

* Albert Carr. Men of Power (1963)



Stalin Reaches for World Power

IN THE south of Russia, at the point where Europe merges with Asia, is the rugged, mountainous country of Georgia. There for centuries people have lived mainly by herding sheep and growing grain and, until recent times, by robbery, which used to be a favorite occupation of many Georgians.

In Tiflis, the Georgian capital, a young bookkeeper named Josef Dzhugashvili grew to manhood hating the Russians and their Cossack police. His parents had been very poor, and he believed not only that Georgia ought to revolt against the Czar of Russia, but also that the poor people, while they were at it, should seize the wealth of the rich. He and other young Georgians with similar ideas would meet secretly at night, and discuss their dreams of revolution. One of his friends lent him some pamphlets and articles by a Russian named Nikolai Lenin, who was the leader of the Russian Communists. Josef was deeply impressed by these pamphlets, and became an ardent admirer of Lenin, and a Communist.

At that time, railroads were being built in Georgia, and oil had been discovered. Poor peasants were crowding into the cities to find work at the oil wells, on the railroads, and in factories. Soon they started to complain about the way their em-

ployers treated them, and formed unions to protect themselves.

Young Dzhugashvili helped the Georgian workmen organize these unions, and led strikes for higher wages. To throw police off his trail, he began to use various disguises and assumed names. One of his assumed names was Stalin, which means "steel." And as Stalin the world knew him thereafter. In time the police caught him and sent him to jail for almost two years; later he was banished to a distant part of Russia, but he escaped, and again plunged into politics.

A REVOLUTION THAT FAILED

In 1905 Russia went to war against Japan, and, to the surprise of the world, was badly beaten. For although the Russian Empire was much larger than Japan, the men who ran the Czar's government and army were for the most part interested only in filling their own pockets. Many thousands of Russian soldiers were killed and wounded because they had been given defective ammunition, or became sick because of bad food.

The defeated Russian people were so bitter against their government that the Socialists and Communists thought it was a good time for a revolution. Workers all over Russia went on strike. They demanded that the Czar abdicate and give his power to a parliament. But the Czar still had enough loyal soldiers to shoot down the strikers and he managed to stop the revolution and save his crown.

At this time Stalin first met his hero, Lenin. With his small build, pointed beard, and eyeglasses, Lenin looked more like a college professor than a revolutionist. When Stalin heard him speak, however, he knew that he was listening to a strong leader.

Stalin, like all the Socialists, was disappointed when the revolt failed. But he was not disheartened. He managed to escape from Russia and to join Lenin, who was making plans to try again.

The other Russian revolutionary leaders did not think much of Stalin. For one thing, he was not well educated, and could speak no language but Russian. For another, he looked like a cold-hearted man, who would stop at nothing to gain his ends. But Lenin felt that Stalin might be useful to the Communists, who were in desperate need of funds.

Stalin told Lenin that he knew how to get money. He went back to Georgia, to the mountains, and there sought out a gang of bandits. He wanted their help, and they would be paid for it.

STALIN ROBS A BANK

He had made a plan—to rob the largest bank in Tiflis. It was exactly the kind of plan that a man who had grown up dreaming of bandits and Cossacks would make. Spies brought him word that on a certain day a large sum—about \$170,000—would be transferred from the Tiflis post office to the bank.

That day the bandits rode their horses down to the city secretly, and lay in wait. Stalin saw the bank's cashier leave the post office with a package in his hand and enter a carriage. Cossack soldiers on horseback were standing guard. At a signal, one of the bandits threw a bomb under the carriage. As it went off, killing the cashier, other bombs were thrown, and the Cossacks' horses bolted in all directions. Shooting and yelling, the bandits swooped down from a nearby street. One of them, disguised as a Cossack officer, shot the carriage horses, which were running away, and grabbed the package containing the money.

It was much like a stagecoach robbery in the American "Wild West" of earlier days, but bloodier, for it is said that more than fifty Cossacks and bystanders were killed or wounded by the bomb explosions. The bandits escaped to the mountains and divided their loot. More than half the money was sent to the headquarters of the Communist party.

Stalin's conscience was not at all troubled over this affair. He felt that he had not committed a crime, that what he had done was war—war against "the enemies of the working class." All his life he showed this tigerish nature. He never hesitated to kill when killing, in his judgment, would advance his cause or his personal power.

THE CZAR FALLS

The Czar's police caught Stalin again and sent him to work in the Siberian mines—a dreaded punishment. There the Cossack guards would flog their prisoners, or—worse still—force them to "run the gantlet." This meant that the prisoner had to run between two long lines of Russian soldiers, who struck his head and shoulders with the butts of their heavy rifles. Lucky was the prisoner who escaped with only broken bones and bruises, for some men died or went mad under the ordeal. Stalin was forced to endure this torture, but, being physically tough, he escaped without serious injury.

Later he was sent to a village far in the north, near the Arctic Ocean, where any attempt to get away meant death from cold and starvation. Little news reached Stalin in his frozen village. But every now and then he would hear a rumor about what was happening in Europe. In 1914 came a startling report. A great

war had begun. Germany and Austria were fighting England, France, Italy, and Russia. Two years passed, and rumor ran that the Russian troops had been badly defeated by the Germans. Then suddenly, in 1917, Stalin heard electrifying news. There had been a revolution. The Czar had been driven from his throne. A republic had been set up, headed by a man named Kerenski. All political prisoners were free to return to their homes.

Rejoicing, Stalin made his way to St. Petersburg ^{FALSE → called} (now Lenin- ^{Petrograd} grad) ^{From 1914-} ¹⁹²⁴ ^{Lenin-} ^{grad} ^{From} ¹⁹²⁴⁻¹⁹⁹¹. There he joined a group of Communists under Lenin's leadership, who were already plotting to overthrow the new republican government and get power for themselves. They persuaded a great many Russian soldiers to join them, and, in a day of fighting, seized the headquarters of the government, and forced Kerenski to flee for his life.

THE ALLIES ATTACK RUSSIA

The Germans were so busy fighting in France that they were willing to let Russia alone, provided that they got a big slice of Russian territory. Lenin was willing. The war ended, but the revolution churned on. People who owned property had to leave Russia or run the risk of being killed. Aristocrats, if caught, were treated cruelly; the helpless Czar and his family were shot to death. People all over Europe were shocked. And they were afraid, too, of the influence of the Russian revolution on their own countries. The Communists began to tell everyone who would listen how happy the Russian people were, and what a beautiful future lay ahead for other countries that would follow their example.

After 1918, when Germany surrendered, the Allied governments decided to send troops to Russia in an effort to get rid of the Communist government. A Polish army attacked from the west; English and French troops drove into Russia from the north and the south; and Japanese and American forces landed in eastern Siberia. With them came many Russian aristocrats, "White Russians," eager to recapture their lost lands.

Against these odds, it seemed unlikely that the Communists could survive. But somehow they did. The commander-in-chief of the Communist army was a man named Leon Trotsky, who had never led an army before, but who proved himself an excellent general. Stalin, too, showed great ability as a military organizer. After some early defeats, the Communists succeeded in driving the Allies and Whites out of Russia.

STALIN RISES

At the end of the war with the Allies, Lenin rewarded Stalin by making him Secretary of the Communist party. This job was much more important than it sounds. To belong to the Communist party in Russia was considered a great privilege, for the members of the party got all the best jobs and really ran the country. In Stalin's time, out of about 175,000,000 Russians only about 2,000,000 were full-fledged Communists.

The Secretary of the Communist party could say who would be made a member and who would not. Naturally, he had enormous power. Most of the Communists and the Russians who hoped to become Communists wanted to prove that they were his friends, so they did what he told them to do. It did not take

Stalin long to become the most important politician in Russia, next to Lenin.

In 1918, Lenin was shot by a dissatisfied Communist, and he never fully recovered. People began to wonder who would take his place. Most Communists thought it would be Trotsky, who was still head of the army, and a close friend of Lenin. But Stalin had his own ideas.

He quietly made friends with other leaders of the Communist movement who were jealous of Trotsky. Finally he was ready to strike. A meeting of the supreme council of the government was held, and voted to remove Trotsky as head of the army, and put one of Stalin's followers in his place.

STALIN AGAINST TROTSKY

Trotsky felt sure that, after Lenin died, he would become the most important man in Russia, and would be able to cope with Stalin. For it was known that Lenin had written a letter telling his wishes about the way Russia should be governed. This letter, which was made public after Lenin's death, condemned Stalin for his harsh and cruel ways, and urged the Communists to remove him from his post as Secretary of the party. By this time, however, Stalin was too strong to be beaten even by Lenin's wishes. The Communist leaders gave him a vote of confidence, and he stayed in power.

Then began a long struggle between Stalin and Trotsky. Both had great reputations as heroes of the revolution. Trotsky was the better speaker—a man of great passion and talent for persuading people to do what he wanted. For a while he seemed to

be winning many people to his side. But Stalin was only waiting for the right moment to act. Suddenly, in 1927, he denounced Trotsky as a traitor, and exiled him from Russia. The people on whom Trotsky had counted were too frightened to help him resist. He fled first to Turkey, then to France, Norway, Mexico—a fugitive from the revolution he had helped to make.

Trotsky's books and articles, exposing Stalin as a brutal dictator, made a stir in the free countries of the world. Finally, one of Stalin's secret agents came to Trotsky's hiding place in Mexico and assassinated him. That was the end of the great feud. Murder was always Stalin's favorite method for dealing with his enemies.

Stalin was now the unquestioned master of Russia. Although his only title was still that of Secretary of the Communist party, the party did what he wanted, and the people did what the party wanted. Those who dared to disobey soon found that Stalin's dreaded secret police were on their trail.

THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN

People everywhere wondered what would happen next in Russia. They soon found out. Stalin announced a great Five-Year Plan to give the backward country railroads and factories. He went about it just as ruthlessly as he had robbed the bank in Tiflis. First he took away all the money, goods, and grain supplies of the small business men and wealthier peasants. Then he sold the grain in other countries, and bought machinery with the money. Those who resisted were shot by the Red soldiers.

At the same time, all over Russia, peasants were ordered to give up their little patches of land and go to big "collective

farms," where they were really wage laborers for the government. Since the desire to own land of their own is strong in peasants the world over, at first the Russian farmers refused to obey, and many thousands of them were shot or turned out to starve by the stern Red soldiers. Meanwhile, however, the government was building factories, railroads, dams for generating electricity, and schools for training workmen. In later years, there were a second and a third Five-Year Plan.

GUNS OR SHOES?

About 1935, it became clear that something was going wrong in Russia. The men in the factories and on the collective farms still were receiving low wages, and still had to pay high prices if they wanted shoes, or butter, or tobacco. Most Russians were no better off than they had been before the Five-Year Plan.

The fact was that Stalin did not have the money or the trained men to build all the factories and railroads that Russia needed. If he built factories to weave cloth for women's dresses, he might have to get along without a steel mill, or a railroad line. He had to decide which factories were most important.

He knew that most of the other governments of the world were still Russia's enemies. The Communist theory was that the capitalist nations would some day attack Russia. So Stalin ordered more factories for making airplanes, tanks, guns, submarines, and all the other things that a strong military nation requires. Naturally, this meant that factories needed to make clothing, canned foods, and plumbing equipment could not be built. As a result, most of the Russian people had to live in a primitive way, although they had a strong army.

TERROR SWEEPS RUSSIA

When the Russian people found that the goods they wanted were as scarce and expensive as ever, they began to complain that the Communist party was not keeping its promises. They saw that although nobody in Russia was allowed to get rich, a good many Communist officials were living in good houses, wearing good clothes, and riding around in government automobiles.

Some Russians began to feel that the Communist party was only looking out for itself and for the Red army, and not caring very much about the 170,000,000 workers and peasants. They whispered that the Communist party had become a ruling class as selfish as the Czar's aristocracy.

One of Stalin's chief lieutenants was murdered, and Stalin used this as a pretext to put an end to all criticism. His secret police arrested everybody suspected of being against him. Tens of thousands of Russians were imprisoned, sent to Siberia, or killed. A number of important men in the Communist party itself were charged with treason and shot. A wave of terror swept the country. People were so afraid of spies that they no longer dared open their mouths to say a word about politics. Every man suspected his neighbor of being a government agent.

STALIN'S DEAL WITH HITLER

In 1939 the war clouds hung heavy over Europe. Stalin foresaw that England and France would soon fight Germany. Most people thought that he was going to join in the war, and that he would be against Germany, because Hitler's government was

an open enemy of Russia and of Communism. For a while, Stalin encouraged England and France to believe that he would fight on their side. But he did not trust them any more than they trusted him. Suddenly it was announced that Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia had signed a treaty, and had promised that neither would attack the other.

This treaty left England and France to fight Germany alone. In every country, idealistic people who had been friendly to Soviet Russia felt that Stalin had betrayed them. But this deal between Stalin and Hitler was not really a pact between friends. It was only a truce between enemies. Both had something to gain by pretending to be on good terms.

Once Hitler was sure that Russia would not attack him, he told his generals to invade Poland. When the Polish army had been crushed by the Germans, the Russians marched in from their side, and occupied about half of Poland. About the same time, Stalin seized three small countries on Russia's western frontier—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. All over the world people began to say, "While Germany is fighting England and France, Russia is really winning the war without bloodshed."

Next, Stalin turned to Finland and demanded certain territories from the Finns. When they refused, strong Russian armies attacked, and, after months of fighting, Finland had to agree to Stalin's harsh terms.

HITLER TURNS ON STALIN

When Hitler's fierce war against France and England exploded in western Europe, Stalin watched carefully. He hoped that if England and France and Germany bled each other white,

Soviet Russia would be able to spread her power farther and farther. The rapid German victory in France did not please him at all, for he knew that Hitler, if easily victorious in the west, might attack Russia in spite of the nonaggression pact.

And that, of course, is what happened. In 1941, German armies swept into Russia. For a time it seemed that nothing could stop them. But, as Napoleon had learned, the Russians are hard fighters when they must defend their own land.

Moreover, America was anxious to see Hitler defeated, for he was an enemy of democracy and of the United States. So we helped the Russians by sending them airplanes, tanks, guns, and supplies. To Hitler's surprise and anger, his forces were turned back at the gates of Moscow, and then crushed in the bloody battle of Stalingrad. Finally the Germans began a long and costly retreat to their own country—like Napoleon's army before them.

THE YALTA CONFERENCE

As the Second World War approached its end, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill began to ask themselves what Stalin would do after peace was made. They realized that his troops, hot on the heels of the Germans, would soon occupy many countries in eastern Europe. Would he force these countries to become Communistic? In an effort to prevent this, Roosevelt and Churchill arranged to meet with the Soviet leader at the Russian resort of Yalta, on the Black Sea. There these three famous war leaders came together, early in 1945.

Roosevelt and Churchill began by asking Stalin to give free-

dom to the countries which had been occupied by Russian troops. Stalin agreed. For at this time he was anxious to get something from the United States and England, whose armies had occupied western Germany. Stalin said that Russia ought to be given a large number of German factories, in order to replace Russian factories which Hitler had destroyed. And he also demanded billions of dollars' worth of other "reparations" from Germany.

Roosevelt and Churchill felt that it was important not to strip Germany bare, for fear that the German people might starve and become Communistic. They were polite, but they let Stalin see that they did not like his idea.

That was when Stalin stopped pretending to be friendly to his wartime allies. Although he promised to help America and England fight Japan, in return he demanded important territories in China. And immediately after the Yalta Conference, he broke his pledge to give freedom to Poland, Rumania, Hungary, and other countries. Soviet troops settled down and turned these nations into mere satellites of Russia, with puppet governments. Thousands of Poles and Hungarians who were against Communism were killed, or sent into Russia, where they became virtual slaves of the Soviet government.

THE COLD WAR

That was in 1945. It was then that America and England turned against Stalin's Russia, and the long war of nerves known as the "Cold War" began. This was a struggle of diplomats, spies, money, and propaganda. At first, Russia scored heavily, for throughout Europe and Asia there was great misery, and Communism thrives on misery. Russian Communists worked hand