

PURIM 1953: THE RISE AND FALL OF A MODERN DAY HAMAN

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Reinitz

*Another chapter of R' Hillel Zaltzman's memoirs * A most frightening period in our history and the amazing denouement with the death of Stalin on Motzaei Purim after the Rebbe's heavenly intervention on Purim 1953*
Part 1 of 2*

Every year, as Purim approaches, I think back to the fear and dread that were our daily fare in the days before Purim 1953. It was the height of the Doctors' Plot and we breathed a sigh of relief when we got the news that our mighty enemy, Stalin, had died. His death meant the end of the doctors' trial and that the threat that hovered over us and millions of Jews in the Soviet Union was eliminated.

So that a modern-day reader will be able to understand the background of the Doctors' Plot, we have to go back in time to my early childhood years. In those days, Stalin carried out the "Great Purge" in which he had nearly two million people murdered to establish his control of the Soviet Union. All opposition or perceived opposition

was quashed.

Stalin was aided in his reign of terror by his secret police which was called the Cheka at first and later became known as the GPU, NKVD and KGB. These purges included arrests, torture, forced labor in the gulag, exile, execution, imprisonment, and show trials.

Between the years 1936 and 1938, the Minister of the Secret Police, Yezhov, arrested religious people, Jews and non-Jews. Many Lubavitcher Chassidim were arrested during that terrible time and shot to death in the cellars of the KGB on Lubianka Street (a name mentioned with dread; people were afraid to go anywhere near it) or sent to labor camps in Siberia. All of them were arrested under Paragraph 58 which forbade 'anti-



Soviet' activity.

By the outbreak of World War II, Stalin had annihilated most of the Bolsheviks who had played a prominent role during the Russian Revolution or in Lenin's government. Only two of them remained – Vyacheslav Molotov and Stalin himself.

At the same time as the purges were being carried out, Stalin consolidated his leadership by cultivating a cult in which he was worshipped in a manner unprecedented in the history of the modern world, perhaps even of all mankind. Stalin had himself

highlighted as a hero, the creator, the father of his nation.

One of the methods used was visual propaganda. The number of portraits, posters, pictures and statues representing Stalin was virtually uncountable. An entire industry was devoted to producing portraits of Stalin. Writers and poets, movie producers and artists were directed by the government to produce works that conveyed four main messages about Stalin: As a father, creator, hero, and powerful leader. The newspapers published only laudatory articles about him. An entire generation of children was

raised with blind admiration for this unparalleled monster.

In the midst of the World War II, when the enemy had invaded deep into Russia and the number of dead became known, the artificially induced personality worship which had until then been dictated from 'on high' was transformed into a real and heartfelt source of hope for the

Below: The Rebbe put his hands together to form a triangle and announced three times, "Hoo-ra, hoo-ra, hoo-ra" at the Purim farbrengen 1953. (Thanks to Rabbi Levi Goldstein for this picture from his family archives)



Within a short time, all the Jews whose names appeared on the list were arrested and sent to labor camps in Siberia. Many of them disappeared and till today it is not known where they are buried.

public at large. If there was one man who could save the country, it was Stalin.

Stalin took the highest military designation for himself, Major-General, but he did not suffice with this title since there were other generals and so he took the unique title of Generalissimo. When his own son was taken prisoner by the Germans and the Germans offered to exchange him for one of their field marshals, he turned them down and said he wouldn't exchange a young officer for a general.

STALIN PERSECUTES HIS LOYAL JEWISH SUBJECTS

At the end of World War II, Stalin presented himself as the celebrated war leader who led the Soviet Union and saved it from the Germans. Then he turned his attention back to eliminating his enemies from within. He gradually became paranoid and murdered anyone who was suspected of being less than absolutely loyal to him.

An example of his paranoia of even his own people, were the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, an organization which was founded during the war in order to help the Soviet Union in its war against Nazi Germany by gaining the support of world Jewry. To establish the committee, they joined together high-ranking Jewish members of the Soviet government, along with unwitting Jewish leading lights who fell into the Soviet trap. The organization's goal was to advance the interests of the Soviet Union during the war with the help of propaganda which was based, supposedly on the condition of Jews in the Soviet Union.

After the war, Stalin used the members of the committee to further the battle against those Jews who wanted escape the Soviet Union. The members of the committee, some of whom were Yiddishists, published a newspaper in Yiddish called *Einikait* (Unity) in which they wrote hateful articles against Jews who wanted to leave the Soviet Union. These Jews were referred to as reactionaries and cosmopolitans.

After a few years though, Stalin became suspicious of the members of this organization, all of whom were Jews. He dispersed the members with the excuse that it had turned into a center of "anti-Soviet propaganda." The chairman, Shlomo Michaels (Vofsi), the artistic director of the Jewish theater in Moscow and one of the greatest Jewish actors, was murdered by the Soviets in a staged car accident in a dark alleyway of Minsk in 1948. Over the course of the next year, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was disbanded and its members were arrested. After years of interrogations and torture, the death penalty was decreed for thirteen of them.

THE AUTONOMOUS JEWISH REGION

Stalin supported the idea of a Jewish state but fought Jews who requested to go there. Stalin's position was that anti-Semitism can't be prevented in capitalist countries and therefore, one could understand the need for a Jewish state. However, since a communist country has no anti-Semitism, contact between Jews in communist countries and Israel is unacceptable.

When the first Israeli diplomatic mission arrived in Moscow, the Jews of Russia welcomed them joyfully. The Jews, most of whom had lost many relatives in the Holocaust, hoped that the State of Israel would be able to help them out of Russia. When Golda Meir, who headed the delegation, went to the main shul in Moscow on Archipova Street, thousands of Jews approached her with tears of joy and asked that she help them make aliya.

When Golda Meir brought up the subject with Stalin, he asked her to give him a list of people who wanted to leave. In their naivety, the delegation prepared a list and gave it to Stalin's office. To their enormous dismay, within a short time, all the Jews whose names appeared on the list were arrested and sent to labor camps in Siberia. Many of them disappeared and till today it is not known where they are buried.

At that time, Stalin tried to advance the idea of an autonomous Jewish region. The autonomous region was actually started twenty years earlier in reaction to two threats to the Soviet Union: the Jews were a threat to atheism and the Zionists who were part of a nationalist movement were a threat to the international Soviet vision. The solution, in the communists' opinion was to establish a Jewish region which would provide Jews with a national homeland, though not in Israel, where the language

would be Yiddish, not Hebrew.

Efforts were made to promote emigration to the area. Posters were made and forms dropped from the air over areas where Jews lived. Books were written in Yiddish about the socialist utopia. The government even produced a movie in Yiddish called "Those Who Seek Happiness" about a family which left the United States because of the poor economy and arrived in this region.

The propaganda was so effective that even thousands of Jews who weren't Soviets emigrated there including hundreds who had lived in Palestine. At a certain point the number of Jews in the region reached a peak of about a third of the local population. Between 1945 and 1948 the total Jewish population was about 30,000.

With the founding of the State of Israel, Stalin went back to his idea

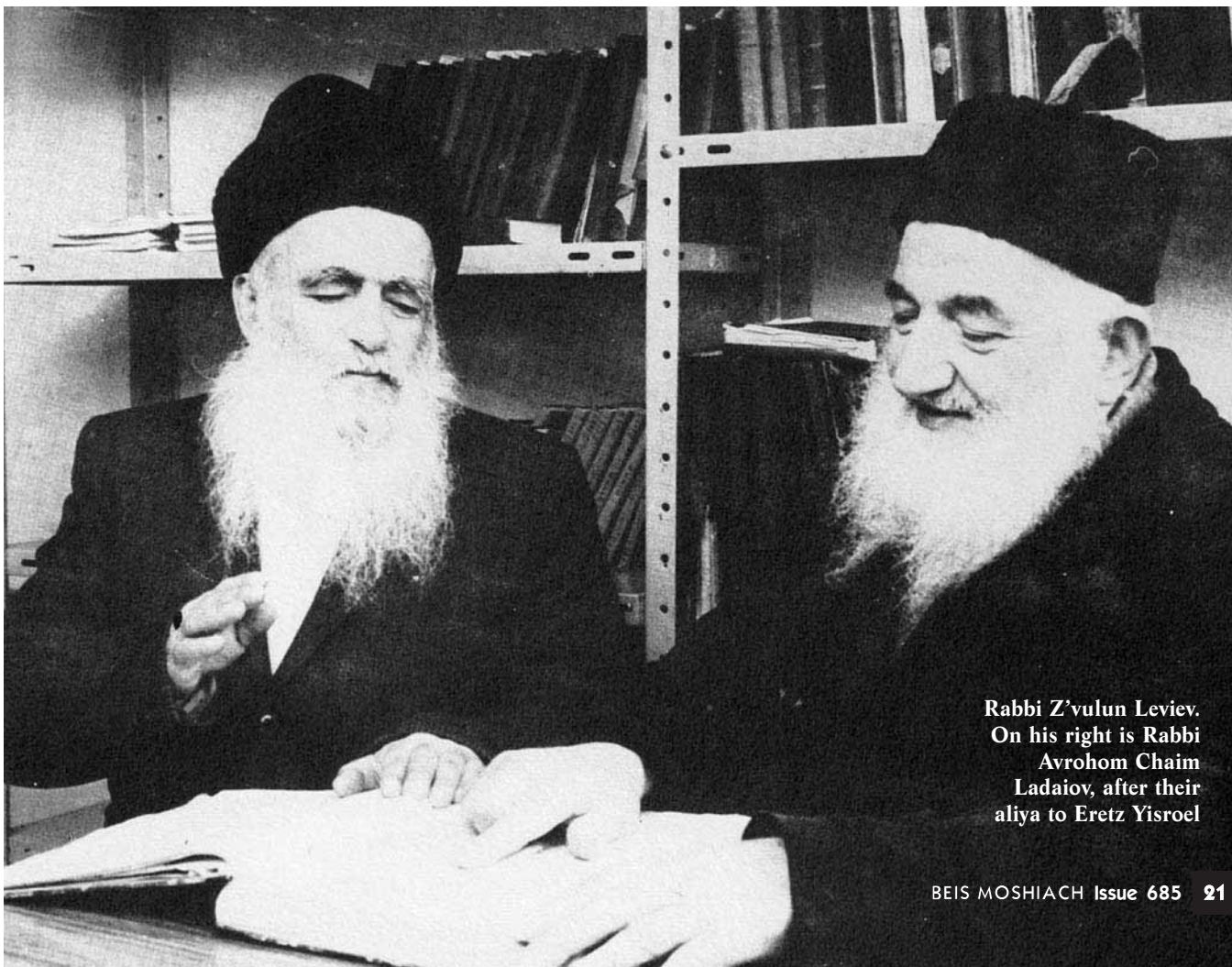
of an autonomous Jewish area. The government advertised that whoever went there would receive a farm animal for free and a gift of 18,000 rubles. Lubavitchers joked and said that was the best case scenario, but in fact those Jews would be lucky to receive a Jewish burial.

SHOCKING ARRESTS IN SAMARKAND

Unlike the great purges that took place in the years prior to World War II that were directed at the general population, a wave of arrests between the years 1948-1953 targeted Jews, religious and irreligious.

Where we were in Samarkand, there were many arrests of Jews whose only crime was that they were associated with Chabad Chassidim. That was enough to earn one the title of counter-revolutionary.

Eventually, they approached his hiding place and stabbed him in the head. It was only by a miracle that he wasn't killed by the bayonet. He shouted out in pain and that is how his hiding place was discovered.



Rabbi Z'vulun Leviev.
On his right is Rabbi
Avrohom Chaim
Ladaiov, after their
aliya to Eretz Yisroel

R' Simcha Gorodetzky, who was sent to Samarkand by the Rebbe Rayatz, sent bachurim from there to learn in Tomchei T'mimim yeshivos. After they returned to their communities they taught Torah and Judaism in Samarkand and its environs. Many of these Chassidim were arrested.

One of those arrested was Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Ladaiov who, during the war, built a mikva in the cellar of his home. The mikva was used by the many refugees who came to the city and was known as "Avrohom Chaim's Mikva." After the war, when the persecutions began against the Jews, R' Avrohom Chaim was afraid and he removed the water from the mikva. He covered the pit with blankets and shmattes.

Apparently someone tattled to the KGB and their agents went to arrest him. They found him sitting at the table in his home. Since the arrests were accompanied by massive propaganda in the newspapers, the KGB searched for a way to present him as a dangerous criminal who was fleeing the law. They took him down to the cellar, removed some of the blankets, put him in the pit and covered him with the blankets and they photographed him. In his file appeared the picture of a traitorous Jew who tried to hide from the law.

A horrifying thing happened when they went to arrest R' Z'vulun Leviev, the grandfather of the philanthropist Lev Leviev. A member of the household noticed the police approaching the house and R' Z'vulun quickly hid in a hiding place that he had prepared long before. One of the walls of the house was a double wall and a person was able to hide there.

It seems that whoever informed on him supplied the KGB with the information about the hiding place, for when the policemen didn't find him, they began to poke the walls with their bayonets. Eventually, they approached his hiding place and

stabbed him in the head. It was only by a miracle that he wasn't killed by the bayonet. He shouted out in pain and that is how his hiding place was discovered.

I remember how they brought him to jail. At the time, we all lived in the Jewish quarter in the old city. It was like a closed ghetto and everybody knew about everybody. When they came to arrest someone, they came with many men and began to search and the entire procedure took about two hours. During this time, the news spread throughout the Jewish quarter and



hundreds of Jews, men, women, and children would show up. When they found the person at home, everybody would cry, for they knew what the end would be.

Even according to what we were used to in those days, with arrests happening every day, his arrest was a terrible sight. Blood flowed from his temple as two KGB men dragged him and put him in the black truck. Policemen armed with rifles stood on either side of him.

In those dark days they also arrested Rabbi Mulle Chizkiyahu who was the only Chassidic rav of

the Bucharian Jews; the shochet Mulle Yosef, and others.

They once arrested a blind Jew, a very simple person whose name was Rebbi (a common name among Bucharian Jews). When he was interrogated, he maintained that he was a simple person who couldn't even learn on his own and why were they accusing him of activities against the government?

We don't care, said the interrogators. We know that you say the T'hillim after the davening, one of the enactments of Rabbi Schneersohn, and that's enough to incriminate you for associating with a counter-revolutionary organization.

My uncle, a shochet named R' Chaim Boruch Duchman, was loved by all and when they found out that the KGB had their eye on him, some local Jews went to warn him to run, otherwise he would be arrested. He fled immediately and hid in another neighborhood of the city. He remained hidden there until Stalin died, a year and a half later.

The fear of the unknown was so powerful that upon the death of R' Moshe Yachovov, a Bucharian Chabad Chassid and a friend of R' Mendel Futerfas, my mother said: R' Moshe is a lucky man. He died in his bed, was given a Jewish burial, his children accompanied him to his resting place and they can visit his grave. As for the dozens of Jews who were arrested, nobody knows what will happen to them. We can assume that they will be shot or die of forced labor in Siberia and nobody will know where they are buried.

In the end, as will be related, the situation changed for the better with the death of Stalin, and most of those who were arrested were released and returned home. That's when my mother repeated the aphorism – you can return from anywhere but not from there ...

[To be continued be"H]

PURIM 1953: THE RISE AND FALL OF A MODERN DAY HAMAN

Prepared for publication by Avrohom Reinitz

*Another chapter of R' Hillel Zaltzman's memoirs * A most frightening period in our history and the amazing denouement with the death of Stalin on Motzaei Purim after the Rebbe's heavenly intervention on Purim 1953* Part 2 of 2*

[Continued from last issue]

THE BEGINNING OF THE DOCTORS' PLOT

On 26 Teives, 5713, the following report, titled "Vicious Spies and Killers under the Mask of Academic Physicians," appeared in the communist newspaper *Pravda*, courtesy of the official news agency of the Soviet Union, TASS:

A terrorist group of doctors, uncovered some time ago by organs of state security, have been planning to shorten the lives of leaders of the Soviet Union by means of medical sabotage.

Investigations have established that participants in the terrorist group, exploiting their position as doctors and abusing the trust of their patients, deliberately and

viciously undermined their patients' health by making incorrect diagnoses, and then killed them with fraudulent and vile treatments. Covering themselves with the noble and merciful calling of physicians, men of science, these fiends and killers dishonored the holy banner of science. Having taken the path of monstrous crimes, they defiled the honor of scientists.

... The majority of the participants of the terrorist group... were bought by American spies. They were recruited by a branch-office of American intelligence — the international Jewish bourgeois-nationalist agency called the "Joint." The filthy face of this Zionist spy organization, covering up their vicious actions under the mask of charity, is now completely

revealed...

Unmasking the gang of poison-doctors struck a blow against the international Jewish Zionist organization.... Now all can see what sort of philanthropists and "friends of peace" hid beneath the sign-board of the "Joint."

... The investigation will conclude shortly.

The names of nine people who had been arrested were listed, all of whom were top doctors in Russia at the time. Six of them were Jewish.

Initially, thirty-seven were arrested, but the number quickly grew into hundreds. Scores of Soviet Jews were promptly dismissed from their jobs, arrested, sent to labor camps or executed. This was accompanied by show trials and anti-Semitic propaganda in the state-run mass media. This libel later came to be known as "The Doctors' Plot."

The newspapers and radio reported this along with a commentary of incitement against the Jews of the Soviet Union and Jews worldwide. The commentators and the media called upon the public to be wary of the "enemy of the people" and asked all citizens to be on the alert for "terrorists in the guise of doctors."

In all sorts of public venues – schools, universities, factories and army camps, and foremost, in all medical institutions – there were “explanatory meetings.” The speakers, members of the party and secret police, defamed the “terrorist doctors” and called upon the public to guard against additional fraudulent doctors.

The anti-Semitic rhetoric intensified. Day after day there were articles in the major newspapers about robberies, corruption, and swindling. The common denominator in all of this was that all of the suspects in these crimes had Jewish names. At first, the newspapers didn’t refer to Jews explicitly. They used euphemisms such as “rootless cosmopolitans,” “bourgeois,” “Zionist agents,” etc. Within a short time though, they removed their kid gloves and began writing explicitly: “we mean the

Stalin’s timetable for this expulsion was as follows: On 18 Adar the doctors would be tried and a week later, 25 Adar, they would be executed.

Immediately after that, the expulsion plan would begin to be implemented...

Jews, reactionary Jews who work for Zionist, capitalist purposes,” etc.

This massive propaganda campaign soon began to affect the Russian nation, who believed the party line. Non-Jewish patients were afraid to be treated by Jewish doctors. Numerous Jews were fired from their positions, especially in institutes of science, universities and, of course, medical centers.

Our fears heightened as the incitement grew. We anxiously

awaited the show trial. There was a very serious fear that when the arrested doctors would be incriminated – and we had no doubt that they would – the Jews of Russia would be in grave danger of pogroms far worse than those that were routine under the czar.

After Khrushchev rose to power,

Below: According to the testimony of Chassidim who were present at the farbrengen, like Rabbi Yosef Goldstein and Rabbi Pinchas Korf, this picture is from the Purim farbrengen of 1953.



The calculation was simple: a third would be killed by Russian murderers in the pogroms, a third would die on the trip to Siberia, and the final third would arrive at the barracks in Siberia.

minutes of all the secret meetings of the central communist party in Moscow were marked down in a small book. Copies of this book were sent to all the communist centers throughout Russia, where it was read at secret meetings.

Since my cousin, Yaakov Pill *a"h*, presented himself as a sworn communist, he was trusted and even allowed to take the book home for a night, to read at leisure. Whenever this book would reach the communist party center in Samarkand, Yaakov would invite us to his house to read it.

From these books we found out that the Doctors' Plot was the final component of Stalin's elaborate plan, which was organized down to the smallest details. The doctors would be incriminated, the public would be outraged, and at the last moment Father Stalin would come to the protection of the Jews. His protection would entail a mass exile of the Jews to Siberia.

Stalin's timetable for this expulsion was as follows: On March 5 (18 Adar) the doctors would be tried and a week later, March 12

(25 Adar), they would be executed. Immediately after that, the expulsion plan would begin to be implemented.

Two to three weeks before the designated expulsion date, dozens of trains were readied at stations in all the big cities in the Soviet Union, prepared to take Jews to Siberia. In clandestine areas in Siberia, concentration camps were quickly set up and 40,000 barracks were built to contain hundreds of thousands of Jews. The calculation was simple: a third would be killed by Russian murderers in the pogroms, a third would die on the trip to Siberia, and the final third would arrive at the barracks in Siberia.

As the date for the trial approached, we suffered more and more from insults and degradation. We were humiliated and persecuted wherever we went, on the street, at work, and by our neighbors. The antipathy reached a point that Jews refrained from going out on the street. When Jews were beaten on the street and police were called to intervene, they told the perpetrators, "Don't strike them now, for in a little while we'll be able to beat them publicly with full government support..."

My brother-in-law, Aryeh Leib, lived in Minsk. He was once taking the train and the goyim, noting his obvious Jewishness, mocked him. Nobody intervened on his behalf. When he tried to defend himself, an army officer grabbed him by the neck and threw him off the train.

Under these circumstances, every day seemed longer than a year. It was just a question of who would die when...

In February, 1953, a 15 kilogram bomb was planted at the Soviet embassy at 46 Rothschild Street in Tel Aviv. The building was greatly damaged. The Soviet Union reacted in a fury and cut off

diplomatic ties with Israel. The Russian papers publicized this prominently, adding fuel to the already blazing fire of hatred.

Another brainchild of Stalin, designed to fan the flames of Russian hatred, was narrowly avoided. Lazar Kaganovitz, the only Jew who served on the Politburo, Stalin's government in those days, was sent by the government on an official mission to Afghanistan. The pilot was given a secret order to fly the plane to Israel and to say that Kaganovitz decided to defect to the Zionist entity. Needless to say, such an incident would have caused unimaginable suffering for the Jews of Russia.

By a miracle, the plan was discovered by Kaganovitz's brother-in-law, Vyatsislav Molotov, who served as Russia's Foreign Minister. Family ties and Molotov's sense of justice outweighed political considerations, and he immediately called the airport and urgently asked for Kaganovitz.

Kaganovitz was already on his way to the plane when he was called to the phone. Molotov told him of Stalin's plot. Kaganovitz, one of the most loyal of Stalin's men, initially refused to believe him, but in the end he was afraid and he canceled the flight.

The Doctors' Trial was getting underway and the poisonous propaganda continued to spew forth. The feeling was that the Jews in Russia under Stalin were in great danger, with no positive resolution forthcoming. We all cried to our Father in Heaven.

UNUSUAL ACTIONS IN THE REBBE'S COURT

Of course, we in Russia had no idea what was going on in 770, but when we heard about it later, after leaving Russia, we realized that "Mordechai knew everything that had happened." The Nasi HaDor

and leader, the Rebbe, knew what was taking place secretly in the dictator's office and, like Mordechai HaTzaddik, he worked to pre-empt the evil decree through heavenly channels.

In hindsight, it is obvious that in those winter days of 5713, the Rebbe was aware of the terrible danger hovering over a large portion of our people. At the farbrengen of Shabbos, Parshas VaYeira, 20 Cheshvan, 5713 (1952), the Rebbe began to sing a new niggun that had never been sung at farbrengens before. In the middle of the singing portion of the farbrengen, between sichos, the Rebbe suddenly asked, "Does anyone here know how to sing, 'Ani Maamin'?"

One of the people present began to sing the famous niggun that Jews sang in the Holocaust, and the rest joined in. As soon as the niggun was begun, the Rebbe's face changed and he became very serious. He motioned with his hand that they should sing it forcefully and he too joined in. Those who were aware of the atmosphere among the Jews of Russia recognized the appropriateness of the niggun..

At farbrengens during that time, the Rebbe spoke a lot about the intensifying darkness of galus and about the special quality of the Jewish people which can overcome the darkness. Despite the fact that the Jewish people were under the control of the nations of the world, they had the ability not to be impressed by the concealment and to stand strong, weakening the klipa.

The Rebbe unexpectedly published a new maamer, "Hashem does not come with impossible tasks for His creations," on 21 Teives, 5713. The date was not a

special one in the calendar, but it was just a few days before the Doctors' Plot erupted. This maamer is about the mesirus nefesh of the Jewish people in a time when it is hard to keep Torah and mitzvos, and declares that if this is our lot in galus, then surely we have the ability to prevail.

Two days later, at the farbrengen of Shabbos, Parshas Shmos, 23 Teives, the Rebbe referred explicitly to Stalin in Russia and expressed amazement over the special Jews whose faithful resolve was ironclad. They had to hide in order to put on t'fillin, kept Shabbos despite the danger in losing their jobs, traveled great distances to immerse in a mikva, and studied Torah in cellars. Their commitment did not wane despite the poverty and the lack of food and shoes.

Then came the Purim farbrengen. On Tuesday, Motzaei Purim, a large crowd gathered to farbreng with the Rebbe. Dozens of Russian Jews, who had left the country just a few years before, were present. Some of them had sat in jail for long periods of time and had felt Stalin's iron fist. They and their friends could not help thinking of their brothers in captivity and terrible danger behind the Iron Curtain.

In the course of this very long farbrengen, the Rebbe said eleven sichos. He began with a deep maamer, based on the verse in Esther, "and he reared Hadassah." Then the Rebbe said sichos on relevant matters, with niggunim interspersed, as usual.

The hours flew by. Towards morning, the Rebbe began to relate a story:

"During the Russian Revolution, after the fall of the czar, the Rebbe Rashab told the Chassidim to take part in the elections. One loyal Chassid, who was completely removed from matters of this world and knew nothing about what was going on in the country, went to vote as the Rebbe had directed. Naturally, he first prepared himself by immersing in a mikva and putting on his gartel, as one should when carrying out the Rebbe's instruction.

"After he voted, as his friends told him to, he saw people standing and proclaiming, 'Hoo-ra,' and he stood there too, announcing 'Hoo-ra, hoo-ra, hoo-ra.'"

As he related this, the Rebbe put his hands together like a triangle (see picture) and, with a big smile, proclaimed "hoo-ra" three times.

The Rebbe then turned to his right and repeated the story, once again putting his hands together and proclaiming "hoo-ra" three times. Then he turned to his left and repeated it again, doing as the Chassid did.

The astonished crowd of Chassidim at the farbrengen realized that they were witnessing something beyond their earthly comprehension. Then the Rebbe's face grew serious once again and he began



Image from Chabad.org

A statue of Stalin toppled after the fall of communism

the second manner of that farbrengen, based on the verse in Esther, “therefore they called these days Purim, for the lot.”

WITHOUT REJOICING BUT WITH A SIGH OF RELIEF

Three days later, on 17 Adar, 1953, the Soviet radio announcer sorrowfully announced that Stalin was seriously ill and had lost consciousness. This official proclamation of Stalin’s illness was unusual for the Soviet Union, which had always refrained from announcing the illnesses of the top echelons. We suspected that Stalin had died, and the wording of the public announcement was to prepare the citizens of the country for the truth in order to prevent chaos. Only later was his death confirmed.

The next day the official announcement was made that Stalin, the wicked enemy of the Jews, had died. The top government radio announcer, Yuri Levitin, dramatically announced, “On the 9th of March, at 10:50, the heart of the First Secretary of the communist party of the Soviet Union, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Council, the Generalissimo Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, stopped beating.”

What caused Stalin’s sudden death? Like everything in those days, this was also murky. Some said he had had a stroke and he lingered for three days and then died. Some said he died in the midst of a psychotic episode, which occurred with some frequency in his later years. Some said he wanted to shoot the members of his government and they preempted him and eliminated him.

A confidante of Stalin, who had defected to England immediately upon Stalin’s death, reported in the

London Chronicle that Stalin had given Voroshilov, the Premier of the Soviet Union, a document decreeing that every Jew in the Soviet Union be exiled to Birobijan, where they would all be killed. His goal was to complete what Hitler had started.

Voroshilov took the paper from Stalin, read it, and threw it back in his face. Stalin, shocked and angered by his chutzpah, had a heart attack on the spot and died.

***Stalin had given
Voroshilov, the
Premier of the
Soviet Union, a
document
decreeing that
every Jew in the
Soviet Union be
exiled and killed.
Voroshilov took
the paper from
Stalin, read it,
and threw it back
in his face.***

Others said that Stalin had been poisoned by the head of the KGB, Beria, because senior government officials feared that an expulsion of the Jews would lead to a third world war and a probable US victory, which would completely undermine Russia.

Stalin’s death was not met with the joy that Haman’s death was received. The people were too stunned. Citizens of the Soviet

Union, who from their youngest years had been raised to sing and praise the “Sun of the Nations,” who were exposed daily to radio programs and newspaper articles that lauded Stalin and his personal concern for every citizen throughout the empire, found it hard to imagine how Russia could go on without him.

People believed that Stalin preserved peace in the world. The “Father of the Nations,” is how he was known. I remember a children’s song that described the residents of the empire asleep in their beds at night and from just one window did light shine for that is where Stalin sat, concerned about peace for all... In every book, no matter the topic, the author had to praise Stalin in the introduction for his contribution to the book. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be approved for printing and the author would be accused of treason.

Thus, despite the massive incitement campaign against the Jews perpetrated by Stalin, there were Jews who cried upon hearing of his demise. A woman who worked for my father tearfully complained, “We finally had someone who cared about us, and now G-d took him away too...”

After the initial shock, the Jews of Russia breathed a sigh of relief. They couldn’t imagine a better ending to the Doctors’ Plot.

On Chol HaMoed Pesach it was reported on the radio that the doctors had been released. The false witnesses who had incriminated the doctors had been sentenced to imprisonment and exile.

Though not every home had a radio in those days, our landlady did, so I was among the first to hear the good news. I ran to my uncle, R’ Boruch Duchman, and to our friends, the Mishulovins (who later became our mechutanim) and

announced the wonderful news.

My uncle Boruch said that the day would come when Stalin would be denounced and he would be thrown out of Lenin's mausoleum. It sounded like a wild dream, but only a few years later, Khrushchev revealed Stalin's atrocities and he was indeed thrown out. Forty years later, with the collapse of communism, all remaining statues of Stalin were removed from public places.

Following Stalin's death, the situation in Russia changed significantly. Many political prisoners were freed, including many Chassidim who had been exiled to camps in Siberia. Thus ended a terrible era in the lives of Russian Jewry.

THE REBBE ACKNOWLEDGES HIS ROLE

The Rebbe never explained the otherworldly events that took place at the Purim farbrengen in 1953. A sort of "acknowledgment" was given only forty years later, when that special maamer was edited by the Rebbe and reprinted. The Rebbe also edited the introduction to the kuntres, including the following:

"To mark the approaching days of Purim, we are publishing the maamer 'Al kein kar'u l'yamim ha'eila Purim,' which the Rebbe said at the Purim farbrengen of 5713. This is the second maamer said at the Purim farbrengen of that year, the recitation of which was apparently connected with the events taking place at that time

including the downfall of the ruler of that country who was an enemy of the Jews. This is according to what they understood at the time from the story that the Rebbe related, by way of introduction and in juxtaposition to saying this maamer, about the instruction of the Rebbe Rashab during the period of the Revolution after the fall of the czar."

The wondrous timing of Stalin's death, on Purim, the day the biblical arch-enemy of the Jews had his downfall, served to underscore the message of 'ba'yamim haheim b'z'man ha'zeh,' that just as in those days, so too in our times, a great miracle took place for the Jews of the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. 'Kein tihyeh lanu' – may we merit the same with Moshiach Now!

**"THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY
WILL REST UPON
THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL"**



WRITE YOUR OWN CREATIVE SHORT STORY.

WIN CASH PRIZES AND INTERNET POSTING

Submit entries by Lag B'Omer 2009

For entry details, visit www.globalenglish.info/MoshiachStory

FIRST-TIME WRITERS WELCOME

MOSHIACH AWARENESS FOUNDATION