

THE MARXIST-LENINIST RESEARCH BUREAU Report No. 13

THE KIROV MURDER

The Murder

On 2 December 1934, 'Pravda' announced that

" . . . on 1 December at 16.30, in the city of Leningrad in the building of the Leningrad Soviet (former Smolny), at the hands of a murderer, a concealed enemy of the working class, died Secretary of the Central and Leningrad Committees of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and member of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, Comrade Sergei Mironovich KIROV*. The gunman has been arrested. His identity is being established".
(Robert Conquest: 'Stalin and the Kirov Murder' (hereafter listed as 'Robert Conquest (1989)'; London; 1989; p. 7, citing 'Pravda' 2 December 1934).

Having entered the building, the assassin went up to the second floor and

" . . . hid in the bathroom. From the bathroom window the main entrance was visible".
(Anton Antonov-Ovseenko: 'The Time of Stalin: Portrait of a Tyranny'; New York; 1981; p. 91).

Then, as Kirov walked along the corridor to his office, the assassin emerged from his hiding place

" . . . to shoot him in the back of the neck".
(Stepan V. Krasnikov: 'Sergei Mironovich Kirov'; Moscow; 1964; p. 200).

The murder was premeditated:

"The murder was not done on impulse. The assassin had been preparing his act since the summer".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 9).

The assassin was arrested at the scene of the crime:

"The assassin fainted and fell beside his victim.. . . Kirov was carried, bleeding and unconscious into his office. . . . He soon died. The autopsy gives in great detail the path of the bullet and its effects. It was soon established that a Nagan revolver was used, and that this was what was found near the assassin. Meanwhile, NKVD men arrested the unconscious killer".
(Robert Conquest (1989): ibid.; p. 9).

The Assassin

On 3 December 1934, it was announced that

" . . . preliminary investigations had established that the assassin was Leonid Vasilevich NIKOLAYEV*, born 1904, a former worker in the Leningrad Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (RKI) and that the investigation was continuing".
(Robert Conquest (1989): ibid.; p. 10, citing; 'Pravda', 3 December 1934).

He

" . . . was married to a woman named Milda Draule, and had two children. . . .

His wife was a Latvian. . . . She had a secretarial job at Party headquarters".

(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 11).

He ultimately got

" . . . a position in the RKI. He seems to have been found inadequate and was demoted to a lesser post".

(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 10).

He

" . . . had joined the Communist Party in 1920, at the age of sixteen. . . .

He . . . in March (1934 -- Ed.) was expelled from the Party for breach of its discipline, However, two months later he was reinstated, . . . having made 'a declaration of repentance'".

(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 10, 11).

He had developed a single-minded hatred of authority,

" . . . which he blamed for failing to give him his due and ignoring his problems,

He began to see himself as an assassin on the historic scale. One report has him saying at an early interrogation 'in times to come my name will be coupled with those of ZHELIABOV* and BALMASHEV*', the great assassins of the Russian past".

(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 11).

Nikolayev later admitted that in the period August–November 1934, he had

" . . . 'tried out' . . . the 'Nagan revolver he possessed'".

('The Crime of the Zinoviev Opposition' (hereafter listed as 'Crime' (1935)'; Moscow; 1935; p. 19).

And it emerged during the investigation that

" . . . with the object of covering up traces of the crime and concealing his accomplices, and also with the object of masking the true motives for the murder of Comrade Kirov, the accused Nikolayev prepared several documents (a diary, statements addressed to various institutions, etc.) in which he endeavoured to portray his crime as a personal act of desperation and dissatisfaction arising out of his straitened material circumstances and as a protest against 'the unjust attitude of certain members of the government towards a live person'".

('Crime' (1935): *op. cit.*; p. 19).

The Investigation

On the evening of 1 December, a high-level delegation, consisting of three members of the Political Bureau — Stalin, Kliment VOROSHILOV*, Vyacheslav MOLOTOV* — and Andrey ZHDANOV* set out from Moscow to head the investigation into Kirov's murder. Lower-level members of the delegation

included Aleksandr KOSAREV*, General Secretary of the Communist Youth League (Komsomol), Genrikh YAGODA* , USSR People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, and Yakov AGRANOV*, Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. The delegates from Moscow reached Leningrad

" . . .around 7.30-8.30 a.m. on 2 December".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 41).

It was already apparent that there were several odd circumstances about the murder:

"The absence of all guards at the Smolny was, on the face of it, an astonishing lapse, and so was the failure of Kirov's bodyguard to accompany him",
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 8, 39).

while the behaviour of the security police had been even stranger. They

" . . . had long since been aware of Nikolayev's attitude and threats. They had reported this to Zaporozhets (Ivan Zaporozhets, Deputy Head of Leningrad NKVD — Ed.)".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 40).

It was discovered that, when Nikolayev visited the Smolny in December 1934 (a few days before Kirov was murdered), his brief-case had been searched and

" . . . in the brief-case there were a loaded pistol and a diary. Nikolayev was immediately detained and taken to the commandant's office".
(Alexander Orlov: 'The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes'; New York; 1953; p. 17).

However, as the defendant Pavel BULANOV* testified at the 1938 treason trial, Zaporozhets had ordered him to be released:

"I recall that . . . several days before the assassination of Kirov, the guard detained Nicolayev . . . and a notebook and revolver were found in his portfolio, but that Zaporozhets released him in time".
(Pavel Bulanov: Testimony at 1938 Treason Trial (March 1938), in: Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites' (hereafter listed as 'Trial' (1938)); Moscow; 1938; p. 558).

Stalin himself interrogated the assassin, Nikolayev. According to Alexander ORLOV* who defected from the Soviet security police in July 1938, when the prisoner was brought from his cell, Stalin asked him:

"'Why did you kill such a nice man?'".
(Alexander Orlov: op. cit.; p. 22).

and

" . . . all accounts agree that Nikolayev replied boldly, pointing to the NKVD men and saying that Stalin should ask them that question".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 41).

The Murder of Borisov (1934)

A vital witness in the case was clearly the head of Kirov's personal bodyguard, a man named BORISOV:

"Accounts are agreed that Borisov was devoted to Kirov".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 42).

Late in the morning of 2 December, in response to a request from Leningrad NKVD headquarters, Borisov was driven to the Smolny:

"Zaporozhets, being alarmed by this and fearing that Borisov would betray those who stood behind Nikolayev, decided to kill Borisov. . . . Zaporozhetsk so arranged it that an accident occurred to the automobile which took Borisov to the Smolny, Borisov was killed in the accident, and in this way they got rid of a dangerous witness".
(Pavel Bulanov: Testimony at 1938 Treason Trial, in: 'Trial' (1938); op. cit.; p. 558-59).

The Arrest of the Leningrad Security Police Officers (1934)

During the day (2 December),

" . . . almost the whole leadership of the Leningrad NKVD . . . were removed from their posts and sent for trial for 'negligence in connection with their duties'".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 42-43, citing 'Pravda', 4 December 1934).

Yakov Agranov

" . . . was given temporary charge of the Leningrad NKVD".
(Robert Conquest (1989): ibid.; p. 43, citing 'Pravda', 4 December 1934).

Kirov's Funeral (1934)

Stalin left Leningrad on 4 December to return to Moscow.

" . . . with Agranov running the actual investigation".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 43.

On 4 December 1934,

" . . . Kirov's coffin arrived in Moscow at 10.30 a.m., . . . and the State funeral started at 2.30 p.m. on 6 December. Stalin was one of the guards of honour".
(Robert Conquest (1989) op. cit.; p. 43.

The Anti-Terrorist Legislation (1934)

On the evening of 1 December 1934, the day of Kirov's murder,

" . . . the Secretary of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, YENUKIDZE*. signed the following directive:

1. Investigative agencies are directed to speed up the cases of those accused of the preparation or execution of acts of terror.

2. Judicial organs are directed not to hold up the execution of death sentences pertaining to crimes of this category in order to consider the possibility of pardon, because the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR does not consider as possible the receiving of petitions of this sort.

3. The organs of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs are directed to execute the death sentences against criminals of the above-mentioned category immediately after the passage of sentences".

(Avel Yenukidze: Anti-Terrorism Directive of USSR Central Executive Committee (1 December 1934), cited in: Nikita S., Khrushchev: Secret Speech to 20th Congress of CPSU (February 1956), in 'The Dethronement of Stalin'; Manchester; 1956; p. 11).

However,

" . . . the 'Law of 1 December 1934 . . . was subsequently rarely used".

(J. Arch Getty: 'Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered: 1933-1938'; Cambridge; 1985; p. 298).

The Trial of the Whiteguard Terrorists (1934)

On 4 December 1934,

" . . . it was announced that 'cases of recently arrested Whiteguards charged with preparing terrorist attacks against workers of the Soviet power' had been sent on 2 December for immediate consideration to the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court. The period from December 5 to 18 December saw the announcement of the trial and execution of 102 of these. . . . (17 were remanded for further investigation). . . .

All those indicted were accused of being terrorists sent over the frontiers with arms and instructions to assassinate".
(Robert Conquest (1989) op. cit.; p. 44).

On 2 January 1935, Ivan MAISKY*, the Soviet Ambassador in London, responding on 2 January 1935 to representations on these cases, declared:

"The persons recently executed in various towns of the USSR under sentences imposed by the courts . . . were found guilty of the planning and execution of acts of terrorism. . . . The majority of them entered the Soviet Union illegally from abroad, and were found to have in their possession bombs, grenades, revolvers and other weapons. In court they openly admitted that they were enemies of the Soviet Union and confessed to the perpetration of the crimes with which they were charged".

(Ivan Maisky; Statement on Trial and Execution of Terrorists (2 January 1935), in: Jane Degras (Ed.): 'Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy', Volume 3; London; 1953; p. 100).

It was not suggested that the terrorists involved in these cases were involved in the murder of Kirov. As J. Arch Getty comments:

"It seemed that the regime, unprepared for the crime and unclear about who should be punished, lashed out in a violent but ad hoc way at traditional enemies of the Soviet power".

(J. Arch Getty: op. cit.; p. 209).

The 'Leningrad Terrorist Centre' (1934)

Yakov Agranov, as temporary head of the Leningrad NKVD, quickly

" . . . established a connection between Nikolayev and the men who had been the leading figures in the Leningrad Komsomol during ZINOVIEV's* ascendancy in the city. The most prominent was I. I. KOTOLNYOV*, former member of the Central Committee of the Komsomol. . . . He had, in fact, been a real oppositionist".

(Robert Conquest: 'The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties'; London; 1973; p. 86).

In fact,

" . . . Nikolayev had been in the Vyborg district's branch, whose head was of course a Zinovievite — I. I. Kotolnyov".

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 51).

Further investigation established that

" . . . in 1933 and 1934 . . . an underground counter-revolutionary and terrorist group was formed in Leningrad"

('Crime' (1935): op. cit.; p. 8)

and that the Kotolnyov group

" . . . was headed by the underground terrorist 'Leningrad Centre'".

('Crime' (1935): ibid.; p. 9)

On 22 December 1934, Nikolayev, Kotolnyov and 12 other people

" . . . were committed for trial before the Military Collegium".

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 53, citing 'Pravda', 17 December 1934).

On 22 December 1934, the NKVD announced that

" . . . the investigation into Nikolaev and his accomplices had been concluded on 20 December. The act (the murder of Kirov -- Ed.) had been carried out on the orders of 'the illegal terrorist "Leningrad Centre" (described as 'former members of the Zinoviev opposition')".

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 53).

The indictment in the case of the 'Leningrad Centre', published on 27 December 1934, named Ivan Kotolnyov as among

" . . . the principal organisers of the conspiracy against Kirov".

('Crime' (1935): op. cit.; p. 8).

The Arrests of Members of the Moscow Terrorist Centre (1934)

Ivan BAKAYEV*, Zinoviev's former Leningrad security police chief, and Grigory YEVDOKIMOV*, Kirov's predecessor as Leningrad 1st Secretary, were

" . . . arrested around 14 December (1934 -- Ed.)"

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 53).

Grigory Zinoviev and Lev KAMENEV* and five of their associates were

" . . . arrested 'in Moscow' on 16 December 'in connection with the Kirov murder'".

(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 54, citing 'Pravda', 23 December 1934).

But on 23 December it was announced that

" . . . in the absence of sufficient evidence to put them on trial",
(J. Arch Getty: *op. cit.*; p. 209).

their cases had

" . . . been handed over for examination to the Special Board of the NKVD with a view to the summary exile of these persons. Investigations in connection with the other arrested persons are proceeding".

(Robert Conquest (1989): *op. cit.*; p. 55, citing 'Pravda', 23 December 1934).

The Trial of the 'Leningrad Terrorist Centre' (1935)

On 28-29 December 1934, the trial took place of Nikolayev, Kotolnyov and 10 other defendants accused of conspiracy to murder Kirov:

"All twelve accused, who were stated to have belonged to a 'Leningrad Centre', were sentenced to death and immediately shot".

(Friedrich Adler: 'The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow'; London; 1936; p. 25).

The First Trial of Kamenev and Zinoviev (1935)

In January 1935 it was announced that further investigation had produced

" . . . new material"

('Crime' (1935): *op. cit.*; p. 33).

relating to the activities of Kamenev, Yevdokimov, Zinoviev and others, and on 13 January they were indicted as members of the

" . . . so -called 'Moscow Centre'".

('Crime' (1935): *ibid.*; p. 33-34).

It was admitted that the further investigation had

" . . . not established facts which might serve as grounds for directly accusing the members of the 'Moscow Centre' of having given their consent to . . . , the terrorist attack committed against Comrade Kirov",

('Crime' (1935): *ibid.*; p. 41).

nevertheless, said the indictment, the facts proved

" . . . that they were aware of the terrorist sentiments of the members of the group and that they inflamed those sentiments".

('Crime' (1935): *ibid.*; p. 41).

and so

" . . . must bear not only moral and political responsibility, but also responsibility before Soviet law, for the consequences of their underground counter-revolutionary activities which induced their Leningrad group to resort to terrorist acts".
(*'Crime'* (1935): *ibid.*; p. 41).

From 15 to 16 January 1935, the first trial of Kamenev, Zinoviev, Yevdokimov, Bakayev and 15 other defendants took place in Leningrad in camera before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court.

The defendant Yevdokimov admitted in court:

"When we are blamed for a terrorist attitude, I firmly declare: yes, for that we must take responsibility, for the venom by which we poisoned those who surrounded us over the last decade and which made possible a supreme crime, the murder of Kirov".
(Grigory Yevdokimov: *Testimony at 1935 Trial*, in: Robert Conquest (1989): *op. cit.*; p. 65, citing *'Pravda'*, 16 January 1935).

A summary of the trial was published in *'Pravda'*:

"The accused confessed . . . that they had tried . . . to strengthen their supporters' feelings of bitterness and open hatred for the leaders of the Party and for Soviet power. . . .

They were forced by the weight of the evidence to confess that in that poisonous, Zinovievist underground counter-revolutionary cesspool, they developed and strengthened authentic Whiteguard methods of struggle against Soviet power, and an openly terroristic temperament that led to the foul murder of Comrade Kirov".
(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 65, citing *'Pravda'*, 17 January 1935).

In short, at the trial, Kamenev and Zinoviev

" . . . denied that they took any part in the murder of Comrade Kirov, . . . stating at the trial that they bore only moral and political responsibility for the assassination of Comrade Kirov".
(*Report of Court Proceedings: The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre* (hereafter listed as *'Report'* (1936); London; 1973; p. 10).

The accused were found guilty. Zinoviev and three minor figures were sentenced

" . . . to ten years' imprisonment as the 'active leaders' and 'most active members' of the underground group".
(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 66).

Most of the others were sentenced

" . . . to eight or six years for 'active participation' and 'membership'".
(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 66).

while Kamenev and two other defendants were sentenced to five years as

" . . . less active members".
(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 66).

In addition,

" . . . the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs sentenced 49 persons involved in the matter of the Zinoviev group to internment in camps for criminals for a period of four to five years, and 29 other persons to be removed to various places in the country for a period of two to five years".

(Friedrich Adler: op cit.; p. 26).

The Trial of the Leningrad Security Police Officials (1935)

On 23 January 1935,

" . . . the police officials whose arrest had been announced on 4 December were brought to trial".

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 69).

The 12 defendants, who included the head of the Leningrad NKVD Filip MEJDVED and his two deputies Ivan Zaporozhets and Fedor FOMIN. were charged with varying degrees of

" . . . criminal negligence. . . .

All . . . pleaded guilty",

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 69, 70).

and were sentenced to terms of imprisonment of between ten and three years.

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 70).

The convicted police officials were in fact treated very leniently:

"The chiefs of the Leningrad section of the Commissariat for Internal Affairs and their deputies . . . were . . . given responsible posts in the administratrion of the concentration camps to which they were sent. Actually, therefore, the punishment meant nothing more than a reduction in rank".

(Boris Nikolayevsky: 'Power and the Soviet Elite: "The Letter of an Old Bolshevik" and Other Essays'; New York; 1965; p. 53).

The Second Trial of Kamenev (1935)

The Yenukidze Affair (see Report No. 12) in the summer of 1935, involved

" . . . a woman employee in the Kremlin library. Among the forty-six persons arrested was Kamenev (whose brother was a doctor in the Kremlin)".

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.,; p. 78).

He was

" . . . sentenced on July 27 1935 to imprisonment for ten years".

('Report' (1936): op. cit.; p. 174).

The Trial of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre (1936)

In the late spring of 1936,

" . . . Zinoviev, Kamenev, Yevdokimov and Bakayev were brought back

from their isolators to face a new interrogation, with the veteran I. N. SMIRNOV".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 79)

The Indictment

" . . . was published on 15 August, and on 19 August the trial opened in public, . . . with representatives of the Western press and diplomatic corps present".
(Robert Conquest (1889): op. cit.; p. 80).

The seven principal defendants were:

Ivan Bakayev,
Grigory Yevdokimov,
Lev Kamenev,
Sergei MRACHOVSKY*,
Ivan Smirnov,
Vagvarshak TER-VAGANYAN*, and
Grigory Zinoviev,

and there were ten minor defendants, making 16 in all.
('Report' (1936): op. cit.; p. 38-39).

Leon Trotsky and his son Leon SEDOV* were indicted in absentia:

"L. Trotsky and his son L. L. Sedov, both of whom are abroad, having been exposed by the materials in the present case as having directly prepared and personally guided the work of organising in the USSR terroristic acts against the leaders of the CPSU and of the Soviet State, in the event of their being discovered on the territory of the USSR, are subject to immediate arrest and trial".
('Report' (1936): ibid.; p. 39).

14 of the defendants (including all the major figures except Ivan Smirnov)

" . . . pleaded guilty on all charges".
('Report' (1936): ibid.; p. 40).

Smirnov and one of the minor defendants denied

" . . . only . . . personal participation in the preparation of terroristic acts".
('Report' (1936): ibid.; p. 40).

The defendant Sergei Mrachovsky testified that at the end of 1932, a unified terrorist bloc was formed between the Trotskyites and the Zinovievites and

" . . . that in the second half of 1932 the question was raised of the necessity of uniting the Trotskyite terrorist group with the Zinovievites. The question of this unification was raised by I. N. Smirnov. . . . In the autumn of 1932 a letter was received from Trotsky in which he approved the decision to unite with the Zinovievites. . . . Union must take place on the basis of terrorism, and Trotsky once again emphasised the necessity of killing Stalin, Voroshilov and Kirov.
. . .

The terrorist bloc of the Trotskyites and the Zinovievites was formed at the end of 1932".
('Report' (1936): op. cit.; p. 41-42).

The defendants Grigory Zinoviev, Grigory Yevdokimov and Lev Kamenev admitted that Kirov's murder had been organised by this unified Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist centre:

"VYSHINSKY (TO ZINOVIEV): Was the assassination of Sergei Mironovich Kirov organised by your centre . . . ?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, by our centre.

VYSHINSKY: In that centre there were you, Kamenev, Smirnov, Mrachovsky and Ter-Vaganyan?

ZINOVIEV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: So you all organised the assassination of Kirov?

ZINOVIEV: Yes".

('Report' (1936): ibid.; p. 44-45).

"VYSHINSKY: Was the murder of Sergei Mironoviuch Kirov prepared by the centre?

YEVDOKIMOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: You personally took part in these preparations?

YEVDOKIMOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: Did Zinoviev and Kamenev participate with you in the preparations?

YEVDOKIMOV: Yes".

('Report' (1936): op. cit.; p. 49).

"VYSHINSKY (TO KAMENEV): Did you give instructions to make preparations for the assassination of Kirov?

KAMENEV: Yes, in the autumn. . . .

The terrorist conspiracy was organised by myself, Zinoviev and Trotsky. . . .

In June 1934 I myself went to Leningrad . . . to prepare an attempt on the life of Kirov parallel with the Nikolayev-Kotolynov group. . . .

VYSHINSKY: Was Kirov's assassination directly the work of your hands?

KAMENEV: Yes".

('Report' (1936): ibid.; p. 46, 65, 67).

Both Grigory Yevdokimov and Grigory Zinoviev admitted that they had lied at their previous trial in January 1935 when they had denied involvement in planning Kirov's assassination:

"VYSHINSKY (TO YEVDOKIMOV): At the trial in Leningrad, on January 15-16, 1935, when facing the court as you do now, you emphatically asserted that you had nothing to do with that murder. At that time you told untruths?

YEVDOKIMOV: Yes, I deceived the court".

('Report' (1936): op. cit.; p. 47).

"VYSHINSKY: Are you telling the whole truth now?

ZINOVIEV: Now I am telling the whole truth to the end.

VYSHINSKY: Remember that on January 15-16 1935, at the session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court, you also asserted that you were telling the whole truth,

ZINOVIEV: Yes, On January 15-16 I did not tell the whole truth.

VYSHINSKY: You did not tell the truth, but you maintained that you

were telling the truth".
('Report' (1936): op. cit.; p. 72).

Defendant Ivan Bakayev admitted conspiring with the assassin, Leonid Nikolayev, to murder Kirov:

"VYSHINSKY (TO BAKAYEV): Did you meet Nikolayev in Leningrad?
BAKAYEV: Yes. . . .
VYSHINSKY: Nikolayev told you that he had decided to assassinate S. M. Kirov, didn't he?
BAKAYEV: He did. . . .
VYSHINSKY: Did you take part in the assassination of Comrade Kirov?
BAKAYEV: Yes. . . .
VYSHINSKY: You were the organiser of the assassination of Kirov?
BAKAYEV: Well, yes, but I was not the only one".
('Report' (1936): op. cit.; p. 49, 61, 62).

The defendants waived their right to speeches in their defence, but made their last pleas to the court, as follows:

"MRACHOVSKY: I am a counter-revolutionary. , , ,
I do not ask for mitigation of my punishment. . . .
I depart as a traitor to my Party, as a traitor who should be shot. .
. . .

YEVDOKIMOV: I don't consider it possible to plead for clemency. Our crimes against the proletarian state and against the international revolutionary movement are too great to make it possible for us to expect clemency. . . .

BAKAYEV: I am guilty of the assassination of Kirov. I took a direct part in the preparation of other terroristic acts against the leaders of the Party and the government. . . .

KAMENEV: I, together with Zinoviev and Trotsky, was the organiser and leader of a terrorist plot which planned and prepared a number of terroristic attempts on the lives of the leaders of the government and Party of our country, and which carried out the assassination of Kirov.
. . . .

ZINOVIEV: I admit that I am fully and completely guilty . . . of having been an organiser of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc second only to Trotsky, the bloc which set itself the aim of assassinating Stalin, Voroshilov and a number of other leaders of the Party and the government. I plead guilty to having been principal organiser of the assassination of Kirov. . . .

TER-VAGANYAN: I bow my head in guilt before the Court and say: whatever your decision may be, however stern your verdict, I accept it as deserved.
('Report' (1936): ibid.; p. 165-73).

All 16 accused were found guilty and sentenced

" . . . to be shot".
('Report' (1936): ibid.; p. 180),

On 25 August 1936,

" . . . it was announced . . . that all the accused had been shot".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 86).

The 1937 Treason Trial (1937)

At the second public treason trial in January 1937,

"PYATAKOV*, RADEK* and fifteen others were accused of having been a 'Reserve Centre', kept secret in case the Zinoviev plotters were discovered. The group shot in August 1936 were now accused of having deceived the court by concealing this second network".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 95).

At this trial,

" . . . little was said about the Kirov case".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 95).

but Yuri Pyatakov and Karl Radek testified that in July 1935, after the murder of Kirov, this 'Reserve Centre' has discussed the question of multiple assassinations of the Party leadership as a whole:

"RADEK: In July 1935, . . . there arose the question that it was senseless killing single individuals. This would produce no political results. . . .

VYSHINSKY: Do I understand you rightly: it was not enough to have killed Comrade Kirov, others must be killed also?

RADEK: Either abandon terrorism altogether, or start seriously organising mass terrorist acts which would give rise to a situation bringing us nearer to power. . . .

Trotsky's directive concerning terrorist acts, group acts, arrived in January 1936. . . .

VYSHINSKY: In the second half of 1935, . . . were preparations being made in your midst for a group terrorist act?

RADEK: Yes, there were. . . .

When the question arose against whom terrorism should be directed.

. . . I . . . did not have the slightest doubt that the acts were to be directed against Stalin and his immediate colleagues, against Kirov, Molotov, Voroshilov and KAGANOVICH*".

(Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre; Moscow; 1937; p. 72, 74, 77, 89).

The 1938 Treason Trial (1938)

In February 1937,

" . . . BUKHARIN* and RYKOV*, leaders of the 'Rightists', were arrested.

Yagoda was arrested in April 1937".

(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 96).

and the 1938 treason trial, like those of 1936 and 1937 held in public,

" . . . opened on 2 March 1938"

(Robert Conquest (1989): ibid.; p. 97).

From the point of view of the Kirov murder,

" . . . the main interest of the trial was that it was now that the NKVD was first publicly blamed not for mere negligence but for active complicity in the crime".

(Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 97).

It was now revealed that Genrikh Yagoda, who had held the post of People's Commissar for Internal Affairs (in charge of the NKVD) from July 1934 to September 1936, had been a leading member of the conspiracy. Yagoda's secretary, Pavel Bulanov, testified that

" . . . in the early part of 1936 . . . Yagoda . . . said that he had known that an attempt on S. M. Kirov was being prepared, that he had a reliable man in Leningrad who was initiated into everything, Zaporozhets, Assistant Chief of the Leningrad Regional Administration of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, and that he had so arranged matters as to facilitate the assassination of Kirov by Nikolayev. . . . The whole affair was nearly exposed when, several days before the assassination of Kirov, the guard detained Nikolayev by mistake, and a notebook and revolver were found in his portfolio, but . . . Zaporozhets released him in time".
(*'Report'* (1938): *op. cit.*; p. 558).

Yagoda himself confirmed that, on orders from Avel Yenukidze, the Secretary of the Central Executive Committee and a member of the conspiracy, he had instructed Zaporozhets to facilitate the assassination of Kirov by Nikolayev:

"VYSHINSKY (TO YAGODA): Did you personally take any measures to effect the assassination of Sergei Mironovich Kirov? . . .

YAGODA: I gave instructions . . .

VYSHINSKY: To whom?

YAGODA: To Zaporozhets in Leningrad. . . . Zaporozhets came to Moscow and reported that a man had been detained . . .

VYSHINSKY: In whose brief-case . . .

YAGODA: There was a revolver and a diary. And he released him. . . .

VYSHINSKY: And then you gave instructions not to place obstacles in the way of the murder of Sergei Mironovich Kirov?.

YAGODA: Yes, I did. . . .

YAGODA: In 1934, in the summer, Yenukidze informed me that the centre of the 'bloc of Rights and Trotskyites' had adopted a decision to organise the assassination of Kirov. . . . Yenukidze insisted that I was not to place any obstacles in the way; the terrorist act, he said, would be carried out by the Trotskyite-Zinovievite group. Owing to this, I was compelled to instruct Zaporozhets, who occupied the post of Assistant Chief of the Regional Administration of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, not to place any obstacles in the way of the terrorist act against Kirov. Some time later Zaporozhets informed me that the organs the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs had detained Nikolayev, in whose possession a revolver and a chart of the route Kirov usually took had been found. Nikolayev was released, Soon after that Kirov was assassinated by this very Nikolayev".

(*'Report'*(1938): *ibid.*; p. 376, 572-73).

Bulanov also testified that Yagoda and Zaporozhets had arranged the murder of Kirov's bodyguard, Borisov:

"Yagoda further told me that . . . when members of the government came to Leningrad and summoned this Borisov to the Smolny to interrogate him as a witness in connection with the assassination of Kirov, Zaporozhets, being alarmed by this and fearing that Borisov would betray those who stood behind Nikolayev, decided to kill Borisov. On Yagoda's instructions, Zaporozhets arranged it that an accident occurred to the automobile which took Borisov to the Smolny. Borisov was killed in the accident, and in this way they got rid of a dangerous witness". ('Report' (1938): *ibid.*; p. 558-59).

and explained the privileged treatment accorded to the convicted security police officials as having been ordered by Yagoda:

"I then understood the exceptional and unusual solicitude which Yagoda had displayed when Medved, Zaporozhets and the other officials were arrested and brought to trial. I recalled that he had entrusted the care of the families of Zaporozhets and Medved to me personally. I recalled that he had had them sent for detention to the camp in an unusual way, not in the car for prisoners, but in a special through car". ('Report' (1938): *ibid.*; p. 559).

The 20th Congress of the CPSU (1956)

In his secret speech to the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, the revisionist First Secretary of the CPSU Nikita KHRUSHCHEV* recounted a garbled version of the murder of Kirov in such a way as to imply that Stalin had been responsible for organising it:

"It must be asserted that to this day the circumstances surrounding Kirov's murder hide many things which are inexplicable and mysterious and demand a most careful examination. There are reasons for the suspicion that the killer of Kirov, Nikolayev, was assisted by someone from among the people whose duty it was to protect the person of Kirov. . . . Before the killing, Nikolayev was arrested on the grounds of suspicious behaviour, but he was released and not even searched. It was an unusually suspicious circumstance that when the Chekist assigned to protect Kirov was being brought for an interrogation, on December 2 1934, he was killed in a car 'accident' in which no other occupants of the car were harmed. After the murder of Kirov, top functionaries of the NKVD were given very light sentences, but in 1937 they were shot. We can assume they were shot in order to cover the traces of the organisers of Kirov's killing". (Nikita S. Khrushchev: Secret Speech to 20th Congress, CPSU (February 1956), in: 'The Dethronement of Stalin'; *op. cit.*; p. 12).

Even Robert Conquest*, who maintains that

" . . . Stalin's guilt (of organising the murder of Kirov — Ed.) is indeed scarcely in doubt". (Robert Conquest: Preface to: Robert Conquest (1989): *op. cit.*; p. vii).

feels compelled to admit that

" . . . though Khrushchev adds the odd detail, what he reveals does not differ essentially from the evidence of Yagoda and Bulanov at the 1938 trial". (Robert Conquest (1989): *ibid.*; p. 113).

The 22nd Congress of the CPSU (1961)

In October 1961, at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev again referred (this time publicly) to 'suspicious' features of the murder of Kirov:

"Great efforts are still needed to find out who was really to blame for his (Kirov's — Ed.) death. The deeper we study the materials connected with Kirov's death, the more questions arise. Noteworthy is the fact that Kirov's killer had twice before been detained by Chekists (security men) near the Smolny, and that arms had been found on him. But he was released both times on someone's instructions. And the next thing this man was in the Smolny, armed, in the corridor through which Kirov usually passed. And for some reason or other, at the moment of assassination Kirov's chief bodyguard was far behind him, although instructions did not authorise him to be at such a distance away from Kirov.

Equally strange is the following fact: When Kirov's chief bodyguard was being escorted for questioning — and he was to be questioned by Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov — the vehicle, as the driver said afterwards, was deliberately involved in an accident by those who were taking the man for interrogation. They said that he had died as a result of the accident, although he was in fact killed by those who were escorting him.

In this way, the man who guarded Kirov was killed. Later, those who had killed him were shot. This was no accident, apparently, but a carefully planned crime. Who could have done this? A thorough inquiry is now being made into the circumstances of this complicated case.

As it turned out, the driver of the vehicle in which Kirov's chief bodyguard was being taken for questioning is still alive. He has said that an NKVD man sat with him in his cabin during the journey. They went in a lorry. (It is, of course, very strange why a lorry should have been used to take the man for questioning, as if no other vehicle could have been found for the purpose).

Evidently, everything had been planned in advance, in detail. Two other NKVD men were in the back of the lorry together with Kirov's chief bodyguard.

Continuing his story, the driver said that when they were driving along a street, the man sitting next to him suddenly wrested the steering wheel from his hands and directed the vehicle straight at a house. The driver had regained control of the wheel and steered the lorry so that it hit the wall of the building only sideways. He had been later told that Kirov's chief bodyguard had lost his life in the accident.

Why did he lose his life while none of the other people in the vehicle suffered? Why were both the officials of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs who escorted Kirov's chief bodyguard later shot? This means that someone had to have them killed in order to cover up all the traces.

Many, very many circumstances of this and other similar cases are still obscure".

(Nikita S. Khrushchev: Report on the Programme of the CPSU, delivered to 22nd Congress of the CPSU (October 1961); London; 1961; p. 111-12).

As Robert Conquest comments:

'Once again, the story was not incompatible with the Yagoda-Bulanov version. . . .

Khrushchev . . . effectively repeated the accusations against Yagoda,

Zaporozhets and the NKVD".
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 115, 116).

However, although no direct accusation was made, the implication of Khrushchev's diatribe was that

" . . . the true culprit or culprits had yet to be named",
(Robert Conquest (1989): op. cit.; p. 115).

and that these were headed by Stalin.

Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, refers to the

" . . . transparent hints"
(Svetlana Alliluyeva: 'Twenty Letters to a Friend'; London; 1968; p. 147)

that Stalin had organised the murder of Kirov.

The Commissions of Inquiry (1956-91)

In 1956-57 the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Party set up a Commission of Inquiry into the murder of Kirov:

"It took a large amount of evidence — 200 volumes is the figure mentioned. Hundreds of witnesses were called, and the commission had access to all the secret archives. . . .

The Commission went to look at the scene of Borisov's accident, and heard the driver's evidence".
(Robert Conquest (1989): ibid.; p. 115).

However, one must presume that it proved impossible to reconcile the draft report with hypothesis desired by the revisionist leaders — that Stalin had master-minded Kirov's murder -- for

" . . . none of this was made public, and it is unofficially reported that the Commission's report was simply shelved".
(Robert Conquest (1989): ibid.; p. 115).

"The Commission's report has never been made public".
(Alan Bullock: 'Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives'; London; 1991; p. 520).

In addition to the Commission of the 1950s, there were

" . . . at least two investigations in the 1960s, the PELSHE* Commission and the SHVERNIK* Commission".
(J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning (Eds.): 'Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives'; Cambridge; 1993; p. 46).

In 1989 a further Commission — the YAKOVLEV* Commission — was organised, charged with filling the 'gaps' left by the earlier inquiries:

"A. Yakovlev's Politburo Commission . . . appointed an intra-agency investigative team consisting of personnel from the USSR Procurator's Office, the Military Procuracy, the KGB and various archival administrations. For two years, this team conducted interviews, reviewed

thousands of documents, and attempted to check all possible scenarios; their work has added another fifteen volumes to the thirty-year old efforts. . . . The team's charter was to show Stalin's complicity . . . It had little political incentive to let him off the hook; quite the contrary. Nevertheless, members of the working team concluded that

' . . . in this affair, no materials objectively support Stalin's participation or NKVD participation in the organisation and carrying out of Kirov's murder' . . .

The team concludes that only

'one-sided, superficial, unverified facts, rumours and conjectures' support Stalin complicity".

(J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning (Eds.): op. cit.; p. 46-47).

True, Olga Shatunovskaia

" . . . has recently written that the Kirov investigation in the 1960s had uncovered convincing evidence that Stalin was behind the assassination . . . and claimed that materials from the 1960 investigation have since been removed by Party Control Commission (KPK) personnel in order to change that investigation's conclusion".

(J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning (Eds.): *ibid.*; p. 46).

And yet

" . . . in 1989 investigators checked the earlier commission's documents against KPK and KGB files and concluded that nothing is missing from the earlier collection. They also found that as a Khrushchev-backed KPK investigator back in 1960, Shatunovskaia . . . at that time agreed with the conclusion that Stalin had not organised the killing".

(J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning (Eds.): *ibid.*; p. 46).

The Myth of Stalin's Involvement (1953-94)

The myth that Stalin masterminded the murder of Kirov first appeared in the West in 1953 as a propaganda weapon in the 'Cold War':

"Before the Cold War, no serious authority argued that Stalin was behind the assassination (of Kirov — Ed.). The KGB defector Aleksandr ORLOV* was the first to make such a claim in his dubious 1953 account. Boris Nikolaevsky repeated the story in his influential 1956 essays (his 1936 'Letter of an Old Bolshevik' had not accused Stalin".

(J. Arch Getty: op. cit.; p. 207).

The usual motive attached to the myth was that Kirov was a 'moderate' political opponent of Stalin:

"The standard view of Stalinist pre-purge politics in the thirties, derived from an oral tradition, runs roughly as follows. At the end of the first Five-Year Plan (1932), a majority of the Politburo favoured relaxation and reconciliation with political opponents. Led by the Leningrad party chief, Serge Kirov, this group of Stalinist 'moderates' opposed Stalin's plans to apply the death penalty to . . . adherents of the 'Ryutin Platform'. . . .

After that, Stalin planned to eliminate the popular Kirov.

This scenario of the Kirov affair comes to us almost entirely from two sources: . . . Boris J. Nikolaevsky and NKVD defector Aleksander Orlov. . .

. . . Virtually all versions of the story inside and outside the USSR can be traced to one of these two original presentations".
(J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning (Eds.): op. cit.; p. 42-43).

On Orlov, the revisionist historian Roy MEDVEDEV* writes:

"It is obvious, in short, that Orlov's 1956 article is a clumsy fabrication"
(Roy A. Medvedev: 'Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism'; London; 1972; p. 318).

while BUKHARIN*'s widow Anna LARINA* writes of Nikolaevsky:

"I consider both the 'Letter of an Old Bolshevik' and the interview' with Nikolaevsky to be spurious documents".
(Anna Larina: "This I cannot forget; The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Wife"; London; 1993; p. 276).

In fact, most historians agree that there is no evidence that Kirov was a 'moderate' or had any political differences with Stalin:

"Kirov's speech to the 1934 Party Congress, . . . actually praised the secret police's use of forced labour and ridiculed the opposition. . . . Kirov was identified with Stalin, and the parts of his speech producing general ovations were the parts in which he praised Stalin and abused the opposition. . . . Careful scrutiny of Kirov's speeches and writings reveal little difference between them and Stalin's utterances, and Soviet scholars familiar with closed party archives scoff at the notion that Kirov was a moderate, an opponent of Stalin or the leader of any bloc. . . .

The Politburo Commission's examination of the Ryutin group did not find any evidence that Stalin demanded their execution in 1932, or that Kirov opposed it".
(J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning (Eds.): op. cit.; p. 45).

"Stalin and Kirov were allies and . . . Kirov's death was not the occasion for any change in policy. . . .
Virtually no evidence suggests that Kirov favoured or advocated any specific policy line other than Stalin's General Line. . . .
Stalin chose Kirov for the sensitive Leningrad party leadership position and trusted him with delicate 'trouble-shooter' missions".
(J. Arch Getty: op. cit.; p. 92, 93, 94).

Indeed, documents recently released with the intention of charging Stalin with organising Kirov's murder have, paradoxically, tended to establish his non-involvement:

"Recent revelations, intended to show Stalin's personal participation in the repression, have paradoxically produced documents and factual evidence that disprove or contradict key elements of this story. The traditional understanding of Stalin's motive, means and opportunity to arrange Kirov's assassination, . . . can no longer be comfortably reconciled with the sources now available".
(J. Arch Getty & Roberta T. Manning (Eds.): op. cit.; p. 43-44).

And other anti-Soviet defectors agree. For example, Grigory TOLKAEV*

" . . . believed that the assassination was really the work of misguided young oppositionists",
(J. Arch Getty: op. cit.; p. 207).

while Genrikh LIUSHKOV*

" . . . an KNVD defector who outranked Orlov . . . told his Japanese protectors that Stalin was not involved".
(J. Arch Getty: op. cit.; p. 207).

To sum up.

" . . . neither the sources, circumstances nor consequences of the crime suggest Stalin's complicity. . . . There is no good reason to believe that Stalin connived at Kirov's assassination".
(J. Arch Getty: op. cit.; p. 210).

Conclusion

SERGEI KIROV WAS MURDERED BY A GROUP OF REVISIONIST CONSPIRATORS WHO WERE CORRECTLY FOUND GUILTY AT THEIR TRIALS IN 1936-38.

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT STALIN WAS INVOLVED IN THE MURDER OR HAD ANY MOTIVE FOR INVOLVEMENT.

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- BAKAYEV, Ivan P., Soviet revisionist politician (1887-1936); found guilty of subversion and sentenced to imprisonment (1935); re-arrested, retried for treason, found guilty, sentenced to death and executed (1936),
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- KAMENEV, Lev B., Soviet revisionist politician (1883-1936); USSR People's Commissar of Foreign Trade (1926-27); expelled CP (1927); readmitted (1928); re-expelled (1932); readmitted (1933); re-expelled (1934); sentenced to imprisonment for subversion (1935); retried for and found guilty of treason, sentenced to death and executed (1936).
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