

COMPASS

MUNIST LEAGUE

THE MYTH OF STALIN'S 'DEMORALISATION' IN 1941

INTRODUCTION

In his secret speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev alleged that, following the German attack upon the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin 'became for a long time inactive' as a result of 'demoralisation':

"After the first severe disaster and defeat at the front, Stalin thought that this was the end. In one of his speeches in those days he said: 'All that Lenin created we have lost forever' . . .

After this Stalin for a long time actually . . . ceased to do anything whatever" . . .

(Nikita S. Khrushchev: 'The Secret Speech to the Closed Session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union'; Nottingham; 1976; p. 53).

Stalin's Appointment Diary

However, new material emanating recently from the former Soviet Union demonstrates that

" . . . far from disappearing and hiding either in his private apartments in the Kremlin or to his dacha at Kuntsevo, certainly during the first week of the Soviet-German War, Stalin would appear to have stuck to a very arduous work routine, displaying little of the panic and fear that is generally attributed to him, both by previous Western and Russian historians".

(Steven J. Main: 'Stalin in June 1941: A Comment on Cynthia Roberts', in: 'Europe-Asia Studies', Volume 48, No. 5 (July 1996); p. 837).

Steven Main, of the University of Edinburgh, who has recently researched Stalin's appointments diaries for the period concerned, testifies that these diaries show that

" . . . On the very first day of the war (22 June). Stalin's official working day began at 05.45 and ended at 16.45. . .

Stalin held meetings with a variety of senior Soviet government and military figures, including Molotov (People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs), Timoshenko (People's Commissar for Defence), Zhukov (Chief of Staff of the Red Army), Kuznetsov (Commander of both North Caucasus and Baltic Military Districts), and Shaposhnikov (Deputy People's Commissar for Defence). All in all, on the very first day of the attack, Stalin held meetings with over 15 individual members of the Soviet government and military apparatus".

(Steven J. Main: *ibid.*; p. 837, citing 'Izvestiya TsK KPSS', Volume 6, 1990; p. 216-22).

However, according to Marshal Georgi Zhukov, on the first day of the war Stalin's working day was even longer than was shown in his appointments diary. Zhukov relates in his memoirs that he spoke with Stalin on the telephone at thirty minutes after midnight:

"Everything was now pointing to the fact that German forces were moving up to the frontier. At 30 minutes past midnight we notified Stalin. Stalin inquired whether the directive had been sent to all districts. I replied in the affirmative".

(Georgi Zhukov: 'The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov'; London; 1971; p. 234).

And then, at 3. 30 a.m., Zhukov ordered Stalin to be awakened:

"At 3. 30 a.m. . . .the Commissar of Defence ordered me to phone Stalin. I start calling . . . Finally, I heard the sleep-dulled voice of the general on duty in the security section. I ask him to call Stalin on the phone.

About three minutes later Stalin picked up the receiver".

(Georgi Zhukov: *ibid.*; p. 235).

The appointments diary further reveals that during the opening week of the war

". . . . Stalin's officially recorded shortest working day was 24 June, lasting a little over five hours, but this followed a working day (23 June) that apparently fell just short of 24 hours -- 22 hours and 35 minutes!".

(Steven J. Main: *op. cit.*; p. 837, citing: 'Izvestia TsK KPSS', Volume 6, 1990, p. 217).

Similarly, on 25/26 June,

". . . . Stalin is on record as having 24 hours of meetings".

(Steven J. Main: *ibid.*; p. 837, citing 'Izvestia TsK KPSS', Volume 6, 1990, p. 218-19).

On both 26 and 27 June

". . . his recorded working days ran to a little over ten hours each and, possibly as a result of this physically and mentally punishing schedule, his working day for 28 June again lasted a little over 5 hours".

(Steven J. Main: *ibid.*; p. 837, citing 'Izvestiya TsK KPSS', Volume 6, 1990, p. 218-19).

Thus, in sum total, of 168 hours (representing the entire week 22-28 June inclusive)

". . . Stalin is officially recorded as holding meetings totalling 88 hours and 40 minutes in duration".

(Steven J. Main: *ibid.*; p. 837, citing: Colonel-General Yu. Gorkov: 'Verkhovnyi I Stavka', in: 'Krasnaya zvezda', 21 October 1995).

In overall terms,

". . . Stalin held 158 meetings, involving 45 named senior government and military figures during this entire period".

(Steven J. Main: *ibid.*; p. 837, citing: Colonel-General Yu. Gorkov: *ibid.*).

Thus, as attested by, amongst others, Molotov:

"It is wrong to say he (Stalin - ed.) was confused; he was worried, but he did not show it . . . To say that he was not worried would be ridiculous. But writers portray him in a way that he wasn't, like a repentant sinner! This is, of course, absurd. During all this time, as always, he worked, he did not lose control of himself and he certainly did not lose the power of speech".

(Steven J. Main: *ibid.*; p. 838, citing Feliks Chuev: 'Sto sorok besed s Molotovym'; in: 'Kommunist voruzhennykh sil', Volume 9, 1991; p. 62-63).

Main sums up his researches as follows:

“Thus, judging by his appointments diary, as well as the statements of his contemporaries, the important measures adopted by both the party and the state, etc., the view that Stalin locked himself away for any length of time during this critical opening period of the Soviet-German War would appear to be no longer tenable”.

(Steven J. Main: *ibid.*; p. 838).

CONCLUSION

Khrushchev's story to the effect that Stalin was 'demoralised' and 'inactive' during the first period of the Soviet-German War cannot be reconciled with known facts, and must be dismissed as false political propaganada of the Soviet revisionists, part of a campaign designed to discredit Stalin and prepare the ground for departures from the Marxist-Leninist path with which Stalin was associated.

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