

†An exciting picture of the Red Dictator.

STALIN — THE ENIGMA

THE only man in Europe who could theoretically afford to give up territory and keep enough to spare is Josef Stalin, the Russian dictator. One day the Soviet may be called upon to help provide "living space" for the land-hungry nations, for Adolf Hitler's published plan is to expand his Reich ultimately to include the Soviet Ukraine. But the Red Dictator is still an enigma.

A British writer with much first-hand knowledge of Russia but little sympathy for the Bolsheviks is Stephen Graham. In a book he recently wrote, Graham considers Stalin to be in some respects a greater man than Lenin. But he comes from Georgia, a little country whose only important figure in history before Stalin was a legendary queen, dark Tamara, who entertained and murdered her lovers in a castle in the Gorge of Dariel. Even then, Georgians were not easily wooed.

But Stalin does not look a typical Georgian, a member of a race which produces the world's most

handsome men, and rather squat, unexciting women. He is short, fleshy, muscular. His thick curved eyebrows are associated by Graham with an "oriental haggler and bargainer."

In 1907, Stalin visited London to join Lenin at a party conference. Lenin was impressed by the adventurous young man from the mountains, and took him into the central committee of the party against the will of other prominent revolutionaries. In fact, it was not always Lenin who got on well with Stalin, while the other revolutionary leaders did not think much of the Georgian. Graham describes Stalin at that time in these words:

"He was dirty and untidy in his dress and habits. His personality seemed Asiatic and greasy. They did not like his Georgian accent and his dog-like devotion to Lenin. Doubtless no-one looked upon him as a coming leader.

"That is a curiosity of Stalin's career. Until he actually won everything and became Dictator of

Russia, most ambitious revolutionaries thought him a man in a secondary role. Zinovieff called him a Caucasus monkey with yellow eyes. To Trotsky he was merely a native, one of the savages who live in the Caucasus. For Trotsky had a Jewish pride in being Western and civilised."

Repeatedly sent to prison and repeatedly escaping, Stalin finally arrived in Petrograd in 1917 to find the revolution well under way. In spite of all claims made by Stalinists, Graham thinks that in the final seizing of power by the Bolsheviks he played a secondary part.

In 1921 when Lenin's health began to give way, the leader felt the need of a strong man as secretary of the party, to handle the hundred small matters which were continually referred to him. At that time the secretaryship was no key-post. Trotsky did not want it. He agreed with Lenin that Stalin whom he still underrated should be appointed.

"The new cook will prepare us some peppery dishes," said Lenin.

Trotsky shrugged his shoulders.

In May, 1922, Lenin had a stroke and lost the use of his right arm and left leg. His doctors said that even if he did not die speedily,

he would soon be rendered quite helpless.

In the rivalry which ensued among the leaders, Stalin played off Trotsky, Zinovieff and Kame-neff against each other. He shrewdly intrigued for power. His position as secretary of the party in which he could pick out men for preferment was of great help to him.

Stalin made rapid progress, but there was one unexpected interruption. Lenin suddenly made a partial recovery. "He came like a ghost to trouble the ways of the living," says Graham and thinks the rival leaders must have been mightily disquieted. "It was as if a dying king had struggled into the next room and found his sons trying on his crown."

But Lenin could not do very much. He was confined to his room. The Trotskyist party, acting with the help of Lenin's wife, tried to persuade him to oust the Georgian. Stalin's position was in danger, but before the fatal step was taken Lenin became paralysed. "He was now a living corpse. He babbled incoherently, with saliva trickling down his chin. A hell was provided for him. He could read and understand and hear, but

he could not say or act."

When Lenin died, Graham claims, he left behind a "last testament." It was not a bequest of his worldly goods, but some attempt to dispose of his political power. Graham makes the accusation against the leaders of the Communist Party that they destroyed it by mutual consent. "They made his tomb a place of pilgrimage, but they destroyed his testament."

In the long struggle that followed, Stalin won against Trotsky and his friends. Trained for priesthood, he converted Bolshevism into a rigid creed. He deified Lenin.

He now had his country seat or summer residence. He lived at Gorki in the house where Lenin died, outside Moscow, a fine white house with Greek columns. Inside were white-walled rooms, pictures in gilded frames, armchairs and sofas upholstered in white and gold, all the bric-a-brac of former bourgeois luxury. Stalin did not have it removed. It did not interest him.

For a time he tried to learn English, but gave it up, finding it

too difficult. Sometimes he would play the pianola which had some fascination for him. In imitation of Lenin he played chess.

In the winter the Dictator lives in the Kremlin, in a little house of four sparsely furnished rooms. He sits down to dinner in the afternoon and to supper in the evening with his new wife and his children. There are seldom any visitors at these meals. Stalin eats and drinks and says little. He does not discuss politics with his wife or tell her the events of the day. When the meal is over he moves back in his chair, lights his pipe and seems to fall into a reverie. "No one," says Graham, "knows whether on these occasions he is thinking of affairs of State or merely enjoying the warmth of his digestive processes."

Stalin's real problem, Graham thinks, is this: "It is better to have Germany and Italy embroiled with France and Britain than with Russia. How is one to handle the machine of militarism so that it will fire upon the West instead of the East?"—*Condensed from News Review.*

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