

Stalin to head the Georgian Communist party in 1931, against the wishes of many of the Old Bolsheviks who had ruled Georgia for much of the previous decade. From 1932 until its abolition in 1937, Beria also chaired the highest party committee of the Transcaucasian Federation (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). He grew close to Stalin, who frequently vacationed in the Caucasus, and flattered him with a long speech, later a book, on Stalin's youthful leadership of the Transcaucasian Bolshevik organizations. A complex and sinister figure, Beria tried for a time to protect his party organization from the demands for blood from the center, but when Moscow warned that Transcaucasian Communists were not adequately self-critical, he carried out wide-ranging purges of party members, intellectuals, and Chekists. The party leaders of the autonomous regions of Ajaria and Abkhazia were liquidated. For his "Bolshevik vigilance," Stalin promoted Beria to head the NKVD after the fall of Ezhov. Paradoxically, this ruthless and unscrupulous man oversaw the police as the purges wound down, the harsh regime in prisons and camps was somewhat ameliorated, and many imprisoned victims were rehabilitated. Shortly after Stalin's death, several of the highest party officials, led by Nikita Khrushchev, who feared that the secret police chief would try to reproduce Stalin's autocratic power, had Beria arrested, secretly tried, and shot.

Ajaria was located on the border of Turkey and was populated by Muslim Georgians. Beria's police fabricated a conspiracy to indict local officials, had them removed, and replaced them with an Ajarian (rather than Georgian) official.

Strictly Secret Must be returned in 48 hours
No Copying Permitted (order of the Politburo, from May 5, 1927, no. 100, p. 5)
Sent to Ezhov

From Tbilisi Sent 16:25 July 17, 1937 Reached the TsKVVP
For deciphering July 17, 1937 17:35 Vkh.
No. 1286/sh

Moscow TsKVVP (b) to Comrade Stalin.

A counter-revolutionary organization has been uncovered in Ajaria, connected with Turkish intelligence and aimed at annexing Ajaria to Turkey. The organization recruited adherents and followers in the villages of Ajaria, linking its work with emigrant elements located in Turkey. By the testimonies of almost all those arrested the chairman of the TsIK (Central Executive Committee [of Soviets] of Ajaria, Zekerii Lordkipanidze has been exposed as the leader of this counter-revolutionary organization and [found] to be connected with the Turkish consul in Batumi and [with] Turkish intelligence. I request that you sanction his arrest. At the present time Lordkipanidze is under observation in order to prevent his possible escape across the border. In the next few days I will present an Ajarian candidate for the post of chairman of the TsIK of Ajaria.

Secretary of the TsK KP(b) of Georgia
Beria

[scrawled across the document in pencil:]

Comrade Beria
The TsK sanctions the arrest of Lordkipanidze.
St(alin)

18/VII/37

RTsKhIDNI, f. 89, op. 48, d. 5, l. 1; translated by the editor.

Stalin to the Secretaries of Obkoms, Kraikoms, and Central Committees of the National Communist Parties

August 3, 1937

It was not enough to have the police or the political apparatus carry out the purges—for Stalin did not trust his own officers and officials. Ordinary people were mobilized to turn on officialdom to find "wreckers" (vrediteli) and "enemies of the people" (vrage naroda). Though local grievances certainly fed into denunciations and testimony at these local show trials, the initiative from the top played a key role in stimulating and legitimizing the terror in the localities. The trials often followed formulaic scripts, with virtuous peasants pitted against evil bosses. In her fascinating treatment of these trials, Sheila Fitzpatrick concludes:

The trials may be seen as a Soviet version of carnival—a people's festival (licensed, admittedly, by the state) where, for a day, the world is turned upside down, revelers celebrate in gaudy costumes, distinctions of rank are forgotten, mockery and humiliation of the proud are permitted. But the point about carnival is that it lasts only for a day or a week. After that, the proprieties and distinctions are restored, perhaps even reaffirmed. Real power relations are untouched. Carnival is not revolution.¹

But, as she goes on to note, "carnivals sometimes get out of hand."² Though the local trials appear to have been halted by December 1937—the curtain rung down by the stagemasters in Moscow—thousands of people suffered and agriculture itself remained in disarray.

In the last few years in the territories, regions, and republics, the destructive work of enemies of the people has been uncovered in the areas of agriculture, aimed at the undermining of the economy of the collective farms and toward stimulating the collective farmers' dissatisfaction with Soviet power by way of a whole system of insults and mockery against it.

The TsK considers it a major failure of the leadership in the matter of crushing the wreckers in agriculture that the liquidation of wreckers is dealt with only in a secret manner by the organs of the NKVD, but the collective farmers are not mobilized for the struggle with the wrecking and its carriers.

Considering absolutely essential the political mobilization of collective farmers in the work being carried out to destroy the enemies of the people in agriculture, the TsKVVP (b) requires the obkoms, kraikoms, and the central committees of the national Communist parties to organize in each district (raion) of each region (oblast') two to three show trials against enemies of the people—against the wreckers in agriculture who have penetrated the district party, soviet, and land organs (workers of the MTS [machine-tractor stations] and district ZO [land departments], chairmen of the RIKs [district executive committees], secretaries of the RK [district committees], etc.), widely publicizing the progress of these trials in the local press. No. 11/s, no. 1178/sh

1. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, p. 311.

2. Ibid.

Secretary of the TsKVKP Stalin

3.VIII.37

20:40

RTsKhIDNI, f. 89, op. 48, d. 12, l. 1; translated by the editor.

Iu. L'vova, "Is Pashchitskii Present?"

With Gorbachev's policy of glasnost' in the mid-1980s, revelations about the horrors of Stalinism filled the pages of newspapers and magazines and television screens. Soviet citizens learned, often for the first time, of the extent of the killings and suffering of ordinary people, as well as high officials. In this short memoir, a teacher of Russian language and literature, Iu. L'vova, tells of an instance of great heroism at the height of the purges. She remembers back fifty years how a popular instructor, with unadorned courage, saved a student from arrest, and how she and her fellow students silently conspired to protect each other. Here human decency spontaneously understood that something had gone terribly wrong.

The tragic events connected with arrests and repression in the 1930s disrupted our school life in unexpected ways. Largely disinterested in political events and deeply involved in our student activities—lessons, sports, books, happy parties, and falling in love—we were far removed from serious consideration of the political trials, accounts of which filled the newspapers and the radio, alternating with cheerful songs and statements about the construction of new factories, mines, dams, and cities.

We sought enjoyment from the theater, ski trips, and meetings of a poetry and literature society organized by our favorite teacher, Nikolai Viktorovich. He embodied all our ideas of what it meant to be a truly good person. But one day we learned that to be a good person it was also necessary to be fearless.

Suddenly there was a rumor in the school that a ninth grade student, Igor Magai, whose father had been arrested, had been removed from a chemistry lesson and taken away somewhere, either to a special boarding school, or to prison, or directly to a concentration camp for convicted prisoners.

We were stunned and frightened. Before we could get over this news, we saw the very white face of Shura Pashchitskii in our class. He said that his father had also been arrested the night before.

The father of Shurkina, our Shurka the clever, so promising in mathematics, a harmless bumpkin who endured our mocking in physical education classes as good naturedly as when he dazzled us with original solutions to complex geometry problems.

Shurka, the son of an arrested person! This was how life touched us! An enemy of the people, an enemy of the nation, not somewhere far away, but right here, so close to us. The father of our comrade—that was how close to us.

The physics lesson continued as in a fog. We were nervous, and the teacher was nervous. Shura sat at his desk, sitting strangely upright, as if turned to stone.

Our next lesson was Russian literature. Nikolai Viktorovich began efficiently, almost sternly. Suddenly the door to the classroom was thrown open. With heavy tread,

two men in civilian clothes approached the teacher's desk. Military-style boots and blue breeches were visible from under their short dark blue coats. We stood up.

"Is this the eighth grade?" asked one of the men. "Is Pashchitskii present? Come to the front."

"Pashchitskii?" repeated Nikolai Viktorovich. "But he is not here. Children, was Pashchitskii in the first lesson?" Our teacher looked over the entire class with attentive gaze, not omitting Shura.

And we, as if wondering whether Pashchitskii was in the classroom, followed our teacher in looking around and then began to speak at once. "No, he was not here! He was not here!"

"There is nothing to do, Aleksandr Pashchitskii is not here," Nikolai Viktorovich declared firmly, turning to the soldiers.

Frowning, they left the room.

"Sit down, comrades," said our teacher, more thoughtfully and a little more softly than usual, as he returned to the lesson.

Shura sat, without moving, and just stared, stared, and stared, at the face of Nikolai Viktorovich. We also stared, not listening to what he said or understanding what it meant. We stared with all our beings, because for the first time in our lives we were witnesses to human fearlessness.

On the same day Nikolai Viktorovich sent Shura to a distant Siberian village, where he had neither family nor friends . . .

In the same way, Lida Nikulina and Valia Plaskin, whose parents had also been repressed, also were sent to some other place.

None of us even whispered among ourselves about this, even in secret we never told anyone.

We were silent for so long . . .

But even then we had begun to think about a great deal.

By Iu. L'vova, teacher of Russian language and literature, candidate of pedagogical science

Iu. L'vova, "Kto zdes'—Pashchitskii?" *Narodnoe obrazovanie*, no. 3 (1990), p. 138; translated by Tom Ewing.

Nikolai Bukharin's Letter to Stalin

December 10, 1937

Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938) was one of the most popular of the close comrades of Lenin, referred to as "the darling of the party." After his alliance with Stalin fell apart at the end of the 1920s, he continued to serve the party as editor of Izvestiia, the government newspaper, and as one of the principal authors of the Soviet constitution of 1936. But many of his young followers, among them V. V. Kuzmin and A. Iu. Aikhenvald, met occasionally and discussed possible opposition to Stalin. Several "Young Bukharinists" were involved in discussions around the "Riutin Platform" of 1932, which called for the removal of Stalin, and at one meeting Kuzmin impetuously declared that he wanted to kill Stalin. The Bukharinists were arrested, and the confessions beaten out of them, as well as statements at the show trial of Kamenev and Zinoviev (August 1936), implicated Bukharin. One of those who accused Bukharin falsely was the Old Bolshevik Karl Radek (1885–1939), who later was killed in prison. Bukharin was arrested in February 1937, and hauled before a lengthy plenary meet-

ing of the Central Committee, where Ezhov and others hurled accusations at him. Languishing in prison before his public trial in March 1938, Bukharin managed to write an autobiographical novel, some philosophical essays, and a series of letters, several of them to his former comrade, Stalin, whom he addressed by his revolutionary nom-de-guerre, Koba.

Very Secret

Personal

I ask that no other read this without the permission of I.V. Stalin.

To I.V. Stalin

7 pages + 7 pages of memorandum

Iosif Vissarionovich!

I write this letter, as perhaps my last letter before my death. For this reason I ask that you allow me to write it, despite the fact that I have been arrested, free of any kind of official style; moreover, that I write it only to you, and the actual fact of its existence or non-existence lies completely in your hands. . . .

At this moment the last page of my drama and, perhaps, my physical life, is turning over. I thought with torment, should I take up the pen or not,—I am shaking now from anxiety and a thousand emotions and can hardly control myself. But precisely because we are talking about the end, I want to *ask forgiveness* from you first, while it is still not too late, and while my hand still writes, and while my eyes are still open, and while my brain functions in some way or other.

So that there will be no misunderstandings, I say to you at the very beginning that *for the peace* (of society) (1) do not intend to take anything back from what I have written down: (2) in *this* sense (and in connection with this) I do not intend to ask anything from you nor do I wish to plead that this matter be removed from the rails down which it rolls. But it is for your *personal* information that I write. I cannot leave life without having written to you these last lines, for I am possessed by torments about which you ought to know.

1. Standing on the edge of an abyss, from which there is no return. I give you my honest, last words before death, that I am not guilty of those crimes that I affirmed at the investigation.

2. Turning over everything in my mind, as well as I am able, I can, in addition to what I said at the plenum [of the Central Committee, February 23–March 5, 1937], only note:

a. that one time I heard from someone about the cry, it seems, of Kuz'min, but never gave it any kind of serious significance. This never entered my head;

b. that I *knew nothing* about the conference (or about the Riutin platform), except when quickly on the street *post factum* Aikhenval'd told me ("the guys have met, made a report"),—or something to that effect, and I hid this at that time, feeling pity for "the guys".

c. that in 1932 I acted as a double-dealer in relation to my "pupils," sincerely thinking that I *would bring them wholly to the party*, or otherwise I would

break with them. That is all. With this I cleanse my conscience *down to the smallest trifles*. Everything else either never happened or, if it happened, then I had no knowledge of it.

Thus, I spoke at the plenum *the exact truth*, only they did not believe me. And here I speak the absolute truth: All these last years I honestly and sincerely carried out the party line and learned wisely to value and love you.

3. I had no other "way out" except to confirm the accusations and testimonies of others and to develop them: or otherwise it would have come out that I had "no disarmed."

4. Except for the external moments and arguments of (3) (above), I, thinking about what is happening, constructed approximately such a conception:

There is some kind of *big and bold political idea* of a general purge (a) in connection with preparation for war, (b) in connection with the transition to democracy. This purge captures (a) the guilty, (b) the suspicious, and (c) the potentially suspicious. Here there is no way to do this without me. They render some harmless like this, others in another way, and still others in still another way. The moment of insurance is when people are forced to speak one about the other and *forever* sow doubt about one another (I judge by my own example: how I resented Radek, who spoke such nonsense about me! But then he himself went down this same path . . .). Thus, the leadership creates a *full guarantee*.

For God's sake, do not think that I am secretly reproaching you, even in my ruminations with myself. I have grown so much from children's swaddling clothes that I understand that *big plans, big ideas, and big interests* trump everything, and it would be petty to put forth a question about one's own person on the same level as the *world's historical tasks* that lie first and foremost on your shoulders.

And here is my *main* torture, and the principal tormenting paradox.

5. *If* I were absolutely sure that you thought in this way, then my soul would be much more peaceful. Well, what do you think! It must be so, that's the way it has to be. But believe me, my heart bleeds with hot streams of blood, when I think that you might *believe* in my crimes and that *you yourself* think in the depth of soul that I am actually guilty of all these horrors. *Then* what will come of this? That I *myself* cause a number of people to be destroyed (beginning with myself!), that is, I wittingly *do evil!* *Then* nothing justifies this. And everything is confused in my head, and one wants to scream and beat one's head against the wall: I became the cause of the destruction of others, you see. What can be done? What is to be done?

6. I do not bear an iota of malice and am not embittered. I am not a Christian. But I have my own eccentricities. I consider that I must atone for those years when I actually carried on a struggle [against you]. And if you want to know, more than anything, one fact depresses me, one that you, perhaps, have forgotten: once, probably in the summer of 1928, I was with you, and you said to me: You know why I am friendly with you? You are incapable of intrigue, you see. I said: Yes. And at that very moment I ran to Kamenev ("the first meeting"). Believe it or not, but it is *this* fact that stands in my head like some original sin for an Israelite. God, how I was a child and a fool. And now I will pay for this with my honor and entire life. *For this*, forgive me, Koba. I write and I cry. I no longer need anything; you yourself know that it's more like

that I make my situation worse by allowing myself to write this. But I am unable, I cannot simply keep silent, not having said to you my last “forgive me.” Here is why I have no malice toward anyone, beginning with the leadership and ending with the interrogators, and I ask you for forgiveness, although I have already been punished so that everything has grown dim, and darkness has fallen on my eyes.

7. When I had hallucinations, I saw you a few times and Nadezhda Sergeevna.¹ She approached me and said: “What have they done to you?, N. I.? I will tell Iosif so that he takes you under his protection.” This was so real that I nearly jumped and wrote to you, so that . . . you would protect me. This is how delirium carried away reality. I know that N. S. would never believe that I had malevolent intentions toward you, and it was not for nothing that my unconscious, unhappy ego called forth this delirium. And with you I talked for hours . . . Lord, if only there was such an instrument that you could see my whole unglued and tormented soul! If you could only see how I am tied to you inside, completely different from those Stetskiis and Tals.² Well, this is “psychology”—forgive me. Now there is no angel who pushed aside the sword of Abraham, and fatal fates are realized!

8. Allow me, finally, to go on to my last few requests:

a. It is a thousand times easier for me *to die* than to live through the forthcoming trial: I simply do not know how I will control myself—you know my nature: I am no enemy either of the party or the USSR, and I will do everything in my power, but my powers in such a circumstance are minimal, and painful feelings rise in my soul; forgetting shame and pride, I would plead on my knees that this would not be so. But this, apparently, is no longer possible; I would ask, if it were possible, to allow me to die before the trial, even though I know how severely you look upon such questions.

b. If³ a death sentence awaits me, then I ask you beforehand, invoking all that is dear to you, not to shoot me but allow me to drink poison in my cell (give me morphine so that I fall asleep and never wake up). This point is extremely important to me. I do not know which words I ought to find to plead for this, for mercy: this will not hinder anything politically, will it, and no one will know about this. But allow me to live out the last seconds as I want. Have pity! You, knowing me well, will understand. I sometimes look death in the face with clear eyes, precisely because I know that I am capable of courageous acts. But sometimes I am so upset that nothing is left in me. Thus, if death is the judgment, I ask for a cup of morphine. I *pray* for this

c. I ask to be allowed to say farewell to my wife and son. It isn't necessary to do so with my daughter: I grieve for her, this will be much too heavy

1. Nadezhda Sergeevna Allilueva (1901–1932) was Stalin's second wife, the daughter of an Old Bolshevik, and a dedicated Communist who had once worked in Lenin's office. She became disillusioned and depressed in the early 1930s and, after a quarrel with Stalin at a Kremlin celebration of the October Revolution, she shot herself.

2. A. I. Stetskii was the director of a department of the Central Committee and the principal editor of the journal *Bolshevik*. B. M. Tal was the director of the department of the press and publishing of the Central Committee and had worked with Bukharin at *Izvestia*.

3. After “if,” the words “you have already decided” were written, then crossed out by Bukharin.

for her, as for Nadia and her father. But Aniuta⁴ is young, she is suffering, and I want to say some last words to her. I request a meeting with her *before* the trial. The arguments go like this: if those in my home see what I *acknowledge* [to be true at the trial], they could commit suicide from the unexpected. I must somehow prepare them for this. It seems to me that this is in the interest of the case and in its official interpretation.

d. If my life is to be preserved, contrary to expectations, then I would ask (although it is still necessary that I speak with my wife):

*. either send me to America for *n* years. The arguments for this: I would carry on a campaign for the trials, would carry on a struggle to the death against Trotskii, would win over large parts of the wavering intellectuals, would be in fact an Anti-Trotskii, and would carry on this matter with all my might and enthusiasm; you can send with me qualified Chekists and, for an additional guarantee, keep my wife here for half a year until I show how I slug the face of Trotskii and company.

** . But if there is an atom of doubt, then send me, let's say, for twenty-five years to Pechora or Kolyma [in Siberia], to a camp. I would establish there: a university, a regional museum, a technical station, and so forth, institutions, picture galleries, an ethnographic museum, a zoological and botanical museum, a camp journal, a newspaper.

In a word, I would carry out pioneering, trail-blazing cultural work, settling there with my family until the end of my days.

In any case, I declare that I would work wherever required like a powerful machine.

However, to speak the truth, I do not place any hope in this, since the very fact of changing the directives of the February plenum speaks for itself (and I see that the case proceeds to a trial, if not today, then tomorrow).

Here, it seems, are all my last requests (also: *philosophical work*, having been left to me, I have done much that is useful).

Iosif Vissarionovich! In me you have lost one of your most able generals, someone really dedicated to you. But this is already in the past. I remember what Marx wrote about Barclay de Tolly [a general at the time of the Napoleonic wars], who had been found guilty of treason, that Alexander I lost such an aide to no purpose. It is bitter to think about all this. But I am preparing emotionally to leave the vale of life, and there is nothing in my attitude toward all of you and toward the party and toward the whole cause, nothing except a great, boundless love. I do everything that is humanly possible and impossible. I have written about everything to you. I have placed all the dots on the “i.” I did this *beforehand* because I have no way of knowing in what state I will be tomorrow or the day after, etc.

Maybe I will have, like a neurasthenic, universal apathy so that I will be unable to move a finger.

But now, with my head aching and tears in my eyes, I write everything. My inner conscience is clear before you now, Koba. I ask of you a final forgiveness (a sincere

4. Aniuta, Anna Larina (1914–1996), the daughter of a prominent revolutionary, Iurii Larin, was Bukharin's second wife. She was arrested in June 1937, and remained in prison and camps until 1959. See her memoirs, *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*, trans. Gary Kern (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

one and no other). For this I mentally embrace you. Goodbye forever, and think kindly of your unfortunate one.

N. Bukharin

10.XII.37

[a seven-page appendix followed, but it was not deposited in the archive with the letter]

Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, f. 3, op. 24, d. 427, 1. 13–18; published in *Istochnik*, no. 0 (1993), pp. 23–25; translation by the editor.

Mekhlis to Stalin and Ezhov

October 28, 1938

A long-time party and state apparatchik, L. Z. Mekhlis (1889–1953) reported back to Stalin on his fact-finding trip out to the Soviet East. The NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) had set quotas for the number of people to be arrested and executed, but local officials had exceeded these limits and requested that the limits be raised. By 1938, the terror was expanding beyond the Moscow's expectations, and the central authorities had to restrain the very local enthusiasts whose activities they had set in motion. That year Ezhov, the head of the NKVD, was arrested, and Lavrenti Beria, Stalin's Georgian client, was brought to Moscow to succeed him and wind down the terror.

I left Chita for Moscow on October 27. In Ulan-Ude [capital of the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic] the secretary of the regional committee of the VKP (b), Ignat'ev, and the NKVD of the Buriat-Mongol ASSR, Tkachev, came to see me. In our conversation they communicated that they had exceeded the NKVD's limit of 447, and in the prisons were over 2,000 arrested people, whose terms of detention have long since run out, among them participants in the bourgeois nationalist and Lamist [Buddhist] counter-revolution—kulaks, lamas, and White Guardists. The cases have all been worked up long ago; the prisons are filled to overflowing, but the troiki¹ have not received permission to examine them. I am reporting that they request that the limit be raised to 2,500 persons.

28/X No. 672 Mekhlis.

RTsKhIDNI, f. 89, op. 73; d. 157, 1. 1; translation by the editor

1. Set up during the collectivization campaigns, troiki were three-person panels that principally judged political cases. They became the major tribunal during the purges. Peter Solomon writes that "the failure of judges on the special collegia and the military tribunals to cooperate fully with the security police may have led Stalin to rely on alternatives to the courts for the conduct of the Terror. Most of the 800,000 political persecutions of 1937 were handled not by courts but directly by the NKVD, including its revived *troiki*." [Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice Under Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 234] In December 1937, Andrei Vyshinskii, the Procurator-General of the USSR, ordered that local procurators use the troiki instead of regular courts "when the evidence of guilt will not allow its use at trial, that is when it featured denunciations or false testimony from provocateurs." [Ibid., p. 238] The troiki were abolished by the decree of November 17, 1938 that essentially brought the Great Terror to an end.

Conference of Musicians at the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, Moscow

January 1948

At the end of the war, many Soviet people experienced a sense that life would not only ease but become freer. The self-reliance of citizens and soldiers during the fighting in the early years of the war, when the party, state, and police structures could not enforce old rules and behaviors, has been characterized—by Soviet historian Mikhail Gefter—as an “elemental de-Stalinization”.¹ It was accompanied by the development of a patriotic civic spirit—a “civic romanticism” in the words of Elena Zubkova. The sense of freedom combined with a feeling of personal responsibility for the fate of the fatherland. Stalin was revered, the embodiment of the hard-won victory, and both memories and practices of surveillance remained embedded in social life, tempering social relations with suspicion and wariness.² Everyone had suffered great personal losses, and the profound experience of war and victory linked people in a shared community of aspirations, attitudes, and material problems.³

The hopes that there would be a turn toward freedom was bitterly dashed, and in the post-war years the party reinforced the cultural conformity and political restrictions, though without the fury of the Great Purges, that had become the Stalinist norm of Soviet life. Andrei Zhdanov (1896–1948), a powerful Central Committee secretary, gave his name to the policy of cultural repression of the late 1940s—the Zhdanovshchina—which began with the Central Committee's decree of August 14, 1946 attacking the literary journals *Zvezda* and *Leninograd*. In his speeches in September, Zhdanov denounced the poet Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966) as a “half-nun, half-harlot” and the satirical writer Mikhail Zoshchenko (1895–1958) for his cheap “heehawing” at Soviet life. In turn, philosophers and cinematographers felt the wrath of the party, and with the conference of musicians in January 1948, the axe fell on composers, most notably the internationally recognized Aram Khachaturian, Sergei Prokofiev, and Dmitrii Shostakovich. It began, however, with a glancing but devastating blow at a minor Georgian opera composer, Vano Muradeli (1908–1970), whose opera, *The Great Friendship*, had displeased the members of the Politburo at its premiere.

FIRST DAY

A. A. ZHDANOV (Introductory speech): Comrades, the Central Committee decided to ask you to come here for the following reason. Recently the C.C. attended a pre-view of Muradeli's new opera, *The Great Fellowship*. You realise how keenly interested we all were in this new Soviet opera, after an interval of more than ten years, in the course of which no new Soviet operas were produced. . . . Unfortunately our hopes were not fulfilled. The new opera did not prove a success. Why was that? . . .

First, as regards its music. It has not a single melody one can remember. The music

1. M. Gefter, “‘Stalin umer vchera . . .’,” in Iu. Afanas'eva (ed.), *Inogo ne dano: Sud'by perestroiki; Vgliady vashias' v proshloe; Vozvrashchenie k budushchemu*, p. 305

2. See the chapter “The Social Psychology of the War,” in Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957*, trans. Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 11–19.

3. Ibid., p. 23.