. The baby was christened on 17 December by the Archpriest Khakhanov, assisted by the subdeacon, Kvinikadze. The same date of birth is on the school leaving certificate, issued by the Gori Junior Seminary when the young Dzhugashvili graduated with honours in June 1894.¹⁹

Once more Radzinsky:

¹⁵ I.e. December 18th 1878 Gregorian style. At this time the difference between the ancient Russian calendar and the Gregorian was 12 days. From March 13th 1900 on (ancient Russian calendar February 29th, same year, a date the Gregorian calendar did never have) till today the difference is 13 days. The official Soviet calendar was acquainted to the Gregorian on February 14th, 1918.

¹⁶ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 12.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Medvedev, Stalin pp. 313-314.

¹⁹ Izvestiya TsK KPSS, 1990, No. 11, pp. 132-3; Medvedev, Stalin p. 326.

As early as December 1922, Stalin's secretary Tovstukha makes out a new CV for him, in which he alters the year of his birth to 1879, and the day to December 21. From then onward, our hero avoided writing his own CV. His secretaries did it for him. The fictitious date was entered in their handwriting. As always, it had nothing to do with him. The false date became official.”²⁰

Regarding why Stalin ordered to alter his day of birth Radzinsky gives some hints,²¹ but the real reason seems to be unknown till today. Maybe that this was in connection with Stalin's intentions to "Russificate" himself and to cover up all his Georgian tracks.²²

But that means: as Stalin died, he was 74 years old.

3) WHAT DO WE KNOW FOR SURE?

It can exactly be said that Stalin suffered a stroke on Sunday, March 1st, 1953. And it is completely known that he died four days later, on. March 5th, 1953, at 21.50 h. However: this did not happen in the Kremlin, as was officially announced at this time, but in his dacha (=villa), which he possessed in Kuntsevo near Moscow and was called the "nearer dacha.”²³ It was this a state-secret. Only Stalin's relatives, friends, some servants, (body-) guards and noted Soviet politicians knew of this possession. This dacha was built in 1934.²⁴ It is also confirmed that in the early hours of that day Stalin got his stroke, i.e. between midnight and 4h in the morning, he was visited by four leading figures of the Kremlin: Georgy Malenkov, Nikolai Bulganin, Nikita Khrushchev and the chairman of the Soviet secret service, Lavrenty Beria. Stalin had left Moscow after February 17 1953, staying in his nearer dacha. The reason why he did so is unknown. It seems that he was not specially sick. As the main witness, Pyotr Lozgagev (he will be discussed later) roughly explained: "The boss²⁵ was amiable, whereas when he felt ill, his mood would change, and it was best not to go near him.”²⁶ And Nikita Khrushchev recalled:

"He was choking boisterously, jabbing me playfully in the stomach with his finger,

²⁰ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 12.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 12-14.

²² More concerning Stalin as a Russian Nationalist: Medvedev, Zhores, Stalin pp. 261-276.

²³ During his lifetime Stalin possessed some dachas.

²⁴ Medvedev, Zhores, Stalin, p. 26.

²⁵ By his servants and bodyguards Stalin, of course secretly, was always called "the Boss."

²⁶ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 570.

and calling me 'Mikita,' with a Ukrainian accent, as he always did when he was in a good mood."²⁷

So why had Stalin left Moscow for his dacha? Maybe he had gone to work out his last apocalyptic plans and finished them now. Therefore, perhaps, he was so lucky.

4) KHRUSHCHEV'S STATEMENTS

Only one of Stalin's comrades-in-arms has made a nearer description respecting the circumstances of Stalin's death: Nikita Khrushchev. And he tells as follows:

"I suddenly got a call from Malenkov. 'The Chekists'²⁸ (he mentioned a name) 'have rung from Stalin's place. They're very worried, they say something's happened to Stalin. We'd better get out there. I've already phoned Beria and Bulganin. Go straight out to Stalin's place. I'll be on my way, and so will the others.' I called for a car immediately.....We agreed not to go straight up to the dacha, but to call at the duty room first.

We looked in at the duty room and asked: 'What's wrong?' They explained that Stalin always rang at about 11 in the evening, and asked for tea.....This time he hadn't. The Chekists said they'd sent Matryona Petrovna [Butusova] to reconnoiter – she waited at table, a person of very limited intelligence, but honest and devoted to Stalin. She came back and said that Comrade Stalin was lying on the floor, and that the floor under him was wet., he'd wet himself. The Chekists had picked Stalin up and put him on the couch in the little dining room. When they told us what had happened, and that he was now asleep, we thought that it would be rather embarrassing if we turned up there while he was in such an unseemly state. So we went back home."²⁹

Khrushchev further:

"After a short time there was another ring. Malenkov was on the line. He said, 'The boys have rung again from Comrade Stalin's place. They say there really is something wrong with Comrade Stalin. Matryona Petrovna did say, when we sent her in, that he was sleeping peacefully, but it isn't an ordinary sleep.' We shall have to go again. We agreed that the doctors would have to be called in."³⁰

²⁷ Taubman, Khrushchev p. 236.

²⁸ Stalin's servants and (body-) guards were called "Chekists."

²⁹ Radzinsky, Stalin pp. 572-573.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 574.

5) A. T. RYBIN

On March 5 1977, the 24th anniversary of Stalin's death, A. T. Rybin, a former guard of Stalin (he quit in 1935), organized a little gathering, inviting some people, including several members of the guard who had been at the nearer dacha around the time when Stalin died, namely Mikhail Starotsin, Vasily Tukov and Pyotr Lozgachev. At least till 1995 his memoirs lay unpublished in the Museum of the Revolution. Dmitry Volkogonov had a conversation with Rybin, who informed him that it was not, as Khrushchev maintained, the maid Butusova but Mikhail Starotsin who found Stalin lying on the floor after a stroke. Therefore Volkogonov insists on Starotsin having seen Stalin first after his misfortune. But Radzinsky knew that this could not be correct because he had read Rybin's memoirs. Rybin first recorded matters on which they all agreed:

On the night of February 28-March 1, members of the Politburo watched a film at the Kremlin. After this they were driven to the nearer dacha. Those who joined Stalin there were Beria, Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Bulganin. All of whom remained there until 4.00 A.M.³¹ The duty officers on guard that day were M. Starotsin and his assistant Tukov. Orlov, the commandant of the dacha, was off duty, and his assistant, Peter Lozgachev, was deputizing for him. M. Butusova, who looked after the Boss's linen, was also in the dacha. After the guests had left, Stalin went to bed. He never left his rooms again.³²

Then Rybin recorded separately the testimonies of Starotsin, Tukov and Lozgachev. Starotsin: "At 19:00 the silence in Stalin's suite began to alarm us. We (Starotsin and Tukov) were both afraid to go in without being called." So they got Lozgachev to go in, and it was he who found Stalin lying on the floor near the table. But Radzinsky was startled by the recorded statements of Tukov and Lozgachev, because Starotsin obviously had omitted a surprising detail: Before going to bed Stalin had given his guards an incredible order. Tukov: "When the guests left, Stalin told the servants and the commandants '*I'm going to bed. I shan't be wanting you, you can go to bed too.*'Stalin had never given an order like that before." Lozgachev: "Stalin said, '*I'm going to bed, you go to bed as well*'I don't remember Stalin ever giving such an order – everybody go to bed – before." Because of those inconsistencies, Radzinsky

³¹ That was normal time for Stalin. In his last years, Stalin went to bed at 4.00 A.M. and got up between 10 A.M. and 12, but normally never later.

³² Radzinsky, Stalin pp. 563-564.

decided to speak to the main witness: Pyotr Vasilievich Lozgachev.³³

6) THE TESTIMONY OF THE MAIN WITNESS

To have a conversation with Lozgachev proved to be very difficult for Radzinsky. Maybe because he was afraid, Lozgachev did not want to speak regarding that issue. But, as Radzinsky states, his persistence at last was rewarded: Lozgachev finally agreed. Having typed up his text, Radzinsky visited Lozgachev again asking him to sign it. Lozgachev, now much more cooperative, “put on his thick-lensed glasses, spent a long time reading the text, then signed at the bottom of the pages with a trembling hand.”³⁴ Now Lozgachev’s Testimony:

“I was on duty at the dacha. Orlov, the commandant, had just returned from leave, and was off duty. Those on duty in Stalin’s quarters were the senior ‘special attachment,’ Starotsin, his assistant Tukov, I myself and Matryona Butusova. ‘The guests,’ as the Boss called members of the Politburo, were expected. As usual on such occasions we helped the Boss work out the menu. That night it included three bottles, I think it was, of Madzhari – that’s a young Georgian wine, but the Boss called it ‘the juice’ because of its low alcoholic contentIn the night the Boss called me in and said, ‘Give us another two bottles of the juice each.’Who was there that night? His usual guests – Beria, Malenkov, Khrushchev and the other one with the beard, Bulganin. Some time later he called me in again: ‘Bring some more juice.’ We took it in and served it. Everything was quiet. There were no complaints. Then at 4.00 A.M....or a bit later – we brought the guests’ cars around. When the boss saw his guests off, an ‘attachment’ always saw them off with him, and closed the doors behind them. The ‘attachment’ Khrustalev, when Ivan Vasilievich was closing the doors, saw the Boss, and the Boss said, ‘Go to bed, all of you, I don’t need anything. I’m going to bed myself. I shan’t need you today.’ Khrustalev came and told us, happily: ‘Well, guys, here’s an order we’ve never been given before,’ and he repeated the Boss’s words. It was true, in all the time I worked there that was the only occasion when Stalin said ‘go to bed.’ He usually said, ‘Want to go to bed?’ and looked daggers at you. As if we’d dare! So of course, we were very glad when we got this order and went off to bed without thinking twice.”³⁵

³³ Ibid., pp. 567-568.

³⁴ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 568. In the meantime, Lozgachev seems to have told his story more often. As Zhores Medvedev, who in principle denies that Stalin has been killed but insists that he had a natural stroke, states: “Lozgachev had a tendency to modify his story. The basic picture, however, remains the same.” Medvedev, Stalin, pp. 21-22.

³⁵ Padzinsky, Stalin p. 569

Radzinsky, interrupting Lozgachev: “Wait a bit. Where does Khrustalev come into it? You didn’t say this. Khrustalev was also at the dacha.”

Lozgachev: “‘Attachment’ Khrustalev was at the dacha only till 10.00 A.M., then he went home to rest. He was relieved by Starotsin, Mikhail Gavrilovich.”

Those statements explain why Starotsin had not told Rybin about Stalin’s order “go to bed, all of you.” Starotsin was not involved in it.

Radzinsky: “So then the Boss, with his obsessive concern for his own security, suddenly *for the first time* orders his guards to go to bed. In effect, leaving his own suite unguarded. And that very night he suffers a stroke.”³⁶

“So then – that night at the nearer dacha only light wine was drunk, no cognac, no particularly strong drink, likely to make him ill.....The important thing is the surprising sentence that Lozgachev heard from the Boss for the first time ever “go to bed, all of you. To be precise, he heard it *not from the Boss but from the attachment Khrustalev: It was Khrustalev who passed on the order*, and left the dacha next morning. The order came as a surprise to Lozgachev and the other guard, Tukov, because the Boss insisted on strict observance of standing regulations. Those alleged words of his were a breach of his sacrosanct routine: they authorized the attachments *not* to guard his rooms. And not to keep an eye on each other.

Lozgachev, then, obeyed the order, and conscientiously slept through to 10.00 A.M. He obviously could not know what his comrades were doing during the night. What, for instance, was Khrustalev doing, between transmitting the Boss’s improbable order and leaving for home next morning?³⁷

Lozgachev continuing:

“At 10:00 A.M. there was ‘no movement’ in his rooms – that was the expression we always used when he was sleeping. 11:00 A.M. came. 12:00 – still no movement. It began to seem strange. He usually got up between 11 and 12, but he was sometimes awake as early as 10. 1:00 came, and there was still no movement. We began to be alarmed. 3:00 P.M., 4:00 P.M. – no movement. People may have been trying to ring him, but when he wanted to sleep his calls were usually put through to other rooms. I was sitting there with Starotsin, and he said: there’s something wrong, what shall we do? We wondered whether to go in there. But he had given the strictest possible orders

³⁶ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 568.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 570.

that if there was 'no movement' no one should enter his rooms. He would punish severely anyone who did. So we sat there in our staff quarters – which were connected with his rooms by a corridor twenty-five yards long, entered through a separate door – for six hours, wondering what to do. Suddenly there was a ring from the entry out in the street. 'I see the light's gone on in the little dining room.' Thank God, we thought, everything's all right. We were all at our posts, all ready for action....and still nothing happened! 8:00 P.M. – still nothing. We didn't know what to do. 9:00 P.M. – 'no movement.' 10:00 P.M. – still none. I said to Starotsin – 'You go, you're in charge of the guard, you ought to be getting worried.' He said: 'I'm afraid.' I said: 'You're afraid – what to you think I am, a hero?' About then they brought the mail – a packet from the Central Committee. It was usually our job to take the mail straight to him. Or rather mine, the mail was my responsibility. Oh well, I said, I'll go. If anything happens, guys, don't let me down. I had to go. As a rule we were careful not to creep up on him, in fact you sometimes knocked on the door specially loudly, so that he'd hear you coming. He reacted very badly if you went into his rooms quietly. You had to walk with a firm step. You didn't have to look embarrassed, and you didn't have to stand at attention. If you did he'd say, 'Why are you standing at attention like the good soldier Schweik?'³⁸ Well then, I opened the door, and walked noisily along the corridor, and there was the Boss lying on the floor holding up his right hand like this [here Lozgachev showed me – crooking his arm and raising it slightly]. I was petrified. My hands and legs wouldn't obey me. He had probably not yet lost consciousness but he couldn't speak. He had good hearing, he'd obviously heard me coming, and probably raised his hand slightly to call me in to help him. I hurried up to him and said: 'Comrade Stalin, what's wrong?' He'd – you know – wet himself while he was lying there, and was trying to straighten something with his left hand. I said, 'Shall I call the doctor, maybe?' He made some incoherent noise – like 'Dz – dz....' All he could do was keep on 'dz' –ing. His pocketwatch and a copy of *Pravda* were lying on the floor. When I picked the watch up the time it showed was 6:30, so 6:30 was when it must have happened to him. I remember there was a bottle of Narzan mineral water on the table, he'd obviously been going to get it when the light in his room went on.³⁹ While I was questioning him, maybe for two or three minutes, he suddenly gave a little snore, like a man snoring in his sleep. I raised the receiver of the house phone. I was trembling. I broke into a sweat. I rang Starotsin: 'Come over quick. I'm in the house.' Starotsin came, he was dumbstruck, too. The Boss was unconscious. I said, 'Let's put

³⁸ The Good Soldier Schweik: Satirical novel written by the Czechoslovakian writer Jaroslav Hasek. First published in 1921. Translated from Czech into many languages.

³⁹ Zhores Medvedev: "There was a glass and a bottle of mineral water on the table. Apparently Stalin had got out of bed and went to the table for a glass of water, but at that moment he had had a stroke. It was clear from the scene that all this had taken place in the morning, in any case before 11 am." Medvedev, Stalin p. 22.

him on the sofa, it's uncomfortable for him on the floor.' Tukov and Motya Butusova arrived after Starotsin: 'Go and ring them all up – without exception.' He went to ring. I didn't leave the Boss's side. He was lying motionless, just snoring. Starotsin rang Ignatiev⁴⁰ at the Ministry of State Security first, but Ignatiev was frightened and referred him to Beria and Malenkov. While he was ringing, we talked it over and decided to move him onto the large sofa in the big dining room We moved him because there was more air in there. We all helped put him on the sofa, and covered him with a rug, we could see he'd got very cold, lying there since 7:00 P.M. Butusova rolled his shirtsleeves down – he must have felt cold like that. In the meantime Starotsin had put in a call through to Malenkov. Roughly half an hour later Malenkov rang us and said: 'I haven't found Beria yet.' Another half an hour went by, and Beria rang to say: 'Don't tell anybody about Comrade Stalin's illness.'"⁴¹

"At 3:00 A.M. I heard a car drive up."⁴²

"Beria and Malenkov had arrived. [And there was no Khrushchev!]⁴³ Malenkov's shoes creaked, and I remember him taking them off and tucking them under his arm. They came in: 'What's wrong with the Boss?' He was just lying there, snoring.....Beria swore at me, and said, 'What d'you mean by it, starting a panic? The Boss is obviously sleeping peacefully. Let's go, Malenkov.' I told them the whole story, how he was lying on the floor, and I asked him a question, and he could only make inarticulate noises. Beria said to me: 'Don't cause a panic, don't bother us. And don't disturb Comrade Stalin.' Then they left."⁴⁴

Radzinsky concerning those statements: "So then – after declaring that a seventy-four-year-old man, who had been lying for 4 hours (or possibly longer) in a pool of his own urine, was 'sleeping peacefully,' his comrades-in-arms drove off, leaving the Boss without help."⁴⁵

Lozgachev further:

"I was on my own again. I thought I'd better call Starotsin and tell him to get them all up again. I said, 'Otherwise he'll die, and it'll be curtains for you and me. Ring and

⁴⁰ Semyon Ignatiev.

⁴¹ Radzinsky, Stalin pp. 570-572.

⁴² Ibid., p. 573

⁴³ Michael Taubman:" According to Khrushchev, he too was present at this fateful moment, but the guards said he didn't arrive until seven in the morning, when Beria and Malenkov returned with other leaders and Kremlin doctors. This was not something Khrushchev was likely to have misremembered. Either the guards had it in for the man who later denounced their boss, or Khrushchev convinced himself such a crucial turn of events couldn't have occurred without him." Taubman, Khrushchev p. 237. One more possibility: Simply not telling the truth?

⁴⁴ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 573.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

tell them to come.”⁴⁶

“Around 8:00 A.M. Khrushchev put in an appearance [This then was his first appearance.] Khrushchev said, ‘How’s the Boss?’ I said, ‘Very poor, something’s happened to him,’ and told him the whole story. Khrushchev said, ‘The doctors will be here right away.’ I thought, ‘Thank God!’ The doctors arrived between 8:30 and 9:00 A.M.”⁴⁷

Radzinsky: “He had been lying there, without help, for thirteen hours. We will never know for sure what happened that night in the Boss’s locked rooms. But there are only two possible versions. Either the Boss suddenly lost his mind, ordered everybody to bed, and then had a stroke in the night, or Khrushchev was ordered by *somebody* to send his subordinates to bed so that he, or someone unknown to us, could be alone with the Boss. After Vlasik’s⁴⁸ arrest, Beria had of course recruited support for himself among Stalin’s guard, which was no longer under proper supervision. The Boss had always thought he could count on Beria because he was a man of straw. He had miscalculated. Beria had seized his last chance of survival. Was it Khrushchev himself who ventured into the Boss’s room?⁴⁹ Or someone else? Perhaps they gave the Boss, who was fast asleep after his Madzhari, an injection? Perhaps the injection caused his stroke? Perhaps the Boss managed to wake up when he felt ill and tried to save himself? But the injection took effect before he got any farther than the table? If that is how it all happened we can easily understand why his henchmen so bravely refrained from rushing to his aid. It looks as though they *knew exactly what had happened*, and that the Boss was no longer dangerous. Even if we prefer the first variant, the four of them calmly and *deliberately* denied Stalin help and left him to die. In either case, then, they killed him. Killed him like the cowards they had always been. Beria had every right to say to Molotov – as Molotov later told Chuyev⁵⁰ – ‘I took him out.’”⁵¹

Should Stalin really have been killed, there may have been two more possibilities: Putting sleep-inducing drugs into his wine so that he would get asleep and nothing could be able to wake him up some hours later. Or the murderer opened the door to Stalin’s sleeping-room carefully, then spraying gas so that Stalin would be unconscious. In both cases the killer gave Stalin a lethal injection, in the second one perhaps using a gasmask for not falling asleep himself.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 574.

⁴⁷ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 574.

⁴⁸ Nikolai Vlasik. More of him later.

⁴⁹ Zhores Medvedev: It is highly unlikely, and almost impossible in fact, that Stalin could have been poisoned by Khrushchev, whom he treated in a particularly friendly manner. Medvedev, Stalin p. 26. Medvedev does not give more details regarding those good treatments.

⁵⁰ Feliks Chuyev, a poet.

⁵¹ Radzinsky, Stalin pp. 575-575.

7) THE DYING STALIN AND HIS FUNERAL

Once more Lozgachev:

“Well, the doctors were all terrified...They kept looking at him....They were all trembling, like us. They had to examine him, but their hands were shaking. A dentist came to take out his false teeth, and they slipped out of his hands, he was so frightened. Then professor Lukomsky said: ‘We’ll have to take his shirt off, to measure his blood pressure.’ I ripped open the shirt. They started measuring. Then they all took a good look and asked us who was there when he fell. We thought, This is it then, they’ll put us in a car and it’s good-bye – we’re done for! But the doctors, thank God, came to the conclusion that he’d had a hemorrhage. Then a lot of people started arriving, and from that moment we were really out of it all. I stood in the doorway. There were crowds of people behind me, people, who’d just come. I remember that Ignatiev, the minister, was afraid for some time to come in. I said, ‘Come in, there’s no need to be shy.’”⁵²

On March 2 Svetlana⁵³ was brought in, as she recalled: “They called Vasily⁵⁴ in as well but he was drunk and hurried off looking for the guards. I heard him out there in the staff quarters shouting that they’d killed Father... Then he went off home. They applied leeches, and x-rayed his lungs. The whole Academy of Medical Sciences met to try and decide what else they could try. An artificial respirator was brought in. The clumsy machine stood there unused, while the young technicians looked goggle-eyed at what was going on around them.”⁵⁵

Once more Svetlana: ‘Father’s death was slow and difficult....His face was discolored and different....his features were becoming unrecognizable....The death agony was terrible. It choked him slowly as we watched. At the last minute he opened his eyes. It was a terrible look – either mad or angry and full of the fear of death....Suddenly he raised his left hand and seemed either to be pointing upward somewhere or threatening us all... then, the next moment, his spirit after one last effort tore itself from his body.’⁵⁶ “At the same moment Beria darted out of the room. The silence of the room was shattered by the sound of his loud voice, the ring of triumph unconcealed, as he shouted [to his driver], ‘Khrustalyov!’⁵⁷ My car!’”⁵⁸

⁵² Radzinsky, Stalin p. 575.

⁵³ Svetlana Alliluyeva, Stalin’s daughter.

⁵⁴ Vasily Stalin, Stalin’s second son with his second wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva (also Svetlana’s mother, died in 1932). Stalin had a further son, Yakov, with his first wife, Ekaterina Svanidze (died in 1907). He was taken prisoner by the Germans during the Second World War and died in a German camp.

⁵⁵ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 575

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 576-577.

⁵⁷ Ivan Khrustalev. That seems to prove that there were near connections between those two men.

Radzinsky: "This note of Svetlana's has preserved for us Beria's triumphant voice – and the fact that he addressed himself to Khrustalev! Of all the attachments he singled out Khrustalev."⁵⁹

The eminent physician A.L.Myasnikov, who was one of the experts assembled to determine the cause of Stalin's death, recalled:

"Stalin lay there in a heap. He turned out to be short and rather fat.⁶⁰ His face was contorted....The diagnosis seemed clear – a hemorrhage in the left cerebral hemisphere resulting from hypertonia and sclerosis....The consultants had to answer Malenkov's question: What is the prognosis? There could be only one answer: Death is inevitable.'

Malenkov gave us to understand that he hoped that medical measures would succeed in prolonging the patient's life 'for a sufficient period.' We all realized that he had in mind the time necessary for the organization of the new government and the preparation of public opinion. Stalin groaned from time to time. For just one short minute he seemed to be looking at those around him and recognizing them. Voroshilov said: 'Comrade Stalin, we are here – your loyal friends and comrades. How to you feel, dear friend?' But by then there was no expression on his face. On March 5 we spent the whole day giving injections and writing bulletins. Members of the Politburo approached the dying man's bedside. Those of lower rank looked in through the door. I remember that Khrushchev also kept to the doorway. The order of precedence was strictly observed. Malenkov and Beria were in front. Then came Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Bulganin, and Mikoyan. Molotov was unwell, but looked in briefly two or three times."⁶¹

"Death took place at 21:50."⁶²

Molotov recalled:

"I was called to the dacha. His eyes were closed, and whenever he opened them and tried to speak Beria rushed over and kissed his hand. After the funeral Beria said, "'The Coryphaeus of Sciences⁶³, eh?' and roared with laughter."⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Taubman, Khrushchev p. 239.

⁵⁹ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 577.

⁶⁰ Shortly before getting his lethal stroke, Stalin had stopped smoking because of lung-problems: Zhores Medvedev, Stalin p. 17.

⁶¹ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 576.

⁶² Ibid., p. 577.

⁶³ In his last years, Stalin had innumerable names and titles. One of them was "Coryphaeus of Sciences."

And Khrushchev recalled:

“Beria was radiant.” He “was sure that the moment he had long been waiting for had finally arrived. There was no power on earth that could hold him back now. Nothing could get in his way. Now he could do whatever he saw fit.”⁶⁵

“Lozgachev regarding Stalin’s dying and after:

They say that when he died he raised his hand, as he had that other time by the table, begging for help....But who could help him!”⁶⁶

“They told us that they’d be taking him to the hospital right away to embalm him. Nobody called us to say goodbye to the dead man, we went in without being asked. Svetlana was there briefly. Vasya was there too. I wouldn’t say he was drunk, but he was overexcited.....Then a car came with a stretcher, they put him on it and carried him out, with me watching. And that was it.....There was nobody else there – only ourselves standing and watching..... There was no bruise....Nobody pushed him. *Khrustalev was there when they embalmed him*, and told us they’d found something like a cinder in his lungs. Maybe something had got in when they were piping oxygen in. Otherwise there was nothing.”⁶⁷

After Stalin’s death, except Lozgachev, Stalin’s “attachments” had to leave Moscow immediately and to take their families with them. But Starotsin, Orlov and Tukov did not want to leave and asked Beria not to send them away. Having done so, Beria said: “If you don’t want to be there – you’ll be there (pointing at the ground).” Now all obeyed and left.⁶⁸

Lozgachev: “*Khrustalev fell ill and died soon after.*”⁶⁹

Radzinsky, who attended the funeral of Stalin, remembers: “The sarcophagus containing the mummy of the second Bolshevik God stood outside the Mausoleum. On the Mausoleum stood the loyal comrades-in-arms who had killed him: Malenkov in a cap with ear flaps, Khrushchev in a squashed fur hat, Beria in a felt hat with the broad brim pulled down over his pince-nez, looking like a Hollywood Mafioso.”⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 576

⁶⁵ Taubman, Khrushchev p. 239.

⁶⁶ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 577.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 578.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Khrushchev “remembered:” I wasn’t just weeping for Stalin. I was terribly worried about the future of the country. I already sensed that Beria would start bossing everyone around and that this could be the beginning of the end.”⁷¹

Anne Applebaum: “By ‘the end,’ of course, he meant the end for himself: surely the death of Stalin would bring on a new round of bloodletting.”⁷²

In 1961 Stalin’s corpse was removed from the Mausoleum to the Kremlin wall. As F. Konyev, Commander of the Kremlin Regiment, remembered:

“October, 31, 1961. Militia squads cleared Red square and closed off all the entrances. When it was completely dark they finally got around to digging a grave by the Kremlin wall..... They transferred Stalin’s body from the sarcophagus to a coffin lined with red cloth. He looked as if he was alive; the Mausoleum staff wept as they switched off the installation. They replaced the golden buttons with brass ones, and also removed his golden shoulder boards. Then they covered the body with a dark veil, leaving only his lifelike face uncovered. At 22:00 the Reburial Commission arrived. No relatives were present.....After a minute’s silence we lowered him into the grave. We had orders to cover him with two concrete slabs [as of they feared that he might return from the grave]. But we just shoveled earth onto him.”⁷³

Stalin’s son Vasily, made by his father “Lieutenant General of Aviation,” was dismissed from the army three weeks after Stalin’s death and arrested one more month later. He was released from prison in the spring of 1961 and banished to Kazan, where he died, or perhaps “was died,” on March 19, 1962.⁷⁴

8) LAWRENTY BERIA AND NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV

Should Stalin really have been killed, so Lawrenty Beria may have been the ringleader of the murder. At least there are some, if not even many, facts allowing that conclusion. Therefore, regarding Stalin’s death, Beria’s role must be examined more exactly. It seems, that Beria’s activities at this time cannot be separated from those of

⁷¹ Applebaum, GULAG p. 478

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Radzinsky, Stalin pp. 580-581.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 580

Nikitai Khrushchev.

How was Beria's situation at the beginning of 1953? During Stalin's reign, two NKVD-bosses had already been shot: Genrikh Yagoda on March 15th, 1938 and Nikolai Yezhov on February 4th, 1940. That means that Beria was, at least regarding Stalinist circumstances, chief of the secret service for an immense long time. And as Radzinsky states:" Meanwhile, a special prison for Party members was being built in a hurry on Matrosskaya Tishina Street in Moscow..... He⁷⁵ warned Malenkov at the start that Beria was to have no authority over this prison. In other words, Beria too was finished."⁷⁶ If so: Was this also a hint for Malenkov that he was, or at least could be, finished too?

Anne Applebaum, in her , really, magnificent masterpiece :GULAG, writes:

"Although sick and dying, Stalin was not mellowing with age. On the contrary, he was growing ever more paranoid, and was now inclined to see conspirators and plotters all around him. In June 1951, he unexpectedly ordered the arrest of Abakumov,⁷⁷ the head of Soviet counter-intelligence. In the autumn of that year, without prior consultation, he personally dictated a Central Committee resolution describing a 'Mingrelian nationalist conspiracy.' The Mingrelians were an ethnic group in Georgia, whose most prominent member was none other than Beria himself. All through 1952, a wave of arrests, firings, and executions rolled through the Georgian communist elite, touching many of Beria's close associates and protégés. Stalin almost certainly intended Beria himself to be the purge's ultimate target."⁷⁸

It seems that all those statements are clues that Stalin had played his games too long and above all too monotonously.

On December 15, 1952, Nikolai Vlasik, Stalin's main bodyguard, was arrested. It seems that Vlasik should be shot, too, but Stalin's death saved him. Vlasik was tried on February 17, 1955. Edvard Radzinsky:

"Stalin's death saved Vlasik. In 1955, Vlasik wrote a petition for a pardon, which contains something extremely interesting. Vlasik tells us that he was originally interrogated by Beria in person. He was astonished to find that Beria knew details of

⁷⁵ Stalin

⁷⁶ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 535

⁷⁷ Viktor Abakumov

⁷⁸ Applebaum, Gulag p. 474.

private conversations between himself and the 'head of government' (Stalin) which he could have obtained only by 'eavesdropping.' 'Beria,' Vlasik wrote, 'must have known about the head of government's expressions of dissatisfaction with Beria after the war.' The Boss had, for the first time in his life, been in too much of a hurry. By arresting Vlasik he had deprived himself of an experienced watchdog with no other to take its place."⁷⁹ If so, the "watchdog" obviously was not clever enough to discover Beria's bugs. And Vlasik at this time drank very much and little by little lost his discipline. So Stalin had real reasons to fire Vlasik, but no reason, maybe, to kill him.

Considering all the facts, it is thinkable that Beria was right in saying to Molotov, as Molotov said to the poet Feliks Chuyev: "I did away with him, I saved all of you."⁸⁰ According to Molotov, Malenkov, Beria and Khrushchev were a core group, a "trinity."⁸¹

Anne Applebaum: "As Khrushchev had feared, Beria, who was barely able to contain his glee at the sight of Stalin's corpse, did indeed take power, and began making changes with astonishing speed."

All those just mentioned statements seem to proof that Khrushchev considered Beria as the "Evil One." But how were Khrushchev's personal relations with Beria? It seems that Khrushchev, related to this, did never mention some important facts in his memoirs, and as Tsering Shakya exactly knows: "Like all autobiographies of important historical figures, their importance lies not in what is written but in what is omitted."⁸² Khrushchev's own son-in-law, Aleksei Adzhubei (he had married Khrushchev's daughter Rada) obviously knows something very important. Adzhubei first attended a journalism school, then he got a position at the Soviet newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. When he worked late there, he often rode home with his father-in-law. Sometimes, obviously by prearrangement, Khrushchev's car rendezvoused on the dark road with Beria's; Adzhubei then traded places with Beria so that he and Khrushchev could talk. When the two cars drove up to the gates of Khrushchev's dacha, said Adzhubei, "Nikita Sergeyevich got out and shook Beria's hand for a long time. Then he stood there, hat in hand, until Beria's car was out of sight. Khrushchev understood very well that the duty officer at the gate would surely inform his bosses as to the deference with which he saw Beria off."⁸³

⁷⁹ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 555

⁸⁰ Taubman, Khrushchev p. 237.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 225.

⁸² Shakya, Tsering, The Dragon in the Land of Snows. New York 1999, p. XXXIII.

⁸³ Taubman, Khrushchev p. 225.

What did Khrushchev and Beria have to speak so much about secretly? Did Khrushchev, perhaps in connection with Malenkov (both politicians and of course also Beria knew, or at least feared, that new purges of Stalin were under way), give Beria the authority to eliminate Stalin, because Beria, as the chairman of the secret service, was the man most fitted for this task? And the takeover of the main power by Beria after Stalin's death was the price for the murder? Was Beria therefore so self-confident in his actions after Stalin had died?

However it may have been: Beria did not keep his power for a long time. During a meeting in the Kremlin on June 26th 1953 he was suddenly arrested. On December 18th of the same year Beria and six of his accomplices were put on trial and sentenced to death five days later. Beria's corpse was incinerated at the Donskoi crematorium.⁸⁴

Does that mean that Khrushchev instigated, so to speak, a "triple-intrigue?" First a plot together with Malenkov and Beria eliminating Stalin, and afterwards two more intrigues, i.e. a real plot with Malenkov and perhaps other Soviet politicians against Beria and a "pseudo-intrigue" with Beria against other Kremlin figures, thereby arresting and later eliminating Beria?

Some more plots later Khrushchev became the sole ruler of the Soviet – Union. He held that position till 1964, when leading Soviet persons, many of them heaved into their positions by Khrushchev himself, intrigued against him and ousted him in October 1964.⁸⁵

9) STALIN'S LAST ACTIONS AND PLANS

After the Second World-War, the number of purges in the Soviet – Union, as well as in the countries occupied by the Soviets, increased. And from 1848 on, after the state of Israel was recognized by the United Nations, Stalin's policy became more and more anti-Jewish. Ad Edvard Radzinsky states:

"By then a large group of eminent Jewish doctors – Kogan, Feldman, Ettinger, Vovsi, Grinstein, Ginzburg, and others – had been arrested in readiness for the coming trial. Stalin's story line, however, demanded that the conspiracy should be against himself. There was only one thing to do: he generously added his own doctor,

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 256.

⁸⁵ More: Taubman, Khrushchev pp. 3-17.

Professor V. Vinogradov,⁸⁶ to the list.”⁸⁷

“A new wave of anti-Semitic hysteria followed. Jews were sacked, Jews were beaten up in the streets, At the end of February⁸⁸ rumors went around Moscow that the Jews were to be deported to Siberia.”⁸⁹

After Stalin’s death the whole world would hear of the deportation planned by Stalin. Professor B. Goldberg noted in his book *The Jewish Problem in the Soviet Union* that ‘Stalin’s plan to send the Jews to Siberia reached the West after his death.’ And in *The Jews of the Soviet Union* Benjamin Pinkus, professor of Jewish history at Ben-Gurion University, wrote that ‘Stalin saw in the trial [of the doctors] a way to prepare the ground for exiling the Jewish population from the center of the Soviet Union.’ ‘Only Stalin’s death saved the Jews from this fate.’ (*The little Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, ‘Anti-Semitism.’) In Siberia and Kazakhstan people still point out the remains of the flimsy wooden huts, without heating, in which hundreds of thousands of Jews were meant to live, or rather to die.”⁹⁰

“March 5 was the day on which he intended to lead the world into the Apocalypse, and to destroy the chosen people. But March 5 was the day on which he would close his eyes forever. It was his turn at last to discover that God does exist.”⁹¹

Anne Applebaum knows:

“The Doctors’ Plot was a terrible and tragic irony. Only ten years before, hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews living in the western part of the country had been murdered by Hitler. Hundreds of thousands more had deliberately fled from Poland to the Soviet Union, looking for refuge from the Nazis. Nevertheless, Stalin spent his final, dying years planning another series of show trials, another wave of mass executions, and another wave of deportations. He may even have planned, ultimately, to deport all Jews resident in the Soviet Union’s major cities to Central Asia and Siberia.

Fear and paranoia swept across the country once again. Terrified Jewish intellectuals signed a petition, condemning the doctors. Hundreds more Jewish doctors were arrested. Other Jews lost their jobs, as a wave of bitter anti-Semitism swept across the country. In her faraway Karaganda exile, Olga Adamova-Sliozberg heard local women gossip about packages sent to the post office by people with Jewish names. Allegedly, they had been found to contain cotton balls, riddled with

⁸⁶ Vladimir Vinogradov.

⁸⁷ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 553.

⁸⁸ 1953

⁸⁹ Radzinsky, Stalin pp. 559-560

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 560.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 565.

typhus-bearing lice. In Kargopol, in his camp north of Arkhangelsk, Isaak Filshtinskii also heard rumors that Jewish prisoners were to be sent to special camps in the far north.

Then, just as the Doctors' Plot looked set to send tens of thousands of new prisoners into camps and into exile, just as the noose was tightening around Beria and his henchmen, and just as the Gulag had entered what appeared to be an insurmountable economic crisis – Stalin died.”⁹²

So it seems that, had Stalin not died, the Soviet-Jews would have had a similar fate as the Kulaks from 1930 to 1932.⁹³

If Stalin's domestic policy consisted of eliminating Jews and other “dangerous” or “poisonous” elements, what about the foreign policy during his last years?

On July 16th, 1945 the first atomic bomb was tested near Alamogordo, New Mexico. US-president Harry Truman, who attended at this time the Potsdam-Conference, informed Stalin of it. But Stalin, exactly informed of the US nuclear-program via his spies, emotionlessly said that he was glad to hear this, hoping that the United States would make good use of the new bomb in the war against Japan.⁹⁴

Now, at the beginning of 1953, Stalin waited impatiently for the test of a hydrogen bomb. Eduard Radzinsky maintains:

Like all previous victims, Beria was required to complete the work entrusted to him before his removal. He was more immediately relevant to the Great Dream than anyone else. The new, more powerful nuclear bomb had been tested under Beria's supervision in 1951. Now, in 1953, his scientists had created a new weapon of unprecedented power. The transportable hydrogen bomb was shortly to be tested. Its yield was expected to be twenty times that of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. There was nothing else like it in the world. The Boss alone possessed such a weapon. (The bomb would not be tested till August 1953, some months after his death.)

Before this new weapon became available, Stalin had ordered Beria to complete Moscow's rocket defenses. It had been decided at the end of the forties to surround Moscow with special formations armed with enough ballistic missiles to shoot down any plane flying toward the city. Two gigantic concrete rings were built, with anti-aircraft rocket installations at intervals around them. The Boss insisted that this work should be carried out in feverish haste. The work was done by the experienced

⁹² Applebaum, *GULAG* p. 475. Regarding Stalin's death, Anne Applebaum gives no explanation how he died.

⁹³ More of the extinction of the Kulaks: Radzinsky, Stalin pp. 246-249.

⁹⁴ Fleming, Thomas, *The New Dealers' War*. New York 2001, p. 537. Further information of Soviet spies in the USA: Medvedev, Stalin; Persico, Joseph E., *Roosevelt's Secret War*, New York 2001.

construction workers available to Beria's department. There were six hundred rockets to each emplacement. Twenty rockets could be launched simultaneously. Radar stations tracked the targets, rockets soared....but coordination was unsatisfactory. The Boss told Beria to hurry up. The engineers were housed in barracks, Beria summoned the chief designer and told him that the system must be made to work – 'or else.'

It began to work. By early 1953 the Boss knew that Moscow would soon be looking at the West from behind a picket fence of rockets. Everything was ready: the superweapon and the most powerful army in the world, which had not yet forgotten the art of killing. It had not been idle talk when Stalin said to Molotov soon after the war: 'The First World War delivered one country from capitalist slavery; the Second has created the socialist system, and the Third will finish imperialism for ever.' In 'in-depth language' this meant: 'We shall start a war and we shall finish it.' The Great Dream, bequeathed to him by the God Lenin, would come true."⁹⁵

Lozgachev allegedly said to Radzinsky:

"Shortly before he died the Boss asked me: 'What do you think – will America attack us or not?' I said, 'I think they'd be afraid to.' He flared up and said: 'Clear out – what are you doing here anyway, I didn't call you.' The guys said to me afterward: 'What did you do to make him so angry today?' ...Suddenly there was a call: go to the house. I went over, and his tone had changed completely: 'Forget that I shouted at you,' he said, 'but remember this: they will attack us, they're imperialists, and they certainly will attack us. If we let them. That's the answer you should give.' From that Radzinsky draws the conclusion: "He was getting ready for the Apocalypse."⁹⁶

Did Stalin really want to do so? There may be no proof and perhaps never will be, in consideration of the fact that a lot of material has, as mentioned above, already been destroyed. But if so, it may have fitted exactly to Stalin's character.

That leads to one more question: What conception of the world did Stalin have? Like Karl Marx ("The world shall emerge from myself....")⁹⁷, Stalin seems to have considered the universe as his "private property." His thinking may have been as

⁹⁵ Radzinsky, Stalin p. 556.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 568-569.

⁹⁷ "Die Welt soll aus mir selbst entstehen.... Poem written by Karl Marx in 1837. More of those poems and many other facts regarding Karl Marx: Loew, Konrad, Das Rotbuch der kommunistischen Ideologie. Marx & Engels - Die Väter des Terrors (The Red Book of Communist Ideology. Marx & Engels – the Fathers of Terror)- Munich 1999. Another extremely informative book concerning Karl Marx by the same author: Der Mythos Marx und seine Macher (The Marx Legend and its Doers)' Munich 1996.

follows: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were the big prophets. There may have been “lesser” ones as Ludwig Feuerbach, Alexander Herzen, Nikolai Chernyshevski, Mikhail Bakunin, Sergei Nechaev and Pyotr Tkachev. Lenin was the Messiah. The only God was he, Stalin, himself. And after him the Apocalypse, the Deluge or both combined. That may sound extremely far-fetched, but one must not forget: Stalin had attended first a church school for four years and afterward a seminary for five years, i.e. from 1894 to 1899 (his mother always wanted her son to become a priest). Then he was dismissed. Official reason: “Failure to sit an examination.” But the real reasons were, of course, his revolutionary activities, which Stalin already started very early. Having left the Tiflis Seminary he started working; the only ordinary job in his life (from the beginning of 1900 till April 1901): In the Tiflis Main Physical Observatory. There he will have got very important astronomical knowledge.

10) WAS STALIN REALLY MURDERED?

Is there a real proof that Stalin has been killed? Of course not. And there are also clues hinting that he got a natural stroke. Michael Taubman states:

“By the beginning of 1953 Stalin had fainted several times, and his blood pressure was rising. But although he stopped smoking, he didn’t give up steam baths, which further raised his pressure (partly because Beria urged him not to), and he distrusted doctors until the very end.”⁹⁸

And Zhores Medvedev writes at the beginning of his book *The Unknown Stalin*:

“Was there a plot to murder Stalin? It has often been suggested that he died prematurely as a result of some slow-acting poison. A. Avtorkhanov developed a detailed theory to this effect in a book first published in 1976, naming Beria as the culprit. Many versions of this story have continued to appear, most recently in the biography of Stalin by Edvard Radzinsky, who had entrée to previously inaccessible archive documents. Nevertheless there is still no concrete evidence to substantiate the claim that Stalin’s death was anything other than the result of illness. His death was not unexpected. Although his health had noticeably been deteriorating in the course of 1951-1952, he refused to take any medication or submit to medical examinations. His chronic afflictions – high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis and rheumatic pain in his joints and muscles – were all progressive. Towards the end of 1952, after an unidentified lung problem, Stalin suddenly gave up smoking. All these factors pointed

⁹⁸ Taubman, Khrushchev p. 237. Taubman obviously thinks that Stalin died of a natural stroke, but does not rule out that he was killed.

to the approaching end. However, the fact that this was obvious to everyone, including Stalin himself, made him increasingly dangerous to all those in his immediate entourage as well as for the country as a whole.”⁹⁹¹⁰⁰

So there is, of course, the possibility that Stalin died of a natural death. The opinions of the experts are different. But considering all the statements and facts, a murder seems to be more likely, because there are too many coincidences and inconsistencies.

But until now, there is no proof.

Now, will it be possible to investigate how Stalin really died? Maybe. Since Stalin's corpse was embalmed, it may still exist. If so, it must be possible to exhume it for careful examination so that the real cause of Stalin's death perhaps can be found out.

CONCLUSIONS

If Stalin was really murdered, Stalin, as an adult, had miscalculated twice. First, as he did not believe that Hitler would dare to wage war simultaneously on two fronts, attacking thereby the Soviet-Union.¹⁰¹ Ten years later, he underestimated the cleverness of his subordinates, not believing that they would be able to kill him. Stalin's first miscalculation brought heavy losses to the USSR in the Second World War. His second one (or in fact a natural death?), possibly, saved the world from a nuclear inferno; at least for a while.

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⁹⁹ And also for the world???

¹⁰⁰ Medvedev, Stalin p. 11.

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