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VOLKOGONOV'S POLITICAL PORTRAIT OF STALIN

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[Series of articles by Dmitriy Volkogonov: "Triumph and Tragedy: A Political Portrait of I.V. Stalin"]

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[No 7, Jul 89 pp 12-77]

Chapter I. Disastrous Beginning

[Text]

The nation pays for the mistakes of its statesmen.
Nikolay Berdyaev

Stalin was finding it hard to get the meaning of what Zhukov kept saying over the phone: "Comrade Stalin, can you hear me? Did you understand what I said, Comrade Stalin? Hello, Comrade Stalin..."

Finally, the man who found such fantastically heavy burden to have landed on his shoulders answered hoarsely:

"Come to the Kremlin with Timoshenko. Tell Poskryobyshev to summon all Politburo members..."

Stalin put down the receiver, stood at the table for a minute, casting a shocked bleary glance at the face of a grandfather clock in the corner of the room - the small hand had just moved past number four. With their indecisive directive No. 1, they sent yesterday a sort of a cautious warning to the military councils of the Leningrad military district, the Baltic, Kiev, Western, and Special military districts: "The goal for our troops is not to fall for any provocative actions."

The troops did not have enough time to adequately react to this belated signal. Stalin realized subconsciously that something horrible, grandiose and tragic had happened, had begun in the life of the country, the people, and, of course, his own life, the first person in this huge state. Aware of the colossal military machines squared off against each other on the border, even he could not imagine how disastrous the beginning of the war was going to be for him. Although he was cognizant of the Red Army's many technical, operational and organizational foibles, he could not even think that Minsk would fall a week after the outbreak of the war and that German tanks would wedge into, and rip apart ever new, unsuccessful, lines of defense...

Buttoning up his tunic absent-mindedly, made familiar to millions of Soviet people through endless photos and portraits, Stalin could not hear the far away roar of tens of thousands of German guns which opened up pinpointed fire against the positions and areas occupied by Soviet troops, the border outposts, and strong points. As he was getting into his car, German bombs were booming out in Brest, Bobruisk, Vilnius, Ventspils, Grodno, Kobrin, Kiev, Minsk, Zhitomir, Slonim, Sevastopol and dozens of other cities, heralding the arrival of the juggernaut of war. Stalin's car, accompanied by two limousines with security guards, was speeding up down Moscow's deserted streets towards the Kremlin, while the tracks of thousands of German tanks were already furiously furrowing the earth of the Homeland. Those who had ever watched a fire in the taiga forest, know how fast the wind blows forward a wall of fire across the swaths of forest, accompanied by a thunderous roar of calamity... The fire of invasion was rushing down like a deadly fiery avalanche, devouring thousands of cities and villages and destroying millions of human lives.

How could have Hitler decided to wage war at two fronts? Is he really a madman? Stalin still did not want to admit that on capturing Paris, Hitler practically abolished one front and hoped to end the Russian campaign in the east in a similar blitzkrieg. Stalin was searching for a helpful loophole: maybe the military have just panicked, faced with a large-scale provocation? The same Pavlov sent a message two or three days ago (it seems like it was not the first one) requesting "permission to occupy field fortifications along the state border." Stalin told Timoshenko to convey his refusal to the commander of the Belorussian special military district, since a troop advance could have provoked the Germans who seemed to have been waiting for an opportune occasion... He should inquire in Berlin in the first place whether it could just be a test of strength... Did the Khasan events result in war with Japan?

Passing through a special entrance, used only by him, Stalin came upstairs to his office and curtly said to the pale Poskryobyshev:

"Ask all of them to come in, at once..."

politburo members, followed by Zhukov and Timoshenko, stepped in cautiously in silence. Without greeting them, Stalin said, addressing no one in particular:

"Get in touch with the German Ambassador..."

Molotov left the room. A depressing silence fell. Those invited by Poskryobyshev sat at the table: A.A. Andreyev, K.E. Voroshilov, L.M. Kaganovich, A.I. Mikoyan, M.I. Kalinin, N.M. Shvernik, L.P. Beriya, G.M. Malenkov, N.A. Vosnesenskiy, and A.S. Shcherbakov. When Molotov came back, he felt that not only Stalin, but all members of what was then called the "Party top," were looking at him intently. The head of the People's Commissariat of Defense forced words in a flat voice, as he approached his chair:

"The Ambassador announced that the German government had declared war on us. The formal pretext is," said Molotov looking at the paper he had in his hands, "that 'nationalist Germany decided to forestall the forthcoming Russian attack.'"

A "thick," viscose silence set in. Stalin sat down at his desk, looked at Molotov and recalled how Molotov

confidently reported half a year ago, after his return from Berlin, in the same room and in front of almost the same people:

"Hitler is seeking our support in his struggle against Britain and her allies. One should expect their rivalry to intensify. Hitler is rushing around... It is clear that he will not dare to wage a fight at two fronts. I think we have time to reinforce our Western borders. But we should be super alert, as we are dealing with an adventure-seeker."

Stalin looked at Molotov once again, this time maliciously: "We have time..." The all-powerful secretary has long stopped paying notice to the trait which he developed - he did not find fault with himself for a single error, miscalculation, or mistake. Anxiety was welling up in his heart. Stalin felt that he had been brazenly deceived. He felt lost and indecisive, probably for the first time in years. The Leader had become accustomed to the events developing according to his will. He did not want his obedient "comrades-in-arms" to see any signs of his weakness. Everyone was waiting for him to say something and to give instructions. Having a clever, but malicious and catchy mind, Stalin felt intently that he had turned all those sitting at the long green table in his office into the people incapable of coming up with a wise advice or taking a decisive step. His "comrades-in-arms" were used to saying yes, agreeing with him, guessing his wishes, and executing them selflessly.

Timoshenko broke the depressing pause:

"Comrade Stalin! May I report the situation?"

"Go ahead"

First Deputy Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin entered the room. His report was brief and contained little new information. Large groups of German troops invaded the Soviet territory in a number of Northwestern and Western directions, following a barrage of artillery fire and air raids. Enemy planes were bombing airfields nonstop. The General Staff did not possess any other information at this point.

None of those present in the room could even imagine how swift and dramatic the future events were going to be. The fiery avalanche of war was swiftly rolling eastwards.

Paralyzing Shock

No, Stalin was not in a shock on the first day. He felt visibly confused and angry at everybody for having been so deceived, and anxiety over uncertainty. But his will was not paralyzed. The politburo members spent almost 24 hours in his office on the first day, waiting for the news from the border. They left the room only rarely to make a phone call, to have tea, or to limber up. They talked but little. Everybody hoped that only partial setbacks could be expected, since the troops had been alerted and were moving towards the border; they also knew an approximate balance of power between the two warring armies. Nobody doubted that Hitler would be given a devastating rebuff. Talking among themselves, the members of the Party areopagus admitted that some fierce fighting was possible for a week or two near the border. The war could become a trench warfare for a while, until the Red Army forces could deliver their devastating offensive strike at the aggressor...

Malenkov had in his folder a draft directive: "On the Tasks of Political Propaganda in the Red Army in the Near Future," submitted for his consideration in mid-June by the head of the Red Army's main political propaganda directorate, A.I. Zaporozhets. Stalin would replace him with army commissar L.Z. Mekhlis on the second day of the war. Together with Molotov, Beriya and Zdanov, Malenkov was one of Stalin's closest associates; he was rising fast to become the Central Committee secretary, member of the Organizing bureau and alternate politburo member before the war, and now was in charge of the personnel directorate of the Central Committee of the all-Russia Communist Party (Bolshevik). Malenkov handed this directive over to Stalin when he was summoned by Stalin to his office on June 20 and received another assignment. They had started work on it after the meeting of the main political council and Stalin's speech to the graduates of military academies on May 5, 1941. Stalin made it very clear at that time that a future war was inevitable and one had to be prepared to the "unquestionable smashing of German fascism." According to the instructions made by the Leader, the directive, which he did not have time to approve before the war, contained the following provisions:

"The new conditions in which our country lives and the present-day international situation are fraught with surprises and require revolutionary determination and constant readiness to begin a devastating attack against enemy... All kinds of propaganda, agitation and education should be geared towards a single goal of providing political, moral and combat readiness of the personnel, conducting a *just offensive* and *all-devastating war*..., educating the personnel in the spirit of active hatred towards enemy and the desire to come to grips with it, readiness to defend our Homeland on enemy territory, and strike a mortal blow at it."

In addition to Malenkov, the directive was reviewed by Zhdanov. What eventually counted most was not the directive, but the confidence espoused by the political leadership in the country's ability to repel any attack and to punish the aggressor. The directive was drafted in the spirit of G.K. Zhukov's proposals regarding the plan of strategic deployment of the USSR armed forces, the proposals submitted to Stalin in May. It also mentioned the need to "forestall the enemy and smash its main force in the territory of what used to be Poland and Eastern Prussia." General Staff and the Main Political Directorate believed that defense could be only short-lived, as the troops were trained for offensive. To repel an attack and to advance... That is why the idea of a disaster did not cross the leaders' minds in the first day or two. It was ruled out, if it were.

But this is what happened in reality. Although the political and military leaders were forewarned about the coming attack by fascist Germany through different channels, they did not do such obvious thing as to place border troops on combat alert. Directive 1, if one has its purpose in mind, was at least a day too late. Stalin and his retinue did not understand, and the military hesitated to explain - Timoshenko was very much afraid of the Leader in general - that combat readiness required a rigid time frame. It takes from four to twenty hours to place a division on alert, assemble it and have it march to take the indicated defensive lines. The average time varied from four to 23 hours in the Western specialmilitary district, for example. In the meantime, they started to transmit Directive No. 1, after it had been approved by General Staff, at 0:20 a.m. on June 22. The districts finished its reception at 1:20 a.m. Following this, the commanders and their staffs studied the document and formulated the orders and instructions, necessary in such cases, which took another hour or an hour and a half. Actually, the troops had less than one hour to execute the alert order.

A large number of divisions were alerted only by fascist air raids and artillery bombardments. Having started to move to the designated areas, the units and formations did not reach them, as a rule. They were forced to engage the enemy on the move as they ran into German tank columns on their way. The enemy went to special pains to disrupt communications and to cripple troop control. To everybody's complete surprise, the German strike forces advanced 50-60 km deep into the Soviet territory by the end of the first day.

The second echelon troops began to move towards the border under the constant raids by enemy aircraft which dominated the skies from the very first hours. Endless crowds of refugees were moving in the army's opposite direction. There were no communications. The commanders did not know the situation. The areas into which the units were ordered to move, were already taken by the enemy which scored tactical, operational, and then strategic success thanks to its surprise attack. Yes, it is true: because of Stalin's criminal foot-dragging, the troops found themselves in a situation where the most adventuresome plans were carried out by the German command. The Chief of General Staff of the Wehrmacht's ground forces, Colonel General F. Galder wrote later: "The attack by the German troops caught the enemy by surprise. The enemy's battle formations were not arranged for defense from the tactical point of view. Its troops were scattered over a vast territory in the border area and tied to the areas where their quarters were located. The guarding of the border itself was weak."

Stalin did not know that the German command focussed on a decisive movement of its tank wedges deep into the Soviet territory, not bothering about Soviet troops remaining behind their lines. Mobilization was disrupted in many Oblasts. The enemy captured over 200 fuel, ammunition and all type of munition depots, as well as many military hospitals, during the first day or two. Confusion and lack of firm control swayed the personnel towards demoralization. The operations brief No. 1 of June 24, 1941, signed by chief of staff of the 4th army Colonel L. M. Sandalov, says for example: "Infantry has been demoralized by constant and fierce bombings and shows no stiff defense. The commanders of all formations, starting from army commanders, have to halt the haphazardly retreating units and sometimes large units, although these measures do not produce the desired result despite the use of weapons."

And Stalin kept waiting for the reassuring news...

When an issue was raised in the morning of June 22 as who was to address the nation with the news about the attack of Hitler Germany, everybody naturally looked at Stalin, who, almost without hesitation, refused to do it. The historical literature still claims that Stalin did it because, as A. I. Mikoyan related, he was "in a state of depression and did not know what to tell people, since the people were brought up believing that there would be no war, and even if the war breaks out, the enemy would de defeated in its own territory, and so on, and now we had to admit that in the first hours of the war we were suffering a defeat."

I do not think this is the way things were. The matter of addressing the nation was being decided early in the morning, when nobody in Moscow knew that "in the first hours of the war we were suffering a defeat." People were often warned about war, about a threat of war. Preparations for war were made, but still it came all of a sudden. Stalin could not figure out many developments on the border, and he did not want to tell people anything without sorting it out first. He never made major steps before, at least in the 30s, if he did not know how they were going to affect his standing, and always ruled out risking the Leader's prestige. Not hearing any victorious news on the morning of the 22nd, Stalin felt anguish and even confusion; he still hoped to "punish" Hitler in two or three weeks for perfidy and then he would "come" to the people. Stalin would be paralyzed by shock only five or six day later, having seen at last that the invasion posed mortal threat not only to the Homeland, but also to him, the "sagacious and invincible" leader.

This opinion is corroborated by the two documents, two directives to the troops, approved at 7:15 a.m. and at 9:15 p.m. of June 22 in the Leader's office and signed by Timoshenko, Malenkov, and Zhukov. After it had been decided in the morning that Molotov would address the nation and carry out mobilization in the territory of 14 military districts, Stalin, who did not understand the scale of the disaster yet, demanded that the military "defeat the invading enemy by striking devastating blows at it." S.K. Timoshenko immediately gave an order to draw a document, known in history as directive No.2 of the chief military council:

"Military councils of the Leningrad military district, Baltic special military district, Western smd, and Separate md. Copy to the People's Commissar of the Navy.

On June 22, 1941, at 4 a.m., the German aviation staged raids, without any pretext, against our airfields and cities along the Western border and subjected them to bombings.

Simultaneously, the German troops opened artillery fire in several places and crossed our border.

In connection with Germany's unheard-of and brazen attack against the Soviet Union, I *order*:

1. The troops should bring down on the enemy forces all the available forces and means and destroy them in the areas where they violated the Soviet border. The ground troops should not cross the border now, until special notice.

2. Reconnaissance and combat planes should locate the areas where enemy planes and the group of its ground troops are concentrated. Destroy planes on enemy airfields by making bombers and low-flying attack planes deliver powerful strikes and bomb out the main groups of its ground forces. Deliver air strikes up to 100 to 150 km deep in the German territory. Bomb out Koenigsberg and Memel. Make no raids against the territories of Finland and Rumania until special notice.

Timoshenko, Zhukov, Malenkov"

No. 2 June 22, 1941 7:15 a.m.

The order does not resemble a military document much. It has an imprint of Stalin's "work" on it, of his political editing. It looks rather like an act of political will, strong determination to punish the treacherous neighbor, with a thinly veiled hope that the business of war might possibly be still "settled." It is hard to understand otherwise why the ground forces "should not cross the border until special notice." Giving the order to deliver "powerful bomber strikes," Stalin did not know yet that the troops of the Western front *alone, only* during the first day of the war, would lose 738 planes, out of which 528 on the airfields. The situation will be the same in the Leningrad MD [Military District], the Kiev and Baltic SMDs [Special Military Districts]. During the very first hours of the war the Germans will achieve complete air supremacy, having destroyed over 1,200 planes just in one day of June 22!

Many decisions were made during the first day. I shall repeat that Stalin did not know the dimensions of the disaster yet. The initial confusion and depression passed. But the thought that gnawed at his mind was how could he have trusted Hitler. How did the Fuhrer manage to pull a fast one on him? Molotov, my foot! Does it mean that numerous intelligence reports and information received through other channels about the impeding German attack and the specific dates were correct? Does it mean that if he had listened to Pavlov and ordered the troops to be placed on full alert several days ago many things would have panned out differently? Stalin has long believed in his own infallibility and it seemed to him all the time that today his "comrades-in-arms" were thinking with reproach in his office about his mistakes. He found it painful just to think that people (and not in the Kremlin alone could doubt his sagacity, foresight and infallibility).

At Timoshenko's suggestion, the Baltic, Western and Kiev, special military districts were transformed into the Northwestern, Western, and Southwestern fronts. The south and north fronts were established then. Stalin constantly requested information about the border situation and about the measures taken to carry out directive No. 2. Calling Timoshenko, Zhukov or Vatutin on the phone several times, he would ask angrily:

"When are you going to report a clear picture of the border fighting? What are Pavlov, Kirponos and Kuznetsov (front commanders - D.V.) doing? What is General Staff doing. Why are there no reports?"

Vatutin brought the map of operations two or three times to the Kremlin, with the situation plotted on it, but it contained no reassuring news. The areas of concentration of our armies, corps, the aircraft bases and the directions of formations moving from depth were painstakingly penciled on it in different colors. But the essential thing lacking was where the fighting was going on, where the enemy is located, and what type of action the Soviet troops are taking. The Kremlin did not understand yet the degree to which the troops control and communication systems were destroyed by the German troops - it was almost completely paralyzed at the Western front. A few hours after the invasion began, General Pavlov lost control over troops at his front. The flights undertaken by German reconnaissance planes with impunity for months and intelligence data provided by its agents, enabled the German command to pinpoint all control points, communications lines, airfields, depots, and unit zones of concentration. The aggressors first strike, which involved planes, artillery and tanks, was exceptionally effective. The enemy saboteurs, who had been infiltrated before, disrupted wire communications which played a larger role than radio communications at that time.

In the meantime, Stalin was still waiting for the news about victory, or at least for some reassuring announcements. They would not come. As soon as his office door would open, he would look up quickly and scrutinize the visitor's face. the Leader was nervous. Stalin had nothing but a glass of tea during the entire first day of the war. It seemed to him that the military commanders were marking time, were indecisive and did not grasp the full meaning of the order sent to the border districts in the morning. It will be recalled that during the Civil War he was often used as a Party plenipotentiary at different fronts. He came to believe in the effectiveness of putting much pressure to bear on the staffs and leaders with the help of rigid demands, threats, and different administrative measures. It was already then that Stalin saw the

effectiveness of "strong hand." The confused situation put him in depression, he could not wait any longer. Without finishing the discussion of the document on establishing the Stavka of Main Command with Molotov, Zhdanov and Malenkov, which was brought by Timoshenko, Stalin ordered:

"We should urgently send authoritative Stavka representatives to the Southwestern and Western fronts. Shaposhnikov and Kulik will go to Pavlov, and Zhukov will go to Kirponos. You are leaving today. Immediately."

He came up to the table, looked over all those present and said in a stern voice, as if with a threat:

"Immediately."

Everyone nodded in consent. It seemed to Stalin, who did not know the real situation at the fronts, that ever new vigorous impulses were required from the center to impel the HQs and the troops to take more resolute action. By the end of the day, Vatutin prepared another directive by the Chief military council (this is how it should be obviously called, since the Stavka under the chairmanship of Marshall of the Soviet Union Timoshenko was established the next day) at his initiative and behest. Its initial version was heavily "edited" by Stalin's remarks. I shall quote just a few excerpts from the rather lengthy document, known as Directive No.3:

"Military councils of the Northwestern, Western, Southwestern and Southern fronts.

1. Having struck main blows from the Suvalki salient toward Olita and from the Zamostiye area, at the Vladimir-Volyn, Radzekhov, as well as ancillary strikes in the directions of Tilzit, Shaulay and Siedlce, Volkovysk and suffering large losses, during June 22 the enemy achieved minor successes in the directions mentioned above. Enemy attacks were repulsed, with it suffering heavy losses, at all other sections of the border with Germany and along the entire border with Rumania.

2. The immediate order for the troops for June 23-24 is as follows:

a) surround and destroy the enemy Suvalk group and take the Suvalki area by the end of June 24, by delivering concentric concentrated strikes by the forces of the Northwestern and Western fronts;

b) surround and destroy the enemy group advancing in the direction of Vladimir-Volyn and Brody and take the area of Lublin by the end of June 24, by delivering powerful concentric strikes, using the mechanized corps, all the planes at the Southwestern front and other troops of the 5th and 6th armies..."

The directive went on to specify the most unrealistic offensive missions set for the fronts' armies. Article 4, dictated by Stalin himself, said:

"I allow to cross the state border along the front stretching from the Baltic sea to the state border with Hungary, and to take action irrespective of the state border."

The very turn of the sentence, which tautologically uses the word, "border," three times, showed that Stalin was not his "usual self." The directive was singed by Timoshenko and Malenkov. Zhukov had already left for Kiev, but Stalin ordered to have his signature on the directive too.

The first day of the war was coming to a close. the Leader still entertained the hope that the units moved from inside would be able to halt and then drive away the invading German troops. He felt even more so, since Vatutin brought an operations brief No. 2 of General Staff at 10 a.m., which reassuringly summed up: "Following the arrival of the Red Army field advance units, the attacks by the German troops have been repelled along the overwhelming stretch of our border, with the enemy suffering losses." Everyone seemed to have come back to life and even to cheer up. Stalin and all those present in his office did not know that the German troops had advanced tens of kilometers inside the Soviet territory in many areas within the past 24 hours.

The illusions that Stalin still entertained began to evaporate fast starting from the morning of June 23. The most influential Stavka member tried twice to get on the phone personally with Pavlov, but the Western front HQs answered tersely on both occasions that "the commander was among the troops." They did not succeed in getting any specifics from the front chief of staff Major General V.E. Klimovskikh either. An alarming picture was taking shape: the HQs lost troop control and did not have any say over the disastrous developments.

The Western front HQs really lost troop control the next day. Let me quote from the two documents formulated and signed by Pavlov in those tragic days, keeping their style and spelling intact:

"Coded cable No. 5352

of June 23, 8:05 p.m.

10th army commander

Why didn't the mech. corps advance, who's to blame. Take active action immediately and do not panic but control. You have to beat the enemy in an organized manner and not to run without control. You have to know each division, where it is, what it is doing and what the results are.

Why don't you set no attack objective to the mech. corps. Find the 49th and 113th infantry divisions and move them out.

Correct your mistakes. Bring in ammunition and fuel. You'd rather take provisions on the spot.

Remember that if you do not show no activity, the military council will not tolerate no more.

Pavlov, Fominykh."

From the sketchy information coming to the HQs, the front commander, who was to remain in this position for another week, realized during the fourth day of the war that the enemy mobile units would be able to approach Minsk from the north-west and Southwestern in two or three days. The units of the 3rd and 10th front's armies acting at the Belostok salient, found themselves in the most difficult situation, since they have been outflanked and partially bypassed from the rear. Under those circumstances Pavlov apparently made the correct decision to retreat, since he saw that a 50-60 km wide corridor still remained open in the direction of Minsk. But it was exceedingly difficult to carry out the decision. One of the very few directives was preserved, which Dmitriy Grigorievich Pavlov still had time to sign in what was to become for him a short-lived war - just more than a week. Here is the directive:

"Commanders of the 13th, 10th, 3rd and 4th armies.

Get ready the units and begin retreat tonight, on the 25th and the 26th, not later than at 9 p.m. The tanks are in the vanguard, the cavalry and strong antitank units in the rear...

The forthcoming march to execute swiftly, day and night, under the cover of strong rear units. Make a breakthrough over a wide front... The first jump of 60 km a day and more... Allow the units to fully rely on local supplies and take any number of carts...

Western front commander Army General Pavlov

Member of the Western front military council Ponomarenko

Western front chief of staff Klimovskikh."

Indicating the final line of retreat and division lines to the formations, Pavlov did not know that the troops had no fuel and transport means left, which were captured or destroyed by the enemy during the first days of fighting. The units were retreating in a haphazard manner under the most difficult conditions; as the German aviation dominated the skies, the enemy mobile groups made swift bypassing maneuvers. Stalin was waiting for the reassuring news to no avail - the disaster was spreading.

In the later days, especially by the end of the month, Stalin lost self-control for a while and was in a state of profound psychological shock, as he realized the dimensions of the deadly threat. The documents and testimonials by the people who saw him at that time prove that Stalin was so depressed and shocked between June 28 and 30, that he was unable to do anything serious. The psychological crisis was deep, although not a lasting one. But before he sank into it, he tried to do something, issued some orders, tried to infuse the supreme control bodies with energy. When a decision was being made on establishing the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the morning of June 23, all of a sudden he interrupted the discussion and suggested setting up an institute of permanent advisors under the Stavka. Malenkov and Timoshenko, who drafted the document together, exchanged glances but did not object, of course. Stalin dictated its composition in no time. Let us quote it as it was, reading exactly the same, as was suggested by Stalin:

"Organize the Institute of permanent advisors at the Stavka, which is to include Comrades Kulik, Marshall Shaposhnikov, Meretskov, air force commander Zhigarev, Vatutin, air defense chief Voronov, Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Voznesenskiy, Zhadov, Malenkov, and Mekhlis."

Poskryobyshev sent the decision, signed by him but presented as a government decision, to the districts and fronts over the phone. True, "the Institute" lasted only two weeks and became quietly defunct, without having performed any function.

I think that one of the mistakes made by Stalin and General Staff before the war was the failure to work out the details well in advance for an extraordinary body to conduct the war (State Defense Council), nor the single body to exercise strategic control over the armed struggle (the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief). Both were set up in the course of combat action. General Staff was weakened by the replacement of three of its chiefs, one on the heels of another. Many omissions became painfully apparent very soon.

Sketchy reports sent by the front HQs, air reconnaissance data, and reports by the Stavka representatives caused deep depression and paralyzing confusion in Stalin. He was especially demoralized when to his questions: "What is the progress on the directive sent to the units on the 22nd? Why is General Staff reporting nothing? Who is commanding the troops?" Vatutin answered, weighting his every word, that the Western and Northwestern fronts tired to strike counterblows, but no desired result was achieved because of poor air cover, ill-coordinated action and bad artillery support. The troops were continuing to retreat, having suffered big losses. Often, without any order. The units and formations of the 3rd and 10th armies found themselves in especially bad jam. They were practically surrounded, Vatutin added. The German Panzer columns were not far from Minsk...

"What do you mean, Minsk? You've got it all wrong! Where did you get this information?"

"No, it is not wrong, Comrade Stalin, " said Vatutin in the same soft and apologizing tone. "The data provided by General Staff representatives, who have been sent to the troops, and the air reconnaissance data coincide. One can say today that the first echelon troops have failed to halt the enemy near the border and ensure the deployment of the arriving troops. The Western front has been broken through as a matter of fact..."

Stalin could guess on June 23, 24 and 25 that the border battles had been lost, but to allow the German troops to advance 150-200 km deep into the Soviet territory in five or six days? This was incredible! What have Pavlov, Kulik and Shaposhnikov been doing? Why has not General Staff been managing troops? Is this a catastrophe? The military commanders silently listened to Stalin's angry and insulting outbursts and promptly left for General Staff as soon as they were dismissed.

There was an utter confusion and occasional chaos at the fronts during these first days of war, but the Kremlin was unaware of this yet. The HQs dispatched ever new orders and instructions, which did not keep pace with the extremely fluid situation. The situation was the same both at the Western and at other fronts as well.

In his special memo to General Staff, 8th mechanized corps commander D.I. Ryabyshev recalled the first days of war later on: "I received the order from the 26th army commander to concentrate the corps to the west of the town of Sambor only at 10 a.m. on the 22nd.... The troops concentrated in the designated area by 11 p.m. after a 80-km march. A new order was received at 10:30 p.m., according to which the 23rd corps was to move 25 km to the east of Lvov by 12 a.m. The corps, now assigned to the 6th army, was ordered in the second half of the day to reach the area of Yavorov... The Southwestern front commander set the new mission in his order at 11 p.m.: to reach the area of Brody and strike at the enemy in the direction of Berestechko in the morning of 26th. The corps had just completed a 300-km march in a day and a half before this.... The 8th mechanized corps concentrated in the Brody area on June 25. We launched an offensive in the morning, scoring partial success, but the corps did not accomplish its mission in general. There was no fuel. There were only German planes in the air. A new order was received on the 27th at 4 a.m.: the corps is to be withdrawn to the front's reserve. We began to withdraw. A new order came at 6:40 a.m. - to strike at the enemy in the direction of Brody-Dubno. But the troops had already started the retreat. corps commissar N.I. Vashughin, member of the military council of the Southeastern front, arrived at the corps commanding post at 10 a.m., who demanded that we executed the order, threatening me with a firing squad. But the formations have already been surrounded. It was established later on that the offensive planned by the front HQs earlier had been scrapped... We learned that the offense order had been long canceled only on July 2, as our two divisions were taking defensive positions... We were breaking through the encirclement unit by unit. We back tracked to the Proskurov area at the order of the front commander. We sent the report to the front HQs in Zhitomir, but the city had already been taken by the enemy." According to D.I. Ryabyshev, as a result of all the fighting and numerous maneuvers, "not more than 10 percent of the tanks and 21 percent of the armored vehicles were moved on the Dnieper's left bank. The corps was disbanded later on."

We gave a brief account of the bitter story told by General Ryabyshev, whose courage cannot be denied. The higher and front strategic commanders caused even more confusion by their orders which misfit the situation, as they were flabbergasted by the unpredictable events during the first days and weeks of the war. The units' grave situation was aggravated even more as a result of frequent reshuffles, the lack of flexible coordination and the loss of control over units and formations, and also due to the ignorance regarding the real situation.

Deep in his heart, Stalin saw more and more clearly that the army and defense had been made podgy, hard to control and losing self-confidence fast as a result of prewar mistakes, dilly-dallying, "fear of provocations", and the poor training of many newly-appointed minor and major commanders. The papers wrote - and this was true - about the heroism of Red Army men, exploits by pilots and tank crewmen, and that the country was rising to repel the enemy... This was all true. But a disaster was looming larger at the front, the fact that could not be concealed from the people any longer. Stalin felt that the country was intently watching him, her leader, who together with Voroshilov had assured the Soviet people on so many occasions that the Red Army was capable of smashing any enemy.

The situation looked absolutely hopeless to him at times. When Vatutin showed the retreat of the 8th and 11th armies on the map in the diverging directions, during one of the routine reports, Stalin visualized a huge breach, spanning 130 km, in-between the Western and Northwestern fronts. The main force of the Western front was either surrounded or defeated, while the Southwestern front held out with more dignity so far. How could he have dismissed the opinion of experts about the most probable line of attack along the Western direction? What kind of spell was he under? Why did they not convince him? In all his European campaigns, Hitler pushed right through to capture the capitals of the defeated states so as to force the enemy to surrender as soon as possible. Why did the military not drawn Stalin's attention to this specific feature of German strategy? A huge troop regrouping will be required now, but the time does not wait.

Stalin felt jittery, made some demands, summoned some people, and from time to time secluded himself at his dacha and was not heard of for hours. Appointed head of the Stavka, Timoshenko felt very ill at ease in his position. Those surrounding him understood that Stalin was actually in charge and in full command, although he was unusually impulsive, and everybody felt his depression and extreme blues. The emerging situation was not sized up correctly during the first three or four days of the war, because of Stalin's condition and a certain degree of confusion in General Staff. They started talking outloud about defense positions only on June 25-26 and about establishing the lines of defense and moving troops there. It took Stalin quite a while to realize that by the end of the month, when the first stage

of the initial stage of the war was over, that we lost too much to the aggressor. Stalin saw that the Western direction was the main one only after the fall of Minsk a week later. The Stavka was sending its directives to the troops, in many cases couched "in the same tone" as Stalin's, which could be viewed as nothing but the gestures of despair, ignorance of the situation and the desire to score partial success at least somewhere.

Let us quote several of such documents by the Stavka which show that it was dealing with tactical rather than strategic matters:

"Western front commander Com. Pavlov

Enemy tanks in the Rakov area have no gasoline. The Stavka has ordered to immediately organize and conduct the encirclement and destruction of enemy tanks. Use the 21st infantry corps and part of the 2nd and 44th infantry corps for his operation. Capture and defeat the enemy immediately. Prepare the strike with an air raid.

June 28, 1941."

The strength of three infantry corps is suggested to be used to accomplish a tactical mission! One can easily see that this directive, like many similar ones, could not be carried out, given the front situation in those days.

Here is another document by the Stavka (People's Commissar Timoshenko doubles as the head of Stavka so far)

"Northwestern front commander

The People's Commissar ordered you to assume responsibility for driving the enemy out of Dvinsk not later that tonight, destroy bridges and take strong defense, preventing the enemy from crossing over to the northern shore of the western Dvina river in the vicinity of Dvinsk. Use a reinforced infantry regiment from the 112th infantry division to build up the attacking units. If the KV tanks have arrived, use up to one platoon to increase the strength of onslaught and suppress the enemy firing positions. Report execution at 9:00 p.m. on June 28.

June 28, 1941."

The Stavka was determining how to use a tank platoon...

At night Stalin left for his nearby dacha. He entered his office, lied down on the couch without getting undressed, but he could not fall asleep. He got up and went to the hall and then to the dining room. The oak-toned dark wall panels perfectly fit his gloomy mood. He sauntered aimlessly from room to room, glancing at the phones with a corner of his eye - the dacha had three Kremlin direct government lines, "vertushkas," installed in three different places - as if anticipating and fearing new horrible news. He opened the door into the room of his duty aide; General V. Rumyantsev was sitting there. The latter fussily stood up, staring at the Master questioningly. The dacha owner looked at the general with the unseeing eyes, closed the door softly behind him and went to his room. Stalin slept either on a couch, or on a sofa or in bed, which were all in separate rooms. No one knew where he was going to sleep on a particular night. Clean bed sheets were put everywhere, courtesy of Valentina Vasiliyevna Istomina.

He lingered near an opening in the curtained window, gazing at the park's night silhouettes. For some reason, he recalled an excerpt from an old letter by Tukhachevskiy: "A future war will be a war of engines. A concentration of armor troops will make it possible to create such strike fists which will be exceedingly difficult to overcome." He was a smart man, all right, but he wanted to stage a coup d'etat, as Yezhov claimed.... If Tukhachevskiy had been in Pavlov's shoes, many things might have been different, perhaps... But why such thoughts? Having cast aside the shadows of the past, Stalin tried to find oblivion in sleep - the reality was awful.

The supreme command organ inherited, to a certain extent, the political leader's confusion and psychological crisis. This is testified to by the Stavka's controversial, confused and even "petty" directives and orders. The first person could not recover himself.

It may be interesting to give A.I. Mikoyan's testimonial about Stalin's behavior in the last days of June 1941. He relates in his memoirs that Molotov, Malenkov, Voroshilov, Beriya, Voznesenskiy and he, Mikoyan, suggested to Stalin that a State Defense Committee be established to concentrate all power in the country in its hands. Stalin was to become its head. "We decided to go and see him," writes Mikoyan. "He was at the nearby dacha. Molotov said, though, that Stalin was so prostrate that he took no interest in anything, lost initiative and was in bad shape. Indignant at what he has heard, Voznesenskiy said: 'Vyacheslav, you go ahead and we follow you.' The meaning of this was that if Stalin continued to behave in the same way, Molotov was to lead us and we were to follow him. We felt confident that we could organize defense and could put up a real fight. But this was not easy to do so far. We did not feel depressed at all."

"We arrived at Stalin's dacha. We found him sitting in an arm-chair in the smaller dining room. He looks at us inquiringly and asks: 'Why did you come?' He looked strange, so was the question. As a matter of fact, he should have summoned us himself. Molotov said on our behalf that power should be concentrated to make fast decisions, to put the country back on her feet. Stalin had to be at the head of such body. Stalin looked in surprise, making no objections. 'All right,' he says."

Each of us lives in two worlds at the same time in a certain sense - the outside world, "a mundane one," and an inside world, which is closed and often mysterious. The outside world can be figured out. It is more difficult to do this with the internal world. It become easier to understand a person as a whole, if one can learn something about his or her internal world. The impeding disaster was not just what it could be for any citizen of the Homeland, for Stalin this was the demise of the

earthly God. He was falling from a greater height than other people. The gaping precipice was deeper for the person who came to belief in being special, having a foresight and a special will. The few days during which Stalin was in the state of deep psychological shock, almost paralysis, brought him back to "earth."

Maybe Stalin thought that the visit by the politburo members almost in full strength indicated their intention to dismiss him from all positions? Or maybe even to arrest him? This would be so convenient, making one person "carry the can" for all the setbacks. He, Stalin, realized long ago that there should be a culprit, a "scapegoat" responsible for any fiasco or a setback. People should be given a chance to let off steam of indignation and to castigate the culprit. But in the eyes of his comrades-in-arms Stalin stood so high, that the very idea could not possibly cross their minds seriously. Even in his "prostate" condition, to quote Molotov, Stalin was looked upon as a great man, being at the same level of greatness which they created for him themselves. Now they wanted him to remain there, at the top, and to continue to guide them.

Timoshenko, Zhukov, General Staff and the People's Commissariat of Defense were trying to establish a new line of defense in the way of the German avalanche that swept across the Western front. They were moving the 13th, 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd armies there, together with what remained of the units that were breaking through encirclement. Losing self-control and swinging in his moods from apathy to nervous agitation, Stalin paid two surprise visits to the People's Commissariat of Defense on June 29. Without mincing words, he spoke up his mind, telling military leaders saying what he thought, in those dramatic days.

Stalin's gaunt and gray face made the bags under his eyes, red-rimmed because of lack of sleep, visible even more. Stalin's intellect has finally grasped the entire extent of the grave threat - the Germans could reach Moscow soon, if something extraordinary is not done and if all the forces are not mobilized... He took his "classical" first steps, which showed that he tried not only to get hold of himself but to control the situation - he started to dismiss military commanders. The State Defense Committee was established on June 30, with Stalin at its head, by the decision of the Central Committee of the all-Russia Communist Party (Bolshevik), the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium and the USSR Council of People's Commissars. The mortal threat hanging over the Homeland required that all forces were concentrated to conduct an armed struggle.

Stalin's first step in his new capacity was to remove Army General D.G. Pavlov from the position of the Western front commander. He was replaced by People's Commissar of Defense S.K. Timoshenko. Colonel General F.F. Kuznetsov, the Northwestern front commander, ordered the same day that the troops withdrew from the Western Dvina line and occupied Ostrovskiy, Pskov and Sebezh fortified areas. As soon as Stalin was told about this decision by the commander, he immediately ordered to dismiss the general. Major General P.P. Sobennikov, the new front commander, was conveyed the Leader's order: "Restore the previous position: return to the line of the Western Dvina river." The troops, which were retreating in a disorganized manner, could not either advance or defend themselves when they received the new order. Seeing confusion, the enemy struck at the juncture of the 8th and 27th armies and broke the front line. These reports did not add confidence to the Chairman of the State Defense Committee, who could not recover emotionally, or find a mode of conduct which would give the organs of strategic control a sense of precision, logic and well-conceived action, which they needed so badly in those dramatic days.

K. Klauzewitz is known to have contemplated about an interdependence between danger and a military leader's emotional condition. In his two-volume treatise, "About War," this German thinker, whom Lenin held in high esteem, wrote that a military commander's mind works among the elements of threat: "It is typical of human nature to view an immediate feeling of great danger to oneself and to others as a barrier for pure reason." But Klauzewitz added that by contrast, the elements of danger sharpen the faculties of the mind and will in a large-caliber military leader: "In a normal person, danger and responsibility do not add to the freedom and vigor of the spirit, but on the contrary have a depressing effect on him; that is why if these feelings inspire and sharpen the faculty of thinking, we undoubtedly deal with a rare grandeur of spirit." One can say today that Stalin did not display this "grandeur of spirit" at the beginning of the war, when it was needed so much. More than that, the first week or two after the war broke down saw a deep emotional crisis, depression or, as we have already quoted Molotov, a condition of "prostration" in which the Leader found himself. The numerous documents issued by the Stavka did not put on the record of history at the end of July any significant vigorous steps or actions by the first person in the state, aimed at getting a handle on the situation. Stalin became caught in the vortex of exceptionally unhappy events, and like many other people, he was "carried" in his horrible stream. He could not find a point of rest, stand up and straighten himself...

Stalin might have expected to become a focal point of dissatisfaction on the part of his environment, military leadership and the people, as the main person to blame for the mistakes, an abortive "game" with Hitler and an unprecedented weakening of the army due to the terror against its cadres. But the Soviet people proved to be above revenge and score-setting with their Leader at the hour when their Homeland faced mortal threat. "Spiritual grandeur" of the people turned out to be so high that at that tragic moment it did not go as low as to look for those to blame for the obtaining situation. The sagacity of popular experience left it for history to do this. "The kindness of the Russian people," wrote N.O. Losskiy, "is

expressed, among other things, in the absence of rancor in people of all walks of life."

Stalin's behavior after the news about the fall of Minsk was broken to him came as a culmination of his psychological shock. Having read the morning report from General Staff, Stalin left for his dacha and did not come to the Kremlin almost the entire day. Molotov and Beriya went to see him. It is hard to figure out what the three people talked about, but Stalin found it difficult to believe that the capital of Belorussia came under the invaders' heel just one week after the war began. I would like to tell the readers about a fact of history, in the authenticity of which I did not and do not have complete confidence, but the probability of which is hard to dismiss entirely.

In the last half of the 1970s, in 1976 or 1977, I was put on an inspection group headed by the Marshall of the Soviet Union K.S. Moskalenko. We stayed for a few days in Gorkiy. In the evening, I was reporting to the Marshall on the party-political work in the units we have been inspecting. On many occasions, the conversation would switch to his book of memoirs. I was interested in his views on some matters of national history. One day, during one of such conversations, I asked the Marshall the question which has bothered me for a long time:

"Kirill Semyonovich, why didn't you mention in your book the fact which you related to the Party active members about twenty years ago? Are you sure yourself that it happened that way?"

"Which fact, what do you mean?" the Marshall looked at me guardedly.

"About the meeting of Stalin, Molotov and Beriya with the Bulgarian Ambassador at the end of June 1941."

Looking at the window, Moskalenko remained silent for a long time and then said:

"It is not time yet to talk about these facts. And not all of them can be verified..."

"What do you personally think about the authenticity of what Beriya said?"

"All he had to say about that matter hardly exonerated himself...In his condition, it was difficult to make up what could not help the criminal anyway..."

I want to quote an excerpt from a document so that the reader could understand what we were talking about. A meeting of Party activists was held in the Ministry of Defense on July 2, 1957 to discuss the letter of the CPSU Central Committee, "On the anti-Party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov and others." The report to the activists was delivered by G.K. Zhukov. Major military leaders, such as I.S. Konev, R. Ya. Malinovskiy, F.F. Kuznetsov, M.I. Nedelin, I.Kh. Bagramyan, K.A. Vershinin, F.I. Golikov, K.A. Meretskov, A.S. Zheltov, and other comrades took the floor. K.S. Moskalenko made a speech as well. His speech contained a reference that is of interest to us:

"In reviewing the case of Beriya, Procurator General Com. Rudenko and I established that, according to his testimony... back in 1941 Stalin, Beriya and Molotov discussed in the office the issue of the Soviet Union surrendering to fascist Germany. They agreed to surrender to Hitler the Soviet Baltic republics, Moldavia and part of the territory of other republics. In doing so, they tried to get in touch with Hitler through the Bulgarian Ambassador, since not a single Russian tsar ever did this. Characteristically, the Bulgarian Ambassador proved to be above these leaders, as he told them that 'Hitler will never defeat the Russians, let Stalin not to worry about this.' The Bulgarian Ambassador gave us this testimonial just recently."

It took Moskalenko a while to start talking. Stalin kept silent all the time during that meeting with the Bulgarian Ambassador Ivan Stamenov. Molotov did all the talking. He asked the Ambassador to get in touch with Berlin. Molotov called his proposal to Hitler to stop the hostilities and to make major territorial concessions (the Baltic republics, a large part of the Ukraine, Belorussia and Moldavia) "probably the second Brest Treaty." "Lenin had enough courage to make such a step at that time, and we intend to make the same step today," allegedly said Molotov, to quote Beriya. The Ambassador refused to intercede in this "questionable matter" saying that "even if you retreat as far as the Urals, you are going to win anyway."

"It is hard to say, or to say categorically that it was exactly like this," said the Marshall pensively. "But it is clear that in those days - at the end of June and in the beginning of July - Stalin was in a disparate situation, fretting and not knowing what to do. It did not make much sense for Beriya to make it all up, especially that the former Bulgarian Ambassador confirmed this fact in our conversation."

There are mysteries and hoaxes. The author has cited an oral and a documented written testimonials of the version preserved in the archives and voiced by Marshall of the Soviet Union K.S. Moskalenko, who quoted other people. I find it hard to answer whether this is a historical mystery or a hoax. The one thing that is clear is the during the first weeks of the war, Stalin, as we already said, clearly did not demonstrate "grandeur of spirit," about which our historians and writers talked for so long with persistency after the war. It is easier to be a hero, a "genius" and an idol under the *ordinary* circumstances, but as Tarle observed shrewdly, "the point is that in *extraordinary* cases Kutuzov was always at his place. Suvorov found him at the right place on the night of assault on Ismail; the Russian people found him in the right place when the *extraordinary* case of 1812 took place."

People were waiting for Stalin's speech. They still believed in him and pinned their hopes on him. It is likely that this is what helped Stalin to shake off his psychological shock. Chairman of the State Defense Committee decided to address the nation on the radio only on July 3. We should point out in passing that German general Galdier made an entry in his diary on the same day, which said: "It would not be an exaggeration to say that the campaign against Russia was won in 14 days." The general was obviously in a hurry, since the war had just begun. Many people realized already that the war was going to be deadly difficult and long. Stalin revised his speech several times. The most difficult for him was to find the words and the arguments explaining to the people what has happened, the setbacks, the invasion and the collapse of the Soviet-German treaties. Stalin's manuscript has the comments written in pencil on its margins: "Why?," "Enemy defeat is inevitable," "What is to be done?" This looked like a plan for a keynote speech by the state's No. 1 person. Stalin laid down in it the main provisions formulated in the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the all-Russia Communist Party (Bolshevik) of June 29.

In his speech, the Leader gave lengthy and not very convincing reasons, essentially trying to justify himself, why the German troops had captured Lithuania, Latvia, part of the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Estonia. Eventually, everything was reduced to the sentence: "The reason is that the troops of Germany, as a warring country, were completely mobilized, and the 170 divisions thrown by Germany against the USSR and moved to the USSR borders, were placed on full alert, just waiting for a signal to attack, while the Soviet troops had to mobilize yet and move to the borders." Naturally, speaking about the Soviet-German pact, Stalin did not say a word about the shameful "Treaty of peace and borders." Stalin's voice sounded more confident when he talked about "placing all our work on a military footing." In his speech he called the war "patriotic" for the first time, urged to "form partisan units," organize "merciless fight against all type of people disorganizing the work of the rear, deserters and panic-mongers," expressed the hope, for the first time publicly, for joining the efforts of the nations of Europe and America against Hitler's fascist armies. Stalin tried to calm people down, telling them the outright lie about "the enemy's finest divisions and the finest units of its air force have already been smashed." the Chairman of the State Defense Committee said in his speech: "The State Defense Committee has started its work and urges all people to rally against the party of Lenin-Stalin."

Stalin habitually said already, "the party of Lenin-Stalin," and the people habitually took *this* for granted. Given the tremendous blind faith in Stalin, created on the eve of the war, the Leader's role played a certain mobilizing role, as if giving simple answers to the questions that tormented people. Only a few people were able to realize at that time that the disastrous beginning of the war stemmed primarily from Stalin's autocratic rule; its countless losses in the first weeks were the result of the miscalculations made by the "infallible." It a great paradox that while Stalin committed many mistakes and grave crimes, they fantastically became transformed in people's minds into the Messiah's great exploits, thanks to the system that he created. One of the main culprits, or the main culprit, to be precise, responsible for the disastrous start of the war, continued to personify people's hopes. It was the faith which "worked."

The descendants cannot but be amazed by the "grandeur of spirit" displayed by the Soviet people, who found enough strength left to "stick it out" and to hold out. But this took a toll of millions of lives. Stalin's "grandeur" had always rested on victims, many victims, countless victims.

Severe Times

In July and August, Stalin concentrated all of the state, Party and military power in his hands. The Stavka of the Main Command was transformed into the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, headed by Stalin. He was nominated USSR People's Commissar of Defense on July 10, and the Supreme Commander of the USSR Armed Forces on August 8. V.I. Stalin remained Supreme Commander-in-Chief from that date till the end of the war. By assuming all top level positions in the country (we mentioned before that he became Chairman of the State Defense Committee as of July 30) he was able to concentrate unheard-of power in his hands. Stalin's condition of shock began to disappear gradually from the beginning of July, although even prior to that he behaved in such a way that not all people could notice his confusion and depression. A burst of willful energy was translated in an active and often incompetent intrusion into the most diverse areas of life of the state, which was waging a mortal war.

As I try to paint Stalin's portrait, including his features of a "military leader," I will have to review or just mention certain events of the Great Patriotic war. I would like to warn the reader that I cannot cover all of the war and its operations and battles, and that on some occasions I do not stick to strict chronology, since my main objectives to show Stalin in relief as Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

During the first phase of the war, Stalin worked 16-18 hours a day, becoming even more ruthless, intolerant and often nasty. He was presented every day with dozens of military, political, diplomatic, ideological and economic documents, which he signed into orders, directives, resolutions and decisions. It should be said that the concentrations of *all* power in the hands of one person had both its pros and cons. Of course, the centralization of power under extraordinary circumstances makes it possible to focus the efforts of the state to the utmost on the solution of the main tasks; however, absolute rule also drastically saps independence, initiative and creative endeavor of all other organs. Not a single decision,

action, or step is possible without an approval by No. 1 person. The following picture emerged: members of the politburo, State Defense Committee and the Stavka often gathered in Stalin's office, and very often it was hard to figure out whether it was the session of politburo or of the State Defense Committee. Or maybe it was a Stavka session? Actually, only Stalin knew which is which, since he epitomized all the three top organs. Only two or three people from among the Stavka members did any actual work together with Stalin.

Of course, everybody worked, but they worked to have Stalin's orders fulfilled. In addition to Stalin, Voznesenskiy and Khrushchev played a significant role as politburo members in the armed struggle. As far as Voroshilov was concerned, he lost Stalin's "operational" confidence after the abortive defensive operations. As members of the military councils of directions and fronts, Zhdanov and Khrushchev were active conduits of Stalin's will. Kalinin put the Leader's decisions in an appropriate order format and participated in propaganda activity. Mikoyan and Kaganovich took care of many transportation-economic and food problems; they were not involved as members of the front military councils, other than Kaganovich's temporary visit to the southern sections of the front as a member of the military council. Malenkov was basically doing Stalin's errands in the apparatus. At the request of the Supreme Commander, he visited the front several times, in particular to Stalingrad. But he left no imprint on this activity, since he was completely divorced from military affairs because of his incompetence in that area. Vozhensenkiy, whose role in the war has not been given its due so far, was actively involved in the country's economic affairs. Molotov was deputy chairman of the State Defense Committee from June 30 1941 till the end of the war, dealing primarily with international issues. Beriya took care of his macabre business and visited the Transcaucasian front twice on Stalin's order. His responsibilities included the "weeding out" of the troops' rear, German POW camps and camps for Soviet servicemen, "prison" industry working for the war. Andreyev was in charge of agriculture and front supplies.

With his absolute rule, Stalin's figure overshadowed the Central Committee in party life during the war, although the primary party organizations played a tremendously important role at the front and behind the lines. The Central Committee apparatus epitomized its work. No Party Central Committee plenums were held during the war (with the exception of the plenum in January 1941 which took up the extention of the rights of union republics in defense and foreign relations); Central Committee members were summoned to Moscow in October 1941, waited for two days for the plenum to begin, but it did not take place since Stalin and Malenkov "did not have time."

Stalin paid little attention to distinguishing the functions of supreme organs, which did make much sense to do anyway, since he was at the head of all of them - as Secretary of the Central Committee, Chairman of the Council of People's Deputies, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Chairman of the State Defense Committee, Chairman of the Stavka, and the People's Commissar of Defense. However, he used different titles to sign the documents: on behalf of the Central Committee, the Stavka, the State Defense Committee, or the People's Commissariat of Defense. It can be said unequivocally, without doubting the necessity of centralizing power in the hands of one person during the time of war, that such concentration should have its limit, first of all in the Party sphere, and not to reduce his retinue to the role of extras and yes men.

Stalin "took charge of it all"; no matter what we think about him today, we cannot but admit that he shouldered inhumanely heavy and responsible volume of work. While other politburo members and members of the State Defense Committee by and large handled economic, political and diplomatic issues, he had to deal with the military and military-political issues as Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Fortunately, an entire galaxy of outstanding military leaders rose fast and proved their worth in the General Headquarters and the top military leadership.

The summer of 1941 was especially harsh. We described this period in our books and text-books for a long time as the "fiasco of Blitzkrieg," "upsetting of Hitler's plans," "planned retreat," and "temporary setbacks of our troops." But history needs no embellishments, and its one basic feature lies in the fact that it acknowledges nothing but the truth which is bound to take place in its annals sooner or later. It often turned out to be "superfluous" there. The many-volume studies and monographs did not use such words as "defeat," "catastrophe," "encirclement," or "panic" when referring to our troops. But they did happen. They did happen before we achieved the long-suffered and cherished victories won at the cost of so much blood shed.

Upon taking care of the armed forces, Stalin was painfully trying to figure out what was happening at the fronts. Where is the front line today? What is in store for us tomorrow? Where shall we finally be able to halt the German troops? What is the quickest way to offset huge human losses and the loss of a huge arsenal of weapons and military hardware? Stalin listened for long to the reports delivered by Zhukov, Vatutin, Vasilevskiy and other members of General Staff, silently looked at the map spread out on his big table. As an inveterate armchair leader, it was hard for him, looking at the map and reading the reports, to catch, to hear or to feel the frantic pulse beat of the bleeding army, the roaring battles, the clanking of the steel caterpillars of German tanks that have broken through, the crackle of city fires, and the wheezing of the dying soldiers... The shadow of the "saber" Civil War seemed to recede far into the distant past. This was an altogether different war.

Prior to the Battle of Stalingrad, many of Stalin's decisions were impulsive, superficial, controversial and incompetent, although he confronted his retinue and the

HQs with many "jigsaw puzzles" more than once later on as well. Here is a document that was written by Stalin in 1942, the document that has no title and possibly makes no sense. It looks like Stalin drafted this document, hard to understand even by an insider, as he was issuing orders and discussing things at the same time:

"1) 40th army - 7th infantry division + 2 tank br.

2) Katukov - at the back of the 48th army.

3) Mishulin - remain at the same place.

4) Mostovenko - in the area of the 61st army.

5) Lizuykov - to the west of Yelts.

6) Main task - in the north.

7) the 40th advances as well.

The document has been written personally by Com. Stalin

Major General Shtemenko."

Sometimes, following reports of another setback or a troop retreat, what Stalin dictated were not operational orders, but "punitive" instructions. Their author can be fathomed immediately even though they were signed by Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, Shaposhnikov, and Vatutin. For example, Stalin reacted immediately in July 10, 1941 when it became known that the Northwestern front had again failed to hold an advantageous line of defense and the HQs' report mentioned the operation of saboteur groups behind the lines:

"The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the State Defense Council are absolutely dissatisfied by the work done by the command and staff of the Northwestern front.

First, the commanders who failed to execute your orders have not been punished so far, the commanders who abandoned their positions as traitors and retreating from the line of defense without an order. Defense will not work for you if you display this type of liberal attitude to the cowards. The 'destroyers' units' have not worked so far; one cannot see the results of their work; because of the lack of activity on the part of division, corps, front commanders, and units of the Northwestern front, units are always rolling back. This shameful matter has to be put an end to... The commander and the member of the military council, the procurator and the head of the 3rd department should visit the advance units immediately and take care of the traitors and cowards on the spot."

They did not make any arrangements to provide the Stavka, the highest strategic organ of troop control, with any shelter before the war. Neither the Kremlin nor Stalin's dachas had any protected control points, although Timoshenko and Zhukov insisted that they should be set up. That is why during the first months of the war, Stalin frequented a mansion on Kirov Street, next to the building which housed some General Staff directorates. Shut off from the transportation network, the Kirov metro station served as a very good bomb shelter. Stalin had the maps with the situation plotted on them both in his Kremlin office and at the Kirov metro station. When a small shelter was built later at the nearby dacha in the winter of 1941, a communications point was set up there as well, which he also used for talking with the fronts.

Looking at the map with the current situation marked on it, prepared by General Staff, Stalin could clearly see the three main directions along which the enemy was speedily advancing: towards Leningrad in the northwest, towards Moscow in the west, and towards Kiev in the Southwestern. It is likely that it was at that time when Stalin made his first major strategic decision during the war, as he suggested setting up three Chief Commands, one at each of these directions. Naturally, General Staff supported him. By the Stavka's decision on July 10, the Northwestern command was established, with K.Ye. Voroshilov as its Commander-in-Chief and A.A. Zhdanov as its member of the Military council; the Western one under the command of S.K. Timoshenko, with N.A. Bulganin as member of the Military Council; the Southwestern one under the command of S.M. Buduonniy, with N.S. Khrushchev as member of the Military Council. The decision was essentially correct, it seemed, but the commanders-in-chief did not show their worth. The main reason lied in Stalin himself again, as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, having established these organs of strategic control, did not vest them either with appropriate rights, or with independence. Instructions were sent to the troops above their head. Besides, no plans were made to set up the HQs for the commanders-in-chief, since no appropriate personnel, no experience of using them, nor basic technical supplies were found for them. The commanders-in-chief soon became subject to Stalin's dressing-downs and accusations of "passivity and lack of will."

It is obvious from today's perspective that the strategic troop formation was one of the reasons behind major setbacks. It is an open secret that the first strategic echelon included predominantly attack groups, which had to switch to *defense* at once. The fronts were assigned a clear task of going on strategic defense only in June 27-30, although astute minds saw it clearly already at that time that we had completely lost during the initial phase of the war.

Major strategic re-groupings were required soon as a result of the erroneous anticipation of the Wehrmacht's main attack before the war. A large number of our troops did not fight but just *moved around* during the initial phase of the war due to poor foresight and Stalin's bad perspicacity; this often enabled the enemy to smash our units and formations one by one. Stalin was compelled to move virtually all available reserves in the western direction The strategic mistakes of the prewar period required an immense toll in blood.

Stalin was slowly pacing up and down a long table, with the map of operations, plotted for the morning report, spread out on it, as he waited, at about 3 a.m., for the military comrades to arrive with their regular report of the day. He was not concerned over the Northern front, since active combat action started there only at the end of June. The situation was much worse at the Northwestern front; within more than two weeks, the troops retreated almost 450 kilometers, leaving the Baltic republics, and having failed to use the advantageous defense positions on the Nieman and the Western Dvina rivers. The new commander, P.P. Sobennikov did not live up, according to Stalin, to his expectations. He would be removed a month and a half after his nomination.

He was especially concerned about the situation in the Western front. Stalin took a close look of the fancy shape of the front which by July 10 was (it just pained him even to think about it!) already 450-500 kilometers away from the border... The bitterness of humiliation and the powerless fury were welling up in the Chairman of the State Defense Committee. The front which had 44 divisions at its disposal did not stop the invasion! How could he, Stalin, have trusted Pavlov so much? How he let him down! He should issue an order as early as today to expedite the investigation and trial of the Western front command.

Stalin hardly knew, as pondered over the map, that almost one half of the front divisions were not in combat readiness by the outbreak of the war: 12 of them had just began mobilization, and two corps in the process of formation had no tanks at all. Analyzing the balance of power before the war, Stalin liked very much to estimate the number of divisions, forces and means of armed struggle, but ignored the qualitative aspect of the process, such as the provision of troops with combat equipment, their cohesion, and the personnel skills. Before the war, he constantly demanded that new units be formed, although their number had already exceeded two hundred. In qualitative terms, the troops were clearly inferior to those of the Wehrmacht by the outbreak of war.

Two thick blue arrows on the map coverged on June 29 to the east of Minsk, which meant that the bulk of the Western front forces was surrounded. It was reported to Stalin today that soldiers in groups and individually continued to break through the encirclement... But the 3rd, 4th and 10th front armies were considered to be in especially high combat shape. He thought that he should sign a paper which he has just received from Beriya about establishing 15 more special camps for screening those who broke through encirclement...

Stalin's good memory held the figures cited in the morning report during one of the first days of July: 24 divisions out of the front's 44 divisions were completely wiped out, while the remaining 20 divisions lost from 30 to 90 percent of their forces and means. The defeat of the main front is obvious, which influenced the setbacks at other fronts. Zhukov was right when he suggested that a new line of defense along the Western Dvina and the Dnieper river be set up, incorporating the 22nd, 19th, 20th, 13th and 21st armies of the front, Stalin thought. He began to grasp immediately the basics of strategy in the tragic turmoil of military days and nights, the fact that cannot be denied. He would tell no one in the future that Zhukov, Shaposhnikov, Vasilevskiy, Antonov, Vatutin and other outstanding military leaders helped initiate him in the secrets of strategy and the dialectics of formulating the concepts and decisions for operations. Utterly erroneous assertions that it was Stalin who made a new contribution of principle to military science would be taken for granted at some future point in time. These included, for example, the idea of artillery offense, new methods of surrounding the enemy, the ways of establishing air supremacy, the creation of a multi-echelon flexible defense, and so on. He would believe himself in being a trailblazer. It would not be before long that he would forget about *his* humiliating defeat as a political and military strategist during the first part of the war.

In the meantime, the harsh reality reminds him, the head of the Stavka, that everything is hanging by a thread. It is obvious that after Minsk, the Germans set their sights on Smolensk and Moscow. Continuing to read the map of operations, Stalin, obviously, noted bitterly that the Germans did not deliver their main blow not in the south, as he sought. And they concentrated 58 divisions there, including 16 tank and 8 motorized infantry divisions. But the front's main forces, who found themselves "aside" from the the direction of the main strike, failed to repel the offensive; this fact was quite real. As a result of the unfortunate troop formation in the Southwestern direction, the German panzers struck at the poorly defended junction in between Lutsk and Dubno. Stalin recalled that back in June 30, the Stavka allowed the front to withdraw troops to the lines of fortified areas along the old border, which meant a retreat of 300-350 kilometers. The front did slow down enemy advance, he thought, but failed to halt it. The situation is as bad at the Southern front.

Stalin recalled prewar war games. During those games, after a short period of repelling an "enemy" attack, a powerful blow followed and the "defeated enemy" was pursued. This doctrinaire concept - and it was dominant before the ordeal - was scuttled at the beginning of the Great Patriotic war. The grim situation itself made the Stavka, front and army HQs to switch over to strategic defense, for which nobody was prepared and which nobody studied. Espousing offensive doctrine, they primarily learned the algebra of offense. The results of this gap were horrible. Huge losses were suffered: 30 divisions were virtually wiped out, and about 70 lost up to one half of their strength, around 3,500 planes were destroyed, as well over half of the fuel and ammunition depots. And all this in just three weeks of war! The Germans, of course, did not achieve this success at a low cost, Stalin was thinking; according to the front reports, the aggressors lost over one million soldiers and a lot of equipment. But it would become clear later on that the figures of enemy losses were grossly inflated.

No one knew yet that due to the heroism of soldiers, commanders and political officers, during the three week of war, about 150,000 soldiers and officers of the Wehrmacht, over 950 air planes, several hundred tanks were destroyed on the Soviet-German front. Stalin was reported different data over the two weeks of fighting. A yellow archive page cites "ballpark" figures:

"Planes lost: Enemy minimum - 1,664; our losses - 889.

Tanks lost: Enemy - 2,625; our - 901.

Human losses of the enemy: 1,312 thousand killed. Besides, during the fierce fighting at different sections the enemy sustained huge losses, but it was impossible to account for them since our units were retreating. A large number of paratrooper saboteurs have been destroyed but not accounted for so far.

As many as 30,004 people were taken prisoner; besides, many parachute jumpers were taken prisoner of war, but have not been counted. Until June 29, our losses of those missing in action and taken prisoner amounted to about 15,000 people.

Five subs were destroyed in the Baltic sea and one in the Black sea. Two monitors have been destroyed."

These were the kind of confused and garbled figures that were reported. Judging by them, it is difficult to glean the real situation at the fronts, the balance of forces, the real numbers of airplanes and tanks. But such "statistics" were not accidental. All of it were the results of a one-man rule, when some truths were not needed. The disintegration of front and army control, the encirclement of dozens of large units were, nevertheless, accompanied by reports which were divorced from reality. But Stalin acted on them! He did not brook the idea of being deceived! That is why many decisions made by the Stavka at that time were based on the desirable, suggested and probable elements, and not on strictly real ones.

No matter what, the initial power of the German strike was considerably weakened. The main thing was that the German command failed to destroy the bulk of the Red Army forces. The German strategic forces were halted for the first time at Smolensk. The army is fighting. It is retreating, but it is fighting. Looking at the grim and mute panorama of the fierce war on the map, Stalin gradually came to the conclusion that the war was going to last long. If we hold out in the near future, there is a chance that the wind of victory will fill our sails. Running ahead of myself, I would say that following initial major successes, which still were far away, Stalin soon developed a habit of overestimating his possibilities, the fact that resulted in major grave mistakes in 1942.

Having heard Zhukov's regular report about the situation at the fronts without comment, Stalin asked:

"Will you repeat what is the level of the Western front's provision with personnel and equipment?"

"On the average, 10 to 30 percent. Only individual units have 50 percent and more of men, artillery and tanks." "Individual," Zhukov stressed. "The situation is virtually the same at the Northwestern front. The situation in the Southwestern is slightly better. The most painful is that we lost the bulk of antiaircraft artillery. We should do something to increase and build up antitank capabilities."

Having discussed the required measures on expediting the manufacture of antitank artillery, placing a call to Voznesenkiy, Stalin asked Zhukov, looking him straight into the eye:

"And what can be done right now, today, to increase our antitank capabilities? Don't the military see means other than the artillery?"

"Why, Comrade Stalin! Aviation can accomplish a lot as well."

Zhukov explained the aviation's technical and combat capabilities against tanks. Stalin came back to life and ordered to immediately prepare a Stavka directive. Zhukov left the room and came back half an hour later with the document:

"Commanders of the fronts: Northern, Northwestern, Western, Southwestern and southern. Commander of the Red Army Air Force.

In the first 20 days of the war, our aviation struck predominantly at the German mechanized and tank troops. Hundreds of planes engaged tanks but no desired effect was achieved because the planes' antitank fighting was ill-organized. Tank units can be not only stopped but also destroyed provided aviation strike is properly organized.

1. Gun-equipped fighters and diving planes lead the attack against tank troops (columns), simultaneously dropping incendiary means. Conduct attack in a wide sweep, with several approaches, perpendicular to the tank column.

2. All type of bombers follow gun-equipped fighters and diving planes, dropping high-explosive and incendiary bombs. Organize attacks in the echelons of groups of nine planes with individual aiming."

What else could be done to turn the disastrous developments around? Stalin was thinking hard, gradually recovering from the shock the likes of which he had never experienced before in his life. He ordered to send a cable to the troops on July 5:

"Front commanders (with the exception of the Transcaucasian and the Dnieper Military Flotilla). A number of people from among the commanders, chiefs, junior chiefs and privates - tank men, artillery men, pilots, and others - have displayed exceptional courage and bravery in the fighting for socialist Homeland against the forces of German fascism. Urgently send to the Stavka the list of people to be decorated with government awards who

have performed special exploits." After the papers published a decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet on awarding the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union (the first such title during the Patriotic war) to M.P. Zhkov, S. I. Zdorovtsev and P.T. Kharitonov for ramming enemy bombers, Stalin called the Central Committee' agitprop department:

"Publicize more widely the heroism of Soviet people. Recall Lenin's call, 'Socialist Homeland is in danger!'. Convince people that fascist bastards can and should be defeated." And without waiting for the answer, he put down the receiver. He noticed that he began to use often the word, "bastard" in describing the fascists and Hitler. One should come up with moral incentives for people. Reports and the press talk every day about thousands of soldiers, commanders and political workers fighting for each line, sacrificing their lives...

In his struggle for power, Stalin used the monopolized right to interpret and understand Lenin as his main weapon. This disarmed everyone. Nobody has succeeded in finding an antidote to this method of Stalin's. Anyone speaking against the general secretary would be speaking against Lenin, as it were. In the final count, this allowed Stalin not only to climb to the pinnacle of power, but a good, though dogmatic, knowledge of Lenin. In any of his speeches he could use several quotations from the Leader from his memory. Having done with dictating a not too much "polished" cable to the fronts ("who performed special exploits"), he recalled an apt quotation from Lenin. Only people's power can stir in the working people a "genuine heroism of self-sacrifice." But the cable had already been dictated. Zhukov stood there, looking at Stalin in silence; and he was obviously in a hurry. He already had dark rings around his eyes on his young face; obviously he did not have a good sleep for a long time. Stalin looked at Zhukov once again, wanted to say something, but than waved his hand:

"Dismissed..."

In addition to exclusively military matters, for several hours a day Stalin had to deal with economic, industrial and organizational issues. The other day, Malenkov, Zhukov and he took up the issue of creating the divisions of volunteer people's guards, as suggested by the Leningrad Party organization. Stalin did not know yet that the initiative will start a powerful movement, and about 60 volunteer guards' divisions, 200 separate regiments will be established by the end of the year, which played a notable role in the defense of Homeland.

On July 4, Voznesenskiy and Mikoyan reported draft decision by the State Defense Committee, "On Formulating a Military-Economic Plan of Ensuring the Country's Defense." Stalin signed the document practically without reviewing it - the lobby was crowded with the military. He anticipated now the bad news getting only worse. In a hurry, Voznesenskiy had only enough time to tell Stalin that the USSR Council of People's Deputies approved a general mobilization national economic plan on June 30, which provided for placing the national economy on a military footing as soon as possible. Before Voznesenkiy, Stalin received Shvernik, chairman of the evacuation council, who reported on the progress in implementing the decision of the Central Committee of the all-Russia Communist Party (Bolshevik) and the Council of People's Commissars "On Procedure Governing Shipment and Placement of Contingents and Valuable Property." Initially, the plan provided for moving to the east only the enterprises lying in close proximity to the border. But the military setbacks made it necessary to revise the estimates drastically within the next few days. No one knows so far that 1,523 industrial enterprises, including 1360 defense-related, were shifted and soon put back in operation in the shortest time possible (by January 1942) thanks to the efforts undertaken by the Soviet people, and the railway transport workers. One cannot overestimate the fact. An entire industrial power was moved thousands of kilometers to the east and began to replenish its lost military potential very soon only thanks to the tremendous, fantastically selfless efforts made by the Soviet people. It suffices to say that in 1941 the defense industry turned out 12,000 combat planes, 6,500 tanks, around 16,000 guns and mortars; this despite the great rehousing, often done under bombings!

Having spent an hour and a half with the military, Stalin returned to Party and state matters, signing Malenkov's proposal on nominating Party organizers of the CPSU Central Committee at 1,170 major military plants and enterprises of the heavy industry. Stalin wrote a note to Malenkov on a piece of paper:

"I suggest you think about setting up this institution also in the political departments of machine and tractor stations and on state farms."

We know today that a decision was made in November on establishing several thousand political departments in machine-tractor stations and on state farms. Due to the lost of huge territories and the departure of labor force to the front, agriculture assumed a very heavy burden of providing the army and the country with food.

This was a typical working day of a man who concentrated in his hands practically all top positions one could think of. The war reinforced his position of an absolute dictator even more.

Ivan Vladimirovich Kovalyov, the former People's Commissar of Railways, told me: "I remember how I, chief of the military communications department, was summoned to a Kremlin meeting. I saw railway men, military and Central Committee workers around myself. Among them were Kaganovich and Beriya, who was in charge of transport for a while. Stalin walked in. Everyone stood up. He said without any introduction: the State Defense Committee made a decision to set up a transportation committee. I suggest that comrade Stalin be elected its Chairman. He said it himself. I

remember one sentence uttered at that distant conference: 'Transport is the matter of life. The front affairs are in the hands of transport. Remember that a failure to fulfill the directives of the State Defense Committee will result in a military tribunal,' he said this softly and with an accent, but it made you cover with goose-flesh..."

In the course of the war, Ivan Vladimirovich reported dozens of times to the Supreme Commander about the delivery of trains to a particular section of the front. Usually, he reported to Stalin every two hours regarding some trains which carried especially important cargo. There was a case when he "lost" a train. He told Stalin that it was at a particular station, but it was not there. Stalin could hardly control his fury at that point:

"If you don't find it, General, you'll go to the front as a private..." (Incidentally, it was not an empty threat. Working in the archives, I came across a case of former Major General Nikolay Ivanovich Moskvin having been demoted to a private and sent to the front at Stalin's order -D.V.).

"And Poskryobyshev told me as I stood there ashen-faced: 'You'd better watch out. The Master's on the edge.' 'When I came to report to Stalin, he had, as a rule, Molotov, Beriya and Malenkov with him. I thought to myself: they just stand in my way. They never ask questions, just sit and listen, and write something down. But Stalin issues orders, makes phone calls, signs papers, summons Poskryobyshev and gives him instructions. And those people just sit there and look, one time at Stalin, one time at the person who has entered. I witnessed the picture dozens of times. It looks like Stalin needed their presence, either to give them orders as they came, or for historic testimony... Kaganovich was not usually present there - he worked 18 hours a day. Cursing, commotion, threats. Kaganovich spared neither himself nor others. But I did not see him sitting at Stalin's place, like the other three did. When Stalin talked on the phone, I noticed that he always said a few sentences and then put down the receiver. He was brief himself and required brief reports. You would not report to him something in the ballpark, he would immediately lower his voice and ask menacingly: 'You don't know? And what are you doing?'"

"I visited Stalin many times, but I never felt calm when I came to see him," said Ivan Vladimirovich, concluding his story. "You always anticipated a question, to which you do not know what to say. He was awfully dry. He would just nod his head instead saying 'Hello...' As soon as you've reported, and if there are no questions, you'd better leave as soon as possible with relief. Move fast! Poskryobyshev used to instruct in this way. I noticed that he overwhelmed and humiliated everyone with his authority, memory, and intellect. A person who came to visit him felt himself even more insignificant than he really was..."

I think that Kovalyov's observations are interesting, and give one a more profound understanding of Stalin's intellect, feelings and will not just during the war. The examination of documents and the discussion of various matters, held at the Leader's place, show that during the war very few people could pluck up courage to argue with Stalin and defend their viewpoint. He really overwhelmed everyone with his authority.

The Supreme Commander spent the lion's share of his time on the military matters during the first months of the war, but Poskryobyshev found "gaps" to make it possible not only for Politburo members, but also for people's commissars, designers, and even managers of major plants to "get through" to Stalin. During those periods, he often became bogged down in "petty" business: distributed mines and rifles, issued orders to send civilians to dig anti-tank trenches, leafed through information bureau reports and engaged in other insignificant business. For example, one of the Stavka's documents addressed to the Air Force, was received by the coding department of the army and stayed there for more than eight hours. On learning about this, Stalin ordered to immediately draft a decree by the People's Commissar of Defense which reprimanded Colonel I.F. Ivanov and Senior Lieutenant B.S. Krasnov and dismissed them from General Staff. Having signed the order, Stalin wrote a resolution across it:

"Coms. Vasilevskiy and Zhigarev.

I request that the head of General Staff operations department and the Air Force commander straighten things out in the coding business, each in his respective department.

August 25, 1941

I. St."

And this was done at a time when immeasurably more was at stake at the fronts in those horrible hot days of August! It is just that Stalin could not kick the habit formed over years of deciding everything on his own. To decide for everybody. The realities of the front soon introduced changes in the Supreme Commander's order, style and methods of work.

Becoming drawn into the brutal pace of war, but acting only as a person who approved or refused to approve the proposals made by General Staff, Stalin was constantly looking for some additional levers of influencing the situation. He signed a directive on stepping up the use of aviation against tanks, as we have mentioned earlier. When reports were delivered to him to the effect that there were no weapons to arm the replenishment with, Stalin insisted that a special directive be sent to the troops on behalf of the Stavka on this issue:

"Explain to all of the commanding, political officers and men in the acting troops that a loss of weapons on the battlefield is the most grave violation of the military oath and those guilty should be held responsible in line with the laws of the military times. Reinforce the attached weapon collection teams with additional personnel and

make them responsible for the collection of all the weapons left on the battlefield."

But when the fate of the country (and his own as its Leader!) was placed on the razor's edge of the war, Stalin began to make his "own" proposals, largely inspired by the Civil War memories. After his talk with Budennyi over Bodeaux, all of a sudden he displayed heightened interest in the cavalry. A Stavka document summing up the first three week of war was under preparation by General Staff under Zhukov's supervision at that time, the document that was to be sent to commanders-in-chief, and front and army commanders. The document was almost ready. Stalin read it, approved in principle, but ordered to include one more point:

"Fourth. Our army underestimates somewhat the significance of cavalry. Under the present situation at the front, when the enemy rear lines have been stretched for several hundred kilometers in the forest areas and is completely unprotected against major saboteur actions on our part, the raid of Red cavalry men against the enemy's extended rear could play a crucial role in disrupting the control and supplies of the German troops. Were our cavalry units, now hanging around at the front and ahead, pitched in the enemy rear, it would find itself in a critical situation, while our troops would be relieved tremendously. The Stavka believes that a few dozen light fighting cavalry divisions, each 3,000-men strong, provided with light transport means and without too much rear support, would be sufficient to organize such raids behind the enemy lines."

Although it seemed to make some sense, the idea itself was, nevertheless, an attempt to return not only back to the irretrievable period of the Civil War, but to the far away, hazy period of the 1812 Patriotic war. Stalin's shrewd thought, with its poor reliance on the conclusions of military science - which he knew at the level of ordinary consciousness or just plain common sense - sought the ways out of the most critical situation in which the country found itself because of his miscalculations and Hitler's perfidy. Similar critical situation happens in sports, in Greco-Roman wrestling, when one wrestler gets his adversary "arched up" in a hammerlock, trying to press his shoulder blades against the floor. A clean victory is scored if he succeeds. Stalin was "arched up" in June, July, August, September, October, and November of 1941. It was not he, of course, but the country, the army and the people. Epitomizing them as he always did, he found himself placed by Hitler in an absolutely awkward position, which was so desperate that he saw a cure-all in any possible action, making others draft the directives, similar to the one on establishing and using light cavalry divisions...

Just the very thought of Pavlov made a fit of fury grip Stalin: how could have the front commander lost everything in one week? Pavlov made a good impression on him when Stalin received him here, in his office, before this appointment commander of the Western special military district. He made a concise report, expressed mature thoughts, and showed confidence. True, he did not have much experience - it was such a meteoric rise after Spain... How could he have lost control over his troops? What was his staff doing? Why did not he maintain the troops' combat readiness? Stalin did not want to remember that in June Timoshenko and he received two or three coded cables from Pavlov who strongly insisted that the troops be moved to their field positions, requested permission for their partial mobilization and stressed the necessity of reinforcing the district's units with radio communications means and new tanks... the Leader harped on the same issue again and again: how could have Pavlov lost everything so ineptly? Stalin came up to his table and pressed the buzzer. Poskryobyshev quietly appeared right away, a note pad in his hand.

"Who has been court-martialed besides Pavlov? When is the court-martial? Where is the draft verdict?" Without waiting for the answer, he said: "Ask Ulrikh to come."

As noiselessly, Poskryobyshev left a spacious and sunlit office paneled with treated oak. Stalin continued to pace up and down along the long table draped in green cloth, with a large map showing the operational situation spread out on top of it. As he turned, Stalin glanced at the portraits hanging on the wall - Marx, Engels, Lenin. He did not read much of Marx. He could never get through "Das Capital," but was familiar with a number of his works. He thought that "Class Struggle in France in 1848-1850" was the most valuable of his works. Marx used the term, "dictatorship of the proletariat," for the first time there, which was, in Stalin's thinking, the linchpin of teaching about society. He did not value Engels much. He called for criticizing "erroneous" tenets of Marx's great comrade-in-arms even during his visit to the Communist Academy. Stalin thought, though, that Engels had written a pretty good work on Russian military history, putting a high premium on Suvorov's genius of a military commander, appreciating less that of Kutuzov, on the decisive contribution made by the Russian troops to the liberation of Europe enslaved by Napoleon I, and on the heroism displayed by the defenders of Sevastopol during the Crimean war of 1853-1856. But these were the details, many of which were wrong.

As to Lenin... Each time he read his works, he felt being average, not a "high-flyer," even mediocre. The "defense" of Lenin has enabled him to become an autocratic leader. All that scum whom he destroyed never understood what was the main source of his power: the monopoly of interpreting Lenin, his "defense." But Lenin had something that he could never accept. Stalin called it "liberalism." He recalled an episode of June 29 and cursed himself for a momentary weakness: as Molotov, Voroshilov, Zhadov, Beriya and himself were leaving the People's Commissariat of Defense on the Frunzenskaya embankment, being in his lowest spirits, he said outloud:

"Lenin has created our state and we've lost the s - - t of it."

Perplexed, Molotov looked at Stalin, but said nothing. Others were tight-lipped too. He should not have said those words: they may recall them and take it that he was panicky. Nothing blurted out by "great people" is ever forgotten, especially their weaknesses.

Poskryobyshev quietly came up to thetable and put a thin file on it, interrupting Stalin's thinking and his far and close flashbacks. The head of the Stavka came up to the table and quickly reviewed the papers. A draft verdict was on top:

"In the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics The Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, including: Chairman, Army military lawyer V.V. Ulrikh members: division military lawyers A.M. Orlov and D.Ya. Kandybin secretary, military lawyer A.S. Mazur examined in camera on July, 1941, in the city of Moscow, indictment against:

1. Pavlov Dmitriy Grigorievich, b. 1897, former Western front commander, Army General;

2. Klimovskikh Vladimir Yevimovich, b. 1895, former chief of staff of the Western front, Major General, both of them charged of the crimes under articles 63-2 and 76 of the Criminal Code of the Belorussian SSR;

3. Grigoriev Andrey Terentievich, b. 1889, former chief of communications of the Western front, Major General, and

4. Korobkov Aleksandr Andreyevich, b. 1897, former commander of the 4th army, Major General, both charged with crimes under article 180(b) of the Criminal Code of the Belorussian SSR..."

It was claimed further on that the preliminary judicial investigation established that "Defendants Pavlov and Klimovskikh, as participants in the anti-Soviet military plot and abusing their office - the former as the Western front commander and the latter as the chief of staff of the same front - conducted hostile activities, which amounted to the failure, for the purpose of conspiracy, to get the military personnel under their command prepared for combat action, weakened the mobilization preparedness of the district troops, disrupted troop control and surrendered weapons to the enemy without fighting, thus causing a substantial harm to the combat power of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants..."

The rest continued in the same vein. Stalin did not read those pages, pausing just at the last one:

"Thus, Pavlov and Klimovskikh have been found guilty of the crimes committed by them under articles 63-2 and 76 of the Criminal Code of the Belorussian SSR, and Grigoriev and Korobkov, of committing the crimes under article 180 (b) of the Criminal Code of the Belorussian SSR. Proceeding from the aforementioned and in conformity with articles 319 and 320 of the Criminal Procedures Code of the RSFSR, the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court

sentenced

1. Pavlov Dmitriy Grigorievich

2. Klimovskikh Vladimir Yefimovich

3. Grigoriev Andrey Terentievich

4. Korobkov Aleksandr Andreyevich -

to stripping them of their military ranks; Pavlov, of that of Army 'General,' and the other three, of the military rank of 'Major General' and subject all the four to the highest measure of punishment - *execution* by a firing squad, confiscating all of their personal property... The sentence is final and shall not be appealed."

Stalin did not read any further, but said to Poskryobyshev next to him:

"I approve the verdict, but tell Ulrikh to cut out all that rubbish about 'conspiratorial activities.' Tell them to move fast. No appeal. And then report the news to the fronts, so that everyone knows that we are going to punish defeatists without mercy."

Everything was decided before the court-martial. When the "court-martial " was held on July 22, only formalities had to be observed. The defendants asked to be sent to the front in any rank - they were ready to prove their loyalty to the Homeland and their military duty with their blood. Please believe them that all that has happened was due to very unfortunate circumstances. They did not deny their guilt. They were to redeem it in combat. Sighting, Ulbrikh hurried them:

"Make it short..."

They were shot the same night. Following a detailed analytical examination of whether the charges against Pavlov, Klimovskikh, Grigoriyev and Korobkov were justified, General Staff passed its competent decision on November 5, 1956 which said: "The available documents and testimonials by a number of generals who served in the Western special military district, without denying major shortcomings in preparing the district for the war, disprove the prosecution's verdict to the effect that Generals Pavlov D.G., Klimovskikh V.E., Grigorieyv A.T., Korobkov A.A. and Klitch N.A. were guilty of cowardice, inaction, delays, a deliberate disruption of troop control and the surrender of weapons to the enemy without a fight."

Stalin knew Pavlov well; he also talked with generals Klimovskikh and Korobkov during their appointment. Both produced a favorable impression on him as well. They probably made a number of mistakes before the war and following its start. Owing to lack of training, these people failed to organize properly combat action

against the enemy's overwhelming force during the decisive period, although they were genuine patriots, loyal to the country, who were promoted to high positions, bypassing a number of intermediate steps, as a result of an acute shortage of personnel after 1937. But were such people few in number? Their bravery and courage were not adequately backed up by experience and wisdom of military commanders which one gains as years go by. Having annihilated the entire strata of commanders, Stalin put those whom he promoted as replacement in a very difficult situation. Guilty of the disastrous start of the war more than anyone else, the Supreme Commander, as was his wont, showed utmost cruelty to those who fell victim of his miscalculations. Nobody denies their own guilt, which they probably had. But this was not a moral guilt, but the one predetermined, by and large, by the force of circumstances, premature promotions and lack of competence as a result.

N. Berdyaev wrote in his book, "Fate of Russia": "The atrocities of war, the brutality of our epoch are not just the brutality, anger and heartlessness of people and individuals, although these could be concurrent phenomena. This is the brutality of historical fate, the brutality of historical movement, historical ordeal. A person's brutality is repulsive." Brutal as it is, Stalin made the manifestations of the war even more brutal. And this is really repulsive. Make your own judgment.

Reporting on the situation from Leningrad, Zhdanov and Zhukov cited the facts that when the German troops attacking our positions pushed women, children and old people in front of them, putting the defensive units in an exceptionally difficult position. The women and children shouted: "Don't shoot!" "We are yours!" "We are yours!" The Soviet soldiers and officers we at a loss as what to do. One can imagine the feelings of the unfortunate people too, with the German automatic guns butting into their backs and a possible death awaiting them ahead.

Stalin's reaction was prompt and cruel, typical of his nature:

"The German scum advancing towards Leningrad is said to send old men, old women, women and children in front of their troops... Some people are said to have appeared among Leningrad Bolsheviks, who do not think it is possible to use arms against such delegates. I think that if such people are found among the Bolsheviks, they should be the first to be done away with, since they are more dangerous than the German fascists. My advice is not to show sentiments but to kick in the teeth the enemy and its accomplices, voluntary or involuntary... Hit hard at the Germans and their delegates, no matter who they are, mow down the enemies, regardless of whether they are willing or unwilling enemies...Dictated at 4:00 a.m. on September 21, 1941 by Com. Stalin. B. Shaposhnikov."

Although Stalin called the old people, women and children put by the fascists in the horrific situation "delegates," it is obvious even from his order who they really were. "Mow down the enemies, regardless of whether they are willing or unwilling enemies." Zhukov and Zhdanov told him that these were women, old folks and children, but he said: "Not to show sentiments and kick in the teeth the enemy and its accomplices...." Children, "in the teeth," with a submachine gun? By its nature, the war is brutal, but this is a special kind of brutality, brutality not only against the enemy, which is understandable, but against one's own compatriots. This can never be understood, explained, and even less so justified. Indeed, "A person's brutality is repulsive."

I want to cite just two testimonials to make it more clear that Stalin's short shift with the generals in the nightmarish conditions of those days was not just an emotional outburst, but a continuation of his arbitrariness since the end of the 1930s. The generals who were shot came across in an entirely different light. Major General B.A. Fomin, the former staffer of the Western front, wrote after the war:

"Since August 1940, Pavlov made five army field trips, performed one army command military mock exercise on terrain, five corps military games, one front military game, one radio communications exercise involving two tank corps, two divisional and one corps exercises. Closely following the positioning of enemy troops, Pavlov more than once approached the People's Commissar of Defense with a request to allow the troops of his district to move from depth into the border area. The district troops were in the grip of organizational measures when the war broke out. Five tanks corps, an airborne corps, three antitank brigades and so on were in the process of formation. The units mentioned were not formed completely, nor were they provided with materiel.

Pavlov knew about the Germans' preparations for a surprise attack and requested permission to occupy field fortifications along the state border. Pavlov was informed by a coded cable on June 20, which was signed by deputy chief of the operations of General Staff, Vasilevskiy, that his request had been related to the People's Commissar of Defense, who did not allow him to occupy field fortifications, since this could provoke the Germans.

I see no wreckage and even less so any betrayal in the actions taken by Pavlov during the prewar period, and also during the hard-fought defensive operation. The front suffered a setback not because of Pavlov's ineptitude, but due to a number of reasons, the most important of which were the enemy's numerical superiority, its surprise attack, delayed occupation of positions in the reinforced areas, harebrained interference by Kulik in the orders issued by Boldin and Golubev, which resulted in the infamous collapse of the front's mobile force."

Or, here is what Colonel General L.M. Sandalov reported to Army General V.V. Kurasov: "As far as commander of the 4th army general Korovkov is concerned, a glaring injustice was done with respect to that able commander, who distinguished himself in Finland, where he fought gallantly at the head of his division. General Korovkov was nominated a corps commander after the end of the war with Finland, and became the commander of the 4th army a few months before the war, proving to be a brave and energetic army commander. His shortcoming was in trying to fulfill any order by the district command without reservations, including those out of tune with the obtaining situation.

Why the 4th army commander A. Korobkov, of all people, was arrested and put on trial, although his army, which did suffer heavy losses, continued to exist and did not lose communications with the front HQs? According to the quota (note, the quota - D.V.), one army commander from he Western front was to be put on trial by the end of June 1941, and the 4th army commander was the only one available. The 3rd and 10th army commanders were lost, and no communications were maintained with them. This sealed Korobkov's fate. We lost a good army commander in the person of Korobkov, who I believe would have joined later ranks of the best Red Army commanders."

There were many of those who could become something, but they did not. Very many of them perished on the battlefield; there were generals who committed suicide, after having reached the limit of their struggle and did not want to be taken POW or become subject to Stalin's reprisals. The archives have many reports of such cases. For example, commander of the 17th motorized corps Major General Petrov reported to Marshall Timoshenko that his deputy Kozhokhin Nikolay Viktorovich committed suicide on June 23. Major General Ivan Ivanovich Kopets ended his life as well. The head of the political propaganda department of the Western special military district, Listev, explained the step by the "loss of heart due to repeated setbacks and relatively large aircraft losses." It seemed to many people at the time (or people were afraid to be known as panic-mongers) that setbacks were "individual" and the losses were "relatively large..." The fate of many generals who found themselves in the vortex of tragic events was even worse. Here are two of them.

The state security organs reported to Stalin in August 1941 that two generals voluntary gave themselves to the Germans as prisoners and "were working" for them. One of them was the former commander of the 28th army Lieutenant General V.Ya. Kachalov, and the other was commander of the 12th army Lieutenant General P.G. Ponedelin. Stalin wrote his decision: "Put on trial." Not all the orders relating to the front matters, far from all, were meticulously executed, especially in the first phase of the war. Had they been, the Germans would not have reached the walls of Moscow in the fall. But the orders that commanded to put people "on trial" were carried out without fail. Two Lieutenant Generals were sentenced in absentia in October 1941 under article 265 of the Criminal Procedures code and sentenced to be shot, "with the confiscation of their personal property and a request of stripping them of their awards, such as orders of the Soviet Union."

The ill-starred and cynical informers did not know that Vladimir Yakovlevich Kachalov was killed on August 4, 1941 by a direct shell hit, but the surviving members of his family bore the stigma of the relatives of the "traitor of Motherland" till 1956. The fate of Pavel Grigorieyvich Ponedelin was even more dramatic. Surrounded in August 1941, he was heavily wounded and was taken prisoner unconsciousness. The four long years of Hitler's camps did not break the general's will, he carried his cross with dignity, supporting those despairing, flatly rejecting any collaboration with the fascists. After his liberation and repatriation, Ponedelin was arrested and spend five years, this time in a Soviet camp, although he was sentenced to death in absentia in 1941. In response to Ponedelin's personal appeal to Stalin, a new court-martial followed on August 25, 1950, which sentenced him to be shot once again. Sentenced to death twice, having lived through all the horrors of Hitler's and Stalin's camps, Lieutenant General Ponedelin had his life taken away from him only because he had the bad fortune of being taken prisoner while he was unconsciousness....

Harsh times, cruel people... After the outbreak of the war, having hardly recovered from the paralyzing psychological shock, Stalin used his tested method of violence and the accompanying fear in order to remedy the situation. Thousands, hundreds of thousands of people perished at the front, many found themselves in enemy captivity. Those who broke out of the encirclement, escaped from a POW camp were sent to "special screening camps." There is an array of reports sent by Beriya, describing the operation of those camps. After the screening, some servicemen were sent to the new units being formed, while others ended in camps for years. Their plight was especially bitter, the one of shame, disgrace, execution, and sorrow for the family. There were quite a few people like this. They included, of course, those who deliberately betrayed their country or failed to perform their martial duty due to the loss of heart. But we do not talk about them. We used to associate Stalin's harshness towards the Soviet people early in the war with the names of Pavlov and generals of his staff only. Few people are aware, however, of Stalin authorizing an arrest of a large group of commanders at the beginning of the war. They included:

Major General I.I. Alekseyev, commander of the 6th infantry corps; Major General B.I. Arushanyuan, chief of staff of the 56th army; Major General N.I. Gopich, head of the communications department of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants; Major General V.S. Golushkevich, deputy chief of staff of the Western front; Lieutenant General F.S. Ivanov, from the reserve of the chief personnel department, NKO; Major General F.K.

Kuzmin, head of the tactics department, Frunze Academy; Major General I.L. Leonovich, chief of staff of the 18th army; Major General V.A. Melikov, chief of department, Academy of General Staff; Major General A.G. Potaturchev, 4th tank division commander; Major General F.N. Romanov, 27th army chief of staff; Lieutenant General I.V. Selivanov, 30th infantry corps commander; Major General V.V. Semashko, Leningrad front chief of staff deputy; Lieutenant General N.I. Trubetskoy, head of the VOSO[?] department of the Red Army; Major General P.G. Tzyrulnikov, 15th infantry division commander; Major General I.N. Rukhle, reserve of the chief personnel department, People's Commissariat of Defense.

The list does not cover all those arrested. The fates of these people were different, with some of them managing to return to the front, others ended in camps for years and still others perished.

Most of the times Stalin just authorized an arrest, but sometimes personally ordered to arrest an individual. Here is an example. On August 25, 1943, at 5:15 a.m. Stalin dictated a telegram to be sent to Stalingrad:

"Personally to Vasilevskiy, Malenkov.

I am amazed by the fact that the same breakthrough deep inside our troops' rear happened at the Stalingrad front that took place at the Bryansk front last year, when the enemy reached Orel. It should be pointed out that the same Zakharov was chief of staff at the Bryansk front, while the same Ruhle was Yeremenko's confidant. This should give one food for thought. Either Yeremenko does not understand the idea of a second echelon, where inexperienced divisions occupy the front lines, or we deal with some one's evil will, which informed the Germans where the weak points of our front exactly are."

Stalin did not dare to suspect Zhakharov and Yeremenko directly, while the Supreme Commander voiced personal suspicions with regard to Major General I.N. Rukhle, head of the front HQs operations department. He saw no logic in the fact that German military commanders looked for our most vulnerable spots and struck at them, but attributed the situation to "evil will" which "tells the Germans... exactly." Officers at the special department did not need any "reasons" after receiving such a cable. The Supreme Commander himself furnished them... Major General Ivan Nikiforovich Rukhle was immediately arrested, but he had a good fortune of having survived eventually.

Stalin could never completely abandon his "cruel games." But many people believed at the time that the cruel and desperate time warranted the Leader's cruel measures.

Bitter Taste of Wormwood

As usual, he fell into a restless slumber in the morning. As soon as his head touched the pillow, he sank into something dark, deep and sticky. Stalin confessed to Poskryobyshev once that he had very rare dreams. He did not experience the pangs of consciousness, was not haunted by the shadows of Party fellow workers vanquished by him, he did not hear the voices of his wife and perished in-laws from the past. His nature seemed to have a sort of moral insulators which protected his consciousness against anguish, atonement and the qualms of consciousness. The centers which were supposed to respond to the instances of general human morals were frozen or blocked in his mind. He never suffered from sleeplessness, not the one caused by the deficit of consciousness.

In slumber for three or four hours, he woke up several times today. Stalin had a bad sleep not because of apparitions, nightmares or the roaring of the war. He woke up feeling the bitter taste of wormwood that interfered with his sleep. Having shaken off the hallucination, he fell fast asleep again, but the smell of wormwood, the same one he remembered many years ago at Tsaritsyn, haunted him. Voroshilov and he went out to inspect the positions then and stopped near a hillock on their way back to lunch on a chunk of bread. Stalin leaned back on the grass and catnapped for a few moments, amid a cloud of wormwood smell rising above the sun-drenched steppe. He felt himself tiny, helpless and irrelevant against the hot haze of the endless sunny sky. Falling into the precipice of sleep, he was tossed on the waves of the wormwood aroma like a chip... Tonight, too, he could even clearly feel that ancient bitter taste in his mouth. He shook off the remnants of sleep as he immediately recalled last night's report. The setbacks smelling of wormwood haunted the army, and Stalin, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, along almost the entire huge front.

He got up, had some tea, but did not go to the Kremlin. Instead, he ordered Zhukov to see him at midnight and report on the overall situation, making conclusions and suggestions. A quarter to midnight, Georghiy Konstantinovich was at the dacha. He came up to the map spread out on the table and began his report in a quiet voice, carefully choosing his words. He sounded as if he was reading a lecture, thought Stalin, but did not dare to interrupt. The "lecture" was grim, having that bitter wormwood aftertaste about it.

"One can say that we have lost the first stage of the war completely," Zhukov said. "The fighting is going on already at the far environs of Leningrad, in the vicinity of Smolensk and in the area of the Kiev defense junction. Defense remains very unstable. We are forced to spread the forces along the front more or less evenly, without knowing where the enemy is going to strike next, with its concentrated force. It fully controls the strategic initiative. The situation is aggravated because some sections of the front have no second echelons or major reserves. The German planes dominate the skies (nobody knew at that point that by September 30, 1941 we would have lost 8,166 planes, or 96.4 percent of the prewar number, although the German aviation suffered substantial losses

as well. Only 90 divisions out of the 212 divisions in the fighting army had 80 percent and more of complete strength - D.V.). The defense is gradually becoming more 'resilient' on the approaches to Leningrad," the head of General Staff continued his report in the same unperturbed and somewhat flat voice. "The Germans seem to be losing momentum there as well. It seems that we shall have to move the entire fleet to Krondstat. Major losses are inevitable. The battle of Smolensk enabled us to halt the German armies in the most dangerous, western, direction. According to our estimates, Zhukov consulted his notes, it involves over 60 German divisions with a total strength of about half a million people. As you know, Comrade Stalin, the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd armies were assigned to the Western front back in early July. But we still experience a shortage of troops and divisions often organize one-echelon formations. Our attempt to launch a counter offensive in that direction with the help of the 29th, 30th, 24th and 28th armies have been only partially successful, enabling the 20th and 16th armies to break through encirclement and move behind the lines. Our counter-offensive scuttled German strike."

"What is the role of the Central front in this battle?" Stalin interrupted at last.

"There is every reason to believe that the center of the strike by the German group will shift here. But I'm greatly worried by the one-echelon front formation, which includes only 24 incomplete divisions. I cannot rule out establishing another front group here..."

Stalin seemed to be "shut off," having understood the main conclusion that the battle of Smolensk, where the Yelnya operation stood out, showed the real possibility for the Red Army units and formations to halt enemy even in the main direction, where the bulk of its forces was concentrated.

Zhukov's measured, harsh words began to reach him once again:

"We have failed to 'hold on' to the old border. The 5th and 6th armies were unable to hold ground there. Having reached the outer rim of the Kiev reinforced area, the Germans in fact split the front into two parts: the 5th army in the north is trying to settle down in the Korostyany fortified area, and the southern part of it which includes the bulk of the troops - the 6th, 12th, and 26th armies. The counter offensive organized from north and south against the flanks of the breakthrough group have borne only partially positive results. One can say that the 6th and 12th armies have been cut off as of this morning."

Stalin did not allow the General to continue:

"I am afraid for the Dnieper and Kiev. We should do something..."

"We have already issued a preliminary order on organizing a strong line of defense along the eastern shore of the Dnierper river," answered Zhukov.

"Can we talk now with the Southwestern front command?"

"We can get through to them if Kirponos and Khrushchev are not visiting troops," replied Zhukov.

Several minutes later "Bodeaux" typed: "Kirponos and Khrushchev speaking."

Let us quote part of the conversation kept in the military archives:

Stalin is speaking: "Hello. We should not allow the Germans to cross into the left bank of the Dnieper at any point under any circumstances. Tell me whether you have the means of preventing this incident? Further, it would be a good idea to map out a plan of a strong defensive line together with Budyonniy and Tyulenev, running approximately from Kherson and Kahovka, via Krivoy Rog, Kremenchug and then to the north along the Dnieper, including the area of Kiev on the right side of the Dnieper. If all of you approve of that preliminary line of defense, we should set out to do some frantic work to organize a line of defense and to hold to it at any cost... If you had managed to do this, you could receive the retreating tired troops on the line, let them recover, catch some sleep and keep fresh units to replace them. If I were you, I would use not just new infantry divisions, but also new cavalry divisions, have them dismount and temporary act as infantry. That's it.'

Khrushchev, Kirponos: We have taken every measure to prevent the enemy either from crossing into the left bank of the Dnieper river or capturing Kiev. But we need reinforcements. Comrade Stalin, until now we have not been getting good reinforcements. We have some divisions which have only 1,500-2,000 men. The materiel supplies are as bad. We request your help in this.

Your instruction about organizing a new line of defense is absolutely correct. We shall start working on it right now and request your permission to report to you on this by 12 o'clock on the 5th... Commander-in-Chief Comrade Budyonniy set us the objective of launching an offensive from the Korsun area in the direction of Zvenigorod, Uman in the morning of the 6th, so as to give help to the 6th and 12th armies in linking up a single front with the Southern front... If you do not object to the offensive and if it is successful, the line of defense can alter significantly to the west. That's all."

Stalin: "Far from having any objections, I fully welcome an offensive, the goal of which is to hook up with the Southern front and bring into the open the two armies that you mentioned. The order by the Commander-in-Chief is absolutely correct. Still, I would request you to work on the line of defense which I suggested, since during the war, one should be ready not only for the

good, but also for the bad, and even for the worse. This is the only way of not being caught on the wrong foot."

Alas, Stalin's hopes did not materialize. The wormwood smell could haunt him not only at night, but also all day long...

The Kiev defensive operation was not going well. The surrounded units of the 6th and 12 armies fought against heavy odds up to August 7. The armies ceased to exist after they have exhausted every possibility for any further resistance. A large number of personnel was taken prisoner. Marshall Budyonniy asked the Stavka's permission to move troops behind the Ingul river, considering the threat of having the troops of the Southern front enveloped. Stalin threw up a kick and prohibited the withdrawal, pointing to another line of defense. Stalin ordered to move 19 infantry and 5 cavalry divisions to reinforce the troops in the Southwestern direction by the special directive of the Stavka No. 00661. The newly-established formations were not streamlined, trained and lacked weapons. When engaged in combat, many of these units did not put up stiff resistance in defense. Confusion often bred panic, with units leaving their positions without permission.

Stalin either flew into rage or fall into apathy as he was reported about a loss of particular lines, ever new populated areas. Contrary to his habit of not making hasty conclusions and evaluations of people, he often made them right on the spot, after a regular report. This time he came after Ivan Vladimirovich Tuylenin, whom he knew well for a long time. Stalin's cable to the Commander-in-Chief said:

"Front Commander-in-Chief Tyulenin did not live up to his task. He does not know how to advance, nor does he know how to withdraw troops. He lost two armies in such manner in which one does not lose even regiments. I suggest you visit Tuylenev immediately, examine the situation in person and immediately report back about the plan of defense...It seems to me that Tuylenev has been demoralized and is incapable of commanding the front.

Stalin

Dictated over the phone at 5:50 a.m. on August 12, 1941. Shaposhnikov."

The Supreme Commander-in-Chief was sending angry messages, issued stern orders, signed impromptu directives, but the situation was deteriorating. It reached the critical point in the Southwestern direction in August-September. Stalin tried to get through to one or another commander, but he was not always successful. One day, when another report by the Stavka announced another unsanctioned withdrawal of several units, Stalin dictated "Order of the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army No. 270 of August 16, 1941."

I must make a reservation by saying that all of us are familiar with the famous "Order by the USSR People's Commissar of Defense No. 227 of July 28, 1942." The same order, No. 270, was made pubic almost a year before and authored by Stalin himself. Having lost any hope of having the front stabilized and avoiding the defeat, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, by and large under the force of critical circumstances, resorted to his usual method of harsh reprisals. Few people are familiar with the order today, so we shall cite it as an example of Stalin's "creative" directive-issuing, as Stalin found himself dangerously "arched up."

In the beginning of the order, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief cited the examples when the surrounded commanders, political workers and Red Army men showed the strength of spirit and emerged with dignity out of the most complex situation. This was done by the 3rd army commander Lieutenant General Kuznetsov, for example. He and his commanders and political workers extricated the 108th and 64th infantry divisions from encirclement.

"However, the 28th army commander Lieutenant General Kachalov," Stalin dictated, "displayed cowardice and surrendered as a POW, while the HQs and the units broke out of the encirclement; Lieutenant General Ponedelin, the 12th army commander, surrendered as a prisoner, the same as commander of the 13th infantry corps Major General Kirillov. These are shameful facts. The cowards and deserters should be annihilated.

I order:

1) Consider the people tearing off their insignia during combat and surrendering as prisoners malicious deserters, whose families are to be arrested as the families of those who broke the oath and betrayed their Homeland. Such deserters should be shot on the spot.

2) Those surrounded should fight their way to the friendly units till the last resort. Those who chose to surrender as prisoners, should be destroyed with all available means, while the families of those Red Army servicemen who surrendered should be denied state allowances and aid.

3) Promote active and courageous people more vigorously.

The order shall be read in all the companies, squadrons and batteries."

Stalin dictated the order nonstop, then paused but did not set out to edit the impulsively written text, the gist of which was contained in a sentence or two: "shoot deserters and soldiers who surrender as prisoners without mercy. If they decide to surrender, let them know that their families will have to drink from the most bitter cup." This was the order of despair and cruelty. Stalin started dictating it as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, but after he had stopped dictating it, he put his own signature under it and ordered that it should be also

signed by Molotov, Budyonniy, Voroshilov, Timoshenko, Shapooshnikov, and Zhukov, although some of those people were not present at the Stavka.

Such orders were carried out with a lot of zeal by some people. Stalin was told at the end of August about a letter written by writer Vladimir Stavskiy, who spent ten days at the front in the Yelnya area. Let me quote a few excerpts from it:

"Dear Comrade Stalin!

A number of our units perform wonderfully, delivering smashing blows at the enemy. After the courageous and energetic Major Com. Utvenko took charge of the 19th division, its regiments defeated the 88th infantry regiment and repelled many German counterattacks...acting along a 11-km stretch of the front... The units fighting at Yelnya undergo combat training, accumulate combat experience, study enemy tactics and beat the Germans...

But things have been overdone recently in the 24th army... From 480 to 600 people were shot as deserters, panic-mongers and for committing other crimes, according to the data provided by the command and the army political department. At the same time, 80 people were nominated for awards. Army commander Com. Rakutin and chief of the army political department Com. Abramov eliminated this extreme the day before yesterday and today."

Stalin left a brief message on the letter which described the awful "extreme:" "Com. Mekhlis. I. St." He was not worried by the figure of the "extreme" (which might have been exaggerated somewhat), and the significant losses which he sanctioned resolutely. Indeed, the war is harsh, the situation is desperate, but Stalin's resolutions do not even hint at the necessity for the commanders and political organs to appeal to the consciousness, dignity, courage, patriotic feelings, and national dignity of the people. As always, he believes in power and pressure only.

One of the major tragedies of the Great Patriotic war was on the horizon. Stalin talked to Kirponos again a week and a half before it happened:

Brovary: "Colonel General Kirponos is speaking."

Moscow: "Stalin is speaking."

Stalin: "We have received information that the front decided with a light heart to surrender Kiev to the enemy under the pretext of the shortage of units capable of holding Kiev. Is this correct?"

Kirponos: "Hello, Comrade Stalin. You have been misinformed. The front's military council and I are taking every measure not to surrender Kiev under any circumstance... All our thoughts and aspirations, both mine and those of the military council, are directed at not surrendering Kiev to the enemy..."

Stalin: "Very good. I'm giving you a firm handshake. I wish you success. That's all."

The Southwestern front was holding on by the skin of its teeth. Much has been written about the heroism displayed by the Kiev defenders; they did all they could. But we shall probably never be able to convey the feelings and thoughts of the defenders of the Ukrainian capital, reflecting both the immutable patriotism by the overwhelming majority of the Soviet people, as well as the bitter bewilderment at a long chain of defeats which brought the aggressor to the Dnieper banks.

The German 1st and 2nd tank groups closed the ring in the Lokwitsy area on September 15, surrounding the bulk of the Southwestern front forces. The 5th, 26th and 37th armies and part of the 21st and 38th armies found themselves encircled. Stalin had his last conversation with Kirponos four days before dozens of the units and formations, bled white, were caught in the fateful noose.

Priluki. "Hello, Kirponos, Burmistrenko and Tupikov are here."

Moscow. "Hello, Stalin, Shaposhnikov, and Timoshenko are here. I regard your proposal to withdraw troops to the bridgehead of you know what river as dangerous (the Psel river - D.V.) If you review the recent past, you would recall that when you withdrew troops from Berdichev and Novgorod-Volynskiy, you had the Dnieper river, a more serious line; despite this you lost two armies during the move... and the enemy crossed...on the eastern bank of the Dnieper... The way out is as follows:

1) Immediately regroup forces, even at the expense of the Kiev fortified area and other troops, and launch desperate attacks at the enemy group in Konotop in cooperation with Yeremenko...

2) Immediately set defensive lines along the Psel river or somewhere along that line, move a large artillery group facing the north and the west and move 5 or 6 divisions beyond that line.

3)...The evacuation of Kiev should be started...only after these two points have been carried out, i.e., after the striking force against the enemy Kontop group has been organized and after the defense line along the Psel river has been established, in a word, after all this has been done...

Kiev shall not be abandoned and no bridges blown up without the permission of the Stavka. That's all. Goodby."

Kirponos: "I've got your instructions. That's all. Goodby."

Colonel General Mikhail Petrovich Kirponos, Hero of the Soviet Union, could have said "farewell," since he was to live for just a few more days. He would not receive any new instructions from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, who did not take the real situation into account at all. There was a chance of escaping a deadly noose as

long as the front's encirclement was not solid. The front's military council sent Stalin another cable (cable No. 15788) containing the request on September 17 at 5:00 a.m. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief did not permit the breakthrough again, with the exception of the withdrawal of the 37th army, under the command of A.A. Vlasov, to the eastern bank of the Dnieper. The situation became extremely critical. Contrary to Stalin's demands, the military council made the decision to withdraw the front troops by the end of September 17, but the time had been lost. The staff lost communications with the armies by that time. The front troops, in small and large units, tried to break through to the east at their own risk. Few succeeded, although fighting continued for another 10 days in the encirclement after the breakthrough order had been issued. The Stavka sent the following reassuring radio cables to Kirponos on September 22 and 23:

"Kirponos (Southeastern front)

Show more determination and calm. The success is assured. You face small enemy forces. Amass artillery in the breakthrough sections... Our entire air force is acting on your behalf. Our troops are attacking the enemy positions... I repeat, more determination, calm and energy in action. Report more frequently.

B. Shaposhnikov."

The disaster was terrible, with 452,720 people, including 60,000 commanding officers, surrounded; the enemy captured a large number of weapons and military equipment. The front commander Kirponos, chief of staff Tupikov and member of the military council Burmistenko were killed in the last action, sharing the fate of thousands of soldiers. Even if Kirponos had broken out of the circle, Stalin would have hardly forgiven him the debacle. Naturally, he did not consider himself responsible for it at all!

Stalin displayed nothing but his ironclad obstinacy, not a subtle operational flair and understanding of the situation, during what was probably the greatest tragedy of the Great Patriotic war. If the Supreme Commander had at least a scant understanding of what was happening at Minsk, in the Crimea, at Kiev, during the battle of Smolensk at that time, then besides being stubborn and straightforward, he could have displayed the required strategic sagacity, which he had a clear shortage of. He was an armchair military commander, ignorant of the front line, the life of the troops in the fighting army. His two secret trips to the front were to take place later, and we shall describe them.

The Stavka and its Supreme Commander-in-Chief are largely responsible for the tragedy that befell the Southwestern front. Naturally, the front commanders and staff also failed to exercise adequate control over such a large force which was undoubtedly capable of avoiding such a sad end, given more able command. More often than not, courage was not backed up by skills, good organization, and competence. The Kiev defeat once again strongly tipped the scales of the deadly fighting in the aggressor's favor along the entire stretch of the Soviet-German front.

Stalin did not show much emotion outwardly, he just told Shaposhnikov:

"We should patch up the hole... Fast!"

"We have taken the measures already," replied the Chief of General Staff. "It looks like we might be able to restore the 21st and the 38th armies. I ordered to move five infantry divisions and three tank brigades from the Stavka's reserves. We shall set a new command for the Southwestern front. We need your decision on the commanders."

"And whom do you suggest?"

"I think we need a firm hand and an experienced head under this complex situation. I do not think that we can find a better candidate than Semyon Konstantinovich."

"I agree."

"And Khrushchev should be appointed member of the military council, and Major General Pokrovskiy, as Chief of Staff."

"All right..."

The mammoth losses required early replenshment. The chief directorate in charge of formations and the military districts by and large coped with the task of sending an uninterrupted stream of people to feed the cruel and bloody mill of war. Stalin carefully examined the memo listing the losses and featuring the possibilities of replenishment, prepared by Shaposhnikov at his request. Boris Mikhailovich added at the end that the data could be incomplete and inaccurate because the events moved so fast.

General Staff reported the operation of 39 reserve infantry brigades, where replenishment were being trained. Those called-up were to undergo training for one or one a and a half months, and the junior commanding officers, for three months. During August, the fronts received 613,000 people from company reinforcements and 380,000 men called up from various rear military establishments and institutions. The training centers and reserve units can train and send to the front up to 2,500 thousand people till the end of the academic year. But Stalin immediately felt that the losses (irretrievable and the so-called "sanitary") were apparently underreported:

June-July 1941 - 651,065

August - 692,924

September - 491,023.

He knew, of all people, that we lost about half a million men at Kiev alone. Most of them will now be listed as "missing in action." Such people were probably in the majority during the first year of war.

In no time, Stalin wrote a message and handed it over to Poskryobyshev, without any apparent connection with what he read and what he was thinking about:

"Com. Shaposhnikov

Please gimme a verified report about our losses during the retreat from the Staraya Russa area.

I. Stalin."

It is difficult to figure out why he was interested in Staraya Russa, of all places, and why he made a grammar mistake - it was usually hard to find grammar mistakes in his texts. Was it because our counterstrikes there did not produce the desired result? He might have thought that now attention was to be paid, apart from the major fronts, to other enclaves spaced out over vast expenses where the deadly confrontation was taking place - after the Stavka's directive to hold to the present positions and assume strong defense. Stalin will continue to display interest in the position of individual armies and sections of the front. Is it possible that he sought to glean a fuller panorama of the war using these fragments?

Stalin never thought about his kin, but now he could not but recall his son Yakov. In mid-August, A.A. Zhdanov, a member of the military council of the Northwestern direction, sent him a letter in a wax-sealed envelope. It had a leaflet featuring Yakov talking to two German officers. Below was the caption:

"This is Yakov Dzugashvili, Stalin's elder son, battery commander, 14th howitzer artillery regiment, 14th armor division, who surrendered as prisoner on July 16 at Vitebsk, along with thousands of other commanders and soldiers. Timoshenko and your political committees teach you, on Stalin's order, that the Bolsheviks do not surrender as prisoners. But Red Army men defect to the Germans all the time. To intimidate you, the commissars lie to you about Germans mistreating POWs. Stalin's son has exposed this lie with his own example. He surrendered, because any resistance to the German Army now is useless."

His son's fate concerned Stalin in one respect only. It is a sin to think this way, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief mused, but he wished his son had been killed in action. He took interest in Yakov in only one sense - what if he, a weakling, yielded, broken, and started saying over the radio and in the leaflets what he has been ordered? The Supreme Commander's own son will work against his country and his father! The thought was intolerable. When Molotov and he were left alone yesterday, Molotov told him that the chairman of Sweden's Red Cross, Count Bernadot, conveyed an oral message: is Stalin authorizing him or anyone else to take action to get his son out of captivity? Stalin thought for a minute, then looked at Molotov and switched to other business, making it clear that there would be no answer.

"Answer in reply to Churchill's letter that without any doubt Soviet warships in Leningrad will be actually sunk by the Soviet people, if the need arises. We are thankful to Britain for her readiness to take part in restoring our navy after the war. But we shall make Germany offset the damage."

Molotov wrote something in his pad, but did not bring up the issue of Stalin's son again.

Stalin did not learn yet how to think on a large scale, on the scale of the entire Soviet-German front and how to take into account the interaction of a wide range of factors - military, economic, moral, political, and diplomatic. The turmoil of war put armed struggle on the front burner, overshadowing all other kinds of confrontation. Stalin's strategic and operational thinking was clearly "fragmentary" so far. It seemed to him that the commanders did not carry out his instructions well. He knew how to wait patiently and move steadily to achieve a goal in his previous life. An immediate result was required during the war, but time ran out on him - he was late, overestimated the effect of an order or a directive, and did not always consider objective circumstances. His first three directives early in the war, a number of other hasty and precipitous steps, especially those which caused dire and tragic consequences in the Kiev operation, proved that natural wit, will and smart thinking were grossly inadequate to exercise an able stewardship of all the armed forces in such a war.

General Staff and its leaders, including Shaposhnikov, Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, Vatutin and Antonov, played an immense role in having Stalin develop the skills and in "coaching" him. But Stalin gained the necessary experience in managing large operational formations at the cost of bloody "experiments," mistakes, and miscalculations. During the first stage of the war, Stalin "hard-pedaled" the moral factor - and this was obviously justified by the situation - as he did not show a shrewd understanding of the situation, of all the hidden mechanisms of war, the specifics of conducting operational-strategic work, or the concrete content in the operation of commanders and headquarters. Upon reading a report about a setback or a critical situation, Stalin addressed the troops' morale first and the operational situation second. However, war experience proves that these two elements of military might should not be viewed in isolation from, or in apposition to, one another. When the situation at Kiev reached its critical point, for example, front chief of staff Tupikov reported it as it was: "The position of the front troops has been aggravated by the rising tempo...The disaster your are aware of can happen in a matter of days."

One does not have to be sorcerer to size up the situation this way. It is another matter whether everything been done, up to the very last moment, to avoid or at least to reduce the size of the disaster? This did not follow from Tupikov's cable. Sensing the tragic mood, Stalin dictated a reply message on the spot:

"Priluki. Southwestern front commander.

Copy: southern direction Commander-in-Chief.

Major General Tupikov sent a panic message to General Staff No. 15614. The situation requires that the commanders at all levels, on the contrary, remain exceptionally cool and self-possessed. Without panic, all measures have to be taken to hold to the occupied positions and to hold the flanks especially strong. One should make Kuznetsov and Potapov stop their retreat. One should impress onto the entire front composition the need to fight tooth and nail, without looking back.

It is imperative to fulfill without fail Com. Stalin's instructions given to you on September 11."

They still did not know how to fight well. They were often afraid of reporting the truth to the top - were not accustomed to it - if it was bitter. A typical conversation took place, for example, between G.K. Zhukov and General Rakutin on September 4, 1941. Zhukov lambasted Rakutin for having lost the tanks, which were received as reinforcement and engaged in battle without much thought, and for sending him false reports.

Rakutin: "I'm leaving in the morning to investigate the matter. I've just received the report..."

Zhukov: "You are a commander, not an investigating officer. Submit a written report to me to be conveyed to the government. Was Shepelevo taken or was it an eye-wash as well?"

Rakutin: "Shepelevo has not been taken... I'll look into it tomorrow and report to you. I shall not tell you lies."

Zhukov: "The most important thing is to make your staff stop telling lies and review the situation well. Otherwise, all of you look bad."

Rakutin was let down by his subordinates. These things did happen, when one invented a success. But it was often the fear of reprisals that made people tell lies. Rakutin did review the situation, but he had only one month to live - he would fall on the battlefield during the October fighting.

Stalin desperately searched high and low to halt the retreat, to make the depressed and demoralized people fight, to help them believe in themselves again. The Stavka documents and Stalin's personal instructions prove that the Supreme Commander-in-Chief gave priority to the threat of using merciless punishment in order to accomplish his exceptional task. Could Trotskiy be correct in claiming that during the critical moments of fighting soldiers should be confronted with a choice "between a possible honorary death upfront and an inevitable ignoble death at the back?" This idea could have easily crossed Stalin's mind. He personally drafted a directive for all the fronts on combating panic-mongers. Dictated and revised by him, the document reads like this:

"The experience of fighting against German fascism has demonstrated that our infantry divisions had quite a few panic-stricken and outright hostile elements who drop their weapons as soon as the enemy applies pressure, starting to shout: 'We've been surrounded!' and take other soldiers in their wake. As a result of this kind of action taken by these elements, a division flees, abandons its materiel and then one person after another begins to come out of the forest. Such things happen at all the fronts... The trouble is that we do not have that many tough and reliable commanders and commissars...

1. Each infantry division should have a barrier unit, not more than a battalion in strength, composed of reliable soldiers.

2. The immediate mission of each barrier unit is to help directly commanding officers in establishing strict discipline in the division, halting the panic-stricken fleeing men, not stopping short of using weapons...

4. [as published] The formation of barrier units should be completed within five days since the day of receiving the given order. I. Stalin

Dictated personally by Com. Stalin. B. Shaposhnikov

September 12, 1941 11:50 p.m."

Such extreme but forced steps as barrier units, punitive companies and battalions, the threat of being shot were taken by and large due to the mistakes and miscalculations made by Stalin himself. "We do not have that many tough and reliable commanders and commissars" - this condition was also caused primarily because of the Supreme Commander himself.

Or, here is another telegram by Stalin intended to use mostly his name as a moral stimulus:

"The 51th Commander-in-Chief Com. Kuznetsov. Commander of the Black Sea front Com. Oktyabrskiy. Copy: People's Commissar of the Navy Com. Kuznetsov.

Relate the request of the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the soldiers and commanders defending Odessa to hold out for 6 or 7 days, during which they will receive help in the shape of airplanes and armed reinforcements.

Acknowledge receipt

September 15, 1941

I. Stalin."

Such telegrams often produced a mobilizing result. In this particular case, however, the garrison had to be evacuated to defend the Crimea in mid-October, despite the courage displayed by Odessa defenders.

Stalin searched for the ways to boost the troops' moral. During his regular report to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in mid-September 1941, Shaposhnikov expressed the opinion that if all the divisions fought as well as the best of the units did, the enemy would have been halted long ago. Stalin stayed silent, but then ordered General Staff and the Chief Political Directorate

to think about singling out the best units. The well-known order No. 308 by the USSR People's Commissar of Defense of September 18, 1941 was born soon, which decreed the establishment of t Soviet Guards units. The order read in part: "The 100th, 127th, 153rd and 161st infantry divisions have set the examples of courage, gallantry, discipline and good organization during the numerous battles for our Soviet Homeland against Hitler hordes of the fascist Germany. Under the difficult conditions of combat, these divisions repeatedly defeated German fascist troops, made them flee and put horror in their heart... The aforementioned divisions should be renamed the Guards divisions for their combat exploits, good organization, discipline and exemplary order. A one and half salary is to be paid to all the commanders, and double salary, to the soldiers as of September of this year."

Things did not run smoothly behind the lines, especially near the front zone, during the first months of the war. M.I. Kalinin's secretariat preserved the copy of a letter written by Ye. V. Lugovaya, the copies of which were sent to several addressees. A Soviet woman, who appears to be a teacher, writes to Kalinin: "I shall try to describe briefly the rear zone where I live. The locality is Melitopol -(Berdyansk) - Osipenko. Thousands of people who have been mobilized from different places, already occupied, and from the front line zone, roam around. Aimlessly. They observe no order. They have no uniforms. Twenty percent of them are bare footed. They have no weapons. Discipline is low... Some of those mobilized come up to our women to tell them bad news: 'We have no weapons, no uniforms, the German equipment is undefeatable; take away grain, it will perish anyway, take away livestock...' The people are worried a lot. The leaders are leaving, their wives who did not work escape; and they abandon us to death; they liked to boss, but none of them is here to defend us... Our newspapers do not report shortcomings, gloss them over, which breeds mistrust."

A simple woman made astute observations: the disastrous beginning affected moral most of all. One needed successes and military victories which could restore courage in those who lost it.

The enemy sequentially concentrated its efforts in one direction after another, winning victories. In an attempt to turn the unfortunate situation around, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief attempted to use the same method, but the troops were accustomed to retreat and defend, to defend and retreat. In mid-September, Stalin decided to remove the blockade of Leningrad, paying special attention to the city. He took an unusual step of nominating Marshall of the Soviet Union G.I. Kulik the commander of the large, 58th army, which included eight divisions. This is probably the only case in our history when a Marshall commanded such a formation. Stalin had his hopes high, expecting the operation to succeed. However, the strikes from Volkhov and Leningrad in the direction of Mga did not produce the desired result. The troops barely advanced, but even that reassured the Supreme Commander. Speaking with Kulik on direct line on September 16, 1941, after B.M. Shaposhnikov had given the commanders the concrete operational instruction, Stalin decided to promise a "bonus."

Stalin: "We are very happy that you have scored some successes. Bear in mind that we shall give you two good cadre divisions and maybe a new tank brigade if you strike at Mga real hard tomorrow, so that you can break through or bypass the Mga defenses. But I give you my word that you will receive neither two divisions, nor the tank brigade if you delay tomorrow's attack."

Kulik: "We shall try to carry out your instructions and receive what you have promised by all means."

On September 20, Stalin called Kulik on the direct line again, being increasingly disillusioned about the Marshall's capacity to win a major success.

Stalin: "You are very late. You have to make up for the time lost. Otherwise, if you are still late, the Germans will have time to turn each village into a fortress, and you will never be able to hook up with the Leningraders."

Kulik: "I'm just fresh from fighting. We waged a fierce battle to capture Sinayvino and Voronovo all day long. The enemy went on several counteroffensives, but despite the killing fire from our side (I used today two RSs and all the reserves),I was not successful."

Stalin: "You are being given new divisions and a brigade not to take the station of Mga, but to follow up on your success after the capture of Mga. The available forces are enough to capture station of Mga not once but twice."

Kulik: "I report that given the available forces, we cannot capture the station of Mga without the introduction of new units."

Stalin cut the conversation short, but probably thought to himself: Why did I award him the Hero's Golden Star and the rank of Marshall in 1940? No matter what you entrust him, nothing but setbacks and failures... But Stalin turned to Marshall of the Soviet Union Grigoriy Ivanovich Kulik once again, during the critical period - he would send him to the epicenter of the impeding major debacle in 1942, when no one could probably do a thing. After the latest instruction from Stalin, Kulik was demoted to the position he used to occupy in the early 1930...

No, Stalin essentially failed to win a major, even local, success in the summer and autumn of 1941. As one gets familiar with the telegrams, instructions, and directives sent personally by him, one can see the confirmation of the conclusion made by G.K. Zhukov to the effect that Stalin was no military commander early in the war. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief tried to replace the lack of specialized knowledge and the experience of guiding military action on such a scale by applying force, threats,

reprisals, or expletive appeals. His operational and strategic thinking during the first stage of the war did not go beyond the bounds of common sense, old empirical experience and the old patterns of the Civil War. One should admit, however, that Stalin was a diligent student. War was an awesome teacher.

Debacles and...Hopes

1941 and partially 1942 saw quite a few battlefield debacles. I do not think that any other state could have withstood such blows. Major defeats that led to the encirclement of the main forces - first, of the Western front near Minsk and then of the Southwestern front near Kiev - were not isolated cases, since two more disasters, one in the Crimea and the other in Leningrad, were on the horizon. One of them would "happen," but the other would be eventually averted at the cost of innumerable losses and human stoicism, since the city on the Neva would hold out.

After his major success in the Ukraine, Hitler came to believe that he would be able to continue offenses in several strategic directions. Shaposhnikov reported to Stalin late in September that the Crimea was in peril, as the advance units of the German army had pushed through to the Turkish rampart. Having discussed the situation, they decided to dispatch two Stavka directives, with Stalin insisting on one of them, and Shaposhnikov, on the other. Stalin recalled that when he nominated Colonel General Kuznetsov commander of the 51st army back in August, he emphasized in a special order: "Hold the Crimean peninsula in our hands till the last man." Looking at the aviation as a cure-all (during the entire war), he issued an order:

"Southern front commander, Member of the military council of the Red Army Air Force Com. Stepanov. Commander of the 51st separate army.

Enemy force of up to three infantry divisions attacked fortifications in the Perikop isthmus and pushed through to the Turkish rampart. The Supreme Commander has ordered: the Fifth reserve air force group in full strength should destroy the German troops storming Perikop during the entire day of September 26, 1941...

September 26, 1941 4:20 a.m. at the instruction of the Stavka B. Shaposhnikov."

Stalin thought naively that the air force alone would be sufficient to halt the invasion of the Crimea by the German troops. Another directive dealt with the evacuation of troops from Odessa into the Crimea and the placement of the units of the Odessa defense region under the command of the 51st separate army. Stalin asked Shaposhnikov after the directives had been singed:

"How many people are going to defend the Crimea? What are the chances of holding it?"

"After the Odessa units have been moved, the number of Crimea defenders will reach up to 100 thousand. About 100 tanks, over 1,000 guns and 50 planes. One can hold the Crimea given these forces."

Stalin did not know, however, that fearing a troop landing the command of the 51st special army would scatter the formations and units all across the peninsula. They did not know how to fight yet... The most dangerous section would have highly inadequate defenses. The units of the four incomplete infantry divisions were essentially used to defend the isthmuses. The German group pushed into the Crimea after 10 days of bloody fighting. The units of the Maritime army were retreating to Sevastopol fighting fierce battles, while the 51st army was retreating towards the Kerch peninsular (Stalin replaced its commander F.I. Kuznetsov with P.I. Batov by that time).

The Crimean troop commander Vice-Admiral Levchenko reported to Stalin in a coded message on November 6 that the situation in the Crimea, especially in the Kerch peninsular, was very grave. His report said that "reserves have been used up, there are no rifles and machine guns, reinforcement companies arrived unarmed, and the divisions retreating in the Kerch direction had a strength of only 200 to 350 people. Because of their low strength, the 271st, 276th and 156th infantry divisions were merged into one, the 156th division." Levchenko requested either have "the Kerch direction urgently reinforced with two divisions, or solve the question about the evacuation of troops from Kerch."

Listening to the reports of General Staff about the continuing retreat of the 51st army, Stalin angrily queried all the time:

"Why are they backtracking? The Germans even do not have tanks there. An approximate balance of forces! Tell Levchenko to fly to Kerch immediately and stop the retreat. Tell him: stop the retreat!"

Vice-Admiral Levchenko arrived from Sevastopol to Kerch as soon as November 9. The situation did not improve. Stalin asked to get Marshall of the Soviet Union Kulik on the line, who had been recalled as commander of the 51st army by that time. Bidding a gloomy and glacial hello, without any intros or explanations, the Supreme Commander ordered the ill-starred Marshall who seemed to have lost Stalin's confidence:

"Leave for Kerch immediately. Help Levchenko to figure out the situation. Kerch must be held, otherwise the Germans can reach the Taman peninsular. Is it clear?"

"I'll do everything. I'm leaving right now."

"All right, go ahead," Stalin bid a dry good-by.

Upon arriving in Kerch on November 12, Kulik found a severely disorganized military entity, whose units were waging isolated rear guard battles, without a streamlined plan or leadership. The city had already witnessed the instances of panic, chaos and confusion. Kulik tried but

failed to put defense in order. All of Kulik's demands - to dig up, not a step back! - were in vain. Only individual units, whose commanders have not lost their heads, fought to death. The two regiments which he still could move from the Taman peninsular to Kerch could not save the situation, according to him. He ordered those regiments to reinforce the defenses of the Taman coastline rather than cross into Kerch. This detail was soon to become almost the main indictment against Kulik, still Marshall of the Soviet Union.

Kulik received another order of Stalin, communicated to him by Shaposhnikov on the 15th, a day before the final fiasco: "Do not surrender Kerch!" Speaking with Major General Vechniy of General Staff on direct line, he described the situation and his plans in the following way:

"The condition of the 51st army is so grave that only the 106th infantry division at best can be considered 40 percent combat ready; the remaining divisions have a strength of no more than 300 men... Fighting is going on on in the city's southern outskirts, the enemy has penetrated the Mitridat region. The objective set for today was to hold out for another 24 hours, to withdraw the bulk of artillery before dark and remove the remaining units on the night of the 16th... I reviewed the situation on the spot and made the decision, in line with Com. Stalin's personal instruction on the phone, as he left to visit the 51st army, *to prevent the enemy from crossing into Northern Caucasus...*"

Let us make a digression. After Kulik had been summoned to Moscow for explanations after the debacle, his reference to Stalin's instruction "to prevent the enemy from crossing into Northern Caucusus" caused the Supreme Commander's angry tirade:

"Prevent from crossing into Caucasus by *holding Kerch.* Not by surrendering it!"

But let us continue the account of the report made by Kulik to General Staff:

"Now the 12th infantry brigade, which I armed by disarming the Crimean institutions of higher learning in Krasnodar area and the reserve units, has been pitched on the northern spur of the Taman peninsular and holds the line of defense along the western slope of the spur. Two regiments of the 302nd infantry division hold defense on the southern spur of the Taman peninsular."

On February 16,1942, Kulik was brought in front of a special session of the USSR Supreme Court which qualified all his actions to defend Kerch as criminal. Stalin did not want to forgive him the surrender of Kerch, as the Supreme Commander did not think that Kulik used all the means available to hold it.

Let us turn back to Kulin's report once again:

"There is only one pier, at the Voikov plant, which is good for loading artillery, while the Yenikal pier is good only for loading personnel; this is briefly the situation and the condition of the army. One more detail. We are tracking down the deserters from the 51st army in Anapa, Novorossiysk, the Crimea and Krasnodar, which number in thousands."

It is difficult to count on any success, of course, if the divisions have "not more than 300 men," while the deserters are counted "in thousands." The Stavka archives do not have any evidence of whether official permission to abandon the Kerch peninsular was issued or not, which was left on November 16. Moscow realized however that under the circumstance an organized evacuation was the only chance left. The surrender of Kerch was the logical outcome of unsuccessful fighting in the Crimea. The 51st army command did not make a good use of the experience of the heroic defense of Sevastopol. The situation of the Sevastopol defense region became even more difficult after Kerch had been abandoned.

On listening to the report by the Chief of General Staff about the Crimean disaster, Stalin flew into fury. He made Kulik the scapegoat this time. Kerch set off his decline as a military commander. He was demoted in March 1942 from Marshall of the Soviet Union to Major General. Kulik commanded the 4th Guards army for about six months after this and then became deputy head of the main directorate in charge of troop formation and completion. But Stalin never forgave him defeats at the front. Kulik was arrested and shot several years after the war. This was the sad fate of another Marshall of Stalin's.

To all appearances, Kulik was rather an inept military commander, with no marked military talents, but we do not think that he was obviously or mostly responsible for the Kerch debacle. He arrived in Kerch four days before the bad end. He did not possess such outstanding talents as to do the impossible within such a short period of time. Stalin evaluated the Marshall's actions as a failure to carry out his orders. Marshall of the Soviet Union Sokolovskiy analyzed the Kerch events of November 1941 in a calm atmosphere after the war and wrote in the conclusion made by the General Headquarters: "The examination of the available documents shows that under the given situation, Marshall of the Soviet Union Kulik could not have turned the military actions to our advantage and held the Crimea, since he lacked the required means and forces, as he arrived in Kerch on November 11 to provide assistance to the troops operating on the Kerch peninsular. This conclusion has been also corroborated by the participants in those events, Admiral Com. G.I. Levchenko, and Army General Com. P.I. Batov."

It was Stalin himself who brought Grigoriy Ivanovich Kulik to the top rungs of military hierarchy, although the latter did not seem to have possessed neither great intellect, nor high-level professional competence. Stalin appeared to give him a chance after the Marshall of the Soviet Union had been demoted down to Major General - he ordered to promote him to Lieutenant General within a month. But after the war Stalin ordered to demote Kulik to the rank of Major General after he had

received a letter from Colonel General Smorodinov, head of the chief directorate of Glavuprform and Major General Kolesnikov, member of the military council, which was addressed to Bulganin, about Kulik's "moral unscrupulousness and dealing in secondhand things, the loss of taste for, and interest in, work." Again, Stalin ordered Kulik's demotion to Major General.

Kulik was finished off by service, or by Stalin to be more exact, after he had been nominated deputy commander of the Volga military district. The position was held at the time by Colonel General Vasiliy Nikolayvich Gordov, who also earned Stalin's disfavor. The generals, who felt that they have been hurt, talked indiscreetly and were soon retired. However, they were arrested, sentenced and shot, Kulik in 1950, and Gordov in 1951. They were rehabilitated and reinstituted in their military ranks in 1957. But let us return to the Crimea.

The Supreme Commander did not want to reconcile himself to the loss of Kerch. He agreed to the proposal made by the General Headquarters to shore up Sevastopol's heroic defense with a daring landing operation in the Crimea, which was to set the stage for liberating the peninsular. That is the reason why Stalin turned to the Crimea once again, as he was discussing tentative strategic plans for the winter campaign of 1941-1942 with Shaposhnkov and Vasilevskiy. The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief approved the plan of landing troops on the peninsular in less than a month after it had been left.

This was the largest operation of this kind during the Great Patriotic war. Stalin was confident of its success for some reason. He might have relied on psychology: can German generals even imagine that the Soviet troops will reappear on the Kerch peninsular in less than a month? Conversely, after a severe setback, our divisions would want to prove that they had not lost their will to fight and win on this rocky terrain. Stalin supervised the blueprints for the Crimean operation personally, the operation which was prepared in great secrecy.

This turned out to be not just a major troop landing but eventually a major setback. Between December 26 and 31, the ships of the Black sea Navy and the Azov military flotilla landed about 40,000 men, 43 tanks, 434 guns and mortars, and a lot of other weapons and equipment in the north and east of the Kerch peninsular and in Feodosiya. Initially, a telling blow was struck. The units of the reconstructed 51st and of the 44th army managed to move over 100 kilometers westwards and to liberate Kerch and Feodosiya. It looked like that one more push would bring them to Sevastopol, after which the liberation of the entire Crimea became feasible. To guarantee a fuller success, Stalin sent Mekhlis to the Crimean front as a Stavka representative.

Amassing forces for a consequent offensive, the military council of the Crimean front did not pay due attention to defense, which was thin and unstable. Reconnaissance, antiaircraft defense, camouflage and the positioning of the reserves were poorly organized. Retribution followed fast. The German group, outnumbered and outgunned by the Soviet troops almost two to one, launched an attack along the Feodosiya coastline on May 9. Lack of concern and bad organization resulted in a great tragedy. Mekhlis began to dispatch cables denouncing front commander Kozlov to the Supreme Commander almost immediately, but Stalin's reaction was unusual this time. He realized that it was too late to replace the front commander at this critical juncture, therefore he lambasted Mekhlis:

"You take a strange position of an outside observer, not responsible for the affairs at the Crimean front. This position is very comfortable, but it is outright rotten. You are not an outside observer at the Crimean front, but a responsible representative of the Stavka, in charge of all the front's successes and failures... You demand that we replaced Kozlov with someone like Hindenburg. You cannot but be aware of the fact that we have no Hindenburgs in our reserve. Your business in the Crimea is not complex, and you could handle it on your own."

Stalin was right in saying that there were "no Hindenburgs in the reserve," but his claim about the situation in the Crimean not being "complex" was wrong. The Supreme Commander sent more than one Stavka directive to the 51st army command to dig in at the Turkish rampart, organize a stiff defense, visit the front line personally and make a more active use of the artillery. But the front command was obviously at a loss. Anticipating trouble, Stalin dictated a cable, typical of him, at one breath in the night of May 11:

"Commander-in-Chief of the Stavka of the Crimean direction Marshall Budyonniy. Copy: military council of the Crimean front - Mekhlis.

Considering the fact that the military council of the Crimean front, including Mekhlis and Kozlov, have lost their heads and still cannot get in touch with the armies, although the army staffs are located not more than 20-25 kilometers from the Turkish rampart; despite the fact that, contrary to the Stavka order, Kozlov and Mekhlis hesitate going to the Turkish rampart and organize defense there, the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders the Commander-in-Chief of the Stavka of the Crimean direction, Marshall Budyonniy, to promptly leave to the location of the Crimean front headquarters (city of Kerch), put things in order at the military council of the front, make Kozlov and Mekhlis suspend their work on rear formations, entrusting this work to rear service personnel, make them leave immediately for the Turkish rampart, receive the retreating troops and the materiel, set them straight and organize a stable defense along the Turkish rampart, dividing the defense line into sections, headed by responsible commanders.

The main objective is to block the enemy passage to the east of the Turkish rampart, using for that purpose all defensive means, troops, the Air Force and Navy units.

Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief

Stalin

May 11, 1942

Vasilevskiy."

The entire half-page telegram is just one sentence. It includes evaluations, anger, advice, order, action plan, missions - all together. There are circumstances, however, when the incantations by the most powerful people are useless. Five days prior to the sorrowful outcome, Stalin told Vasilevskiy to convey once again his message to the Crimean front command:

"Commander of the Crimean front

Lieutenant General Kozlov

May 15, 1942 1:10 a.m.

Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders:

1. Do not surrender Kerch, organizing defense similar to that in Sevastopol.

2. Send a group of courageous commanders, provided with portable radio transmitters, to the troops fighting in the West with the aim of establishing control over the troops and organizing a strike force in order to liquidate the enemy which pushed forward to Kerch and restore the line of defense along one the Kerch enclosings. You should visit it personally if the situation permits.

3. You, not Mekhlis, are the front commander. Mekhlis should help you. Report back to me if he does not."

Had Stalin been a self-critical person, he must have thought how badly the fronts missed such people as Tukhachevskiy, Bluykher, Yegorov, Yakir, Dybenko, Kork, Kashirin, Uborevich, and Alksnis. Because of his nature, he could not, and did not know how to look at himself from the outside. The Supreme Commander always believed that the setbacks and disasters were rooted in the staffs' failure to execute orders, commanders' bad organization, and the inability of political workers to fire up people. He did not even contemplate his own faults, as he listed shortcomings, errors, and omissions - which he knew how to do and liked to do it too. In the meantime, his was the greatest fault...

Stalin sent his last directive to the crumbling Crimean front on May 15, knowing already that Kerch was in the state of agony for the second time within the last six months. He was told that the main force (the Crimean front had already 270,000 people in early May) would be evacuated. With the tragedy over and no more explosions and salvos heard in Kerch, he demanded an accurate losses report. He was presented it only a week and a half later. It said that the Crimean front, which outnumbered the enemy significantly, lost 176,566 men, 347 tanks, 3,476 guns and mortars, and 400 air planes during the 12 days of German offensive. This was one of the major war debacles suffered by the Red Amy. Stalin was furious as he read the report:

"Scum! To screw up such a successful operation!"

He sent Mekhlis there, who only seemed to have disrupted things; he dispatched deputy chief of General Staff General Vechniy, but he failed as well... Kozlov was clearly at a loss, the same as army commanders. Budyonniy bungled the operation with his command as well. He called Vasilevskiy on the phone right then and ordered him to prepare an urgent Stavka directive to be sent to the military councils of fronts and armies, which summed up the bitter lessons of defeat. During his routine report on June 4, Vasilevskiy put a draft directive in front of Stalin. Stalin become engrossed in reading it:

"The Crimean front had 16 infantry divisions, three infantry brigades, one cavalry division, four tank brigades, nine artillery regiments of reinforcements vs the enemy's seven infantry and one tank divisions and two brigades at the beginning of the offensive.... Nevertheless, our troops suffered a defeat at the Crimean front and were compelled to withdraw behind the Kerch straight as a result of unsuccessful fighting." This part was followed with meaningful conclusions about operational and tactical mistakes and the reasons for failure, such as the poorly echeloned defense, a poor use of the reserves, inability to take advantage of the terrain, unimaginative troop control and their miscoordination...

"The front command did not even ensure that its orders reached the army," Stalin continued to read. "This happened with the order to the 51st army on covering the retreat of all the front forces behind the Turkish rampart, the order not delivered to the army commander. The Crimean front commander and Com. Mekhlis were engaged in fruitless sessions of the military council lasting for hours, instead of personally communicating with army commanders and instead of exerting their personal influence on the course of the operation during its critical days. Kozlov and Mekhlis ignored the Stavka's instruction and did not ensure its execution; they did not ensure a timely withdrawal of troops behind the Turkish rampart. The two-day delay in withdrawing troops was of lethal consequences for the operation." The document then enumerated the tasks to front military councils on drawing conclusions from the defeat.

"Is that all?" Stalin looked at Vasilevskiy sternly.

"Yes, Comrade Stalin..."

"Write it down...All these people should be court-martialed. Those who deserve it. But this can wait. Write it down," repeated the Supreme Commander. The following order was born as a result:

"1. Remove army commissar first rank Com. Mekhlis from his position of a People's Commissar of Defense

deputy and the Chief of the Red Army Political Directorate and demote him to the rank of a corps commissar.

2. Remove Lieutenant General Com. Kozlov from the position of front commander and demote him in rank to that of Major General, and test him in another, less difficult, job.

3. Remove division commissar Com. Shamanin from his position of member of the front military council and demote him in rank to that of brigade commissar, and test him in another, less difficult, job.

4. Remove Major General Com. Vechniy from the position of chief of staff and send him to the discretion to the chief of General Staff to be assigned to a less responsible job.

5. Remove Lieutenant General Com. Chernyak from the position of army commander, demote him in rank down to that of a colonel and test him in another, less difficult military job.

6. Remove Major General Com. Kolganov from his position of army commander, demote him in rank down to that of a colonel and test him in another, less difficult military job.

7. Remove Air Force Major General Com. Nikolayenko from the position of the front Air Force commander, demote him in rank down to that of Air Force colonel and test him in another, less difficult military job."

Stalin looked at Vasilevskiy and asked:

"Have we forgotten anyone? Let the Commander-in-Chief of the direction punish others with his authority. Now, let me sign it..."

All this has been a thing of the past for him.

Another heavy blow, a severe defeat at Kharkov, was to be suffered during the same time, within a week or two. The losses there were even more terrible: about 230,000 people killed and taken prisoner, 775 tanks and 5,000 guns and mortars lost.

These were the two most terrible fiascoes since 1941. Vereshchyagin's "War Apotheosis" has only a distant resemblance to the scale of Stalin's fiascoes. Under the force of circumstances in the summer, Stalin removed some large forces from the Far East again, after consultations with Molotov and Beriya regarding Japan's plans. Stalin called Vasilevskiy immediately after Molotov told him that "Japan was tied down in Southeast Asia:"

"Remove ten to fifteen divisions from the Far East. The hidden movement should start not later than July 11. Report tomorrow."

"All right, Comrade Stalin."

Next day, or night, to be more precise, Vasilevskiy read to Stalin over the phone the directive sent to the commander of the Far Eastern front:

"Send the following infantry units of the Far Eastern front to the reserve of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief:

the 205th infantry division - from Khabarovsk

the 96th infantry division - from Kuybyshev, Zavitaya

the 204th infantry division - from Cheremkhovo (Blagoveshchensk)

the 422nd infantry division - from Rozengartovka

the 87th infantry division - from Spassk

the 208th infantry division - from Slavyanka

the 126th infantry division - from Razdolnoye, Putsilovka

the 98th infantry division - from Khorol

the 250th infantry brigade - from Birobidzhan

the 248th infantry brigade - from Zelodvorovka, the Maritime territory

the 253rd infantry brigade - from Shkotovo."

"I agree, send the directive, " said Stalin.

The Supreme Commander, who began to feel more confident and who started thinking how to make 1942 the year of defeating German troops, was stunned by these major setbacks. Stalin did not know yet that it was not his last disaster. He did not want to admit that this time, too, the enemy turned out to be more skillful in military command. The Stavka's straightforward and often delayed instructions and directives were unsophisticated, often primitive and lacking in the intricacies of military art during the first phase of the war.

In March, Stalin convened a meeting to discuss the proposals made by the command of the Southwestern direction. It was attended by Stalin, Voroshilov, Timoshenko, Shaposhnikov, Vasilevskiy, and Zhukov. The military commanders-in-chief suggested starting a major offensive operation in the south of the country, involving three fronts and advancing to the line of Nikolayev - Cherkassy - Kiev - Gomel. Shaposhnikov objected:

"We do not possess major strategic reserves. It is more expedient to keep active defense along the entire front, paying special attention to the central direction."

"We should not sit idle in defense and wait for the Germans to strike first," said Stalin.

Zhukov suggested attacking in the western direction, and maintaining active defense on the remaining ones. Timoshenko insisted on a major operation in the south. He was supported by Voroshilov. Reflecting the position

of General Staff, Vasilevskiy objected. The opinion split, and everybody was waiting for Stalin's word. He used to limit himself to approving or rejecting drafted proposals at similar conferences before. Now he had to make his own responsible decision. He had to make a choice. A strategic choice.

Stalin was always a "centrist" in his heart. During the October [revolution] days, feud over the peace of Brest, clashes with the opposition, he always sought to take a position, it will be recalled, from which it would be easy and safe to join the stronger side. Radek's archives contain a curious document, "On Centrism in Our Party," which call Stalin its purveyor and describes centrism itself as "politician's ideological poverty." Stalin remained loyal to his methodological credo. He made a halfway decision, limiting the troops of the Southwestern direction to conducting one operation. Stalin gave preference to the Kharkov operation, to be followed by the liberation of Donbass. No one objecte now, although other proposals, not the objections, were voiced before. They objected rarely to Stalin in the Stavka.

The participants agreed to limit the objective to routing the Kharkov group and decided that the attacks along the convergent directions - from the area to the south of Volchansk and from the Barvenkovo bridgehead - can put the enemy in the hopeless situation. But the Stavka did not know that the German command was also planning to strike at our troops at the Barvenkovo salient. In fact, the Stavka sanctioned an assault from the operational "pocket." This was fraught with great risk.

The Kharkov offensive went off to a good start on May 12. Stalin talked with Timoshenko on the phone several times. The troops advanced up to 50 kilometers deep during the first three days. A powerful flank strike against the attacking group came as a complete surprise for everyone. A number of controversial orders followed. According to some information (the archives have records of no such conversations), Timoshenko approached Stalin on May 18 with a request to suspend the Kharkov offensive. The Supreme Commander refused:

"We shall give you two infantry divisions and two tank brigades from the reserve. Let the Southern front hold fast. The Germans will fizzle out soon."

Khrushchev devoted a whole section of his report at the 20th Party congress to the Kharkov events. According to his own version, he called Stalin at his dacha. Malenkov answered the phone. Khrushchev allegedly told him that he wanted to talk personally with Comrade Stalin. But the Supreme Commander, who was "just a few steps away from the phone" in his room, said again that Khrushchev should talk to Malenkov. After Malenkov conveyed his request on halting the offensive, Stalin replied: "Leave everything as it is!" Here Khrushchev mentioned the ill-famous "globe" which Stalin allegedly used to direct front operations. In other words, Khrushchev told the Congress delegates in no uncertain terms that Stalin was to blame for the Kharkov disaster. G.K. Zhukov came with another version; he believed that the leadership of the military council of the southern and Southwestern fronts were also responsible for the setback.

G.K. Zhukov writes in the second volume of his memoirs, "Recollections and Musings," that General Staff felt the danger earlier than the front did. On May 18, "General Staff again spoke in favor of stopping our offensive operation at Kharkov... A conversation took place regarding this issue with member of the front military council N.S. Khrushchev in the evening of May 18, who expressed the same considerations as the Southwestern front command, i.e., the danger posed by the enemy Kramator group had been grossly exaggerated and there were no reasons for stopping the operation. Referring to these reports prepared by the military council of the Southwestern front, which stressed the necessity of further offense, the Supreme Commander rejected the reasons furnished by General Staff. The version about the distress signals that allegedly were being sent by the military councils of the Southern and Southwestern fronts to the Stavka do not match reality. I testify to this personally, because I was present when the Supreme Commander had the conversation."

I think that the Marshall is closer to the truth. Sharing his personal recollèctions in the report, N.S. Khrushchev most likely conveyed, after many years, his belated reaction to the setback, while it was clear as early as the 19th [sic] that the catastrophe was coming. Marshall Zhukov repeatedly stressed that the decision made by the Supreme Commander was based on the reports submitted by Timoshenko and Kruschchev. If this fact just escaped Krushchev's memory, this is one thing, but if he made a hindsight attempt to establish a historical "alibi" for himself after the event, it is another matter. As far as Stalin was concerned, he could not adequately appreciate a sober analysis of the situation done by General Staff.

By building up the strength of its offensive, the Kleist's group widened the breach and Stalin clearly saw, to his horror, that in a day or two our troups could fall into a "mousetrap" at Barvenkovo. Eventually, he ordered to switch to stiff defense at the Barvenkovo salient, but it was too late. Two armies, the 6th and the 57th, were practically smashed, the same as the army group under the command of General L.V. Bobkin, which moved towards Krasnograd. This was another most terrible defeat suffered during the Great Patriotic war.

Did Stalin comprehend the reasons of the defeats? Did he understand the essence of his personal mistakes? Did he feel his own strategic and operational vulnerability? It is hard to say. There is not doubt that both he and the command in general gradually learned the bloody lessons of war. Military historians write with good reason from the today's perspective that the reasons behind the

Kharkov debacle lie on the surface: they did not provide reliable support for the flanks of the advancing group; did not ensure a decisive superiority in the key area; did not conduct two or three camouflage operations somewhere to the south and north of the point of onslaught, thus allowing Hitler's command to maneuver their forces at will; did not engage the aviation of the Bryansk and Southern fronts for providing a massive offensive support and striking at the most dangerous enemy groups; Kleist's counterattack came as a surprise, which testified to poor intelligence; and finally, controls and communications turned out to be very ill-organized again. All this is clear to us, I repeat, as we sit in our quiet offices, alone with the Stavka's archive files. Everything was more complex, difficult and unpredictable in the bloody grinder of the war at that time. But a military leader's real genius, grandeur and talents come to the fore precisely in such situations. Stalin did not display them. It was only the people and ordinary soldiers who displayed unheard-of staunchness, as they continued to fight on and on, ignorant of the fact that numerous huge losses at Minsk, Kiev, in the Crimea and at Kharkov, and in a number of other places could be largely attributed to the Leader's miscalculations.

Having suffered a series of devastating setbacks, for which he was also personally responsible, Stalin continued to look for the ways of putting up a stronger resistance. He decided to give a higher profile to the partisan movement following the Crimean and Kharkov disasters. He signed resolution No. 1837 of the State Defense Committee in late May 1942, having discussed the matter with his retinue, "On Establishing Central Headquarters of Partisan Movement at the Stavka of Supreme Commander-in-Chief." The resolution said in part:

"Establish the Central headquarters of the partisan movement at the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in order to combine the command of the partisan movement behind the enemy lines and to further encourage this movement." Front headquarters of the partisan movement were established under the military councils of the Southwestern direction, Bryansk, Western, Kalinin, Leningrad, and Karel-Finnish fronts. The tasks for the partisan movement were formulated. The movement was headed by the central staff, which included Comrades P.K. Ponomaryov (Central Committee of the all-Russia Communist Party (Bolshevik), V.T. Serghienko (NKVD), and G.F. Korneyev (reconnaissance directorate of the People's Commissariat of Defense). This was the correct step by the Stavka, the step which, probably, should have been taken before.

Stalin, of course, agonized over the reasons for setbacks. He learned a great deal later on, but the lessons were too bloody. In the meantime, Stalin decided to send a special letter to the military council of the Southwestern front after the front in the south had been stabilized more or less.

On July 24, at 2 o'clock in the morning, Stalin suddenly said as Vasilevskiy was ready to leave after his routine report:

"Wait a minute. I want to go back to the Kharkov setback. They failed to give me any coherent answer today when I asked the staff of the Southwestern front whether the enemy had been halted at Kupyansk and what progress had been made on establishing a line of defense on the Oskol river. When are people going to learn how to fight? The Kharkov defeat should have taught the headquarters a lesson. When are they going to comply with the Stavka's directives to a tee? We should remind them of this. Let those in position punish those who deserve it, but I'd like to send a personal letter to the front leadership. What do you think?"

"I think this could be useful," said Vasilevskiy.

The document has been preserved for us in the archives, these dispassionate repositories of human memory.

"Military council of the Southwestern front.

We here in Moscow, members of the Defense Committee (characteristically, Stalin made decision himself, like many others, without consulting anybody from the Defense Committee -D.V.) and people from General Staff decided to remove Com. Bagramyan from the position of chief of staff of the Southwestern front. Com. Bagramyan does not satisfy the Stavka neither as the chief of staff, who was supposed to strengthen communications and army control, nor as an ordinary communicator who is bound to provide honest and true reports to the Stavka about the front situation. Moreover, Com. Bagramyan failed to draw conclusions from the disaster that broke out at the Southwestern front. Because of its lack of concern, the Southwestern front not only lost the half-won Kharkov operation in a matter of three weeks, but let the enemy take care of 10-12 divisions."

Stalin stopped, paused, glanced at Vasilevskiy and then started to pace his office again. Finally, he addressed the Chief of General Staff:

"In 1914, together with Samsonov, a Russian general with a German name - I forgot it - also suffered a defeat..."

"Rannenkampf," said Vasilevskiy after a pause. He became the chief of General Staff only this month and was not used yet to the Supreme Commander's thoughts "zigzagging."

"Yes, of course...Go on writing.

This is a disaster, tantamount in its dire results to the one suffered by Rannenkampf and Samsonov in eastern Prussia. Com. Bagramyan could have drawn a lesson after what has happened and learned something. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As prior to the catastrophe, the staff's communications with the armies remain unsatisfactory and the information is of low-grade quality...

We are sending you Com. Bodin, deputy the Chief of General Staff, as an acting chief of staff, a person familiar with your front and capable of doing you great service. Com. Bagramyan has been appointed chief of staff of the 28th army. If Com. Bagramyan shows his mettle as the army chief of staff, I'll raise the issue of giving him an opportunity later on to advance further.

It is clear that the matter concerns not just Com. Bagramyan. It concerns the mistakes made by all members of the military council, and first of all, by Com. Timoshenko and Com. Khrushchev. If we had told the country everything about the disaster, with a loss of 18-20 divisions which the front has suffered from and still continues to suffer, I'm afraid you would have been dealt with very harshly...

Wish you success

June 26, 1942 2:00 a.m.

I. Stalin."

Stalin dismissed Vasilevskiy, and tired, leaned back in his chair. The year went off to such a good start, he thought. The Moscow counteroffensive from December 5, 1941 till January 7, 1942 was the first major offensive undertaken in close collaboration with fronts. The country was jubilant, as the enemy was thrown away from the walls of the capital 100-250 kilometers to the west! The tide seemed to have been turned. A successful landing of a large party in the Crimea; success at Tikhvin; the encirclement of a large group at Demyansk... And then... If Stalin read Julius Gaius Svetoniy's "On Divine," he could have quoted Caesar as saying: "No victories can bring as much as one defeat can take away." However, it was more that one. And more were to come...

Now, these defeats. But he reacted to them with more calm than to the threat that hung over the capital in the October of last year. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief could not shake off some uncertainty, he was haunted by premonitions. He could not recover his former confidence until the first major victory, at Moscow. When a radio intercept of Hitler's speech was brought to him on October 2, he might have thought: if we do not hold out now, this will be his, Stalin's end, in the first place. It seemed to the Leader that in case of another major failure, they would not just turn their backs on him, but remove him, do away with him, liquidate him...

He recalls how he stayed in his office then several nights in a row, falling into an oblivion of a restless sleep in his resting room for two or three hours a day; the rest of the time, together with generals from the General Headquarters and politburo members, he made frantic decisions, gave orders and summoned some people. He remembers what seemed to him a clever directive prepared by the Stavka, onpassing to stiff defense along the entire front line, digging holes and full-size trenches, several lines of them, the ones with communication passages, barbed wire concertinas, and antitank obstacles. It may sound funny now, but he was perhaps the main "supplier" in those days, distributing almost every tank, gun, and truck arriving in Moscow. On October 1, for example, he made "a fair" distribution of barbed wire and low-visibility obstacle packages.

Despite the heroic effort undertaken by the troops of the Western, Reserve, Bryansk, and Kalinin fronts, the 3rd and 4th German tank groups hooked up near Vyazama in mid October, and divisions of the 19th, 20th, 24th and 32nd armies were surrounded. The Soviet troops seemed to be ill-fated in 1941 and in the first half of 1942, as the German mobile tank and mechanized units prepared and carried out envelopments, encirclements and pincer movements. The troops were cursed with encirclements. One incautious word said in defense, such as "bypassed" or "surrounded" created grounds for panic and a drop in troops' moral. Stalin feared that the threat of encirclement would paralyze troops at Vyazma as well, but the units were fighting tooth and nail. People's moral "resilience" and staunchness were growing, although it was still insufficient. Stalin issued the order for the surrounded formations to fight their way through to the Mozhaisk line of defense. Individual units managed to do this, but the losses were very large once again. The selfless spirit shown by Soviet soldiers, fallen in the fighting near Vyazma, delayed over 30 enemy divisions for more than a week. The Mozhaisk line was being urgently reinforced during the period.

After Stalin had been told that the German troops posed a direct threat to Moscow, having reached Ostashkovo, Tula and Naro-Fominsk, he dictated a brief order, without seeking advice from General Staff, and signed it as the People's Commissar of Defense: "All antiaircraft batteries of the Moscow air defense command, located to the west, Southwestern and south of Moscow, should be ready, in addition to their main task of repulsing airborne enemy, to repel and destroy enemy tanks and personnel which manage to break through." About half a million Muscovites, mostly women, were building defense lines around Moscow. These were the most alarming weeks faced by the capital. Fresh divisions were moving from the Far East and Siberia.

A real danger was hanging over Moscow. A state of siege was imposed in Moscow on October 20 by the decision of the State Defense Committee. October and November proved to be extremely difficult months for Stalin, as well as for all of the Soviet people. He could not regain complete peace of mind, because the enemy was striking one devastating blow after another, allowing no time to recover, take a respite and look around. Stalin was like a cornered boxer who could hardly stand on his feet under a flurry of blows delivered by his skillful opponent. It seemed to Stalin sometimes that only a miracle could save him. But this was not a miracle, but the people which, found in the most dire situation, found enough power to hold out. Those October days also witnessed concern over Leningrad reaching its peak. The Leningraders displayed great stoicism and a genuine grandeur of spirit. Hitler said cynically on November 9, 1941, as

he tried to explain why the German army was marking time near Leningrad: "We advanced near Leningrad only as long as it took us to surround the city. Now we are on the defensive there, while the enemy is compelled to attempt to break out, but it will starve to death in Leningrad. If there had been a force that could make us end the siege, I would have ordered to take the city by assault. But the city is solidly surrounded, it and its inhabitants - everybody will fall into our hands."

Stalin was not sure that they would manage to keep Leningrad. On the night of October 23, 1941, Vasilevskiy dictated over direct line, at his request, the text of the instructions written personally by Stalin:

"Fedyuninskiy, Zhdanov, Kuznetsov.

One can come to the conclusion, judging by your slow action, that we have not grasped yet the critical situation faced by the troops of the Leningrad front. All our troops will be taken prisoner if you fail to break the front in the next few days and do not restore strong ties with the 54th army which connects you the country's rear. This link has to be restored not only in order to supply the troops of the Leningrad front, but especially to open up the exit to the east for the Leningarad front troops - to avoid being taken prisoner if we are forced to surrender Leningrad. Bear in mind that Moscow is in a critical situation and is unable to help you with fresh forces. Either you break through the front in these two or three days and enable our troops to withdraw to the east in case Leningrad could not be held, or you are going to be taken prisoner.

We demand that you take decisive and prompt action. Concentrate eight or ten divisions and break through to the east. This is necessary in case Leningrad is held or in case Leningrad is surrendered. The army is more important for us. We urge you to take resolute action.

Stalin. October 23 3:35 a.m."

The Supreme Commander admitted the possibility of the enemy capturing both Moscow and Leningrad. This becomes clear from the aforementioned text of his personal instructions, and from his instructions on preparations to destroy the Baltic Navy. The same archive documents record a conversation that Vasilevskiy had a hour later on direct line with the 54th army commander, Lieutenant General M.S. Khozin, who was nominated commander of the Leningrad front four days after that: "I'm answering your questions by giving you Comrade Stalin's instructions. The 54th army has to make every effort to help the Leningrad front forces to break through to the east... Take into account that this involves not just the saving of Leningarad, but the saving and withdrawal of the army of the Leningrad front. That is all."

The situation was critical in the approaches to Moscow as well. The group "Center" command received Hitler's instruction: "The 4th tank group and the 4th army attack without delay in the direction of Moscow with an eye on defeating enemy forces near Moscow and taking firm control of the terrain around Moscow and reliably encircling the city. To achieve this objective, the 2nd tank army moves to the area southeast of Moscow so that, covered from the east, it envelops Moscow from the southeast and then from the east." The German troops advanced up to 200-250 kilometers in some areas during their October offensive.

Stalin recalls how he assembled the members of the State Defense Committee, the politburo and the military in his office on October 17 or 18. They included V.M. Molotov, G.M. Malenkov, A.I. Mikoyan, L.P. Beriya, N.A.Voznesenskiy, A.S. Shcherbakov, L.M.Kaganovich, A.M. Vasilevskiy, and P.A. Artemiyev. Having greeted them, the Master asked everyone to sit down and began to issue instructions immediately: to evacuate today the government, leading public figures, and statesmen; mine major enterprises and have them ready to be blown up in case Moscow is captured; raise antitank and antipersonnel obstacles at all exits from, and entrances to, Moscow. It was decided here, as was provided for in the plan of mobilization, to evacuate the government to Kuybyshev and General Staff, to Arzamas. Stalin added after a pause that he still hoped for the better, as divisions were to start arriving soon from Siberia and the Far East. They were already boarding trains.

"We shall not surrender Moscow." "There is no more room for retreat" were the words that became civic and patriotic imperatives for each Soviet. Calm and determination set in on Moscow streets after a short-lived panic in mid-October. The capital was prepared to fight to the last.

A few AA batteries were placed and security was strengthened around Stalin's nearby dacha. One early morning, as Stalin came to his dacha, he witnessed an air raid on Moscow, as he stepped out of his car. The deafening claps of AA guns, the searchlight beams overhead, the roaring of numerous planes in the Moscow sky gave a graphic evidence of the capital's situation. Stalin stood still at his car, watching the raid in silence. Could he have imagined just four months ago that his dacha would be a mere day's march away of a German tank column? Something fell with a thud on the road. Vlasik bent down and saw a fragment of an AA shell. The head of security tried to cajole Stalin into going to his dacha (the shelter was built later on), but the Supreme Commander lingered for a few more minutes, inhaling the chilly October morning air and feeling the deadly breath of war probably for the first time. It was then that he felt an urge to visit the front.

On a late October night, a column of a dozen vehicles took the Volokolamsk highway and, as it left Moscow, turned onto a country road. Stalin wanted to see a salvo of reactive guns which were being moved to the firing positions, but his accompanying party and the security did not allow him to go any further. They stood for a while atop a hillock. Stalin listened to the report by a high-ranking Western front commander, stared for a long time at the crimson flashes over the western part of

the horizon, and then turned back. His heavy armored car got stuck in the mud on his way back. Driver A. Krivchenkov was in agony. But the motorcade did not stop, as Beriya insisted that the Supreme Commander changed cars, and the "front trip" was over as the dawn came.

One day in mid-October, as Stalin was getting ready to go to his dacha, Beriya said indecisively: "You shouldn't, Comrade Stalin." As he caught the Master's perplexed look, he said in Georgian: "The dacha has been mined and made ready to be blown up." Stalin became indignant, but calmed down fast. Beriya also told him that a special train was prepared for him at a railway station near Moscow, as well as four Stavka's planes, including Stalin's personal Douglas plane. Stalin wavered, because deep in his heart he felt that the people and the army felt confident as long as they knew that he was in Moscow. On thinking hard, he decided to stay in Moscow till the last moment. This was his extra chance. He knew that the capital's evacuation was proceeding apace and that defense enterprises were being mined; Beriya suggested blowing up Metro in case of retreat... He should discuss this with Shcherbakov... Stalin closed his eyes: Beriya drifted away, with his voice dying down, only to be replaced with a smell of wormwood and the hallucinations of crimson flashes. And he was holding a warm fragment of the AA shell that Vlasik gave to him...

But they did hold out! And the Germans' second overall offensive against Moscow failed flat! Stalin soon endorsed the idea of a counter-offensive suggested by the Western front commander G.K. Zhukov. The crux of the plan was to smash the enemy main force hanging over Moscow from the north and the south by having the Western front strike powerful blows, in conjunction with the troops on the left flank of the Kalinin and Southwestern fronts, and also to surrender and destroy all enemy armies facing our western front. The reserves made the day in the final count.

As commander of the "Center" group von Bock had predicted, "the outcome of the battle would be decided by the last battalion." This time the Soviet command made a far more calculated use of them. An order was given to launch a counteroffensive after the German attacks had fizzled out right on the approaches to Moscow, with the dead tired Wehrmacht soldiers hardly able to stand on their feet. It was a success at last. The Hitlerites suffered their first major defeat in World War II. This was especially important, since the German command had already prepared the ritual of "taking the capital prisoner," which implied the Russians' early capitulation. What was most amazing, the Soviet troops scored a success despite a slight edge that the enemy had in tanks, artillery and some other components of its might.

It seemed like a turning point came when the invaders were pushed to the west. The most important achievement of the first victory was to restore people's confidence in the possibility of routing the aggressor, to dispel an atmosphere of fatal misfortune and to destroy the aura of "invincibility" that surrounded the German army. One could hardly overestimate the spiritual significance of victory in the first major strategic offensive. It seems that after December 1941 Stalin began to feel more confident of the overall positive outcome of the war. Of course, Stalin hoped to achieve success eventually deep in his heart, even after the bitter defeats at Kharkov, in the Crimea and at Vyazma. These hopes were not groundless, since they rested first of all on the ability of the Soviet people to sustain such disasters that no one else would have been able to survive. The defeats suffered by fronts, armies, corps, or divisions did not lead to an irreparable national disaster first of all because Hitler failed to break the will of our people. As long as this spirit lives on and the will to fight has not been lost, the biggest material losses and human sacrifices do not spell out the final end. *The disasters strengthened Stalin's hopes. Paradoxically, but this is true.* No other nation would have forgiven their leader the mistakes that he made on the eve of the war, including a dilettante stewardship of the armed struggle which resulted in exorbitant material, human, technical and territorial losses during the initial stage of the war. But the Soviet people "forgave" him, because it had long been part of the system under which he was not the maker, but the executioner of the leader's will. It is the result, not its price, that always counted for Stalin. The fortunes of history placed at the head of the huge country a military leader and commander who could afford to lose 100, 200, 300 or 400 thousand people in operations, and still keep alive the hope of final victory...

Another moment in the battle of Moscow. In late November, the Germans reached the Volga-Moscow canal, crossed the Narva river and approached Kashira from the south. The Stavka was preparing a counteroffensive at the time, while Stalin again suggested "reshuffling" the commanders, now at the fronts near Moscow. Earlier, in October, he replaced the Western front commander Colonel General I.S. Konev (he was appointed Kalinin front commander) with Army General G.K. Zhukov; he substituted Major General G.F. Zakharov for Colonel General A.I. Yeremenko at the Bryansk front, the former was replaced by Colonel General Ya. T. Chervichenko. He appointed Lieutenant General F. Ya. Kostenko to replace Marshall S.K. Timoshenko as commander of the Southwestern front, whose right wing participated in the Battle of Moscow. Only Marshall Budyonniy kept his job as commander of the reserve front. It seemed to Stalin that the reshuffles helped find the best combination of front leadership near Moscow. However, this seemed to do nothing but perplex the "Center" group commander von Bock, who did not have time to grasp the intelligence reports about the replacements of Soviet generals and also caused much inconvenience to the commanders who were compelled to try to fit into the new situation nonstop. It appears that near Moscow the Soviet troops showed real resilience for the first time, stood firm till last and dispelled the myth

about German invincibility. Not only the people and the army began to look up. Stalin seemed to regain the lost confidence as well.

Stalin had a peculiar reaction to the stories about the tragedy of Leningraders, the starvation to death of hundreds of thousands of people. Army General I.I. Feduyninskiy once told me about a conversation Stalin had after the blockade with a group of Leningrad leaders. Stalin was told that in the winter of 1941-1942 Leningrad became a ghost city. Many corpses were lying in the street, people moved along houses like shadows. The helpless, emaciated people would fall down to never rise again. The sappers used explosives to make trenches into which piles of corpses were pitched. The most horrible thing, Feduyninsky said, was that the dying people had lucid minds till the very last moment. Even fear disappears. A person seems to "see," visualize his or her death. The immobile city silently epitomized one of the most horrible tragedies in human history.

Stalin's response to the story was as follows: "Death mowed down not only Leningraders. People perished at the fronts and in the occupied territories. I agree that death is awful when there is no hope. And hunger leaves no hope. We could not offer Leningrad more at that time. Moscow was hanging by a thread itself. War and death are inseparable. This rotter with a fringe brought blight not only to Leningrad."

When large losses caused by encirclement, abortive counteroffensive or other operation were reported to Stalin, the Supreme Commander normally did not vent his feelings. He might take an angry jab or two at his military commanders, saying for example, "When are they going to learn how to fight?," or "This is an old story all over again." But he never spoke about the bitter and irretrievable losses, thousands of the Motherland's sons who died, did not express his feelings in the same words which Lenin said during the Civil War: "Such losses, such losses, this is awful." Stalin's emotions were either "frozen" long before the war, or he knew how to hide them very deep.

Stalin was not a bad psychologist. He knew that he should not leave Moscow, that the Information bureau reports should not contain a hint of panic; he insisted with good reason that the papers should write more frequently about exploits, and the courageous and gallant acts performed by Soviet soldiers. On the eve of the November red-letter day, Stalin asked Molotov and Beriya:

"How are we going to conduct the military parade? Maybe an hour or two earlier than usual?"

The interlocutors thought they had misunderstood him. What parade? The Germans were right near Moscow. The fascists' strike force of 51 divisions semicircled the capital. Parade, by George! Stalin went on, as if oblivious of the bewilderment in his comrades-in-arms:

"Moscow antiaircraft units should be beefed up even more. The main military leaders at the fronts. Budyonniy will take the parade and General Artemiyev will command it. If the parade is interrupted by a bombing raid - in case the German planes get through - remove those killed and wounded promptly, but the parade shall be completed. Let the documentary workers make newsreels which should be promptly copied and sent all over the country... The papers should cover the parade extensively. I shall make a report at the ceremonial function and make a speech during the parade... What do you think?"

"But risking... Risk! This will send large political ripples in our and in other countries of course," recovered Molotov.

"All right, let's do it," Stalin did not elaborate. He turned to Beriya: "Give the necessary instructions, but nobody should know about the forthcoming parade with the exception of Artemiev, Budyonniy and a few other confidants."

Looking back, one can say that the decision to hold a parade was a foresight. It came as evidence of Stalin's growing confidence, his ability to influence the public opinion in the country and to control the people's spiritual condition, the more so that war sowed doubts in many people about its successful outcome. The occupied areas saw the emergence of many hirelings of Hitler. Stalin realized that setbacks were sapping faith, which had to be reinforced by all means.

Stalin approached mass surrender as a sign of betrayal, treason and hostile intentions. With no exceptions. He had never admitted in public the ironclad fact that very many Soviet servicemen were taken prisoner by the enemy. Speaking at a commemorative function of the Moscow Soviet of people's deputies in the "Mayakovskiy" metro station on November 6, 1941, the head of the State Defense Committee said that "we have lost 350,000 people killed in action and 378,000 missing in action in the four months of the war." Stalin knew that the number of those "missing in action" was several times higher. What he saw behind the terse losses reports, which had large numbers in the "missing in action" column (there was no "taken prisoner" column) was not the result of the disastrous beginning of the war, but political shortcomings in people's education, "defects" in the work of the punitive organs, enemy influence, the dregs of the class struggle of the past. In evaluating these phenomena, Stalin did not come across as either an astute psychologist, or a sober politician, or "the nation's wise father." He was the same Stalin, who showed all his colors in 1929-1933 and in 1937-1939. It takes a long time to change a human nature, to alter one's core. Stalin continued to refer to "enemy shenanigans" and "enemy environment" all his life. He would not have been Stalin otherwise.

Footnotes:

1. This is how the Soviet information bureau reported this on May 31,1942: "The Soviet command learned some time ago about the German command's plans of launching in the future a major offensive of the German fascist troops in one of the sections of the Rostov front. To forestall and frustrate the attack by the German fascist forces, the Soviet command began an offensive in the Kharkov direction, with the command not planning to capture Kharkov... The main objective set by the Soviet command of forestalling and frustrating the attack by the German fascist troops has been met. The Germans have lost not less than 90,000 men and officers killed and taken prisoner, 540 tanks, not less that 1,500 guns, and up to 200 airplanes. Our troops lost in the fighting up to 5,000 men killed, 70,000 missing in action, 300 tanks, 832 guns and 124 air planes."

Captivity And Vlasovites

The fascist invasion caused many tribulations in most horrible shape. Captivity was one of them. A man faced with a life-or-death choice, often opts for life during war, although it leads to the loss of freedom, many values and his dignified social status. Captivity was next to death during the past war, since the overwhelming majority of the prisoners perished in German concentration camps.

The Soviet government emphasized in its address to the International Red Cross Committee and the governments of the world in May 1918 that the Russian Soviet government recognized and would honor the convention on the victims of war and "all other international conventions and agreements related to Red Cross, recognized by Russia prior to October 1917." Encyclopedia Britannica writes that the Soviet Union did not ratify the 1929 Geneva conventions on prisoners of war. Compared to 1918, the times and people had changed dramatically in Soviet Russia. As to Hitler, international law was nothing but another "chimera" for him.

Millions of our soldiers were taken prisoner during the first year and a half of the war. We still do not have the accurate number of Soviet losses or prisoners. It is to be hoped that the overall number of those killed and taken prisoner will be specified now that the archives are becoming more accessible. We shall give our own estimates of the Soviet Union's losses in the Great Patriotic war in one of the subsequent chapterns. Today we have almost no doubt that around three million Soviet servicemen were taken prisoner by the Germans in 1941, which amounts to about 70 percent of the overall number of our people taken prisoner during the war. For the Soviet people, this was not just the problem of the "balance of forces," but a political and moral one. It has not been solved in full until now. There were many people who were taken prisoner under the tragic circumstances, not accounting for the dishonest people, turncoats, and traitors. All of them were the horrible *victims* of war.

Stalin's grandeur, who remained atop the pedestal of victory even after his cult had been exposed, can be attributed, among other things, to the fact that the people and society still do not know the *exact* price of Victory. In the meantime, it is exorbitant, and to no less degree due to the flagrant miscalculations made by Stalin on the eve of the war, his crimes involving terror against the military cadres, as well as to the dilettante and inept leadership, especially early in the war.

A huge number of Soviet servicemen were taken prisoner following a number of unsuccessful defensive and offensive operations in 1941 and in 1942. The fate of those people was dismal. It was twice as dismal, because according to our official views, captivity was a disgrace. Although Soviet military manuals did not consider the political and moral aspects of captivity, it was unequivocally qualified as actual treason. The formula said better dead than taken prisoner. But the circumstances of war were as such that many people preferred life to death in the hope of escaping from captivity and returning to their hearth.

Stalin inquired about the size of losses several times during the first months of the war. He received reports prepared by the General Staff and the chief personnel directorate, but nobody seemed to know a thing at that time. I have in front of me a few statistical reports listing losses. They have columns listing the number of people killed, wounded, sick, missing in action; how many horses were disabled, guns, mortars, tanks, and air planes lost... But there is no column indicating the number of people taken prisoner. If one to believe this report, a total of only 72,776 people "were missing in action" at all the fronts in June and July. The number will double if we add the August and September figures from the next report, but we know that 452,720 people were surrounded in the area of Kiev alone. Most of them were taken prisoner.

Individual reports that did not tally numbers gave a more accurate number of those missing in action. For example, the chief military procurator of the Red Army, division military lawyer, Nosov, reported to USSR deputy People's Commissar of Defense L.Z. Mekhlis on September 24, 1941: "The 299th infantry division, 50th army, Bryansk front, suffered immense losses during eight days of fighting at the station of Zhukovka, along the Bryansk-Roslavl highway. As of September 12 of this year, the division had less than 500 men, with about 500 people killed, 1,500 wounded and 4,000 missing in action out of the total combat strength of 7,000 people."

Stalin implicitly admitted a large number of those "missing in action." He wrote in his telegram sent to Timoshenko, Khrushchev and Bodin: "The Stavka considers it unforgivable and inadmissible for the military council to furnish no information for several days about the fate of the 28th, 38th and 57th armies and the 22nd tank corps. The Stavka has learned from other sources that the staffs of these armies had moved behind the Don; neither the headquarters nor the front military council report to the

Stavka what happened to the troops of these armies, what is their fate and whether they are continuing to fight or have been taken prisoner. These armies had about 14 divisions. The Stavka wants to know what has happened to these divisions."

The disastrous start of the war, when the German tank groups plunged and cut through fronts, armies, and corps, created an atmosphere of isolation, separation and ignorance in the units. The collective's main strength, such as teamwork, cohesion and unity, becomes undermined under the circumstances. German military commanders succeeded in carrying out many maneuvers that led to the encirclement or semi-encirclement of individual units and formations. The Soviet troops were not taught how to conduct this type of combat. The cases of panic, confusion and loss of control were frequent occurrences at that time, despite the courage displayed by many soldiers, commanders, and political officers. Quite a few commanders shot themselves to avoid captivity. This was often done after all the opportunities for resistance had been exhausted. This step was mostly motivated by the fear of disgraceful captivity or the fear of responsibility for the failure to execute an order. For example, General Kopets, whose name we have mentioned before, shot himself after the stunning defeats over the first few days; he fought courageously in the Spanish sky and was promoted to Air Force commander of the Western special military district. Some other people did the same. Major General S.V. Berzin also took his life after he had been surrounded in the Uman area and had exhausted all possibilities for resistance, although he was listed as "missing in action" for a long time after that.

Hitler claimed in his November 1941 address: "If I want to give a general outline of the success during this war, it suffices to cite the number of those taken prisoner, which ran into 3.6 million people in six months. And I forbid all those English dimwits to say that it has not been proved. When a German military institution makes an estimate, its estimate is always correct." Choked with hysterical glee, Hitler actually proclaimed that victory was at his feet and all he had to do was to bend down and pick it up. But he did not feel yet that the specter of Napoleonian defeat hovered behind his back.

Today Western scholarly publications cite different numbers of Soviet prisoners in the past war. Some of them refer to the data taken from the Wehrmacht's headquarters (OKH and OKV): the Germans took prisoner 5,160 thousand people between June 1941 and April 1945. According to our preliminary data, the number seems to be inflated. Enormous price was paid for miscalculations, incompetence, and lack of preparation.

I repeat again that probably more accurate numbers of those killed, wounded and taken prisoner on both sides will be available in the near future. We can give our conservative preliminary estimate of the number of Soviet servicemen taken prisoner by the fascists, on the basis of the strength of units surrounded, the number of killed in operations during the first phase of war, and foreign statistics. This number runs approximately into three million people during the first *six months*. A considerably lower number of servicemen were taken prisoner during the Kharkov and the Crimean operations and during the German summer offensive in 1942. After Stalingrad, it were the Soviet troops, as a rule, which took enemy prisoner. We should note for the sake of historical fairness that when the final victory was achieved in Berlin in May 1945, the surviving Wehrmacht soldiers, officers and generals - we want to emphasize, all of them - were taken prisoner either by the Soviet troops or by their Allies. So, only the Allies could talk eventually about the final "success in the war" as being expressed in the number of POWs.

What was Stalin's attitude to captivity? How did he respond to the surrounding and surrender of a huge number of servicemen? In addition to the official oral instruction prohibiting captivity as an act inadmissible for a Soviet soldier, Stalin harbored the suspicion of treason, betrayal and collaboration with the enemy. Any person taken prisoner did not enjoy his confidence. In addition to barrier units, the Surpreme Commander personally authorized, as we have mentioned already, the creation of special NKVD [People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (1917-1946)] camps to "screen" people who broke out of encirclement. A large number of them were set up during the first and the second stages of the war. Stalin issued quite a few instructions similar to the one quoted below:

"Comrade L.P. Beriya.

I have no objections to setting up three NKVD camps to screen the retreating units.

I. Stalin

August 24, 1942 3:35 a.m. Dictated by Com. Stalin over the phone. Bokov."

Stalin closely watched the fate of major commanders who were missing in action. For example, he gave special instructions to find out what happened to army commanders Kachalov, Ponedelin, Vlasov, Yefremov, Potapov, Rakutin, Samokhin and Lukin. We talked before about the fate of Kachalov and Ponedelin. The Surpreme Commander instructed Beriya to find out about the fate of Vlasov and Yefremov after both of them we reported missing. The A.A. Zhadanov archives has a cable to General Sazonov:

"Report immediately at the request of the Stavka of the Surpreme Commander-in-Chief what you know about Vlasov, whether he is alive, whether you have seen him and what measures you have taken to find him. Wait for your immediate reply.

Zhdanov."

They did not find Vlasov, who soon announced himself however. We shall talk about it below. They learned by

accident about the fate of Lieutenant General M.G. Yefremov, about whom Stalin made inquiries as well. A woman from the village of Slobodka, Tyomkinskiy rayon, Smolensk Oblast, told the military that at the end of April she saw soldiers "burying a general" outside the village. They reported to the top, where, it was suspected, the army commander was in captivity. The check-up resulted in a report, sent to Stalin, which virtually rehabilitated the general:

"Comrade Stalin.

Lieutenant General M.G. Yefimov organized a group of soldiers and commanders to break out of encirclement. Lieutenant General M.G. Yefimov was seriously wounded in the side fighting against the enemy near the village of Maloye Ustie; unable to move without help, he shot himself and was buried in the village of Slobodka, Tyomkinskiy rayon, Smolensk Oblast. On opening the grave and identifying the body, it was established...that Yefremov was seriously wounded in the sciatic bone and shot himself, having no hope of escaping captivity.

Sokolovskiy

April 30, 1943

Bulganin."

The Soviet general, who preserved courage till the last minutes of his life, removed the politically dubious definition of "missing in action" with his own death, the circumstances of which became known.

The records and statistics department of the chief personnel directorate reported to Stalin the names of many generals who were listed "missing in action" in 1941-1942, including L.B. Bobkin, T.K. Batsanov, P.M. Padosek, S.V. Vishnevskiy, P.F. Alferieyv, G.M. Zusmanovich, V.V. Vladimirov, I.P. Novohatniy, I.S. Nikitin, N.A. Lebedev, I.V. Zuev, L.S. Grishchuk, T.K. Cherepin, V.G. Vaneyev, A.I. Popenko, G.A. Larionov, P.G. Yegorov and D.G. Yegrov, I.P. Prokhorov and V.I. Prokhorov, B.A. Pogrebov, G.I. Fedorov, A.S. Titov, A.V. Gornov, M.G. Khatskilevich, A.B. Borisov, M.D. Borisov, V.B., Borisov, G.I, Kuzmin, L.G. Petrovskiy, P.P. Pavlov, F.N. Matykin, E. Ya. Magon, I.P. Karmanov I.A. Kornilov, M.M. Shaymuratov, B.S. Rikhter, K.T. Rudenko, A.A. Zhurba, P.V. Sysoyev, Ya.I. Smirnov, F.G. Sushchiy, A.G. Samokhin, A.S. Zotov, I.A. Konyak, A.N. Tonkonogov, K. Ye. Kulikov, D.M. Karbyshev, G.P. Kozlov, and a number of other generals.

Some of them were taken prisoner, quite a few shot themselves, the majority perished trying to break out of encirclement. Working on this book, I was able to find out what happened to many of them later on. This could become a separate research paper. Let me give a few names. Major General L.V. Bobkin was not missing in action, but was killed by a German soldier from a submachine gun on May 26, 1942. The bullet hit him as he stood over the body of his son...

Generals G.A. Larionov, P.G. Yegorov, G.I. Fyodorov, A.S. Titov, M.G. Khatskilevich, A.B. Borisov, V.B. Borisov, E.Ya. Magon, L.G. Petrovskiy, M.M. Shaymuratov, K.I. Rakutin, A.N. Smirnov, A.S. Mitrofanov, F.N. Matykin, F.F. Alyabushev, F.G. Sushchiy, D.P. Safonov, S.V. Berzin, I.V. Vasiliev, and some others were not "missing in action" either, but died directly in fighting. For example, generals V.B. Borisov and M.G. Khatskilevich were killed when their tanks were hit by German shells. Generals G.M. Zusmanovich, I.S. Nikitin, P.G. Makarov, N.M. Starostin, I.M. Shepetov, K.E. Kulikov, S.V. Baranov, D.M. Karbyshev and many others died a martyr's death in fascist camps. Others had a different fate. Major General P.V. Sysoyev was taken prisoner in July 1941, escaped from his camp in 1943 and then was "screened" for three years. Several people were sentenced to be shot for failing to fulfill an order or for high treason. There were very just a few people who went to serve Hitler, like B.S. Rikhter, V.F. Malyshkin, and G.N. Zhilenkov. We should stress once again that there was just a handful of such scum wearing general's shoulder straps.

Most of the Soviet generals were taken prisoner during the first months of war. There were only two or three occasions when, due to a tactical mistake or fateful negligence, they found themselves behind the enemy lines. The Surpreme Commander issued a stern order on each of these occasions. Here is an excerpt from one of such orders, for example:

"Front and individual army commanders.

On November 6, commander of the 44th army Lieutenant General Khomenko and artillery commander of the same army Major General Bobkov went to visit the corps headquarters, but lost their bearings and found themselves amid enemy positions. As they encountered the enemy, the car that Khomenko drove himself, got stalled and these people were taken prisoner, together with all the papers that they had with them.

1. Prohibit army and corps commanders from leaving without reconnaissance and protection;

2. Take no operational documents, with the exception of an unplotted map of the destination area, when visiting the troops, from the corps headquarters and below...

3. Prohibit senior commanding officers to personally drive cars.

November 7, 1943

I. Stalin."

Having organized a "total" purge of society over 1937-1939, Stalin could hope, it seemed, that there would be no instances of collaboration with the invaders. Molotov claimed after the war as well that the Master had "liquidated the fifth column." Otherwise, he said, we could have hardly held out during the war. Both Stalin and Molotov were far away from the truth. We have

talked already quite a lot about the fact that these were not the enemies whom Stalin cut down in 1937-1938. Finally, the West also had its quislings and lavales; quite a few traitors and collaborators appeared in the occupied Soviet territories as well. There were many reasons for this phenomena. Two dozen odd years passed since the revolution. There were still people hurt by Soviet rule. Many were prodded into collaborating with the invaders because of fear, an attempt to adapt and to survive. Some people believed, especially in 1941, that the Germans came to stay for a long time, maybe forever. Finally, all epochs had, and probably will always have weak persons with no will, or outright scum capable of betrayal, perfidy and treason. For example, in late December 1941 Beriya told Malenkov that a Red Army serviceman, named A.P. Ulyanov in the papers, was taken prisoner by the Germans and then was infiltrated across the lines in captain's rank, twice Hero of the Soviet Union. However, he was exposed in no time.

True, there were people who did not put high value on their Homeland. But they were outnumbered by far by those whose valor and dignity of a citizen and a patriot made it impossible to start serving the aggressor, whatever the circumstances.

Stalin came across not only individual, but group cases when some of our compatriots collaborated with the fascists in the past war. The most blatant example was the betrayal by Lieutenant General A.A. Vlasov, commander of the 2nd strike army of the Volkhov front.

Stalin reacted calmly on the outside when he received the news at the end of May 1942 that the 2nd strike army of the Volkhov front had been cut off in the Myasnoy Bor area. How many armies have already been "cut off"! He reacted to such news more dramatically back in 1941. After the successful Battle of Moscow, Stalin reacted to the setbacks more calmly. He was sure that individual setbacks at the front were unable to change the situation radically. He had no doubts anymore that the anti-fascist, anti-Hitler coalition would win a victory. Having received the news about the 2nd army, he knew that it was under the command of an experienced deputy front commander Vlasov; just three months ago, Stalin approved the decision of the USSR Council of People's Commissars on awarding him a rank of Lieutenant General, as one of the "stronger" commanders, a candidate for the position of a front commander. Stalin asked people from General Headquarters a few days later which units of the 2nd army had broken out of encirclement and how it all happened.

Vasilevskiy reminded him that directive No. 131 of May 21, signed by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, set the Volkhov front units, of the Leningrd front, the objective, among other things, to "Destroy the enemy in the Priyutino and Spasskaya Polist salient by delivering a strike using the main force of the 2nd strike army from the west and a simultaneous attack by the 59th army from the east...and then secure a reliable bridgehead on the western bank of the Volkhov river in the area of Spasskya Polist, Myasnoy Bor and Zemtitsy, using the units of the 59th and the 2nd strike armies and the right flank of the 52nd army; cover the Leningrad railroad and highway so as to prevent the linkup of the enemy Novgorod and Chudov groups along these roads and to restore the Novgorod-Leningrad railroad."

"How did you allow the army to be surrounded?" Stalin queried Vasilevskiy.

"When a large German group threatened the 2nd army from the north, I asked Khozin more than once to move the army troops on the line of the Volkhov river."

"So, what about Khozin?"

"The front issued the necessary order only on May 25, but it was too late. The army main supply lines were cut off and the army was surrounded three or four days later. After this I sent the following cable on June 3, signed by Bokov and myself to the Leningrd front commander: 'You are taking very slow action to destroy the enemy in the Spasskaya Polist and Priyutino area. Far from being destroyed, the enemy took active action to block the passage to the 2nd strike army, as it figured out your withdrawal maneuver. Attempts to make a breach in the enemy formation proved ineffective. The main reason for this lies not only in your slow steps but the withdrawal of forces unit by unit, instead of striking a blow by the entire 2nd army... Any delay and indecision is very dangerous in this matter, since it allows the enemy to hold firmer day after day on the lines of withdrawal of the 2nd strike army.' But it looks like the front and army commanders are not fulfilling the orders..," continued Vasilevskiy.

"Have you had a contact with Vlasov?"

"No, we received the last communication from him somewhere in early June," replied Vasilevskiy.

"Should we make the Volkhov operational group a separate front?"

"I think this is the right step. This group has a large strength. They should help the 2nd strike [army] break out of encirclement."

"Remove Khozin and appoint Govorov commander of the Leningrad front. Appoint Army General Meretskov commander of the new Volkhov front. Issue an order, if you have no objections."

Virtually never did Stalin run into objections. Soon other events removed Vlasov from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's field of vision, attention and memory. True, Stalin ordered the Soviet information bureau to make a special announcement, after the Germans started harping on surrounding "the largest" Soviet army. A draft was speedily prepared for Stalin:

"The German information bureau broadcast a report from Hitler's Stavka on June 28 about the annihilation of the 2nd strike, 52th and 59th armies of the Volkhov

front, allegedly surrounded by the German fascist troops on the western bank of the Volkhov river. But the developments unfolded at this section of the front in such a manner that following the attacks of the 59th and 52nd armies from the east and the 2nd strike army from the west, the enemy forces that broke through communications lines were destroyed by and large, and their insignificant remnants thrown back to their initial positions... Consequently, there can be no question about the annihilation of the 2nd strike army. Soviet information bureau."

Stalin glanced at the text, paused and gave it to Poskryobyshev, saying: "Do not announce anything." The Surpreme Commander changed his mind. Several hours later, however, he again ordered the announcement about the 2nd army. The Soviet information bureau broadcast on June 29, 1942 in part: "Hitler's scribes give an astronomical figure of 30,000 people allegedly taken prisoner, saying that the number of those killed exceeds the number of prisoners several times over. Naturally, this new falsehood of Hitler's does not match the facts... According to the preliminary data, the Germans lost not less that 30,000 as killed only... The units of the 2nd strike army moved to the prearranged line. Our losses in this fighting run into up to 10,000 people killed and about 10,000 missing in action." It is so hard to believe when both our and German losses are given in such "round" numbers!" We are gradually learning just now that an ill-prepared operation took the lives of thousands upon thousands who perished in the swamps of the Volkhov front in early spring; the people who are listed as "missing in action" until now!

One late night, a few weeks after Vlasov had disappeared, Molotov and Beriya stayed in Stalin's office. With a gleam of his small lenses, Lavrentiy Pavlovich took out a few pages from his perennial leather folder and put them in front of Stalin.

"What's this?"

"Look how the commander of the 2nd strike army, who was listed as 'missing in action,' has reappeared," replied Beriya.

Stalin shoved the pages toward himself and quickly glanced at the headline which read: "Appeal of the Russian Committee to Soldiers and Officers of the Red Army, to All Russian People and Other Peoples of the Soviet Union."

"The Russian committee," said the 'Appeal,' "has set the following objectives: to overthrow Stalin and his clique, sign an honorable peace with Germany, create a New Russia... We urge you to defect to the Russian liberation army which is acting in union with Germany... Chairman of the Russian committee Lieutenant General Vlasov. Secretary of the Russian Committee Major General Malyshkin." It was followed by pass-leaflets for crossing over to the Germans, Open Letter by A.A. Vlasov: 'Why I've chosen the path of struggle against Bolshevism and other products' in the same vein.

Stalin pushed away the leaflets in disgust and asked Beriya:

"Maybe this is a forgery? Have you heard from Vlasov? Is there any proof?"

"Yes, there is. Vlasov is actively working for the Germans."

"How did we fail to figure him out before the war?" cut in Molotov.

By way of reply, Beriya took out Vlasov's file from his folder. Leafing over a page, Stalin looked for a while at the face of a man with high cheek bones, in glasses, with protruding ears and shrewd eyes. He was born in the Gorkov oblast into a family of serednuak [peasant of average means] peasants. Has no relatives except for an old father and wife. Graduated from a religious school in Nizniy Novgorod, - obviously Beriya underlined this in red pencil - studied in a religious seminary for two years until 1917. He would have been a priest, not a Red general but for the revolution, thought Stalin. Took part in the Civil War. Then had an all-out good service record: the 99th infantry division under his command was one of the best in the Kiev okrug. Was on a special assignment in China before that. Commanded the 4th mechanized corps which fought well at Peremyshl and Lvov, then was appointed commander of the 37th army which defended Kiev - Stalin knew this well himself, because he signed the nomination. The army looked quite well there. Then assumed command first of the 20th and then of the 2nd strike army... Stalin recalled how Shaposhnikov signed an order on April 20 at his request to appoint A.A. Vlasov deputy commander of the Volkhov front "in conjunction" (this word is rarely used in military terminology) with his position of commander of the 2nd strike army. His Party reference had an entry made in 1938: "Does a great deal to liquidate the survivals of wrecking in the unit." The evaluations were signed by such well-known military commanders as Kirponos, Muzychenko, Parusinov, and Golikov. Army General G.K. Zhukov wrote in Vlasov's combat reference on January 24, 1942: "Commanded the operations of the 20th army, including the counteroffensive at the town of Solnechnogorsk, the advance of the army troops along the Volokolamsk direction and the breakthrough of the defense line on the Lama river. Lieutenant General Vlasov is well prepared personally in the matters of operations, has organizational skills. Adequately handles army's troop control."

I carefully studied the personal file of former Soviet Lieutenant General A.A. Vlasov. All references are brilliant. The only critical remark recorded in the evaluation on November 19, 1940 urges him to "pay more attention to the preservation and maintenance of horses." It is written everywhere: "Committed to the cause of the party of Lenin-Stalin and the socialist Motherland." And all of a sudden...

It meant quite a lot at that time to earn Zhukov's assessment, "adequately handles." One could start

thinking along what used to be the customary pattern: how did Zhukov, Kirponos, Golikov and others fail to unmask a traitor? But let us stop at the very beginning. One could not "find anything" against Vlasov before the war, while Vlasov fought better than many others. He was awarded the Orders of Lenin and Red Banner... The secret niches of human mind can hide the things which defy observations by an outsider. This man had never had genuine socialist convictions. He knew how to portray himself as a patriot and a man of duty; he was a dedicated martinet. Some people from the special department tried to harp on Vlasov's religious education but had to drop that reason, because the Leader himself studied in a seminary... Stalin did not believe that Vlasov would be able to do anything serious working for the Germans. But he realized that following the announcement about the establishment of the RLA (Russian Liberation Army), one could anticipate the emergence of other ethnic formations. And he was right.

Berlin felt that it had underestimated the Soviet Union's economic, military, social and spiritual power, when they banked on a blitzkrieg against it. Hitler had hoped to split the Soviet Union into ethnic fragments following his strong strikes in 1941, but this did not happen. The internationalist unity was not shaken. By contrast, it turned out to be one of the pillars of the Soviet state's viability. Common threat greatly reinforced the Soviet people's internationalist cohesion, although Stalin committed serious mistakes and crimes, including those during the war, in the nationalities sphere.

As early as 1942, the Hitler leadership set out to look for renegades in POW camps, who would be ready to serve not only in Vlasov's Russian liberation army, but in various ethnic legions, including the Georgian, Armenian, Turkisatan, Caucasian, Baltic and other ethnic formations. Considerable effort produced but meager results. Many POWs "joined the legions" as they regarded as a means of survival and escape route to the friendly units; they were others, of course, who fell in for nationalist propaganda. Overall, the strength of internationalist consciousness was high. Even the "legionnaires" wearing uniform often sought to cross the lines, although many of them could not but know what was in store for them. On October 3, 1942, for example, soldiers of the Turkestan legion Berghenov, Khasanov and Tulebayev reached the positions of Soviet units after four days of looking for the partisans, and reported that the majority in their battalion was ready to cross the lines and join the friendly troops. The former servicemen, Tsulaya and Kabakadze, crossed the lines at the section of the 2nd Guards infantry division's defense positions on October 8 of the same year and asked to help a unit of the Georgian legion cross the front lines.

The Germans put especially high stakes on the legions which they formed in the Baltic republics. The population of those areas had lived for only less than a year as part of the Union before the war. But the German command could use those legions mostly as ancillary units to guard facilities, roads, for patrol and occasionally for punitive action. The people who served in the legions were sentenced and exiled after the war. The republican leadership approached the Soviet govenment with a request of amnesty for those persons. For example, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Latvia Latsis and secretary of the central committee of the Latvian Communist Party (Bolshevik) Kalnberzin wrote to Moscow on March 16, 1946: "The German invaders mobilized by force the entire ablebodied population by force during the temporary occupation of the Latvian SSR, part of which was taken away to do forced labor in Germany, while enrolling the other part in the so-called legions of the German army... After the liberation, these people were exiled for six years to the northern areas. We plead to return to the Latvian SSR those of them who had done nothing but served in the legions."

Normally, Stalin passed such messages for consideration by Molotov and Beriya, but his position regarding the lives of the people who voluntary joined the Germans or left together with the Germans never changed. Beriya reported to Stalin after the liberation of Northern Caucasus:

"The NKVD considers it expedient to resettle...members of the families of bandits, active German collaborators, traitors, those who betrayed their Homeland and voluntary left with the Germans, from Stavropol, Kislovodsk, Pyatigorsk, Mineralnye Vody, Essentuki... and re-settle them permanently in the Tajik SSR as special settlers. A total of 735 families, or 2,238 people, are slated for resettlement. Request your instructions.

L. Beriya."

Stalin always "approved." He could not but understand that mothers, sisters, and children could not be held responsible for a crime committed by their father or brother, but he always remained *true to himself.*

The political organs and the NKVD reported to Stalin on the legions' activities. He was aware that these formations could not possess any real power, but could make a political impact based on the use of radio and lęaflets. His oral instructions, as well as his resolutions on the documents, which we had a chance to review, testify to Stalin's harsh and irreconcilable attitude to those who betrayed Motherland. The overall number of those people was quite significant and they included people of different nationalities.

The documents of Stalin and Beriya contain a number of reports on the traitorous and bandit activities engaged in by individual groups of renegades who put their services with the Hitlerites. For example, Kobulov reports to Beriya "On Combating Banditism in the areas of Northern Caucasus. Six bandit appearances took place in the past week (on May 2 and 3). Eight bandits were killed, including two German paratroopers. Forty-six bandits were arrested. Thirty-seven weapons were confiscated. Our losses are eight people. The chieftain of the

Kayakent gang, Nadzmuddin Ilyasov, has been killed; S.Kh. Temirkanov's gang has been eliminated." Here is another report which bears a comment by the People's Commissar of internal affairs in its top corner, reading: "The report has been sent to Comrades Stalin, Molotov and Antonov." Let us give it in full:

"July 20, 1944 L. Beriya

A German paratrooper named Kh.Kh. Fadzayev (former Komsomol member, an Ossetian, worked as a policeman in the village of Urukh, joined the German army in 1943, has the rank of ober feldfebel) was arrested following the combing of the forest in the vicinity of the village of Kazburun of the Kabardin ASSR. Several other paratroopers were apprehended. The search is continuing for another two paratroopers out of the eight. The rest have been killed or arrested.

Kobulov."

Similar reports were coming from the Crimea and other places. Instead of continuing to combat the bandits and the invaders' collaborators, and individual criminals, Stalin and Beriya made a decision, based on the proposals and plans prepared by Serov, Kobulov, Momulov, Tsanava and other executioners, to resettle whole nations from Northern Caucasus, from Kalmykiya, and the Crimea to the east. There is documented evidence of quite a few turncoats there at the period. But there were so many heroes, glorious sons of those peoples and our entire Motherland! The Chechens and Ingush alone, for example, had 36 of their kin named Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Hundreds of thousands of Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Karachayevs, Crimean Tartars, Kalmyks, Meskhitian Turks and people of other nationalities were resettled during 1944 on Stalin's orders, codified by respective decrees, when the bloody road of war was winding up to come to its victorious finish. (Professor Kh.-M. Ibraghimbeily has conducted probably one of the few research studies dealing with the tragic period on the basis of party and state archives).

In the meantime, Stalin was receiving the following reports:

"The State Defense Council.

In accordance with the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the decision of the USSR Council of People's Commissars of December 28, 1943, the USSR NKVD has conducted an operation to resettle the persons of the Kalmyk nationality to the eastern regions... A total of 26,359 families, or 93,139 settlers, were loaded onto trains which were sent to the resettlement areas in the Altai and Krasnoyarsk territories and the Omsk and Novsibirsk Oblasts... L. Beriya."

Stalin followed these "operations" as closely as those at the front. There was no resistance here, however, since the resettlement involved mostly the old people, women and children. Even Beriya's reports say: "No incidents have been reported during the resettlement operation either on the spot or on the way." Hundreds of thousands of people were tragically depressed and emotionally shaken... But these feelings were foreign to the "father of the peoples" who "doubled" as a hard-hearted and cruel dictator. He was quite generous in such instances:

"Nominate for awards the people who executed the resettlement order in an exemplary manner!"

His instructions were promptly acted upon:

"State Defense Council.

Comrade I.V. Stalin

In accordance with your instruction, I am submitting a draft decree by the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on awarding orders and medals to those who have *distinguished* themselves (in what? spacing is ours.- D.V.) most of all as participants in the operation to resettle the Chechens and the Ingush... A total of 19,000 NKVD, NKGB and 'Smersch' operatives and up to 100,000 NKVD men and officers took part, a large number of whom participated in the eviction of the Karachayevs and Kalmyks, and will also take part in the forthcoming operation to evict the Balkars. Overall, around 650,000 Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks and Karachayevs have been resettled in the USSR eastern regions as a result of the three operations."

Sorrowful pages... An autocracy manifest in cruel arbitrariness is applied against entire nations. Just to think about it, Stalin went to such an extreme as to accuse entire nations of "high treason"! More than 100,000 soldiers took part in the eviction of the old people, women and children! It is no surprise that an "extra" regiment or battalion was found lacking at the fronts, often in the hottest of spots and the most critical of moments. And over 100,000 people here! The autocrat has lost any moral brakes long ago. Stalin, who imagined himself as Lenin's only "preserver" and "interpreter," did not want to remember his wise warning to the effect that nothing harms internationalist cohesion as much as "national injustice and there is no other thing the 'hurt' nationals are as sensitive to the feeling of equality and the violation of that equality." All peoples in our great Union, the Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, Kazakh, Jews, Kabardins, and dozens of other nationalities, fell victim to Stalinism. Stalin tied more than one tragic "knot" in our history, including the national ones, which today we are obliged to untie calmly and cleverly. In no way should this harm our internationalist solidarity, a source of our strength and of the long-cherished and far away prosperity.

We made a long transgression to prove that the "punishment" of entire nations had nothing to do with isolated cases of betrayal of Motherland and the failure to perform a military duty by individuals or by groups of Soviet citizens of various nationalities. Were Stalin to

stick always to his criminal logic, following the establishment of Vlasov's RLA, he should have exiled the Russian, the Ukrainian and all other peoples... The absurd and criminal nature of Stalin's decisions become apparent in the sheer unfeasibility of carrying this out.

Quite a few books have been written about Vlasov in the West. Iochim Gofman's "History of Vlasov's Army" can be used as such an example. Basing on Vlasov's archives, it claims, among other things, that the German Wehrmacht had 90 Russian battalions and almost as many ethnic legions by May 1943. The figures are highly inflated. Similarly, the attempts to portray this "movement" as an "alternative to Bolshevism" sound very unconvincing. Essentially, Vlasov's formations included not "ideological fighters" but criminals, nationalists, as well as weak and faint-hearted people propelled by nothing but the "desire" to survive. Vlason's attempts to rely on the White Guards emigres (chieftain P.N. Krasnov, general A.G. Shkuro, general Sultan-Ghirey Kluch, and others) testified to the movement's complete ideological poverty. Incidentally, soon after the war the Allies actively turned the disarmed units of Vlasov's over to the Soviet authorities.

Stalin instructed the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs to screen the liberated areas and protect the Red Army's rear. Beriya regularly reported to him what measures had been taken. Things were run on a grand scale. Here is one of the documents, in which Beriya reports the state of affairs in this field:

"The NKVD forces in charge of protecting the rear of the fighting Red Army apprehended 931,549 people for a check-up in the process of cleansing the territories liberated from the enemy and of performing the fronts' rear security service, including 582,515 servicemen and 349,034 civilians.

A total of 80,296 persons have been unmasked and arrested (agents, traitors, turncoats, members of punitive force, deserters, marauders and other criminal elements)."

A number of trials were staged in February 1943 to interdict and condemn the very fact of treason, during which former Red Army generals A.A. Vlasov, V.F. Malyshkin and some other active German collaborators were indicted in absentia and sentenced to be shot. But errors were committed in this case as well. The Stavka's directive No.30126 of May 12, 1943, signed by Stalin, stated that "it has been reliably established that Lieutenant General V.Ya. Kachalov, Lieutenant General A.A. Vlasov, Major General P.G. Ponedelin, Major General V.F. Malyshkin had betrayed their Motherland, defected to the enemy and presently are working with the Germans against our Motherland." Patriots Kachalov and Pondedlin were "hitched" to the group of traitors that included Vlasov and Malyshkin. Their honest names were returned to them only in 1956.

Beriya and his services not only stepped up their efforts to check out and uncover dubious elements this side of the front, but also tried to find out what the situation was like in the units formed by the Germans out of Soviet POWs. One day Beriya, who reported to Stalin only tete-a-tete, or in the presence of Molotov, showed the Surpreme Commander a record of interrogation of Red Army Major General A.E. Budykho. The latter escaped from a German camp and joined the partisans. Budykho was in the Oranienburg camp which housed predominantly commanding officers taken prisoner. He described in detail the personalities of many people, related a camp visit by Vlasov's representative, General N.G. Zhilenkov and other RLA functionaries. Incidentally, before the war Zhilenkov was secretary of a Moscow Party rayon committee and made a fast career as a result of the tide of repressions that swept away Party workers. A member of the military council of the 32nd army of the Western front, Zhilenkov was surrounded and then taken prisoner. This man's lack of principles and adaptability, who became a Party leader by chance, brought him to the camp of collaborators in no time. Another close associate of Vlasov, former Major General V.F. Malyshkin, chief of staff of the 19th army, was of the same ilk. Purged in 1938, he was set free at the beginning of the war, but joined Vlasov eventually. It is hard to say whether he was motivated by his hurt feelings or his traitorous intentions were the result of his convictions. At any rate, as Beiya was reporting on the cases of the generals who were indicted and released later on, Stalin said curtly:

"Find out who endorsed Malyshkin..."

Stalin did not read the interrogation of Budykho any longer. He stinted wasting his time to get familiar with the cases of what he believed were half-finished persons, whom he failed to unmask in 1937-1939. All these Vlasovites cannot change anything in the final analysis, thought Stalin. The country braved the most terrible months of 1941. History hardly knows of the cases when a war would start with a greater disaster than the Great Patriotic war did. All leading military and political experts believed that the Russians would be able to hold out for three months at best. The Soviet people upset those forecasts. True, the fact of incredible staunchness and perseverance was later attributed to Stalin's "sagacious leadership," although he - we shall repeat it again - was to blame most of all for such a disastrous beginning.

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Chapter II. Supreme Commander-in-Chief

[Text]

In the eyes of the people, a general who has scored a victory, has committed no errors at all.
Voltaire

Time alone can answer all questions. All of us knew very little about Stalin just a few years ago. He resembled a sunlit marble statue, with the side basking in the warm sunlight presented as the heart of the phenomenon. The

other one, in somber shadow, did not seem to have existed at all. We become more and more convinced, as we open ever new pages of history, that the "sunlit" side was nothing but an apparition and an appearance. Stalin proper, genuine and life-size, always "hid" behind the statue's shadow, the statue displayed for public view. I know that this statement will stir indignation and anger in some people.

I might have had the same reaction thirty years ago. On familiarizing oneself with the original documents, materials, and eye-witness reports, one becomes increasingly convinced that no "genius" existed at all, even in that area where the mirage of the leader's grandeur has lingered until recently. One can refute my argument out of hand by invoking the prestige of our profoundly respected military leaders who wrote their war memoirs. Stalin is positively portrayed in the memoir literature in many instances, although a careful reader will come across quite a few cautious reservations, allusions, and indirect testimonials pointing to the lack of "genius" in the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. We shall return to all these issues, and now let us make two preliminary remarks.

The authors of military memoirs, who had trod the front line roads as long as 1,418 days and nights, might have been ignorant of many things regarding Stalin at that time. Parceled out, truncated and twisted, the truth has always been a *luxury* within the system of relationship that existed under Stalin and which was revived by and large in the late 1960s. But the main thing is that Stalin's "heirs," even those who did not consider themselves as such, thought and acted the way Stalin did. They controlled their *reminiscences.* Many things could not have been published. Any book had to pass through the real purgatory first; it was not allowed to write about the repressions in 1937-1938, or to dispute Stalin's "genius as a military leader," or to fail to mention the "special contribution" made to the victory first by Khrushchev and then by Brezhnev, and often by other, less prominent "comrades-in-arms" of theirs. Any truth that did not fit into the embellished and approved pattern was truncated and twisted into becoming unrecognizable. There is evidence that even G. K. Zhukov was compelled, in his own words, to reduce part of his manuscript because of the deletions. This story was told by the widow of Air Force Chief Marshall A. A. Novikov, the woman with whom Zhukov shared his chagrin as he was vacationing in the "Arkhangelskoye" sanatorium shortly before his death. It is our great regret and it is a misfortune that - not through their fault - many famous veterans, who have left invaluable testimonials to us, sometimes had to speak under their breath or just to keep silent.

Stalin was not a "brilliant military commander," as was heralded to the world in hundreds of tomes, movies, poems, research papers, and statements. We do not imply by this that he was a person of no talent. We shall try to draw on the documents and testimonials to show that he was an *"armchair"* military commander, who did possess a practical, "strong-willed," and evil mind and who learned the mysteries of military art through bloody experiments. In sizing up Stalin, we often leave the price of Victory "out of the picture," which is one of the most crucial criteria of his skill as a military commander. It is crystal clear for us today - and we have tried to prove this - that the situation in which the country and the army found themselves in June 1941 had arisen directly from the miscalculations, self-confidence, short-sightedness and was the consequence of the bloody terror unleashed by the man who was to become the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

"Why do you put all the blame on one person?" comes the immediate argument, as a rule. "There were the Party, the Central Committee, the Politburo, and his retinue." Yes, there were. But all state and public institutions see their future-making impact drastically curtailed under the *dictator,* in conditions of *Caesar's* rule. The absolute ruler decides everything at his will. The people will have their say in the final count only. We should not be oblivious to this as we turn to the past.

It is only our country and our people that have been able to make the utmost sacrifice, without losing the will to fight and to win victory. We should never forget the crippling setbacks suffered by the Southern and Southwestern fronts early in the war, or the Kharkhov and Crimean debacles, or other lamentable landmarks in our military history. History could not be changed, nor the truth suppressed forever by saying in a few lines: "As a result of the Soviet troops' unsuccessful operations, they had to leave Kiev"; and even less can we bring back to life hundreds of thousands of homeland's sons who laid down their lives, not in the least due to the miscalculations made by the military-political leadership. But all this was kept under wraps to please just one man. The truth is often bitter, but our people should not be afraid of it, since they alone had managed to hold out and to win against the heaviest odds stacked against them by the "helmsman" and as a result of Hitler's perfidy.

The portrait of the person who occupied all top-level positions in the state during the war would be incomplete if we did not try to answer the question whether the generalissimo-to-be had any talent as a military commander. How did Stalin show his mettle as a military leader during different stages of the war? What was the responsibility of his close military retinue for his actions as a commander? Why did we suffer twice or thrice as many losses as the enemy did, given the Supreme Commander's "brilliance"?

Napoleon, who is still considered the greatest of all the military leaders of all ages, remarked that a military person should "possess as much character as intelligence". He added, however, that it was not enough just to have those components, since they were to be kept in the required proportion, to be kept "in balance". Using an interesting reasoning, he compared a military leader's gift to a square, in which will lies at the base and intelligence constitutes its height. The square will be a

square, Napoleon argued, if the base is equal to the height; in a real military leader, the will is equal to intelligence. If the will exceeds intelligence, the leader will act decisively, boldly, but not always intelligently; conversely, a powerful intellect can produce good plans and designs, which are difficult to implement given the "lack" of courage. What ratio is more desirable if one cannot obtain the best possible correlation between the mind and the will (sides of the square)? Which military leader looks stronger, the one with "dominating mind or the one with will?"

We realize, of course, that all of Napoleon's arguments may be essentially correct, but they do not embrace the entire wealth of qualities which a military leader should possess. Intelligence and will power are unquestionably the most important of them. A flexible, sharp, and broad mind and a strong will, to be more precise. We have pointed out more than once already that Stalin did not have a dearth of will - his choice of a Party name that symbolized the hardest of the alloys, is not accidental. We have seen, however, that his will wavered in the first week or two after the war had started, since a man's depression, shock, and a psychological crisis are most often associated with the "deformation" of the will, albeit a temporary one. As far as his intellect is concerned, we know that he had a sharp but a dogmatic one, "one-dimensional," so to speak, one that overestimated the power of a directive, an order, or an instruction.

Stalin never possessed outstanding forecasting abilities, which was not possible given his dogmatic mind-set. But the most important thing is that Stalin, with his strong will and rigid mind, was not able to rely on professional military expertise, since he was not conversant either with military science, or military art theory. He "grasped" all the stratagems and the art of operations in the course of bloody empirical experience, a multitude of trials and errors. The experience which he had gained during the Civil War as member of the military council at a number of fronts was fragrantly inadequate in his position of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Stalin's renown of a military leader was backed up - and this is not much talked about - by the collective intellect of the General HQs and the outstanding abilities displayed by a number of major military leaders who stayed together with him during the war. First and foremost, these included Shaposhnikov, Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, and Antonov. The lack of sense of operational time, for real space coordinates of the theater of military operations, and of the troops' potential occasionally led astray, especially in the early period of war, the man who had never visited a military unit, the HQs, field control positions, and who did not have a clear idea about how the machinery of the military system operated in reality. This explained why his instructions were frequently doomed to be ignored, or why hasty, impromptu actions were taken. Here are a few examples.

On August 6, 1941, Stalin signed a cable to the commanders of the Reserve and Western fronts on preparing for, and launching, an operation near Yelnya. The cable was signed in the wee hours of the 6th, but it required that the very same day, on the 6th, troops were to be regrouped, and a number of units advanced to new positions. The cable ended with the following words: "Acknowledge receipt and *immediately* send the plan for the Yelnya operation." The sense of reality was visibly lacking there. Or another example. In the afternoon of August 28, Stalin signed an order - not as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, but as the People's Commissar of Defense, for some reason - requiring the aviation of the two fronts to "rout" tank groups. Stalin demanded that at least 450 planes were to be used. The operation was to start as soon as the day broke. But what about reconnaissance, assigning missions to specific units and formations, and the order of their execution? The Supreme Commander issued many orders like that one.

It appears that Stalin believed that when he signed a directive, or an order, he immediately "put the system in action," without giving thought to the fact that it took time for the addressees (at several levels) to receive the instruction, issue preliminary orders, set the objectives, organize coordination, provide technical support for the action, and do many other things. A military dilettante, Stalin "learned" things as they came, and, as G. K. Zhukov wrote, he began to have a handle on "major strategic matters" only during [the battle of] Stalingrad. "To have a handle" rather implies that he could understand, feel, and appreciate, and not that he was a "strategy-maker". Stalin began to "grasp" things primarily because the Stavka had such a working organ as the General HQs, whose role cannot be overestimated. "The true nature of war gradually expanded the field of its [the General HQs - D.V.] action, and prior to the world war we accounted for the 'brain of the Army' tending to emerge from the army's crane and shift into the head of the entire state organism," wrote B.M. Shaposhnikov. We shall not pass judgment on the "state organism," but this truth is irrefutable as far as the Stavka, headed by Stalin, was concerned. The Stavka could function only thanks to the hard work done by the General HQs, the "army's brains."

Stalin and the Stavka

On a sojourn in Moscow one day during the Civil War, Stalin dropped by at the republic's revolutionary military council (to tell the truth, he visited it only twice or thrice) where E.M. Slyankskiy, Trotsky's deputy and friend, gave him a book by M.K. Lemke, "250 Days in Tsar's Stavka" (from September 25, 1915 to July 2, 1916). Stalin leafed through it without much interest as he was returning to the Southern front in a railroad car. The book "exposed" military "mandarins" wearing white aiguillettes, who were thinking up plans for unimaginative operations secretly and quietly. When Timoshenko and Molotov ran by Stalin in the morning of June 23 the resolution drafted by the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) and the Council of People's Commissars on establishing the supreme military organ to control the armed forced,

what came to his mind from the pages of the book by the long forgotten Lemke was the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in old Russia, first located at Baranovichi and then moved to Mogilev. All those who headed the Stavka had long turned into shades (with the exception of Kerenskiy), including the Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich, Emperor Nicholas II, generals M.V. Alekseyev, A.A. Brusilov, L.G. Kornilov, and N.N. Dukhonin. Stalin remembered how this counterrevolutionary nest was seized on Lenin's order by the revolutionary unit led by N.V. Krylenko, who became the Supreme Commander-in-Chief himself. This was the very same Krylenko whom Stalin queried once with malicious irony:

"Why would a person have two degrees of higher education?" hinting at the fact that in addition to Petersburg University, Nikolay Vasilyevich graduated from the law department of Kharknov University before World War I.

"I would not mind going to another University, if I could..." the USSR People's Commissar of Justice quipped.

Rummaging through his drawer recently, Stalin came across his last letter, written in 1938, which pleaded for saving his life and mercy. Well, it turned out that there was already one head of the Stavka in the Soviet period. And now Timoshenko and Molotov suggest in their draft that Stalin become the head. No, let it be Timoshenko...

Indeed, initially Timoshenko was the Chairman of the Stavka, with Stalin becoming the head of it on July 10 and becoming the supreme commander on August 8, 1941. With Baranovichi and Mogilev having been seized by the Germans long ago, Stalin thought with bitter irony that they did not dare to locate the Stavka even near Moscow, although before the war Timoshenko and Zhukov raised the issue of establishing one or two protected points to control the country's armed forces. He had dismissed the proposal as untimely then. The draft on establishing the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was related to Stalin for the second or third time in May 1941. A special exercise was contemplated on placing the country on a military footing under the Stavka's supervision. Stalin approved in principle the need to have such an organ of supreme military leadership in case of war, but no specific decisions were made. No one else dared to "bother" Stalin with similar proposals, especially since they were aware of the leader's "settling down" in two locations - in the Kremlin and at his "nearby" dacha. He had not visited his "far away" dacha at Semonovskoye even before the war, and in September 1941 he ordered to have it given over to wounded soldiers. Therefore, the Stavka of the Supreme Commander was either in Stalin's Kremlin office, or at his "nearby" dacha, or at the "Kirov" stop metro station, or in the General HQs building. It was from these locations that Stalin overviewed the entire war.

I think that G. K. Zhukov's "Reminiscences and Reflections" give the best description of the Stavka's work. Quite a few interesting descriptions of the work done by this supreme strategic control body can be found in A.M. Vasilivskiy's book, "Cause Of All My Life"; some testimonials by S.M. Shtemenko merit attention as well. We shall not describe the operation of the Stavka, but just touch upon some episodes characterizing the work done by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief as its chairman. On becoming the head of the State Defense Committee on June 30, 1941, Stalin concentrated unlimited power in his hands, a fact that we have mentioned before. Those harsh times by and large justified this, but the negative consequences of such unparalleled centralization of power were becoming more apparent as the strategic initiative was seized and the mortal threat to the state lessened. Not a single decision made independently by the Party Central Committee, the Council of People's Commissars, or the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet carried any weight, was plainly unfeasible without Stalin's personal endorsement. This was the heyday of a one-man rule. I do not think that the state and public organizations would have been hamstrung dealing with the general task by going into a higher gear. On the contrary, drawing on the work done by the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defense during the Civil War, it will be recalled that it did not supplant Party and state organs, but rather relied on them.

Not every participant in the meetings and conferences, which were held at Stalin's place daily, and occasionally several times a day, could say exactly which organ was in session at that particular moment, whether it was a Politburo meeting to which military Comrades were invited, or it was a sitting of the State Defense Committee, attended by nonmembers of the Committee, or whether these were the deliberations of the Stavka, at which some Politburo members were present. The situation was clarified by the Master himself, who would occasionally interrupt the discussion by saying: "File as the decision by the State Defense Committee," or "Prepare the HQ's directive."

From time to time, Malenkov registered the results of some discussions as Politburo session papers as well. To all intents and purposes, Stalin had the final and decisive say, regardless of whether this decision was taken by the Politburo, State Defense Committee, or the Stavka. It looked like the leader himself attached little significance to formally tying particular individuals to a particular control organ. But it was tough on those who had to carry out the decisions, figuring out "on the spot" which "department" was to take care of this or that instruction issued by the Supreme Commander, Chairman of the State Defense Committee, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Party secretary, and the People's Commissar of Defense.

Normally, no records or notes were kept. For example, the Stavka's fund contains thousands of different documents, such as reports, memos, directives, orders, and

instructions, but there are practically no materials testifying to the discussion of strategic issues by the Stavka. Stalin usually invited two or three members of the Stavka and decided operational questions with them, especially after he had recovered from the shock and gained authority. The leading workers from the General HQs were accustomed to bringing their ready proposals, some conclusions and evaluations, when they went to see Stalin; this facilitated the Supreme Commander's role of an arbiter, a judge, and a priest of the last resort.

Members of the Stavka knew that every person on the State Defense Committee was responsible for a particular area, such as ammunition, food, planes, transport, foreign affairs; there was no such division of "duties" there. The Stavka exercised day-to-day guidance of the fronts with the help of the General HQs, the main Navy HQs, and the departments under the People's Commissariat of Defense. An institution of Stavka's representatives in the units "struck root" fast - without 'formal decision' taken to the effect - to supplant the advisors," who were soon forgotten.

It should be mentioned that Stalin kept almost none of those representatives in Moscow. The way he resented any outside trips (except to take summer vacation prior to the war), he detested the presence in Moscow of those whom he entrusted to be Stavka's representative. This is why Zhukov, Timoshenko, Voroshilov, Vasilevskiy, Voronov and initially Mekhlis very often visited units as Stavka's representatives at Stalin's instructions, although the occupied certain key positions. Stalin required that those people reported to him daily, either in writing or on the phone; they could expect a dressing-down if the report was delayed or rescheduled for some reason. The Supreme Commander could subject them to the most rude and tactless tongue-lashing. For example, once he gave a hard time to Malenkov, whom he dispatched to the Stalingrad front, for irregular reports. I would like to refer to another example of similar reaction with respect to Vasilevskiy, who was in Stalin's "good books," as if anyone could ever be in Stalin's good books. Vasilevskiy quoted this cable by Stalin in his book, the cable with significant deletions. Let us give this cable in full, which was found in the Stavka's archives.

"Marshall Vasilevskiy,

It is 3:30 a.m. of August 17 already, and you have not sent to the Stavka yet your report on the results of the operation of August 16th and about your evaluation of the situation.

I have long tasked you as a Stavka representative to send without fail special reports by the end of each day of the operation. Almost each time you failed to remember this duty of yours and did not send any reports to the Stavka.

August 16 marks the first day of the important operation on the Southwestern front, where you represent the Stavka. Once again you have forgotten to perform your duty with regard to the Stavka and send no reports to the Stavka.

You should not invoke a shortage of time, since Marshall Zhukov works as hard as you do at the front, but still does not fail to send his daily reports to the Stavka. The difference between Zhukov and you is that he is well disciplined and is not deprived of the sense of obligation to the Stavka. You have little discipline and often forget about your duty to the Stavka.

I'm warning you for the last time that you will be relieved of your position of the chief of General Staff and recalled from the front if you forget about your duty to the Stavka once again.

August 17, 1943 3:30 a.m.

I. Stalin."

This was run-of-the-mill style of the Supreme Commander. There was not a single Marshall or a major military commander who had not experienced bitter moments after Stalin's dressing-down, often unjustified. In Vasilevskiy's case, they did not report to Stalin about the Marshall's regular report soon enough. Immediate harsh response followed.

Stavka's representatives had it a hard way. "Conclusions" were drawn after their trips to one section of the front or another if the situation did not improve there. For example, in February 1942, Stalin dispatched Voroshilov to the Volkhov front. The leader's blue-eyed boy, Marshall Voroshilov had a well-established reputation of a giftless military commander by that time. Voroshilov failed to accomplish anything of substance this time either, and when, speaking over a hot line, Stalin offered him to become a front commander, Voroshilov got confused and started to say "No." This came as the last drop in the Supreme Commander's cup. Stalin dictated a document, which was registered as a Politbureau decision, a month-odd later, after Voroshilov had returned back from the front. It is interesting to quote it with some omissions:

"Members and candidate members of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), ARCP(B), and members of the Party control commission members. Reported here is the following resolution passed by the ARCP(B) Central Committee regarding the work done by Comrade Voroshilov, adopted on April 1, 1942.

First, the Finnish war of 1939-1940 revealed serious problems and backwardness in the leadership of the People's Defense Committee [PDC]. The Red Army had no mortars or submachine guns, did not keep the right track of planes and tanks, was found to have no necessary winter clothes for the troops, and the troops had no dry food rations. Major backlog was unveiled in the work of such PDC departments, as the chief artillery administration, combat training administration, and air force administration; work was ill-organized in military educational institutions, and so on. All this could not but protract war which took an excessive toll. As the People's Commissar of Defense at that period, Comrade

Voroshilov had to admit his inept leadership of the PDC during the plenary meeting of the ARCP(B) Central Committee at the end of March 1940. The ARCP(B) Central Committee considered it necessary to relieve Comrade Voroshilov from his position of the People's Commissar of Defense.

Second, Comrade Voroshilov was nominated commander of the Northwestern direction at the beginning of the war with Germany and his main job was to defend Leningrad. It turned out later that Comrade Voroshilov failed in his job of organizing the defense of Leningrad. In his work in Leningrad, Comrade Voroshilov committed serious mistakes, including issuing an order on electing battalion commanders in the volunteer people's guards units - the order was rescinded at the Stavka's instruction as the one resulting in disorganization and the weakening of discipline in the Red Army; he set up the Military Defense Council of Leningrad, but did not become its member himself - this order was also abrogated by the Stavka as erroneous and pernicious, since the Leningrad workers could conclude that Comrade Voroshilov had not joined the Defense Council because he did not believe in the defense of Leningrad; he got carried away with establishing workers' battalions which had poor weapons (shotguns, spears, daggers, and so on) but overlooked the use of artillery for the defense of Leningrad... Because of all this, the State Defense Committee has recalled Comrade Voroshilov from Leningrad.

Third, at Comrade Voroshilov's request, he was sent to the Volkhov front in February as a Stavka representative to help the front commanders, and stayed there for about a month. However, the stay of Comrade Voroshilov at the Volkhov front did not produce the desired results. Guided by the desire to give Comrade Voroshilov another chance to use his experience of front line work, the ARCP(B) Central Committee suggested that Comrade Voroshilov assume direct command of the Volkhov front. But Comrade Voroshilov reacted negatively to this proposal and did not want to assume responsibility of the Volkhov front, despite the fact that the front plays a decisive role today in Leningrad's defense, referring to the Volkhov front being a difficult front and waying that he did not want to botch it up.

Considering the above mentioned, the ARCP(B) Central Committee resolves:

First, to admit Comrade Voroshilov's failure to do his job at the front.

Second, dispatch Comrade Voroshilov to do military work in the rear.

Secretary of the ARCP(B) Central Committee

I. Stalin"

This sarcastic and derisory resolution is clearly Stalin's brainchild. Constantly repeating "Comrade Voroshilov," the Supreme Commander actually demonstrated complete ineptitude of the former "first Marshall". But Voroshilov's good fortune was that he was not demoted, like Marshall Kulik (who was shot after the war). In our history, Voroshilov was to resurface again after Stalin's death to become the head of the Soviet state in 1953.

Although the decision was justified in Voroshilov's case, others were much worse off. A setback at the front or a poor report could result in immediate removal from the job, or even in an arrest, accompanied by the most dire consequences. Here are a few examples.

On February 22, 1943, the 16th Army of the Western front launched an offensive on the Stavka's order, delivering a blow from the area southwest of Sukhinichi towards Bryansk from the northern direction. But the offensive dried up, running into strong enemy resistance. Stalin realized during the regular report on February 27 that the Army was marking time to all intents and purposes. The reports over, Stalin dictates Stavka's order No. 0045 of February 27, 1943, without asking anyone's advice or specifying the situation. The order said: "Relieve Colonel General I.S. Konev of his position as commander of the Western front for his failure to do his job as front commander and to dispatch him to the Stavaka." Worse things happened - I.S. Konev was to prove his mettle in the future, as we know - but many people did not have a second chance. Here is another order by the Stalin "self."

"Commander of the Caucasian Front, Comrade Kozlov,

...Immediately arrest Major General Dashichev, acting commander of the 44th Army, and send him to Moscow. Take urgent measures to put the 44th Army units in good order, check any further enemy offensive and keep the city of Feodosiya."

Stalin did not waffle over "personnel" problems. His style was marked in general by the constant reshuffling of commanders, which few people could comprehend. He believed for some reason that these "castlings" helped strengthen the command of formations, while people were moved a month or two later to take charge of other "domains". Naturally, no one argued with Stalin. The very same Konev, who was replaced recently and appointed again, got into the Supreme Commander's bad books for some reason:

"Relieve Colonel General Konev I.S. from his job of commander of the Northwestern front in connection with his appointment to another job...

June 23, 1943

I. Stalin."

During the entire war, Konev was to assume the command of six fronts in a row. One sometimes gets the impression that Stalin looked at the theater of war operations as at a chessboard, on which he enjoyed moving chessmen a lot. For example, A.I. Yeremenko, whom Stalin favored for a while, but scolded frequently, commanded the following fronts during the war: the

Bryansk, 1st and 2nd Baltic, 4th Ukrainian, Kalinin, Stalingrad (of the first formation), Southeastern, Stalingrad (of the second formation), and southern (of the second formation). The would-be Marshall supervised ten fronts, without spending much time at any of them. But Stalin liked Yeremenko's confidence. The Supreme Commander recalled how he called this military commander on "Bodeaux" during the difficult August days of 1941:

"This is Stalin speaking. Hello. Should not the central front be disbanded, the 3rd army merged with the 21st and pass the combined 21st army under your command? I'm asking you this because Moscow is not satisfied with Yefremov's work... If your promise to defeat this bastard Guderian, we can send you several air force regiments and several artillery batteries from the Stavka's reserves. What is your answer?"

Yeremenko: "Hello. My answer is as follows. My opinion regarding the disbanding of the Central front is that the southern direction should be strongly supported since I want to trounce Guderian and I definitely will... That is why I request that the 21st army, merged with the 3rd army, be placed under my command... As far as that bastard Guderian is concerned, will shall definitely try to beat him, to execute the task you have set, i.e. to rout him."

Although Yeremenko did not trounce Guderian "definitely," Stalin liked the confidence espoused by the military commander. At that time, by the way, the Leader was very keen on having Guderian "routed". On listening to another situation report a few days later, Stalin "dictated" another cable to Yeremenko:

"The Stavka is still not satisfied with your work. They enemy continues to hold Pochep and Starodub despite the work done by the air force and the ground units. You have just pinched the enemy a bit, but failed to budge it... Guderian and all of his group have to be smashed to smithereens. This has not been done so far. All your assurances of success hold no value. We are expecting your reports on routing the Guderian group.

September 2, 1941 2:50 a.m.

Dictated over the phone by Com. Stalin

B. Shaposhnikov."

As the Supreme Commander, Stalin ran things "according to himself" in the Stavka as well. His working day would not start before 12 noon, but he discussed problems (Stalin usually took an afternoon nap during a break) till four or five o'clock in the morning of the next day. The General HQs, the Council of People's Commissars, the Central Committee, and all state and military organs had to adapt themselves to Stalin's schedule. He did not think twice about calling the Central Committee, People's Commissariats, and the departments at three or four o'clock in the morning and always found someone at desk, although formally the institutions started their working day at 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning! All this "wore people down a great deal," wrote G.K. Zhukov.

The Supreme Commander listened to the front line situation reports twice a day, lest there were some emergencies. The chief of the General HQs or one of his deputies briefed him about the situation at different fronts, bending over a map that was spread out on the table (for some reason, Stalin did not like the idea of having the map on the wall), indicating the current situation and how it had changed within the past few hours. As he did so, Stalin leisurely paced up and down the carpeted office, occasionally shooting all kind of questions.

"Where has the General HQs spotted the appearance of fresh German divisions?"

"Have you provided Khozin with extra Douglas planes to bring in food supplies, as I ordered last time?"

"Check it out. I gave the order to smash ice with artillery fire at Zavidovo at the area of bridge crossings. Have you verified it or not?"

"Yesterday, I ordered Konev to deliver a blow at the front (while the latter was still the commander of the Kalinin front) in order to have troops pulled out from other sections of the front. How was it done? Don't you know?"

The person doing the briefing found himself in a jam. His job was to brief Stalin on the operational and strategic situation at the fronts. He was lucky if he knew where fresh German units had appeared, or that only 18 Douglas planes have been sent so far, while he has heard nothing about Zavidovo, a minor tactical mission. And the most difficult question. Indeed, Stalin gave a personal order to Konev on November 27, 1941 to strike at the German troops after the fall of Rogachev. But how could one execute a "strike" order a few hours later, without any preparations as a matter of fact? The briefing commander knew that the strike had not been delivered yet, that it was being prepared, but he had to report:

"May I clarify it, Comrade Stalin?"

"Well, you don't know then... And what do you know?"

In such instances, Stalin's appearance changed abruptly. He would grow pale and, as Zhukov reminisced, "his look would become stern and severe. I did not know of many brave people who would be able to take Stalin's ire and pare the blow." Stalin's irises will turn yellowish, and nobody could predict the consequences of the general's briefing. Stalin believed that the one reporting had to be able to answer any questions, while he took it for granted if he was unaware of one problem or another. An absolute attitude to his own will, desires, and intentions gradually made Stalin shed practically any critical evaluation of his own actions and intentions.

The General HQs workers soon realized that Stalin did not possess the faculties of a professional military, and tried, as best as they could, to "offset" many of Stalin's illiterate directives with their own orders. The military commanders around him had a keen sense of his military ineptitude and considered it natural and to be taken for granted in a political leader; but they could not speak about it outloud for the reasons which we mentioned earlier. According to Soviet military historian, N.G. Pavlenko, who met G.K. Zhukov more than once, after the latter had been removed from active work, the illustrious Marshall said about Stalin: "He's been and he's remained shtafirka," or a civilian.

Stalin agreed with the proposals made by Shaposhnikov, Zhukov, and Vasilevskiy on the routine of planning strategic operations. Initially, he just reviewed the proposals prepared by the general HQs and expressed his opinion on their score. Shaposhnikov suggested later - he left the general HQs to become head of the academy of the general HQs, but was frequently invited by Stalin to offer his opinion and advice - that after the chief of the general HQs had outlined the concept of the operation, those proposals should be thoroughly discussed with the chief of the rear services, arms commanders, heads of chief directorates of the people's commissariat of defense, chief political directorates of the Red Army and Navy, and the head of the chief directorate of troop formation and staffing. Done with all the estimates and evaluation of the ideas on supporting the operation, Shaposhnikov suggested that the opinion of front commanders to be taking part in the operation be heard (either in writing or orally, depending on the situation), and only then the concept, contents and the ways of implementing the idea to be formulated. The supreme commander was initially perplexed by what he described as a "long and routine work". Shaposhnikov, whose role as a "teacher" of Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, Antonov, and Stalin himself has not been given due recognition, in my opinion, explained with patience that this was the minimum volume of work to be done.

"Some operations may take just a few days to prepare, while others will require several months," he added.

In his naturally practical mind, Stalin realized that Shaposhnikov was right, although he could not but feel that, if not helpless, he was a complete dilettante in this process. However, Stalin soon found a convenient pattern of behavior when the operations were being planned, which allowed him to preserve his high renown as the leader and "chief military leader," without actually putting his prestige at stake. A careful scrutiny of the Stavka's archives shows that Stalin normally espoused his ideas in two aspects. First, he gave a general outline, the way he did it during the meeting at the Stavka in January 1942, when he said: "We should give enemy no respite and keep him pushing to the West." This generality reflected the sentiment of the broad spectrum of the Soviet people, but did not contain a specific strategic concept, did not account for our possibilities of "pushing it without respite," the enemy's potential to resist those efforts, nor did it outline the ways and means of implementing the idea. This is the wish of a politician and a public figure, not that of a military commander.

Another aspect related to Stalin acting as a military leader during the Stavka meetings involved the changing or elaborating of a specific plan, concept and deadlines. As a summary, a conclusion and a summing-up, these remarks made by Stalin had a special effect. Although the general Staff thrashed out the entire plan, its content, sequence, the issues of coordination, materiel supplies and set an in-depth mission, Stalin added the final "brushstrokes" to the picture and thus was perceived after that as the architect of the entire idea.

Following the discussion of Stalin's "instruction" to "allow enemy no respite and push enemy to the west," which was not backed up militarily, economically, or technically, the Leader suggested making public an "Instructive letter by the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief." It outlined a number of ideas on the need of acting with the help of *strike* groups (what the Germans practiced from the very outset of the war), and of launching an *artillery* offensive. The military councils were explained that one should switch from the practice of "the so-called artillery preparation" to that of artillery offensive. The artillery "should advance together with the infantry."

We should mention it, running ahead of ourselves, that the instruction regarding "artillery offensive" caused confusion and misinterpretation in the units. Some commanders were perplexed by the expression, "the so-called artillery preparation." Did it mean that it was scrapped altogether? But how could one advance without it? What did "artillery offensive" mean? The front line units asked a lot of questions. But no one dared to make another report to Stalin; it was clarified and later put on record in the infantry combat manual at the end of 1942 (ICM-42) that artillery preparation, artillery support for the infantry, as well as the artillery support for infantry and tank in-depth battle remained in force. In other words, all the three stages in artillery operation, which existed prior to the war, were to remain the same. But Stalin "grasped" them only in early 1942 and conveyed them in his idea of the artillery offensive.

So, after this directive letter had been prepared and discussed in the presence of Vasilevskiy, Molotov, Malenkov and a few other officials, Stalin took the document in his hands and blurted out:

"But the letter does not include the main point..."

All those present exchanged furtive and bewildered glances, expecting an eye-opener. And it came:

"I suggest that the letter should reflect another, what I think may be the crucial idea."

Every one got ready to write it down. Stalin kept silent for a long while, building up heightened attention and

putting his thoughts together, and then dictated a sentence which was included, unedited, in the "Directive letter": "Our objective is to let the Germans have no respite, pushing them westward without a let-up, make them deplete their reserves before spring, when we are going to have large fresh reserves, while the Germans will have none, and thus ensure that the Hitler troops are completely routed in 1942."

Naturally, all those present were greatly impressed by Stalin's addition. The General Staff and Stavka members felt that Stalin had a vision that others did not possess, and his farsightedness seemed to surpass others' commonness by an order. Everyone burst into praising the idea to the skies, agreeing with its thrust, of course, but giving no thought as to how it was to be fleshed out. Like many times before and after this, the forecast and the mission outlined by Stalin were nothing but a pipe dream. This became evident soon, in April 1942, when our winter offensive fizzled out and looked utterly erroneous and utopian after the German troops had reached the Volga during their summer offensive. But no one recalled the Supreme Commander's blunder, since the prewar rule that worked without fail said that Stalin should be credited only with successes, achievements, invincibility, wisdom, and foresight, while the failures, defeats, and miscalculations should be blamed on the negligence in carrying out the Leader's will.

Some changes and amendments made by Stalin in the Stavka's plans often played no decisive role, but occasionally had a tragic influence on the course of operations. He was particularly fond of rescheduling, reducing without fail the time required to prepare an operation, a maneuver, or a concentration. He would advance the date of the operation, at least by one day. This was a matter of principle for him.

Zhukov reports to Stalin on September 4, 1941 that he is planning, at Stalin's order, to launch a strike on the 8th to support Yeremenko. Stalin is his usual self.

"You'd rather do it on the 7th than on the 8th... That's it."

The Supreme Commander was persistent to the point of obstinacy. They normally did not argue with him out of fear. Even Zhukov, known to be able to stick to his guns, often had to acquiesce to Stalin, without sharing his ideas.

Let us return to the same conversation between Stalin and Zhukov on September 4.

"Stalin: I think that the operation that you contemplate in the Smolensk area should be started after Roslavl has been done with. It would be even better to wait with Smolensk, to do away with Roslavl together with Yeremenko, and then to tail Guderian... The main thing is to trash Guderian, and Smolensk won't go away from us. That's all."

Zhukov: ..."If you order me to attach in the Roslavl direction, I can handle that. But it would have made more sense if I took care of Yelnya first."

Stalin succeeded - and this was a major accomplishment - in having the Stavka maintain direct communications not just with each front, but with each army as well. From time to time, the supreme commander used the hot line to call representatives of commanders-in-chief, front and army commanders. It was hard to find any logic in whom he conversed with. This was not necessary a critical area. It appeared, though, that his conversations with commanders Kirponos and Kozlov created that impression. Most often, Stalin called on the hot line the people who he believed had failed to implement the Stavka's directives or when he felt that this would be a "pep" talk necessary to make commanders feel that the Supreme Commander was on track, the Supreme Commander was concerned, the Supreme Commander demanded...

The operational value of Stalin's instructions was often quite questionable. Stalin might have been able to make meaningful recommendations and give operational advice during the second or the final, third, period. Feeling himself vulnerable in these matters, he often brought along seasoned General Staff workers to take part in the talks, whom he entrusted with operational questions, leaving to himself "general advice," criticism, dressing-downs, or sometimes moral support.

For example, Stalin brought Lieutenant General P. I. Bodin to take part in the discussions with Timoshenko, Bagramyan, Khrushchev, and Kirichenko on June 13, 1942.

"Bodin: The Stavka is going to pick up the phone. I've been instructed to start the discussion. Please report the most recent situation at your front.

Timoshenko: ... Bluntly speaking, the 28th Army units, ill-controlled by Ryabyshev and his staff, have been strongly demoralized during the three days of incessant and large raids of enemy aircraft; resolute measures are required to put them back in order. Completely demoralized, Ryabyshev left the army and arrived at the army HQs at 4 p.m. without any permission under the pretext of arranging his command post. He reported on the army's most dire predicament to the military council, and could not pinpoint the location of a single division...

Stalin: Ryabyshev is a weakling of course, but what could he have done if you had not sent him tanks and allowed enemy tank groups to break across the lines of the 28th army... We can send several U-2 regiments. Golovanov will be told to start working today on enemy airfields... Why has your southern front remained silent and inactive during the entire operation. You are bad at maneuvering your reserves, your divisions are stuck idle behind the Oskol river... All the best, good luck. Don't be afraid of the Germans, the devil is not as black as he is painted."

We witness here Stalin's attempt to issue operational instructions, which would be codified later in a special directive. It is absolutely evident, however, that the advice and instructions given by Zhukov or Vasilevskiy are unquestionably more professional and useful. When Timoshenko tells Stalin that they do not have "bombers for daytime action" and the fronts are unable, therefore, to actively destroy the fords, Stalin objects, drawing on the papers available at the Stavka: "Our IL-2 low-flying attack planes are considered to be the best daytime bombers for close encounters. They can work on tanks, enemy manpower and the fords, too, more effectively than the Junkers. Our attack planes have a payload of 400 kg of bombs. You do have attack planes, according to my information. May be you are not using them well?" Timoshenko does not argue any more, since Stalin knows better whether they have "daytime bombers" or not. Before going to the negotiating room, the Supreme Commander read, of course, the memo on the forces available to the Southwestern and Southern fronts, but he failed to notice that it was dated July 1, while it is the 12th today. Making no more requests, Timoshenko just stated: "All right, we'll look into it and make a decision based on your instructions. We'll give you a report."

The Stavka sent several thousand directives, orders, and instructions to the units during the war. Stalin was in no position, of course, to study all the documents, but he reviewed and edited the most important ones, sometimes returned them for further revision, added sentences and paragraphs in his own handwriting.

Furious at a setback or bugged by requests, Stalin dictated himself the cables to the commanders and HQs on behalf of the Stavka. They were thick with lecturing (sometimes accompanied by threats) and thin with specific instructions of operational value. Vexed by Timoshenko's requests to reinforce the front, Stalin dictated in late May 1942, for example:

"Timoshenko, Krushchev, Bagramyan,

The Stavka has been receiving your ever new requests for arms in the past four days, and on sending new divisions and tank units out of the Stavka's reserves.

Bear in mind that the Stavka does not have combat-ready new divisions, that these divisions are half-baked, untrained, and sending them to the front now would be tantamount of enabling the enemy to win easily.

Bear in mind that our weapon resources are limited, and take into account that apart from your front, we have other fronts as well.

Isn't it high time that you learned how to fight 'spilling little blood,' the way the Germans do? You should win with skills, not numbers... Take all this into consideration, if you ever want to learn to beat the enemy, and not make him score a walk-over. Otherwise, the weapons you receive from the Stavka will fall into the enemy hands, the way it is happening now.

May 27, 1942 9.50 p.m.

Stalin"

"Bear in mind" is a stock-in-trade expression of Stalin's, who was fond of lecturing everybody. The words about "spilling little blood" sound sacrilegious coming from him, of all people. Stalin's cables often had another telltale expression, "regardless of the losses."

Let us cite a dozen directives, say of 1942 (since they are available in the archives) to give an idea about the Stavka's scope and nature of work and concerns and the volume of work done by the Supreme Commander.

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170562 of 08/09/42 for the commanders of the Southeastern and Stalingarad fronts on placing the Stalingrad front under the commander of the Southeastern front and defending the city of Stalingrad;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170566 of 08/13/42 on appointing Lieutenant General Gordov deputy to Colonel General Yeremenko for the Stalingrad front, and nominating N. S. Khrushchev member of the military council under Colonel General Yeremenko;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170569 of 08/15/42 for the commander of the SE and Stalingrad front Yeremenko on taking the 181st, 147th and 229th infantry divisions of the 62nd army out of encirclement;

Stavka's directive to the VGK of 08/17/42 to the commander, member of the military council and deputy commander of the Western front, the 61 and 16 Army commanders on taking 387th, 350th and units of the 346th divisions of the 61st army out of encirclement;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170580 of 08/23/42 for Beriya, Tyulenev, Charkviani, and Bodin on approving the measures by the Transcaucasian front to bolster mountain pass defenses;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170599 of 09/03/42 for Army General Zhukov on taking immediate measures to help Stalingrad;

Stavka's directive to the VGK of 09/04/42 for Zhukov, Malenkov, and Vasilevskiy on strengthening the blow to prevent the fall of Stalingrad;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 994201 of 09/11/42 for Shchadenko, Khrulyov, and Yakovlev on withdrawing tank corps' nine motorized infantry brigades from the fronts to bring them up to full strength;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170610 of 09/12/42 for Govorov, Zhdanov and Kuznetsov on suspending the crossing of the Neva river by the Leningrad front troops;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170609 of 09/12/42 to Zhukov and Malenkov of regularly sending combat situation reports to the Stavka twice a day;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 994205 of 09/25/42 to form the 8th Estonian infantry corps;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170662 of 10/14/42 to People's Commissar Beriya on establishing a 25km-deep front line zone and relocating the civilian population from it;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170136 of 03/08/42 for appointing Lieutenant General Vlasov deputy commander of the Volkhov front, and appointing Major General Vorobyov 52th army deputy commander;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170228 of 04/09/42 to the commanders of the Southern and Southwestern directions, all army and front commanders on the routine of withdrawing division units for rest;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170300 of 04/22/42 to the Leningrad front commander and Western direction commander on appointing and replacing the commanders of the 4th, 54th and 8th armies;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170366 of 05/08/42 to the SE front commander on building the army defense line along the entire length of the front line;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 934169 of 08/23/42 to Siberian military district commander on forming out of the Siberians a voluntary infantry corps named after Stalin;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170589 of 08/26/42 on appointing army general Zhukov deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and the Navy;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 934235 of 10/09/42 for all the front commanders and the commanders of 7th special army on introducing the position of orderlies for the commanding officers in all fighting armies;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170542 of 07/31/42 to the Stalingrad front commander and member of the military council on introducing "barrier" units;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170583 of 08/24/42 to Beriya approving the establishment of three extra NKVD camps for screening the retreating units;

Stavka's directive to the VGK No. 170603 of 09/08/42 to the Stalingrad front commander and member of the military council on approving the decision to remove Lopatin from the position of the 62nd army commander.

I think the reader may become bored. But one cannot figure out what kind of work the Supreme Commander was doing, without being aware of the fact that every day he had to look into a host of most diverse problems.

Thousands of documents bearing Stalin's signature made people, huge masses of them, move. Behind the Stavka's directives were the future of the country, although during this war, more than ever before, Stalin learned how to use such concepts as "the masses," "people," "nation," "personnel," "men and officers". He became accustomed to shaping people's lives, often giving no thought to the consequences of his decisions. It was only in the front line and captured newsreels that he could see the throngs of retreating soldiers, people dying at river crossings, the women and children crying against the ruins, piles of unburied corpses, and the deranged looking mothers holding tight the bodies of their dead babies. Stalin was numb to the numberless twists and turns of the tragedies of war. He mindlessly thought and acted in terms of life and death. Seeking to inflict the greatest possible damage on the enemy, he never really gave a thought as to what price the Soviet people were going to pay. Thousands and millions of lives were nothing but cut and dry statistics for him... Just read two horrible orders, personally conceived and dictated by Stalin. One of them is No. 0428 of November 17, 1941:

"The Stavka of the Commander-in-Chief orders:

1. Demolish and burn to ashes all populated localities behind the German troops' lines 40-60 km deep from the front line and 20-30 km to the right and to the left of the highways. Immediately employ aviation, make an extensive use of the artillery and mortar fire, scouts' teams, skiers and partisan commando groups provided with incendiary bottles... in order to destroy the populated localities in the given radius.

2. Set up 20-30-men teams of 'hunters' in each regiment to blow up and burn down the populated areas. Put up the most illustriously gallant men for government awards for their courageous action in destroying populated areas".

And the incendiary men worked with a zeal. The glow of the fires came as a stark contrast against the black winter sky. The darkened peasant huts were blazing. Horror-stricken mothers hold tight their wailing children. The moan rose over the long-suffering Motherland's villages. The Germans burned down villages in the hope of punishing partisans, and now their own people committed them to flames... Award lists... 'Hunters' teams... It were the villages and houses with no Germans that went ablaze more often - it was not easy to set them on fire in the places which had the occupying troops. This was the tragedy lit by the crimson blazing fires...

War knows no mercy. Such acts might have created pervasive problems for the occupiers, since they had many frost-bitten men. This is true. But for how many Soviet people their roof was their last flimsy shelter, in which they hoped to live through the ordeal, see their own men come back and save their children! Who can say whether this order contained more military expediency or thoughtless brutality? That decision was typical of Stalin. He had never had sympathy for his own people. Never!

It is useless to argue with Stalin's order in retrospect on burning down populated areas in the front line zone, but this was a macabre order.

Army General N.G. Lyashchenko, who was a regiment commander at the end of 1941, told me of an episode involving the implementation of the order.

"We were in defense," reminisces Nikolay Grigorievich. "Two villages, those of Bannovskoye and Prishib, I recall their names even now, loomed ahead of us. An order came down from the division to burn down all villages within our reach. As I was discussing the details of executing the order in the dugout, an elderly signal man suddenly interrupted us, in violation of all rules of subordination:"

"Comrade Major, this is my village... My wife, my children and my sister are there... What do you mean, burn it down? They are all going to die!"

"Why don't you mind your own business? We'll take care of it ourselves," I cut him short.

Sending the sergeant back, the battalion commander and I started thinking what to do. I remember calling the order "stupid" for which I had almost to pay a price, since it was Stalin's order. However, army commander R. Ya. Malinovskiy and member of the military council, I.I. Larin saved me from the special department people. We recaptured those villages the morning after with the permission of division commander Zamortsev. We did not have to set it on fire...

Here is another document dictated by Stalin:

"The Kalinin front commander,

January 11, 1942 1.50 a.m. No. 170007

...Take the city of Rzhev on the 11th and not later than the 12th under any circumstances... The Stavka suggests that to achieve the objective, use should be made of the artillery, mortar and aviation forces available in the area, trouncing Rzhev, without letting any serious damage to the city stop you.

Acknowledge receipt and report the results.

I. Stalin"

It is unfortunate that Stalin did not display the same decisiveness when the intelligence, the military, the country's friends reported before the war that Hitler's machine was poised for a formidable onslaught. Now the "city of Rzhev is to be trounced," while two days before the war the "clairvoyant" banned taking the necessary measures to repel the attack. As one reads the countless documents issued by the Stavka permeated with the idea of halting the enemy, routing it and kicking it out of the Motherland, one develops a keen feeling that the mishap of such proportions could have been averted. Displaying his will, ruthlessness, decisiveness, and the staunchness of a military commander, Stalin made no bones about burning down, destroying, and demolishing everything that had been built with the hands of his compatriots. Indeed, this was often dictated by dire necessity - blowing up bridges, railway stations and factories during the retreat. But the roof of a house in a poor Russian village could have hardly saved the occupier.

I think that the documents issued by the Stavka and the State Defense Council should be published in special editions. They reflect the unheard-of endeavor displayed by the Soviet people, the bitter debacles, undying hopes, and thousands and millions of human dramas and the people's indestructible faith in Victory. Stalin kept receiving letters from ordinary Soviet people, expressing support, the patriotic wish to donate their last things for the front, and in which teenagers pleaded to be sent to the front, even during the period when our troops found themselves on the Volga and the road to Berlin looked way too long. Stavka's thousands of documents bearing Stalin's signature is no indication that he was the Messiah. There were no Messiahs. The people are the Messiah. A signature in blue pencil on the documents was nothing but the proof that during the entire war the person who affixed it had to devote his will and mind to the formidable fight against the forces of evil, with which he had tried to strike up a hasty "friendship". His intellect and will hardly fit into the Napoleon's "square". Merciless, brutal and evil, his will had been always more prominent. A dogmatic mind is prone to falter. It can be convincingly argued that it was Stalin's talented military retinue, and not himself, that eventually turned the Stavka into a collective body of strategic leadership.

'Chapters of War'

The millstone of war was grinding human lives. The four long years of the war required ever new human victims. Ascending to the top strategic positions soon after the war outbreak, Stalin did not develop a more profound or longer perspective of things. The theater of war looked to him like a "scuffle" between the two armies, taking place over the vast expanses that stretched from the Barents to the Black seas. Stalin was not good at first at making the head or tail of the military situation, or seeing its main elements - he failed to understand the rapid disintegration of the Western front under the command of Pavlov. Only after seeing some captured documents after the war did he realize how strong was German concentration along the main line of advance and how evenly were the Soviet troops extended operationally.

The leader gained strategic "vision" bit by bit. He learned his first lesson in July 1941, after the Germans had occupied Minsk and were pushing towards Smolensk and Moscow. Listening to the reports made by General Staff officers, Stalin felt at some point that the Stavka did not have enough strategic reserves "at hand" and that there were "gaps" behind the lines. The consequent dispatch of the units arriving from the country's heartland to close the gaps in the front line, which was frequently breached, enabled the enemy to destroy them piecemeal. Stalin learned from those horrible days of July that reserves upon reserves again were needed to build up a reliable and strong defense (and then the offensive strike force); even the two-echelon setup did

not guarantee the front's capacity to be resilient and unbreakable without the reserves.

The Supreme Commander-in-Chief just tried to meet enemy challenges, threats, and blows for a long while. It was only after Moscow and Stalingrad that he felt confident enough to impose his will on the enemy and dictate his terms. By the end of 1941, Stalin realized that like a book consisted of many chapters tied up by a single plot, the war was a sum total of many specific operations. Poskryobyshchev recalled after the war how one day, having wound up the discussion of current business of the final Berlin and Prague operations with chief of general staff A.I. Antonov, shortly before the V-Day, Stalin asked the Army General all of a sudden:

"It looks like these are going to be our last offensive operations in the West. I was just wondering how many of them we have had during the war?"

"It's hard to say," replied Aleksey Innokentievich, "but I think we have had about 40 major strategic operations, including the defensive ones."

Antonov got it almost right. The fronts' armed forces carried out under the Stavka's command around 50 strategic operations - offensive and defensive - between 1941 and 1945. While the Supreme Command, the HQs and the fighting armies "wrote" the first 10 to 15 chapters as dictated by the enemy, they created the remaining 35-40 chapters whenever and wherever they deemed it necessary. The Soviet people - soldiers, commanders and political workers - were the main characters in and creators of the great book of war. The front and army HQs and the Stavka itself wrote the chronicle included in this huge folio.

Under the impact of the strategic situation, the original five fronts were downsized (there were already 12 fronts in July 1943, for example), and the unheard-of epic ended up on eight fronts. The Supreme Commander pointed out unabashedly after the war that he had learned the "secrets" of strategy, operational art, and tactics. While he did make much headway in strategy, he remained a dilettante in terms of operations and tactics till the very end of the war. This is how Stalin picked on Aleksandrov and Fyodorov, front commanders, for ineptly conducting the war:

"I consider it shameful for the front commanders to have let our four infantry regiments to be encircled as a result of negligence and foot-dragging. It is high time you learned proper troop control in the third year of the war."

"...high time you learned"...This could have been said by the person who "has learned himself". Stalin did not have the slightest doubt that, like with political struggle, he had learned the art of armed struggle.

"Aleksandrov" and "Fyodorov," whom he was lecturing, were the real persons, not mythical ones. We mentioned earlier Stalin's fondness of secretiveness; he made a contribution of his own to subjecting the enemy to a cover-up and disinformation. A.M. Vasilevskiy acted as "Aleksandrov" since May 15, 1943, while no other than Tulbukin was "Fyodorov". Let us list some of the aliases so that the readers had a clear idea of who was who.

I. Kh. Bagramian - Khristoforov;

K. Ye. Voroshilov - Yefremov, Klimov;

S. M. Budyonniy - Semyonov;

G. K. Zukov - Konstantinov, Yuriev;

N. A. Bulganin - Nikolin;

I. S. Konev - Stepanov, Styopin;

N. A. Bulganin - Nikolin;

K. K. Rokossovskiy - Kostin, Dontsov;

A. M. Vasilevskiy - Aleskandrov;

I. V. Stalin - Vasiliyev, Ivanov;

N. F. Vatulin - Fyodorov, Mikhailov;

N. N. Voronov - Nikolayev...

The length of time these named were used was predetermined and kept in strict confidence, of course. The cables "coded" this way very often made no sense when you read them, although Stalin insisted on using this type of coding. Were one able to "read" these cables, it became clear who had sent the dispatches and to whom they were addressed, although no real names were used. The text of the document itself unraveled the mystery. Here is just one of many such cables:

"Comrade Kostantinov (read G.K. Zhukov - D.V.),

Here are a few ideas expressed by Mikhailov (A.M. Vasilevskiy). Give me your opinion. Mikhailov's cable does not reflect the role to be played by the 62nd army in the general offensive to destroy the encircled enemy. I found out after talking to Mikhailov that the 57th army will act from Rakitino area; Kravtsov and Tsybenko, in the general direction towards the Gornaya polyana and Balka peschanaya state farm...

Vasiliev (Stalin - D.V.)"

If the enemy were to intercept and decoded the cable, it would hardly be mislead by the typically Russian names.

It transpired that the Stavka not only assumed the prerogative of formulating general and specific objectives for each front, but planned operations by and large. It will be recalled that the chief commanders of troop directions, such as the Northwestern, Western and Southeastern were soon deprived of any decision-making powers. The Stavka continued to guide the fronts, issue instructions and demand that this or that

order made by the Supreme Commander be implemented even after army Commanders-in-Chief were established. Often one had the impression that Stalin needed army Commanders-in-Chief not for facilitating troop control, but for using them as "scapegoats", and the regular butts for biting criticism. The army commanders-in-chief were essentially unable to control reserves, aviation units under their command, or to make even minor decisions. When talking with front commanders, Stalin did not consider the plans and proposals drafted by army Commanders-in-Chief, but just dismissed them in passing. Here is what Stalin ordered, speaking with general D.T. Kozlov, the Crimean front commander, on the hot line: "The entire 47th army should be moved without delay behind the Turkish rampart, bringing up its rear and organizing its aviation cover... All the orders issued by the army C-in-C which contradict the just issued orders should not be considered for execution."

Stalin did not decide on his attitude of principle to the commanders-in-chief till the very end, which were, as we said earlier, disbanded several months after being formed. Two positions of army commander-in chief were re-instituted for a short period of time, but remained in operation till summer 1942. Given Stalin's penchant for rigid centralization, these regional organs of strategic guidance could not prove their worth.

Defensive operations amounted to less that one quarter of all the operations. How did Stalin and the Stavka craft and conduct them? We should say outright that the majority of the strategic defensive operations were not pre-planned during the first year of war (these included the ones in the Baltic region in June-July; the ones in Belorussia, the Western Ukraine; beyond the Arctic circle and in Kariliya in the autumn of 1941; the Kiev one in July-August, the Smolensk one in July-September, and some others). These operations were conducted under enemy's duress, with the Soviet troops often acting spontaneously.

The organization and execution of protracted nationwide defense and the defensive use of all of the armed forces were not practiced neither during the exercises, nor the maneuvers, nor in theory in 1939-1941, a fact we have mentioned earlier. Anyone suggesting a discussion of the Dnieper, Moscow or Leningrad defense prior to the war, might have been accused of defeatism, treason, or betrayal. One did not indulge even in abstract theorizing about organizing strategic defense over vast expanses and for a long period of time. Stalin did indeed "help"...the enemy to launch a surprise attack with his policies and wrong action.

The main objective pursued by the Stavka and front commanders in issuing orders and directives for strategic defense was to stop the enemy and bleed it white, and pave the ground for an offensive. It was only later on, at Stalin's "suggestion," that propaganda workers started to present the catastrophic retreat of the Soviet troops as having had the hidden goal of "wearing the foe down" through active defense. We used a "planned" strategic defense perhaps only once, in the summer of 1943. The supreme Commander-in-Chief did not like defense, got jittery about it, and did not have an in-depth understanding of its essence. He tried to address it not only through operational, but also through administrative-punitive measures, as testified by the orders No. 270 of August 16, 1941 and No. 227 of July 28, 1942, and a number of additional instructions on giving a higher profile to the NKVD "barrier" units behind the lines along the sections of the front which were in peril.

The majority of military commanders did not have much experience in organizing strategic defenses at that time either. It should be borne in mind that a large number, or the majority, to be precise, of the commanding cadres perished or were wounded in 1941. Although the summer and fall campaign of 1942 could have shaped up better, as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief Stalin was unable to show a profound understanding of defensive fighting (the troops' morals were "boosted" following the battle of Moscow; the enemy advanced not along the entire front, but in the southwestern direction only; the German troops lost much of the "novelty" of their strikes). It was evident to him that the scope of those operations in the summer of 1942 could not be the same as it was in 1941, when our troops withdrew 850 to 1,200 km deep inside.

Stalin believed that any significant retreat was unfeasible. The People's Commissar of Defense claimed in his order on the occasion of February 23, 1942: "The inequality in war conditions created due to a surprise attack by German fascist troops has been done away with... As soon as the Germans' arsenal lost its surprise element, the German fascist army found itself facing a debacle." But Stalin did not take into account that our army would find itself in a critical situation once again, although less dangerous than the year before, because the enemy had concentrated its troops along the narrower sections of the front, where the Supreme Commander-in-Chief expected them to be least of all. The enemy succeeded in advancing 500-650 km deep, i.e., half as much as in 1941, once again by breaching the front in several places. The Germans' territorial "successes" would amount to a mere two or three dozen kilometers in the future... But we failed to blunt and contain the offensive thrust of the German troops in the summer of 1942, because Stalin once again overestimated his powers and insisted on conducting at least minor offensive operations in parallel. The enemy was stopped at the Volga only thanks to major strategic troop movements. The Stavka was forced to send over 100 large infantry units, about half a dozen tank corps to the southwestern direction in the second half of 1942. This is what it implies in having failed to precisely establish the enemy potential!

Stalin miscalculated in 1941, when he believed that the main enemy strike would directed southwest, while it was in the western direction. We had to resort to major troop regrouping at that time, and we had just over a half

of all our divisions in the western direction by the time of our winter offensive. The Supreme Commander and the Stavka in general believed the western direction to remain the main one in 1942, although he admitted the possibility of a formidable strike in the southwestern one. But the southwestern direction came to the fore, as the enemy was delivering its main blows during the summer campaign. It can be argued that the Stavka failed to determine precisely the directions of major enemy strikes both in the summer of 1941 and later in 1942. On both occasions, Stalin "helped" to make what later turned out to be erroneous final conclusions.

After the discussion of the 1942 plan in the Stavka, the leader insisted that the "Directive letter," which we already talked about, be sent to the military councils of fronts and armies, orienting them towards taking offensive action. The letter said that the "enemy switched over to defense, and was building defense lines in order to arrest the advance of the Red Army." Defensive battles had to be waged instead, for which no due preparations had been made, since Stalin was known to have set the objective of "ensuring complete rout of Hitler's troops in 1942." This was understandable as a common wish entertained by the Soviet people, but unfeasible as far as its actual execution was concerned.

What strikes the eye is that in discussing things with army and front commanders the Supreme Commander-in-Chief feels himself less confident during the defensive operations that he did when the troops are advancing. He often gives Shaposhnikov or Vasilivskiy, and then to Antonov, a chance to conduct discussions, interfering most often in cases when the same "issues" are raised - he says whether he is going to assign reserve units to the front; usually recommends a fuller use of aviation and pointed to an army or corps commander who "spoil the game." Stalin was fond of reminding everyone about vigilance as well... We are in possession of dozens of his instructions on the matter. Nothing doing, this gave out his temperament.

Here are a few orders he gave to the units on the defensive. He tells Timoshenko at the end of their conversation on June 22, 1942: "People have to be evacuated from the front line zone so that no agent, and not a single suspicious person remains there, that lines behind the troops were one hundred percent clean."

Giving instructions to the Bryansk front commander, F.I. Golikov, on July 1, 1942, he mentioned one of the reasons for failure: "Feklenko... is a cunning guy. If you do not make Feklenko move immediately towards Bykovo or to the south of Bykovo, you'll be hald accountable by the Stavka. If Feklenko does not do his job right, ask Fedorenko to replace him with somebody else, but you'd rather make Feklenko move forward and atone for the shame that he covered himself with."

Talking to southern front commander, R. Ya. Malinovskiy on July 22 of the same year, Stalin expresses dissatisfaction with the reconnaissance information. "Your reconnaissance information is not very reliable. We have an intercept of the report sent by Colonel Antonescu. We put little value on Antonescu's cables. Your air reconnaissance data are of no great value either. Our piliots do not know combat formations of ground troops, they take every buggy for a tank, and they are unable to decide whose troops move in this or that direction. Reconnaissance pilots have let us down more than once and provided us with false data. That is why we treat the reports done by reconnaissance pilots in the critical vein and make major reservations. Army reconnaissance is the only reliable reconnaissance, but it is army reconnaissance that you lack or which is very poor." When G.K. Zhukov reported to him a defection of a German soldier, who disclosed to army reconnaissance that the 23rd infantry division had been replaced at night by the 267th infantry division and that he also observed SS units, Stalin "warned" the report presenter: "You should not trust POWs too much." The Supreme Commander-in-Chief preferred to mistrust virtually everyone: the prisoners of war, reports by scouts, radio intercepts, and commanders' appraisals...

Stalin actively adopted the most radical measures during the first period of the war. One of them concerned, for example, the engineering development of positions. Tree to five defense lines were built in the Moscow and Leningrad directions, and tremendous engineering work was conducted. Stalin took an unprecedented step of establishing ten engineering armies which seemed to have played their role. They were gradually disbanded in 1942. This fact shows that Stalin looked in 1941 for the ways of bolstering front defenses, using this method, among other things.

Occasionally, he would be gripped with a fixed and questionable idea, and he saw to its fruition. We mentioned earlier, that Stalin believed in the great potential of light cavalry divisions after his talk with Budyonniy in September 1941. Semyon Mikhailovich claimed that they could paralyze the enemy rear. Shaposhnikov and Vasilevskiy expressed their cautious skepticism in the matter, but Stalin had his way:

"You underestimate the capabilities of light mobile cavalry units. I think their raids can disorganize Germans' control, communications, supplies and rear services... How come you don't understand this?"

"But additional forces will be needed to provide them with cover from enemy aircraft. They are defenseless without aviation's protection. Besides, the cavalry divisions are cumbersome," Shaposhnikov seemed to muse to himself."

But the opposition was weak. They set out soon to establish 3,000-men strong light cavalry divisions. The armed forces had a total of 94 cavalry divisions by January 1, 1942. Attempts were made to use cavalry extensively to stage raids behind the Fascist troops' lines. Some of them were more or less successful, but the German command soon inflicted heavy losses on the

units, which did not have reliable antiaircraft defenses or had little striking power, when it used aircraft against cavalry.

It was common knowledge that both cavalry armies and even cavalry divisions were a thing of the past; the number of cavalry divisions was reduced by the end of 1942, but 26 units still remained by May 1945. Stalin did not use cavalry on a wide scale any longer, entrusting its command to S.M. Budyonniy, a "red cavalry man" with anachronistic thinking. Marshall of the Soviet Union, S.M. Budyonniy was nominated the Red Army cavalry commander with a small staff by the Stavka order No. 057 of January 25, 1943. Stalin nominated Colonel General O.I. Gorodovikov as Budyonniy's deputy. The Supreme Commander remembered about cavalry once again in May 1944:

"Commander of front troops Comrade Budyonniy Copy to Com. Aleksandrov (A.M. Vasilevskiy - D.V.)

The experience of Red Army offensive operations of 1943-1944 has shown that the cavalry units always produce good combat effect...in the cases when the cavalry units are used en masse, when they are reinforced with mechanized and armor units and supported by aviation, when they are used against enemy open flanks to strike at its rear and to pursue it.

The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts can be used as the examples of correctly using cavalry units of the 1st and 6th Guards cavalry corps, and of the 4th and 5th Cossack Guards corps...

The 1st Baltic, the former Western and the 1st Belorussian fronts are the examples of the wrong use of cavalry, where the 3rd, 6th, 2nd and 7th Guards cavalry corps were re-subordinated to the armies and we used for limited tactical purposes...

I order the removing of cavalry units from under army command and use them hence as the means of front command for building up success and striking behind the enemy lines...

May 1, 1944 12 a.m.

I. Stalin
Antonov."

It was obvious that Stalin continued to argue with himself about the role of cavalry in modern warfare, still relying on the cavalry's offensive power. The times of epics and legends about Red Army cavalry men were gone. Cavalry turned out to be able to perform nothing but secondary and ancillary tasks in the war. Stalin, as was his wont, did not remember about his own bad ideas any more. Unfortunately, the "flying cavalry divisions" did not paralyze German rear, as the Supreme Commander wanted them to.

Stalin effused more confidence during the offensive operations, as we mentioned earlier. Capable of waiting it out, Stalin did not display this quality in this case and was always impatient. Stalin was planning to conduct offensive operations in all directions, without having sufficient capabilities yet, contrary to the warnings sounded by Shaposhnikov and other military commanders, as they planned combat operations for the summer of 1942. It seemed that the defeat of the most dangerous enemy group near Moscow should have convinced the supreme commander of the importance of concentrating efforts along a given direction. But as soon as the first strategic success became feasible, Stalin concluded that the Red Army was capable then of conducting similar combat operations along all the directions. G.K. Zhukov recalls that Stalin claimed more than once that after the battle of Moscow the "Germans would not be able to sustain Red Army blows as long as their defenses were skillfully broken through. This gave him an idea of starting an early general offensive on all the fronts, from Lake Ladoga to the Black sea." Zhukov gives these deliberations by the Supreme Commander:

"The Germans have been confused following their Moscow defeat, and they are ill-prepared for winter. Now it is the most opportune moment to go on a general offensive..."

None of those present objected to this, recalled Marshall, and I.V. Stalin elaborated:

"Our objective is to give the Germans no respite, push them westwards nonstop, make them deplete their reserves before spring sets in.."

He made emphasis on the words, 'before sprint', paused for a while and went on:

"When we have new reserves, while the Germans will have no more reserves."

The Politburo and Stavka members agreed with Stalin, although Zhukov, Shaposhnikov, and Vasilivskiy expressed doubts about the idea's feasibility in the course of a cautious discussion. But the Supreme Commander's sharp retorts soon made everybody agree with him. Convinced of something, Stalin was very hard to sway, with even a good reason having little effect on him. It was decided to deliver the blows using the units of the Northwestern, Kalinin, Western fronts, and the forces of the Leningrad, Volkhov, Southwestern, Southern, Caucasian fronts and the Black sea fleet.

We know today that the Soviet troops' summer and autumn offensives were a flop. The Stavka felt disappointed at the northwestern front failing to rout the Demyan group. Outnumbering the enemy considerably, over 20 Soviet divisions were trying to break enemy resistance without success. Stalin sent several stern cables to the front commanders. It did not help... The Germans were better fighters at that time. The 11th and 1st armies failed to cut through the so-called "Ramushev corridor" with their strikes delivered from opposite directions. The troops' action was stereotyped, without any imagination. Nothing but generalities, Stalin's cliche advice of "using aviation more actively," and creating

"striking forces" could not help the front. The 2nd strike army under Lieutenant General Vlasov, found in semi-encirclement, was bleeding to death in the meantime. Stalin accused the Leningrad front commander, M.S. Khozin, of "lacking initiative and being irresponsible," which was quite serious. At that point, Zhdanov reported the complaints by Zaporozhets and Melnikov, the front deputy commanders, about "Khozin's unseemly behavior." Stalin curtly said on the phone: "Sort it out and report to me."

Zhdanov asked Khozin to answer the accusations made by his political workers. Khozin wrote a letter addressed to Zhdanov on June 3, 1942 which said: "Zaporozhets has accused me of amoral family behavior. It is true that women telegraph operators went to visit me once or twice to see a movie... I've been accused of using much vodka. I'm not saying I'm a teetotaler. I drink two, sometimes three glasses before lunch and dinner... I cannot work with Zhaporozhets after all this scandal-mongering." Zhdanov called two days later. On finishing his regular report, he added: "I think Khozin should be removed... Things do not work for him."

Lieutenant General M. S. Khozin was relieved of his duties as the Leningrad front commander by the Stavka order on June 9. Soon Stalin appointed him army commander, and then the commander of the special group, first promoting him to Colonel General. Then Khozin became deputy commander of the northwestern front, and then Western front deputy commander. The endless reshuffling of generals looked baffling sometimes, but Stalin closely watched their moves and forgave no mistakes of theirs. The same Khozin appeared in one of the Stavka's orders again on December 8, 1943:

"Remove Colonel General Khozin Mikhail Semyonovich from the position of the western front deputy commander for idleness and lack of serious attitude to work and send under the jurisdiction of the head of the chief personnel directorate of the People's Commissariat of Defense. Stalin
Zhukov"

One day the Supreme Commander-in-Chief suddenly "became candid" after having listened to the report by A.I. Antonov, new head of the operations directorate and first deputy head of the General Staff - this happened after Stalingrad, when the wind of victory was filling his sails stronger and stronger. But let us make one digression.

It took Stalin quite a while to size up Antonov, who was recommended to the General Staff by Vasilevskiy. Stalin did not like replacing people around himself frequently. It will be recalled that back in 1938, when Poskryobyshev's wife had been arrested for "assisting in espionage activities of her in-laws," Stalin did not listen to Beriya's strong advice to have his first assistant replaced. It was hard to get used to new people at his age, and here the case involved daily war situation reports. When Vasilevskiy visited the troops, he was reported to by F. Ye. Bokov, General Staff deputy head for political affairs, a person not very well versed in operational matters. At the end of March 1943, Stalin asked, at last, Aleksey Innokentievich Antonov to report to him for the first time. The report was brief, but to the point. Stalin did not let it be known that the "test" went well, and bid good-by dryly. Two or three months later, Antonov became one of Stalin's closest military assistants due to the Supreme Commander's frequent communication with that precise, smart and taciturn general of youthful appearance.

So, Stalin's "candidness" might have been attributed to his pent-up bewilderment on the one hand, and to an attempt to sound out Antonov even deeper, on the other. When Antonov asked permission to leave, Stalin suddenly asked him:

"Comrade Antonov, have you ever thought why many of our offensive operations in 1942 had not been completed? Take, for example, the Rzhev and Vyazma operation involving two fronts, the operation to lift the siege of Leningrad, the winter offensive of the troops of the Southern and Southwestern fronts. Incidentally, you have been Malinovskiy's chief of staff, haven't you?"

"Yes, Comrade Stalin..."

"You had two armies in the Crimea and suffered a defeat, and then came Kharkov... How do you explain those debacles? Don't tell me now that the balance of forces was wrong, that we atomized our forces, did not use aviation and armor the right way..."

A teacher of general tactics before the war, Antonov was not taken aback and gave his rather clear-cut interpretation of the fiascoes:

"Last year, and not infrequently this year too, we acted according to cliches, without imagination. We have not learned how to break the defense lines at several points at a time, and made poor use of armor units to develop success..."

"You've started off right, but then went into too many details...The main thing is that," the Supreme Commander looked at Antonov, "we have learned how to defend ourselves, but still do not know how to advance. In a nutshell, we still do not know how to fight well..." Stalin glanced at Antonov again, suddenly broke into a rare smile, and said softly: "You may leave."

At the end of December 1942, listening to the report by the head of the main political directorate, A.S. Shcherbakov, regarding political work in the army, Stalin said forcefully, winding up the conversation: "The men should be guided towards a specific goal; 1943 should see the end of fascist bastards! Instruct political bodies to step up work to boost morale. We shall have many broad offensives. Yes, offenses! The fascists cannot be defeated solely be defensive means, without an offensive." Stalin realized that in addition to the offensive skills, which were lacking among men, commanders, and especially

the supreme command, people had to display lofty morale and a faculty and determination to show strong fighting will to wing victory. There was often a dearth of this will as well. Special classes were held for political workers and active party members at Shcherbakov's instruction at front political directorates, and at the political departments of armies, corps, and divisions. They discussed the forms and methods of maintaining a high offensive elan. The party archives have a speech made by L.Z. Mekhlis to the political workers of the 2nd strike and the 8th armies of the Volkhov front on January 9, 1943. With an obvious emphasis, the speech was called, "Regarding political work in an offensive operation."

Humiliated and demoted by Stalin for the Crimean debacle, Mekhlis opens up each paragraph, nevertheless, with eulogizing or just mentioning the Supreme Commander: "On Stalin's order, 1943 (the same was said in early 1942 - D.V.) should become the year of the complete defeat of German invaders. We cannot win the war through defense. According to the recently published, Stalin's 'Infantry Combat Manual,' offensive is the main type of combat for Soviet troops."

Then Mekhlis tried to "substantiate theoretically" the political work geared towards raising moral potential. "During war, the flesh reflects the animal survival instincts and the fear of death. The spirit is reflected in the patriotic feeling of a Homeland's guardian. A subconscious, and sometimes a conscious conflict shapes up between the spirit and the flesh. We shall see a coward in front of us, if the flesh dominates the spirit. And the other way round." Mikhlis, of course, focussed on the need to spread confidence in Stalin's clever leadership. "Great military leader Comrade Stalin heads the country and the army, whose genius, the striving for victory and staunchness have no parallels among the contemporaries." Definitely, Mekhlis did not mention his own "method" of inspiring an offensive elan, when he banned digging deep trenches in the Crimea, where a large number of troops were landed. When commanders tried to object timidly, Mekhlis retorted categorically:

"Trenches are a defensive psychology. We are going on an offensive in the next few days. Comrade Stalin has set the goal of liberating the Crimea as soon as possible..."

Crowded like in a Gypsy camp, their "minor" defense lines barely established and the army HQs and heavy artillery moved almost to the front line, the divisions were hit by the devastating German strike. Thinking about nothing but "offensive," Kozlov and Mekhlis brought about a heavy defeat for the front.

Space is not enough to analyze the specific "chapters" of war, the operations (I shall describe the Stalingrad operation only in greater detail), and the role played by the Supreme Commander in their execution. I would like to say that after Stalingrad, the commanders, HQs and the troops they controlled raised their operational skills, and the Stavka itself began to perform more efficiently. Albeit dogmatic in his thinking, Stalin, who possessed a powerful mind and a strong will, imparted greater dynamism, sense of purpose and meaningful decision-making to the strategy formulated by the supreme military body.

War is a severe teacher. Military leaders and commanders could not but learn military art, given the loss of millions of lives, setbacks, and debacles, accompanied by the unsurpassed courage displayed by the Soviet people. In fact, many of them climbed to the upper rungs of the military structure just shortly before the war. The bloody lessons of war could not but make their impact even on Stalin; he became more circumvent, thoughtful and purposeful, although he did not abandon his powerful, severe and punishing style with regard to failures. Some things changed in Stalin as the years went by, but his dictatorial verve and the Caesar's character became stronger and "more perfect." Many people who got in touch with him during the war felt his heavy hand, peremptoriness, take-it-or-leave-it manners, and suspicion.

Some excerpts from his directives, orders and instructions during the second and the third, the last, periods of the war characterize the kind of action he took as the Supreme Commander.

"Southern front

Comrades Yeremenko, Khrushchev

Copy to Comrade Malinovskiy

The capture of Bataisk by our troops has a great historical significance. The seizing of Bataisk has allowed us to bottle up enemy armies in Northern Caucasus and to bar the advance of 24 German and Rumanian divisions towards Rostov, Taganrog and Donbass. The enemy has to be surrounded and routed in Northern Caucasus, the same way it was surrounded and routed at Stalingrad...

January 23, 1943 6:30 a.m.

I. Stalin

Approved over the phone. Bokov."

Alas, it was difficult to repeat Stalingrad. Once again, Stalin's wish was not backed up by either the skills or the possibilities available to Soviet troops. Some units of the Wehrmacht's 1st tank army broke into Donbass through Rostov, and the remaining units moved to the Taman peninsular and the lower reaches of the Kuban. And another directive:

"Southwestern front

Comrade Fyodorov (F.I. Tolbukhin - D.V.)

Instead of the plan of operation that you suggested, it would be better to adopt another plan, having limited objectives but more feasible at the present moment. The general objective set for the front in the immediate future is to stop the enemy from retreating towards Dnepropetrovsk and Zhaporozhe and make the entire

front take all the necessary measures to keep the enemy Donetsk group in the Crimea, block the Perekov and Sivash passages and thus isolate the enemy Donetsk group from the rest of the troops in the Ukraine. The operation should be started as soon as possible. Send your decision to the General Staff for information.

November 2, 1943 4:05 a.m.

Vasiliev

Send by Comrade Stalin over the phone. Bokov."

The text of the phone message coveys Stalin's complete confidence in his action. He dismisses Tolbukhin's plan out of hand and dictates the one of his own, without its prior discussion at the General HQs. The coded cable shows that Tolbukhin's decision was to be fully based on Stalin's instruction, given above, and should have been sent to the General HQs "for information" only. While before Stalin did not make similar major decisions on his own, rather relying on the General HQs, he was capable then of taking independent and responsible steps. It is a different matter how smart and how substantiated they are; for example, one could give different interpretation to his desire to "block" and "bottle up" the German group in the Crimea.

Stalin was learning how to direct combat action and saw to it that everybody learned too. More than one directive was sent to the units at his initiative containing instructions on being more active in acquiring experience of offensive operations. Here is one of such documents, which was sent to the front commanders in May 1944: "Organize analysis of the most typical operations and combats at all fronts. The reviews should be conducted in the presence of commanders and chiefs of Staff of the armies, corps and heads of arms and services of the Army and Navy under the leadership of front, division and regiment commanders, and with respective heads of arms under the leadership of army commanders. Along with showing the positive sides of combat actions by friendly troops, the reviews should reveal the shortcomings in organizing and conducting the operation and combat, specifically the drawbacks in the use of arms, organizing their interaction, in troop control, and should give instructions on taking remedial measures."

Is it possible that this kind of instruction, coupled with the real combat and blood-shedding situation, helped the Soviet troops move in a forceful way in the last year of war?

In his rare moments of rest, Stalin's mind turned back to the past operations, "reliving" them in his frayed mind. Almost every one of them was associated for him with a recollection, anguish that receded into the past, a stern demand, a threat to a commander, and an ambitious feeling of another success. Indeed, so many operations "passed" through his head in 1943, even more in the "good" year of 1944, and the victories year of 1945: the Oryol, Belgorod-Kharkov, Smolensk, Donbass, Chernigov-Poltava, Novorossiysk-Taman, Lower Dnieper, Kiev, Leningrad-Novgorod, the liberation of the Crimea, Vyborg-Petrozavodsk, Belorussian, Lvov-Sandomir, Yassy-Kishinev, East Carpathian, Belgrade, Budapest, Vistula-Order, Vienna, East-Pomeranian, and Prague...

Even in his mind, Stalin was unable to remember all of them at once. They "went" through his head and his heart, making the Supreme Commander, who was not young, look very old very fast. He was thinking about himself, and not about his people, millions of his compatriots who saw this war "pass" not just through their minds and their hearts, but who saw the rivers of their blood, paying for Victory with their lives.

Stalin had long been accustomed to manipulating millions of human lives. They were the mass of people and he was the Leader; this had always been the case in history, and he was convinced this would always be. Having familiarized myself with hundreds of operations documents, dictated or signed by the Supreme Commander during the four years of war, I did not come across a single one, it seems, in which he would set the goal of taking care of people, not throwing them into impromptu attacks, showing concern for the lives of his compatriots. No, I think I'm wrong. There is one document, very unlike Stalin's other "works" in that area. Let me cite it:

"Commander of Western Front Comrade Zhukov

member of Western front military council Com. Bulganin

Western front deputy commander Com. Romanenko

61st army commander Com. Belov

16th army commander Com. Bagramyan

August 17, 1942 10 p.m.

According to the reports sent by the Western front headquarters, the 387th, 350th and part of the 346th division of the 61st army are continuing to fight in conditions of encirclement, and no help has been given to them so far, despite the instructions issued by the Stavka. The Germans never abandon their units surrounded by Soviet troops and try to break through to them and save them using all available means. The Soviet commanders should display more comradeship towards their surrounded units than the German fascist command. In fact, it turns out that the Soviet command shows much less concern for their surrounded units that the German does. This makes the Soviet commanders look shameful."

It seems that even here Stalin urges concern for "their surrounded units" because "the Germans never abandon their units surrounded by Soviet troops." This is not just a weird but a humiliating reason. One should take care of those surrounded only because the enemy does the same. Many front and army commanders, commanding and political officers of various ranks had a strong feeling of combat comradeship, felt pain for the lives lost and

bitter over the unnecessary losses, but it was not always that they could display those feelings.

Stalin believed that the war, cruel by its very nature, justified even major losses. Unskillful military operations, head-on, primitive attacks against German positions were protracted and bloody until the commanders and men learned to act according to all rules of military art. It boiled down essentially to a simple maxim: to reach the main objectives and victory with as few lives lost as possible.

Even the most benevolent Western analysts saw nothing but the final outcome in Stalin's action, which was a victorious one. This enabled them to use superlatives to size up the skills of the Supreme Commander. Peter Ustinov writes, for example, in his interesting book, "My Russia": "Probably no one but Stalin could have done the same during the war with such degree of ruthlessness, flexibility, or purposefulness which were required by the successful conduct of war on such a superhuman scale." [retranslated from Russian - Tr.] I cannot agree with this main "no one." Yes, it is probably true if one meant the "degree of ruthlessness." As to "flexibility and purposefulness," Russia has never been short of talents.

..."Sorting out" in his mind dozens of operations held, Stalin still singled out two of them, the ones most to his heart - the Stalingrad and Berlin ones. He felt himself not only a political leader but a military commander again after the former one. The later crowned the horribly tense and brutal battle waged over four years. This was the pinnacle of triumph, which he believed to have immediately "offset" all miscalculations, mistakes, and to have justified the countless number of victims. The defeats were followed by many victories. However, as the city bearing his name, Stalingrad symbolized the decisive event which turned the tide not only of the Patriotic war, but of World War II as a whole.

Stalingrad Revelation

Dozens of books have been written about the battle of Stalingrad. It is not our purpose to reconstruct the picture of the outstanding operation, since it is well known. We are interested in the role that the Supreme Commander played in this battle which turned the tide.

Smarting under his wrong assessment of the direction of the main thrust before the war, when the German troops were practically a long-range gun's shot away from Moscow, Stalin concentrated the main strategic reserves in the center of the Soviet-German front. It became clear that the forces were not sufficient to repel a powerful enemy attack in the southwestern and southern directions in the second half of June 1942. Our troops' defense was deeply breached at the junctions of the Bryansk and Southwestern front in early July. The 21st and 40th Soviet armies were surrounded as a result of a powerful strike and the maneuvers undertaken by the advancing groups of the German forces.

Stalin urgently sent A.M. Vasilevskiy to the south. But he was sending highly disappointing reports. The German troops widened the breach up to 300 km within a week. Their striking force advanced by 150-170 km in a few days, enveloping the main Southwestern force from the north. The Germans delivered a new strike, in the direction of Khantemirovka, by that time. Studying the map, which showed a dangerous situation, during a routine report, Stalin clearly saw the threat of the second (the same as in 1941) disastrous encirclement of the Southwestern front. But he had learned some things about the specific strategic issues, and practically did not object to the withdrawal of the 28th, 38th and 9th armies of the Southwestern front, nor of the 37th army of the Southern front. The Stavka gave an order to start urgently preparing the Stalingrad defensive line.

The Supreme Commander could have gauged his lack of foresight, if he had been just self-critical. After the Kharkov debacle, Vasilevskiy suggested, back in May, reinforcing strategic reserves in the southern and southwestern directions, but Stalin did not agree, since he was afraid for Moscow. Now, huge numbers of troops had to be moved in conditions of an acute strategic crisis. The situation was aggravated by a disorganized retreat of many units. The words, "surrounded," "bypassed" were once again very strong on people's minds... Quite a few divisions and units did not have any contact with the superior HQs for a few days. The haphazard groups of thousands of retreating soldiers were kicking up hot dust. Junkers and Messerschmids ruled the skies once again. Occasionally, one got an impression of chaos, confusion and a repetition of the worst 1941 situations.

The military archives have preserved a series of Stalin's stern telegrams to front commanders, urging them to put the retreating units in order, to fight to death, and not to abandon the occupied positions without an order. Here is one of them:

"Stalingrad. Vasilevskiy, Yeremenko, Malenkov.

The enemy has breached your front with a small force. We have enough resources to destroy the enemy which has broken through. Assemble air planes from both fronts and come down on the enemy in the breakthrough. Mobilize armored trains and run them along the Stalingrad beltway. Use smokescreens to confuse the enemy. Fight the penetrating enemy day and night. Use artillery and reserve forces to the hilt.

Lopatin has let down the Stalingrad front for the second time with his ineptitude and delays. Establish a reliable control over him and organize the second echelon behind the Lopatin's army.

The most crucial thing is not to give in to panic, not be afraid of the brazen enemy and to keep confidence of our success.

August 23, 1942 4:35 p.m. I. Stalin

Dictated over the phone by Com. Stalin. Bokov."

The Leader again had a feeling of being in Tsaritsyn. He pinned special hopes on armored trains as well and urged to "come down," "fight day and night," use artillery "to the hilt." But the situation was clearly getting out of hand. Dozens of his cables are not strategic or operational instructions, and decisions, but appeals to the will, consciousness and feelings of the people, the appeals to their sense of duty, accompanied by the threat of reprisals. He answers the Commissar of Internal Affairs regarding the latter's initiative at Stalingrad:

"Comrade L. P. Beriya

I have no objections to three NKVD camps to screen the retreating units.

August 24, 1942 3:35 a.m.

I. Stalin

Dictated by Com. Stalin over the phone. Bokov."

Who knows what the dictator, used to personifying the will of millions of people, might be thinking? Dictators are lonely in their hearts, no matter how many people surrounded them. They are always afraid to open up just a little bit, since people immediately are going to see their complete moral vulnerability; the burden of unchallenged power had suppressed all human qualities in them...

Vasilevskiy used to go to see Stalin as if he were going to the slaughter in those July and August days of 1942. The Master did not hide his fury, often made impulsive decisions and sometimes required that similar telegrams be sent one after another which addressed the same problem. He again began to reshuffle and replace commanders. He often demanded to be put through to one or another headquarters, but his orders and instructions have always been the same - fight to death! Normally, during the conversations Stalin was unable to give a meaningful operational advice or to make a decision. In the meantime, the troops continued to retreat... One day, after Vasilevskiy's routine report, Stalin nervously walked around the map, lying on the table, and all of sudden broached operational matters:

"The troops have forgotten the Stavka's order No. 270 of August 16 of the last year. Yes, they have! Especially in the HQs. Prepare a new order for the troops, the idea of which is 'Retreat without an order' is a crime which is going to be punished with all severity of the war period."

"When shall I report the order to you?"

"Today... Come in as soon as the document is ready."

After his own heavy editing all across the text, Stalin signed in the evening the well-known order by the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR No. 227 of July 28. The order was studiously hidden in the military archives for a long time after the war. Now the order is accessible, and it has been published in various publications. We are not going to quote it in full, but rather give those provisions of it which reflect the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's creativity, his formulations and personal editing:

"The enemy is committing ever new forces to the front and, ignoring significant losses, is pushing forward, thrusting deep inside the Soviet Union, seizing new areas, devastating and ruining our cities and villages, raping, plundering and murdering the Soviet population... Following panic-mongers, part of the southern front's forces left Rostov and Novocherkassk without putting up serious resistance and without the order from Moscow, covering its banners with shame...

Some unintelligent people at the front console themselves by saying that we can continue to retreat eastwards, since we possess much territory, much land, a large population and that we shall always have more than enough bread; by saying this, they want to justify their shameful behavior at the fronts. But such talking is out-and-out false and untruthful, of benefit to our enemies only.

We have much less territory after the loss of the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Baltic republics, Donbass and other areas. Therefore, we have far fewer people, less bread, metal, fewer plants and factories. We have lost over 70 million of the population, over 800 million puds [one pud equals 16 kg - Tr.] of grain and over 10 million tons of metal a year. We do not outnumber the Germans either in human reserves, or in grain stockpiles any more. Any further retreat means the undoing of ourselves and the undoing of our Motherland...

Not a step back! This should be our main motto from now on."

Stalin underlined several times the words: "not a step back!"

"We cannot continue putting up with the commanders, commissars and political workers, whose units and formations leave their combat positions without permission. We cannot put up with the situation when commanders, commissars and political workers allow several panic-mongers shape up the situation on the battlefield, to let them draw other soldiers into retreating and to open up the front to the enemy. Panic-mongers and cowards must be eliminated on the spot."

Then Stalin edited with particular thoroughness the specific measures which he outlined in the morning:

" a) eliminate any feelings of retreat without fail...

b) remove without fail army commanders, who allowed their troops to retreat from the occupied positions without permission, and send them to the Stavka to be put to court martial...

c) form from one to three (depending on the situation) penal battalions (800 men each), where middle-level and senior commanders and respective political workers should be sent."

Stalin revived the idea which he first espoused in his directive to all the fronts on September 12, 1941. He dictated at that time: "Each division should have a barrier unit up to a battalion in strength (at the rate of one company per an infantry regiment), made out of dependable soldiers, whose task is to stop the fleeting of panic-stricken soldiers, without stopping short of using arms." Stalin presented the "old" idea in a new version:

"Set up three to five well-armed barrier units within the army (up to 200 men in each of them), placing them in the rear of unstable divisions and instruct them to shoot panic-mongers and cowards on the spot in case the division units are gripped with panic and retreat in the disorganized way... Establish five to ten penal companies (from 150 to 200 persons in each) within the army (depending on the situation)...Place them on the difficult sections held by the army so that they are given a chance to expiate their crimes against Motherland with their blood...

The order should be read out in all the companies, squadrons, batteries, air squads, commands and headquarters.

People's Commissar of Defense I. Stalin."

Practically two days later, the units of the newly-formed 192nd and 184th divisions left their positions in the Mayorovskiy area without an order and retreated towards Upper Golubaya. Stalin construed this as the failure to communicate his order No. 227 to the front line troops. A stern cable was addressed to the commander of the Stalingrad front, Gordov, and member of the front's military council, Khrushchev:

"The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders:

1. Immediately report to the Stavka what measures have been applied by the front military council and the army military councils, in line with the order of the People's Commissariat of Defense No. 227, against those responsible for retreat, against panic-mongers and cowards both in the aforementioned divisions and in the units of the 21st army, who have vacated Kletskaya without an order.

2. Within the next two days, set up barrier units, up to 200 men in each, out of the best personnel of the Far Eastern divisions which arrived at the front, which should be positioned directly behind the lines, and first of all behind the lines of divisions of the 62nd and 64th armies. The barrier units should be placed under the command of the army military councils through special departments. The most experience special department officers should be placed in command of the barrier units.

Report execution not later than the morning of August 3, 1942

I. Stalin
A. Vasilevskiy

Reported to Com. Stalin and approved on the phone on July 31, 1942

Vasilevskiy"

Like in 1941, panic struck root again in some units. No due efforts were made before the war to ensure the personnel's psychological hardening, the less so that almost none of the officers' cadres remained among the troops - they were purged. A negative emotional response to danger in conditions of heightened tension and loss of confidence of achieving an objective is known to be fraught with action that defy control. A person is gripped with a mob instinct, losing the faculty to make a sober assessment of the situation. Stalin attempted to resolve the problem by employing barrier units and penal companies, paying the least attention to enhancing the role of commanders and political workers under those extreme conditions.

It is not clear whether Stalin was familiar with a passage from Napoleon's book, "Thoughts," which was once underlined by Lenin, but it is worth quoting it now: "A moment happens in each battle when the bravest of soldiers, having experienced the greatest tension, feel like fleeing; this panic is caused by their having no confidence in their courage; a minor occasion, any pretext can be sufficient to restore this confidence in them; the high art lies in creating them." A commander's personal courage, his firm control, self-confidence and resolute orders play a great role under such circumstances. A person has not suffered a defeat in any situation until he has conceded his defeat. A soldier is capable of performing his duties as long as his will to fight has not been broken.

It is only the commanders and political workers who could and should have restored "confidence in one's own courage". Neither a military person, nor a good psychologist, Stalin relied rather on the methods of power and punishment. Meanwhile, numerous short-term courses did not focus on psychological hardening at all. Stalin believed - and there was a good reason for it - that only fresh victories would help to restore men's confidence; but there were no victories yet. Moreover, the spectrum of a new disaster did not disappear, but loomed ever larger.

Let me recall L.D Trotsky's view of similar situations. "The masses of people cannot be led to death without the commanders having death penalty in their arsenal. The soldiers should be made to chose between the possible death ahead and the inevitable death behind," he said. Without quoting Trotskiy, Stalin was saying virtually the same: death is honorary ahead and it is shameful behind.

But Stalin did not limit himself to this. A large number of servicemen became surrounded, and in 1942 as well, and some of them fought their way through to reach

friendly troops in groups or individually. The commanders were immediately dispatched to NKVD's special camps. Given a very critical situation in July-August 1942, Stalin went even further, taking even a "bolder" step:

Commander of the Moscow military district Commander of the near Volga military district Commander of the Stalingrad military district People's Commissar of Internal Affairs Com. Beriya

To give an opportunity to the commanders and heads, who stayed in the enemy-occupied territory for a long time and who did not join partisan detachments, to prove their loyalty to Motherland, arms in hand, I order:

"Establish attack infantry battalions out of the contingent of commanders and heads, found now in the NKVD camps, by August 25 of this year." This was followed by the names of special camps to which the commanders and political workers, who broke out of encirclement, were confined: Lyubertsy, Podolsk, Ryazan, Kalachyov, Kotluban, Stalingrad, Belokalitvin, Gheorghiev, Ugolniy, Khonlarskiy... The attack units were to have 929 men each.

"The battalions are to be used on the most active sections of the front," the directive said. The directive signed by Stalin on August 1, 1942, and which had the words "especially important" stamped across it, took care of such "trifle matters" as "completing the units of carriers, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, cooks and drivers out of the special contingent as well." The "special contingent" was to be deciphered as "ex-commanding officers, starting from the company level and up."

Very often the guilt of those people amounted to having found themselves surrounded as a result of unfortunate fighting or unintelligent commands issued by the superior headquarters; they had been fighting their way to reach friendly troops for week or two, or even for a month. We found out from the documents that the former commanders were happy to be used "in the most active sections of the front." Most of them would perish in those "active sections". But the death gave them the hope of exonerating themselves and their families from disgrace and retribution. It is true that Stalin ordered to have added to the directive: after taking part in combat in the active sections of the front and given "good certifications can be sent to the field units to occupy respective commanding and superior positions."

I think that Stalingrad became imprinted in the mind of the Supreme Commander the way the far away Tsaritsyn did, the city that had played an important role in his destiny. It appears that after Tsaritsyn Lenin began to believe that the taciturn People's Commissar for Nationalities - who was in charge of food supplies in southern Russia - could handle the complex objectives of the military, political, and economic nature. An obscure member of party leadership, Stalin believed in himself even more after Tsaritsyn. For the Supreme Commander, and for all of the people, Stalingrad became the symbol of his ability to withstand a new desperate enemy assault.

For Stalin, the tension of the Volga situation was on the ascendant. The tensions were rising throughout July, August, September and October to reach their peak in November. Stalin did not know yet that when the future of Stalingrad was hanging by a thread, Vasilevskiy instructed a group of Teneral Staff officers, which included A.A. Gryzlov, S.I. Teteshkin, N.I. Boykov and other comrades, to work out in deep secrecy the version of bracketing the deeply penetrated enemy group from the north and the south. A map was preserved showing the first markings of the would-be famous operation executed by N.I. Boykov. We shall repeat, that Stalin did not know about it then. The year which he proclaimed as the "year of routing German invaders" threatened to witness a new major disaster.

The Supreme Commander would stay in his office for several days in a row, submerge into a restless sleep in the resting room, having instructed Poskryobyshev to wake him up in a few hours.

One day, when Poskryobyshev woke up the deadly tired man, deep asleep, half an hour later than he was asked to (Stalin did not ask Poskryobyshev when he had time to sleep himself), Stalin glanced at his watch and scolded his aide:

"Here you are, philanthropist! Ask Vasilevskiy to call me. Move, you bald philanthropist..."

The round face of Poskryobyshev, who had a large bald spot on his head, remained, as always, expressionless. The aide mumbled something under his breath, which sounded like "Yes, sir," and disappeared behind the door right away.

Vasilevskiy, who had arrived from Stalingrad two days before, called. After a curt "Hello," Stalin inquired whether the 1st Guards and the 24th and 66th armies had been committed to combat, whether ammunition had been delivered, of which they had run out by September. Vasilevskiy reported the situation as of evening September 3rd: one of the units of the B group of armies had broken through into the environs of Stalingrad... Annoyed, the Master interrupted Vasilevskiy:

"Don't they realize that if we surrender Stalingrad, the country's south will be cut off the center and we would hardly be able to defend it? Do they realize it or not that this is a disaster not only for Stalingrad? Are we going to lose the main waterway and soon oil too?"

Vasilevskiy waited out the Supreme Commander's angry outpour and then continued in a calm but tense voice:

"We are bringing to the besieged sections everything in Stalingrad that has fighting capability. I do not think we have lost our chance of defending the city."

Stalin called Vasilevskiy again a few minutes later, but Vasilivskiy was gone. Major General Bokov picked up the phone. Stalin ordered him to locate immediately Zhukov in Stalingrad, who had been appointed deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief by the Chief Defense Council shortly before that, on August 26, and relate the order to him. After a few moments of silence, Stalin dictated it:

"Especially important. Army General Com. Zhukov.

The Stalingrad situation has deteriorated. The enemy is three versts away from Stalingrad. If the northern group does not come to immediate rescue, Stalingrad can be taken today or tomorrow. Order the commanders of the troops positioned to the north and northwest of Stalingrad to immediately strike at the enemy and come to the help of Stalingraders. No delay can be brooked. Any delay now is tantamount to crime. Bring the entire aviation to the aid of Stalingrad. Very little aircraft are left in Stalingrad itself.

Acknowledge the receipt and report on the measures taken without delay.

I. Stalin

September 3, 1942 10:30 p.m. Send over the phone by Comrade Stalin

Bokov"

Zhukov reported soon that the 1st Guards and the 66th armies would start offensive on the morning of the 4th. Preparations were under way. Stalin responded briefly:

"Zhukov, Malenkov, Vasilevskiy.

Received your reply. Expect you to intensify the strike even further so as to prevent the fall of Stalingrad.

I. Stalin

September 4, 1942 2:25 a.m. Sent over the phone by Com. Stalin. Bokov."

Stalin requested reports from Stalingrad every two or three hours, and he talked with Zhukov and Vasilevskiy - the latter was sent there once again - as talking with Malenkov did not satisfy him much. A complete military nonentity, Malenkov was likely sent by the Supreme Commander just as an "overseer," a person capable only of reminding people of Stalin's demands and collecting "impressions" about the operation of the HQs. Malenkov went to visit the front line units two or three times, spending the rest of the time in a special office in the HQs, summoning political workers and the heads of special departments from time to time. Being aware of the role Malenkov played at the front, military commanders talked with him politely, but refrained from striking up a conversation on their own.

Zhukov organized a couple of offensives from the north on September 5, 6 and 7, but they proved ineffective, because of weak artillery and aviation support. Stalin demanded that attacks be continued and that aviation (this was the cliche in his directives) and other means used more actively. On September 6, Zhukov was conveyed on the phone Stalin's order: "Receive two fighter regiments: one from Kamyshin, and the other from the Voronezh front... You should bear in mind that you have unlimited rights with regard to moving aviation and other troops from the Stalingrad and southeastern fronts to the north and back. You have every right to execute maneuvers in troop concentration. You have already been sent 3,000 H-20 shells."

Zhukov was compelled to report on the phone soon that the forces available at the Stalingrad front were not sufficient to break through into a corridor and couple with the troops on the Southeastern front. The newly arrived German units from Stalingrad had considerably buttressed their defense positions. Any further attacks with the same forces and within the same group would be fruitless and the troops would inevitably suffer considerable losses. Stalin listened to the report, and summoned Zhukov and Vasilevskiy to Moscow.

Having consulted the operations experts and studied the map together for a while, Zhukov and Vasilevskiy came to the conclusion that the enemy had to be worn out through tenacious defense and that stage-by-stage preparations should be started for launching a major counteroffensive. The two military leaders had decided at that time that the main blows would have to be delivered against the flanks of the German group which protected the less combat-prone Rumanian forces. This is how the idea was born which they brought to the Supreme Commander's attention in the evening of September 13. When realized, this idea was destined to become a classic operation of World War II, one of the most brilliant examples in the history of world military art. This was a revelation. But this revelation dawned not on Stalin, but on his retinue, aides and up-and-coming military commanders.

Initially, Stalin showed little interest in the idea. He pointed out that the main objective was to hold to Stalingrad and stop the Germans from advancing any further, towards Kamyshin. Stalin either did not grasp the daring idea, or viewed it as unfeasible given the prevailing situation. The Supreme Commander's entire attention was riveted to the defensive fighting in Stalingrad. He understood not only the military, but also the political, economic and international significance of the raging battle. We have already pointed out that Stalin's forecasting abilities lagged behind his faculty to make an immediate, on-the-spot analysis. As a manifestation of an offbeat idea, arising from the outwardly hidden laws and trends of reality, revelation was foreign to Stalin. He approached a particular decision by making many steps, one at a time, and the intuition was not of much significance in the process. Once Stalin had grasped the idea, he turned in into an initiative of his own by using his will power, orders, and directives. It became "Stalin's wise decision" both internally and in the form it assumed.

Fierce house-to-house fighting had been raging already in Stalingrad by the time the Supreme Commander was first acquainted with the bold and audacious concept, formulated by his military aides. The Germans had broken into the city; unprecedentedly fierce fighting had been going on over two months, day and night from that moment on. V. Nekrasov's book, "In the Trenches of Stalingrad," contains one of the best descriptions of this heroic epic of the Soviet soldiers. At the outset of the Southwestern offensive, the invaders measured the pace of their advance in dozens of kilometers, then in several kilometers, and in September, in hundreds of meters a day; in October, a 40-50 meter advance was considered by them a major accomplishment. Even that slow movement stopped by the middle of October. This was when the order No. 227, with its famous sentence, "Not a step back!," was executed up to a tee. The Wehrmaht's military machinery began to skid, although the invaders committed 22 of their own divisions and almost as many units of their allies in the area of Stalingrad.

Stalin was given a respite, but he allowed one neither to himself nor to others. Members of the Chief Defense Committee, the Stavka, heads of the rear People's Commissariats, and the NKVD worked virtually day and night to implement the Supreme Commander's ever new orders. Stalin believed in the feasibility of the daring encirclement operation. Incidentally, there was no other way of opening the way to the south which had almost been cut off by the German divisions that reached the Volga. The same way as the Germans had made preparations to march down the Moscow streets at the end of 1941, now they visualized the seizure of Stalingrad as leading to the oil-rich, doomed Caucasus.

Through their unsurpassed and virtually inhuman effort, the people did again what seemed to be next to impossible. A total of 72 infantry divisions, 6 tank and two mechanized corps, 20 infantry and 46 Armour brigades were moved in Stalingrad's direction at the Stavka's order between July 1 and November 1, 1942. Stalin was rushing things again and again... Many units were sent to the Volga undermanned. The strength of most of the units did not go beyond 65 percent, and that of the artillery and tanks did not surpass 50 to 60 percent. The 8th and 16th airborne armies were significantly reinforced by the Supreme Commander's order, and the enemy lost its air supremacy by November.

Handling other military problems at that time, Stalin constantly turned back to the forthcoming operation which was to involve three fronts: the Stalingrad, Southwestern and Don. The operation was code-named, Uranium, by the General HQs. The Supreme Commander did not object, but required sternly that a limited number of people, just a very few, were privy to the concept, time, nature, and sequence of the operation. Stalin requested Vasilevskiy, one of the architects of the idea of a counteroffensive, to coordinate the fronts' actions.

It was probably for the first time since the war started that Stalin was confident enough of the success of the operation which began on November 19. He felt confident not because the enemy was outmanned and outgunned significantly as a result of the concentration of means and forces, but because no other operation had been so thoroughly prepared before. We must admit that Stalin did have some misgivings a week before it began, since the strength of aviation was not more than equalized, with Stalin always paying special attention, as we pointed out, to the situation in the air. This was his "fixed idea," and he did not conceal his belief in being especially competent in the aviation matters. Stalin had such strong misgivings that he even contemplated rescheduling the operation. He related this to Zhukov:

"Especially important. Com. Konstantinov

If Ivanov (A.I. Yeremenko - D.V.) and Fyodorov (N.F. Vatutin - D.V.) do not ensure adequate aviation preparation, the operation will end in a fiasco. War experience has shown that one can win an operation against the Germans only in case we have air superiority... If Novikov does not think that our aviation is incapable of performing these missions now, we'd rather postpone the operation for a while and amass more aviation. Talk to Novikov and Vorozheikin, explain the matter to them and report your opinion back to me."

In conducting the operation, Stalin relied fully on Zhukov, enabling the latter to specify the composition of units, many important details and deadlines. Deep in his heart, the Supreme Commander realized that Zhukov had a far better grasp of the nature and origin of developments, and of the inner springs of war which were hidden from an outside observer. He counted on Zhukov more and more. Stalin sent Zhukov another coded message, enabling the latter to finalize the date four days before the operation was to start:

"Especially important
Personally to Com. Konstantinov only

You can name the day of resettlement of Fyodorov and Ivanov at your own discretion and then report it to me on your arrival in Moscow. If you decide that any of them should begin resettlement a day or two earlier or later, I authorize you to decide that matter at your discretion as well.

November 15, 1942 1:10 p.m.

Vasiliev

Sent over the phone by Comrade Stalin. Bokov."

Zhukov exercised his right. Like the Don front troops, the Southwestern front went on an offensive (started "resettlement") on November 19, while the Stalingrad front began its "resettlement" on November 20. The encirclement of the enemy's Stalingrad group was completed by November 23.

Stalin usually went to bed at four or five o'clock in the morning. He broke that routine during the battle of Stalingrad. He took in reports more frequently than usual, including at six in the morning. His eyes red-rimmed, the Supreme Commander would come up to the window, take in a breath of fresh cold morning air through the open fortochka [window ventilation opening - Tr.] and look down at the dark Kremlin courtyard. He read somewhere that the star of hope could be seen only in the morning. Stalin could not see it against the nippy November sunrise, but he felt, he believed and he knew that it was shining...

Gradually, Stalin learned to "read" the map. He used to like to linger at the country's map and the maps of Europe and Asia. Now the Supreme Commander had to deal with specialized military maps on which HQs officers speedily plotted a new situation. Red and blue arrows, jagged defense lines, oval reserve concentration areas, the dotted lines indicating the advance of diamond-shaped tank columns, and a host of legends... He felt a strange mixture of joy and anguish when he saw a large red ring of the inner encirclement rim on the evening of the 23rd, which encompassed the 62nd, 64th and 57th armies of the Stalingrad front, the 21st army of the Southwestern front and the 65th, 24th, and 66th armies of the Don front. He was happy that it had happened at last. And it happened at S-t-a-l-i-n-grad, of all places!

Wasn't this symbolic? He did not know exactly the strength of the surrounded troops (there would be over 330,000 men), but he realized that this would be the beginning of a great breakthrough if the matter was brought to completion. As to the anguish... Looking at the outer front of encirclement, the Supreme Commander felt that the German commanders would do their utmost to save their 22 surrounded divisions of the 6th and 4th Wehrmaht's armies. He did not forget how they had failed to annihilate the surrounded enemy group at Demyansk.

There, too, it turned out to be more difficult to wipe out the surrounded group that was expected. He found out that it was easier to build up a solid external front. The enemy group that began to unblock the surrounded German troops at Stalingrad was pushed 200-250 km back to the west, and the Soviet army seized strategic initiative at the end of 1942. The Paulus army gave much trouble. An order addressed by Paulus to the surrounded units - captured by our troops - turned up one day among the documents which were brought to Stalin daily. Here it is:

"Army order. Send down to the company level.

The Russians have repeatedly attempted lately to enter into negotiations with the army or the units under its command. Their goal is crystal clear. By making promises in the course of negotiations, they seek to break our determination to fight back. All of us know what lies in store for us if the army ends its resistance: the majority of us will face a sure death either from an enemy bullet, or from hunger and suffering in the shameful captivity in Siberia. One thing is certain: those who surrender will never see their kin again! We have only one way out: to fight to the last bullet despite growing cold and hunger. Therefore, any attempts to conduct negotiations should be turned down, while envoys should be turned away by opening fire.

Otherwise, we shall firmly believe in redemption which is already on the way to us.

December 24, 1942

Colonel General Paulus"

Putting the order aside, Stalin could have thought that Hitler's plans had been pinned on such generals, officers, and men. They kept fighting despite the desperate situation. And fight they did...

One day, after the battle of Moscow had already been won, Zhukov told the Supreme Commander how he personally interrogated POWs in the winter of 1941. He was stunned then by their arrogance and conviction in Hitler's being right. The Nazi spirit was especially strong among young soldiers and officers, and among pilots and tank men. But Zhukov said that due had to be given to the German soldier's skills, degree of organization, discipline and tenacity. The numerous victories won over almost all of Europe, and their blind belief in racial and national supremacy, which was hammered in by Goebbels' propaganda, were of paramount significance for them. A man wearing a mouse-gray uniform was turned into a fanatic executioner of another person's will through the use of the romantic history of his ancestors, chauvinistic stupor, an entire system of spiritual brainwashing, with its hierarchy of fuhrers, and the blind faith in special Aryan destiny. Hitler was fond of quoting Nietzche as saying: "Let obedience be your valor! 'You must' sounds nicer to a good soldier than 'I want.' And everything that is dear to you, first must be ordered to you!" Initially, it was only Hitler and his stalwarts who used to say this, but soon the entire nation began to echo them, marching towards war. This was a fanatic intoxication with a false idea. The German soldiers became sensitive to the millions of leaflets which Soviet special propaganda units dropped over the Hitlerites-occupied territory only after they had drunk from the bitter cup of the Stalingrad defeat. It is a defeat, and not a victory that usually comes as an eye-opener at the front.

When the Supreme Commander read the order signed by Paulus on December 24, 1942, neither the German military commander - who became General Field Marshall during the catastrophe - not Stalin himself knew that Paulus would sign an altogether different document in less than two years, in October 1944. It was preserved in Stalin's personal fund. Let us quote only part of it:

"Germans!

October 26, 1944. Field Marshall General von Paulus.

I felt that my duty to my homeland and the special responsibility bestowed upon me as a Field Marshall bound me to tell my comrades and all of our people that only one solution remains now in what looks like the deadend situation of ours - to break away from Hitler and to end the war.

Mr. Himmler came with the blatant lie in saying that German soldiers are being treated inhumanly in Russian captivity, and that they are forced to make propaganda statements against their homeland under the threat of a stick and at gunpoint. They treat POWs in a humane and considerate manner in the Soviet Union."

Paulus did not know yet that he was going to spend ten long years in the Soviet Union. The defeated commander missed Germany, although he was put in adequate conditions.

Let us make a brief digression now. S.N. Kruglov reported to Stalin at the end of February 1952: "Field Marshall of the German Army Friedrich Paulus, who was interned at a special installation near Moscow, suffered a stroke and briefly lost consciousness on the night of February 26, 1952... Necessary medical aid was provided. His ration is quite adequate. Paulus' personal orderly soldier Shulte and his personal cook serviceman George live together with Paulus and serve him. He began to display nervous anxiety recently as a result of the prolonged captivity and uncertainty regarding the matter of his repatriation." Following the necessary formalities, a decision was finally made, "at the highest level", to repatriate him home. But this would have taken place ten years hence, while the Paulus army was fighting in the meantime.

Stalin realized the profound meaning of what had been accomplished only after the Stalingrad epic was over and only a few days were left before taking prisoner Paulus, his generals and the remnants of his army. He realized that it was not only the annihilation and taking prisoner thousands upon thousands of German soldiers, nor even the liberation of vast territories - which were so ingloriously surrendered to the Germans in the summer and autumn of 1942 to be desecrated - which in itself was of great significance after this grandiose success, nor the far-reaching international impact produced by Stalingrad. In the breadth and width of public consciousness, the routing of Germans on the Volga gave rise to the indomitable confidence of achieving liberation, and at the same token eroded Germany's faith, and its ability to fight this war till victory, in that peculiar sense in which Germany understood it at the time.

The Supreme Commander wants to believe in himself as a military leader after Stalingrad. He quickly forgets, we shall repeat, that the brilliant idea of launching the counteroffensive did not dawn upon him, as another, catastrophic defeat looked inevitable. He was not its architect. Nor were Zhukov and Vasilevskiy alone. Modest and nondescript operations experts from the General HQs did their estimates and calculations to make the idea crystal clear; they worked on what looked like a simple and even rudimentary idea of surrounding the enemy, which had deeply penetrated defense, to turn it into a beautiful plan of ironclad logic, thought out down to the last detail.

It is true that a strategy is hardly elementary. I do not think that it was the stratagem of surrounding the German group by the forces of the three fronts that was outstanding - quite a few attempts at, and real instances of, encirclement were executed in the past war. I think that the intellectual pinnacle of the strategic idea of the Stalingrad offensive operation was in the ability to arrive at that decision when the most difficult defense effort, fraught with another defeat, was *at its peak.* It was a genuine revelation to see the Firebird of potential victory at the time when the smoldering fires enveloping Stalingrad could not but reveal the desperate condition of the fighting units and formations. I do not know whether the architects of the idea felt that the conceived operation and its brilliant finale would help all of the people discern the shape of the cherished future victory, but it was a stroke of genius. It was a *collective revelation.*

We noted before that initially Stalin did not appreciate the daring nature of the idea - he was not the person inspired by it. He proved incapable of strategic sagacity, which would be displayed by Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, Antonov, and other Soviet military commanders, as well as rank-and-file HQs operatives more than once. But the Supreme Commander succeeded in evaluating the action for what it was worth later on, the action which was a masterpiece of military art in every respect. The partial and hard-won successes scored in 1941 and 1942, which had made a contribution of their own, were quite far away from the offensive Stalingrad operation as far as the refined strategic concept was concerned.

When Zhukov and Vasilevskiy took the map with the counteroffensive plan on it to Stalin - it was the result of detailed planning on operations maps, long columns of estimates for materiel supplies, and reconnaissance in the areas of Serafimovich, Klyotskiy and other localities - Stalin did not examine it for the first time, since he had already lived by the idea and tried to believe in it as hard as he could. The Supreme Commander wrote "Approved. I. Stalin" in the corner in his bold hand. The bottom edge of the map had the signatures of Zhukov and Vasilevskiy.

... The first apologetic publications would appear after 1945 regarding individual operations launched during the Great Patriotic war. Stalin would be rankled to see that in addition to his name, "the architect of the Stalingrad strategic concept of a genius," mention would be made of the names of his deputy G.K. Zhukov; chief of General Staff A.M. Vasilevskiy; front commanders N.F. Vatutin, K.K. Rokossovskiy, and A.I. Yeremenko; members of the military councils A.S. Zheltov, A.I. Kirichenko, and N.S. Khrushchev, chiefs of staff G.D. Stelmakh, M.S. Malinin, I.S. Varenikov, and other military leaders. He already became used to the idea that

Stalingrad, the operation to break the seize of Leningrad, the Kursk counteroffensive, the liberation of the right side of the Ukraine, as well as the concluding operations of the Great Patriotic war, were the fruit of only *his* talents as a military commander. He would never be able to share laurels with anyone else again.

The sending of Zhukov and some other military leaders to the dog house after the war was caused, among other things, by Stalin's unwillingness to "share" his glory with them. Not that anybody attempted to "share" it, of course. It was just that the reports, speeches, and movies which featured only one impeccable military leader occasionally listed, as a group, the names of front commanders, members of military councils, and chiefs of staff. No military commanders were usually given prominence, while the people - the main hero of the past war - was used as the background to portray the brilliant deeds of the "invincible military leader." On becoming familiar with hundreds and thousands of operations, political and Party documents dealing with the past war, one can say in full confidence today that the Supreme Commander-in-Chief had been able to perform his role only thanks to the presence of gifted military leaders and commanders in the Stavka, the General HQs, at the fronts and in the fleets.

Following the decimation by Stalin of the larger part of its top military commanders before the war, our country, Russia, managed to bring back its potential of military commanders, so to speak, having passed through the trials and tribulations, awash in blood - the fact that proved that it possessed boundless life force. That milieu was giving birth to the military art of the Great Patriotic war, i.e., what we called a "revelation" in connection with Stalingrad. Stalin learned how to utilize it pragmatically.

Supreme Commander and Military Leaders

During the war Stalin read nothing but the reports, coded cables, operations briefs, operation plans, memos sent by people's commissariats, and the diplomatic cables. His libraries at his dacha and in his Kremlin apartment could have gathered dust. But he did browse through a couple of books. I happened to run across a note send by Poskryobyshev to Stalin listing "the books on the art of military command." Here is the list, ostensibly compiled at the Leader's request:

1. S. Borisov, Kutuzov, Moscow 1938.

2. M. Dragomirov. 14 Years. 1881-1894, St. Petersburg, 1895

3. A. Zykov. How and What People Control, Petersburg 1909

4. K. Clauzewitz. 1812, Moscow 1937.

5. N.A. Levitskiy. Napoleon's Art As a Military Leader, Moscow 1938

6. G. Leer. Fundamental Issues (Military Etudes), St. Petersburg, 1897

7. F. Mering. Notes on War History and Military Art, Moscow 1940

8. N.P. Mikhnevich. Suvorov As a Strategist (reports by the Professors at the General Headquartes Academy), St. Petersburg, 1900

9. Moltke. Military Instructions, Moscow 1938

10. Napoleon. Selected Works, v. 1, Moscow 1941

11. K. Osipov. Suvorov, Moscow 1938

12. A. Petrushevksiy. Genaralissimo Count Suvorov, St. Petersburg, 1990

13. A.V. Suvorov. The Science of Winning, Moscow 1941

14. E. Tarle. Napoleon's Invasion of Russia. 1812, Moscow, 1938

15. Fosch. On Conducting a War, Moscow, 1937

16. B. Shaposhnikov. The Brain of the Army, Moscow 1927.

Stalin ticked off, probably himself, numbers 1, 11, 13 and 16. Given his enormous capacity for work, it is possible that he leafed through those and likely some other books on outstanding military leaders and the different aspects of such an involved phenomenon as war. It was not accidental that he ordered to have the portraits of Suvorov and Kutuzon hung in his office when the war started. One can see why, in addressing the troops in his brief speech during the Red Square parade on November 7, 1941 he exclaimed with much pathos: "Let yourselves be inspired in this war by the manly images of our great ancestors Aleksandr Nevsky, Dimitriy Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dimitriy Pozharskiy, Aleksandr Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov inspire you in this war! May the victorious banner of the great Lenin guide you!"

Stalin invoked more than once the shadows of the great military commanders of the past, drawing on their glory, legends and life stories to gain faith in the victory and confidence of achieving the objectives which he formulated in his speech on July 3, 1941. It was on his initiative that the orders named after such military commanders as Suvorov, Kutuzov, and also Bogdan Kmelnitskiy, Aleksandr Nevsky, Nakhimov and Ushakov were instituted. Stalin realized that in conditions of war, combat traditions acted as a focus of military experience, a fusion of the old and folklore, a life-giving source of national self-consciousness, dignity and integrity. It was not accidental that Mekhlis and then Shcherbakov made special reports to Stalin on the progress of printing and distributing at the front of the pamphlets about famous Russian military leaders and

commanders. The heads of the political departments briefed Stalin on fulfilling one of his instructions in this case.

We shall say it once again that four Soviet military commanders and leaders, B.M. Shaposhnikov, G.K. Zhukov, A.M. Vasilevskiy, and A.I. Antonov, made the greatest impact on Stalin in developing his skills as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Those names were not listed arbitrarily or due to personal likes and dislikes. As testified to by the analysis of hundreds of Stavka's documents, military correspondence, the directives and orders issued by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, personal cables and memos, the three Marshalls of the Soviet Union and one Army General mentioned above, arranged the most close cooperation with Stalin during the war years and made the most lasting imprint on the consciousness of such a complex personality as Stalin.

Naturally, the Supreme Commander knew well practically all front and army commanders and had numerous personal contacts virtually with all major military leaders. The examination of the archive documents and memoirs make one say once again that Stalin felt considerable empathy for K.K. Rokossovskiy, N.F. Vatutin, A. Ye. Golovanov, N.N. Voronov, L.A. Govorov, and A.V. Khrulyov. Judging by the cables, notes and resolutions, the Supreme Commander held in relatively high esteem such military commanders as I.S. Konev, P.S. Rybalko, P.A. Rotmistrov, D.D. Lyulyushenko, I.I. Fedyuninskiy, M.V. Sakharov, I.S. Isakov, S.K. Timoshenko, and R. Ya. Malinovskiy.

Many of those promoted before the war to occupy a large number of "vacancies" did not show their mettle as high caliber military leaders. The war came as a severe test, mercilessly casting aside those of weak will, low skills, or the outsiders. But Stalin himself was the main "expert on selection" in this. Dozens of generals, whom he blamed for some or other defeats or miscalculations, had either vanished forever, or ended at the very bottom of the military hierarchy.

When the Politburo meeting examined the list of commanders in late May 1940 who would have been promoted to the ranks of generals and admirals by the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of June 4, 1940, for the first time Stalin did not know that out of one thousand people honored with the titles, over two hundred people would die or be taken prisoner, and several dozen of them would be arrested at his sanction and many would await execution by a firing squad. The war would take away the lives of several thousands of the military commanders from the new stratum, who rose through the ranks to replace those eliminated before the war. The former and the latter were patriots, but Stalin evaluated them only through the prism of their personal loyalty. Just to think that the tragedy that befell thousands of military commanders was caused by the suspicions harbored by a single person! There would have been no terror had he stopped that terrible meat grinder! This is the horrible result of rule by one man.

Being a withdrawn and inaccessible person, Stalin did not wear his heart on his sleeve, of course. Many military leaders and commanders had more than one opportunity to feel his "heavy hand," including G.K. Zhukov, I.Kh. Bagramyan, S.M. Budyonniy, K.E. Voroshilov, V.N. Gordov, I.F. Dashinov, D.T. Kozlov, I.S. Konev, A.I. Lopatin, V.A. Mishulin, D.I. Ryabyshev, I.V. Tyulenev, N.V. Feklenko, M.S. Khozin, Ya.T. Chervichenko, S.M. Shtemenko, and many others.

Stalin was able to show his skill as a military leader thanks to the mentioned "foursome" of Shaposhnikov, Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, and Antonov, each of whom was chief of the General Staff, or a member of the Stavka, or deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief at different points of time. It was *just hard not to prove oneself*, given such brilliant retinue. The overwhelming majority of directives and decisions made by the Stavka "passed" through the "army's brain," i.e., the General HQs, through a large group of operations experts and, naturally, through those four people. Each of them possessed an inimitable military individuality of his own. The Supreme Commander's decisions and will virtually thrived on the thinking done by these talented military leaders .

I dare say that Boris Mikhailovich Shaposhnikov exerted significant influence on Stalin, and likewise on Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, Antonov and many others. Fate had it that apart from the battle of Moscow, he did not participate personally and directly in major victories, nor was he immediately involved in the 1943-1945 offensive operations, nor did he live to see the cherished and much suffered-for great Victory Day. But he had a significant intellectual influence on the military-strategic stratum of the Soviet leadership. It was not accidental that the outstanding work by theoretician and military commander, Shaposhnikov, was singled out by Stalin from among the four historical books on strategy and military art.

The Marshall and Professor Shaposhnikov possessed a happy combination of high military culture, excellent education, vast experience as a commander, in-depth knowledge of theory and tremendous charisma. A powerful and willful by nature, Stalin usually dwarfed everyone he dealt with because of his peremptory attitude. But having come to know Shaposhnikov better, the Supreme Commander soon felt his military "inferiority" when faced with the Marshall's logic, erudition, and the power of patient conviction.

Shaposhnikov was not a manifestly strong-willed man. For example, he could not stick to his guns and argue with Stalin for a long time. This was the Marshall's "weak spot." But his "ordinary" will was offset by his subtle, flexible and multidimensional mind. The severe and no-compromise nature of the all-Union one-man commander seemed to yield to the intellect, restraint, and culture displayed by the representative of the old Russian military school. Everyone knew about the Leader's special feelings for Shaposhnikov. Zhukov, who

had to listen to Stalin's stern and frequently unjust reproaches more than once, writes about Stalin: "He had great respect for Marshall of the Soviet Union, Boris Mikhailovich Shaposhnikov, for example. He addressed him only using his first name and patronymic, and never raised his voice talking with him, even if he disagreed with his report. B.M. Shaposhnikov was the only person to whom Stalin allowed to smoke in this office."

The passage underlined by Stalin in Shaposhnikov's work, "Brain of the Army," testifies to Stalin having studied that work. He underlined heavily the following words: "Every statesman operating on the political field - and this is irrefutable - should possess military knowledge. We do not intend to have him go into the secrets of strategy and even less so those of tactics up to his ears. But we think that the understanding of the nature of war should not be foreign to politics, as one cannot make a good use of an instrument, without knowing the conditions when it is used." As a theoretician and a practitioner behind the preparation of strategic and operational reserves, Shaposhnikov helped Stalin learn the art of concentrating, advancing and using them. Characteristically, Stalin called Shaposhnikov quite often to seek his advice and to invite him to attend the meetings at the State Defense Committee and the Stavka after Shaposhnikov had quit for health reasons to become the head of the K.E. Voroshilov higher military academy. Shaposhnikov was perhaps one of those few people, whose explanation, advice and help Stalin did not "shy away" from seeking. The dictator had a weakness of heeding the voice of the person in whom he admitted a developed intellect. Although partial and incomplete, Shaposhnikov did keep Stalin in his spiritual grip. Having nothing but "yes men" and "float-with-the-current" people in his environment, Stalin met a man whose erudition made such a strong impression on him.

Shaposhnikov cleverly suggested certain measures, without infringing on the Supreme Commander's dignity, as he saw Stalin's dilettantism in military matters, especially apparent during the first months of the war. For example, the German troops used to break through the defenses at the junction of units and formations in 1941. This was a frequent and sad fact. Shaposhnikov reported to Stalin to this effect, explained the crux of the problem and after Stalin had grasped the problem, put in front of him Stavka's directive No. 98 addressed to the directions and front commanders. It said in part: "Unit (formations) commanders have forgotten that the junctions have always been the most vulnerable points in troop combat formation. The enemy broke the junction of our units without much effort and often in an insignificant force, creating flanks in defense combat formation, committed tanks and motorized infantry into the breaches and threatened the combat formation of our troops with encirclement, putting them in predicament." The directive went on to outline specific objectives of protecting the junctions, creating "blanket fire barrage zones by organizing cross fire by the units at the front and in the depth." The Supreme Commander acquiesced but asked Shaposhnikov to sign the directive.

Marshall B.M. Shaposhnikov was the purveyor of lofty ethical principles. Molotov told Stalin once that Shaposhnikov usually addressed his interlocutor as "my dear." The Supreme Commander himself had an opportunity to see the Marshall's exceptional softness. Let us refer to the reminiscences by the Chief Marshall of Artillery, N.N. Voronov, who was once present as Shaposhnikov was reporting to Stalin. During his briefing, Shaposhnikov said that no information had been received from the two fronts despite the measures taken. Interrupting, Stalin queried the head of General Staff:

"Have you punished the people who do not want to inform us of what is going on on their fronts?"

Boris Mikhailovich answered seriously that he had to issue reprimands to the both chiefs of staff. Judging by the tone of his voice and the expression on his face, he considered this act of discipline almost tantamount to the highest measure of punishment. Stalin smiled glumly:

"Our people issue reprimands in each cell. This is not a punishment for a military person..."

This was the gist of Stalin...

Seriously, Shaposhnikov reminded Stalin of an old Russian military tradition, according to which the culprit had to immediately submit his resignation after the head of the General Headquarters had reprimanded the front's chief of staff.

Stalin gave Shaposhnikov a look saying he was an incorrigible "idealist," but said nothing. With his cultured ways, the former colonel of the tsarist army, representing the old Russian school, disarmed the Supreme Commander. This human trait, much of it lost in our days even despite the high educational standards enjoyed by many people, and not military alone, enabled Shaposhnikov to "teach" the Supreme Commander in a soft-pedal manner how to understand strategy, military art and even technical and tactical problems.

As the reactive artillery began to arrive, the Supreme Commander insisted that the units used it to the utmost. First, there few but a few units and very little ammunition, second, on receiving these instructions some commanders immediately used them for blanket firing and firing against ill-reconnoited targets. As a result, the new hardware did not produce the desired result. Shaposhnikov reported to Stalin why he thought it was not sufficiently effective, and suggested that a special, very important directive be sent to the front and army commanders. Stalin agreed. Here is the directive:

"The units of the Fighting Red Army in action have recently received new powerful weapons, represented by combat vehicles M-8 and M-13, which are the best means of destroying enemy manpower, its tanks, motorized units and the means of fire. The M-8 and M-13 artillery battalions and batteries should be used only

against major, well-reconnoited targets. Categorically prohibit firing at individual minor targets. Consider all M-8 and M-13 vehicles the Red Army's absolutely secret weapons...

I. Stalin

B. Shaposhnikov
October 1, 1941 4 a.m."

While Shaposhnikov helped Stalin understand the stern logic of armed struggle, the significance of depth-disposed defense and offense, the role and place of strategic reserves in operations, and learn other "secrets" of military science, G.K. Zhukov, perhaps our most famous military commander, had a different sort of influence on the Supreme Commander. Stalin looked at Zhukov not only as a talented military leader, a man of strong will to execute Stavka's decisions, but a person who seemed to be kindred to Stalin as far as decisiveness, the driving power and the unwillingness to compromise were concerned. This idea was expressed by A.A. Yepishev, in describing the Supreme Commander's attitude to Zhukov, as we conversed one day.

Stalin regarded himself Lenin's almost main plenipotentiary at the fronts during the Civil War. He strongly believed that he had a substantial, if not a crucial influence on the situations at Tsaritsyn, Perm, Petrograd, and the Southern front. He came to believe in the institution of supreme command at the fronts. It was not accidental, therefore, why he revived actively the method of sending Stavka's representatives to the fronts during the Great Patriotic War. Stalin regarded G.K. Zhukov as his main representative (and then made him his deputy). Why? Well, because despite everything, Stalin considered him the most capable person to implement his decisions, a person able to take firm and sometimes cruel measures, and of displaying strong will power that knew no compromises. In Yepishev's view, Zhukov met Stalin's idea of a modern military commander. Zhukov did possess all those qualities, of course, but Stalin appreciated only his will as a military commander and underestimated his strong intellect. I think this a very apt definition, made by the man who fought all his way from Stalingrad to Prague as a member of the army military council.

All of us are aware today of the great contribution made by Zhukov to defeating the German troops near Moscow, saving Leningrad, the Stalingrad operation, and to dozens other "chapters" of war. Characteristically, as Zhukov's became more and more popular and famous, especially after the war, Stalin was feeling increasingly cool toward him. It was not accidental that Stalin left it to himself to coordinate the action of the three fronts in seizing Berlin, rather than entrust this to Zhukov. He made the Marshall take command of the First Belorussian front instead. The Supreme Commander was thinking about the future, about history, and he did not want to share the finale of the war and the climbing to the pinnacle of triumph with anyone, even in relative terms.

Stalin realized that Zhukov matched him, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, in will power. He felt that unbreakable will in many combat episodes when the war began. Voroshilov and Zhdanov, for example, stationed in Lenigrad, requested Stalin's permission in early September to have the Baltic Navy warships mined and have them sunk if Leningrad was surrendered. Stalin gave his consent. The military council of the Leningrad front passed a resolution as early as September 8, which said in part:

"2. Take into consideration the report by Admiral Isakov to the effect that the draft plan was reviewed and approved by People's Commissar of the Navy Co. Kuznetsov...

5. All the following responsible persons be allowed to become involved in the preparation of preliminary measures:

Commander Raal, chief of staff of the Baltic fleet

Captain 1st Class squadron chief of staff Yevdokimov

Deputy People's Commissar of Ship-Building Industry Com. Samarin

Deputy People's Commissar of Sea Fleet Com. Kirichenko

Commander Chelpanov, commander of Leningrad's sea defense

Commander Zhukov, deputy sea defense commander

Captain Ist Class Yanson, transport unit commander

Once again pay special attention to clandestinity in formulating and implementing all preliminary measures, making Adm. Isakov take care of this.

Member of Military Council Leningrad front commander

USSR Marshall K. Voroshilov

Zhdanov"

Zhukov arrived from Moscow, having Stalin's instructions, by the time the Military Council had made the decision. "Here is my mandate," said Zhukov as the new front commander, passing on the memo from the Supreme Commander. "I forbid blowing up the ships. They have 40 rounds of ammunition aboard!"

Recalling this episode in 1950, Zhukov wondered: "How could one mine ships. They may be destroyed. But if they are, it'll be in combat, as they fire. When the Germans started an offensive on the seaside section of the front later on, the seamen did hit them so hard from their ships that they just fled. How about that? 16-inch guns. Can you imagine how much power they had?"

Stalin could not but appreciate the new front commander's boldness and farsightedness when he learned that Zhukov had rescinded the decision made by the military council, and actually by the Supreme Commander himself. On listening to Zhdanov's report, Stalin did not comment on it, but went ahead with other business, making it clear that he wanted the things to remain the way Zhukov had decided. Stalin knew that Zhukov could be a ruthless, no-compromise person at the critical moments. The Supreme Commander found this to his heart, this was like him. Zhukov dealt with cowards and panic-mongers without mercy and could resort to the most harsh measures, if the situation warranted it. For example, he dictated order No. 0064 during the critical period of Leningrad's defense in September 1941, which said: "The military council of the Leningrad front orders to announce to all commanders, political workers and men defending the section in question that all commanding and political officers and men will be shot immediately if they withdraw from the line without a written order from the front and army military council.

Make the commanding and political officers sign the acknowledgement of this order. Have it well explained to the men."

Having affixed his signature, Zhukov let the remaining members of the front military council sign it as well: Zhdanov, Kuznetsov, and Khozin. It seemed that Army General G.K. Zhukov was capable of doing the impossible. He occasionally had to resort to such measures to achieve it.

In one of his reports to Stalin in the capacity of the reserve front commander regarding troop action in the direction of Roslavl, Zhukov said: "Individual commanders proved to be cowards and panic-mongers in these battles. They include 211st division commander Colonel Fursin, who was demoted from his rank of Major General during the Finnish war; chief of staff of the 211st division Colonel Arshintsev, chief of communications of the 211st division Captain Doroshenko; quartermaster 1st class, head of the captured equipment section, Mokrov; Major Shokin, head of the artillery of the 211st division; artillery regiment commander, 211st division, Captain Verzhbitskiy; 887th infantry regiment commander Major Perkhorovich. All these people are to be arrested and court-martialed." These were harsh measures, but Zhukov did put the division in order.

Here is another example. He sent a coded cable to Lieutenant General V.F. Gerasimenko, 21st army commander, in July 1941, which said: "Order the 75th division commander, through a delegate, to stop acting like a coward and halt his criminal retreat. If he fails to do this, the Stavka ordered to warn him that he will be shot as a coward who has failed in his duty." Naturally, many people did not like this, especially those victims who were removed from their positions, court-martialled, or demoted. In his memoirs, "Through the Eyes of a Person of My Generation," K. Simonov quotes Stalin as saying, as the novel by Kazakevich, "Spring on the Order," nominated for Stalin's prize, was being discussed: "Not everything was correctly portrayed there. He has shown Rokossovskiy, he has shown Konev, but it was Zhukov who commanded the main front on the Order. Zhukov has his shortcomings, and they did not like some of his traits at the front, but I must say that he waged the war better than Konev and not worse than Rokossovskiy."

More than once, Stalin was harsh and unfair with Zhukov, not only after the war, but during it as well, especially at its outset. When the situation became critical near Vyazama in July 1941, Zhukov suggested delivering a counter blow at Yelnya to interdict the move of the German troops behind the lines of the Western front. Without hearing out the report, Stalin cut Zhukov short rudely:

"Counterattacks, my foot! What a piece of rubbish! Our troops cannot put up a good defense and you are talking about a counterattack...

"If you think that as chief of the General Staff I'm good only at talking rubbish, I request to be relieved of my duties of chief of the General Staff and to be sent to the front where I can be of more use than here," Zhukov said.

Mekhlis, who was present during the conversation, interceded:

"Who has given you the right to talk to Comrade Stalin like this?"

As a result of that conversation, Zhukov was appointed commander of the Reserve front. But Stalin could not do without this outstanding military commander, although Beriya and Mekhlis went out of their way to compromise him in Master's eyes. Zhukov was Stalin's "magic wand" during the first phase of the war. When the Center group of armies breached defense and surrounded a considerable number of the Western and Reserve front troops in early October, because of the inept Soviet command, Stalin dispatched Zhukov to straighten out the disastrous situation. Pointing to the map, Stalin said bitterly, as Zhukov remembers:

"Look what Konev has done. The Germans can approach Moscow in three or four days. The worst thing is that neither Konev nor Budyoniy know where their troops are, nor what the enemy is doing. Konev should be put on trial. I'm sending a special commission headed by Molotov tomorrow..."

Zhukov managed to bring the situation under control by resorting to extraordinary measures. Thanks to him, Konev was spared court-martial, and Georgiy Konstantinovich took him as Western front deputy commander.

Stalin discovered soon that Zhukov's confidence, decisiveness, and "firm hand" did not just help turn around the organization of military action by formations, but that the military leader's very presence became known to

the troops soon in some unexplainable way, raising the men's combat spirit. Here are the reminiscences of Zhukov's former aid-de-champ General L.F. Minyuk about the action taken by Zhukov near Belgorod after the Voronesh front commanders, Golikov and Krushchev, had lost control of the situation. "Georghiy Konstantinovich virtually assumed control of those troops in the critically alarming moment. And it came as no surprise. No one could see Zhukov at a loss. On the contrary, during the moment when everything seemed to go under and fall apart, and, when one could become desperate, he would become alert, active and decisive. Danger did not depress him, but rather filled him with even more will and he looked like a tight spring or a stern bird ready to brave a storm. I often noticed Zhukov's habit of pressing his clenched fist against his chin during such moments."

The Supreme Commander could not but feel that Zhukov began to epitomize a modern type of a military leader, the one possessing flexible and bold thinking, great will power and decisiveness, and morally attractive for the fighting commanding officers, political workers, and men in the units and formations.

Stalin did not have "blue-eyed boys." It is just that he relied more on some people and less on others. Such moral considerations as close acquaintanceship, old "likes," or old services did not stop him when he decided the fate of one military commander or another. With the exception of Beriya, perhaps, he did not always listen to what people around him "whispered into his ear."

Beriya and Abakumov are known to have framed Zhukov after the war. They even used his photo album, where Georghiy Konstantinovich was shown in the company of American, British, and French politicians and military commanders, bugged his telephone, and rummaged through his personal archives and mail. Despite all his suspiciousness, Stalin had enough sense of measure to know when to stop. It is mostly likely that Zhukov's arrest was in the wings. Zhukov was accused of "ascribing to himself the laurels of the main victor" on the basis of the testimony provided by a number of arrested military leaders, which were made public during a special session conducted by Stalin and attended, in addition to a group of top brass, by Beriya, Kaganovich, and other statesmen. Some military leaders, P.S. Rybalko for example, interceded on behalf of Zhukov, and Stalin began to waffle. He decided to replace the planned arrest with sending Zhukov to the out-of-the-mainstream districts, first to the Oddessa one, and then to the Urals. The final decision was made by Stalin, and nobody else.

The order signed by Generalissimo on June 9, 1946 mentioned a high ranking military commander, who had sent a letter to the country's leadership reporting "the facts of Marshall Zhukov's unbecoming and deleterious behavior with respect to the government and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief." It alleged that Zhukov lost modesty and ascribed to himself the credit for the greatest contribution to major victories and gathered the dissatisfied people around himself. But the autocrat did not bring himself to making short work of the famed military leader.

It was hard to act as a "gray cardinal" under Stalin, the way Suslov was, for example, under Krushchev and Brezhnev. The reason being that Stalin was the "main cardinal" himself, rather dark than gray...

One can hear people saying sometimes that Stalin was harsh but fair. One person advocating such view mentioned to me the fate of the Supreme Commander's son, whom Stalin allegedly "demoted" without any pity. Indeed, Stalin did demote him but because Vasliy Stalin discredited his father rather than himself. Stalin relieved his son of his position not only after the war, but during it as well. Beriya told Stalin about some new drunken antics by Vasiliy in May 1943, who was an air force regiment commander at that time. The furious Stalin dictated the order immediately:

"Commander of the Red Army Air Force

Marshall of Aviation Comrade Novikov.

I order:

1. Immediately relieve Colonel V.I. Stalin from his position of the air force regiment commander and do not appoint him to any commanding positions until my order.

2. It shall be told to the regiment and to Colonel Stalin that Colonel Stalin is being removed from his position of regiment commander for drinking and debauchery, and for spoiling and corrupting the regiment.

3. Report compliance.

People's Commissar of Defense I. Stalin

March 26, 1943."

Stalin was so furious that in dictating the order he did not notice using the word "regiment" four times and the word "Colonel" twice in a single sentence... The well-wishers reported to Stalin, however, that soon after his symbolic "demotion" V.I. Stalin "admitted his mistake" and was ready to assume a "commanding position." Stalin's son resumed regiment command after awhile and was nominated an air force division commander at the end of 1943. One should hardly talk about the Supreme Commander's fairness in this instance, since he was more concerned, we shall repeat, about his good name.

The Leader was usually ruthless and unyielding in his personnel decisions. He did change them, though, later on and without apparent outside influence. I think that Stalin was sending messages to his retinue, members of the State Defense Committee, and the Stavka that his appointments were based solely on such criteria as work, practice, and a man's actions and abilities. The opinion

was divided, for example, on who should be in charge of finally eliminating the surrounded enemy group at Stalingrad. It was Stalin's attitude to that person that became absolutely clear in actual fact. Beriya suggested that Yeremenko remain commander of the Stalingrad front, while Zhukov gave preference to Rokossovskiy. Zhukov recalls that on listening to the "sides," Stalin summed it up:

"I value Yeremenko less than Rokossovskiy. The troops do not like Yeremenko. Rokossovskiy enjoys a greater prestige. Yeremenko was real bad as the Bryanks front commander. He is not modest and boastful."

"But Yeremenko will be mortally offended by this decision, " objected Zhukov.

"We are not prep school ladies. We are the Bolsheviks, and we should place worthy people to take care of business."

Stalin demoted Zhukov, Kotnev, Yeremenko, Timoshenko, Khozin, Kozlov, Voroshilov, Budyenniy, Bagramyan, Holikov and many other military leaders. One cannot say that there were no grounds. The removal of Voroshilov, Budennyiy, Golikov, Kozlov and other military commanders was often necessitated by the dire situation. But very often the Supreme Commander gave them a chance to prove themselves, show their worth in action, and to prove that their commission, oversight or a setback were accidental. Giving this chance, Stalin did not let bygones be bygones, however. As he discussed the Staligrad affairs, he brought up Yeremenko's setbacks at the Bryansk front.

Stalin knew that in his desire to have an order fulfilled, Zhukov did not wince at taking the most extreme measures. A number of offensive operations in the western and north-western directions were planned at Stalin's initiative and suggestion in the summer of 1942 in order to bolster the position of Soviet troops at Leningrad and Rzhev. The operations began. Zhukov was the Western front commander at the time. Poskryobyshev called Zhukov on the phone on August 27 at the front to tell him that he was nominated deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief and that he was being sent to Stalingrad. Prior to that, Zhukov was trying to defeat the Zubtsevo-Karman enemy group on Stalin's order and assist the Kalinin front in capturing Rzhev. The Supreme Commander called Zhukov frequently, before he became "engrossed" in Stalingrad to require more "active" action. But the success was highly unlikely because of the dispersion of the means and forces. One can only say that fierce fighting prevented the German fascist from withdrawing a number of its units and moving them to the southern flank of the Soviet-German front. Many divisions in the Center group of armies lost up to 50 percent of their strength. Zhukov was not used to ignoring the orders.

In organizing the breakthrough of the German lines by the 31st and 20th armies, he used the method he could hardly be proud of later. Zhukov informed Stalin in detail about the course of the operation which involved 14 rifle divisions and 11 tank brigades, and about its result in a written memo to Stalin, which carries the supreme commander's resolution "Com. Vasilevskiy. I. Stalin." The memo has a passage which shows that Zhukov used the method which the Supreme Commander tried to impose so much during the initial phase of the war, since he was compelled to execute Stalin's order without fail, at any cost:

"In order to prevent individual units from falling behind and to fight against cowards and panic-mongers, commanders specially appointed by the army military council were riding in tanks after every attacking battalion of the first echelon.

As a result of the measures taken, the troops of the 31st and 20th armies successfully breached enemy defenses.

Zhukov, Bulganin

August 7, 1942."

Speaking about personalities, Zhukov was the main protagonist of the defense of Moscow and of the routing of fascist troops in the capital's environs. It was historically justified to let the man who defended the capital of the homeland take direct action in the capture of the enemy's capital, and he let the troops under his command seize Berlin. That is why Stalin resorted to castling, changing the positions of Zhukov and Rokossovskiy. When Stalin appointed Zhukov commander of the First Belorussian front, which was to play the crucial role in that operation, Stalin was not guided, of course, by any moral considerations, although he "liked" (if he really seriously liked a single person) the outstanding military leader, K.K. Rokossovskiy. Stalin just wanted to rule out any chance completely. In fact, Zhukov's appointment to this position in November 1944 testified to the Supreme Commander admitting this Marshall's superiority over all the others in terms of his talents, reliability, and decisiveness.

Zhukov remembered the order he received from the Stavka almost by heart, the order requiring that the troops of the First Belorussian front seized Berlin:

"The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief *orders*:

1. Prepare and conduct an offensive operation with the objective of capturing Germany's capital city of Berlin and reach the Elbe river not later than on the 12th-15th day of the operation.

2. Deliver the main strike from the ridgehead on the Order river, to the west of Kustrin, by using the troops of four infantry and two tank armies. Engage five to six artillery divisions in the section of the breakthrough with the density of not less than 250 guns, 76mm and up, for each kilometer of the breakthrough area.

3. Strike two ancillary blows using the strength of two armies for each in order to support the front's main group from the north and south...

4. The operation is to start according to the instructions received by you personally.

Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief

I. Stalin

April 2, 1945

No. 11059"

Stalin closely followed the operation which was to crown him with the victor's laurels. He did not meddle much in the operational matters, leaving this to Zhukov and Antonov. But the morning and evening reports started with the briefings on the progress of preparations, and then of the course of the Berlin operation. Zhukov reported that the German troops had virtually ceased to resist in the west and were engaged in fierce house-to-house fighting in the east. Stalin responded ruthlessly and without a compromise, as was his wont, sending a cable to Zhukov:

"Commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front.

I have received your coded cable containing the testimony by a German POW to the effect that they should not yield to the Russians and fight till the last man, even if U.S. troops move behind their lines. Pay no attention to the testimony by the German POW. Hitler is spinning a web in the Berlin area to cause a rift between the Russians and the Allies. This web has to be cut with the Soviet troops capturing Berlin. Cut down the Germans mercilessly, and you will be in Berlin soon.

April 17, 1945 5:50 p.m.

I. Stalin."

Stalin watched in suspense the battle of Berlin. He was interested in such "minor" issue as taking Hitler prisoner. The only thing he needed to make his triumph complete was to capture the German Furher alive and have him tried by an international tribunal. Although Zhukov reported fighting in the Reichstag and on the approaches to the imperial chancellery, the long-awaited report still would not come. Finally, a coded cable was received in the evening of May 2:

"Comrade Stalin.

I am sending a copy of the order issued by General Weidling, Berlin defense commander, on the German troops ending their resistance in Berlin.

May 2, 1945

Zhukov

Order

The Fuhrer committed suicide on April 30, 1945. We, who have pledged our loyalty to him, have been left on our own... According to the agreement reached with the Supreme Command of the Soviet troops, I demand that fighting be ceased immediately.

Weidling, General of the Artillery and Commander of the

Berlin defense."

"He did it, bastard," thought Stalin, putting the cable aside. For no obvious reason, he recalled Molotov's story about meeting Hitler before the war, the latter's fanatical belief of overcoming the British. But already then he was thinking of striking as mortal a blow against the Soviet Union as possible. So, he has escaped retribution...

During the last days of war, Stalin authorized Antonov increasingly often to sign operations documents on his own behalf and on behalf of the Stavka, since he had long felt confident about the outcome of the battle, turning his thoughts more and more to the postwar affairs. Stalin did not hesitate to authorize Zhukov to sign the war's main act, when the days of the unforgettable triumph arrived, with diplomacy replacing military operations ever more actively. He requested Antonov to bring the cable to him personally, although he recently approved many documents in absentia, over the phone. The cable is terse, but reading the archive original one cannot but feel subconsciously how much is behind these few lines. This was the philosophy of tragedy in retrospect and the one of triumph which was to be experienced:

"Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshall of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov.

The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief authorizes you to ratify the protocol on the unconditional capitulation of the German armed forces. Supreme Commander-in-Chief

Marshall of the Soviet Union I. Stalin

Chief of General Staff of the Red Army

Army General Antonov

May 7, 1945

No. 11083"

By affixing his signature, the Leader made it look like he, and not Zhukov, was to sign the long-awaited protocol within the next few hours. Handing in the cable to Antonov, Stalin stood up, and, looking into Antonov's tired but happy eyes, suddenly shook his hand.

As one becomes familiar with Stalin's numerous documents which mention Zhukov, the transcripts of his hot line conversations, cables, and memos preserved in the military archives, one reaches the conclusion that the Supreme Commander-in-Chief valued Zhukov more than any other Soviet Marshall. Zhukov was awarded three times the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union (he was bestowed this honorary title for the fourth time in

1956), two "Victory" orders, the highest military decorations, the 1st Class Suvorov Order under number one, which was the highest recognition for a military commander. It is clear that only "himself" could have sanctioned those awards, regardless of Zhukov's tremendous services to the people. But back in 1944, Stalin felt that Zhukov's glory should be cut down in size to fit the Procrustean bed of "*one* of the talented military leaders." When Zhukov's fame of a military commander went beyond the bounds of the homeland, Stalin decided that it cast shadow over him.

For example, Stalin felt an unpleasant aftertaste in his mouth following the press-conference for Soviet and foreign correspondents which G.K. Zhukov conducted in Berlin on Moscow's instructions on June 9, 1945 (A. Ya. Vyshinskiy, though, attended it too). Answering the questions from British, American, French and Canadian journalists, the Marshall spoke at length and in detail about the preparations for, and the progress of, the Berlin operation, about cooperation with the Allies, about the datelines for the Soviet Army's demobilization, how war criminals would be dealt with; he shared his thoughts about the superiority of the German soldier over the Japanese one, and many other things. And not a single word about Stalin! Not a word! As if letting Zhukov off the hook, the Times correspondent P. Parker asked Zhukov at the very end:

"Did Marshall Stalin take active part on the daily basis in the operations you were in charge of?"

"Marshall Stalin actively and daily supervised all sections of the Soviet-German front, including the sections where I was present at," Zhukov answered briefly.

Stalin re-read Zhukov's last sentenced several times, deeply hurt by his deputy's "ingratitude." It is likely that it was at that point that he made his decision about the Marshall's future. Zhukov was "moved" to command secondary military districts for almost seven years after the war. Given the skills and experienced gained in vilifying honest people, it was an easy job to frame up a case accusing Zhukov of "conceit and Bonapartism." The most talented military leader in World War II, Zhukov did not know that it was not his last exile. It has been noted long ago that such open, honest and straight people have never had simple lives.

Never able to be self-critical, Stalin did not give any thought to Zhukov's contribution to his development as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. It is possible that he could admit that no one could have implemented the Stavka's decisions as well as Zhukov did, put them into practice. But as an *armchair* military leader, the Supreme Commander more often than not just approved and authorized the decisions and concepts born in the General HQs. It was Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, and other military leaders - representatives of the Stavka, front commanders- who put them into practice. More importantly, it was the mass of soldiers and sailors, about whose life, living conditions, actions, sufferings, and pains Stalin knew only from the reports, the stories told by representatives who came back from the front, and the military newsreels, for which he fell in starting from 1943.

Aleksandr Mikhailovich Vasilevskiy was one of the military commanders, who became a major Soviet military leader later on, whose activity provided a constant link between Stalin and the front life, with its deadly breath of battles. He was deputy head of the operations directorate when the war started; he became directorate head and deputy head of the General HQs from August 1, 1941; he was head of the General HQs and deputy People's Commisar of Defense from June 1942 till February 1945. Vasilivskiy also commanded the 3rd Belorussian front and later became Commander-in-Chief of the Far Eastern troops.

Vasilevskiy's work at the General HQs reflected the peculiar style of Stalin's work in the Stavka, the highest military control organ. Aleksandr Mikhailovich spent two thirds of his time at the front as its representative, executing Stalin's direct instructions, and he spent only one third of his time taking care of the immediate operations in the General HQs in Moscow. It essentially became a rule with Stalin to dispatch either Vasilevskiy or Zhukov when the most important operations were being planned, or when the situation at the front came to a crisis. Or he sent them both at the same time, as was the case in Stalingrad. Work became a bit easier for Vasilevskiy when Stalin agreed to Vasilevskiy's personal request to have Antonov's candidacy approved as head of the operations directorate, deputy and then first deputy head of the General Staff. Aleksey Innokentievich gradually assumed more control over the Stavka's main strategic organ.

Stalin knew how to single out some main traits, skills, facets of character or of talent in each military leader and commander. Vatutin, for example, was "good for offense," the fact that Stalin reiterated on many occasions; Petrov was "the master of defense." As we pointed out, he highly regarded Zhukov's decisiveness and will in the first place. This type of a military leader was more to his heart than any other. He liked Shaposhnikov, it will be recalled, for his softness. He appreciated Rokossovskiy for his self-effacing, calm but very purposeful manner of leadership. Stalin had ample opportunities to become disappointed in Budyenniy, Voroshilov, Kulik, and some other military leaders. He asked himself more than once why not a single border district commander was able to show his best having become a front commander in 1941. How could this happen? But the Supreme Commander failed to answer these questions without critically assessing his own role.

But let us turn back to A.M. Vasilevskiy. He was a catholic military leader and commander. He could prove himself both as a commander and as a HQs officer. Stalin could see that Aleksandr Mikhailovich was acting with the same confidence either in the critical situations

during defensive fighting, or in organizing major offensive operations, in strategic planning, as a Stavka representative, or as a front commander.

One day Stalin asked Vasilevskiy:

"Has your religious education given you anything? Have you ever thought about this?"

Baffled by the question somewhat, Vasilevskiy came back with a dignified and clever answer:

"No knowledge is useless. Some of it proved useful in military life as well..."

Stalin gave Vasilevskiy a curious glance (he was not in good spirits following the recent liberation of Minsk) and added in the same tone:

"The main thing that the clergy can teach you is to understand people."

Changing the subject abruptly, Stalin said that the Marshall should not just take under his control the action of the 2nd and 1st Baltic and the 3rd Belorussian fronts. G.K. Zhukov performed similar duties being until then, guiding the operations undertaken by the 2nd and 1st Belorussian and the 1st Ukrainian fronts. These were not commanders-in-chief, but in this way Stalin introduced a new form of controlling the fronts' combat activity by the Stavka. Both the initiative and the decision were his. Zhukov and Vasilevskiy saw this as an indication of growing strategic maturity of the Supreme Commander.

During the war years, from five to seven meetings and conferences were held in Stalin's office every day, including those of the State Defense Committee, the Stavka, the heads of individual People's Commissariats, Party Central Committee officers from the partisan movement HQs, intelligence operatives, designers, transport commission, and many other organs and organizations. They would sit a a long table, and as soon as one meeting was over, Poskryobyshev would let another group of comrades in. The "conveyor belt" slowed down only in 1944 and 1945, when it became obvious that the routing of invaders was only the matter of time. This cold-hearted and stern-looking man had an amazing capacity for work. Vasilevskiy mentioned it more than once.

Stalin always heavily relied on Vasilevskiy. The latter virtually "was stuck" at the fronts, able to achieve the desired or acceptable results without going out of his way or resorting to extreme measures. The Marshall took issue with the Leader but rarely, and was not as obstinate as Zhukov; however, in discussing the operational matters with the Supreme Commander, he could get his point across unobtrusively but persistently.

It is hard to tell how many thousands of kilometers he flew during the war years, swinging from one front to another on Stalin's order only to return to Moscow for a couple of days to make a report and ro receive new instructions. During the greater part of the war, Stalin talked to Vasilevskiy virtually every day, with very few exceptions. This is how Aleksandr Mikhailovich describes this in his recollections:

"Starting from the spring of 1942 and during the rest of the war, I did not talk with him over the phone only when he left to meet the commanders of the Western and Kalinin fronts in early August 1943 and during his stay at the Teheran tripartite conference of heads of government (from the last days of November till December 2, 1943)." In addition to the operational necessity, Stalin felt the need to constantly ask Vasilevskiy's advice, to listen to his measured and concise report, which sounded like thinking aloud.

Although Vasilevskiy remained chief of General Staff till February 1945, the second half of the war was mostly associated in the Stavka with the name of A.I. Antonov. As I reviewed archive materials, I noticed that most of the directives issued by the leadership's supreme military organ since the spring of 1943 were signed by Stalin together with Antonov, or by Antonov himself on behalf of the Stavka.

A man born to be a staff officer and a highly cultured person, Antonov won Stalin's sympathy and confidence fast enough. The Supreme Commander became less quick-tempered and impulsive in the second half of the war, gradually returning to the pattern of behavior that was typical of him before the war - outward calm and manifest restraint, accompanied by tremendous inner work. Stalin closely watched himself before the war, it will be recalled, since he knew that each step, gesture and word of his in public was laden with the meaning which everyone interpreted in his or her own way; he watched himself closely. As a result of self-restraint, dictated by his desire to cut an image of a charismatic leader, he developed a measured pace, soft gestures, laconic phrases, outward good-naturedness, ostensible modesty and the striving to sum up things in slogans ("Life has become better, life has become more fun!" "Cadres Decide Everything!," "Man Is Our Main Capital!").

Following the disastrous start of the war, when everything was hanging by the thread, Stalin felt that the people had the right to take him to task in full measure. All or *almost* all of his well-rehearsed theatrical and outward gestures and the style of behavior were soon swept away, like the dry leaves of autumn. Even outwardly, the Supreme Commander became harsh, angry, and intolerant, and his speech edged on being hysterical. He could use the foulest of languages and make an ill-conceived decision on the spur of the moment in the presence of all top leaders, as he expressed his opinion about an event, a person, or a process. Stalin became what he really was.

The country gradually recovered from the horrible war stabbings thanks to the great stoicism of the people, their unbroken faith in socialist ideals, to Russian and Soviet patriotism amplified by the sacrificial staunchness of the mass of soldiers. The momentum created by the German

blow began to wane. Both the Stavka and the fronts in their capacity of strategic troop control organs were gaining experience in conducting both defensive and offensive operations. Stalin's old "leader's manners" began to come back bit by bit, the manners intended to give rise to legends, stimulate veneration for him as a deity, a genius, an inimitable Messiah and a prophet. All of us recall how often they used to tell the story of Stalin pacing in his office, a pipe in his hand, touching his mustache with its tip, the thrilling story which was told orally, in writing and shown in the movies almost with trepidation, as the supreme revelation; we knew that he stuffed his pipe only with the tobacco from the "Gertsagovina flor" papirosys and that he drank nothing but Khvanchkara... He understood that the most minute details of his life and style became, assuming more details, part of a large mosaic portrait of the Leader, the "only wise one."

After Antonov was accepted by Stalin and began to see him two or three times a day, he realized soon that it was very rarely that the Supreme Commander suggested any new ideas or offbeat proposals, if one ignored the fact that in any operation he always cut down on the time necessary for its preparation and always rushed things in the belief that our troops could move at a greater pace, scope and to a greater depth.

The observant Aleksey Innokentievich noticed that some of the Supreme Commander's habits were sort of a ritual. For example, listening to a report by Antonov, sometimes in the presence of Molotov, Beriya, and Malenkov, Stalin often interrupted him to call Poskryobyshev, who would bring Stalin a glass of tea. Everybody silently watched the Supreme Commander perform the religious rite of slowly squeezing lemon into his glass, then proceeding to his resting room, walking around the writing desk, opening the door - which could not be distinguished from he wall until Stalin opened it - and emerging with a bottle of Armenian cognac. Amid general silence, the Master put one or two teaspoonfuls of cognac in his tea, took the bottle back to his "den," sat down at the table and, only then, stirring tea with the spoon, said:

"Go ahead..."

Even this ordinary tea drinking (incidentally, those present were offered tea only rarely) was turned into a sort of a ritual which had some special "higher" meaning which seemed to be clear only to Stalin. Everyone watched this "religious rite" in awe.

Antonov realized that as a replacement for the chief of General Staff for many months and then in this position himself, he had an advantage of having the most horrible and hard scenes of war behind him in Act I. By the time he came to the General Staff, a certain routine of its 24-hour operation set in, and considerable experience of work in the Stavka accumulated. Being a pedantic person in a good sense of the word, Antonov introduced quite a few new things, like perhaps no one before him, in streamlining the work of the Stavka's main organ. He set precise deadlines for processing information, reports to be made by the representatives of intelligence and rear services, the fronts and reserve formations. He made a clear delegation of duties among his deputies A.A. Gryzlov, N.A. Lomov, and S.M. Shtemenko.

To make the organizational improvements in the work of the General Staff and the Stavka "irreversible," Antonov laid everything down on three pages and decided to report it to Stalin. It was determined that the Supreme Commander would listen to reports at definite periods of time (three times a day), most often on the phone, with the final report delivered to Stalin personally; he defined the routine of preparing and approving directives, communications with various control organs and made other provisions. When Antonov asked Stalin to review and endorse the agenda of work for the Stavka and General Staff, following one of the nighttime final reports of the day, the latter silently looked at the general in surprise and then read the document carefully. Without saying a word again, he wrote, "Agree. I Stalin" across it. But he obviously thought that Antonov was not a Simple Simon he looked. Actually, Antonov made the Supreme Commander himself pace the work of others as well as his own.

While before Stalin could summon Antonov any time for a report, now he himself tried to stick to the fixed schedule. Antonov succeeded in establishing a routine under which the main functions performed by General Staff were closely associated henceforth with the efforts of the central and main directorates of the People's Commissariat of Defense. The main function was "work" for the Supreme Commander himself and relating to him the information necessary to make decisions, and the second function lay in passing down instructions and exercising operational control over the fronts' combat actions.

As a gifted operative of large caliber with the General Staff, Antonov probably had as much influence on Stalin as Shaposhnikov, Zhukov, and Vasilevskiy. Always a man of schemes, Stalin liked a great deal Antonov's high level of culture of a HQs officer, his organization and a careful thought given both to the main concept and to the details. Stalin had next to him a man who had to pigeonhole everything by the nature of his job, which he did with a flair. The Supreme Commander had so much confidence in Antonov by the end of 1943 that he authorized him to sign most of the directives, orders, and instructions to the fronts, directorates to the people's commissariats, and the internal districts, using Stalin's name.

Antonov rose fast through the military ranks too. He started at the General Headquartes in 1942 as Lieutenant General, became Colonel General in April 1943 and was promoted to Army General the same year. But he did not make a Marshall of the Soviet Union, despite the benevolent attitude shown by the Supreme Commander to the Chief of General Staff (since February

1945), since Beriya stepped in. This evil incarnate did not have strong positions among top military leaders, and Beriya was keen on having there his own people there. It is a well known fact today that top Soviet generals had always exercised a reserved caution for Beriya, espousing profound mistrust in their hearts for the man who wore small glasses shaped like snake eyes. Beriya was constantly searching for the ways of winning major military leaders over to his side. To do them credit, it should be said that his efforts were fruitless. The very fact that Beriya was arrested, tried and then liquidated by the military themselves was a telltale sign of their attitude towards this Werewolf.

During his trips to the North-Caucasian front, Beriya tried to "work" generals Tuylenev, Maslennikov, Sergatskiy, Petrov, Shtemenko, and other military leaders. As a result, cables and memos were sent to Stalin requesting his protection for the control organs against Beriya's "team."

It is likely that Beriya succeeded in influencing only Army General Maskennikov, who used to work under his direct command for a long time. This is testified to by the conclusion made by generals of General Staff, Pokrovskiy and Platonov, who specially researched this matter in 1953. They wrote the following in their report, entitled "Regarding Beriya's criminal activity during the defense of the Caucasus in 1942-1943": "The northern group of troops of the Transcaucasian front was established on August 8 in order to defend the eastern part of the Caucasian ridge. General Maslennikov, who did not do a good job as army commander at the Kalinin front, was appointed its commander, ostensibly at Beriya's request...Unquestionably enjoying Beriya's protection, general Maslennikov often ignored the instructions sent by the front commander and delayed the regrouping of troops with his actions."

I do not want to make a final claim that I.I. Maskennikov became Beriya's confidant. But reviewing a number of his letters written to Beriya in 1942 one can draw the conclusion about a special relationship between these two people. As the commander of the 39th army, Maslennikov sent the following request directly to Beriya, for example, in circumventing military leaders: "Considering the complicated and difficult situation and recalling your promise to render possible assistance...Respectfully yours, Maslennikov. June 7, 1942." Having read the article, "Battle of Caucasus," in the 1952 August issue of the VOENNYA MYSL magazine, he sent a letter addressed to the head of the military-scientific department of General Staff, in which he took issue with the presentation of the role played by L.P. Beriya at the Caucasian fronts. The letter said:

"In describing the measures taken by the Stavka of the USSR Supreme Command on page 56, the authors make a very cursory mention, and only in passing, of the tremendous creative efforts and the political and organizational measures of principle undertaken by comrade Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beriya, who turned the tide and altered the entire situation at the Caucasian fronts as of August 1942, despite a very difficult situation that shaped up there.

This description of activity pursued by Comrade L.P. Beriya does not give an exhausting picture of all the measures which were undertaken under the personal and direct leadership of Comrade Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beriya.

Displaying the Stalinist type of leadership, L.P. Beriya set the personal example of the Bolshevik, statesmanlike, military, Party-political and economic leadership at the Transcaucasian front (August 1942 - January 1943), and brilliantly executed the instruction given by Comrade Stalin."

Stalin could not do without Beriya. In his heart, he probably despised that person with a willful face. But he needed him. Beria was an inquisitor, an executioner, and an informer. Beriya reported several times, for instance, that Berlin had long been hatching an act of terrorism against the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The People's Commissar said that according to some information, the special Arado-332 Messerschmidt plane was to drop a group of experienced terrorists from Vlasov's Russian Liberation Army, according to some other information, the retreating Germans left some saboteurs behind. The People's Commissar of Internal Affairs reported to the Supreme Commander almost on the monthly basis about extra security measures taken to protect Stalin. Stalin ordered to have his "faraway" dacha converted to a hospital back in 1941, while extra guards were sent to take care of the "nearby" dacha and the approaches to it.

But Stalin needed Beriya for many other things. For example, the Air Force commander Novikov reported yesterday that out of the 400 fighter planes sent to take part in the operations at the Kalinin and Western fronts, 140 planes became disabled four of five days after the operation had started. How could this happen? Stalin asked Beriya to find it out, since it could have hardly happened without "wreckage." The People's Commisar organized a "good" screening of the people in Stalin's retinue; according to him, about half of them could be used in combat units again, of course, under surveillance. But Stalin did not like Beriya meddling in the work of the HQs and the General Staff without any good reason. Well, he knew too much... The Supreme Commander did not like to reminisce, but Beriya knew about him more than anyone else. Stalin did not want Beriya to outlive him (but this was for the distant future). In the meantime, the Supreme Commander had a need for him...

Beriya was an exceptionally notorious person. He was only feared, and nobody liked him. Nobody! We shall repeat, however, that Beriya needed support in the army. He saw the leader aging fast, and he could have entertained far-reaching ambitious plans even at the end of the war, the plans which could not be implemented without army support in conditions of the system where

only the vestige of democracy existed. With Stalin's consent, Beriya took Army General Maslennikov to work in his system; that was probably why the latter showed his feelings of a loyal subject in public. Beriya's attempts to establish a special relationship with Antonov were of no avail, as the general treated him in a dry official manner. As was Beriya's wont, he set out to surreptitiously compromise Antonov, who became the Chief of the General Staff. Stalin did carry out his intent following the victory and did not award the rank of the Marshall to Antonov, the Chief of General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces, although he did not seem to pay much heed to the monster's innuendoes. Moreover, he again nominated Antonov first deputy chief of General Staff in 1946 and demoted him even further in 1948 to the position of the first deputy commander of the Trans-Caucasian military district.

Overall, A.I. Antonov had a bad fortune in our historical literature (and fiction), since a long list of military leaders, who have rendered great services to their homeland, almost never mentions his name. He did not become either a Marshall or a Hero [of the Soviet Union - Tr.], the fact that is not that important for history. What is important is that no due was given to the services provided by the talented man. He was an exemplary soldier and a real military intellectual, known for his power of thinking and subtlety of feelings. Antonov admitted after the war that he was dreaming about a day when he could play his favorite records: Chaikovsky's first piano concerto and Rakhmaninoff's third. The records gathered a layer of dust during the war, but their music was playing in his soul.

The "Army's brain" implies not just the power of collective intellect, but its organization as well. Thanks to Antonov, the Stavka and General Staff, as its main organ, worked with clockwise precision by the end of the war. Stalin was able to take a respite following the maddening disasters, tension, imponderables, disillusions and inhuman work. He started going out to the Bolshoi Theater again, though infrequently, in 1945...

The war was over. Like Caesar, the Supreme Commander dashed atop the Capitoline in the chariot of triumph. While the God-like Julius racked his brains for a long time thinking how to reward his loyal legionnaires, Stalin gradually removed from his environment those people whose presence and position reminded him of each person's real contribution to the great triumph. In the final count, Stalin did not give a full measure of credit to the man whose signature was affixed together with that of Stalin more often than anyone's else during the last two years of war, and who was the only Army General awarded the Victory Order. He "forgot" already that Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, and Antonov elaborated and submitted to him such concepts of operations and the strategic concepts of war in 1944-1945 which made it unnecessary for him to look for something else; all he had to do most often was to approve them, making just secondary and minor changes. As we mentioned before more than once, these changes involved the deadlines, which Stalin would "cut" without fail by a day or two. Aware of this peculiarity of his, military commanders at the Stavka and at the fronts normally requested several days more that were required to prepare an operation, regroup troops, or to concentrate the reserves.

Stalin already "forgot" that he had a very vague idea about the theory and practice of military science when he became the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. In general, it was only step-by-step that he began to comprehend a close link between military strategy, operational art, and tactics as the components of military science; he didn't as a result of reports, memos, and elaborations prepared by the "foursome" regarding specific situations. The Supreme Commander was to be "educated" with caution, since he stood no lecturing, of course.

Stalin has a simplistic understanding of the term "operation" for a long time. Initially, any major military action or a combat were treated by him as an operation. He grasped gradually that the operation is a sum total of combats, fighting, and strikes executed simultaneously (or consequently) according to the same concept or plan. Not each combat was an operation. The operations themselves could be different and include many versions.

The war was over. It was its result that counted for Stalin in the first place; he preferred to talk about the price of victory only in terms of fascist atrocities. He never mentioned his own mistakes, with the exception of the speech which he delivered during the Kremlin reception on June 24, 1945 in honor of Soviet army troop commanders. It will be recalled that even then he mentioned the mistakes made by "our" government, and not his own errors. The "greatest military commander" was another epithet, which had a military connotation, which was added to the endless list of such other epithets as "the great leader," "sage teacher," "unsurpassed manager," and "the strategist of a genius." This is the reason why, in adding ever new brushstrokes to the portrait of this man, we would like to touch upon I.V. Stalin's strategic thinking.

Thinking of a Strategist?

I think that some readers would like to take an issue with me on seeing the question mark after the words, "Thinking of a Strategist?" As a matter of fact, I question what used to be presented as the absolute truth for decades. To counter my "heresy," they would give numerous quotes by our outstanding military commanders testifying to the opposite. It can be assumed that those pronouncements are correct in their own way, because when the outstanding Soviet military commanders wrote their memoirs, they could say only what they were *allowed* to say. Any negative or critical comments about the Supreme Commander were qualified as "vilification."

I happened to work in the Army and Navy Chief Political Directorate for about two dozen years. There was a time when all memoir manuscripts were reviewed

by the Chief Political Directorate's press section in line with the instructions issued at high level by Suslov and his apparatus. I talked with people who read the reminiscences by military leaders in the 50s, 60s and later on. The manuscripts "made circles" at the top level offices for a long time, and their authors knew quite well what they could or could not write. To begin with, the facts, conclusions, events, figures, observations, thoughts and evaluations that could "malign" our history did not find their way into the books because of the filter; and thus it always looked quite good. I do not think that we should look for specific "culprits" but rather understand that a system based on definite preclusions and limitations had shaped up in literature, the system that would make any work fit the Procrustian bed. Neither Glavlit [directorate in charge of censorship - Tr.], not numerous reviewers could ignore the evaluations dictated by the ideological *literary system* based on a lopsided view of the past.

I know that the memoirs by military leaders did not include everything that they had written. As they wrote them, they looked for a place and an occasion, often under the influence of outside factors, to mention the names of "powers that be" in their books, who could not be seen even through a very powerful magnifying glass during the years of war. I know how some zealous timeservers were looking for the unit, where L.I. Brezhnev served before the war; or a railway station to Krasnoyarsk from which K.U. Chernenko once accompanied a trainload of gifts to the front... Many good works were "marred," for example, the forced references to Brezhnev and by the pretexts to mention his "services." The following "comment" could not be included in any book, of course. Regiment commissar Sinyavskiy, a lecturer at the Chief Political Directorate of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (CPDWPRA), who went to visit the 18th army in August 1942 to check how order No. 227 was being executed, wrote to the CPDWPRA deputy head Shikin, among other things, that political directorate workers Yemelyanov, Brezhnev, Rybanin, and Bashilov had failed "to bring about a respective change for the better in the mood and behavior (both at and off work) among the workers of the front's political directorate... According to regiment commissar Com. Krutikov and senior battalion commissar Com. Moskvin, a considerable number of other workers too, were afflicted with complacency, carefree attitude, familiarity, collective protection, drinking and so on." We cannot claim that everything that regiment commissar Sinyavskiy wrote about (and the memo mentions other similar "sins") was true. We just wanted to point out that any critical comment on Brezhnev was ruled out at that time.

We have been the prisoners of "false consciousness." People were often faced with the dilemma of making the book "right" or not seeing it published at all. There is another factor. I do not want to offend anyone, but I must say that most of the military leaders' memoirs were written by literary workers, "literary polishers," the people who were often far detached from the things experienced by the authors of the books. It is true that they used the materials and the stories told by the memoir writers, but in the final count *they* and not the "authors" of the memoirs wrote them. Because of its secondary nature, an author's own perception is often lost or blunted. I once overheard I.Kh. Bagramyan saying, speaking about the memoirs: "They greatly depend on who gets which colonel." Writing through "an intermediary" - not rare and inevitable - always means a loss of something inimitable, unique and specific to the author only.

Thus, when I wrote "Thinking Of A Strategist?," I just wanted to cast an unbiased glance at the peculiar features of strategic thinking done by the man who was at the head of our people and army during the Great Patriotic war. I must say outright that Stalin's thinking (some parts of it) had some advantages over many Soviet military leaders; but there were areas where he could not get rid of dilettantism, one-sidedness, incompetence and stereotypes till the end of the war. But let us take one thing at a time.

Stalin was not a military leader in the full sense of the word. Military leader is a military personality. It is not just the position that qualifies the person as such, but rather his talents, creative thinking, profound strategic insight, military experience and competence and rich intuition and will. Stalin possessed far from all these qualities. He was a *political leader*, the one who was harsh, of strong-willed, purposeful, and power-hungry.

Stalin's absolute power predetermined his forte as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. But this was not the only factor that elevated him above other military leaders. His edge over them lay in the fact that in his capacity of the country's leader he had a more profound understanding of the armed struggle depending on a host of other, "nonmilitary" factors, such as economic, social, technical, political, diplomatic, ideological, and national. He was aware of the country's real potential and that of its its industry and agriculture much better than people from the Stavka, General Staff, or the front commanders, since he led the Party and the state for many years. Stalin possessed what can be described as a more *universal* thinking, associated organically with a broad spectrum of nonmilitary knowledge. I shall repeat that this advantage was predetermined by his position of a statesman, a politician, and a Party figure. The facet of a military leader, the military one, is just one of the many that a statesman of such caliber should possess. He played a more prominent role as Chairman of the State Defense Committee than as a military strategist, the fact predetermined by his prewar position.

One can say that Stalin's most strong faculty as a military leader was determined not so much by his personal virtues but rather by the possibilities open to him as a result of his political status. We have to take this particular feature into consideration by all means when we attempt to look at Stalin's thinking of a military leader and a strategist. He was a military leader, the

Supreme Commander-in-Chief, according to his status. But what kind? Let us look at the past once again.

Military historians often refer to Napoleon. The biography of the Emperor, and the military leader, made his pronouncements classical. Analyzing a balance between intellect and character in a military leader, Bonaparte wrote: "People possessing much intellect and little character are the most ill-fit for this profession. It is better to have more character and less intellect. People entitled with mediocre intellect but with enough character, can often be successful in this art." Naturally, by intellect one should mean not just the process of reflecting objective reality, which provides knowledge about significant links, properties and relations in the real world, but also competence in the specific area of military science.

In his excellent work, "The Mind of a Military Leader," Soviet scholar B.M. Teplov wrote that such intellectual work is "marked by the exceptionally complex prime material and a great simplicity and clarity of the end result. The *complex material is first analyzed* and finally it is *synthesized to provide simple* and *definite postulates.* The transformation of complex into simple is a crisp formula that can define one of the most important aspects of a military leader's work of mind." In other words, a military leader's thinking enables him to see simultaneously the whole, the details, the movement and the static condition. A military leader's genuine thinking encompasses the mind's synthetic (summarizing) power, expressed in concrete thinking. The truth is "uncovered" with the help of thinking, the truth whose sense lies in illuminating "darkness."

Ignorance about the enemy, its misinformation, a superficial knowledge of "self" and the twilight of tomorrow can be illuminated only by the truth, a product of a military leader's thinking. But a military leader should possess the mind and the will, the intellect and the character of equal power. We know that one or the other come to the foreground from time to time. But the mind and the will should always act together. Only then a military leader can display flexibility with respect to the decision already made or the plan adopted, showing a simultaneous perseverance and determination in achieving the objective.

The Supreme Commander thought "in stereotypes," if one can put it this way. The prevalance of general considerations over the specific ones was the weakest side of his strategic thinking. It is true that this trait can come as a strong point in case of generalization. In Stalin, the politician always had the upper hand over the military leader. To be more precise, an astute and tough politician prevailed over a military dilettante.

Naturally, generalities are always important for a strategist, but they often overshadowed specific problems in Stalin's case, and the other way round. When he tried to focus on one specific issue, his mind lost control over more general issues. For example, when the Kharkov debacle was in the making at the end of May 1942, the analysis of Stalin's work shows that he was actively involved at that time in ensuring the passage of ship convoys in the Barents Sea, the affairs of the Volkhov front, organizing the "sabotage of enemy airfields" on the Western front, allocation of motor launches for the Ladoga military flotilla, and the further movement of troops to destroy the Demyan group. He did not have sufficient strategic "brain power" to focus his own efforts and those of General Staff and the Stavka representatives on what was the "linchpin" of the Soviet-German front at that period. Like Timoshenko and Khrushchev, Stalin did not feel the degree of graveness from the outset. Ignoring the decisions and actions undertaken by the commanders-in-chief, as he always did, Stalin carelessly approached the conclusions and assurances provided by the front commander and the staff of the Southeastern direction, nor did Stalin's "intuition" tell him about the grave danger in good time.

Stalin's dissociation from the realities of time, the fact mentioned by both Zhukov and Vasilevskiy, was a weak point of his thinking as a military commander. Fired by a particular idea, the Supreme Commander often demanded that it was implemented immediately. Signing a directive to the front, he often allowed only a couple of hours to pass from the moment it was issued to the time to start putting it into effect, the fact that usually compelled the HQs and formations to take ill-prepared and hasty measures which resulted in setbacks. In 1942, for example, the Western front received several of Stalin's orders and instructions of moving units from one part of the front to another by 50-70 kilometers, while just five or six hours were given to perform these maneuvers. But it was barely enough time for the order to reach those who were supposed to implement it. Stalin could not grasp the truth till the end of the war that a wave of hand by the Supreme Commander did not mean that his will would be immediately carried out in regiments and divisions. This drawback in Stalin's thinking was associated with his very poor knowledge of the troops' life, everyday activities, the work of commanders, the procedure and routine of fulfilling orders and instructions.

As a nonmilitary person, Stalin relied on the supremacy of "pressure" to be put on military commanders and HQs, rather that on the specific knowledge of the situation, as he decided particular operational matters. Very often his instructions and conclusions were nothing but common sense, rather than dictated by strategic or operational evaluation. Stalin sent the following message over the phone to Yeremenko and Rokossovskiy on October 5, 1942:

"Having occupied the center of the city and moved up to the Volga to the north of Stalingrad, the enemy intends to capture fordings from you, to surrender and take prisoner the 62nd army, and then to surround the southern group of your troops, the 64th and other armies and take them prisoner as well... That speaks of your bad work. You have more forces in the Stalingrad area than

the enemy does, and regardless of this, the enemy continues to push you back. I am not pleased by your work at the Stalingrad front and I demand that you took every measure to defend Stalingrad...that part of Stalingrad which is occupied by the enemy must be liberated."

No specific operational instructions, but the general idea was expressed very clearly - not to surrender Stalingrad; I'm not pleased with you. This meant a lot at that period.

Discussing things on the hot line, Stalin very often dismissed out of hand the counter arguments of those who failed with sarcasm. On July 4, 1942, Stalin talked with Timoshenko on the "hot line":

Stalin: "This means that the 301st and 227th infantry divisions have been surrounded and you surrender them to the enemy. Is that right?"

Timoshenko: "The 227th is retreating in the wake of the 8th motorized infantry division... As to the 301st rifle division, we have not been able to locate it until today. We have no grounds to believe that it has been surrounded. We admit that it has suffered a defeat, and that its individual groups are infiltrating, possibly in the wake of the 227th one. That's it.

Stalin: Your guesses about the 301st and 227th divisions sound very much like a fairy-tale. If you continue to lose divisions the same way, soon you'll have none under your command. Divisions are not needles, and it is hard to lose them."

Castigating Golikov for having lost communications with his units on June 30, 1942, Stalin said to the commander of the Bryansk front in frustration: "As long as you neglect radio communications, you'll have no communications, and you entire front will look like a disorganized rabble. You do not move fast, and you are late in general. One does not fight like this." In that case, Stalin interfered in the situation not as an operator but more like a political leader and a statesman, using thinly veiled threats to demand better troop control.

The willfulness usually took the upper hand in Stalin's intellect. Sometimes his cables just stated the murderous situation, containing no conclusions or instructions. But that kind of "statement" very often had sinister connotations for military commanders.

"Commander of the North Caucasian front.

The State Defense Committee is very much displeased at not receiving regular information from you on the front situation. We have learned about the territory lost by the North Caucasian front not from you, but from the Germans. We have the impression that, panic-stricken, your are retreating haphazardly and it is not clear when you are going to stop retreating.

August 10, 1942 8:45 p.m.

I. Stalin"

Given Stalin's great prestige, such reminders by the Supreme Commander had a "mobilizing" effect. The well-tested stimuli included fear, apprehensions about making fast decisions which could result in the military leaders being demoted a couple of levels at best or having Beriya people take care of such leaders at worst.

Between 1943 and 1945, Stalin learned a few important truths about the art of operations in his capacity of a strategist and a military leader, the truths about which his military aides reminded him of discreetly. The Supreme Commander realized, for example, that one should and could switch over to defense not only when the enemy forced one to, but well in advance and deliberately later on in order to get ready for offensive operations, as a number of 1942 operations proved. Stalin detested defense, and had the worst recollections and feelings about it.

He remembered how Poskryobyshev - it was likely in the evening of September 16, 1943 - entered his office and put on his desk a report by the chief intelligence directorate of General Staff singed by General Panfilov, giving an interception of a Berlin radio broadcast. "Stalingrad has been taken over by the glorious German troops," the broadcast said. "Russia has been bisected into the southern and northern parts, which are going to fall into a state of agony soon."

The Supreme Commader read the terse message several times, looked blankly through the window of his office, beyond which, far away in the south, a likely disaster had struck, the place where he was fighting in a similar critical situation a quarter of a century ago. But they did hold out at that time... Why can't they do it now? What kind of commanders are they? It was only the other day that he dismissed commander of the 62rd army General Lopatin, and corps commanders Pavelkin and Mishulin... It did not dawn upon him that a whole slew of young commander, who made it from company to corps commanders in three or four years, simply did not possess enough knowledge, experience, and skills. It was not only the matter of commanders. Stalin never told his associates and aides that the country had paid a high price for underestimating the threat of a new German offensive in the southern direction. Gazing through the opening in the window curtain, afraid to hear the confirmation of the German report, Stalin was already thinking how to continue fighting. He had no doubts on that score. He softly said to Poskryobyshev:

"Put me through to General Staff. Fast..."

A minute later, the Supreme Commander was dictating to General Bokov a cable addressed to Yeremenko and Khrushchev:

"Give me a clear idea what is going on at your end in Stalingrad. Is true that Stalingrad has been taken by the Germans? Give me a straight and honest answer. Expect your immediate reply."

We shall repeat that Stalin did not like defensive operations. Very often the defense was inept and strained, with the leaders' mistakes resulting in big losses, the vacation of ever new territories, but is was also accompanied by the men's unparalleled tenacity. He recalled the first eighteen months of war as a long nightmare by the end of the war. He experiences many disappointments. Stalin found it hard to admit to himself that the enemy was eventually halted only at the cost of huge territorial, material and human losses. It was done not due to strategy, but thanks to the selflessness shown by the entire people. This was the measure of pay for the prewar mistakes, miscalculations, terror and conceit. But there was no one who dared to say this to Stalin.

The end alone has always been the main goal for Stalin. He has never suffered from the pangs of consciousness, the feelings of bitterness and pain caused by huge losses. He was just frightened by the loss of so many divisions, corps or armies, but never of people. Not a single document by the Stavka reflects Stalin's concern over excessive losses. Stalin had little interest in that facet of genuine military art, which reflects its heart, that calls for achieving objectives with the least losses. The Supreme Commander believed that both war victories and defeats inevitably resulted in a harvest of sorrow. According to Stalin, losses, even mass losses were inevitable part and parcel of modern warfare!

Is it possible that this is what Stalin believed as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of a huge army? By the end of the war, the armed forces had around 500 rifle divisions, not counting the artillery, tank and air force ones! This was twice the prewar size. It is true that in strength Soviet divisions were significantly smaller than the German ones, but Stalin had never agreed, despite the proposals made by military leaders, to build up the strength of formations. Possessing such tremendous military might and a well-organized system of troop replenishment, Stalin did not think it was absolutely necessary to make the achievement of strategic objectives dependent on the level of losses. The following essentially horrible additions to the directives were taken for granted by him:

"The Supreme Command makes it incumbent both on Colonel General Yeremenko and Lieutenant General Gordov *to spare no effort* and *stop at no losses*." As a sort of "a prize" to the front or the army for successfully accomplishing a mission, Stalin sometimes added in the cable: to allocate one, two or even three divisions.

The Supreme Commander "counted" divisions by the dozen. He always liked a large scale, and, therefore, his urge "to stop at no losses" not only characterized his intellect from the moral point of view, but was a strategic and utterly negative characteristic. We shall repeat that according to Stalin, the achieving of an objective should not be dependent on the number of losses, which were often not counted at all. It is not accidental that half a century after the end of the war, we do not know the exact official toll - no one really took it at that time.

It should be said that Stalin was involved, to a certain degree, in elaborating such new forms of strategic action as operations undertaken by groups of fronts. These were the most involved and large-scale series of fightings and battles, subordinated to one concept, and harmonized as to their purpose, time and place. Some of them "encompassed" from 100 to 150 divisions and more, tens of thousands of guns, up to 3,000-5,000 tanks, and 5,000-7,000 aircraft. This tremendous might was brought into play, based on the strategic imagination and plans of General Staff, front directorates, and with account for numerous factors and possibilities (both of friendly and enemy units). Stalin felt himself a true "military commander" in this type of operations which included several fronts.

Action on a large scale did not mean for him the use of might in quantitative terms only. He saw in them the great possibilities for realizing his own strategic potential and for "self-assertion." After the battles of Moscow and Stalingrad, Stalin constantly sought to "pull together" the efforts of different fronts together in ever new strategic combinations. The operations of Kursk, Belorussia, East Prussia, Vistula and Order, Berlin and Manchuria corresponded not only to the natural course of events, but to Stalin's infatuation with everything undertaken on a major, large and overwhelmingly grandiose scale. And those were precisely such operations. The line of offense often stretched for 500-700 km in length and 300-500 km in depth, and the offense lasted up to a month. As was his habit, the Supreme Commander hurried their start, was displeased with their pace and was peeved over the delays. Stalin promptly grasped the general concept of offensive operations formulated by General Staff; occasionally he offered some details to increase the power of strikes.

But he did not suggest any ideas of principle as alternative to those proposed by General Staff, as the concept was born in the "army's brain." We have already said that as a rule, Stalin sought to assign a greater role to aviation in the operations; when tank armies began to be established in the summer of 1942, he did not fail to specify their missions and kept a close watch on the use of such powerful large striking units.

An analysis of many operations, based on the archive documents, shows that their planning, progress, development and conclusion did not have a clear "imprint" of the Supreme Commander's influence. For example, on listening to Zhukov's report on the progress of fighting in the Ponyrey area on July 9-10, 1943, Stalin reacted as if to leave the final decision to the discretion of his deputy:

"Isn't it time to engage the Bryansk front and the left wing of the Western front?"

Stalin had quite a good grasp on the operational strategic matters in the last eighteen months of the war. He often suggested surrounding an enemy grouping in a particular

offensive operation, giving priority to this type of action after Stalingrad. Having listened to Antonov, he often said, as if a propos:

"Can we make another Stalingrad for the Germans here?"

He accumulated but a meager "array" of different types of military action. But he understood and gave his due to the proposals made by front commanders and Stavka's military members. As we mentioned already, the Supreme Commander has a weakness for such type of offensive action as encirclement and the annihilation of the enemy by delivering strikes with several fronts in a row (the Belorussian and the Yassi-Kishinev operation). He particularly liked the idea of organizing and conducting a number of successive operations at staggered intervals and at varying depth. The time would come when everybody said that this concept was the brainchild of "Stalin's genius of a strategist." The proposal made by General Staff and the front to deliver a few "scatter" strikes during the Orlov operation, expanding them in depth and in flanks, came as an eye-opener for him; or the splitting of a large enemy group (the Vistula-Order operation), and its elimination piecemeal.

Having made major miscalculations regarding the main thrust of fascist troops at the initial phase of the war, Stalin was more circumvent in determining where the Soviet troops should apply their main effort when they launched a counter-offensive and an offensive. Stalin endorsed the decision by top military commanders in the winter of 1942-1943 and in the summer of 1943 to achieve strategic success in the southwestern direction; however, it became evident in the summer of 1944 that the proposal by General Staff to shift the center of offensive operations back in the western direction could expedite the defeat of the fascist army.

We shall stress once again that Stalin himself did not father the strategic ideas of operations, but he was able to appreciate their value in 1943-1945. During the second and third stages of the war, his "genius" was likely manifest most often in understanding and approving rational proposals made by Zhukov, Vasilevskiy, Antonov, and front commanders.

Resting on a multifactor foundation of understanding war, Stalin's thought probed the ways of raising the efficiency of combat action and expediting the routing of Hitler's troops. This was manifested in several respects. In 1943-1945, for example, the attention of commanders, HQs, and reserve armies was drawn, on Stalin's initiative, to increasing operational camouflage, improving controls by army HQs, corps and division HQs, expediting the passage of orders, commands, and directives to their executioners, establishment of special counter-battery units, the use of aircraft and tank formations. The very gamut of these strategic, operational and even tactical issues, approved by the Supreme Commander, proved that he had learned quite a lot during the war and from his professional military aides in the Stavka and that he began to feel intuitively the strong and weak sides of some of his decisions.

At the same time, Stalin continued to pay special attention to exploring the avenues of making executioners step up their combat activity, especially at the operational level of command. Adopted single-handedly, his decisions were radical, as a rule, in this area.

Sometimes Stalin stumbled across what looked like illogical ideas, but the ones that played a significant role nevertheless. One of them was to hold the Red Square military parade on November 7, 1941, which we mentioned already; likewise, his decision to have a large group of German POWs march down Moscow in the summer of 1944 came as a surprise to his entourage.

"This will boost the morale of the people and army even higher and make for a fast routing of the fascists. What do you think?" he asked his comrades-in-arms.

After a brief and perplexed silence, Molotov, Beriya, Voroshilov, and Kalin expressed their approval, vying with one another:

"A smart move, Iosif Vissarionovich!"

"Only you could have suggested this!"

"Decision by a genius!"

A week later, on July 13, Beriya reported the plan of the unusual "moral" operation to the Supreme Commander.

"According to your instructions, Iosif Vissarionovich, fifty-five thousand POWs will be marched across Moscow on July 17 of this year, including 18 generals and 1,200 officers. We shall bring 26 trainloads of them to Moscow from the First, Second and Third Belorussian fronts. Generals Dmitriyev, Milovskiy, Gornostayev, and commissar of state security Arkadieyv are taking immediate care of it. NKVD officers Vasilieyv and Romanenko are in charge of security and convoys in Moscow. We shall assemble everybody on the hippodrome and on the parade grounds of the NKVD motorized infantry division by the evening of July 16. We have estimated that 26 trainloads will be equivalent to 26 columns. The itinerary will include Moscow hippodrome, Leningrad highway, Gorky street, Mayakovskiy square and then along the Ochard Ring of Sadovo-Triumphalnaya, Sadovo-Karetnaya, Sadovo-Samotyochnaya, Sadovo-Sukharevskaya, Sadovo-Spasskaya, Sadovo-Chernogryazskaya, Chkalovskaya, the Crimean rampart, Smolensk boulevard; and they will return to the Moscow hippodrome down Barrikadnaya and Krasnopresnenskaya streets... The procession will start at 9 a.m. and end at 4 p.m.(incidentally, the time and the itinerary would be changed later - D.V.)."

"Will the columns be able to last during your march?" Stalin interrupted.

"They will, Comrade Stalin."

"And what next?"

"They will be sent off to the eastern camps early next morning from eleven points of departure (railway terminals)."

Beriya intended to continue his report, but Stalin did not want to hear more. "Sure they'll carry it out when you give them an idea," Stalin thought looking at his comrades-in-arms with resentment. "Couldn't they have come up with it on their own?"

Stalin attached paramount importance to providing moral incentives to the men and commanding officers in the acting army. For example, certain criteria were formulated at his initiative in early September 1943 to decorate commanders for successful river fordings. Following Stalin's revision, the following directive was sent by the Stavka to the front and army councils:

"Nominate for decorations for crossing such rivers as the Desna in the Bogdanovo area (Smolensk Oblast) and downstream, as well as the rivers as difficult to ford as the Desna:

1. Army commanders - the Order of Suvorov 1st Class

2. Corps, division and brigade commanders - the Order of Suvorov 2nd Class

3. Regiment commanders and the commanders of engineering, sapper and pontoon bridge battalions - the Order of Suvorov 3rd Class.

For fording such rivers as the Dnieper in the Smolensk area and downstream, and the rivers as difficult to ford as the Dnieper, the unit and formation commanders mentioned above should be nominated for the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union

September 9, 1943 2 a.m.

I. Stalin

Antonov."

Such directives were not an exception. Faced with tough barriers to overcome, Stalin regularly resorted to the use of moral stimuli in the well-justified belief that a generous reward for those who have distinguished themselves would play an important role in creating and sustaining combat elan of the attacking troops.

However, Stalin was rather scrupulous in bestowing awards, as he realized that it can backfire if he "overdid it." When his 70th birthday was marked in 1949, he did not agree with G.M. Malenkov's idea of awarding to him the second Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union (the Leader has had already two "Stars": that of the Hero of socialist labor in 1939 and the Hero of the Soviet Union in 1945). Stalin figured out that he should "stop" after he had been given the second Victory Order. They say that he stopped the zealous people who wanted to give the highest award to President de Gaulle, asking: "Can France decorate France?" Stalin cut short a slew of decorations not out of sagacity, but out of simple realization that "an excess" could boomerang.

But Brezhnev and Chernenko were not able to do this, because they wanted the stream to continue... A person occupying the top position in the Soviet Union could decorate himself on any occasion until recently (and without an occasion); but this lowered his prestige rather than add to it. As a result, Stalin had as many orders as Mekhlis, for example, and four to five times fewer than Brezhnev. But it was not in this matter that Stalin's "scrupulousness" with regard to decorations became apparent: he was not too generous with political workers, HQs officers of rear units. The Supreme Commander could award a Marhall's title to a tank army commander, while he did not "allow" to give the title of Lieutenant General to K.F. Telegin, who consequently held high positions, as member of the military council of the Moscow military district, of the Moscow defense zone, of the Don, Central, Belorussian, First Belorussian fronts, and the group of Soviet occupation troops in Germany.

One day the Supreme Commander learned that Army General Yeremenko, commander of the first Baltic front, without taking into account the opinion of a military council member, awarded orders and medals to a group of staff workers of the newspaper, VPERED NA VRAGA. People from the special department reported the "divergence of views" between the commander and a member of the military council. Stalin immediately dictated Order No. 00142 of the People's Commissar of Defense of November 16, 1943 which said:

"1. *Cancel* the order by the commander of the 1st Baltic front of October 29, 1943...on awarding government decorations to the staff workers of the front newspaper. *Takeaway* the orders and medals which have been given.

2. The item of the order issued by the military council of the 1st Baltic front of September 24 on bestowing an award to Colonel Kassin, editor of the VPERED NA VRAGA newspaper is to be *abrogated* as being illegal. *Takeaway* Kassin's order of the Patriotic War.

3. Explain to Army General Com. Yeremenko that the orders and medals have been instituted by the government as awards for the Red Army men and officers who distinguished themselves in the fight against German invaders, and not as giveaways to all and sundry...

4. Demote the paper editor, Colonel Kassin's, military rank to that of Lieutenant Colonel and appoint him to a lower-level job. I. Stalin."

This is what Stalin was like when he sharply reacted to what he considered to be the mistakes in the "policy of giving awards." Orders and medals were for him nothing but a means to stimulate success, and not *an award* for what has been accomplished.

Having signed the directive on crossing the Vistula river, Stalin dictated another directive to Antonov, the one that was sent to the commanders of the 1st Belorussian and the 1st Ukrainian fronts as a separate instruction:

"Attaching much importance to the crossing of the Vistula river, the Stavka obliges you to announce to all the army commanders at your front that the men and commanders who would have distinguished themselves in the crossing of the Vitula are to be decorated with special orders, up to awarding the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

July 29, 1944 12:00 a.m.

I. Stalin

Antonov"

As a rule, the military leaders did not take an issue with Stalin as long as the war lasted. Following the leader's death and especially after the 20th congress, it became known that some of them had partially or generally "revised" their views on the Supreme Commander's "gift" of a military leader. I would like to cite one fact to illustrate the strategic "dissidence," the fact, I'm sure, known to a very few.

Marshall of the Soviet Union V.I. Chuykov expressed the view in his memoirs, "End of the Third Reich" and in number of other publications and speeches that Berlin could have been captured in February 1945, rather than in May. G.K. Zhukov, A.Kh. Babadzanyan and other military commanders disputed this conclusion, including making objections in the press. Chuykov tried to counter criticism in the VOENNO INSTORICHESKIY journal, but it turned down his article. Then he wrote a letter to the Party Central Committee which advised that one should do "appropriate" work with the "recalcitrant" Marshall. Soviet Marshalls, generals and experts got together in the office of Army General Yepishev on January 17, 1966, on instructions from the Old Square [headquarters of the CPSU Central Committee - Tr.], to "straighten out" Chuykov. Following the report delivered by Colonel General K.F. Skorobogatkin, Chuykov took the floor. He said again that "having covered 500 kilometers, the Soviet troops halted 60 kilometers off Berlin... So, who stopped us? The enemy or the commanders? We had enough troops to launch offensive on Berlin. Two and a half months of respite that we gave to the enemy in the western direction enabled it to get prepared for the defense of Berlin."

Chuykov's opponents, including Army General A.A. Yepishev, Marshalls I.S. Konev, M.V. Zakharov, K.K. Rokossovskiy, V.D. Sokolovskiy, K.S. Moskalenko and other participants in the meeting tried to convince their colleague that the troops had lost their offensive charge by that time, the rear units had fallen behind, the men were tired and ammunition and replenishments were required...

It is likely that the majority was right, but I see something else in that meeting: the period of "moratorium" of Stalin's criticism had begun. Debating the issue of whether the Berlin operation could have been executed earlier or not, all the meeting participants, who gathered in the office of the head of the Army and Navy Chief Political Directorate, did not link the issue, as if in collusion, with the decisions of the Stavka and those of Stalin. They resolutely condemned even the theoretical discussion of the possibility to start an earlier operation. Summing up the debate, A.A. Yepishev said that Chuykov's views on the issue were "unscientific" and that "our history should not be maligned, otherwise there would be nothing left to use for the education of the youth."

The old chains of dogmatic thinking, to the making of which Stalin had contributed so much, strongly bound these venerable people at that time, and they bind us to a loose degree even today. It was not just the issue of whether the beginning of the war's last operation could have been expedited, but the fact that the raising of the issue itself was treated as heresy. Stalin had been long gone, but the style of his thinking persisted. Even the strategically-minded people of such a high rank were not prepared to discuss his actions as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The Marshall knew quite a lot about him, but few people have it in them to break the bounds of their time...

When Stalin finally realized that time was working for the Allies' victory (after Stalingrad), he started to make 30-40 minutes a day, mostly at night, to watch front newsreels. Occasionally, these reels prompted him to make large-scale decisions. The thought of an armchair military leader, fed additional information, was to be transformed through the stereotypes of totalitarianism, Caesarism, suspicion, mistrust and caution, the traits which were typical of him.

One of the reels, for example, had the footage featuring two police collaborators who, failing to flee or to surrender, were captured in a half-burned collective farm shed in the front zone. Stalin immediately ordered to send a memo to the front commanders (a copy to Beriya) demanding an unfailing compliance with the Stavka's directive of October 14, 1942. Under the document, a front line zone was established whose population was to be resettled without exception "to prevent the penetration of units by enemy agents and spies." Stalin wrote in his own hand: "Especially important. The zone adjacent to the front should be made inaccessible to enemy spies and agents. It is high time one understood that the populated localities situated in our immediate rear provide a convenient shelter for spies and for spy work." No, the directive does not say a word about the resettlement of civilians for the sake of their security (and these were Soviet citizens!) or about showing concern for them... Stalin's thinking about "spying" saw the threat coming primarily from the citizens who had been liberated. Stalin never changed his ways in this respect...

We have mentioned earlier that the Supreme Commander did not possess good forecasting abilities. This can be easily understood, since a dogmatic mind finds it harder to grasp the trends which seem to be "hidden" behind the horizon of tomorrow. For example, he set the goal of making 1942 the year of defeating Hitlerite invaders, but he miscalculated. Then he designated 1943 and finally 1944. It did not work either. He did not just set the objective, but expressed "confidence" in the feasibility of the program; these were nothing but far-fetched forecasts.

Stalin's practical and tenacious mind was not good at probing the darkness of the unknown. This was explained by the fact that he never had a good grasp of dialectics and its laws. Often he did not have reliable information either about his own troops or about the enemy. It has been established that he was often reported inflated figures of enemy losses, while the German strength was grossly exaggerated in the hope of receiving additional reinforcements.

These garbled front figures made it much more difficult to size up the real situation soberly, gauge the balance of forces, seriously undermining the forecasts made by the Stavka and by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief himself. But this was his own fault, since lies had ruled his life of a Caesar for a long time. Stalin severely punished and even dismissed the military leaders for padding or underreporting figures, but he had never managed to eradicate the cases of truth twisting in their reports. Stalin caught even Zhukov doing this, who relied on unverified information from lower-level commanders:

"Com. Yuriyev (G.K. Zhukov - D.V.)

I have received your cable requesting a fresh corps of low flying attack aircraft, since you claim that the 1st Ukrainian front has only 98 attack planes... You must have been misled.

In fact, you have 98 attack planes and also 95 attack planes of the 224th attack air force division, located in Priluki. All in all, you have 193 operable attack planes. You should add 143 attack planes being sent to you one by one to replenish attack divisions. Thus, you should have 336 attack planes in good condition.

March 16, 1944 1:45 a.m.

Ivanov (I.V. Stalin - D.V.)."

The figures of 98 and 336 planes, available to the Supreme Commander and his deputy, make for too significant a divergence. Both figures were probably inaccurate, but they showed that some commanders and HQs had a stake in distorting the figures.

While Stalin believed any reports in the beginning of the war, he reacted calmer to the most dramatic reports later on. Hitler was unable to make any cardinal changes, with the time working for the Allies only. When unverified data were received, Stalin tongue-lashed the commanders and the Stavka representatives into the bargain, who were at a particular front. Here is another directive of his:

"Commander of the 1st Baltic front

Army General Yeremenko. Copy to Com. Voronov

The hubbub that you made regarding the offensive by a large enemy force, allegedly up to two tank divisions from Yezerishche to Studenets, has proved to be a groundless panic report... You must avoid henceforth the sending to the Stavka and General Staff the reports that contain unverified and ill-conceived panic conclusions about the enemy.

November 12, 1943 12:00 a.m.

I. Stalin."

Stalin probably felt his inferiority as a military commander who did not have a clear-cut idea about front life. He experienced this complex of vulnerability even stronger because part of his comrades-in-arms, thanks to his own decision, did go to the front. Zhdanov was closely associated with Leningrad, saw the blockade with his own eyes and was in the thick of military affairs as a member of the front's military council. Khrushchev "hanged around" at the front as well. Malenkov spent quite a lot of time in the dugout that housed the HQs of the Stalingrad front. Completely inept in military matters, he did nothing but occasionally sign cables to Stalin together with the commander. Malenkov did not visit a single front line unit. It is true that Stalin sent Malenkov to the front once again in April 1944.

Member of the Western front's military council L.Z. Mekhlis, who gradually recovered from the devastating fiasco in the Crimea, send a personal letter to Stalin one day. Its contents remained unknown. However, Stalin issued an order on April 3 which said: "Assign the duty of checking up the work done by the HQs of the Western front within 4-5 days to the extraordinary commission including member of the State Defense Committee, Com. Malenkov (Chairman), Colonel General Shcherbakov, Lieutenant General Kuznetsov, Colonel General Shtemenko, and Lieutenant General Shimonayev." It is hard to say now what Mekhlis wrote about, what was checked and what conclusions were made. But after the commission had left, front commander Army General V.D. Sokolovskiy was demoted to become chief of staff of the 1st Ukrainian front.

Stalin kept Malenkov close to himself to do errands in the apparatus and to monitor the aviation industry throughout the war. When aircraft production went onstream, the Supreme Commander sanctioned the awarding to Malenkov the title of Hero of Socialist Labor in September 1943. He appointed him chairman of the committee to oversee the restoration of economy

in the areas liberated from German occupation, under the Council of People's Commissars, almost at the same time.

Stalin decided to try Koganovich for military work as well. In July 1942, he dispatched him to the Caucasus as member of the military council of the North-Caucasian front. Incidentally, A.I. Antonov, a would-be chief of General Staff, was appointed chief of staff of the front in the same order. Kaganovich did not distinguish himself at the front in any positive way; like Malenkov, he was a figurehead in a war game and Stalin's ordinary "spy" in the headquarters and the front's political directorate. But he also received Stalin's dire warnings.

When the North-Caucasian front left its positions without the Stavka's sanction in mid-August 1942, Stalin sent a cable to the military council (Budyonniy, Kaganovich, Korniets and others) which said:

"It should be borne in mind that the lines of departure present no obstacle and give nothing unless defended... There are all indications that so far you have failed to ensure an adequate turnaround in troop action and that the troops are putting up a good fight in the panic-free areas... Suvorov said: 'I have won half victory if I put fear in the enemy, although I have not seen the sight of it yet; I bring troops to the front to finish off the frightened enemy."

It looks like Stalin made up Suvorov's words, but the Supreme Commander was very eager to inspire the front's military council in which Kaganovich, one of his former favorites, looked like a scared little man. Kaganovich did cope successfully with one "front" assignment. During the hard days and weeks of German breakthrough in the south, Stalin authorized him and Beriya to organize the work of the tribunals, the procurator's office and other elements of the punitive system which the Supreme Commander deemed capable of making people fight to death.

Stalin frequently used Beriya's services in taking care of the rear behind the lines, "sorting out" in camps those who broke through the encirclement, and "mobilizing" hundreds of thousands of prisoners to work on construction and other sites related to the front needs. Beriya participating in organizing some units and formations. The Stavka authorized Beriya to form 15 divisions based on the NKVD units on June 29, 1941. Beriya was at the Caucasus in August 1942 and March 1943 where Stalin sent him to assist the defense of the area. The Commissar of Internal Affairs was sending cable after cable to Stalin about removing the Chechens and the Ingush from military units as the people not deserving to be trusted; he commented on the actions taken by Budyonniy, Tuylenev and Sergatskiy; reported his decisions regarding military appointments (for example, Lieutenant Colonel Rudovskiy of the NKVD, ill-versed in operational matters, was nominated the 47th army deputy commander). Stalin issued appropriate orders in line with Beriy's reports on ethnic issues.

For example, let us quote the directive of August 20, 1942:

"Commander of the Transcaucasian front

People's Commissar of Defense Deputy Com. Shchadenko

1. Remove 3,767 Armenians, 2,721 Azerbaijanis and 740 people of the Daghenstan origin from the 61st division...

2. Send the Armenians, Azerbaijanis and people of the Daghestan nationality, removed from the 61st rifle division, to the Transcaucasian front reserve units; make up for the personnel shortage created as a result of removals out of the front resources by taking in Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians...

Report execution."

Beriya was a real agent provocateur. During the war he and Stalin took quite a few anti-Leninist steps, whose echo we can hear today. On returning to Moscow, Beriya told Stalin about his trip, not failing to describe "his own impressions," to speak about "the front line," "bombings," the "bungling" by some "suspicious" leaders.

Listening to the waxing Beriya, whose shiny well-fed face did not look the least tired following such "hard" work, Stalin felt piqued deep in his heart. Stalin did not make any new plans to visit the front following his abortive trip to the front in October 1941, when he reached only the Volokolamsk highway and saw the flashes of the approaching front, 10-15 kilometers from the place where his motorcade was. He made a firm decision to go to the front, at least for the sake of "numbers" or as a symbol, after he had heard Beriya's and then Malenkov's stories about their "baptism by fire." He did go on such a trip, which was prepared exceptionally thoroughly and in great secrecy. Stalin visited the Western and Kalinin fronts in early August 1943. In his opinion, his biography of a military leader contained no "blank spot" afterwards.

Stalin left by a special train from Kuntsevo on August 1. An old locomotive and battered cars were chosen. A timber flatbed was hitched to the small train for disguise. Stalin was accompanied by Beriya, the Leader's aide Rumyantsev and reinforced security guards in changed clothes. On arriving in Gzhatsk, Stalin met the Western front commander V.D. Sokolovskiy and member of the military council N.A. Bulganin. Having heard the leaders' reports and expressed his general ideas, Stalin spent a night there and then left for Rzhev to see A.I. Yeremenko at the Kalinin front.

He made a stopover in the village of Khoroshovo in a faraway house of a simple peasant woman, who had been moved from the place with all her things. This house with a wood-carved ledge and a memorial plaque has been preserved to remind of the Supreme Commander's front "forays." This small house is said to have been the place, from where Stalin issued an order to fire the first

gun salvo to commemorate the capture of Orel and Belgorod. Stalin, who met the front commander there, did not want to visit the front units to meet their commanders and men. The Supreme Commander came back to Moscow, he and Beriya riding in cars under especially strong security, without any dramatic occurrences (it will be recalled that Stalin's car got stuck in the mud on a village road during his first trip) after having spent the night at Khoroshevo. He could feel satisfaction now, since no one dared to think (*nobody,* of course, dared to say it!) that the military commander knew about the front only from newsreels and the reports made by generals from the General Staff and by Stavka representatives, who stayed at the fronts virtually all their time.

Maybe Stalin did not need to go to the front at all? Stalin did not visit industrial plants either, but he took charge of such a boost in the country's industrialization! He visited a couple of villages once, but what a "revolution from above" he accomplished there! Can a battlefield be an exception? Stalin could fathom everything from his Kremlin office. He did not even need a specially protected Stavka control outpost to steer the country during the war (when the fascists were near Moscow, he visited the Kirovskaya metro station just a few times, the place of Moscow's air defense command). The Supreme Commander was an unsurpassed expert in armchair leadership; therefore, he did not need to visit the front on the tangent (actually, he was very far away from it) to become familiar with the situation on the two fronts, or to enrich himself with impressions by meeting the men of the units which were getting ready for the offensive. Not at all. This was needed for history. I am sure that Stalin was thinking about his historical prestige. Would-be chronicle writers were supposed to adequately describe this performance of his as a military leader. His biography was to include a page portraying his inspiring visit to the fighting army.

But Stalin thought it was necessary for the Allies to find out about his visit to the front from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief himself. Here are a few excerpts from his letters to Roosevelt and Churchill:

Stalin to Roosevelt. August 8, 1943:

"Now that I came back from the front I can answer to your latest message of July 16. I have no doubt that you consider our military situation and understand my delay in sending a reply... I have to *personally visit* (the spacing is mine - D.V.) different sections of the front more *frequently* and subordinate everything to the interests of the front."

Stalin to Churchill. August 9, 1943:

"I have just come back from the front and have already read the message by the British Government of August 7... Although we have scored some successes at the front lately, the Soviet troops and the Soviet command have to exert tremendous effort and display special vigilance with regard to the potential new action by the enemy. Because of this, I have to visit the troops and particular sections of our front *more frequently than usually* (the spacing is mine - D.V.)."

No, Stalin did not write this in order to turn down the trip to Scopa-Floe to meet the leaders of the two countries. To do this, he had only to refer to the involved front situation. The Supreme Commander did not want to be known as an armchair military commander.

To Stalin's pleasure, both Roosvelt and Churchill gave their due to Stalin's "direct" stewardship of the fronts in their joint message of August 19, 1943: "We fully appreciate the important reasons which make you stay close to combat fronts, the fronts at which your personal presence contributed to victories so much." [Retranslated from Russian - Tr.].

Stalin stood at the head of the people and the army during the war. His will and sense of purpose as a politician and statesman played a role in defeating fascism which he wanted to portray as "friend" at some point in time. If one assumes that as the leader of such a vast and powerful country he had many facets, that of a military leader was not his strongest one (can we really regard at least one facet of his character and nature as positive?!). His predominantly dilettante and inept leadership, especially in the first 18 months, resulted primarily in catastrophic material and human losses. It was only the Soviet people which could sustain them and which held out not d u e, but contrary to Stalin's "genius." The references to a surprise attack, lack of preparation, Hitler's perfidy and the mistakes made by military leaders, and so on do not justify Stalin, but just emphasize his strategic myopia and inferiority. Being at the head of the armed forces, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief led them to victory at the cost of immeasurable losses. Drawing on his religious and philosophical world outlook, N. Berdyev wrote that "war is a guilt, but it is also an atonement for the guilt." He could have added that it was the atonement by the guiltless for the others' guilt. The war took to the netherworld thousands, millions of human lives, the people who had not been destined to traverse the entire length of the path of their lives.

We know that a genuine talent and a military leader's strategic thinking are appreciated for an ability to reach the loftiest of goals with the least sacrifice. Stalin did not possess that talent. The Soviet people had to sacrifice 20 million human lives (and we shall speak about our estimates later on) on the altar of victory. The direct losses suffered by our people during the war amounted to about 26-27 million, according to the calculations performed by Professor A. Kvasha, which were based on mathematical estimates and an analysis of numerous accurate figures and relevant trends. Not a single nation in history has ever paid such a horrific price for freedom and independence, according to my own estimates, which are close to the earlier ones. In addition to direct losses, indirect losses were tremendous too (from decline in the birth rate and so on). We shall repeat that history

knows of no losses of such huge proportions. Measured against Stalin's "genius of a military leader," they make holes in any attempts at least to give the Supreme Commander special credit for achieving victory. The full measure of this credit goes to ordinary Soviet people and the nation which had overcome the unforgivable mistakes made by Stalin and his entourage before and during the war.

Stalin's words, "at any cost" which we quoted in this chapter, were not accidental. They by and large characterize the Supreme Commander who gave preference, to quote well-known Russian theoretician M. Dragomilov, to "the willful" and not "intelligent" style of leadership. Stalin did not achieve a harmony of these components. One cannot overestimate the contribution, which the military organs and the people who seemed to have been overshadowed by Stalin, made to the overall final success.

Voltaire's words quoted in the epigraph to this chapter come as a reminder that a military leader who has won a victory does not seem to have made any mistakes in people's eyes. These words apply to Stalin the best, since no one had ever told him about his "mistakes." However many people, millions of them, spoke about the grandeur of the military leader of "all epochs and all peoples." The Generalissimo of the Soviet Union did not doubt being "a genius" either, hardly suspecting that the verdict of history will be different.

Dealing with military matters, Stalin paid ever more attention to a host of other concerns at the end of the war. The autocrat and dictator, who concentrated all power in his hands, Stalin doomed himself to take care of an endless stream of business. But he was flattered by the fact that everything was under his control and everything was at his will. The military leader who was portrayed as "great" in a unison of long standing, gradually switched his attention over to other areas. However, many of them were still directly related to the war, major and minor, important and less significant.

For example, Beriya reported today, on March 16, 1945, that Tsanava has discovered Rokossovskiy's in-laws in the area occupied by the 2nd Belorussian front. Let it be... Another report said that the Armenians' deputy Catholicos Georg Cheorekchyan has been waiting in Moscow for a long time to be received by Stalin. Well, what does he want? What has he written? "During the days of the Great Patriotic war, the Armenian church, with its clergy and believers in the USSR and overseas, did not fall behind other churches in the Soviet Union. It has proved in deed its historic loyalty to the great Russian people and the Soviet state." This is obvious. What is he asking? Well, now it is clear: the permission to restore the sacred Yachmiadzin, the opening of a parochial school, a printing press and the YACHMIADZIN magazine, permission to rebuild the Zvartnots church, which was destroyed, an opportunity for overseas religious leaders to visit Armenia, an opening of a hard currency account in the Yerevan bank, and many other things... Well, some things will have to be granted. The Orthodox church, and not it alone, has done a great deal to support him, the Leader, during the most tragic months of the war.

What else has Poscryobyshev put in his folder today? "The camps belonging to the NKVD-run timber industry have fulfilled the state quotas for timber procurement during the years of the Great Patriotic war and met the quotas set for the defense industry... in providing aircraft plywood, pit-props, and special crating materials," Stalin read. They are asking for "giving orders and medals" to the camp officials of the timber industry."O.K., let them give awards... What else? Serov's report on meetings in Warsaw with the representative of the Polish government in exile Yankowski and the leader of the Polish underground parties, Stronnitstwo ludowe, Stronitstwo praci, Stronitstwo democraticne, Stronitstwo of Popular Democrats, PPC..." I should ask the advice of Berut and Osubko-Morawski before deciding how to deal with these parties. Here is a draft resolution prepared by the State Defense Committee: assign a battalion of NKVD troops and one antiaircraft regiment to provide security for President of Czechoslovakia Benes and his government. I should agree, for Benes rendered important services to him in the past and is very loyal right now...

Stalin thumbed dozens of papers one after another, including those dealing with the number of POW camps in the USSR, the operation of filtration points to process the Soviet citizens returning to their homeland (he marked somewhere that tens of thousands should be sent directly to the NKVD camps), the growing activity of the Baltic gang movements, the Cheka army operation in western Belorussia, supervised by Kobulov, Tsanava and Belchenko, aimed at "removing anti-Soviet elements and eliminating armed bandit groups," setting up new camps to screen Soviet military personnel liberated from captivity... Beriya reported that many eastern parts of the country, especially Kazakhstan and trans-Baikal, were hunger-stricken. There is no end in sight to reports, memos and briefings. And the military are coming soon, too, to deliver their regular report.

By the end of the war the Supreme Commander-in-Chief often felt the burden of tiredness, heavy as a soldier's issue, pressing down on his shoulders. He stayed at his dacha longer than usual and stretched out his numb legs on the couch in the resting room more than once during daytime. As he fame was growing, so was his old age... Molotov will come soon after the military: not the guns but the diplomats will have to speak soon, and to speak outloud.

Stalin and the Allies

The torch of war lit by Hitler in Berlin several years ago was on the brink of petering out, also in Berlin. Antonov reported to Stalin daily about meetings with the Allies in the last days of April and in early May.

The Allied forces...For the Supreme Commander-in-Chief (and not for him alone) this was the side, the facet of war which was associated with long waiting, hopes, disillusions, bargaining, suspicious mistrust, new hopes and eventually a well-oiled military cooperation. In addition to a general summary of contacts with the Allies prepared by General Staff, Antonov put a folder full of reports on his table: from the staff of the 58th Guards rifle division, the staff of the 1st Belorussian front, the 61st army commander, the 2nd Belorussian front commander, the political department of the 5th Guards army, the political department of the 13th army, the staff of the 3rd Ukrainian front, the political department of the 2nd Belorussian front, and from other staffs and political organs. Stalin deliberately requested unit reports, since he wanted to know what were the feelings of generals, officers, sergeants, and privates, to find out about the behavior of the Allies, and to determine his future relations with them. The war was coming to an end in the west only.

Having shaken each others' hands in Teheran, Yalta (and soon in Potsdam) the Allied leaders thus made a number of major steps to enable the people of the planet - who lived in the same space house which was hurtling forth in the boundless Universe - to understand the truth which they would have to face life-size in less than half a century after the joint victory. Probably neither Stalin, nor Churchill, nor the prematurely demised Roosevelt thought at that time that our civilization was unique and probably the only one in the boundless universe. No one has proved it otherwise so far. There are no inhabited islands and the ships similar to Earth around it. That is why any attempt by one group of earthlings to annihilate another, which lives and thinks differently, can destroy the priceless hearth. Coming close to the end of one act of its drama, the humankind did not know yet that it was entering a nuclear-space era. The union of the former enemies looked solid and lasting at that time, in the spring of 1945. Despite being an inveterate orthodox, Stalin sacrificed Comintern for the sake of antifascist coalition, pushed ideological postulates far aside, close his eyes to the deep-seated and long-lasting anti-Soviet feelings espoused by Churchill and Western democracies. Pragmatic considerations always prevailed in him during the most critical and crucial moments.

The Supreme Commander-in-Chief normally read nothing but reports from General Staff, fronts, and the Stavka representatives. And now, during the days of the approaching triumph, he leafed through quite a few reports that contained a different type of information. Here is one of them: "A meeting took place between the officers of the 173rd Guards rifle regiment and the Allied patrols of the 1st U.S. army, 5th army corps, 69th infantry division, in the bridge area east of Torgau, on April 25, 1945 at 3:30 p.m. Five men under the command of U.S. army officer Robertson crossed onto the east bank of the Elbe river for negotiations... Rudnik."

Who was this Rudnik? (S.R. Rudnik was chief of staff of the 58th Guards rifle division). How are these "Rudniks" going to behave when they get in touch with the Allied armies, but from the other, capitalist world? Will they fraternize or have frictions?

Stalin recalled receiving an "especially important" cable from Abakumov three weeks earlier. It was based on the report filed by the "Smersh" department in the 68th air force base area in Poltava, whose airfield was used for shuttle operations by US Air Force in the summer of 1944. It reported Major General Kovalyov as saying: "It does not work between us and the Americans here. We cannot rule out a military clash with the Americans here in Poltava." Kovalyov asked for some measures to be taken in this connection, "just in case."

On reading the coded cable, Stalin cursed softly:

"Where are these idiots coming from? He has even drawn a plan of combat action, this Kovalyov..."

He wrote a resolution across the document in his bold hand:

"Comrade Falalev (Air Force)

I ask you to restrain Com. Kovolyov and prohibit him taking any arbitrary action.

I. Stalin."

And now they report that "the meetings with American and British troops are taking place in an exalting mood. This is the kind of fun they had during the meeting of two generals: commander of the 58th rifle division Rusakov and commander of the 69th US infantry division Reinhart... Toasts, speeches, gifts, the shouts of hurrah. Head of the political department, 5th Guards army, Katkov reports that at the meetings the Americans sought stars, shoulder straps and buttons as curios... The general wrote that the Soviet soldiers were surprised at the difficulty of telling the difference between an American general and a GI. Every one had the same uniform. Take us, for instance, one can spot a general at a distance."

In his heart, Stalin agreed with Soviet soldiers, since he liked a Marshall's uniform and did not take it off now, often lingering before a mirror for a minute or two. With their rotten democracy, the Americans did not understand that society should rest on hierarchy. The uniform makes it clear to every one in no time... Incidentally, writer Konstantin Simonov attended the meeting too, says Katkov. His writings about the war are not bad at all, the Supreme Commander thought in passing. They are fraternizing now, but how much effort it took to arrange allied cooperation!

One had to step over the long period of mistrust and suspicion between the USSR and Western democracies. What could not be done before the war, was achieved with Hitler's "help." Waging the war on two fronts, the Furhrer could not but turn the USSR and Western

countries into the Allies. Stalin remembers British Ambassador Cripps arriving in the Kremlin with his aides and the British mission personnel on July 12, 1941 (Stalin became the Stavka Chairman two days earlier). Stalin and Molotov, accompanied by B.M. Shaposhnikov, N.G. Kuznetsov, and A.Ya. Vyshinskiy, met the British in the hall. The leader was still smarting under the devastating shock caused by the outbreak of war. He went to great pains to assume his usual pose of grandeur. Shaposhnikov reported to Stalin just half an hour before the official meeting that two days ago the 2nd and 3rd tank groups of the Germans and part of the 9th Center army group units had reached the bridgeheads on the Western Dvina and the Dnieper rivers across a wide front...

The Germans on the Dniepr, just to think about it! After the raging battle of Smolensk, about 70 German army formations were getting ready to strike a mortal blow further on, against Moscow... Purturbed, Stalin shook hands with the British absent-mindedly and stared blankly at the backs of V. Molotov and S. Cripps who had signed an Agreement on joint action by the two sides.

He remembers how USSR Ambassador in London, I. Maiskiy, and Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Y. Masarik signed a similar agreement a week later, and how a Soviet-Polish agreement on mutual aid in the war against Germany was signed later on in the same month of July and also in London. The first article of the Agreement read, at the insistence of the Polish sides, as follows: "The USSR government recognizes the 1939 Soviet-German treaties regarding territorial changes in Poland as no longer valid."

On July 30, 1941, Stalin met President Roosevelt's personal representative Harry Hopkins in Moscow. On instructions from the President, the American said that those who were fighting against Hitler were on the right side in the conflict and that they intended to provide aid to that side. Stalin briefly outlined his request for technical aid, expressing the hope that the President could appreciate the Soviet Union's position. The aid agreement was to be signed later on, but Hopkin's fact-finding trip set the stage for arranging cooperation.

USSR Ambassador to the United States M. Litvinov and Secretary of State Cordell Hall would sign an agreement on the principles of "conducting war against the aggressor" a year later. Speaking with Hopkins, Stalin told him about the critical situation at the fronts and asked the United States (he was not good at asking for things since he never did) to send medium-caliber antiaircraft guns, large caliber AA machine guns, rifles, aircraft alluminium and high-octane gasoline as soon as possible. "Please tell the President that we shall need planes, a lot of planes in the future," Stalin said softly but persistently.

Back in July, Stalin dispatched a special mission to Britain, headed by General F.I. Golikov. He gave the general his personal instructions, and asked Shaposhnikov, Timoshenko, and Mikoyan to do same on specific issues. The two major tasks entrusted to Golikov were to stimulate Britain's strategic interest in landing its British troops in Europe or the Arctic and to expedite putting military and technical aid on a practical footing. Upon his return to Moscow and his half an hour report to Stalin, Golikov was immediately instructed to leave for the United States the same month. The main question that Stalin focussed attention on there was to organize large-scale military supplies as early as possible. Faced with the threat of defeat, Stalin went into a high gear in the military and political area. The ideological rivalry was put on the backburner, proving to be only secondary and surmountable.

As a typically pragmatical person, Stalin soon overcame ideological bias and moved headlong towards Western democracies. Incidentally, he did not have much choice. It should be mentioned that Stalin contributed appreciably to establishing an anti-Hitler coalition (we wish it had been forged before the war!). As the Soviet leader calmed down more and more, he sought to win support of as many countries as possible and did his best to prevent Japan and Turkey from backsliding from their neutralist attitude toward the USSR. Naturally, he pinned the greatest of hopes on Great Britain and the United States.

A man thinking in practical terms, Stalin sought to put the nascent cooperation on the practical plane from the very beginning. In one of his first messages to Churchill, dated July 18, 1941, he writes point blank: "I think...that the military position of the Soviet Union and that of Great Britain could be improved greatly if an anti-Hitler front was established in the west (northern France) and in the north (the Arctic)." Stalin did not fail to mention the idea of the second front in all his subsequent negotiations, correspondence and exchange of cables. As if divorcing his prewar maneuvers and actions and justifying the territorial changes, which were rejected in the West, from the present realities, Stalin writes: "One can imagine that the German troops would have been in a much better position had the Soviet troops to withstand their onslaught not in the area of Kishinev, Lvov, Brest, Belostok, Kaunas and Vyborg, but in the area of Odessa, Kamenets-Podolsk, Minsk and the environs of Leningrad."

We know that on July 26 Churchill virtually rejected the possibility of opening a second front in France. Put by the German troops in a critical situation in August, the Supreme Commander sent another personal message to Churchill, couched in outright candid and even scathing terms with regard to oneself and the Allies. Having described fresh major strategic setbacks on the Soviet-German front, Stalin raises the question: "How can one get out of this by far uncomfortable situation?" And he responds: "I think that the only way out of this situation is to open a second front already this year either somewhere in the Balkans or in France, the front that can deflect 30-40 German divisions from the Eastern front

and at the same time provide 30 thousand tons of alluminium to the Soviet Union by early October of this year, i.e., the minimum *monthly* aid of 400 planes and 500 tanks (small or medium).

Without these two types of aid, the Soviet Union will either suffer a defeat or will be weakened to such an extent that it would lose any capability of helping the Allies for a long time...

I realize that the present message will cause chagrin in Your Excellency. But what shall we do? Experience taught me to look reality in the face, no matter how unpleasant it could be, and not to be afraid to tell the truth no matter how undesirable it could be."

Did it occur to him, as he dictated these lines, that he hurried things in the August of 1939? It might as well be that if he had displayed patience and London and Paris displayed foresight, the antifascist coalition could have been established two years ago. But Stalin never expressed his doubts. He concluded long ago that people should believe in his prophecy.

In his letters, Stalin gave the reasons for rendering the USSR effective aid in connection with the threat of its defeat. While he did succeed in receiving substantial military and technical aid because of the Allies' goodwill - unfortunately our works on military history have underestimated or played it down for a long time - his efforts to have a second front opened bore little fruit. It will be recalled that Stalin addressed this proposal to Churchill back in July 1941. But the difficult year of 1941 elapsed, followed by the hard year of 1942 and not a very easy year of 1943, but the Overload operation was not begun until June 1944. Incidentally, when the Supreme Commander asked Molotov about the translation of the English word, he was shocked to find out that it meant "a lord" and "a ruler." He thought that the real ruler of the world destinies was approaching Berlin from the east. This was the brainchild of the incorrigible Churchill...

The Soviet troops were poised by that time (as seen from Stalin's directives Nos. 220112-220115 of May 31, 1944) to deliver a series of strikes to liberate Belorussia, Western Ukraine, the eastern parts of Poland and Czechoslovakia and reach the German border. The second front was opened at a time when nobody had questioned the USSR's capability to complete the routing of Hitler's Germany on its own, single-handedly.

As the Chairman of the State Defense Committee and the Stavka, Stalin had to devote more and more time to diplomatic matters. The more clearly the shape of the long-awaited victory stood out, the longer nights Molotov spent in his office and the more often he had to meet Allies' representatives. The Supreme Commander realized that in the antifascist alliance, Britain and the United States acted in most of the cases in unison, as if representing a single Western power. But Stalin perceived different shades in the partners' positions even early in the war. A very cunning person himself, Stalin tried to find the hidden meaning behind the particular diplomatic steps made by Churchill and Roosevelt, the advantage they sought to get from the emerging situation. The Chairman of the State Defense Committee was mostly concerned and even rankled by the Allies' desire to repeatedly delay and put off the opening of a second front in Europe. Through the diplomatic and intelligence channels Stalin received information about the first (December 1941-January 1942), the second (June 1942) and the third (May 1943) conferences in Washington, Anglo-American meetings in Casablanca and in Quebec and other contacts. In discussing these reports with Molotov, Stalin perceived the Allies' intention to launch actions in Europe only for sure, when Germany and its armed forces found themselves in a critical situation.

Molotov went on a trip to London and Washington in May-June 1942 at Stalin's request. The chairman of the Council of People's Commissars set before the People's Commissar of External Affairs the task of holding negotiations to make the Allies assume specific commitments to open a second front in 1942. But Roosevelt and Churchill made numerous reservations. However, the joint Soviet-British communique signed in London said that "complete understanding was reached regarding the immediate tasks of creating a second front in Europe in 1942." It became clear soon that the Allies did not intend to live up to their commitments.

Stalin did not conceal his disappointment, irritation and displeasure. This can be felt in his message to Churchill sent on July 23, 1942, which said in part:

"As regards... the issue... of opening a second front in Europe, I am afraid that this matter is beginning to look not very serious. Based on the situation obtaining on the Soviet-German front, I must state most categorically that the Soviet government cannot reconcile itself to the postponement in the organization of a second front in Europe till 1943."

Churchill recalled that after such a message he could not limit himself to just sending a reply. He expressed readiness to meet Stalin personally on Soviet territory. Stalin agreed, and on August 12 Churchill arrived in Moscow, accompanied by his Chief of General Staff Brook, Assistant Foreign Secretary Kadogan, and other officials.

This is how Churchill described his mood during the flight from Cairo to Moscow in his memoirs: "I was thinking about my mission to this grim Bolshevik state which I attempted hard to strangle in its cradle and which I regarded a mortal enemy of civilized freedom until Hitler emerged. What was I supposed to tell them now? General Waywell, known for his literary gift, summed it all up in a poem which he showed to me the night before. It had several four liners, with the last line of each of them saying: 'There will be no second front in 1942.' It was the same as bringing a large chunk of ice to the North Pole." [retranslated from Russian. - Tr.]

Despite the exceptionally difficult and critical situation at the Stalingrad and the Southeastern fronts, Stalin spent hours talking to Churchill. Present at the talks from the Soviet side were Molotov and Voroshilov, and from the British side, Ambassador Kerr and personal envoy of U.S. President, A. Harriman. Churchill had to say it bluntly that there would be no second front in 1942. If the Allies had tried to open it, said the Prime Minister, they would mostly likely be defeated as a result of the action. Stalin objected at length and in many words, citing primarily moral reasons, though.

"The one who does not want to take chances will never win the war. You should not be afraid of the Germans," Stalin said to Churchill, using his reasons of "gallantry."

"But a second front in Europe is not the only second front," persisted the British Premier. He tried to catch Stalin's fancy with the Allied plans of launching operations in northern Africa.

No matter what Stalin-Churchill talks touched upon on August 12, they were persistently steered by the Soviet leader to the subject of a second front. We shall repeat that he was compelled to do this due to the gloomy front situation. With the aid of Harriman, Churchill looked for ever new reasons why it was not possible to open a second front in the West in 1942. Upon consulting Molotov, Stalin made an unusual move the next day. During another meeting, he handed over to his interlocutor "a memorandum" on the issue of a second front. Churchill recalled later on that on August 12 Stalin allegedly "gave up, admitting that the decision was beyond his control." In his memorandum, the Soviet leader put on record for history the Allies' official refusal to abide by the agreement reached in the Anglo-Soviet communique on June 12, 1942.

Churchill was flabbergasted. Being in a critical situation, when the fate of Stalingrad and possibly that of the country's south (and maybe more!) was hanging by a thread, Stalin decided, for the sake of history, to shift a large part of responsibility onto his Allies. The text of the memorandum contained the same words which Stalin addressed to Churchill and Harriman the day before. The British Premier and his party immediately familiarized themselves with its contents:

"The refusal by the British government to open a second front in Europe in 1942 represents a moral blow at the Soviet public, counting on the creation of a second front, complicates the position of the Red Army at the front and does damage to the plans of Soviet command... We believe, therefore, that a second front can and should be created in Europe in 1942. Unfortunately, I have not succeeded in convincing the Mr. Prime Minister of this, and Mr. Harriman, the U.S. President's special envoy at the Moscow talks, supported Mr. Prime Minister one hundred percent.

August 13, 1942

I. Stalin"

Naturally, Churchill sent a "memo" the very next day in response, which said that "the talks with Mr. Molotov regarding a second front could not serve as a basis for changing the strategic plans of the Russian High Command, since they were qualified both orally and in writing."

Naturally, the second front was the centerpiece of Stalin's diplomacy up to mid-1944. When the wind of victory began to fill his sails more and more, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief did bring the issue to a boil, the way he did early in the war. For example, when Associated Press correspondent Cassidy approached Stalin through the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in October 1942, the Chairman of the State Defense Committee did not receive him. However, the correspondent received the most terse answers to his questions in writing. Let us quote some of them:

"1. What is the role of a second front in the Soviet evaluation of the current situation?

Answer: It plays a very important, one can say, a paramount role.

2. How efficient is Allied aid to the Soviet Union?

Answer: Compared to the aid that the Soviet Union has so far provided to the Allies, taking on the bulk of the German fascist forces, the Allied aid to the Soviet Union is of low effectiveness yet."

Thinking about the pattern of his behavior with the Allies, Stalin realized only too well that he and his partners were motivated by nothing but dire necessity. They found themselves in the same military camp with them through the turn of historical circumstances (in which both he, Stalin, and the present Allies became involved). But Stalin never forgot things. He remembered the statements made by Wilson, Churchill, Chamberlain, Daladier, and other bourgeois leaders about the Soviet Union, and about "new orders" in his country. However, the Allies were pushed towards each other when faced with a common grave threat. This has happened more than once in history.

Being a pragmatic man (like probably all politicians are), Stalin defined his attitude of principle toward the Allies back in 1942. He believed that the status of his country, which bore the brunt of the fight against fascism, fully justified his efforts to win special position for it in the alliance. This was the special position, from the point of view of his right to make proposals (which sounded rather like demands) regarding aid. In upholding his country's interests, Stalin proved to be a tough and uncompromising politician, which, incidentally won him his partners' respect. In the eyes of Roosevelt, Churchill and de Gaulle, Stalin was a ruthless but smart dictator. The chairman of the State Defense Committee was aware of this and did not try to make them change their impressions of him.

Trying to receive as much Allied aid as he could, especially military and technical aid (we shall repeat that it was substantial), the Supreme Commander, on the other hand, explored avenues of playing down the role of ideological obstacles. As Stalin and Churchill had their night Kremlin talk in August 1942, both were aware that the Comintern executive committee was located just a few blocks always from them, the organization which epitomized deep-rooted class antagonism towards the forces which were represented not only by Hitler, but by the British Prime Minister as well. Therefore, astute politicians were not surprised by Stalin's decision on the self-dissolution of the Communist International, recorded as the decision made by the Comintern itself. Like in September 1943, Stalin did not stop short of making major ideological "concessions" in order to achieve a particular objective.

He was not very much perturbed by how thoroughly the real reason was camouflaged. Speaking at a function in connection with the 25th October anniversary on November 6, 1942, making, according to Stalin, "a progress report" for the past year, he emphasized that ideological differences among the Allies were not obstacles to military and political cooperation. "The present danger makes it imperative for the members of the coalition to take joint action in order to save mankind from returning to savagery and medieval atrocities," Stalin stressed. These words were addressed to fascism, of course, since Stalin never considered his bloody terror "medieval atrocities." The idea running through his report is that the class logic plays no decisive role during the fight for survival. Mankind is arriving at the same conclusion today and we hope for ever. In Stalin's words, it sounded like an aphorism: "It turns out that the logic of things is stronger than any other logic."

The fate of the Comintern was sealed. World capitals learned in the spring of 1943 that the international organization of the working people, which seemed ready to cover the entire world with red banners after the revolution, dissolved itself. In his answer to a Reuter correspondent, King, on May 28, 1943, Stalin pointed out: "The dissolution of the Communist International is correct and timely, since this facilitates the organization of a joint onslaught by all peace-loving nations against the common enemy - Hitlerism..., espouses Hitlerite lies to the effect that Moscow allegedly intends to interfere in the life of other countries and to 'Bolshevize' them." [sentence as published]

Stalin's pragmatism did not stop him short of abolishing the Commintern, the same political pragmatism prompted him to improve and even to arrange relations with the Orthodox church. The former seminary student, did not lavish too much attention on the church. Moreover, at Stalin's initiative, the party leadership did not allow to elect the head of the Russian Orthodox Church to fill the vacancy that existed since 1925. This religious position was replaced with a temporary one of Patriarch locum tenens Metropolitan Serghiy. Stalin did not permit the convocation of the local council which in turn made it impossible to replenish the composition of the Śacred Synod which did not function for a long time. All of a sudden, Stalin invited G.G. Karpov, chairman of the committee for religion of the Russian Orthodox Church, to come to his dacha on September 4, 1943.

During the conversation, in which Malenkov and Beriya took part as well, the role of the church in conditions of war was discussed. It should be said that the Russian Orthodox church repeatedly made large financial contributions for the country's war needs and domated major values to the state's fund. The clergy used their influence to bolster people's faith in the final victory over the aggressor.

Upon listening to Karpov, Stalin suggested receiving high-level priests the same day. Metropolitans Serghiy, Aleksiy, and Nikolay arrived at his place within a few hours, a great deal surprised by such high-level attention. Following a lengthy conversation held at Stalin's place, an approval was granted to hold the council, elect the Patriarch, and to open educational religious institutions. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief, giving Beriya a significant look, reveled in his "magnanimity" as he promised financial aid and all kind of concessions. I think that as a former seminary student, Stalin enjoyed an opportunity not just to influence the fate of high-level church clergy, but of religion in general. To be level, one should point out that a number of the pledges made at the time were honored.

PRAVDA reported the next day, on September 5, 1943, a significant meeting (the only one of this kind until 1988): "Metropolitan Serghiy brought to the attention of the Chairman of the Council of People's Deputies that the leading circles of the Orthodox church (a Stalinist stereotype that became entrenched in bureaucratic writings - D.V.) intend to convene a council of bishops in the near future in order to elect the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia and to found a sacred synod under the Patriarch.

The head of the government, Com. I.V. Stalin, responded to these proposals sympathetically and stated that the government would not create any obstacles."

Why did Stalin remember about church all of a sudden? I think he did it because of two reasons. First, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief saw the patriotic value of the church in the war and wanted to encourage that type of activity in the future as well. Another reason was related to the international affairs - Stalin was getting ready for the first summit meeting that was to take place in Teheran at the end of the year. He set the goal of not only having a second front open as soon as possible, but of receiving more military aid. Britain's Soviet Aid Committee, headed by one of the leaders of the Anglican church, H. Johnson, could play a significant role. Stalin, who received several messages from the superior of the Canterberry church, decided to make a public gesture testifying to his more than loyal attitude to the church. Stalin understood that the West could not but notice the

gesture, which was to produce a positive response. It was not the vanity of the half-baked seminary graduate that motivated Stalin, but exclusively pragmatic calculations in his contacts with the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition.

The "Big Three" meetings provided the best framework for Stalin's relations with the Allies. The Teheran (November 28-December 1, 1943), Crimean (4-14 February 1945) and Berlin (July 17-August 2, 1945) were known to be the heydays of military-political cooperation of states so different in every respect. It is possible that those conferences and cooperation demonstrated even at that time the supremacy of general human values and priorities over the class and ideological ones. The contents of the conferences and their role are well known, and we shall touch upon Stalin's attitude to some of the issues raised there.

Stalin was a stay-at-home person. He was prepared to meet the Allied leaders, but he did not like to travel far and for long. Churchill and Roosevelt suggested Cairo, Asmara, Baghdad, Basra and other venues to the south of the USSR. Churchill even hoped that Stalin would agree to meet in the desert, where three tent camps could be set up to ensure secure and seclused discussion environment, according to the British Premier. But the Supreme Commander insisted on Teheran, because he could exercise, according to him, "everyday supervision of the Stavka." After a lengthy correspondence, Churchill and Roosevelt had to agree.

Stalin did not mention, of course, that he was afraid of flying. This was the first flight in his life. He did not like to take personal risks and did not want any chance to be part of his life. The leader was approaching the pinnacle of his glory, and he was worried and scared even by a probability, no matter how remote, of some undesirable event.

He sent similar cables to Churchill and Roosevelt two days before the departure: "I have received your message from Cairo. I shall be ready at your service in Teheran in the evening of November 28th." The phrase "ready at your service" sounds most peculiar coming from Stalin. But the Soviet leader wanted to look like a gentleman.

Stalin did everything to bring the issue of a second front to the center of discussions at the Teheran conference. However, in the evening of November 28, Roosevelt and he talked about the weather in the Soviet Union, the events in Lebanon, Chiang-Kai-Shek, de Gaulle, India, but not about a second front. They event dwelt on a future political system in India, and Roosevelt said all of a sudden that "it would be better to establish in India something close to the Soviet system, starting from bottom, not from top. It could be a system of Soviets." Stalin understood it his own way, saying that "beginning from bottom would mean taking the road of revolution."

Attending an international conference outside his country for the first time, Stalin was closely watching his partners. Everything was an eye-opener for him. He did not take as much interest in Churchill, since he had already met him and had become aware of that politician's great mind and cunning. He took an immediate liking of Roosevelt, who had piercing eyes, and whose face showed the signs of tiredness and illness. Maybe he liked his good-nature and candidness. For example, during his concluding talks with Stalin on December 1, he stated in what looked like a simple-minded manner, that he did not want to discuss the Polish problem and its borders in public at this point, since he would likely run for re-election next year, and "as a practical man, he would not like to lose the votes of 6 to 7 million Polish Americans." Stalin liked his straightforward manner, although the Marshall did not always follow the rule of speaking his mind.

The youngest among the "Big Three" participants, Roosevelt called its participants "members of a new family" as he opened the conference. Churchill added that the leaders present there demonstrated "the greatest concentration of world power that ever took place in the history of mankind." Roosevelt and Churchill looked at Stalin, waiting to see what he had to say during those first minutes of the conference.

"I think that history is spoiling us," Stalin said all of a sudden. "It gave us very much power and very great opportunities. I hope we shall take all measures to adequately use the might and power that our peoples have vested in us within the framework of cooperation. And now let us get down to work..."

The main issue whose solution Stalin had sought for a long time was eventually agreed upon. During the luncheon in honor of the heads of delegations which took place on November 30, Roosevelt - who remembered Stalin's insistent demands during the talks in the days before - turned to the Soviet leader with a smile, as he was unfolding his napkin:

"Mr. Churchill and I have made a decision, based on the recommendations made by the joint chiefs of staff, to start the operation Overload in May by simultaneously landing troops in southern France."

"I'm satisfied with this decision," Stalin replied as calmly as he could, as if they discussed a breakfast menu. He came up with a surprise for Churchill and Roosevelt, in his turn, saying that the Russians will deliver a powerful blow at the Germans at the time of the Allied landing. His "homework" made a very positive impression on the interlocutors. The members of the "new family" were mutually pleased. They did look like "the favorites of fortune," since they held the fortunes of the war in their hands.

The tripartite declaration signed by Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill on December 1, 1943 said in conclusion: "We have came here with hope and determination. We leave here friends in fact, in spirit and in purpose." Stalin had his own opinion and struck his own stand when the parties discussed the issues of Yugoslavia, Turkey, Finland, the fight against the Japanese in the

Pacific, the post-war Germany and post-war cooperation to promote lasting peace. The "Polish problem" featured prominently during the negotiations held be the "Big Three" in Teheran, the same way it did later in the Crimea and on Berlin. Before a recession during the last plenary session, Churchill announced a proposal which obviously had been discussed with Roosevelt:

"The hearth of the Polish state and people should lie between the so-called Curzon line and the Oder river, with the Eastern Prussia and the Oppeln province becoming part of Poland."

"If the British agree to transfer the mentioned territory to us (the ice-free ports of Koenningsberg and Maamel - D.V.), we shall accept the formula proposed by Churchill," said Stalin.

Many of the things discussed during the "Big Three" summit conference today sound, of course, quite cynical from the political point. We shall remember, however, that international relations have never known a harmony between power and reason. In order to approach the line beyond which the new thinking emerged, mankind first had to face the threat of self-destruction at the least. Life itself, or the long-term interests of the Great Powers, to be more precise, made their leaders bend over the world's political map. Their thinking at that time was very different from our thinking today. We know today that national and territorial revisions always carry a threat. A greater threat today than before.

Sharing his ideas on Poland during the Crimean conference, three months before Hitler's fascism was routed, Stalin outlined his long-standing position in the following way: the Polish issue "is not just a matter of honor, but also the matter of security. It is a matter of honor because the Russians have committee many sins against Poland in the past. The Soviet government seeks to make good for those sins. It is the matter of security, because the Soviet state's most crucial strategic problems are connected with Poland... Throughout history, Poland has always been a corridor down which enemy passed to attack Russia... Why did enemies find it so easy to pass across Poland so far? Primarily because Poland was weak. The Polish corridor cannot be plugged mechanically from the outside by the Russian forces only. It can be reliably plugged only from the inside by Poland's own forces. To do this, Poland has to be strong. This is the reason why the Soviet Union has a stake in creating a powerful, free and independent Poland. The Polish issue is the matter of life and death for the Soviet state."

Discussing the "Polish problem", Stalin made it clear that for him the issue of government was more important that the issue of borders. He said outright that he accepted the Curzon line, with deviations from it in a few areas to Poland's advantage. As to the government... No...He will not make any concessions on this issue, although it was he who showed the will for cooperation at the beginning of the war. He remembered how Major General A.M. Vasilevskiy signed a military agreement at his order between the USSR High Command and the Polish High Command. Major General S. Bogush-Shishko signed for Poland. The Soviet side not only agreed to incur the expenses involved in maintaining the army to be formed on Soviet territory, but also agreed to open a Soviet military mission at the Polish High Command in London. But now Churchill and Roosevelt call the legitimate Polish government "the Lublin one," although it already has the situation in the country under control exercised from Warsaw! Having taken a stand on the "Polish issue" once, Stalin showed that he could "bend" but not budge. It was at his insistence that Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to add [to the Soviet Union - Tr.] part of Polish territory in the north and in the west.

At the end of the war and immediately after it, Stalin did not really expect to have been "burdened" with so many of what can be described as "military and diplomatic" problems. True, Molotov did give him a hand quite a lot. The latter's deputies, A.Ya. Vyshinskiy, S.I. Kavtaradze, I.M. Maiskiy, and other people also took part. Aware of the arrangements made with the Allies and of his own interests, the Supreme Commander made immediate decisions himself. He was peeved at Churchill meddling too often in the affairs of Eastern Europe. Stalin believed that since the Soviet troops came there, Moscow enjoyed the priority in dealing with the current issues. Naturally, it was done in agreement with friends, those antifascist and democratic forces which have helped and continued to help eliminate Hitlerism.

Stalin saw another evidence of how Molotov could execute his will inveterately. The Leader's directive or instruction was more important for him that the Party rules. One day in December 1945, already after the war, Molotov related to Stalin how Harriman almost "raped" him but how he carried out Stalin's instruction - both of them sat at the table at the "nearby" dacha during the wee hours.

Stalin was getting ready to leave to take his first postwar vacation when the U.S. Ambassador insisted on being received by him. The Leader told Molotov:

"See him yourself. I won't. Tell me later what they want."

"So, Harriman and First Secretary of the U.S. Embassy Page came to see me. We had a conversation which I wrote down in my diary (I'm quoting it almost in full from Molotov's diplomatic diary -D.V.)"

"Harriman: I have received a Presidential cable for the Generalissimo. I have been requested to hand in the message personally and discuss certain questions with Stalin *personally*.

Molotov: Stalin is gone on vacation, for about a month and a half. He, Molotov, will tell Stalin about the President's request.

Harriman: President knows that Stalin vacationing but hopes that Stalin will receive his Ambassador anyway. The issue concerns the London conference. He, Harriman, is ready to go anywhere.

Molotov: Generalissimo Stalin is not taking care of business now, since he is vacationing far away from Moscow.

Harriman: President hopes that Stalin will be able to receive him.

Molotov: He will tell Stalin.

Harriman: President believes that Generalissimo has deserved rest.

Molotov: All of us believe that Stalin should take a good rest.

Harriman: He noticed how strong Stalin looked during the physical culture parade.

Molotov: Indeed, Stalin is a strong man.

Harriman: The movie featuring the physical culture parade showed Generalissimo Stalin very cheerful and vivacious.

Molotov: All Soviet people are happy to see Stalin in high spirits.

Harriman: I'd like to get the film.

Molotov: You definitely will.

Harriman: I have nothing more to add to the stated purpose of my visit.

Molotov: He will inform Stalin of the conversation, who is taking a full rest now.

Harriman: There is no need to say how important the matter is...

Molotov: Yes, I see.

Harriman: He would like to come to see Stalin as a friend...

Molotov: He will convey this to Stalin. But Generalissimo is vacationing."

Harriman might have recalled this episode as well when he wrote in his book, "Special Envoy of Roosevelt to Stalin": "I must admit that for me Stalin remains the most unfathomed, mysterious and controversial personality I have ever known. History is bound to make its last judgment, and I reserve this right to it."

V. Pavlov, who wrote down this amazing dialogue, put on record not only Molotov's but also Harriman's persistency despite the ostensible emptiness of the conversation. No "conferences" or Presidential requests could sway Molotov, who put the highest premium on the Leader's wishes. This is how Molotov executed the Leader's instructions; flexibility was out of the question. This was Stalin's school.

Upon listening to this lengthy monologue, sitting at the table, the Leader asked all of a sudden, after a pause:

"And maybe Harriman really wanted to convey something important from Truman?"

Molotov and Beriya exchanged glances; they did not understand whether Stalin was making a joke or really regretted the missed opportunity.

Poskryobyshev started a few files which contained the materials related to the Master's instructions on taking action in the liberated countries. There we so many of them! Ruti maneuvers in Helsinki were still fresh in his memory. Kollontai began to send some signals from Stockholm that the Finns "were ready" to end the war. However, following Ribbentrop's arrival in Helsinki on June 26, Ruti said in his public statement: "As President of the Republic of Finland I declare that I shall not conclude peace with the Soviet Union other than upon agreement with the German empire, and I shall not allow any Finnish government appointed by me, or any government whatsoever, to negotiate armistice or peace, or to conduct negotiations pursuing this objective other than in agreement with the government of the German empire."

Stalin's reaction was fast - to expedite the offensive operation on the Karelian front. He understood long ago that strong blows always made enemy more pliable and tractable. This is what happened, although the operation was not as successful as Stalin expected it to be. He was more demanding, and not less harsh with those who has not lived up to his expectations. Indeed, the Finns adopted Soviet conditions on ceasing military hostilities against the USSR on September 4, 1944, but true to himself, Stalin gave his evaluation of the people who were to make Mannerheim more tractable sooner. The assessment was typical of him:

"Karelian front commander Member of the Karelian front military council

The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief believes that the latest operation undertaken by the left wing of the Karelian front was not successful mostly due to poor troop organization and control; at the same time the Stavka notes that the front apparatus is strewn with idle and incapable people. Besides, officers of the Finnish nationality occupied some commanding positions and, naturally, they did not strike real hard against the Finns who confronted our troops and who were of the same kin, and therefore, could not enjoy support of the troops under their command." Then Stalin drew the conclusions which were already customary for him: "The military council of the Karelian front should organize firm troop control and kick out the idlers and people incapable of controlling troops...

The Karelian front deputy commander Colonel General F.I. Kuznetsov is to be sent at the disposal of the head of the main personnel directorate of the People's Commissariats of Defense. Front chief of staff Lieutenant General B.A. Pigarevich is to be relieved of his position for his failure to provide adequate leadership of the front HQs and to be sent at the disposal of the head of the main personnel directorate of the People's Commissariat of Defense. The head of the operations department at the front headquarters Major General B.Ya. Semyonov is to be sent at the disposal..."

The front's actions prompted the enemy country to withdraw from the war, but Stalin was displeased. He saw that the victory over Hitler and his satellites was at hand, but he honored his commitment made to the Allies - at his insistence, the representatives of USSR and Britain were having talks with Finland, with Britain acting on behalf of the United Nations. The armistice agreement was signed on September 19, 1944.

Sorting out the events over the past few months in his memory, Stalin saw how the multicolored character of the world and the emerging international situation found most diverse manifestations, to which he had to respond as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Here is, for example, his "especially important" cable to front commanders, Chairman of the SKK in Hungary Voroshilov; SKK deputy chairman in Rumania Susaikov, and to Shatilov in Warsaw:

"The instances of foreign planes, including British and American planes, landing on the territory occupied by our forces have become more frequent recently. Harmful complacency, unnecessary trust and the loss of vigilance... enable the enemy elements to use these landings for transporting terrorists, saboteurs and the agents of the Polish exile government in London."

Here is another document signed by him:

"Very important.

Commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front Commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front Copy: Marshall Com. Timoshenko

The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders:

1. Commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front move troops to Bucharest on August 31 at 10:00 a.m. Do not delay the troops in the city and, after passing through the city, proceed to accomplish the mission outlined in the Stavka's directive No. 220191, seeking to seize the area of Krayov as soon as possible. When passing through Bucharest, have as many planes as possible in the air and near the city.

2. Commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front send the 46a motorized unit which entered Bucharest to Dzurza with the mission of taking crossings over the Dunabe river...

3. Pay attention to order and discipline among the troops passing through Bucharest...

August 30, 1944

I. Stalin

8:15 p.m.

Antonov."

Only early in the month Antonescu visited Hitler in his stavka in an attempt to organize defense along the Galetc-Foksany line, but then made a turnaround toward the Anglo-American troops. But the dictator failed to slow down the advance of Soviet troops and wait for the Allied invasion. Taking advantage of the victorious move of the Red Army, the patriotic forces overthrew the Antonescu dictatorship on August 23. Stalin was reported that some "organs" came to help to track down fascists. The Supreme Commander reacted immediately:

"Commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front Commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front and Com. Tevchenkov

The Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief prohibits any arrests in Bulgaria and Rumania. No one is to be arrested henceforth without Stavka's permission..."

He wondered who was going to ask for his "permission." Let them figure it out themselves...

Here is another of Stalin's "very important" cables:

"Marshall Tito Copy to Marshall Tolbukhin

You requested Marshall Tolbukhin to have the Bulgarian troops withdrawn from Serbia, leaving them in Macedonia only. Besides, you pointed to Tolbukhin to the wrong doing by the Bulgarian troops in distributing captured German spoils of war. I consider it necessary to let you know the following regarding these matters:

1. The Bulgarian troops operate on the territory of Serbia according to a general plan which was coordinated with you and at your request contained in the cable of October 12, 1944 No. 337, providing substantial help to the Soviet troops... We cannot withdraw Bulgarian troops from Serbia now, since a large German group still remains in Yugoslavia...

2. Regarding the spoils of war. The law of war is such that the one who grabs the spoils keeps them.

October 18, 1944 7:10 p.m.

Alekseyev (Stalin -D.V.), friend."

Leafing through the documents he signed, Stalin felt amazed at all the things he had to take care of. There is so much to do, and no blunder is to be made. Antonov, the good guy, writes many international cables so well that Molotov can't vie with him. Here is one, for example:

"Very important

Commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front Member of the front military council As per your report of April 4, No. 024/zh, the Stavka instructs:

1. Trust Carl Renner

2. Tell him that the Soviet army command will support his efforts to restore democratic regime in Austria.

3. Tell him that the Soviet troops entered Austria not to capture the territory of Austria, but to drive out fascist invaders.

April 4, 1945

I. Stalin

7:30 p.m.

Antonov."

Stalin continued to slowly thumb through the copies of documents which he signed recently. I should ask Antonov how many directives and orders have been issued by the Stavka during the war. But it that all? What about the resolutions of the State Defense Council, the Politbureau and the People's Commissariat of Defense? Well, they sure gave a lot of work to do for the historians... An idea crossed his mind that he should ask a reliable person to look at his correspondence, instructions, and directives. Nothing should be left that could cast a shade of doubt over his activity during the war years. He remembers, however, that he gave most of the "questionable" instructions orally.

Here is a folder full of the "Hungarian papers." A report sent to Stalin by Colonel General Kuznetsov regarding his conversation with the Colonel General of the Hungarian Army Veres Janos regarding the formation of a few Hungarian units. It also contains the copies of the orders given by the 9th Guards Army commander Colonel General Golikov on including the 2nd and 6th Hungarian infantry divisions in the formation; Stalin's order to the Red Army's head of provisions Lieutenant General Pavlov on turning over large amounts of food to the government commissar in charge of the provision of Budapest. There is a cable from Bela Miklos, chairman of the national provisional government, following these documents:

"Marshall Stalin.

Since the gallant Red Army has liberated the city of Budapest from the cursed German rule, the working people of the city have experienced for the second time influential Soviet aid, which results in a significant improvement in what were until now the miserly public supplies... I express my sincere gratitude and hail the great Marshall of the Soviet Union on behalf of the decree by the Hungarian provisional government."

Stalin put Miklos' cable aside and thought that no matter what Horti tried to do to have the Allies come to the Hungarian territory earlier, nothing worked for him. His pleas to Hitler, then to the Allies and finally to himself, Stalin, resulted in Horti's arrest by the Germans. The puppets always have the same fate, with eventually no one having a need for them. Germany's last ally has collapsed. But Stalin insisted that Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary withdrew from the fascist bloc in an active way - all of them declared war on Germany. The Allies could not throw the first stone at Stalin, since the Supreme Commander-in-Chief informed the major allies in the anti-Hitler coalition about all his steps and actions in the countries which the Soviet troops entered.

Here is a document which he signed the other day:

"Commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front and Marshall Timoshenko

In view of the enemy retreat in front of the 4th Ukrainian front, the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders:

1. Turn the front's main force westward and strike in the general direction of Iyeglava, Ulabing, Harn, and then advance to the Vlatva river and liberate Prague.

2. Continue offensive with part of the front's right flank in the direction of Olomouts.

May 2, 1945

I. Stalin

7 p.m.

Antonov."

Here is a document that Beriya brought on Victory Day. Well, he has his own concerns... True, Stalin signed the directive two days later, making him reflect the fate of the citizens from the Allied countries:

"Very important

Commanders of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts. Com. Beriya, Com. Merkulov, Com. Abakumov, Co. Golikov, Com. Khrulyov, Com. Golubev.

In order to ensure a well-organized reception and maintenance of the former Soviet POWs and Soviet citizens, liberated by the Allies in the territory of West Germany, and the transfer of the former POWs and citizens from the Allied countries, liberated by the Red Army, the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders:

The military councils establish camps for accommodating and keeping former POWs and the repatriated Soviet citizens in the rear areas, with 10,000 people in each camp. All in all, set up 15 camps at the 2nd Belorussian front, 30 at the 1st Belorussian front, 30 at the 1st Ukrainian front, 5 at the 4th Ukrainian front, 10 at the 2nd Ukrainian front, and 10 camps at the 3rd Ukrainian front. Some of the camps can be allowed on the territory of Poland.

The following entities should be made responsible for screening former Soviet POWs and the liberated citizens in the camps to be established: former servicemen by the 'Smersh' counterintelligence organs; civilians, by the

screening commissions comprised of the representatives of NKVD, NKGB and 'Smersh' under the chairmanship of the NKVD. The period of screening should not exceed one to two months.

The former POWs and citizens of the Allied countries, set free by the Red Army, should be turned over to the representatives of the Allied command by the decisions of the military councils and representatives of the USSR Council of People's Commissars...

May 11, 1945

Stalin

12 a.m.

Antonov."

About one hundred camps, Stalin guessed... How many survived the captivity, in bondage? And how many people were there in the first place? But now when the entire world looked at him as a victor, he did not feel like thinking about that. He will instruct Beriya to give an official figure one day for historians and writers. In the meantime, here is another document that he dictated to Shtemenko himself:

"Commanders of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian and the 1st Ukrainian fronts.

When our troops encounter American or British troops, the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief orders to take into account the following:

1. A senior commanding officer, at whose section an encounter has taken place, should immediately get in touch with a senior American or British commanding officer and establish a line of demarcation together with him. Report none of our troops' plans or combat missions to anybody.

2. Do not initiate friendly meetings. On encountering the Allied troops, treat them cordially. Organize a formal or a friendly meeting with our troops, if the US or British troops want to have one."

The flurry of "fraternizations," get-togethers, and parties began to get on his nerves. Here, Zhukov and Vyshinskiy are flying to Frankfurt am Main at the invitation of Eisenhower. In his cable, Zhukov asked Stalin's permission to present the Order of the Red Banner to ten of Eizenhower's staff officers and the medal "For Combat Service" to another ten men.... First, they are going to decorate the Americans, and then will receive awards themselves... They are cheering and celebrating, while the postwar affairs have not been settled. What Stalin had in mind were the preparations for the tripartite Berlin conference of the leaders of three Allied powers, the conference which was to determine the shape of the postwar world to a great extent. Well, the war is not over yet either. He is not going to dilly-dally with the opening of the second front, the way his partners did. He will definitely stand by his Yalta commitment to enter into the war against Japan within two or three months after the surrender of Germany.

Just today, on June 28, Stalin signed a few orders, bearing "Top Secret" and "Very Important" seals, on finishing all preparatory measures by August 1 to "conduct an offensive operation at the special order of the Stavka of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief." The orders sent to the commanders of the Far Eastern front, the Maritime group and the trans-Baikal front outlined in detail the objectives of routing the Japanese Kwantung army (after the start of the combat operations, the Maritime group will be renamed the 1st Far Eastern front, and the Far Eastern front, into the 2nd Far Eastern front). "All preparatory operations should be conducted in utmost secrecy," said one of the orders. "Assign missions to army commanders in person, orally, without giving the front's written orders." Stalin already decided to send to the East, in addition to Vasilevskiy, also Meretskov, Purkaev, Ivanov, Maslennikov and Shikin. Let the main personnel directorate suggest other military leaders. Many people know how to fight now....

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Chapter III. Cult at Its Peak

[Text]

The most brutal tyranny is the one acting under the protection of legitimacy and under the guise of justice.
Charles Montesquieu

On 10 May, Stalin was told about a shorthand report of the ceremony at which the act of unconditional surrender had been signed. Judging by its text, everything had been wrapped up fast. Oh no, there was a hitch. Serov had called him from Berlin, and then Beriya had reported it as well. According to them, the signing of the surrender act had been delayed by two or three hours "because of a negligent attitude to work by a Narkomindel [people's commissariat of foreign affairs] staff member, Ambassador Smirnov, who had missed four lines in the text of the document on German capitulation, sent from Moscow. The Allies noticed it and refused to sign. The omitted lines were added after having been verified against our original document, and the text of the document on surrender raised no objections." Stalin had been jarred by that perennial slipshodness at the time.

Reading the shorthand report, the Supreme Commander was trying to visualize the atmosphere of what was happening now in Germany. Such a long and horrible war, and such a "short" end of it. Stalin even found the last words of Zhukov, who was the master of the ceremony, too down-to-earth: "I congratulate Air Force Chief Marshall Tedder, Colonel General of the U.S. Army Spaats, Commander-in-Chief of the French Army General Delatre de Tassigni on the victorious end of the war against Germany." Such a banal completion... It was not the end of it, however, by far. Lying ahead is hard bargaining with the Allies over the postwar shape of the

world. The war against Japan would not take much time. It is so important to safeguard the main fruit of victory - a lasting and stable peace.

Stalin realized that now he enjoyed an international and worldwide prestige, which before the war used to be unassailable only in the Soviet Union and maybe in the Comintern too. During their personal meetings and in their ample correspondence, Western leaders sang praises to the leader of the Soviet state and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of its armed forces. The new U.S. President Harry Truman noted in his message to Stalin that he had demonstrated "the ability of the freedom-loving and exceptionally courageous people to crush the evil forces of barbarianism no matter how strong. On the occasion of our joint victory, we welcome the people and the army of the Soviet Union and their excellent leadership."

As usual, Churchill reflected the situation in his message more emotionally and, perhaps, more profoundly. It was read on the radio by Mrs. Clara Churchill at the request of the British Prime Minister on 9 May: "I convey to you heartfelt greetings on the occasion of the brilliant victory which you have won driving invaders out of your country and having routed Nazi tyranny. I firmly believe that the future of mankind depends on friendship and mutual understanding between the British and Russian people. We think often about you in our island homeland, and from the bottom of our hearts we wish you happiness and prosperity. We wish that after all the sacrifice and ordeal in that dark valley which we have crossed together we could move further in loyal friendship and sympathy under the bright sun of a victorious world." It might have seemed incredible at the time that very soon the same person would say very different things in his Fulton speech.

Even de Gaulle, whom Stalin regarded as an arrogant man with a stiff upper lip, admitted his special contribution to victory. He said in his message of greetings: "You have turned the USSR into one of the major elements in the fight against oppressor powers; precisely thanks to this, victory could be won. The great Russia and you personally have won the gratitude of all of Europe which can live and prosper only by being free." What all of them were saying after the victory... And what did they say on the eve of the war?

There are so many congratulations today! Here are the messages of greetings sent by Boleslaw Bierut, Chiang Kai-shek, Josef Broz Tito, the regents of Bulgaria, McKenzy, King, Juhan Nugorswold, Joseph Chiefly, Mahmud Fahmi El Nokrashi, Zdenek Fierlinger, Miclosz Bel, Carl Mannergheim, and many other statesmen. Stalin shove the pile of greetings aside, took his pipe into his hand, as was his habit, and went on his journey of many years: twenty steps one way down his office and the same number of steps the other way.

Everything moved in a world torn apart and turned upside down: nations, armies, and their leaders. Even semiparalyzed Roosevelt went on long trips aboard cruisers and airplanes. Only Stalin did the minimum during the past war: the flight to Teheran, the only one in his life, the trip to the Crimea to meet Churchill and Roosevelt in early 1945, and the secret visit to the front in the August of 1943. He was the leader of the world's largest state, but he did not like to cross its expanses; he wanted to know everything, but only here, in his study. It seemed to him that he had learned to look far beyond the Kremlin, as if from the top of the Elbrus. The habit of seclusion reinforced the leader's "mystique." I do not know how Stalin would have behaved himself had television been available at the time. Would he have preferred to be incessantly on and off the screen, the way Brezhnev was. In "his" time, Stalin preferred to be talked about, written about, thought about and seen as rarely as possible. He found a very narrow group of personal confidants to his liking.

He was going on a foreign trip soon, the last one in his life. Stalin suggested to the Allies, through special aide Harry Hopkins, whom he met in Moscow on 26 June, that a summit meeting be held in Berlin without any dilly-dallying. He felt that he had accumulated dull fatigue during the war years, the fatigue that he found more and more difficult to shake off. The sixty-five years, most of which were tumultuous, felt like heavy weights on his feet. The "Kremlin highlander" firmly decided to think about taking a serious and prolonged rest in the south after the war in the east was over. He believed that his native Caucasus would give him a new breath of life. Before the war, Stalin used to go to Sochi for a month and a half or two at summer's end, closely monitoring state affairs from there and gradually filling in with energy.

Having agreed to Berlin, Truman and Churchill had postponed the date of the meeting too much, till 15 July 1945. Stalin had agreed, yet unaware of the fact that the U.S. President had scheduled the date of the conference based on readiness for testing his atomic bomb. Work in this area went ahead in the Soviet Union as well, which he had asked Beriya to take care of. Stalin summoned Colonel General Golikov, head of the personnel department of the people's commissariat of defense, to make a report in March: are specialists in physics being discharged from military units and sent to the Skobeltsyn research institute of physics and to other scientific centers? Beriya reported earlier that several laboratories had been set up within his system, into which convicted scientists were taken. So, when Truman told Stalin about the successful testing of the atomic bomb in Alamogordo, the latter did not display any visible interest.

A.A. Gromyko, who took part in the Berlin (Potsdam) conference, writes in his memoirs that "Churchill was waiting in excitement for the end of the conversation between Truman and Stalin. As soon as it was over, the British Premier rushed to ask U.S. President: 'So?'"

Truman said: "Stalin did not ask me a single clarifying question and limited himself to just thanking me for the information."

The interlocutors speculated on whether Stalin had grasped the significance of what he had been told. They did not know that a coded cable was sent to Moscow on the very same night urging Beriya to speed up work in the nuclear field as much as possible. But this was to take place on 24 July in Berlin, and in the meantime, Stalin was getting ready for the trip.

The leader dismissed the plan of flying a Douglas airplane out of hand. Citing expert opinion, Beriya tried to prove that this was absolutely safe, but we remember that the dictator had a fear of flying. He always recalled with horror the moment when the plane "dropped" into air pockets several times somewhere over the mountains, as he was flying to Teheran in late 1943. Gripping the chair arms, his face distorted by fear, the Supreme Commander could hardly regain himself, and for a long time could not bring himself to look at Voroshilov, who was sitting in the chair across from him: did the latter notice that degrading condition? But it looked like Voroshilov had gone through the same moments himself.

They decided to go by train. Beriya worked out a special itinerary, to the north of the regular one. It was a special train with armored cars, special security and special accompanying party. Let us tell you a more detailed story, since the operation to bring the leader to Berlin had been planned probably more meticulously than many combat operations. Let cut-and-dried documents tell the story, the way we have been doing throughout this book.

Stalin required frequent reports on preparations for the conference, his trip, took interest in the details, and issued instructions. Tens of thousands of people were involved in the operation to deliver the leader and provide for his life support. Two weeks before the trip, a document was put on the Generalissimo's table, a document that cannot be overestimated in figuring out Stalin's attitude to his own persona. Here is the document:

"To Comrade Stalin I.V.

To Comrade Molotov V.M.

The USSR NKVD reports on the end of preparations for measures to receive and accommodate the forthcoming conference. Sixty-two villas (10,000 square meters and one-story cottage for Comrade Stalin: 15 rooms, an open-air veranda, an attic, 400 square meters) have been prepared. The private residence has all the amenities. It has a communications center. Poultry and fowl, gourmet and other groceries, and beverages have been stocked. Three farms seven kilometers from Potsdam have been established, which have livestock, poultry pens, and vegetable warehouses; two bakeries are in operation. All of personnel is from Moscow. Two special airfields are ready. Seven regiments of the NKVD troops and 1,500 men of the operative personnel have been sent to take care of security. A three-ring security zone has been set up. Lieutenant General Vlasik is in charge of the residence security. Security for the conference venue - Kruglov.

A special train has been prepared. The itinerary is 1,923 kilometers (1,095 across the USSR, 594 across Poland, and 234 across Germany). Seventeen thousand NKVD troops and 1,515 men of the operative personnel ensure its security. Six to fifteen security men per each kilometer of rail track. Eight NKVD armored trains will run along the route.

A two-story cottage (11 rooms) has been prepared for Molotov. Fifty-five villas, including eight cottages, for the delegation.

2 July 1945. L. Beriya."

It is hard to find any precedents for such security measures. How far has the leader moved away from his "asceticism" of the Twenties! The greater was Stalin's glory and the older he became, the more he feared for his life. The leader asked Beriya, up till the very departure, sometimes several times a day, either about how secret the departure time was, or about the thickness of the car floor armor plates, or about the timetable of moving across Poland... Did he recall that the Russian Soviet soldier has trodden the same path from Moscow to Berlin on foot, under fire, surrounded by calamitous and mortal danger? He hardly did, if one looks at the scale of preparations.

Meeting Truman in Berlin at 12 p.m. on 17 July, Stalin would say, after exchanging greetings with him:

"I apologize for being one day late. I was delayed by the negotiations with the Chinese. I wanted to take a plane, but the doctors would not allow me."

"I understand it quite well. I am happy to meet Generalissimo Stalin," replied Truman.

Stalin came lay to emphasize his importance. One could and had to wait for the great leader... He used this psychological trick more that once. Sir William Hayter, member of the British delegation at the Potsdam talks, recalled: "Stalin was always late for the sessions, and we had to wait for his arrival for a long time."

The "Big Three" would start to divide the spoils of victory in Europe in the evening. It turned out easier to do than to make them common and lasting. Everyone felt that their odd alliance was probably having its last days. True, August reminded of this alliance more than once. Chained to the galley of their times, neither Stalin nor his partners knew that a new thinking would be born decades later, which would put priority on overall human values. It seemed a sheer utopia at the time. They were expected not only to divide the fruits, but also to grasp a new balance of forces.

The Fruits and 'Price' of Victory

A long motorcade accompanying Stalin pulled up at a small gray mansion, situated seven to eight minutes' from Tzetsiliengoff, the palace of Germany's former crown prince Wilheim. The heads of three powers "summarized" the outcome of the war and determined the future of Germany for two weeks, starting from 17 July. They argued about the destiny of the Eastern European countries, explored the avenues of settling the "Polish issue," divided the German Navy, established the proportions of reparations, reached agreement on putting military criminals on trial, set a tentative date of ending the war against Japan, and discussed many other matters. Dozens of issues were raised and over one hundred draft documents were discussed by heads of governments, who held 13 sessions, and by foreign ministers, who met 12 times.

Returning to his two-story mansion, Stalin would examine coded cables from Moscow, occasionally call Moscow on the government line, come up to the window, sit down in his arm chair, and gaze for a long time at a park with scrawny pine trees and at a beautiful lake. What were Stalin's thoughts on the German soil, amid the subdued German "spirit," against which he had waged a deadly fight of attrition for the four endlessly long years? Did he probably recall that this land had given birth to an ideology whose principal proponent he had been himself for many years? Did he, perhaps, remember the Central Committee Plenum in January 1924, when, elaborating on Zinoviyev's report on the international situation, he stated that he "did not support repressions against Radek for his mistakes on the German issue?" But Stalin censured Radek for the latter's policy of forming an alliance with German Social Democrats, essentially failing to realize that this had started one of his profoundly fallacious lines in international affairs. Had the Communists united with Social Democrats they would have prevented the hydra of fascism from rearing its head... The repressions are premature right now, their time has not come.

Reminiscing about Radek, he recalled a pun that Radek circulated among his milieu in 1928, when he had been exiled by Stalin to Tomsk. The leader had never forgiven him that joke. How could he: "Stalin and I differ on the agrarian issue: he wants my persona to lie in ground, while I want the opposite." True, Radek swiftly changed his "bearings" during the exile. In September 1928, he sent a cable to Stalin protesting the continuing arrests and exile of members of the Trotskiyite opposition and demanding that Trotskiy be brought back from Alma Ata for health reasons. Half a year later, though, he wrote a letter to Stalin and the Central Committee of the all-Russia Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) condemning Trotskiy for his articles in the bourgeois press. The older he was getting, the more often his memory brought back the past. Radek had been long gone, but he remembered him; Radek was in charge of the "German question" in the early Twenties...

Worn down by lengthy debates with Truman and Churchill at the [negotiating] table, did Stalin probably recall Thalmann, whom he was not able (or did not want) to help? One day at the end of 1939, Molotov reported to him on a cable sent from Berlin by the USSR plenipotentiary representation's counselor Kobulov. The latter described the visit of Thalmann's wife. Knowing about the treaty of "friendship" concluded with Germany, she requested Moscow's help in trying to get her husband out of the fascist torture-chamber. Speaking about herself, she said that she "had no way out, since she was virtually starving, having no means of subsistence" Kobulov said, according to the cable, that "we cannot help her in any way." With tears in her eyes, she queried: "Has all his work for the good of Communism been a waste?" Kobulov repeated his answer. He said that Thalmann's wife "asked our advice whether she could make a statement to Goering. I said that it was up to her. Desolate, Thalmann left."

Stalin recalls that he looked at Molotov at that instant and said: think it over, maybe we should help Thalmann's wife with marks. But he took no radical decision on behalf of Ernst Thalmann, who had succeeded in having several letters pleading help smuggled to Moscow out of the fascist torture-chamber. Stalin did not want to approach Hitler personally, he did not want to mar the treaty of "friendship." Having sent a group of antifascists back to Germany, it was not only Thalmann whom he could have won freedom for. It looks like Kobulov was right in saying that it was up to R. Thalmann. As usual, Stalin did not feel any pangs of consciousness. A consciousness rooted in the past did not exist for him at all...

Thinking about Thalmann, Stalin could not help remembering Beriya telling him - right after the war's victorious chord - about a document related to the leader of the German proletariat. Indeed, he did remember such a document:

"State Defense Council, to Comrade Stalin I.V.

11 May 1945

A representative of the USSR NKVD at the Second Belorussian front Com. Tsanava reported that NKVD operatives' groups had discovered the wife of E. Thalmann, Rosa Thalmann, who escaped from a concentration camp and was hiding in the city of Furstenberg, and Thalmann's daughter, Fester Irma, who was freed by Red Army units from the concentrations camp in the city of Noibrandenburg...

R. Thalmann said that she had seen Thalmann for the last time on 27 February 1944 in jail in the town of Beuten, in the presence of a Gestapo worker. He said that he had been subject to constant torture, demanding that he forswore his convictions...

L. Beriya."

On reading the cable, Stalin told Poskryobyshev that Thalmann's close relatives, who were set free, were placed in appropriate conditions and given the necessary aid. Maybe the leader felt some belated stirrings in his heart... Well, how many such cases appeared at the end of the war!

I. Serov, one of Beriya's deputies, reported, for instance, that the former Prime Minister of the Republic of Spain, Fransisco Largo Cabalero, had been set free from the German concentration camp at Oranienbaum, at the section of the front, where the Polish First infantry division operated. Very emaciated, he requested that his family was told that he was alive. Or another case. The same Kruglov reported that Rumania's King Mikhai had helped his relative, Major Goggentsollern, and Ober Lieutenant von Bolen und Golbach, a son of German industrialist Krupp, to escape from German captivity. Could he, Stalin, react to this kaleidoscopic stream of names, last names, the ex so-and-so, current and exalted ranks! Let Beriya and Molotov take care of this business. A far more important thing - the *political* end of the war depended on him, the leader. Having won the military victory, he had no right to let it slip past him on the political scene. Despite the weariness that he felt after the war, he still warmed to his past experiences and had not fully recovered from the victorious triumph.

Looking down from a light oval balcony of his mansion, he could spot unobtrusive guards everywhere - on the shore of the lake, near the entrance to a small park near his residence, and on a quite street, from which residents had been vacated. He believed that the war had turned him into a military person once and for all, and he continued to wear his Marshall's uniform till the end of his life. True, one day Khrulyov and Politbureau members brought along three dashing young guys wearing the uniforms, have of which included gold balloons, gold stripes and gold embroidery, at every spot one could just think of...

"What's that?" asked Stalin, looking at them perplexed.

"These are the three versions of the suggested uniform for the Generalissimo of the Soviet Union," said Khrulyov, head of the main logistics department of the Red Army.

Stalin angrily glanced at the gilded foppishness and, cursing, drove the entire party out of his office. What picture is going to cut in this uniform? That of a doorman in a fancy restaurant or of a clown? Dimwits! True, Stalin did not forget that Khrulyov did not procrastinate in fulfilling his instruction on preparing and designing a prototype of the "Victory" Order.

The first version, which the Supreme Commander reviewed on 25 October 1943 featured the silhouettes of Lenin and Stalin in the middle. The Supreme Commander did not like the boilerplate image of the two leaders, repeated in thousands of instances, in which his, Stalin's profile could be recognized only by his typically Caucasian nose and mustache. The Generalissimo-to-be, who was getting ready for the forthcoming triumph, suggested showing the Kremlin wall and the Spasskiy tower in the middle, against a blue background. The order was to be minted from platinum and diamonds were to be spared. Even before the highest decoration for military leaders was instituted, Stalin had decided that it would be bestowed upon very few people. He approved a sketch of the Order on 5 .November, and a decree instituting it was published on 8 November by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Stalin sighed: they could not design even an order without him...

Listening for the speeches of his partners to be translated, he habitually doodled something on a piece of paper. He usually had several color pencils, and a pen in front of him. Sometimes he would mechanically write down the same word dozens of times, concentrating on their hidden and genuine meaning: "reparations," "contribution," "parts and shares of reparations." Sometimes, as Baron Beaverbrook noted during his Moscow talks at the beginning of the war, Stalin drew "an endless multitude of wolves on paper and colored the background with a red pencil." While an interpreter was finishing translation, he added another wolf to the pack of wolves, the wolf which merged with the bloody twilight of the cruel times...

Stalin realized that the routing of fascism was turning the USSR into a real super power, and him, the leader of this state, into one of the greatest (he probably believed in his heart, into the greatest) leader of modern times. His Western partners are time-servers, the children of "democracy." Roosevelt was a major politician, but had he been alive he would have left the White House after his term had expired. Churchill, for example, came to the summit in full confidence of his party's electoral victory. Stalin recalled Truman's answer during their meeting on 17 July, when the latter said, asked by Stalin whether President was seeing Churchill:

"Yes, I saw him yesterday morning. Churchill is confident of winning the election."

"The British people cannot forget the victor," agreed Stalin.

But things turned out differently: it was announced on 26 July that the Conservatives had lost, and Churchill was replaced in Potsdam by new British leader K. Attlee. Stalin could not understand this: these "rotten" democracies, thought Generalissimo, weaken themselves. The system that he has created ruled out such "reshuffling." He new that he would stay at the pinnacle of power as long as his health permitted, and he had no complaints about it, although some symptoms of overstrain did appear. It does mean something to be from the Caucasus! He also knew that the pinnacle, swept by the winds of history, had enough room for nobody but himself.

Like France's Roi-Soleil, for a long time Stalin had secretly identified himself with the state, society, and the party. Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars became used to speaking on behalf of the people and

indicated a path to it in full confidence that it was making the people happy in doing so. The greater the power, the higher its leader. The war moved the USSR to the highest frontiers of world influence, which means that it raised him, Stalin, immeasurably. The trajectory of his life, that of a person who undividedly ruled the vast country, quickly began to approach the apogee of world-wide glory, power, and sacred cult since the very first months after the war.

It was not only the defeat of fascism and transformation of the USSR into one of the most influential powers in the world that Stalin listed among the fruits of victory. The Generalissimo was feeling already the in-depth tremors under the structure of anti-Hitler coalition, the tremors which were soon to raze it to the ground. But he could not anticipate that it would happen so precipitously. Only as astute eye could notice that sitting at the table in Tsetsilegoff were the allies, who could be called "friendly enemies." Stalin was not deceived by Truman's phrase during their first meeting that he wanted to be "a friend of Generalissimo Stalin." The Soviet leader especially felt this when the question of reparations was raised.

The Americans had departed from their position at Yalta and sided with the British, who pressed for a highly disadvantageous decision for the USSR. A huge portion of Soviet territory, where a countless number of industrial plants were destroyed, was occupied during the war. The United States and Great Britain did not experience this. The Soviet representative pointed out that the USSR had both the political and moral right to have these losses compensated for, the same as Poland and Yugoslavia. But Truman and Churchill turned a deaf ear to Stalin's pleas. Stalin had to accept these disadvantageous conditions only during the last, thirteenth session - he risked receiving far less. But the Generalissimo took his revenge on the "Polish issue," especially as far as the Order-Niese border was concerned. Stalin seemed to "move" Poland to the West, wishing to have a strong Slavic state on the border with Germany.

He was justifiably alarmed by the fact that liberally discussing Eastern Europe at length, the President and the Prime Minister did not want to talk about Western Europe. When Stalin raised the issue of Franco's fascist regime during the conference, he did not meet with any understanding, while Truman and Churchill demanded at the same time support for Tito's opponents in Yugoslavia. The Western partners spoke with concern at the negotiations about the position of Bulgaria and Rumania, but did not want to see that a civil war was flaring up in Greece, for example, not without the Allies' aid.

It seemed to Stalin at times that sitting at the table were not the allies, but old adversaries, who were trying to grab a large piece of the pie which they have made together. He had it right: the military problems (with the exception of those in Asia) have receded into the past, and politics - a rather hypocritical and ruthless dame - has been placed on the front burner. The partners had too conflicting stands in this area to expect them to achieve the same results that were achieved, for example, in Yalta. The war, common threat and common strategic objectives brought them closer together. Political and class egotism moved to the foreground, as always, as soon as those objectives had been met. Excellent interpreters were not able to make the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition speak the same political language of the allies.

In general, however, Stalin was pleased with the conference results, so were the Allies. The inertia of victory made it possible to achieve what would be virtually impossible to accomplish a year or two hence. Agreement was reached on the demilitarization of Germany, and mutually acceptable solutions were found on some other key issues. Truman pressed the USSR hard to make a public reiteration of its commitment to move against Japan. The head of the Soviet delegation did not deviate from his Allied commitments:

"The Soviet Union will be ready to go in action in mid-August, and it will honor its word."

He did not want to delay the opening of his "second front" as long as the Allies did; in doing so, Stalin tried not to impinge on their interests in any way. For example, on the eve of the war against Japan commander-in-chief of the Soviet Far Eastern troops A.M. Vasilevskiy was tasked not only to liberate the southern part of the Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, but also to occupy half of the Hokkaido island to the north of the line running from the city of Kusiro to that of Rumoi. To accomplish this, two infantry, one fighter and one bomber divisions were to be airlifted to the island. With Soviet troops already in southern Sakhalin, Stalin ordered on 23 August 1945 to get ready to load the 87th rifle corps for a landing operation. But no order on boarding was issued, however, on 25 August, after the liberation of the southern Sakhalin had been completed. Stalin was thinking: what could this step do for him? The Generalissimo might have thought - and rightly so - that this "landing strike" could further strain what were already cool Allied relations. Finally he ordered not to send any troops to Hokkaido. Chief of staff of the Soviet Far Eastern troops' Supreme Command General S.P. Ivanov, send the Supreme Commander's order: "Categorically forbid sending any ships or planes in the direction of the Hokkaido island in order to avoid creating any conflicts or misunderstanding with its Allies." But all this was to happen several weeks later.

During the concluding session of the heads of delegations, held in the early morning of 2 August, Stalin's last words were: "The conference can be probably described as a success." The three leaders signed a congratulatory message to Churchill and Eden a few minuted before, and then Truman, who opened and closed the conference, declared:

"I declare the Berlin conference closed. Till we meet again, which, I hope, will be held very soon."

"God willing," replied Stalin.

The Generalissimo did not know yet that the Pentagon would elaborate very soon the plans of atomic bombing, "Dropshot" and "Charioteer," while the CULLER'S magazine would outline a detailed scenario of a forthcoming war against Red Russia, followed by the occupation of the Soviet Union. But all this was for the future. In the meantime, the Allied leaders, willingly or unwillingly, not only made an important step toward ending the war in Europe politically, but also toward its further division, a harsh division into different worlds.

The antifascist alliance was living its last hours. The Western leaders were in a hurry. According to Churchill, he already visualized "the iron curtain," descending from Lubeck to Trieste, dividing Europe. Neither Stalin, nor Truman, nor Churchill, nor Attlee who replaced him, knew yet that the trail of mutual hatred, on which all of them would soon step, would lead their distant successors to a historical nuclear dead end, at which point they would have to uphold their class and political prejudices and then, like during the years of the past war, return to general human values. Otherwise, the risk of doing away with conferences by heads of state would be too great on our planet.

Things would start to change precipitously after the Allies had perpetrated their last concerted act of signing the Act of Japan's surrender aboard U.S. cruiser Missouri. Lieutenant General Kuzma Nikolayevich Derevyanko, who signed it on behalf of Stalin, does not know yet that for a very, very long time the former Allies would not have a chance to sign any joint documents, shaping the lives of millions of people.

The great victory over fascism, with people acting as its main architect, bore bitter fruit, too, for the Soviet people. Victory only served to reinforce Stalin's belief in his infallibility and his role of a messiah for the destinies of our people and socialism; it turned him into an earthly God for good. Victory won in the terrible war was used by the triumphant leader as another reason to *conserve* the system which he had created. The Soviet people won a freedom from fascism, but it was still a terribly long way - a road several generations long - till a freedom from Stalinism.

Returning to their destroyed hearth, still wearing their military uniform, the citizens of the Homeland hoped to see changes for the better, the same way as their distant ancestors did during the 1812 Patriotic war. The winds of freedom and of popular triumph, the victory that took a toll of millions of lives, gave rise to vague hopes. People wanted to be better off, to be free of fear and coercion. No, they still held Stalin in high esteem, glorified and extolled him, and kowtowed to him, but they believed at the same time that there would be no more violence, endless campaigns, constant severe shortages of bare necessities which had become one of the hallmarks of the existing Soviet way of life.

Conversely, victory convinced Stalin that all the institutions of the state were unshakable, the system was profoundly viable, and the course of social development was correct. He sent a message soon that the situation inside society was not going to change. One had to work to restore the dislocated national economy on the basis of recommendations which he was to issue. Not a single mention was made of democracy, people's rule, participation of ordinary working people in running the state in the "Appeal of the Central Committee of the all-Russian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) to all voters in connection with elections to the USSR Supreme Soviet," which were held on 10 February 1946! It contained the same hackneyed words about the "bloc of Communists and non-Party people," about the "Soviet people becoming convinced from their experience over many years of the Party's correct policies which met the people's fundamental interests, and that there should not be a single voter failing to exercise his honorary right..." The latter expression sounds like a warning. The Soviet people knew this all too well!

As usual, Stalin himself approved the "Appeal..." as an important document. It said essentially that the national economy should be rebuilt so that our Homeland had the same things it had before. Flimsy illusions dimly entertained by some intellectuals and former frontline soldiers evaporated in no time. The cogs in Stalin's bureaucratic system began to spin relentlessly at a speed set by the leader... Party decisions followed one another, as if off the conveyor belt, the center's instructions: to unfold the study of the "Short Course of the History of the AUCP(of Bolsheviks)," on poor work by the newspapers MOLOT (Rostov-on-the Don), VOLZHSKAYA KOMMUNA (Kuybyshev), and KURSKAYA PRAVDA; on stopping the "squandering of collective farm land" (the ban on establishing subsistent economies and individual vegetable gardens by workers and employees); on poor work of OGIZ (Association of State Publishing Houses); on ensuring the preservation of state grain, and so on.

Many documents bear Stalin's signature. As before, he believed in the magic power of *instructions, directives,* and *decrees.* While Stalin's bureaucratic system was adjusted and fine-tuned before the war, after the victory they began to restore fast what had been curtailed or abolished during the war. Essentially, in his path toward society's further social and political development, Stalin embarked on the course of *total bureacracy* since 1945. They began to wear shoulder straps in many departments after the war, the railroad workers being among the first. Ever new organizations were created, whose almost only principal job was to exercise "control over the execution of instructions and decisions." Collective farmers had their passports taken away for good in order to "tie them down" to the farm. Exiles and deportations continued till the end of the Forties; Beriya's department did not remain idle.

All social scholars were ultimately turned into undiscriminating commentators of "great" dogmas. Tiresome and stupefying rituals of praising the leader became common practice again. It was still dangerous to be open even with close people. Intellectual watchdogs, led by Zhdanov, were killing the heart of culture and art - the freedom of thought and creativity. Stronger bureaucratization began to grow its fruit - the most dangerous for society - of a working person's indifference and his readiness to do nothing but execute orders; moral degradation of many people, expressed first of all in individual's duality, became more pronounced. Dualism as split thinking (one thing in words, another in action) became a moral norm for many people.

The party was increasingly turning into the state's shadow. Or the other way round: the state was becoming the party's shadow. One could fully appreciate Lenin's words of warning: "This apparatus does not belong to us, we belong to it!" during the period of putting Stalin's system "in order." No one could invoke any opinion now except the official one. Pushkin's words, said so long ago, seemed to have assumed a modern meaning: "The absence of public opinion spells indifference to any duty, justice, right and truth... This is a cynical despise for a man's thought and dignity." Collective bureaucracy was getting entrenched deeper and deeper. The socialism of leveling-off was banked upon, which, paradoxically, gave birth to a bureaucratic elite, contrary to the slogans.

Thus, Stalin capitalized on the fruits of victory for his internal purposes; he was *conserving* the system deliberately and resolutely. As in the Twenties, he was incapable of genuine social creative work. To maintain and uplift his status of a "genius leader," limitlessly high as it was already, from time to time, but on a rather regular basis, he fired, dismissed, or removed an Obkom secretary, a minister, a Marshall, or another representative of power, accusing them either of being apolitical, or of abusing power, or of disregard for high-level instructions, or of showing little concern for the people.

Stalin was already a "good tsar" in the people's eyes; such steps raised his prestige even higher. Many people like his style even today: "Stalin would not have allowed the Rashidovites and Churbonovites!" But to think about it, no matter how paradoxical it may sound, the most deep roots of bureaucratic transformation of many leaders in the "post-Stalin" period were struck at that time. Found in an atmosphere free from fear and "firm hand," the embryos of unlimited regional, nomenclature and departmental rule and leader's glorification immediately began to grow. Void of genuinely socialist economic levers and lofty moral culture, the system of endless bureaucratic bans, accompanied by the complete absence of glasnost, proved to be ineffective. As soon as Stalin was gone physically, and then politically, to a certain extent, it became evident that the system's conservation only aggravated crisis phenomena in the present and in the future. Many years later, people can say: *absolute power corrupts absolutely.*

One of Stalin's extremely negative actions taken after the war was his desire, we shall repeat, to conserve the political system, leaving it intact. Indeed, the General Secretary was never able to say, the way Lenin did: "We need changes in the political system." Sizing up the prevailing system, which was centered on him, the leader, he could not grasp with his dogmatic mind that his attempt at conservation resulted in a deep erosion of socialist values and ideals which millions of people continued to believe in.

People's hopes, will and energy continued to live, ebb and prevail amid these negative processes involving the conservation of the Stalinist bureaucratic system. Victory over fascism convinced the Soviet people that socialism was undefeatable, and that a correct historical choice was made in 1917. The people remained the main guardian of spirituality and belief in a better future, despite a multitude of barriers, hardships, distortions, and crimes. It succeeded in restoring the ruined economy in an unprecedentedly short span of time.

After the summarized data about the economic damage caused to the country by the war was made available to Stalin at end of 1945, knowing probably more than anyone else about the wounds and scars on the body of the Homeland as Chairman of the State Defense Committee, he queried Voznesenskiy:

"Are there any exaggerations?"

"These could be only an underestimate. It is impossible to gauge the depth and scale of all the losses in such a short period of time..."

He also remembers his words to Marshalls and Generals, front and arms troop commanders, whom he summoned after the end of the war in Europe to take part in the conference to discuss the demobilization and reorganization of the Red Army, which was held on 21-22 May 1945: we shall not be able to heal our wounds without the army, or to be more precise, without those who are in the army today. Holding a sheaf of papers in his hands and glancing into them occasionally, he talked to the audience in his flat and slow voice: "Demobilization should first of all involve the air defense units and the cavalry. It must not affect the armor units or the Navy. As far as infantry is concerned, it will cover from 40 to 60 percent of its personnel, without touching the troops in the Far East, Trans Baikal area, and Transcaucasus... Every demobilized soldier should be sold trophy goods at a low price and given wages for as many years as he has served in the army... To avoid old mistakes, all first line troops should be kept in full wartime strength. Any eventuality would be ruled out under such condition." Stalin was talking about demobilization of the army, and thought about an early infusion of this force into the process about which Voznesenskiy spoke persistently - the country had to be raised from ruins. Everything was running out: forces, possibilities, and patience. The people lived in abject poverty. The other day Beriya

reported a severe famine in the Chita Oblast, in Tadjikistan, Tataria, and other areas.

Stalin picked up the summary, turned over a page and read a report by the people's commissar of internal affairs of the Tadjik ASSR, Kharchenko: "Twenty people were found to have died from starvation, and 500 people swollen by hunger...in the Leninabad Oblast. Over 70 persons died from starvation in the Ramit, Pakhtaabad, Obi-Garm and other regions of the Stalinabad Oblast. Emaciated and swollen people have been found too. Such facts were reported in the Kurgan-Tuybinsk, Kulyabskaya, and Garm Oblasts. The local help provided to these regions is insignificant."

The facts of "eating dead animals and tree bark" have been reported in the Chita Oblast. The horrible fact was reported, when a peasant woman and her sons killed her small daughter and used her flesh for food... Here is another case like this... Stalin did not want to go on reading the sorrowful summary. Eying the leaders' displeasure, Beriya said hastily:

"Some flour has been allocated till the new harvest. One has to rough it!"

The war against Japan was lying ahead, while the reports made by N. A. Voznesenskiy said: colossal work is to be done. The alternative member of the Politburo understood large-scale economic processes under way in the country better than anyone else. Stalin, who had long kept an eye on Voznesenskiy, had mixed feelings about him. Indeed, he was perhaps the most intelligent leader in his retinue, but the Leader did not like his independence and occasionally harsh judgments. It would probably be difficult to rebuild the ruined economy without using his brains, mused Stalin. To many people's surprise, Stalin suggested electing Voznesenskiy Politburo member during the Central Committee Plenum in February 1947.

Reading his memo about the scale of devastation and the first version of the report filed by the extraordinary state commission on the atrocities committed by German invaders, Stalin pondered over many figures at length: 1,710 cities and urban-type settlements were destroyed; over 70,000 villages were burned down (the leader did not think that many thousands of these villages were on his consciousness); 32,000 industrial plants and 65,000 kilometers of railway track were blown up or disabled; about 100,000 collective and state farms and thousands of MTS [motor-tractor pools] were laid to waste...

Stalin compared these horrible figures with his personal impressions: as he was taking a train trip to Berlin, sitting in an armchair close to a bullet-proof window, he moved a heavy curtain aside and unblinkingly stared at the vast expanses of the Russian flatlands, scarred by trenches and dugouts, and scorched by fires. The train did not make stops at major stations or in cities; he saw fleeing past him twisted frames of buildings with numerous gaping glassless window-panes, blown plants, and charred wooden barracks. The villages that survived were mostly burned to the ground, with the chimneys of Russian stoves stretching out their sad cold arms toward the sky. Even the lush green of July could not hide the signs of horrible disaster...

Voznesenskiy reported that 25 million people in the country had been left without a roof over their heads, huddling in dugouts, sheds, and basements. Livestock breeding, as ill-developed as it was since the early Thirties, had been completely devastated: tens of millions of livestock had been taken away or slaughtered. The preliminary estimates put the direct damage caused by the invasion at about 700 billion rubles (at prewar prices). In other words, the country lost 30 percent of its national wealth. The living standards of the population were at the lowest level imaginable...

These sentiments did not move Stalin much, for he had always believed that socialism could not be built without making major sacrifices. Stalin was confident that it was not possible to smash fascism and to rebuild the country now, without keeping public consciousness in a state of constant strain, mobilized, in a sort of the "civil war," combating difficulties and internal enemies. That he was correct was proved by the report submitted by Khrushchev, which the noiseless Poskyobychev had recently put on his table in a folder. Khrushchev said in his report of 31 December 1945 that the Ukrainian nationalists had become more active in the Western parts of the Ukrainian SSR in connection with the approaching elections to the USSR Supreme Soviet. The report ended up with a request to provide additional help to the units of the Carpathian and Lvov military districts. Are these the only enemies? How many people lived in the occupied territories, in captivity, or were taken prisoner? Stalin was convinced that many people had come back from the front as "Decemberists."

In a corner of Khrushchev's report, he wrote his instruction to N.A. Bulganin and the General Staff to send additional troops to the western areas of the Ukraine. A similar situation was described in Bulganin's report, "On Establishing Destroyer Battalions to Combat Banditry in Latvia." Bulganin suggested financing them out of a local budget. There were losses there as well. The war was over, but the list of losses does not end, no, it doesn't. Merkulov and Kruglov report, for example, that the "anti-Soviet nationalist underground stepped up its activity" in Lithuania on the eve of the elections. Quite a lengthy list follows:

- "Mituzas Yu., a member of the okrug electoral commission, was taken into the forest and shot on 15 December 1945 in the Shaulay uyezd.
- Levulis V., chairman of the electoral commission, was murdered by a group of bandits in the Veyseyask volost of the Ladziya uyezd on 16 December 1945.
- Ghikelis M., chairman of the electoral commission, was massacred by a group of bandits in the Rokish uyezd on 17 December 1945.
- Gabrilavicus Yu., member of the precinct electoral commission and chairman of the rural Soviet, was

killed by bandits in the Tauyan volost of the Ukmerg uyezd on 20 December 1945."

Several years were to pass before blood ceases to be spilled in the Baltic republics. These are just fractions of a percentage point compared to the losses suffered during the war. Thinking about the human price paid for victory, Stalin mulled over different numbers, obviously believing that this was also "a political issue."

What were these lists of losses? What is the price of victory? How many people have perished? He was to address a pre-election meeting soon and he had to tell the people about this price. The Supreme Commander did not think about it during the war, since the country seemed to be inexhaustible. But he figured out, as the troops were retreating toward Stalingrad, that 70 to 80 million people remained in the occupied territories.

According to the memo prepared by the GUK [main personnel directorate] in January 1946, only a rough estimate of the losses could be made. This statistics of blood was ill kept, as we have already said, especially early in the war. Voznesenskiy said, as he reported personally, that the losses could be more or less accurately calculated only in a few months' time, but as many as 15 million people perished in the country, according to raw data. Stalin said nothing, as he decided to stick to the number of seven and a half million people who were killed, died of wounds and were missing in action, as reported by the General Staff and the GUK. He did not want to cite a higher number, since his image of a military leader will immediately tarnish. He could not permit this.

What is the real horrible price paid for our victory? While Stalin put it at seven and a half million people, Khrushchev was the first to circulate the number of over 20 million in his letter to the Prime Minister of Sweden T. Erlanger. What is this quantitative estimate based on, the number commonly used now as well? It is based on rough estimates. I think that only the word, *"over,"* is correct in Khrushchev's estimates. Historians are working now to determine a relatively accurate number: we shall repeat that the people should know how many of their sons and daughters it had laid on the altar of victory.

I have made my own conclusions, which I do not consider the only correct ones and final, as I drew on some statistical data available at the military department, including the one on the number of Soviet POWs (the Germans, for example, meticulously calculated the number of our soldiers whom they kept and destroyed in concentration camps). I made my own calculations based on the study of census results, the number of formations and their numerical dynamics in the course of the war, the losses known to have been sustained in major operations, as well as on the scientifically substantiated estimates done by Doctors of Science I. Vyrodov, Yu. Vlasevich, A. Kvasha, and B. Sokolov. The number of servicemen, partisans, underground workers, and civilians who perished over the years of the Great Patriotic war seems to vary from not less that 26-27 million people, out of which about 10 million perished on the battlefield or in captivity. The most tragic fate befell the first strategic echelon and the bulk of strategic reserves which bore the brunt of the war in 1941. The overwhelming majority of the cadre personnel of units and formations of this echelon laid down their lives, and over three million servicemen were taken prisoner. The losses suffered by us in 1942 were not significantly lower.

"Missing in action" is the most vague and politically ambiguous category of people. These include those who perished in battle, but whose names were not entered in unit loss reports, those taken prisoner, or who found themselves among the partisans, or whose lives carried them away to foreign lands. True, this number includes the people who wavered, fell in for promises and joined the RLA (Vlasov's Russian liberation army), or became policemen. But these were in the absolute minority. The fate of the overwhelming majority of those missing in action is outright tragic: death in combat or in captivity, or, "under the best circumstances," lengthy screenings at NKVD camps, with a risk of confinement there for years and years. Had Stalin possessed a self-critical mind, a simple comparison of his own and German military losses would have led him to the conclusion that he could shine as "a genius leader" largely because of people's ignorance. According to our estimates, the ratio of irretrievable losses stands at 3.2 to 1, and not to our advantage.

One has to take into account, of course, the Nazis' barbarian policy of a premeditated massacre of nations, especially the Slavs, Jews, and other ethnic groups. This is one of the main reasons for staggering losses. The bulk of the dead are the civilians. But even if one is to disregard the disastrous start of the war, Soviet military casualties were somewhat higher than those suffered by the Germans. True, Soviet soldiers and commanders learned how to fight smart during the second and third stages. Throughout the war, however, Stalin was guided by the principle, repeatedly set forth in his directives and orders, of reaching goals, "irrespective of the losses."

For a person shielded against any type of criticism, the value of a human life (of hundreds, thousands, or millions of people) gradually ceases to have any moral value. This is also one of the main reasons why the price of our victory was exceedingly high. It was treated from the very outset of the war not in terms of sorrowful bewilderment, but in terms of "unbridled will" of the leader who "led" us to victory. Its fruits will always have the bitter taste of immeasurable losses. Stalin had never been tormented by this problem. Stalin's socialism of sacrifices required sacrificial victories, too. The very immutability of this fact of history serves to emphasize not just the great patience and selflessness of the Soviet people, but also comes as a reminder: the leader had been *allowed* to become what he was. The decisive role played by the popular masses should not be viewed as something "in the final count..."

The war was won. One could finally take a full breast of the Caucasian air. Beriya keeps himself busy: although this operation of "bringing" the leader is simpler that the one in Berlin, still... Let me cite a few excerpts from a report made by the KGB deputy chief in the Krasnodar kray Zhdanov (the document gives no initials) to Merkulov: "On Measures Being Taken In Connection With Arrival of a Special Moment in Sochi...(according to the text - D.V.). The anti-Soviet elements registered by the Sochi department are being actively worked on and placed under surveillance. The arrests are carried out in their stead... The forest and park area, stretching from the Golovinka river to the Psou river is being combed. The censorship center has been expanded. The passport regime has been made more rigorous. Automobile transport has been placed under stricter control. 184 posts have been stationed from the railway terminal to the dacha. The entire itinerary is under guard. An energy train unit has been installed. Com. Vlasik is being briefed on a daily basis."

Not only in Germany, but in his own land the "leader of the peoples" was awfully afraid for his life. He covered part of the way in a car. As always, Vlasik, Poskryobyshev, Istomina, and numerous aides, security personnel and other "service" people accompanied Stalin on his vacation. Incidentally, it was after this trip that Stalin gave an order to build a modern highway to Simferopol.

As he passed through Orel, Kursk and other towns and villages, Stalin more than once got out of the car to talk to people... He was stunned by the stoicism and selflessness of the women and children who found themselves probably in the worst predicament during the war. Cities laid in ruins, but when Stalin had come to the south, he was told that Beriya's department was very busy building new state-owned dachas near Sukhumi, Noviy Afon, on the Ritsa, the Kholodnaya river and other places. Soon Stalin became bored by mixing with people as he proceeded on his vacation trip, he found it vexing having a crowd gather around him and stare at him avidly. "Stalin himself!" loyal shouts were heard, women had the tears of joy in their eyes, and the men assured him cheerfully: "Things are looking up, Comrade Stalin!;" he caught the surprise looks of the old people and children - "This is Stalin, isn't he?"

Indeed, he realized that to be very popular he would rather wave his hand to the crowd from the mausoleum, be seen in newsreels, meet people on a daily basis only by way of portraits, statutes, or busts. Stalin more or less understood the psychology of mass consciousness: he realized that during those meetings people began to feel somewhat disillusioned deep in their hearts. They saw in front of them a small person, with an angular body, a squat torso and rather long arms and legs. The military tunic showed a pouch draped in the Marshall's uniform. He had thin hair and a pock-marked, pallid face of a sedentary person. His irregular teeth were not particularly white, and only his livid darting yellow eyes betrayed pent-up energy, power, and self-confidence. One woman in Kursk even dared to touch the sleeve of his tunic - so wide was, obviously, the discrepancy between her image of him in her mind and what she saw now. Very soon Stalin detected not only the joy and delight at meeting the leader in people's eyes, but a thinly veiled disillusion at the sight of the ungainly Generalissimo and the "leader of all epochs and peoples."

Stalin's monosyllabic questions to the people around him produced the same monosyllabic exclamatory answers which rather betrayed amazement, inertia of deification, and expectation of a miracle. But the miracle... did not come. People virtually "gaped" at him, finding it hard to believe that they were seeing Stalin Himself in front of them. A god on earth, a person cannot - simply cannot - but disillusion people during his personal contact with them! He is just as everybody else; many of those magic-making, sagacious, clairvoyant, and epic features were ascribed to him and made up by the people themselves. An entire system of myths, cliches, and legends "works" not until people directly confront the carrier of all these attributes of deification.

Bumping in a heavy limousine, Stalin became more and more convinced: a mysterious and taciturn leader, appearing in public but rarely, has his advantages over a "populist." He would not allow such thoughtlessness any more. He should combine an illusion of omnipresence with godly aloofness in the future as well. He should remain in the people's eyes a person who has built socialism, crushed all "enemies of the people," defeated fascism, and the one who will soon, with the wounds healed, beckon people towards new "great construction projects of Communism." No, his strength lay in his mystique and his ability to unite people in a new campaign during the period of triumphs, vanities, and languor of the spirit. Like in the Ecclesiastes, only he, the leader, could determine the right "time to kill and the time to heal, the time to destroy and the time to build." Stalin should have had a keen feeling that he was needed *only by the system* which he had created, and no other. Front-line fighters -"Decembarists" have been waiting for the changes in vain. One has to strengthen the system, build up the power of the state, and sweep away all those who is not ready for it. The great victory that he has won serves as a timeless proof of his being historically correct.

It may seem that we have been thinking up too many things "for Stalin," but it appears that we have done this properly enough, through analyzing an immense number of documents, eyewitness testimonials, and the logic of his action. The steps that Stalin took and the decisions he made point out unequivocally: the autocrat intended to change nothing in the way the things were. It is the people who could and should be changed, without altering the main thing: an overall unshakeable setup that has brought him to the very pinnacle of power.

In his last work, "Kingdom of Spirit and Kingdom of Caesar," written before his death, N. Berdyaev defines Caesar as Man-God. And the "state bent on serving the Caesar takes no interest in man; man exists for it as

nothing but a statistical entity. When this entity begins to take too much interest in the state, this is the worst thing, because the state begins to enslave not only an outside, but also an inside person." Stalin showed scant interest in an individual; the realm of his interests included, we shall repeat, the masses, nations, alliances, coalitions, and epochs. He had long come to believe that Providence, had he admitted its existence, put on his shoulders the responsibility of making the world a different place; if not all of it a Communist one, at least the one that has made major strides towards Communism.

Although the past war gave Stalin a profound shock, it eventually confirmed his belief that he was historically right. He shed for good the "prejudices" of consciousness, abandoned a half-hearted play at "democracy," and deprived people of what could be called an option of social choice. Stalin was confident that the system that he wanted to conserve now was the closest possible to the one postulated by the founders of scientific socialism. Everything has been programmed, specified, scheduled, and predetermined. As soon as the war-damaged building of socialism was rebuilt and refurbished, he would float again the slogan: "Catch up and overtake!"

Stalin could not but feel a general shift to the left, if one may so, which had taken place after the Victory. Antifascist fight united the masses, revived democratic forces, and subdued the reactionaries. The heroic and selfless effort undertaken by the USSR peoples evoked profoundly good feelings for the Soviet state. Even many White Guard members, emigre intellectuals, and just "ex-es" warmed to the Soviet Union. Stalin found particularly interesting the "signals" that came from Paris from Georgian Mensheviks, since he knew personally many of them. Soon after the end of the war, he ordered that secretary of the Georgian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee Shariya, who was in charge of propaganda, be sent to Paris. Stalin studied Shariy's report closely and at length, which was brought to him by Beriya and Abakumov. The Georgian names of Kediya, Arsenidze, Tsereteli, Chkhenkeli, Gobechiya, Takanshvili, and others brought the leader back to the years of what was now distant revolution, struggle, and a wide rift.

Shvariya said that Georgian emigres handed him ancient manuscripts, gold and silver artifacts, old coins, and archaeological items to be returned to the Homeland. On Moscow's instructions, he also met with Noy Zhordaniya, Yevgheniy Gheghechkory, Iosif Gobechiya, and Spiridon Kediya. Zhordania said at the beginning of the meeting that he reiterated his belief about the absence of democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, elections, and private enterprise in the Soviet Union. However he said then that (the leader underlined the words): "Stalin won the war. I consider him the greatest of men. It would be stupid to deny his grandeur because of political differences. History will have even more to say about his greatness. It will unveil those sides of his activity which are still unknown to contemporaries" (Zhordaniya was absolutely right on this score! - **D.V.**). Many of the former political opponents expressed their desire to go home. On reading the memo, Stalin might have thought: the victors are always right!

In-depth processes have developed within the structure of international relations under the impact of liberation. The colonial empires began to disintegrate, and the world felt the quickened pulse of the national-liberation movements. Communists would occupy key positions in the Eastern European countries and then in China. Stalin could already feel the currents of a new revolutionary upsurge and justifiably believed that the Communist movement was having its "second wind."

True, this wind was soon suppressed by the "cold war," which is known to have been ushered in following Churchill's Fulton speech on 5 March 1946, as well as due to the internal difficulties in the Soviet Union. Vast expanses of the country were stricken by severe drought in 1946. The iron ring of severe shortages of bare necessities held the victorious country within its tight grip. The Western Ukraine and the Baltic republics became the scene of a low-profiled, protracted, and severe war - the war ill-known to the country even now - between the government forces and opposition units. Despite Stalin's personal instruction to "expedite the smashing of the gangs," it took a long time to eradicate the hotbeds of postwar resistance. Occasional clashes with the still armed gangs flared up in the Western Ukraine up to 1951.

Economic difficulties added to spiritual difficulties. The people's intuitive expectations of change for the better and hopes of a dignified life were again pushed into the indefinite future. In his pre-election speech at the Bolshoy theater, Stalin urged hard work and patience which our people are known to have plenty of.

Shroud of Stalin's 'Secrets'

Stalin was fond of secrets, both big and small. But he craved most of all for the secrets of power, of which there were plenty. Some of them were horrible. Only now did people begin to think how it happened that an absolutely amoral and physically unattractive person - utterly repulsive politically - could *make* himself "lovable" to all of the great people. How did he succeed in translating people's tragedies into personal triumphs? Why did millions, and not only in our country, believe him? Stalin knew the "secrets" of such phenomena, and he cherished and guarded them the same way as his personal secrets.

When so much is being written about the leader now it is natural for many authors to "divorce" Stalin from socialism and from the people. Trotskiy attempted to do the same some time ago, when he set down to write his book, "Stalin." This intention becomes apparent in many articles written by Soviet authors. Initially, I too tried to "dissociate" him, but I came to the conclusion that it cannot be done without undermining the historical truth. Can one really view "separately" Stalin and the people in the 1930's and 1940's? Were the people and

the party without a leader? Did not they sing praise to their leader who orchestrated the affairs of a huge country?

Herein lies, perhaps, Stalin's greatest "secret." He managed to symbolize and epitomize socialism. However, Stalin can probably be "dissociated" from socialism to a certain extent if one realizes that when the building of socialism was announced in the late 1930's, *a transitionary* period was actually under way. Immature socialism allowed the person not worthy of its lofty ideals to emerge as its leader. The triumphant Stalin separated himself from the people as much as the model of socialism built according to his "blueprint" differed from Lenin's concept of it. Many positive things born in society became a reality first of all not owing to Stalin, but to what we call "the charge of October," its socialist momentum. But I shall repeat that it is impossible to completely dissociate oneself from *Stalin's* socialism.

Banking on the use of force in dealing with many economic, social, and ideological issues, Stalin realized too well that without a change in public mind it would be impossible to create a situation that enabled him, the leader, constantly to be the centerpiece of the system being established. His idea of "a new person" was dramatically different from Lenin's idea of raising a harmoniously developed personality in socialist society. How was Stalin able to manipulate the public consciousness of the people and society? Of course, with the help of a large apparatus. Along with developing certain positive elements of consciousness, the ideas of the leader himself were unfailingly inculcated into it. The "secrets" of Stalin's influence on this process is quite simple at first sight.

Talking one day with Dmitriy Trofimovich Shepilov, a former Central Committee secretary, I heard him say the following: it was Stalin's practice to invite some representatives of creative intelligentsia, scientists and public figures for tete-a-tete talks.

"I know that he could suddenly invite a major writer, performer, journalist, or a producer," said Dmitriy Trofimovich. "This was a great occasion for that person: the leader himself condescended to invite him! A social or an ideological order was often issued during such meetings. Without a hard sell, but with much authority. One night I was told: call such-and-such number. Torn by guessing, I called the number. Stalin turned out to be at the other end.

'Comrade Shepilov! Can you spare some time? Could you come and see me now?'

'Yes, of course...'"

"I do not remember what else I said, but the phone went dead. I even did not know where to go. But they called me again at that point to say that a car would be sent for me in a few minutes.

Completely unaware, I walked down Kremlin corridors, accompanied by the silent staff of Stalin's secretariat. Kremlin guards stood still almost at every turn and on each floor.

The conversation lasted for over an hour," D.T. Shepilov continued his story. "Stalin began in a roundabout way: new times demanded new economy. The leaders, 'captains of industry,' as he said, were ill-grounded in economics. A new good textbook of socialist political economy has to be written fast." As I understood, the job was entrusted to me and to another two major scholars. He made well rehearsed recommendations: raise the degree of socializing the means of production, improve planning, make plan an "iron-clad law," to increase labor productivity and the like (Now we know all too well that the leader was talking about his 'power economics.'- **D.V.**). I felt ill at ease when Stalin stared at me without blinking. He seemed to be probing inside. His look, I can remember it even now, seared you, so to speak.

Stalin made his order. Tight schedule. The three of us were "hidden" in one of the dachas near Moscow. Suslov called at the end of each week and demanded: 'How are the things going? When can one read the text? Comrade Stalin is waiting. Just remember this!'

This was one of the methods of making a *personal* order for a play, a movie, a book, or a textbook. Stalin himself set the work's guidelines. The "secret" of this was simple - Stalin personally influenced the process of spiritual production in society in the *required* direction.

Critic Mikhail Shkerin, who met Mikhail Sholokhov more than once, wrote that on 21 May 1942, which was the author's birthday, Stalin suddenly invited the author of "Quiet Flows the Don" to dinner at his place. After a long tete-a-tete conversation, Stalin finally said the main thing, the reason he invited Sholokhov.

"The war is going on. A hard one. The hardest. Who is going to write about it vividly after the victory? With as much dignity as in 'Quiet Flows the Don'... Brave people have been portrayed both Melikhov, and Podtelkov and many Reds and Whites. But there is none like Suvorov or Kutuzov. But it is such great military leaders, Comrade writer, who win wars. I would like to wish you good health for many years to come on your birthday and a new talented all-encompassing novel, which like 'Quiet Flows the Don' truthfully and vividly portray heroic soldiers and military leaders of genius, participants in the current horrible war..."

The overriding "secret" of Stalin's influence on public consciousness lay in keeping constant tension in society. An atmosphere of a potential "civil war," or to be more exact, of a permanent fight against "enemies of the people," "spies," "doubters," "cosmopolitans," "renegades," and "wreckers," created the situation in which his instructions and urges of vigilance always fell on fertile soil. Stalin felt that the people, and especially the intellectuals, began to entertain dim but real hopes of

change after the end of the war. The war seemed to have freed people spiritually. Immediately Stalin gave an order to Zhdanov:

"We should strike at lack of ideological conviction... In literature one can see deviations from class principles in creativity. Check a couple of journals. Best of all in Leningrad..."

When Zdanov came to the city on the Neva river, after the ill-famous resolution "On Journals ZVEZDA and LENINGRAD" had been passed by the Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks), he said, according to the shorthand minutes of his speech: "This matter was brought for consideration by the Central Committee at the initiative of Comrade Stalin, who is personally aware of the work of the journals... and suggested that we discussed the shortcomings in running these journals; incidentally, he personally attended that meeting of the Central Committee and issued instructions which formed the foundation of the resolution." So, "personal participation" of a secretary of the Central Committee in a Central Committee session became a "historic event." Having given the names of the writers whose works were "alien to Soviet literature," Stalin tried to bring Soviet society back to an atmosphere of suspicion and fear. Stalin knew that a strong leader, a "firm hand," and resolute leadership were required when external and internal enemies posed constant threat. Stalin discovered this old "secret" of all the dictators earlier than anyone else. Who needs a dictator in a society free from enemies and dissidents, and free from struggle?

Stalin knew another "secret" of manipulating public consciousness: it is important to imbue it with the myths, cliches, and legends which are based not on rational knowledge but rather on faith. The leader's biography, the "Short History of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks)," and his speeches are by and large the spreading of myths and ideological cliches.

Sociologist G. Sorelle formulated a theory early in the century according to which the human masses not possessing high intellectual standards are more prone to trust irrational myths which require no explanation. Sorelle wrote that the myths gave an "intuitive" idea about socialism as a dream, an ideal, and a goal. One does not necessarily have to understand the myths; it is important to *believe* in them. And people were made believe in the absolute values of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," "the new man," and the infallibility of decisions made at the top. Ritualistic meetings, manifestations held according to preset scenarios, "oaths," and letters of greetings addressed to the leader sanctified and canonized political myths and turned them into an element of one's outlook. The truth-based conviction was superseded with *faith*. Stalin had achieved quite a lot in this. People believed in socialism, in him as their leader, in our society being the most perfect and advanced, and in the innocence of power.

Naturally, I am far from denying outright the significance of one's belief in ideals and socialist values, but I am also far from seeing them as something ossified, eternal, and exceptional. Consciousness basing itself on nothing but a myth loses a very important faculty: an ability to engage in constant *socially creative endeavor*. Herein lies one of the sources (along with economic and political reasons) instrumental in shaping up a social personality that is characterized, along with positive traits, by indifference and passive attitude to one's work, unshaken faith in instructions, a possibility and need to have all problems taken care from the top, dependency and lack of initiative. This type of consciousness, molded according to Stalinist recipes, perceives the multicolored and varied world only through black-and-white glasses, in a take-it-or-leave-it manner. The category of personal freedom is only secondary for such consciousness. Such a person expects to be "led," "guided," and "inspired." We are reaping now the fruits of indifference, lack of initiative and a formal attitude to work. All this became possible as a result of autocracy and those "secrets" of Stalin's which helped the leader to rule.

I do not think that Stalin had ever read Plato's dialogues, at least I have not been able to uncover any signs indicating that his was familiar with the Greek philosopher's famous work "State." There is no doubt that the general rules which many autocrats had followed since the ancient times form the framework of many "secrets" of Stalin's absolute rule.

A dictator, or a "tyrant," as Plato defines him, is usually brought up as a "people's protege." Typically, "during his first days and initially in general, he always smiles amicable to whomever he meets, claims that he is no tyrant himself; he makes many promises to individuals and to society." The tyrant lives among people, and the secret of his power lies in his ability to turn his enemies into friends and the other way round. "After he has reached accommodation with some of his enemies, and has destroyed some of them, so that they do not bother him any more, I think his main task will be to constantly involve citizens in some wars, so that the people had a need for a leader." Plato seemed to have seen through the ages. "If he suspects someone of having free thoughts or of denying his rule, he will destroy such people under the pretext that they have sided with the enemy. The tyrant has to constantly stir everyone with the help of war for this purpose." The internal "war" in the first place.

What comes next? We ask and look for Plato to give us an answer about dictators' eternal "secrets." "Some influential people who contributed to his rise will begin to voice their displeasure at what is going one both openly and in conversations with each other, at least the more brave ones." As one reads the dialogues, one tends to forget that they were written in... 4th century B.C. Don't Plato's words match what we know about Stalin and Lenin's retinue: "The tyrant will have to destroy

them all in order to preserve his power, so eventually none of the friends or the enemies is going to be left, capable of anything."

We can continue quotes from Plato's dialogues about "tyrants" and "a tyrannical man," but those already cited seem sufficient to claim that in addition to specific features of dictatorial rule in different epochs, it has something in common: the ruling individual cannot act other than "on behalf of the people." Dictators mercilessly weed out their "comrades-in-arms" and "friends"; they tolerate no iconoclasts and seek to keep people in suspense, focusing their attention on numerous enemies. The threat of war or of evil forces is an absolute must to highlight the leader's messiah's role... Ignorant of Plato (as of many other thinkers), Stalin learned these "secrets" reading the life stories of Russian tsars.

A rich album was released on the occasion of the Romanovs' 300th anniversary, similar to those albums about "great" leaders which were published under Stalin and after him during the Soviet period. Holding all Russian tsars, emperors and empresses belonging to the clan of the Romanov boyars in despise, the leader found time to leaf through a thick book. Lingering on a page describing the death of Alexander II following his assassination, Stalin read: "As the Emperor was coming back from the Mikhailov Palace, he was mortally wounded by a bomb thrown at him at 2:35 p.m. on the Yekaterinenskiy canal... Leaning towards the sovereign's right shoulder, the Grand Duke asked him softly whether His Highness could hear him, to which the sovereign answered softly: 'I can'; as to the next question how the sovereign was feeling, the Emperor said: 'Fast to the palace... take me to the palace... to die there.' These were the last words that the witnesses to the heinous crime could hear." Stalin shut the huge book, thinking with good reason: had he been strong, you would get them, not they getting you... More than anyone among his "comrades-in-arms," he realized that any power has some common features, even the one filled with diametrically opposite social and political content. It has to be strong, especially if it is a dictator's power. It had many old "secrets," and Stalin learned them very well.

Equally well did he imbibe the idea that was the centerpiece of all the "secrets" behind his power: struggle has to be maintained at a high pitch in the society. He felt himself confident in it, this struggle. We shall remember that for him all of his prerevolutionary life was nothing but the struggle - to survive, to prevail, and to undermine the foundation of autocracy. The situation in the Twenties was such that he was able to put this struggle on a plane of ideological vilification and political elimination of all those who thought differently from him, who even potentially could lay claim to playing a premier role. Stalin turned the fight for the choice among the ways and means of development, into the one for laying out his personal stake. In the Thirties, the struggle was reduced on his own accord to physical annihilation of all real, and more important, potential adversaries. He had succeeded in it so well that I think that the earthlings, if they are to survive, will associate barbarity centuries hence not only with the names of Tamerlane, Chinghiz Khan, and Hitler, but with that of Stalin too. He had not written a separate book called "Mein Kampf," as was done by a man with whom Stalin is often compared. But in his life and action, this was really *his struggle* against an numberless swarm of enemies, fewer real ones and more imaginary foes.

Fascists were the most real of all his enemies, the fascists with whom he tried to build the relations under the camouflage of "friendship," most likely for tactical reasons. But the fight with Hitlerites, which put not only his career but his great cause on the brink of disaster, the cause which he attempted to make personal, eventually took him back to the very top of power and glory. Having reached the peak of his power, he could not but understand that he owed it not just to the interplay of historical circumstances, a coincidence, and an irrefutable idea, but primarily to the methods he had chosen to carry out his aspirations. These methods were nothing but perpetual struggle. It does not matter what shape it took: a fight against fractions, for industrialization, collectivization, against "cosmopolitans," and against many other "fortresses" which the "Bolsheviks had to take." In the final count, for him as a leader such a fight spelled establishing himself, becoming immortalized and deified.

Stalin had always remembered that for human existence the idea of class struggle was fundamental for him. Even after the landlords and capitalists had been smashed, he discovered another "class" - the kulaks - which had to be wiped out. Finally left without apparent class enemies who could be constantly "beaten," Stalin found a formula under which they would be always appearing. Sitting in his Kremlin office during the wee hours, one week before the sinister plenum in February-March, Stalin was searching for a definition, or a conclusion that would enable him to make struggle within society "permanent." The words contained in his key sentence, the words crossed out and changed many times, indicate how long had Stalin been looking for it. Finally the dictator formulated what he needed. Let us remind you of this excerpt from the plenum's shorthand report: "The more headway we make and the more successes we score, the more embittered will be the remnants of the smashed exploiter classes, the sooner will they resort to acute forms of struggle, the more will they try to mess up the Soviet society, the more will they grab the most desperate means of struggle, as the doomed people's last resort." The speech contains further one significant sentence: "we shall smash the enemies the same way we have been smashing them now and smashed them in the past."

The banking on ceaseless struggle, interpreted in antagonistic, ruthless, uncompromising, and unequivocal terms, lies only one of the main "secrets" of Stalin's methodology of thinking and acting. Stalin did not stop even after he had succeeded in making the great people keep silent. To use Plato's definition, the "tyrannical

man" summoned minister of the internal affairs Kruglov in January 1948 and issued an order: come up with "specific proposals" for establishing new, additional camps and prisons of special purpose. Stalin detected something alarming amid the barely perceptible currents in the vast homeland (he did not issue instructions to frame up the "Leningrad case" yet!) - there were more instances of people expressing their dissatisfaction, attempts were made to cross the border; some of the writers became silent as if protesting against the hopelessly tightening grip of autocracy.

"Report draft decision in February," summed up Stalin. "We should create special conditions for the Trotsiyites, Menshevisk, Social Revolutionaries, anarchists, and White emigres..."

"I will, Comrade Stalin, I will," an obedient functionary of Beriya's repeated several times.

I do not want the reader to think that I mixed up historical dates. No, in 1948 Stalin again began to talk about the Trotsiyites, Mesheviks, Left Revolutionaries, and anarchists... I think that he invested these bugbears with the names of "new" enemies: neo-Trotskiyites, neo-Mensheviks, neo-Left Revolutionaries, and so on. Kruglov did not keep him waiting. Poskryobyshev presented the following document to the leader in mid-February:

"Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks)
Comrade Stalin I.V.

According to your instructions, I herein submit draft resolution by the Council of Ministers on organizing strict security camps and prisons for specially dangerous state criminals and on sending them for settlement in the far away localities of the USSR after they have served their time.

Request your decisions.

V. Abakumov, S. Kruglov."

The resolution said that "Trotsiyites, terrorists, the righists, Mensheviks, Left Revolutionaries, anarchists, nationalists, and White emigres" had to be sent to dozens newly established camps in the Kolyma, near Norilsk, in the Komi ASSR, Yelabuga, Karaganda, and other places. The "Chekist work" should be conducted with the convicts "to uncover those remaining free; there should be no reduction in the length of isolation and no other privileges." Moreover, the MVD [ministry of internal affairs] was instructed "to delay the release of convicts if necessary, doing the required paperwork later on as prescribed by law." It sounds very meaningful: to delay people who have done their time "as prescribed by law!"

His "Approved" is nothing but a brushstroke in the leader's portrait. Struggle, violence, nonfreedom became for him an instrument of "building" a world Stalin style. It is always dangerous to turn something into an absolute. By turning class struggle into an absolute, the struggle which was one of the elements of development in many epochs, Stalin negated many real values of socialism. He trampled underfoot the most important of them, such as social justice, humanism, individuality, and freedom. Stalin's "secrets" of autocracy are the secrets of *regeneration.* Had Trotskiy, killed by the leader, been alive, he could have repeated his words: "Stalin is leading to Thermidor."

As the world was discovering more things about Stalin - and not just with the help of Feuchtwanger and Barbusse - more and more people became convinced that the turning of class struggle into an absolute was the main "power" of Stalin and the "secret" of his invulnerability. It appears that in his anti-Bolshevik satirical pamphlet "The Kingdom of Anti-Christ" D.S. Merezhkovskiy saw the mortal danger of this absolutizing before anyone else. Let us remind you what was written there three years following the October revolution: "Whether the idea of class struggle was good or bad, noble or despicable, we living people and participants in the struggle, executioners and victims knew something about it which Marx did not know and which all the Social Democratic pundits could not even dream of. This idea was just in their minds, with us it was in blood and bones: our blood is being spilled and our bones are cracking up from it." Indeed, Stalin had done so much, like no one else, to turn the idea that "was only in the minds" into the dominating element in politics, economics, ideology, culture, and social life. He could not remain calm if he had not heard and had not felt the convulsions of the victims of this idea.

It might have seemed that history was corroborating Stalin's having been right, when a general trend to the left became apparent in Europe and the world at large after the war. It seemed to many people that the iron plough of class struggle would soon start again to open the scars on the surface of the earth. It appears that no one tried to think in global terms at the time - the sword of Domocles of nuclear Appocalypse had not been clearly visible yet. Many people thought that the events would go beyond the collapse of the colonial system until the winds of the "cold war" had put on cold the social and public activity of the anti-imperialist forces.

Stalin's postwar speeches were still devoted to the "struggle" to rebuild the national economy; the "struggle" for the priority development of heavy industry, as before; and the "struggle" to revive agriculture. The situation in agriculture was very grim. The first postwar year saw a grain shortfall. Critical situation took shape following the stop of US grain shipments and a very poor harvest in the European part of the country. But these misfortunes did not upset Stalin. One had to postpone the abrogation of food coupons till the fall of 1947. It was not the first time that the country faced famine. Stalin recalled that the breakthrough year of 1943 witness a poor harvest as well. The Americans had helped people at the front then, while the country's population had withstood the misfortune stoically and at great sacrifice.

During one of his meetings with Stalin in April 1944, Beriya silently put in front of Stalin a report filed by the people's commissar of internal affairs of the Kazakh SSR Bogdanov, which was addressed to Moscow. The Supreme Commander did not have time to read it at that moment, but he leafed through an eight-page report from Alma Ata in the evening. The people's commissar of the republic wrote that the bad harvest of 1943 had caused considerable difficulties: thousands of people were bloated by hunger; there were many fatalities, especially among special resettlers. Stalin had other concerns, but his eye "caught" some specific facts cited by Bogdanov:

"Collective farm worker Kovalyova (Kamenskiy rayon of the Western Kazakhstan Oblast), whose husband perished at the front, has four children, lives in exceptionally harsh conditions, collects dead animals and waste...

The family of collective farm worker Fedosova (collective farm named after Voroshilov, of the Andreyevsk rayon of the Alma Ata Oblast), whose two sons have perished at the front and whose husband, wounded three times, is till at the front, receives no aid, and uses cats and dogs for food...

In 23 collective farms of the Zyryanov rayon of the Eastern Kazakhstan Oblast, most of the 110 families of front line fighters did not receive food for a long time; most of the children in a number of collective farms are bloated with hunger, and some are in the hopeless condition...

Collective farmers from the '5th December' farm in the Zelenovo rayon of the Western Kazakhstan Oblast dug out a horse corpse from a livestock grave and divided her meat among themselves....

A woman named Gastel on the 15 years of the RKKA [workers' and peasants' Red Army] collective farm in the near Urals rayon of the Western Kazakhstan Oblast left a suicide note: 'I'm killing myself because there is no way out and I have no support whatsoever.'"

He had just put the coded message aside at the time since he had other concerns... What about now? His thought followed its customary pattern: "Sacrifices are inevitable." Isn't it clear to everyone that the war, although it was over, continued to gather its harvest of sorrow? I could not find amidst numerous telegrams, reports, and memos on the dire food shortages experienced by the population a single sign of Stalin's constructive reaction showing his desire to help people somehow.

I saw many memos on famine which had never been reported either in the press or on the radio. Stalin had the same reaction after he had been told about a severe situation in the Chita Oblast in March 1945. True, Molotov issued instructions to send additional flour to Chita. They harvested ... 1.3 centners [hundredweight] per hectare that year. Beriya reported in one of his secret cables that children from the village of Butorino of the Beleysk rayon, for example, were steeling pig fodder...

The censors who opened letters sent to the front from the Chita Oblast stated: collective farmer Lesnikova wrote that in the Mogutuy rayon people ate dead chickens; they picked up the dead horses abandoned by the military and ate them up in Skovorodino; they ate up all of goosefoot, nettles, hops, and couch-grass roots in the Uletovo rayon, wrote collective farmer Kalashnikova...

It pains a great deal to write about this; the war was such a horrible calamity for the people. It would seem that its extremes both at the front and in the rear could not be attributed directly to Stalin. But he had always been a heartless person since he never doubted - and he was not the only one - that "loyalty" to revolutionary radicalism meant being ruthless along the way towards the designated peaks. He is going to be there as well, or at least his ideas would prevail there if he fails to live long enough to see Communism arrive! One can get bogged down in everyday routine if one dissipates his efforts for such trifles. A genuine leader should not be sentimental, thought Stalin. He is not going to say this in public; this is another "secret" of his. On the contrary, let everybody know that he is "showing concern" for all and sundry.

Many people used to believe for a long time that Stalin's rule was shored up primarily by his prestige, and spiritual and moral sway over people. But Stalin himself knew that this was not the case. His principal instruments included an apparatus of coercion centered on the NKVD and the party which he had been working hard to turn into an ideological "order" for a long time. These were not just the "transmission belts" for his will, but the main elements of the system which he had created. These very instruments identified socialism with the leader, as something wholesome and natural. All of these were the "secrets" of his power and influence, but he had his personal secrets as well.

It appears that Stalin did not keep any diary and was cautious as to what he wrote in his notes. Many documents were destroyed at his instruction after he had familiarized himself with them. The thick volumes of his correspondence contain notes: "Destroy these documents. I. St." (as a matter of fact, they wrote and reported to him, while he himself just passed oral or written decisions, leaving brief resolutions such as "Agree," "Report the results," "The thing has not been thought out well," and so on.). It has been established that they sometimes destroyed the memos reporting back to him on fulfilling some of his instructions to the NKVD.

Stalin was probably one of the few who could read those foreign materials which portrayed him in a malicious and caricatured manner of political satire. Reading these documents in translation made him fill with hatred: he became charged with anger against numerous enemies inside the country and abroad, finding some extra reserve for the incinerating fire in his heart, already overflowing with hatred.

For example, Stalin was told in August 1937 that poet T.N. Garin-Mikhaylovskiy, one of the "ex," a "fugitive" wanted to publish a poem "Pushkin And Stalin" in an emigre publication to make a living. The report was accompanied with the text of the poem, written as a dialogue between the leader and the great Russian poet. Maliciously and squeamishly Stalin turned over the pages of the text, typed on an old typewriter with a "yat" letter [old Russian letter replaced by "e"]. Skimming parts of it, he paused to read the poem's final verses:

"Stalin (wakes up, rubs his eyes, looks around, and leafs through a Pushkin volume. Alone)

It wasn't Pushkin, this is clear:

The quote is not at hand, or near...

Usurper I might have just seen

Appearing in my daytime dream...

But 'God does have a hungry feeling!'

And for a good reason was I seeing

Kebab and fine red wine to drink,

I have another name, I think (Shouts.)

Hey, servants, bring my daily feast

And GPU-convicted list

I just forgot to add a name

That curs'd Pushkin was to blame...

(Happily rubs his hands.)

S' Comrades, I do my every bit,

The state, I'm taking daily care o' it,

Like Volga's following its course...

Hey, Pushkin, 'Russia's Mine, not yours!"

He remembers that the same year he felt the same intense hatred after he had become familiar with one of Trotskiy's speeches, "I Accuse!" The speech made by Trotskiy at the New York hippodrome especially shocked him. "Why is Moscow so afraid of the voice of one person?" asked the exile. "Only because I know the truth, I have no reason to hide it. I am prepared to submit documents, facts and testimonials which hide the truth to an international commission of investigation. I declare that I shall voluntary surrender myself to the GPU if the commission finds me guilty in the least of the crimes which have been ascribed to me by Stalin. I am making this statement for all of the world to hear... But if the commission finds out that the Moscow trials are a deliberate and a premeditated provocation, I would require that my accusers take their place in the dock."

Stalin would keep such documents until he turned them over to Poskryobyshev after a while. The latter destroyed many of them, though some were preserved in secret archives. For Stalin, this was a tete-a-tete communicating with those whom he hated, against whom he fought, and who attacked him. "Charged" with hatred, Stalin also knew how to "discharge" - and millions of people experienced this...

A.A. Yepishev, who worked as a deputy minister of state security for a while, said that Stalin kept a thick exercise-book bound in black calico where he made occasional entries. He hardly did it to remember things because he had the memory "of a computer," although it began to fail him in his later years. It is possible that we shall never learn about the content of those entries. I do not know what source Aleksey Aleskeyevich drew upon, but he speculated that Stalin also kept personal letters written by Zinoviyev, Kamenev, Bukharin and even Trotskiy for a while.

No, the leader, unlike the last Russian tsar Nikolay Aleksandrovich Romanov, did not keep his daily diary. The Emperor's diary spanned 36 years, with not a single day missed (sic!), covering a total of fifty morocco notebooks! I do not think that Stalin would stoop as low as to keep a diary, like a gymnasium schoolgirl, filled with nothing but pedantry and trifles. Judging by his character, the dictator might write down some things of substance about the present and future action, about people and their future lives. Despite all my attempts, I could not find out either what were the contents of Stalin's personal notes, or what had happened with them. It befits some people to keep under wraps many things about Stalin today. Only Beriya and Poskreyobyshev had a direct access to Stalin. But shortly before Stalin's death, Poskryobyshev, the same as Vlasik (the two persons whom Stalin trusted most) was discredited by Beriya and removed from his retinue. Only three of them could know about those notes done by the leader, but Beriya was the only one who stayed near Stalin on the eve of his death.

After Stalin had suffered an apopolectic stroke, when Beriya and Khrushchev brought doctors in the morning (Stalin had no medical aid for 12 to 14 hours until then), the Stalin's monster determined at one that this was the end. During one of the days of Stalin's agony, Beriya rushed to the Kremlin, leaving Khrushchev, Malenkov and other Politburo members at Stalin's deathbed. Who can say now whether or not this Stalin's Fusche rushed to Stalin's safe in the first place? If he did, where could he have put Stalin's personal notes and his other papers?

Beriya could not but see the Master's attitude towards him becoming increasingly worse in the past year or year and a half. Stalin could not but entertain suspicions about Beriya's far-reaching intentions. Is it possible that the Generalissimo had left some instructions or even a will? The leader was surrounded with such reverential honor at the time they , it seems, might carry out his will. Beriya had every good reason to be leery of this and to move fast. We shall repeat that only he could get into Stalin's office since Stalin was guarded by Beriya's men.

Whatever the case, I have succeeded in establishing that Stalin's safe was virtually empty but for his party card and a sheaf of insignificant papers. Having destroyed Stalin's mysterious personal notebook (if it had been there), Beriya cleared his path to the very top of power. We might never learn this secret of Stalin's, but A.A. Yepishev was certain that Beriya had "cleaned" the safe before it was officially opened. It looks like he really had to do it.

Stalin had a habit of putting the documents he found interesting for some reason in a separate file: letter, coded messages, and testimonials. For instance, Beriya handed to Stalin the photocopies of Hitler's personal and political testaments early in 1946. Stalin had hoped to capture him alive so much? He read the translated texts of the Furhrer's testaments for a long time, pausing at length at some phrases: "Before my earthly abode came to an end, I decided to marry a maiden... she is going to die as my spouse of her own will... We wish to be burned on the spot right away."

"The pictures that I acquired over many years were collected not for personal purposes but to open a gallery in my native town of Lintz on the Dunabe."

"I do not want to get into the hands of the enemies, who need to have spectacles, staged by the Jews, in order to provide fun for their oppressed masses."

"I'm dying feeling joy in my heart... the national socialist movement will witness its shining revival."

Understanding the religious meaning more profoundly than anyone else, Stalin was particularly peeved at one phrase written by the degenerate: "Before my earthly abode came to an end, I decided..." Did he hope for the future life then? Not in Paradise?! Stalin had much regret that Hitler had managed to escape an international trial for military criminals, but these and some other documents sent to him from Berlin gave him a close-up of the sinister profile of the person against whom he fought tooth and nail all these years. Could he imagine that many years hence numerous historians, philosophers, and writers would compare him, Stalin, with the person he had vanquished, and would be looking for the features common to the two dictators? This is also an eternal secret.

The file contained other papers which Stalin obviously had looked through. They were preserved in his fund. Let us name just a few. The file had a letter written by the graduates of the Institute of Red Professors of 27 October 1935 where the newly graduated specialists complain of having been evicted from a dorm, where "class alien elements such as Princess Bagration" were left to stay. It also contains the minutes of the commission on disbanding the society of former political hard labor camp inmates and exile settlers. Signed by Ya. Peters and P. Pospelov, the memo, which Stalin read, says that the society is "dominated by former Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks closely tied up with each other. Forty-fifty members of the society were arrested after Kirov's assassination..." I said further that they put special emphasis on Bakunin, Lavrov, Tkachyov, Radishchev, Ogaryov, Lunin, and others "in their magazine CAMP AND EXILE. It included articles about Nietzsche and Kerenskiy; the magazine wrote how the Narodnaya Volya [people's will] members made their bombs (well, it looks suspicious)... Some members of the society believe that they should protect the members of their society arrested by Soviet authorities." The fate of the society was sealed after Stalin had read the memo.

Here is a letter in the folder, signed by Akulov, suggesting erection of a monument in the Perekov and in Chongar. The resolution: "To the archives. The matter postponed. There are no funds yet." A letter from prison by A. Ya. Kapler with a request to be sent to the front; Beriya's memo regarding the report from Yugoslav general Stefanovich about son Yakov, with whom he was in captivity for a while; Kruglov's report on the delivery of "Russian foreign archives" from Prague in December 1945. Letters addressed to Stalin by G. Yagoda, K. Radek, M. Zoshchenko, A. Zhdanov, O. Serova, and many others. As time went by, part of them were sent to personal archives, and some were obviously destroyed. Apart from official papers, the "personal correspondence" includes quite a few letters addressed directly to the leader. Familiarization with these documents also makes it possible to lift part of the shroud with which the dictator covered his secrets. The society that Stalin was building was to be very closed, and, naturally, any glasnost or public information were ruled out. It is easier to lead people who know as little as possible. It was Zhdanov, Suslov and their disciples who took care of this "little."

There is another secret which is unlikely to be ever unveiled in full: the death of Stalin's wife. Official statements and different versions have been on record long ago, but it seems that each of them is not convincing enough. Let us voice one consideration on this score. The archives contain an interesting document: a petition addressed to M.I. Kalinin pleading clemency for Aleksandra Gavrilovna Korchagina, an inmate in the Solovki concentration camp. The appeal is written in violet pencil on several pages from an exercise-book on 22 October 1935.

The lengthy letter makes it clear that A.G. Korchagina, a party member, had worked as a maid in Stalin's family for five years. She was arrested when one of the convicts who used to work in the Kremlin before, a Sinelobov, said that Korchagina allegedly claimed that Stalin himself had shot Nadezhda Sergheyevna. Korchagina denies this fact in her letter, not with much conviction though, invoking an official version of Alliluyeva's "heart attack." Sinelobov (there are no initials in the text - D.V.), guard Ya. K. Glome, who was Korchagina's live-in boy friend, and a nameless secretary of the primary party cell inquired the maid why the cause of death was not given in the papers. The petition indicates that the official version of death left many people

unsatisfied, the more so that, as Korchagina writes, on the night of her death Stalin returned to his Kremlin apartment apparently after his wife. It looks that all those speculations, of which Stalin learned, frighted him and he decided not just to remove Karchagina but to use her arrest to make all those privy to the affair keep silent. That is - keep silent.

The trials were held Stalin style even then, at the end of 1935 and early 1936. Korchagina writes to Kalinin that investigator Kogan made her admit accusation by using threats and then he sentenced was passed without a trial: the Solovki concentration camp. Enclosed with the letter is a verdict by NKVD special representative Lutskiy which says that Korchagina A.G. "is involved in the case of counterrevolutionary terrorist groups in a government library, the Kremlin's commandant's office, and others." The "all-Union headman" made a laconic resolution: "Rejected. M.I. Kalinin. 3 August 1936."

It should be added that in fact many people believed at that time that Aliluyeva had not killed herself, but was shot dead by Stalin in a fit of fury, who did not want to stand his capricious wife, known for her strong character, any longer. This version does not look infeasible if one takes into account the fact that Stalin completely lacked what we call decency. He never hesitated to send his friends, Politburo fellow-members, and comrades-in-arms of the Civil War vintage, and in-laws to the guillotine of Lawlessness. Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that Nadezhda Sergheyevna not only became tired of her husband's lack of sympathy, but used this tragic action to express her protest against many things she was aware of. This is another secret that is unlikely to be unraveled.

Among his personal "secrets" there is the one connected with his elder son Yakov. A couple of testimonials indicate that one or two attempts had been made to organize an escape by Second Lieutenant Ya. Dzhugashvili, a fact that we mentioned in book one, referring to D. Ibarruri. Let us repeat that at the time Stalin wanted to protect himself rather than save his son. He thought that the fascists would be able to break Yakov's will and use him against his father's authority. But the Germans mentioned the name of Dzhugazhvili in their propaganda more and more rarely, until they turned silent completely. It is likely that Stalin calmed down completely only after the USSR commissar of internal affairs reported to him on 5 March 1945:

"State Defense Committee,

Comrade Stalin I.V.

A group of Yugoslav officers were liberated from a German camp at the end of January of this year by the First Belorussian front. Among those set free is General of Yugoslav Gendarmerie Stefanovich, who told the following story:

Second Lieutenant Dzhugashvili Yakov and also Captain Robert Blum, son of France's ex-Prime Minister Leon Blum, and others were kept in the 'X-C' camp in the city of Lubeck. Dzhugashvili and Blum were kept in the same cell. Stefanovich had visited Dzhugashvili about 15 times, offering him material aid, but the latter refused and behaved independently and haughtily. He would not stand up in front of German officers, for which he was locked up in a punishment cell. The Germans' newspaper gossip about me is a lie, said Dzhugashvili. He was confident of the USSR's victory. He wrote his Moscow address for me: Granovskiy Street 3 Apt. 84.

Beriya"

As the leader's strength was ebbing closer to the end of his life, he thought more and more often: what are historians going to be left with after he is gone? What kind of traces has he left for them? What is his documentary and epistolary heritage. This probably explains why eighteen months prior to his birthday, Stalin asked Malenkov to carefully examine the archives: which materials related to Lenin and himself, Stalin, have remained unknown? There are grounds to believe that he was less interested in Lenin. A very wily person, Stalin realized that this "inventory-taking" of the archives would raise no false interpretations or doubts neither now nor in the future when carried out "in conjunction" with Lenin. This was an easy thing to do, since almost all the main archives were in the MVD custody. Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov reported eight-ten months later:

"Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks),
Comrade Malenkov G.M.

The MVD archive organs have been carrying out systematic work to uncover and preserve original archive documents written by V.I. Lenin and I.V. Stalin.

A full page-by-page review was carried out in 1948 of 190,000 cases and documentary materials contained in 38 major archive funds: those of the Central Executive Committee, Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and RSFSR, USSR STO, people's commissariat of nationalities, USSR NKVD, people's commissariat of education, all-Union Council of national economy, newspaper IZVESTIYA, management administration of the republic's revolutionary council and others.

As a result of the page-by-page scrutiny of the mentioned number of documentary materials, 1,203 autographs and copies of authentic documents written by V.I. Lenin and I.V. Stalin... were discovered and turned over to the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

A total of 58,000 cases will be reviewed this year in the archives of the October revolution and socialist construction with this purpose in mind.

28 January 1949

Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov."

According to some information, G.M. Malenkov reported to Stalin on the results of such "reviews" more than once. I do not think that all the documents found their way to the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Stalin went to great pains to be sure that history retained what he had "allowed." It is not surprising, therefore, that the archives do not have many genuine documents, while the copies do not carry his resolutions. These are also the exclusive secrets of Stalin's. Many of them are really hard to uncover.

In general, Stalin took interest in the archives "from this point of view." After he had been told that the Czechoslovakian government was planning to present the "Russian foreign archives" as a gift to the USSR, he issued an order to organize the reception and review of the fund's documents. The same Kruglov reported on 3 January 1946 that nine car loads of documents had been delivered to Moscow under NKVD protection (archives of the governments of Denikin, Petluyra, personal archives of Alekseyev, Savinkov, Milyukov, Chernov, Brusilov, and many other Russian personalities.). Books and materials covering the history of the October socialist revolution and the Civil War featured prominently in the archives.

Experts at the Academy of Sciences I. Nikitskiy, S. Bogoyavlenskiy, I. Mints, S. Sutotskiy were invited to receive the documents, but it were the NKVD top officials who managed the entire process and reported to Stalin on the contents and the archives' future. Sorting out the Russian foreign archives, NKVD staffers discovered, for example, a manuscript written by Aleksey Alekseyevich Brusilov, the former Tsarist general who carried out the famous "Brusilov breakthrough" during the first world war as commander of the southwestern front. He served in the Red Army since 1920, was a cavalry inspector with the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, was assigned to the revolutionary military council of the USSR as an emissary for most important duties since 1924. The manuscript of his book, "I Remember," completed in 1925 as he was undergoing treatment in Karlovy Vary (Brusilov died next year) was clearly not intended to by published in the USSR.

Brusilov writes in a memo attached to the manuscript: "It is clear to everybody that I could not have written anything in the USSR. I'm leaving these notebooks in the custody of friendly people abroad and request them not to make them public until my death... If people in Europe want to save their order, family and homeland, let them understand my mistake and not to repeat it. Our political parties feuded and bickered until they put Russia to ruin!"

The memo reveals the confusion of a person, seven scores years old, who loved Russia but who could not understand and accept the revolutionary cataclysm. This memo came to Stalin as another "proof" of being right in not trusting "specialists."

Stalin could turn anything into a secret. They even brought census sheets of July 1938, which listed members of the families of the ruling elite, were brought to the dictator to review. Stalin followed the listed names with a pencil:

- Beriya Nina Teymuradovna, a Georgian, scientific worker, son Serghey, age 14.
- Kaganovich Mariya Markovna, daughter Maya and son Yuriy.
- Voroshilova Yekaterina Davydovna.
- Zhemchuzhina Polina Semyonovna; daughters Svetlana Vyacheslavovna Molotova and Rita Aronovna Zhemchuzhina.
- Andreyeva Dora Moiseyevna Khazan, daughter Nataliya Andreyevna.

Stalin's red pencil ticked off the names, which only he knew why he singled out, and "took inventory" of the in-laws of his lieutenants. He drew a heavy line under the name of the polster: Kharitonov I.S. Secrets, mysteries... The society he was building could not exist without them.

Stalin likes secrets and knew how to keep them. All of his behind-the-scenes life is wrapped in a shroud resembling a cerement. He constantly kept an eye on all his "comrades-in-arms." Those could not err either in word or in deed. As soon as Voznesenskiy, who was capable of harsh and daring evaluations, had overstepped the invisible boundary of permissible, his fate abruptly changed. The leader's "comrades-in-arms" knew about this very well. Beriya regularly reported the results of surveillance of the dictator's lieutenants. In turn, Stalin watched Beriya, but the information was not very complete. The reports were delivered orally, which means that they were super secret.

Stalin was fond of sorting through the lists of party workers, statesmen, diplomats, and the military, leaving the marks he alone could understand next to individual names: asterisks, crosses, minuses, double lines. This could mean election or the failure of election to the Central Committee, the Supreme Soviet, horizontal or vertical promotion, and sometimes the worst. It appears that these decisions were motivated by the degree of personal loyalty to the leader (but all of them were loyal!) and based on some other criteria he alone was aware of.

It is hard for prominent people, who are very much in the public eye, to have personal secrets. There is not need for this in a democratic society. Information about the composition of families of Politburo members, their likes and tastes, and their attitude to certain issues and problems were kept a state secret of particular importance during Stalin's period. Mysteriously secret and lackluster, the leadership was destined just to create a background of "retinue," "comrades-in-arms," and "like-minded persons." Stalin and Beriya always had in their arsenal a secret about a possible "conspiracy," "assassination," and "act of terror." Stalin was really mortally afraid of assassination. Knowing what he was

saddled with, he surmises that there could (must!) be people in the society similar to the Narodnaya volya members or Social Revolutionaries who put special state on terror.

Stalin had expected to be assassinated his whole life, but it would not happen... The leader underestimated his ability to be able to make the people keep silent and quiet. The dictator destroyed those who knew what kind of socialism Lenin had in mind, while the waves of new young generations - because of Stalinist demagogy - believed that socialism should look the way Stalin was building it. His lieutenants were aware of the leader's pathological fear of an assassination, and were scared to death to incur any suspicions about themselves, the suspicions which could become fatal.

The closeness of society starts with its leaders. Stalin had achieved quite a lot in this regard. Just a small fraction of his private life became public knowledge. Thousands, millions of portraits, sculptures, and busts reflected a mysterious person, whom the people deified and worshiped, but were completely ignorant about. Stalin knew how to keep the strength of his power and his individuality a secret, putting on public display only what was designated for jubilation and adoration. The remainder was shrouded in the darkness of mystique.

Paroxysm of Violence

All people living on earth are given the same measure of time. The leaders are no exception. His years felt like a burden on his shoulders, while his glory kept growing. In fact, it became global. Both friends and enemies had to take into account his will, astute mind, and designs. Long before his 70th birthday, Politburo discussed at Malenkov's initiative a long list of measures and actions to mark the birthday in a worthy manner. These included not only to immortalize the leader's name through erecting new monuments and giving his name to integrated works and construction projects, but countless labor reports. The fund "Correspondence with Comrade Stalin" includes a great number of reports, reports by people's commissars (and then by ministers), plant managers, and Obkom secretaries. But most of the appeals come from Beriya. The latter began to please Stalin with the reports of labor accomplishments of his people's commissariat back during the war. For example, he reported on 26 January 1944:

"State Defense Council

Comrade Stalin I.V.

I report that the Chelyabinsk metallurgy construction enterprise of the NKVD has completed the first stage of the heating plant at the Chelyabinsk metallurgical plant and commissioned turbine No. 1 with the capacity of 25 thousand kilowatts and boiler No. 1. The construction of the thermal plant was started on an underdeveloped plot of land in March 1943 and completed within a short period of 10 months.

I'm submitting for your consideration a report by construction workers and a draft reply telegram.

People's Commissar of Internal Affairs

of the USSR L. Beriya."

We shall mention it again that Beriya's reports were coming in a regular stream. One had the impression that his department worked better then anyone else's. One year before his birthday, Beriya's successor Kruglov showered the leader with similar cables:

"Comrade Stalin I.V.

The USSR Ministry of the Internal Affairs is reporting to you, Comrade Stalin, that miners from the Pechora coal basin, working to meet ahead of time the target of the third year of the five-year plan, fulfilled their coal output quota on December 19 (one the eve of the leader's birthday - **D.V.**)... Miners from the Pechora coal basin will give the country 200,000 tons of coal above the quota till the end of the year.

USSR Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov."

The same kind of "miners" worked at hundreds, thousands of enterprises in the country worked under the guards' convoy. Stalin considered this absolutely normal, since the building of new society required stiff selection. All those unfit to be called "a new man" had to undergo a lengthy reeducation in many camps. Even when the fascist were within a long-range gun's shot from Moscow, dozens of NKVD units and formations guarded a huge number of convicts, most of whom should have been in the front had the system been just with regard to them. Then Zhukov and other military commanders would not have to put together everything that was at hand in order to close breaches in the front line - to pitch cadet schools, different courses, people's voluntary units, military warehouse personnel and guard companies... Indeed, during the most difficult times, dozens of NKVD units and formations were guarding "enemies of the people" whom Stalin seemed to be afraid of not less than the fascists.

The documents show that it was Stalin who suggested turning convicts into a source of cheap labor force with no rights. His speech at the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on 25 August 1938, which encouraged lawlessness and allowed to keep inmates in the camps even after their time had been done, was immediately codified in an appropriate legal act, whose price thousands upon thousands of people learned at their own expense.

Former worker Aleksandr Gheorghiyevich Kabayev, now a pensioner in Bugruslan, told me how his father, an aircraft factory engineer in Moscow, was arrested in 1936 for "counterrevolutionary Trotsky activity," about which he did not have the slightest idea, and sentenced to five years. Without any trial, another six years were added. In 1947 he rejoined his family, exiled in Bugruslan, but did not spend much time with it, for soon he was

arrested again, put in prison and, without any trial, exiled to the Krasnoyarsk Kray, where he died. A broken and spoilt life. How many people have become victim to such arbitrariness? Who can say? Who knows?

After a while, Beriya organized, with Stalin's consent and approval, a whole system of exploiting in prisons the country's intellectual potential: engineers, doctors, architects, construction workers, technology experts, and scientists. Many major inventions and discoveries, which played an important role in bolstering defense, were made using the brains and hands of these people during the war. In some instances, this was the way for these people to win their freedom. Here is one example. Beriya prepared the following report in February 1944:

"Chairman of the State Defense Committee
Comrade Stalin I.V.

The following work, having major significance for defense, was done according to the projects designed by imprisoned experts of the 4th special department of the NKVD at the No. 16 NKAP plant over 1942-1943:

1. Experimental RD-1 jet liquid engines, designed to be installed in planes as boosters, were build according to the design of Glushko V.P.

2. Powerful MB-100 aircraft engines with a take-off capacity of 2,200 horsepower and 2,425-horsepower MB-102 engine were built according to the design of Dobrovolskiy A.M. by coupling serial M-105 engines....

Considering the importance of the work being done, the NKVD thinks it is expedient to set free imprisoned specialists, expunging their previous convictions, who have distinguished themselves most of all.

Beriya"

This is followed by a list of 35 names: Artishevskiy L.B. (sentenced to 10 years), Begash B.L. (10 years), Berezhnoy Yu.M. (25 years), Bodnya M.E. (20 years), Braghin D.Ya. (10 years), Vitka V.A. (10 years), Vladimirov M.S. (10 years), Volf A.O. (10 years), Glushko V.P. (10 years), and others... Such practices were resorted to for many years. Stalin believed that one's brain, held in captivity, was able to work for the common good. Everyone should do the same... Didn't he himself work 12-14 hours a day!

Indeed, the leader could but remain himself. He *wanted* to decide everything *himself.* An analysis of his daily business, which the tight-lipped Poskryobyshev put on his table, shows that power became even more centralized. Not a single more or less major matter could be decided without the leader. Monstrous centralization paralyzed the initiative, dampened real creativity and led to the stagnation of public thought. It extended to such matters as new construction projects (emphasis of heavy industry again), a stiff monetary reform, use of the labor of a great number of German and Japanese prisoners, cutbacks in Moscow air defense units, establishment of the ministry of forestry, progress reports on a new T-54 tank, the decision of allocating one gram of radium to a research institute, making a decision about a Soviet delegation's visit to the surgeons' congress in Prague, on opening a house of Soviet culture in Vienna, study of an intelligence report about US nuclear tests in Bikini, and many other things. Everything reported to Stalin had to be decided by him personally. For example, Bulganin and Golikov have reported about Marshall Zhukov's willfulness, who commended performers Ruslanova and other Moscow theatrical workers in his special order after the performance. Stalin pushed the paper aside, without making any decision. It is just a trifle matter, the leader was thinking, the same as the report filed by Karpov, chairman of the USSR Council of Minister's council for religious affairs of the Russian Orthodox church, about another synod session under the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia...

Dealing with dozens of major and minor, important and secondary matters on a daily basis, Stalin became a hostage of the system he had created himself; but he could not nor did he want to do otherwise. A harsh reaction followed as soon as anyone made a more or less independent decision, not approved by Stalin or at least by any of his lieutenants. This was the case, for example, of former secretary of the Leningrad party Obkom P.S. Popkov, who rashly approved an all-Russian trade fair in the city on the Neva without the center's special decision. This step became one of the arguments to confirm an "anti-Party attitude" of the Leningrad leadership.

Leafing through numerous coded messages, reports, and memos, Stalin smugly noted that virtually all enterprises had been rebuilt and the new ground had been broken for hundreds of new ones in advance of his jubilee. Revival was swift. He made a forceful point during his latest conversation with Voznesenksiy that heavy industry was the focus of attention. Agriculture and consumer goods were not of a decisive nature. As before, technology and financial resources were concentrated first of all in industry. But it experienced a growth in quantity rather than in quality.

In the meantime, agriculture continued to decline more and more. Stalin hardly knew that collective farms, deprived of any stimuli and having no passports, worked only under the threat of numerous punishments and hardships (the need to produce the minimum number of work-days, an increasingly heavy financial tax and duty in kind levied on each and every living creature on the farm, even on a fruit tree, reduction in the size of homestead plots, and other obligations). This was an estate deprived of any rights and incapable of protesting or changing anything. The collective farms' entire crop (normally very low) was carted away for a ridiculously low, token pay. The young people sought to leave villages by hook or by crook, joining vocational schools and providing cheap labor for numerous new construction sites and timber felling organizations. A collective farm could not decide anything: everything was decided on top - from the time to sow down to who should become the next farm chairman.

An agrarian "experiment" launched in the late Twenties and turned into a system, showed how absolutely ruinous rule by decree and administrative coercion had been. The Central Committee passed numerous resolutions on agriculture, but all of them were superfluous and spelled nothing but a search for new leverage in the desire to *make* people work. In fact, this was a slave labor. "The Soviet Worker's Handbook" edited by A.Ya. Vyshinskiy listed numerous excerpts from different resolutions passed by the center: how the villages were prohibited, limited, warned and threatened with various measures of "social protection." Although the "Handbook" was published before the war, its provisions retained their force of punishment until now. As one carefully looked at the life led by the huge state, the tremendous effort made by the people and the selfless attitude displayed by millions of people, who patiently had been waiting for their living conditions to improve, it became clear that the road to the "shining future" was being built through coercion. We shall repeat that Stalin saw this as the "law" of building socialism.

A peasant on a collective farm could not leave his village on his own accord. Numerous camps were not empty. One indiscrete word could lead to losing freedom. A directive or an order from the top, often harebrained, could not be discussed. A special NKVD conference, established by the decree of the USSR Central Executive Committee on 10 July 1934, continued to function actively. Any suspicion of dissent or of any political action was harshly punished. Numerous reports and memos, alike like peas, were sent to Stalin every day. Here is one of them, for example:

"Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks)

Comrade Stalin I.V.

This is to report that on 24 December 1948 the Special Conference of the USSR MVD conducted the investigation of 260 persons. All of them have been sentenced to varying terms:

- 8 persons for 25 years
- 8 persons for 10 years
- 48 persons for 7-8 years
- 29 persons to 12 years of hard camp labor.

USSR Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov."

The Special conference carried out the same volume of work on 30 December, while twice as fewer people - 15 - were sentenced to hard labor. All decisions were approved by the autocrat, since hard labor was his brainchild...

Let the reader experience no surprise: a special type of punishment, hard labor for fascist murderers, traitors, and invaders' hirelings was introduced by the decree of the USSR Supreme Soviet on 19 April 1943, the decree that was not published anywhere. Hard labor sentences of 10 to 20 years were meted out by court martial. After the war was over, special conferences whose decisions could not be appealed, took over from the court martial. Not only policemen but dissidents and suspects could find themselves caught in-between their grinding stones. Stalin learned soon after the war that several departments made a proposal of changing the degree of punishment which could be administered by the special conference: "Considering the fact that the war is over... it is expedient to authorize the NKVD's special conference to serve sentences up to 10 years." Stalin rejected the proposal... This organ of repression outside of the legal system did not outlive its architect for long: the special conferences were finally scrapped in September 1953; this was one of the sighs of relief experiences by the society after the tyrant's death.

The leader's fame was accompanied by the paroxysms of coercion. He invariably affixed his "I. St." during numberless reports about the session of special conferences which never acquitted anyone. Everyone, or almost everyone, to be more exact, thought that Stalin knew everything and could see everything. But he saw what he wanted to see. He had never wanted, even in his mind's eye, to look in the desperate eyes of millions of Soviet people who passed through *his camps*. If he had, he could have seen a real sinister shadow of his "global" fame. But Stalin was driven by the old idea: he just wanted more power to his country which would add to h i s glory even more.

On his 70th birthday he carried out one action which is still popular with the elderly people. Against the backdrop of a virtual collapse of agriculture, poor possibilities available to the light industry, he announced (like in the years before) a large cut in consumer goods prices.

Although Stalin signed the day before a decree of the USSR Council of Ministers "On A New Reduction of State Retail Prices of Consumer Goods As Of 1 March 1949," he could not resist the pleasure of unfolding PRAVDA of March 1 after breakfast, later than usual. A long column of numbers caught his eye. He look lingered at several lines: "Reduce state retail prices of consumer goods by an average percentage as of 1 March 1949:

Bread and flour by 10

Butter and ghee by 10

Meat, sausage and canned food by 10

Vodka by 28

Cosmetics by 20

Woolen fabrics by 10

Bicycles by 20

TV sets by 25

Watches by 30

Reduce accordingly the prices in restaurants, dining and tea rooms and other public catering establishments." Having put his signature under the decree the day before,

he suggested, on behalf of the party Central Committee, that Malenkov did the same.

Having put the paper aside, the leader stated to think. The people are poor. The NKVD organs have reported, for example, that people were still starving and there were shortages of clothes in some parts of the country, especially in the east. It was his profound belief that people would be only corrupted if they are provided with things above a certain limit. Besides, there was no way of providing more - one had to strengthen defense and develop heavy industry. The country had to be strong, and to make it so one had to continue belt-tightening.

The population expected another price cut every year. And it did come. The leader's authority became even higher. The people did not want to realize that the policy of reducing the prices played a very limited role in increasing material well-being given severe shortages of goods. With the wages staying abysmally low, this price cuts did not result in any meaningful raise in the standard of living. Such policies led to social demagogy. Some comparative data even suggest that the standard of living and the real wages had just reached the 1940 level by the early Fifties; the 1940 level was almost the same as the one in 1928 when the country had barely risen the level on the eve of the first world war. It is possible that my conclusions, based on my own estimates, are not correct. But it is hard to avoid the impression that protracted experiments, mixed with the horrible war, did very little to meaningfully raise the people's standard of living.

One could not overlook the fact, of course, that the educational level of the Soviet people had risen, certain steps were made to promote social welfare of the population, including pensions, paid maternity leaves, allowances to the families of those killed in the war, and to women with many children, and a few other things. But all this was a socioeconomic minimum which reflected the general condition of poverty. A further policy of giving priority to the development of heavy industry at a time when agriculture was declining precipitously did not make for promising future.

Heated debates about "those" foregone times often produce such arguments in Stalin's defense as the existence of "order," "discipline," and "respect for laws." We have allegedly fallen so low: we have prostitution and drug addiction! I do not know about prostitution, but our society had all other vices, such as drinking, hooliganism, theft and even drug addiction during the years of autocracy as well. But all this remained in the realm of absolutely secret criminal statistics. These vices have possibly existed on a smaller scale. Here is what S.N. Kruglov reported to Stalin in January 1948: "The MVD department of the Frunze Oblast (Kirghiz SSR) received information in November 1947 that a group of opium dealers was active in the city of Frunze, whose members included Nigmatzhanov, Khabibulin, Khismutdinov, and Gaynulina (the document gives no initials - **D.V.**). Seventeen kilograms of opium were confiscated."

For example, the training of labor force was regarded as an unquestionable achievement of the authorities at the time. Of course, quite a few things were done in that field. But S.V. Kruglov reported that at the same time "the MVD organs apprehended 10,563 students who escaped from the FZO [vocational], vocational and railroad schools... Many crimes have been committed as a result such as theft, and banditry. Living conditions are unsatisfactory at the schools: they are filthy, cold and often have no electricity."

Barrack-style order, coercion and the predominance of administrative rule were unable, as they often say now, to eradicate the moral blight of crime. It is highly unlikely that Stalin agreed that criminal aberrations can be successfully combated only by respecting law, showing a high standards of relationship and a democratic social milieu.

The contradictions born out of a one-man rule were accompanied by a range of other: an absolute power of one person and lack of freedom for millions; entrenchment of pervasive bureaucracy and an innate life's need for social activity; promotion of conformism and a natural need for the masses to display creativity - and they, these contradictions, deepened the genesis of future crises. Stalin either did not want to or could not understand this. The paroxysms of these contradictions seemed to frame his halo of a victor. He pressed the ideological rather than economic pedals harder and harder, failing to see a slow but steady waning of revolutionary zeal.

Stalin continued to bank on socialist competition, binding the masses' creative activity, and more and more often resorted to such well-tested methods as threats, administrative measures, or directives. It was not fortuitous therefore that the cult of Stalin, which peaked during the festivities to mark his 70th birthday, coincided with the "Leningrad affair." All of Stalin's "triumphs," every one of them, are associated with violence. This is the law governing the one-man rule of a dictator. He needed internal "civil wars," even on a regional scale, even in conditions of implementing major socioeconomic programs. Following the defeat of fascism, Stalin shifted the epicenter of this "internal war" to Leningrad.

We know today that the scathing resolution regarding Leningrad journals ZVEZDA AND LENINGRAD was passed at the leader's initiative. It was followed by the castigation of the movie "Big Life," the opera "Great Friendship," and a blow was stuck at the repertoire policies. Stalin felt that attempts had been made in literature and art, although not that obvious, to go beyond the party-imposed framework; and this was a challenge to like-mindedness. Rested on a system of immutable postulates, his spiritual world could not reconcile itself to such free thinking. The artists' thought was to be returned to the Procrustean bed. The harassment of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova was a signal to launch a campaign of ideological purges. Still smarting under the effects of the inhuman ordeal, Leningrad was

categorized as an ideological heretic. Stalin's message was clear: even if the heroic city cannot "get away with it" no one will be spared!

The Zhdanov's fund contains a lengthy letter written by Vera Zoshchenko to Stalin:

"Dear Comrade Poskryobyshev:

I beg you to submit this letter for consideration by Com. Stalin, or if he becomes bored by it, relate its summary to him...

8 September 1947

Sincerely yours,

Vera Zoshchenko."

The letter, especially its beginning, contains the lines which were almost a must at the time, but which one is grieved to read now. "The greatest joy of my life is the thought about your existence in this world, and my greatest desire is that you should live as long as possible." Then the writer's wife mentioned the resolution: "Dear Iosif Vissarionovich! I was virtually stunned by the resolution of the Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) about the journals ZVEZDA and LENINGRAD... How could this have happened since everyone loved Zoshchenko. Recognized him (Gorkiy, Tikhonov, Shaghinyan, A.A. Kuznetsov, Mayskiy). No fleeing from Leningrad could be talked about... He had worked on a book about partisans throughout the winter of 1944... There can be no calumny or ill-wishing in his books." The courageous woman practically dismissed all innuendoes and accusations against her husband. Speaking frankly and defending the writer, she reveals very personal things: "He is a difficult neurasthenic psychopath... has strange mania. He was very much scared of going mad, like Gogol did. He began his own psychoanalytical treatment and... seemed to have cured himself. His disease gave him the gift of a satirical writer, and this is his problem. He cannot accommodate somebody else's will, nor can he act on somebody's cue."

There are indications that Stalin had read the letter, since it shows some places underlined in the same pencil in which he addressed the letter to Zhdanov. The leader could not but feel that her rejection of his appraisal was not just a personal attitude by the writer's wife. It is surprising that Stalin did not go beyond unleashing a moral terror against the writer and his family, did not do anything major. Having stricken an ideological blow against Leningrad, he would supplement it two years hence with a devastating political, punitive blow, which many people justifiably interpreted as a "dress rehearsal" of possible new massive purges.

G.M. Malenkov, instructed by the leader, was sent by Stalin to Leningrad, where he arrived in mid-February 1949, the year of Stalin's jubilee. The formal reason was: violation of the norms of inner party life during the party conference held by Leningrad Communists. It was manifest in an episode which was hardly exceptional at the time. Despite the fact that Oblast leaders P.S. Popkov, G.F. Badayev, Ya. F. Kapustin, and P.G. Lazutin had several votes cast against them during elections to the party Obkom, the chairman of the counting commission A.Ya. Tikhonov, reporting on the returns, said that those Comrades had been elected unanimously. One of the members of the counting commission wrote an anonymous letter to the Central Committee right away. Stalin's reaction was harsh, although he had probably resorted to a gross falsification of the vote himself during the 17th congress in 1934:

"Too many dangerous signals have been accumulated regarding the Leningrad leadership to continue ignoring them. Go there Comrade Malenkov and sort out the whole business well. Comrade Beriya has some additional information."

"All right, Comrade Stalin. I'm taking a train tonight."

There were the following "signals." Supported by the Central Committee Secretary A.A. Kuznetsov, the Obkom allegedly ignored the central party organs. Facts? There are facts: an all-Russian trade fair was organized in Leningrad in January 1948 without a special decision by the central organs. Stalin's diligent student, Malenkov spoke at the joint session of the bureau of the Leningrad Obkom and Gorkom, accusingly stringing together one mistake after another made by the Leningrad leaders. The hushed audience dispiritedly listened to Malenkov, who worked himself up more and more, leveling ever new accusations. G.V. Malenkov, who became a Politburo member after the war, the same as Beriya, categorized the case of the fair as an anti-party cliquishness and the pitting of the Leningrad party organization against the Central Committee. But the main thing lay ahead. Following the script written for him by the Chief producer in Moscow, Malenkov capitalized on P.S. Popkov's unfortunate expression to come up with the main charge: an attempt to set up a Russian communist party with far-ranging goals. Everybody understood that Malenkov's speech was a harbinger of a major calamity.

Those in the audience did not know that their secretary Aleksey Aleskeyevich Kuznetsov, promoted to the Central Committee in Moscow, had been dismissed a week before. Following Malenkov's report, all Oblast and city leaders were naturally removed from their jobs. But this was just the beginning. Each of the accused had behind him the threads which were fast spun into a framed-up case. The arrests followed. One immediately uncovered "spies" like Kapustin, "renegades" like Popkov and those like Kuznetsov, who "inspired" the anti-party course

Another Leningrader - Nikolay Alekseyevich Voznesenskiy - was removed from the Politbureau in March. A genuine economic tsar during the Great Patriotic war, an Academician known for his forthrightness and open heart, he began to be perceived as too dangerous by Stalin. Manipulated by Beriya, Kruglov, Abakumov, and Goglidze built a much publicized "case" practically out

of nothing. Interrogations followed, during which the goal was to get admissions of antiparty and antistate activities at any cost. One of the main protagonists of the major provocation against the Leningrad party organization, Malenkov rubbed his hands in glee: "Comrade Stalin's instruction has been fulfilled." He did sort it out "well," especially considering the fact that neither Malenkov nor his close friend Beriya had any particular liking for Voznesenskiy or Kuznetsov. Considering the leader's fast aging, they regarded both men as potential adversaries during the struggle over party leadership. The Valkyries, known to chose dead among the people, reappeared again in the atmosphere of the society, the same as in 1937. It was with good reason that the society and the party feared the worst to come, the more so that former Leningraders were "removed" in different republics and oblasts from the jobs to which they had been promoted or sent in different periods.

Nothing seemed to pose a threat to Voznesenkiy or to Kuznetsov back in the beginning of January 1948. Moreover, as high-ranking Central Committee officials they were reported to about the situation in Leningrad by the people who were soon to become their prosecutors, interrogators and executioners. "Comrade Stalin's Correspondence" has the following document, for example:

"Com. Stalin,

Com. Molotov,

Com. Beriya,

Com. Voznesenskiy,

Com. Kuznetsov

On uncovering a major theft of women's rubber overshoes and galoshes at the 'Red Rectangle' plant in Leningrad.

Fifteen factory workers have been arrested in the case. A shortage of 45,130 pairs of women's over-shoes was established. Investigation continues...

9 January 1948

USSR Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov."

As we have seen, the would-be jailers were reporting on everyday, criminal cases in the city on the Neva both to Voznesenkiy and Kuznetsov.

What motivated Stalin in organizing this criminal action? Why did he engineer it in advance of his jubilee? Why the ideological blow struck against Leningrad in August 1946 was followed more than two years later with a more smashing blow - a punitive one? Only the dictator himself knew all the motives of this crime. But the following assumptions can be made as one draws on the documents and an analysis of the time.

Stalin did not allow anyone to get away with independence and "free thinking." In their speeches and written articles both Voznesenkiy and Kuznetsov eulogized him, the leader, to a lesser degree than others. Stalin was constantly alerted by their independence, greater than shown by others. The leader wavered for while, turning a deaf ear to the calumny spread by Beriya and Malenkov. The leader is known to have made flattering remarks about the two Leningraders, who, considering the leader's advanced age, might have been regarded as potential successors to the number One. The apparatus camarilla from among Stalin's lieutenants did not want to allow this. Stalin was repeatedly told in secret reports that before the war Voznesenkiy had failed to discover "enemies" in Gosplan [state planning committee], possibly because he covered them up. Beriya mentioned more than once, in passing, that as chairman of the Gosplan Voznesenskiy set low targets for the chemical and metallurgical industries, of which he was in charge himself, while he set high targets for the timber industry which Beriya took care of. Stalin turned a deaf ear to all this for a while. But he was peeved by Voznesenskiy's address to the Politburo in which he made a few convincing arguments against levying additional taxes on collective farmers and against the intention of Kuznetsov, who was in charge of the personnel, to establish more streamlined controls over the ministries of internal affairs and state security. They also brought to Stalin's attention Kuznetsov's words that the "Kirov affair" did not uncover real instigators of the crime.

Even the most valuable and needed people were to meet the main criterion as far as the leader was concerned: be absolutely dependable and loyal to him. He did not just feel some doubts about those recalcitrant Leningraders, but also saw them as his potential opponents. When Stalin familiarized himself with Voznesenskiy'a manuscript, who was his deputy on the State Defense Council during the war, he put his signature of approval as well; he could not but appreciate the intellectual magnitude and in-depth analysis done by the youngest member on the Politburo.

Serhey Ilych Syomin, who was head of a Gosplan administration under Voznesenskiy, notes the latter's exceptional energy and his very penetrating mind searching for the best possible avenues of developing national economy. Despite all the rigidness of the directive economy, Voznesenskiy tried, whenever possible, implement an idea of a broader participation of the working people in the process of planning, control and determining the prospects for the operation of each enterprise. He took no vacations or days-off. He was probably the second major economist in our top leadership after Bukharin.

The leader showed almost no hesitation, although prior to Voznesenkiy's arrest the leader had received a memo from Voznesenkiy and several other Leningraders professing their innocence. Initially, he wanted to send Voznesenskiy away as director of the Institute of Marx-Engels-Stalin, but then changed his mind: let the entire Leningrad crew drink from "Iosif's cup" in full. The trial held in September 1950 followed his instructions. N.A. Voznesenkiy, A.A. Kuznetsov, P.S. Popkov, Ya. F.

Kapustin, and M.I. Rodionov were sentenced to be shot. The same fate awaited many other Leningraders later on: G.F. Badayev, I.S. Kharitonov, P.I. Kubatkin, P.I. Levin, M.V. Basov, A.D. Verbitskiy, N.V. Solovyov, A.I. Burlin, V.I. Ivanov, M.N. Nikitin, V.P. Galkin, M.I. Safonov, P.A.Chursin, and A.T. Bondarenko, a total of about two hundred persons.

Those present at the trial which was held in the officers' club in the Liteynyy avenue did not hear any speeches of confession. Kuznetsov said in his last word: "I have been a Bolshevik and I'll shall remain one; whatever is the verdict, history will justify *u s.*"

The "Leningrad affair" was closed in April 1954 by the USSR Supreme Court under chairmanship of A.A. Volin. Here is the charge made against the convicted persons in September 1950: "Kuznetsov, Popkov, Voznesenskiy, Kapustin, Lazutin, Rodinonov, Turko, Zakrzhevskaya and Mikheyev (the document gives no initials - **D.V.**) have been found guilty of conducting subversive work in the party, uniting into an anti-Soviet group in 1938, to dissociate the Leningrad party organization from the Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) with a purpose of turning it into a platform of struggle against the party and its Central Committee... For this purpose they tried to stir dissatisfaction among communists of the Leningrad organization with the measures undertaken by the Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks), spreading calumnious statements and expressing traitorous designs... They also squandered state means. The case materials indicate that all those accused had admitted their guilt in full during the preliminary investigation and during the trial." Turko, a convict at the time, said on 29 January 1954 how these confession were wrought out:

"I committed no crimes, and I do not consider, nor have I considered myself guilty. I gave evidence as a result of systematic beatings, since I denied my quilt. Investigator Putintsev began to beat me systematically during the interrogations. He hit me on the head, on the face and kicked me with his feet. One day he beat me so bad that my ear began to bleed. After such beatings, the investigator would send me to a punishment cell, threatening to destroy my wife and children and have me sentenced, if I do not confess, to 20 years in camps... As a result, I signed everything that the investigator offered."

The old and well tested methods sanctified by the dictator's will and thought. Three Bolsheviks, tied by matrimonial bounds, fell as a result of Stalin's spasm of anger: the brothers Nikolay Alekseyevich Voznesenkiy, a Politburo member, Aleksandr Alekseyevich Voznesenskiy, rector of Leningrad University, and their sister, Mariya Alekseyevna Voznesenskaya, a party functionary. A whole generation of outstanding patriots has been cut down. The following fact shows the degree to which the "affair" was framed up: the main charge against M.A. Voznesenskaya was that "she subscribed to the views of the 'workers' opposition' during the Twenties!" The grounds for her rehabilitation are also ridiculous, by the way: "there is no proof that Voznesenskaya subscribed to the views of the 'workers' opposition.'" And what about if she did? This was the kind of legal system that existed at the time. In a word, the one of Stalin style.

Everyone was shot in Leningrad. S.I. Syomin claims that according to some information, Voznesenskiy had been kept in prison for another three months following the trial (maybe the leader hesitated: they had worked together in the State Defense Committee throughout the entire war. No one had done so much for the economy as his deputy). Syomin told me that in December 1950, at somebody's order, Voznesenskiy, lightly dressed, was trucked to Moscow in a van. He either froze to death or was shot on the way...

Following the Leningrad purge, the waves of terror continued to wash people away into oblivion for a very long time. And not only those who knew the accused, but the organ workers as well. Sometimes, though, Stalin showed "mercy" for reasons that only he was aware of. Kruglov reported to him in October 1949 about Lieutenant General I.S. Shiktorov, who worked as head of the ministry of internal affairs department in the Leningrad Oblast since 1943 and them worked in Sverdlovsk since 1948. Shiktorov was made return to Leningrad after the arrest of the Leningrad leadership. But the report said that he was "not purging the MVD organs of the persons who do not instill confidence. For a very long time Shiktorov worked under the old enemy leadership of the Leningrad Oblast." It was proposed to remove Shiktorov and replace him with T.F. Filippov.

Stalin did not agree to this, but he ordered to find another job for Shiktorov. This was a rare case since normally such report-proposals ended tragically without fail.

The leader could not allow his credence table to remain empty. His violence was encouraged by the submissiveness of his victims and docility of the party and people. He figured out once that the repressions affected directly or indirectly at their peak (in the late Thirties) only three or four percent of the population - this is just a trifle! - but how obedient and controllable does the masses, purged of filth, become! Not everyone could see it at the time, but growing in scope, the leader's fame was accompanied by the spasms and convulsions of fresh terror.

It was hard to explain this paroxysm of violence outwardly. The country was healing its wounds fast, the internal situation was stable, there were no action by opposition, and the party exercised undivided ideological influence. People were really united around the political leadership, represented by Stalin, and interethnic relations looked strong from the outside. At the peak of his glory, the leader nevertheless continued to employ crude pressure which occasionally extended to a particular region, to a particular social stratum or a

department. Having stayed at the peak of violence for a quarter of a century, he *could not do without it* anymore. Stalin's entire methodology of thinking and acting rested on violence. This explains the particular attention he paid to the organs of state security and internal affairs.

Beriya, Kruglov, Serov, Abakumov and other officials of this department regularly reported to the Master on the situation in the Gulag [main directorate of camps], which served as one of the most important sources of free labor. One day Malenkov, who came to present another report to Stalin, compelled him to commit an "act of humanism." He put in front of the Generalissimo a memo prepared by head of the Gulag under the USSR MVD Dobrynin (as usual, there are no initials) which said that 503,375 women were kept in camps and colonies the year when the leader was having his 70th birthday. Malenkov said:

"We should look into setting free those of them who have children under the age of seven..."

Stalin peered at the figures for a long time, and eventually accepted Malenkov's proposal; the main argument in favor of the proposed decision was the fact that a total of 166 million rubles a year was spent to keep children in the Gulag... This is the explanation behind this act of Stalin's who ordered that women, who had children under years of age, do forced labor at the place of their domicile! He made a reservation, however, that this should not include the women sentenced for their counterrevolutionary activities.

One day in September 1951, a delegation of British women - quite a rarity at the time - requested to be shown around a women's camp. The masters were naturally at a loss. A call to the MVD directorate. They could not make a decision of course. A request sent higher up, to Serov. He has no right to decide the issue either. To the minister - the result is the same. Approached Suslov - but he could not decide anything either. The latter approached Malenkov. Only the Politburo member, who discussed the matter with Stalin, put his signature on the permission... The camp was specially prepared, of course - they cleaned it, put in good order, and briefed everyone. Seventy percent of the women, who did not look too well, were taken to work out of the camp. The British women met our quite "conscientious citizens" who had been temporary placed here, behind bars. The delegation even made an entry in the "visitors'" book, which was hastily put together: "We were greatly impressed by how spontaneously people approached us. The place is all clean. We believe this is a valuable experiment which is a success."

Malenkov reported such figures to the leader from time to time, the information other protected him from. But is was tough to move Stalin. In September 1949, when the "great jubilee" was approaching, Melenkov showed Stalin the following document:

"Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks), Comrade Malenkov G.M.

On August 12, the bodies of three murdered children of state farm worker Dmitriyenko: Mikhail, 11-year old, Pavel, 9 and Yelena, 8, were found in the field on the Sun Yat-sen state farm of the Mikhaylov rayon of the Maritime Territory.

The murder was committed by their mother Dmitriyenko L.A., born in 1917 (the year of the October revolution - **D.V.**). She testified that she had committed murder due to extremely dire material conditions she found herself in after her husband Dmitriyenko D.G., born in 1912, had been sentenced in 1946 (under the Law of 7 August 1932), she had been dismissed from the school where she worked as a teacher and evicted from her apartment."

The resolution of the Central Executive Committee and the USSR Council of People's Commissars of 7 August 1932 provided using the highest measure of punishment, with the confiscation of all the property or imprisonment to not less than ten years under the extenuating circumstances for stealing cargo on railway and water transport, as well as the stealing of collective farm property.

She worked on the collective farm since April. The management gave her no material aid...

It is beyond one's power to read this report which is permeated with the apogee of sorrow which struck not just this family, but the family of all of the peoples in our Homeland. It is difficult to tell how Malenkov and Stalin responded to this crazy act committed by the mother brought to her wits' end: the document bears no evidence of any decision. Normal people should have seen their own sentence behind those lines. But they could not live without violence any more, the violence which became a norm of life.

Of all the state institutions, the punitive organs were the only ones not to have been ever downsized. It was Stalin who took them from under the state control and exercised his one-man control over them. He spent more time on the army than on the MVG and the KGB only during the war; the latter had always been the main focus of his attention. Moreover, Stalin invested more time in taking care of these organs than of party business in the late Thirties and after the war till his very death. The proof of this can be found in the fund "Correspondence with Comrade Stalin," for example. The bulk of the documents are related to the work of the NKVD (MVD) and the KGB, including speeches, announcements, cables, operational briefs, memos, reports on the sessions of special conferences, the opening of new camps, training of personnel for these organs, and many other. It appears that Beriya (Kruglov, Merkulov, Abakumov and other officials in this area) signed more than one document every day addressed to Stalin. The leader looked through all of them, but he honored just a few with his resolutions, such as "Agreed," "Word Out Details," "Report Your Compliance," "Punish Guilty of Procrastination Accordingly," "Do Not Keep Liberals." These organs, which Stalin often called "punitive" to a great

extent symbolized his rule, power, and will. He *became used* to a threat, violence and the possibility of using it as a part and parcel of his rule. It was not fortuitous that the "punitive apparatus" was steadily strengthened after the war on his initiative; one had to constantly produce "enemies," "terrorists," and "traitors" in order to keep the people and the "organs" permanently mobilized and "vigilant."

What was the price of Stalin's autocracy? How many innocent people had died at the tyrant's will and at the hands of the machine of repression which he had created? I do not think that we are going to receive an absolutely accurate number ever. The state and a specially established commission could have provide the closest answer. The secrets of Stalin's dictatorship have become the secrets of history now. Researchers have come with many different estimates giving the total number of the Soviet people who perished during the years of Stalin's autocratic rule. Let me cite the following numbers spanning 1929 to 1953, which are based not on a series of summarized numbers, but on the so-called "intermediary" figures which I was able to find in the archives which were accessible.

"Revolution" carried out in the countryside between 1929 and 1933 cost our peasantry 8.5 to 9 million of the repressed peasants. A total of 4.5 to 5.5 million Soviet citizens were caught in the net of repressions in 1937-1938. The Yagoda-Yezhov department did not sit idle in-between those two big waves - about one million people were arrested during the period. The number of camps, inmates, and exiles - who formed the third wave - increased dramatically at the end of the Forties, although death sentence was abolished in 1947. It engulfed 5.5 to 6.5 million people. One can argue with me that not only political prisoners but also criminals were imprisoned. This is right. But even according to Beriya's numbers, 25 to 30 percent of camps inmates were charged for "counterrevolutionary activity" until Stalin's death. From 19.5 to 22 million Soviet people became the victims of Stalin's repressions over slightly more than two decades. Not less than one third of them were sentenced to death or perished in the camps or in exile. My estimates might sound as too conservative, but they are based on the documents available to me, although I admit that I have just failed to find out many other things.

This is probably the most horrific feast of violence in history that dictators have ever been able to celebrate on earth. Stalin never deviated from his credo: "We shall destroy each such enemy, (even though) he were an old Bolshevik, we shall destroy his entire kith and kin, and his family. We shall mercilessly destroy everyone who encroaches in deed and in thought, yes, in thought too, on the unity of the socialist state." As if these words were said by a Medieval Inquisitor. But they stuck to these words and they were an entire program! Schiller was absolutely right in saying: "Evil seed gives birth to evil!"

From the sociopolitical point of view, after the war the society did not just become ossified, but assumed new macabre features of a bureaucratic and police nature. Stalin knew how to combine which could not be combined - in every possible way maintaining an outward zeal and selflessness among millions of Soviet people who believed that the Promised Land was at hand, after the next pass and keeping the constant threat of individual or mass terror. But... people *believed* Stalin... It was not a coincidence that on the eve of his arrest N.A. Voznesenskiy was finishing the last chapters of his book "Political Economy of Communism." Even he, an Academician, one of the most educated persons in the leadership, admitted that the Stalin-led society had been approaching "a bright future." By the way, the decision made by the military collegium of the USSR Supreme Soviet accused N.A. Voznesenskiy, who was sentenced under four articles at the same time (58-1a, 58-7, 58-10 part 2, and 58-11) of "compiling and having published politically deleterious works." If a scholar wrote about Communism, but raised the leader's suspicions, this alone made his work dangerous. This was the dictator's logic, the dictator who made his own interpretation of the forthcoming Communist society.

People considered it natural for the power, force, ruthlessness, and faith in the only purveyor of the truth to act as the main motive force behind this process. Reason, humanness, loyalty to humanism, and freedom (sic!) moved somewhere into the indefinite future. Not a single philosophy textbook or a major monograph mentioned the subject of democracy, freedom and individual rights. Everything became encrusted in the idea of violence, and pervasive class struggle. According to Stalin, force, power, hegemony and domination were regarded as principal values. One of the unorthodox Russian thinkers, Nikolay Berdyayev, who was deported overseas in 1922, watched in pain the idea of force eroding all other values. He wrote as early as 1930: "According to the Russian spiritual type, it is the messianic elements of Marxism rather than its scientific ideas that prevailed in Russian Communism - the idea of the proletariat as a liberator and organizer of mankind and as the purveyor of ultimate truth and ultimate justice. But this messianic idea - militant, aggressive and victorious - is the idea of a rising force. The suffering and passively tolerating elements of the old Russian messianic consciousness are being completely ousted. The messiah of the proletariat is not a sufferer, nor a victim, but the victorious world-wide organizer, an accumulator of force."

One can argue with the opinions expressed by the Russian philosopher, but his observations about the primacy of force and the banking on it increasingly used by Stalin and his like-minded persons correctly reflects the mainstream of the social development which they had chosen. This direction might not have been so damaging had the leader not crucified in passing the basic humanistic values, sacrificing them to the idea of force. He had always been faithful to that idea, the only difference being that it had been transformed into permanent violence in the social context. It had its high and

low tide. Each high tide was proceeded by a paroxysm, a fit of fury felt by the aging leader.

The Aging Leader

Stalin's 70th birthday was approaching. He was aware of the kind of hustle going on in the Politburo and at other, lower echelons of power, but this did not affect him much. He seemed to have been satiated with glory, but he was not surfeited with power.

One day he summoned Malenkov and warned him:

"Don't you dare make me happy again by giving the 'Star.'"

"But Comrade Stalin, this is such a jubilee... The people won't understand."

"Do not bring the people into this. I'm not going to argue with you. No willfulness! Have I made it clear?"

"Of course, Comrade Stalin, but Politburo members think..."

Stalin interrupted Malenkov, making it clear that the subject had been closed, and requested the program of celebrations which were scheduled to be held in the Bolshoy Theater. However, he mentioned the "Star" on purpose.

After the Victory parade and a reception for front commanders in June 1945, a group of Marshalls approached Molotov and Malenkov with a request of marking the leader's "exceptional contribution" with the country's highest decoration - awarding him the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Those who came with the suggestion took into account the fact that Stalin was bestowed the title of Hero of Socialist Labor on his 60th birthday, and that he was decorated with three orders during the war - the Victory Order No. 3 (Orders 1 and 2 were earlier awarded to Marshalls G.K. Zhukov and F.I. Tolbukhin) by the decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet on 29 July 1944; the Order of Suvorov First Class, and the Order of the Red Banner. The decree said that the latter award had been given for his "length of service in the Red Army."

After military commanders had talked with Politburo members, the latter "discussed" the matter with their colleagues within a day or a day and a half, and two decrees were passed by the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on 26 June: on awarding Marshall of the Soviet Union I.V. Stalin the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and decorating him with the second Order of Victory.

The title of Generalissimo of the USSR was instituted by the same decree on 26 June 1945, and it was bestowed on Stalin the very next day, on 27 June. This was probably the only case when they did not follow the leader's order. Unfolding PRAVDA before breakfast as usual, Stalin saw the decrees and became furious: they did not ask his advice! they have not asked him! "I did warn Malenkov... Lackeys and yes-men..." On arriving in the Kremlin, he immediately summoned Molotov, Malenkov, Beriya, Kalinin, and Zhdanov and gave them a dressing-down. The most scared were Kalinin, since this arbitrary act was performed by his "department," and Malenkov, who failed to cut down the comrades-in-arms' feelings of loyalty. But Molotov, Beriya and Zhadov realized that the anger was artificial, a feigned one.

Stalin had been elevated so high to the pinnacle of fame that these decorations - intended for mere mortals - did not impress him any more. It is for ordinary people that a decoration is very important, while for him it had the opposite effect - placing the leader *among the many.* So, does this elevate him? A man possessing such power can strew himself with decorations after all and ... deglorify himself completely! L.I. Brezhnev might not have known this, who seemed to have missed many other things...

Stalin could not but remember reading somewhere, probably in Napoleon's "Thoughts," that a person can be given a button (this is how the emperor disparagingly described orders at the end of his life) and asked to give his life in return. Don't these people, who are described by the press as his comrades-in-arms, realize that the degree of his significance, recognition, and glory cannot be marked with some commonplace orders? Probably, they did not really understand this, but they knew another thing: their leader needed another pretext to play up his modesty, simplicity and absence of any vanity. And Beriya caught this mood better than anyone else. Stalin's monster wrote in the article "Great Inspirer and Organizer of Victories of Communism": "The genius of our leader is combined with his modesty and simplicity, with exceptional personal charisma and irreconcilability to the enemies of Communism, with sympathetic and fraternal attitude to the people. Typical of him is an absolute clarity of thought, a serene greatness of his character, despise and intolerance for any ballyhoo and outside effect." Beriya had learned the habits and intentions of his patron perhaps better than anyone else: he knew that Stalin understood other people's modesty as nothing but obedience. Stalin was fond of those who agreed with him submissively, who always "modestly" followed him.

When Alexander the Great of Macedonia was offered to join a race, considering his particular "fast feet," he replied to this: "I would have taken part had the tsars run next to me!" Our leader could have responded the same way. Didn't the naive "all-Union headman," who had never argued with anyone and who faithfully filled in his ritual role, understand that the decorations which other people could *receive* were not any decorations to speak of for Stalin? The Master said at the end of his tongue-lashing:

"Get yourself out of this mess any way you want, but I shan't accept the order. Do you hear me, I shan't accept it!"

And he did not accept it for a long time. His comrades-in-arms tried two or three times to convince him to accept the awards, but Stalin acted obstinate for a long time. Poskryobyshev and even Vlasik were prodded into trying to make Stalin change his mind, but all in vain. Five years later (sic!) the jubilarain himself brought up the subject of old decorations all of a sudden during a dinner at his dacha, the more so that the two stars of the Hero and the two Victory orders had long been shown shining on all of the leader's pictures. On 28 April 1950, on the eve of May Day celebrations, Shvernik finally handed in to Stalin the 1945 decorations, in addition to the Order of Lenin which was bestowed on Stalin in connection with his 70th birthday. N. Shvernik and A. Gorkin signed a decree on 20 December 1949 which said: "In connection with the 70th birthday of Comrade I.V. Stalin and considering his outstanding contribution to the cause of strengthening and developing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics... award Comrade Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin with the Order of Lenin." Upon receiving the Gold Star medal and three orders in a row from the hands of Shvernik, Stalin said gloomily:

"Trying to gratify the old man. This does not make one healthier though."

These words revealed the old fears which rose on the eve of the jubilee. One night, as Stalin gave some instructions to Poskryobyshev, getting ready to go to his dacha, he got up from the table and wanted to go to change his clothes, when he felt dizzy all of a sudden. He saw orange circles floating in his eyes. He recovered right away. The scared Poskryobyshev was holding tight his elbow.

"Comrade Stalin, let me call the doctors. You should not go now. You need doctors..."

"Don't you bother..."

The dizziness passed fast. He stayed back for a couple of minutes and had tea. He had a dull pain at the back of his head. Stalin stopped [Poskryobyshev] from calling the doctors not because he did not trust them, but because he rather mistrusted Beriya, who threw his weight about the fourth main administration of the Ministry of Public Health. Who knows, damn it, what that man has on his mind... Besides, he did not want the rumors about his illness to spread. He is going to get to his dacha and drink some herbal tea which Poskryobyshev recommended. This always helped and it will help now too...

So, the Politburo decided to celebrate Stalin's jubilee in a big way. N.M. Shvernik was nominated chairman of the jubilee committee. A memo was put on his table soon which requested about 6.5 million rubles to finance the festivities, the memo prepared by P. Ponomarenko, V. Abakumov, N. Parfyonov, A. Gromyko and V. Grigoryan. After making some changes, Shvernik put his signature under the following document: Approve the total estimated expenses of 5,623,255 rubles, according to the annex, to be incurred in receiving and servicing the delegations which are arriving in connection with the 70th birthday of Com. I.V. Stalin and in organizing an exhibition of gifts presented to Com. I.V. Stalin. A large number of the country's well known personalities were put on the committee, according to the decree. Let us name just a few: G.F. Aleksandrov, M.A. Baghirov, S.M. Budyonniy, S.I. Vavilov, Ya. E. Kalnberzin, O.V. Kuusinen, A.N. Poskryobyshev, A.A. Fadeyev, M.F. Shkiryatov, D.D. Shostakovich, and naturally the Politburo members. It was decided who was going to receive gifts 'for Comrade Stalin' and when: N.M. Shvernik, T.D. Lysenko, P.N. Anghelina, A.I. Pokryshkin, and other officials. The lists of those invited to attend the ceremonious function in connection with the 70th birthday, together with their wives, were compiled carefully and approved at the very top.

It appears that the most pleasant surprise that Stalin's retinue was preparing for the jubilarian was the intention to institute the Order of Stalin. The following decree by the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium was drafted:

"On establishing the Order of Stalin.

The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet has decreed: in connection with the 70th birthday of Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin and taking into account his outstanding services to the Soviet people in establishing and strengthening the Soviet state, the building of Communist society in the USSR and ensuring the historic victories of the USSR in the Great Patriotic war, institute the Order of Stalin...

Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR

Supreme Soviet N. Shvernik

Secretary of the Presidium of the USSR

Supreme Soviet A. Gorkin.

December 1949."

The same document defines the statute of the Order, gives its description and contains the draft decree on instituting a jubilee medal "In connection with 70th birthday of I.V. Stalin." The hairsplitting authors of the decree estimated the medal to cost 7 rubles 64 kopeks, and it would take 24 tons of copper and 6 tons of nickel to mint one million medals. Stalin's folder had inside it also a draft decree establishing international Stalin prizes "For strengthening peace among nations."

Thirty sketches of the order were submitted to the leader's consideration, the sketches done by artists N.I. Moskalyov, A.I. Kuznetsov, and I.I. Dubasov. The masters had done a great job - one is dazzled by the number of orders done on gold and color enamel, with all kind of ribbons. On top is a sketch exactly imitating the Order of Lenin, but the customary face is replaced with the profile of a man wearing mustache. Sketches feature an order shaped like a golden banner; the one resembling an old badge with a portrait; one can see the leader against a red banner in the background; in a snow-white cup; Stalin's profile framed by spikes, in a Marshall's uniform on a

golden plateau... Not much fantasy was shown: gold, a banner, and a man in a uniform.

Everything was ready for one more order, the most prestigious one at the time, perhaps, to appear in the country. But the leader turned out to be obstinate at the very last moment, although he had given his prior consent. Upon reviewing the mock-ups and sketches and reading the decrees (his comrades-in-arms closely watched their patron as he read them, thinking as to which of them was going to the first to decorated with this order) Stalin said all of a sudden:

"I approve only the decree establishing the international prize." Then he added, after a pause: "This kind of orders are introduced only after one's death."

All those present made a din, arguing with him, but Stalin raised his arm to quite them down:

"There's the right time for everything..."

The dictator obviously believed that things can boomerang against you if you have overstepped a certain line. His pervasive image was everywhere in the country: his pictures in newspapers and magazines, his name of steel [Stalin is translated: one of steel] mentioned dozens of times on each and every page; sculptures, bas-reliefs, monuments; and the avenues, combined works, collective farms and cities bearing his name. What is going to be added to this after his death? An order, of course...

Incidentally, no one on the burial commission brought up Stalin's last wish after his death. But he would never be aware of human ingratitude.

Stalin felt himself well on the day of his birthday, as got up at 11 a.m., as was his habit. The thing that happened yesterday seemed as an insignificant episode. And a difficult day was awaiting him today. After celebrations by the Politburo, he would have to listen all evening long to endless eulogies and praises on his behalf. A great competition is going to take place as to who will use more superlatives, find new epithets, and illuminate new facets of the services provided by the great leader.

PRAVDA was replete with articles, reports and news items about the country's preparations for the great jubilee throughout December. The tide of eulogies was rising higher and higher with every passing day. Upon his arrival at the Kremlin, Stalin studiously read the papers for a long while, and attentively looked through the folder - which grew thicker and thicker - containing production reports on the fulfilled competition pledges in connection with his 70th birthday. The reports were coming in from all republics, krays and oblasts. As many reports, it seemed, were coming from the countless Gulag organizations: people there also fulfilled, overfulfilled and "celebrated" in anticipation of an amnesty. It were not the cons, though, but the MVD officials who were sending reports to represent their charges.

Leafing over the papers in his quiet office, Stalin more than once caught himself thinking: is it he, the one who languished in the god-forsaken Kureyka slightly more than three decades ago, who is an object of all this love through genuflection? What is it? A whim of history? An outrageously good luck? Or is he really a rare gem of a person? Dispelling these, now utterly unnecessary thoughts, he thought jubilantly about himself: the most important thing is that he is stronger than all of them in spirit. No one is capable of pursuing the goal with such determination as he...

Turning over the pages of the newspapers, almost entirely devoted to him, he came across not very jubilant materials for a couple of days. A trail of the traitor Traicho Kistov and his associates was on in Bulgaria, and almost simultaneously a trail was in progress of a group of Japanese ex-servicemen who were accused of making and using bacteriological weapons. The press just echoed his worldwide fame: he knew that meetings devoted to his jubilee were being held in thousands, hundreds of thousands of collective (and not just in our country alone).

The Bolshoy Theater filled to capacity almost an hour before the ceremonial meeting was to begin. Carefully chosen and "screened" people filled the festively decorated auditorium. Stalin pulled up half an hour before the inauguration. Met with applause in the room for the Presidium members, the Generalissimo warmly welcomed Palmiro Togliatti, Mao Tse-tung, Walter Ulbricht, Umdjagin Tsedenbal, Iocham Koplenig, Dolores Ibarruri, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Vulko Cervenkov, William Shirokiy, Matyas Rakosi, F. Yuzviak, Kim Du Bon, Henri Martel, Willie Pessi, and Soviet comrades.

When the presidium entered the stage, the audience could not quite down for a long time - so tumultuous and prolonged was the ovation. Malenkov had shown Stalin the "sitting arrangement" (the plan and the location of each invitee in the Presidium) the day before, but Stalin immediately made changes. He did not wish to sit in the middle. We know that very often he would sit in the second row during the congresses, plenums, and conference, using the occasion to emphasize his "modesty." This was impossible to do now, since he was the jubilarian! Stalin shifted his position much to the right of the chairman, indicating with his pencil that Mao Tse-tung was to sit on his right and Khrushchev, on his left.

After Shvernik's short introductory speech, punctuated by stormy applause many times, as soon as the speaker mentioned the leader's name, other speakers took the floor. Throughout the entire evening the audience heard: "a genius," "thinker and leader of genius," "teacher of genius," and a "brilliant military leader." Mao Tse-tung was the only one who called him "great." Either he invested it with some hidden meaning, or the Chinese language did not have the right equivalent for the word "genius." Many speakers followed each other to the rostrum. The speakers included representatives of southern republics, Communist and worker's parties,

young people, and creative organizations. This was a concentrated profession of "love" by the peoples.

Many people sitting in the presidium became tired by the end of the meeting. The pictures and newsreel clips of that faraway day show that Beriya, Voroshilov, Molotov, and Mikoyan, visibly tired of incessantly getting up and applauding, are engrossed in their own thoughts. One was possibly contemplating his ambitious plans, another about a prolonged exile, a third one... Well, each of them had food for thought. Stalin found it hard to concentrate and comprehend an avalanche of eulogizing which lasted for several hours. Referring to Plato's dialogues, the leader could have seriously thought that he had succeeded in accomplishing mankind's ages-long dream of creating "an ideal state" in which the main corroding principle - confrontation between wealth and poverty - had been eradicated.

Indeed, the state whose leader he was did not have either rich or poor. Even at this hour he did not want to answer the question: were there miserable people? There were. Thousands, hundreds of thousands. To be more exact, millions imprisoned and exiled. There were quite a few policemen [those who collaborated with the Germans], self-seekers, embezzlers, currency speculators, ordinary thieves and robbers, but probably more than half of them were the people who just *seemed* dangerous to the triumphator's line.

Several days before the commemorative meeting, Stalin approved a report by Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov on the results of a regular session of special conferences which were held almost every month. As an addenda, the report included a list of over one hundred people, involving "the cases of members of the families of those who betrayed Motherland." All of them were "sentenced to be exiled in the USSR northern areas." The law is severe, but he abides by the law. Who is saying that Stalin is ruthless? Why is the West still harping on Trotskiy's old inventions about his brutality? Wasn't it he who very recently approved a presentation made by S. Kruglov, in which the latter wrote:

"A total of 14,170 children under the age of four and 7,220 pregnant women are kept in the MVD correction labor camps and colonies now. This number of children exceeds the *accommodation space* (the spacing is mine - **D.B.**) in the 'infant houses' available in the camps and colonies by more than three times. Therefore I suggest setting these women free, replacing their imprisonment with corrective labor at their domicile."

Listening to endless speeches of praise, Stalin occasionally leaned, tired, against the back of his chair. He would visibly light up when he was praised in poems. Speaking on behalf of Belorussia, Yakub Kolos read his long poem, which included Stalin's entire biography, which ended with the following words:

> You victory bring us,
>
> you freedom pursue.
>
> All nations so happy you make.
>
> We wish many years, our teacher, to you.
>
> All people sing praise in their tunes 'bout you.
>
> Our father and teacher, you are great.

It is so good that he resisted the temptation to yield to Malenkov who persistently supported a proposal made by a group of writers to publish the early poetry by Dzhugashvili. The leader should not succumb to momentary temptations. How could he have known that slightly less than a quarter of a century hence, a man who also became General Secretary won the Lenin prize for literature, without writing a single line in "his" works.

The recital by A. Tvardovskiy of poetry which sounded like an expression of the thoughts by Soviet writers caused stormy applause. Stalin might have been particularly moved by the words of the great Russian poet:

Let many springs which follow each other's stead Replacing leaf with leaf, one blossom with another Carry along above your glorious silver head Your life that is so precious and dear!

I think that Tvardovskiy said these words insincerely. They reflect our joint blindness, our faith in idols, not ideals. Everyone seemed to be in a religious stupor glorifying the leader who epitomized socialism. Believing in the leader, they believed in the ideals which he seemed to personify. The degree of that glorification is tantamount to the degree of people's humiliation.

Stalin's good memory pigeonholed in "computer" cells the words by Mao Tse-tung: "The leader of the working class all over the world"; by Palmiro Togliatti: "We pledge to continue to be faithful to your teaching"; by Kim Du Bon: "Long Live great Stalin, the savior of the Korean people"; by Henri Martel: "You are a theoretician of genius and a great revolutionary"; by Walter Ulbricht: "Honor and glory to you, the helmsman of genius"; by Matyas Rakosi: "The Hungarian workers and peasants call Comrade Stalin 'their own father'";... The audience lit up when Vulko Cervenkov presented to Stalin a message of thanks signed by five million (sic!) of Bulgaria's working people, almost the entire adult literate population of the country.

Before leaving for the banquet the next day, the 70-year old Stalin found time to read in the Kremlin hundreds of telegrams from foreign statesmen. Standing next to Stalin, Poskryobyshev closely watched the leader's sclerotic hands putting aside one page after another. When done with reading, Stalin rose and started for the exit. All of a sudden he asked, turning to his aide:

"Who has given you that fancy idea of writing about the citrus fruit?"

Poskryobyshev was taken aback by the question which he did not expect, but came back fast:

"Suslov and Malenkov suggested it. They read it in the propaganda department; Mikhail Andreyevich reviewed it himself."

Stalin said nothing else and stepped to the exit. He needed enough strength for a long banquet with speeches and endless toasting. The question to Poskryobyshev referred to the latter's lengthy article in today's PRAVDA, "Beloved Father And Great Teacher." One of Stalin's aides wrote in a section of the article that the leader not only had helped the Muchurin's disciples to defeat the Weismanism-Morganism, but showed how advanced scientific methods should be practically introduced. "Comrade Stalin, engaged for years in breeding and introducing the citrus plants in the Black Sea area," proved to be an "innovative scientist." Poskryobyshev wrote further on that "one can give other examples of Comrade Stalin's innovative activities in the field of agriculture. Comrade Stalin is known to have played a decisive role, for example, in the planting of eucalyptus trees along the Black sea coastline, breeding melons and gourds in the Moscow region area, and in spreading branchy wheat culture."

Stalin was impressed by a display of gifts which he toured late at night. This included the exhibits which he had been given earlier, before his jubilee. Passing from one room into another, he lingered at an ocean of banners. Dozens of panels from republics, Oblasts, and enterprises. Stalin stopped near one of them, unfolded the width and read: "Raise Higher the Banner of Lenin-Stalin! It Brings Victory To Us!"; the other had inscribed on it: "For Motherland, for Stalin!" What followed next were at least 30 banners presented by the people of China and Korea alone. The inscriptions looked quite impressive: "The self-rule government from the city of Sanshilin is making a present to the savior of mankind Genaralissimo Stalin"; "To the Torch-Bearer of the Proletariat Generalissimo Stalin"; "Long Live the Savior of the Peoples of the World, Stalin!"; "Thanks To Great Stalin for Liberating Us From Japanese Yoke. From the Russian Population of the City of Mulin." Standing apart was the banner of the 26th rifle Stalin, of the Red Banner and the Order of Suvorov division. A sea of golden and red calico.

Hundreds of pictures: paintings, graphic works, water colors, and embroidery. One can find here I.I. Brodskiy, P.V. Vasiliyev, Ye. N. Golyakhovskiy, V.N. Deni, N.A. Dolgorukov, A. Kruchina, I.N. Pavlov, I.A. Sokolov, N.I. Shestopalov, and other famous masters. The sculptures by N.V. Tomskiy, P.V. Kenig, L.V. Yedunov. Glancing at the countless images of a man with mustache, Stalin did not find himself in an irrational topsy-curvy world but took this overall blindness as a recognition of his brilliance. A former exile and a man without complete education and a skill, he already believed in his exceptional fate a score years after the revolution.

The aging leader impatiently moved amidst countless vases, albums, boxes toward a pile of weapons: dozens of guns, rifles, and submachine-guns... Having passed through this unreal world of the gifts, as if through a lineup, Stalin walked without haste, like an earthly god should, to his limousine to leave this place and seclude himself again behind the toothed walls...

Throughout December, the press was full of greetings, jubilee articles, and outpourings of loyalty - the great people was virtually in the process of being humiliated. But the leader considered this natural. No matter what, his old-time critic Karl Kautskiy seemed to have been correct with regard to Stalin. He queried not without irony as early as in 1931, when the edifice of autocracy was just being built: "What else does Stalin need to do to achieve Bonapartism? You believe that the matter will reach its crux not before Stalin is crowned as a tsar?" Tating an ever closer look at what had happened, one becomes convinced: at least the "first counsel," if there is no emperor, is an absolute must for total bureaucracy. The bureaucratic system itself, having formal democracy as a window-dressing, cannot exist without a political figure of a despotic nature.

Stalin was thanked for everything done by the great nation, spoke about the "great happiness" that he brought to it, wrote up his virtues and good deeds in every possible way. Even emperors were not humiliated that much by their people. Far from cutting down on this humiliation, Stalin instigated it. The aging leader personified not socialism, but its malaise shadow.

We have dwelt in such detail on the celebrations of the leader's 70th birthday because this heyday of Caesarism put in particularly high relief the features of its historical doom.

Stalin began to wane even faster after his jubilee. He had constantly high blood pressure, but the leader did not want to see the doctors, whom, I shall repeat, he just did not trust. Stalin more or less heeded the recommendations and advice given by Academician Vinogradov, but Beriya gradually convinced the leader that "the old man" was suspicious and tried to assign new doctors to Stalin. But Stalin did not want to deal with other physicians.

On learning about Vinogradov's arrest, Stalin cursed foully but did not intercede. After the Academician had been removed, Stalin finally gave up smoking. As for the rest, he continued to conduct as an unhealthy life style as before: he got up late, worked at night; according to the old Siberian habit of his, he continued to go to the steam-house despite his hypertension. They continued to rebuild the steam room, as his dacha itself, at his order. He would take small sips of fragrant Georgian wine during lunch, eschewing medicine. He did take some pills occasionally, at Poskryobyshev's advice; he would drink half a glass of boiled water before each meal, putting a few drops of iodine there first. The man who knew no limits to his power, was afraid to entrust himself and his health to the doctors. He mistrusted them the same way as he mistrusted everybody.

This is the fate of dictators. They are lonely people, although they have a swarm of people around them all the time. A dictator deprives himself of normal human contacts: the currying of favors, toadying, flattery and praise by his yes-men only serve to emphasize his loneliness in the crowd. Stalin was separated from the people by his fame, rule and power to such an extent that even he lived among them, he had long lost the real value of human contacts and genuine feelings. The old age that seemed to have arrived so suddenly brought his thoughts back to the past more and more often. This is the most affordable luxury one can have, old dictators being no exception, in the twilight of one's life.

Another, smaller house, was erected for him in Kuntsevo next to the big one. A fireplace was put in one of the rooms. Leaving his office, Stalin would often sit in front of the fireplace for an hour or an hour and a half, watching the castes built of hot-red embers appear and collapse, and the blood-red and crimson flame flickers reflect on the top of his soft boots. Stalin was only rarely engage in idle thought before. Now he more and more often thought about the past. The other day he ordered to make to enlarged pictures of Nadezda Sergheyevna. The framed one was put on his office table, the other was hung on his bedroom wall. Was this an admission of his guilt? Direct or indirect? Knowing quite a lot now about what Stalin had done, I almost rule out his ability to atone. He simply might have lived through once again that cold November night when the irreparable had happened. Nothing can be brought back in life, but one can visit that past, gone forever, in one's mind's eye, with the help of memory. The dictator could not just act any more; the time for recollections had come. He had achieved everything, but he felt that he was moving close to the line of no return. For no one. For the leaders, neither.

A man of tenacious and evil mind, he might have understood at the end of his life that, having vanquished everybody, he still "missed it." Maybe he was scared by the *inconsolable* nature of his personal victory and its historical doom? Maybe the shadows of thousands of his comrades, friends and comrades-in-arms, whom he had sent to death himself, struck the chords of consciousness, hidden deep in his heart? What did he see as he stared at the embers turning into ashes with his eyes made watery by the heat? Being aware of what this man wrote, said and did, I cannot believe in his having any regrets about anything. He was probably depressed only by the merciless time which has no pity both for the executioners and the victims, the only difference being that it marks forever the former with despise and singles out the later as eternally grieving martyrs.

Looking around himself like a god on earth on his "seventh day of creation," he could have said that he had achieved everything: he created a powerful state; he made the vast and great nation obedient; he vanquished all his enemies; and won genuine "love" of millions of his compatriots. But why did he still feel melancholic? Maybe because the world revolution did not come through? Or did he realize that his protracted bloody social experiments could not seriously challenge private enterprise in the final count? Or did he see the dead end for this ideas bred on violence? I do not think so. Stalin might have been thinking about different things - he was just afraid to die. The same as his whole life he was afraid of assassinations, conspiracies, and acts of sabotage. He was afraid that all his evil deeds would become known after he had been gone. He was fearful of losing the brainchild he created, did not want it to become anything else, since the "other" one would have no room for him, Stalin. Khrushchev recalled that the leader often told his comrades-in-arms in his later years: "What are you going to do without me? You'll be done for, like kittens!" He was right: his world, his orders, and his godly cult did not last long.

The aging leader felt scared. His face, which became ruddy (probably because of hypertension) by the end of his life, could not hide profound tiredness, which concealed fear, despite his exceptional ability to wear a mask befitting the occasion. Creating her father's psychological profile, his daughter wrote that as he was approaching his end, he felt empty, "was oblivious of all human attachments, began to be tormented by fear, which turned into a real mania of persecution in his last years - his strong nerves became eventually shattered. But his mania was not his sick imagination, for he knew and realized that they hated him and he knew why." After another fit of dizziness, when he began to swoon, his faith in his special Caucasian longevity was on the wane. This had happened more than once already.

He gave almost no thought to his children before until now. After Yakov had died, his constant irritability, brought about by a mere mention of his son's name, vanished into the thin air. He could not talk calmly with Vasiliy at all. The leader was not told many things about him, but he felt that his weak-willed son kept his job only thanks to his father's name and highly-placed beneficiary "friends" who hover around him so far. For Lt. General, they invented the position of air force deputy commander of the Moscow military district for line service, and then nominated him district acting Air Force commander for as long as six months. Bulganin convinced Stalin to nominate Vasiliy commander in June 1948. He understood that they were pushing his son to the top, eager to curry favor with him, but he just gave up: "Do what you want!" Had Stalin been self-critical, he could have said: the children did not make it out. But the leader had never subjected himself to internal trial, although he eagerly urged others to do it. "We need self-criticism as much as we need the water and the air... If our country is the country of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the dictatorship is exercised by one party, the party of the Communists which does not and cannot share power with other parties - is not it clear that we ourselves should uncover and correct our mistakes if we want to move along."

The daughter got out of hand completely. After she had left her next husband, her father ordered to give her an

apartment and actually forgot about her. Svetlana occasionally came to see her father at his dacha, to listen to the grumbling old man and to borrow some money from him. Stalin, who lived at full state expense, would thrust a wad of bills to his daughter out of his salary as a deputy. He had never spent a ruble, visited a single store in the last quarter-century, was unaware of how people survived on their modest salary, trying to make both ends meet. The money had long lost any meaning for him. But the numerous retainers attending to Stalin knew their worth very well. Incidentally, Beriya, who had been trying in vain for years to remove Vlasik and Poskryobyshev, was able to remove the head of security and get him in prison, less than a year before Stalin's death, charging him with abuses and using his position for personal benefit.

One day in the early Fifties, when Svetlana was taking her post-graduate course at the Academy of Social Sciences, Stalin asked which dissertation she was working on there. He was told that she had chosen the subject "Development of progressive traditions of Russian realism in the Soviet novel." Stalin hemmed but said nothing. In her abstract to the dissertation, dated 1954 (already after her father's death), seeking the scholarly degree of Candidate of Science, Philology, S.I. Alliluyeva wrote that to present the problem, she had to draw on some formulations made by I.V. Stalin in his "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR." An orthodox work, written in the spirit of the times, showed no indication of an abrupt change that the views of Stalin's daughter were to undergo in the future. Incidentally, he knew but very little about her, compared to what all normal fathers do.

The old people appreciate their grandchildren. All the love that remained unspent on their children, they usually passionately invest in them, as if the entire life of their darlings depends on each of their meeting, word, or action. Stalin did not want to see his grandchildren, and never met half of them. Such general human feelings, as filial, paternal, or love by an old person were foreign to him. A dictator becomes what he is not only because he gains a lot, but also because he loses even more, first of all from the treasure-house of general human morals. It appears that the lust for power eroded not only his feelings of a father and a grandfather, but also his love for his mother. S. Alliluyeva recalls Stalin's mother, who was not spoilt by his attention and who lived to see her son's tremendous fame, saying to him during their last meeting:

"Too bad you did not become a priest!"

The Master grew even more irritable and intolerable closer to the twilight of his life. People belonging to his retinue and his daughter recalled that there were instances when he would hurl a telephone against the wall, or bad-mouth his aide or interlocutor. In his old age, his intellect turned into a cold, chilling machine, fully devoid of any manifestations of simple human feelings. Let us cite another excerpts from his daughter's book "Only One Year." She makes a correct observation that as her father sent people to death, he immediately turned away from them, as if forgetting about them. "Many people find it more plausible to imagine him physically as a brutal monster," writes S.I. Alliluyeva. "But he was a spiritual and moral monster, which is more awful."

What peeved him? It was most likely his satiation with power. He could do anything. But he tried everything. With the people obeying his will without a question, he realized that even absolute power can be powerless. For example, he approved so many resolutions and laws to make peasants "happy," but they constantly reported to him that yields did not increase, livestock productivity was falling, many collective farmers were not producing the minimum number of workdays, and complain when their personal plots of land were reduced. Did he understand or not that his rule was powerless compared with the objective laws of everyday existence and economic management? It is hard to say. This powerlessness did nothing but irritate him. Maybe he also felt resentment because he was beginning to understand: history judges not only the vanquished, but, who knows, may be it can judge "a victor" as well? Or maybe his senile resentment stayed with him in his later years because he grew increasingly despondent of creating something grand and eternal? For he wanted to remain great forever. Throughout his life he had pledged allegiance to the Marxist teaching, although he believed in his heart that Marx and Engels had not cleansed their ideals of the bourgeois and Philistine culture. They resorted to often to the questionable notion of humanism and downplayed the socialist ideal. He, Stalin, imbibed Marxism with readiness for revolutionary miracle and an ability to sacrifice almost everything today for the sake of a radiant tomorrow...

The dictator believed his entire life that the countless victims were a necessary, natural and obligatory pay for being loyal to the Great idea and the readiness to bring it to fruition as much as possible. It had never dawned on Stalin that a person and a mass of people had become *a means* of bringing about Paradise, which he saw significantly altered compared to the one postulated by the founders of Marxism. The goal, the idea and the ideal were *everything* for him. But these were the goals grossly distorted and twisted by his, Stalin's vision. Anything was permissible to achieve them. Outstanding Russian thinker Serghey Bulgakov aptly described this thoughtless revolutionary Russian radicalism at the turn of the century: "It makes a historical leap in his imagination, and, showing little interest in the stretch jumped over, bores his eye into a lit spot on the very edge of historical horizon. Such maximalist approach bears the signs of ideological zeal, self-hypnosis; it binds the thought and develops fanaticism which turns *a deaf ear to the voice* of life." I think that Bulgakov made a correct observation regarding one of the sources of revolutionary, but eventually tragic Russian radicalism, which was a forerunner of ignoring everything for the sake of the Great idea. Stalin proved to be the most faithful exponent of this

maximalist approach, which turned into a criminal one, as practiced by him. S. Bulgakov wrote about this with such wisdom and foresight! Let us continue the quote: "I realize my idea and free myself of the bounds of normal moral for its sake; I abrogate the right not only to other people's property, but also to their life and death, if my idea demands it. Each such maximalist has inside him a tiny Napoleon of socialism and anarchism."

But it was not "a tiny Napoleon" sitting inside Stalin. He was among one of the greatest Caesars, for whom Machiavelism became an inseparable methodology in his thinking and acting. Given all this, Stalin could not but see that the right to "other people's life and death" which he usurped could not accomplish many of the things which he had planned. A terrible premonition might already have been making its way to his heart. He dismissed it by getting down to his long-lasting habit of busy daily routine. This routine was far from simple not only inside the country, but also beyond it. Many international events of the time bore the imprint of his personal role as well.

Chilly Winds

Looking down at almost eight years which Stalin was destined by fate to live after the war from the pedestal of the past decades, one can see that those years were extraordinary ones in many respects. Inside the country, they were marked by an all-out mobilization of all human effort to rebuild the state and enhance its power. But this entire process was taking place within the framework of conservation of the system, ideology, priorities, and values. In fact, Stalin endorsed only *quantitative* changes in the system, aimed at making it more powerful. He failed to see the need for any *qualitative* transformations. Paradoxically, the system became *ossified* despite all the inhuman effort made by the people.

Internationally, all these eight years saw the winds of the cold war blowing harder and harder. An impressive, but short-lived shift to the left in Europe, Asia and other areas was followed by harsh reaction on the part of the United States, a great power which emerged as the strongest country after World War II. "We emerged as the world's most powerful country from this war, probably the most powerful in human history," said Truman. The leaders of the nation which had a monopoly of the most powerful weapon of annihilation could not resist the temptation to capitalize on this as much as possible. Stalin's preelection speech in February 1946, quite calm and peace-making, was taken by the West almost like a challenge. Many people overseas just needed such a "challenge." The idea of "world leadership" was not a fiction, but a real desire in the United States. Some stronger expressions gained currency too, such as "rebuild the world in the image of the United States." And this mythical "challenge" was met right away.

One the night of 6 March, as Stalin was getting ready to start for his dacha, Poskryobyshev came to his office and put a coded message on his table. Stalin sat down at the table again and began to read. The Embassy in Washington reported that Churchill made an unusual speech at Fulton in the presence of Truman (the President was born in the local state of Missouri). The speech by the former Prime Minister was utterly belligerent. The leader, who met Churchill four times, whom he never trusted but whose encyclopedic brain he appreciated, was stunned by Churchill's tough expressions. Although in the first part of his speech, Churchill made a worthy reference to the Soviet leader, saying: "I have heartfelt admiration and pay my due to the heroic Soviet people and my comrade-in-arms Marshall Stalin," he stated further on that the Western democracies were threatened with "red menace." But, thanks God, the United States was at "the pinnacle of world power which gives hope of receiving protection against the designs of sinister personalities and the aggressive spirit of strong nations." Churchill said that "an iron curtain descended over the European continent from Shtettin on the Baltic to Trieste on the Adriatic." The former Prime Minister was close to the truth on this score, since immediately after the war Stalin took a number of vigorous steps to cut down on any contacts with the West and the rest of the world. The "iron" or "ideological" curtain, depending on the point of view, did descend. One of the members of the Big Three had always feared the influence of "rotten democracies." For many years, Soviet people were able to learn about the West only what people like Suslov deemed necessary to tell them. An information gap between the two worlds dogmatized our minds, made for poorer intellects and dramatically sapped the ties among world cultures. We became poorer in spirit.

In his speech, Churchill did not stop at that; he warned that "a Communist fifth column was working... far away from Russia's borders... presenting a growing threat for the Christian civilization." The great Englishman clearly stretched the point to far here. Even he became a victim of spy mania and a "witch-hunting" campaign. The guest of the U.S. President, with the latter being obviously supportive of the ideas expressed, urged the whole world to uphold "the great principles of freedom and human rights, which are a common historical heritage of the English-speaking world."

Shoving the coded message aside, Stalin stared without blinking into the dark March night for a long while. The fledgling spring became strongly bound by frost in no time. Churchill's speech was both a signal and a challenge. The leader stepped to the table and called Molotov. The latter was at his place, since Politburo members usually waited for Stalin to leave and only then did they go home themselves.

When Molotov arrives, the conversation between two architects of the country's foreign policy lasted for at least another hour. They did not know that Churchill's speech was proceeded by a "lengthy cable" which U.S. charge d'affairs in Moscow had sent to Washington, misinterpreting Stalin's February speech. Kennan claimed that the Soviet leaders regarded a third world

war "inevitable." The Soviet leaders who lived by constant struggle took this open Western challenge as something natural. Neither Churchill, nor Truman, nor Stalin were able come close to realizing the futility of attempts to build a "new order" based on the fear of mutual annihilation. They were the products of their times. Stalin found himself in predicament. With the A-bomb added, the United States possessed immeasurably more power at the time than the USSR did. Suffice to say, during the war years the US industrial potential rose by 50 percent, and the output grew by two and a half times. The United States was producing four times as much equipment and seven times as many transport means. Farm output went up by 36 percent.

This was in glaring contrast to the situation in the USSR. Thousands of populated localities lay in ruins; the country was on the verge of a severe harvest shortfall of 1946. Almost the entire Western part of the USSR had been caught in the kind of war which the Spanish call "guerrilla,"(?) the fact which had never been written about or publicly mentioned before. This was a kind of a blase that happen to burn peat bogs. Behind a puff of smoke outside, hidden in the depth is the fire that only waits for more air to come to avidly devour everything around it. This is a little publicized subject in Soviet history so far. Armed units, especially in Western Ukraine and in the Baltic republics, with Lithuania standing out, continued to fight against the Soviet power after the German troops had been driven out. Stalin ordered Beriya more that once to put an end with "banditry as soon as possible," not knowing yet that this struggle would last for almost five years after the end of the war, especially in the Western parts of the Ukraine. For example, the USSR minister of internal affairs soon, in March, after Churchill's speech, reported on the result of this fighting. Let us give an abridged version of this lengthy document:

"Comrade Stalin I.V.

12 April 1946

As many as 8,360 bandits were liquidated (killed, taken prisoner, or surrendered) in the western parts of the Ukraine in March 1946; 8 mortars, 20 machine-guns, 712 automatic weapons, 2,002 rifles, 600 pistols, 1,766 grenades, 4 printing presses, and 33 typewriters were captured... OUN subregional transmitter Fyodoruk F.I., SB subregional referent Chyorniy V.G, subregional referent Gorin I.G., region deputy gospadarchiy [head] Varvarichef I.I., chief of communications of the OUN regional unit Kravchuk L.I. were captured. Over 200 people belonging to the Party and Soviet aktiv, MVD, MGB and Red Army officers and men were killed.

The Lithuanian SSR. 145 bandits were destroyed; 75 surrendered; 1,500 apprehended. 44 machine-guns, 289 rifles, 122 pistols, 182 grenades, and 12 copiers were seized. The bandit groups of Iodepukis A., Noreikis I. and others were liquidated. 122 acts of banditry were registered in the republic during this month. 215 activists and MVD, MGB and Red Army men were killed."

The report listed the results of fighting in the Berolurussian, Latvian, and Estonian republics. Having signed the report, Stalin told Beriya and Kruglov, in a tired voice, that he was very much displeased by inefficient action taken by Red Army regular units and destroyer battalions.

There were rampant difficulties, and now this open Western challenge. The USSR found itself in strong isolation at the United Nations. It is good to have the right of "veto" in the Security Council. Stalin felt that a difficult and unequal confrontation got under way. But he did not intend to yield - he will turn the country into a fortress. In the leader's thinking, "Truman's anti-Communist doctrine" made it impossible the Marshall Plan. The USSR was in dire need of economic aid, and it could have probably received this aid through the Plan, but at the price of actually placing its economy under control. Stalin said "No" through Molotov who spoke at the Paris conference. It appears that Stalin had correctly seen through the aims behind the Plan, since Truman candidly wrote in his reminiscences later on: "in his conception, Marshall pursued the aim of liberating Europe from the threat of enslavement which Russian Communist is preparing for it." In a nutshell, a long "cold war" went off the ground.

French politologist Lilly Marcu, whom I happened to meet in Moscow, justifiably writes in his book "Cold War" that starting from 1946 and for almost a decade "an escalation was going on whose spiral of tension was irrevocably unwinding like an avalanche, dictated by its inner logic and defying common sense." The logic of it was in the fact that Stalin saw a way out only in ending U.S. nuclear monopoly. The USSR almost doubled its production of steel, coal and cement in 1952 over its prewar level at the cost of tremendous effort, and boosted its output of oil and electric power. Stalin continued to claim that an absolute growth of output of the heavy industry was the constant law of socialism. Super effort in the field of heavy industry and science laid the ground for making a breakthrough in the nuclear area. As we have mentioned before, the Master put Beriya in charge of monitoring all this super secret work and demanded that the latter reported to him on the daily basis.

A good school had been established in the domain. The ideas expressed by Ioffe, Kurchatov, Flyorov, Landau and Tamm before the war made it possible to start building the first nuclear reactor. The work was suspended then, and it was resumed on a broad scale under Kurchatov's guidance only in 1942. Stalin rushed and rushed them... He made an order to spare no means and labor force to expedite the realization of the program. His fund includes a number of document-reports reminding one of that dramatic "nuclear race." It was the race to catch up with the opponent who had a head start, to be more exact. Here is an example of one report:

"At the instruction of the special committee under the USSR Council of Ministers, we carried an on-site inspection of the construction of Kurchtov's and Kikoin's special projects during the first ten days of October 1946." It says further on that measures have been taken to expedite construction, and bring the number of people working directly on sites up to 37,000. The document bears the signatures of S. Kruglov, M.Pervukhin, and I. Kurchatov.

Almost simultaneously S. Kruglov and A. Zavenyaghin report to Stalin and Beriya that imprisoned scientists, sentenced to ten years and more, were added to shape [as in the original] work on the products of nuclear fission, including S.A. Voznesenskiy, N.V. Timofeyev-Resovskiy, S.R. Tsarapkin, Ya.M. Fishman, B.V. Kiryan, I.F. Popov, A.S. Tkachyov, A.A. Goryunov, I.Ya. Bashilov et al.

Soviet scientists performed the first chain reaction in December 1946; they launched the first nuclear reactor the next year, which made it possible for M.V. Molotov to state in November 1947 that the secret of the A-bomb did not exist any more. The Soviet A-bomb was tested in the summer of 1949, and a thermonuclear device was tested in 1959. Stalin's entire work was directed at boosting the country's economic and defense power. The dictator could back up his grandeur now only with the greatness and power of the state. A large part of the Gulag was directed to do defense work. In fulfilling government orders, many ministers made "the usual step" of approaching Beriya first. This is how, for example:

"Comrade Beriya L.P.

Considering the utter need for establishing a research center in the east, I request you to instruct minister of internal affairs Com. Kruglov to open a camp staffed by 1,000 prisoners from Siberian camps, to be cited on the TsAGI [Central Civil Aviation Institute] grounds.

23 July 1946

M. Khrunichev."

Or even more candidly:

"Comrade Beriya L.P.

In order to start construction, I request to start another camp for 5,000 people, allocate 30,000 meters of tarpaulin to make tents, and 50 tons of barbed wire.

22 March 1947

A. Zademidko."

Just think about it: how low morality declined, how utterly cynical the social policy became; now the cost of human life was reduced to nought. The cons' destinies and lives were matched only against their numbers, the barbed wire for enslavement and the tent over their heads! I think that this short memo, laconic in its downright cynicism can serve as a tragic and profound reflection of the depth down to which Stalinism dropped. I think that memory needs not only martylologies - the endless lists of those who perished innocently - but also the documents which lay bare Stalinist crimes. This document is the feast of anti-morals.

Although the work done by convicts was of low efficiency, Stalin believed that its wide-scale use at defense projects was not only a cheap way of building up military muscle, but also an excellent method of "reeducation" of hundreds of thousands of "enemies" and "traitors." Stalin had long been accustomed to looking at them as at "former" people.

No matter what our attitude to Stalin, we should point out: he achieved what seemed to be an impossible breakthrough - the U.S. nuclear monopoly was abolished - at his merciless will, at the cost of tremendous effort made by the Soviet people, and huge material and human sacrifices. Groundwork was laid down for achieving strategic parity. Stalin's intellect was not fit for "new thinking," nor was that of his overseas opponents. He saw the world only in "black" and "red," in terms of constant rivalry; even under the circumstances when he was inferior to his main foe in the majority of parameters, he had an optimistic view of the ultimate outcome of the confrontation.

To increase his chances in this struggle, Stalin deemed it necessary to encourage in every possible way the fledgling movement of the broad masses for peace and for the prevention of war, and to rev up antiimperialist action by all detachments of the international workers' and Communist movement. After a long discussion with Molotov and Zhdanov, he decided to make a step which, as could have been anticipated, would evoke the West's very negative response. In conditions of intensified rivalry, he decided to have a coordinating body in the activities of the Communist parties. Its establishment was qualified in the European capitals and across the ocean as an official recognition of Western challenge and the concept of the "cold war."

Stalin did not forget how much thought he had given before making an important step of dissolving Comintern after it had existed for a quarter of a century. He was advised to take this step early in the war, but he was smart enough to realize that this would have been taken as a weakness in the face of both fascism and the Allies. We shall recall that Stalin had chosen a very opportune moment: the spring of 1943, when he had Stalingrad to his credit. Taken over by the war completely, the Soviet leader hoped that the United States and Britain would give him due to this step and would be prodded into opening a second front. Stalin could not but see that Comintern had long been speaking nothing but "Soviet language," and was turned into his mouthpiece and instrument. After much thought, the leader arrived at the conclusion that the dissolution of Komintern will give him more pluses than minuses. But all this was way back

in the past. And now the establishment of an international center again? What motivated Stalin? What ideas crossed his mind?

When the Communist International was being born, its leaders believed in an early world revolution. Especially Lenin, Trotskiy, and Zinoviyev. But after the revolutionary high tide subsided, laying bare the solid foundation of the old world, it became clear that it [the old world] was highly viable. It became obvious that given capitalism's relative stabilization, Komintern was destined to play a rather limited role, subordinated to the country where its venue was. Apart from some advantages, leadership exercised from one center strongly discredited the Communist movement, giving all the enemies and critics an opportunity to speak constantly and not without a good reason about "Moscow's hand." But as the "cold war" intensified now, Stalin felt that the facts of the bipolar worlds and the formation of two camps put the matters of interaction among communist parties in the agenda again. He realized at the same time that there should not and could not be any rollback to the past, although in form.

A conference of nine European communist parties was held in September in Szklyrska Porembe, Poland, at the initiative of Polish comrades, whom Stalin supported. On the eve of the conference, A.A. Zhdanov, whom Stalin entrusted to represent the AUCP (of Bolsheviks), sent a coded cable to the leader reporting the preliminary "outline" made by the working group. He said that comrades agree that:

"The conference is to start its work with information reports on behalf of all communist parties participating in the meeting. Then an agenda was to be formulated. We shall suggest the following questions:

1) On the international situation - the report is to be made by us and...

2) On coordinating the activities of communist parties. We'll offer Polish comrades to deliver a report. This should result in establishing a Warsaw-based coordinating center. I think that we should put particular emphasis on the voluntary elements in this matter.

Request your instructions

A. Zhdanov."

And Stalin approved it. An information bureau of the communist and workers' parties was formed as a result, four years after the Komintern had been disbanded. The West immediately called it "Cominform." In his coded report to Stalin, Zhdanov summarized and evaluated the reports made by representatives of the parties which arrived at the conference. According to Zhdanov, the Yugoslavs acted most actively and positively at the conference; he did not know yet that in November 1949, the new organ will pass a resolution under the title "Yugoslav Communist Party In the Grip of Murderers and Spies." The conference was held over September 22-27. An interesting detail: as far as the contents, direction and constructive spirit were concerned, Zhdanov put the highest premium on two reports, those of E. Kardel, a representative of the Communist League of Yugoslavia, and of R. Slanski, a representative of the Czechoslovak communist party. Ironically, Zhdanov branded Kardel "an imperialist spy" in less than one year, and Slanskiy will lay down his life as a result of a shameful trial, conducted according to Beriya's scenario.

A.A. Zhdanov's report "On International Situation," approved by Stalin, formulated a premise which had been practically a centerpiece of Soviet propaganda for many years - "the division of the world into two opposite camps." This was perhaps a response to Truman's anti-Communist doctrine. The report also sized up the Marshall Plan as "a program of Europe's enslavement," and again sharply criticized the role played by the Social Democratic parties. Stalin persisted in his mistakes his whole life, not only then. Zhdanov did not stint any abusive epithets against Social Democrats. Stalin continued to feel profound resentment toward, and mistrust of, Social Democrats till his very last days, the fact that ultimately not only weakened the progressive forces but also undermined a large-scale campaign for peace.

The Cominform session agreed to hold the next meeting in Belgrade. Alas, it was never to take place there. The relations between the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) and the LCY [League of Communists of Yugoslavia] seemed to be most close and strong. The Yugoslav peoples have made a major contribution to the defeat of fascism, not for a minute having stopped their heroic fight against the aggressor. A treaty of friendship, mutual assistance and postwar cooperation with Yugoslovia, signed during J. Broz Tito's Moscow visit in April 1945, was the first such treaty signed by the Soviet Union with the countries in Eastern Europe which had embarked on a path of socialist development. Stalin had several meetings with Tito and held quite warm talks with him. As a result, a decision was made to turn over to the Yugoslav people's army weapons and combat equipment for 20 infantry and two air force divisions, tank and artillery brigades. Friendly relations seemed to be progressing along the ascendant only. A large group of Soviet military experts worked in the Yugoslav people's army; tens of thousands of Yugoslav military personnel were taking instruction in the Soviet Union. There was a close cooperation between the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) and the LCY - and suddenly a conflict! And what a conflict it was!

A number of current issues stirred Stalin's angry response (preparations for the Bulgarian-Yugoslav friendship treaty, the dispatch of a Yugoslav regiment to Albania, Dimitrov's statement as a press conference ruling out the establishment in principle of any future federation or confederation of European countries of people's democracies), the issues on which Moscow had "not been consulted." Power and glory clouded Stalin's mind. The dictator believed that he could rule not only

at home but among his allies as if it were his roost. The conflict was deep-rooted in political cynicism and autocracy.

Stalin suggested calling a Soviet-Bulgarian-Yugoslav meeting, which took place in Moscow on 10 February 1948. The delegations were led by Stalin, Dimitrov, and Kerdel. The Soviet side at the conference was represented by several Politburo members: V.M. Molotov, G.V. Malenkov, A.A. Zhdanov, and also M.A. Suslov. The members of the Bulgarian delegation included well known persons such as T. Kostov and V. Kolarov; the Yugoslav side included M. Djilas and V. Bokaric. From the very outset, Stalin mostly irritably expressed his displeasure over the differences on foreign policy issues. As was his wont, he qualified some steps taken by Bulgaria and Yugoslavia as "a special foreign policy line." Responding to the protestations of the Bulgarians and the Yugoslavs that those reproaches were groundless and that the steps they had been accused of taking were of little significance, Stalin came all of a sudden with a proposal on the need of establishing a Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation. The leader who had become used to his wishes always treated as a *decision* in his own country, suddenly had a clear feeling of internal resistance. Without ruling out the federation in principle, both I. Dimitrov and Kerdel said that the situation was not ripe yet for it. Kardel said that he was unable to provide a more definite answer until the matter had been decided by the country's political leadership. Stalin, who used to be able to have his way in all matters as Chairman of the State Defense Committee or as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, probably for the first time in many years ran into opposition from... the communists! This was unheard-of! No one had objected to the dictator for many years. He was caught fully unawares of this. A spasm of malicious anger required an outlet.

Stalin went into fury on learning that Belgrade had decided not to rush an establishment of the federation, putting a possible solution of this matter in a historical perspective only. His stately image alone, even his single word could seal the fate of millions of people! And they have turned down his proposal here, in Moscow...

Milovan Djilas, one of the participants of a meeting with Stalin which the Yugoslav and Bulgarian delegations had, reminisced later on how Stalin cut short Dimitrov, without waiting for the latter to be over with his explanations:

"Garbage! You became carried away like a Komsomol member. You wanted to surprise the world - as if you were still Komintern secretary. You and the Yugoslavs report nothing about your affairs, and we learn everything in the street - you make us face fait accompli!"

Stalin did not allow Kerdel to speak at all, for all intents and purposes. Stalin cut him short too, less maliciously but with as much abuse as he did with Dimitrov:

"Nonsense! We do have differences and the profound one at that! What are you going to say about Albania? You have not consulted us at all about the introduction of troops in Albania!"

Kerdel objected by saying that the Albanian government had agreed to it. Stalin yelled:

"This could have resulted in serious international complications... You do not seek our advice at all. These are not your mistakes, but your principle, yes, your principle!"

M.Djilas writes further on: "We left three or four days later. We were taken to the Vnukovo airport at dawn break, and shoved into an airplane without any honors."

The meeting did not result in a dialogue. Stalin wanted to cut down his friends, the way he did with republican secretaries in his own country.

Autocracy first blunts a person's basic ability of self-criticism and then robs him of it altogether. An individual's self-consciousness, which illuminated itself from within, so to speak, according to Hegel, and can act as a judge together with one's conscious, was unable even to drop a seed of doubt in Stalin's mind about his being wrong. He was accustomed to people fearing him, obediently following him and agreeing with him on everything. He was confident in this case,too, that his demands would be accepted without fail. And suddenly - resistance!

This was followed with impulsive sanctions: the withdrawal of Soviet military advisers, a harsh letter sent by Stalin and Molotov to the Yugoslan leadership. Tito prepared a weighed answer which was approved by the LCY Central Committee. He dismissed the allegations of unfriendly acts and of Trotsiyism. His reply said, in part: "No matter how any of us loved the USSR as a country of socialism, he cannot under any circumstances feel less love for his own country, which is also building socialism." In May, Moscow sent another reply, this one on 25 pages. Known for his restraint and an ability to pull himself together, Stalin acted this time on the spur of the moment, without having analyzed the real situation. The voice of ambition deafened the voice of reason, while appropriate organizations collected at Beriya's initiative numerous "facts" proving "deviation" and "betrayals" on the part of Tito and all of the Yugoslav leaders. Stalin did not realize yet that he had suffered his first telling setback after the war.

The escalation of measures was precipitous. Stalin decided to get the Informburo involved in the conflict. Moscow sent two messages to Belgrade inviting the Yugoslav delegation to attend an Informburo session in Bucharest. The Yugoslav gave a polite but firm "No," qualifying this as interference in their internal affairs and at the same time expressed their readiness to normalize relations.

Stalin decided to hold the Informburo session without the "defendants," but this was already a rupture. The day before, Stalin reviewed a draft report to be presented by Zhdanov in Bucharest, under the title "On the Situation in the Yugoslav Communist Party." Zhdanov reported in the cover letter that the "text of the report had been reviewed by Malenkov, Suslov and myself." All these people went to Bucharest by the decision of the Master. Stalin himself made a number of changes in the report, where Zhdanov had earlier already formulated the following provisions: "Tito, Kerdel, Djilas, and Rankovic bear full responsibility for the obtaining situation. They use the methods from the Trotsiyte arsenal. Their policies in town and countryside are erroneous. Such a shameful, purely Turkey-style regime of terror is intolerable in the communist party. One has to *do away* [spacing is mine - **D.V.**) with such regime. The Yugoslav Communist party will raise up to this honorable goal."

As Khrushchev said at the Twentieth party congress, Stalin had lost a sense of reality when he declared at the peak of escalation:

"I have only to stir my little finger, and Tito will be gone. He will fall down."

Again, Zhdanov is reporting from Bucharest that the conversations held with Kostov, Cervenkov, Togliatti, Duclos, Rakosi, Georgiu-Dez and other comrades show that "all without exception have taken an irreconcilable stand with regard to the Yugoslavs." The great-power pressure, passed as proletarian internationalism, was exerted clearly to please the enraged dictator. Stalin did not stop short of abrogating the Treaty of peace, recalling the ambassadors, and suspending economic ties.

The shameful resolution, "The Yugoslav Communist Party Is In the Grip of Murderers and Spies," passed at the Informburo conference in November 1949 came as the heyday of the conflict. M.A. Suslov, who became a Central Committee secretary, did a good "job" drafting the text of the resolution. It covers all the angles! A comparison of Yugoslav leaders with Hitlerites, accusations of espionage, siding with imperialism, kulak [rich peasant] regeneration, an so on. Some specific features of internal political development, some steps diverging from Stalin's stereotypes and some harsh response measures, taken by the Yugoslav leaders in the heat of the fight, were described as the action by the "lackeys of imperialism," and the "abolition of the popular democratic system in Yugoslavia." It is even hard to imagine today how far the AUCP(of Bolsheviks) and other communist parties were carried away by Stalin's ambition and great-power attitude. All these developments have an imprint of autocracy's profound decline.

The conflict belongs to history now. Yugoslavia's "dissociation" from socialism, performed by Stalin, offers one more proof of the sheer limitations of a dictatorship. His style is all the same: in 1929-1933, 1937-1938, as well as the attempts to apply the methods of the Caesar in relations with sovereign countries and parties. Burdened by his closeness to Stalin, N.S. Khrushchev demonstrated however that it is better to use a chance of consciousness late than never. His trip to Belgrade from the end of May till the beginning of June 1955 was one of the steps which he climbed courageously on his way to the rostrum of the Twentieth party congress.

The few years that Stalin was destined to live after the end of World War II were as tumultuous for the leader as his entire life after the victory of the October [revolution]. Now his concerns went beyond his own borders. The socialist countries, which came to be called "the camp," to use Zhdanov's flippant definition, face quite a few problems. Each of the countries had a chance of creating something of its own in building socialism, the one attuned to national peculiarities, historical experience, a a specific situation. There is no denying the fact that a great deal has been accomplished in building socialism. This has an everlasting significance. The common cause was greatly harmed however by Stalin's interference, his desire to standardize experience, the demand to stay with one model, and the forced introduction of bureaucratic and dogmatic stereotypes in the political structure and public consciousness. This was particularly true when one attempted to use Stalinist methods to eliminate dissent. Never conversant with the economics in-depth, the leader practically contributed to having Soviet experience introduce in the countries which embarked on socialist development. The fallacy of such steps have become evident long ago.

There are indications showing that before his death, Stalin possibly began to see the ineffectiveness of having a "single center." Stalin's "Yugoslav defeat" probably made him to revise his dogmatic arsenal to a certain extent. This is illustrated by Stalin's gradually waning interest in the Cominform. One or two more conferences were held after the "Yugoslav affair," and the Cominform became defunct even during Stalin's lifetime without anyone noticing it. The resuscitation of command methods in the international movement proved a complete failure. Stalin possibly realized that it was clear to everyone who was really in charge of that center, given the system which he established.

Along with the establishment of the socialist camp, only two events - the formation of the People's Republic of China and emergence of a powerful popular movement for peace and the prevention of a new world war - could be regarded as major positive factors during these glum years of the "cold war." The late Forties and early Fifties were extremely tense years. It might have seemed that the leaders had lost their minds at times. Even the Pope said that any Catholic assisting Communists would be ex-communicated. "Witch-hunting" was rampant.

It is hard to believe that only three or four years later the victorious powers found themselves on the verge of war against each other. Blinded by its power and its

monopoly of nuclear weapons, America could not reconcile itself to watching another colossus rise. The Pentagon was busy planning nuclear bombings. Under the circumstances, Stalin continued to pursue a cautious policy, building up military muscle, but also trying not to provoke his former ally at the same time. True, unlike Mao, he did not claim that the A-bomb was "a paper tiger," but he made it clear on more than one occasion that the popular masses would play a decisive role in any potential war. There was a period, though, when a narrow strip of light loomed on the horizon, which seemed to give the hope that the chilly winds would calm down. The European director of the International News Service, Kingsbery Smith sent the following cable to Stalin from Paris on 1 February 1949: "The White House official spokesman Charles Ross said today that President Truman would be happy to confer with you in Washington. Would your Excellency be prepared to go to Washington for this purpose? If not, where would you be prepared to meet with the President?"

Stalin replied the next day:

"I am grateful to President Truman for his invitation to come to Washington. A visit to Washington is my old wish, a fact that I mentioned to President Roosevelt in Yalta and to President Truman in Potsdam. Unfortunately, I have no possibility at present to make my wish come true, since the doctors strongly object to any more or less lengthy trip of mine, especially a sea or an air trip." Stalin suggested Moscow, Leningrad, Kaliningrad, Odessa, Yalta, Poland, or Czechoslovakia as a summit venue, knowing that Truman would definitely turn the meeting down. They had nothing to discuss. The President believed that America stood a good chance to make the USSR say what he wanted to hear. But Truman realized that those hopes were nothing but a pipe dream as the time went on. Stalin did not intend to succumb to his dictate. On Sunday of 26 June 1949, PRAVDA carried an editorial under the title "Truman Becomes Boastful."

All of a sudden, the first, though weak, voices urging reason were raised in this subdued world, confused by peril and hearing nothing but the stomping of soldiers' boots and shoes and the rattling of arms. Representatives of the pacifist organizations, arriving from both "camps," met in Wroslaw in 1948, where world cultural leaders set the tune. The world peace congress in Paris was the next step that a part of mankind took, the people whose eyes had opened first.

Skeptical of this intellectuals' movement at first, Stalin suddenly realized its great hidden potential. He could see that the socialist camp found itself at a great disadvantage in conditions when America was virtually invulnerable because of her possession of nuclear weapons. One had to capitalize utmost on the world public opinion, using it against those who wanted to resolve the epoch's cardinal contradiction in a nuclear way. Later on, in 1950, peace champions undertook their most impressive action: they launched a campaign of collecting signatures under the Stockholm appeal for peace. The campaign was conducted on a tremendous scale. The members of the campaign organizing committee said less than a year later that over 500 million people in the world had put their signatures under the demand to prevent war! Stalin and the official Soviet propaganda, which professed its support for the idea of peaceful coexistence, found themselves in the mainstream of popular aspirations. I think sometimes that the Stockholm campaign was the source of shaping mankind's planetary consciousness, which boils down to recognizing the priorities of common human values. We are closer to achieving this goal today than we were at the time, but it was crucial to take the very first steps!

Stalin closely followed the work of the world peace congress which opened in Paris' "Pleille" auditorium in April 1949, attended by some 2,000 delegates from all parts of the world. He regarded it as a premier political event. Stalin and Molotov decided themselves on the composition of the Soviet delegation, eventually including in it the following persons: Fadeyev, Erenburg, Vasilevskaya, Korneichuk, Tursud-zade, Volghin, Fedoseyev, Kosmodemyanskaya, and Maresiev. Stalin could not help being profoundly moved (if he were capable of it at all) when PRAVDA reported on 21 April that American singer Paul Robson, finishing his address to the congress, broke out into singing in Russian right behind the rostrum: "From one end to the other..." Was Stalin able to perceive the beginning of an era of genuine popular influence on the destinies of peace and war?

In this clash of the worlds, when the chilly winds which had frozen the minds of politicians and generals, were on the brink of overturning the barrier separating war from peace, Stalin received tremendous support from the Chinese revolution. Naturally, the latter had received earlier support from the Russian revolution. The victory of the Chinese revolution dramatically changed the balance of forces and their world structure.

The 20-year long struggle waged by the Chinese people for their social and national liberation ended in a triumph after the People's Republic of China was established on 1 October 1949. PRAVDA carried an editorial article in its issue of 5 October at Stalin's instructions under the title "Historic Victory of the Chinese People," accompanied by four portraits - those of Mao Tse-tung, and the smaller portraits of Chou-Tde, Liu Chao-chi, and Chou En-lai. The editorial quoted the leader of the Chinese revolutions as saying: "If the Soviet Union had not existed, if victory had not been won in the anti-fascist World War II, if - what is especially important for us - the Japanese militarism had not been defeated and if the countries of people's democracy had not emerged in Europe... the reactionary forces would have undoubtedly applied a stronger pressure than now. Could we have won victory under those circumstances? Of course not." The editorial went on to say that "a brilliant foresight of Comrade Stalin is coming true, who said as early as 1925 that 'the forces of the revolutionary movement in China are immense. They have not developed to the full yet.

They will have their say in the future. The rulers in the East and the West, who do not see those forces and who do not take them into account accordingly, are going to suffer from this.'"

Stalin followed the developments in China very closely. Stalin began to see many things clearly after he had been told that the new U.S. Ambassador in China Harley stated his full support for Chiang Kai-shek. Stalin realized that the USSR position would become even more difficult if the United States had succeeded in extending its influence to China. Initially, Stalin could not understand quite a few things about the struggle between Mao and Chiang Kei-shek; he even believed for a while that the uprising staged by the starving millions had no relation to the socialist or democratic movement. On learning about the October talks (1945) between Chaing Kei-shek and Mao Tse-tung in Chountsin, which dealt with the internal issues, Stalin became convinced that the Communists had adopted a more realistic and progressive attitude.

Stalin used to write quite extensively about China. His collected works contain about a dozen articles about the Chinese revolution. Some of them are very primitive from the political point of view. He claimed, for example, that "the revolutionizing of the East should provide a decisive momentum to the aggravation of the revolutionary crisis in the West. Attacked from both directions - upfront and from behind - imperialism would have to admit that it was doomed to death." Voicing some correct ideas about the Chinese revolution, after Stalin characteristically resorted to political lecturing: "The Chinese Communists *must* (spacing is mine - **D.V.**) pay special attention to conducting work in the army;" "*Must* take on a close study of military art;" "The Chinese Communist Party *must* participate in the future revolutionary power in China" and so on. It appears that Stalin developed particular confidence in a Communist victory not after their military success, but after Chiang Kai-shek's speech in January 1945, in which he made it clear that he intended to keep an antidemocratic regime by convening a government-appointed national congress.

The Soviet Union had done quite a lot to render aid to the Chinese revolution after the end of World War II: large amounts of different weapons and combat equipment were turned over to the People's Liberation Army; other help was extended. The winds of victory began to fill the PLAC's sails starting from the second half of 1947, following which Chiang Kei-shek had to flee to Taiwan. Given U.S. hostility, Mao cast his lot with the Soviet Union. The relations between the two countries made much progress in most diverse fields following the victory of the Chinese revolution. They culminated with Stalin's invitation to Mao Tse-tung to come to Moscow to attend the celebrations of Stalin's 70th birthday.

Stalin harbored considerable mistrust in anticipation of his meeting with the leader of the Chinese people. Although he used to write and speak a lot about China and about the Chinese revolution, as a matter of fact, he was ignorant of its history and culture, very distinct from those of Russia, and did not understand the national psychological idiosyncrasies of the world's largest population, and did not have a clear picture in his mind of Mao Tse-tung. Stalin had a few meetings with Mao Tse-tung's after the latter's visit to Moscow on 16 December 1949. No records were kept for most of the parleys; therefore, the recollections of N.T. Fedorenko, a well-known Soviet Sinologist, who acted as an interpreter at the time, are crucial for understanding their essence, contents, and thrust.

One would assume that Mao, too, found all the things unusual; he had never traveled beyond China, did not participate in the work of the Komintern bodies, and had weak contacts with representatives of other communist parties. One can even say that those two people, who sat at a table across from each other many times, thought in different terms - they had different systems of values and represented different civilizations. They were not "extraterrestrials," but the leaders differed considerably as to their social and cultural nature. Marxism served as only a weak link between them. On some occasions, Mao could refer to the Chun-chiu annals (Confucius' classic work "Spring and Autumn"), while Stalin, who knew a lot of quotations by the founders of Marxism, now preferred to quote himself. Pragmatism was the one thing that they had much in common. The teaching of Confucius is known in China under the name of Choutsiao ("scholars' religion"). Probably without subscribing to Confucius' metaphysics, Mao often thought both along those lines in form and in unmistakably unique way at the same time.

Stalin watched his interlocutor with curiosity and with carefully concealed mistrust. Suddenly deviating from the discussion of specific burning issues on more than one occasion, Mao would involve the Soviet leader in a magic and mysterious world of Chinese tales. For example, Mao could tell Stalin a parable about how "Yui-gun Moved Mountains." According to the parable, once upon a time an old man Yui-gun ("stupid old man") from the northern mountains lived in the north of China. Two big mountains - Taikhanshan and Vanchushan - blocked the road that led from his house to the south. Yui-gun and his sons decided to excavate those mountains with their hoes. On seeing them, another old man Chi-sou ("clever old man") laughed and said: "You are doing a stupid thing. How can you hoe away two such big mountains!" Yui-gun told him: "When I die, my children will remain; when my children die, grandchildren will remain; so generations will succeed each other endlessly. These mountains are high, but they cannot grow higher; they will become reduced by as much as we excavate. So, why can't we dig them away?" Having refuted Chi-sou's erroneous argument with these words, Yui-gun began to dig the mountains every day, without any hesitation. This moved the God, who sent two saints down to earth, and they carried the mountains away.

Stalin listened to the flowery Chinese folklore invested with profound philosophical meaning: two mountains are pressing down on the Chinese people with their weight now - the imperialist mountain and the feudal mountain. The Chinese communist party had decided long ago to excavate those mountains. We shall also "move" the God which is called the Chinese people. The Soviet leader agreed with his Chinese counterpart and said in unison that if we stay together, we can excavate more than just two mountains.

N.T. Fedorenko recalls that the conversations were lengthy and unhurried. The interlocutors would languishingly savor the well-cooked food, take a sip or two of dry wine and talk at length about international, economic, ideological and military matters. The fundamental aspects of the Treaty of friendship, alliance and mutual aid were discussed in the course of these nighttime feasts. One day, recalls Fedorenko, Mao told an episode from the history of fighting against the Kuomintang. Although surrounded, the men did not surrender, following their commander's call: "Ignore the difficulties, brave the ordeals and view death as a comeback." Stalin tried to comprehend the meaning of "comeback" for a long time. Mao patiently explained that in this particular case, the Chinese character standing for "return" means despise for death as a form of return to one's original being, i.e., probably as the matter not disappearing. A perceptive interlocutor and an attentive listener, Stalin made a record of not only the fearlessness but also of the wisdom of the military commander.

This is how the two leaders of the two huge countries conversed. Their meeting was universally appraised as really historic, ushering in major changes on the global chessboard of world politics. Stalin was shedding his prejudice slowly - he had not trusted Mao Tse-tung for a long time. A.A. Yepishev told me that Stalin's words about the Chinese leader first circulated among top leadership at the time: "a margarine Communist" (not a real one) "a reddish" (red on top and white inside), and so on. This was probably the result of the information about Mao available at the time: resentment for Chinese personnel studying in Moscow in Yunnan; an apparent indifference shown by the Chinese leaders during the critical situations near Moscow and Stalingrad during the war, and other similar facts.

Stalin's attitude to the Chinese leader was gradually changing, however, under the impact of a Sino-Soviet rapprochement, Peking's more pronounced anti-American stand, its role in the Korean war, and other steps and action in the general direction of strengthening the socialist camp. It seems that Mao had rather mixed impressions about the Soviet leader too. One thing is clear, however: the stately and poised serenity which Stalin was very good at projecting and his absolute confidence made the Chinese leader convinced of the power and sense of purpose espoused by the head of the party and the Soviet state. The signing of the Treaty on 14 February 1950 reduced the dangerous effect of the cold winds which seemed to be sweeping across the entire planet. The tensions reached their peak in the very year when the two great peoples sealed their bonds of friendship in an official agreement. I do not think that Stalin's successors (as Mao himself) had done their very best to maintain the relations which began to shape up in the Fifties. One of the reasons was Mao's specific and sometimes outright negative attitude to the criticism of the cult of personality, the CPSU Twentieth Congress, and to everything associated with it. A firm handshake by the two giants was historically short-lived. Thank God, the leaders of the two countries have shaken hands again now.

The cold winds were sweeping across the country not only from the West but also from the East. The simultaneous presence of Soviet and U.S. troops in Korea immediately after the war led to the establishment, in conditions of the "cold war," of different political structures both in the north and in the south of the peninsular. Following the elections in South Korea on 10 May 1948 and the creation of executive and legislative bodies, elections were held in the north in their wake, on August 25. In fact, two states were formed which artificially halved the single nation, the same as was done with the German nation. Following the pullback of Soviet troops from northern Korea, the Americans did the same. Each side believed that the majority of the population in the peninsular supported its respective government.

Unfortunately, the public is unaware of any Soviet, Chinese, or Korean documents, except for those which were published in the papers at the time. But it is clear that the conflict was triggered by the desire of each side to secure its dominating position over all of the Korean territory. Relying on a number of indirect sources, I was able to find out that Stalin watched the aggravation of the situation on the peninsular with great caution. From the very outset, he did his best to avoid a direct Soviet-United States showdown. Mao felt more strongly regarding the issue. It is clear that Stalin and Mao Tse-tung discussed the Korean peninsular problems during several of their meetings held between December 1949 and February 1950. Stalin realized, however, that the Americans had deviated from the Potsdam agreements on Korea so far that it would be impossible to create a single state without much pain. He also viewed suspiciously an American idea of establishing a trusteeship of Korea and holding "free" elections there. As a matter of fact, the bulk of the population lived in South Korea, where U.S. troops were stationed. The line crossing the 38th parallel was established without any political reason in 1945 as a temporary demarcation line between the American and Soviet troops. Its geographical unfairness became evident later on, after it had become a state border, since it strongly impinged on the Northerners' interests.

The pendulum of war made a few wide swings. High tensions were growing further along the line of demarcation. As the hostilities broke out on 25 June 1950, the DPRK troops struck a powerful blow, then captured Seoul and reached the Naktongan river. The victory

seemed to have been won. But this was a terrible blow for the Americans. They had just lost their positions in China, and could not allow to be thrown out of another country. Winning the support of the Security Council (the Soviet representative was not present at the session and could not exercise his "veto" power), the U.S. troops staged a major landing operation in Inchon in September, under the UN "auspices" and staged a counter-offensive from the Pusan bridgehead. Their strike was so devastating that the United States and South Korean troops, without stopping on the 38th parallel, captured Pyongyang and occupied a large portion of the DPRK by the end of October. Now it looked as if the Americans had reached their objective, the more so that their troops reached the PRC's border in a number of areas. According to the available information, Stalin was forced to agree to Mao Tse-tung's proposal of providing direct Chinese assistance to the DPRK, although this increased the threat of further escalation. The United States used the blue UN flag as a cover, while the Chinese used "volunteers."

It should be pointed out that the Korean conflict increased Stalin's trust of Mao, and consequently, strengthened overall Soviet-Chinese relations. The situation changed dramatically again after about 30 Chinese divisions had begun moving from the depth. Not only did the Chinese and North Korean troops liberate the territory to the north of the 38th parallel, but they moved some 100 km deep into the south. The morale of U.S. troops and the U.S. military prestige took a severe beating by the midsummer of 1951. Stalin felt that the most dangerous and crucial moment had arrived. The Americans would not accept their defeat and may go to the last, nuclear, resort. It seemed that it was the closest that mankind edged towards a third world war since 1945. U.S. General MacArthur began to make strong demands for bombing Manchuria; Truman made it clear that he did not rule out a use of nuclear weapons. Not chilly winds but polar hurricanes began to blow. Neither Stalin nor Mao could permit a U.S. defeat now. Two long years of negotiations followed, during which fierce fighting continued to rage on the Korean peninsular.

The U.S. planes dominated the air, while the Chinese volunteers controlled the terrain. Reading one of the reports submitted by the General Headquarters, Stalin became interested in the following novelty in military art: having no air cover, the Chinese and the North Koreans found an offbeat solution by creating huge underground military tunnels, where platoons, companies, battalions and even regiments used to hide. This was a protracted and ferocious war of attrition. The negotiations were also protracted and difficult, but Stalin realized that neither of the sides had a way out but to strike a compromise. Otherwise, the chilly winds could be replaced with nuclear twisters. He was right on this score. But the final agreement was reached only several months after his death, in July 1953.

In analyzing the role played by Stalin in the Korean war, which was strongly camouflaged in many respects, I found it important to make a conclusion, which did not seem to be directly related to the specific national interests of the warring sides. I think that the war proved that a stalemate is inevitable in a modern world, divided into blocs so far, when Western and Eastern interests strongly clash. The sides reached their first stalemate in Korea, and the second one - during the Carribean crisis. But wisdom prevailed much sooner then, during the second one. It is hard to tell whether Stalin had succeeded in learning the lessons of Korea. It is clear though that America is realizing this later, perhaps. The use of napalm, a threat of nuclear bombings and the stationing of troops thousands of kilometers away from the United States, the refusal to recognize China over many years, and the Vietnam venture have shown that the stake on force alone is outliving itself. The Soviet Union will arrive at this painful realization much later, as a result of the Afghan venture. The world realized that America was not all powerful after the Korean war. Stalin was more circumvent during the Korean conflict - the Yugoslav cold "shower" restored his traditional caution. Is it possible that he had learned a thing or two from his defeat during his feud with Tito, into which Stalin plunged headlong, committing a lot of blunders, whose price is not so easy to determine even today?

In the most fancy way, the peak of Stalin's cult, which coincided with the leader's 70th birthday, was reached at the crest of his personal fame and the advocacy of violence. The conservation of the system was accompanied by the chilly winds blowing both across the vast expanses of the homeland and beyond it.

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Chapter IV. Relics of Caesarism

[Text]

The Caesar should not have celebrated his triumph amid the miseries of his homeland...
Plutarch.

The many-volume fund "Correspondence with Comrade Stalin" contains no correspondence per se - they just sent their reports to the leader. He responds, often orally, and sometimes just addresses the reports and memos to Beriya, Molotov, Malenkov, Voznesenskiy, Khrushchev or somebody else. His "Correspondence..." included nothing that we could qualify as epostolary? genre. Of course, the significance of an ordinary letter has been greatly reduced in our days by the use of a telephone, telegraph, airplane or a car, and we are losing something very important, that of human beings. As I was leafing through a collection of documents dating to the 1812 war one day, I could not tear myself away for a while from M.I. Kutuzov's letter to his wife.

"19 August 1812. Near the Gzhatsk pier.

I'm all right my friend, thank God, and I entertain great hopes. The spirit in the army is extraordinary, there are

quite a few good generals. Really, I do not have much time available, my friend. God bless the children.

Loyal friend Mikhailo (Golenishchev)

Kutuzov."

Charming and profound laconism, full of power and dignity. Only people capable of moral grandeur, which Stalin had always lacked, are capable of writing such letters. Human relations were limited for him by the framework of class struggle and politics. All of his resolutions are dried-and cut and monotonous: agree - do not agree. Only a couple of Stalin's "personal" letters have been preserved; with the exception of a letter or two to his daughter, they have no moral contents. He swiftly reviewed a huge number of documents that we sent his way every day and sent them to executors to take care of specific matters. His postwar resolutions betray no doubt, deliberations, or vacillations. If he had any, he would convey them orally to his aide or to Molotov. The man "of steel" wanted to remain as such in history too.

Stalin, who made occasional mysterious notes in his "black notebook," thought more than once about getting a major, fundamental work written about himself instead of the "Short Biography." The proof of this can be seen in his instruction to "take stock" of the archives, his fragmentary thoughts outloud in the presence of A.A. Zhdanov, N.A. Bulganin, and A.N. Poskryobyshev, and his repeated conversations with G.F. Aleksandrov, M.B,. Mitin, and P.N. Pospelov (one of the writers of his official biography) about the matters of party historyography? and elucidation of the "role played by Lenin's disciples." It was the present that repeatedly took him to the past. As the years went by, he more and more often looked back at the turn of the century, to the post-revolutionary struggle, to the names and faces of those people who destiny he had decided himself. Occasionally the people and the relatives of his former companions-in-arms reminded him of the past. After his regular report about his business, Beriya sometimes would pull out the lists of the in-laws of prominent party leaders who had been executed as "enemies of the people" or sentenced to rot in camps, the people who wrote personal letters to him, the leader. Stalin silently looked at the lists and returned them to his aide, without saying a word as a rule. The latter would give the leader an understanding look, put papers and the folder and leave. "Let them carry their cross," the dictator thought. He did not look forward to hundreds, thousands of wives, children, cousins and grandchildren of his Party fellow members returning to Moscow, Leningrad or other cities. How many new concerns would the authorities and the organs have then! No, let things stay the way the NKVD has decided.

Sometimes he asked about some people though:

"And what does she need? Is she asking for a release? He looked at Beriya reproachfully."

The letter would readily take out of his pocket a typewritten letter a person, in whom Stalin became interested.

Last time, it was a letter from a relative of Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinskiy, Yadviga Iosifovna, who lived at 9/11 Potapovskiy lane apt. 21. The petitioner was pleading the case of her mother, Dzerzhinskaya Yadviga Ghenrikhovna, who had been sentenced by a special conference and had been in Karanganda camps for many years. The daughter wrote that her "mother was very sick, suffering from lung tuberculosis, scurvy, and foot-and-mouth disease. She is in a very bad condition."

At that instant, Stalin recalled the far away years, when Dzerzhinskiy and he went to Petrograd at Lenin's instruction to organize a rebuff to Yudenich and then near Vyatka at the eastern front. Oh God, it was so long ago! And the image of Dzerzhinskiy himself had long faded in his memory. But why do such people have questionable in-laws, defective children and grandchildren? And then, what does a Yadviga Genrikhovna have to do with it? No, let Beriya handle those matters. Stalin's personality was deprived of basic human sympathy. But his most damaging trait was probably the fact that the leader had *never* been able, nor did he want to mentally put himself in the shoes of his victim, whose life depended on his will. The most awful ailment of the soul, coldness has "frozen" in him any typical human feelings for ever. Looking at each next list, the dictator became surprised: how many people have still survived out of those who should long have been disappeared from the face of this earth!

"Is this one asking for anything too?" said Stalin outloud, as if talking to himself, poking his finger at the name of Radek.

"No, this is his daughter, she is asking for herself," explained Stalin's Inquisitor.

"I, Radek Sofiya Karlovna, born in 1919, write this letter to you and beg you to pay attention to my letter," read Stalin. He remembered that perhaps no one wrote about him in such a lofty manner as Radek did. He had a good pen. For example, Radek wrote so well about him as a leader: "The years of the October revolution saw Stalin not only in the headquarters of the revolution, but more often at the combat front line. When Moscow is threatened with a noose of hunger, he procures grain; when the ring of the enemy forces threatens to close around Tsaritsyn, he organized a rebuff there; when Petrograd finds itself in danger, he inspects bastions there. He does not see the revolution from the reports, he look it right in the face, he can see its greatest upheavals and he can see its bottom. And this brings to fruition, tete-a-tete, Stalin's final evolution as a leader of the revolution."

Stalin liked these words of Radek's a great deal at the time, still he put Radek in the dock together with Pyatakov, because he suspected him of having strong liking for Trotskiy. Didn't they report to Stalin that

Radek used to write to the "outstanding leader," who was exiled in Alma Ata. The same as Trotskiy wrote to Radek. Although Radek did try to win his confidence back. He even turned over to Yagoda the unsealed letter of Trotskiy's which Bluymkin brought to him. But the exile wrote the letter to Radek of all people... No, he was a Trotskiyite and he will remain a Trotskiyite. When the leader approved draft verdict reported to him by Ulrikh, he did replace execution with camps. He was told later that Radek had died there. So, what is Radek's daughter writing about?

"My father Radek Karl Berngardovich was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment as an enemy of the people on 30 January 1937. My mother, Radek R.M. and I were exiled to the city of Astrakhan for five years six months later following the decision of the special conference. My mother was arrested in Astrakhan and exiled for eight years to the Temnikovo camps, where she died... I was deported from Astrakhan in November 1941, with a note [in the record]: 'Has the right to reside only in Kazakhstan.' I would spare you the description of all the hardships I went through. The time of my exile was up in June 1942... I am a human being too; if I am the daughter of the enemy of the people, does it mean that I am the enemy too? When my father was arrested in 1936, I was 17 years old; for 17 years now I have been carrying the stigma of 'the enemy.' I am an educated person, but I cannot get a job according to my speciality in Chelkar. I do not have a passport up till now. The head of the Chelkar NKVD Com. Ivanov would not give any answer to my inquiry. Help me atone for my father's guilt!"

"That's the right way to put it," thought Stalin. Her exiles and camps were not in vain, she began to understand something. That is right - all these "kith and kin" should stay in prison until they understand that they are guilty too. And then let them atone for that guilt! But let give all of this to sort out to the person who is not taking away his small eyes from him...

Such letter revived the past for him. The same as the article in today's PRAVDA "Outstanding Document of Bolshevism," devoted to an anniversary of his speech at the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Plenary meeting in February-March 1937. It seems that N. Mikhailov, who signed the article, makes a correct observation in saying that at the time Stalin "mobilized the party and the Soviet people to completely annihilate the network of foreign imperialist intelligence agents. This resulted in a further strengthening of the Soviet state." But looking back at the past years, he wanted to look not in the eyes of the people who had long turned into shadows, and who were next to him, but at what he has accomplished.

A powerful state emerged under his leadership in less than three decades, the state which everyone has to take into account now. Isn't it so? But a discrepancy often emerges between the result and the process. Why are there so many dissatisfied people? Why would not a single major undertaking get off the ground until he has issued a command? Why is not the number of enemies, turncoats and traitors growing smaller? For instance, the other day he had to satisfy a request he was approached with by the minister of internal affairs: "The numerical composition of the camps has been now set at 180,000 people. The MVD is requesting a permission to increase the capacity of special camps by 70,000 people to bring it up to 250,000." These are the camps for *special* enemies, those who are still armed. Is there number growing? Well, Beriya says that people's commissariats submit so high requests for the labor force out of the special contingent that it is impossible to meet these demands despite the increase. How many millions of people have been made pass through the camps, but the number of the suspects is not going down? Several books and articles published in the West, which he had been told about in translation allegedly describe the society that he has created as "totalitarian." They also write that he is the architect of Stalinism, a new phenomena is public life and politics. He did not pay much attention to this at first. He himself believes that it is time, perhaps, to speak about "Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism," but there is generally no need for this now. The time will come. As to the enemies... Are not the enemies expected to smear everything that he has done throughout his life? L. Trotskiy, R. Ghilferding, A. Rosenberg, and R. Abramovich claimed that Stalinism was "a betrayal of Bolshevism." Before his death K. Kautskiy went as far as to claim that "even more powerful and ruthless masters have appeared in Russia, and more obstacles have been raised in the proletariat's path to socialism than those existing in advanced capitalist countries with established democracy." What else can you expect from such people? They did not spare Lenin either.

Stalin might have been thinking along these lines, but he was little concerned by the attacks of Sovietologists. He had doted on struggle and nothing but struggle all his life. He could hear an echo of that eternal struggle, sense fear and malice in the new "inventions" made by bourgeois advocates. PRAVDA, too, published a lengthy article recently about the latest editions of Encyclopedia Britanica and Encyclopedia Americana under the title "Encyclopedias of Obscurantism And Reaction." It writes correctly that the articles dealing with "socialism and communism claim libelously that no concern is shown for people's happiness under communism." What else can they write? These are the same scribes who write all kind of garbage about "Stalinism." The leader did not know that a time will come when in the country, where he was regarded as a god on earth, people will pose the same question: what is Stalinism and what is its nature?

Anomaly of History

I would not deny that when I started collecting material for this book, it seemed to me that everything created by the people was one thing, while Stalin and his crimes were another. History immediately became simpler, easier to understand and more accessible that way. But as I became immersed in the past, sorting out through numerous archive files and talked with the eyewitnesses

and participants in the past events, and deliberated about what has been achieved, it became clear how far more complex the things really are. It is tempting to brand not only Stalin but his entourage as well, and all of the bureaucratic layer that it had created, or "a new class," as Kautskiy used to say; then everything would become clear as well, and there is much truth in this. But many things are not true. We tend to forget sometimes that Stalin and everything associated with him were born by and large on the soil of Marxism. Stalin did not "defect" to the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) from another party, nor did he stage "a coup d'etat," as they claim now, to create socialism Stalin style. He had sworn by and evoked Marx, Engels and Lenin all the time. And all of the party echoed him.

Lenin wrote with amazing foresight that the value of the Marxist theory lay in its critical and revolutionary nature. "And that latter quality is pertinent to *Marxism* entirely and unquestionably, because this theory takes on a direct goal of *laying bare* all forms of antagonism and exploitation in modern society, to trace their evolution and prove their transient nature." Yes, exactly their *transient* nature. Many Marxist decided for some reason that this applies to the exploiter society only. The "transient nature" of resolving these contradictions in the establishment of a new society embraced a multitude of alternatives in the range of these ways. With party's help, Stalin was increasingly distancing himself from the concept of Lenin's. It was already too late when the best of the party brains had realized this. A bureaucratic system has one idiosyncrasy: it becomes established very fast and turns out to be extremely viable.

One of the cardinal problems involved in the entire socialist evolution lies in the very fact that while paying lip service to the dialectics, we often just "fooled around" with it, making an absolute out of many conclusions, formulas, and predictions in the theory of scientific communism in the process. The founders of Marxism warned us against doing this themselves. Marx claimed in one of his letters to Engels that political economy could be turned into genuine science "only in case if instead of analyzing contradicting dogmas, one examined contradicting factors and real contradictions, which are the underlying cause of those dogmas."

Lenin wrote outstanding lines on the eve of the October, when he was hiding from the sleuth-hounds of the Provisional government (it is possible that Stalin was with him at the moment, since he did go to see Lenin during the period), dealing with the evolution of a future communism: "It *takes its origin* from capitalism, evolves out of capitalism historically, and results from the action of the public force which is *born* by capitalism. Marx did not make the slightest attempt to make up utopias, or to guess against guessing about what cannot be known." Why am I repeating these evident truths? The fact is that they had deviated from them soon after Lenin's death. They began to use Marxism *discriminatively,* and, what is most important, not creatively.

Neither Marx nor Engles could foresee even large blocs in the design of a future structure, to say nothing about its details. But many dogmas of the past were taken for granted from the very outset. The leaders used to say very often in the Twenties: "The working class cannot make mistakes"; "the party cannot make mistakes." But they did. All of us agree that Stalin did not "invent" anything in the theory of scientific communism, did not move an inch ahead in the positive sense. He relied on Marxist postulates, which were often half a century old, without comprehending them in a dialectic and creative way. Very many people voiced fundamental objections to the very essence of those postulates, to the nature how they were utilized and implemented. Stalin stuck to the letter of Marxism. Ranting against Bukharin at the Plenum of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee in April 1929, he stated, for example: "Leninsim is unquestionably in favor of a strong alliance with the bulk of the peasant masses, in favor of alliance with the serednyak [peasant of average means] peasants, but not of any alliance, but in favor of such an alliance with the serednyak peasants which serves to ensure the *leading role* of the *working* class, *strengthen* the dictatorship of the proletariat and *facilitate the business of eliminating* classes." Then he quotes Lenin as saying: "What does it mean to guide the peasantry? This means, first, to pursue the policy of eliminating the classes, and not of a petty producer. We would have ceased being socialists if we had deviated from this fundamental and main line."

We can see that Stalin stuck to the letter in form and inveighed against those who dared to deviate from it. In asserting socialism, he, therefore, turned the arguments, polemics and assumptions made by the founders into a dogma in the first place, and then misinterpreted the ossified dogma to the benefit of Caesarism. This is why, perhaps, it is more correct to say, without beating about the bush that Stalinism was born on the soil of Marxism and fed on its distorted postulates and conclusions. This does not imply that Marxism is guilty of producing Stalinism. Being a concept of world outlook and that of methodology embracing philosophical, economic and sociopolitical views of society, nature and thinking, Marxism is not responsible for how it is interpreted. Unlike a cookbook, Marxism is not a collection of recipes, nor is it a plan of political action. But this is exactly how Stalin understood Marxism.

Summing up the results of the first five-year plan in January 1933 and touching upon the outcome of the "struggle against the remnants of the enemy classes," Stalin interpreted one Marxist thesis the following way: "Some comrades understood the thesis about the liquidation of classes, establishment of a classless society and the withering away of the state as justification for laziness and complacency, justification for the counterrevolutionary theory on the waning of class struggle and the weakening of state power. There is no question in our mind that such people can have no truck with our party. They are renegades or double-dealers who should be kicked out of the party. The liquidation of the classes is

achieved not by way of the class struggle subsiding but by intensifying it." This take-it-or-leave-it, mechanistic and primitive interpretation of the Marxist thesis was a forerunner of new troubles to come. But Stalin will portray those troubles as victory and sanctify it with the banner of Marxism. Having taken the fundamental premise of Marxism on class struggle to the extreme, Stalin arrived at a model of social relations which we resolutely censure today. One should mention the fact that a trend to take to the extreme many things that by great thinkers said emerged in Marxist propaganda at a certain stage, long before Stalin. Stalin was one of those who inherited and persistently developed the tradition.

All the things said are not intended to justify something in Stalin or Stalinism. Of course not. But the numerous publications in recent years have often attributed all distortions, errors and crimes to only one person. Had it been the case, we would have jettisoned Stalinism long ago. Stalin is dead, but Stalinism is still alive. *Decades* pass, but it is still politically alive, although it seems sometimes that Stalinism had long been dead. I think that this political practice has become one of historical possibilities (utterly negative) of implementing the ideas which were espoused in the Marxist doctrine. Marxism very attractively embodied the people's eternal striving for freedom, happiness, equality, and justice. Its followers often believed that the very attempt at a *creative interpretation* of Marxist postulates were a heresy, deviation, or revisionism. A point was reached after a while when any view, different from the one established in Marxism, began to be treated with outright hostility. To some extent, Marxism assumed the character of a political doctrine at a certain stage, which tried not so much to adapt to the changing environment as to make the conditions fit its conclusions. As long as Lenin was alive - and this is seen from his last works most of all - he attempted to make the Bolsheviks address *reality* in their thinking and action, the complex realities of existence, and a knot of contradictions which were growing in a vast country of peasants. The tragedy of the Russian revolution lies in the fact that Lenin's entourage, possessing high intellectual standards, was still a level or two below the intellect of the genius. This is why the trend of canonizing Marxism considerably accelerated after the death of the leader of the revolution. By the force of circumstances, which we mentioned before, a man who was best suited to follow the Marxist doctrine simplistically was found at the helm of the party and the state.

Stalinism capitalized utmost on the infatuation of Russian revolutionaries with radicalism, when it was justified to sacrifice everything - history, culture, traditions, and human lives - for the sake of an idea. The deification of an ossified ideal eventually led to the disregard for the needs of specific people in particular time. Russian radicalism put on the garb of revolutionary romanticism, chafing at Philistine well-being and bourgeois culture. Such person as Stalin fit these views best of all: anything is permitted to make the idea triumph! Nobody had ever said that this is an outright antihuman thought, and a social sin against the people! Such personality antipodes as Stalin and Trotskiy approximate each other considerably in this respect. The dictator associated active work in his own country with the "victory of socialism in all countries." Placed in entirely different circumstances and waging a mmortal fight against Trotskiy proclaimed: "For socialism! For world revolution! Against Stalin!" Despite the outward political apposition of the two "outstanding leaders," their radicalism is rooted in the Russian veneration for the idea at the expense of realities. Radicalism allows no historical balance, an equilibrium of ideas and existence. The main goals are to "take over," "overturn," "destroy," "smash," "break," "unveil," and "nail down..." The revolutionary radicalism on which Stalin sponged methodically established a new pseudo culture to which his ideas were central. I do not think that an examination of Stalinism as a historical anomaly would have been complete without this observation.

It is probably worth mentioning one aspect of the revolutionary struggle which accompanied revolutionary development before the October [revolution] and afterward. One cannot but see that the Mensheviks, whom I do not want to whitewash - although they regarded themselves a workers' party, by and large they were the proponents of petty bourgeois reformism - came out rather persistently against dogmatic, radical and doctrinaire principles which dehumanized and enfeebled Marxism from within. Menshevism had turned out to be politically fruitless eventually, and V.I. Lenin demonstrated this in a brilliant way, but the criticism of Stalin by the Mensheviks helps understand certain aspects of that phenomena.

The exiled Menshevik leadership (Martov, Abramovich, Dan, Nikolayevskiy, Dolin, Shvartz, and Yugov) had tried to wage a two-front struggle, as it were, for a long time: to uphold the ideals of revolution in Russia and to criticize its degeneration at the same time. The Mensheviks had their own printed publication, SOTSIALISTICHESKIY VESTNIK, until 1965. The most influential people among its leaders (it was called "Foreign Delegation") were F.I. Dan, who was increasingly attracted toward the USSR and who died in 1947; R.A. Abramovich, who passed away in 1963 and who tenaciously stuck to his anti-Soviet views till his very death. The main arrows of criticism that were released by the leaders the rapidly shrinking Menshevik groups after V.I. Lenin's death were aimed against "Stalin's antidemocratic methods." Doomed to live far away from their homeland, the most astute of them could clearly see that Stalin was moving away from Lenin. Approving of the NEP [new economic policy], for example, the Mensheviks expressed a very interesting idea: a new line in economics should be accompanied by a meaningful reform in politics; then no Bonapartist trends can develop in the USSR. The Mensheviks saw the root of growing Caesarist trends in the fact that with its "worker's origin," the Bolshevik party was increasingly turning into an instrument of a small group of people. They

believed that an increasing role that one personality played was fraught with regeneration. Abramovich believed that only a party allowing plural opinions to be expressed could guarantee the development of democracy. One cannot but agree with these sober ideas.

How did the Mensheviks size up Stalin? Within the context of two possibilities of negative development of the USSR - counterrevolution and pseudo revolution. The emigres believed that Stalin, willingly or not, led the country along the second path. The Mensheviks claimed that Stalinism boiled down to the renunciation of the traditions inherent in social democracy. But after the revolution, Menshevism was not a homogeneous political and ideological force; its influence was on the wane. F.I. Dan, who was an undisputed leader of the Mensheviks for a long time, broke away from it after a while, and began to publish journal NOVIY MIR in the hope that after the defeat of fascism the Soviet Union would be able to change to embrace the genuine principles of socialism. In his major work on the origins of Bolshevism, which F.I. Dan wrote shortly before his death, he said with a foresight that the tragedy of Russia lay in the fact that Stalin had failed to combine socialism and democracy. This is the "brand of Stalinism." But Dan expressed an optimistic idea to the effect that Bolshevism did not start nor did it end with Stalin; socialism is worthy of freedom, and it will bring it to the people. These people were capable of passing sober judgment of Stalinism, although as onlookers, the people who were ending their lives at the backwater of Russian history, who met Lenin personally, directly witnessed the Russian revolution, their adversaries, the Bolsheviks, their ups and downs. Historically analyzed, some of their ideas and evaluations warrant serious attention.

The numerous "oppositions," "factions," and "deviations" that emerged after the victory of the Great October socialist revolution - often containing quite a few dubious and erroneous elements - were nevertheless one of the usual forms of presenting socialist alternatives. My assertions may again sound as heresy to people thinking in orthodox terms, but I think that the elimination of *revolutionary* pluralism made the mainstream of social renovation poorer. I do not think that Mensheviks internationalists, led by L. Martov, O. Yermanskiy, Yu. Larin, I. Astrov, et al., were the enemies of the revolution. The same is true of Left Revolutionaries who formed their party at the end of 1917. Does not this represent one of the main sources of dogmatic and Caesarist monoliths, which recognized but one opinion, one will, and one truth? So many ideas on democracy, NEP, the peasantry, trade, state and party building were not implemented because the party majority stuck with one orthodox line! All of the multicolored reality was reduced to a black-and-white vision of the only monoschematic perception!

Initially, the things seemed to move in the direction of revolutionary pluralism. Let us get acquainted with an abstract from the protocol by the Council of People's Commissars No. 23 of December 9, 1917:

"Chairman is Vl. Ilych Lenin. Present: Trotskiy, Lunacharskiy, Yelizarov, Glebov..., Raskolnikov, Menzhinskiy, Uritskiy, Stalin, Bonch-Bruevich, and Bogolepov.

Listened: the question of including L.R. (Left Revolutionaries) in the Ministries (this way in the text, although what is meant are the People's Commissariats. **-D.V.**).

Resolved: Offer L.R. to become part of the government under the following conditions:

a) the People's Commissariats conduct a common policy with the Council of People's Commissariats;

b) Shteinberg is appointed People's Commissar of Justice. The decree on courts is not up for abrogation;

c) Trutovskiy is appointed People's Commissar in charge of urban and zemstvo [elected district council] self-government. He exercises the principal of full powers both at the center and locally in his activity;

d) Coms. Algasov and Mikhailov (Karelin) are included in the Council of People's Commissars as ministers without portfolio. They carry out practical work as members of the collegium on internal affairs..."

Left Revolutionaries Proshiyan, Kollegayev, and Izmailov were also appointed People's Commissars. Then other issues were discussed, while Sverdlov continued negotiations with the Left Revolutionaries. They put on record item No. 11 of the minutes of the Council of People's Commissars' session late at night:

"Publish the following: full understanding on the composition of the governmen was reached on the night of 10 December between the Bolsheviks and Left Revolutionaries. Seven L.R's are included in the government." The minutes were signed by Vl. Ulyuanov (Lenin) and N. Gorbunov. It was clear to everybody at the time that both the Bolsheviks and the Left Revolutionaries were in the mainstream of revolutionary movement. The very practice of reforms required socialist pluralism, which was ruthlessly crushed in its nascent form.

Stalin proved to be the right person for this power, unidirectional vector of development. We know that other alternatives were available; but no real struggle took place over giving real chances to another vector. For example, Bukharin expressed many attractive ideas, which he had to renounce later, not on his own accord. In saying so, I do not claim that Stalin and Stalinism had been preordained; they were not. I just want to make the point: Stalinism - and this is very important - stemmed from the turning of Marxism into a dogma and many conclusions into absolutes, the conclusions made as early as the mid-19th century, and from giving no chances to other revolutionary alternatives.

This did not present major social pitfalls as long as the party did not control power. But the implementation of canonized tenets became a calamity after it had become a ruling party. Capitalizing on this monopoly, Stalin

went even further: he distorted many principles of scientific communism, which resulted in social regeneration in many areas. We want to emphasize one again: *Stalinism* is the distortion of the theory and practice of socialism; it epitomizes power and violence as a universal means of achieving political and social goals. Stalinism is a monodimensional perception of the world, advocating the use of any radical means for achieving the goals which were set and which become eventually distorted. Stalinism gave rise to a profound contradiction between the economic base and the political structure, the people and the bureaucracy, genuine culture and its surrogates, and the socialist ideals and their implementation. Stalinism reflects not only the processes of deforming the power by the people, but, as we have said before, its regeneration into a special kind of Caesarism. It is a historical anomaly of socialism.

One can possibly say that any revolution is threatened by its "Thermidor.?" It can assume different forms: the restoration of the old setup, partial deformation, or gradual degeneration. Stalinism came across as a form of Thermidor through the *degeneration* and distortion of the people's power into a dictatorship of one dominating individual.

This distortion of theory and practice became evident to the full in *alienation.* We used to believe before that alienation is possible only in capitalist society. I do not think this is right. Marx singled out the following aspects of alienation in his "Economic And Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844": the loss of the right to take care of one's own activity; alienation of the products of labor from their producer; alienation from the befitting conditions of life; mutual alienation; the loss by people of their social sense of purpose. Essentially, Stalinism means *alienation of individual from power,* depriving him of the possibility of running the state, production, or other social processes. Thus, Stalinism is first and foremost a *dictatorial form of alienation of working people from the right to take care of themselves and of state administration.* The founders of Marxism believed that while alienation was natural for capitalist society, it comes as an anomaly for socialism, which accomplishes revolution for the very purpose of eliminating many forms of alienation.

Stalinism became established as a phenomena by passing through several stages. One of them - not very noticeable, happened when Lenin's entourage "turned a deaf ear" to his "Testament." It was probably at that point that Stalin felt for the first time that the Olympus of power was not a dream but a reality for him. The second stage spanned the period between 1925 and 1929. Stabilization of capitalism after the revolutionary upheavals had subsided in the West coincided with the emergence of bureaucratic structures and removal of Stalin's main opponent at home. Collectivization and an end to a moderate line in the Central Committee represented still another stage. It was at this stage that Stalinism, which resorted to mass violence, took the upper hand over possible alternatives of development. Stalin stepped in his soft boots, on the next stage in 1934 (the Seventeenth congress), to be "crowned" as the only leader. Stalinism's iron-clad orthodoxy became only more ossified further down the road. War was the only thing to loosen his grip somewhat, because not only Stalinism but Stalin himself faced a mortal threat.

Stalinism cannot allow cardinal reforms. The political system, social relations and the though itself gradually become encrusted. I want to emphasize: Stalinism is a specific form of alienation of a working person from power which he had won for himself during the revolution, with all the ensuing harsh consequences in the political, economic, social, and spiritual fields. This is really a "sickly shadow" of socialism, its pseudo model.

As one defines Stalinism, one can perhaps single out a number of its salient features. One of them is the *lack of alternatives* in development. All of the wide range of revolutionary recipes was ruthlessly and gradually reduced after 1917. A choice among two or more alternatives was often made not by life itself, but by office activity. Stalin was unrivaled specialist in this regard. He had always known what was good and what was bad, what was revolutionary and what was counterrevolutionary. A methodological key to resolving all problems was simple: everything that did not coincide with his views, tenets and goals was denounced as anti-Leninist and hostile, of course. This emerged gradually a state rule. In addressing different problems, Stalin usually never seriously considered different alternatives, with the exception of those which he suggested himself. Naturally, anything that did not fit them was branded as unscientific, nonsocialist, hostile and reactionary. The style of governing by directives, once chosen, could be only perfected, but not revised or replaced. I think that the things that we refer to as "pluralism" today would have driven him crazy and would have been described as a real betrayal of the revolutionary cause.

Everything accomplished by him, Stalin, was portrayed as an expression of objective law. Even theoretical actions were dovetailed to that pattern. For example, Stalin published a scathing article after the journal PROLETARSKYA REVOLUYTSIYA carried an article by Slutskiy, "Bolsheviks On German Social Democracy During Its Prewar Crisis." The journal editors simply wanted to examine the history of relations between the Bolsheviks and the Second International, the contacts between communist parties with Social Democrats. That was the question which is topical even today. But Stalin interpreted this as an attempt to revise the Bolsheviks' views on centrism and opportunism in general. In his typical style, Stalin slapped brands in passing on Rosa Luxemburg, Volosevich and some other people and tongue-lashed them, extensively using such "arguments" as "rubbish," "vulgar and Philistine epithets," "wretchedness," and "Trotskiyite contrabandists." Even a timid attempt to look at partial alternatives was interdicted immediately.

After Stalin had succeeded in keeping his position of General Secretary following the Thirteenth congress, he began to swiftly develop his main premise of power: no alternatives! Neither political, nor public, nor personal. Especially personal! He had done away not only with Trotskiy, but with all of Lenin's entourage in the final run. Stalin's reaction was unequivocal after the war, when Beriya began to whisper into his ear that A.A. Kuznetsov had set his sight on becoming General Secretary after the leader's death and that N.A. Voznesenskiy aspired to become Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Not a stupid person, Stalin realized that the Central Committee, and Politburo as the party's collective mind could present the most credible alternative to his rule. By resorting to political shenanigans, intrigues and reducing the rights of the elected organ, Stalin turned the Central Committee into a rubberstamp institution consisting of yes men, whom he got together more and more rarely. His apparatus, a party chancellery of bureaucrats, acted on behalf of the Central Committee. Any alternatives to Stalin's rule were out of the question during the autocrat's lifetime.

Stalinism was a *secular* religion of sorts. One had to have faith in, and accept it, agree with it, and to interpret the postulates formulated by Stalin. To do this, one had to regard the party as nothing but a sacred order dominated by only one person. Not a single evidence of public disagreement with Stalin's dogmas was found since the early Thirties. To rule them out completely, the first chapter of the Code of Laws was adopted by the USSR Executive Central Committee in 1927, which included the ill-famous article 58, with its 18 "modifications." There is no doubt that the state should safeguard its interests. But when dissent is qualified as anti-Soviet "propaganda and agitation" and is punished most severely, it is easy to see how an ideology of Stalinism was becoming a method of adaptation and survival for the people, although this did not help if the sword of lawlessness had been already raised over a person's head. Everyone had to unquestionably believe in Stalin's theory, appeals, conclusions, and evaluations. The manipulation of public consciousness resulted in millions of people believing everything the leader said, or had to pretend that they believed. Very often he said what was not true.

Addressing the joint session of the Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission on 7 January 1933 "On the Results of First Five-Year Plan," he engaged in wishful thinking as far as many indices were concerned. Claiming that in agriculture the five-year plan targets were met in four years, for example, he did not say a single word about a horrible famine which took a toll of a great number of human lives, reduced the overfulfillment of the plan to the fact that over 200,000 collective farms and 5,000 state farms had been established (in this respect the five-year plan was "surpassed" three times over!). He alleged that "as a result of the Party's achievement," the "kulaks had been defeated as a class, although not finished yet." And everyone believed in this, taking it for granted, as the ultimate truth of Marxism! Although in fact this was nothing but travesty.

As a distorted theory and practice, Stalinism allowed from now on only *"revolution from above,"* and approached all reforms as the fruit of deliberations by "the supreme political leadership." A wide gap developed between genuine social activity and imitation of it. This activity began to be stage managed from now on: the laudatory remarks to be shouted at the all-union forum of the Komsomol and trade unions were approved; which initiative is to be advanced and where; who is to deliver a speech at the preelection meeting and what kind of speech; which portraits and how many of them were to be in the column of demonstrators; how many "volunteers" were to be sent by a rayon to a "shock" construction project; what to report and when... People gradually became used to others thinking about everything for them. They were instructed to do nothing but to "approve," "applaud," and "support." It seems that some processes will have to be always organized, but this should go hand-in-hand with civic activity, social responsibility, genuine initiative, and an ability to engage in public creative endeavor.

Those who masterminded reports found it normal for the convicts, too, to report to the leader about their successes. For example, Minister of Internal Affairs S. Krruglov reported to I.V. Stalin on 3 January 1952 that "corrective labor camps under the timber industry of the USSR MVD have fulfilled the government quotas for the procurement, processing and supplying to the national economy of timber materials." The same type of reports, signed by the minister, were sent to the leader regarding the mining of nonferrous and rare metals, accompanied by "a report by the workers" engaged at prison enterprises. Even the Gulag regularly reported to Stalin about "high political and work enthusiasm!" Stalinism organizes, arranges and provides for everything, and all of it *from above.*

One cannot but mention the fact that Stalinism as phenomena is characterized by unwritten "laws" of *personal dictatorship.* They were simple and straightforward, but Stalin closely monitored their implementation. To begin with, party, state, or public organs could not make a single decision without his personal review and approval. For example, the leader was asked to approve even the "slogans" for writers. A.S. Shcherbakov writes a letter to Stalin on 2 January 1936 which says: "I have worked as secretary of the Writers' Union Board for 15 months, combining jobs. I have to bother you, seek your help and instructions for the sake of business. Fairly good new works have been created by Korneichuk, Svetlov, Levin, Yanovskiy, Leonov and Avdeyenko. The old masters, who 'kept silent,' began to speak up again, including Faiko, Tikhonov, Babel, and Olesha. The new names of Orlov, Tvardovskiy and Kron have appeared. But lagging behind in literature has not been done away with. Criticism does not help here

either. One writer (Vinogradov) have talked about suicide following rude criticism. And critic Yermilov says in reply: 'let such people poison themselves, we shall not miss them.'

This is what the situation in literature is like. It requires now a militant specific slogan which would mobilize the writers. Will you help to come up with such a slogan, Comrade Stalin?

A. Shcherbakov."

The definition of the main pillars on which an autocracy can lean is among of the "laws" of the dictatorship. The acquaintance with Stalin's archive, fund of documents, and correspondence shows that he paid his main attention to the NKVD, NKGB, and the army from the mid-Thirties, and less attention to the Central Committee, where G.M. Malenkov gradually assumed full control, in line with the leader's instructions, of course. Stalin's personal fund and the "Correspondence..." contain largely the documents sent to him by Beriya, Abakumov, Kruglov, Merkulov, Serov, and other agency heads, on whom he relied, and whom he supported and encouraged. One has on file many presentations made by Beriya, like the one we are going to quote, which deal with awarding combat decorations to Gulag personnel:

"State Defense Committee

Comrade Stalin I.V.

20 December 1944

The paramilitary guards in the NKVD corrective labor camps and colonies successfully coped with the task of isolating and guarding inmates kept in NKVD camps and colonies throughout the Great Patriotic war. I recommend that Gulag guard personnel of the USSR MVD, who showed good results in their work, be decorated with USSR orders and medals."

What follows is a list of hundreds of names of the people "who showed good results in their work," to be decorated with the Order of the Combat Red Banner, Patriotic War of the 1st and 2nd class, the Red Star, and other combat awards.

Stalin lavished high ranks on his internal support. Beriya, who became Marshall of the Soviet Union, was not the only one to have had a high military rank conferred on. Stalin endorsed Beriya's recommendation on 7 July 1945 and signed the decision of the Council of People's Commissars, awarding the title of Colonel General to seven (sic!) leading NKVD and NKGB officials at the same time: V.S. Abakumov, S.N. Kruglov, I.A. Serov, B.Z. Kobulov, V.V. Chernyshov, S.A. Goglidze, and K.A. Pavlov. The front line generals, who showed their mettle at the fronts of the Great Patriotic war, were never rewarded once with such "massive" show of affection on the part of the Chairman of the State Defense Council!

The keeping of the upper echelons of the apparatus in constant suspense was one of the unwritten "laws" of the dictator's activity. He would remove one or another leader at a central or regional level from time to time, but regularly enough, especially considering the fact that there were enough pretexts to resort to such reprisals: the plan has not been met; "a gang of wreckers that operated in the oblast" was not exposed in due time; blinked at low-grade works of culture; let "a gross political error" pass unnoticed in a book, article, and so on. No one could be sure that the stately hand would not dismiss a People's Commissar, First Secretary, Marshall, or a head of some department from his high position at a moment's notice today or tomorrow. This is why the leaders worked selflessly, under constant stress, looking up at higher-ups all the time and sparing no subordinates of theirs.

Stalin believed that power should always command not only respect, but also fear. He introduced unofficial "rules of conduct" for his "fellows-in-arms" as an absolute dictator. For example, they were not allowed to get together without permission (two or three, and less so several people) at somebody's office, apartment, or dacha. This was viewed with suspicions and disapproved. The only exception was made for Beriya, who was close to Malenkov, and often went with him in the same car to the dacha and back. All of them could get together only at Stalin's, if the latter invited them, of course. Strange as it may seem, but the leader did not like to spend long hours working alone. Molotov, Beriya, Kaganovich, Malenkov, and Zhdanov were often summoned to his office, where they often spent several hours at a time. The Master himself decided the subject of the conversation, or a monologue, to be more exact. It looked as if he did not count much on any proposals or objections, with the exception of those from Molotov and Voznesenksiy, as he expressed his thoughts outloud; however he needed a servile support, unanimous consent, approval, and expressions of admiration for the ideas of "Comrade Stalin." For him, it was a sort of "apparatus entourage," a psychological stimulant to which he was addicted as to a ritual of decision-making.

As a form of leadership and management, Stalinism relied primarily on the review of numerous reports and memos which were prepared by different people and organizations on the leader's instructions. Naturally, the NKVD and the NKGB prepared most of such memos. Let us give one more example of this:

It was natural that during the war years Stalin showed interest only in that part of science which provided direct and immediate results in building and updating weapons and combat equipment. He showed a general interest in the Academy of Sciences soon after the Victory. Beriya reported that the President of the Academy would allegedly become sick very often, that research was of low efficiency, and that other Academicians deserved a closer scrutiny too. Stalin requested a memo giving brief profiles of scientists. He was presented with it in no time; it was prepared however not by

the Academy presidium or party committee, but by one of the NKGB departments. It is worth while to quote excerpts from the Academicians' character references, deliberately dropping names in a number of instances:

"Academician B. is a major expert in the field of ferrous metallurgy. Does not mix with his colleagues much, because of his wife's particular avarice;

Academician Vavilov S.I., a physicist in his prime. His brother Vavilov N.I., an expert in genetics, was arrested in 1940 for wreckage in agriculture, sentenced to 15 years and died in a Saratov prison;

Academician V. commands prestige among mathematicians only. A bachelor, drinks alcohol in conspicuous quantities;

Academician Volgin V.P., vice president. There are over 20 denunciations of Volgin (by Stetskiy and others) as a Trotskiyite. Has not been awarded any decorations yet and is not a Stalin Prize winner;

Academician N., director of the institute of combustible fossils; according to agents, does not manage the institute well, is often sick;

Academician Z., a participant in an anti-Soviet organization, according to testimonials provided by enemies of the people. Was engaged in wrecking activity in the field of prospecting for ores. Pays too much attention to personal well-being;

Academician Lysenko T.D., nonparty member, director of the institute of genetics. President of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, twice winner of the Stalin Prize (what follows are the words one can hardly disagree with - **D.V.**). Academician Lysenko does not command prestige, including on the part of President Komarov. Everyone thinks that Vavilov N.I. was arrested because of him."

This is a lengthy list. Stalin relied on such memos from Beriya's department to decide serious questions. Such "documents" were of decisive nature when any type of decision was to be made. One can see how far the agencies, beloved by Stalin, extended their powers - they evaluated even the competence of Academicians!

The entourage did not seem to harbor any doubts about the expediency of any decisions made by the leader. The basic idea behind "scholarly" comments to the dictator's works and conclusions was to claim that Stalin was a classical example of historic necessity. That he has comprehended the in-depth demands of social development better than anyone else and that all his actions were in the mainstream of the manifestation of the laws of history. It was alleged that the epoch itself called Stalin; he is the best spokesman for the aspirations of the working people and of the social progress in its entirety. Molotov wrote directly on this score: "If the Soviet people victoriously solved their internal and external strategic and tactical tasks after Lenin and made their state so powerful and at the same time so close spiritually to the working people all over the world, the greatest historical credit for this goes first of all to Comrade Stalin, the great leader of our party."

Fatalistic motives were very pronounced in Stalinism, a distorted theory and practice of socialism, such as automatic work of history to benefit socialism; a priori fairness of all its steps; and predetermination of the triumph of communist ideals. Stalin's approach places too much emphasis on negation: of the capitalist mode of production, exploitation, abolition of classes, all parties except the Bolshevik one, any views except the Marxist ones, and simultaneously of all of Lenin's comrades-in-arms and potential opponents. It is true that nothing happens in nature without the negation of the things that outlived themselves. But does it mean that Stalin had achieved what the ideal of Marxism contained by resorting to this negation "in vain" and by having changed the production and social image of the country dramatically? Is industrialization (I am not even speaking about the tragic collectivization and the liquidation of the kulaks) and achievement of universal literacy are sufficient to say: here is the socialism we worked for? Stalin's binary thinking, which acknowledged only black and white colors in the limitlessly rich palette of reality left out of its vision the *man,* something essential, main, and fundamental. Stalinism assigned to the man the role of an instrument and a means, and not the purpose of history. Cliches about the Soviet man - his life is "better and more fun" - could not hide the situation which we witness now, looking back at the past, decades later: individuality was suppressed; collective spirit was taken to its extreme at the cost of harmonious development of personality; the concept of educating a "new person" *by force* was prevalent.

Without casting any doubt on the unheard-of enthusiasm displayed by the Soviet people and their amazing belief in the triumph of socialist ideals, and their commitment to the values which the new world was identified with historically, one cannot but say today: the people were assigned by Stalin the role of an object for his ideas, will, and instructions. Stalinism reduced the popular masses to a huge mechanism of implementing the leader's ideas. It was considered normal to perform shameful and ruthless executions of entire parts of this living and intricate organism, sending thousands and millions of the best representatives of people to death or to a prolonged isolation in countless camps of Stalin's. The ill-famous Gulag became a symbol of horrible rule over people, whom Stalin never asked as to what they thought and wanted, or how they reacted particular "historic decisions." Beriya's creatures reported to Stalin on people's behalf. One could hardly recognize Dzerzhinskiy's brainchild ten years after his death: it was placed above the state and then above the party, which meant the degeneration of power. Everything lay in the wake of Stalin's concept, according to which the "punitive agencies and intelligence, necessary to catch and punish spies, murderers, and wreckers sent to our country by foreign intelligence," performed the main functions in the state, along with other agencies.

We believe that Stalinism made the prevalence of politics over economics and of state over society look absurd. Herein lie the deep roots of what we call the command and bureaucratic system. Under the situation, the man sitting at the top becomes the lord of society, the fact that Stalin had learned long ago. He becomes a *lord,* and not a comrade. In this case, the economy begins to change according to the political directives, rather than in line with its innate laws. A vast and powerful layer of bureaucracy at all levels of society and in all of its spheres becomes vitally necessary. Political absolutism of sorts emerges, when a leader's willful decision disregards economic expediency, material possibilities, and the timeliness of one or another technical and economic project. Suffice it to recall the construction under Stalin of the Baikal-Amur railway, the tunnel from the mainland to the Sakhalin (under the straights), and the main line from the northern Urals to the Yenisey, the works which were started without adequate feasibility studies and without making them public knowledge, and which were stopped later. Taken to its extreme, political supremacy made even cosmetic criticism of any type of activity impossible: economic, technical, scientific, or agricultural. Politics has become that mysterious all-powerful sphinx which threatened to devour anyone who expressed even indirect doubts about any of its aspects. Stalinism is an absolute dictatorship of politics over economics, social and spiritual life, and culture. Stalinism is an evolution of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the dictatorship of the party, and then to the dictatorship of one individual. Under the dictatorship of a ruling individual, all institutions of the government and society play the role of nothing but an *apparatus* of its rule.

From the outset, I would like to meet the criticism of those who might interpret these ideas as my failure to understand the role of politics in the life of society. No, I am not against politics, I am just against turning it into an *absolute.* It will always play a tremendous role, for it alone allows one to regulate relations among classes, nations and other social groups, and to exercise people's power. But the real and genuine politics is exercised only when it is underpinned by everlasting democratic values, which are capable of both harmoniously regulating relations among social groups but to closely interact with the country's economic and spiritual life.

Stalinism is the malaise of immature socialism. It was not in the least inevitable or fatal. At the same time, many factors were caused not only by the subjective mistakes made by the party itself, its leaders and underdeveloped theory, but also by many objective circumstances, which we have already mentioned. Stalinism did not result in a complete regeneration of society, nor did it fully deform the socialist ideals and values. People's faith in socialism was sapped, but not undermined completely. Many things sound paradoxical in this faith: people believed that the hardships, repressions and deprivations were a historical price they had to pay for reaching a promised land in the *future.* Stalin speculated like a criminal on this sacred faith; he had deliberately harped on it for many years in order to reinforce his autocracy. One of the major crimes of Stalinism lies in the fact that Stalin had the gall to identify himself with socialism. He had succeeded in doing this to a great extent. The people had withstood because they believed. Stalinism covered society with a crust of bureaucracy and dogmatism; it takes great pain over a long period of time to get rid of it. Stalinism has inflicted an enormous damage to society, especially the political, social, cultural and moral damage. The rule of Brezhnev and many other major flaws in present-day life are deep-rooted in Stalinism. It will take a long time for its painful scars to cicatrize.

The *Stalinist establishment* comes across as the most cynical, often vulgar everyday manifestation of Stalinism. This rule is primarily represented in the *duality* of thoughts and actions, theory and practice. Split consciousness, when people said one thing but did another, was the most widespread practice under Stalin's rule. A well-known American journalist Anna Louise Strong wrote in her 1956 book "Stalin's Era" that the dualism had become evident even during of the Master's victorious rise to power. "Stalin's constitution," writes Strong, "was violated while it was being written. The USSR Constitution was violated by its architect Stalin." He talked about human rights, but trampled them underfoot. The leader was a cynical pragmatist: addressing the first all-Union congress of shock collective farm workers on 19 February 1933, he focused the pathos of his entire speech on how "to make all collective farmers well off." He offered a simple recipe (and this recipe was used for years later on): "If we work honestly, work for ourselves, for our collective farms, we shall succeed in raising the level of all collective farmers, both former poor and average farmers to the level of well-to-do farmers in a mere two or three years, to the level of the people enjoying an abundance of food and leading quite a cultural life." And what was his attitude to those who really knew how "to work for oneself," and work selflessly? All of them were doomed to "liquidation," without any due differentiation, involvement in cooperatives and becoming "hitched" to economically to the new processes going on in the countryside. Speaking at the plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Executive Committee a month earlier, Stalin described the situation in the following way: "The Kulaks have been smashed, but far from finished. Moreover, it will be long before they are finished if the Communists continue to be caught napping and remain complacent in the belief that the kulaks will descend to their graves on their own."

This was a cynical pragmatism of liquidating the "affluent" while urging others to become "affluent." This is what dualism is all about when it becomes part of one's outlook. Stalin often said one thing, intended for general consumption, but did something different. He was fond of talking about a "cultural and funny life," while subjecting large segments of the population, the entire

strata of society to barbaric terror. Gradually Stalin's rule became translated into uniform thinking, harebrained projects, officialdom, lack of initiative, suspicion and intolerance. The saddest thing is that many of these features were not just a decor, an outside manifestation of the rule exercised by Stalin and his apparatus, but became part of the mind set and of many people and of their perception of the world, and that many of them have survived today.

Stalinism has become a subjectively distorted answer to the questions which history posed before the homeland of socialism after Lenin's death. The implementation and achievement of socialist ideals was retarded due to the theory and practice of Stalinism, which was based on power, order, uniform thinking, and historical peremptoriness. The most profound fallacy of Stalinism lies in the fact that it is the state in its role of a machine, glorifying one person, and not an individual, that is found in the center of aspirations expressed by the society. Lenin's humanistic essence was lost amid Stalin's "transformations." A faceless apparatus replaced an individual. Characteristically, this trend became obvious long ago. Ex-Communist Victor Serge, who became an advent of anti-Sovietism in his book "Fate of One Revolution, USSR, 1917-1936," wrote: Stalin had created a state "for which an individual meant nothing." It is obvious today that what used to be regarded as heretical thoughts before are far from being such now. Boris Suvarin points out in his book "Stalin" that "Stalin's concept of socialism essentially lost a lot five years after Lenin's death because of the rapid bureacratization of the party, state and all institutions." These people knew Stalinism from the inside. Their rejection of Stalinism put them in the positions diametrically opposite to socialism. But some of their ideas which analyze the phenomenon of Stalinism are quite astute.

Stalin and Stalinism regarded the cult of state coercion as something natural. But even Hegel wrote with insight that "fate commands a greater sphere of action than punishment." Well, Stalin never understood Hegel... It had never occurred to Stalin that his brainchild - Stalinism - would find itself in a historical trap one day.

Mummies of Dogmatism

A capable student at a religious school and then at a seminary, Iosif Dzhugashvili grasped the postulates of dogmatic theology faster than anyone else. Contrary to the impression which we formed, theology contains quite a bit of useful information, like any knowledge: historical, social, and moral. Dzhugashvili liked the very "packaging" of theological knowledge, their systematization and even their certain harmony. For example, he was fast to grasp the postulate that orthodox dogmatism embraces three basic periods: a)the initial one - prior to ecumenical councils; (b) during the ecumenical councils; (c) in Russia - from the 15th century till the ecumenical councils. He did not probably believe much in the contents of the dogmas; he saw them very often as naive, but they contained something which connected them with secular life. This "something" was interconnection between knowledge and faith.

In the writings of Climent of Alexandria, Kirill of Jerusalem and Grigoriy of Nissa, as well as other theologians, whose books Dzugashvili read at one time, he was most wedded to the idea: there is no faith without knowledge, nor is there knowledge without faith. In his mind, the formula of interconnection between faith and knowledge presented itself in the following shape: faith precedes knowledge, knowledge follows faith. He recalls that his teacher of theology made this point: "Every person is dogmatic by his very nature, since he *believes* in the possibility of discovering truth until he finds out that his efforts are in vain. For the truth lies in faith."

For some reason, he enjoyed most of all such books as the theological writings by Khomyakov and Silvester, rector of the Kiev religious academy, "Experience of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology (with the historical outline of dogmas)," which claimed that the Holy Scripture contained the truths which the church should recognize *always* and *everywhere.*

All of this had been left far behind long ago, behind many of the life's threshholds. The "Symbols of Faith" seemed to have vanished into the thin air of everyday secular existence; even before the revolution, Dzugashvili-Stalin could hardly make any meaningful comments about god consciousness, the parables of Solomon, revelations by John the Baptist, or the message of Judas. All this was carried away by times beyond the point of retrieval, and sometimes he could not believe that he might have become a priest. But something sublimely subtle has stuck in his mind. Stalin had always believed in the existence of certain doctrines which have the significance of irrefutable truths. It is likely that we also believe in, and are even convinced of, this. But becoming what he was, the leader was apt to turn these truths into absolutes, especially if they belonged to him. I have great doubts that he believed everything he said. But others believed it - and we know this for sure today.

We have talked before about the dogmatism of Stalin's thinking. Now we are interested in dogmatism as one of the mainstays of Stalinism, its most important feature which can gradually lead social studies and then society itself into a theoretical and spiritual blind alley. Stalin possessed a tremendous faculty for deadening certain postulates of Marxism and turn them into the mummies of ossified and distorted truth. He was an unrivaled expert in doing this.

For example, the leader used every possible occasion to publicize his understanding of the "final victory of socialism." Leaning on Lenin's ideas about the existence of everything necessary to build socialism in our country (article "On Cooperation"), in his work "On Issues of Leninism" Stalin repeatedly quoted his "modified" definitions contained in various pamphlets. Finally, he cites his main definition: "The final victory of socialism is a full guarantee against any attempts of invasion and

consequently of restoration; any major attempt at restoration can take place only given serious outside support, only given the support of international capital." In order to prove that his formula is absolutely true and fault-free, Stalin had to show how wrong the issue was interpreted by his opponents. To do this, he quotes Zinoviyev as saying: "One should interpret the final victory of socialism as at least the following: 1) elimination of classes and consequently 2) abolition of the dictatorship of one class, in this case, the dictatorship of the proletariat... One should be aware of two things in order to get a clear picture of the situation in the USSR in 1925: 1) an existing *opportunity* of building socialism; such an opportunity of building socialism can be fully perceived, of course, within the framework of one country and 2) a final building and reinforcement of socialism, i.e., establishment of a socialist system and socialist society."

All subsequent interpretations made by Stalin have only the purpose of proving that Zinoviyev was a person having little faith and who was prone to capitulate. The scholastic scholars could take a leaf out of Stalin's book, as he fine combed his opponents' works to discover their weak points, which did not match his orthodoxy. The medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas saw one of the critical problems of cognition in whether God's activity was being perfected on the basis of the God's free will or this activity was based on God's reason, to which his will is subjugated. The scholiasts could argue for decades what was supreme: the internal "light" of reason or the light of the truth of salvation - the "light of grace" and the Holy Scriptures. Stalin did not stoop as low as to deal with such "trifles"; he looked for all those who did not believe in building socialism. Shades of meaning, nuances and the fine print assumed particular importance for the General Secretary since no one spoke out against it and no one objected in principle to the very possibility of establishing a new society. Stalin demonstrated his sophisticated and at the same time dogmatic thinking in this area.

Stalin noticed that by focusing attention on the opponents' sins he always managed to make a special impression on the listeners and readers. Stalin is doing the same in Zinoviyev's case:

"Haphazard building, without a perspective, the building of socialism when it is not possible to build a socialist society is the stand taken by Zinoviyev. But this is the travesty of the issue, and not the solution of the issue!"

But the reader could see that Zinoviyev did nothing but express some doubts which he soon discarded by the way. He tied too closely together the future of the Russian revolution with international affairs; this is natural, since he was chairman of Komintern!

"Capitulation to the capitalist elements in our economy," Stalin works himself up even more, "is where the inner logic of Zinoviyev's arguments leads us." But Grigoriy Yevseyevich did not have anything like this in mind! He just talked about a potential possibility and about its opposite! But Stalin goes even further: "One should not have taken power in October 1917 is the conclusion that is prompted by the inner logic of Zinoviyev's arguments." This sounds as a verdict in Stalin's wording.

Criticizing the "new opposition" for a number of erroneous conclusions, one of which was a mild criticism by Zinoviyev of Bolshevik Yakovlev, the party did not give Stalin any reasons to place Zinoviyev (and his fellow friends in the bargain) on the other side of a political barricade. The leader could not (nor did he want to) understand that many inaccurate and sometimes wrong statements were made in the heat of a debate and fierce argument argument and were dictated by Zinoviyev's desire to actively involve the waning international revolutionary situation, to give it momentum and to instigate it. Taken by his work with Komintern, Zinoviyev lived by this work and often took his evaluations to the extreme. These distortions were not just a point of view for Stalin, which could and should have been criticized in a comradely manner, but a pretext for "beating," "smashing," and "liquidating."

Disagreement with Stalin's theoretical postulates was categorized in the mid-Twenties as a "hostile deviation" from Marxism. Even a hint at any disagreement with the dictator had a tragic outcome later. This can be qualified as theoretical dictatorship; incidentally, even Nietzsche called such people "tyrants of spirit." We find rather interesting thoughts on this score in one of his works. "The tyrants of spirit" practice violence, wrote Nietzsche, by their "belief that a person possessing the truth; at the same time one had not ever encountered such strong manifestations of brutality, willfulness, despotism, and hatred, which are typical of such belief."

Stalin's dogmatism, which has had its dictatorial power over public thinking, was militant, persistent, and merciless. He was given a helping hand by his ideological arms bearers, including Zhdanov, Suslov, Pospelov, Mitin and other knights of dogmatism. M.A. Suslov, a real ideological Inquisitor, displayed particular sophistication in this; even after Stalin's death he succeeded in perpetrating the condition of stagnation in theoretical studies for many years. By erecting ideological barriers everywhere and perpetrating Stalinism, Suslov acted as a generator of duality and theoretical hypocrisy. Speaking at the all-Union conference of the heads of social studies chairs in 1962, the secretary of the Central Committee declared, for example: "Dogmatism is the most dangerous form of divorcing theory from practice. Under its disguise of alleged loyalty to Marxism-Leninism, dogmatism and left opportunism cause great harm to the revolutionary theory and practice, and to socialism. Attempts to hide oneself from life under a pile of quotes spell either inability or unwillingness to gauge a new historical situation and to apply creatively the great principles of Marxism-Leninism and to develop them under new, changing conditions." Such Stalin's disciples

as Suslov were extremely good at mimicry; they ruthlessly expunged any living ideas, innovation, attempts to grasp new processes; they covered up their dogmatic and retrograde attitudes by invoking dialectics, "the living soul of Marxism."

By turning truths into mummies, Stalinism established such feature of dogmatism: a selective use of particular tenets of Marxism. There is no denying the fact that like any teaching, the very theory of scientific socialism and the works by the founders of Marxism-Leninism are subject to the test of time. It was K. Marx who said: "We are not posing in front of the world as doctrinaires who have a ready-made new principle: this is the truth, on your knees in front of it!" Some of the postulates formulated by the founders can be viewed only with an eye to the period when they were made. This is natural. But we should respect and probably know even those conclusions which may become obsolete or inadequate to our understanding today. It would not occur to anyone now, for example, to stop publishing those works by the founders which deal with the dictatorship of the proletariat. But Stalin personally decided what could or could not be published out of the theoretical heritage left by the founders of Marxism. Stalin's fund contains many memos which requested his permission to make public one or another letter by Lenin, or a fragment from a manuscript by Marx and Engels. Here is one example. M.B. Mitin, director of the institute of Marxism-Leninism, addresses Stalin in June 1939: "I request your permission to publish two enclosed letters by V.I. Lenin to Inessa Armand in the next issue of BOLSHEVIK." The resolution is very laconic: "No obj. St." But it was not always that the institute of Marxism-Leninism received such permission.

One day Zhdanov, Mitin and Pospelov showed Stalin an article by Engles "On Foreign Policy of Russian Tsarism," as they had some doubts about the expediency of publishing it. Stalin carefully studied what Engels wrote and made the following comments on the margins: "despicable acquisitions are not the monopoly of Russian tsars"; "overestimation of the role of Russia's foreign policy"; "attacking tsarist foreign policy, Engles decided to undermine any confidence in it on the part of the European public opinion." Then he made the following summarizing conclusion: "All said, is it worth publishing Engles' article in our militant organ BOLSHEVIK as an article providing guidance in all circumstances or as a very instructional article; it is tacitly clear that its publication in BOLSHEVIK means giving it exactly this kind of recommendation. I do not think it is worth it. I. Stalin. 15 July 1940."

It is not surprising, therefore, that many of Lenin's documents have not been made public for decades. Stalin kept under wraps many of Lenin's thoughts and ideas till the end of his life. Dogmatism acknowledges only the things which directly corroborate its tenets, and rejects what is opposed to them. As a matter of fact, even Hegel saw this: "in a more narrow sense, dogmatism amounts to the fact that one-sided arguments of reason are preserved, and opposite definitions are ruled out." Even the leftist phrases which Stalin was fond of using so often could not conceal his emphasis on preserving the theoretical tenets of Marxism which he needed and on passing in silence those of them which he regarded as doubtful. This is natural for dogmatic thinking, since it always regards itself fault-free.

The ill-famous text-book "History of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks). Short Course" became a veritable encyclopedia of dogmatism and a collection of the mummies of half-truths and anti-truths. It was printed in over 300 editions in a total run of over 43 million copies! This collection of dogmas became such a must for the country's adult population, as the Koran is in the country ruled by Moslem fundamentalists. But history has proved long ago that consciousness is a sphere that is the least dependent on the authorities. Heresy, doubts, and dissent are born largely as a result of violence over consciousness and of attempts to rigidly control it or to keep it in prison.

Famous historian V.S. Soloveyov (removed by Stalin from the history of homeland's public thought for a long time) published an article early this century under a telltale title "Guiding Thoughts." He criticized there as a scholar the works by the professor at Petersburg University N.I. Kareyev, published in the collection "Historical Review." Kereev attempted to proscribe to historians not only how to *write* history, but also how to *study* and *understand* it. With intellectual refinement typical of him, V.S. Solovyov refutes the author's claim to interpreting the past. But Kareev is no par to Stalin! Stalin's "guiding thoughts" became mandatory for everyone, at least in words! Let us note that the overwhelming majority of the population had its consciousness deformed to such an extent that it blindly believed in the leader's *interpretation* of history.

We shall dwell on the dogmatic formulations contained in the "Short Course" and show its real role in the life of our society. I would like to remind the readers now that Stalin's backward mind, which took the significance of party's struggle inside the country against countless "enemies" to its extreme, created a distorted image of the past. The party did wage a struggle, and a fierce one oftentimes, which was a law of dialectics. But Stalin saw nothing but struggle and baseness in the party's history: "perfidy" of the Mensheviks, capitulatory stand of the liquidators, anti-Sovietism of the Trotskiyites, and political double-dealing by his former comrades-in-arms. One could think, according to Stalin, that practically all of the old party "guard," with the exception of himself and a group of his supporters, were "scum from the Bukharin-Trotskiy gang." The subtitles to 12 chapters in his book alone speak volumes. In Stalin's thinking, the historical fabric has woven into it the endless hostile sallies by some, and the decisive and clever action by others, led by Stalin. "Splinter activities of Menshevik leaders," "Disintegration of Intelligentsia in the Opposition Ranks," "Stepping Up of Trotskiyite Activities," "Defeat of the Trotskiy-Zinoviyev Bloc," "Political Double-Dealing,"

"Liquidation of the Kulaks As a Class," "Liquidation of the Remnants of Bukharin-Trotskiy Spies," and so on.

In accordance with the Politburo decision on 16 April 1937, a group of historians, including Knorin (he did not finish his work, though since he was arrested), Pospelov and Yaroslvavskiy focused all of their attention on writing the book. Its core was based on Stalin's pattern of dividing the party's history into periods and on his definition of the essence of that history as "Bolsheviks' struggle against anti-Bolshevik factions." The authors supplied Stalin with one chapter after another; there were several versions of the "Course" all in all. Under his pen (or often under his pencil), each chapter was decisively dovetailed to match the overriding idea: the history of the party is a history of inner party struggle, which was headed by Stalin, a faithful comrade-in-arms and follower of Lenin's cause. Despite being personally very busy with other matters, Stalin sat over "history" for a long time, if one is to judge by his comments to the texts of different versions. He knew it too well: this is going to be one of the most important mechanisms of his long-lasting influence over the minds of millions of people.

On reading another revised text of the "Short Course" (I shall repeat that there were several of them until he approved the one which tens of millions of people were to study), Stalin could not but notice that party's history came across as a knights' stadium of unceasing battles that his "order" was waging against the infinite hordes of ideological barbarians. Stalin gave this a thought and then decided to protect his version of party's history against possible future criticism (such criticism was ruled out at present) by dictating a number of postulates which looked the following way after having been edited:

"It might seem that the Bolsheviks devoted too much time to the cause of struggle against the opportunist elements in the party and that they overestimated their importance. But this is completely wrong. One cannot stand opportunism in one's milieu, as one cannot stand an ulcer in a healthy organism. The party is the guiding detachment of the working class, its advance fortress, and its militant headquarters. One cannot allow skeptics, opportunists, advocates of capitulation and traitors to be present in the leading headquarters of the working class. To wage a mortal struggle against bourgeoisie, having capitulationists and traitors... in one's own fortress, means finding oneself in the position of people who are being fired at both from the front and from the back. One can easily see that such a struggle can end in nothing but defeat. It is the easiest to capture fortresses from inside." This is the kind of "front line" point of view that Stalin espouses, and his terminology is military out-and-out as well.

The titles of the "Course" have behind them a mummified history, and the real events and facts are constantly intermingled with distorted ideas of Stalin's.

The over-amplification of revolutionary leaps and downgrading the role of reforms is one of such "mummies" of dogmatism: "So, one has to be a revolutionary and not a reformer in order to avoid making mistakes in politics." Such point of view and methodological tenet justified willfulness, power politics and forearmed the leader with the right to take any radical steps which he deemed necessary. For example, to effect a transition to "the policy of liquidating, to the policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class." The "Short Course" sanctified Stalin's "revolutionary" willfulness of leaps and bounds as the ultimate Marxist truth. The very words "reform" and "evolution" were the synonyms of the hostile and alien elements, underrated by history.

The claim that production in the USSR was the acme of perfection in today's world was another "mummy" of dogmatism. The "Short Course" proclaimed that production relations were "fully attuned to the productive forces, ... and therefore socialist production in the USSR was immune to periodic crises of overproduction and the absurdities that it entails." Stalin did have his hand in eliminating the "absurdities" of overproduction in our country. However, permanent shortages, degrading deficit of goods and a low quality of products oriented only towards quantitative indices were raised to the level of a law.

One can give many similar examples of this dogmatic attitude, but let us name just one more. Stalin succeeded (and this is put on record in the "Short Course" more than once) in creating a strong impression, - no, to put it more strongly - to inculcate this as a world outlook among the Soviet people - that all setbacks, failures and difficulties were attributed to the activity of numerous "enemies of the people," who finally began to be decisively abolished on a wide scale starting from 1937. The "Short Course" did not stint such epithets against old Communists of the Lenin guard and the makers of October as "enemy gang," "scum of the earth," "Trotskiyite-Bukharin monsters," "White Guard pygmies and louts," "despicable lackeys of the fascists," and so on. The all-Union mandatory textbook instructed millions of Bolshevik and nonparty people: "Party members should not only become familiar with how the party fought against and overcame the Constitutional Democrats, Left Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, and anarchists, but also with how the party fought against and overcame Trotskiyites, 'democratic centralists,' 'worker's opposition,' Zinoviyevites, rightists deviationists, rightist-leftist freaks and so on. One should not forget that the familiarity with, and understanding of, the history of our party is the most important means that is necessary to ensure revolutionary vigilance of the party members." The main architect of the "encyclopedia of Marxist knowledge" wanted everyone to live feeling tension, anticipating enemy sallies, and constantly be on guard with respect to people around, co-workers, and colleagues - The Enemy is not asleep!

Stalin went to special lengths to ensure that the "Short Course" was especially marked by its anti-Trotskiy

thrust, in addition to those general guidelines which he set in his 1937 letter "Regarding the Text-book of AUCP (of Bolsheviks) History." Trotskiy was "introduced" in the text whenever possible. For example, in the following fragment: "It has been established *now* as a result of the trial of the anti-Soviet 'right-centrist' bloc in *1938* that the 'left' Social Revolutionaries staged the mutiny, with Bukharin and *Trotskiy* being aware of it and consenting to it, and was part of a general plan of counterrevolutionary conspiracy of the Bukharinites, Trotskiyites and 'left' Social Revolutionaries against Soviet rule." The spaced words were added by Stalin.

All of the "work's" contents were designed to make people look at the surrounding world through the eyes of their leader, who regarded almost every third citizen of his homeland as a "dubious person," "double-dealer," or a "hidden enemy." We should point out at the same time that the "Short Course" was quite popular in the country not only because the propaganda apparatus turned it into the main book of society for many years, in the spirit of Stalin's instructions. It was also popular because its extremely primitive and schematic presentation appealed to many people due to its simplicity, the people who were used to others thinking for them and who were satisfied with this miserly spiritual food.

Dogmatic postulates (with the exception of second paragraph of chapter four) turned out to be very easy to understand. One did not have to dig through the original sources, or literature, and most importantly, one did not have to think hard: everything was put in political pigeon holes, all protaganists were painted in appropriate colors (and we shall remember that there were two colors), and clear and unequivocal evaluations were given everywhere. The authors took care to end each chapter with a "Brief Summary" at Stalin's proposal, the summary styled as political instructions. All one had to do was to memorize the tenets which were spelled out. This book became the main weapon of actively instilling dogmatic thinking in the party and the country. This is how "empty" truths found their way from the book to public and individual consciousness. Henceforth the entire system of political education and party enlightenment was based for many years on the "Short Course," which crudely impressed the distorted fragments of Leninism on the minds of millions of people. It is not surprising therefore that the leader has so many followers even today! The "Short Course" played a significant role in this.

In fact the new generations, with the exception of a narrow group of scholars and intellectuals, were not familiar with genuine Lenin and his works in the Thirties and the Forties. On the other hand, the "Short Course" was crammed with Stalin's quotes, the book that soon came to be regarded as the leader's own work. For example, the last three chapters of the course, a total of over 70 pages, contain more than 60 (sic!) references to, quotes, and conclusions made by Stalin. The author of the work made himself its main protagonist as well. Addressing Moscow and Leningrad propaganda workers on 1 October 1938 in connection with the publication of the "Short Course," the leader focussed his speech on the main idea, according to which he was not sure whether Soviet rule would have been possible without Lenin's disciples (he meant only himself, of course) who hit at the same point. He suggested that people should study the "Short Course" as well as "Comrade Stalin's book 'On Fundamentals of Leninism' which gives all the basics." Stalin called the "Short Course" "a manifesto, Marxist of songs." Taking into account the composition of the participants, he did not fail to warn that "we did not educate part of the intellectuals; they were caught in the net of foreign intelligence services. This is the catch of foreign intelligence services." Instructing propaganda workers as to how to use the "manifesto," Stalin warned against free thinking at the same time, which may lead one only into the net of "foreign intelligence services." The "Short Course" had hence become Stalin's book of quotes, used to check each person's orthodoxy and police loyalty.

Such ideological food, dogmatic and antihistoric in its contents, resulted in spiritual impoverishment, theoretical oversimplification and broad primitivism. Stalin fertilized the soil to grow on it a large segment of *primitively* thinking people, who were constantly used as the base for recruiting career-seekers, informers, zealous officials, and thoughtless executives. This very segment augmented the bureaucratic apparatus, the punitive agencies, and the ranks of all types of functionaries. G.M. Malenkov, as seen from his archive fund, "screened" thousands of people appointed to do party work (people were "elected" at the plenary meetings automatically), to the NKVD organs, and the apparatuses of the ministries. The absence of "incriminating evidence" with the organs and work on Stalin's "desktop book" were used as criteria of ideological and theoretical maturity. Some people were summoned to Moscow for an interview. Either Malenkov himself, with puffed cheeks, princely, leaning back in his chair, or an official acting on his behalf, did not fail to ask one or two questions dealing with the "Short Course" or Stalin's other works, amid other questions:

"Which deviation is the main and the most dangerous one? (This was a loaded question, since not all people could recall that Stalin taught that the main deviation was the one against which they stopped to fight).

"When and where did Comrade Stalin say 'cadres decide everything'"?

Well, and other "wisdoms" of the kind.

The ideological charge contained in the "Short Course" lasted for more than a decade. Stalin's book of quotations dominated public consciousness before the war not because propaganda people worked to make it so, but also because millions of people saw in one book the most concise and easy to understand description of the entire epoch, the fact that we have mentioned before. Most of the people did not understand that the picture of the

times painted in the "Short Course" was utterly distorted. The entire system of political education was engaged in instilling dogmatic thinking in the country. A.A. Zhdvanov and M.A. Suslov after the former's death were the most active conduits of Stalin's policy in this field.

Stalin had set his sight on Zhdanov long ago. Stalin learned a lot of thing about him later on, of course, after the young secretary of the Nizniy Novgorod party gubkom [province committee] became a member of the Central Committee in 1925 (alternate member). Stalin invited the Secretary of the Gorkiy (the city had been renamed by then party kray committee to the Kremlin for a talk in 1929. The strongly-build 33-year old man produced a good impression on the General Secretary. He inquired Zhdanov about the situation in Gorkiy, about the popular mood, how people reacted to the exile of Trotskiy and the expulsion of a large group of his supporters from the party and their deportation. He asked Zhdanov in passing which of his in-laws lived in his home town of Mariupol, whether he kept in touch with Shchadrinskiy, and where he started his party career during the Civil War years. Surprised that the General Secretary was so well informed, Zhdanov told him everything in a concise and intelligent way, expressed optimism over the beginning of collective farm movement in the kray and assured Stalin of the striving of the Bolsheviks of the kray organization to meet their five-year plan targets ahead of schedule. Bidding farewell, Stalin noted down something in his mysterious exercise-book.

Yes, he had clever eyes, came across as an intellectual, and did not ask for anything - a car, people, or additional funds - as is often the case in such situations. The evaluations made by the young secretary regarding the future of the collective farm movement and the necessity of developing industry at a fast pace surprisingly coincided with what Stalin was thinking himself about these matters.

Returning to Gorkiy, Zhdanov found out the venue of the next party conference. It turned out to be in the Sormovo region. He went there and delivered a report, putting the main emphasis on the conclusions and instructions which he received during his conversation with Stalin. He drew the party members' attention to the fact that not all of Trotskiy's supporters had disarmed themselves yet and urged vigilance. Zhdanov was elected member of the Central Committee at the regular Sixteenth congress a year later. His career became even more meteoric after that. Zhdanov was put at the head of the Leningrad party organization in 1934, after Kirov's assassination and became secretary of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committeeat the same time. He became alternate Politburo member in February 1935 and full Politburo member in 1939. He was close to Stalin personally, and even became his relative at one point, after his son Yuriy had married Stalin's daughter Svetlana. Unfortunately, the marriage did not last. Stalin was pleased with Zhdanov as member of the military council of the Leningrad front. Zhdanov was given the rank of colonel general in 1944 at the initiative of the Supreme Commander. Only a handful of political workers were assigned such a high rank at the time.

Stalin tested Zhdanov in the military diplomatic field, so to speak, at the end of the war. Zhdanov conducted affairs with the Finns after they signed an armistice agreement in 1944. Zhdanov's archive contains quite a few cables addressed to Stalin. Here is one of them:

"To Comrade Stalin I.V.

To Comrade Molotov V.M.

'Very urgent'

Today, on 18 January 1945, I visited Mannerheim. The tete-a-tete meeting lasted for about two hours. Mannerheim said that the time had come to make a turnaround in relations between our countries after many years of hostility. The military defense lines against the USSR are useless, I became convinced, unless there are good relations. Mannerheim said that he did not want war in 39, nor the war of 41-44, about whose positive outcome he had his doubts even before it began. He expressed his willingness to arrange cooperation in coastal defense, while he would defend his country's mainland on his own. He asked whether standard treaties were available. I said that they seemed to be, for example with Czechoslovakia. Request your instructions.

A. Zhdanov."

It was not Stalin but Molotov who gave the Politburo member a stern reply: "You have run ahead of yourself. The signing of a pact with Mannerheim, similar to the one we concluded with Czechoslovakia is the music of the future. First we have to restore diplomatic relations. Do not scare Mannerheim with radical proposals. Just sound him out.

Molotov."

Zhdanov reported to Stalin one day later again: "I saw Mannerheim again. I told him that the signing of the treaty similar to the one with Czechoslovakia, is 'the music of the future,' after the restoration of diplomatic relations. Mannerheim replied that he did understand: as a country, Finland was under supervision and cannot have any other type of relations with the USSR for the time being. It was obvious that he was disappointed." The message continued with specific issues related to the union auditing commission. Stalin approved the proposals made by the Soviet side, probably thinking that he would be able to use Zhdanov after the war for solving international issues as well. Incidentally, it was Zhdanov who was taking care of the Cominform affairs on Stalin's instruction.

Why am I making such major digressions? Just to show: Stalin always checked the people on whom he had banked. He checked them for a long time, sometimes during their lifetimes. But he did not forgive them a

single blunder. Zhdanov had always lived up to Stalin's expectations. Who knows, however, whether Zhdanov would not have been caught in the Leningrad tornado if he had not died suddenly in August 1948 at the age of 52. His son, Yuriy Andreyevich Zhdanov, believes that Stalin had grown cool to him at the end of his father's life, the same way he grew cool first toward Voznesenskiy and Kuznetsov and sometime later, to Molotov. But as far as Stalin growing cool to Zhdanov, these are the suppositions based on nothing but a some circumstantial evidence.

Working directly in the Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) from 1944, A.A. Zhdanov proved himself as a ruthless and merciless curator of ideology and culture. Dogmatism was cultivated not only by deifying the leader's "genius of a theoretician," it was inculcated in people's minds through a whole system of bans: which movies and stage productions were allowed, what writers and musicians could create, or what philosophers and historians could write. There were innumerable taboos at every step, the taboos that Zhdanov placed intelligently. All the roads that creative endeavor could follow were barred, and only one road was open... Zhdanov lived up to Stalin's expectations, persistently making art, literature and entire culture fit into the Procrustean bed of Stalin's stereotypes. Aesthetical life froze very fast after the war, having experienced no thaw after 1937-1938.

A collection of historical stories and reminiscences, published in Paris, contains the impressions of an eyewitness who was present during Zhdanov's speech about the journals ZVEZDA and LENINGRAD in Smolniy in August 1946. Let me quote just a fragment from these recollections, signed only with initials "D.D.":

"The speaker entered from the right side, behind the audience, accompanied by a large group of people. He had a folder in his hand. His hair shone brightly under the electric light. He had the look of a person who had a good night's sleep and taken a bath. Everybody rose to their feet. The audience broke into applause. The speaker approached the rostrum. It was 5 p.m. A presidium including prominent literary workers was suggested as usual. They even had a laugh, because the writers forgot to suggest their own secretary Prokofiev for the presidium. The speaker smiled and made a joke in a soft voice. The audience hushed in no time. The speaker paused for a minute and then began his speech. Incredible hush fell on the audience a few minutes later. The audience was immobilized into dead silence. It was freezing fast and turned into a solid white boulder in the course of three hours. The speech came as a shocker. People left the audience without saying a word." This is the picture of Zhdanov, one of the highest ranking intellectual watch dogs of Stalin's and the caretaker of his ideological mummies.

Many party people called M.A. Suslov "gray cardinal," the people who knew his real role. Like Malenkov, he was one of the high priests of the apparatus work. Stalin fully appreciated his worth (the same as that of Shvernik) after his 70th birthday. In the leader's opinion, the organization was perfect. Suslov was largely in charge of taking care of the ideological side of the jubilee. I think that Suslov's own pronouncements, for example, those about Stalin and Khrushchev, serve best to characterize him. The pronouncements he made prior to their death or demotion, and the ones he made after. There is not enough room to cite this diametrically opposite opinions, as if belonging to entirely different people. The main ideologist, who had worked in the apparatus all his life and who replaced Zhdanov, had never shown any scruples as far as the leaders were concerned. He kowtowed only to the one who was at the helm, and ruthlessly trampled underfoot the one who had departed.

A thin sickly man, who always wore frayed suits, he valued the good things of life not less than other comrades-in-arms did.

Suslov has a clearly pronounced "barrier" type of thinking: to bar, to ban, to prohibit, and not to indulge. Not only middle-ranking people, but even those who worked together with him were somewhat afraid of him. He worked as head of the propaganda and agitation department of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee since 1947, and the same year became Secretary of the Central Committee. This man had contributed a lot towards perpetrating dogmatism in national social studies not only under Stalin, but after him as well. Considered the party's chief ideologist, during the decades of his work in the apparatus he had not produced a single fresh idea or proposal one could remember. This man was the caretaker of Stalinist dogmas all his life, and then, having forsaken Stalin formally, did not stop working to conserve his old myths in every possible way. It was Suslov who most vehemently popularized such Stalin's works, till Stalin's very death, as the "Short Course," which was imperceptibly losing its impact, despite all the attempts made.

It gradually became obvious after the war that the "masterpiece" had exhausted its potential of gearing up people ideologically. Social studies experienced not just a stagnation but began to turn stiff all across. Stalin made new injections with the aid of his pamphlets "Marxism And the Questions of Linguistics" and "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR." In answering to numerous reactions stirred by his first work, Stalin made public, as was his wont, a few letters he received. In his "Reply to Comrades," Stalin pointed out, specifically in response to A. Kholopov, that "Marxism does not recognize unchanged conclusions and formulas which are mandatory for all epochs and periods. Marxism is the enemy of any dogmatism." One cannot but agree with the fact that Marxism is indeed hostile to dogmatism. But in this particular case Stalin identified his "teaching" with Marxism, of course. The new works by Stalin were as utterly and hopelessly dogmatic, as virtually everything he had written before. Incidentally, those new works were written for him by major experts, while he just "looked them over," giving the pamphlets a typically "Stalinist look."

It should be said in all fairness that after Lenin, Stalin was one of the few leaders who usually worked themselves on their articles, speeches, or books. We do not discuss the contents of Stalin's books now. There are suspicions, thought, that he borrowed some ideas and formulations from other people which he included in "Fundamentals of Leninism" and in his work "Questions of Leninism." But we shall repeat that Stalin usually wrote his works himself. This tradition was lost later on: Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Chernenko "wired for sound" what others had written, not too coherently, especially the latter two. They know the names of the people who prepare President's speeches in the United States ("speech writers"), for example. There appears to be nothing wrong about it. But what about the situation when people start publishing their works in many volumes, the works which they had hardly read? I think that Brezhenv, for one, did not write anything himself, but he even did not read "his" works, bound as majestic folios. He was ignorant of the fact (and there was "nobody" around to tell him this) that "his" numerous volumes were the written monuments to the vanity of a political mediocrity.

Stalin made a belated attempt to "revive" ossified social studies at the end of his rule. The destiny gave him too short a spell to do this. As far as his work "Marxism and Questions of Linguistics" is concerned, propaganda had enough time to use it to build up an appropriate ballyhoo; numerous articles and brochures were published and series of lectures were read to attract attention to Stalin's unfading "genius." Propaganda workers were in a quandary, however, in answering intelligently the question why the leader became engrossed in linguistics at the end of his life, a rather narrow field of science. Only experts could notice, of course, that the leader "floundered" in a big way by criticizing rather odious views of Academician Marr, who did not enjoy much popularity among the linguists themselves. Besides, many people knew that the brochure was drawn to a large extent on the work done by Academician Vinogradov. Stalin's bid to analyze some questions of methodology (basis, superstructure, class principles, language, thinking, and others) often come across not only as primitive, but also as naive. Stalin's invasion of a rather specialized field of science did not result in reinvigoration, contrary to his expectations, of social sciences, nor did it add the desired momentum to increase his fame of a theoretician.

Stalin prepared more carefully for the publication of his work on economics. Like in his previous brochure, he stuck to the catechist principle: questions and answers. The questions about economic laws, commodity production, the law of cost, and many others. In form, the work was prepared as comments on economic matters related to the November 1951 discussion and evaluation of a proposed textbook on political economy, which was being written by D.T. Shepilov and a small group of scholar, the fact that we mentioned before. Stalin was old already, and a small book of about 100 pages, published at the end of 1952, a few months before his death, was prepared by other people. The sick leader, however, made considerable "revisions" in the text, as he always did, and orally conveyed his wishes to the authors who remained anonymous for the public. But many formulations have a clear-cut personal imprint of the leader's dogmatic thinking. Speaking about commodity production under socialism and dwelling on collective farm production, for example, he continues to be persistently engaged in wishful thinking. These thesis lay bare Stalin's complete ignorance of agriculture. Judge for yourself. At Stalin's insistence, the following fragment was included in his work: "The state can control the output of state-run enterprises only, while only collective farms control their produce which they own. But collective farms do not want to dispose of their produce other than through commodities, which they want to exchange for the goods that they need." Did not Stalin know that collective farmers still did not dispose of anything and that the position of the bondaged group, to which Stalin's agrarian policy reduced them, reached a point beyond which lay nothing but absolute lack of hope?

Many other issues of political economy and historic materialism were examined in the old, traditional way, as a rule. One can witness another attempt to revive the mummies which had been dry for a long time, the attempt accompanied by new errors or reiteration of the old. It appears, though, that Stalin's co-authors (deliberately or not) had played a bad trick on Stalin. The "fundamental economic law of socialism" which they formulated repeated almost word for word what Karl Kautskiy said more than a decade and a half ago, the person so much despised by Stalin for his reformism. Like Stalin, Kautskiy formulated the law not on the basis of profit, but on the basis of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly growing material and cultural requirements of society.

We have already pointed out that Stalin was a bad prophet. Most of his predictions did not come true. The leader showed this once again in his last work. Postulating the issue about the "inevitability of wars among capitalist countries," Stalin essentially reiterated the theses which were topical and true only in the Thirties. The old leader's understanding of the world froze at the level of the period. He stated categorically that the "inevitability of wars among capitalist countries remained in force," formulating even a more dubious and erroneous thesis in passing that the possibility of wars among capitalist countries was even stronger than "between the camp of capitalism and the camp of socialism."

Thinking in "Komintern terms," Stalin failed to comprehend the role played by peace partisans: "the struggle for peace will evolve under certain circumstances into a struggle for socialism in some places, but it would be a movement to overthrow capitalism rather the present-day peace movement." In a word, Stalin failed to grasp the emergence of a new approach to international affairs. He probably found it hard to talk (but he was a "genius"!) about the fact that the new weapon which the

Soviet Union possessed now, too, would go soon beyond the goals for the sake of which it was developed. Stalin proved unable to perceive through the haze of the future a boundary, a limit, a threshold of war, beyond which it stops being a rational political means. We probably "expect" too much of Stalin. But, I shall repeat, everybody considered him a genius! But he again produced ossified dogmas which could give some sort of an answer a decade and a half ago: the law on the inevitability of wars remains in force. The conclusion that he suggests could make the winds of the "cold war" even more chilly: "In order to remove the inevitability of wars, one has to destroy capitalism." Stalin remained true himself: in order to build, one has to destroy.

Dogmatism resulted in many troubles for our society, as it tended to view the world and human consciousness only as static and unchanged, and look at theoretical formulations in their age-old rigidity. Willfulness dominated theory, social life, and history. There was not probably a single science or a form of public consciousness which was not subject to dogmatic deformations.

History was a special field in which Stalin tried to cultivate in consciousness the stereotypes of looking at the past through his own eyes. As far as party history was concerned, it spoke of "the two leaders," and then treated him, the successor, as "Lenin today." The main goal was to show Stalin's special contribution to the smashing of numerous factions and oppositions, industrialization and collectivization, the building of socialism, and the defeat of fascism. Gradually the party history had no room left but for the leader, as seen from the "Short Course," "Biography of I.V. Stalin," and other apologetic works. Due to the manipulation of "personal" historians, even Lenin was pushed aside. The history of the CPSU became the shadow of the history of accomplishments made by one leader. Falsification, omissions and distortion of the truth came to be regarded as permissible for the sake of "higher interests."

The history of the country was significantly revised as well. Zhdanov's memo (August 1944) to Stalin, containing his comments and his draft resolution of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee, "On Shortcoming And Errors in Scholarly Work in the Field of USSR History," largely serves as a good indication of the dogmatic cliches which were practiced in this field of social studies. In his memo Zhdanov castigated Professors B. Syromyatnikov, A. Yakovlev, and Ye. Tarle for having found some positive elements in the policies followed by some Russian tsars; he qualified the printing of the pictures of Genghiz Khan, Batu, Timur and "False Demetrius" in the historical textbooks as a mistake; he considered it a mistake to have awarded Stalin Prize to A. Yakovlev for the latter's work "Serfdom and Serfs in Moscow State in 17th Century." The tenor of the memo changed abruptly as soon as Zhdanov went to characterize the tsars who, he knew, were in Stalin's good books, in particular Ivan the Terrible. Describing this Russian tsar, the memo says in particular: "For his time, Ivan the Terrible was unquestionably an advanced and educated person, and he succeeded in strengthening his absolute power with the held of nobility. His numerous tortures and executions, the same as Ivan the Terrible's entire activity, were progressive (the author of the memo has such a foresight! -D.V.), and helped to accelerate the historical process and turn Russia into a strong centralized power." Stalin needed such postulates; they complied to his historical parallels and global ambitions.

The taking of the high level of socialization of the means of production and other components of material life to the extreme resulted in a situation when an ordinary worker had practically nothing: everything was "common," the fact that encouraged leveling off, lack of responsibility, and an absolute disinterest in the final results of a labor process. According to Stalin, provision could be achieved not through economic, but only through administrative measures. Relying on his dogmatic ideas, Stalin arbitrary "sliced" the stages and the boundaries of movement and development. I think that if Stalin had lived for another five-year period or two (it is horrifying just to think about it!), he would have probably announced that the communist society had been built, the same way as he proclaimed the complete building of socialism. His idea that once the socialist basis of society had been established, what remained was to "complete" the superstructure, made people believe that the country which faced a host of most severe problems, where bloody purges were under way, where everybody was equally poor and everything was overcentralized represented the very ideal which the Bolsheviks had striven to achieve. Such statements could not but create a distorted views of socialism. Stalin turned into a law a practice under which the demand of the population outstripped production, sending the signal that overriding deficit and the shortages of essential goods were the law of socialism. The dogmatic views in the field of law were associated with a simplistic understanding of the essence of legality. According to Stalin, it meant only the inevitability of retribution, coercion and punishment for any violations of Soviet laws. The questions of legal culture, the unity of the citizens' right and duties and subordination of the authorities to the popular organs of power were considered irrelevant.

In general, social studies were doomed to languish miserably. Primitive comments not only killed the very soul of science but drastically reduced the "scope" of its influence. Starting from the end of the Thirties, one could only comment on what Stalin said. The subjects for "research" were the same both for budding social students and up to Academicians: "The role of V.I. Stalin in the development of economic science," "The significance of I.V. Stalin's work 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR' for the development of philosophical science," "I.V. Stalin and the theory of state and law," "Decisive contribution of I.V. Stalin to the development of military science," and so on. I discovered in libraries (this obviously does not include everything) that about 550 (sic!) books and brochures were written

on similar subjects between the end of the war and the death of the leader. Scientific thought was girded by the ring of primitive dogmatism and channeled only into clarifying, deifying and explaining the significance of the ideas of the only Creator. One can only guess how many genuine talents wilted, withered or died, the people who did not have an opportunity to speak outloud about their new concepts, ideas, books, or discoveries! The shackles of dogmatism were made of lead and pressed down upon too many people. We still do not know the degree of damage done by Stalinism to the intellectual potential of the society.

Much damage was done to social sciences and to technology. Evolution of genetics was delayed for many years, and cybernetics was sent to the dog-house. The point is that new fields and new ideas in natural sciences were evaluated and approached from vulgar political positions, or from those of out-and-out ignorance sometimes. The search for homebound "cosmopolitans" doomed science to greater isolation and dogmatic ossification. Such articles as "Cosmopolitanism In the Service of Imperialist Reaction" (IZVESTIA, 18 April 1950) damped the slightest desire to maintain scientific contacts with foreign research centers. It was not a safe thing for a Soviet scientist to have his name mentioned in a foreign scientific publication or invited to an international congress, the facts that made people busy at the upper echelons of power. All this not only introduced police motives into science but also safeguarded dogmatism to the utmost.

The attempts of mechanically applying Stalin's formulas of "dialectics" to the questions of the development of biology were tantamount to the suicide of science, the situation that was excellently described by V.D. Dudintsev in his novel "White Clothes." To be more accurate, it was not a suicide but an attempted murder. Had the same trend continued for another five or more years, science, big-time science would have been in danger of rolling back much further.

Under those conditions people like T.D. Lysenko surfaced very fast, as they grasped Stalin's pragmatic demand that "immediate practical result is required in science." The press carried scathing articles lashing out at "fawning" Soviet Morganists. For example, Doctor of biological sciences I. Glushchenko inveighed against Soviet genetic scientists Dubinin, Filipchenko, Koltsov and Serebrovskiy in his article "Reactionary Essence of Weismanism." He praised to the skies Academician Lysenko at the same time, who showed in his report, "Situation in Biological Science," "the wretched practical activity" of the country's Morganists. Sealed off, the exact sciences remained for Stalin essentially a domain of alchemy, something mysterious and enigmatic, associated with understanding the new. But it seemed to him that organization was the most important thing about science. He often eyed skeptically reports about scientific discoveries or inventions if he did not understand them. The leader believed that scientific creativity was possible in the Gulag camps too. Those scientists whom Stalin saw as dangerous and were incapable of switching over to the dogmatic rails of Stalinism were ruthlessly liquidated or sent off to countless camps. Hundreds of talented people included A.K. Gastev, N.I. Vavilov, N.A. Nevskiy, N.P. Gorbunov, I.A. Teodorovich, O.A. Yermanskiy, A.I. Muralov, N.K. Koltsov, N.M. Tulaikov, G.A. Nadson, A.N. Tupolev, V.M. Myasishchev, V.M. Petlyakov, S.P. Korolyov, I.T. Kleimanov, and many others.

The scientists whose lives were preserved worked at special establishments, camp laboratories which were under the supervision of the 4th special department of the USSR MVD. In this case Stalin approached science from exclusively pragmatic positions - he showed little interest in the inmates' world outlook or political views. What was important was quick result. When it was achieved, Stalin occasionally demonstrated "mercy" by reducing the imprisonment terms and sometimes even gave orders to set them free. The organs [security] regularly reported to Stalin on the results of scientists' work in captivity. Here are a few such reports:

"To Comrade Stalin I.V.

A group of imprisoned specialists from the 4th special detachment of the MVD under the leadership of imprisoned specialist Professor Stakhovich K.I. and Professor Vinblat A. Yu., and engineer Teifel G.K. has been working for a long time on building a Soviet turbo prop engine. Basing on the results of their theoretical studies, the group suggested building the TRD-7B engine. I request that you examine draft resolution by the Council of Ministers. 18 May 1946 S. Kruglov."

"To Comrade Stalin I.V.

Imprisoned specialist A.S. Abramson (sentenced to 10 years) suggested a new, original system of an economical carburetor for car engines in 1947. Its testing on ZIS-150 saved 10.9 percent of gasoline... It is suggested that the term of imprisonment be reduced by two years for Abramson A.S., mechanical engineer M.G. Ardzhevanidze designer engineer G.N. Tsvetkov.

Request your decision.

8 February 1951

S. Kruglov."

Stalin acquiesced on both occasions. Did he understand that in this and many other similar cases the engineering and technical thinking did not "draw" on his "brilliant" ideas, and that scientists and engineers used for their methodology profound respect for genuine knowledge, creativity, and innovation, not clouded by the ideological garbage of Stalinism?

The dogmatic attitude to Marxism-Leninism could not but affect the process of studying Lenin's works by the people. Suffice it to say that half or more of all the articles, brochures and books dealing with major works by Lenin's were devoted to Stalin. It looked as if one

could not understand Lenin anymore without one or another of his formulations commented on with the help of Stalin's quotations. In the course of students' instruction, for example, their notes of Stalin's works were checked.

I remember how one day, when I was a military cadet at the Orel tank school, the instructor asked me to stay after the seminar. He was a lieutenant colonel, not young any more, who was liked by the cadets for his good-nature, if one may say so. Left alone, the lieutenant colonel said softly, in a fatherly manner, as he handed me my notes of the original works which he had checked (many years have passed and unfortunately I do not remember his name):

"You have done a good job. One can see that you do not just copy it, but think it over first. But take my advice: make more detailed notes of Stalin's works. *More detailed,* you see! One more thing. Do not write any abbreviations in front of Iosif Vassarionovich's name-,like 'Com.,' write in full 'Comrade.' Did you get me?"

"Yes, sir! I did, Comrade lieutenant colonel!"

Incidentally, a friend of mine confided to me that night that the instructor of the CPSU history had the same type of talk with him and some other cadets. One expected a commission to come, and it was rumored that much "attention was drawn" to "political immaturity," like the one in my notes, in a military school next to ours.

One can ask elderly people, whose young years coincided with the period, how painstakingly they studied Stalin's works. Many people remember Stalin's works "Questions of Leninism," "Fundamentals of Leninism" which had the following subtitles: "Method," "Theory," "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," "Peasants' Issue," "Nationalities' Issue," "Strategy And Tactics," and "Party." Many people were even touched one day by how simple and clear those primitive dogmas were. They memorized them everywhere: at a technicum [junior technical college], school, college, place of work, and in party, Komsomol, and trade union organizations. The problem is not just that all those revelations were oversimplified - one writes as he can. The main thing is that Stalin preserved these "mummies" of dogmatism for decades, the dried-and-cut and distorted "truths," and turned them into an ABC of Marxism. Considering himself a dialectician even then (what an irony of life!), he anathematized the "dogmas" of the opportunists from the Second International. This is how he numbered them: "the first dogma," "the second dogma," "the third dogma."

The more often Stalin's "truths" were drummed up, the more obedient people became. The immobile dogmas are one of the means of turning people into whom the Chinese described as hunweipings ["Red Guards"]. By and by people became accustomed to a one-sided deduction: one formula was used to derive another, and a third one if it was necessary. They often sought to explain certain processes not by life but by formulas, definitions, and extractions from Stalin's works. Dogmatism in thinking proceeded hand-in-hand with bureaucracy, which also became a fixture of Stalinism.

Total Bureaucracy

Before I move to analyze bureaucracy, another relic of Stalinism, I would like of offer the reader a small fragment from Nikolay Berdyaev's book "Destiny of Russia." The Russian philosopher was completing the book after the Great October socialist revolution had already been accomplished, when freedom had gone into the heads of some people and when other people felt the fear of "anti-Christ." Contemplating about democracy, Berdyaev arrives at largely paradoxical conclusions. Let me give you one lengthy quotation: "The popular rule can deprive an individual of his inalienable rights the same way as autocracy can. This is the nature of bourgeois democracy with its formal absolutization of its principle of popular rule at its extreme. But Marx' social democracy liberates an individual as little too, also disregarding his autonomous being. An opinion was expressed at one of the Social Democratic congresses that the proletariat can deprive an individual of what may seem to be his inalienable rights, for example, the right to free thought, if this were to meet the proletariat's fundamental interests. The proletariat is perceived as some absolute in this instance, to which everything has to be sacrificed. We come across the heritage of absolutism, both state and public, everywhere; it lives not only when one person rules, but also when the majority has the upper hand." Berdyaev saw threat in the tyranny of the majority, not just in the rule of one person. I think that these ideas contain a grain of rationality: this threat becomes feasible under a socialist organization of life when the majority helps a leader create a layer of those who "fulfill the will of the majority" within a state, and when *"collective bureacracy"* is established.

Not a single state can live without an apparatus. Bureaucracy emerges in a situation when the apparatus does not depend directly on the results of the system's economic functioning and when no democratic methods exist for establishing it and exercising control over it. It appeared at first that those who "fulfill the will of majority" would not pose a threat, which emerged in reality later. Speaking about the establishment of a new apparatus, V.I. Lenin said soon after the October armed uprising that "it should be void of any bureaucracy in the interests of the people." But the very next months and then the very first years of Soviet power proved that the threat of bureaucracy was much stronger than it was implied theoretically. We know that Lenin could be very ruthless towards bureaucracy in some critical periods, as he saw it posing a long-lasting threat to the new system. For example, he expressed his attitude to one of the specific cases of foot-dragging in the following way in January 1919: "harsh reprisal, up to execution, for... bureaucratic attitude to work, and for an inability to help the starving workers."

The struggle to strengthen the state - which was vital at the time - led to the growth of the apparatus. New elements of the state structure were born, new links, often intermediate, coordinating, connecting and so on appeared. Even during Lenin's lifetime the apparatus began to spend a threateningly large amount of popular energy, means and potential on sustaining its own functioning. If there were an area at which Stalin was an expert at in those years, its was apparatus work. The people's commissar of two commissariats, a Central Committee member over many years, a member of different councils, commissions, and committees, he understood the pros and cons of the administrative and party structures earlier than others did, as we have already said.

As General Secretary, Stalin tasked the apparatus to work out a classification of positions in people's commissariats, which were to form the notorious bureaucratic nomenclature later. Executive manager at the commissariat of nationalities Brezanovskiy, for example, prepared a document in February 1923 on Stalin's instruction "Breakdown of positions in the structure of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities' apparatus in gradual gradation." All positions were divided into four groups (heads in charge of nationalities' problems, heads in charge of the commissariat's administrative-economic affairs, heads in charge of political-scientific- educational work, and heads in charge of scientific literature publishing house). The gradation also listed qualifications: a party worker of the higher and highest qualification, of medium, and low; it was specified which positions can be filled by nonparty members (there were only two or three of them). Upon Stalin's approval, the "gradation" clearly divided the inflated apparatus into several echelons (similar to tsarist officials belonging to many classes), separating the commissariat's identification, weak as it was, with the genuine problems which nationalities faced. To all intents and purposes, Stalin set out to create a huge and all-embracing army of bureaucrats from the very moment of occupying the position of General Secretary.

Very unfortunately, the party was not at its best at the moment. It itself became the first victim and an instrument of total administrative control. The loss of Lenin's democratic principles by this public organization precipitated bureaucratization of society. The party failed to curb the leader's Caesarean aspirations; gradually it became the autocrat's weapon. It pains one to write about this, but this is so. Had it been otherwise, we shall not be talking today about renovation and restructuring. Today the party has to regain confidence, look for new, democratic ways of restoring its influence and set the stage for expanding genuine socialist pluralism. The party has to learn a lot from the past lessons. It had to raise barriers in the way of the dictator in the Twenties and Thirties, but it had failed to do this.

Stalin concentrated special power in his hands: General Secretary, Politburo member, and Organizing Buro member. He became the Big Master of the apparatus. It was not without his contribution that a routine was "streamlined" soon, the routine which became classical for the Soviet bureaucracy over a period of time: countless reports, local memos, "percolation" of directives and instructions, establishment of a nomenclature of cadres and concentration of appointments at the center; greater secret classification of the most diverse forms of activity, which became absurd over time, attempts to deal with new problems by setting up ever new departments, establishment of auditing mechanisms at several levels, wider functions of suppression assigned to the appropriate organs of the proletarian dictatorship, and so on. Stalin became a "professor of bureaucracy" earlier than anyone else. He learned early the bureaucrats' standard ruse of inaccessibility even in the most common sense. Even though the Central Committee plenum in 1922 decided on the days and hours when the General Secretary was to receive visitors, very soon Stalin abandoned this pursuit, which he did not find particularly interesting. Here is an example. Yenukidze receives a letter from one of the employees in the central apparatus, a Malinovskaya (the original has no initials - **D.V.**), who was dismissed. She writes:

"Avel Safronovich,

... I am a person dismissed from my job... under the suspicion of everybody. All the people who know me, are not around now: Serebryakov, Semashko, Rykov. One *cannot get through* (spacing is mine - **D.V.**) to Com. Stalin. Avel Safronovich, help me to get out of this impossible situation, I wont't let you down...

Malinovskaya

My phone is 2-66-93

19 December 1924."

This is, of course, just one facet of bureaucracy, not the main one; but Stalin began to become inaccessible, secluded and as remote from the people as God in those distant years. One can say that, as we know him today, he was by and large the *product of bureaucracy,* its sinister fruit. It needed a leader in Stalin's mold, while he needed an ironclad bureaucratic machine.

Already sick, Lenin tried to launch a large-scale campaign against bureaucracy through a number of his instructions, especially in his latest letters, the bureaucracy that turned out to be total during the apogee of Stalin's autocracy. He saw the threat not only in its numerical growth (he did not shy away from using such expressions against it as "locusts of officials," a "bureaucratic rat"), but primarily in having the apparatus supersede the popular rule. What ways did Lenin envision of blocking and curbing the influence of bureaucracy?

He pinned great hopes on the social composition of the managerial apparatus, insisting on increasing the share of workers and peasants. We know today, however, that it could be only an initial measure, which is not a panacea at all. All of our today's bureaucrats are "flesh of

the flesh of its people"; it does not have representatives of the exploiter classes, the persons, whose social origins would make one apprehensive, as one would have put it befofe. Lenin put some hopes on purging the party, especially of those of its members, who are "not only unable to combat foot-dragging and bribery, but hamper the efforts to combat them." One can imagine how horrified Lenin would have been had he been told that the Union of the republics which he established would see six or seven decades later such phenomena as the cases of rashidovs, churbanovs, kunayevs, and many others - a fitting apotheosis of the bureaucratic monstrosity. The purity of apparatus ranks always remains topical, but this is not the main thing. Lenin put the main emphasis on ensuring genuine popular rule, on having the working people participate in earnest in running the state, controlling the executive, having genuine glasnost, and on raising the overall cultural standards of the people. It is not the people who should depend on the apparatus, but, the other way round, the apparatus should depend on the people. Lenin wrote bitterly: "We have as many written laws as we want! Why haven't we succeeded in this struggle? Because it cannot be achieved through propaganda alone; it can be accomplished only if the popular masses help us." This is all correct. But I should think that we must regard this as insufficient on the basis of today's knowledge and experience.

Formally, two alternative concepts were born and existed in the second half of the Twenties. One (represented by Bukharin) proceeded from rather moderate pace of development (both industrialization and cooperation), the other banked on an unprecedented leap both in industry and agriculture. The latter trend was manifest most completely in Stalin's case. It would have been hardly possible to make such a leap while relying on economic methods alone. Administrative and coercive methods were required for this, the methods which inevitably gave birth to, cultivated and reinforced a broad layer of bureaucracy. Violence was predetermined, pre-programmed, so to speak, since those tasks were to be accomplished mostly at the expense of the peasantry. One can admit that some administrative measures (not repressions, of course!) are allowed as a short-term measure. Stalin could not have been ignorant of Lenin's writing: "It is the greatest mistake to think that NEP [new economic policy] put an end to terror. We shall return to terror, the economic terror."

I want to make the point that I examine the alternatives, and do not say that I agree with such version. Having broken down the resistance of his opponents ruthlessly, Stalin made a stake on *power* alternative, which automatically began to build up the bureaucratic system in no time. The reliance on noneconomic coercion gave birth to an entire class which did not depend immediately on the quality and quantity of products, but depended to a great extent on political instructions. Bureaucracy, too, automatically put the political and ideological levers of influencing the masses on the foreground, pushing the economic ones to the background or even further away. Very soon socialism lost even the few traits of its democratic image.

One should say that many Bolshevik leaders set their sight on dictatorship without democracy from the very outset. L. Trotskiy wrote in 1922 that "if the Russian revolution had fettered itself to bourgeois democracy, given the unstable social relations within and sharp and always dangerous turns outside, it would have found itself long ago lying on the Main Road with its throat cut." He does not speak about socialist democracy for the time being, in the belief that it can be practiced only after the fire of the revolution had engulfed other countries as well. Therefore, Trotskiy goes on saying, "when we shoot enemies, we are not saying that the Aeolian harps of democracy are sounding. An honest revolutionary policy rules out throwing dust in the people's eyes in the first place." "Wedded" to the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat (it was not likely that the power could have been taken otherwise then), the Bolsheviks followed a popular instruction of solving the most complicated problems by force. Radicalism was the trademark of revolutionary elan. It was most unfortunate for the Russian revolution that, contrary to Lenin's will and the interests of the future, history had chosen Stalin, an ideal candidate to sing praises to, and perpetrate bureaucracy and terror.

The combating of bureaucracy in the Twenties was limited and halfhearted not only because the program itself was narrow, but because its essence was understood only superfluously. Incidentally, even today we see bureaucracy only in such common terms as foot-dragging, officialdom, formality, paper pushing, and red tape. Even many leaders of the revolution viewed bureaucracy in the very same terms at the time. Addressing the 3rd all-Union conference of worker's and peasant's correspondents on 28 May 1926, L. Trotskiy seemed to come with what looked like a correct formula: "We do have bureaucracy, and a rampant one at that. It stems from lack of culture, it stems from lack of ability, and from a host of historical and political reasons." He then reduced it to a rather narrow phenomena of servility, mimicry, conservative traditions, and so on. All of this is correct; however, it does not reveal the in-depth meaning of bureaucracy, which lies in supplanting popular rule with the omnipotent apparatus, which defies controls on the part of the masses.

The fundamental feature of bureaucracy.

Stalin's style lies in the fact that it becomes *total.* What does it mean? All state, party, legal organs and public organizations begin to act in accordance with its unwritten laws. Bureaucracy seems to coalesce them into a single entity, viscose, pervasive, tenacious and unassailable. The shrouds of bureaucracy entwine everything. Each organ, an element of the system, or an individual can do only what was proscribed, allowed and indicated. This system is dominated by the power of instructions,

directive, or a resolution; it spells the threat of retribution, punishment, condemnation, and of being ostracized; it encourages selfless performers and vigilant bureaucrats; eventually all of this emerges as *collective bureaucracy.* Total bureaucracy is independent of economic rationale. It thrives on the omnipotence of the apparatus.

We faced the following situation until recently: if we had a shortage of vegetables, we would create a ministry of vegetables. The press carried a few critical articles about shoddy packaging of products and industrial goods, they set up packaging scientific-research institutes. When the quality of industrial products declined, an entire system of government controls was established above the plant quality inspection department. The more resolutions are promulgated on reducing the administrative staff, the faster it grows. For it us useless to fight the administrative system with administrative methods. One cannot become healed of bureaucracy without extending therapy to the economic, social, and political methods, the more so that it assumes many facets: from countless titles, degrees, and ranks to the mysterious hierarchy of upper echelons, where it is often impossible to find a person responsible for a particular thing behind boundless collective administration. Stalin fine-tuned the system for a long time, doing it painstakingly, persistently and ruthlessly.

One should say that as the bureaucratic system evolved, it educated all of society in its laws. People became part and parcel of it. Moreover, people became accustomed to it; and many still see the "advantages" of socialism in it. This is not a simple issue. It would be wrong to deny the many achievements scored by the society in the country's social and cultural life, including universal employment, guaranteed social security, although at a very low level, universal education of a rather poor quality, introduction of the ABCs, fundamentals of spiritual culture to the masses, free but inadequate medical care, low prices of basic necessities, very low rents for accommodation in ill-appointed government-run apartments, practically free (at a token cost) upkeep of children in pioneer camps, kindergartens and nurseries, and a number of other substantial social gains made by the Soviet people. A government action involving the lowering of food and industrial goods prices were very popular with the people. Notwithstanding the fact that it ensured their standard of living barely above the level of overall poverty, they were inspired by the very trend of gradual and steady progress.

I do not feel like explaining this by the "successes" of Stalinist leadership. It is just that the selfless efforts made by the hardworking Soviet people could not but produce certain fruit. The society was free of rampant and pervasive corruption, moral degradation of large groups of leadership, the phenomena which became very apparent two or three decades after Stalin's death. The overall atmosphere was such as to give one an impression of moral health and social well-being of society. Total bureaucratic "order" seemed to satisfy the broad masses of the population. There were several reasons. Several generations had already been raised in Stalin's lifetime. They were unaware of a "different" socialism, nor could they see behind a solid ideological curtain the real picture of life in the "other" world. The overwhelming majority of the people sincerely believed that workers in the capitalist world lived in abject poverty, in their "absolute" and "relative" impoverishment, prison-like mores in Western countries, and the USSR's complete supremacy over the "free world" in most of the parameters. Such impression was strong.

One should suggest that total bureaucracy is somewhat convenient for people who have not been raised on the ideas of free thinking, truth and openness. Yes, it is convenient: life is scheduled, determined and fixed: from work and guaranteed wages up to the occasion to express one's amazement and excitement, what to sow and when to sow it, what kind of report to send it to the "highers up." The system took care of everything: passed a final verdict of a particular work, historical and current facts, said in no uncertain term what was good and what was bad, and knew from the very outset which of the decisions, forums or leader's speeches were historic. Distribution was practiced by and large through leveling. Total bureaucracy is convenient for the executors, "cogs," the same way as it is also convenient for the leadership at all levels. The system was conducive to cultivating a uniform and simple world outlook. The expansion of the role played by public funds, which had many positive elements, often leveled off people irrespective of their contribution to the common cause. One's position, salary and getting into the nomenclature rather than the final result of work moved more and more to the foreground. In his book, "Stalin and the Making of the Soviet Union," Alex de Jong, a professor at Oxford University, writes that the dictator had established a perfect total pyramid of rule in general: "No one had a chance of correcting his boss. Each boss became a small Stalin in regard to his subordinates. Everybody mistreated those below him, looked askance at those equal and flattered those above him."

Stalin's Caesarism was growing stronger not only because of the development of totalitarian trends and tsarist traditions, but also because of universal blindness and entrenched belief that this is what socialism should look like and that any future genuine prosperity is possible only along those lines. Stalin's name became almost mystical by and by; it instilled both horror and love, fear and loyalty, meekness and adoration. The bureaucratic machine that functioned in such an atmosphere turned a person more and more into an anonymous "cog."

The suggestion that under total bureaucracy a person is characterized by erosion of his creativity, as a demiurge of existence, is normally countered with the following objections: there was order, security of the future, unfailing fulfillment of plans, and a slow but steady rise in living standards. Well, one can take an issue with this.

The bureaucratic and barrack-type features of life, associated with the constant threat of punitive sanctions and purges, are capable of sustaining economic structures, production and the operation of all state institutions at the level of plans which had been approved and "sent down." I think that even today (this is just an abstraction) a plan would have been fulfilled without fail, if a person, a manager, or an enterprise had the Sword of Damocles spelling out Stalin's punishment, hanging over. It would have been fulfilled at any cost. To be more precise, at a awful price of losing human dignity and finding oneself living in an atmosphere of fear, silence, and blind obedience. But who would agree to this today?

The all-powerful apparatus of punitive organs, which was subordinated practically to only one person before the 20th party congress, was the most awful outgrowth of Stalin's bureaucracy. It was not the matter of coercion which was epitomized by what Stalin called "punitive organs," but of their invasion of all of pores and cells of state - political, economic, cultural, and ideological. Many of Dzerzhinskiy's positive traditions were lost because of Stalin, even though disrespect for law was considered a sign of "revolutionary spirit" even then.

Russia has never been rich of democratic traditions, while the situation was better as far as police traditions were concerned. Of course, the things that Stalin was to create stood no comparison with the "dilletentism"? of the autocracy. And still... They usually say that the courts and laws are needed to reinforce the domination of the ruling class. But I think that the ruling classes needed laws less than those disfranchised and destitute in all the ages. The traditions of secret police in Russia possibly date back to the period when Nicholas the First established a third department of his chancellery to which a corps of gendarmerie was subordinated. The political censorship made its voice very clear from that time onward. Given the political censorship, however, the readers had no problem receiving from abroad the overwhelming majority of books. The legal ground for persecuting dissidents was laid down in 1845 by a special decree which emphasized crimes against the state and the ruling order. Articles 267 and 274 said, among other things:

"For compiling and distributing written or printed works and for making public speeches which, although void of any direct and obvious incitement of uprising against the supreme rule, attempt to dispute it or cast doubts on its inviolable rights, or to impertently? criticize the mode of government established by law, or the order of succession to the throne, the guilty persons are subject to: rescission of all property rights and exile to hard labor at factories for a period of from four to six years."

It is interesting to compare: eighty years hence, already after Lenin's death, the RSFSR 1926 penal code put on record:

"Propaganda and agitation contained pleas to overthrow, undermine or weaken the Soviet power... as well as the distribution, printing, or the keeping of literature of the same content result in the imprisonment, combined with strict isolation for a period of not less than six months." Almost the very same ideas, with the exception of the words "propaganda," "agitation," which were nonexistent during the period of Nicholas I, and rather nebulous "not less than six months."

The autocratic rule put main emphasis on the army and police, although the strength of the punitive apparatus was not large by today's standards. For example, the police department had 161 employees in 1895, the corps of gendarmerie had about 10,000 men and several tens of thousands of policemen. But the authorities invested the police, especially the political one, with rather broad powers. The head of the police department A.A. Lopukhin wrote (1902-1905) that "the Russian population was put at the mercy of personal views of political police officials." One's guilt was often decided on the basis of subjective opinion of police officials. The autocracy made wide use of exile for the undesirables, and streamlined the institution of hard labor. For example, Siberia had about 300,000 exiles of different categories at the turn of the 20th century, and about 11,000 convicts sentenced to hard labor. It is true that only five to ten percent of the exiles and convicts were "political." A large portion of the exiles (because of the regime's leniency), sometimes as many as half of them, were "absent," i.e., were runaways.

The police regime, rather pervasive as it was, was not particularly harsh (foreign tours, for example, were quite easy to make). Anyone wishing to go abroad had only to write a request to the local governor and pay a small fee. About 200,000 Russians spent several months abroad, for example, in 1900. There is nothing surprising in the fact therefore that the main critics of tsarism lived abroad. Many of them were well aware of the weaknesses of the police department; after the revolution, when a new security system was being established, they went much further in enforcing stricter rules and regulations laying out one's loyalty to the Soviet state.

On coming to power, the revolutionary party had weaker democratic traditions to its credit, which would put a barrier in the way of mushrooming bureaucracy, but it had in front of it the police experience of tsarist autocracy which it overthrew. It is not surprising therefore that reprisals were practiced on a broad scale against the opponents of the new system soon after October, the measures which went beyond the framework of revolutionary legality. This was a mortal threat to freedom for which the Bolsheviks fought so fiercely. Imperceptibly, a path for a future Caesar was being steadily cleared.

M.I. Kalinin's archives have an extract from the Politburo minutes No. 110 of 9 March 1922. Unshlikht was reporting on the fight against banditry. Having heard him, the Politburo resolved:

"Accept Unshlikht's following proposals: give the GPU [main political department] the right to mete out direct *punishment* (spacing is mine - **D.V.**) a) to the persons found guilty of armed robbery, criminals, and repeated offenders caught with weapons; b) to exile to, and imprison in, Archangelsk of underground anarchists and Left Revolutionaries...

Central Committee secretary Molotov."

Punishment without trial... More and more was to come...

Read the following document, for example:

"Moscow, B. Lubyanka 2

No. 243511

Secretary of the USSR Central Executive Committee
Com. Yenukidze

The OGPU [organization of chief political directorate] requests permission to pass the verdict *outside of court* (spacing is mine - **D.V.**).

1. The case of Babin M.I., also known as Rubin, a Menshevik of the Zarist rightist group, charged under Art. 62 of the Penal Code.

2. The case of Abrikosova et al, a total of 56 persons, charged under Art. 61, 66 and 68 of the Penal Code, a major spy-fascist organization.

A personal report regarding both cases will be made by deputy head of the SOOGPU Com. Andreyeva.

5 April 1924

Yagoda,

Deribas."

An addition below: "Procurator Karanyan has objections regarding the second case. Yagoda."

One still could raise objections at the time...

The lawlessness, which could probably be understood within the context of the revolution and the Civil War, was not wiped out, despite Lenin's efforts. It became almost a permanent fixture of a new way of life after his death; one only had to make charges of hostile action against the new system. Bureaucracy learned this rule of harsh play earlier than others. Gradually, new generations of agency officials began to look at the society and Soviet citizens through the prism of potential opponents of the system. Such perception produced results all the time. They were written about in the press but rarely; however, on learning about the unmasking of another "nest of anti-Sovieteers," people in a settlement, at a plant, institute or ministry, seemed to become even more uptight, introvert and more suspicious of those around them; they were ready to support any new "instruction" or "line" promulgated by the leadership. A potential and often a real threat of punishment crippled the people spiritually.

Stalin received many reports regarding political sentiments, surveillance of suspects, and exposure of new anti-Soviet groups. Here is an abstract from one of such reports, for example, "Anti-Soviet Groups Among Intelligentsia and Youth" which was put on Stalin's desk soon after the end of the war:

1) The case of the anti-Soviet group of engineering and technical workers at the NKPS [People's Commissariat of Railways] in Moscow: D.D. Terembetskiy, V.D. Biryukov, S.A. Babenkov... (several other names follow - **D.V.**). Made anti-Soviet statements. The group's goal was to stage an insurrection by the time of the arrival of the Hitler troops. The case is with the special conference.

2) An anti-Soviet group of Moscow VUZ [institutions of higher learning] students (5 persons), including Medvedskiy L.A., student at the chemical engineering college; Viliams N.I., son of Academician Viliams, MGU; student Gastev Yu.A., son of the enemy of the people, Trotskiyte Gastev A.K. His mother and brother were purged, also an MGU student, and others. Conducted anti-Soviet conversations. Anti-Soviet poetry was confiscated from the group members.

3) .....

4) An anti-Soviet group at a Soviet high school in the village of Staro-Mikhailovskaya of the Krasnodar Krai, including: Kovda B.A., former student. Stayed on the occupied territory; Dukhno R.N., an 9th-grader; Bogva N.G., a 9th-grader. Established a sort of the "Struggle for Justice" club. Were supported by anti-Soviet teachers Yakovich S.M. and Yarovoy D.K. Investigation continues.

This is followed by a list of more than several dozen similar "anti-Soviet groups." If one saw a threat to the system on the part of 15 and 16-year old school students, whose romantic and patriotic elan of free spirit had not been snuffed yet, what can one say about other "groups." We shall repeat that Stalin's bureaucracy could not live without victims.

Many matters, which seemed to belong to the realm of politics and ideology, were also made the domain of the agencies which Stalin obviously considered more important than the party. Here is another document:

"8 September 1945

To Comrade Stalin I.V.

The V.I. Lenin Mausoleum is fully prepared to admit visitors... Herein we submit for your consideration a draft resolution of the USSR Sovnarkom on opening the V.I. Lenin Mausoleum from Sunday, 16 September 1945.

L. Beriya

V. Merkulov."

The body of Lenin, which was kept in Tuymen during the war years, was being prepared by the NKVD to be placed in the Mausoleum. The bureaucracy instructed Beriya's department to take care of Lenin's memory, without relieving Beriya of his direct duties, which were "overfulfilled" under Stalin. For example:

"To Comrade Stalin I.V.

To Comrade Molotov V.M.

To Comrade Beriya L.P.

The MVD (the NKVD was changed into the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1946 -**D.V.**) is reporting on the progress in implementing the resolution of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers No. 1630 of 27 July 1946 on the measures to ensure the preservation of state grain. Here are the results: 13,559 people had criminal proceedings started against them (in just one month! -**D.V.**) in December 1946, and 9,928 people, in January 1947...

S. Kruglov."

When Stalin did not attach much importance to the information, he just put an asterisk or a Latin letter "V" in the top corner. According to bureaucratic thinking, a person whose unique job is that of being a "beloved leader" is interested in knowing virtually everything about his people. A good disciple of Beriya, Kruglov showered Stalin with all kind of reports: from the actions of "anti-Soviet groups," which we mentioned before, to religious matters:

"According to the report submitted by the MVD of the Ukrainian SSR, rumors spread among the population of the Rava-Russkiy rayon of the Lvov Oblast in the beginning of August of this year that one itinerant nun had witnessed the image of the 'Holy Mother.' A cloud allegedly descended and disappeared, leaving the traces of blood on the ground." Because of an obvious hoax, the report made no impression on the atheist leader, with his seminary background, but he did grace it with his "asterisk." These are just peanuts, to tell the truth...

Keeping several million people behind the barbed wire on a permanent basis (who can say now how many of them were innocent?), the state bureaucracy turned them into a factor of "creating" a new society. Stalin initiated and strongly advocated using the convict labor in building the socialist society as extensively as possible. This was a matter of principle for him. The leader entrusted the NKVD and the MVD with building major industrial projects and roads. This department, we shall remember, was primarily even put in charge of building nuclear weapons. Work schedules were often such that they would appear absolutely fantastic today. And these quotas and schedules were normally met. For those in charge realized that their lives were constantly taken hostage by the "directive" organ. Let me give one example to illustrate this thought.

Urgent measures were taken after Stalin's instruction in July 1945 to expedite work on the A-bomb. Then additional measures were adopted. Such as:

"Magadan. Head of the Dalstroy [Far Eastern construction organization] Com. Nikishov

By the decision of the USSR Council of People's Commissars of 13 October 1945, you were instructed to organize prospecting for uranium ores. This is an exceptionally important matter.

All measures should be taken to launch a vigorous search for the uranium raw material and to organize mining and production of uranium concentrate in the *current year* (spacing is mine - **D.V.**)... Request your reports on the measures being taken to fulfill the assignment every two weeks...

L. Beriya."

We have already mentioned the fact that virtually all the ministries showered the MVD with requests for thousands, tens of thousands of citizens of the socialist society who became zeks [cons], to use the camp terminology. The convicts made their contribution not only to the construction of roads and bridges, mining of coal, supply of timber, but also to the mining of the uranium, building of nuclear reactors, high-rise buildings, and majestic hydro electric power stations.

I shall never forget my 1952 visit to the construction site of the Kuibyshev hydro power station, where I went together with a group of Komsomol workers. The scale of construction made a great impression. Standing on the upper platform of the dam, I could see hundreds of people, dressed in gray jackets and pants, swarming, scurrying and moving around everywhere. As we passed by one of such groups, a thin lanky boy straightened up and said softly but clearly, addressing us:

"Tell those people at large how we work on the great construction projects of Stalin's epoch!"

We exchanged glances, but on seeing several guards standing nearby, we understood it all. To tell the truth, I was surprised by the convict's flowery style of speaking. But I understood soon why he was speaking like this. I came across a paperback "Great Construction Projects of Stalin's Epoch," written by Academicians A.V. Topchiev, G.M. Krzhizhanovskiy, A.V. Vinter, V.A. Obruchev, V.S. Nemchinov, I.A. Sharov, and other scholars. It is true: very many "great projects of Stalin's," if not most of them, were built by prisoners. I think that this facet of totalitarian bureaucracy is especially cynical. But Stalin liked this type of reports:

"To Comrade Stalin I.V.

To Comrade Molotov V.M.

To Comrade Malenkov G.M.

To Comrade Beriya L.P.

To Comrade Khrushchev N.S.

2 February 1951

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has also been entrusted by the decree of the Council of Ministers of 30 July 1949 to design and build the Kuibyshev hydro electric power station on the Volga river, completing the work in 1955. Construction is proceeding according to the plan...

The USSR MVD has been entrusted by the decree of the Council of Ministers of 16 August 1950 to design and build the Stalingrad hydro power station and the main canal to irrigate the northern part of the near Caspian low land. Much preparatory work is under way...

S. Kruglov."

Stalin is laconic: "Report on work progress regularly." It were not only the jubilant masses but also many tens of thousands of convicts who worked on those majestic projects. This is one of the most dark chapters in the folio of Stalinist bureaucracy. Invading the entire fabric of society, the bureaucracy did not spare the human sanctuary - the thought. The Beriya-Kruglov department even organized creative competitions, which were the tests of talents. But everything was different in this particular case. The bureaucratic predetermination decided the final outcome. However, one first had to report to the leader before implementing the results of the competition:

"20 March 1951

To Comrade Stalin

The Council of Ministers instructed the MVD to hold a closed competition for the architectural solution (design) of the Volga-Don waterway. The architectural studios of Polyakov L.M., Dushkin A.N., Fomin I.I. and Priymak I.I., and the MVD Gidroproekt [hydro project] were involved.

The project by Com. Polyakov L.M. (architectural studio No. 6), which was taken as the base, turned out to be the best. The MVD hydro project (it did come through - **D.V.**) worked out a new project, taking into account the judges' comments. The great role of Comrade Stalin will be reflected by erecting a tall sculpture on the higher bank of the Volga, near the entrance to the Volga-Don canal. We intend to organize another closed competition to select a monument.

Request your approval

USSR Minister of Internal Affairs S. Kruglov

Chief Architect of the MVD Hydroproject L. Polyakov."

Stalin modestly agreed to have his persona embodied in a larger than life monument once again. He would request that several dozen tons of nonferrous metal be allocated for that.

Bureaucracy does not like the words "human rights." For it, they are nothing but a myth, or bourgeois sabotage. I do not think it will ever be possible to determine accurately how many of the homeland's citizens were sentenced to death (and how many of them were innocent?), nor how many perished in camps.

... I was raised in a small village in the south of the Krasnoyarsk krai, Irbeiskiy rayon, in Agul. The majestic distant Sayan hills and the ridge spurs stretch to the rivers Yenisey, Kan, and Agul. Dense taiga forest is around everywhere. This was the land of Old Believers, native Siberians, who came from the western provinces of Russia a century and a half or two centuries ago. In 1937 or 1938, scores of military people arrived in our out-of-the-way area! Then the convicts' columns stretched out. The taiga forest began to groan. They started building "zones." Camps were built half a year later not only in Agul, but also in other taiga settlements such as Kessa, Punchete, Nizne-Sakharniy, Verkhne-Sakharniy, and Solomatka. Barbed wire, high fences, behind which one could barely see the barracks, guard towers, and German shepherd dogs. The residents noticed soon that the columns of emaciated people were marching on and on (it was more than one hundred kilometers from the railway station), as if the camps were elastic... But we realized what was going on: very long trenches were dug outside the villages, to which tarpaulin-covered bodies were brought at night on dray carts and sledges. Many people perished as a result of camp life hardships. They executed people in the taiga. Boris Frantsievich Kreshchuk, who also lived in Agul at the time and whose father, a blacksmith, and brother were also executed because of Boris' sharp-edged wit, told me how neighborhood boys and he used to go out to collect pine nuts. He heard the crack of shots nearby.

"As if they were ripping apart a big sheet," he said. "So, we went to see. We saw from behind the bushes several armed man pushing the bodies of killed convicts into the trench, about twenty people. We ran away as fast as we could. I still remember one of them trying to grab dry grass with his hands, it looked like he was still alive."

My mother was a principal in a seven-year school. Two convicts used to come to the school, with the authorities' permission, to help with the things at the library, to mend book covers or to bind something. Sometimes my mother would bring them half a dozen boiled potatoes in jackets and half a jug of milk - we lived hand to mouth ourselves, especially after my father had been arrested and we had been sent there. Since we lived in the Maritime Territory, and there was no more land to the east to deport us to (maybe to Japan?), we were taken West, to this place of Agul. There were no teachers there, so my mother was allowed to teach, since she graduated from a University after the revolution. So, one of the convicts, who called himself pan [Polish for Mr.] Khuderski, had been recently deported and did not live long. One day he got sick and did not come to school. I do not remember the name of the other one (I was ten), but my mother used to talk with him at length sometimes, when

nobody was around. One day the convict took out a piece of cloth from under his prison jersey (I understood what I saw only much later). He untied it fast and showed it to my mother. I stood nearby, in a long room with a low ceiling which housed the library, and out of curiosity I stood on tiptoe to peek over my mother's shoulder at the convict's hand. In his hand, he was holding a small-sized photo, plastered to thick cardboard, the kind they used to make before, with a monogram and foreign words beneath. The unfortunate man said softly:

"We lived in exile, in Switzerland, at the time. Here is Lenin sitting, my wife and I next to him, and these are two German Communists."

I could not but feel mistrust looking at the dirty and thin man, with big melancholic eyes: this man knew Lenin personally? He was explaining something else to my mother, carefully wrapping up the photo in his piece of cloth. He was allowed to come to the school a couple of times more, without guards, but then he was gone. He either died (he was very weak), or it was like those in the forest...

These childhood memories stayed with me forever. When I read the stanzas of Shakespearean Sonnets, it seems to me that they refer to the fate of my family. But no, not to them alone; they are about the lives of very many people, who were burned by Stalin's criminal arbitrariness:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought

I sum up remembrance of things past,

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,

And with old woes new wail my dear times'waste:

.....

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,

And heavily from woe to woe tell o'ver

The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,

Which I now pay as if not paid before.

My mother died soon after the war, still very young, and she did not tell much to her three children, struggling to see us survive. We buried her at a village cemetery, not far from the place where the convicts were put under ground. Even then they leveled their tombs in the trenches. Nameless, voiceless places, testifying to the people's long-lasting tragedy. But the silence of those graves should sound like a shout to us. I think that only very few people survived in those areas, where the camps were located. Apart from my father, my two uncles were my other kin who did not come back from the camps alive. They were simple peasants, who were not circumvent enough to say things which were on many people's minds.

It is possible that some people may say maliciously upon reading these lines: "an offended son," "one from those purged," "undisguised revenge." Not at all. I was a young lieutenant, a tankman, when Stalin died. I thought that the skies would fall. When they were taking my in-laws away, I did not understand anything. I did not associate this tragedy with Stalin's name later on either. "Your father died," they told me. My mother cried secretly. I realized for the first time that I was a 'marked man' only in July 1952. It was after a commemorative graduation lunch in the school's mess. We were packing our cheap fiber suitcases, wearing out squeaking shoulder belts and golden shoulder boards, to leave for good for our units, to which we had been assigned. Before I bade farewell to my friends, a comrade from my platoon came up to me, took me aside and said:

"Swear that you'll never tell it to anyone!"

"I won't," I looked in my fellow student's face in surprise and incomprehension.

"I 'herded' you for three years, reporting your words. Well, I spied on you. I'm sorry but I could not refuse."

'What did you tell them?" I stared at my comrade, still shaken.

"Nothing bad, since you graduated from school, and cum laude at that. O.K., take care. Don't bear a grudge. They can do more, you know," said my interlocutor, looking me straight in the eye.

I am not giving his name only because he might still work somewhere, and I gave him my word...

It seems that I digressed too much from my deliberations about Stalinist bureaucracy. But I wanted to mention this for the following reason: it does not make any sense either to take revenge of history, or to ridicule it. Let bygones be bygones. But we should know and remember it. For example, the fact that my father was only 37-year old when he was no more...

Did they in the Kremlin know what was taking place in Agul, Solomatka, Kessa and thousands of other places? They did. They knew it very well. Beriya's fund contains a host of letters full of cries of pain, for help, pleas to sort it out, intercede, or to look dispassionately at the case of a particular person. Here is one of the many letters that reached the leader (it was addressed to "the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee, Stalin."). Obviously some kindhearted person smuggled the letter out of the camp and mailed it. Such letters reached the leader "from there" but very rarely. The letter has the following lines:

"It will deal with the camp section No. 14 of the NKVD camp No. 283 and mine No. 26. The plight of the inmates is difficult. The Medieval inquisition would look like a paradise. The former [Red Army] men and partisans are kept together with police collaborators and German lackeys. No one knows his or her length of sentence, and this is as bad as execution. They beat you

up regularly. We are infested with lice and wear rags. The food is awful; one can often find mice in meals. Cabbage is shredded with the help of a horse thrasher, and one can find horse manure there from time to time. The guards beat up the convicts. They select personnel out of fierce people..."

This letter does not contain a single lie. But to sign it, is to get 'hard labor' immediately."

Stalin passed the letter to Malenkov, and the latter wrote across: "To Coms. Beriya and Chernyshov." And Beriya just signed "L. Beriya." The circle has closed. No one knows what is more difficult: to display heroism and selflessness in a combat or a prolonged martyrdom. One is amazed at the unheard-of and stunning long-suffering of the Soviet people. Could Hegel been right in saying that "woeful passivity... clings to its hardships, and does not resist them with all its might." One cannot but be shocked by the phenomena of submissiveness, when Stalin and his lieutenants massacred millions of people, while everyone kept silent. The innocent people were made to believe that they were guilty. Or at least: "This is a mistake made by particular people, not by Stalin."

Bureaucracy Stalin style dons the mantle of lawlessness. No, there was plenty of laws, instructions, and orders, but most of them were "illegal." No leniency was shown with regard to the duties that the ordinary (and not only ordinary) members of society were expected to perform. But as far as their rights... They were not even in Cindarella's shoes. As one studies the documents, feeling flabbergasted by the apotheosis of lawlessness perpetrated by Stalinist bureaucracy, one is especially surprised to see some isolated attempts to voice meek protest by the people who were found in the upper ranks of the state pyramid. This was very unsafe. There is an interesting document in V.M. Molotov's personal fund, which was sent to Stalin and Molotov by the USSR Minister of Justice N. Rychkov in May 1947. It says:

"In accordance with the instructions of the USSR Government and the order by the People's Commissar of Justice and the USSR Procurator (No. 058 of March 20, 1940), the persons *acquitted* (here and further on the spacing is mine - **D.V.**) in connection with counterrevolutionary cases, are not to be freed immediately, but are to be *returned to places of confinement,* and can be released only provided the NKVD files a report stating that it has no objections on its part. This procedure results in a situation under which the released individuals continue to remain in prisons for months.

For example, the military collegium of the USSR Supreme Court, in answer to the protest by the USSR Procurator General, rescinded the verdict by the military tribunal of the 89th Taman infantry division on 5 April 1946 against citizen Litvinenko was charged with treason and sentenced to execution (the sentence was commuted to a ten-year camp term by the tribunal of the separate Maritime army). The military collegium of the USSR Supreme Court closed the case for lack of incriminating evidence. The decision was sent to the MVD SibLAG [Siberian Camp] on 6 May 1946, where the inmate was kept. The document was sent from there for coordination to the MVD 1st special department, which sent it to the Tavria military district. The case has been unresolved for months...

There are quite a few facts like this. This undermines authority of the courts. I request that the orders of the USSR People's Commissariat of Justice and USSR Procurator No. 058 of 20 March 1940 be abrogated.

USSR Minister of Justice N. Rychkov."

Stalin's reaction is unknown. Molotov wrote on the memo: "Ask Coms. Gorshenin, Kruglov, and Abakumov. V. Molotov. 17 May 1947." But it would take very long before those "asked" would agree to have the absurd decisions rescinded. However, there were very few overtures like this in the bureaucratic, punitive practice of life under Stalin. Bureaucracy gradually made people believe that any action taken by the authorities was reasonable and proper. Genuine law, or legal frame of mind, was nonexistent for all practical purposes. This was one of the conditions determining the existence of total bureaucracy. Stalin and the system which he had nurtured made it a habit with the people to withstand and to remain silent and submissive. Bureaucracy cannot rule without suppression of one's will. The leader has a will of steel, while all the rest have their wills *appropriated* by him, obedient ones. It is only under these conditions that the people, especially those in the Gulag, can bear it till the very end. Stalin understood this better than others. Let us recall Hegel once again: " Courage is above woeful patience, since even vanquished, courage foresees this possibility." The German philosopher, though, could not have known what the Gulag was, nor people in Russia could visualize this hell on earth even in their most nightmarish dreams. For many more people were annihilated over thirty years under Stalin and Stalinism than by all the Russian tsar throughout the 300-year old rule of the Romanovs. This is where Stalin's confidence in the universal power of force had led him. But, as Paul Valery wrote: "Power is weak in believing in nothing but power." The leader did not know either that it was not always that the sword could overwhelm the pen. There were many instances in history when a powerful and correct idea, "sitting at the tip" of one's pen, brought the sword to shame.

People did not contemplate much about this at the time. Anyway, very many people did not think, nor were they aware of all the horror which was hidden behind the curtain of total bureaucracy. Aleksandr Fadeyev probably knew nothing either, as he published a lengthy article "Stalin's Humanism" a few days after the leader's death. Only a shock experienced by the slaves or the blindness of our hearts could have produced the words which came from under his pen. But millions of people might have shared the same feelings. These words sound as a monstrous blasphemy today. The talented writer,

whose consciousness was also girdled by a band of Stalin's dogmatism, wrote that we could consider Stalin "one of the greatest humanists that the world has ever known." Fadeyev claimed in his article that "the great and simple man, whose name expressed the unbending power of his soul, a kindhearted teacher of mankind and the father of the peoples, reached the end of his life's road, but his cause is invincible and immortal." Is it possible that Fadeyev was tormented by the eye-opening pain when he took his own life in May 1956?

History knows of many instances when an entire nation goes blind. The crusades, religious wars, the nationalistic zeal and a fanatical faith in the history's Caesars are the result of not only socioeconomic and political reasons, but of the eclipse of one's mind, which relies on the mummies of dogmatism. But the eclipse cannot last forever: when it is over, the Ceasars existing in one's consciousness die, although this happens often too slowly.

Physical death struck Stalin earlier than the leader expected it - he differed but very little from the majority of people in this respect. But his political death is still to come - the remnants of Stalinism still persist. The historical death will probably never come - people will never be able to forget everything associated with his name.

Earthly Gods Are Mortal

Stalin gradually changed the years-old established routine of his life in the past 12 to 18 months of his life. The old age, years full of struggle, upheavals, inhuman glory and reminiscences (yes, reminiscences!) were becoming more and more of a burden for the leader. More and more often now, getting up at 11 a.m., as usual, instead of going to the Kremlin, Stalin would summon Poskreyobyshev, suck on his unlit pipe, step to the window and gaze for a long time at the cold strip of overcast sky above a dark edge of the forest, at the barren trees in the park, and a flock of crows was circling above. He remembered one day that shooting at the crows was Nicholas II's favorite pastimes when he took strolls.

One day after the war, Stalin recalled that the RED ARCHIVES published excerpts from the diary of the last Russian tsar, and he wanted to take a look at them all.

The next day Beriya (the MVD was in charge of all state archives) and Poskreyobyshev brought several dozen exercise-books bound in red calico to his office. Having exchanged some words in Georgian with Beriya, Stalin dismissed the men and began to slowly flip through the exercise-books. He became engrossed in reading on several occasions, and then began to review them faster. Stalin was amazed: fifty-odd thick exercise books had nothing of interest, in his opinion. The autocrat seemed to have appreciated the regularity of the entries themselves (he did not missed a single day in 36 years!) than their content. The weather, conversations, billiards, reading, name-day celebrations, receptions, relations with Aliks, and hunting... There was probably more about hunting than about anything else. The exercise-book dated 1895 sums up the tsar's luck as a hunter: "During the entire period, I killed 3 bisons, 28 deers, 3 goats, 8 wild boors, and 3 foxes = 45." The tsar was fond of shooting: "I killed a crow during my walk (8 November 1904). The Emperor practiced shooting crows; he was a crack shot. Stalin leafed through the notes even faster: it was all the same. The Russia was not fortunate with its tsars, the first counsel might have thought, - they shot at the wrong targets."

What are they going to say about him after his death? People are keen on revising the extinct lives, failing to realize that the time past cannot be changed. Is there going to be a person who would try to discover something false and erroneous even in him? No, this is impossible. It was "Russia In the Dark," and it emerged as a strong victorious power. Everything has been taken care of. Another fantastic leap or two, and the state will dictate its rules to everyone. His attentive and steady eye could see in the meantime that first crow in the black flock would get off the branch with a croak, and only then the rest of the flock will follow her. It is the same everywhere - in nature, society, and history, he thought. On many occasions, Poskryobyshev would find him standing immobile near the dining room window, or sitting in his office armchair, facing the park. What what on the leader's mind, who realized that his fate had passed through the top of the arc and, regardless of his greatness, he was as mortal as anyone else?

During the moments of his deliberations, till the end of his life, Stalin often addressed himself, outloud or in thought, to the religious texts, using them not as they were, but as a metaphor, a dictum, or a biblical aphorism. I think that at the twilight of his years, he could compare his life with what was said in the Holy Scripture. It is hard to remember it all, but Ecclesiastes? was probably right in saying: "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart: that this is also vanity. And how dieth the wise man? as a fool... To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born and a time to die... All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again... For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"

Yes, what shall be after him? Will his companion-in-arms fight with each other, or his assistant in a pinzez-nez will devour them all? He should think about this in earnest. But why is there such a rush? Why is there this pessimism? Did not he come down from the Caucasian mountains famed for their centenarians. All of his opponents had long decayed, while he is atop the highest hill of power. One should less listen to those doctors and trust folk medicine more.

As the dictator peered at the barren tops of winter birches, he could have asked himself the same "question which one's reason cannot answer," to quote the great writer: "What is the meaning of my life?.. The answer

should be not only sensible and clear, but also correct, i.e., the one that would make me believe in it with all my heart, believe in it inevitably, as inevitably as I believe in the existence of the infinite." Tolstoy said accusingly that some people saw the meaning of their lives in their own well-being, but then a person "lives and acts solely to be the only one to possess the good, so that all of the people and even all creatures should live and act with the sole purpose of making it good only for himself." Stalin would not have failed to feel indignant were these words applied to him: speaking about good, did he wish anything only for himself, did not the people know about his simple ways and modesty, or that without any pity he sent to Kolyma a well-known singer and her husband, a general, when the two decided to grab some extra things from the defeated Germany? Was not the people convinced that *everything* that he was doing was done for the people's good?

It had been long since the dictator was able to confess even to himself, even in whisper, even in thought, that he was driven by only one eternal, everlasting, and insatiable passion. No, not the one for wives, for those few women, the liaison with whom he kept as a special secret; not for the Marxist ideas, which he dissected for so long and so painstakingly; not for the people whom he bled white (for their own sake!), no. For all these thirty years he loved *only power,* and his will elevated to the status of law. His will for power proved the strongest. He was not well versed in Nietzsche, but he could have been an ideal case study for the German philosopher to examine his unique *will* for power. He could feel its muscles of steel on the body of the huge state even now, if it were. Well, was not this power used for the people's sake, the fantastic power which he could exercise by writing two or three words or by a easy swing of his withered arm? The abundant and shameful glorification had convinced the leader that his mind and firm hand were making the people happy. Was not he the one to come up with ever new ideas of improving the people's "material well-being" and strengthening the power of the state? Yesterday, for example, they reported to him on having begun to put into effect another of his ideas:

"To Com. Stalin I.V.

In view of the fact that you, Comrade Stalin, showed interest in the progress of designing a hydro power station, the USSR MVD is reporting what work has been done. In accordance with your instructions, large-scale hydrological, topographic, and prospecting work is under way along the Urals river, from the city of Uralsk to Chkalov (500-km long). Two versions of siting the hydro electric power station and the high dams in the neighborhood of the villages of Golitsyn and Krasniy Yar are under study. A tentative annual generation of power will amount to 390,000 thousand kilowatt-hours. The reservoir will have a capacity from 7,700 to 11,000 million cubic meters. The final version of the assignment will by ready by 1 April 1953.

11 December 1952. Minister of Int. Affrs. S. Kruglov."

He had no way on knowing, of course, that he would not be around in April 1953, and that another "historic" project of Stalin's would not materialize. But was it a bad idea of his to have the banks of many manmade seas, created according to his will, flooded with electrical light? It occurred to him once, though, that these countless manmade seas could flood the country's huge plain and its best farming land, submerging the millennium-old culture of the peoples in the darkness of billions of cubic meters of cold water; but he dismissed this unwarranted thought.

These morning hours often took Stalin to the mist of the bygone times. This was the feast of his memory. The silent, black-and-white shots of his reminiscences snatched out of the abyss of the past individual faces of the people who had long been gone: his timid Koto; his stern hardworking mother, Shaumyan, Kamenev; the latter gave Stalin his warm woolen socks when they bumped in cold railway cars from Achinsk to Petrograd in 1917... What do the socks have to do with it? All of a sudden, he recalled his first major reassurance and Lenin's support which helped him to believe in himself. But why have not the historians written anything about it? Oh, what a criminal omission? Who has dared to hide this outstanding fact? Even he did not use it in the heat of the fight in the Twenties, as he fought against Trotskiy, Zinoviyev, Kamenev, and Bukharin. He should instruct Beriya tomorrow to find the documents. In the new volumes of his works, now under preparation, people should be reminded of the fact that Lenin *himself* had chosen him, not fortune, but the leader of the revolution.

Indeed, one curious episode remained ignored in history. It was in December 1917. The euphoria of the revolutionary victory was steadily ebbing low in the streets of Petrograd, Moscow and a host of other Russian cities, which found themselves in the grip of rallies, under the impact of rising difficulties. The Council of People's Commissars was in its regular session on 23 December. The meeting was chaired by Lenin. Those present included Shlaypnikov, Uritskiy, Vinogradov, Proshiyan, Shlikhter, Menzhinskiy, Akselrod, Stalin, Petrovskiy, Trutovskiy, Algasov, Dybenko, Bonch-Bruyevich, Karelin, Lunacharskiy, Kollontay, and Kozmin. As usual, they discussed a lot of issues: a draft decree on Turkish Armenia, feud between the Commissariat of Internal Affairs and the Higher Council of National Economy over Varvara Nikolayevna Yakovleva, the end of payments for the coupons, commission in charge of vermicelli, abolition of the all-state committee and entrusting all of its affairs to the all-Russia union of handicapped soldiers, and many others. One issue dealt with "Granting leaves to Com. Lenin for three-five days, to Com. Dybenko, for two days, to Proshyan, for one day, and on replacement of Chairman of the Council during Lenin's absence.

Resolved:

Grant the leave. Com. Stalin is to be appointed Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, and Com. Shlyapnikov, his deputy."

Stalin recalls that while he substituted for Lenin, he held two or three sessions of the Sovnarkom council (the government met almost daily then to discuss the numerous problems). Gorbunov, it will be recalled, brought up the issue of allowing a press bureau correspondent to attend the session; Proshiyan reported on the efforts to combat sabotage on the part of the department of posts and telegraph and suggested introducing labor conscription for the "post office people;" Stalin himself delivered a report on the situation on the Don, and on the vacillations among the Cossack masses; at Algasov's request, they discussed the allocation of money for the senate printing press, Sverdlov seemed to report something. How long ago it was! Lenin could not have left him as his substitute by chance, could he? How many brilliant revolutionaries were in the leader's field of vision! Why did not he use this argument in his struggle in the past? Well, leave this argument alone. The victor needs it now only for his "historical biography."

It was hard to imagine for Stalin that when Lenin left him as his replacement by the decision of the Council of People's Commissars, he did not attach much importance, it might seem, to this act of routine work. The leader was concerned that the council had almost no representatives of national outlying areas among its members; the Black Hundred men, who fled to the south, shouted from rooftops that Lenin had formed a "Jewish government." This was a natural step to replace temporary the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars with the Commissar for Nationalities, Stalin, under the circumstances. But Stalin saw a hidden meaning, advantageous to himself, amid all the obvious things that were done in the apparatus of power...

Jolted out of his memories, Stalin looked at the man who came in. But this was not the familiar figure of Poskryobushev whom Stalin finally agreed to remove from working for him in November 1952, the same as he did with Vlasik, after Beriya's had insisted on it for a long time. The other day Beriya said something to the effect that "Poskryobyshev might have been connected with the doctors' plot and he would have to be checked"; Beriya was raising more and more suspicions in Stalin. So, let him do the checking. Unending suspicions and the checking of all those who gave him the slightest pretext has long become part and parcel of Stalin's life. The same way as they checked recently all of Leningrad leaders and their proteges in Moscow and in other cities; the same way as they checked the case of the Jewish antifascist committee, headed by Solomon Abramovich Lozovksiy, whom Stalin came to know well during the war (the former headed Sovinformburo); the same as this new case of "doctors poisoners." Thank God, he tries to do without their help. How many emperors, kings, presidents, and leaders have been sent out of the world imperceptibly by the court doctors throughout history! Who can say? The main thing is not to trust this ilk, whom Beriya is working on himself, without doubt.

His new errands-man, with a folder in his hand, was standing in the doorway instead of Poskryobyshev. It was hard to replace Poskreyobyshev, and for three months Stalin could not make up his mind as to who should become his arms bearer to replace his disgraced aide.

Nodding with his head toward the table, where V.I. Malin put the folder with the documents prepared in his secretariat (Malenkov himself was monitoring its work at Stalin's request), Stalin said curtly, without acknowledging the greetings:

"Ask Malenkov to call me."

"I will, Comrade Stalin!"

A two or three minutes later, he heard the voice of his favorite on the phone, who was going out of his way to fulfill any of the leader's wishs.

"I'm going to the Bolshoy tonight. Take care of it. Send me no more papers. Khrushchev, Beria, you," he paused and then added, "and Bulganin come to see me tomorrow night."

"All right, Comrade Stalin. I'll take care of everything, study the documents and convey your instruction to the Comrades you mentioned. Everything will be done!"

Stalin put down the receiver, without waiting for the fast-talking Malenkov, choking with zeal, to finish. His treacherous weakness and slight dizziness did not go away. Although he had returned from Sochi only a month or a month and a half ago, he did not feel relieved or fresh as he normally did. On examining the documents, Stalin set out to look through newspapers, magazines, translations of foreign articles and books. At night, he went to see the Swan Lake at the Boloshoy Theater, accompanied by a dozen body guards. He saw this performance for the twentieth or thirtieth time perhaps. The theater manager, commandant and MGB official A.T. Rybin were waiting for him near his box. Sitting down in the corner of the empty box (sometimes he invited Molotov and Zhdanov), Stalin stared at the stage blankly, knowing by heart every minute element of choreography and the spectacle's music. He left without waiting for the last act to finish. Some vague anguish did not abandon the dictator: he was frightened by his growing weakness. He was not taken in by mysticism, but he saw the blurred contours of personal threats all his life. He felt that one of them was lurching nearby. And it looked like it was real.

Getting up later than usual on the 28th, Stalin felt that he was imperceptibly back in his old shape, and he cheered up. He read reports from Korea, protocols of interrogations of "doctors poisoners" M.S. Vovsi, Ya. G. Etingher, B.B. Kogan, M.B. Kogan, and A.M. Grinshtein. He took a short walk, and late at night, as he had instructed, Malenkov, Beriya, Khrushchev, and Bulganin came to

his dacha. They sat over a long dinner. They discussed (and decided, one could assume) a host of questions. Bulganin gave a detailed account of the military situation in Korea. Stalin saw another proof of the situation reaching a stalemate there; he decided to advise the Chinese and the Koreans tomorrow, through Molotov, to "bargain" at the talks till the "very last," but to eventually agree to end the hostilities.

Beriya talked at length. He felt that Stalin secretly changed his attitude toward him; being even more cunning than Beriya, the leader seemed to have begun to harbor some suspicions regarding his hangman's disloyalty. That is why Beriya went out of his way tonight.

"Ryumin has proved without doubt that all of this bunch - Vovsi, Kogan, Feldman, Grinshtein, Etingher, Yegorov, Vasilenko, Shereshevskiy, and others - have been discretely reducing the lives of the leadership for a long time. Zhdanov, Dimitrov, Shcherbakov, we are specifying the list of the victims, are the doings of this gang. Zhdanov's electrocardiogram was simply replaced, for example... They kept silent about the infraction he had, allowed him to walk, work, and made him kick the bucket in no time... The most important thing is that all of them are the agents of the Jewish bourgeois-nationalistic organization, 'Joint.' The threads reach far down, to party and military personnel. Most of the accused admitted their guilt..."

Stalin recalled that the "Doctors' case" started with Professor V.N. Vinogradov, who found Stalin's health to have deteriorated considerably during his last visit in 1952 and who suggested that Stalin stay away from active work as much as possible. Stalin flew off the handle. They did not allow Vinogradov to visit him anymore, and soon he was arrested. The MGB decided to actively harp on Stalin's displeasure with the doctors, with one of the investigators, Ryumin, decided to capitalize on the case to push his career. The events moved fast. Attuned to Stalin's wish, they were preparing a much publicized case of a broad "doctors' plot" of an openly anti-Semitic nature. Definitely there would have been a trial, there would have been victims, and who knows how much further this new bloody harvest would have gone. Only Stalin's sudden death did not prevent this new tragedy from reaching its logical end, Stalin-style.

The leader inquired about the progress of investigation on two or three occasions on that last night. Then he asked Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, in charge of the MGB and the MVD, who had been particularly servile with Stalin lately:

"What about Vinogradov?"

"Apart from being unreliable, the Professor also has a big mouth. He told one doctor at his clinic that Comrade Stalin allegedly had several dangerous hypertension attacks."

"All right," Stalin cut Beriya short. "What are you planning to do next? Have the doctors confessed? Tell Ignatiyev that if he fails to get the doctors' full confessions, we are going to shorten him by his head."

"They will. We are wrapping up the investigation with the help of Timashuk and other patriots, and we shall request your permission to allow us to have a public trial."

"Get it ready!" said Stalin curtly, and switched over to other affairs, "those involving Yugoslavia."

Stalin was dissatisfied with Beriya's forecasts, who claimed two or three years ago that "the Tito's regime will soon fall; the party and the people do not support him;" but it turned the other way round. PRAVDA published articles by G. Gheorghiu-Dej "Yugoslav Communist Party In the Grip of Murderers and Spies," by Matyas Rakosi "Yugoslav Trotskiyites see the Shock Detachment of Imperialism," by V. Kirsanov "The Struggle of the Yugoslav People Against Tito's Fascist Clique," V. Pankov "The Book Exposing a Gang of Traitors," and many others. In the meantime, Yugoslavia and the LCY were going from strength to strength, regardless of this unseemly abuse. Stalin had long realized that he had grossly "miscalculated" in the matter, and more than once vented out his bitterness on Molotov and Malenkov, his main advisors on the issue. There was another one, Zhdanov, but who would take the dead man to task?

On 1 March, they stayed up till 4 a.m. By the end of their early morning conversation, Stalin was irritable and did not try to hide his displeasure with Molotov, Malenkov, and Beriya. Khrushchev was put on the hot spot too. Bulganin was the only person he did not say a word against. Everybody expected the Master to get up so that they could leave. But Stalin waxed on and on about some people in the leadership who obviously believed that old services were sufficient to address new issues. They are making a mistake. Stalin's words had a sinister ring to them. His interlocutors could not but know that this short temper of Stalin's might spell that he had some new idea on his mind. Maybe this one: to remove all "old" Politburo members so as to make them the scapegoats for all his numerous mistakes. Stalin understood that his fate would not give him much time. But even he could not know that the diatribe was the last one in his life. The sand glass of his life was almost empty. The last grains of sand were oozing out of the vessel. Interrupting his thought in mid-sentence, Stalin bid them a curt good-bye and retreated to his quarters. Everyone went outside in silence and right then. It was still dark. Malenkov and Beriya again took the same car.

Aleksey Trofimovich Rybin recalled during our conversation that on 1 March the "service people," as he called them, began to worry by noon: Stalin did not come out, did not summon anyone, and nobody was allowed to see him without a summons. Anxiety was growing. However, the light was turned on in Iosif Vassarionovich's

office at 6.30 p.m., Rybin said. Everyone sighed with relief. They were waiting for a ring: the leader did not have his lunch, did not check his mail, or the documents. All this was unusual and bizarre. The time passed, but nobody called them. It was 8 p.m, then 9 p.m., then 10 p.m. - there was dead silence in Stalin's quarters. Anxiety reached its peak. The aides and guards began to argue that someone should go and see the leader; premonition was growing. The officials on duty - M. Starostin and V. Tukov, and server M. Butusova began to discuss: someone had to go. Starostin went there at 11 p.m., taking mail with him as a pretext, in case the Master was displeased at the violation of the established routine.

Starostin passed through several rooms, turning on the lights on his way; when he put on the light in the smaller dining room he was taken aback, as he saw Stalin lying on the floor, in his pajama slacks and undershirt. He barely waved his arm at Starostin, but could not say a word. His eyes were full of horror and supplication. A PRAVDA was lying on the floor, an open Borzhomi bottle stood on the table. It looked like Stalin had been there for a long time, since the light was not turned on in the dining room. The shocked servants rushed, when Starostin called them. Struck down by an attack and laid on the sofa, the leader tried to say something, but only gurgled sounds came out of his throat. Brain hemorrhage paralyzed not only his speech, but it would paralyze his mind soon as well. Maybe Stalin recalled Lenin's tragedy at this moment, who was doomed to a long horrible silence?

According to Rybin, the guards and servants began to call Ignatiev at the KGB. He could not respond other than advise them to call Beriya and Malenkov. They could not find Beriya anywhere, while Malenkov hesitated to take any steps without Beriya. One of the most powerful persons in all of human history found himself deprived of basic medical aid during the critical moment because of an array of his own bureaucratic instructions and bans. The leader became a hostage of his own system. It turned out later on that one could not call doctors to see Stalin without Beriya's permission, the way it was laid down in one of the numerous instructions. They finally found Stalin's monster in one of the government villas, in the company of a new woman; Beriya and Malenkov came to Stalin's place at 3 a.m. Beriya was visibly tipsy, while Malenkov walked into the room, where the dying Stalin was, having socks on his feet and carrying his new shoes under his arm, which he obviously took off lest they creak. The person lying on the couch, who had an unheard-of profession of the "father of the peoples," was making wheezy sounds of a dying man. Without taking any steps to call the doctors, Beriya lashed out at the servants:

"Why are you panicking? Can't you see that Comrade Stalin is fast asleep? Get out of here, all of you, and do not disturb the sleep of your leader. Just wait till I get back to you about this!"

Malenkov supported him, but only halfheartedly. It appeared that no one was planning to help Stalin, who had laid there without help six or eight hours after the stroke, A.T. Rybin said with much conviction. It looked like everything went according to the pattern which satisfied Beriya. Having driven the guards and servants out and forbidden them to call anyone, the comrades-in-arms left amid much commotion. Beriya, Malenkov, and also Khrushchev, as well as other Politburo members and doctors, came back only around 9 a.m.

Stalin's daughter Svetlana described his agony the following way in her book: "There were crows of people in the big room where my father was. Unknown doctors, who saw the sick man for the first time (Academician V.N. Vinogradov, who took care of the father for many years, was in prison), were fussing around. They put leeches at the back of his head and on his neck, took cardiograms, did an X-ray of the lungs; a nurse was making one injection after another; one doctor was writing the medical case in the register nonstop. Everything was being done the way it should. Everyone was fussing, trying to save the life which could not be saved." Everyone was filled with a sense of solemn, somber and statelike significance, although no one had any doubts that this was the end. A strong stroke struck the leader down. But Beriya, this merciless inquisitor and perfidious courtier would come up to the doctors now and then and ask outloud, for everyone to hear:

"Can you guarantee Comrade Stalin's life? Are you aware of your responsibility for Comrade Stalin's health? I want to warn you..."

The professors, doctors and nursers, scared to death, mumbled something no one could hear and fussed, feeling that the leader's death can soon result in their own demise. Beriya could not hide a triumphant expression on his face, on which one could read his understanding of the culmination of his own fate.

Everyone on the Politburo, including Malenkov, was afraid of this bastard. The leader's death could spell a continuation of new bloody orgies. Worn down by giving countless instructions and showing ostentatious concern, having realized that Stalin was already beyond the other side of the invisible line that separates life from death, Beriya hurried to the Kremlin for a few hours, leaving the country's political leadership at the leader's deathbed. I have already suggested a version, under which first deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beriya was hard-pedaling a major political gamble, which he had conjured up long ago. His rushed trip to the Kremlin was possibly caused by his desire to take out the dictator's documents from Stalin's safe, the documents which, Beriya feared, could include instructions regarding his fate. Stalin obviously might have left a testament; at the time when he enjoyed tremendous prestige, there would have hardly been any forces to defy the dying man's last wish.

On returning several hours later, Beriya openly dictated his will to the depressed comrades-in-arms, even more confident of himself. He issued an order to have a government announcement about Stalin's sickness prepared as soon as possible, and have a bulletin on its progress released. The government announcement, read on the radio and published in the newspapers, said in part: "On the night of 2 March, Comrade Stalin, who was in his Moscow apartment (but he was at his dacha - **D.V.**), had a brain hemorrhage, which affected the vital parts of the brain. Comrade Stalin lost consciousness. A paralysis of his right arm and leg developed. A loss of speech occurred. Grave disruptions of the heart and breathing functions took place... The treatment of Comrade Stalin is taking place under the constant supervision of the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government (we mentioned earlier how Beriya exercised 'constant supervision' - **D.V.**)... Comrade Stalin's grave illness will result in his more or less prolonged nonparticipation in the leadership activity."

They had time to follow the first bulletin with two others, the one as of 2 p.m. and as of 4 p.m. on 5 March. The medical luminaries A.F. Tretyakov, I.I. Kuperin, P.Ye. Lukomskiy, N.V. Konovalov, A.L. Myasnikov, Ye.M. Tareyev, I.N. Filimonov, I.S. Glazunov, and others (after the still pending "doctors' case" Beriya saw to it that Stalin was treated by Academicians and Professors of only one nationality - **D.V.**), did not hide it: the catastrophe was at hand. The monster's sinister whispering into their ears did not make them change their mind: "grave disruptions in blood circulation in the coronary arteries, with isolated changes in the heart rear wall," "heavy collapse," "the condition remains extremely grave." They did not know yet that periodic disruptions of blood circulation in the brain had earlier produced numerous small cavities (cysts) in the brain tissue, especially in its frontal lobes. Today's experts believe that changes in that part caused alterations in the psychic area and added to the despotic disposition in Stalin's character, aggravating his tyrannical inclinations even more. I think that many old people can suffer from this. Despite his horrible moral anomaly, I do not think that Stalin was a person who should have been put in the care of psychiatrists. His "disease" was of a different, social nature - Caesarism and tyranny. One can put it differently perhaps: it was not only the leader but all of society that was "sick."

In the meantime, the last act of the leader's drama was coming to a close at the dying man's bed, the drama that will make it possible only years hence to unveil the depth of popular tragedy associated with the life of that man. It seemed at the time that his death was a tragedy; they realized years after that the tragedy lay in the crimes committed during his lifetime. His drunk son Vissiliy appeared in the hall several times, shouting: "Bastards, you did my father in!" His stone-faced daughter stood there immobile, and Politburo members Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Khrushchev sat in the chairs and on the couch, worn down by lack of sleep and the impending unknown. Some people were crying. Beriya would approach Stalin several times and say out loud:

"Comrade Stalin, all Politburo members are here. Say something to us!"

Beriya behaved like a successor, as a senior prince of a gigantic empire, capable of deciding the life of any of its inhabitant. He took no interest any longer in the person he served, the one who invested him with unchallenged power. For him, Stalin receded into the past. Beriya's sight was all set on the immediate future. The end of the leader was not long in coming. I think that his daughter gives the best description of the last moments of the dictator's life: "The agony was terrible. It choked him in front of everybody's eyes. At some point - I do not know whether it was really so or just seemed to be - obviously at his very last minute, he opened his eyes all of a sudden, and glanced at everyone who stood around him. This was a horrible look, either crazed or angry and full of horror in front of the death and in front of the doctors' unfamiliar faces who bent over him. His glanced passed all of us in a fraction of a minute. And then - this was incomprehensible and frightening; I still do not understand it, but I cannot forget it - he suddenly raised his left arm (the one he could move) and either pointed with it somewhere upward or threatened all of us. The gesture was incomprehensible but menacing, and it is not clear to whom or to what it was directed... The next moment, the soul made its last effort and escaped from his body." It was 9:50 a.m. on 5 March 1953.

His comrades-in-arms, hushed and immobilized in front of the eternal mystery of death, had lying before their eyes their ruler, idol, judge, master, benefactor, and executioner. Most of them felt both chagrin and relief at the same time. Gone was the man, who apart from deification, instilled irrational fear in everybody all the time. Any of his comrades-in-arms might turn out to be superfluous in his entourage, the way it recently happened to Vozensenskiy and Kuznetsov.

The nagging thought was secretly on everybody's mind: did the leader leave his testament? If he did, what did it say? He would not fail to mention there the names of the people who should carry on "his" cause...

Many used their hankies to wipe off their tears, sincerely mourning and peering at the austere, familiar profile, which suddenly turned white somehow, with their red-shot eyes. Valentina Vasiliyva Istomina, Stalin's housekeeper, stood on her knees at the body, and sobbed loudly and uncontrollably, her head resting on the chest of the gone leader. She had taken care of him for about 20 years, always accompanied him to the south during his vacations and even to two of the three international conferences in which he took part. The stupor caused by the death of the god on earth evaporated quickly however. Everyone in the crowd stirred all of a sudden, started to talk and moved toward the exit: the Politburo had to have its session and to solve state matters; along with the funerals, the first question was as to who would

take charge of the things if the deceased had not issued any instructions on that score. The larger dining room, where Stalin often used to sit next to the fireplace or at the table, surrounded by four or five of his comrades-in-arms, became suddenly vacant. Never shall any issues be resolved here anymore, the issues related to the promulgation of a new law, appointments of ministers and ambassadors, awarding of the Stalin prizes, establishment of new camps, construction of electric power stations, or the eviction of entire nations. The epoch of tyrannical autocracy was over. Incidentally, no one knew for sure at the time whether it was over. Maybe Stalin's entire "cause" was "willed" to Beriya? Riding fast in long black limousines to the Kremlin, many people who were close to Stalin could not but contemplate that horrible idea. Could the leadership pluck up enough courage to immediately contest the leader's last will? Hardly. They hardly could at the time, it was another matter three months later.

An unusual joint session of three organs took place the next day: the Central Committee, the Council of Minsters, and the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium. No one was able to find any instructions made by Stalin in case of his death. Beriya was the only person who once went to the Generalissimo's office since he became sick; he ordered to have it sealed after that. One had to resolve the issue about succession of power. This is a usual procedure in a democratic system: everything according to the constitutional norms. There is always a mystery and an unknown where democracy was flimsy and where a person like Stalin stood in the epicenter of the state. G. M. Malenkov chaired the meeting, but the decision to be passed by the three organs had been discussed by a small group of the "entourage" well before the session.

One of Stalin's positions, that of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, was decided to give to G.M. Malenkov, who was the leader's obvious favorite in the past two or three years. L.P. Beriya, V.M. Molotov, N.A. Bulganin, and L.M. Kaganovich were appointed his first deputies. One should take note of the following issues connected with reshuffling in state leadership: the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were merged again. Beriya again came at the head of the huge, inflated MVD. He was an actual head of both ministries before; keeping the position of first deputy (obviously, he was really *first*) of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, he now took the department management into his hands, which had exercised virtually undivided control over all other agencies for a quarter of a century. Beriya not only intended to preserve the situation that existed under Stalin, it seemed, but to reinforce the role played by the ministry in dealing not only with internal, but also with foreign policy matters. He actually controlled an apparatus which he could use in the future to pave his way to power. Molotov was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, while Bulganin, the Military Minister. The executive power underwent significant changes as well: N.M. Shvernik, former Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, was "reassigned" to take care of trade unions, and his position was taken by K.Ye. Voroshilov, who was in the leader's bad books for many years after the war.

The upper party organ saw the changes which were equally meaningful. The leading nucleus, which met the night before this memorial meeting, less than 12 hours after Stalin's death, decided to drastically curtail the Politburo, at the suggestion of Molotov, who was supported by other "comrades-in-arms." It was known as the Central Committee Presidium after the 19th congress. It appears that closer toward the end of his life, Stalin set out to get rid of his comrades-in-arms of many years - Beriya, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Molotov, Khrushchev, and possibly some others. It would have been more "daring" to remove them all at once than in the Thirties. He needed to do it gradually, but Stalin felt that he did not have much time left.

The leader's cunning mind found a smart way out, as he always did. He suggested that the Presidium (everyone on the old Presidium agreed at once, of course) be increased up to 25 members and 11 candidate members. The number of secretaries was increased up to ten! In doing so, he immediately "dissolved" his old "comrades-in-arms" among new functionaries, on which he banked in the future. I think that had not Stalin been struck down by the stroke, he would have found an excuse to make charges against Molotov, Mikoyan, Beriya and some others in order to remove them from the leadership, and at the same time lay at their door the blame for very many things which, the aging leader thought, detracted from his historical portrait. But the old apparatchiks knew their leader only too well. Several hours after his death, they made it their first priority to remove the newly promoted officials from the main levers of power, in the interests of "ensuring uninterrupted and correct leadership."

The joint session endorsed the proposal made by the "nucleus" to more than halve the Presidium, down to ten members and four candidate members. Only three new persons - N.A. Bulganin, M.Z. Saburov, and M.G. Pervukhin were added to the old "Stalin's guard" of G.M. Malenkov, L.P. Beriya, V.M. Molotov, K.Ye. Voroshilov, N.S. Khrushchev, L.M. Kaganovich, and A.I. Mikoyan. Some leaders, who were glimpsed in the Presidium for less than five months, at Stalin's whim, were gone from the high political filament never to reappear there again, including V.M. Andrianov, V.A. Malyshev, L.G. Melnikov, N.A. Mikhailov, P.K. Ponomarenko, D.I. Chesnokov, A.G. Zverev, I.G. Kabanov, A.M. Puzanov, I.F. Tevosiyan, and P.F. Yudin. L.I. Brezhenv would not be able to stay in that top party clip for the time being; stripped of his high-ranking titles of candidate member of the Presidium and Secretary of the Central Committee, he would be sent to head the political department at the Ministry of the Navy.

Nobody was officially elected to the post of General Secretary of the Central Committee after 1934. It was

universal knowledge that Stalin was the main person, the one who dominated state, society and party undividedly. There was no other person who would command similar prestige after his death. Malenkov, who took charge of the Central Committee business in the last years at the leader's request, was nominated Chairman of the Council of Ministers. They made an indeterminate decision, as if putting him on probation: "Consider it expedient for Comrade N.S. Khrushchev to concentrate on working at the CPSU Central Committee and in this connection relieve him of his duties as First Secretary of the Moscow CPSU Committee."

Plunged into the four days of official mourning, the country did not pay much attention to the fine points in the reshuffling of power. But it was clear to many people that the new political figures, who were called upon to replace Stalin, enjoyed but a fraction of the huge prestige that was commanded by the person who stood at the head of the party and the people for three decades. The people were avidly trying to catch the news reports coming out of hoarse loudspeakers, the news which were as alike as two peas. They reacted calmly to the decision by the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers to place a sarcophagus with Stalin's body in the Mausoleum in the Red Square, next to the one of V.I. Lenin, and to build a Pantheon, a monument of internal glory of the great personalities of the Soviet Union. "On completing the Pantheon, put in it the sarcophagus with the body of V.I. Lenin and the sarcophagus with the body of I.V. Stalin, and the remains of the outstanding leaders of the communist party and the Soviet state, buried under the Kremlin wall." Everything was taken for granted.

The oriental pagan custom of embalming and mummifying the rulers, against which N.K. Krupskaya protested so vehemently in her time and on which Stalin insisted, looked all too natural as well. As years pass by, people become used to many things. Even to the fact that a god lived next to them on earth. But it was hard to believe that the god had died, as all mortals do. Aleksey Surkov described in his PRAVDA article, "Great Farewell" how a "living river of popular love and sorrow, zigzagging along Moscow streets, had flown for three days, day and night, into the Hall of Columns." The only thing he did not write (and no one would have allowed him to) was that the deceased leader did not change his ways - he could not allow, even though he was dead, for his sacrificial alter to stay empty. The crowds were so huge that quite a few people lost their lives, crushed to death by the throngs.

The new War Minister, Bulganin, issued an order to the troops of the Soviet Army, an order rife with such words as "great," "genius," "immortal." Thirty salvos were fired in the capitals of union republics, hero-cities, and some other cities on the day of interment. Marshalls Sokolovskiy, Budyonniy, Govorov, Konev, Timoshenko, Malinovskiy, Meretksov, Bogdanov, and generals and admirals carried the Generalissimo's orders and medals. All of the country was in deep mourning. The mourning was for real. Millions of people had no way of knowing that the funeral act was giving them the beginning of their liberation from one of the most terrible tyrannies, and not only of the 20th century.

Chou En-lai, G. Gheorghiu-Dei, C. Gottwald, B. Berut, M. Rakosi, O. Grotewohl, Y. Tsedenbal, V. Cervenkov, U. Kekkonen, and many other political leaders and statesmen from all parts of the world arrived for the funeral. Mankind realized that gone was the man whose role in world history would be hard to evaluate. Diplomatic representations in Moscow were sending dispatches to their capitals those days, mostly giving evaluation of the event for the huge country and making future forecasts. Everyone was waiting for what Stalin's successors were going to say during the funeral ceremony of burying Stalin. The four people played the solo: Khrushchev as chairman of commission in charge of organizing the burial (the memorable meeting entrusted him to "concentrate on work in the Central Committee"), opened the funeral meeting. The others were Malenkov, Beriya, and Molotov. Political analysts decided that those were the key people in the shrunken new leadership.

The speakers emphasized the full allegiance of the people and the country to Stalin's course, essentially using the same words and expressions. Malenkov called Stalin "mankind's greatest genius," and expressed confidence that the USSR possessed "everything it takes to build a full-fledged communist society." Naturally, Beriya reminded those present that in following Stalin's course, we should "constantly raise and perfect vigilance of the party and the people against the encroachments and schemes by the enemies of the Soviet state. We should increase our vigilance even more now." Harping on the chosen refrain - what it means to "be Stalin's loyal and worthy follower" - tried to formulate the guidelines for further strengthening leadership positions inside the country and in the international arena. The comrades-in-arms took an oath, as it were, that the things would remain the same they used to be under Stalin. There were no nuances in the speeches made by the leaders at the funeral rally, with the exception that the cunning Beriya, under the circumstances when he had failed to take a one-man position in the leadership (I have no doubt that he nurtured such plans), decided to throw his lot with Malenkov, the person who was the closest to him. Beriya said in his speech (Molotov did not do this) that among the "most important decisions aimed at ensuring an uninterrupted and correct leadership for the country's entire life" was appointment of Gheorghiy Maksimilianovich Malenkov, a talented student of Lenin's and a loyal comrade-in-arms of Stalin's, to the position of Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

The funeral ceremony over, the body of the deceased leader was taken into the Mausoleum; it was closed to the visitors for another eight months henceforth, as the process of embalming was taking place. The idea was to have the mummy there for centuries. Lying next to Lenin was a person, who usurped the right, during his lifetime, to explain and interpret Lenin's heritage. The two

bodies, that of Lenin in a dark suit without any decorations (nobody could imagine him wearing "an iconostasis" of orders, as one of the General Secretaries did many years later), and that of Stalin, with platinum order slat. They riveted the people's attention, while history has passed and continues to pass its judgment, without looking back at the "vanity of vanities." Who could have guessed that the Stalin's mummy would be removed from the Mausoleum forever as soon as 31 October 1961? Some astute, as there have always been people like this, could have remembered the words of A.I. Hertzen from his letter to Alexander II regarding Arakcheyev: "Slimy, yellow, offensive on a heap of birch rods, surrounded by the corpses of those whipped to death." But Arakcheyev was no match for Stalin!

A stream of condolences, sincere and sorrowful, continued for a week or two in the press and over the radio. I think that even bourgeois leaders, known for their anti-Soviet sentiment, were sincere in associating the entire epoch of progress of one of the most powerful states with Stalin's name, without account for whose position many global issues could not be resolved. The Soviet press went out of its way to find epithets to describe the role played by Stalin in world civilization. PRAVDA wrote that he had his hands on "the help of human history." I should say that one came across the materials occasionally between the lines of which one could read a different message.

Proletarian German poet I. Becher wrote in his poem "To the Immortal:"

"The chest of earth has heav'd, full of life.

The seeds that Lenin planted came forth alive

And people said: 'The word of Stalin's been good,

It's time to reap the fruits we undertook!'

The hearts again been filled with Stalin's light

The morning in greatest triumph we took delight

He, full of mourning, marked the memories of those dead

And silently did people weep, and many a tear was shed."

The eternal darkness engulfed the leader. He was gone, lamented over by his successful comrades-in-arms (he destroyed the unsuccessful ones), accompanied by their wailing and protestations of being loyal to "his cause." Nothing changed on the surface. The people continued to think along the same lines. Spinning its mammoth cogs, the bureaucratic machine continued to relentlessly produce directives, instructions; it was engaged in training, study, and placement of personnel; everyone adopted the same letters of greetings at each ceremonial meeting, addressed to "those at the very top." But the very same people who would begin and end their articles and speeches with reference to "Stalin's genius," gradually began to change their tone. The scales began to ease away imperceptibly from people's eyes and hearts. The "doctors' case" was closed in less than a month, while Ruymin, the mastermind behind Beriya's idea, was executed by a firing squad, the same as they did before. Very little time passed, and the emboldened comrades-in-arms carried out a "palace operation" of removing and then liquidating Beriya. The "Leningrad affair" was closed by the decision of the military collegium of the USSR Supreme Court, chaired by Cheptsov, a year after Stalin's death, as the one that had "been fabricated by the former USSR Minister of State Security and his accomplices." A.A. Voznesenskiy, N.A. Voznesenskiy, M.A. Voznesenskaya, and dozens of other people "under the same case," who laid down their lives through the fault of the satrap, who died in March 1953, were rehabilitated. PRAVDA reported a year later that V.S. Abakumov, A.G. Leonov, B.I. Komarov, and M.T. Likhachev, charged with framing up the "Leningrad affair," were sentenced to the highest degree of punishment - execution by a firing squad, while others received different prison terms during the open session of the military collegium in Leningrad.

What looked immobile, ossified, eternal and monolithic even before the cult of personality had been officially condemned, began to fall apart, evaporate, to be eroded imperceptibly, and to disappear. The laconic adage of Thomas Mann that lifetime glory is a dubious thing, the adage as old as life itself, began to find its early proof.

Stalin died, having passed through the apogee of his fame and grandeur. The dictator's death coincided with the growing deep crisis of the Soviet society. The system had been ossified: all forums, congresses, and assemblies were nothing but a formality, since their outcome had been predetermined by the dictator. Ideology reduced culture to the role of an imitator of the obedient "educator." Despite a nuclear breakthrough, a technological gap with the West was growing wider. Agriculture continued to regress even more. Social studies were involved in combining quotations. Natural and technical sciences fell under the influence of obscurantist processes, similar to the one practiced by Lysenko, and fulminations against cybernetics and genetics. The bureaucratic system controlled practically every aspect of society. Despite the protestations of the official propaganda about ever new triumphs of "Stalin's internal and foreign policy," a silent country, occupying vast expanses, could expect its supreme leader to come with a new paraxism of violence at any moment. The old man in the Kremlin eyed suspiciously the waning enthusiasm of the people, who were used to taking orders, fulfill them and hope. He looked with displeasure at what seemed to be vigorous, but in fact inefficient action undertaken by the bureaucratic layer which he had established. The cogs in the state machinery were rotating at a speed set by the leader, but he felt: instead of accelerating, it was slowing down. The crisis was looming large.

The situation in the international affairs was not much better. The conflict with Tito made everyone aware of the fact that Stalin was not omnipotent. The Kominform which he created was in a limbo. The cold war brought in sharp relief the possibility of a new world conflict. Stalin did not have a keen feeling of the world being on the verge of new changes. One needed new thinking, new approaches, new alternatives, which would recognize the priority of general human values over those of class. The leader was absolutely incapable of such an evolution. Had not Stalin had a stroke, each year would have aggravated the serious political crisis of the country even further. But the life had it otherwise - the leader's death opened up new opportunities for overcoming what people would call Stalinism later on. As Vergilius said: "Everyone has his day due." And that day had come. The great rights and freedoms won by the working people in a fight turned out to be greatly curtailed and could not get out of the rut of Stalin's. But the dictator proved unable to distort everything; many things had survived, although truncated. One could not deny the viability of socialism against the backdrop of the crisis, the full picture of which we could glean only decades later.

... One day, when Dzhugashvilli was just entering his adolescent years, a seminary confessor was reading admonitions on the fundamentals of the Gospel. His eyes wideopen, Soso was looking at the priest who tried to prove that Jesus had no craving for power on earth, but became a persecuted wanderer, preferring suffering and death to fame. And he called himself Messiah several hours before ascending the Golgotha. Having merged with the people, the God became a Man-God and shared the fate of all those prosecuted because of the truth.

The young seminarian could not understand why the God had forsaken his Kingdom on earth. If he had accepted it, he could have changed the life of not only those "persecuted," but also of all those he deemed necessary... When he became caught in the vortex of secular life, having shed biblical colaries [sic], from his green years he preserved his firm opinion about authority, which can invest a person with such power and will as tantamount to the ones possessed by the God.

Stalin's life and death proved a number of eternal truths. The precipice of history is equally deep for everybody, but an echo caused by a person falling there can be a testimony of either Good or Evil. The more we learn about Stalin, the more we are convinced that he is destined to become one of the most horrible incarnations of Evil in history. No good intentions or programs can justify his inhuman acts. Stalin had proved once again with his life even that lofty human ideals can be turned upside down, if policy refuses to have truck with humanism. With all his aspirations being so total, Stalin left out man - the main thing - out of his field of vision. For the leader, a man had always remained an element of the mass of people, and this is almost nothing. Stalin's life and death proved that as a manifestation of dictatorship by one person, autocracy is very fragile. It perishes and disappears when the autocrat dies. Stalin had never been able or wanted to understand that a genuinely free society is not a platform for a pyramid, on top of which one person positions himself, but an association in which each person is free to decide his own fate.

Stalin's life and death proved that a dearth of harmony between politics and morals eventually leads to a disaster. The historical pendulum of events in our country had swung Stalin to its highest point and lowered him to the lowest point, because for the dictator the political values had an absolute sway over the moral ones. Stalin's life and death spotlighted the fact that a life of a person who believes in nothing but violence can span one crime after another. The stage props of glory, "wisdom," "foresight," and reverence which he had created collapse sooner or later. Stalin proved with his own case that his claims to a perfect administration were illusory. His ability to captivate people's minds and to turn them into thoughtless executors is a stern forewarning of what can be a result of an absolute power which defies any controls and which is concentrated in the hands of one person. But we have not fully comprehended this historical foreboding; no firm guarantees have been put in place so far to prevent a deification of a number one person in the state and society. Stalin's triumph and the people's tragedy are an eternal warning of this. History accuses Stalin. His death did not acquit him.

Stalin's Heritage

We said before that Stalinism was born on Marxist soil, but he plowed and fertilized it in such a way that social and moral monsters in the guise of bureaucracy and dogmatism, still common on the landscape of our life, began to grow on it. But I wanted to point out once again that Leninism is not "at fault" for the emergence of Stalinism. This is an antipode which managed to camouflage cleverly itself in Marxist garb. I wanted to say this with full determination, since voices are still heard which want to find the genesis of Stalinism as far back as in the Communist Manifesto. We know that most diverse plants can grow on the same soil. Stalin had grown the fruits, many of which can horrify those who had dreamed about "the kingdom of justice and happiness" long before the October revolution. Characteristically, in his speech at the Red Square during the leader's funeral, Beriya pronounced the words to the effect that Stalin "had left great heritage to our party and country, which should be safeguarded as the ball of one's eye and amplified relentlessly." One is horrified to think that the monster could have been given an opportunity to increase the "great heritage."

It is my profound belief that many things could have developed entirely differently had Lenin lived for another five or ten years. This is not the making most of a role played by a personality, but of the forces which

had a great idea on their minds and in their hands. Born almost a half-century ago, unfortunately this great idea has not fully materialized in people's eternal aspirations. But this does not mean that everything about this idea is an utopia. Stalin's action, however, made too many people doubt the possibility of its humanistic implementation. Speaking about the heritage left by Stalin, it should be said therefore that the great thinkers - Marx, Engles, and Lenin - are not responsible for that sickly shadow that had covered their ideas for long.

Marxism seemed to have grown "shallow" because of Stalin; we stopped seeing its real depth. I think that this depth is not of one but of many dimensions. A one-dimensional view of Marxism, to which Stalin and his machine accustomed millions of people during a quarter-century, began to be seen by them as an array of dogmas which "emasculated" not only the theory, but the revolution itself. Lenin would have shuddered if he could have imagined even for a minute, or for a hundredth fraction of it, the degree of evil which was brought about by the man who followed in his footsteps. Telling the history of the French revolution, Jean Jores wrote significant words: "The great accomplishers of the revolution and democracy, who worked and fought over half a century ago, bear no responsibility for the cause which could have been achieved only by several generations. It is sheer naivete and unfairness to judge them as if they had to brint to an end the drama and as if history was not to continue after them. Their cause was inevitably limited; but it was great." It is sacrilegious to turn the trial of Stalin into a trial of Lenin, as attempts are being occasionally made today, since he is not responsible to us for the cause which could have been accomplished only by several generations. In defiance of Lenin's will, these generations were led by the man who committed the most heinous crime by the very fact of equating the *great idea* with *personal rule.* All of Stalin's crimes are the derivative of that capital crime. This statement of the fact determines the character and content of Stalin's heritage and his role in history. It is hard not to agree with Milovan Djilas, who makes the conclusion that "Stalin is one of the most monstrous oppressors in history." Stalin's heritage could be expressed in the formula: suffering, misfortune and the perishing of millions for the sake of "happiness" of the rest. Stalin saw this as a normal manifestation of the "progress" which he strove to achieve. Freedom became the main victim of Stalinism. "The leader of the peoples" was no emperor, but perhaps not a single monarch commanded such undivided power as he did.

It cannot be denied that Stalin, who put his hands, dry but firm, on the helm of steering the society and the state, had his ear attuned better than anyone else to the national idiosyncrasies of the Russian people, and not just to the social, economic and ideological factors which helped him first to stay in power, and then to stand firm on his feet. D.S. Merezhkovskiy wrote at the turn of the century that "one of the most profound features of the Russian spirit lies in the fact that it is very difficult to make us move, but once moved, we go to the extreme in everything; in good and in evil, in truth and in lies, in wisdom and in madness." One can take an issue with the categorical claim made by this well known Russian writer, but one cannot but admit that throughout his life Stalin the leader subtly capitalized on the ethnic and historical peculiarities of peoples, the Russian people first and foremost.

Adding the last brushstrokes to the political portrait of the man who left such a deep scar in the history of the Soviet (and was it only the Soviet?) people, one should say that *Stalin's heritage proper* did not, nor could it, preserve a single "value" of any positive significance. The things which we value and those intransigent, important and needed things that we possess have not been created, nor do they exist because of Stalin. Having scored so many personal "victories," it may seem, he eventually suffered an eternal historical defeat. I would like to reiterate some conclusions and evaluations of Stalin's last congress in order to size up his heritage, whose remnants tell about themselves even now.

The 19th congress of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) - this is what the party was called when it opened - is separated from its predecessor by as many as 13 years. Stalin had long lost use of party forums. The life of the Central Committee after the war became even more impoverished. In fact, this organ of party leadership in-between congresses played the role of party chancellery under Stalin; personnel was appointed; instructions were issued to republican and Oblast party organizations; resolutions were passed, in astonishingly the same mold. Most of those resolutions dealt with agriculture: on measures to eliminate the violations of the charter of an agricultural artel regarding collective farms; on ensuring the safekeeping of state-owned grain, on collective-farm building in the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian SSR; on merging smaller collective farms and the tasks of party organizations in the matter; on organizing propaganda and introducing the achievements of science and advanced experience in agriculture, and other similar attempts to revive the decaying countryside.

Nothing but willful ideas, persistently uniform, which pushed agriculture into a dead end more and more, were born as a result of long nighttime conversations at Stalin's nearby dacha, where sitting next to the leader were such "agrarian experts" as Molotov, Beriya, and Malenkov. Stalin often grabbed at ephemeral, illusory possibilities under the circumstances, when he felt that countryside was paying him back in protracted, unconscious and passive but unavoidable revenge for his outrage against a grain grower or a cattle breeder. It was Stalin who put Lysenko on the roll and it was on his initiative that, like before the war, a resolution was passed by the Council of Ministers and the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee in September 1946 on the checking and confiscation of "illegally occupied land both on the part of individual collective farmers and organizations and institutions for subsidiary plots." The document said that those found guilty would be "put on

trial as violators of the law and enemies of the collective-farm system." It was Stalin who suggested (and this was naturally put on record in a resolution) establishing departments of agriculture propaganda under the USSR and republican ministries of agriculture, headed by first deputy ministers... To no avail. The willful and far-fetched decisions, whose arsenal included nothing but the measures of administrative-repressive, armchair nature, evoked numb indifference on the part of the countryside.

Years went by. The Central Committee did not meet in session. Following the 1947 February plenum, which discussed the same questions of "upgrading" agriculture, the next plenum took place only in the summer of 1952. It decided organizational issues related to convening the 19th party congress. Even the information report about those two plenums was printed in the press in a mysterious form: "A regular(sic) plenum of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee was held the other day (sic!) in Moscow." The reader could only guess who made the report, which questions were discussed, and when this "the other day" took place. Bureaucracy cannot live without secrecy, since it is one of its mainstays. Stalin did not need party forums, but he did not want to carry out sweeping changes in party leadership without a congress. He knew that the congress would be held according to this scenario and would rubber stamp his decisions. The things went so far already that people's scruples were confined to a remote reservation long ago. The party had become his order. Having become convinced of his spiritual immortality, Stalin decided to leave his inheritors the materials that would take them long to digest: "Marxism And Questions of Linguistics," "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR," his speech at the 19th party congress and two new volumes of his works which were being prepared as a special edition. We have already said that the old and sick leader wanted to pave the way for removing a number of his comrades-in-arms over many years, who knew too much, but who could be conveniently turned into scapegoats after the congress nevertheless.

The 19th Congress provides much new but also quite telltale material in order to draw Stalin's political portrait and to characterize his heritage. From August till September, Malenkov reported to the leader on preparations for the congress several times; familiarized Stalin with the contents of the progress report regarding the work of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) Central Committee, the Congress guidelines for the fifth five-year plan period, and other documents and speeches. Stalin leafed through draft speeches by some Politburo members, but he showed little interest in them. Everyone vied with one another to discover new epithets, to praise his services, virtues, and talents previously untapped. The leader did not make any written comments; during his meetings with the servile Malenkov, Stalin would make brief remarks which sounded like the orders to be obeyed. He paid much more attention to his own speech. Suslov and his team used Stalin's draft to prepare several versions of the speech, but he did the final polishing himself.

Several days before the congress, Stalin suddenly suggested that it should open at... 7 p.m. He made the supreme party organ subject to his own schedule. The congress presidium was not large, but the novelty was that everyone moved to the left side of the presidium from the middle of the table. Stalin sat to the right all on his own - there was nobody either next to him or behind him. The "great leader" did not want to be lost even among the top-level party representatives. The endless mentioning of his name by the delegates in their speeches was punctuated by stormy applause, as people stood up and chanted. The leader was watching the frenzied psychosis of what looked like normal people through his screwed-up, semiclosed eyes, the people who did not take away from him their eyes, full of loyalty, love, and unfeigned servility. Tired of listening to an avalanche of elaborate praise, Stalin would withdraw during the recess not to come back for a long time. It appears that he attended all the sessions only on the opening and closing days. He did not show up at all for two or three days. I do not think this was because of his ill health. Stalin had long lost any interest in these forums which were void of struggle, riddles, or ambiguities, but he did not want other ones. The congress served as a "democratic" frame for his autocracy. Besides, few Central Committee members, elected at the 18th congress, were still alive, and the composition of the Central Committee was to be replenished. The leader was already playing such a role in society that all of the congress was meaningless compared with the thought which was on everybody's mind: is Stalin going to speak?

He had long turned into a living myth in public consciousness - a concentration of wisdom of all earthly goods and prophesies. Universal blindness was so strong that any commonplace word, thought or idea coming from Stalin were subconsciously invested with special, original and inimitable meaning. People stopped to realize that they approached common banalities and simple truths, often very far divorced from the realities of life, as heavenly revelations. The delegates were not sure whether the leader was going to say anything till the very last day.

When they saw Stalin stand up from the presidium table during the last session and start slowly walking to the rostrum along the carpet, the audience raised to its feet and gave him a prolonged applause. He came to be seen by them again not in his military but in his "party" uniform, having nothing but a Hero's Star, skillfully preserving the image of a modest leader in people's minds. His speech was brief. It looked like that applause which punctuated it took more time. Stalin did not say a *word* (sic!) about the country's internal situation or about the party, touching only upon the fact that "our party finds it easier to fight, and the work is proceeding more briskly" now that the countries of people's democracy had been formed, which he called new "shock brigades."

Addressing the Communist party delegates from capitalist countries, Stalin made two rather dubious slogans. Both were based on the fact that the banners of bourgeois

democratic freedoms, and national independence and sovereignty had been allegedly discarded in modern capitalist countries. He urged the communist and democratic parties to "pick up" those banners. Like in the Twenties, the old years of the Komintern, Stalin again expressed the confidence "in the victories of the fraternal parties in the countries dominated by capital." Stalin's one-dimensional thinking seemed to have solidified. Not a single new idea. It was not accidental that soon after the congress PRAVDA carried an article, "Gathering of Social-Traitors," devoted to the regular congress of socialist International in Milan. "Chieftains," "provocateurs," "criminals," and "traitors" were the article's lexicon. Stalin's heritage, as far as the communist movement and the struggle waged by the working people for their social rights, as well as international relations in general, is characterized by an all-out ossification, conservatism, and the failure to understand the need for radical change. At his last congress, Stalin did nothing but to put on record more saliently the obsolete, traditional position of the communists, clearly out of step with the changes that began to take place in the world.

The more astute people, and I happened to talk to some delegates to the 19th party congress, felt that Stalin was already openly thinking about what was going to be left after him and how his heritage was going to be handled. This probably explains his unusually lengthy speech at the Central Committee plenum, which was elected at the congress. His voice ringed with anger and accusatory tone, he seemed to have expressed some doubts whether his comrades-in-arms would be able to follow the charted course. Would not they succumb to internal difficulties, or to imperialism? Would they display courage and flint when faced with new trials?

We know today that Stalin fulminated against Molotov and Mikoyan in his last public speech, as if implying that not all of his old guard members were worthy of confidence as leaders. Stalin was just apprehensive of his main heritage - a formidable and dour power, ossified by its long-lasting immobility, - falling into the hands of the people unworthy of his memory. The leader realized that his name, cause, and ideas could be preserved only under the system which he had established; any other would reject his postulates. The totalitarian state which the dictator was building over these long years, in fact, all those years, functioned according to his strict recipes: the highest degree of centralization, a democratic decorum of autocracy, stake on force as the main factor of progress toward communism. Till the end of his days, Stalin believed that a priority growth of the means of production and the elevation of state-farm property to the level of all people's property should be ensured in order to reinforce the material base of such a state.

People's nonfreedom became the linchpin of Stalin's heritage. True, there was no exploitation in its old, "capitalist" interpretation; people were essentially equal in their poverty, formidable dependence on the apparatus; they had an opportunity "to work selflessly." People often reached the peak in their production, scientific, and artistic endeavors until the great charge of the October - social enthusiasm - began to evaporate. But an increasingly broad use of an elaborate system of bans, limitations, and coercion instilled social passivity, indifference, and inertia in the minds of the people. A mass-scale use of forced labor, deportations, pervasive mind control, a threat of constant punishment for displaying a whiff of dissent have been instrumental in establishing a society in which people's nonfreedom became a natural condition. It is taken for granted that they did not talk about this - it was even dangerous to think about it.

The party had a place of its own in Stalin's heritage; not the party the way we understand it today, but as a synonym of a mammoth ideological order. Stalin was fond of saying till the end of his days: "We the Bolsheviks...," "There are no fortresses that would withstand the Bolshevik [onslaught]," "The Bolsheviks are the people of a particular mold..." These were already the generations of people who were brought up in reverence for Stalin and his ideas. The so-called "class approach" was, it seemed, the centerpiece of all of world-outlook premises. It appears that the Marxists had always made it an absolute, dovetailing all of social phenomena to a pattern, according to which, class struggle was the prime mover of progress. The very idea of humanism, general human values, and morals was declared heretical and bourgeois. For a party member, class consciousness spelled out outright rejection of everything alien and everything running counter to his convictions. The taking of class approach to the extreme justified cruelty, violence, and intolerance. The party order, and Stalin often called it the "army," was gradually turned into a ramified, universal apparatus of power. The party which Stalin left had abandoned Lenin's imprint by and large. Obedient, automatic unanimity, consensus, and thinking alike turned the members of what used to be Lenin's revolutionary party into a mass of executors. The imprint of Stalin's creativity is seen here as clearly as in other areas. We should stress again that not only Stalin and his entourage, but also the party itself is responsible for the emergence and functioning of such phenomena as Stalinism.

Finally, Stalin's heritage would have looked incomplete, as we analyze the remnants of the past, if we had ignored the role and place that the dictator had assigned to the punitive organs [of state security]. I shall repeat that as one goes through the volumes of "Stalin's correspondence," one can see that the NKVD-NKGB-MVD-MGB were his principal correspondents. Following Stalin's careful selection, the heads of these organizations formed a caste of Stalin's confidantes, whom he trusted completely. Beriya, Kruglov, Abakumov, Kobulov, Serov, Merkulov and other high priests of Stalin's security had complete command over the life of any citizen in the country, whether a nondescript toiler or a well known personality. Let me give the following example.

I. Serov, one of the persons in Beriya's sinister entourage, wrote to Stalin and Beriya in his denunciation after the war: "I have already reported a biassed attitude shown by Lieutenant General Teleghin, member of the military council of the Soviet occupying troops in Germany, to NKVD staffers. Teleghin began to ferret out isolated 'facts' against individual NKVD representative and present them to Com. Zhukov in a distorted light. For example, he reported the dispatch of 51 train loads of trophies to the NKVD address... We have dozens of facts of General Teleghin trying to discredit NKVD staffers. I reached the conclusion that General Teleghin is very embittered toward the NKVD." Naturally, Stalin instructed the NKVD to "closely look into it." The outcome could have been easily guessed. Teleghin was soon recalled to Moscow, and enrolled in the advanced course for political personnel, while the organs were preparing the case, which they showed to Stalin. K.F. Teleghin, who fought all his way throughout the war, was arrested for "hostile activities" with Stalin's approval. The verdict of the military collegium said: "Deprive of freedom for a period of 25 years in a correctional labor camp, with all the property confiscated, for anti-Soviet propaganda under the Law of 7 August 1932 and under article 58-12 of the RSFSR Criminal Code." It was only Stalin's death that opened the doors of the camp for Teleghin. The slightest friction with, an askance glance at, or minor disrespect for, a representative of the punitive organs were qualified as a grave offense.

Every person chooses those things in history which are attune to his world outlook. Studying the French Revolution, Lenin saw the central idea of that great upheaval in popular rule, its imperfection and contradictions, but also its everlasting historical hope. Addressing the French Revolution, Trotskiy was stunned by the inexorable regression and a possibility of snuffing out mercilessly the flame of popular freedom. The word "Thermidor" meant for him a symbol of restoration of the old, of counterrevolution, perfidy and betrayal of all the best hopes of the revolutionaries. One of the "outstanding leaders" usually used this word in conjunction with the name of 'Stalin.' In going over the chronicle of the French Revolution, another "outstanding leader" concentrated mostly on the threat which he believed had ruined it. This threat was specific and it translated into the term "enemies of the people." This term, an unfortunate one for Russian and Soviet history, entered our tragic reality from the events at the end of the 18th century. Anyone posing a threat to autocracy, directly or indirectly, or even potentially, were "the enemies of the people" for Stalin. He directed all of his efforts towards bolstering autocracy, naturally presenting them as the "strengthening of socialism." And this required a mammoth punitive machine, which he personally built, directed and controlled.

An awful network of punitive organs spread out its tentacles over the people, state, and party. In turning violence into an absolute, Stalin created a huge system of surveillance of each citizen in the country, completely defenseless when faced with the threat of punitive arbitrariness. Having distorted the idea of class struggle to make it absurd, Stalin turned it into an instrument of comprehending "the supreme truth" as a prerequisite for "preparing for a transition toward communism." All of his heritage, whether it deals with state, public, or ideological aspects, is essentially linked with a possibility of, and need for, violence. The transition effected by Stalin from revolutionary popular rule in the shape of the dictatorship of the proletariat to an autocratic and Caesarist regime had codified (during the dictator's lifetime) the most conservative trends of development. Stalin allowed only those reforms which went through his mind and which ruled out any radical change. In all of his activities, the leader safeguarded the institutions which were created with his participation, endorsed and instilled the most orthodox views, which spelled out faith in the social inertia of progress without its revolutionary stimulation.

But he clearly overestimated how stable was the society which he had built. The successors began to breach Stalin's behests virtually hours after his death. A decade of Soviet reformism, which affected virtually all facets of life, was ushered in March 1953. One can hardly overestimate the significance of the reforms undertaken over those years. Especially the decisions of the truly historic 22nd party congress. The salient feature of all the reforms undertook during the period was that they were not complete, half-hearted, and "half-pronounced." But the main thing was accomplished - and end was put to the terror which had been invariably on the agenda for almost a quarter of a century. Freedom received a chance to come to the fore. But all of this would happen only after Stalin's heritage began to be sapped and eroded at a fast pace.

We have been taking a bird's eye view historically of Stalin and Stalinism so far. I think that these macabre pages of the Soviet people's chronicle will be viewed in greater depth, more comprehensively and accurately decades hence, at a greater span of time. Today's retrospective is too close and grabs us by our coattails. But one thing is clear even now: Stalin is just the tip of an iceberg. Having described its top, we do not claim to have seen all of the iceberg.

Let me express one more heretical idea. Its crux is as follows. D.S. Merezhkovskiy is known to have written a controversial pamphlet prophesy "The Forthcoming Boor." It was qualified as an antirevolutionary manifesto, if it were, at the time, and I do not think that many people today have a different opinion of this work. Let me cite what looks like its main message. Not untalented, but prone on mysticism, Merezhkovskiy wrote with a foresight: "Don't be afraid of any attractions, any temptations, any freedom, not only an external, a public one, but also an internal, a personal one, because the former is unfeasible without the latter. Be afraid of only one thing - of slavery, and philistinism as the worst of all types of slavery, and of boors as the worst of all philistines, since a slave at the top is a boor, and a boor at the

top is the devil, not an old and fantastic one, but a new real devil, really black, more black than he is painted, the forthcoming Lord of the present world, the Forthcoming Boor."

The critics immediately saw the proletariat referred to as the slaves, and I think this was wrong, since the writer talks about "spiritual slavery," as the pamphlet makes it clear. Merezhkovskiy writes that one can find in its bondage autocrats, "dead positivism of red tape, the Chinese wall of the table of organization," and also "dead positivism of Orthodox red tape," and the "Black Hundred." The slavery and boorishness are essentially the synonyms of anti-freedom for him. It is conceivable that the writer did not try to look so far ahead, beyond the boundaries of the present, in his naive belief that Russia could be saved through "religious public" and revival of intelligentsia alone; but he expressed, whether he wished it or not, a very profound thought: trampling freedom underfoot always poses a threat of the "Lord of the present world, the Forthcoming Boor" coming alone. The specter of the Forthcoming Boor loomed large for the people during every epoch when freedom became the domain of rulers, emperors, dictators, and tyrants. Stalin had proved with all his life, activities, and aspirations that the Boor of anti-freedom can be bloody and monstrously horrible. The recipes of Merezhkovsky, who had misgivings about the arrival of the "real devil" are rather naive, but they do have a rationale: he believed in a special role to be played by human intellect. We know today that the Boor of violence, bureaucracy and dogmatism can be kept at bay if he is challenged by a close-knit alliance of Democracy, Law, and Culture.

My thinking may come across as too abstract and far-fetched on this score. But I wanted these ideas to come as a reminder, because the less respect is paid for democracy, law, and culture, the larger the specter of the Boor of anti-freedom looms *invariably.* This was true at the turn of the 20th century and I think it will remain true in the 21st century as well. Merezhkovskiy himself might not have known how long-lasting his idea was. It is obvious that we read him today in a different way than we did at the time, at the foothill of the century, amid the flashes of bloody class battles. Merezhkovskiy is not the case in point after all. There are general human truths based on humanism, faith in the omnipotencey of human intellect and a person's indestructible striving for social and moral justice, to which many elements of traditional Marxism are not in apposition either. Stalin's heritage does not fit into this mold at all.

The Forthcoming Boor finds his most sinister manifestation in a dictatorship which rules out freedom. Everything seemed to begin with small things: concentration of power in the hands of too small a group of people, which eventually passed it down to one person for the sake of notorious unity. Even Plekhanov anticipated that menacing threat. Protesting against excessive concentration of power, he wrote: "The Central Committee 'reclassifies' all the elements displeased with it, places its minions everywhere, and secures for itself quite a loyal majority at the congress without much effort by filling all committees with these minions... We shall really have neither the majority nor the minority in the party, because we should realize the ideal of the Persian shah then." Referring to Krylov's fable, in which frogs beckon a tsar for themselves, Plekhanov writes: "If our party had really awarded itself with such an organization, it would not have sonn any room left either for intelligent people, nor for seasoned fighters; it would keep only frogs... and a *Central crane,* swallowing one frog after another, without a problem." We know today that the "Central crane," did not swallow "frogs", but devoted its entire existence and activity to cementing Caesarism rather than to promoting and developing popular rule.

When Stalin felt that old age and diseases were going to finish him, he again screened the new Central Committee for its loyalty. In his speech at what was to become his last plenum of the Central Committee, he suddenly talked about old age and the need to relieve him of the duties of the secretary of the Central Committee. Stalin knew the outcome of the show ahead of time: the new Central Committee members could not even think about "relieving" the leader. The very idea was a blasphemy for them! Even if one imagined the impossible - Stalin quitting his position of secretary (the position of General Secretary was "dropped" unobtrusively since Stalin did not need it), he would have remained chairman of the Council of Ministers. Sitting atop that position, I think he would have soon unleashed a bloody bath against those who had agreed to his resignation. But this suggestion is absolutely unreal, and Stalin knew this better than anyone else. Still, several months before his death, he again decided to test the loyalty of his entourage and of the new Central Committee. The new members of the Central Committee passed this test of *Stalin's,* in his opinion. The dictator loved nothing but power till his very last days. The people, state, society, and the party were nothing but the elements which synthesized power in the hands of one person. This is the idea. We shall say it again that Stalin had never taken interest in a *person* per se, as a social phenomena, "a measure of all things," as a goal of socialist development.

A person was of any interest to him (one cannot understand the essence of Stalin's heritage without this) only as an ally, enemy, executor, or a "cog." At the end of his life, though, he became keen on top-level personalities, prominent figures, people of "blue blood" or famous names. Stalin displayed undisguised interest in them, issued appropriate instructions, or just cherished an opportunity to decide their fate. Let us cite a few examples.

Field Marshall Paulus, who was kept at "a special establishment" near Moscow, cooperated with the Soviet authorities in relating to, and summarizing for, them his military experience. He approached Stalin several times with a request to allow him to go home, especially so that his attitude to the USSR had drastically changed for the better. Years went by, but Stalin

did not release his prisoner. Finally, one day Stalin found a report by Minister of Internal Affairs Kruglov on his table:

"The former field Marshall of the German army Paulus Friedrich had a fainting fit on the night of 26 February 1952, accompanied by a short spell of loss of consciousness... would think it expedient to look into the matter of a possible repatriation of Paulus to the GDR."

Stalin agreed to work on the "routine of Paulus' repatriation." He had kept the symbol of one of his most illustrious victories in his hands for ten years, and he reluctantly was giving it up.

On learning that the widow of Willheim II, Germina von Prizen, was found in a Saxonian village near the Rossl castle, he issued the following order, upon some reflection: "Create normal living conditions for her. Who is she in touch with?"

The dictator had earlier been informed that the former president of the Republic of Spain, Francisco Largo Caballero, extremely emaciated, was kept in the concentration camp in the city of Oranienbaum. Stalin had dealt with him in the late Thirties. He limited himself to giving this instruction: "Tell his family in Spain that he is alive." Whether you want it or not, but presidents, monarchs, and military leaders were the people belonging to "his milieu." He afforded to show even benevolence in such cases.

Let us, perhaps, give another example of Stalin's involvement in the life of another monarch - the Emperor of Manchuria Pu-I. After the Kwantung army had been defeated, the Emperor and his family, as well as his servants, were deported to Chita and then to Khabarovsk. He was obviously "worked upon" ideologically with a zeal, the fact of which is seen in the plea that the former Manchurian Emperor sent to Stalin in the mid-1949. Let me give an excerpt from the letter, which had probably pleased the vainglorious leader, if he had not caught any hint of the fact that the NKVD "overdid" it again:

"Generalissimo Stalin.

It is a great honor for me to write this letter. I have always had the feelings of deep love and admiration for you, and therefore I would like to express my hope of being allowed to take residence in the USSR. The Japanese military limited my life in the past. I was in no position to know the real situation in the USSR... I read your book 'Questions of Leninism' and 'History of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) - Short Course' for the first time in 40 years. I know now that the USSR is really the most democratic and progressive country in the world, the guiding star for small and oppressed nations... The USSR government abolished death penalty. This is a new era for the USSR in safeguarding humanitarianism...

I had requested permission for settlement in the USSR before. I have not received any answer yet. I want to work here. I wish you constant good health and happiness.

Aitsitsuelo pui."

Stalin read the translation, peered at what looked like a carpet of Chinese characters with curiosity, and shot at Beriya: "Shall we turn the Emperor to the Chinese perhaps?" An Emperor's life is not unimportant, one can go as far as to make a personal decision. And otherwise? It is better to decide people's fates from the lists. Long lists. Endless...

Having destroyed any alternatives for society, except for his own, Stalin turned his heritage into a one-dimensional negative. He could hardly guess that the beginning of his historic defeat was just at hand. Putting his laconic resolutions in the corner of a document - and he examined far fewer of them lately - he would lift the palm of his left hand up to his ear, as if shielding himself from sun rays. A habit! One of the earlier pictures (it seems in 1917 or 1918) features Stalin sitting in the same posture near the end of the table, unshaven, in worn-out boots, shiny old coat, his hair uncombed. But his hand shields his eyes against the light... He is Generalissimo now, and perhaps the most powerful dictator on earth. But this gesture of Stalin's does not shield him from the sun. Without realizing it, Stalin seeks to shield himself against the future historical defeat.

Historical Defeat

Khrushchev was at the rostrum. But the longer people listened to the report, which shocked everyone, the more the podium became separated from the presidium; it seemed that two people performed their solo acts there: Khrushchev and a painfully familiar (and now unfamiliar!) ghost. This is the impression that the 1,436 delegates to the 20th party congress might have had when the First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, N.S. Khrushchev made his famous "secret" speech on 25 February 1956. Almost one and a half thousand delegates in the audience and the presidium of the congress looked intently at the man standing at the rostrum, in dead silence, which was occasionally punctuated by the shouts of indignation and shock. But the further he leafed over the pages of his report, the more clearly could everyone present at the Kremlin Palace of Congresses see a ghost which appeared now to the right and now to the left of Khrushchev. Imperceptibly but swiftly at the same time, the First Secretary was creating, with his particular accent, an entirely new image of the "leader of the peoples," Stalin. Nothing but the podium seemed to have been left in the center of the hall, on which only two people were present: one, the new party leader, the former loyal comrade-in-arms of the dictator, who died about three years ago, and the other, the tight-lipped leader, his profile and face very well known to everybody, who was assuming entirely new features - those of the Bloody, tyrannical, and monstrous person - right

here, on the truly historical stage. Those were the rare hours invested with truly historical meaning.

It might have seemed that Khrushchev was calling the spirits from the other world. N.A. Berdyaev was obviously correct, when he said in his Moscow lectures in the Free Academy of Spiritual Culture that "evocation of the past always contains some very special feeling of associating oneself with another world, and not only with empirical reality which weights down on all of us from all sides, like a nightmare, and which we have to vanquish in order to rise to some new height." No one could imagine just a few hours before the report that the party was able to rise to this "new height" after many years of stagnation and deformation. No matter what is our attitude to Khrushchev, who was as much responsible for all the years of terror and arbitrariness as all of Stalin's entourage, he accomplished a truly civic and historic feat of thought, politics, and action at the time.

Little visible underground processes were unleashed in the leadership immediately after Stalin's death, the processes, directed at shedding the chains of Stalinism, which accelerated after Beriya's arrest and execution. This act enabled the new leadership to take a deeper and broader look at what was happening behind the Stalin's scenes, although his comrades-in-arms were well aware of many of them before. Soon after the date of the 20th congress had been set, the first congress after Stalin's death, at one of the Presidium sessions, Khrushchev suddenly suggested establishing a commission to investigate the abuses of the past years. The First Secretary took this step not only "at the call of his heart and consciousness," as he tried to convince everybody later on. The problem was that the Central Committee, the government and various state agencies began to receive a growing avalanche of letters from those who had been put behind the barbed-wire zones as soon as the embalmed Stalin had been put next to Lenin in the Mausoleum; these were the letters from kith and kin, trying to establish the whereabouts of their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. This was a spontaneous tide of protests and hopes, pleas and faith in the restoration of justice which had been trampled underfoot.

Khrushchev issued an order to prepared a few summarized memos regarding these appeals, which convincingly proved the criminal falsehood of many accusations, when combined with the disavowed "Leningrad affair," some revised cases of individual prisoners, who managed to get through to the Central Committee. It was clear that those people had to be returned home in the next two or three years, after the prison terms of a huge number of people, convicted under different sections of Article 58, expired. They would bring with them a never-ending pain, bewilderment and then the demands to have those guilty punished. After the death of Stalin and Beriya, no one would assume a criminal responsibility of continuing to keep those people rotting in camps and hiding in exile, the way it was done before. In other words, Khrushchev realized that the party and the country faced a very responsible choice.

The very idea of setting up the commission was vehemently opposed by Molotov, Kaganovich, and Voroshilov. But Bulganin, Mikoyan, Saburov, and Pervukhin, with Malenkov still vacillating?, gave Khrushchev a majority. The commission was formed under the chairmanship of P.N. Pospelov, who worked as PRAVDA's editor-in-chief for many years, and then was director of the Institute of Marx-Engles-Lenin. Khrushchev ordered to give the commission access to MVD and MGB materials. It should be said that Pospelov did a good job, the same way, incidentally, as he did it on the leader's "Short Biography" a few years ago, together with G.F. Aleksandrov, M.R. Galaktionov, V.S. Kruzhkov, M.B. Mitin, and V.D. Molchanov. When Pospelov reported to Khrushchev and all members of the presidium on the commission's conclusions before the congress, the First Secretary finally realized that this document would either break the concrete crust of lies, myths, and legends associated with Stalin, or would bury himself politically.

Khrushchev would come back to Pospelov's report several times, asking his colleagues: what shall we do? How should we inform congress delegates of the conclusions made by the commission? Who should do this? Maybe Pospelov? Molotov, Voroshilov, and Kaganovich opposed it and fought it tooth and nail. This heated debate was not recorded, but according to the reminiscences of Khrushchev and some other comrades, the report opponents advanced several "iron-clad" [steel] arguments: who is making us wash dirty linen in public? Wouldn't it be better to correct mistakes quietly? Does Khrushchev himself realize the possible consequences of reporting the commission results to the Congress delegates? And finally, are not all members of the Central Committee Presidium responsible, to one extent or another, for the past abuses of the law? Can one ignore all these misgivings? But Khrushchev carried the day: the Central Committee Presidium decided on 13 February to suggest to the Plenum, and to the Congress if the latter approved, to deliver a report "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences." The Central Committee plenum, held the same day, approved the proposal.

Khrushchev himself often had doubts, but he recalled the inmates' letters and thought back about the madness of the past years and became more and more convinced: it would not be possible to keep under wraps for a long time the results of such a mass terror, arbitrariness and monstrous abuses. The people will learn the truth sooner or later. One has to take on the initiative and to tell the party this terrible truth. Unfortunately, Khrushchev had no intention of telling people about it.

The cruncher came at a time when it seemed that the regular 20th congress will roll on till its successfully banal end, to take its place among other congresses, as nondescript and overorganized, immediately described "historical" by the press. The delegates were told about holding a secret session. Bulganin, who was its chairman, gave the floor to the First Secretary of the party Central Committee.

This was Khrushchev's hour of glory. An Orthodox Stalinist, who had never took issue with the leader, Khrushchev suddenly displayed historical boldness, civic courage and an ability to step over the prejudices which have formed over the decades. It would become known later that this step by Khrushchev's was not accidental.

To a degree to which he was a nondescript executor in the entourage, to the same degree he proved to be a decisive and often impulse politician when he became First Secretary. Khrushchev's service record, in addition to the "secret speech" and a number of unusual measures in the internal policy, includes such extraordinary steps as the trip to "Kanossa" to see Tito, an attempt to blockade Berlin, the decision to site nuclear missiles in Cuba, a summit meeting with President Eisenhower, decisive action during the 1956 events in Hungary, establishment of friendly relations with Nasser, irreconcilability toward Mao Tse-tung, support for Vietnam, and many others which have an imprint of the First Secretary's complicated and controversial personality. These events show that Khrushchev did not have a dearth of decisiveness, courage and readiness to assume full responsibility. It should be pointed out, however, that he was a bad analyst, often proved to be inconsistent, and clearly overestimated his intellectual and political abilities. His steps occasionally came across as plain ill-thought and short-sighted. These were supplemented by the old malaise of making the most of the first person's personality, typical not only of Khrushchev but of the Soviet system in its entirety. The post-Stalin political structures were still immune against Caesarism, glorification of the leading personality, did not guarantee against the emergence of the cult in a new shape. Khrushchev corroborated this organic flaw of the system, which did not possess genuine democratic features, with his subsequent activity and steps.

We have been compelled to digress, however. But these digressions are essential for showing the historical significance of that part of the 20th congress which delivered the first devastating blow against Stalinism. This was the beginning of a historical defeat for "the victor" who had built "Stalin's socialism" for thirty years. As I was finishing my book, Khrushchev's speech had not been published yet in our country, more than three decades after it was made, although all of the world learned about its contents as early as June 1956. This very fact is a telling example of the stagnation of Stalin's system, whose relics exist till this day. I shall not go over its points - I had finally been published! - but I shall just attempt to show what a great role it played in the nascent de-Stalinization and what deep repercussions its echo had all over the world.

... There were two protagonists on the historical stage, as we have said already: the furious Khrushchev and the illusory Stalin. The First Secretary moved from one topic to another, amid the dead silence in the audience. Pospelov and his aides prepared a report that covered almost over a dozen topics, each being part of the whole, but each having a significance of its own. The inner logic was weak. For example, the report switched from the general methodical questions regarding the cult of personality and the views of it expressed by the founders of Marxism and Lenin's appraisal of Stalin directly to the subject of the "enemies of the people," and then again went back to the general issues: Lenin and party opposition, and collective leadership. Some topics in the report were repeated again and again: responsibility for terror, genocide and terror, and others. The report "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" examined such special problems as Stalin and the war, the conflict with Yugoslavia, the role of Beriya, and some others.

Khrushchev began in a calm manner: "The objective of the present report is not a thorough evaluation of Stalin's life and activity. Concerning Stalin's merits, an entirely sufficient number of books, pamphlets and studies had already been written during his lifetime. The role of Stalin in the preparation and execution of the Socialist Revolution, in the Civil War, and in the fight for the construction of Socialism in our country is universally known. Everyone knows this well. At the present we are concerned with the question which has immense importance for the Party now and for the future - [we are concerned] with how the cult of the person of Stalin has been gradually growing, the cult which has become at a certain specific stage the source of a whole series of exceedingly serious and grave perversions of Party principles, of Party democracy, of revolutionary legality." Present in the audience were the delegates who learned for the first time (sic!) about Lenin's letter to the congress, about the evaluations he made of Stalin back in the early Twenties. These were the revelations which finally allowed the truth to get out of prison. Although Khrushchev denounced the "Trotskiyte-Zinoviyev bloc," as well as the "Bukharinites," for the first time he expressed what was then a heretical thought, according to which during Lenin's time the fight against opposition was conducted on an "ideological basis."

But not these ideas were central to the speech. All pathos of Khrushchev's speech came down against Stalin's abuses; "It is clear that here Stalin showed in a whole series of cases his intolerance, his brutality and his abuse of power. Instead of proving his political correctness and mobilizing the masses, he often chose the path of repression and physical annihilation, not only against actual enemies, but also against the individuals who have not committed any crimes against the Party and the Soviet government."

The paralyzed audience was stunned when Khrushchev spoke at length about how cases were framed up and what the so-called "enemies of the people" really meant. He pointed out with foresight that Stalin's concept of "enemies of the people" made it possible to apply the most harsh repressions against anyone who disagreed with Stalin, no matter what the issue was, and against those who were just suspected of intentions to commit hostile actions, and also against those who had a bad reputation. Listening to these horrible revelations,

people in the audience saw the painfully familiar figure wearing a Marshall's uniform gradually turn into the butcher of his own people with blood-covered hands.

In the course of the three or four hours that the speech lasted Khrushchev succeeded in doing what seemed to be impossible. To begin with, the speaker debunked Stalin as a leader. Khrushchev especially harped on the idea of Stalin being an incompetent leader: "He knew the country and agriculture only from the movies," and during the war "he mapped out operations on the globe," completely disregarded the "opinion of Party workers." Well-versed in agriculture, the First Secretary delivered his most crippling blows at the ghost on the stage in that particular area. He told the delegates that in recent years Stalin contemplated increasing agricultural taxes to the tune of 40 billion (sic!) rubles, and that it was a fantastic idea of a person who became divorced from reality. Showing the leader's incompetence and his speculative decisions, he thus pulled down from Stalin the garb of infallibility and wisdom, which the leader donned so carefully and for such a long time.

Stalin came across in the speech as a butcher, sadist and a person deprived of any basic human qualities. Touching upon the fates of Kosior, Chyubar, Postyshev, Kosarev, Eykhe, and other prominent Bolsheviks, Khrushchev showed comprehensively that Stalin acted as Chief Procurator in all those cases. Stalin not only agreed to all those arrests, but he took the initiative to issue arrest orders. It was a "technicality" to extract "confessions," the main proof of guilt. "And the investigators secured those confessions," said Khrushchev. But how can one get a confession of the crimes that a person never committed? Only one way - by using physical methods of pressure, through torture, deprivation of consciousness, deprivation of sanity and deprivation of human dignity. This is how mythical "confessions" were obtained. Citing a large number of specific facts related to the fates of the delegates of the 17th party congress, and also those of Kirov, Postyshev, Rudzutak, Voznesenskiy, Kuznetsov, Rodionov, Popkov, and Rosenblyum, and the "Mingrel affair," Khrushchev succeeded in creating a new image of the leader, "called back" from the other world: a bloody and ruthless dictator and tyrant.

And finally, the "secret report" of the First Secretary cast strong doubts on the style and methods of Stalin's leadership. Khrushchev emphasized the fact that the dearth of collective approach in the top-level party leadership was a direct outcome of abuses of personal authority. He said, for example: "During all the years of the Great Patriotic war not a single plenum of the party Central Committee took place. [As a matter of fact, one plenum of the Central Committee was held in 1944]. It is true that there was an attempt to call a Central Committee plenum in October 1941, when Central Committee members from the whole country were called to Moscow. They waited for two days for the opening of the Plenum, but in vain. Stalin did not even want to meet and talk to the Central Committee members."

Throughout his report, Khrushchev put across the idea that, constantly abusing his unlimited power, Stalin acted on behalf of the Central Committee, while he did not ask the opinion not only of the Central Committee, but of Politburo members either. Very often he did not inform them about his personal decisions regarding very important party and state matters. An analysis of the conflict with Yugoslavia became one of the examples of the ruinous nature of autocracy. Khrushchev said outright that Stalin had played a "disgraceful role" in the affair.

Khrushchev made some personal digressions in his report. In this case, too, he recalled one of his visits to Stalin.

"I will shake my little figure, and Tito will be no more. He will fall," the leader told Khrushchev during their conversation.

As a result, the speaker accomplished several objectives: he demonstrated the leader's illusory "greatness," who possessed neither competence, nor wisdom, nor foresight; states unequivocally that Stalin bore the main responsibility for wrong doing, crimes, and terror. Khrushchev also resolutely denounced the leader's one-man rule, a source of many troubles both for the party and the people. This was an outburst in public consciousness - the most daring and unexpected attack against Caesarism, lawlessness and totalitarianism.

The course of the secret session was not recorded, and there was no debate. They passed a resolution, "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences," which was published later at the decision of the Central Committee. The Central Committee Presidium decided on 5 March to make the report available to the party and Komsomol members, and also the active of workers, collective farmers, and peasants. The contents of the report sent many people into a shock, the fact that proved that the First Secretary had displayed courage.

Khrushchev has been and remained the son of his times. His personal contribution to the resolute unmasking of the cult of personality is undeniable; this fact alone made his name forever part of our history. But the report prepared by the old court theoretician of Stalin's was not profound; scratching the surface of phenomena and facts, it almost did not speak about the genesis of Stalinism, the reasons for socialism's deformations; moreover, those deformations were not even admitted. Stalin's "services" were not completely denied: "One cannot deny that Stalin had provided great services to the party, the working class and the international labor movement in the past; he was convinced that this was necessary to protect the interests of the working people against the encroachments of enemies and attacks by the imperialist camp." Having been severely censured, Stalin received indulgences from history at the same time.

Khrushchev hoped that the discussion of the question of the cult of personality and its consequences within the

party would be sufficient to eradicate Stalin's distortions. The speaker candidly stated this at the congress: "We cannot let this matter get out of the party, especially not to the press. It is for this reason that we are considering it here at a closed Congress session. We should know the limits; we should not give ammunition to the enemy; we should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes. I think that the delegates to the Congress will understand and assess properly all these proposals."

A reformer who had made a major breakthrough, he could not understand that "secret thinking" was Stalin's thinking, inherited from the ghost. "To know the limits" meant not to address people with these heretical views, especially to the world public. A man who wrote a well known article, "Stalin's Friendship of Peoples Is an Earnest of Invincibility of Our Homeland" six years ago, could not jettison overnight all that shaped up, grew and formed in him for decades. The leader who did not take an issue with the leader during his lifetime, did not forget, of course, that his will, as well as the will of other comrades-in-arms of Stalin's was appropriated by the dictator lock, stock and barrel. They were used to *executing,* and not arguing. Khrushchev remembered that very often he was unable to decide secondary, purely economic matters other than approaching Stalin directly. This was always worrisome - one could encounter some rude turndown or an abusive comment - but he still did approach him:

"Central Committee of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks)

Comrade I.V. Stalin

We request that destroyer battalions, acting against the OUN members, be provided by the state. We need:

leather for boot tops 104,300 decimeters

yuft [Russian leather] for

boot fronts 775 decimeters

sole leather 20,380 decimeters

coarse calico for underwear 196,000 meters

cotton thread 525 spools

18 September 1946

N. Khrushchev

S. Kruglov."

It is easy to imagine that if they sent to Stalin requests for thread, his comrades-in-arms could not "request" anything from him in political matters. On delivering the first formidable blow against Stalinism, Khrushchev could not, of course, shake off all of its shameful features all at once.

Khrushchev's inconsistency, half-heartedness and compromise (his compromise with the Stalinists in a certain sense) were reflected in the CPSU Central Committee resolution: "On Overcoming the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences," which was adopted on 30 June 1956. The document, which has very little in common with Khrushchev's speech, attempted to lay bare the reasons for Stalin's cult of personality, but more vividly reflected the same compromise with the Stalinists. The resolution claims that "serious mistakes" were made only during the "last period of Stalin's life." Laying out the "objective reasons" for the existence of anti-Leninist phenomenon, the resolution by and large borrowed arguments from Stalin himself: "After Lenin's death, enemy trends became more pronounced in the party, including Trotskiyites, right opportunists, bourgeois nationalists, who stood on the platform of rejection of Lenin's theory about the possibility of socialism becoming victorious in one country, which would practically result in the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. The Party launched a merciless struggle against those enemies of Leninism..." It said further "that certain limits had to be set for democracy, justified by the logic of our people's fight for socialism in conditions of capitalist surrounding." All of this rather justified than explained the abnormalities of the cult. Khrushchev again revived the idea of "Leninist nucleus" which allegedly began a decisive struggle, immediately after Stalin's death, against the cult of personality and its consequences. But we know that this was hardly the case.

The resolution asks: "Why did not these people come out openly against Stalin and not removed him from the leadership?" Then follows the statement, an objective but a terribly bitter one: "Any instance of coming out against him would not have been understood by the people under the circumstances, and the matter is not lack of personal courage. It is clear that anyone speaking up against Stalin in the situation like this would not have been supported by the people." Neither Khrushchev, nor the Central Committee Presidium wanted to admit that one had to "speak out against" Stalin much earlier, when Lenin made this proposal to the Party. The resolution did not mention this, relieving the Party of the blame for the dictatorship of one person, but found it necessary to point out that "the Soviet people knew Stalin as a person who had always defended the USSR against encroachments of the enemies, who fought for the cause of socialism." Occasionally (sic!) he used unseemly methods in his struggle, violating Lenin's norms and principles of Party life. This was Stalin's tragedy (sic!). It turns out that all of this was Stalin's and not the people's tragedy. "It would be a grave mistake to use the fact of the cult of personality in the past for drawing conclusions about some changes in the social system in the USSR or to seek the source of this cult in the nature of the Soviet social system. Both are absolutely erroneous, since it does not match reality and contradicts the facts," the resolution continues.

As one reads the resolution further on, couched in the same spirit, one begins to get the impression that in his duel with Stalin's ghost, Khrushchev himself became scared of his victory, after he had inflicted the first, but

mortal defeat on his dethroned idol on 25 February 1956. It is not accidental that the Central Committee and the official press remained completely silent about the "secret speech," as if their goal was to shield the people from ideological shock. But the speech was inevitably "leaked" as a result of making the text of the report known to the heads of delegations of fraternal parties, and the party public at special closed meetings. The text of the report appeared on the pages of the bourgeois press in the United States, France and Britain in early June 1956. Having eventually admitted the existence of the document, our official party leaders pretended for over three decades that the matter was not topical at all, the same way as in George Orwell's novel "1984": you see, "it did not seem to exist for me." In other words, this is not a document. No, one could not get hold of it in the archives; it was not included in the materials of the 20th congress, to say nothing about separate publications. This astounding fact alone proves that Stalinism is still alive, having just changed its shape and manifesting itself in relics. It appeared that the party, precisely the party, which began to denounce and deglorify Stalinism, should have completed the job. As our renewal began, one of the congresses or plenums should have adopted a profound analytical documents which should have reflected the Communists' complete and comprehensive attitude to the phenomenon alien to Marxism. We are now in the year 1989, but no such document has appeared.

Khrushchev's second attack against Stalin and Stalinism which he launched at the 22nd party congress, now publicly and openly, only put squeeze on the totalitarian-bureaucratic way of thinking and acting. It put a squeeze, but did not eradicate it. A long, quarter-of-a-century moratorium followed. Hesitant about reviving Stalin and Stalinism completely, Brezhnev followed another course, at the suggestion of Suslov and other comrades-in-arms of his: *gaps* and *empty spaces* were created in history. As if Stalin, the evil doings of Stalinism, the thousands and millions tortured to death and executed, or the Gulag did not exist. It is useless to look up materials about Trotskiy, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and many other revolutionary leaders in the editions of encyclopedic dictionary of those years. They either do not exist, or if they do, only as evil spirits.

The patterns of history created by such people as Pospelov (they are prepared to write eulogies of Stalin and his historical obituaries) were simplified to the maximum: Stalin "did not exist"; it was the party that exercised leadership, even if it did not hold its congresses and plenums. Stalin was mentioned only as one in the array of other leaders preserved for history, as one of many, but only as the one who committed "some mistakes." Probably one of the genuinely historic events, the 20th congress itself fell under the spell of ideological ban for many years. For example, the party press completely passed in silence the first 10th anniversary of the congress (February 1966). The picture was the same during the second decade... It looked as if the ghosts of Stalinism launched an invisible counteroffensive.

Nothing is accidental here. Stalin died, but the system remained. New people using it mechanism arrived. Those two memorable historic attacks, which Khrushchev launched in his boldness of a romantic reformer, made it possible to make large breaches in the body of Stalinism; without much ado, his inheritors put political, ideological, and social collision mats against the holes. The books which A. Solzhenitsyn and some other writers and historians had a chance to write during the "thaw," turned out to be out of tune with the times. The studies made over those years of the Twenties, Thirties, Forties and Fifties became largely reflections in the "crooked mirror."

But Khrushchev's speech had its impact. The Communist parties started a lengthy and difficult process of a painful revision of their histories, programs, and views. But this is a separate subject. Some of the parties approached the speech from the old methodological positions and the same point of view, following the principle: what is important is not to find the truth, but who is telling the truth. Many Orthodox leaders reacted accordingly, since, as the CPSU Central Committee resolution stated: "a wide calumnious anti-Soviet campaign was launched in the bourgeois press, with the reactionary forces trying to use as a pretext some facts related to the denunciation of I.V. Stalin's cult of personality by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union." In other cases, like in the case of the Italian Communist party, its leadership and especially Togliatti himself, raised the issue of the nature of Stalinism, not satisfied with the limited explanation of its phenomenon. The French Communist party took a more cautious approach to evaluating the matters of Stalinism, its genesis and it consequences in depth.

The Chinese Communist Party initially sided with the conclusions contained in Khrushchev's report, but consequently switched from support to denunciation of the historic action of the 20th congress, on the basis of increasing inter-party differences. A concentrated attitude to Stalin appearsd to have been formulated in a joint article in two Chinese party organs, ZENMINH RIBAO and HUNTSI. The article of 13 September 1963 said: "Comrade Khrushchev completely and indiscriminately negated Stalin at the 20th CPSU Congress. He did not consult fraternal parties on such an issue of principle as the issue of Stalin, which has relevance for all of the international communist movement; he began to impose the congress decisions on them after the 20th congress, making them face a fait accompli." The article went on to make the following conclusions: "All of Stalin's services and mistakes are an objective historical reality. If one is to match Stalin's services against his mistakes, he has more services than mistakes. The correct things in Stalin's activity form its core; his mistakes occupy a secondary place. On summing up the results of the theoretical and practical work done by Stalin in general, every honest Communist who respects history observes this main side of his in the first place. Correctly understanding, criticizing and overcoming Stalin's mistakes, it is necessary to defend the main aspect of his life

and work, to safeguard Marxism-Leninism which he upheld and promoted." This is a conservative, but a well-argued position. There were reactions of a different sort.

E. Hoxha published a book "With Stalin" in Tirana in connection with Stalin's birth centenary, in which he gave a detailed description of his five meetings with the leader. The book contains no arguments rejecting the decisions of the 20th party congress by the Albanian leadership, but it is rife with a rabid and emotional resentment against the very idea of denunciation of leader's glorification. "Nikita Khrushchev and his accomplices," wrote Hoxha, "threw mud at Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin in their 'secret' report which they delivered at their 20th party congress, and tried to humiliate him in the most despicable way, using the most cynical Trotskiyite methods."

Each Communist party, in fact, "digested" Khrushchev's report to the 20th congress in its own way. Shock, confusion, but also a revival of theoretical thinking, revision of the past experience, as well as the renegade trend accompanied by the desire for renovation and new forms of political and social activity - all of this reflected what had happened at the 20th congress in Moscow in the most controversial manner. I doubt that Khrushchev himself was able to anticipate the many-sided and controversial effects of his breakthrough. He could hardly imagine that the stage of the palace where he was delivering the report would soon expand to embrace all of the world. A protracted struggle between different concepts of socialism would unfold (the struggle which is still going on) in the arena. An orthodox, rigid, bureaucratic, power, no-compromise, and mono-dimensional socialism on the one hand, prepared to justify even crimes for the sake of an idea's triumph, and a democratic, humane, and multidimensional concept proceeding from the principle that a lofty idea can rest only on a clean, humane ways and means, approving of historical compromises and the coexistence of different systems and ideologies, on the other. Khrushchev did not possess those kinds of conceptual views, of course, which we are acquiring today. I daresay Khrushchev opened ajar a door of public consciousness in the socialist world so that eternal spiritual values could penetrate there, which appear as heresy to some people even today, if one is not to reduce "new thinking" only to the contemporary comprehension of the dangerous realities of the nuclear world but see it as a new interpretation of the great ideas of humanism. Khrushchev pulled off the tyrant the garb of infallibility, which, like a crooked mirror, reflected the most complex contradictions of the epoch. "X-rayed" by Khrushchev's report to the last bone, this man turned out to be an inimitable expert of combining a lofty idea with monstrous absurdity.

I would like to go back to N. Berdayev again, the person who was perhaps able to grasp the secrets of the philosophy of history better than anyone else. Through a prism of eternally throbbing existence they unravel many secrets of one personality or another, or at least hope to unravel them. "Each person is a certain great world by its internal nature," Berdyaev wrote, "a microcosm in which all of the real world and all great epochs of history are reflected and exist."

A researcher who overcomes the layers of time and tries to understand the things which are gone for good, has simultaneously the chance to spot the "imprints," sometimes weak, sometimes glaring, of the work of thought, will and passion displayed by a person whose portrait we want to reconstruct. Sometimes the "excavations" of the relics of the past, no longer controversial or horrible, help to do this. The relics of Stalinism require to be thought over for a long time. Apart from dissecting individual facts, we were sometimes compelled to use the methods of the philosophy of history, which came in this case as a prophesy, turned backward. People will be capable of making prophesies about the future only after they have understood the past.

By Way of Conclusion. Verdict of History

One day in early 1945, when the outcome of the war was already clear, during one of his evening reports, Beriya silently put in front of Stalin a piece of paper covered with neat handwriting in the old spelling. Next to it he put the same text retyped in the department of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. Stalin knew that they did not bring useless "papers" to him. Having given Beriya an attentive look, the patron began to read:

"Most Dear Iosif Vissarionovich

We, grandsons of writer Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, Ilya Ilich and Vladimir Ilych Tolstoy, and our families, liberated from German occupation by the Red Army troops in the territory of Yugoslavia, where we lived for 23 years as emigres, request permission to return to our homeland in order to take part in the war.

Fully aware of the erroneous and criminal nature of our emigration, we request a right and an opportunity to join that gigantic struggle which our people are waging under the leadership of the Soviet power for the happiness of their homeland. Helping the Red Army in its combat work in the place of our residence, we have already joined our hearts with it and now want only to give our efforts and our lives to our country.

We hope that as a human being you will appreciate and understand how natural and sincere our desire is and will not turn us down.

Respectfully,

Ilya Ilych Tolstoy

Vladimir Ilych Tolstoy

20 January 1945

Noviy Bechey, Yugoslavia."

Stalin raised his head and looked at Beriya. "No matter how much you feed the wolf [the leopard will not change its spots]," thought the Supreme Commander. "Here again their noblemen's pride: '...that gigantic struggle which our people are waging under the leadership of the Soviet power.' It is good for them to have recognized the power, but not him, the leader... Beriya, who was saying something fast, interrupted Stalin's train of thought:

"... This Ilya, the former landlord, graduated from the tsarist army naval corps in 1916. Fought with the Whites during the Civil War. After the defeat of Kolchak, fled to Kharbin, and via Japan and Italy, to Yugoslavia, where he has lived since 1921. Member of the anti-Soviet organization, 'Party of Young Russia,' since 1933, and the head of the party's Belgrade section since the eve of the war. Contributed to the White Guardist newspaper RUSSKOYE DELO until 1939, which published fabrications about the Soviet leadership and advocated monarchist ideas. Lived from hand to mouth, worked as a bookkeeper; he and his son made boots and dolls together. Now his son Nikita moved forward with one of the Red Army units..."

"And what about the other Tolstoy?" interrupted Stalin.

"Vladimir Tolstoy... Received his education at the First Moscow corps. Was a volunteer at the German front before 1917, then fought with the Whites. Fled to Constantinople with the Wrangel's troops. Earned his living in Yugoslavia as a construction worker, a vegetable picker, a tobacco warehouse employee in Macedonia."

"And his anti-Soviet activity?"

"We do not have any information yet. Under the Germans, he was in their concentration camp for his affection toward the USSR."

Stalin remained silent. He heard a feeble echo of the Civil War which unleashed the rivers of blood in the course of intestinal struggle. How many people like this are going to make confessions now? he thought, not without malice. History has proved his correctness and power to everybody. The fragments of the past... As if reading the leader's thoughts, Beriya butted in:

"There should be quite a few of all kind of former people in Yugoslavia: White Guard officers, Cossacks. The same as in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. I think that these Tolstoy brothers should be screened in a camp. Why should we make an exception for them?"

Silent for another minute, Stalin suddenly disagreed with his executioner:

"Leave them alone. Turn over the letter to Molotov. Allow them to enter the country. Let history judge them."

It was only four and a half months later that a resolution appeared on Tolstoys' application at last: "Both should be allowed to return to the USSR. V. Molotov. 3 April 1945." The families of the grandsons of the great Russian writer received their Soviet citizenship in October.

"Let history judge them." It was not typical of Stalin, since he used to pass judgment himself. The leader had long come to believe that history can judge anyone, except himself. The dictator believed that he was above the past, present and future, if it were, although he understood that the past devoured many people, all people in the final count, but he hardly applied this to himself. A Christian turned atheist, he knew that this great religion praised resurrection, but he did not need one. He believed that one would not have to revive the memory of him artificially. But judgment... Stalin had long come to the conclusion that history would not judge, but study him, glorify him, and make his name legendary and eternal. What he accomplished included a powerful state, a monolithic party, a closely-knit people, which has won so many victories under his leadership - the facts obvious to everyone. No, Stalin could not even visualize some historical judgment of himself. This is impossible. There will be nothing but a great reverence of his memory for his immortal services.

At first it seemed that things would move exactly in that direction. Two years after his death, the state-run scientific publishing house, Greater Soviet Encyclopedia, said apologetically in a lengthy article in its three-volume encyclopedic dictionary that "Stalin is a loyal student and comrade-in-arms of V.I. Lenin's, the great follower of his immortal cause, leader and teacher of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Soviet people and the working people in all countries." But this inertia of apology did not last long.

We know today that a public trial of Stalin began in February 1956 and has continued for several decades. It is wrong to assume that even during the years of autocracy there was no one who from time to time expressed their rejection of Stalin's policies not only in thought, but also openly. Here are a few examples. Military archives contain quite a few political reports sent to the political department of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army showing, for example, that the bloody terror of 1937-1938 produced not only a blind and mechanical approval, but also confusion, depression, and occasionally moral protests. Let us quote from the political reports filed by corps commissar Govorukhin, division commissar Volkov, brigade commissar Kruglov (the reports do not give initials, as was often the case at the time):

- Lieutenant of the 101st artillery regiment Shkrobat, a non-Party member, said talking to other Red Army men that he "could not believe Stalin" that "Yakir and Tukhachevskiy were enemies of the people";
- Red Army man Zubrov: "There was a shortage of gallows under Nicholas, and now there is a shortage of ammunition. They can't shoot us all";
- artillery school instructor Trushinskiy: "Isn't Stalin a Trotskiyite himself?";

- Red Fleet man Klepalov expressed doubt that "Bukharin and Trotskiy were enemies of the people";
- Ship commander Kirillov: "I do not believe that Bukharin and others are the enemies of the people and of socialism. They just wanted to replace party leaders."

The reports are rife with such facts. As a rule, they say right there: "So-and-so has been turned into the hands of the NKVD for investigation." A doubt or a weak protest were suppressed immediately.

I myself remember our village next door neighbor Prokop Mochalov telling my uncle softly sometime in the late Forties, after the war: "Stalin pinched collective farms real hard. Can you imagine us going to such an extreme that we villagers eat bread only on holidays? They take away everything. Nothing but taxes. What sort of socialism is that?" My uncle remained silent, taking a cautious look around him. People like myself were unaware that people can and should live better. We knew no other life but the one of poverty, constant shortages, limits, and mobilizations.

Overall poverty, regimentation and predetermination became a norm. Stalin could be "judged" by those who could compare their life then with something else. I have the documented evidence of other instances of open and "Aesopian" anti-Stalin statements made by a number of workers, peasants, engineers, writers, and scientists, whose minds were not completely clouded and whose consciousness was not distorted. These were the voices of Stalin's condemnation, courageous but normally not heard behind the high walls of the huge power. We have not studied adequately yet this topic of social and spiritual protest.

It is the people in the first place who pass the verdict, the decision of the history's "jury," the people who had followed for three decades the man who mercilessly infringed on the great idea. This trial alters the political image of Stalin more and more. I said before that I probably failed in my first attempt to paint a political picture of this tyrant. But let my attempt be limited to drawing just one of the sketches, relying on other people to paint a more accurate portrait. But it is clear already now that to speak and to write about Stalin means to take a close scrutiny of the epoch, on whose shield that man has left a deep and bloody dent. This job can hardly be accomplished in one book. But let us put a few more finishing "brushstrokes" to our portrait (sketch?). There are not the results of speculations, but the result of the trial of our times, which is not over yet, which is continuing. The historical verdict that the people will eventually pass regarding the actions of this man will help us to answer a number of questions.

Was Stalin a revolutionary? Obviously, he was. But up to what point? The years of life underground, in exile, prisons, the time of the revolution and the Civil War, the influence exerted by Lenin, the genuine leader of the revolution, formed in Stalin the qualities that many people possessed at the time: belief in the correctness of Marxist ideas, conviction that reality can be transformed in accordance with one's ideas, a flair for radicalism, unmitigated commitment to class criteria, and a nihilistic attitude to democratic and humanitarian values. Because of his low profile during the October revolution, Stalin did not provide much material for the historians. He was an imitator of the revolution, its extra, although he was included in the leadership echelon. But there is testimony, unknown to us before, showing that Stalin was capable of making independent decisions *sometimes,* the fact that Lenin could not but appreciate. For example, the session of the Council of People's Commissars on 28 November 1917, chaired by Lenin, discussed the following question, among others (the session was attended by Trotskiy, Stuchka, Petrovskiy, Menzhinskiy, Glebov, Krasikov, Stali, Bonch-Bruyevich, and some others). Here is an extract from the minutes:

"Listened:

...2. Draft decree (tabled by Com. Lenin) regarding the arrest of prominent Central Committee members, enemies of the people (Constitutional Democrats -**D.V.**) and putting them on trial by the revolutionary tribunal.

Decided:

Adopt and approve (approved unanimously, with only Stalin against)."

Such behavior of Stalin may sound incredible today. Is it possible that this was his way of attracting attention to himself? Documents are hard-core evidence. It is just that this little known fact shows that Stalin had undergone a peculiar evolution in his development as a revolutionary. He had not always been a vampire. Initially, this evolution was quite positive, if Lenin had agreed to promote Stalin to party General Secretary and described him later on as one of the "outstanding leaders." We have already said that according to our information, it was L.B. Kamenev who suggested Stalin's name for General Secretary, although official announcements indicate the opposite on the score. For example, L.B. Mekhlis stated directly in the newspaper PRAVDA on 9 April 1949 that Stalin became General Secretary "at the suggestion of V.I. Lenin"; Mekhlis is too an odious figure, however, to take his statements for granted.

We know from the position of today that the high-level job began to change Stalin very soon. It has been known throughout history that power screens people better than any X-ray. The General Secretary began to undergo transformations, revealing his negative immoral potential very fast. Many wanton inclinations which were latent in that nondescript person were early brought to life - Stalin "unmasked" himself. In less than a year after Stalin had been appointed General Secretary, Lenin found out that the former had profound political and moral defects.

A revolutionary began to die fast and dictator born in Stalin after Lenin's death. He was already the first consul in the Thirties, and then a Caesar. To quote Jean Jores,

who tried to answer the question "How Revolutionaries Should Be Judged?": "from now on the light of the revolution will flicker in the dark atmosphere of Thermidor." It is hard to recognize a former revolutionary in the tyrant. Could one surmise on 28 November 1917, when Stalin opposed Lenin's proposal on putting the leaders of the Constitutional Democrats on trial, that shortly before his 70th birthday, Stalin would be able to calmly approve within one month, September 1949, a whole pile of sentences passed by the USSR MVD special conference, without a single comment?

Here is a fragment of macabre chronicle:

"2 September - 30 persons to 20 years of hard labor;

10 September - 52 persons to 20 years of hard labor;

16 September - 31 persons to 20 years of hard labor

24 September - 76 persons to 20 years of hard labor..."

This followed the same pattern in the subsequent months for a few years that the dictator was destined to live. The overwhelming majority of those people were no criminals. The evidence of this could be found in the rehabilitation of those convicted by the "troikas" [panels of three] and special conferences. A total of about a quarter million people were rehabilitated as of 1 July 1989. Does not Stalin resemble now the merciless butcher of his own people? Can one really do away without this typical brushstroke to the portrait, without a risk of distorting it? These are the poles of the evolution that one person, who started as a revolutionary and ended his life as a bloody tyrant, underwent in 30 years.

Stalin was a radical, but revolutionary romanticism and a daring flight of thought had never been his penchant. When all the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution, led by Lenin, hoped to see the proletarian world conflagration burn brighter, Stalin was rather cool to the idea - he did not believe in it much. It will be recalled that he smiled derisively when Bukharin tabled a proposal at the 4th congress of Comintern about the rationale of conducting a "red intervention" by the proletarian state, since the "spreading of the Red Army is the spreading of socialism, the proletarian power, and revolution." The first General Secretary of the AUCP (of Bolsheviks) viewed the revolutionary spirit in Europe rather skeptically, the same as the one in Asia, incidentally - he was more comfortable with socialism in one country.

The sentiments of isolationism were strong in Stalin. Time would come, and he will create the "iron curtain." A person taking a foreign tour, even on business, came under suspicion under his regime, as well as incidentally later on. While capitalist countries erected cordons in the Twenties to block the "Bolshevik plague," Stalin took care of this later on, true, because he was afraid of realities. For example, how could one sustain a myth about the "absolute impoverishment" of the proletariat in the West without isolating the Soviet people from the truth? What Stalin needed was nothing but revolutionary phrase mongery. Revolution itself came under suspicion of the dictator, unless he has sanctioned it himself.

What Stalin was like as a statesman? One can argue with me that Stalin took the office of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars only on 6 May 1941, although he occupied two positions at once at the beginning of his meteoric career in the beginning - those of the People's Commissar for Nationalities and of the People's Commissar of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. Stalin did not waste time on what he regarded as utopian deliberations about "withering of the state." If he mentioned it at all, as he did at the 18th party congress, it was only in the following context: the withering of the state in the future will take place through it becoming stronger and more powerful. A strong, iron-clad power, not burdened with democratic vestiges, was needed to accomplish "revolution from above," the only kind of revolution he recognized after October. He saw the state as a means of obtaining power and keeping it forever. It never crossed his mind that after a certain number of years the people, displaying their free will and having alternatives open to them by all means, should give a mandate to rule to newly elected representatives of the people. On ascending to power, Stalin decided outright that it was for life. He put the highest premium on the apparatus in the state; he put the highest stake on the department of Internal Affairs. He succeeded in turning even the party into a sort of specific apparatus in a short period of time, or possibly into a state ideological order.

From the very outset, Stalin saw the state as an instrument of power, an instrument which always made it right. He did not go as low as to trivial claim that "L'etat c'est moi" [I'm the state]; he enjoyed absolute prerogatives of the legislative and executive power even without being the head of government until 1941. The state became for him a means of exercising unlimited autocracy. This man had never been familiar with Plato's "State"; had he read the work, he would have been flabbergasted to discover what kind of old recipes he was using. Plato wrote: "Having laid down the laws, they pronounce them fair for the subordinates... while those violating them are punished as a violator of laws and justice... In all the states, justice is treated as one and the same thing, i.e., what fits the ruling power. But it is a force, so, it turns out, if one argues correctly, that fairness is the same everywhere: what benefits the most the strongest."

In order to make people understand that it is the state alone that can decide what is just and what is not, one has to be ruthless with those who doubt this. As was his old habit till the end of his days, they would pick up only a few typical letters for Stalin from a huge avalanche of them. Much depended on Poskryobyshev and his apparatus in this respect. But Stalin almost never gave one reason to believe that the state "made a mistake."

One day his aide put in his folder a letter from the relatives of Yuriy Anatoliyevich Pestel, a grandson of the Decembrist, to the effect that he, without arms, had been

incarcerated for 10 years already. Take pity. For the name of Pestel means so much for Russia... If they had asked for something else... And Stalin just put the letter aside. Here is another one:

"Four of my sons, the former holders of orders and merited masters of sports, brothers Nikolay, Aleksandr, Andrey and Pyotr, were arrested on 21 March 1939 and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment each by the decision of the military collegium of the USSR Supreme Court under article 58-10 of the Criminal Code. Show mercy to my sons and allow them to fight at the front.

Starostina Aleksandra Stepanovna

12 March 1944."

Stalin put that letter aside as well - let Beriya look into the matter. Beriya knows his leader's premise: the state does not punish for nothing. Stalin had never heeded the voice of human feelings (and maybe he had none himself?). Is not this how a real statesman should act? And finally, does not the people appreciate his staunchness and inexorability? The leader's will is the law for the people. He said this in public one day, it seems to Churchill: "It is easy to be a leader serving such people."

Why did Stalin's one-man rule expand and reinforce total bureaucracy so fast? The point is that during the years of the autocrat's rule our society, contrary to Stalin's statements, had not built "a full-fledge socialism," but was going through a painful transitional phase, burdened with many problems. Bureaucracy is capable of sweeping problems and contradictions under the rug, and not to resolve them. Owing to bureaucracy, the problems of power, village, culture, public thought, and human rights looked as if they had been solved for many years. Internally, the state encouraged the growth of bureaucracy in every possible way: it experienced a growing need for overseers, steerers, controllers, censors, planners, rate-setters, and inspectors. The external political situation also encouraged the putting of bureaucracy in concrete - the more setbacks were suffered by the revolutionary movement and the greater was the threat of war, the more justified looked the steps aimed at "tightening the screws." Eventually, the country saw the emergence of the Main victor - the bureaucracy, which had overcome the idea, the party, and the people for many years to come. The "Great Stalin," its main priest, was placed in the temple of bureaucracy. In effect, the "leader of the peoples" personified total bureaucracy. The revolutionary lava that erupted from the October crater was cooled off by the coldness and indifference of Stalin's bureaucracy. It will take years before history would present its promissory notes for payment.

Socialism and the dictatorship of the individual are incompatible, but Stalin managed to have them fused. This fact alone provides enough material to made a historic verdict: dictator means absence of freedom for the millions and freedom for the despot alone. It should be pointed out that the foes of Stalin and Stalinism had noticed this and said about this earlier than the Bolsheviks in the party did. A book "Is Stalin A Dictator?" by Aleksandrov, published in Paris in 1932, tried to answer the question about the nature of Stalinism and the nature of the state power exercised by the despot. The author wrote that Stalin "seized not the power but the crown - he was given leadership by the steeled and loyal apparatus, which he created, at the head of new prominent party leaders, who agreed with him in everything." The party cannot abscond responsibility for its past, associated with Stalin. Dogmatism and bureaucracy afflicted not only the state and society, but also their institutions.

Stalin always believed in the power of state machinery and eyed any manifestations of public independence with suspicion. He qualified any attempt to establish the most innocent independent public organization, not provided for in the apparatus instructions, as a hostile act. Stalin succeeded in combining one-man rule with socialism. True, socialism became essentially *absolutist* because of that.

Was Stalin a Bolshevik party leader? Time itself puts this question to us as well. I would answer it the following way: Stalin could not be a leader of the Bolshevik leader, as was stated outright in Lenin's letter, in which he suggested that the General Secretary be replaced. The congress ignored the leader's warning and showed complacency, while Stalin drew important conclusions for himself. The main one was to set off a process of changes in the party itself; in effect, it became an organization by the late Twenties in many respects different from the one that functioned in Lenin's time. By and large, the General Secretary became a leader of *another* party. How did these changes manifest themselves? First of all, in its composition. If one is to take a close retrospective look at the history of the CPSU, it comes across essentially as the battle of ideas among different groups, or factions, as they used to say, deviations and opposition elements. I think that dissent was overdramatized both earlier and later. The fight for unity was largely the fight for orthodoxy. To do this, the party needed bureaucrats in spirit, and a hierarchy of functionaries. A revolutionary party faces a threat of regeneration without the permission of expressing one's opinion *freely,* coupled with the readiness to work to see the adopted decision implemented. As nomenclature emerged, the Central Committee's absolute right became established (it is how Stalin's will was often camouflaged), democratic centralism was molded into bureaucratic centralism. The party actually turns into a *monolith* under those conditions. But what does it mean? This means: it enjoys a tremendous social and political prestige, while its creative potential is reduced to the minimum. V.I. Lenin expressed his concern over the party's ballooning in his letters to V.M. Molotov in March 1922 and insisted on applying stricter admission criteria: "If we have 300,000 - 400,000 party members, this number is excessive, since all the available data unmistakably point out to an inadequate level of preparedness of the current party members."

Thanks to the efforts of Stalin and Zinoviyev, the terms of admission to the party were made even easier; it continued to mushroom to top one million, as the General Secretary reported in 1925 to the 14th congress. By 1928, two thirds of its members were those who joined it after 1921, during the NEP period, while the Communists with the pre-revolution record accounted for merely over one percent. The revolutionary vanguard became dissolved.

The party was joined by quite a few people who did not have proper political credentials, of low cultural and educational standards, who saw party membership as an instrument of promoting their social status. At the same time, stricter conditions were introduced for the admission of "specialists" - former engineers, teachers, and the military. The competency of party members and their social maturity took a nose dive. The new party members were especially valued for their readiness to comply with the center's directives, approve party guidelines of the Central Committee and its General Secretary. The party's composition underwent sweeping changes five to six years after Lenin's death to become more obedient and to begin to assume the features of a specific mammoth apparatus, which resembled an ideological order, as we have already said. Stalin emerged as even a better fit as the leader of this, largely transformed party, the more so since a large number of people from Lenin's entourage "fell off the bandwagon," with Stalin's help, to use Stalin's words, from its leadership positions by the early Thirties.

The new party leader could not become an autocrat, Caesar, or a dictator - the fact that we do not bring up often enough - without a sea-deep change in the composition, structure and functions of party organs and organizations. He had succeeded in doing this as well. When the last representatives of Lenin's guard finally became concerned and began to act, it was too late - the general secretary's personal proteges occupied virtually all the positions. So, we shall give an unequivocal answer to the question whether Stalin was a Bolshevik party leader, the one we raised earlier: he was the leader of a Stalinized party, which lost a great deal from Lenin's arsenal. What was left was centralism without democracy, discipline without thinking, intolerance for dissent, and refusal to allow free opinion.

The central party apparatus assumed full control over the appointment of party members to most various positions by the mid-Twenties. Stalin kept this sphere of activity under a special control. For example, G.M. Malenkov, in charge of personnel, regularly reported to the leader on the changes in the middle and upper echelons of what was then "Stalin's guard," as he made decisions on promotions, appointments, and dismissals of party functionaries in the Forties. Acquaintance with Malenkov's fund, his correspondence and reports to Stalin show that the channel was used nonstop to supply "concrete mixture" to cement the huge bureaucratic system, which fused the party, state organs, the Soviets, security agencies and other organizations into one. The G.M. Malenkov's fund has endless lists: N.V. Shtankol I.L. Mazurin, P.I. Panfilov, A.I. Ivanov, V.A. Parfyonov, I.I. Olyunin, L.S. Buyanov, N.M. Ivanov, and many other names, sanctified by Stalin's resolutions. These people were fortunate to have been promoted thanks to Stalin's wish.

Stalin was able to come at the head of the party because he made the society a one-dimensional one. Our enemies noticed this long ago. One of the emigres, a R.N. Kudengove-Kalerghi, pointed out in his book "Bolshevism And Europe" in 1932 that Stalin established an order of his own. "It is dominated by one will, one world outlook, one party, and one system," he wrote. "The Soviet Union is one single plantation, and its entire population is a single workers' army." This is a malicious statement, the kind of statements usually made by those defeated, but the one-dimensional nature of society, which came across as a manifestation of power in those years, became eroded later on. Passing its verdict, history confirms it today. Multitude and pluralism are more instrumental in promoting social, intellectual and moral creativity than a drab and cold uniformity, which Stalin was so fond of.

The former seminarian was never a prophet, although he did believe in utopia. He looked only straight ahead of himself, as if through a strong point embrace. One of the secrets of his "triumph" (as well as of the tragedy of the people) lies in the fact that he managed to gradually replace a cohort of revolutionaries with an army of officials. It would be wrong to say that Stalin was the only maker of bureaucracy. They needed each other. Total bureaucracy could not thrive without such a leader as Stalin. We shall repeat: Stalin was no prophet. He had a lop-sided understanding of the past, otherwise another secret of his rise would have been clear to him. Any revolution gives rise to a counterrevolution, weak or strong. The October revolution also gave birth to a counterrevolutionary reaction. A reciprocal, second tide of the revolution was required to stem it. Lasting as long as an entire decade, it put many new people on its crest. This tide pushed Stalin to the top. The General Secretary succeeded in staying atop the crest, at the same time pushing one of his potential rivals after another into an abyss. When the revolutionary tide finally ebbed, Stalin found himself on the highest point of the beach, surrounded by a host of the mandarins of bureaucracy, who took solid control of all key positions of the incipient system. L.D. Trotskiy observed this reality in the following way: "the lead-heavy rear of bureaucracy outweighed the head of the revolution." The construction of socialism began to be viewed not as a social, but as an administrative objective henceforth. We used to think that history gave us only one mark - the exclamation mark - but were utterly wrong...

As a result of the analysis that we made, one can say that Stalin is a *political* figure inside out. This man looked at all of the world around him through the prism of his political interests, political priorities, and political misconceptions. Stalin believed it was possible to achieve an

utopian "paradise on earth" at the expense of immeasurable suffering and sacrifices incurred by millions of people. Essentially, Stalin's policy stemmed from the premise that all of the past history was nothing but a preparation for "genuine" history. The bliss to be achieved by those distant future generations, which are going to reach the Promised Land, justifies the pains and bitter existence experienced by the people who had lived before and who live today. Stalin was prepared to sacrifice the past and the present of peoples for the sake of an illusory future. However, Berdyaev aptly said that the past is an illusion, because it is *no longer* here, while the future is an illusion, because it is not here *yet.* Politically, Stalin had never been able to bridge the gap between the past and the future, believing that *today* was nothing but "prehistory."

Senselessly running against the clock ("We are one hundred years behind, we must cover them in ten years") Stalin was ready to annihilate millions of people in order to have the plan of collectivization "fulfilled ahead of time"; he found it natural to consign thousands of his fellow Party workers to oblivion in order to achieve complete "unanimity" in the "shortest time possible." It appears that Stalin believed in absolutes and in his ability to make millions of future citizens "happy" by committing countless crimes today. His policy of "making the future," no matter how noble the motives were used to camouflage it, is utterly faulty. To implement it, Stalin found it permissible to control the future of millions of his compatriots today. Here are excerpts from a document, where Stalin, Molotov, Beriya, and Malenkov are told about the progress in implementing one of the leader's earlier decisions:

"The MVD is reporting that a total of 2,572,829 evictees and special resettlers (including the members of their families) have been registered as of 1 January 1950. There are 894,432 persons in Kazakhstan, the remainder are distributed and settled down in approximately equal portions in Central Asia, in the Urals, and in Siberia. As many as 278,636 families have houses of their own; 625,407 families own vegetable gardens and livestock. In 1949, 1,932 evictees were sentenced by special conference to 20 years of hard labor each for attempts to escape from their deportation areas. All of those people have been resettled in the deportation areas for ever in accordance with the decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of 26 November 1948." Resettled for ever... What a fatal feeling of doom! And ... socialism? As if it happened in the olden tsarist times: exile, hard labor, the unknown; but the scale cannot be compared. It looks like Berdyaev was correct. Let us turn once again to him and to his work "Spirits of Russian Revolution," in which he writes that "there is no other nation but the Russian nation that would combine so divergent ages, that would match the 20th century with the 14th century." But it seems that it is not the people but the person, whose portrait we tried to paint, who had brought medieval cruelty to the 20th century. The sad experience of a historical setback, which we identify with Stalin, is challenged by the endeavor and spirit of the people, which managed to preserve something that rejected Stalinism initially. This trend is discernible if one takes a careful look at the life led by all sections of the Soviet society.

We have even today people who say, although not with as much conviction as several years ago: "We fought with the words: 'For Motherland, For Stalin!'; 'Can one deny that people loved him?' No, one cannot - people really loved him. But he did not love them! Moreover, he cheated on the millions perfidiously, identifying himself with socialism. The faith in socialism was automatically projected to him. I think that this is the most paradoxical example of an entire nation coming under 'an eclipse.' To be more precise, a subtle manipulation, for most cynical purposes, of the tremendous striving that millions of people had for social justice, happiness, and prosperity. Stalin harped on mass enthusiasm, heroism, and selflessness to create a system in which he alone was in full command of the control panel. The autocrat turned the state into 'power of Stalin's,' in which only his ideas, instructions and will had any 'historical significance.'"

We shall continue to look back for a long time and on many occasions, looking for profound reasons why "leader's cult" and then "Caesarism" became established as a specific type of power which Stalin managed to pass as socialist rule. Stalin was given such a tremendously great chance due to the fact that any sensible alternative was absent, or to be more precise, was abolished by Stalin. One can have no doubt that Stalin learned the secrets of power concentrated in the hands of the *only* leader earlier than his other comrades-in-arms. Reading S.G. Lozinskiy's "History of Ancient Rome," he underlined a few telltale phrases back in the late Twenties (I have become convinced long ago that the autocrat underlined only the things which had any meaning *personally* for him). Reading about Augustus Octavius, he singled out in pencil the words "the first citizen," and "the supreme ruler." Studying a text about Caesar, he highlights the expression "victorious leader." He underlined the following sentence in the "Course on Russian History": "Chenghiz Khan killed many people, saying: 'The death of the defeated is necessary for the calm of the victors.'" Yes, he was a victor, who, as became obvious much later, made a historical "miscalculation." But he required so many deaths to remain calm that not a single, most bloody dictator could dream of. These extra brushstrokes convince one once again: Stalin knew what he was after. His opponents did not know it that well. The initially weak opposition to the leader's cult stemmed not only from a whole array of reasons, of which we talked in book one, but also from the fact that there were no *alternatives in revolutionary pluralism.* Only it alone might have precluded Stalin's monism.

The picture of a pile of human skulls, with a crow sitting atop, painted by Vereshchaghin in his "Apotheosis of War," could become a symbol of personal autocracy, of

course. But the symbol would have been oversimplified; the pyramid *hides* the people who survived, whose hopes and belief have been betrayed, the people for whom the past tragedy is their own history... And one can neither take revenge for it, nor ridicule it. We cannot and should not deny what is socialism's due. What Stalinism has brought into our lives is to be put on the trial of history. A protracted, painful, but cleansing. Lenin's words remain topical even now: "One should be able to recognize evil without fear, so that one can fight against it with more determination."

Yes, we are gradually overcoming the evil of Stalinism. There is no doubt about it. But I do not think that socialism in general can be negated on that ground. It is premature to speak about the "useless" path to socialism even after a major historical setback (and Stalinism is a tragedy for the people). The renovations which we have embraced - and without much success so far, especially in the socioeconomic field - has not provided a convincing answer so far to the question: what is socialism's historical opportunity? Some of the decisions and steps taken today look like a social improvisation, are half-hearted and not consistent. I think this largely stems from the fact that we have not comprehended our historical experience well enough: setbacks and achievements. Probably, we were poor students of other nations and societies. It is feasible that socialist ideals can materialize, as one takes entirely new approaches in the economic, social, and spiritual spheres. We need a new concept of socialism, which is naive to expect from another plenum or in a speech of one statesman or another. The democratization of society gradually involves people in social creative endeavor; one can find new solutions, befitting hopes and expectations, only along those lines. Our nation is too great to be satisfied with very little. On discarding Stalinism, it has the right to hope for a better life.

The trial of history and its verdict are made possible owing to the memory of the people. In fact, it has always been the principal vehicle for "restoring" the past. I think that eternity, of which philosophers, historians, and writers talk so much, cannot exist other than in one's memory. This is an eternal attempt by the people to overcome any end. It is memory, after all, that makes an unbiased judgment of an epoch, event, or a person, making it possible to preserve the continuity of epochs. Because of memory, we know much more truth about Stalin than we did during his lifetime. Coupled with consciousness, we can use memory to shed more light on the awful truth about that person. We are able to rely on memory to undertake cleansing through atonement; much remains to be done to shake off Stalin's stupor in our souls. It is only memory which will make it possible to pay due to the millions of martyrs, who fell victim to Stalin and Stalinism.

Some people may say: the author of the book limited his palette of colors to using only dark and somber hues to paint the portrait. I had no prejudice against the man; I just could not imagine, as I started to collect materials for the book ten years ago, what lows of human spirit and lack of morals I would happen to see. Upon my visits to the archives and meetings with the people who had gone through the ordeal of Stalin's hell, I was often haunted for a long time by the silent voices of anguish, pain and horror of the people, whose lives had been taken away from them brazenly and cruelly. I could not write in a different vein.

The opening of our eyes evolved through several stages. I think that one would see a calmer attitude to Stalin sometime in the 21st century, when the people who lived directly in Stalin's shadow are not around any more. It is possible that the word "calm" is unfortunate. He will stay in the historical memory as one the greatest despots of human civilization, but the span of time will make the eternal pain less sharp. Time is not only the best editor and biographer, but also the best healer. But people will always be astonished by how the nation preserved (and not only out of fear!) its commitment to the ideas of justice and humanism, an ability to display self-sacrifice and long lasting suffering under the conditions of ruthless dictatorship. Unfortunately, the darkness of the past will not envelop the tyrant, but we should do our utmost to make sure that his victims are not buried in oblivion.

I realize that one cannot understand the portrait of the person who will remain in history forever, whether we want it or not (like Tamerlane, Genghiz Khan, Hitler, and other tyrants and dictators), without constantly relying on economic, social, political, and spiritual parameters. I attempted to do this. But I think that the history's main judgment will be on morality. What in particular?

Even the big-time politics is a fake gem without its union with morality. A ruthless politician, Stalin filled his whole existence with politics, leaving absolutely no room even for basic moral values. The criminal negligence of morality took a heavy revenge on the "triumphator" - the historical defeat of that personality was predetermined and became inevitable sooner or later. I think this is going to be one of the counts in the historical verdict.

Stalin's "triumph" and the people's tragedy shed a bright light on the old truth, according to which the truth, veracity, is always the first to fall victim to injustice. Stalin was able to deform many great ideas - and this is probably his most horrible crime - and supplant them with his own myths. Interpreting Leninism in his own way, the dictator committed a crime against thought. Stalin proved with all of his life and action that Lies are a universal evil. All bad things begin with Lies. Violence, one-man rule, bureaucracy, dogmatism, and Caesarism - all of them were sanctified with lies. Any truck with it is always fraught with trouble. I think that this will be also put on record in the historical verdict.

The attempt to paint Stalin's political portrait made it painfully clear that many things have happened in our history because of disregard for freedom. It was the objective of the Great October socialist revolution, but

the people who had won it, were unable to make good use of it. Stalin rejected freedom on the assumption that it was dangerous. Freedom can exist only in conditions of genuine democracy. If it does not exist, freedom is present only as a shadow, ideological slavery, cult myths and cliches. Stalin did not like even to talk about freedom. It was assumed to have only one source - a social one. But the social facet of freedom can manifest itself only in conjunction with spiritual freedom. I think that this will also come as a remainder in the historical verdict regarding Stalin's destiny.

I invoked consciousness quite often, maybe too often, in this book. People like Stalin regard consciousness "a chimera." One does not speak about the dictator's consciousness - he just did not have one. But every criminal action perpetrated by Stalin was taken by the people, who often realized that they were doing evil things. Unfortunately, there were only few of those who tried to use their chance of consciousness. Consciousness seemed to have "frozen in very many people," to quote V. Korolenko, in that system of relations which was established. As a result, the great people allowed to have consciousness driven into a reservation, enabling the Great Inquisitor to do his evil for many years. The fact that we have not lost everything, preserved our faith in lofty ideals, proved capable of atonement and showed striving for renovation and revival stems, not to a small degree, from having liberated our consciousness from the chains of shameful nonfreedom. The leitmotif of my book was: consciousness always has a chance, even when the "triumph" of one person is accompanied by the tragedy of the millions. Freedom has no alternatives. I believe this is true more than ever before.

I shall end the book with the words which I put an the end of the introduction to it: the trial by people can be an illusion, while the trial of history is eternal.

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