

SECRET
STALIN - AND AFTER

NS 1022/4
NS 10110/53
NS 1015/19
NS 10110/59

The broadcast from Moscow in the early hours of Wednesday, 4th March which announced the serious illness of Marshal Stalin released a bombshell into international politics. Ever since that moment, Western observers have been trying to assess what will follow from the removal of this unique figure from the leadership of the U.S.S.R., and their appetite for speculation has been whetted by the recent dramatic changes in certain aspects of Soviet policy.

The questions which are thus raised are not, of course, likely to be answered in full for a very long time and much of the evidence which now presents itself appears to lack any connecting thread or even to be flatly contradictory. At best one can place the salient facts into what appears to be the correct order and hope that ^{some kind of} a general outline ~~at least~~ will emerge. It is with this object that the following article has been prepared and it gives [both] the background to the events of the weeks following Stalin's death as it appeared to Her Majesty's Ambassador in Moscow, [and the Foreign Office assessment of the new Soviet policies.]

(Secret)

Stalin's funeral took place on 9th March, some four days after the official date of his death. During these days his body had lain in state in the Hall of Columns, in an open coffin banked with flowers and wreaths, and illuminated by powerful searchlights beamed upon the catafalque. Two large orchestras, one on each side of the room, took it in turns to play suitable music and, for the last hour before the removal of the body, a choir of about one hundred young women dressed in black sang funeral dirges before the coffin of their dead leader.

To a Western observer the scene was sinister and barbaric and relieved by no religious atmosphere. Such as it was, however, it was not destined to be savoured by many ordinary Russians, for it soon became clear that an obviously pre-arranged plan had been put into effect for countering ^{any possible} disorder in the capital. Many hundreds of lorries were driven into Moscow and positioned front to back across the roads leading to the Hall of Columns and against these barricades were stationed large numbers of troops and auxiliaries. Great queues of people began to form up to pay their last respects to the Generalissimo but after hours of waiting and shuffling forward a few paces at a time they found that the head of the

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