

STALIN
on the
PERSONALITY CULT

IRISH COMMUNIST ORGANISATION

Contents

Comrade G. Telia. In Memoriam.	Page 3
On Lenin's 50th Birthday.	" 6
Reply to Railway Workers' Greetings	" 8

First published by the Irish Communist Organisation in March 1969. Second edition, January 1971.

Introduction

It is now 13 years since the struggle against the 'Stalin personality cult' was foisted on the international Communist movement by Khrushchev and his supporters. The 'personality cult', it was alleged, was responsible for very grave errors being persisted in by the international Communist movement during a period of about 20 years, from the early '30s until Stalin's death.

In view of the gravity of the errors which the 'Personality cult' was alleged to have caused, one would expect a comprehensive analysis of the causes, functioning and consequences of the 'cult' to have been carried out by those who initiated or supported the struggle against it. Up to the present, however, there has been no attempt to do this.

In a future pamphlet we will attempt a historical analysis of the events connected with the 'Stalin cult' and with the struggle against it. In this pamphlet we are reprinting certain statements made by Stalin about 'personality cult' in

2. general and about the 'Stalin cult' in particular. It is useful to do this since it has been claimed by many (including not a few who have declared that they are anti-revisionists) that Stalin was a particularly vain man who actively encouraged the 'Stalin cult' and took great subjective pleasure in it. It is even claimed that he believed himself to be suprerhuman and omniscient, and that he didn't think it was necessary for him to investigate a situation before making a statement about it and compelling everyone to agree with what he said, since he was so conceited that he believed the truth was merely a way of describing whatever he said.

No hint of this attitude will be found in the statements that follow. In his writings down to the time of his death Stalin appears as an exceptionally capable Marxist, subject neither to mock-modesty nor conceit, whose main interest in life was to contribute to the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie, and who investigated a matter very carefully before making a statement on it - being in this respect the antithesis of the Stalin critics who have been howling about the 'Stalin cult' for the last 13 years without ever making a concrete investigation of it.

The particularly deep and hysterical resentment which the intelligentsia harbour against Stalin seems to us to be due to the fact that he never allowed himself to be diverted from the class struggle by their flattery. For a quarter of a century their bourgeois 'creative' impulses were thwarted. Their attempts to lead the world communist movement into opportunism led nowhere. The working class under Stalin's leadership presented them with the choice of either serving the working class or openly joining the bourgeoisie. Their freedom to purvey bourgeois ideology in the Communist movement was severely restricted.

It was precisely Stalin's refusal to become the figurehead of a cult whose high priests were the opportunist intelligentsia and officials that generated theremarkably intense hatred of him that is felt by the elements who seized the leadership of the Communist movement after his death.

IRISH COMMUNIST ORGANISATION.

March 1969

Comrade G. Telia.

In Memoriam

Excessive eulogy of departed comrades has become a custom in our Party circles. The hushing up of the weak sides and the exaggeration of positive sides is a characteristic feature of obituary notices today. That, of course, is an unwise custom. We do not wish to follow it. We wish to say only what is true about Comrade G. Telia; we want to present Telia to our readers as he was in reality. And reality tells us that Comrade G. Telia, an advanced working man and an active Party worker, was a man of irreproachable character and of inestimable value for the Party. All that which most of all characterises the Social-Democratic Party - thirst for knowledge, independence, undeviating progress, staunchness, industry and moral strength - all combined in the person of Comrade Telia. Telia personified the best features of the proletariat. That is not an exaggeration. The following brief biography of him will prove this.

Comrade Telia was not a 'scholar'. He learned to read and write by his own efforts and became class conscious. Leaving the village of Chagani (Telia was born in the village of Chagani, Kutais Uyezd), he obtained a job as a domestic servant in Tiflis. Here he learned to speak Russian and acquired a passion for reading books. He quickly grew tired of being a domestic servant and soon got a job in the carpenters' shop at the railway workshops. These workshops rendered Comrade Telia a great service. They were his school; there he became a Social-Democrat; there he was steeled and became a staunch fighter; there he came to the front as a capable and class-conscious worker.

In 1900-01 Telia already stood out among the advanced workers as an esteemed leader. He had known no rest since the demonstration in Tiflis in 1901. Ardent propaganda, the formation of organizations, attendance at important meetings, persevering effort in socialist self-education - to that he devoted all his spare time. He was hunted by the

4. police, who searched for him 'with lanterns', but it served only to redouble his energy and ardour in the struggle, Comrade Telia was the inspirer of the 1903 demonstration (in Tiflis). The police were hot on his heels, but, notwithstanding this, he hoisted the flag and delivered a speech. After that demonstration he passed entirely underground. In that year, on the instructions of the organization, he began to 'travel' from one town to another in Transcaucasia. In that same year, on the instructions of the organization, he went to Batum to organize a secret printing plant, but he was arrested at the Batum station with the equipment for this printing plant in his possession and soon after he was sent to the Kutais prison. That marked the beginning of a new period in his 'restless' life. The eighteen months of imprisonment were not lost on Telia. The prison became his second school. Constant study, the reading of socialist books and participation in discussions markedly increased his stock of knowledge. Here his indomitable revolutionary character, which many of his comrades envied, was definitely moulded. But the prison also left on him the impress of death, this prison infected him with a fatal disease (consumption), which carried our splendid comrade to his grave.

Telia was aware of the fatal state of his health, but this did not daunt him. The only thing that troubled him was 'sitting in idleness and inaction'. 'How I long for the day when I shall be free and do what I want to do, see the masses again, put myself in their embrace and begin to serve them!' - that is what our comrade dreamed of during his confinement in jail. The dream came true. Eighteen months later he was transferred to the 'little' Kutais prison, from which he forthwith made his escape and appeared in Tiflis. At that time a split was taking place in the Party. Comrade Telia then belonged to the Mensheviks, but he did not in the least resemble the 'official' Mensheviks who regard Menshevism as their 'Koran', who regard themselves as the faithful and the Bolsheviks as infidels. Nor did Telia resemble those 'advanced' workers who pose as 'born Social-Democrats', and being utter ignoramus shout in their comical way: We are workers - we don't need any knowledge! The characteristic feature of Comrade Telia was precisely ^{that he} rejected factional fanaticism, that he utterly despised blind imitation and wanted to think everything out for himself. That is why, after escaping from prison, he at once pounced upon the books: MINUTES OF THE SECOND CONGRESS, Martov's STATE OF SIEGE, and Lenin's WHAT IS TO BE DONE? and ONE STEP FORWARD. It was a sight to see Telia, his face pale and emaciated,

poring over these books and to hear him say with a smile: 'I can see it's not such an easy matter whether to decide to be a Bolshevik or a Menshevik; until I have studied these books my Menshevism is built on sand.' And so, after studying the necessary literature, after pondering over the controversies between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, after weighing everything up, and only after that, Comrade Telia said: 'Comrades, I am a Bolshevik. As it looks to me, whosoever is not a Bolshevik is certainly betraying the revolutionary spirit of Marxism'.

After that he became an apostle of revolutionary Marxism (Bolshevism). In 1905, on the instructions of the organization, he went to Baku. There he set up a printing plant, improved the work of the district organizations, was an active member of the leading body and wrote articles for PROLETARIATIS BRDZOLA - such was the work Comrade Telia performed. During the well-known police raid he, too, was arrested, but here too he 'slipped away' and again hastened to Tiflis. After working in the leading organization of Tiflis for a short time he attended the All-Russian Conference of Bolsheviks in Tammerfors in 1905. His impressions of that conference are interesting. He viewed the Party's future with great hope and he used to say with glistening eyes: I shall not begrudge my last ounce of strength for this Party. The unfortunate thing, however, was that immediately on his return from Russia he took to his bed, never to rise from it again. Only now did he commence serious literary activity. During his illness he wrote: WHAT WE NEED (see Akhali Tskhovreba), OLD AND NEW CORPSES (a reply to Archil Jorjadze), ANARCHISM AND SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY, WHY WE ARE CALLED BLANQUISTS, and others.

A few days before he died he wrote to us that he was working on a pamphlet on this history of Social-Democracy in the Caucasus, but cruel death prematurely tore the pen out of the hand of our tireless comrade.

Such is the picture of Comrade Telia's short but stormy life.

Amazing capabilities, inexhaustible energy, independence,

6. profound love for the cause, heroic determination and apostolic talent - that is what characterised Comrade Telia.

Men like Telia are met with only in the ranks of the proletariat; only the proletariat gives birth to heroes like Telia; and the proletariat will take revenge on the accursed system to which our comrade, the working man G. Telia, fell a victim.

(March 22, 1907. C.W. Vol. 2 p28)

*

The Russian revolution has overthrown many a reputation. Its might lies, among other things, in the fact that it has not cringed before 'celebrities', but has taken them into its service, or, if they refused to learn from it, has consigned them to oblivion. There is a whole string of such 'celebrities' whom the revolution has rejected - Plekhanov, Kropotkin, Breshkovskaya, Zasulich and all those old revolutionaries in general who are noteworthy only for being old. We fear that Gorky is envious of the laurels of these 'pillars'. We fear that Gorky feels a 'mortal' urge to follow after them - into the museum of antiquities.

Well, every man to his own fancy... The revolution is not disposed either to pity or to bury its dead...

(October 20, 1917. C.W. Vol.2,p112)
From STRONG BULLS OF BASHAN HAVE BE-
SET ME ROUND.)

On Lenin's

50th Birthday

After the speeches and reminiscences we have heard here, very little remains for me to say, I should like only to mention one feature of comrade Lenin's of which nobody has yet spoken, namely, his modesty and courage in acknowledging mistakes.

I recall two occasions when Lenin, that giant, admitted that he

The first episode relates to the decision on boycotting the Witte Duma, taken in Tammerfors, Finland, in December 1905, at the all-Russian Bolshevik Conference. The question of boycotting the Witte Duma had then to be decided. A group of seven, closely associated with Comrade Lenin, and on whom we provincial delegates used to bestow all kinds of epithets, had assured us that Ilyich was opposed to boycotting the Duma and in favour of taking part in the elections. This, as it turned out later, was actually so. But the debate opened, and the pro-boycotters from the provinces, from St. Petersburg, Moscow, Siberia and the Caucasus went into the attack, and what was our surprise when, after we had spoken, Lenin got up and declared that he had been in favour of taking part in the elections, but he saw now that he had been wrong and associated himself with the delegates from the provinces. We were astounded. It had the effect of an electric shock. We cheered him to the echo.

Here is another episode of a similar character. In September 1917, under Kerensky, at the time when the Democratic Conference had been convened and the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were contriving a new institution, the Pre-parliament, which was to pave the way for a transition from the Soviets to a Constituent Assembly, at that moment we in the Central Committee in Petrograd decided not to disperse the Democratic Conference, and to go ahead with strengthening the Soviets, to convene a Congress of the Soviets, start an uprising and proclaim the Congress of Soviets the organ of state power. Ilyich, who at that time was living in hiding outside Petrograd, did not agree with the Central Committee and wrote that the scum (meaning the Democratic Conference) should be dispersed and arrested right away.

It seemed to us that the matter was not quite so simple, for we knew that a half, or at least a third, of the members of the Democratic Conference were delegates from the front, and that by arresting and dispersing the Conference we might only spoil matters and damage our relations with the front. We considered that all the bumps and pitfalls on our path were clearer to us, the practical workers. But

8. Ilyich was a great man; he was not afraid of bumps and pitfalls, he did not fear danger, and said: 'Rise and march straight to the goal!' We, the practical workers, on the other hand, believed that no good could come of acting in this way at that time, that the thing to do was to skirt around the obstacles in order to take the bull by the horns later. And despite all Ilyich's insistence, we did not listen to him and went on strengthening the Soviets, and to such effect as to end up with the Congress of Soviets of October 25 and the successful uprising. Ilyich was already in Petrograd by then. Smiling and glancing at us silyly, he said: 'Yes, it seems you were right'.

Again we were astounded.

Comrade Lenin was not afraid of acknowledging his mistakes.

It was this modesty and courage that particularly captivated us.

(Speech delivered on April 23, 1920. CW,
Vol.4, p328)

Reply to

Railway Workers Greetings

Comrades, permit me first of all to tender my comradely thanks for the greetings conveyed to me here by the representatives of the workers,

I 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. That 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. 9.

I must therefore give a true picture of what I was formerly, and to whom I owe my present position in our Party.

Comrade Arakel said here that in the old days he regarded himself as one of my teachers, and myself as his pupil. That is perfectly true, comrades. I really was, and still am, one of the pupils of the advanced workers of the Tiflis railway workshops.

Let me turn back to the past.

I recall the year 1898, when I was first put in charge of a study circle of workers from the railway workshops. That was some twenty-eight years ago. I recall the days when in the home of Comrade Sturua, and in the presence of Djibladze (he was also one of my teachers at that time), Chodri-shvili, Chkheidze, Bochorishvili, Ninua and other advanced workers of Tiflis, I received my first lesson in practical work. Compared with these comrades, I was then quite a young man. I may have been a little better-read than many of them were, but as a practical worker I was unquestionably a novice in those days. It was here, among these comrades, that I received my first baptism in the revolutionary struggle. It was here, among these comrades, that I became an apprentice in the art of revolution. As you see, my first teachers were Tiflis workers.

Permit me to tender them my sincere comradely thanks.

I recall, further, the years 1907-09, when, by the will of the Party, I was transferred to work in Baku. Three years of revolutionary activity among the workers in the oil industry steeled me as a practical fighter and as one of the local practical leaders. Association with such advanced workers in Baku as Vatsek, Saratovets, Fioletov and others, on the one hand, and the storm of acute conflicts between the workers and the oil owners, on the other, first taught me what it means to lead large masses of workers. It was there, in Baku, that I thus received my second bap-

10. tism in the revolutionary struggle. There I became a journeyman in the art of revolution.

Permit me to tender my sincere comradely thanks to my Baku teachers.

Lastly, I recall the year 1917, when, by the will of the Party, after my wanderings from one prison and place of exile to another, I was transferred to Leningrad. There, in the society of Russian workers, and in direct contact with Comrade Lenin, the great teacher of the proletarians of all countries, in the storm of mighty clashes between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, in the conditions of the imperialist war, I first learnt what it means to be one of the leaders of the great Party of the working class. There, in the society of Russian workers - the liberators of oppressed peoples and the pioneers of the proletarian struggle of all countries and all peoples - I received my third baptism in the revolutionary struggle. There, in Russia, under Lenin's guidance, I became a masterworkman in the art of revolution.

Permit me to tender my sincere comradely thanks to my Russian teachers and to bow my head in homage to the memory of my great teacher - Lenin.

From the rank of apprentice (Tiflis) to the rank of a master workman of our revolution (Leningrad) - such, comrades, was the school in which I passed my revolutionary apprenticeship.

Such, comrades, is the true picture of what I was and what I have become, if one is to speak with exaggeration and in all conscience.

(Reply to the greetings of the workers of the chief railway workshops in Tiflis. June 8, 1926, CW Vol 8, p 182.)

I have read your letter and the draft of the article. I apologise for being late in replying.

11.

Here are my comments.

1) I object to your calling yourself 'a disciple of Lenin and Stalin'. I have no disciples. Call yourself a disciple of Lenin; you have a right to do so, notwithstanding Shatskin's criticism. But you have no grounds for calling yourself a disciple of a disciple of Stalin's. It is not true. It is out of place.

(From letter to Ksenofontov. December 30, 1926, CW, Vol 9 p156.)

5

*

Stalin: The transformation of the world is a great, complicated and painful process. For this great task a great class is required. Big ships go on long voyages.

H.G. Wells: Yes, but for long voyages a captain and a navigator are required.

Stalin: That is true; but what is first required for a long voyage is a big ship. What is a navigator without a ship? An idle man.

(Stalin-Wells Interview. July 1934)

*

Should there be a special chapter in the textbook on Lenin and Stalin as the founders of the political economy of socialism?

I think 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 textbook.

(Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR. 1952. Section 8, paragraph 8.)

12. (FINALLY, WE CAN SEE FROM THE FOLLOWING REMARK MADE IN ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, HOW LITTLE STALIN WAS TAKEN IN BY THE INTELLECTUALS AND BUREAUCRATS IN LEADING POSITIONS IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES WHO SUBSTITUTED A CULT OF 'STALINISM' FOR SERIOUS WORKING CLASS POLITICAL ANALYSIS. IF, AS THESE ELEMENTS NOW MAINTAIN, STALIN JUDGED THE POLITICAL LEVEL OF PARTIES BY THEIR APPARENT ENTHUSIASM FOR THE 'STALIN CULT', HE WOULD HAVE JUDGED THE WEST EUROPEAN PARTIES TO BE ON A VERY HIGH POLITICAL LEVEL. THERE WAS CERTAINLY NO BASIS IN 1952 FOR CRITICISING THE PRESENT DAY 'STALIN CRITICS' FOR NOT DISPLAYING ENOUGH ENTHUSIASM IN THE 'STALIN CULT'. THEY WERE THE INITIATORS AND THE HIGH PRIESTS OF THIS CULT, AIMING TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT THROUGH IT. BUT STALIN'S ONLY REMARK ABOUT THESE 'STALIN-CULTISTS' WAS :)

"Incidentally, in view of the inadequate level of Marxist development of the majority of the Communist parties abroad, such a textbook (ie of the elements of Marxist political economy, ICO) might also be of great use to communist cadres abroad who are no longer young."

IRISH COMMUNIST ORGANISATION AND COMMUNIST WORKERS ORGANISATION
LITERATURE CAN BE OBTAINED FROM:

I.C.O.
10 Athol St.,
Belfast 12,
Bt 12 4GX

I.C.O. Books,
9 St. Nicholas Church Place,
off Cove Street,
Cork.

G. Golden,
28 Mercers Road,
London, N. 19

BOOKBANE,
30b Holyhead Road,
Bangor, Caerns,
N. Wales



