**The cult of the individual**

(This speech was delivered to the 20th congress of the Communist party of the USSR in Moscow on February 25 1956)

Comrades! After Stalin's death, the central committee began explaining that it is foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics, akin to those of a god. Such a man supposedly knows everything, sees everything, thinks for everyone, can do anything, is infallible in his behaviour.

At present, we are concerned with how the cult of Stalin has been gradually growing, the cult which became the source of a whole series of exceedingly serious perversions of party principles, of party democracy, of revolutionary legality.

The great modesty of the genius of the revolution, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, is known. Lenin always stressed the role of the people as the creator of history. Lenin mercilessly stigmatised every manifestation of the cult of the individual. Lenin never imposed his views by force. He tried to convince. He patiently explained his opinions to others.

Comrades! The party congress should become acquainted with new documents, which confirm Stalin's character. In March 1923, Lenin sent Stalin the following letter: "Dear comrade Stalin! You permitted yourself a rude summons of my wife to the telephone and a rude reprimand of her. Despite the fact that she told you that she agreed to forget what was said, I have no intention to forget so easily." Comrades! I will not comment on these documents. They speak eloquently for themselves.

As later events have proven, Lenin's anxiety was justified. Stalin, who absolutely did not tolerate collegiality in leadership and in work, acted not through persuasion, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his opinion. Stalin originated the concept "enemy of the people". This term automatically made it unnecessary that the ideological errors of a man be suspected. Stalin, who absolutely did not tolerate the slightest opposition, considered any opposition as an attack on himself. As soon as the nation's political situation had improved, Stalin acted not through persuasion, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his opinion. Stalin originated the concept "enemy of the people". This term automatically made it unnecessary that the ideological errors of a man be suspected.

On the whole, the only proof of guilt actually used was the "confession" of the accused himself. "Confessions" were acquired through physical pressures. Innocent individuals - who in the past had defended the party line - became victims. Mass arrests and deportations of many thousands of people, execution without trial and without normal investigation created conditions of insecurity, fear and even desperation.

Stalin used extreme methods and mass repressions at a time when the revolution was already victorious. During Lenin's life, party congresses were convened regularly. Lenin considered it absolutely necessary that the party discuss at length all questions bearing on the development of government. After Lenin's death, Stalin trampered on the principle of collective party leadership.

Lenin taught that the application of revolutionary violence is necessitated by the resistance of the exploiting classes, and this referred to the era when the exploiting classes existed and were powerful. As soon as the nation's political situation had improved, Lenin gave instructions to stop mass terror and to abolish the death penalty. Stalin deviated from these precepts. Terror was actually directed not at the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes but against the honest workers of the party; against them were made lying, slanderous and absurd accusations. Mass repressions contributed to the spreading of unhealthy suspicion, and sowed distrust among communists.

When we look at many of our novels, films and historical-scientific studies, the role of Stalin in the patriotic war [World War Two] appears to be entirely improbable. Stalin had foreseen everything. The epic victory is ascribed as being completely due to the strategic genius of Stalin. What are the facts of this matter? Stalin advanced the thesis that our nation experienced an "unexpected" attack by the Germans. But, comrades, this is completely untrue. As soon as Hitler came to power he assigned to himself the task of liquidating communism. The fascists were saying this openly. They did not hide their plans.

Stalin acts for everybody, he does not reckon with anyone. He asks no one for advice. Everything is shown to the people in this false light. Why? To surround Stalin with glory - contrary to historical truth. Not Stalin, but the party as a whole, the Soviet government, our heroic army, its talented leaders and brave soldiers, the whole Soviet nation - these are the ones who assured victory in the great patriotic war. The magnificent, heroic deeds of hundreds of millions of people of the east and of the west during the fight against the threat of fascist subjugation which loomed before us will live for centuries, for millennia in the memory of thankful humanity.

Comrades! The cult of the individual acquired such monstrous size chiefly because Stalin himself supported the glorification of his own person. The edition of his short biography, which was published in 1948, is an expression of the most dissolute flattery, approved and edited by Stalin personally. He marked the very places where he thought that the praise of his services was insufficient.

Comrades! The cult of the individual brought about rude violation of party democracy, sterile administration, deviations of all sorts, cover-ups of shortcomings, and varnishings of reality. Our nation bore forth many flatterers and specialists in false optimism and deceit.

_Nikita Khrushchev_