

*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” (vragi 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.<sup>1</sup>*

*But, as she goes on to note, “carnivals sometimes get out of hand.” 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.

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

2. *Ibid.*

Consideri  
ers in the work  
ture, the TsK V  
of the national  
region (*oblast*)  
the wreckers in  
land organs (w  
departments],  
the RK [distric  
in the local pre

Secretary of the

RTsKhIDNI, f. 89,

*With Gorbach  
of Stalinism f  
Soviet citizen  
fering of ordi  
Russian langu  
the height of  
with unadorn  
students silen  
tion revealed  
wrong.*

The tragic even  
our school life  
deeply involved  
and falling in lo  
ical trials, accou  
cheerful songs  
dams, and cities

We sought  
and literature se  
embodied all ou  
learned that to b

Suddenly th  
Magai, whose fa  
and taken away  
directly to a con

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 TsK VKP (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

Secretary of the TsK VKP                      Stalin

3.VIII.37  
20:40

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

END READING HERE

### Iu. Lvova, "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. Lvova, 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 the spontaneous demonstration revealed an understanding of human decency 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.

18/VII/37

## and Central Parties

... carry out the purges—  
... people were mobilized  
... of the people" (vragi  
... ns and testimony at  
... e in stimulating and  
... mulaic scripts, with  
... tment of these trials,

... people's festival  
... is turned upside  
... nk are forgotten,  
... oint about carnies  
... eties and distinc-  
... s are untouched.

... ?<sup>22</sup> Though the local  
... n rung down by the  
... lture itself remained

... the destructive work  
... agriculture, aimed at  
... l toward stimulating  
... ay of a whole system

... the matter of crush-  
... rs is dealt with only  
... ctive farmers are not