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## CONDITIONS FOR STALIN'S PERSONALITY CULT WERE CREATED IN LENIN'S LIFETIME, YUGOSLAV PROFESSOR CLAIMS

Summary: Professor Kresic of Belgrade criticizes certain Soviet Party theoreticians and historians for having refrained from telling the full truth concerning Stalin's "personality cult." This "full truth" is that the rule of horror which bears the name of Stalin actually was born in Lenin's lifetime. Stalin was only a consequence of something which was created several years before he assumed full power in the Soviet Union. Professor Kresic finds many contradictions in the claims made by the Soviet theoreticians and historians who, on the one hand, would like to make people believe that Stalin was wrong in having introduced "iron discipline" and having restricted democracy, yet on the other hand argue that this very "iron discipline" and the restriction upon democracy was a good and necessary thing.

Soviet Party theoreticians and historians have for years given a distorted presentation of the consequences of Stalin's rule of terror, but have never attempted to explain its real causes. This is one of many claims made recently by Belgrade Professor Andrija Kresic. In an article entitled "Political Society and Political Mythology," published in a Zagreb periodical,<sup>1</sup> Professor Kresic polemicizes with a statement made by

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1) Encyclopedia moderna, Zagreb, No. 5-6, September-December 1967, pp. 8-15.

Nikita Khrushchev at the 22nd Party Congress in October 1961. Kresic also criticizes certain statements on the origins of Stalin's personality cult by Pravda's editor-in-chief, P. A. Satyukov, and Party ideologist B. N. Ponomarev, one of the authors of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet critics of Stalin's personality cult, says Professor Kresic, have been inclined "to link this phenomenon primarily with Stalin's personal characteristics." They always avoid -- notably M. A. Suslov at the 22nd Party Congress -- talking about the beginnings of this phenomenon," but tend rather to discuss its consequences. Says Kresic:

The views concerning the infallibility of the CPSU throughout its whole history would be easier to accept if it were possible to prove that this doctrine had suffered a dangerous but short-lived infection called the "personality cult."

One must pose the question why Professor Kresic so passionately insists that the conditions for Stalin's terroristic rule were created during Lenin's lifetime rather than after his death? Why is this so important today, 50 years after the successful Bolshevik seizure of power? Kresic's reasons are not difficult to guess. He is very critical of the present way of thinking and acting in the Soviet Union and other East European countries in which Stalin has been criticized but not the foundations of the system which produced Stalin. While the Soviet and East European ideologists would like to present Stalin as the originator of the cult of personality, Professor Kresic and many of his colleagues in Yugoslavia consider Stalin merely the product of a system which was born during Lenin's lifetime. In other words, the changes which are needed in Communist countries must not be superficial, must not be restricted to criticism of Stalin. These changes must go much deeper into the essence of what is today called Leninism and must include criticism of Lenin and his actions. For, without Lenin, there would have been no Stalin. Professor Kresic concludes that with all due consideration for the situation and atmosphere in which Lenin had to work in a country surrounded by enemies, torn by a civil war, and extremely backward in all spheres of life, the onus for Stalin's "cult of personality" falls on Lenin. In such a country, with no revolutionary cadres available to construct socialism after the successful Bolshevik coup d'etat, it was the "system of command" and "unconditional obedience" which were extolled as the characteristics of a socialist country.



Lenin was not blind to the faults of the system with which he was saddled. P. A. Satyukov, says Kresic, quoted, in 1961, a letter of Lenin's to Molotov,<sup>2</sup> in which Lenin wrote that "the Central Committee has enormous power in its hands. Its power is gigantic. We transfer 200,000-400,000 Party workers, and with them thousands upon thousands of non-Party people." Kresic says that Satyukov, in thus having quoted Lenin, actually confirmed that the Party in Lenin's lifetime "was burdened with the most shameful and most stupid bureaucracy," that "stupid people are sitting at the most important posts in the Party leadership."

In Kresic's opinion "even a historian who is only slightly serious must immediately take upon himself the task of establishing why such phenomena took place." Says Professor Kresic:

Especially a Marxist historian must not deviate from true historical facts and must not degrade historical science to a factual chronicle of ruling houses, leading politicians, and army leaders. However, the Soviet critic of the "personality cult" still hesitates openly to ask: What made it possible for a person to impose himself willy nilly upon the Party and state and why the whole of Soviet society had to tolerate the arbitrariness of such a person? The open condemnation of Stalin and the present-day advocates of Stalinism, which was the chief point of the 22nd Congress, starts from the "personality cult" as a primary fact and wishes to remove its consequences. This level of official criticism -- which was symbolically confirmed with the removal of Stalin's body from Lenin's mausoleum -- is, in the main, the framework of the current discussion of Stalinism in Soviet ideology. There have been only a few suggestions aimed at overcoming the above-mentioned ideological framework, i.e., to have the criticism of the consequences of the "personality cult" expanded by an explanation of the "personality cult" as a derivative.

[Emphasis original]

#### Russian Inconsistencies in Logic

Professor Kresic does not believe that you can, as Satyukov did, criticize Stalin as the standard-bearer of the "personality cult," while simultaneously justifying the "iron discipline," "the strictest centralization in leadership," and "certain temporary restrictions upon democracy." Satyukov's colleague, B. N. Ponomarev, is criticized by Professor Kresic for having said that all errors and shortcomings in the history of the CPSU

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2) Pravda, 27 October 1961.

which resulted from the personality cult were detrimental to the development of Soviet society but, "despite the false inventions of the enemies of socialism, could not change and have not changed the deeply democratic, the really popular character of the Soviet order."

Professor Kresic finds such contradictions throughout Soviet books dealing with criticism of the "personality cult." What he misses in these books is "a criticism of the socio-historical roots of the 'personality cult.'" Instead of simple "registration of harmful consequences of the 'personality cult'" it is necessary to start establishing their real causes in order to extirpate the consequences forever," Professor Kresic says.

In the Soviet "practical and ideological criticism of the 'personality cult,'" Kresic sees some "symptomatic inconsistencies in logic." He quotes the most important one:

First, it is claimed that definite internal and external conditions, socio-political conditions, existed which dictated not only "certain" but rather rigorous restriction of democracy ("iron discipline, a stubborn strengthening of vigilance, and the strictest centralization of leadership"); second, under these conditions ("at that time"), Stalin, as Party Secretary-General, acquired "great authority and popularity" in proportion to his great merits.

The two above-mentioned points, according to this [Ponomarev's] Party history, refer to the first few years of the newly established Soviet power, i.e., when the ruins of the imperialist war and revolution were not yet removed....

So far so good. But Professor Kresic then sees "a rather strange development of events." After the first difficult post-revolutionary years, when difficulties were abundant, the writers of history claim that "Soviet society had started abruptly to develop and to become democratic." But how then can one explain the fact that, precisely in this era of "abrupt democratization," Stalin's personality cult began to gather strength! Is this not illogical, Professor Kresic asks? "Moreover," he continues, "precisely at the moment when Soviet society found itself at the threshold of Communism, i.e., 'in the last few years of Stalin's life,' the 'personality cult of Stalin' inflicted 'especially serious damage to the cause of the Party and state leadership.'" Kresic continues:

In short, the more democracy in Soviet society the greater was the damage inflicted by the "personality cult," by "the hampering of the creative initiatives of the popular masses" and "the checking of the development of Soviet



society." The real logic of history is here completely neglected. What has remained is an abstract ideological construction entangled in impossible contradictions. At the very beginning, the historian [i.e., Ponomarev] claimed that the "cult of Stalin" grew from "definite, concrete historical conditions"; at the end, the political ideologist considers that an ideological phenomenon -- "Stalin's cult" -- became the basic conditions of absolutely materialistic "consequences" in Soviet society. Even so, all these enormous materialistic social "consequences" in Soviet society are, in turn, not the characteristics of this society, even though they have inflicted "especially great damage upon the cause of the Party and state leadership."

[Emphasis original]

Professor Kresic has found such contradictions in many books. But what is of interest here is the reason why he has felt compelled to write about them today. Although he does not say so openly, it appears certain he has the current situation in mind in many of the Communist-ruled East European countries. He cannot understand why, if it is really true that the class enemies have been defeated, the Communist leaders of those countries still insist on "extremely centralized" Party organizations and state apparatuses. Discussing the Soviet past, but bearing in mind the current situation in Eastern Europe, Professor Kresic says that "in opposition to social necessities, the political power reflected in the state and the ruling Party has been acting in the old way, as if the socialist forces had not yet won the main victories in the class war, as if a mortal danger still threatened them directly." He then continues:

If no social necessity exists for an omnipotent centralized state, and if such a state still exists, then it becomes an aim in itself and retains its power against the will of the social forces it once served.

It is impossible, says Professor Kresic, to understand certain assertions concerning a separation of Soviet society from the "personality cult." If we have seen that the "Soviet state" and "personality cult" have grown in parallel fashion, then how can one claim that the "personality cult" has no roots in Soviet society? This is nonsense. What Professor Kresic actually would like to tell his readers is that the Soviet leaders have been afraid to touch the essence of the personality cult, because, in such an event, they would have to deal with "the fundamental nature of Soviet society." In other words, the present leaders would have to go. This is why they have restricted themselves only to criticizing "the consequences" of the personality cult, the consequences which they themselves represent today.

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