

THE HORROR, THE HORROR

Lessons from a Master

Here begins the Great Game.

-Kim, Rudyard Kipling

by Victoria Wilson



His very existence was improbable, inexplicable, and altogether bewildering. He was an insoluble problem. It was inconceivable how he had existed, how he had succeeded in getting as far, how he had managed to remain . . . His was an impenetrable darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines.

Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad

Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria (March 29, 1899 — December 23, 1953) - - the man who controlled the entire apparatus of state security under Joseph Stalin. . . called by Stalin to take over the NKVD, becoming master of the midnight arrest, lord of the Siberian concentration camps and mines, ruler of the Georgian G.P.U. as one of Stalin's regents. Beria, (Vyacheslav M.) Molotov and (Georgy M). Malenkov (no it wasn't a comedy act from Ninotchka) were the troika under Stalin. . . Beria was brought to Moscow to become a member of the Politburo, eventually put in charge of the development of atomic energy as the US was developing the bomb. THE N.K.V.D. was split into three ministries all under Beria - - the M.V.D. (responsible for 'internal order' and forced labor); the M.G.B. (overseeing espionage and counter-espionage), and the M.G.K. (inspection rights over the whole apparatus of government).

Beria, short, bald, thick-necked, with pince-nez and fedora, the mouth tight and thin, the manner cold, abstract, the aloofness of a disassociated fanatic. . . responsible for the slave labor of millions who lived and labored under conditions close to hell on earth. His traits: versatility, mercilessness, shrewdness and sychophantic loyalty to Stalin.

Beria was considered one of the most vicious and mysterious figures of Stalin's reign. He joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917, received an architectural degree from a technical college in Baku (Azerbaijan) in 1919 and soon was drawn into the intelligence and counterintelligence operations

of the 'Cheka' – the Bolshevik secret police, in 1923 becoming the head of Georgia's Cheka division.

He blackmailed officials in order to gain political backing and promotions, setting up his superiors with married women, exposing their affairs, causing their ruination and taking their posts after they resigned in disgrace. Wherever he went, people died or were reported missing. . .

Beria was viewed by many including his party comrades as not just a monster, but as a vicious sexual predator, reportedly kidnapping young girls on the streets of Moscow, raping and sodomizing them and threatening their families to keep quiet.

He used his position as chief of the secret police to succeed Stalin as sole dictator but by 1953 he was outmaneuvered and defeated by an anti-Beria coalition (led by Malenkov, Molotov, and Nikita S. Khrushchev). Beria was arrested, stripped of his government and party posts, accused of being an "imperialist (British) agent" and of conducting "criminal anti-party and anti-state activities," and along with six accomplices, was tried and convicted of high treason and executed. In the official version the execution took place in December 1953, but it is said that he was shot dead during his arrest as early as July.

**He considered the years to come when Kim would have been entered
and made to the Great Game that never ceases day and night. . .**

—*Kim*, Rudyard Kipling

Without the least excuse
Or the slightest provocation,
May I fondly introduce,
For your mental delectation,
The names that always give me a concussion,

The names of those composers known as Russian.
There's Malichevsky, Rubinstein, Arensky, and Tschaikowsky,
Sapelnikoff, Dimitrieff, Tscherepnin, Kryjanowsky,
Godowsky, Arteiboucheff, Moniuszko, Akimenko,
Solovieff, Prokofieff, Tiomkin, Korestchenko.
There's Glinka, Winkler, Bortniansky, Rebikoff, Ilyinsky,
There's Medtner, Balakireff, Zolotareff, and Kvoschinsky.
And Sokoloff and Kopyloff, Dukelsky, and Klenowsky,
And Shostakovitsch, Borodine, Glière, and Nowakofski.
There's Liadoff and Karganoff, Markievitch, Pantschenko
And Dargomyzski, Stcherbatcheff, Scriabine, Vassilenko,
Stravinsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Mussorgsky, and Gretchaninoff
And Glazounoff and Caesar Cui, Kalinikoff, Rachmaninoff,
Stravinsky and Gretchnaninoff,
Rumshinsky and Rachmaninoff,
I really have to stop, the subject has been dwelt upon enough!

—Tschaikowsky (and Other Russians) Lyrics Ira Gershwin
Music Kurt Weill performed by Danny Kaye, *Lady in the Dark*, 1941