



Stalin: "I? A Dictator?"

Josef Stalin

Josef Stalin, supreme political boss and lord high executioner of all the Russias, began life under the pet name given him by his doting mother, who called him "Soso." He was born on December 21, 1879, in the town of Gori, now in the sub-Caucasian republic of Georgia.

He was christened Josef Vissarionovitch Dzhugashvili. His father was a cobbler. His grandfather had been a cobbler. His great-grandfather had been a cobbler before that. But because her three previous children had all died in early infancy, pious, 20-year-old Ekaterina Dzhugashvili named this Yuletide baby Josef, and resolved to dedicate him to the service of the Russian orthodox church.

Small, dark and eager, Soso was sent to the local church school when he was eight years old. At 14, he was awarded a scholarship to study at the theological seminary in Tiflis.

Vissarion, the boy's father, had died three years before. Mother and son moved to the Georgian capital, where Ekaterina became a dressmaker.

At that time Tiflis, newly industrialized and long the scene of Turkish and Russian anti-Armenian campaigns, was a nest of radical political groups. Subversive leaflets flooded the city and invaded the seminary itself.

MARXIST: Soso became an early convert to the new doctrine of freedom and equality for the masses. Later he wrote: "My whole atmosphere was saturated with hatred of Czarist oppression." At 17 he was already the dominating figure in secret round-table discussions. When a book by Karl Marx was discovered under his bed by a seminary monitor, the book was destroyed and Soso was expelled. He did not care—he had practically memorized Karl Marx already.

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In 1898 he joined the illegal and radical Socialist Democratic party (parent group of Bolshevism, later Communism). After the first party congress in Minsk in that year, he visited railroad and factory workers to proclaim the vision—"a social order in which there shall be no place for exploitation of man by man."

To escape police surveillance, Stalin had to work with the greatest care. He lived in a world of false passports and disguises. He sent and received instructions written in invisible ink. Soso became a man of many aliases: Koba, Nizheradze, Ivanovitch, Chizhikoff, and finally Stalin—Man of Steel.

AGITATOR: For the next 20 years Stalin lived "underground," organizing labor unions, fomenting strikes and engaging in terrorist acts. Once he helped fire the oil fields of Baku, whose vast blaze was the signal for the first general strike in the history of Czardom. In June, 1907, one Kamo, acting under orders from 'Koba' (Stalin), bombed a bank carriage in Tiflis and escaped with 250,000 rubles for the party fund, leaving 50 dead and wounded behind him.

When in the spring of 1911 Stalin left his provincial endeavors to visit the Bolshevik Central Committee itself in St. Petersburg, he had become a legend. He had been imprisoned or exiled to far distant parts of the empire four times. Four times he had escaped. True to form, before he became permanently settled in the Russian capital he was twice arrested for his underground activities and twice exiled. Each time he returned within a few months.

DIRECTOR: In 1912 he became one of the founders and chief director of Pravda ("Truth"), the Bolshevik daily. With the great revolutionary Lenin an exile in Krakow, Stalin became the chief engineer for the party in matters of policy. The Pravda became the axis about which the whole Bolshevik movement revolved. Stalin himself became a member of the powerful Central Committee.

A year later Stalin was once more arrested and sent to the tiny, swamp-surrounded village of Kureika. It was in the Arctic circle, and so isolated that it was the only place from which Stalin ever failed to escape.

Without his principal lieutenant, the absent-minded Lenin was at a loss. In 1915 he wrote a friend: "Great favor to ask of you: Find out the name of 'Koba' (Joseph Dzh—, we have forgotten). It is very important." The revolution was beginning to stir.

In 1917, it arrived. The people rose up against the Czardom. Nicholas II abdicated in favor of his brother Michael; both were taken prisoners. Stalin was released. A government of the people, but not of the Bolsheviks, was in power at St. Petersburg.

The Provisional Government continued to wage the war against Germany. Worse, it gave no prospect of

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carrying out promised land reforms. Bolshevik Trotzky raised the cry "Land and Peace!" At Ekaterinburg, Czar Nicholas, the Empress Alexandra and their four daughters and one son were hustled into a cellar and shot to death by Bolsheviks. On November 6 and 7, the populace was on its bloody march once more, this time led by the Reds. The Kerensky Government was toppled. At long last the Leninites were rulers of the State.

In the end, the power rested in the hands of three men: Lenin, the bald-headed and inspirational leader of Bolshevism; Trotzky, who organized the Red armies and defended the life of the young republic against the Czarist, German, Polish, Esthonian and Ukrainean troops in the campaigns of 1918-20; and last of all Stalin, who had stayed underground for 15 years and who probably knew more party workers than any other Red.

ADMINISTRATOR: Lenin, the dictator, could do nothing without Stalin. It was Stalin, "the wonderful Georgian," who drafted the Russian basis for the Brest-Litovsk peace with Germany in 1918. Stalin, as commissar for nationality affairs, made the Russian checkerboard of minority populations into a strong federation of Soviet republics. Stalin, as head of the Rabkrin, became the head of the State bureaucracy and the dispenser of all patronage.

When Lenin died in 1924, Stalin and Trotzky were both logical successors to his scepter. A bitter feud raged between the two. Stalin instituted a whispering campaign against his rival, filled the Trotzky military affairs commissariat with creatures of his own, and kicked Trotzky downstairs into minor offices and finally into extra-territorial exile in 1929.

Stalin's power has been supreme but not unchallenged since 1927 (see page 8, col. 1). Today he presents the puzzling prospect of a dictator who holds no formal office in the government. He is, however, a member (but in no instance chairman) of the Communist party's three most powerful policy-determining boards: the Politbureau, the Orgbureau and the Central Committee. His is the final word in all appointments and all state policies. Stalin is in reality a vastly powerful political boss.

EXECUTIONER: In disposing of his enemies, he has shown the utmost cruelty. He murdered Zinovieff and Kameneff, two former allies, last August. Piatakoff, beloved by Lenin, was executed last week.

In 1933, several million peasants opposed Stalin's plans for socializing farm lands. Famine came and those several million peasants were allowed to starve to death, although they could have been fed from other provinces.

And yet Stalin is not personally cruel. He is, rather, a fanatic who can brook no obstacles to the day when the Soviet republics will be completely socialized. According to his long-range view, a few lives make no dif-

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ference.

HUMAN: Stalin is human. He has an unknown Georgian woman whom he later divorced, and again in 1919 to Nadya Alliluieva, the daughter of an old Tiflis comrade. By his first wife he had one son, now lost in proletarian obscurity. By Nadya he had a boy, Vassily, now 15, and a girl, Svetlana, 10. Nadya died in 1932 of appendicitis. Stalin's mother is still living in Tiflis.

He lives humbly while in Moscow. His quarters are three rooms in one of the Kremlin compound's 30 buildings. At about an hour's ride from the city, however, he maintains a large "datcha" or country estate, once owned by a capitalist. He rides to work in one of a procession of three Packard cars, riding in front with the chauffeur, and never in the same car on two days running, to guard against assassins. His salary is about \$2,500 a year.

Contrary to popular notion, he is physically rather small. Temperamentally, he has been called "a slab of granite." He seldom displays emotion of any kind. He has many friends, but few close ones. Long years "underground" have made him sufficient unto himself. He is a pipe smoker, and extremely taciturn.

Stalin is above all modest, after the fashion of Lenin, his saint. He submits to his role of people's idol with complete indifference. He has never worn a necktie in his life.

"The times are past," he once wrote, "when great men were makers of history." And once, when he was asked by an audacious reporter whether or not he were a dictator, Stalin smiled: "I? A dictator? That is just funny!"

READERS WRITE

On Stalin, Russia

I have always felt that your publication could be depended upon to give us the truth devoid of bias or prejudice but your article on Stalin, Feb. 13, wherein you accuse him of murder and personally starving millions upsets this feeling. The parties you speak of were tried, convicted and executed according to law as they would have been in any civilized country. As for the famine, the farmers were dissatisfied with the share they were to give the government so did not try to raise crops and deliberately brought on the trouble.

B. Brown

Springport, Mich.