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Historical Questions – A re-assessment of the past Part IV Stalin and the ‘Cult of the Personality’

Beginning with Khrushchev, the successive revisionist leaders of the USSR have denounced Joseph Stalin for cultivating the “cult of the personality”, which, they allege, greatly distorted inner party life, did great damage to Soviet social development, and hindered economic development. When Khrushchev, in his capacity as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, delivered his report on 14 February 1956 to the 20th Party Congress, he did not feel strong enough to attack Stalin openly and directly. On the contrary, he was obliged to make deferential and highly approving remarks about Stalin and the struggle of the Party during his leadership:

“Shortly after the 19th Congress”, *he said*, “death took Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin from our ranks. The enemies of socialism hoped there would be confusion in the Party’s ranks, discord among its leadership, hesitation in carrying out its internal and foreign policy. However, their hopes came to nought.” (N.S. Khrushchev, *Report of the Central Committee, 20th Congress of the CPSU*, London, February 1956, page 78.)

We know only too well that the imperialist hopes were more firmly grounded in reality than Khrushchev’s boastful assertions.

And further:

“The Party’s unity has been built up over the course of many years and decades; it grew stronger in battle with a host of enemies. The Trotskyites, Bukharinites, bourgeois nationalists, and other malignant enemies of the people, the men who wanted to restore capitalism, tried desperately to undermine the Party’s Leninist unity from within, and all of them broke their necks” (*ibid.* p. 79).

Khrushchev's attack on Stalin in this report was veiled and shrouded in language almost allegorical:

"It was of paramount importance to re-establish and to strengthen in every way the Leninist principle of collective leadership..

"The Central Committee... vigorously condemned the cult of the individual as being alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism and making a particular leader a hero and a miracle worker ... currency of the cult of the individual tended to minimise the role of collective leadership in the Party, and at times resulted in serious drawbacks in our work." (*Ibid.* pp. 80-81.)

Having already eliminated, through judicial murder, Beria and a few other Marxist-Leninists, Khrushchev felt bold enough to condemn Beria as an imperialist agent – a most absurd accusation:

"The imperialists had placed special hopes on their old agent, Beria, who had perfidiously wormed his way into leading posts in the party and government. The Central Committee put an end to the criminal conspiracy of that • dangerous enemy and his accomplices. That was a big victory for the party, a victory for its collective leadership." (*Ibid.* pp. 78-79.)

If, in the remarks quoted immediately above, one were to substitute the name of Khrushchev for that of Beria, one would be very much closer to the truth. For this truth is that Beria was a Marxist-Leninist, and imperialists, so far removed were they from placing special hopes on him, went lurid with delight at the news of his physical elimination. With Khrushchev, matters stood differently. The imperialists had placed "*special hopes*" on this arch-revisionist, "*who had perfidiously wormed his way into leading posts in the party and government,*" and their hopes were not belied. This hypocritical high priest of capitalist restoration, this cringing flatterer, this double dealer and intriguer, learning his lessons from the "*Trotskyites, Bukharinites, bourgeois nationalists, and other malignant enemies ... who had wanted to restore capitalism,*" and who had all broken their necks, bided his time and waited for his opportunity, which came his way following the death of Stalin in March 1953.

"Honesty in politics is the result of strength;" *remarked Lenin*, "hypocrisy the result of weakness." (Polemical Notes, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVII p. 166.)

It is a testimony to the hypocrisy – and weakness – of Khrushchev, and his revisionist cohorts, that his direct attack on Stalin was made in a "secret speech" to the 20th Party Congress on 25 Febru-

ary, 1956. So fearful were the revisionist clique of the reaction of the Soviet people to Khrushchev's baseless and unwarranted abuse of Stalin that they never dared publish it in the USSR. Instead they leaked it to the US State Department, leaving it to the imperialist mass media to broadcast it to the Soviet people. For the revisionists this proved to be an extremely wise precaution, as even the rumours about the content of Khrushchev's "secret speech" at the Congress led to industrial unrest, demonstrations and riots in the USSR. In this "secret speech", Khrushchev charges that:

"... the cult of the individual acquired such monstrous size chiefly because Stalin himself, using all conceivable methods, supported the glorification of his own person." (Russian Institute, Columbia University (ed.): *The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism*, New York, 1956, p. 69.)

As time went on, and Khrushchev felt more secure and bold, he gave vent to his anti-Stalin spleen in language most absurd, violent and venomous. In his conversation with the delegation of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) on 22 October 1961, he abused Stalin as a "murderer" a "criminal", a "bandit" and an "idiot". In his speech at a 1962 May Day reception given by the Soviet government, Khrushchev described Stalin as a "gambler;" a "despot of the type of Ivan the Terrible", "the greatest dictator in Russian history" and a "fool."

The meaning of Khrushchev's abuse, its real significance, can only be that the first socialist state was for nearly three decades headed by a "bandit"; that the heroic struggle of the glorious CPSU was, over this period, waged under the leadership of a "fool;" that the great Red Army, which by smashing the Nazi war machine triumphed in the anti-fascist and Great Patriotic War, had an "idiot" as its supreme commander. That the international communist movement had a "murderer" for its teacher over 30 long years; and that the international proletariat and the oppressed people the world over had a "gambler" as their standard-bearer in the struggle against international imperialism and all reaction. As the Chinese comrades at the time correctly commented, such abuse of Stalin by Khrushchev was "a gross insult to the Soviet people, a gross insult to the CPSU, to the Soviet army, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the socialist system, to the international communist movement, to the revolutionary people the world over and to Marxism-Leninism." (On the Question of Stalin; Second Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU by the Editorial

Departments of *People's Daily* and *Red Flag*; 13 September, 1963).

The Chinese comrades went on to ask:

“In what position does Khrushchev, who participated in the leadership of the Party and the state during Stalin’s period, place himself when he beats his breast, pounds the table and shouts abuse at the top of his voice? In the position of an accomplice to a “murderer” or a “bandit”? Or in the same position as a “fool” or an “idiot”? (Ibid.)

Asked the Chinese comrades: “What difference is there between such abuse of Stalin by Khrushchev and the abuse by the imperialists, the reactionaries in various countries, and the renegades to communism? Why such inveterate hatred of Stalin? Why attack him more ferociously than you do the enemy?”

“In abusing Stalin,” *said the Chinese comrades by way of an answer to the above question,* “Khrushchev is in fact wildly denouncing the Soviet system and state. His language in this connection is by no means weaker but actually stronger than that of such renegades as Kautsky, Trotsky, Tito and Djilas.” (Ibid.)

While pouring such abuse on Stalin, the Khrushchevites were heaping praise on the political representatives of US imperialism. Noted the Chinese comrades:

“On the one hand, they viciously lash out at a great Marxist-Leninist, a great proletarian revolutionary and a great leader of the international communist movement, and on the other, they laud the chieftains of imperialism to the skies.” *Hitting the nail on the head, they pertinently asked:*

“Is there any possibility that the connection between these phenomena is merely accidental and that it does not follow with inexorable logic from the betrayal of Marxism-Leninism?” (Ibid.)

That was indeed the political significance of Khrushchev’s vicious attack on Stalin, of his vituperative invective. In attacking Stalin, he (Khrushchev) was only maligning the party of great Lenin, the motherland of socialism, the Soviet people who were the first to accomplish a socialist revolution, who upheld its great gains in fierce battles against international imperialism and internal counter-revolution, who displayed miracles of heroism and dedication in the task of socialist construction, and who faithfully fulfilled their internationalist duty to the working people the world over.

In his article, *The Political Significance of Abuse*, Lenin made the observation:

“Abuse in politics often covers up the utter lack of ideological content, the helplessness and the impotence, the annoying impotence of the abuser.”

This apt observation so neatly described the Khrushchevite revisionists who, feeling constantly haunted by the spectre of Stalin, tried to cover up their utter lack of principle, their helplessness and their annoying impotence by abusing Stalin. Khrushchev merely abused Stalin; he never even attempted to substantiate his accusations and charges against Stalin. Such was his hatred of Stalin that in his speech at the Soviet- Hungarian Friendship Rally in Moscow on 19 July, 1963, Khrushchev said: “*Ah! If only Stalin had died ten years earlier.*” As is known, Stalin died in 1953. Ten years earlier would have meant 1943, the very year in which the glorious Red Army began its counter-offensive against the Nazi beasts in the Great Patriotic War. None but Hitler would have wanted Stalin to die just then – one would have thought! No, it turns out that the Khrushchevite revisionists were at one with Hitler in wishing Stalin’s demise in that fateful year when the fortunes of the war, and with them the destiny of the entire humanity, hung so precariously in the balance.

Lenin, in the Preface to his remarkable work in defence of Marxian philosophy, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, made this penetrating observation in regard to revisionism:

“... it was only the revisionists who gained a sad reputation for themselves by their departure from the fundamental views of Marxism, and by their fear or inability, to ‘settle accounts’ openly, explicitly, resolutely and clearly with the views they had abandoned. When orthodox Marxists had occasion to pronounce against some antiquated views of Marx..., it was always done with such precision and thoroughness that no one found anything ambiguous in such literary utterances.”

Khrushchevite revisionism is, or shall we say was, characterised by precisely such a duality – by its departure from the fundamentals of Marxism- Leninism accompanied by its fear of, or inability to, ‘settle accounts’ openly and honestly with the views it had abandoned. Even as late as Gorbachev’s accession to power, the revisionists in the USSR, while doing everything to bring about the final collapse of even the remnants of socialism, continued to invoke the names of Marx and Lenin. They have found an easy way: instead of openly taking up cudgels against Marxism-Leninism even today, they

confine themselves to abusing Stalin and blaming everything and every misfortune, real and imaginary, on Stalin's 'personality cult'.

In what follows we intend to refute beyond doubt the revisionist assertions that Stalin was an extremely vain person, who not only encouraged the 'Stalin personality cult', but also took great pleasure in it, that he regarded himself as a superhuman being who knew everything, that he made statements without prior investigation and forced everyone to agree with him through sheer conceit. What emerges in our study of the real Stalin, as distinct from the mythical Stalin, is an extraordinarily competent Marxist-Leninist, who hated flattery and flatterers, who hated the cult of personality and did everything to stop it. What emerges is a great proletarian revolutionary suffering neither from conceit nor mock-modesty, and one mission – one burning desire – in life, namely, to contribute to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for its social emancipation; who never opened his mouth without making a careful study of the matter concerned. What also emerges clearly is that it is precisely his detractors, the Khrushchevite revisionists, who were guilty of building the Stalin 'personality cult'. But he was never fooled or distracted by their flattery from the proletarian course he had set himself. That is precisely why the bourgeois intelligentsia – in particular the revisionists – entertained such burning resentment against him. For three long decades he frustrated their attempts to divert the international communist movement along opportunist channels and curtailed their freedom to corrupt the working-class movement with bourgeois ideology. It is natural that his consistent refusal to assume the pictorial leadership of a cult officiated by the opportunist intelligentsia aroused such uncontrollable hatred of him as that felt by the revisionist clique which seized the leadership of the CPSU after his death.

Friend and foe alike testify to Stalin's simplicity and modesty. This is how Enver Hoxha, the Albanian leader, describes Stalin:

"Stalin was no tyrant, no despot. He was a man of principle; he was just, modest and very kindly and considerate towards people, the cadres and his colleagues (E. Hoxha: *With Stalin: Memoirs*, Tirana, 1979, pp. 14-15.)

Henri Barbusse, the French writer, gives the following vivid picture of Stalin's lifestyle:

"One goes up to the first floor, where white curtains hang over three of the windows. These three windows are Stalin's home. In the tiny hall a long military cloak hangs on a peg beneath a cap. In

addition to this hall there are three bedrooms and a dining-room. The bedrooms are as simply furnished as those of a respectable, second-class hotel. ... The eldest son, Jasheka, sleeps at night in the dining room, on a divan which is converted into a bed; the younger sleeps in a tiny recess, a sort of alcove opening out of it. ...

“Each month he earns the five hundred roubles which constitute the meagre maximum salary of the officials of the Communist Party (amounting to between £20 and £25 in English money)....

“This frank and brilliant man is ... a simple man. ... He does not employ thirty-two secretaries, like Mr Lloyd George; he has only one....

“Stalin systematically gives credit for all progress made to Lenin, whereas the credit has been in very large measure his own.” (H. Barbusse: *Stalin: A New World Seen Through One Man*, London 1935, pp. vii, viii, 291, 294.)

Although Stalin had the use of a country cottage (*dacha*), his lifestyle in it was just as simple and modest. Let Svetlana, his daughter, speak:

“It was the same with the *dacha* at Kuntsevo. ... My father lived on the ground floor. He lived in one room and made it do for everything. He slept on the sofa, made up at night as a bed” (S Allelujeva, *Letters to a Friend*, London, 1967, p. 28).

The Russian-born American writer, Eugene Lyon, in his biography of Stalin, paints the following picture of the simplicity of Stalin's lifestyle and of his pleasant, likable and friendly manner:

“Stalin lives in a modest apartment of three rooms... In his everyday life his tastes remained simple almost to the point of crudeness.... Even those who hated him with a desperate hate and blamed him for sadistic cruelties never accused him of excesses in his private life...

“Those who measure ‘success’ by millions of dollars, yachts and mistresses find it hard to understand power relished in austerity

...

“There was nothing remotely ogre-like in his looks or conduct, nothing theatrical in his manner. A pleasant, earnest, aging man – evidently willing to be friendly to the first foreigner whom he had admitted to his presence in years. ‘He’s a thoroughly likable person,’ / remember thinking as we sat there, and thinking it in astonishment.” (E Lyons, *Stalin: Czar of All the Russias*: Philadelphia, 1940, pp. 196 and 200.)

Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the famous British Fabians, in their enduring work *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*, forcibly reject the myth of exercise by Stalin of dictatorial power:

“Sometimes it is asserted that... the whole state is governed by the will of a single person, Josef Stalin.

“First let it be noted that, unlike Mussolini, Hitler and other modern dictators, Stalin is not invested by law with any authority over his fellow-citizens. He has not even the extensive power which ... the American Constitution entrusts for four years to every successive president... Stalin is not, and never has been,... the President of the USSR ... He is not even a People’s Commissar, or a member of the Cabinet... He is... the General Secretary of the Party....

“We do not think that the Party is governed by the will of a single person, or that Stalin is the sort of person to claim or desire such a position. He has himself very explicitly denied any such personal dictatorship in terms which ... certainly accord with our own impression of the facts.

“The Communist Party in the USSR has adopted for its own organisation the pattern which we have described ... In this pattern individual dictatorship has no place. Personal decisions are distrusted, and elaborately guarded against. In order to avoid the mistakes due to bias, anger, jealousy, vanity and other distempers... it is desirable that the individual will should always be controlled by the necessity of gaining the assent of colleagues of equal grade, who have candidly discussed the matter and who have to make themselves jointly responsible for the decision ...

“Stalin ... has... frequently pointed out that he does no more than carry out the decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party...

“The plain truth is that, surveying the administration of the USSR during the past decade under the alleged dictatorship of Stalin, the principal decisions have manifested neither the promptitude nor the timeliness, nor yet the fearless obstinacy that have often been claimed as the merits of a dictatorship. On the contrary, the action of the Party has frequently been taken after consideration so prolonged, and as the outcome of discussion sometimes so heated and embittered, as to bear upon their formulation the marks of hesitancy and lack of assurance... These policies have borne the stigmata of committee control.” (S and B Webb: *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*, London, 1947, pages 333-336.)

For those who are disinclined to believe in the testimony of Hoxha, Barbusse and the Webbs as being biased witnesses, we shall reproduce excerpts from the writings of those very critical of Stalin but who, nevertheless, corroborate the testimony already cited.

Joseph Davies, the US ambassador to Moscow from 1936-1938 – the period of the Moscow Trials – has this to say of Stalin:

I was startled to see the door... open and Mr Stalin come into the room alone... His demeanour is kindly, his manner almost deprecatingly simple...

“He greeted me cordially with a smile and with great simplicity, but also with a real dignity ... His brown eye is exceedingly kindly and gentle. A child would like to sit in his lap and a dog would sidle up to him.” (J.E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, London, 1940, pages 222 and 230.)

Walter Bedell Smith, another US ambassador to Moscow, from 1946- 1949, writes of Stalin:

“He is not, for instance, an absolute dictator, on the one hand, nor a prisoner of the Politburo, on the other; his position, I would say, is more that of chairman of the board with the decisive vote ...” (Walter Bedell Smith: *Moscow Mission*, William Heinemann Limited, London, 1950, p. 44).

Another Russian-born American correspondent, Isaac Don Levine, in his far from friendly biography of Stalin, writes:

“Stalin does not seek honours. He loathes pomp. He is averse to public displays. He could have all the nominal regalia in the chest of a great state. But he prefers the background.” (I.D. Levine, *Stalin: A Biography*, London, 1931, p. 248-249.)

The American writer Louis Fischer, who is equally hostile to Stalin, gives this description of Stalin’s capacity to listen:

“Stalin ... inspires the Party with his will-power and calm. Individuals in contact with him admire his capacity to listen and his skill in improving on the suggestions and drafts of highly intelligent subordinates.”) L Fischer, from an article in *The Nation*, Vol. 137,9 Aug. 1933, p. 154).

To Eugene Lyons’ question “Are you a dictator?” Stalin replied:

“No, I am no dictator. Those who use the word do not understand the Soviet system of government and the methods of the Communist Party. No one man or group of men can dictate. Decisions are made by the Party and acted upon by its organs, the Central Committee and the Politburo.” (*Ibid*, p .203.)

Arvo Tuominen, the Finnish revisionist politician, who, while being hostile to Stalin feels nevertheless able to testify to Stalin's self-effacement and to stress, albeit with surprise, the contrast between the real and the mythical Stalin in the following words:

"In his speeches and writings Stalin always withdrew into the background, speaking only of communism, the Soviet power and the Party, and stressing that he was really a representative of the idea and the organisation, nothing more ...

"I never noticed any signs of vainglory in Stalin." (A. Tuominen: *The Bells of the Kremlin*, Hanover (New Hampshire USA), 1983, pp. 155 and 163.)

And:

"During my many years in Moscow I never stopped marvelling at the contrast between the man and the colossal likenesses that had been made of him. That medium-sized, slightly pock-marked Caucasian with a moustache was as far removed as could be from that stereotype of a dictator. But at the same time the propaganda was proclaiming his superhuman abilities." (*Ibid.*, p. 155).

Marshal Georgy Zhukov writes of Stalin thus:

"Free of affectation and mannerisms, he won the heart of everyone he talked with." (G.K. Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, London, 1971, p. 283.)

Svetlana, Stalin's daughter, with her notorious ability to fall for all manner of slander hurled at Stalin, nevertheless rejects the charge that her father was personally responsible for directing the 'cult' of his personality. Describing a train journey with him from the Crimea to Moscow in 1948, she says:

"As we pulled in at the various stations we'd go for a stroll along the platform. My father walked as far as the engine, giving greetings to the railway workers as he went. You couldn't see a single passenger. It was a special train and no one was allowed on the platform ... Whoever thought such a thing up? Who had contrived all these stratagems? Not he. It was the system of which he himself was a prisoner and in which he suffered from loneliness, emptiness and lack of human companionship.

"Nowadays when I read or hear somewhere that my father used to consider himself practically a god, it amazes me that people who knew him well can even say such a thing...

"He never thought of himself as a god." (S Alleluyeva, *Letters to a Friend*, London 1968, pp. 202-3 and 213.)

She paints this poignant picture of the grief-stricken servants at Stalin's *dacha* immediately following his death:

"These men and women who were servants of my father loved him. In little things he wasn't hard to please. On the contrary, he was courteous, unassuming and direct with those who waited upon him ...

"Men, women, everyone, started crying all over again ...

"No one was making a show of loyalty or grief. All of them had known one another for years...

"No one in this room looked on him as a god or superman, a genius or a demon. They loved and respected him for the most ordinary human qualities, those qualities of which servants are the best judges of all." (*ibid.* pp. 20 and 22.)

To those who say that Stalin, for reasons of vanity, conceit and subjective pleasure, encouraged the 'cult' of Stalin's personality, we answer that Stalin frequently condemned and derided the 'cult of the individual' as being contrary to Marxism-Leninism. We reproduce below his pronouncements on this question made over a period of more than two decades. In June 1926, in his *Reply to Railway Workers' Greetings*, he expressed himself as follows:

7 must say in all conscience, comrades, that I do not deserve a good half of the flattering things that have been said here about me. I am, it appears, a hero of the October Revolution, the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the leader of the Communist International, a legendary warrior- knight and all the rest of it. This is absurd, comrades, and quite unnecessary exaggeration. It is the sort of thing that is usually said at the graveside of a departed revolutionary. But I have no intention of dying yet...

"I really was, and still am, one of the pupils of the advanced workers of the Tiflis railway workshops." (J.V. Stalin, *Works* Vol. 8, Moscow, 1954, p. 182.)

On 21 December, 1929, he sent a reply "*To All Organisations and Comrades who sent Greetings on the Occasion of Comrade Stalin's Fiftieth Birthday*", "which shows his modesty and utter devotion to the cause of the world proletariat:

"Your congratulations and greetings I place to the credit of the great Party of the working class which bore me and reared me in its own image and likeness.

And just because I place them to the credit of our glorious Leninist Party, I make bold to tender you my Bolshevik thanks.

“You need have no doubt, comrades, that I am prepared in the future, too, to devote to the cause of the working class, to the cause of the proletarian revolution and world communism, all my strength, all my ability and, if need be, all my blood, drop by drop.” (J.V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 12, Moscow 1955, p. 146.)

In early March 1930, Stalin wrote his article *Dizzy with Success*, in which he criticised the deviations from the Party line in the implementation of the policy of collectivisation, stressing the voluntary character of the collective- farm movement, among other matters. This article had a singularly beneficial effect in winning the vast masses of the peasantry to the side of collectivisation by removing the errors of some zealous functionaries in the field of collectivisation. He was rightly given credit for his initiative. In his typically self- effacing manner he passes all credit to the Party Central Committee. This is what he wrote in his *Reply to Collective-Farm Comrades* in April 1930:

“There are some who think that the article ‘*Dizzy with Success*’ was the result of Stalin’s personal initiative. That, of course, is nonsense. It is not in order that personal initiative is a matter like this to be taken by anyone, whoever he might be, that we have a Central Committee (*Ibid.* p. 218).

In August 1930, in his Letter to Comrade Shatknovsky, he denounces devotion to persons as “vain and useless bauble of weak-minded intellectuals.”

“You speak of your devotion to me ... I would advise you to discard the ‘principle’ of devotion to persons. It is not the Bolshevik way. Be devoted to the working class, its Party, its state. That is a fine and useful thing. But do not confuse it with devotion to persons, this vain and useless bauble of weak- minded intellectuals.” (J.V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 13, Moscow, 1955, p. 20.)

During December 1931, during his *Talk with the German Author, Emil Ludwig* Stalin has this to say on the role of outstanding individuals in history:

“As for myself, I am just a pupil of Lenin’s, and the aim of my life is to be a worthy pupil of his...”

“Marxism does not deny at all the role played by outstanding individuals or that history is made by people. But... great people are worth anything at all only to the extent that they are able correctly to understand these conditions, to understand how to change them. If they fail to understand these conditions and want to alter them

according to the promptings of their imagination, they will find themselves in the situation of Don Quixote...

“Individual persons cannot decide. Decisions of individuals are always, or nearly always, one-sided decisions ... In every collective body, there are people whose opinion must be reckoned with ... From the experience of three revolutions we know that out of every 100 decisions taken by individual persons without being tested and corrected collectively, approximately 90 are one-sided...

“Never under any circumstances would our workers now tolerate power in the hands of one person. With us, personages of the greatest authority are reduced to nonentities, become mere ciphers, as soon as the masses of the workers lose confidence in them. Plekhanov used to enjoy exceptionally great prestige ... As soon as he began to stumble politically the workers forgot him. They forsook him and forgot him. Another instance: Trotsky. His prestige too was great, although, of course, it was nothing like Plekhanov’s... As soon as he drifted away from the workers they forgot him”. (*Ibid*, pp. 107-109 and 113.)

In his *Letter to Comrade I.N. Bazhanov* in February 1933 he wrote:

I have received your letter ceding me your second Order as a reward for my work.

I thank you very much for your warm words and comradely present. I know what you are depriving yourself of in my favour and appreciate your sentiments.

“Nevertheless, I cannot accept your second Order. I cannot and must not accept it, not only because it can only belong to you, as you alone have earned it, but also because I have been amply rewarded as it is by the attention and respect of comrades and, consequently, have no right to rob you.

“Orders are instituted not for those who are well known as it is, but mainly for heroic people who are little known and who need to be made known to all.

“Besides, I must tell you that I already have two Orders. That is more than one needs, I assure you.

“I apologise for the delay in replying.

“With communist greetings,

“J. Stalin.

“P.S. I am returning the Order to where it belongs.” (*Ibid*. p. 241.)

In his *Talk with Colonel Robins* in May 1933, we find this dialogue:

“Robins: I consider it a great honour to have the opportunity of paying you a visit.

Stalin: There is nothing particular in that. You are exaggerating.

Robins: What is most interesting to me is that throughout Russia I have found the names Lenin-Stalin, Lenin-Stalin, Lenin-Stalin, linked together.

Stalin: That, too, is an exaggeration. How can I be compared to Lenin?” (*Ibid.* p. 267.)

When in 1938 it was suggested by some well-meaning sycophants that a book entitled *Stories of the Childhood of Stalin* be published, Stalin characteristically came down on them like a ton of bricks, suggesting that the book be banned:

“I am absolutely against the publication of ‘*Stories of the Childhood of Stalin*’.

“The book abounds with a mass of inexactitudes of fact, of alterations, of exaggerations and of unmerited praise...

“But... the important thing resides in the fact that the book has a tendency to engrave on the minds of Soviet children (and people in general) the personality cult of leaders, of infallible heroes. This is dangerous and detrimental. The theory of ‘heroes’ and ‘crowd’ is not a Bolshevik, but a Social- Revolutionary theory...

“I suggest we bum this book.” (*J.V. Stalin, ibid. Volume 14.*)

Here is our final piece of evidence on this question. In the latter half of 1950, a 4-man delegation of the then united Communist Party of India, composed of M. Basavapunnaiiah, C. Rajeswara Rao, Ajoy Ghosh and S.A. Dange, met a 4-man delegation of the CPSU(B), headed by Stalin, the other members of it being Molotov, Suslov and Malenkov. In an article, in connection with the role of Stalin, which appeared in the 8 July 1990 issue of *People’s Democracy*, the weekly organ of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Comrade Basavapunnaiiah has this to say, which testifies to Stalin’s modesty, prodigious memory and tremendous willingness to help fraternal parties and to treat their leaders with respect and on a footing of equality:

“Stalin said: ‘Comrades, you have requested us to assist you in sorting out some issues connected with the Communist movement in India. Our knowledge about present-day India is not up to the mark, and we are stating our views based on our old study of India

and our general understanding of historical and dialectical materialism.’

“After some preliminary exchange of views, Stalin asked our delegation to prepare two drafts, one relating to our party programme, and the second on the then current tactical line....

“Stalin asked our delegation whether the CPI had its Party Programme. We felt humbled since our Party in India had no programme as such, and it was being run by political resolutions from time to time. Then Stalin reminded our delegation about our Draft Programme forwarded to the centre of the Communist International in the year 1928. Besides reminding us of our forgotten ‘Draft Programme’, Stalin told us that it must be available in the archives of the Communist International which was locked and closed after the dissolution of the Third International in the year 1943. Stalin asked his aides at hand to unlock and open the doors of the closed CI archives, and find out our Draft Programme of 1928. It was found and delivered to our delegation for reading and returning back to the CI archives. We were all terribly impressed by how Stalin could remember this Indian draft of 1922, after two decades and more, and how all members of our delegation had almost forgotten about such a document.”

Comrade Basavapunnaiah concludes with the following quotation from Stalin’s speech made at the 19th Party Congress of the CPSU, delivered on October 14th, 1952, which testifies to the proletarian internationalism as propagated and practised by Stalin:

“Comrades, permit me to express the gratitude of our Congress to all the fraternal parties and groups whose representatives have honoured our Congress with their presence, or who have sent greetings to the Congress – gratitude for their friendly felicitations, for their wishes of success, for their confidence.

“It is their confidence that we particularly prize, for it signifies readiness to support our Party in its struggle for a brighter future for the peoples in its struggle against war, its struggle for the preservation of peace.

“It would be a mistake to think that, having become a mighty force, our Party is no longer in need of support. That is not true. Our Party and our country have always needed, and will need, the confidence, the sympathy and support of fraternal peoples abroad.

“The distinguishing feature of this support is that whenever any fraternal party supports the peaceable aspirations of our Party, it is

at the same time supporting its own people in their struggle for the preservation of peace. When in 1918-19, at the time of the armed attack of the British bourgeoisie on the Soviet Union, the British workers organised a struggle against war under the watchword of 'hands off Russia!' this was support – support, primarily, for the struggle of their own people for peace, and support also for the Soviet Union. ... This distinguishing feature of mutual support is to be explained by the fact that the interests of our Party do not contradict, but on the contrary, merge with the interests of the peace-loving peoples. As to the Soviet Union, its interests are altogether inseparable from the cause of worldwide peace.

“Naturally our Party cannot but remain indebted to the fraternal parties, and it must in turn render support to them and also their peoples in their struggle for emancipation, and in their struggle for the preservation of peace. As we know, this is exactly what it is doing. After our Party had assumed power in 1917, and after it had taken effective measures to abolish capitalist and landlord oppression, representatives of the fraternal parties, in their admiration for the daring and success of our Party, conferred upon it the title of the ‘Shock Brigade’ of the world revolutionary and labour movement. By this, they were expressing the hope that the success of the Shock Brigade would help to ease the position of the peoples languishing under the yoke of capitalism

The question then arises: if Stalin was not behind the ‘personality cult’ drive, who initiated it, who perpetrated and perpetuated it? The answer is none other than the revisionists – like Khrushchev, Karl Radek, Mikoyan and many others, who had wormed their way into a position of authority and influence in the CPSU and the Soviet government. And they did this partly to conceal their own revisionist position, for, learning from the total defeat and rout of the Trotskyite and Bukharinite opposition, the revisionists, the would-be restorers of capitalism, considered it wise to profess loudly their loyalty to the Party, and especially to its deservedly respected leader; partly they indulged in this sycophancy to discredit Stalin by laying blame for all real and imaginary misfortunes at the door of Stalin by alleging that he alone was running the show, that his dictatorial behaviour suppressed all dissent and democratic norms, etc. None was more sycophantic, none so revoltingly cringing, as Nikita Khrushchev, who played probably the most leading role in building up Stalin’s ‘personality cult’ – a cult which neither Stalin nor any-

one of his truly Marxist-Leninist supporters in the politburo ever encouraged.

As to how the ‘cult of personality’ got going, the following account, given by the Soviet revisionist historian, Roy Medvedev, is pretty authentic:

“The first issue of *Pravda* for 1934 carried a huge two-page article by Radek, heaping orgiastic praise on Stalin. The former Trotskyite, who had led the opposition to Stalin for many years, now called him ‘*Lenin’s best pupil, the model of the Leninist Party, bone of its bone, blood of its blood.*’ ... He ‘*is as far-sighted as Lenin*’, and so on and on. This seems to have been the first large article in the press specifically devoted to the adulation of Stalin, and it was quickly reissued as a pamphlet in 225,000 copies, an enormous figure for the time.” (R. A. Medvedev *Let History Judge: the Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, London, 1972, p. 148.)

Everyone knows who Karl Radek was and where he ended up. At the Second Moscow Trial he admitted to, and was convicted of, terrorism and working for the restoration of capitalism in the USSR (See *Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre*, Moscow, 1937, pages 88-115.)

Khrushchev, who with his anti-Stalin outburst combined with a wholesale revision of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, set the ball rolling at the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU towards the restoration of capitalism, was the most fervent promoter of the ‘cult of the personality’ around Stalin. Here are a few examples. He finished his speech at the Moscow Party Conference in January 1932, introducing for the first time the term *vozhd* (leader) to refer to Stalin, with these words:

“The Moscow Bolsheviks, rallied around the Leninist Central Committee as never before, and around the ‘vozhd’ of our Party, Comrade Stalin, are cheerfully and confidently marching toward new victories in the battles for socialism, for world proletarian revolution.” (*Rabochaya Moskva*, 26 January 1932, cited in L. Pistrak, *The Grand Tactician: Khrushchev’s Rise to Power*, London, 1961, p. 159).

The same man, whom he was to abuse in his “secret speech” at the 20th Party Congress as an “*idiot*” and a “*fool*”, he cringingly called “‘*vozhd*’ of genius” at the 17th Party Conference in January 1934 (see L. Pistrak, *ibid.*, p. 160).

During the Kamenev and Zinoviev Trial (first Moscow Trial)

during 1936, Khrushchev, who was then the Moscow Party Secretary, said:

“Miserable pygmies! They lifted their hands against the greatest of all men,... our wise ‘vozhd’ Comrade Stalin! Thou, Comrade Stalin, hast raised the great banner of Marxism-Leninism high over the entire world and carried it forward. We assure thee, Comrade Stalin, that the Moscow Bolshevik organisation – the faithful supporter of the Stalinist Central Committee – will increase Stalinist vigilance still more, will extirpate the Trotskyite-Zinovievite remnants, and close the ranks of the Party and non-Party Bolsheviks even more around the Stalinist Central Committee and the great Stalin.” (*Pravda*, 23 August 1936, cited in L Pistrak, *ibid.* p. 162.)

In November 1936, at the Eighth All-Union Congress of the Soviets, Khrushchev proposed that the new Constitution be called the ‘Stalinist Constitution’ as, he claimed, “... *it was written from beginning to end by Comrade Stalin himself.*” (*Pravda*, 30 Nov 1936, cited in L. Pistrak, *ibid.*, p. 161).

Be it noted in passing that neither Molotov, who was Prime Minister, nor Zhdanov, the Party Secretary in Leningrad, made reference to any special part played by Stalin in writing this Constitution. In the same speech it was Khrushchev who coined the term Stalinism:

“Our Constitution is the Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism that has conquered one sixth of the globe.” (*Ibid.*)

Speaking to a mass rally of 200,000 in Moscow in January 1937 during the Second Moscow Trial (that of Pyatakov and Radek), Khrushchev declared:

“By lifting their hands against Comrade Stalin, they lifted them against all the best that humanity possesses. For Stalin is hope; he is expectation; he is the beacon that guides all progressive mankind. Stalin is our banner! Stalin is our will! Stalin is our victory!” (*Pravda*, 31 January 1937, cited in L. Pistrak, *ibid.*, p. 162.)

Khrushchev repeatedly extolled Stalin as an “*intimate friend and comrade-in-arms of the great Lenin*” (December 1939); as “*the greatest genius, teacher and leader of mankind*” (18th Party Congress, March 1939), as “*the great, ever-victorious Marshal*” (May 1945), as “*the sincere friend of the people*” (December, 1939), and as his “*own father*” (December 1949). [All quotations in this paragraph are taken from the *People’s Daily* and *Red Flag* editorial cited above].

On the occasion of Stalin's 50th birthday in December 1929, Mikoyan made the demand:

"...that we, meeting the rightful demand of the masses, begin finally to work on his biography and make it available to the Party and to all working people in our country." (*Izvestia*, 21 December, cited in L. Pistrak, *ibid.* p. 164). Mikoyan repeated this demand 10 years later on the occasion of Stalin's 60th birthday in December 1939.

Eventually *Joseph Stalin: A Short Biography*, written by six people – Alexandrov, Glatonov, Kruzhkov, Mitin, Mochalov and Pospelov – was published in 1947. And yet Khrushchev, in his "secret speech", claimed that Stalin had personally written it to glorify himself:

"One of the most characteristic examples of Stalin's self-glorification and his lack of even elementary modesty is the edition of his '*Short Biography*'..."

"This book is an example of the most dissolute flattery." (Russian Institute, Columbia University (ed.), *op. cit.* p. 69).

The truth is that Stalin disliked flattery and was fully aware that the exponents of the 'personality cult' were up to no good. According to the Finnish revisionist, Tuominen, when Stalin was informed in 1935 that his busts had been prominently displayed in Tretyakov, Moscow's major art gallery, Stalin exclaimed:

"That's downright sabotage!" (A Tuominen, *op. cit.* p. 164.)

Leon Feuchtwanger says that Stalin believed that the "*wreckers*", with the purpose of discrediting him, were encouraging the 'cult of personality.'

"It is manifestly irksome to Stalin to be worshipped as he is, and from time to time he makes fun of it..."

"Of all the men I know who have power, Stalin is the most unpretentious. I spoke frankly to him about the vulgar and excessive cult made of him, and he replied with equal candour..."

"He thinks it is possible even that 'wreckers' may be behind it in an attempt to discredit him." (L Feuchtwanger, *Moscow 1937*, London, 1937, pp. 93-95).

Stalin poured scorn on the 'personality cult' drive then underway by proposing this sarcastic toast, recorded by Tuominen, at a New Year Party in 1935:

"Comrades! I want to propose a toast to our patriarch, life and sun, liberator of nations, architect of socialism (he rattled off all the appellations applied to him in those days), Josef Vissarionovich

Stalin, and I hope this is the first and last speech made to that genius this evening.” (A Tuominen, *op. cit.* p. 162.)

Stalin was never fooled by flattery showered on him by the intellectuals and bureaucrats occupying influential positions either in the USSR or in the Communist Parties of other countries. We know only too well how the very people who were to accuse him, after his death, of practising the ‘cult of the personality’ were declaring him at the time to be the virtual creator of the universe. Refusing to be taken in by this kind of sycophancy, and referring in his *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, to the textbook *The Elements of Marxist Political Economy*, which was then under preparation, he declared:

“Incidentally, in view of the inadequate level of Marxist development of the majority of the communist parties abroad, such a textbook might also be of great use to communist cadres abroad who are no longer young.”

And when Yaroshenko, who had put forward a series of erroneous ideas on questions of political economy and whom Stalin had criticised for that, requested that he be entrusted with the task of compiling the book on the political economy of socialism, adding that he would be able to expound in it “*the Marxist, Leninist-Stalinist theory of the political economy of socialism, a theory which would convert this science into an effective weapon of the struggle of the people for communism,*” Stalin retorted “*Comrade Yaroshenko’s request... cannot be taken seriously, if only because it reeks of Khrushchakism [boastfulness]*”. (*Ibid.* pp. 85-86.)

He also addressed himself to the question “Should there be a special chapter in the textbook on Lenin and Stalin as the founders of the political economy of socialism?”, *to which his response was:*

“I think that the chapter, ‘*The Marxist Theory of Socialism. Founding of the Political Economy of Socialism by V I Lenin and J V Stalin,*’ should be excluded from the textbook. It is entirely unnecessary, since it adds nothing and only colourlessly reiterates what has already been said in greater detail in earlier chapters of the book.” (*ibid.* p. 45.)

It is indeed a tribute to Stalin’s revolutionary leadership, to his steadfast defence of Marxism-Leninism and the interests of the international proletariat, that even Khrushchev in his “secret speech” was compelled to make the following remark:

“This question is complicated by the fact that all this which we have just discussed was done during Stalin’s life under his leader-

ship and with his concurrence; here Stalin was convinced that this was necessary for the defence of the interests of the working classes against the plotting of the enemies and against the attack of the imperialist camp. He saw this from the position of the interest of the working class, of the interest of the labouring people, of the interest of the victory of socialism and communism. We cannot say that these were the deeds of a giddy despot. He considered that this should be done in the interests of the Party; of the working masses, in the name of the defence of the revolution's gains. In this lies the whole tragedy!" (*op. cit.* p. 85).

And since then the revisionists have been at sixes and sevens in dealing with Stalin. Each time they try to reassess his role, they are compelled, against their wishes and intentions, to pay the highest compliments to him. The revisionist attacks on Stalin bring to our memory a remark made by Marx in his preface to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Marx commented that when Victor Hugo made a scathing personal attack on Louis Bonaparte, he made his literary victim appear "great instead of little by ascribing to him a personal power of initiative such as would be without parallel in world history."

Only a few months after Khrushchev's "secret report", on 30 June 1956, the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted a special resolution entitled *On Overcoming the Cult of the Individual and its Consequences*. This resolution reads:

"J.V. Stalin, who held the post of General Secretary of the Party's Central Committee for a long period of time, worked actively in common with other leading officials of the Party to carry Lenin's behests into life. He was faithful to Marxism-Leninism and led, as a theorist and organiser of large calibre, the Party's fight against the Trotskyites, Right-wing opportunists, bourgeois nationalists, against the intrigues by capitalists from without. In this political and ideological fight Stalin earned great authority and popularity. But there appeared a mistaken practice of associating all our great victories with his name."

In January, 1959, the leadership of the CPSU returned to the question of Stalin for the third time and published another version under the title *Stalin and his Work*, which was to be incorporated into a volume of the Soviet Encyclopaedia. The publisher's note in it asserted:

"It may perhaps be right to add that this is the first authoritative

reassessment of Stalin made since the 20th Congress of the CPSU.” *This “First authoritative reassessment” ends up with two concluding paragraphs under the caption “Name of Stalin Inseparable from Marxism-Leninism” And they read as follows:*

“Stalin has long occupied a leading position in the Central Committee of the Communist Party. All his activity is linked with the realisation of great socialist changes in the Soviet country. The Communist Party and the Soviet people remember and respect Stalin. His name is inseparable from Marxism-Leninism and it will be a gross historical distortion to extend the errors committed by Stalin during the last period of his life to all the long years of his activity as leader of the Party and the State.

“The campaign started by the imperialist reactionaries against ‘Stalinism’, which they themselves invented, is in reality a campaign against the revolutionary movement.

“The outbursts of revisionists against ‘Stalinism’ are similarly, in essence, a form of struggle against the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism.”

We know already that it was none other than Khrushchev and other concealed revisionists who, while Stalin was alive, initiated and continued the *“mistaken practice of associating all our great victories with his name.”* What is more, this was done against the often expressed wishes of Stalin. We also know that the *“outbursts of revisionists against ‘Stalinism’,”* which are *“in essence a form of struggle against the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism,”* were the handiwork of Khrushchevite revisionists and no one else. The Trotskyite and imperialist campaign against ‘Stalinism’ got nowhere until triumphant Khrushchevite revisionism after the 20th Party Congress decided to weigh into the scales on the side of this imperialist campaign. On one thing we can, however, agree with the above *“First authoritative reassessment”*, namely, that the essence of the campaign against ‘Stalinism’ lies in the fact that it is *“a form of struggle against the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism,”* irrespective of whether it is indulged in by Trotskyism, imperialism or modern Khrushchevite revisionism. Be it said in passing that while the revisionists constantly talk about *“the errors committed by Stalin during the last period of his life,”* they never specify these errors, let alone bother to substantiate their accusations.

It is also a tribute to Stalin’s revolutionary leadership, to his steadfast defence of Marxism-Leninism and the interests of the in-

ternational proletariat, that after more than thirty years of combined revisionist and imperialist vilification and negation of Stalin, there exist in the USSR vast numbers of people who cherish with affection the memory of Stalin, who hold dear, and with pride, the supremely meritorious services rendered by Stalin to his socialist motherland and to the international proletariat. At the end of 1987, the Soviet magazine *Oktyabr*, which had been in the forefront in propagating the twin reactionary policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, was obliged to publish 16 pages of readers' letters passionately defending Stalin as a bulwark of socialism and vehemently denouncing Khrushchevite revisionism as counter-revolutionary:

“Stalin and Lenin are the two bulwarks, the twin legs of our Socialist ideology. To remove either one means to cause irreparable damage to the cause of communism.

“That is something the ideologists of Zionism-imperialism saw clearly, as they worked out their strategy of anti-Socialist struggle. Having realised that their gamble on Hitler had failed, they decided to stake all on a fifth column – and they made no mistake.

‘You may claim that the 20th Party Congress (when Khrushchev launched the de-Stalinisation campaign in 1956) laid down the foundation of democratisation in Soviet society. But I think it was the reverse. The activities of Khrushchev and the writers who supported him like Solzhenitsyn and Tvardovsky, meant counter-revolution. And if it was not clear enough in 1956, it is today.’ (cited according to the *Guardian*, 16 Dec. 1987.)

And when the August 1987 issue of *Oktyabr* published a commentary by Yuri Burtin, its editor, on the posthumous publication of Tvardovsky's anti-Stalin poem *By Right of Memory*, it produced a wave of letters in passionate defence of Stalin, including the following:

“The poem for you was just a pretext to launch a murderous attack on our Soviet history of the 1930s and 1950s ... our people refuse to continue spitting on Stalin's name for the sake of pleasing some aesthetic snobs”, wrote *I. Perov, aged 23, from Kishinev.*

“Ask the workers and peasants what they think about Stalin ... if you try to convince them that it was under Stalin that the system of privileges for the top party echelons began, they will tell that it's rubbish, and every sane person knows these privileges grew up under your beloved Khrushchev.”

Another letter goes on:

“If you were an honest man or a true patriot, you would have to recognise that despite the slanderous campaigns against Stalin, the trust in him, in his cause and righteousness is not only alive, but it is being reborn among the new generation.”

“Khrushchev’s supporters seized control of the central apparatus, and ^ removed as supporters of the cult of personality the real adherents to socialism, the true revolutionaries,” *says another*.

We end this article with the following quotation of Stalin’s, taken from his speech of 23 October 1927, delivered at a meeting of the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the CPSU(B):

“The reason why the main attacks were directed against Stalin is because Stalin knows all the opposition’s tricks better, perhaps, than some of our comrades do, and it is not so easy, I dare say, to fool him. So they strike their blows primarily at Stalin. Well, let them hurl abuse to their heart’s content.

“And what is Stalin? Stalin is only a minor figure. Take Lenin. Who does not know that at the time of the August bloc the opposition, headed by Trotsky, waged an even more scurrilous campaign against Lenin? Listen to Trotsky, for example:

“The wretched squabbling systematically provoked by Lenin, that old hand at the game, that professional exploiter of all that is backward in the Russian labour movement, seems like a senseless obsession’ (see *Trotsky’s Letter to Chkheidze*, April 1913).

“Note the language, comrades! Note the language! It is Trotsky writing. And writing about Lenin.

“Is it surprising, then, that Trotsky, who wrote in such an ill-mannered way about the great Lenin, whose shoe-laces he was not worthy of tying, should now hurl abuse at one of Lenin’s numerous pupils – Comrade Stalin?

“More than that, I think the opposition does me honour by venting all its hatred against Stalin. That is as it should be. I think it would be strange and offensive if the opposition, which is trying to wreck the Party, were to praise Stalin, who is defending the fundamentals of the Leninist Party principle.” (J.V. Stalin, *The Trotskyist Opposition Before and Now*, Collected Works Vol., 10, p. 177-178).

In view of the foregoing, it is clear that Stalin was not guilty of practising the ‘cult of personality’. The practice of such a cult was entirely against his wish and was indulged in by concealed revisionists – the very people who were to denounce him on this score at

and after the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Thus their hatred of Stalin cannot be attributed to the 'cult of personality,' which was their own creation in any case. To what, then, must we attribute this hatred?

The answer to this question is to be found in the economics of class struggle – a subject with which we shall deal in the next issue of *Lalkar*.