

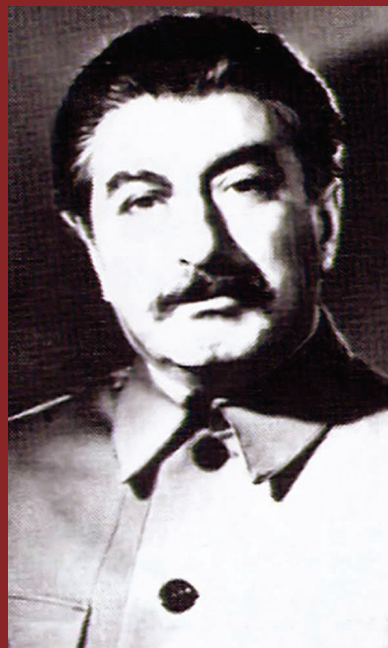
BODY DOUBLES OR POLITICAL DECOYS

Throughout history, world leaders have used political decoys, or body doubles, to ensure their own safety – employing the doubles to appear in public when they feared assassination attempts. A decoy often copied the mannerisms and sometimes the speech patterns of the person they were imitating. Occasionally, decoys received plastic surgery to make their likeness more convincing. Often, political figures had multiple decoys to ensure their safety. Stalin, for example, was thought to employ multiple body doubles – as were other authoritarian leaders who feared assassination, including Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Fidel Castro of Cuba, and Manuel Noriega of Panama.

TWO OF THE SIX MEN DRESSED LIKE JOSEPH STALIN



Alexei Dikiy



Felix Dadaev, Left, one of Joseph Stalin's body doubles

ALEXEI DIKIY

was one of the most prominent theater artists of the early Soviet years. Born in 1889 in Ekaterinoslav, a city in the Ukrainian Republic, Dikiy moved, in 1909, to Moscow to study acting. He eventually joined the Moscow Art Theater, where he either acted or directed at the Art Theater's studios for nearly 20 years.

He also was an active participant in the work of the Moscow Jewish Theater in the 1920s. In 1937, he was arrested on accusations of anti-Soviet activity and sent to a prison in Siberia, where he spent four years until his release in 1941. He would go on to act in a number of films, including several propaganda films made during the war in which he portrayed Stalin. In 1943 he was cast in the title role in *Kutuzov*, a film about the general who defeated Napoleon. He also portrayed Stalin in the 1949 film *The Battle of Stalingrad*. He was awarded the “Stalin Award” in 1946, 1947, 1949 twice, and 1950; and was named “People’s Artist of the USSR” in 1949. But in 1953, he found himself at odds with the Soviet government when his production of a play called *Teni (Shadows)*, by Saltykov-Shchedrin, was censored for its satirical portrayal of Soviet bureaucracy, and Dikiy was essentially blacklisted by the Minister of Culture of the Soviet Union. He died of heart failure in Moscow in 1955.

FELIX DADAEV

was born in 1918 in Dagestan, a republic in the far south-west of the country bordering Georgia and Azerbaijan. A talented juggler, ballet dancer and magician, he became a member of a concert brigade after the USSR joined the war in 1941, and kept alternating between performing and soldiering until the following year, when, while fighting in the Chechen city of Grozny in 1942, he was seriously injured and his family was told that he had been killed in battle. When it turned out that he had survived his injuries, Russian authorities realized they had a great opportunity on their hands: ever since he was young, Dadaev had been told that he bore a striking resemblance to Stalin.

In 2008, Dadaev was granted permission by the Putin government to tell his story, so at the age of 88, he published an autobiography revealing his experiences as Stalin’s body double. The book includes details about the training he received from the NKVD (Secret Police) to impersonate Stalin. He also revealed some of his most high stakes missions, such as his visit to Yalta in February, 1945 to discuss the postwar reorganization of Europe with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Following Stalin’s death in 1953, Dadaev was forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement that prohibited him from discussing his role as Stalin’s political decoy. He was never able to notify his family that he was alive or what his role was in the Soviet government.

A TIMELINE

1878

1942

1878

Stalin, whose birth name was Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, is born in Gori, a city in eastern Georgia. His nickname as a child is 'Soso', the diminutive of his birth name.

1884

Stalin gets smallpox and is scarred.

1889

Alexei Dikiy is born in Ukraine within the limits of the "Pale of Settlement." This western region was where the settlement of Jews was legally authorized, making it, in the 19th century, one of the largest Jewish communities in Russia.

1890

Stalin is injured in a carriage accident, leaving him with permanent disability in one arm.

1898

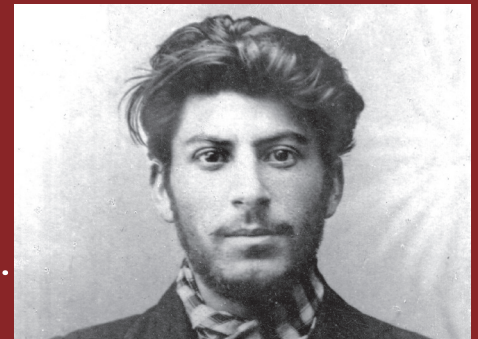
The Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) is founded by Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko. Stanislavsky develops a system of training for actors that would enable them to perform realistically in any sort of role and situation. That fall they produce Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, launching their long artistic association with one of Russia's most celebrated playwrights.

1899

Stalin joins the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party. He takes on the nickname 'Koba' from a character in Alexander Kazbegi's 1882 novel, *The Patricide*. Koba was the embodiment of Georgian knightly morality, symbolic of justice and freedom from Imperial oppression.

1902

Stalin is arrested and sent to Siberia, the first of seven such exiles from which he escaped six times.



Stalin at age 23

1905

The 1905 Russian Revolution. While ultimately unsuccessful in overthrowing the Tsar, it led to significant reforms, including the creation of a legislative body, the Duma, and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. Stalin is the leading Bolshevik in Georgia; he meets Lenin for the first time.



Moscow Art Theatre production of *The Seagull*, 1898



Kato Svanidze at age 19

1906

Stalin marries Kato Svanidze who gives birth to their son Yakov in March 1907.

1907

Kato dies of tuberculosis. Stalin leaves their son Yakov to be brought up by Kato's family.

1909

Alexei Dikiy leaves Ukraine and arrives in Moscow; the next year he joins the Moscow Art Theatre.

1912

Stalin begins going by the pseudonym "Stalin," derived from *stal*, the Russian word for steel.

1917

The February Revolution & The Bolshevik Revolution. Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks seize power, overthrowing the provisional government and establishing the world's first communist state. Stalin takes over as editor of Pravda, the official newspaper of the Communist Party.

1918

Felix Dadaev is born in Dagestan, a republic in the far south-west of the country bordering Georgia and Azerbaijan.

1919

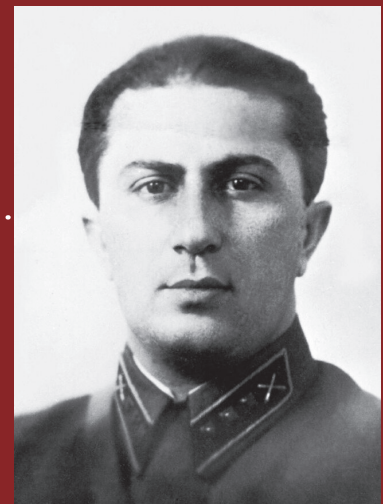
Stalin marries his second wife, Nadya Alliluyeva. Nadya is seventeen at the time of their marriage - Stalin is thirty-nine.



Nadya Alliluyeva

1921

Stalin's eldest son Yakov is brought to Moscow to live with Stalin and his new wife. Nadya is only six years older than Yakov.



Yakov Dzhughashvili in 1941

1922

The USSR is founded

1924

Lenin dies; Stalin becomes General Secretary of the Party.

1928

Stalin has consolidated power and is now the head of the Soviet Union. His son Yakov attempts suicide.



Rharin, 1933. Villagers leaving in search of food

1932-1933

The Holodomor, a famine orchestrated by Stalin's government, kills millions of Ukrainians.

1932

Nadiya (Stalin's second wife) commits suicide.

1934

The founding Soviet Writers Congress takes place. The doctrine of "soviet realism"-- a form of modern realism imposed in Russia by Stalin-- is proclaimed by author Maxim Gorky, though not precisely defined. In practice, it means using realist styles to create highly optimistic depictions of Soviet life. Any pessimistic or critical element was banned.



Portraits of Maxim Gorky and J.V. Stalin by Isiah Brodsky, 1937 and 1935

1936

Stalin and a delegation of government officials attend a production of Dmitri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the Bolshoi, directed by Alexei Dikhiy. The delegation reportedly walks out before the final act. Almost immediately, an article appears in Pravda, denouncing the opera. Many in the Soviet artistic community see this not just as an attack on one opera, but as a government effort to control all artistic expression.



1934 production of Shostakovich's "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" in Moscow

1937

The Great Purge: Stalin attempts to eliminate any threats to his power within the Party. This period is marked by public show trials as well as a number of secret trials in which many prominent old Bolsheviks are found guilty of treason and executed or imprisoned.

Alexei Dikhiy is sent to a Gulag - or Labor camp - in Siberia. By the late 1930s, Soviet Gulag Labor camps and colonies held 1.665 million people, including many artists and intellectuals.

1939

Germany invades Poland, triggering the Second World War.

1940

Vsevolod Meyerhold, a Russian theatrical producer, director, and actor (and the original Konstantin in the MAT production of *The Seagull*) is executed for anti-Soviet activity.

1941

Alexei Dikiy is released from prison.

JUNE 22, 1941

The Nazis launch Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union.

JULY 13, 1941

Britain and Russia sign the Anglo-Soviet agreement, creating an alliance against Germany.

JULY 16, 1941

Yakov is captured at the Battle of Smolensk. This is the first major battle of Operation Barbarossa.

JULY 1942

Felix Dadaev is wounded in the Battle of the Caucasus, a series of Axis and Soviet operations in the Caucasus region, part of the Eastern Front.

***OUR
PLAY
BEGINS...***



Yakov Dzhushevili, following his capture, on a German airfield, 1941