

lish the Leninist standards of party life, to re-establish the principle of collective leadership in all links of the party, from top to bottom, to develop self-criticism and criticism of shortcomings, to have collective discussion and decision of all important questions.

Life shows that the re-establishment of the Leninist principles of collective leadership and the struggle against the cult of the individual have aroused an unprecedented upsurge in the activity and creative initiative of the broad masses of the working people. This is having a favourable effect in our entire economic and cultural development.

The cult of the individual helped to spread the methodicalism in party leadership and economic management—arbitrary administration—and instilled contempt and disregard for initiative from below. Thus, serious mistakes were made in the direction of agriculture, for instance, which brought about backwardness in a number of its important branches. The central committee, as is known, revealed these mistakes and took measures to a rapid advance of agriculture which have already yielded favourable results.

The cult of the individual led to the development of monstrous phenomena as the covering up of shortcomings, the vanishing of reality, and the creation of phantoms. We still have quite a few lick-spittles and sycophants, people who are used to making speeches dictated by others, brought up in servility and subservience. To eradicate and overcome all these most harmful survivals of the cult of the individual is our present task.

The cult of the individual has also done much harm in ideological work. If we take works on philosophy, political economy, history and other social sciences, we often find under the influence of the cult of the individual, see that many of them represent a collection of quotations from works by J. V. Stalin and glorification of him. One of the striking manifestations of the cult of the individual is the "Short Biography" of J. V. Stalin, edited with his direct participation. *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), First Course* is also in many respects permeated with the cult of the individual. Dogmatism and talmudism are a direct result of the flourishing of the cult of the individual, under which it was considered that only one man—Stalin—could develop and advance theory, say anything original and new, while all the others must vulgarise his thoughts, set out his formulations. All this hampered the development of Marxist-Leninist theory. Given such a state of affairs, the role of the creative thought of the party, which advances theory, is ignored, and party decisions which were the embodiment of the great historical experience of the party and wisdom were relegated to the background and not valued profoundly.

The cult of the individual has also left its imprint on a number of works of art and literature. Many of our historical, and especially wartime, films, works of literature and paintings are in the main dedicated to the glorification and glorification of Stalin. Wartime films and works of literature and art, for instance, do not yet directly throw light on the role of the Communist Party of the Soviet government, our army and people in the Great Patriotic War who rendered epoch-making services in defending our homeland and saving all mankind from the threat of fascist enslavement.

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The eradication of the survivals of the cult of the individual from theoretical and practical activities is one of

the important tasks of the party and all its organisations, in order to preclude any possibility of a revival of the cult of the individual in one or another form.

In eliminating the vestiges and survivals of the cult of the individual from our life, it is necessary to develop on a wide scale an explanatory campaign. The party teaches us that in this big and difficult job there is no place for hurry and haste. It would be wrong to imagine that it is enough to take some administrative measures to put an end to the cult of the individual for ever. Haste is also out of place in solving big theoretical problems. Such an approach to ideological questions can only cause harm. The overcoming of the vestiges of the cult of the individual requires a wide range and improvement of propaganda and agitation, of our entire ideological and theoretical work.

The great inspiring and directing activities of the Communist Party, led by the Leninist central committee, and the devoted labour of the Soviet people—therein lies the cause and wellspring of all our successes and victories. And it would be an absurdity bordering on superstition to imagine that all our historic victories are the fruit of leadership by one man alone, as was done in the period of the flourishing of the cult of the individual. All these victories are the result of the enormous activities of the people and the party, a vivid manifestation of the triumph of the great ideas of Marxism-Leninism.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, reared on the teaching of Marxism-Leninism, having half a century of experience of work, steered in the crucible of revolutionary struggle, has inexhaustible latent creative forces. Paying tribute to the services of J. V. Stalin, soberly assessing the big contribution which he made to the cause of the revolution, to the cause of building socialism, the party at the same time has resolutely raised the question of eliminating the cult of Stalin, so as fully to establish the Leninist principles and standards of party life and state activities and thus to create the best conditions for our entire great creative endeavour in communist construction.

The fact that the party directly, frankly and vigorously has raised the question of principle of the cult of the individual which is alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, demonstrates its great moral and political strength, the inviolability of its Leninist principles and its close ties with the people. The entire historical experience of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union conclusively proves that the policy of our party is true and unshakable, that it has been the wellspring of the greatest victories of the Soviet people, that it corresponds to the fundamental vital interests of the working people, that it points to the only right road towards communism, that it sets an inspiring example to the entire international communist and labour movement.

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party has demonstrated with renewed vigour the unbreakable unity of the party, its solidarity with the Leninist central committee, and the unanimous support for the party's policy by the entire Soviet people.

**It is now the main task of the party and all its organisations broadly to explain and put into effect the decisions of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to carry out the majestic programme of building communism, outlined by the congress.**

Armed with the historic decisions of the 20th Congress, the Communist Party confidently leads our people to new victories in the building of communism.

# Why the Cult of the Individual is Alien to the Spirit of Marxism-Leninism

'Pravda' Editorial

March 28, 1956

THE 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which drew up a majestic programme for the further advance of our country towards communism, gave a penetrating Marxist-Leninist analysis of the decisive role in socialist construction of the masses of the people led by the party, and of the harm of the cult of the individual. The congress resolutely condemned the cult of the individual as being alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. The resolution of the 20th Party Congress on the report of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union says:

"Thorough explanation of the Marxist-Leninist conception of the role of the individual in history was of great importance for increasing the activity of party members and the working people generally. The congress considers that the central committee was absolutely right in combating the cult of the individual, which tended to disparage the role of the party and the masses, to belittle the role of collective leadership in the party, and not infrequently resulted in grave errors in its activities. The congress instructs the central committee not to relax the struggle against the survivals of the cult of the individual, and in all its activities to proceed from the conception that the real makers of the new life are the masses of the people, led by the Communist Party."

This decision of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has met with the unanimous approval of the entire party, of all the Soviet people.

Why has our party launched a vigorous struggle against the cult of the individual and its consequences? It is because the cult of the individual signifies an inordinate exaltation of individuals, attributing to them supernatural features and qualities, making them almost miracle workers, and worshipping them. Such incorrect

conceptions of man, which are alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, and precisely concerning J. V. Stalin, emerged and were cultivated here over many years.

It is irrefutable that J. V. Stalin performed great services to our party, the working class and to the international labour movement. Universally known is his role in the preparation for and the making of the socialist revolution, in the Civil War, in the struggle to build socialism. Holding the important post of general secretary of the central committee of the party, J. V. Stalin emerged among the leaders of the party and the Soviet government. He fought actively, especially in the first years after Lenin's death, together with the other members of the central committee, for Leninism, against the people who distorted Lenin's teaching and against its enemies. Stalin was one of the strongest Marxists, his works, his logic and will exerted a great influence on the cadres, in the work of the party.

Guided by the teaching of the great Lenin, the party, headed by the central committee, launched great activities for the industrialisation of the country, the collectivisation of agriculture and a cultural revolution; and gained historic victories which are known to all. These victories were gained by the party in irreconcilable ideological struggle against different political trends hostile to Leninism—Trotskyites, Zinovievites, right-wing opportunists, bourgeois nationalists, all those who tried to divert the party from the only correct Leninist path. At that time Stalin earned popularity in the party, its sympathy and support, and became known to the people. However, those features and qualities in Stalin's practice of leadership which later developed into the cult of the individual, gradually began to come to the fore. The cult of the individual arose and developed against the background of the majestic, historic achievements of

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xism-Leninism, the enormous successes of the Soviet people and the Communist Party in building socialism, the victorious conclusion of the Patriotic War, the further strengthening of our social and political system, the growth of its international prestige. These historic successes in building a new society, achieved by Soviet people under the leadership of the Communist Party on the basis of the historical laws discovered by Marxism-Leninism, did not receive the necessary correct interpretation and were incorrectly attributed to the merits of one man—Stalin—and gained by some special merits as a leader inherent in him. Not possessing personal modesty, far from cutting off those exaltations and praises addressed to him, he reported and encouraged them in every way. As time went on this cult of the individual assumed ever more monstrous forms and seriously prejudiced the cause.

It stands to reason that such a practice on the part of Stalin meant the violation of the Leninist principles of leadership and was contrary to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism.

Any manifestation of the cult of the individual was equally alien and repugnant to Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the founders of Marxism-Leninism: they nipped in the bud each and every attempt at their personal exaltation, the matter whence these efforts emanated. Toadyism, Khrushchev said, made his gorge rise most of all.

Marx and Engels scathingly criticised and ridiculed the conceited bragging of certain politicians. Thus, they bitingly derided the petty-bourgeois desire of Lassalle, that "self-lauding braggadocio" and "desire 'to imagine himself incredibly important,'" which he strongly opposed the intention of the Lassallists to establish a "flattering cult of Lassalle."

In a letter to Wilhelm Blos, a German political leader, Marx wrote: "...owing to my aversion to any cult of the individual during the existence of the International, I never allowed the publication of the numerous messages recognising my services pestering me from different countries. I never even answered them, indeed, if only to hide their authors for them now and again. Engels and my own initiation into the secret society of communists is made pursuant to the condition that everything contributing to the superstitious genuflection before authorities would be crossed out from the charter (Lassalle subsequently did exactly the reverse)" [*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Works, First Russian Ed., Vol. 26, pp. 487-488*].

Engels, in reply to a proposal to arrange on his 71st birthday a musical celebration in his honour, replied to his sponsors: "Both Marx and I have always opposed any public manifestations with regard to individuals, the only exception being in those cases which had an important purpose; and most strongly we have opposed such manifestations which during our lifetime referred to us personally" [*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Works, Russian Ed., Vol. 28, p. 385*].

V. I. Lenin's speech which he made at a meeting arranged by the Moscow Party committee on the occasion of his 50th birthday is well known. In this speech Vladimir Ilyich requested that he be delivered from attending to jubilee speeches, "to deliver us in the future generally from such jubilee celebrations." Lenin spoke of the stupid, disgraceful and ridiculous position of any conceited person, and warned lest the splendid victories and successes place our party "in a very dangerous position—to wit, in the position of a man who has become conceited" [*V. I. Lenin, Works, Russian Ed., Vol. 30, p. 493*]. Vladimir Ilyich's great modesty and simplicity are universally known. Maxim Gorky quotes the words of a Sormovo worker who, to his question as

to what was V. I. Lenin's most characteristic feature, replied: "Plainness. Simplicity. Simple, like the truth." Simplicity is the quality which Marx, too, according to his own words appreciated above anything else in people.

It cannot be said that there are no passages in J. V. Stalin's works condemning the unjustified praise of individuals and the disparaging of the role of the masses. These passages, as a rule, did not transcend the boundaries of general, vague considerations, while in fact, no resistance was put up to the ever-growing practice of personal exaltation which he himself encouraged in every way, sometimes even resorting to self-glorification.

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Marx, Engels and Lenin, who were most exacting towards themselves, modest as regards their merits, tirelessly exposed all the attempts by bourgeois ideologists to provide a theoretical basis for the cult of individuals. Against the idealistic theories of "Hero and Crowd," they put forward the materialist conception of history, according to which only the people, the masses of the working people are the real and genuine makers of history.

Marxism, working out the foundations of scientific communism, explaining and giving the basis for the epoch-making role of the working class as the builders of communist society, waged an irreconcilable struggle against the incorrect views that, allegedly, history is made by outstanding personalities.

Against these incorrect views on history Marxism-Leninism put forward the teaching that the people are the genuine makers of history and that the deeper and wider the social transformations, the more numerous are the masses of the people taking part in them. The Great October Socialist Revolution, which has exerted an enormous influence on all subsequent world history, was accomplished by the working class of our country, in alliance with the poorest peasantry and with the support of the middle peasantry, under the leadership of the Communist Party. It was accomplished by the majority of the people and therefore it was a people's revolution. Such a people's revolution was the great Chinese revolution, the revolutionary socialist transformation in all the people's democracies.

Developing the materialist understanding of history discovered by Marx and Engels, V. I. Lenin throughout his life waged an irreconcilable struggle against the anti-Marxist views of the Narodniki, and later of the Socialist Revolutionaries about the "Almighty Heroes" and the grey, impersonal and passive "Crowd."

"Marxism," Lenin writes, "differs from all other socialist theories in that it represents a remarkable combination of complete scientific soundness in the analysis of the objective conditions of things and of the objective course of evolution and the very definite recognition of the significance of the revolutionary initiative of the masses, and also, of course, of individuals, groups, organisations and parties which are able to discover and establish contact with these classes" [*Works, Russian Ed., Vol. 13, pp. 21-22*].

G. V. Plekhanov, one of the outstanding Marxists, has done much for a correct understanding of the role of the individual and the role of the masses in history; in his opinion it would be incorrect to believe that history is made by outstanding personalities who arbitrarily instil this conception among the unenlightened obedient masses; history, he said, is made by the people.

Marxism does not deny the role of outstanding persons in history, the role of the leaders of the working people in directing the revolutionary liberation move-

ment, in building a new society. V. I. Lenin stressed with the utmost energy the role of revolutionary leaders as organisers of the masses. The materialist conception of history worked out by the classics of Marxism-Leninism, the recognition of the fact that the working masses, the people, are the makers of the new society, makes it possible correctly to understand and assess the role of the leaders, organisers, initiators and heroes who are created and promoted by the people themselves. Outstanding personalities, thanks to their distinguishing features which make them the most capable of serving the public interests, can play an important role in society as organisers and leaders of the masses, understanding events more profoundly and seeing farther than others.

Exposing the petty-bourgeois, anarchistic radical intellectuals, who came out against the organising role and the authority of the party, Lenin said:

"The working class, waging throughout the world a hard and persistent struggle for full emancipation, needs authorities—but, of course, only in the sense in which the young worker needs the experience of the veteran fighters against oppression and exploitation, fighters who have led many strikes and who have taken part in a number of revolutions, who have been made wise by revolutionary traditions and have a broad political outlook. The authority of the world-wide struggle of the proletariat is needed by the proletarians in each country. . . . The collective of the progressive, conscious workers in each country, who are waging a direct struggle, will always be the highest authority on all such questions" [*Works, Russian Ed., Vol. 11, pp. 374-375*].

The leader and organiser of the Soviet people in their struggle for the new society is the Communist Party, consisting of the foremost section of the working class, the labouring peasantry and intellectuals, and the collective leadership of the party, guarding and interpreting its principles, is the central committee, elected from among the finest forces of the party, uniting in one body all its many-sided experience.

The Communist Party and the Soviet people are rightly proud of the great fruits of their selfless labour, their creative endeavour, in all spheres of state development, economy and culture. The internal situation and foreign position of the Soviet Union, our social and state system are now firm and immutable as never before.

The great strength of the Soviet system, the gigantic advantages of the socialist system, have enabled the party, the state and the people to set themselves new tasks, the grandeur of which has amazed the whole world, in the development of the national economy in the period of the Sixth Five-Year Plan and to set about accomplishing these tasks.

The alliance of the working class and the peasantry, the fraternal friendship of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., the undying love of the people for their socialist homeland, the invincible moral and political unity of the entire Soviet society represent the granite foundation of the Soviet system, its might and prosperity. The wise leadership of our glorious Communist Party, confidently leading the country along the Leninist road, has been, is and will be the source of the strength and firmness of Soviet society, which is steadily progressing towards its great aim—communism.

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The founder and leader of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, V. I. Lenin, always attached special significance to the role of the party in guiding the Soviet state and the whole process of socialist construction. Pointing to the great responsibility of the Communist

Party as the ruling party in the country, Lenin himself strictly adhered to, and demanded of all communists, observance of the standards of party life and principles of leadership which the party had worked out, drawing on vast experience. Paramount among these principles is *collective leadership*, emanating from the very nature of the party, built upon the basis of democratic centralism which combines the activity, initiative and enterprise of the members of the party with iron discipline. Lenin said that the revolution would bring to the fore "collective organising talent, without which the armies of proletarians, many millions strong, cannot win their victory" [*Works, Russian Ed., Vol. 29, p. 75*].

The cult of the individual and the practice of leadership which developed under the influence of J. V. Stalin in the last period of his life and activities did much harm. Stalin's disregard of the standards of party life and of the principle of collective party leadership, the frequent personal decisions on questions taken by him, led to the distortion of party principles and party democracy, the violation of revolutionary law, to unfounded repressions.

Such a hardened agent of imperialism as Beria, and his accomplices, could worm their way into leading positions in the party and the state only as a result of the cult of the individual and the violations of the standards of party life connected with it. The exposure and crushing of the contemptible, traitorous gang of Beria by the central committee made it possible to do away with the violations of socialist law and to restore fully the Leninist standards of party life, the standards and principles of socialist law.

The resolute stand taken by the central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the 20th Congress of the party against the cult of the individual, the consistent, wide explanation of the harm done by this cult are of tremendous theoretical and practical importance.

The regular holding of party congresses and conferences and of plenary sessions of the central committee, the systematic work of other higher organs of the party and its local organisations, the extensive discussion and elaboration of collective decisions are an immutable rule of our party, which bears the responsibility for the destinies of a great state and people, for the building of communism in our country.

"The masses," Lenin taught us, "must have the right to elect their responsible leaders. The masses must have the right to change them, the masses must have the right to know and check each, even the smallest, step in their activities. The masses must have the right to promote all working members of the masses, without exception, to managing positions. But this does not at all mean that the process of collective labour could be left without definite leadership, without precise establishment of the responsibility of the leader, without strict order created by the unity of the will of the leader" [*Works, Russian Ed., Vol. 27, p. 186*].

In combating the cult of the individual one should remember that the petty-bourgeois anarchist views denying the role of the leaders and organisers of the masses are alien to Marxism-Leninism. The extremely rich experience of socialist construction teaches us that the principles of collective leadership, and the broad development of socialist democracy do not by any means deny the role and responsibility of the individual leader for the work entrusted to him. It is also well known that the Communist Party has upheld and continues to uphold the principle of one-man management at industrial enterprises and of one-man leadership in military affairs.

The central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has taken resolute measures to re-