

Why Josef Stalin Was Assassinated



Military historian and former KGB intelligence officer Arsen Martirosyan says Western intelligence agents conspired with ruthless Communist leaders Nikita Khrushchev (right) and Gen. Georgy Zhukov (left) to kill Josef Stalin. Earlier, Zhukov was in command of a nuclear bomb test and exposed some 5,000 Soviet military personnel to the blast effects. Khrushchev's execution of many Russians during the purges exercised by Stalin earned Khrushchev the apropos epithet "Butcher of Ukraine." Facing page: the Soviet Union's Josef Stalin.

SHORTLY AFTER JOSEF STALIN—born Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili—threatened to disrupt the world financial markets by undermining the dollar-based monetary system established at the Bretton-Woods Conference, he was dead at the hands of his own top military and party leaders. But were Western intelligence agencies also involved in his death, and in the death of Lavrenty Beria, one of Stalin's closest associates?

BY DANIEL W. MICHAELS

In an article entitled "Why Stalin Was Murdered," former KGB intelligence officer and now military historian Arsen Martirosyan provides interesting military, geopolitical, and financial reasons why—in his opinion—Western intelligence agents conspired with renegade Communist leaders Khrushchev and Zhukov to kill Josef Stalin.¹

Martirosyan cites favorably Russian conspiratologist Yuri Mukhin to the effect that Stalin's war with dissident members of the Communist Party and the dictator's plan to strip them of their powers fatally backfired. Both fiercely Stalinist authors exonerate Lavrenty Beria of participating in any way in Stalin's death. Indeed, because of his unique knowledge of Stalin's undertakings, the conspirators had to liquidate Beria as well. Zhukov presided over the tribunal that condemned and executed Beria.



STALIN'S ENEMIES IN THE PARTY

In his book *The Murder of Stalin and Beria* author Mukhin showed very clearly that long before his death Stalin had tried to remove some of the older party elite from power.² Stalin's first attempt to put an end to the repressions provoked by entrenched party bosses occurred during the purges in 1937. After assuming total power in the Soviet Union Stalin of course wanted party leaders who were loyal and responsible to him alone and not to his predecessors. Just as President Eisenhower had warned of the danger of a "military-industrial complex" assuming excessive power in the United States, Stalin feared that a "military-party complex" threatened to usurp all power in the Soviet Union and took steps to thwart it.

To achieve this, Stalin attempted to rotate the party ruling elite by increasingly introducing younger men, mostly Russian, to the highest positions.³ After World War II Stalin made a second, more drastic move to reduce the power of party bosses by attempting to separate the party from the governance of the Soviet Union. Aware that their remaining days in power were few, leading party members conspired, possibly in collaboration with Western intelligence agencies, to kill Stalin.

According to authors Martirosyan and Mukhin, the interests of dissident party leaders and military bosses in the Soviet Union coincided with those of the anti-Soviet military-industrial complex in the United States in wanting to remove the Stalinists from power—each group for reasons of its own.

The New Testament says that the desire of money is a root of all kinds of evil (I Timothy 6:10).⁴ In the context of this case, i.e., Stalin's war against ossified party bosses unfit to rule, it is manifested in the extreme measures incumbents in the party hierarchy exercised in order to stay in power. When they recognized that Stalin threatened to strip them of that power together with its exchange value, they undertook to kill him.

Immediately after the war, Stalin launched an investigation to determine the reasons for the tragic losses of June 22, 1941 and the following months, despite the fact that the Vozhd and his military leaders knew that an attack was imminent. The investigation so worried Gen. Zhukov, author Martirosyan contends, that he joined with Khrushchev, who had his own fears of Stalin's intentions, in overthrowing the government on June 26, 1953. In 1989 the

renowned Russian *Military History Journal* published some of the results of Stalin's investigations showing that the military as of June 18-19 had no warning of an immediate attack.

So damning were the findings of Stalin's investigation into the competence of the military and intelligence officers in general that the *Journal* published no further information. Only Beria, Stalin's closest ally, had knowledge of the full findings of the investigation. Understandably, the military leaders responsible for the debacle would prefer to see him silenced as well.

Beria suspected Khrushchev and Semyon Ignatiev, the erstwhile head of the MGB (Ministry of State Security), to have been the ringleaders of the plot to kill Stalin. Ignatiev headed the MGB from 1951 to 1953, i.e., during the crucial period preceding Stalin's death. Ignatiev had replaced Viktor Abakumov, a youthful Russian appointed by Stalin and a protégé of Beria, who was arrested and imprisoned in August 1951. Shortly after Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, Beria, who had quickly seized control of the intelligence agencies, freed Abakumov. But when on June 25, 1953 Beria sought the approval of the Central Committee and the Politburo to arrest Ignatiev, he was refused permission and was himself arrested. Six months later later, on Dec. 23, Beria was executed. The Khrushchev-Zhukov faction had by now assumed power.

Thus, both Beria and Abakumov were executed in 1953. Ignatiev, however, perhaps as his reward for having participated in the coup, lived on peacefully until his death in 1983. He was the only head of the Soviet secret police, to that time, ever to have died a natural death. And if Stalin died a natural death as Khrushchev and Ignatiev contended, then he would also have been the first top Soviet official to die a natural death. (Of course by withholding medical aid to Stalin after his stroke and permitting him to hemorrhage to death, this might be mistaken for a natural death.)

STALIN'S ENEMIES IN THE WEST

Author Martirosyan lists economic and financial reasons why the Western powers would join with the Soviet dissidents in wanting Stalin dead. For example, when World War II ended and the West tallied the geopolitical gains Stalin and world Communism had made in the first seven years of the Cold War, namely, advancing the borders

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of the Soviet Empire deep into Central Europe and Asia, taking Czechoslovakia, turning China to Communism, supporting North Korea in war against the United States, and perhaps most importantly successfully developing fission and fusion weaponry (under Beria's supervision), the West finally realized it had helped create a greater threat to its security than ever Germany had represented in their imaginings and propaganda. Stalin was now a mortal enemy. In fact, the momentum Stalin developed in the postwar period until his death also carried over into the 1950s, when the Soviets jumped to an early lead in space research.

Moreover, the United States had never really recovered from the Great Depression, and the question of whether it could establish a sustainable peacetime economy was yet to be proved.

The West, and particularly the United States, the authors maintain, had another, even more vital, reason for wanting to see a change in leadership in Moscow. On March 1, 1950, author Martirosyan asserts, the government of the USSR published the following decree in the Soviet press:

The continuing revaluation of international currencies in the Western countries has already led to the devaluation of European currencies. Responsible representatives of the U.S. government repeatedly state that the unending increase in the prices for objects of mass consumption, and the continuing inflation resulting therefrom, has also led to a substantial decline in the purchasing power of the dollar. In direct connection with this situation the purchasing power of the ruble has become greater than its official exchange rate. The Soviet government therefore recognizes the need to increase the official exchange rate of the ruble and to change the practice of basing the exchange rate on the dollar, established in June 1937, to a more stable gold standard, based on the gold content of the ruble.

The Council of Ministers of the USSR . . . decrees:

1. As of 1 March 1950 to end basing the exchange rate of the ruble relative to foreign currencies based on the dollar and to change it to a more stable gold standard based on the gold content of the ruble.

2. To establish the gold content of the ruble at 0.222168 of a gram of pure gold.

3. As of 1 March 1950 to set the Gosbank's purchasing price for gold at 4 rubles and 45 kopeks for one gram of pure gold.

4. As of 1 March 1950 establish the rate relative to foreign currencies on the basis of the gold content of the ruble as fixed in point 2 at 4 rubles for one U.S. dollar instead of the current 4 rubles and 84 kopeks.



Checkmating Beria . . .

Despite the bloody early career of Lavrenty Beria (above), the monster personally chosen by Josef Stalin to head up his dreaded secret police, the man did a remarkable turnabout toward the end. After Stalin's death in March 1953, Beria freed a million political prisoners. He radically improved conditions in the Gulag. He even proposed that East Germany should abandon Communism and allow free enterprise. It was thought that Beria, with almost unlimited police powers, would easily seize total control of the USSR's government. But surprisingly Nikita Krushchev rallied enough support to head off Beria's bid for power at a secret meeting of the Communist Party's Presidium that June. Instead of being proclaimed premier, as he had expected, Beria was charged with treason and sentenced to die. Gen. Georgy Zhukov presided over the tribunal.

Apparently elated by what he considered a brilliant move by his hero Stalin, author Mukhin blurts out:

Just think what Stalin encroached upon—America’s “holy of holies”—the basis on which it lives its parasitic existence—the almighty dollar! Not only did he refuse to use the dollar in the Soviet Union’s ever increasing international trade, but he also stopped assessing the value of products in dollars. You can imagine how despised Stalin became in the United States and Great Britain. Essentially what he did was to undermine the dollar gold value system that had been established after the war based on 34.5 dollars for one troy ounce of gold. Under this system the Americans wildly unleashed a torrent of green paper in the world economy.

In an aside concerning the importance of gold, Martirosyan tells the story of how and why Charles de Gaulle, president of France, fell into bad graces with the British and the Americans in the turbulent 1960s. Shortly after becoming president, de Gaulle, in his desire to maintain the independence of France, abruptly exchanged all French holdings of dollars into gold. As the story goes, the French minister of finance had explained to the president in a simple way the true worth of the dollar as a medium of exchange. The minister told the president this story:

Shortly after becoming president, de Gaulle, to maintain the independence of France, exchanged all French holdings of U.S. dollars into gold.

Imagine, if you can, Mr. President, an auction in which a painting by Raphael is being bid upon by Fritz, a German, Abdullah, an Arab, Ivan, a Russian, and John, an American. Each of them makes his bid and offers to pay for the painting with his nation’s most valuable commodity: the Arab would pay in oil, the German with technology, Ivan with gold, but the American, smiling, bid double the amount any of the others had offered and won the painting. He took a packet of hundred-dollar bills out of his wallet, paid for the painting and left.

When de Gaulle asked what the trick was, the minister explained:

By all appearances the American won the painting for \$10,000, but in actual fact he bought it for three dollars, because the real value of each \$100 bill was just three cents apiece. Thus, because the dollar has been de-

clared the universal medium of exchange, all the treasures of this world—gold, oil, technology—can be exchanged for green paper—greenbacks.

Even before World War II ended in July 1944, the UN, primarily supported by the United States, convened the Bretton-Woods Conference in order to establish a new monetary order in the postwar world designating the U.S. dollar the reserve currency for the world. Previously, the British sterling had been the basis of that order. Although Stalin refused to send an official representative to the conference, he was kept fully informed about its plans and proceedings because the gentleman representing the United States, Senior U.S. Treasury official Harry Dexter White, was a Soviet agent.

It was made abundantly clear to Stalin that gold reserves were essential to the future operation of the proposed monetary system. He learned too that the planned

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were to be initially based on so-called “ownerless” gold, i.e., Nazi gold, Jewish gold, czarist gold, and other such. Of course, in the midst and aftermath of the political and military chaos of World War II, which involved theft, confiscation, looting, and “liberating,” ownership was very difficult to ascertain.

It will be remembered that in the interwar period after the First World

War that the victorious Allies were demanding over 200 billion German Gold Marks in reparations from defeated Germany until National Socialist Germany resorted to a barter system in international trade to avoid being made captive to the then existing monetary system.

Stalin was quick to investigate the status of the Russian gold accumulated under the czars as well as the gold and jewels possessed by Czar Nicholas and his family. In 1946, at the time rumors were being circulated that Princess Anastasia had miraculously survived the massacre in Yekaterinburg, probably as a ploy to establish ownership, Stalin organized *Operation Krest (Cross)* and *Operation Mogila (Grave)* under the direction of Molotov to determine the final disposition of the czar’s family. In addition to literature and archival searches the Soviets investigated the gravesite of the slaughtered family.

According to author Martirosyan, on the advice of Minister Witte the czar had several shiploads of Russian gold



Josef Vissarionovich Stalin lies dead in state, having died on March 5, 1953. Stalin, it is generally agreed upon by all serious scholars, had tens of millions of people killed, starved or worked to death. Within a few years after his death, Soviet leaders officially denounced him. This “secret speech” of condemnation spread across the USSR and all its Eastern European captive nations, until the empire’s collapse. Eventually, Stalin’s tomb was moved from its place of honor in the Kremlin. His namesake city, Stalingrad, was renamed, and Stalin’s statues were destroyed.

transported to the United States; later the czar also arranged to have the family’s personal jewels and treasure sent to the British royal family for safekeeping. Regrettably, when the Bolsheviks were holding the czar and his family, the English royals did little or nothing to help them for fear that the British monarchy itself might be threatened. (See also Martirosyan’s book *Who Brought the War to the USSR?* Moscow, 2007.)

Martirosyan cites the understandable reluctance of the holders of ill-gotten gold and priceless jewels, especially after finding out about operations Krest and Mogila, to return these treasures to their rightful owners as yet another reason for wanting Stalin dead.

Earlier investigative work conducted by Aleksei Chichkin (*A Forgotten Idea With No Statute of Limitations*), cited by Martirosyan, indicates that in April 1952 the Soviet Union convoked an International Economic Conference in

Moscow, at which Stalin proposed establishing his own transcontinental “common market” outside of the dollar zone in which a basket of currencies led by the gold-backed ruble would be the basis of the exchange currency in a dollar-free bloc. The countries of Eastern Europe, China, Iran, Iceland, Ireland and several South American countries attended the conference. However, in less than a year Stalin would be dead.

CONCLUSION

Martirosyan and Mukhin are both convinced that Stalin was murdered by one of his closest associates, but certainly not Beria, acting in concert with Western intelligence. Whether a poison or a blood thinner (like Warfarin) had been secretly administered to Stalin is unknown, but the simple fact that medical aid was delayed or withheld for the dying dictator convinces the authors that Stalin was to

die. On the basis of *Cui bono* from the dictator's death, Martirosyan fingers Khrushchev and Zhukov. Martirosyan also suspects that Western intelligence agencies were involved. Some of Stalin's bitterest enemies, Trotskyites living in both the USSR and the West, are believed to have helped the perpetrators.

Khrushchev assumed total power in 1955: rehabilitated Zhukov; denounced Stalin and his crimes in 1956 at the 20th Party Congress; was an honored guest to the United States in 1959; authorized the installation of nuclear-tipped missiles in Cuba in 1961; was removed from power and retired in 1964.

When he died on September 11, 1971, he was denied a state funeral and burial on Kremlin grounds with "true Communist worthies": Stalin, Chernenko, Andropov, Brezhnev, Dzerzhinsky and other such.

Immediately after Stalin's death Zhukov returned to Moscow in time to condemn and execute Beria; ordered a nuclear bomb test on unprotected Soviet soldiers in 1954; supported strong repressive action to crush the Hungarian revolution in 1956; joined with Khrushchev in 1957 against the so-called "Anti-Party Group" led by Molotov; backed the Soviet Cuban adventure. Now he is celebrated in America by most establishment historians as a great strategist.

POSTSCRIPT

Reuters, Aug 1, 2011—Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin today accused the United States of living beyond its means "like a parasite." His statement echoes Stalin,

Martirosyan, Mukhin and a plethora of world economists. To paraphrase Putin:

They (Americans) are living beyond their means and shifting a part of the weight of their problems to the world economy. They are living like parasites off the global economy and their monopoly of the dollar. If in America there is a systematic malfunction, it will affect everyone. Countries like Russia and China hold a significant part of their reserves in American securities. There should be other reserve currencies.

As the saying goes: The more things change, the more things stay the same. ♦

ENDNOTES:

1 Arsen Martirosyan. http://www.delostalina.ru/?p=498#_ftn1

2 Yuri Mukhin, *Ubiystvo Stalina I Berii*, Moscow, 2007

3 At the 19th Party Congress, in 1952, Stalin introduced a new charter for the Communist Party in which most power was concentrated in the Bureau of the Presidium consisting of Stalin, Beria, Khrushchev, Ignatiev and three others. Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Molotov and Mikoyan had already been stripped of most powers.

4 In subsequent centuries as modernization and Protestant sects developed, the accumulation of wealth began to be seen rather as a gift of God and the bountiful Earth He gave us. It became generally accepted that holders of high office in society and the military enjoyed God's favor in the tangible form of wealth and privilege. Also, certain "perks" (perquisites) and privileges of high office were acknowledged as rightful.

DANIEL W. MICHAELS was for over 40 years a translator of Russian and German texts for the Department of Defense, the last 20 years of which (1972-1993), he was with the Naval Maritime Intelligence Center. He is a frequent contributor of articles to geographical and historical periodicals. Born in New York City, he now lives in the D.C. area.

The Chief Culprit: Stalin's Grand Design to Start WWII

In *Chief Culprit*, Victor Suvorov clearly shows that Stalin in early June 1941 felt he had nothing to fear from Hitler. Stalin calculated there was no way Hitler would attack to the east, because he had his hands full in the west and could never hope to win a two-front war. The one thing Stalin was in no position to do was to fight a defensive war. His whole setup was strictly for offense. Everything was mobilized; an attack on Germany was unavoidable. But somehow Hitler got wind of Stalin's plans. He decided to launch a surprise, preemptive strike—and just in the nick of time. He succeeded in wiping out much of the USSR's air force on the ground, and killing or capturing vast numbers of Soviet soldiers. For anyone interested in WWII, this book is a necessary addition to one's library. There are many surprises awaiting the reader of *Chief Culprit*. For example, who would have dreamed it, but it was Stalin who built up the German war machine. Lots more. *Chief Culprit*, hardcover, 330 pages, #526, \$39 minus 10% for TBR subscribers is available from TBR BOOK CLUB, P.O. Box 15877, Washington, D.C. 20003. Add \$5 S&H inside the U.S. Outside the U.S. email TBRca@aol.com for best S&H rates to your nation. To charge, call TBR toll free at 1-877-773-9077.

