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# STALIN

THE FIRST IN-DEPTH  
BIOGRAPHY BASED ON  
EXPLOSIVE NEW  
DOCUMENTS FROM  
RUSSIA'S SECRET ARCHIVES

**EDVARD RADZINSKY**  
AUTHOR OF *THE LAST TSAR*

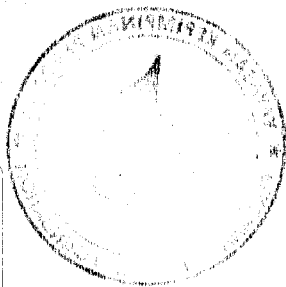
ALSO BY EDVARD RADZINSKY

THE LAST TSAR:  
THE LIFE AND DEATH  
OF NICHOLAS II

PUSTAKA PERDANA



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I have been thinking about this book all my life. My father dreamt of it till the day of his death. It is to him that I dedicate it.

I can still see that antediluvian day in March 1953 when the improbable happened: the event which it would have been a crime even to think of in our country.

I can see the unbearably bright March sunshine and the endless line of those eager to make their farewells to him. I see myself in the crowd of mourners. How lonely I felt among all those grief-crazed people. Because I myself hated him.

I had suffered a revulsion of feeling toward Stalin as an upper-classman at school: a transition from mindless adoration to a no-less ardent hatred, such as only the very young experience and only after mindless love.

This change of heart was brought about by my father and by his dangerous stories about Stalin. The real Stalin. Whenever my father spoke of him, he ended with the same words: *Perhaps someday you will write about him.*

My father was an intellectual with a passionate love of European democracy. He often repeated a saying which he attributed to President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia: "What is happiness? It is having the right to go out onto the main square and to shout at the top of your voice, 'Lord, what a bad government we have!'" My father came from a well-to-do Jewish family. He was a rising young lawyer, twenty-eight years old, when the February Revolution brought down the monarchy. He enthusiastically welcomed the bourgeois Provisional Government. This was *his* revolution. This was *his* government.

But the few months of freedom were soon at an end, and the Bolsheviks came to power.

Why did he—a highly educated man fluent in English, German, and French—not go abroad? It is the old, old story: he was always devoted to that great and tragic country.

In the early twenties, while some vestige of freedom survived, my father edited an Odessan magazine called *Shkvall* (Squall) and wrote screenplays for early Soviet films. His close friends at the time were the writer Yuri Olesha, the theorist of the avant-garde

Viktor Shklovsky, and also the film director Sergei Eisenstein. After my father's death I discovered, miraculously preserved between the pages of one of his books, a letter from Eisenstein complete with a number of brilliant indent drawings—relics of their youthful amusements.

But the epoch of thought control arrived, and the country became a great prison. My father did not grumble but went on living, or rather existing, quietly, inconspicuously.

He gave up journalism and began writing for the theater. He dramatized novels by one of the writers most esteemed by Stalin, Peter Andreevich Pavlenko, author of the scenarios for two famous films, *The Oath* and *The Fall of Berlin*, in which Stalin is among the dramatis personae. Pavlenko's ultrapatriotic screenplay *Alexander Nevsky*, about the thirteenth-century Russian warrior who defeated the Teutonic Knights, was filmed by the great director Eisenstein.

Pavlenko also wrote novels. Stalin conferred on him the highest of literary awards, the Stalin Prize, four times. Pavlenko had seen the Leader on a number of occasions. He had the entrée to the magic circle surrounding the God-Man.

Pavlenko's name saved my father. Many of his friends vanished in the camps, but he himself was not touched. According to the logic of the time, my father's arrest would have cast a shadow on the famous Pavlenko himself.

My father realized, however, that this protection might end at any moment. He expected, and was prepared for, something horrible. Yet in spite of living under the ax, in spite of his thwarted career, he never stopped smiling. His favorite hero was the skeptical philosopher in Anatole France's novel *Les Dieux ont soif*, a man who observed the horrors of the French Revolution with mournful irony. My father observed the dreadful life of Stalin's Russia with the same sort of smile. Irony and compassion were his watchwords.

In my memory he always wears that smile.

My father died in 1969. That is when I began writing this book. I have written it with no feeling of hatred for the Boss. I wanted only to understand the man himself and the horror through which we lived: I wrote surrounded by ghosts of those whom I saw in my childhood. I have included their stories about the Boss in this book, stories which my father loved to retell, always ending with the same refrain: *Perhaps someday you will write about him.*