

A.T. RYBIN NEXT TO STALIN

NOTES OF A BODYGUARD

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Where does any ordinary man behave naturally, within limits? It was in such a situation, for more than 25 years, that Major (retired) A.T. Rybin was meeting with J.V. Stalin.

In his book, this veteran openly talks about the past. In most cases, his thoughts and his story completely differ from the present calumny about the personality of Stalin. Nevertheless, in spite of his differences with the present "authors-historians", Rybin has the right to set things straight for history as an eyewitness and in daily contact as a bodyguard of J.V. Stalin. In this book, in front of you will emerge a new Stalin – a man, many facets of his life that we have not been privy to before.

The publication will truthfully respect and conform to the author's facts and reasoning and, of course, his attitude to the people that were part of this historical period.

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OPENING ARTICLE

Thanks to the many years of research and dedication by the press, there is now no other more individual personality than J.V. Stalin. It seems that readers now no longer are capable of receiving such a volume of information as is now being churned out by all sorts of presses. All of the world has been told that: he was a tyrant; executioner; the one who liquidated M.V. Frunze; killed his own wife with a gun; helped to plan the assassination of S.M. Kirov; had M.N. Tukhachevsky shot by a firing squad and was responsible for turning our country into a permanent cauldron; concentration camps; the architect of all the modern ills that have befallen our Motherland.

Is this the truth? Please read these pages ...

Before you, there will appear an unknown person. Very modest in his personal needs. Very considerate in attention to workers in his household and service. Very demanding and a strict father. Rational housekeeper, very concerned about the household and others. Dedicated fighter for the goals and ideals of the October Revolution. Able to spot talented people and a defender of performing artists. Courageous leader and talented commander, not afraid of bullets or danger and able to lead his people to victory over fascism. In the end, you will find out that he did everything possible to lower consumer prices every year, and made certain that his staff was down to a minimum. He spent many hours during the nights at Novovidechi, at the grave of his wife. He did not have anyone closer to him than S.M. Kirov, even before the XVII Congress of the party when Kirov was elected as the Second Secretary of the CC ACP[B].

Stalin made an unforgettable impression on our history.

Then why is it that his whole life, his dedication and his devotion, have left only a negative impression?

If this was so, would the USSR have been able to become a country that the whole world had to take into account? The present-day enemies try not only to besmirch the so-called "cult of Stalin", but they try to completely eliminate the person from the pages of history. Do these modern enemies not realize that you cannot obliterate the memory of a person from a country by trying to eliminate his personality or his influence on the country?

Maybe our Soviet readers have already seen the author on TV? Yes, Alexei Trofimovich Rybin, accompanying himself on a piano, spoke about this past history. These reminiscences are wide in scope and fill in gaps that had left a vacuum in the life of J.V. Stalin. This information about Stalin's real friends and enemies is priceless. Yes, much is written in this book that was never known before, all by this elder "chekist"-bodyguard. Maybe some of you will not agree with him totally. But, let us remember that in front of you is a document which gives you a first-hand account about this epoch. Also, you should remember that this is not just a view of a subjective person - all these are facts that were verified before this book was published. His detailed descriptions were supported by other bodyguards of J.V. Stalin. To verify that this is so, here, we name these people: N.S. Slavik, V.I. Rumiantsev, I.M. Orlov, V.M. Tukov, M.G. Starostin, S.T. Solovov, P.V. Lozgachev, N.F. Kirillin, V.F. Krutashev, N.N. Altshurev, S.F. Afanasiev, M.N. Kozmin and G.S. Zemsky.

All these veterans are far-removed from political intrigues.

But they could not keep quiet without raising their voices against this campaign of besmirching the name and the role that J.V. Stalin played in the life of the USSR. Therefore, when these colleagues of Alexei Trofimovich helped to gather the documents and materials for this book, they decided that all the details must be accurate, based on documents verified by others - they did not allow themselves even a small deviation or personal feelings to colour the contents of this book. This is so that history would get the absolute truth of the events that transpired about the person, our leader, they knew him for scores of years. After all, these bodyguards spent their lives guarding Stalin through these turbulent years of the Motherland. Now it is their duty to defend his honour, his patriotism and his leadership qualities against all calumny that the enemies are trying to blacken the name of I.V. Stalin with.

I think that this small book, not large by number of pages, will let you come closer to the truth by giving you facts that will let you make another judgement about J.V. Stalin and that period of history ...

- NIKOLAI POPOV

I was only 23 years old. After finishing my school as a Border Guard in 1931, I became a member of the Security to Governmental leaders. Now, as an ordinary young man from the Ural village Rygach, everyday I saw and heard all of the leaders, when just yesterday I could only have seen them in photographs in newspapers. How lucky I considered myself! What honour has befallen me!

Soon after that, I, together with Zhagornikov and Gorundaev, went to the place where Stalin's summer cottage was being built and where he often held meetings with the Politbureau. It was near the region of Kuntsev, which certainly was not a suitable place for rest or recreation. To the north was the Mozhaisk Highway, from where you could always hear the noise of transport trucks. To the west, there was the village of Davidkovo, where in the evenings you could hear singing and merrymaking till the early hours of the morning. To the south, there was the Kiev railway station, where the constant racket of trains, box cars being shunted to and fro, were heard. There was no rest even for the surrounding trees in the woods.

This was a one storeyed cabin, with 7 rooms. The bedroom of Stalin was some place nearby when it was being built, some roofs were under tin, while other sections were under straw roofing. Where the builders brought the wooden, beatenup bed from, for Stalin to sleep on, I do not know. There was no bathtub or sauna yet. Everything was very scanty and meagre. It was made solid and the only luxury was the wooden parquet floor.

To see this "Dacha", Stalin arrived with Voroshilov and Ordzhonikidze. The architect was there, an elderly Merzhanov welcomed J.V. Stalin and company into the meeting room. Yagoda was coming with them. Commander Yefimov was in charge of guarding this meagre summer cottage with his bodyguards. Assistant bodyguard was Mozhukin. I, together with Gorundaev, looked after our tasks such as personal guarding of Stalin. Stalin came to this "Dacha" often and lived here after his working day in the Kremlin ... this was only during the summer months. He was driven to the Kremlin by a black "Packard" automobile. Sometimes, after coming from the Kremlin, he would rest up in the open solarium. During the time when it rained, he worked in a very small cabin.

From the end of July to the 3rd of November, we visited Sochi often. The summer cottage was located near Matsesta in the mountains. In 1932, I was assigned to this place as a personal guard to Stalin. We, the personnel, lived near this cottage. Stalin many times took salt baths in the Small Matsesta – he had serious polyarthritis. Pain in his legs did not give him the opportunity to sit for a long time. If he was standing, he always had to move from one leg to another. He felt much better that way. When he walked, he felt better. Therefore, during working hours or meetings, he was always walking around in the office. He received this sickness from earlier revolutionary work, exile, deprivation, cold and freezing discomfort.

Voroshilov, Kirov and Kalinin were frequent visitors. Stalin liked very much to receive guests, but he hardly ever drank himself. He never touched vodka, cognac – not often. He only drank wine, called "Tsinandali" or "Teliani".

Around 4 p.m., he came to the courtyard that was fenced in. They played at their sport. It made no difference whether I played with Stalin or Voroshilov. There were no differences in rank for the bodyguards or the members of the government. On the playing field, we were all treated the same.

The losers were made to sit under the table, while the winners would bang with anything hard on the table, over the heads of the losers. Many times, Stalin had to sit with me underneath the table and have the banging penetrating our ears. All this was in great fun and comradely enjoyment.

Since there was no television at that time, in the evenings, we all had to improvise our own entertainment. I read them poems by Bagritsky, "Thoughts About Opanasa", Pantiushin played his accordion. Stalin would visit our cabin, listen attentively, clap loudly. He liked Russian folk melodies and thanked us profusely for the entertainment. But he loved Gypsy music even more. Vlasik, who was in charge, barred Pantiushin from playing his accordion, thinking that Stalin had work to do and could not concentrate. Thus, our music did not fill the air for close to a week. Stalin was concerned.

- Your accordion player, did he leave for Moscow?
- I thought that the accordion playing was disturbing your concentration, stated Vlasik.
- No, I listen with pleasure to our Russian songs and old waltzes. Let the accordionist play and not be bashful.

Pantiushin was in his glory and played that accordion like never before.

Once Stalin came up to me when I was on duty and said:

- I see a rifle in your hands. Did you ever have the occasion to use it?
 - No, comrade Stalin, I never had to.

- But where did you use it?
- In the battle with Basmachi Ibragim Beka.
- This means that you smelled gunpowder?
- That's correct.

Stalin went to the vineyard, where he liked to work on the vines. I saw Vlasik, another bodyguard coming in a hurry, but being a bit fat, he was sweating and yelled at me when he didn't see Stalin:

- Where is he?
- He went by himself into the vineyard.

Vlasik immediately ran towards the vineyard. The vineyard was in bloom, vegetables growing, watermelons. The commandant was very concerned to guard these fruits and vegetables against any possibility of poisoning them. Stalin was very particular that his guards make certain that resting workers who came to the woods had all the facilities to rest, how many came, have they everything they need, etc. We knew that we could not be inaccurate, since Stalin had a very keen eye for things like that.

After a very trying day with state business, Stalin liked to go hunting rabbits which were numerous around the vineyard. Vlasik, raising his rifle, would fire and miss. Stalin would burst out laughing.

- Clever rabbit, he knew how to, and where to hide ...

Kirov visited Stalin every year at about the same time. They were great friends. Once, they were sitting around a table, drinking slowly Georgian wine with mineral water. Lukianov, chauffeur to Svetlana and Vasili, Antonov, Kuznetsov and myself, were close by. Stalin asked Kuznetsov with Lukanov to join them at the table. Kuznetsov begged not to ask him to leave his post:

- Comrade Stalin, we are on guard duty. We cannot contravene the instructions that our commandant has given us.
- Yes, but your friends need not fear laughed Kirov. I will not tell your commandant Vlasik. We will drink together with us and have a bite. Everything will be fine.

But Kuznetsov did not budge from his post. Then Stalin said:

- Our task was to invite you to our table, and it is up to you what you must do!

Stalin always invited his bodyguards, his friends or his housekeeper to fish, or to the table ... everything always went harmoniously with no commands to obey.

An incident happened. Nadezhda Alliluyeva (Stalin's wife – ML) decided on a fatal gunshot? According to the words of Solovov, during this evening at the reception table, there gathered members of the government and their wives. As always, the discussion took on the question of the persistent opposition by anti-state elements like Trotsky and others. For a quick defeat of these elements, all present drank a toast of wine. Everyone present drank to this, except Nadezhda. At that time, Nadezhda was studying in the Academy of political science, where debates took place and heated arguments between Leninists and Bucharinites, Tomski and Ukhanov. It was certain that Nadezhda was not in agreement with the Soviet government. Stalin quickly asked her:

- And why aren't you drinking?

Nadezhda left the room to sit on a bench. Molotov's wife went up to her in order to console her. But Nadezhda, being high-strung, went into her room and shot herself with a pistol. The death of his wife caused untold feelings in Stalin. He followed her casket to the Novodevichi cemetery all the way

on foot. Thereafter, for a long time, Stalin at night used to visit her grave at the cemetery. Guards saw him talking sometimes to her while smoking his pipe, one after another ...

II

The growth of the cities, and Moscow in particular, saw constant convoys of trucks and machines on the highway near Stalin's "Dacha". The narrow streets of Moscow made transportation difficult. The widest highway was the Sadovoye Circle, around which stood trees that were so old they dried up. There were also streetcar lines running. Reconstruction of Moscow was on the horizon, the building of the Subway which would see a faster movement of people. The government had to make these decisions and all the complexities that went with it.

Stalin, as always, personally saw to the streets, going from the squares to other buildings. The first time, he made this tour during daylight. But this had to be cancelled until night time because when people saw that it was Stalin, they would gather in hundreds and follow him, asking questions, having meetings, discussions.

After considerable planning, the master plan for Moscow was being put into effect. Thus came into being streets like Gorky, Bolshaya Kaliuzhskaya, Kutuzov Prospect and other beautiful streets and avenues. During one such expedition through Moscow, Stalin told his chauffeur Mitriukhin:

- There is a need to build a new university to be called Lomonosov, so that students should learn in one place and not be quartered and travelling all over Moscow.

As is known, Stalin never threw his words into the wind without any results to them. That is why the Lomonosov University is one of the best recognized structures in Moscow.

In July of 1934, we again came to Sochi, to the industrial-materials station platform. Again, Stalin asked Vlasik:

- Why are you always bringing me to the small corners of the station away from people? I want to come to the station exit where people are supposed to come to and to leave the train wagon as do all the passengers!

Vlasik mumbled something under his breath and led Stalin into an old "Buick".

We went to the "Cold Dacha" which was situated on the Cold River around Gagra. Around us, mountains. The sound of the birds, all the animals, was unbelievable. Standing guard, I used to see bears prowling and prepared myself for any eventually.

Looking over the surrounding area, my eyes caught sight of clothes hanging on a line. I asked:

- Who owns this shirt?
- Joseph Vissarionovich, said the maid. He himself patches shirts, until it's taken off by a convoy (until it falls apart ML).

This could have been looked upon as being negligent. But I later found out that Stalin was very frugal, economizing on everything and thus trying to set an example to others. He had to be convinced to get something new. As an example, to get summer suits. He wore his boots and shoes until they nearly fell off his feet. He raised his children also without luxury. In order to please Svetlana (Stalin's daughter – ML) Vlasik gave her a small cabin to herself which was empty.

Stalin, finding this out later, said:

- Vlasik, you should not do this, it's against the law. Who is she, a member of our Politbureau, a member of our Central Committee? Vacate the cabin and give her a place together with others.

Here is another example. It was a September day. The ocean was calm. Antonov was sunning himself under a large tree. All of a sudden, a dark storm blew up. I stood nearby. The downpour was horrendous, while Antonov, the guard, bravely stood at his post in the open, not moving from his guard duty. It was the most frightful storm I have ever witnessed ... but the bodyguards stood where they were placed throughout this deluge. Stalin, during this event, saw through the window as Antonov was practically drowned by the rain and nearly blown off his feet. After the storm subsided, Stalin, together with Commissar Bogdanov, wanted to see this dutiful man, Antonov.

- Antonov said: I'm listening, comrade Stalin!
- You certainly got a soaking ... I saw everything.
- It's nothing, comrade Stalin, soon my uniform will dry.
- Why hasn't a small shelter for the guards been built here?, asked Stalin of Bogdanov:
- You should be put in his place so that you can see what it is to suffer through such a downpour. I want this small shelter built immediately, within two hours.

In two hours, Stalin came out to see whether this had been done and seeing a new shelter, said:

- Something like this should not have to be ordered by me, Bogdanov should have thought of this himself. All of us must carry out our responsibilities! - Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, comrade Stalin, for being so concerned about us! Altshuler, the guard who had replaced Antonov who had gone to dry himself, thanked Stalin.

Once we were coming from the Kremlin, near Pilnikov. Stalin's auto was coming, we quickly hid in the bushes. These were our orders. But the bodyguards coming with Stalin had their orders to open fire on unknown people after they failed to identify themselves. Stalin, upon recognizing us, was surprised and started to berate Vlasik about the way he instructed his subordinates, that one cannot know a friend from an enemy!

After returning another time to Kursk train station, just before the November 7th holidays, Vlasik suggested that we come on the platform through a special gate.

- What kind of gate? Stalin asked, let us go where all the people go through.

He then proceeded to go where multitudes of people were going through.

In that fateful year, not many guests came to the Dacha. There was only the chairman of the Central Committee of Abkhask SSR, N. Lakoba, and according to the Caucasus tradition, brought with him a young ram. Stalin was often visited by Kirov who even slept on Stalin's divan.

They took steam baths together. Such companionship and understanding between them, no one else of the Politbureau had with Stalin. Stalin was very proud of Kirov as a talented, dedicated Bolshevik. Kirov did masterfully at the last Congress and had the Central Committee in stitches as he devastated the persons of Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev. And about Trotsky, he said the following:

- May he three times be damned, that his name should be brought up at a sacred Congress such as this one!

During the spring of that year, Kirov was present at the meeting of the CC members, roasting shashliks. Everyone was in a good mood and Kirov quipped:

- We just need music to make this evening complete!

Stalin quickly arranged for Pantiushin with his accordion to liven up the evening with Russian folk songs, such as "Mountains, Mountains, you are my stars".

In the autumn of that year, Kirov was in Kazakhstan in order to see how the harvest was proceeding and was in strong disagreement with the leadership of the GPU who were extremely harsh against the Kulak families that were sent here for not having complied with taxes and requisitioning of grain. After returning to Moscow, he complained to Yagoda, head of the NKVD and complained bitterly for these uncivilized and unconstitutional actions by state security authorities. This was taken as a personal affront by Yagoda and since then, Yagoda had it in for Kirov. He carried this personal hatred until Kirov was done away with.

On November 28, the Plenum of the CC ACP[B] finished its session, where a decision was made to eliminate the rationing system.

At the beginning of the next year, January 1st, this was done. In the evening, Stalin, my commandant Smirnov, Commissar Liubovitsky and myself were taking Kirov to the train station. Stalin warmly embraced Kirov and went with him right into the train car called "Red Bullet". On December 1, Kirov was assassinated. On December 2, Stalin, Molotov and Voroshikov immediately went to Leningrad. Now, Stalin himself was under threat of assassination, therefore,

the division of Dzerzhinsky was guarding our route, including both sides of the highway to Leningrad. Stalin became very sorrowful, his face darkened, blotches became evident on his face. He kissed the dead Kirov on his lips and crying, said:

- Goodbye, my dear friend ...

After the death of his wife, there was no other such close friend as was Kirov.

I was always stationed at the Smolny at that time. Among the members of the guards, the assassination of Kirov was always on their lips. All of them swore at Nikolaev (the assassin – ML). But, let us ask the question as to who put that gun in his hands? Unbelievable situation: this armed assassin was twice stopped and held on the approaches to Smolny and also inside the building itself, and twice, he was let go. Zaporozhets gave the order to let him go! During the day of the assassination, Nikolaev was seen all day inside Smolny, loafing here and there, going to the floor which was barred to all strangers, and just waited on the steps without being challenged by the bodyguards assigned to guard Kirov and other state leaders.

There were no guards in the corridors, there was also no guard in front of the door to the office of Kirov. The law required that a guard always be present in the ante-room to Kirov's office, whether Kirov was in the office or not. This was not followed this fateful day. As a specialist in bodyguard duties, I immediately became suspicious of this ... it was obvious that there were traitors here among the bodyguards – behind this traitorous act, there stood a former S-R (Socialist Revolutionary) member, Zaporozhets. While his chief, lurking in the background, was Yagoda, who, after the trial began,

confessed: "In this way, I categorically am telling you that the assassination of Kirov was accomplished according to the decision of the right wing Trotskyist block."

Today, many people state: Stalin this, and Stalin that killed Kirov! Instead of yelling into a bell, look into history. You must remember that Kirov criticized Trotsky since 1921, when Trotsky decided to give up Astrakhan to the civil war enemy, in order to straighten the front lines. Trotsky never forgave Kirov this, since Lenin took the side of Kirov and thus, the civil war enemies were defeated at that place. Social-revolutionary Wasserman then started to spread gossips, lies, that Kirov was a monarchist. Kirov at that time was arrested, but these enemies were not able to liquidate him the Tribunal exposed the provocation and sentenced Wasserman to death. Kirov always opposed Trotsky, knowing full well what Trotsky was capable of and what an enemy he was. Kirov stated in 1927: "In Leningrad the opposition barrier is closed!" Trotsky and the opposition (hidden for now) plus Yagoda, when Kirov criticized for the terrible provocations against Kulaks in Kazakhstan, did not give up. This showed itself that the personal bodyguards were not too anxious to guard Kirov as it was to make certain that potential killers could get to Kirov.

Ш

In 1935, I was appointed as the head of the group guarding members of the Government. I was involved with Kaganovich in overseeing the security of the Moscow Metro. The station "Square of Dzerzhinsky" was our concern, where the lines met. Kaganovich warned the builders very forcefully:

- Look at the lines where they meet. Make certain that the building housing the OGPU is not damaged, otherwise, we will all find ourselves in jail!

I was assigned to work with Ordzhonikidze. This legendary commander was always where there were gigantic building sites. Visiting one such enterprise, he saw a worker doing his work by hand and called on the carpet the Director of the enterprise and told him in no uncertain terms that this method of work is childish and he must get this part mechanized immediately.

With other pressing problems, Ordzhonikidze concentrated on the Aviation industry. Next door to his office, there were many photographs of new motors with metal blades. These were to replace the wooden propellers.

The head of the Aviation industry at that time was M. Kaganovich who always came to see Ordzhonikidze with new photos of planes, new designs and new proposals.

- It's strange that the Western experts are criticizing us that we do not plan ahead, that we do not reason ... but we do plan and they do not? But dear comrades, we must think about the fact, why are the photographs from the West much better in reproduction than ours?

He was always concerned with problems that seemed minor, but overall, were very important. He lived with only one kidney, which made him out of sorts many times. After the arrest of his deputy, Platakov, on whom he looked favourably, and after hearing transcripts of the trial, he spoke in the House of Soviets, with tears in his eyes:

 No kind of riff-raff, no kind of rubbish such as Platakov or the likes of Radek will stop us from building socialism in our country!² After this, Sergo Ordzhonikidze became ill and in the Kremlin, Doctor Levin was called to his bedside to try to make him well. This senior doctor, on instructions from Yagoda, "cured" V. Menzhinsky and Gorky, but both of them died in mysterious circumstances. Could this doctor, under instructions from Yagoda, could he look upon Sergo differently? Never!

Together with the problems of enemies within, with sick leaders, with all sorts of sabotage going on, we had other problems to contend with. Around us there were always strong, healthy flyers who were eager to show the world that Soviet aviation is here to stay and could match any other country in design and daring, and set world records. This concerns the historical flight over the North Pole by G. Baydukov, strong and clever Chkalov, for whom Stalin had great respect. Baydukov told Chkalov:

- Go to see comrade Stalin with your idea. Maybe he will decide to let you make the North Pole flight.
- Yes, but I never flew large planes, only fighters and light aircraft.
- Do not fret, Valery, sit in your seat, be in control, we shall fly you to America, you'll see!

Brave Chkalov decided to go and see Stalin. Thus, he got permission to fly over the North Pole. I remember well how Ordzhonikidze and designer Tupolev sat up all night listening to radio contact. The heroes returned to Moscow. Stalin welcomed them very warmly, with Voroshilov, Ordzhonikidze and Tukhachevsky. After the official party, the reception went to the buffet table. Stalin remained behind. Chkalov, getting drunk quickly, embraced Stalin and kissed him:

- Comrade Stalin, send us even into the fire. We shall fulfill the commands of the party, whatever the cost!

Stalin patiently listened and was smiling under his moustache. Music then started, but Chkalov was taken home, in no condition to dance. At an official reception in the Kremlin, Stalin raised a toast and said to Olga, Chkalov's wife:

- You think that I sent Valery and others across North Pole so that they would get killed or because they were daring flyers? No. I tried to the best of my ability to stop them from this unnecessary risk.

That is the way it was. Sometime later, Chkalov was sitting in the cockpit of I.180, ready to test-fly this new plane. Stalin, somehow had a premonition that there might be an accident, sent immediately a dispatch rider to tell Chkalov to abort the flight. Chkalov did not want to go, but after a while, reconsidered. But in flights later, unfortunately, Chkalov was killed in a crash. Stalin was beside himself. He asked the top air ace, Baydukov:

– What must we do now with this cross-wearing designer? What is your suggestion regarding Polikarpov, the aeroplane designer, whose designs seem to end up in crashes?

Stalin waited for a reply. It seems that this aeroplane designer always went to church to pray for his success, but Baydukov told Stalin that this constructor does not believe in technical knowledge of the Russian kind. This saved Polikarpov from arrest, but his colleagues were tried and it was proved that there was sabotage in construction ... the same Polikarpov, after analyzing the crashes, came to this conclusion. Baydukov stated:

- Stalin had a very knowledgeable expertise in technical matters in the construction of aeroplanes. When talking with

experts in aviation, he knew most of the details. In a collective meeting with aviation workers, he enumerates the problems of design and mechanics, to the amazement of all the experts.

Here, I think, it is also necessary to tell of another episode. This was told to me by M.M. Gromov, Hero of the Soviet Union:

– Stalin had great influence on my life. He was a doer of all that concerned our country – clever, quickly absorbed details and had correct analyses, able to judge character and bring out the best characteristics of a person to accomplish heroic deeds. He was a born leader, not able to stand just routine, unimaginative workers, lies, mundane phrases, careerism and boot-lickers. We must state that we were fanatically dedicated aviators. We wanted much – but sometimes knew too little. He made us all think more deeply, many times urging us to look to the West and learn new techniques where possible. We were in Germany and America. Everything of interest after we returned, we told Stalin. Stalin once gave me such a command that I almost fell off my chair. First, it was as a Chief of Summer Aviation School and then as a Commander of our Aviation army.

These are the kind of people that my posting had me in touch with. My chief Ordzhonikidze was heavily involved in planning and carrying out the building of our fledging aviation. On February 18, I walked Sergo home at 10 p.m. Next day, he died.

About this death, there are various versions. How was it actually?

At that time, on guard by the door was Zemsky. In the Kremlin offices of Sergo, below the stairs, everything was quiet. Zina, Sergo's wife, was absent. In the apartment was a maid – temporarily employed Lavrentyeva. She came out into the corridor, shouting:

Sergo is dying! Sergo is dying!

There was no gunshot heard by the guard Zemsky. There was no gunshot! But it took more than 50 minutes for the head of Security, Yezhov, to come to the scene! He asked what happened, no one seemed to know, but no medical doctors were called immediately! Why?

After the death of Sergo, I was transferred to the agency of the USSR, under the command of A. Mikoyan. He was completely different than Sergo was in his outlook and behaviour. Mikoyan had to go to Yerevan in Armenia and I went ahead to make plans. There came close to 150 state employees. Mikoyan opened the meeting, asked who wanted to speak. No one spoke up.

- That means there is nothing to talk about.

Then he closed the meeting. That was his method, not to get involved or find out what was needed, what problems there were. Sergo, on the other hand, was the opposite.

The elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR were at hand and Mikoyan was to be nominated from the Armenian territory. He had to appear in Yerevan. At the train station, all his relatives came in droves, all eager to shake the hand of their countryman. They surrounded the train car, and I had to deal individually with each relative.

He also had to appear before the voters. Over 100,000 people in Lenin Square. The wooden tribunal was overwhelmed by the multitude who crowded to such an extent that the wooden stand collapsed and we had a hard time to free Mikoyan from under the debris. He then wanted to speak from the balcony of the CC CPSU in Yerevan. The

multitude was so great and noisy that this meeting had to be cancelled.

I was also responsible for controlling the food and wine for leaders, incase of any poison attempt on their lives. Here, I opened the wine bottles, started to taste each bottle to make certain. Without realizing it, I became so drunk that I had to be taken away to bed. Unannounced, coming to Yerevan were Beria and Malenkov – Beria from the train car was yelling in Georgian something to Sarkisov. Three NKVD men went to arrest the First Secretary of the CC of Armenia, A. Kostanian, chairman of the Central Executive Committee, S. Markitian, 4 other section heads and 4 deputy chairmen of the Armenian Internal Security. In 1937, there were 22 high ranking officials of Armenia arrested! Most were not guilty, but the hand of Yezhov was seen behind these acts.

IV

After returning to Moscow from Armenia, I was assigned the command of Bolshoi Theatre, to guard members of the government when they visited the theatre. Here, I found out interesting details of the care given by V.I. Lenin before to arts and especially to this theatre. Stalin paid much attention to the arts and the many theatres, he was on a first name basis with composers, dancers, artists, conductors and leading performers and knew the repertoire of the main theatrical productions.

Today, it is hard to believe this ... but facts are facts. After the revolution, some leftists demanded that all theatres be closed, trying to show that workers and the peasantry did not know or understand classical theatre. These "leftists" came to such a conclusion that they wanted to demolish the Bolshoi Theatre – Even though people always filled the theatres to capacity – so that it would not hinder proletarian culture! Many people felt sorry for the performing artists who had to perform in very cold theatres – there was no money or even coal to heat the theatres. During the winter of 1918, Stalin especially looked into this problem. Director of "Maly Theatre", Galkin, demanded a vote on closing the theatres and not providing them with heat. All other directors voted for maintaining the theatres – except Galkin.

Lenin at that time saved our national treasure. He was always present at the Bolshoi Theatre, talking with artists, performers and it was through the dedication of Lenin and then Stalin that we maintained the best dancers, composers and directors.

Stalin was extremely interested and defended the theatres. Present-day enemies falsify and try to present Stalin as uncultured. Only enemies can talk in this way. People's artist of USSR, V. Barsova and people's artist of USSR, M. Mikhailov even called Stalin assistant-choreographer of nearly all opera productions in Bolshoi Theatre. Here are some examples:

Chief Director S. Samosud, choreographer B. Mordvinov, poet S. Gorodecky, writer M. Bulgakov, artist N. Williams and ballet master R. Zakharov started to rehearse a production – "Ivan Sussanin". The task was not only to return to the stage the genius of M. Glinka, but also to show the patriotism of the Russian people, against any foreign intervention against Russia. The theatre committee decided to eliminate the operatic aria "Slavsia-Glorify". Samosud said that without this song, there could be no opera. This statement was heard in the

Kremlin. Stalin went to see the rehearsal, was very surprised, and said:

- How can this opera be put on without the song "Slavsia"? Were there in Russia no Tsars, Boyars, businessmen and church hierarchy? They all united in order to fight Poland. How can we trample on this historical truth? This should not be!

The heroes of the Opera, Minin and Pozharsky, at the end of the opera, were going out of Spaski gates. Stalin asked why they should not go out as heroes, on horses, and to throw the Polish captured trophies at the feet of these heroes of the struggle against the Polish gentry.

Stalin loved to listen to the "Ivan Sussanin" opera, especially when it was sung by Mikhailov. Mihailov was afraid to sing in full voice, having been trained to sing in a church. Stalin came up to him and said:

- Maxim Dormidontovich, do not be bashful - sing in full voice. I also was schooled in a seminary. And if I did not choose to be a revolutionary, who knows what I might have become. Maybe a priest!

Another example to show Stalin's keen interest and understanding. During the rehearsal of the opera "Virgin Soil Upturned", Stalin suggested some improvements. Nagulov, the main actor-singer, sang "How can the revolution go ahead without me?" as he threw his party card on the table. Stalin said that it should be: "World revolution will go on with or without Nagulov". Stalin asked me to bring to him Samosud and Dzerzhinsky. Stalin asked Dzerzhinsky:

- How do you like classical music?
- Critically (because at that time, it was fashionable to criticize the classics by the revolutionaries).

 Comrade Dzerzhinsky, I recommend that you get all the music, all the arias of the classic composers, sleep on them, get into their costumes and learn from them.

While to Samosud of Bolshoi Theatre, he said:

– Bolshoi Theatre is a sacred stage of the classical theatre, but not a foot cloth or manure!

As a result of this, some minor operas they transferred to a theatre on Pushkin Square, where they became known as operettas.

This example should show the reader that Stalin was not a Georgian chauvinist as some people portray him to have been. In the opera "Eugene Onegin", the title role was played by a young, talented Georgian singer – manly, with handsome face. Stalin called in the Director and asked about the new singer.

- The Tsar was Russian, yes? That means that his costume should be Russian, yes? The scenery should always present the historical truth. This singer, with a heavy Georgian accent, did not present the role of a Russian Tsar. Let him sing in Tbilisi, he has a future there.

He also saw and recognized talent which he thought would be very necessary for the Bolshoi Theatre, the sacred house of Soviet culture. While in Leningrad, he saw and listened to a young soloist M. Reisin. He asked him to come to Moscow, to sing at the Bolshoi Theatre. The artist was afraid – he had a family, an apartment ... what would happen to him in Moscow?

- We shall find you an apartment in Moscow, but first, we must see whether Leningraders will let you go.

It would be a sin not to mention another characteristic of J.V. Stalin. The Director of Bolshoi Theatre, although a stickler for details, somehow saw that less and less notable members

of different foreign Embassies came to the theatre. He did not know what to do. Whom better to ask ... he went to see Stalin. Top opera singer, Golovsnov, seeing what was happening at the Bolshoi Theatre, also decided to leave! Who can get him back? Only Stalin!

He approached Golovanov, together with other performers.

- Comrade Stalin, I feel badly, my health, I cannot go through these problems.
- Nikolai Semenovich, I also am sick with problems, but
 I work. I would ask you to work also. Get on your right
 road and make classics as classics should be.

This great musician-director fulfilled the recommendations of Stalin and the Bolshoi Theatre again became the centre of cultural life of Moscow.

All are familiar with the demands for the good of the people by Stalin. But not too many are familiar with the goodness, humility and dedication of Stalin.

For the 60th birthday of Stalin in the theatre named after K. Stanislavsky, there was an opera performed "In the Office". The main actress-singer Natasha at the finale should have shot the kulak Storozhev. She fired the blank, but it didn't go off. Storozhev, of course, fell as if he had been shot. Looking at this, Stalin, during the intermission, asked for the Director who was very nervous and beside himself, apologizing profusely for this event. Stalin, very softly, hands on his shoulders, said:

- That's fine, it's good that the gun did not go off. Why must we scare the people? This was a rehearsal only. Director Nemirovich-Danchenko said that he will nevertheless hurry up the rehearsals in order to be ready for Stalin's 60th birthday performance.

- This should not be attempted at all, said Stalin.
- In artistic endeavours, hurrying up the performances is detrimental to good performance and artistic merit.

Stalin was capable of getting out of predicaments that others got into – not by yelling or demanding, but by trying to pacify and make smooth some problems, as the following example shows.

There was a reception in the Kremlin for the members of the Political Bureau of the party. In proposing toasts to Stalin, Molotov became so drunk that he asked without niceties of A. Prigarov, to sing:

- Viacheslav Mikhailovich (Molotov), you too have a nice voice, maybe you can sing ... ventured Prigarov.
- Let's eat perogi, blurted out Molotov! Friends of Molotov had to escort him out of the room.
- We, as Bolsheviks, must not drink so that we become drunk and cause some misunderstanding.

After that, in order to break the silence, Stalin, together with Voroshilov and Budenny, started to sing revolutionary songs. Thus, the evening continued very harmoniously.

Many times in the Kremlin, the Central Committee would see new films that were shown. They were shown English films by the Cinematographic Committee under the head of Bolshakov. After seeing this "cultural film", Stalin said:

- Did you buy this film with our gold?
- No, it was in exchange meekly said the chief of the committee.
 - You have "Chapaev"?
 - Yes.
- Give us this film. These are the kind of films to show our youth and future generations.

Some of the people in the audience, members of the Politbureau, started to shout: Bravo, Stalin, Bravo!

After the film ended, Stalin was agitated and told those who performed this "Bravo" event:

- This is not called for at all. I certainly do not appreciate or want these "bootlicking" words to be said in my name!

Stalin loved to sing, second tenor – a rich voice. He liked folk music and old Russian songs.

There were provocations against Stalin, but no attempted assassination. During a large CC meeting, over the heads of the presidium from the ceiling, there flew a piece of cement from the rafters – landing right on the presidium table. The security did not dare cause a commotion, but in the evening, they went to investigate where this could have come from. Sure enough, someone put it there and with the movement in the meeting hall, opening and closing of doors, this piece of cement was meant to land and cause a furor.

v

The Great Patriotic War broke out. Bolshoi Theatre immediately became empty. The majority of the troupe was evacuated to Kuibishev. More than 1,000 artists went in concert brigades to the front lines. Most others went to construction defences and others joined the Red Army. I was assigned a group of thirty bodyguards to guard members of the Government ... inside Moscow and visits to the front lines.

For a long time now, there are stories, lies, outright falsifications that the war scared Stalin out of his wits. In view of these lies, let me tell of an incident. On May 5, at a meeting in the Kremlin, one of the scared officers said that

the CC armored train is ready and hidden. Stalin really let him have it:

- What kind of nonsense! What kind of safety armored train, when the enemy is inside the borders of Soviet Union!

You can draw your own conclusion from this statement ...

At the beginning of the war with German attack on the USSR, this news was conveyed to Stalin by Marshal Zhukov. Already at 3 a.m., Stalin came into his office at the Kremlin. After that came in Zhukov and Timoshenko. Stalin regularly walked on the streets of Moscow, even during the flights of German aircraft. But he understood that people must see him amongst themselves, that the leader is with them, that he is in the capital of Moscow, and is heading its defense. Even more effective, he visited command posts on Gorky Street, Zemlianov Valley, Smolensky Square. For the sentries and army personnel, this had a tremendous effect.

Sometimes at the beginning of the war, at about 4 o'clock in the morning, Stalin was on Kaluzhki Square. Underneath, you could hear the crunch of broken glass. Around us, there were wooden homes, ambulances were racing to and fro, taking the dead and tending the wounded civilians and soldiers, right in Moscow. We were surrounded by crying women with children in their arms. Looking at them with tears in his eyes, Stalin told Vlasik:

- We must evacuate the children deep into the interior of the country.

All of them stared to ask as to when will the Red Army stop the German fascists! Stalin tried to console them with these well known words:

- There will be, there will be a holiday and dancing on this street of ours!

After being bombed by German planes, we went into Gorky Street. A woman with a flashlight came up to Stalin and scolded him:

- Is it permissible for you to wander on the street, comrade Stalin, during such dangerous times? An enemy could easily drop a bomb on you!

Stalin only opened up his arms. Of course, the lady was correct. He was with us near Kubinka when over 400 planes were in the air, bombing while our fighters tried to shoot them down. After successfully repulsing the enemy, Stalin asked for the names of our pilots who did such an outstanding job. He met Victor Talakhin who did an outstanding job of shooting down German planes.

The enemy knew exactly where Stalin had his Dacha. Stalin risked his life together with all of us. Stalin always looked at the tremendous dogfights over the Dacha, when the Germans desperately tried to kill Stalin and his entourage, knowing in advance that they were there. They dropped bombs near the Dacha, some exploded, others did not, and we had to defuse them, knowing full well if they went off, everyone around the perimeter of the Dacha would be killed.

From September 29 to October, Kremlin hosted a Conference of British and American leaders. I was to organize a concert for the foreign allies and they certainly appreciated this gesture, during these very trying and dangerous times.

On October 15, Beria with Shcherbakov called the meeting of the NKVD and secretaries of the districts of Moscow. Beria deceitfully announced:

- German tanks are already in Oditsovo. Contact with the front is broken. According to the decisions of Central General Command, we must mine all large factories, industries and other important structures. Leave 500 members in every district to defend Moscow, evacuate older people and children. Give out all the reserves of products to the people, in order that the enemy would not get them.

Our surroundings at the Dacha were mined, and the news was told to us, from where, we do not know, that Stalin has left and went to Kalinin front or some place else, no one knows where.

Where was Stalin at this time? Chauffeur to Stalin, Mitriukhin, states emphatically that from the Kremlin, Stalin wanted to go to the Dacha to meet his Politbureau. Rumniatsev started to tell him that there is no water there, there is no heat, there are mines, but Stalin gave the order to open the Kremlin gates and go. Orlov kept the gates closed. Stalin gave another order:

- At this moment, I want you to take out all the mines, do you understand!

Orlov had to open the gates and light a fire at the Dacha. Stalin set to work, preparing the agenda for the meeting, while sappers were digging up the mines ...

Going through Moscow on October 16th, Stalin saw people with bread, flour, sausages, macaroni – all goods belonging to the state reserves. He never said a word to these people, but in the Kremlin, he quickly called a meeting, and asked:

- Who allowed this anarchy to take place in Moscow?

All were quiet. Beria even closed his eyes. Sharukhin very briefly told what happened. Stalin commanded Shcherbakov to go on the radio, to tell the people that we are going to be victorious, to make sure that normal state of affairs come back to the city ... to open up all the stores and to get

normalcy going again. Then he called to see G. Zhukov, P. Artemiev, B. Shaposhnikov, A. Voznesensky, N. Kuztsov, M. Kalinin. From Molotov, he demanded that all foreign Diplomatic Corps be evacuated to Kuibishev. At last, the commandant of the Kremlin arrived, General Spiridonov. Stalin asked him:

- What is your suggestion? Beria is demanding the evacuation of all to Kuibishev.
 - Better to go to the Urals or Siberia. It is safer.

Stalin did not say anything ... kept quiet but you could see that he did not like the hidden "panic" created by Beria and some others. Everyone left. Stalin was left alone with only me as a bodyguard. In the evening, the guards at the Lenin Mausoleum were replaced. Together with Vlasik, Rumiantsev and myself, Stalin went down to the coffin of V.I. Lenin, stood there very quietly, as if talking underneath his breath. He then quickly went back into the Kremlin.

Later in the evening, with heavy snow falling, Stalin stopped on the highway, filled with evacuees, soldiers, baggage. He saw a woman who was barely able to pull her sleigh on whose wooden bench were her worldly possessions. Stalin stopped the car, went outside and he thought for a long time. At midnight when in the Dacha there gathered the whole Politbureau, he called in to this high-level meeting, the landlady of the Dacha, Istomina, and asked:

- Valentina Vasilevna, you are preparing to leave Moscow?
- Comrade Stalin, Moscow is our mother, our home. It should be defended, she forthrightly told the gathered Politbureau.
- Do you hear how Muscovites talk? With sarcasm in his voice, Stalin looked around at all those present.

Everyone kept quiet. In the morning on his way to the Kremlin, talking with the chauffeur Krivchenkov about defending Moscow, Stalin forthrightly said:

- I always was and will always remain with the Russian people in Moscow. We shall defend it to the death!

Guards in the Kremlin became fewer and fewer. Beria took most of them to defend the General Army Headquarters Staff. General Shpigov decided to put obstructions on every Kremlin Gate except Spasski Gate. Stalin also made certain that no matter what were the obstacles put in his way, he always greeted us cordially. In the most critical of times, while the enemy was at the gates of Moscow, Stalin remained calm, collected and inspired courage in all of us.

As was already stated, there were four special army trains ready to evacuate the Government. They were located at Rogoshko-Simonovsky corner of Moscow. I was involved with this also, but these trains were under the command of Beria and the NKVD. They remained there until January of the next year. Regarding the "special train" for Stalin, it was shunted to another section of the city where there was an enormous storage of building materials.

There were two bombs dropped by German aircraft on this train ... somehow they were told where this train was hidden.

The commandant of the Dacha, Soloviev, under a command from Beria, started to evacuate Stalin's furniture and other possessions and load them on this train. When Stalin found out, he was livid:

- Where did my furniture and papers go to?
- We are getting ready, comrade Stalin, to evacuate to Kuibishev.

- No! No evacuation. Do you hear? We are remaining in Moscow until final victory!

Suslov, on October 16, came to see if everything was going as planned, heard what Stalin told him:

- Stalin now gave me such a going over, that you must get this train out of sight and return all the furniture and other things from the train back to the Dacha!

As we can see, all sorts of people, even those who wanted desperately, for their own reasons, to have Stalin leave, have told one and the same thing – his decision, his categorical decision was to remain in Moscow. I must also mention that at the airport where the Aerodrom is now, there were ready four Douglas aeroplanes. Colonel Grachev sat in the cabin of Stalin's plane. No matter how they tried, that in case Moscow would fall, they could wash their hands of it!

I want to convince the reader of the falsehood about Stalin's "cowardliness". Here are some examples. Even though the territory of Dacha "Semenovskoye" was heavily mined all around and had anti-aircraft emplacements, Stalin always came here. The NKVD warned Stalin that one of the bombs dropped had not exploded. It was proposed that the Dacha be mined also, in case of an explosion. Stalin heard about this and said:

 You are a tank expert and a land mine expert. Let us go and see how we can defuse them.

Stalin, together with Soloviev, side by side, were treading on each other's toes. But everything came off very effectively. Then two enemy aircraft were circling over the Dacha. Aircraft gunners opened fire. Bullets, shells were falling on the ground like hail and Stalin was asked to go inside ... but he stood there with other defenders, urging them

on. Finally, Stalin said:

 Vlasik, do not worry. Our bombs and those of other's will not fall near us.

November 7th was approaching. Former commander of Moscow Region Red Army, General P. Artemiev, remembers vividly, when Stalin requested for him to come and see him, asking:

- Are you preparing to hold the parade on Red Square?

Opposition to holding the parade on October 7th in Red Square came from all over, even from some members of the Politbureau. It was pointed out that the parade will not have tanks or soldiers, since most of them were at the front. But these faint-hearted "patriots" were not able to convince the Commander-in-Chief.

- My dear young men, you do not seem to understand the historical and political significance of the parade at this time, said Stalin, pointing his pipe at the General.
- This parade will give courage to our people here and at the front. And the capitalists across the ocean will state that the Bolsheviks still have some gun powder in their breechblocks. The Germans will not gain anything good near Moscow. This means that we shall have to help them. Therefore, we should hold the parade. Tanks and soldiers, we shall find. Preparations, you must undertake in secret. About the beginning of the parade, tell me only after the official opening of the Holiday Meeting on November 6.
- But suppose an enemy aeroplane gets through and starts to bomb the parade?
- First of all, not one enemy plane will get through to Moscow. Secondly, if it will get through and unloads its bombs, then pick up the wounded and proceed with the parade.

We shall be on the Lenin Mausoleum to review the manifestation.

He, under strict secrecy, told the General that the USSR has in reserve 50,000 soldiers, but warned him not to let this news be known in the front lines, otherwise, the commanders at the front will grab these reserves and divide them between themselves.

This historical parade took place as planned. I think that the loud and glorious marches deafened the Germans, since they were accompanied by such a Soviet artillery barrage as the Germans had never heard before. But the Commander-in-Chief made another request. He asked Zhukov to invite the performing artists to perform. Zhukov appealed to the artists at the Bolshoi Theatre with these words:

- Dear comrades. The enemy is at the gates of Moscow! We need your help! At this moment, the work of the Bolshoi Theatre artists - this is a moral help to the soldiers at the front. Then every soldier will be as two. This opening spectacle at the Bolshoi will show that no other country, in time of war or danger, ever opened up its theatres, even though the enemy is only 30-40 km from this theatre. Today, the art of the theatre for frontline soldiers is needed, as we need bread, as a soldier needs his smoke while in the trenches!

Even though the artists themselves were cold and hungry, their performance electrified the audience. Artist Lemeshev, as he was being evacuated, at the Kazan train station, got out of the car and said:

- Why should I have to go to Kuibishev when Stalin is staying in Moscow? We must stay here and help the front, not run away into the interior of the country.

Red Army soldiers, of course, were not present at this spectacle at the Bolshoi Theatre, but heard it over the radio, read it in the press and heard from their commanders what had transpired in Moscow. It was at this time that the future of the struggle for Moscow was decided. The danger was that the Germans would again launch a counter-attack and really get to the gates of Moscow.

Of course, Zhukov was preparing for this final battle 24 hours a day. Zhukov's nerves were on edge. On December 4, there took place a meeting of the front commanders of the Armies. Stalin telephoned. Listening to him, Zhukov knitted his eyebrows, and turned white. In the end, he shouted:

- Facing me are two enemy armies. I am able to judge better here than you people at the GHQ.

Stalin, as Commander-in-Chief, also gave Zhukov some choice words.

Of course, all the enemies of Stalin and the USSR try to make more out of this exchange than it is worth. Let me try to put some sense into this question.

Commander Orlov served Stalin from 1937 until 1953, meaning, he had a right to characterize Stalin, since he was closer to him than almost 99% of the others. He said:

– Stalin did not like people who did not stand up for their convictions with truthful comments and arguments or people who always agreed: 'As you say, I will do it.' He always referred to such helpers, saying: 'Such consultants I do not need or people do not need to consult.' Having found this out, I often debated and disagreed with him. Stalin always said after the exchange: 'Fine, I will think about this.' He never liked it when people ran to him, or if he heard their hesitant steps, with cap in hand. You should always go to

him boldly, any time. His office was never closed. Here, I will give another example of my observation: 'Stalin had great respect and admiration for Zhukov, for his forthrightness and patriotism. He was, in Stalin's eyes, always a respected visitor.'

Next day, giving Zhukov and himself time to think about their small disagreement, Stalin phoned Zhukov and asked:

- Comrade Zhukov, what about Moscow?
- Comrade Stalin! Moscow, we shall not give up were made certain by the words of Georgi Konstantinovich.
 - Then, maybe, I shall sleep one or two hours.
 - Yes you can, Comrade Stalin ...

Yes, Stalin was able to read the people that surrounded him during the War Years.

VI

In the spring of 1991, there appeared on TV for two hours former General D. Volkogonov (a strange anti-communist renegade who wrote books in Russia and in America, full of caustic calumny and lies regarding Stalin and socialism – ML). Volkogonov stated that Stalin made only one trip to the front, only once did the Commander-in-Chief leave Moscow, stopping 50 kilometers from the front, slept on a soft bed, met Commanders in order that he could write to Churchill and Roosevelt how he was in the thick of the fighting at the front.

This General-Historian wrote a huge book dedicated to the Stalin 'terror', called "Triumph and Tragedy". If before he wrote that Stalin made two trips to the front lines, now he was satisfied that he made only one. Let me, a person who was with Stalin all through the war years, let me state what really happened. This is confirmed by my friends, who together were bodyguards around Stalin.

Let me quote the source, Volkogonov himself: "The top leader, for the first time, smelled its deadly odor, stood a while and then on a lark decided that he would, on this October morning, also go to the front."

But facts state the following, that Stalin had those thoughts before any of the Politbureau leaders. According to Volkogonov, Stalin just listened to some minor commanders, and then came back. On his return, according to Volkogonov, Stalin's car went into a ditch. The cavalcade went. Stalin did not stay. Stalin was moved by Beria into another car and off they went. Thus, the trip to the front was accomplished.

But this is the way it was, since I was present there ...

In August of 1941, Stalin and Bulganin were going at night to the district of Maloyaroslavets in order to see the actual front and the fighting going on. Kravchenko was behind the wheel of the black Ford as the chauffeur, they were accompanied, besides myself, by General Rumiantsev.

For a couple of days, we went through the front with Stalin and Voroshilov. Near the village of Vezdeshuye, children upon learning that Stalin came to visit, cried out: Stalin is here! Stalin is here!

At the end of October, Stalin and Voroshilov went to see the 16th Army of General Rokossovsky where they saw the operations of the rocket "Katiusha" launchers. Then the Germans started shelling us here, so that we had to immediately get onto the highway. Of course, German aviation then started to bomb the place from where the "Katiushas" were shelling them, salvo after salvo ... but by that time, our "Katiushas" were some place else, again shelling the Germans. Our

automobile was covered with mud, flak, bullet holes ... in this way, we returned to Moscow.

In the middle of November, coming with Stalin were Khrustalev, Kirilin, Tukov, Khrutashov along Volokolamsk highway at midday. Stalin came to the village of Lennino-Lupoha. We stopped at a house where a sign of the Red Cross was shown, where just recently wounded soldiers from the front were taken. When Stalin walked in, they could not believe their eyes. At first, he talked standing up, then he sat down on the stretcher and came close to the wounded Red Army soldiers. Stalin asked all pertinent questions, what were the strong points in the German defence/offence, what were their weak points. The men and officers replied that the Germans were still very strong, but not as strong as they were before, when they started the attack. Now is the moment to counter-attack. He told them to wait a little longer, no counter-attacks, something big was going to happen soon. After looking all over the front lines, Stalin returned home.

During the summer of 1942, Stalin went to the Western Front, across the river Lamoi and together with commanders, looked at the dog fights in the air, going over a pontoon bridge with Tukov and Khrustalev, he then proceeded to go back to the Kremlin.

Stalin also went to many points of the front, of course in secret, since the enemy was always on the lookout for the whereabouts of Stalin. From Marshal Sokolovsky, Stalin went to Yukhnov to see Marshal Voronov and his artillery. Going through the woods, everything was quiet, you could hear birds singing, Stalin sadly remarked:

- How peaceful it is ... You cannot believe that outside these woods, there is death and people are dying ...

At a designated stop, a train was waiting at Yukhnov where Stalin met General Yeremenko. The meeting took place in the village of Khoroshevo. Here, we found Beria trying as always to get into the good graces of Stalin, requisitioned a good bed, fancy coverings, pillows, etc. Stalin always told him to take it back where he got it and slept with his Army greatcoat on as the common soldiers slept.

The evening was dangerous, Germans started to bomb the railway where the meeting was being held ... again, they somehow knew the location. During the night, Stalin, not able to sleep, walked outside, looking at the fighting in the sky. In the morning, there arrived Yeremenko and then Voroshilov. Stalin, over the telephone, was in constant touch with Moscow, giving orders as Commander-in-Chief in order to give help to the Kalinin front.

During the day, it was learned that our army took Orel and Belgorod. Stalin was so happy he invited all to a supper which was a meagre affair, but it was lively and happy. Here, Stalin gave the command to have two victory salutes fired in Moscow in honour of these victories. They drank to the victory.

- To your health, comrade Stalin!
- Drink not to me, comrades, but for the ideas of our Great October and the ideals of our Great Lenin.

(Here, we shall not quote any more from Volkogonov, since the lies and untruths are repeated in various different scenarios and this book is not that important to dwell on this traitor, who sold out and besmirched his country in the pay of foreign powers! – Editors.)

I feel that now, the reader can understand the differences between eyewitnesses and second-hand accounts, or just plain lies. Volkogonov could not have known all the important details, known only to us, the eyewitnesses. Then why the lies that Stalin did not meet even commanders of the front? Then with whom did he meet while seeing Sokolovsky, Voronov and Yeremenko? This is sheer stupidity. How can this traitor state about Stalin that: He was incompetent, that catastrophic decisions were made, and not caring about the dying soldiers. All these lies are not diminishing Stalin's leadership ... the opposite is true, they show him to be a great leader and his strategic knowledge complemented that of his Marshals and Generals.

This attitude to Stalin by Volkogonov and his modern scribes goes in the face of Winston Churchill, who by no imagination can be called pro-Soviet or pro-communist. He gave a great characterisation of Stalin, which is well known and read all over the world.

(We will not publish this speech of Churchill on the death of Stalin, since every reader can find it quoted in previous issues of Northstar Compass or in history books – Editors.)

Is it possible that this Volkogonov (who now is dead – ML) did not know or hear about this speech by Churchill? It would really be strange. But his main task was to heap abuse and calumny on Stalin and thus on the USSR, on socialism and on communism. That was his main task and the task of his backers who paid for his book to be published. I can say that Volkogonov spent his time without any truth in his diatribe. His main argument was the "Cult of Personality" and even Stalin's enemies gave him his due. We would have expected a little more objectivity from our historian.

During the spring of 1942, our designers-constructors came out with a new tank. Because of the lack of enough tanks, we suffered losses. The new tank was brought to the Kremlin where experts, including Stalin, tried to find weaknesses, potential problems and what our tanks were in opposition to and how they measured up. The design was good but it had a weakness. The designer said that the tank must stop for a salvo of 3-4 cannon shots then proceed. Stalin did not altogether agree with this and asked the artillery General how this would affect the possibility of Germans aiming at that time and scoring a hit on the stationary object. The designer was upset, but Stalin asked him:

- How long will it take to get the weak points corrected?
- One month, comrade Stalin.
- We'll give you three months. Do not undermine us. The front is desperately in need of a tank that can have its cannon as it is rolling over the terrain. A tank commander is correct, do not disagree with him ... his life and of his comrades depend upon this new tank.

After this, Stalin went to Gorky Park to see the captured German war materials. He asked General Khmelnitsky whether we could utilize something from German technology. Stalin was interested in a portable small cannon. Can we design our own and even improve on the ones the Germans have? The designers agreed to try. The new light cannon on wheels was brought to the Kremlin together with the gunner. Stalin again asked:

- How, according to you, is it a great cannon?

- No! comrade Stalin, it's useless. Coming down with it, it is impossible to fire.

Stalin again forgave the designer and asked him to redesign it.

These facts are meant to show that Stalin was interested in every aspect of warfare. He was interested in all aspects, so that in 1943, we had to open up the dacha, make it larger with other rooms in order that the maps could be put on walls, on tables, where the Commander-in-Chief could study them, refer to them and hold meetings with his General Staff. He would study the maps, front line changes, put his observations on the maps. It was impossible for us to know when he rested. The lights were burning continually, he was always at the maps, always on the telephone with front commanders, getting their positions, advice. He slept in his overcoat, with his boots on.

A portrait of Lenin was always overhead, with a constant light shining on it, and when he went to the fronts or other governmental assignments, a bust of Lenin was always with him.

It was the time of preparations for the Teheran Conference. At Teheran, the meetings of the leaders took place in the Soviet Embassy. At these meetings, Stalin demanded from Churchill and Roosevelt the opening of the Second Front.

After the Teheran meeting ended, Stalin paid a courtesy visit to the Shah of Iran. As a courtesy to our leader, the Shah of Iran gave such a present to Stalin that Orlov with Tukov could hardly carry it to the automobile.

After the Teheran Conference, Stalin went to Stalingrad. He saw the devastated city, the headquarters of Paulus who was captured and the streets filled with German helmets and other war implements. He sighed ... – Eh, they fought and

received a nightmare. This city, we shall rebuild even more beautiful than before. With our people, we shall accomplish everything!

Going with our car among the ruins, we somehow collided with another car with a woman chauffeur in a Red Army uniform. The chauffeur, seeing that her car crashed into that of Stalin, got out, started to cry. Stalin came up to her, made her feel at ease by saying:

 Don't cry ... our car is bullet proofed, and you will be able to fix your car soon.

Soon, the militia came to the scene, ready to pounce on the unlucky lady chauffeur. Stalin intervened:

- Do not touch her. She is not to blame.

We then went on our way.

The following fact is perhaps hard to believe, but in the middle of this war with fascism, the car industry came up with a new design and production of cars. During the Spring of 1943, members of the Politbureau received their new cars, "ZIS 110", called "Victory and Moskvich". Stalin was very pleased with these cars, sitting behind the wheel, taking it for a spin. Stalin asked:

- What's the price of these cars?
- The Director proudly said that they were from 60 to 75 thousand rubles each.
 - It's too costly, it certainly is too costly, replied Stalin.
- Never mind. Our people have overcome such a war. We are not going to go bankrupt in the manufacturing. The state shall cover the deficit. Get the price down and let us go into full production.

And these light cars did go into production right in the middle of the Great Patriotic War.

-45 -

VIII

On October 28, 1941, at 4 p.m., right on the columns of Bolshoi Theatre, a German air bomb exploded, extensively damaging the facade of the theatre and blowing me practically across the stage. It blew a part of the roof off, many people were killed as they were walking by. Stalin visited this damage and then he went to Hotel Metropol to see the American Ambassador.

Enemy planes continued to bomb Moscow, but after the December defeat of the Germans, the bombing ceased. The decision was taken to immediately start the repairs of the Bolshoi Theatre. The architects were deciding whether to repair or not repair the damaged columns that rise majestically in front of the theatre. Plans were made, blue prints were made, and a miniature model was designed. No one agreed with the new design and they all stated, although Stalin was not involved directly:

Oh! these are no good. Joseph Vissarianovich was correct
why eliminate the columns whose history is tied up with ours? History would never forgive us for this.

While the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre was being rebuilt, the concerts were held in the Kremlin. After each performance, the performing artists would meet with Stalin, discuss anything and everything that came to their minds.

I could tell of many episodes to show how interested and how effective Stalin was with the performers and artists. He knew them by their first names, knew their problems, knew their weaknesses and always tried to deflate any pretentious "prima donna's" ego from coming to the surface, and if it did so, he would very diplomatically deflate that ego in order to have peace and fellowship among the performing artists, knowing full well the temperamental feelings of all artists.

Stalin was very intolerant of some members of the CC who, while attending the performances, would talk with one another. The artists immediately thought that they're not performing the best that they can, would worry, thus, would be more likely to make mistakes. One episode will again show the concern that Stalin had for the artists and those attending concerts.

Merited artist A. Byshevskaya was singing very strenuously, very weakly and after the performance, Stalin inquired as to her health.

- Alexandra Andryevna, you somehow have lost a lot of weight and the role that you sing as Yaroslavna is meant to be sung by a robust well-fed heroine ...

Byshevskaya, with tears in her eyes, blurted out that she and her husband Bobkov did not even have their own little room to sleep in or enough to eat during these terrible war years.

 We shall fix up your bombed-out quarters and make certain that you have enough to eat so that you can sing.

Not only did her situation improve, but the State initiated a plan for all artists to get better pay and rationing of food.

By the end of 1943, the whole Bolshoi Theatre group returned from Kuibishev and this was a real festive occasion. A competition took place to compose a new hymn of the USSR, since until that time, the official hymn was the "Internationale". The Red Army forces were gaining victory after victory, the country was starting to rebuild and this was the time for a National Anthem.

After this competition was launched, Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Malenkov listened to all the hymns of other countries. The Politbureau listened to all compositions, and finally, they agreed that the hymn by A. Alexandrov was appropriate. Stalin said:

- This music is magnificent. It arouses patriotism and a call for more glorious achievements!

He then himself sang the whole hymn in his tenor voice to the amazement and delight of members of the CC CPSU. They then all joined to inaugurate this new powerful hymn of the Soviet Union.

On the night of January 1, 1944, this hymn of the Soviet Union was first heard over the radio. The orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre performed this first concert under the direction of A. Melnyk-Pashaev. Regarding the hymn "Internationale", this remained as the hymn of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The Central Committee had decided to award Stalin the medal of Socialist Hero. Stalin appreciated this honour since he was so heavily involved in all of the 5 year plans. The Politbureau also wanted to give him the Hero of the Soviet Union medal for his role in the Great Patriotic War. When Stalin heard about this from Tukov, he called this disgraceful:

- This is toadyism by jesters! Such a high award must be only given to soldiers, who showed heroism on the battlefield! I was never in the frontlines with a rifle in my hands and did not show any heroism!

Finding out Stalin's unceremonious feelings towards this, Malenkov was elected to approach Stalin on this ... but being very cagey, he asked Poskrebyshev to do this instead. Poskrebyshev was also afraid, since he knew that Stalin does not approve such "ceremonious glorification". He assigned this task to Orlov, the Commandant of the personal bodyguards of Stalin ... let him do it. Orlov knew better than that ... the medal was never given and Stalin never accepted it.

Before the Victory Parade in 1945, the CC decided to make Stalin happy by designing him a new parade-oriented uniform as Generalissimos. Khalev, head of the bodyguards now, was given the task of getting three different uniforms designed and sewn. He got a young, well-built soldier to model for the uniform and showed it to the assembled CC. Stalin, coming from his office, seeing this young athletic man in a General's uniform with sashes, nulets, gold braid and gold buttons, asked:

- What is this peacock doing here?
- Comrade Stalin, these are three proposed designs for your uniform for the Victory Parade, that you will wear.

Stalin refused all of them, had them taken away. He received the parade in his usual uniform. On the Lenin Mausoleum, he greeted all the guests, tapped the microphone with his finger and then turned to Potapov, the head of communications:

- Are you ready to let the world know?
- Yes, let the whole world know, comrade Stalin, said Potapov.
- Let these lovers of wars listen to this all over the world ...

The playing of the assembled orchestra, playing the National Anthem, was heard all over the world!

On July 16, 1945, Stalin came to Berlin to attend the Potsdam Conference. Yefimov and Orlov provided Stalin with a luxurious room in a hotel, got him gold-embossed furniture. When Stalin saw this, he made them take it out and replace

it with ordinary furniture and he blasted them for this bootlicking, fawning attitude to him.

But in three days, everything changed. Churchill was defeated in the English elections, Atlee was yet not able to come to take his place. Stalin organized a farewell concert for Churchill. Stalin acted as the Master of Ceremonies. They performed Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Tchaikovsky.

Stalin again came up with a request which caused a stir. He asked some artists whether they could sing some Russian folk melodies. It seemed as if nobody would be able to do this, since these were classical singers. But G. Baranova came to the rescue. Stalin stood by her at the piano, listening, very pleased and proud of the Soviet songs and melodies. Then he gave her a beautiful bouquet of roses.

IX

Stalin, even before victory, was very concerned about the state of development to newer heights of agricultural collective and state farms. Here is a case in point.

During a luncheon, they had lamb and rice for the main course. Stalin asked:

- Where did we get this lamb from?
- We had it flown by plane from Abkhazia, commandant Solovov replied.
- And the aeroplane used water for fuel, did you say?
 Solovov started to look for excuses, but Stalin stopped him.
- Do not look for excuses, do not try to smooth this over. We do not have to import. We should be doing this here ourselves!

Thereafter, the help started to put into practice the idea of growing and using only the products that could be grown right around the Dacha.

Sometimes Khrushchev used to visit Stalin here after work. He always tried to show off his understanding of agriculture, even though he knew absolutely little about tomatoes and fruits. Somehow, Khrushchev brought as a present to Stalin some live pheasants and let them out into the yard by the Dacha. Suddenly, Khrushchev remembered something and picked them up again. Stalin then remarked:

- Why did you not tell me this before about the gift of Khrushchev? I would not have accepted them. Let him feed himself more. He really likes to eat.

Stalin made certain that the produce of the Dacha where meetings took place should be self-sufficient and did not import from anywhere else. He was very practical. The profit from the acreage around the Dacha therefore reached close to a million rubles. Everyone was economizing and thus, tried to show by their deeds what they were preaching in words.

June 3, 1946, Kalinin died and Stalin was busy arranging the funeral according to the Russian Orthodox tradition, but without the church ceremonies. Stalin was very fond of Kalinin who was one of the oldest Bolsheviks in the ranks of the Government.

In 1946, Stalin went by car to the south of the country, in order to see the ruins and the reconstruction taking place there. He visited Kursk, Orel, not only by car, but on foot, much to the chagrin of the bodyguards. On one of the streets, in ruins, he saw a woman who was carrying water on her shoulders – upon seeing Stalin, she threw the pails down and immediately ran up to Stalin and embraced him, crying:

- Dear comrade Stalin, how can you allow yourself to walk among such ruins?
 - Cannot we walk on your street?, Stalin smiled.

But the woman just carried on with her own thoughts:

- If it wasn't for you, comrade Stalin, we would not have defeated our enemies and seen our victory! We thank you for this with all our hearts.

Such discussions, such meetings took place everywhere we went. In Sochi, they were already rebuilding the port. Stalin, right from the road, hurried there to see for himself, to ask Afanasiev, the Commandant of the Southern government Dacha. He had full information of which he informed Stalin in detail. He then visited Ritsa, saw the mountains, the terrain and the perfect climate. Turning to the architect Avramenko, he urged that a road be built right around the lake. The architect said:

- Comrade Stalin, this will be very costly. This calls for the blasting of mountainous terrain.
- All must be done for the people, that in these future sanatoriums, people will rest and easily be reached by cars and buses.

Could architect Avramenko deny the need to help the Soviet people have the opportunity to reach these future sanatoriums by cars and buses?

At that time, there was no summer cottage for the Government here. They had to sleep in an old building built by the Tsar. They laid the mattresses on the floor, somehow they managed to get some pillows. Stalin lay down together with us – his head underneath the billiard table, while his feet stuck out with his boots on. The tired-out bodyguards immediately fell fast asleep ... no one was guarding anyone.

Stalin, early in the morning, complained:

- Friends, someone was really snoring loud, I could not sleep. Please find some place else for me to sleep.

Stalin loved to fish and there were many rivers there, so in some free time, we managed to fish and cook, together, as one family, not as head of the USSR and his bodyguards. He never wanted us to raise a glass of wine to his health. In this case, he proposed that we should raise a glass to the health of Elizarov, the one who caught the most fish.

Those who now accuse Stalin of this and that, absolutely did not know him, did not see him personally – only saw him in photographs or in films, or they read about him from writers who also never saw him or met him, and wrote as they liked, made of him a person who was nowhere recognizable by people like me. Stalin was articulate, happy and very generous. Not too many of the members of the CC CPSU had the loyalty and the camaraderie with their bodyguards or helpers as Stalin had. When working in the woods, he always either cooked or washed dishes, he never commanded anyone to do what he could not do himself. All of us were assigned jobs. Our work was always going smoothly ... if there were 5 or 10 people, everyone had to do something to help everyone else.

When we were at Borzhomi in Crimea, friends of Stalin, who were in the underground with him in the early days, came around and Stalin found out that due to many circumstances, his friends were hard pressed for some finances. Since Stalin never carried any money with him, he passed a hat around and we collected 300 rubles, which Stalin gave to his friends in an envelope.

Here is another example, just to show that Stalin was a person who tried to help everyone and did not carry his high post to such an extent as to ignore the people or as the following example shows, the children. As we were travelling back to Moscow, on the road, Stalin stopped the car for some fresh air ... vacationers with their children immediately surrounded Stalin. Stalin asked Vlasik to go and get some candies in order to give to the children. Vlasik went to this Georgian man who was running a kiosk, got the candies and gave them out to the children, while the parents were discussing every subject imaginable with Stalin.

At night where we rested, Stalin asked Vlasik:

- Did you pay the man for the candies?
- No, I did not have the time.
- Return immediately to the kiosk and pay the man the money that we owe him!

The kiosk man was very proud that he had sold candy to comrade Stalin.

After the death of his wife, Stalin did not have anything to do with women. He was very much against many-times marriages and often laughed at and castigated Marshal Kulik, who had married a 17-year-old girl:

- Look at this marriage eloper ... we hope that he doesn't trip over his own feet!

Stalin, trying to get some relief for his troublesome feet, took about three salt baths, but people would not let him have any peace. A group of citizens would always surround him, even when he had his feet in a basin.

After returning to Moscow, Stalin went to the steam bath which was built for him, since it was the only cure that seemed to have helped Stalin with his feet. The steam bath was locked.

Stalin waited and the poor bodyguard who was not supposed to be there, but thinking that Stalin was away, just went in. When he heard Stalin's voice, he practically jumped wet into his uniform, apologizing. Stalin told Dubinin that it's fine, let him stay awhile and wished him:

- May you have a light steam bath, comrade Dubinin!

That is the kind of leader we had. He made everyone feel at ease.

But Stalin's son, Vasili, grew up a different person. His character was boisterous – a real buyer and seller – a dashing extrovert. He was not afraid of anyone except his father. It happened that Vasili smashed a motor boat and left it in the water. The head of transport, Lukin, was told by Vasili that if you go and complain to my father, I'll do something drastic! Stalin was informed and Vasili had a hard time for this.

He also took to task the first husband of his daughter, Svetlana, whose husband took advantage of a tailor enterprise, getting his suits sewn ... but not only his own, but with the gang of friends which began to have loose morals and behavioural problems. When Stalin found this out, he called Svetlana on the carpet and stated:

- You are still a student, he is also a student, both of you are married. Do both of you think that you will take advantage of your father and of the State? This will not happen!

After that, the whole gang was thrown out and none of them were allowed to receive any sort of privileges.

The counter-revolutionary assassin of Lenin, Kaplan, was in jail, but it was found out that she had her garden and land near Solovkah. When she died in prison and Stalin was told about this, he said:

- Everything has its time.

Once, while touring Moscow, Stalin saw the empty pedestal where the monument to Mayakovsky was to have been erected. Turning to Tukov, he asked:

- Why is it that till now, a monument to Mayakovsky hasn't been erected? All his life, Mayakovsky promoted Lenin and the revolution. This has to be done immediately. On the same day, Tukov gave the order to the Moscow City Soviet. Thus, the famous monument to Mayakovsky now beautifies Moscow.

We were returning to Moscow, a very heavy rain was falling, and Stalin saw on the highway some collective farmers standing, waiting for a bus. He made us stop the cars and ordered us to shuttle all the people to their village, so that they would not get soaked to the skin. But the collective farmers did not move when they were asked to by Sokolov. Stalin himself got out of the car, went over to the collective workers, explained and invited them to the cars. They talked about problems, about the last war and the deaths of loved ones. Stalin sighed and said:

- I also lost my son ...

Hearing about the wonderful event of riding with comrade Stalin, in the village square, more than a hundred people gathered, hoping to also get such a privilege ... but we were almost out of gas and we nearly did not make it to Moscow.

One spring evening, Khrushchev and Beria at the Dacha were playing skittles. Beria called Khrushchev ...

- Hey, Martin Barulya, hit them first!

Khrushchev in his turn called Beria Public Prosecutor. Stalin, listening to this vulgar exchange, yelled from his office:

- You are like small children!

Never again did Beria or Khrushchev call each other these names.

At the Kremlin, Stalin, on his nightly walk before going back to work in his office, asked the guard Melnikov:

- How many hours do you stand here?
- Every six hours I stand three here without moving.
- When do you receive new uniforms?
- Once per year, comrade Stalin.
- How much do you get paid?
- 600 rubles, comrade Stalin.
- That is not much at all ...

After this, all the guards received new uniforms twice a year and a raise in their pay. Stalin was always concerned about others. He always demanded that prices on goods be lowered. He always thought about these problems.

While driving in the car, Stalin asked:

- Where can we come up with these damned finances?
- Comrade Stalin, we should stop payment when we award medals, said Vlasik.
- You only talk, but haven't enough courage to make this demand in writing to the Presidium of Supreme Soviet to Malenkov.
 - Yes, I will write, stated Vlasik emphatically.

Vlasik kept his word. Stalin always managed to find the needed rubles, he decided to dismiss 70% of his bodyguards. Then, in order to make it much harder to get into the Politbureau by opportunists, just looking to the personal pocketbooks, he proposed a cut in pay for all members of the Government. The members of the Politbureau were dismayed, but what could they do? They started to make plans against Stalin more and more by taking into their own hands practically

all of the functions of the government apparatus. Who were these people in actual fact? Beria, Malenkov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Bulganin. When they managed to put aside Stalin and his role in government in actual practice, they started their plan in earnest. His personal bodyguards and trusted friends that were with Stalin for scores of years like Poskribishev and Vlasik were forced out of the Kremlin shortly after.

It looked as if Stalin was not able now to struggle and fight the "conspirators". He was becoming weak and was already 74 years old. He was beginning to suffer constantly with hypothermia. Once while walking, he almost collapsed from dizziness. Tukov just barely was able to get a hold of Stalin before he fell. He had an extremely hard time to go up and down the stairs, in his Kremlin office. And he complained to his friend Orlov:

- This damned old age is really getting to me ...

X

On February 23, 1953, Stalin visited Bolshoi Theatre to see the ballet Swan Lake, accompanied by Kirilov, the bodyguard. He was alone in his theatre box, staying and enjoying the ballet till the final curtain. He thanked the Director and asked him to convey his best to the artists who performed exceptionally well that night.

On February 29th, in the evening, he, with his "companions", saw a film in the Kremlin after the working day was over. After the film had ended, all went to the Dacha. There were Beria, Malenkov, Khrushchev and Bulganin. Others of the CC went home. There was fruit on the table,

and only grape juice was served during the discussions. Stalin made his favourite tea which all drank. They discussed until 4 a.m. on March 1. The guests were taken to the door by Krustaliov. After that, Stalin told him:

 I'm going to bed. I will not ask you back. You can also go to sleep.

Stalin never made such a command before. Krustaliov was taken aback by this unusual request. Stalin looked fine and had full use of his faculties ...

In the morning, all of us went about our duties as usual. At noon, we were worried that there was no movement in Stalin's bedroom or his office. This was strange, but no one asked us to go to Stalin ... our commandant was quiet, although all of us thought that this was very strange. Only in the evening, around 7 p.m., did we notice a light in Stalin's bedroom and his office. Everyone, including myself, sighed in relief that everything was fine with Stalin. I awaited a call to come in to do the things that I usually do in order to prepare for Stalin's evening work - messages, errands and other governmental things that had to be done. But, we did NOT receive any summons to see Stalin. We again began to worry because this was extremely unusual. Even though it was Sunday, Stalin always kept to his arranged schedule. I thought that something was wrong, very unusual, and I began to worry, but without the command of my superiors, I did not venture to go into Stalin's quarters.

It was now 10:30 p.m. and we had last seen Stalin at 4 a.m. of the previous day. This was 18 hours. Our chief Lozgachev tried to send Starostin, the next in command, to see Stalin in his office. Starostin begged off, saying that he was only second in command of the bodyguards! While this

was going on, wondering who should go into Stalin's office, a mail from the Central Committee arrived. This gave us the opportunity to go into Stalin's office with the mail, although Stalin's office was never locked or closed. We could have walked in any time without any problems.

With firm steps, Lozgachev with the CC CPSU mail went towards Stalin's office. He went in to the cafeteria, thinking that Stalin was there. Not finding him there, he tried every office, but they were empty. From a small room near the office, there was a light shining. He looked into the room and stopped in his tracks ...

There, lying on the couch, was Stalin, somehow strangely resting on one elbow. By his side was his pocket watch and the newspaper "Pravda". On the table, there were bottles (opened) of mineral water and an empty glass. It seemed that Stalin was still alive, as he tried to lift his hand up, but he could not talk. Seeing this, Lozgachev threw the mail on the table and ran, shouting:

- What's wrong with you, comrade Stalin?

In reply, he heard just a sound from Stalin's lips, "dz-z-z ...".

Using the internal telephone, Lozgachev telephoned Starostin, Tykov and Butuzova, the house keeper. Lozgachev asked Stalin:

- Can we put you on a couch, comrade Stalin?

Stalin very weakly nodded his head. All of them picked Stalin up and laid him on the couch. The couch was too small. They lifted him up again and carried him to another room, to a larger couch ... On the way to the room, everyone saw that Stalin was in a bad shape. He obviously had been in this state for many long hours. Butuzov unbuttoned his

tunic. He was covered with a blanket. Lozgachev sat with him, awaiting the arrival of doctors.

Starostin immediately telephoned his chief, Ignatiev. This almighty chief of the KGB just brushed this off and told Starostin to telephone Beria. No one wanted to telephone Beria, since most of the personal bodyguards hated Beria. Starostin then decided to telephone Malenkov. As was expected, Malenkov waffled and waffled, and did not do anything concrete in this dire situation. Only a half hour later, Malenkov telephoned Starostin that he could not find Beria ... suggesting that Starostin should try and find Beria himself. Soon after, Beria arrived and commanded:

- About the sickness of Stalin, I command you not to talk about it or telephone anyone about it!

All this time, the doctors still did not arrive, nor did any of the "companions" of Stalin show up at this critical moment.

But nevertheless, Lozgachev did not leave Stalin's side, waited and waited for the doctors to arrive. Only at 3 a.m. did a vehicle arrive. But this was not an ambulance, but "friends", Beria and Malenkov, who arrived without any doctors with them. Beria, with his beady eyes, looked at everyone first, and only then came up to Stalin where he was lying. Malenkov, wearing brand new shoes which squeaked, took them off and came to Stalin's bedside, without a word on his lips. Stalin, seeing them, with a noticeable frown on his face, tried to get up and started to mumble something, but fell back again, his eyes closed. Beria, noticing this, glanced round and very sharply told Lozgachev:

- You, why are you spreading panic? Can't you see, comrade Stalin is fast asleep! Don't bother us any more and leave Stalin alone, don't bother him! Lozgachev started to command, saying that Stalin needed immediate help from doctors. But Beria fiercely looked at him and, waving his hands, he and Malenkov, these two "friends" of Stalin, left the room. Meeting Starostin, Beria berated the personal bodyguard chief:

- Who, you idiots, ever recommended you to be bodyguards to Stalin? You are unfit to work here! I will look into this and get rid of you!

Then they left. Time was pressing, but the doctors were still not coming. Only at 8:30 a.m. did the doctors arrive!

- Soon, there will be medicine, we are waiting for medicine, stated Professor Lukomsky.

We saw that all these doctors were so nervous that their hands were actually shaking. We wondered why? These doctors were shaking so that they could not even take the shirt off Stalin. They then cut the shirt with scissors! Diagnosing Stalin's condition, they stated that he had a blood clog on the brain. They gave Stalin injections and then, under Beria's instructions, they gave Stalin a stronger dose of something, but we did not know what it was. Beria threatened the doctors: ... so that all present could hear:

- And you guarantee that comrade Stalin will be alive?!

Who would be able to guarantee such a request, even the living people present did not know what would happen, what did happen and what would Beria and Malenkov do? On March 2, they called Stalin's daughter Svetlana and his son Vasili. Vasili, immediately upon seeing his father, cried out:

- Swine, you killed my father!

Some members of the State started to go towards Vasili, led by Beria, but Voroshilov intervened, having come late, since he was the last one to be informed, put his hand on Vasili and pleaded:

- Vasili, calm down. We are doing everything to help your father.

As hard as Beria and Malenkov tried to keep this a secret, the country found out that Stalin was dying. People began to telephone their condolences. Professors from democratic states were phoning, offering their expertise and assistance. One professor was demanding to know what happened, how quickly the doctors were called, what medicine they prescribed – a real professional concern. Beria was called to answer these questions over the telephone:

- Who are you? Are you a provocateur or a bandit? Tell me your name! I will take care of you!

Understanding whom he had to deal with, the professordoctor, highly respected in medicine internationally, just hung up the receiver!

Members of the Politbureau by this time were present around Stalin. On March 5, Stalin's pulse was slowing down. Beria came up to Stalin with a request:

 Comrade Stalin, say something. Here are all the members of the Politbureau.

Seeing a heavy grimace on Stalin's face who tried desperately to say something, Voroshilov came up to Beria, took him firmly by the arms and said:

 Let the bodyguards and his household friends come to his bedside, he knows them more intimately.

As the bodyguards and his household were coming to his bedside, on the instructions of Beria, the doctors gave him an injection. His body trembled and within 5 minutes, Stalin was dead. This last injection was supposed to have been the decision of Svetlana and Vasili, only the immediate family. This was not allowed ... Beria made the decision himself!

After that, Malenkov, Khrushchev, Beria went upstairs and immediately proceeded to divide the governmental posts and responsibilities. Molotov, who was also invited, stated that this could wait, that they should be talking about the funeral arrangements. Impatient, Khrushchev elbowed him strongly, waved his fist in Molotov's face. Molotov, seeing this, left the meeting.

The body of Stalin lay in the House of the Soviets. Attending the funeral, crying, Gottwald, head of the Czechoslovak Government, asked Voroshilov:

- How is it that you were not able to save comrade Stalin?
- We all watched a film in the Kremlin. Stalin was healthy, happy. After the film, we all went home ..

This is correct. For Marshal Voroshilov, this was as he was told by Beria. At this time, Voroshilov pinned on the chest of Stalin the medal, Hero of Soviet Union, the same medal that Stalin refused to accept since it was for soldiers showing exemplary courage in battle!

The first one to expose the suspicious death of Stalin was his son, Vasili Stalin. Thereafter, there were all other versions circulating as to how Stalin died. These different versions are even prevalent today, close to 50 years after the death of J.V. Stalin.

There is a version that Stalin was poisoned by Beria.¹⁰

I would like to agree with this version, since that would really be the truth, since Beria was capable of anything, and, as my "boss", he unnerved me and others no end, and who knows what might have happened to us if he was alive? I am certain that you could guess what he would do!

Let me go back and relate who Beria was and what his character and ambition in life were.

I met Beria in September of 1937, when I was in Yerevan with Mikoyan. Malenkov and Beria at that time dismissed the whole leadership of the party in Armenia, blaming it for separationist tendencies. Then Beria replaced Yezhov. It is necessary to ask how Beria arrived in Moscow. There are rumours that Stalin helped Beria to come to Moscow. Definitely not! Stalin was not that warm towards Georgians, although he himself was Georgian by nationality. Malenkov was the hidden culprit, who already wormed his way into the CC CPSU.

Beria immediately replaced all the other members of his Ministry, employing only his henchmen. He trumped up charges on previous Bolsheviks like Pauker, Volovich, Dagena, Kursk, Gintsel ... his replacements were Ignatoshvili, Kapanadze, Gulst and Sarkisov. My chief was Beria's henchman Kabulov. Beria did not pay any attention to us Russians, and at the first opportunity, he replaced all Russians with Georgians or other nationalities from the Caucasus.

If before, Menzhinsky, Yagoda or Yezhov did not meddle in the affairs of Stalin's bodyguards, Beria tried through all means to compromise the loyal guards of Stalin such as Vlasik and Rumiantsev. But we stood our ground and managed not to have Beria replace us with his Georgian henchmen. This is due to Stalin's suspicions of Beria, and I remember once the following outburst by Stalin against Beria:

I myself will take care of things, I do not need your help!
 Meetings of the Politbureau took place once a week.
 The cars of members of the Politbureau were parked around

the Dacha. Of course, there were no garages for the cars. Once, Beria did not show up. Stalin asked:

- Why is Beria not present?
- He caught a cold in his car.

Stalin, always ready to please his comrades-in-arms, gave the order to build a garage. Again, Beria did not show up. He falsified his request for a garage for cars of others, blaming Vlasik, who got a reprimand for wasting money on garages. Beria always worked under cover and tried to dislodge workers loyal to Stalin. All of us knew what Beria was up to and hated him for it. He was a double-dealing conniver.

How do you explain the loyalty and dedication of Stalin's staff and bodyguards? Besides his humane attributes which I have already mentioned, Stalin was a man of high cultural integrity. He never yelled, never thundered, always spoke in a low voice but with authority that you did not question. He always loved to tell jokes and to be a merry host. He was very unassuming, modest in need and he was always concerned and interested in our personal lives or any problems that we might have. Finding out that Tukov with his wife and grown-up daughter lived in one room, sometimes not sleeping at all, helped him to get a two-room apartment. We always saw before us sincere, correct behavior at all times – a person who was quite different from many members of the Soviet government.

Beria was absolutely insolent. He tried to find the smallest insignificant detail of perceived slight, in order to try and get you fired or arrested ... this was in order to make Stalin either nervous or upset. This came to such a state of outright provocation that once while Stalin was away from the Dacha, Beria with his personal entourage started to

snoop in the offices of Stalin, rummaging through his papers and documents. After one such "snooping search", Stalin's transistor radio went missing. Needless to say, it was Stalin's own bodyguards who were suspected and blamed. The offices were turned upside-down. Time passed and no transistor was found. Then, the guard Kuzin who was shovelling snow, came across the transistor. Who else could do something of this calibre? Only Beria and his clique, well-masked and hidden enemies of Stalin and the Soviet Union!

Who else would have been able to cause such a commotion and provocation like the following one: Someone telephoned the personnel at the Dacha that there was a mine underneath Stalin's couch. How could any such mine-bomb be placed there, when the personal guards of Stalin were on guard 24-hours a day? But we went and searched, and, of course, it was a false alarm. Stalin, coming upon this, was surprised:

- What are you doing here?
- Well, someone who is a friend in the Kremlin telephoned.
- And you believed this fairy tale?, laughed Stalin. It's ridiculous!

Of course, it was funny for Stalin, but not for Tukov. He was on edge and knew who it was, but could not prove it.

Another provocation ... an anonymous letter from Italy stated: "Comrade Stalin, in your car there is an explosive device underneath the hood." We looked ... of course, there was no explosive. Then another letter from Italy came: "Comrade Stalin, it seems that your living expenses are extremely high ... costing the Government money!"

Stalin decided after this to set up a commission, under Malenkov, to look into the finances. The commission detailed all of the expenses of running the government Dacha. Malenkov brought this to Orlov in order for him to sign. Orlov refused, because Stalin was a light eater, hardly drank, and took no liquors. A bottle of "Tsinandali" was enough to last him for two weeks. It was proven that it was Stalin's "friends", under the aegis of Beria, who really lived it up, charging the cost to Stalin's budget. Vodka was the main culprit in the inflated costs charged to Stalin's name. Orlov stood his ground and sent Malenkov away with these words:

" Get out, you good-for-nothing loafer!

Beria always came to the Politbureau meetings at the Dacha with his own supper, as big as a silo. Stalin, forever a host, asked his comrade Lozgachev to prepare a second course, celebrating some economic goal that was achieved by the State. There was not enough fish to go around, so Stalin, shrugging his shoulders, said:

- If there're not enough, that is fine, no one is starving.
- But I will get you the fish, piped up Beria, proudly stating that he had them delivered from Leningrad.

Solovov asked the presiding doctor to look at these fishes. But the doctor saw that these fishes were covered by white rotting flesh. Stalin, seeing this, gave the order to get rid of the whole lot, and turning towards Beria, said:

- You cannot trust this good-for-nothing man.

At another time, while having the Politbureau meeting, Stalin asked why the lemons were so small.

- Comrade Stalin, we have no bigger ones in our storage.
- They ate the big ones themselves", threw in Beria.

Imagine yourself under what suspicion we were placed. The same story was repeated with pears. Stalin had a hard time chewing the hard pears with his teeth. He asked Lozgachev:

- Are there no soft pears?
- There are only these pears, comrade Stalin ...
- But I got soft pears from the same storage, again, Beria came up with this lie.
- Go to Beria's cottage and bring in the soft pears. They went.

They brought them to the table where the Politbureau was sitting, having supper. They were as hard as the other ones. Stalin, smiling at Beria, shook his head and said:

- Hogwash, Beria! Again, a lie!
- But I thought that I had softer pears, apologetically and cunningly said Beria – the provocateur.

In the "New Afon", Stalin had a meeting about collective and state farm agricultural problems. Beria showed his real uncouthness and nationalism, among the Russian and Ukrainian experts – Academicians gathered at this high-level gathering ... loudly talking in Georgian, knowing full well that no one there, except Stalin, knew the Georgian language. Stalin put him down with these words:

- I have no secrets from these comrades. What kind of provocation is this? Talk in the language that you know and that everyone understands!

This impudent fellow, looking into his eyes, did not even know what he was saying and just kept on going, until Stalin finally told him to stop immediately! Now, just realize under what terror we worked. Once I ventured to ask Khrustalev:

- Vania, what is it that Beria represents and what is his aim? Why does he behave so terribly towards the personal guards of Stalin, and especially against the Russians?
- In my estimation, he is a first class swine or an absolute idiot.

He was an absolute swine, not a fool. A fool would not have been able to fool Malenkov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich or Bulganin. What kind of power and hatred towards Stalin must you feel when in front of him you lick his boots, and when Stalin is out of sight, immediately connivingly agitate, plan, threaten (as head of Internal Security), take Malenkov into his car, wine and dine him. That only showed that Beria already felt himself the "almighty power". Yes, this was confirmed by a woman, who, during a friendly get-together, was looking at the portrait of Stalin hanging over the bed. Beria asked:

- Why are you looking at him? The master of the country is not he, it is I!

That is why Molotov was clever and saw through this when he told Malenkov and Khrushchev:

- You are profane and fools, you are sitting in the pocket of Beria so deep, that only your ears are wiggling above the coat pocket.

Now dear reader, you be the judge, can I look at this tyrant without bias?

There are other versions, of poisoned mineral water-wine; that a lady working with Beria gave Stalin ether and then, while Stalin fainted, she was to have given him some needles and thus, Stalin died.¹¹

Khrushchev stated that Stalin was in good humour that night as he saw people to the door.

Whatever the cause or version of Stalin's death that people believe, I myself feel that Stalin could have been saved after his stroke IF medical help had come as quickly as it should have. As I mentioned before, it took long hours for medical help to come to Stalin's bedside. Why? Who prevented this

from happening? In another country, when a leader takes ill or has a stroke, the doctors are there instantly! Why not with Stalin? Was he murdered as the versions go? I cannot be certain as to the version that is the correct one, but I feel that Stalin did not get the proper attention, proper medical help or proper preventive analysis and medicine. Knowing the situation with the "Leningrad Doctors' Affair", Stalin was very wary of doctors and tried not to see them unless it was an absolute necessity.

His health was thus deteriorating. The blood clot could perhaps have been prevented, and if not prevented, stopped immediately by medical treatment until he could have been operated on. As I stated, the medical help was prevented from doing its work which it could have performed if it had arrived in time!

ΧI

With the arms of Khrushchev waving in his "secret speech", Stalin is being blamed for all of the so-called "repressions". How was it in reality? Let us analyse the situation ... because I know this system since I was there – an eyewitness. Twice, I nearly became the scapegoat. I was part of the commission which looked into this period of so-called "repressions". We delved into the archives for 10 years.

In 1921, the country had an extreme shortage of sugar. The question of increasing production was the topic on the agenda of Lenin. There was a need of specialists in this sphere of agriculture. To help decide how to get out of this situation, V.I. Lenin invited the Chairman of the Central Committee of the Union of Sugar Workers, P. Yukhnovsky.

Lenin asked him whether he knew Engineer Nazvanov? Yukhnovsky gave Lenin a very good characterization of Nazvanov who was arrested on trumped-up charges in Leningrad. Asking him to write a report of their discussions, Lenin, with such letters, summoned G. Krzhanovsky and others, pointing out the complete injustice that was being perpetrated.

Thus, Nazvanov was saved from the clutches of these hidden enemies of Lenin and Stalin, and of Socialism, hiding under the cloak of performing their duties to save the "socialist state" from "perceived enemies".

A question has to be asked: Why did the Leningrad Security Organs, knowing full well that Nazvanov was working with Lenin even then in the underground, before his arrest, not inform Lenin at all? And how many such engineers sat in prison, without definite proof? Under the command of Menzhinsky and Yagoda, countless innocent people were arrested and many were shot just because they served Lenin faithfully and were loyal Bolsheviks. Even some of the members of Security force, loyal Bolsheviks, who worked underground against the Tsar, fought for the Revolution, then on trumped-up charges, were arrested, sometimes without Lenin or Stalin knowing about this until it was too late. How was this possible?

We must understand that the enemies were entrenched inside every important position in the NKVD and State Security – well hidden, well masked and cleverly utilizing their power, getting rid of dedicated communists.

Being Chairman of NKVD, Menzhinsky and Yagoda hired only former ruling class kulaks, barons, whiteguards who really terrorized the dedicated communists and workers, those who showed that they were absolutely loyal to the party, to the Motherland, to Lenin and Stalin, and other leaders of the State. Among these lackeys of Yagoda was an officer called Ofitserov. In some cases where a member of the security team would get drunk, thus having to be given a reprimand plus 5 days in jail, Ofitserov, instead of the prescribed reprimand, had that person shot. On Stalin's demand, Nazvanov was released but not without Ofitserov putting a pistol to his back, stating, "Next time, I shall get you!".

With the help of his associate Bulanov, Yagoda tried hard to get rid of Menzhinsky, who suffered greatly from asthma and bronchitis. After getting rid of Menzhinsky, this faithful comrade of Lenin, through poison, Yagoda was now free to do his evil deeds, while masking himself in the cloak of Bolshevik, patriot and falsifying documents in court. Practically all of the people that were sentenced and shot had the signature and hand of Yagoda on them. Letters from innocent arrested comrades, written to Stalin, never reached the eyes of Stalin ... but were utilized to fabricate threats against Stalin ... thus giving credence to their arrest and execution.

One day, Yagoda came to visit M. Gorky at his dacha on Gorky hills. I was there to go with Yagoda. The party was taking place until about 4 a.m. I could not understand what this uncouth Yagoda had in common with this literary genius, Gorky. It became known to me later. Yagoda and his friends were pouring drinks for Gorky from all the bottles, mixing them together. After Gorky became completely drunk, Yagoda and his friends threw Gorky into the snow where he froze all night. There, Gorky contracted inflammation of the lungs. In the end, even the "doctors" of Yagoda helped to have death come sooner for Gorky. Gorky was very disturbed – this was one month after the death of his son. Soon after, Gorky died.

After Kirov was assassinated, the investigation was being conducted by Agranov, Yagoda's assistant, who was falsifying everything. Stalin was becoming suspicious about this and had a commission appointed from the CC CPSU to investigate the NKVD. In the personal files of Yagoda, this commission found a right-wing clique opposing the party and at the same time, files of Tsarist Secret Police and their agents that were still operational. Agents of Tsarist Police, like Zelinsky, Zubov and Ivanov, were agents in Tsarist times. Where do you think these agents under Soviet power were? Zelinsky was the Secretary of Moscow Party Committee. Zubarev was the Second Secretary of the Sverdlovsk Party Committee. Ivanov was the Secretary of the North-Caucasus District Party Committee, and on the instructions of Bukharin, organized the hunger epidemic from 1928 to 1934, in order that the people would be dissatisfied with Soviet power. These are the kind of people that were supported and helped by Yagoda, and before him, Bukharin!

Therefore, his secretary Bulanov during the court proceedings humbly admitted: "All these anti-state activities, I carried out on behalf of Trotsky and Bukharin. On their directives, we killed people, crippled people and jailed people – people that were absolutely innocent. We cannot be forgiven. Let not Bukharin shake his head here ... he is ready to drown all of us, but he is a vicious crook and an enemy of our era. It is they – Trotsky and Bukharin – who told us that we must kill Menzhinsky and Kuibishev, Peshkov and Gorky." ¹³

Please do not think that these confessions were taken under brutal force on the guilty persons. There was nothing of that sort at all. I myself was always present at these processes. Alexiev was also present, keeping a close watch on these culprits and everyday, brought these people fresh newspapers. They were held in jail cells with all the necessary conveniences and got fed really well. Even Bukharin in his trial stated this, with foreign correspondents present.

But today, numerous books are written about this – all historical facts are turned topsy turvy, inside out and upside down. They describe him as the theoretician of the party. Khrushchev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin all rehabilitated these enemies.

How did Bukharin behave in 1918? It is necessary to recall that during the trial, former social-revolutionaries such as Kaverin and Mantsev, all members of the Central Committee, stated:

- Bukharin at that time demanded that Lenin should be arrested and shot. Listening to this in court, Bukharin jumped up as though crazy and shouted:
- No, No! I did not say that to kill Lenin! I said "Kill the ideals of Lenin", not kill Lenin. They misunderstood my words. I must admit that our programme and work was black in deed and we were wallowing in the mud, towards counter-revolutionary activity. This is now defeated and we are uncovered.¹⁴

Let me return to that time when I was the bodyguard to Stalin. I was without a blemish, trusted, dedicated Bolshevik and was not worried about my future. But nevertheless, two NKVD members came to me and arrested me right in the Secretariat of Ordzhonikidze and took me to Liublianka jail. For two hours, they grilled me about the tiniest details of my life. They could not, hard as they tried, get anything on me. Then they brought me to the head of the Operative Section,

to Pauker. This then was proven that these NKVD provocateurs got my name mixed up with another Rybin, chauffeur, who died in a car accident.

There were many such provocations, instigated by Yagoda in order to get rid of people loyal to the State, to Stalin and Socialism.

One more example. Once I asked a well-known flyer, M.M. Gromov, why it was that they arrested so many engineers-designers of the Flying Institute. He very calmly said:

- Arrests were being made because, under goading by Yagoda, plus foreign agents working in the Institute, the designers-builders of aeroplanes used to write protests against each other, praising their own designs while criticizing others. This was the calamity that was masterminded by enemies in order that the aviation industry of the USSR would suffer from backwardness in design and production. There was never any demand from Stalin or Voroshilov for my arrest or reprimand.

Another very pertinent example as to how far the enemies of Stalin and socialism would go in order to get rid of people. I was on guard at the Bolshoi Theatre for 3 hours, standing guard, never closing my eyes in order to guard members of the CC there. After that, my time was up and I placed my assistant on guard duty ... while I went to get a couple of hours of sleep. After waking up, I went to my post, but my assistants were no place to be found. But I never suspected anything, unfortunately.

This is how the new head of NKVD was ruling and masterminding the provocations. Before that, he worked as a secretary in the CC. At the decision of the CC, he was to solidify the composition of secretaries of the CC with good,

solid, dedicated Bolsheviks. But soon enough, these were "Yezhov's gloves", who were at his command.

Who was it that recommended such unreliable scoundrel to such a high position? It was Malenkov, Mikoyan, Khrushchev and Kaganovich. Unfortunately, none of these people told Stalin that this drunkard, this loose-living scoundrel was like that before in the Secretariat of the party.

How was it that Yezhov was in charge or had anything to do with the situation with Blukher? I was also responsible for guarding Blukher when he came to Moscow from the Far East, besides being in charge of the Bolshoi Theatre. The wife of Blukher lived in Chistykh Prudakh district. Blukher did not live there, since it was easier to be situated in Metropol Hotel, where he liked very much to hear the Gypsy choir perform.

Just before his arrest, Yezhov called Blukher to his office. They talked for 2 1/2 hours. I sat in the reception area and listened to all that was said. Blukher went out, but returned because he forgot his service cap. Maybe this was a premonition ... He was highly respected and kind-hearted and patriotic above reproach.

NKVD under Yezhov demanded from all personnel of the CC to find out and report all the anti-Sovietism among their ranks. General Rumiantsev warned about such methods and demanded better control and asked that these so-called "enemies" should be tried and convinced of their error and thus, become better Soviet people. Stalin was opposed to all of this, since he began to hear rumours about illegalities of the arrests. The enemies of Stalin, as of Lenin and socialism, were masked so cleverly that it was sometimes impossible to see through the heavy mist of falsification and outright

provocations. The "Troyka", as it came to be known, the ones that hid the actual arrests, were under the aegis of Kaganovich.

Where there were party secretaries of districts that were honest Bolsheviks, dedicated and loyal Soviets, there were no problems of arrests of innocent people or provocations. One example was the dedicated party Secretary of Stalingrad District Committee, A. Chuyanov. When the head of the NKVD Sharov and assistant Tsac presented him with a list of people to be arrested, he told them that he needed a day to think about this. He looked over the documents and saw that these people were innocent. He freed all of those arrested. Then he got an angry telephone call from Malenkov in Moscow, accusing Chuyanov of doing this on his own. Malenkov, fired up, came to Stalin and reported all this. Stalin did not support Malenkov, knowing Chuyanov well and Stalin knew from long working together with Chuyanov that here was a brave Bolshevik dedicated to Socialism.

This is really the place to tell about the reminiscences of the Marshal of Aviation, A. Golovanov, who, after discussions with Stalin, hesitated at the door of Stalin's office. Stalin, seeing this, asked:

- Did you want to ask something?
- Comrade Stalin, why has this engineer of aviation been jailed?
 - They say that he is cooperating with foreigners.
 - Comrade Stalin, do you believe this?
 - And you, do you believe this?
 - No, absolutely not!
 - And I also do not believe it. Good bye.

Very shortly, the aviation engineer was out of jail.

No matter how Yezhov tried to conceal these arrests and killings from Stalin, this news reached him soon enough. Sensing his own danger, Yezhov started to befriend Stalin, trying by all sorts of methods to convince him of his dedication and loyalty to socialism. Stalin was beside himself, tried to contact Yezhov in every known place, and the answer was always that no one of his helpers knew where Yezhov was. Stalin sent a Colonel Kirilin with a package to Podlipki where he finally located Yezhov, demanding that Yezhov sign the envelope that he had received this package. Fatianov, assistant to Yezhov, tried to save his chief, willing to sign the envelope himself, but Kirilin refused, so that Yezhov was forced to sign this himself. This was a request for Yezhov to appear before the meeting of the Central Committee.

The Plenum of the CC ACP[B] was held in January of 1938. Stalin spoke at this Plenum, analyzed and criticized the work of the NKVD, which had abandoned its revolutionary principles. This activity of disregarding some organizational rules extended to higher commands and to some sections of the Red Army. Yezhov was removed from his post as head of the NKVD. In the ranks of the NKVD, there took place a very sharp debate and criticism to such an extent that the present "Glasnost" would be put to shame. There was a concerted aim of saving the leadership of the NKVD from criticism. But all over the country, there were stormy meetings and criticism of the leadership of the NKVD. In all districts, there took place a removal of provocateurs, spies, quislings and perpetrators of injustices and some of them were jailed, while others, after being tried, were sentenced to death for the harm that they had done to the country, to the party and to socialism. Right in the CC of the NKVD, there was a commission looking into this, headed by A. Andreev. After this country-wide cleansing of the NKVD and other security branches, over 30,000 members were arrested, who, over the years, were placed there by Yezhov and before then, by Yagoda and others. One of these arrested came into my jurisdiction. Nothing untowards, a young man, that's all. He worked diligently. He was then sent to Kashenko. Over 40,000 soldiers were freed from arrest after it was found out that Yezhov and others, under their command, falsified their "criminal anti-State activities". Altogether, there were let out of jail, for lack of evidence, after Stalin started the process of these Investigative Commissions – over 320,000 people ... because they were innocent.

How can anyone now allow himself the stupidity of criticizing Stalin for repression and crimes? This was a psychosis that was cleverly instituted by Yezhov and other enemies of the State ... this psychosis took over the minds of millions of people. Practically all were involved in looking for "enemies" The CC ACP[B] was against this, fought this tooth and nail - Stalin in particular. People got involved in this, and friends were "drowning" friends in the name of getting rid of "enemies". Of course, this cannot all be explained as a mass psychosis! In all these examinations that were conducted into this period, we had 30-40 people going over the same documents, but NOWHERE did we EVER find the name of Stalin, or the command of Stalin, or the resolution to do these things which were undertaken by the REAL ENEMIES of the Soviet people. No directives either of Stalin, Molotov or Voroshilov were to be found in all of these documents.

According to my way of thinking, Stalin also bears some blame because he was the Head of the Motherland. His fault was that he was always favouring "collective decisions" and was thus fooled by his "comrades-in-arms", Yagoda, Malenkov, Khrushchev, Beria and others. Yezhov, Stalin spotted from the start and took steps to stop him and get rid of him.

General Rumiantsev always helped us in our research into the commission – this same Rumiantsev who, over 15 years ago, was the personal bodyguard to Stalin. Such dedication and honour, no other person ever had, even Vlasik who was the bodyguard, in charge from 1924.

XII

Khrushchev became "famous" for his many remarks and innuendoes. It is no use according more attention to them, since most of them are well-known. But the following facts are not widely known – of his hatred of people that he thought did him harm or slighted him. In such cases, even if it took him 20 years, he would not forgive and he would take revenge. Here are facts which will show him to be what he really was.

In 1935, Khrushchev became Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee. He demanded from Stalin that his car be given the emblem as that of the State of the USSR, give his apartment an immediate fridge. In other words, he wanted to be treated as a member of Politbureau of Soviet State government. Vlasik reminded Khrushchev that all these "perks" are for members of the Politbureau. Who had the gall to tell Khrushchev what he can have or not? Only the principled Vlasik stuck to his guns. Khrushchev waited until 1952, and together with Beria, Khrushchev finally managed to put Vlasik behind bars and after his freedom, he was sent to a communal colony where

this devoted worker to Stalin died from a broken heart and broken health!

In October of 1941, after receiving the suggestion from Malenkov and Beria, they suggested that Stalin evacuate Moscow. Stalin kept quiet – took Khrushchev under the arms and led him out of the door – told him to go. Khrushchev also never forgave Stalin for that.

During the war years, the son of Khrushchev from the first wife from Kalinovka was boasting to others that he was able to shoot a bottle of vodka from the heads of his friends. This ended with the fact that his son shot not the bottle but a young officer dead. The result of this was that Khrushchev lost his son, after Military Tribunal found him guilty and sentenced him to a "Penal Battalion". In one of the battles, Khrushchev's son gave himself up to the German fascists. Knowing full his history and of his father, the Germans used him to appeal to Red Army soldiers to give themselves up also. Finding this out, Stalin gave the command for the partisans to liberate Khrushchev's son. He was tried and shot by a Military Tribunal.¹⁵

Khrushchev never forgave Stalin for this. Could Khrushchev also forget that he ran away from the struggle near Kharkov with his Command, where he was a member of War Council of the South-Western Front? He left his army to the Germans and flew back to Moscow. Just by the skin of his teeth was Khrushchev able to escape the War Tribunal which wanted to sentence him, as a General, because he deserted his Army. For more than 6 months, Khrushchev did not show his face to his friends or the government leaders ... or to Stalin personally. But he overcame this and planned for the future ...

And how could Khrushchev forgive the fact that after the war, he was berated for practically two hours, he a member of the Politbureau, and be reprimanded for his misdeeds in front of the bodyguards of Stalin? Khrushchev then complained to Lozgachev:

- Look, they all call me cruel, how can I be otherwise? These Ivans (here, he showed his hatred of Russians by calling them Ivans), I tell them one thing, and they make something else out of what I said ... and all the State's mistakes, like a snow avalanche, drops on me and my tiny mistakes ...!

And Khrushchev heaped on Stalin all the ills and calumny. How many people did Khrushchev get killed when he was in charge of the Tribunal Troyka or controlled their work as was that of Chuyanov? Therefore, he had nothing left to do but put all the blame on Stalin for the repressions, in order to hide his own faults. He worked together with his friends, such as Mikoyan, who asked Yezhov to "take care" of his family's enemies …¹⁶

From the high tribunal of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev heaped abuse on Voroshilov, that he was always in his way, that he prevented him from working effectively. The First Marshal, after that, came to his car and started to weep.

A final example. Khrushchev demanded and expected applause and boot-licking from his subordinates and the general public. During a spectacle in the E. Vakhtanov Theatre, Khrushchev, all by himself in the box, not allowing anyone to have that "glory", stood up in order for all the people to see him, applauding – standing up. He saw that in the first row there was only one person who did not stand up and applaud, but remained seated. On the next day, having found out who he was, Khrushchev personally telephoned him:

- Who are you, that you are demonstrating against me?!
- I have sciatica, explained Georgi Zhukov, forced to listen to this boor.
- I know, I know what kind of sciatica you have, Khrushchev said sarcastically to Marshal Zhukov as he slammed down the receiver.

I think that this was enough for the Marshal who saved the Motherland to quietly go to a rest- or old-age home.

During that speech, Khrushchev said:

- We will look into who really killed Kirov!

Twice, he sent special commissions to Leningrad to look into the assassination of Kirov and twice, his commission came back empty handed.

After blaming Stalin for all the ills that he himself was involved in, he had the audacity to also blame Stalin, saying that the latter was to blame for hindering socialist construction! Let us look at the facts as they were. What was the main task after the victory of the Revolution? To be a Soviet State on its own, or come under the influence and domination of foreign capitalists? The answer was obvious – we must build our State.

Lenin was very concerned about the electrification of the whole country, starting up our own industry, all steps towards mechanization, agriculture, raising the cultural level of the population. All these tasks were accomplished. Stalin was the leader of a socialist state, which defeated the fascist aggressors, and then in a very short time, the country was rebuilt from its ruins. These known facts are even admitted by Imperialism. But not Khrushchev – trying out his abstract idea of getting ahead of America with his "corn" fantasy. Here, we do not mention his other "experiments".

But even after this tirade, he was not satisfied.

All the manipulations and innuendoes and outright falsification by Beria, Khrushchev and Malenkov could not hide the fact that the death of Stalin was in many ways connected with their schemes and outright sabotage of preventing the doctors from coming to Stalin's aid for over 14 hours. This was a criminal and diabolical act intended that Stalin would not be able to live.

So many versions of Stalin's death are being circulated, promoted and constantly used so that the truth will be lost forever. But let us look into some of the text that Khrushchev wrote. The thing that is evident is that Khrushchev hid more facts than he uncovered. Khrushchev hid the fact that Malenkov gave a command to Starostin not to speak to anyone about the illness of Stalin. Khrushchev also hid the fact that Beria gave a strong command to Lozgachev not to bother them any more since "comrade Stalin is sound asleep!". He hid the fact that they made certain that medical doctors would not come immediately. The medical help came only after 9 a.m. the following day. But Khrushchev could not help but praise himself with these words: "We did everything to help Stalin recover and on his feet again." Was this the way to get Stalin on his feet?

- I was taken aback when I saw Stalin on his deathbed, Khrushchev stated, as Stalin gave them his left hand, a smile on his face, pointing his hand all over, thus expressing his feelings!? But this, according to Khrushchev, happened a day or two before Stalin died.

But, how does this compare with the story by Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, in her "Twenty Letters to a Friend"? She wrote: "The agony was terrible. This was felt by all of us.

At one moment, my father lifted his arm and opened his eyes, looked at everyone present. This look was terrible, full of blame at some members who stood around him. This was a terrible accusing look – to this day, I cannot forget it, his hand was lifting and pointing in an accusing way at someone in the room, but not knowing at whom he was pointing. The meaning was there – terrible accusatory look but I did not know at whom he was looking and pointing his accusation.¹⁸

But Khrushchev falsified this last moment in order to make himself appear favourably in the eyes of the people! I think that outright lie here is self-evident. What kind of impression do we get after reading the book by Khrushchev? The impression is that Stalin was a drunkard. I would just like to quote one sentence in that book: "Stalin even in his youth was into heavy drinking. It looked as if that was his undoing."19 Isn't this a surprise? But we, who were with Stalin day and night for years, were blind to this malady? As I mentioned before, Stalin only drank very weak wine, together with mineral water, and cognac very, very seldom. He never touched vodka. His buddies drank it by the bottle! And this was billed to Stalin's personal account. Remember, I stated that Stalin lowered their expense account from 25,000 to 8,000 rubles ... this was the decision of the CC. The money saved went into the sustaining fund. These funds were used to cover expenses when the Politbureau would meet and had supper together ... not individual.

Regarding Stalin himself ... From 1930 to 1953, we, the bodyguards, saw Stalin feeling a bit high only twice ... once on the birthday of S.M. Shtemenko and the other, at the funeral of Zhdanov. He was never drunk, or unable to talk or walk normally. He was always of a sober and rational mind and outlook.

Yet, numerous books are written, focusing on these two occasions, trying desperately to make Stalin out as a drunkard.

Khrushchev was never satisfied with all the falsehoods he said or wrote. The utterance that Khrushchev made: "Seriously, I felt very sorry for Stalin, and I cried bitterly when Stalin died." What kind of mind did Khrushchev have?

I could not take this demagogy any longer and, as a sign of protest against this manipulation of truth, in 1955, I resigned my commission as a bodyguard to members of the CC of the CPSU!

XIII

The sensational episode of "Doctors Case" is also put on Stalin's shoulders. The theory is that Stalin wanted to get rid of the doctors and thus, get rid of Beria. This was not the truth at all. The newspaper "Russian Vestnik" printed my interview with the journalist N. Leontiev.²⁰ When you read this interview, you can see by which methods the "comradesin-arms" of Stalin tried to take over the government.

N.L.: Alexei Trofimovich, please tell us, how the "Doctors episode" came on the scene. How come that the KGB was involved in medicine?

A.R.: In 1952, Stalin was not feeling well. To take medicines, Stalin did not like to indulge in this, and did not altogether believe in them, knowing full well that sometimes there are side effects on the organs of a person. The difficulty of doctors is that sometimes they do not make a proper diagnosis. There are many cases of a wrong diagnosis, since each person has a different organism that does not always behave the same when taking medicine. Here are some

examples ... the soloist of the Bolshoi Theatre, A. Orfenov, is now in the hospital VTO, where he is sick with kidney problems. When he was about to be discharged from the hospital, he was given an injection. The next morning, he was dead. The former bodyguard of J.V. Stalin, K. Ishmetov, waiting in the hospital, received an injection and died soon after. Pianist of world fame, Y. Gigels, found himself in the Kremlin hospital with a seizure in the shoulders, and after an injection, he had a terrible convulsion and died. The same situation happened in 1952 with Doctor L. Timashchuk.

N.L.: Doctor Timashchuk, did she work with the KGB? Why did this doctor write a letter to you? How were the relations between doctors and the KGB?

A.R.: Doctor-cardiologist L. Timashchuk did not work with the KGB, but she analyzed the situation in the Kremlin with the doctors correctly, how these doctors are treating the government personnel. Thereafter, she brought this material, in which the KGB got interested in her revelations. This was not a spy, not a complaint, but actual research into the prescriptions and diagnostic analysis of what the Kremlin doctors were doing. F.E. Dzerzhinsky more than once told the KGB members: "Never forget that our people are the eyes and ears of Soviet intelligence." What made this Soviet patriot, doctor L. Timashchuk, suspect what was really going on?

In 1945, A. Shcherbakov died; in 1948, A. Zhdanov; in 1949, G. Dimitrov; in 1952, A. Choibalsan. Before, on personal command by Yagoda, V. Menzhinsk was "cured" and M. Gorky and his son were also "cured". All this pointed to the problem that all was not well with the "Kremlin doctors". I, during the 1930s, was working in the Secretariat of Sergo

Ordzhonikidze, who was also ailing with an irregular heart beat. The head of the Secretariat, A. Semushkin, called in the doctors. Doctor L. Levin also "cured" Menzhinsky and Gorky. That Sergo shot himself – is only a legend.

N.L.: But why did the KGB get involved with the doctors of medicine?

A.R.: This was caused by an observation of Doctor Lydia Timashchuk, who was concerned about the health and life of our government leaders. Putting her on the pedestal was the work of our press in 1952. The high death rate of the leadership of our country was a signal that all was not well in the Kremlin with the doctors! This situation made the KGB very wary and concerned.

In August of 1952, a very important meeting on this problem was held, in which I took part. Some persons immediately demanded the arrest of the doctors, pointing to the facts already established as to the guilt of some diagnosticians and wrongly prescribed medicines ... tied in to the sudden death of G. Dimitrov. Others suggested that a loyal Commission be appointed to look into this question thoroughly ... composed of impartial doctors and medical experts. Only then should this question be decided upon and steps taken to remedy the situation and sentence the guilty doctors. During this heated debate, the calm voice of the Government Security Organ, N. Vlasik, Major General, stated the following: "All the diagnostic machinery, apparatus used by the Kremlin doctors, should be analyzed, looked into by experts. We found out that the apparatus was in order." Could Vlasik present such a statement, if Stalin was only interested in the wholesale arrest of all the Kremlin doctors? Of course not. But the diagnosis by some doctors was suspect.

N.L.: After this, Vlasik was removed from his post. Why did this come to pass?

A.R.: The statement by General Vlasik made many people hopping mad. They demanded the arrest of the Kremlin doctors. The head of our section, Maslenikov, knowing all of the materials, did not reply to those that demanded the arrest of the doctors. The statement by Vlasik was not to the liking of Beria. Therefore, the silence of Maslenikov was much to the satisfaction of Beria. Grabbing this material from the hands of Maslenikov, he gave it to his crony, his assistant Goglidze, to study. Aside from this, Vlasik had strained relation with Khrushchev (as did many others). These "friends" of Khrushchev – Malenkov, Kaganovich, Bulganin and Beria – found common ground and finally, were able to get rid of Vlasik, the loyal Bolshevik and a friend of Stalin. He was arrested and sent to the Urals.

A question must be asked: Why didn't J.V. Stalin defend Vlasik? This is the way it was ... Stalin was presented with a demand by his "friends" to increase the personal bodyguards by a very large number. This was a fantastic suggestion. J.V. Stalin studied this proposal and decided to recommend downsizing the bodyguards by about 70%. N. Vlasik did not understand this proposal by Stalin, and started to argue against this. During this meeting, no one supported the argument of Vlasik in his attempt to save the doctors from arrests – not one of the government leaders supported Vlasik. Beria won this round!

N.L.: How did Beria look at the letter of complaint submitted by Doctor Timashchuk? Could you explain in more detail the role of this letter in this episode? A.R.: When this material fell into the lap of Beria, he gave it with instructions to his assistant Goglidze. He, in due time, gave it to other cronies of Beria. They started to rework the letter, inserting falsehoods, fabricating evidence. In analyzing the diagnosis of the doctors, you can interpret each recommendation and blame the doctor if something does not happen. This "Doctors Case" in the Kremlin has to be looked upon as to whom Stalin had around him! The "comrades-in-arms" of Stalin were all anxious that only Malenkov be considered as the "second leader" after Stalin, taking all steps necessary to make certain that Zhdanov would not be the future leader. Even Beria, now felt himself strong and influential enough to make his mark on the future leadership of the Soviet Union. Therefore, he started to put on himself the mantle of a dictator.

N.L.: Was there any reaction on the part of Stalin to this "Doctors Case"?

A.R.: Colonel V. Tukov stated – ... Once, Stalin in the car as we were riding, asked, "What must we do? They died one after another, Shcherbakov, Zhdanov, Dimitrov, Chilbalsan, but before this, Menzhinsky ... Gorky ... It is impossible that this should happen ... that one after another, State leaders die so quickly! It looks like we must replace the old doctors in the Kremlin and get younger doctors to take their place." I replied: "Comrade Stalin, older doctors have more experience, practice, while younger ones are still green without practice." "No, we must replace them. There are too many things that are unexplainable, too many complaints from families. The NKVD demands the arrest of these doctors which 'cured' Dmitrov, Zhdanov and others?".

Soon after that, Goglidze came to visit Stalin with all the materials and documents about the arrest of the doctors. Beria, as always, remained in the shadows, but demanded of Stalin that he see Goglidze, presenting him with falsehood and forged documentation about the doctors. Once, I asked Goglidze:

- How are things going with the arrested Doctors?
- We are tying things up. Soon, the case will be closed!, proudly announced Goglidze.

There was no court case at all. They were all freed. I was responsible for filing documents and arranging for the doctors to go back to the places where they lived.

N.L.: How did these accused behave?

A.R.: You could see by the materials how each one blamed the other for incompetence. As an example, in the case of Zhdanov, who suffered from stenocardia, in the Kremlin hospital, they inserted an apparatus and powdered digitalis. Any mistake in the amount of this medicine could be fatal. The nurse in the room where Zhdanov was lying smoked, knowing full well that smoke affected Zhdanov terribly. Other doctors were against such treatment and argued amongst themselves. The NKVD sent these documentations to neutral experts, not naming names of doctors or patients and received disquieting results.

According to the testimony of A. Beliakov, former head of the office of Zhdanov, Zhdanov had a heart attack in September of 1941, at the time when the Germans practically encircled Leningrad. Cardiologist L. Timashchuk revealed this episode and started the heart to beat again. Her older doctor colleagues did not want to listen to her. The heart attack that Zhdanov had ... these doctors concealed this fact.

About this heart attack, not even the Minister of Health of the USSR, Smirnov, was informed. The death of Zhdanov was much to the satisfaction of Beria and Malenkov, according to Beliakov. Malenkov in the Orgbureau stated: "We must tear out by the roots this Zhdanov legacy!" They managed to get Stalin reluctantly to agree to replace Zhdanov as the Second Secretary of the CC ACP[B]. Zhdanov was saved by the previous doctor and was resting at the Sanatorium "Valday". He was resting there and without warning, he started foaming at the mouth. By the time doctors came to help him, he was already dead.

Dr. Lydia Timashchuk was demoted, verbally abused terribly by Khrushchev and her Order of Lenin was taken away from her – but in order to not arouse too much criticism and suspicion, they gave her a medal of the Red Banner. She died soon after, shunned by her colleagues and thrown out on the junk heap.

XIV

In the last 30 years in the press, there were hundreds of articles and many versions of attempts on Stalin's life. These so-called "truths" are nothing but fairy tales. I and my comrades who were the bodyguards of Stalin know what happened and this will be history.

In 1904, the Georgian revolutionaries who were working underground dynamited the basement in Tiflis of a well known banker. Soon, they decided to accept in their ranks a new comrade who went under the name of Goderadze. To the first meeting of RUDWP came a young man who called himself – "Koba". He said:

- For now, it is necessary to wait until we accept this Goderadze as a member.

All were amazed at this suggestion. After three days, this Goderadze again came to the meeting. After him came Koba. At this time, Koba voted for bringing this Goderadze in as a member. Amazed at such a change of attitude, the chairman, S. Kavtoradze, grabbed an oil lamp and threw it at the face of Koba. The lamp got smashed on the wall. Very patiently, not even perturbed, Koba lighted his pipe and stated:

- This is not correct. The banker gave us this basement apartment for free and we nearly burned it down.

This was the first attempt on Stalin's life. The next attempt was more serious. From 1933 on, the opposition started to plan a "palace coup". I was involved in the case of the Right-Trotskyite block. Here is an excerpt, in the words of Rykov: "Here is one attempt to have a 'palace coup'. Enukidze was the ringleader of this attempt. The main role was played in this attempt by Yagoda. There was established a centre with a majority of Trotskyites – Kamenev, Tiatakov, Enukidze. There were myself (as undercover), Bukharin and Tomsky. The group headed by Tukhachevsky was strongly linked with this centre."²¹

Krestinsky said at the trial: "In February of 1935, Piatakov told me that between Right-Trotskyites and Tukhachevsky's group, there was established an understanding in a joint venture of armed rebellion. For this, I carry responsibility."²²

It is not necessary to give the testimony of Grinko, Rozengolds, Radek, Bessenov and others. They waited for Hitler to attack the USSR. Beforehand, they were willing to offer Ukraine to Germany, while to Japan, they promised the far eastern territory. Today, many so-called "specialists" state

that this is a lie. But the trial showed that the guilty perpetrators started to point fingers at each other and to tell the truth on each other in order to save their own necks. You can influence individuals on trial, but not the 34 that were on trial. More than that – they themselves brought related documents ... and, besides, the facts!

Let us turn to other facts that are not known. A heroic woman soldier who wrote her name on the Imperial Chancellery in Berlin on May 2, 1945, wrote to me the following: "When Stalin was in Leningrad to attend the funeral of comrade Kirov, the armed forces (some sections of the militia) were preparing to kill Stalin, but the large and well-armed Stalin's bodyguards prevented this from happening. This army garrison had close contacts with the General Command of the Red Army."

Former student of the OGPU school, I. Orlov, later the commandant of Stalin's Dacha, told me: "At the beginning of 1936, Yagoda, his assistant Agranov, Commissar Pauker, his assistant Volovitch and captain Gintsel formed a command of soldiers. In this 'corps', my schoolmates Sereda and Yurchik were involved. These were soldiers close to 6 feet tall, strong, agile and well built. They taught us Sambo, close fighting with knives and sticks. We were well armed and outfitted. We marched openly on the Dzerzhinsky Square, now knowing what our task was going to be. Yagoda observed us all the time from his office window. After we were trained, they took us to the building and inside the square of the OGPU. Yagoda and his like-minded friends decided that we were ready for any task that our superiors might give us. They were training us how to take over the Kremlin and how to arrest comrade Stalin. But all this preparation went down the drain."23

The arrest of Yagoda, Agranov, Pauker, Volovitch and Gintsel were taking place before my eyes. The commandant of the Kremlin, Tkalun, who was under the command of Yagoda, shot himself. Commissar Dagen was arrested, Commissar Kursky shot himself, Captain Chertok, underling of Yagoda, threw himself out of the window of a 7-storey building. Then, after Panov, Tikhonov, Kozlov and Golubev disappeared. The whole command of all ranks was decimated. You can ask, then, why on May 1st they were on Red Square, each one armed with at least 4-5 pistols?

After the liquidation of the assassins 'corps', Trotsky then did not constitute any danger to Stalin or the Soviet Government. But today's press is full of all versions as to the assassination plots against Stalin. For example, "Pravda" (whose owner is a Greek millionaire), writes that S. Kavtoradze tried to place a bomb in the Bolshoi Theatre where Stalin was sitting in the theatre box.²⁴ I was then the commandant of Bolshoi Theatre security and there was absolutely no such attempt. Not Rakov, or Tukov or Krutashev ever heard of such an attempt.

The newspaper "Niedelia-Sunday", in an article about Beria, wrote that in the Ritsa Lake, there was an attempt on the life of Stalin, that Stalin remained alive only because Beria covered him with his own body. Tukov, who was there, said: "Beria would place anyone else in front of a bullet, but never himself. There was no attempt on the life of Stalin there. This is just yellow journalism by the newspapers. What really happened there was that Beria pushed me into the water when I caught a fish. Stalin was very upset with Beria and scolded him as he would a child for this act of stupidity." 26

In another issue of "Niedelia", they again fantasized that there was an attempt on Stalin at Musserah.²⁷ A personal bodyguard under my command, Potekhin, wanting to get a promotion, one night during his watch, he took his cap off, put it on a post, shot a hole in it and tried to tell us that there was someone trying to kill Stalin. This raised an alarm and we all searched the woods and found nothing in particular except the cartridge which, we immediately found out, was from his own gun. Potekhin was immediately fired from his post and sentenced.

In the novel by I. Stadniuk, "War", there is a tale that in Moscow on the Second Havozna Street, there worked a former landlord who wanted to kill Stalin, having lost all his estates. He wanted to assassinate Stalin as they were going on Kutuzovsky Prospect. The author of this tale stated that Ginka's group was arrested. We, in the NKVD-KGB, do not have any inkling of any arrests, since we were the ones to do the arresting, if any was to be done.

A real attempt was made on November 4, 1942. The perpetrator sat in a frequently hiding place and opened fire with a rifle on the car cavalcade. The first car was hit where Mikoyan was sitting. There were no casualties. The bodyguards killed the assassin on the spot with a grenade.

The novel by Rybakov, "Children of Arbat", stated that Stalin was afraid of people. That is why Rybakov states when Stalin was walking on the Arbat, the security closed all the entrances to the street. This is stupid and impossible to accomplish! It is physically impossible to close all the entrances since these are thoroughfares. Stalin's car never exceeded 30 km an hour and often, went as slow as 10 km an hour. Stalin was never afraid of people or of the dark, as I

have already written. He wanted to be alone. Many times, he walked by himself, telling the bodyguards to leave him alone and in peace!

Many people, while drinking and boasting, tell their friends that they are so brave that they will even place a bomb under leaders of the country. One such drunkard boasted so much that his own father had him arrested and cooled off in the nearest jail.

There were other "attempts"! Maybe we should wait until the present journalists "find out" about them.

The last so-called "attempt" was either thought up from dust or the product of the imagination! The newspaper, "Son of the Motherland", published a story to cause sensationalism, called "Secret War: Berlin and Tokyo". 28 Again, an assassination attempt on Stalin, but this time, by the Japanese.

This attempt was to be made in Matsesta, Crimea. Was this possible? It was impossible, since there were 200 security personnel around the premises. We had three circles of guards – one inside the other ... all of us in communication with each other. You must remember that inside the Japanese security and intelligence agency, our officer Tikhard Zorge was placed, who would have let us know if something as colossal as this was being planned. We fear that it was not the Japanese but our modern "journalists" copying Western style sensationalism.

The following point is more serious. The modern "democratic journalists" have a field day with the personal life of Stalin, thinking up all sorts of stories, innuendoes and absolute falsifications.

The "Komsomolskaya Pravda" newspaper ... basing itself on the dossier of Edgar Hoover, chief of the FBI in the

USA, printed the item that on October 17, 1938, in Lvov, there took place a meeting of Stalin and Hitler.²⁹ At that time, I was head of the group that travelled with Stalin in Moscow and other cities or districts in the country. At that time, my assistants were always assigned to guard Stalin – Kykov, Starostin, Orlov, Krutshev and Kirillin. We all state that this is a vile lie that Hitler and Stalin met in Lvov! In a detailed research of archival documents by the newspaper "Glasnost", it was learned that Stalin was in Moscow all that time and was welcoming workers of the country at an official reception.³⁰

The magazine "Ogoniok" printed fragments from the book of A. Orlov "Secret History of Stalin's Crimes". Who is this Alexander Orlov? This is Lev Feldbin, twice in Liubianka jail. He came from the Caucasus, where he commanded some border guards. During the 1930s, this Feldbin ran away across the border of the USSR and there, he wrote this fable.

He was never close to Stalin. He only met some of the heads of the OGPU such as Commissar Pauker. He is simply a complete liar. Is it at all possible for him to see Stalin meeting Hitler, while we, his personal bodyguards, were sleeping? Stalin never carried any pistols. He always wore his army clothes, plain and simple with no braids or medals or other decorations.

Feldbin states that a bodyguard of Stalin, Enobkimov, was a Trotskyite. This is an outright fabrication! From 1930, the personal guards of Stalin were N. Vlasik, V. Rumiantsev, and A. Bogdanov. Regarding Evdokimov, he was only a secretary in the North Caucasus Party ACP [B], in his time, demanding of Stalin that he give him permission to arrest M. Sholokhov – Stalin put him in his place.

This same Feldbin writes that Stalin asked Pauker to gather for him pornographic photographs. We, his personal guards, living with him 24 hours a day, never ever saw any such trash. In his study, the only photographs that were seen were of D. Bednui, M. Sholokov, M. Gorky, M. Mayakovsky. The other walls were practically bare. He lived very modestly.

This Feldbin states that on the road to his Dacha, Stalin had commanded that all house-cottages on the route be demolished. Anyone who knows the reconstruction of Moscow and the outskirts will laugh at such stupidity since these districts had large apartment houses, industries built along this highway!

"Stalin was guarded at his Dacha by over 1,200 guards"! This is so ridiculous that anyone with a single brain cell would know that it's a lie.

I cannot continue to list the lies by this enemy, Feldbin.

Now, to touch upon the "new sensation" that Stalin always had a "double". The newspapers "Evening Donetsk"³² and "Crimean Pravda"³³ went wild with the sensation that Stalin had a double – Evsei Liubitsky. After that, "Pravda"³⁴ continued to spread this lie. Why was it necessary for these newspapers to spread such terrible lies? I do not understand. The Chief Editor of these newspapers, before printing such trash, should have looked into the archives of the CC ACP[B], interview former members of the CC CPSU. But that was not in the interest of the newspaper "Pravda" as we mentioned before, now owned by a foreign millionaire.

My colleagues and I, being with Stalin practically 24 hours a day, years on end, surely, we would have noticed something if there really was a "double Stalin"!

For a "Stalin's double" to be in existence, you would need to have another auto, the exact kind Stalin rode in, the same chauffeur, the same bodyguards, the same timetable, the same conference materials, the same answers and the same mannerisms! This is absolute rubbish!

Or how could you fool the top actors of the Bolshoi Theatre, like M. Reizen, P. Litsi Lisitsian, N. Golovanov, S. Samosud or V. Barsov who would have immediately noticed a double, since they were in constant contacts and meetings with Stalin?

Here are the statements of bodyguards such as M. Starostin who stated: "Stalin never had a double. Never did I, through 1937-1953, ever see any 'double' or anyone that I did not recognize. I was with Stalin everyday going to and from the Kremlin, his Dacha, Government's Dacha in the Crimea ... and in all these years, if there was a double, surely we would have seen him at least once or twice!"

The same was stated by another bodyguard, I. Orlov.

Stalin looked after himself, never asked anyone to shave him and dressed himself and did all the other necessary things that a person does when performing his day to day work. After the death of Kirov, he was himself always in the steam bath. Maybe the newspaper "Pravda" thought that Mrs. Butuzova, the housekeeper who washed and pressed the clothes and did the cooking, maybe that was the "double of Stalin"? He was very courteous to her and even gave an autographed portrait of himself. No one else ever received such an honour.

During the Great Patriotic War, Marshal Zhukov was his constant adviser, whom he respected very highly for his bravery, honesty and forthright nature. He had members of the Politbureau to consult with, he did not have to have any "special consultants" since Stalin was a genius in tactics and

had a phenomenal memory ... He was always rational, did not use words that had no meaning or reason to be said. He could be very funny, but never liked "yes men" and people with no thoughts of their own.

When discussing things with me, Stalin would think a moment and say: "Maybe you are correct. I'll think about it."

The nurse living in the nearest dacha, Valentina Istomina, former Commandant of the guards, I. Semenov, Captain of the first echelon of bodyguards, V. Krutashev – they all state that there was absolutely no truth to these lies that enemies of the Soviet Union and Stalin are peddling now about any "double" for Stalin!

If the late Goebbels would now hear all these tales and lies, he would turn over in his grave from envy! He, throughout the war, was not able to come up with such a fantastic tale. But history will surely sweep all the dirt off the grave of Stalin.

XV

As is known, Khrushchev, at that 20th Congress, from the tribunal, stated that Stalin was always sitting, scared, in his iron cage. Since that time, the doors of lies have been blown open along with all sorts of fantasies that have been heaped up and said about Stalin. There is even a version that the Dacha where he worked, had iron bars on the windows, bullet-proof glass – a virtual castle. There is also a version now that Stalin secluded himself in this fortress, that members of Politbureau decided by themselves that they would have to use flame throwers in order to get Stalin out of there! That they finally got inside this fortress and found Stalin dead!

In order to forever put these lies to rest, I am here stating that the Government dachas – there were four built – the orders of the CC ACP[B] to utilize for meetings during the summer or if necessity required, at other times. Stalin used the one nearest the Kremlin ... the Dacha in Kuncevo was Stalin's favourite since it was closest to the Kremlin. It was built back in 1931 – under a thatched and shingle roof. During the heavy bombing of Moscow, the Politbureau met at this Dacha, although even there, as I mentioned before, somehow the Germans knew Stalin's whereabouts and began bombing.

He worked day and night, especially during the war years, but even before the war, Stalin was a hard worker since there was so much to be accomplished. He suffered greatly with his feet and always had warm felt slippers while working behind his desk. Even during receptions at the Dacha, he wore those felt slippers, since his feet felt much better with them on than in ordinary leather boots. All of the bodyguards, together with Matrena Butizova, seeing that the felt slippers were getting really worn out, decided to sew him a pair of new ones ... Matrena took his old slippers away while he was sleeping and placed the new ones in their place. In the morning, Stalin called Orlov and very gently asked what happened to his slippers:

- Where are my felt slippers?
- Comrade Stalin, you are the General Secretary of our party. You are the Commander-in-Chief, head of the Government! You are always among the people, foreign guests, important personages. And now just before the forthcoming Anniversary of the USSR ... Orlov tried to be as persuasive as possible, thinking that Stalin would listen to him.

I would suggest that you return my old felt slippers,
 my feet are already accustomed to them – he got his wish
 and kept on wearing them until his last days.

I again repeat, there were no iron doors, double doors, all doors were made of wood, his doors were never closed, since he wanted fresh air and needed this circulation of air to help him breath better. When they had to be locked, the keys were always in the hands of the Commandant of security of the Dacha. There were no other keys, no secret doors, no iron doors or other hiding places, as the present falsifiers try to invent today.

I again and again strongly state this, since Khrushchev tells the world things that he absolutely has no idea about, no way of proving these accusations and outright falsehoods. Khrushchev said: "I was an eyewitness when Stalin went into the toilet where there were no doors and after that, he came out in order to berate his bodyguard about how he was guarding him, his place was to be near him all the time, etc., etc.!

This is absolutely absurd that we, his bodyguards, would be requested by Stalin to go right into the toilet to be with him while he was sitting on the toilet! That Stalin would be afraid to go into the toilet himself – these are thoughts of a very sick mind!³⁵

This is absolutely the thought of a sick mind – yes, of Khrushchev's very sick mind!

There were so many gifts given to Stalin by people, by different Soviet Republics, all meant for Stalin's personal use ... like a handwoven carpet. This large carpet from Azerbaijan was worked on for three years by about 30 best masters. Stalin, in his usual manner, gave this to the Art

Crafts Museum instead of using it in his Kremlin office or at the Dacha. There was also an Arab stallion that was given to Stalin as a gift. Only once did Stalin allow this stallion to pull the sled in winter, then he gave this personal beautiful stallion to a stud farm. Of all the gifts that thousands of people, enterprises and foreign countries gave Stalin on his 70th birthday, he only kept for himself a pair of gloves and felt boots.

Many so-called experts support Khrushchev that Stalin was of "unsound mind". Stalin recognized only the truth, no matter how bitter that truth was. To the end of his days, Stalin always had a steady character, phenomenal memory, quick mind, sharp reflexes, and was very observant of life.

As an organizer, he was supreme. He was a stickler for details that were undertaken to be done, and if they were not done, he made certain that they were done.

Another falsehood that these modern "democrats" promote is that Stalin was paranoid, saw terrorists behind every couch, chair and the draperies that covered the windows. These lies are so absolutely false that I cannot in all good conscience even reply to them. Stalin always had the drapes parted, there were heaters near the window because in the wintertime, it was cold – there was no furnace or central heating. Stalin himself told Orlov:

- Are the electrical heaters heating the drapes that the windows are covered with at night, or should they not be heating the room?

Thus, the drapes were always opened, the room was airy and no amount of lies by Khrushchev and his modern accomplices will subvert this fact. During the heaviest fighting of the Great patriotic War, the other government dacha was utilized near Semenovsk. Stalin rarely used this dacha, but the front, the South-Western fighting was near this dacha, close to 110 km from Moscow. This was designated by Stalin to be a hospital and Stalin many times went there to talk and visit the Red Army men who were being treated there. There was a demand by some of the leadership like Khrushchev and Beria that this dacha should be blown up when the Germans were near. But the General who was commanding this front, Zakharnikov, told Orlov:

- If you get the dacha blown up before it is necessary, I'll shoot you myself. If you give it up to the Germans, we shall find you and hang you. Decide for yourself what you must do.

Soloviev ran to Stalin to complain. Stalin, as Commander-in-Chief, gave the order that the front must stay put and not move back one foot. The Red Army held their positions and the dacha was saved, as was Orlov.

Another interesting characteristic which shows the feelings and the character of Stalin:

- My friend, take a look at this tree, it's an old pine tree, don't you think that it might fall during a storm over the cottage?
 - Let us cut it down quickly, ventured Soloviev.
 - But it will nevertheless still fall on the cottage.
- Then we shall cut it into pieces and burn it, piece by piece, gleefully said Soloviev.
 - Fine, let us do this.

Soloviev got busy getting the workers to get ready to cut down this old pine tree.

- My dear friend, said Stalin, after agonizing about his decision to cut down the tree. This tree, I venture to say, might outlive both of us. Let us save it! It would be a mistake, that I cannot allow to be made, since it was also I who made that mistake!

He always admitted his mistakes, no matter to whom.

Always, as a good host, Stalin was concerned about the lunch or supper for the Politbureau members after they met. He asked the help to go on the lake and catch some fish. Cannonading was going on everyday, the fish were hard to catch. But luck was with them. They caught the fish and Stalin counted them whether there was enough for all the members of the Politbureau. Here's one, two, three, four, when he came upon the name of Khrushchev, he let out a big sigh:

- He needs more than two, the glutton ...

After the death of Stalin, in his bedroom on his small night table, Starostin found Stalin's bank book – only 900 rubles had he saved. The bank book was given to Svetlana.

Whoever will read this book, will think that I am a die-hard Stalinist. I do not absolve Stalin of everything, but I know his character and I also know the circumstances and the bunch of opportunists that were surrounding him in the Politbureau. History now has shown us the conditions under which Stalin had to work, think and lead our country then, during the hectic events, enemies internally and externally doing everything possible to steer the country away from the socialist path ... Could Stalin have known everything that was going on inside the country? Let us ask the question, knowing that around him there were other leaders who were guiding and leading the country, who

were also building socialism. Could they not have also helped to uncover the enemies, correct the mistakes that were bound to be made? If they were also dedicated Bolsheviks, if they saw that Stalin was making all those "mistakes" that they now say that he made, why were they keeping quiet? They knew well that Stalin took advice, always consulted with them. Why are these former "Bolsheviks" keeping quiet now and not answering this cardinal question?

His life was very complex and very hard. These modern "democrats" are trying to build a Memorial to the victims of Stalinism. I would suggest that they build a Memorial to the victims of these enemies of the people. Remember that just in Lithuania and Latvia during the last war, the nationalists killed more than one million people – teachers, party people and young Komsomols. Two hundred thousand of our patriots were killed in Crimea by the Tatar nationalists. But also, never forget about our Red Army men who were butchered by these enemies. Do not all of these killed have any right to have a Memorial built for them?

Let us be truthful, at last!

This was the task that I placed before myself when I started to write this book. I did not embellish anything, did not try to colour anything – I tried to tell the absolute truth about Stalin, with whom I was for more than 25 years. I saw Stalin together with the other leaders, and I could compare their characters. Let us suppose that before we were all like-minded, that we were "afraid of Stalin"! But he is no longer alive, more than 43 years. What is threatening us now? Some could juggle the facts and their thoughts now. But our thoughts, the dedication of those that worked with Stalin,

remain the same as they were during his lifetime. To be truthful, our thoughts are even more solid now, more dedicated to the real truth as time passes on. You can judge for yourself the humility of Stalin and the opportunism, lies, sensationalism and traitorous acts of the present "democrats" and former "Bolsheviks" who now write and write and still cannot dislodge the genius of Stalin, even after 43 years of trying.

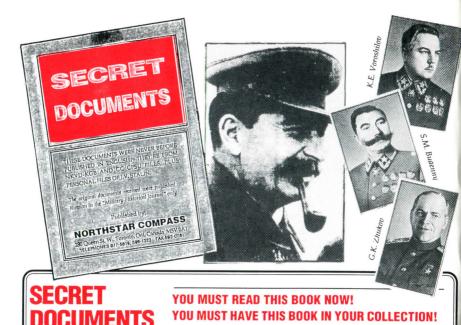
This is why we, people who spent the best years of our lives working together with Stalin, write and struggle against the so-called "learned" who are trying to settle old scores or, if that is not possible, of trying to rewrite history irrespective of the time that was, or write according to the present weather that is blowing an ill wind. That is why we, together, are demonstrating and fighting against those who believe the thought-up sensationalism.

Dear readers, please, be vigilant!

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