

Review:

“Molotov’s Letter to The Central Committee of CPSU - On the Personality Cult and the Programme of CPSU”; Ed. Svitlana M, Erdogan A; np; 2022 – Hereafter “Letter”; 372 pages

Hari Kumar: June 5, 2022

As pdf found on web at:

<https://neodemocracy.blogspot.com/2022/05/letter-from-v-m-molotov-to-central.html>

To avert any dismantling of any of our future socialist constructions, we must understand how it was dismembered the Soviet Union. Several questions about how this happened are only partially answered to now. Yet we certainly know that Nikita **Khrushchev** was the main culprit, although some details remain unclear. The many puzzling questions that remain include:

- “How were the specific socialist measures under the leadership of J.V. Stalin destroyed?
- How did Stalin die and was his personal security compromised?
- What debates and resistance to Khrushchevism were led by honest cadre, inside the highest echelons of the CPSU CC and in the rank-and-file?
- Which other persons were allied to Khrushchev
- What happened to restrain Stalin’s erst-while comrades in the Politburo?
- Who ultimately defended Stalin and who did not?
- What was the role of Molotov?” et cetera, et cetera.

In this review I will cover three aims:

- 1) To describe the provenance of the long “Letter” published in this book, apparently written by Molotov to the Central Committee of the CPSU;
- 2) To review the high and low points of his Molotov’s Bolshevik career; and finally -
- 3) To consider selected aspects of Molotov’s long “Letter”.

1) The ‘Letter to the Central Committee’

The long letter concerns the above puzzle-questions in an English translation. Although it does not answer them in any way fully, details are added, making it of interest. Apparently written by **Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov** it is entitled “*On the problem of the cult of personality of I.V. Stalin and about the program of the CPSU.*” Unpublished until later found in the Russian archives, it was first published in Russian.¹ It is referred to hereafter as ‘*The Letter*’, and has been referenced in Russian texts.²

Before delving into the content of ‘The Letter’, some caveats are warranted. Although there is no signature, the presumption that it was written by Molotov seems reasonably safe. This is based on its’ recovery from Molotov’s files in the archives and the content dealing with the so-called ‘**anti-Party**’ **grouping** (see below p.12). We do not know exactly when it was written, although likely it was in 1957-1958:

¹ “Issues of History”, Nos. 1-6, 8-11, 2011, Nos. 1.3-2012; RGASPI F.82, Op.2, D. 198a L.1-357

² <https://www.litres.ru/vyacheslav-molotov/v-zaschitu-stalina-pismo-v-ck/chitat-onlayn/>

“A little over a year has passed (*since the XX Party Congress, where an open denunciation of the so-called ‘Cult of Personality’ was made public – HK*) and the June Plenum of the Central Committee in 1957.”

Molotov emphasises that:

“This letter is the result of many years of work, the result of hard thoughts and doubts. Before writing it, I tried to the best of my ability and ability to carefully study and analyze all the material available to me on a particular issue.”³

Molotov also says in “The Letter” that he reviewed “extensive” materials to write it:

“The material is extensive. And for me, when working on a letter, the greatest difficulty was precisely the process of selecting the most important and valuable, of course, from my point of view, that can be found in this material on the issues that interested me.”³

Perhaps this explains Molotov’s poor phrasing, sparse punctuation, and disjointed form or style in English (at least to my eye). Long sentences at times obscure the content, and the referencing is sketchy. Undoubtedly, translating it must have posed a challenge. The editors took the decision to present it ‘raw’ from the archives, without attempting to finesse or smooth it. The editors argue that:

“Academic background and expertise is related to the bourgeois methods of “influencing”, “manipulating” the reader with “Titles”, “Headlines”, Out of context “reviews”, “End Notes” etc. We are very familiar with those. That is why we choose to minimize it if not totally eliminate especially in archival, primary source materials.” (personal communication June 2022).

Despite the resulting difficulty to the reader, this letter shows Molotov’s thoughts. The occasional interjection by **Gregori Malenkov** is marked in the text as ‘GM’. The text interests Marxist-Leninists, as it is explicitly about - says Molotov - the “**so-called cult of personality**”:

“The whole letter is devoted, in fact, to one problem, one question - the problem of the so-called personality cult of I.V. Stalin, the question of why, a few years after Stalin’s death, it was necessary to stir up the past and why, and why it was done in such a harsh and unsightly form.”³

The Editors of this volume are to be thanked for placing this translation before the movement.

Molotov was an extremely capable, but contradictory figure. Therefore I believe that it is necessary to weigh this “Long Letter” alongside other materials. To illustrate this, just recall Molotov’s stance at the **XX Party Congress (14–25 February 1956)**. There a vicious, public assault was first begun by Khrushchev upon Stalin. Bland reviewed Albert

³ “Letter” p. 3

Resis' edited volume containing **Felix Chuev's** interviews with Molotov over years, and commented:

"Bland: Although he defends Stalin in many respects, Molotov admits that he kept silent during Khrushchev's savage attack on Stalin at the 20th Congress in 1956:

"Molotov: "Some people holding pretty much the same view blame me. 'Why did you keep silent at the 20th Congress? . . . To keep silent, they say, is tantamount to consent. That's how it turned out. I kept silent and thus consented".⁴

I will return to the matter of Molotov's own culpability later. How consistent Molotov is in this 'Letter' with what he stated in his interviews with Chuev, is a form of a 'validity' test. I will return to this in the final section of this review. I think it helps to briefly review Molotov's career - highlighting World War Two, and Stalin's post-war break with him.

2) A brief biography of Molotov through a Marxist-Leninist Lens

Molotov (originally Scryabin) was born on March 9, 1890 to a salesman. He became a Bolshevik, and was imprisoned several times by the Tsarist regime. In 1917 he adopted the name Molotov - "The Hammer". Still in the lower ranks, he participated in the Bolshevik revolution. At the 10th Party Congress in 1921, he was elected to the Central Committee (CC) and head of the Secretariat. After Lenin's death he supported Stalin against Trotsky. By 1926 a full member of the Politburo, after Stalin's nomination he became in 1930, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. Previously on the ECCI, in 1939 he then became People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs in May 1939.⁵

We know that Molotov was a key comrade of Stalin's from the 1920s, and was an especially important diplomat for the USSR in the tense period before the Second World War, and immediately after.

The German-Soviet Pact and the German Invasion of the USSR

As well as being the key Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov was also on the State Defense Committee. Molotov was renowned as a formidable negotiator for the USSR over these years. Indeed, the much maligned Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact or the German-Soviet Pact, was critical in delaying the strategy of imperialism to unleash Hitler's attack on Russia. This coup of the USSR was defended by Marxist-Leninists, as for example by W.B.Bland.⁶

Actually, the most unbiased bourgeois academic scholars are forced to agree that:

"The Chamberlain government... as a defender of capitalism, refused... to enter into an alliance with the USSR against Germany....

In the pact of August 23rd, 1939, they (the Soviet government -- *Ed.*) secured:

- a) a breathing space of immunity from attack;
- b) German assistance in mitigating Japanese pressure in the Far East;

⁴ Albert Resis (Ed.): *'Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics'*; Chicago; 1993; p. 351; In: Bland W.B. *'Compass'*; *Communist League*, October 1993, No. 108; *"Book Review, Molotov's Memoirs"*;

⁵ Paragraph above is based on Roberts, Geoffrey *'Molotov: Stalin's Cold Warrior'*; 2012; Washington, D.C

⁶ Bland W.B., *"The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact Of 1939"*; London; 1990; <http://ml-review.ca/aml/AllianceIssues/WBBJVS-NaziPact.htm>

c) German agreement to the establishment of an advanced defensive bastion beyond the existing Soviet frontiers in Eastern Europe; it was significant that this bastion was, and could only be, a line of defence against potential German attack, the eventual prospect of which was never far absent from Soviet reckonings. But what most of all was achieved by the pact was the assurance that, if the USSR had eventually to fight Hitler, the Western Powers would already be involved".⁷

When the inevitable war actually started in June 1941, Molotov was given the task of announcing the invasion, and ended the radio speech with the striking phrase:

“Our cause is just. The enemy will be beaten. Victory will be ours.”⁸

Undoubtedly Molotov’s role in the war was important. However, it should be put into perspective against the role of Stalin. It was only a few days later that Stalin gave his own speech.⁹ This short delay was used by Khrushchev to peddle the myth that Stalin was ‘demoralised’ after the German invasion:

“In his secret speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev alleged that, following the German attack upon the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin became for a long time inactive’ as a result of demoralisation’:

“After the first severe disaster and defeat at the front, Stalin thought that this was the end. In one of his speeches in those days he said: ‘All that Lenin created we have lost forever’...After this Stalin for a long time actually...ceased to do anything whatever.”¹⁰

Of course, this is nonsense as the appointment diaries of Stalin has now revealed:

“Steven Main, of the University of Edinburgh, who has recently researched Stalin’s appointments diaries for the period concerned, testifies that these diaries show that:

“On the very first day of the war (22 June), Stalin’s official working day began at 05.45 and ended at 16 45.”¹¹

“The appointments diary further reveals that during the opening week of the war:

“Stalin’s officially recorded shortest working day was 24 June, lasting a

⁷ E. H. Carr: ‘From Munich to Moscow: II’, in: ‘Soviet Studies’, Volume 1, No. 2 (October 1949); p. 103; cited Bland, ‘German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact’

⁸ <https://www.tracesofwar.com/articles/4627/Radio-speech-by-Molotov-22-06-1941.htm>

⁹ <https://www.tracesofwar.com/articles/4628/Radio-speech-by-Stalin-03-07-1941.htm>

¹⁰ W.B.Bland; citing Nikita S. Khrushchev: ‘The Secret Speech to the Closed Session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’; Nottingham; 1976; p. 53). In: ‘The Myth Of Stalin’s ‘Demoralisation’ In 1941; Compass, Communist League April 2000, No. 135

¹¹ W.B.Bland; Steven J. Main: ‘Stalin in June 1941: A Comment on Cynthia Roberts’, in: ‘Europe-Asia Studies’, Volume 48, No. 5 (July 1996); p. 837, citing ‘Izvestiya TsK KPSS’, Volume 6, 1990; p. 216-22; In: ‘Myth of Stalin’s Demoralisation’.

little over five hours, but this followed a working day (23 June) that apparently fell just short of 24 hours -- 22 hours and 35 minutes!"¹²

"Similarly, on 25/26 June: "... Stalin is on record as having 24 hours of meetings."

On both 26 and 27 June:

"... his recorded working days ran to a little over ten hours each and, possibly as a result of this physically and mentally punishing schedule, his working day for 28 June again lasted a little over 5 hours."¹²

In interviews with Cheuv, Molotov was also adamant that Stalin was robust in the days after the German invasion:

"Molotov: At the start of the war..., Beria and I went to Stalin's dacha... with Malenkov.. Stalin was in a very agitated state. He didn't curse, but he wasn't quite himself.

Chuev: It is written that he lost his head and lost the ability to speak in the first days of the war.

Molotov: I wouldn't say he lost his head. He suffered, but he didn't show any signs of this. Undoubtedly he had his rough moments. It's nonsense to say he didn't suffer. But he is not portrayed as he really was... As usual he worked day and night and never lost his head or his gift of speech.

Chuev: How was he behaving?

*Molotov: How did he comport himself? As Stalin was supposed to, firmly."*¹³

Molotov helped Stalin to ensure that an Anglo-American second front in France finally come into being. This was a difficult struggle since the Allies were quite content to see the USSR suffer and bleed an immense loss of lives and resources.

To summarise, before and during the war Molotov played a key role in the defence of the USSR against fascism, especially on the diplomatic front.

Molotov loses Stalin's confidence

Given his enormous role in the Second World War, why then, after the end of the Second World War did Stalin view him with distrust? This is important in the light of subsequent events. Documentation of this distrust, is seen in the cipher telegrams from Stalin to Politburo members (Molotov, Malenkov, Beria and Mikoyan) in November-December 1945.¹⁴ The issues raised by Stalin in these are Molotov's willingness to enable a speech by Winston Churchill free rein in the Soviet press; enabling a "Daily Herald" (UK) article to be dispatched from Moscow which speculated on Stalin's replacement (possibly by Molotov) as head of government; and Molotov's 'personal agreement' with the US Ambassador Averell Harriman to "pass decisions at the Far Eastern Commission by majority of two provided the US belonged to that majority".¹⁵

¹² Bland citing Steven J. Main: *op. cit.*; p. 837, citing: 'Izvestia TsK KPSS', Volume 6, 1990, p. 217; 218-219

¹³ Albert Resis (Ed.): 'Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics'; Chicago; 1993;p. 89

¹⁴ Alexander O. Chubariyan And Vladimir O. Pechatnov, "Molotov "The Liberal": Stalin's 1945 Criticism Of His Deputy"; *Cold War History*, 2000; Vol. 1, No.1, pp. 124-141

¹⁵ I.V. Stalin Plenum CC CPSU; October 16, 1952; Stalin I.V. Works; Tver Information and Soyuz Publishing Center, 2006, pp. 584-587; At: <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/stalin/t18/t18262.htm>

In this article, each of these charges cannot be reviewed. But one central theme that emerges is Molotov's 'cosiness' with the Western imperialists. Further direct evidence on Stalin's growing discomfort with Molotov, is seen in an unpublished speech by Stalin at the Plenum of the CC of the CPSU on October 16, 1952 – just months before his death. A lengthy excerpt is worth giving:

“So, we held a party congress. It went well, and it may seem to many that we have complete unity. However, we do not have such unity. Some express disagreement with our decisions.

They say: why did we significantly expand the composition of the Central Committee? But isn't it clear that new forces had to be poured into the Central Committee? We, the old people, will die, but we need to think to whom, into whose hands we will hand over the baton of our great cause. Who will carry it forward? This requires younger, more dedicated people, politicians. And what does it mean to raise a political, statesman? This requires great effort. It will take ten, no, all fifteen years to bring up a statesman...

Isn't it clear that we need to raise the role of the Party, its Party committees? ... All this requires an influx of young, fresh forces into the Central Committee, the leading headquarters of our Party. So we did ...

People ask why we dismissed prominent party and state leaders from important ministerial posts. What can be said about this? We dismissed the ministers Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and others and replaced them with new workers. Why? On what basis? The job of a minister is a man's job. It requires great strength, specific knowledge and health. That is why we have released some honored [c. 584] comrades from their positions and appointed new, more qualified, enterprising workers in their place. They are young people, full of strength and energy. We must support them in responsible work.

As for the prominent political and statesmen themselves, they remain prominent political and statesmen. We transferred them to work as deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers. So, I don't even know how many deputies I have now.

It is impossible not to touch on the wrong behavior of some prominent political figures if we are talking about unity in our affairs. I have in mind Comrades Molotov and Mikoyan.

Molotov is a man devoted to our cause. Call, and I have no doubt he will not hesitate to give his life for the party. But you cannot ignore his unworthy deeds. Comrade Molotov, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, being under "chartreuse" at a diplomatic reception, gave his consent to the British Ambassador to publish bourgeois newspapers and magazines in our country. Why? What was the basis for such consent? Isn't it clear that the bourgeoisie is our class enemy and that spreading the bourgeois press among the Soviet people will bring nothing but harm. Such a wrong step, if allowed, will have a harmful, negative effect on the minds and worldview of the Soviet people, will lead to the weakening of our communist ideology and the strengthening of the bourgeois ideology. This is Comrade Molotov's first political mistake.

And what is Comrade Molotov's proposal to transfer the Crimea to the Jews worth? This is Comrade Molotov's gross mistake. Why did he need it? How can this be allowed? On what basis did Comrade Molotov make such a proposal? We have a Jewish autonomy - Birobidzhan. Isn't that enough? Let this republic develop. And Comrade Molotov should not be a lawyer for illegal Jewish claims to our Soviet Crimea. This is Comrade Molotov's second political mistake. Comrade Molotov behaves incorrectly as a member of the Politburo. And we categorically rejected his far-fetched proposals.

Comrade Molotov respects his wife so much that we do not have time to make a decision of the Politburo on this or that important political question, as this quickly becomes known to Comrade Zhemchuzhina. It turns out as if some invisible thread [c. 585] connects the Politburo with Molotov's wife, Zhemchuzhina, and her friends. And she is surrounded by friends who cannot be trusted. It is clear that such behavior of a member of the Politburo is unacceptable.”¹⁵

Modern Western scholars have also noticed a warm relationship between Molotov and some imperialists. Perhaps to cover this up, an exaggeratedly antagonistic note is introduced. For example, *both* President Harry Truman's and Molotov's own memoirs 'sex-up' (in Geoffrey Roberts' words) their discussions in Washington in April 1945. Both memoirs exaggerate a sharp disagreement, for instance Molotov says:

“At our first meeting with Truman, he began talking to me in such an imperious tone! Just before that I had had a discussion on the Polish question with Harriman and the British ambassador Clark-Kerr in Moscow – how to form a government there. We wanted it formed by the National Committee of Poland . . . And Truman said, 'Why do you frame the question in such a way that we cannot agree with you? It's intolerable!' I thought, what kind of president is he? I said, 'I cannot talk with you if you take such a tone'. He stopped short a bit. Rather stupid, to my mind. And he had a very anti-Soviet mind-set. That's why he began in that tone; he wanted to show who was boss.... He was far from having Roosevelt's intellect. A big difference. They had only one thing in common – Roosevelt had been an inveterate imperialist, too.”¹⁶

However, the Soviet and USA official reports sharply disagree, from Molotov's very dramatised version of events:

“It is evident that neither Molotov nor Gromyko consulted the contemporary Soviet records of their meetings with Truman. These reports – which are reproduced below – cast a completely different light on what transpired from that recorded by Bohlen, Gromyko, Harriman and Molotov in their memoirs.”¹⁶

The class struggle after the Second World War inside the USSR

After the war, internal class struggles inside the USSR grew apace, consistent with the views of both Lenin and Stalin. This view saw that the closer the higher stages of socialism come – the more intense becomes the class battles. Unsurprisingly then, the anti-Marxist Leninist forces adopted a renewed urgency,

¹⁶ Geoffrey Roberts (2004) *Sexing up the Cold War: New Evidence on the Molotov–Truman Talks of April 1945*, *Cold War History*, 4:3, 105-125

with more sophisticated forms directed at the socialist state.

On several ideological fronts, a concerted attempt to derail the Marxist-Leninist approach took hold. This was led by forces close to Malenkov opposing those of the Marxist-Leninist Zhdanov in the vivid example of the debates in genetics. These became a mechanical attack on adherents of genetic transmission of hereditary characteristics.¹⁷ Meanwhile Stalin fought off attacks on several other fronts – the ideological front on the topic of linguistics; the economic fronts in the “Leningrad Affair”;¹⁸ and with his pamphlet “On Economic Problems of the USSR”.¹⁹

Alongside these ideological thrusts, the hidden revisionists developed their plans for a more overt coup. The hidden revisionists realised they had to systematically disrupt both the state security defences, and Stalin’s own personal bodyguards. They faced key hurdles:

“The seizure of power by the Soviet revisionists required certain preliminary measures — the first of these being the weakening of the security organs of the socialist state and their later transfer into the hands of the revisionist conspirators.”¹⁸

The revisionists degraded the state security apparatus first by breaking it into three parts, and then removing its’ proven Marxist-Leninist leaders:

“In April 1943 the organ which had been responsible for state security, the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), which had been headed by the Marxist-Leninist Lavrenti Beria, was weakened by being split into three parts:
1) The People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), still headed by Beria, but no longer concerned with state security:
“The NKVD, under the leadership of Beria, was thereby relieved of the heavy problems of State security and became more and more an ‘economic’ organisation”.
2) the People’s Commissariat of State Security (NKGB), headed by the Marxist-Leninist Vsevolod Merkulov;
3) The Counter-Espionage Department of the People’s Commissariat for Defence (SMERSH), headed by the Marxist-Leninist Viktor Abakumov.”²⁰

Then SMERSH was abolished; and the leadership of the NKVD was switched out from the Marxist-Leninist Merkulov to the revisionist Sergey Kruglov. In a counter Stalin’s ally Abakumov launched the ‘Doctors Case’, which came perilously close to the revisionists

¹⁷ Hari Kumar, ‘Engels, Engels, Reductionism and Epigenetics’; *Marxism and Sciences 2022; Vol1, Issue 1*; at: <https://marxismandsciences.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/MS-FULL.pdf>

¹⁸ W.B.Bland, “The Leningrad Affair”; Appendix 3 from “*Restoration of Capitalism in the Soviet Union*” Wembley UK 1980; at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bland/1980/restoration-capitalism-soviet-union/appendix-3.htm>

¹⁹ *The Historical Significance Of Stalin’s ‘Economic Problems Of Socialism In The USSR’* By Bill Bland. Autumn 1994; at <http://ml-review.ca/aml/BLAND/EconProbs.htm>

²⁰ W.B.Bland, “The “Doctors’ Case” And The Death Of Stalin”; *Talk to the Stalin Society, London*; 1991; at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bland/1991/10/doctors-case-death-stalin.pdf>

doorstep. Accordingly in 1951 they effected a replacement of the Marxist-Leninist Abakumov as Minister of State Security by the concealed revisionist Semyon Ignatiev.

The second major hurdle the revisionists faced was left personal defence structure:

“Stalin's personal secretariat — also known as the 'Special Sector' of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party — (*was critical –HK*) in bringing about the treason trials of the 1930s. But this body also played an important role in defending from terrorist attack the Marxist- Leninist nucleus, headed by Stalin, at the heart of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The special sector had been headed since 1928 by the Marxist-Leninist **Aleksandr Poskrebyshev**”.²⁰

Robert Conquest, the bourgeois writer describes Poskrebyshev as:

"Head of the 'Special Sector' of the Central Committee for many years, Poskrebyshev was Stalin's closest confidant up till 1952".²¹

Lieutenant-General **Nikolay Vlasik** was also a loyal Marxist-Leninist critical to Stalin;s defense.

Both Poskrebyshev and Vlasik were removed, arrested and soon disposed of. Next the bodyguard around Stalin was decimated by a commission controlled by the hidden revisionists:

“This commission: "... proceeded ... to cut Stalin's bodyguards to the bone. . . . About seven thousand men were dropped from the original Okhrana force of some seventeen thousand. . . . When the slashing was finished, Stalin's personal bodyguards, Okhrana No. 1, had been cut to half strength".²²

There are grounds to be suspicious of the events surrounding Stalin's death. Apart from his evident good health immediately prior, when he did fall ill - medical help was delayed. Stalin was apparently struck by a stroke. But as the bourgeois historian McNeal said:

“Khrushchev's ... narrative makes it incredible that the doctors arrived much before 5 a.m. on 2 March. This is many hours, perhaps twelve, after (Stalin's) seizure.... It is not true that he was under medical care soon after the seizure".²³

To ensure the success of the coup, Marshall Zhukov surrounded Moscow and flooded Moscow with troops.

Khrushchev manoeuvres to seize power

After Stalin's death, Beria at first was able to maintain temporary control for the Marxist-Leninists. Khrushchev:

²¹ Bland²⁰ citing: R. Conquest: 'The Great Terror'; Harmondsworth; 1971; p. 37

²² Bland²⁰ citing: P. Deriabin: 'Watchdogs of Terror: Russian Bodyguards from the Tsars to the Commissars'; n.p. (USA); 1984.; p. 317, 318, 319

²³ Bland ²⁰ citing R. H. McNeal; 'Stalin: Man and Ruler'; Basingstoke; 1988.; p. 304

"Beria immediately proposed Malenkov for Chairman of the Council of Ministers (*Premier — Ed*). On the spot, Malenkov proposed that Beria be appointed first deputy. He also proposed the merger of the Ministries of State Security and Internal Affairs into a single Ministry of Internal Affairs, with Beria as Minister. . . . I was silent. . . . Bulganin was silent too. I could see what the attitude of the others was. If Bulganin and I objected . . . , we would have been accused of . . . starting a fight in the Party before the corpse was cold".²⁴

However Malenkov had already been engaged in undermining and attacking the Marxist-Leninist Zhdanov.²⁵ Malenkov already allied to Khrushchev agreed to attack Beria. Molotov was 'turned' by Khrushchev. The ease with which Molotov listened to Khrushchev, at least as related by the latter – does not portray Molotov in a good light:

"I took Malenkov aside and said: . . . 'Surely you must see that Beria's position has an anti-Party character. We must not accept what he is doing . . .'. Malenkov finally agreed. I was surprised and delighted. . . . Comrade Malenkov and I then agreed that I should talk to Comrade Molotov. . . . I told Molotov what sort of person Beria was and what kind of danger threatened the Party if we didn't thwart his scheming against the Party leadership. I had earlier told him how Beria had already set his plan in motion for aggravating nationalist tensions in the Republics. . . . I said: . . . 'You think, maybe, that we should detain him for investigation? I said 'detain' rather than 'arrest' because there were still no criminal charges against Beria. . . . Molotov and I agreed and parted".²⁶

Lavrenti Beria, Vladimir Dekanozov, Vsevolod Merkulov, amongst other leading were Marxist-Leninists having close connection with the state security forces – were all executed.

Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' and the restoration of capitalism

The allegations that Stalin had erected a Cult of Personality around himself, were first made public at the 20th party congress of the CPSU by then First Secretary Khrushchev. Originally these were made in an oblique manner. However, a more explicit so-called 'secret speech' – was quickly leaked to the US State Department - on 25 February 1956. In it Khrushchev charged 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".²⁷

²⁴ Bland²⁰ citing 'Khrushchev Remembers', Volume 1; London; 1971.p. 324.

²⁵ See Kumar op cit¹⁷

²⁶ Bland²⁰ citing N. S. Khrushchev 'Khrushchev Remembers', Volume 1; London; 1971. p. 330, 331, 332, 333.

²⁷ W.B.Bland, 'The 'Cult Of The Individual' (1934-52)'; May 1991;

<http://ml-review.ca/aml/STALIN-TXT/WBBPERSONALITY1991.html>

citing the Russian Institute, Columbia University (Ed.): 'The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism'; New York; 1956; p. 69; cited in

This ignored the fact that the initiators of the Cult were anti-Marxist-Leninist revisionists such as Karl Radek, and Khrushchev. The latter was credited with coining the term 'vozhd' for Stalin:

"It was Khrushchev who introduced the term 'vozhd' ('leader', corresponding to the German word 'Führer'). At the Moscow Party Conference in January 1932, Khrushchev finished his speech by saying:

"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 Jan 1932).

At the 17th Party Conference in January 1934 it was Khrushchev, and Khrushchev alone, who called Stalin:

"vozhd' of genius". (*XVII s'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (B.)*; p, 145)." ²⁶

Moreover, Stalin had himself pointed out to the writer Lion Feuchtwangler, that a Cult of Personality was being erected against his own will, and was a means by which to discredit Stalin himself. ²⁸ It will be recalled that Molotov describes the contents of this long "Letter" as wholly:

"Devoted, in fact, to one problem, one question - the problem of the so-called personality cult of I.V. Stalin." ³

Yet is this simply Molotov "protesting too much"? ²⁹ For as Molotov confessed to Felix Chuev "some people" considered him to 'blame' as he 'consented'. Bland calls it a "tacit endorsement" to Khrushchev's attack on Stalin:

"Molotov's Tacit Endorsement of the Attack upon Stalin"

Although he defends Stalin in many respects, Molotov admits that he kept silent during Khrushchev's savage attack on Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956:

"Some people holding pretty much the same view blame me. 'Why did you keep silent at the 20th Congress? . . . To keep silent, they say, is tantamount to consent. That's how it turned out. I kept silent and thus consented". ³⁰

Above I noted the astonishing agreement of Molotov to Khrushchev's proposal to arrest and liquidate Beria. Molotov actually tells Chuev that Khrushchev's arrest of Beria "was to Khrushchev's great credit". ³¹ The charge of 'serving imperialism' laid on Beria was, Molotov says, because Beria had prevented the move forward of socialism in the USSR occupied sector of Germany, in the GDR. In reality Beria was fighting an ultra-leftist position of Walter Ulbricht that was supported by Khrushchev. One that led to the 1953

²⁸ W.B.Bland, "Stalin: The Myth And The Reality"; October 1999;

<http://ml-review.ca/aml/STALIN-TXT/WBBSTALINMYTHSPARIS1999.html>; and:

²⁹ "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" Queen Gertrude Act III Scene II Hamlet by William Shakespeare.

³⁰ Bland W.B. 'Compass'; October 1993, No. 108;⁴ citing Resis *ibid*; p. 351

³¹ Albert Resis (Ed.): *ibid*, 1; p. 345.

attempted workers uprising in Berlin.³² Actually Beria had adopted the Marxist-Leninist position that Stalin had already advocated in relation to the People's Democracies – of not exporting revolution:

This Marxist-Leninist position on the export of socialism' was put by Stalin in his interview with American newspaper magnate Roy Howard in March 1936:

"Howard: May there not be an element of danger in the genuine fear existent in what you term capitalist countries of an intent on the part of the Soviet Union to force its political theories on other countries?

Stalin: There is no justification whatever for such fears. If you think that Soviet people want to change the face of surrounding states, and by forcible means at that, you are entirely mistaken. Of course, Soviet people would like to see the face of surrounding states changed, but that is the business of the surrounding states".³³

Molotov and Khrushchev

But the two new anti-Beria allies, Molotov and Khrushchev were to fall out. Becoming First secretary (1953-1964), Khrushchev banned Molotov's writings because of his criticisms of Khrushchev's foreign and domestic policies. Since these policies were also followed by pursued by Brezhnev (1964-1982), Molotov continued to be banned.

Khrushchev was moving the USSR into a profit-based society and resurrecting capitalism in both town and countryside. Such steps largely paralleled those that had been advocated in "The Leningrad Affair". Stalin in his lifetime was able to prevent these steps.¹⁸ However with Stalin now safely dead, the revisionists ploughed on to enacting those steps. The book: "The Restoration of Capitalism in the USSR" details them.³⁴

There remained differences of course within the newly minted capitalist class representatives. For example between Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Most importantly Khrushchev represented the interests of light consumer industry and in addition wanted to make the USSR subservient, comprador state to the USA. In contrast Brezhnev represented the interests of heavy industry, largely based on the military) and a so-called fraction of 'national capital' of the USSR.³⁵

However both emerging wings of USSR capital had the common interest of silencing opposition from Molotov and his allies. To ensure the Molotov led opposition was silenced effectively, Khrushchev obtained the aid of Marshall Zhukov again.³⁶ Molotov together with Malenkov, Kaganovich (and later Shepilov is mentioned also) were dubbed the anti-Party group, removed from official posts, and later were expelled:

³² Hari Kumar, "Where We Stand: Beria and the Berlin Rising of 1953"; Alliance ML Volume 1, Issue 6; August 2003 <http://ml-review.ca/aml/PAPER/AUGUST2003/berlinBeria1953.html>

³³ Bland in review of Resis (ed) Molotov Interview with Chuev⁴ citing Stalin; (Josef V. Stalin: Interview between Josef Stalin and Roy Howard (March 1936); "Works", Volume 14; London; 1978; p.136-37).

³⁴ W.B.Bland, "The restoration of Capitalism in the USSR"; Wembley 1980; at: <http://www.oneparty.co.uk/html/book/ussrmenu.html>

³⁵ Bland for Communist League: "The Class Basis Of Sakharov's "Liberalism"; February 1976, No.3; at: <http://ml-review.ca/aml/CommunistLeague/SakharovFINAL.htm>

³⁶ Lewis Siegelbaum, "The Anti-Party Group"; <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1956-2/the-anti-party-group/>

“The anti-party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov came out against the Party line.... Seeking to change the Party’s political line, this group used anti-party, factional methods in an attempt to change the composition of the Party’s leading bodies, elected by the plenary session of the Party Central Committee.... Comrades Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov embarked on a group struggle against the party leadership. Reaching agreement among themselves on an anti-party basis, they set out to change the policy of the Party, to return the Party to those erroneous methods of leadership which were condemned by the Twentieth Party Congress. They resorted to methods of intrigue and reached a secret agreement against the Central Committee. The facts revealed at the plenary session of the Central Committee show that Comrades Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov, as well as Comrade Shepilov, who joined them, having embarked on the path of factional struggle, violated the Party Statutes and the ‘On Party Unity’ decision of the Tenth Party Congress.”³⁷

There were several grounds given for these drastic steps. One that was mentioned prominently was on the ‘Personality Cult’ allegedly formed by Stalin:

“Comrades Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov (.. and later Shepilov) stubbornly opposed those measures which the Central Committee and our entire party carried out to eliminate the consequences of the cult of the individual leader, to eliminate the violations of revolutionary law which had occurred and to create conditions which would preclude their recurrence.”³³

The destruction of any semblance of economic centralisation took the form of “enlarging the powers” of the union republics to be free of central constraints. Molotov and colleagues objected to this – which formed a second major ground for exclusion:

“They were against enlarging the powers of the union republics in the sphere of economic and cultural development and in the sphere of legislation and also against enhancing the role of the local Soviets in carrying out these tasks. Thereby, the anti-party group opposed the Party’s firm course toward more rapid development of the economy and culture in the national republics -a course assuring further strengthening of Leninist friendship among all the peoples of our country.... With regard to agricultural questions, the members of this group failed to understand the new and vital tasks. They did not acknowledge the need to increase material incentives for the collective farm peasantry in increasing the output of agricultural products. They opposed abolition of the old bureaucratic system of planning on the collective farms and the introduction of the new system of planning which unleashes the initiative of the collective farms in managing their own affairs...”³⁷

The expansion of ‘virgin land’ planting was also opposed by Molotov:

³⁷ *Plenum Of The Central Committee Of The CPSU, Decree On The Anti-Party Group Of G. M. Malenkov, L. M. Kaganovich, And V. M. Molotov. June 29, 1957 – from KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s"ezdov, Vol. IV (Moscow, 1960), p. 271; in Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. IX, No. 23 (1960), p. 6; at: <https://soviethistory.com>.*

"It cannot be considered accidental that Comrade Molotov, a participant in the anti-party group, manifesting conservatism and a stagnant attitude, not only failed to realize the need for developing the virgin lands but even opposed the plowing up of 35,000,000 hectares of virgin land, which has been of such tremendous importance in our country's economy."³⁷

As important, was the "anti-Party group's" objections to the new foreign policy of "peaceful coexistence":

"This group attempted, in effect, to oppose the Leninist course towards peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems, to oppose the relaxing of international tension and the establishment of friendly relations between the USSR and all the peoples of the world."³³

Also in foreign policy shifts was the question of Yugoslavia, which Khrushchev was anxious to rehabilitate into the 'socialist' world:

"Comrade Molotov for a long time not only failed to take any measures through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to improve relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia but repeatedly came out against those measures which the Presidium of the Central Committee carried out to improve relations with Yugoslavia."³³

Molotov's groveling to return to the CPSU

While the core of Molotov's criticisms of the CPSU decisions between 1953-1957 were correct, these apparently did not lead him to a clear understanding of what had happened. For if the party was revisionist now, the task of a Marxist-Leninist is to expose it assist – however painfully or slowly – to build a new one. But Molotov chose to keep silent after the expulsion. Instead he repeatedly tried to worm his way back into the favour of the party. Bland comments thus:

"However, long after it had become patently obvious to anyone with even a smattering of Marxist-Leninist understanding that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was dominated by open revisionists who were restoring an essentially capitalist social order in the country, Molotov tells us his main preoccupation in the years following his expulsion was not so much with fighting revisionism as with trying to persuade the revisionist leaders to reinstate him in the Party:

Molotov: "I send letters to the Central Committee after each congress asking them to consider my application for reinstatement in the Party...

Four times I applied to be reinstated in the Party. I wrote to Brezhnev. . . . I am going to send another application to the 24th Congress".

Indeed, he goes so far as to agree that he deserved punishment for opposing the revisionists, and merely maintains that expulsion was excessively severe:

Molotov: "I ought to have been punished, true, but expulsion from the Party .. .?"³⁸

³⁸ Bland⁴ citing Albert Resis (Ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 284, 356.

Molotov's wish to be embraced again by the party was granted finally in 1984 by Gen Sec Konstantin Chernenko, whom Molotov had previously called 'a non-entity'. Molotov died two years later believing that the USSR was still a socialist state.

3) Molotov's Letter - What can we learn?

Naturally a manuscript of some of 372 pages cannot be regurgitated in an review. Here I only suggest a few points for consideration by the reader. Most of these, bar the final two, concern the various aspects of the so-called 'Cult of Personality' of Stalin.

Note that all page numbers in this section are to the 'Letter' unless otherwise attributed.

Why was it never published in Molotov's lifetime?

The groveling of Molotov to be readmitted to the Party after his expulsion, likely explains why his "Long letter" was never published. Naturally the Party did not want it published. That could only have been done illegally, by means of a dissident's approach. Molotov clearly did not want to risk a future where there was no hope of rejoining the party. So he remained publicly quiet. Even despite his repetitive phrase that "*You can't be silent*" (p.4-7). Well - he remained silent. It is as though this Letter was written as a sort of 'statement' to future historians, in order to preserve his memory – as a stalwart Marxist-Leninist. What does he have to say?

On the Cult of Personality

Molotov in his 'Letter' - just as in the interview with Chuev - points out that at the 20th Party Congress that he himself did *not* condemn the Khrushchevite approach at the Congress. Rather he quotes Molotov – himself - saying at the Congress:

"Supported by the entire Party, the Central Committee came out firmly against the personality cult, alien to Marxism-Leninism, which played such a negative role in a certain period. We can express confidence that this congress will fully approve this principled policy." (p.10)

Perhaps to mitigate his own responsibility, Molotov says that it was "**only**" at the 22nd Congress (October 1961) that a "moderate" critique "turned into defamation" of Stalin:

"The problem of the personality cult, initially presented, as I said above, in a very restrained and moderate tone, turned at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU into a genuine, unbridled campaign to defame Stalin and his closest aides and associates." (p. 23)

This is willfully blind of Molotov, since the leaking of the 'Secret Speech' to the West was in 1956. In fact, going further – Molotov remarks that:

"Stalin's closest associates - Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Molotov, Malenkov, however, like Stalin himself - were not yet accused of such things" (p. 23).

It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that Molotov was inspired to his "Letter" by the accusations against himself. Molotov makes clear that the above named "*closest associates of Stalin*" – also called "*Stalin's former associates of careerism*" - were shocked to find themselves being accused of :

“sycophancy, deliberate destruction and beating of the best cadres of the party.. mockery, and even in sadism and assault.” (p.25)

True, there was an ever-growing escalation in describing the alleged ‘sins’ of Stalin. But undoubtedly the critical step was at the 20th Party, and this minimization is self-serving.

Molotov performs a prolonged self-justification. Molotov’s first step in self-defence is to point out that many of the Khrushchevite leading cadre were also previous “*prominent leading figures*”:

“The prominent leading figures of our party and state, among whom, by the way, were most of the current members of the Central Committee and the Presidium of the Central Committee.” (p.29-30)

The clear implication is that if there is any responsibility for this on “us” (i.e. “Stalin's former associates of careerism”) – it also lies on “them” – i.e. Khrushchev and your fellow co-conspirators as well.

The murder of Kirov and the alleged miscarriage of justice on Tukachevsky

He goes onto to attempt to deconstruct specific allegations, regarding the alleged role of Stalin in the murder of Kirov, and an alleged miscarriage of justice against Marshall Tukhachevsky. Molotov does give some useful rebuttals. For example:

“Tukhachevsky himself made a considerable contribution to the glorification of I.V. Stalin.” (p. 36)

Molotov deconstructs the smear-job of the 1963, the Military Publishing House of the Ministry of Defense book by L. Nikulin - "Tukhachevsky" (p.31-38; 58-61). However on the Tukachevsky question other sources are useful also.³⁹

Similar comments can be made about the case of the alleged murder of Kirov by Stalin, where again added sources should be considered.⁴⁰⁻⁴¹⁻⁴² Of these the first⁴⁰ are the original trial reports. I suggest that while Molotov exposes the anti-Stalin plot, in essence there is little new not covered by those other sources. The overall plot is probably clearer in other accounts than in that of Molotov.

On the need of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ to fight class enemies

³⁹ Grover Furr, ‘New Light On Old Stories About Marshal Tukhachevskii : Some Documents Reconsidered’; *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, 13, Nos 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1986), 293-308; at: <https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furr/tukh.html>

⁴⁰ ‘The Crime of the Zinoviev Opposition’; Moscow; 1935;
‘Report of the Court Proceedings: The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre’; Moscow; 1936;
‘Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre’; Moscow; 1937;
‘Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights & Trotskyites’; Moscow; 1938

⁴¹ W.B.Bland for ‘The Marxist-Leninist Research Bureau Report No. 13: The Kirov Murder’; London ca 1990; at: <http://ml-review.ca/aml/MLRB/MLRB13-KIROV.HTM>;

⁴² Grover Furr; ‘The Murder of Sergei Kirov: History, Scholarship and the Anti-Stalin Paradigm’; 2013; Erythros Press.

Molotov confronts the frequently heard critique of the original trial reports, and flatly contradicts these critiques:

“I remember how at one time the bourgeois press reacted to these trials, asserting that the unanimity of the accused in these trials, their detailed and frank testimony was obtained by the NKVD with the help of some super-sophisticated tortures, machines, etc. invented in it.
Can a sensible person agree with such assertions, which, by the way, have been strengthened to no small degree by the 22nd Congress?
No he cannot.” (p. 70).

Perhaps Molotov is at his best in the “Letter”, when he cites Stalin at the 1933 Joint Plenum of the CC and the Central Control Commission of the CPSU:

“As a result of the implementation of the five-year plan in the field of industry, agriculture, and trade, we have approved the principle of socialism in all spheres of the national economy, driving out the capitalist elements from there.
What was it supposed to lead to in relation to the capitalist elements, and what did it actually lead to?
This led to the fact that the last remnants of the dying classes were thrown out of the rut: industrialists and their servants, merchants and their henchmen, former nobles and priests, kulaks and kulakists, former white officers and sergeants, former policemen and gendarmes, all kinds of bourgeois intellectuals of the chauvinistic sense and all other anti-Soviet elements.
Being knocked out of the rut and scattered throughout the territory of the USSR, these former people spread to our plants and factories, to our institutions and trade organizations, to railway and water transport enterprises, and mainly to collective farms and state farms. They crawled and hid there, throwing on the mask of “workers” and “peasants”, and some of them even crawled into the party.
What did they go with? Of course, with a feeling of hatred for Soviet power...”
(p.71)⁴³

Stalin’s solution was to point to the dictatorship of the proletariat:

“The sharp edge of revolutionary law at the present time is directed, not against the excesses of war communism, which have long ceased to exist, but against thieves and wreckers in public economy, against rowdies and pilferers of public property. The main concern of revolutionary law at the present time is, consequently, the protection of public property, and not something else.
That is why it is one of the fundamental tasks of the Party to fight to protect public property, to fight with all the measures and all the means placed at our command by our Soviet laws.
A strong and powerful dictatorship of the proletariat—that is what we need now in

⁴³ Although it is in a differing translation, this parallels the text in Stalin JVS: Joint Plenum of the C.C. and C.C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) January 7-12, 1933; “The Results of the First Five-Year Plan; Report Delivered on January 7, 1933”; Collected Works Volume 13; Moscow, 1954; at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1933/01/07.htm>
(See section: “VII. The Results of the Five-year Plan in Four Years in the Sphere of the Struggle Against the Remnants of the Hostile Classes)

order to scatter to the winds the last remnants of the dying classes and to frustrate their thieving designs.”⁴³ (*This is a further text, not contained in Molotov, but is from the same reference in Volume 13*)

Molotov’s intent to stress the dictatorship of the proletariat as the defence of socialism. For he immediately quotes Lenin from 1913, to these same effects (p. 72). He also refers to records stating that Stalin was ‘too soft’ In this regard Molotov reminds us of Stalin’s words, perhaps at a premature stage:

“Some comrades think that the chief thing in the offensive of socialism is measures of repression, that if there is no increase of measures of repression there is no offensive. Is that true? Of course, it is not true.” (p.75).⁴⁴

The alleged ‘suspiciousness’ of Stalin

Molotov rather casually – no doubt correctly - dismisses that Stalin was “suspicious”:

“By the way, they talk about the cruelty and suspicion of Stalin ... for some reason forget to add, that until 1936, many old members of the party, members of the Central Committee and the Politburo reproached the same Stalin for excessive softness towards people who showed hesitation and indecision in carrying out the general line of the party, who allowed big and serious mistakes. They forget that even such people as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Preobrazhensky, Serebryakov, Smirnov and others were expelled 2-3 times and reinstated in the party not without the knowledge and direct instructions of its general secretary; that even such people as Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky, Rakovsky and others, whose political views were recognized by the party as early as 1930, at the 16th Congress of the CPSU(b), as incompatible with Leninism, right up to the very trials of 1936-1938 remained in the party, and some even in the Central Committee.” (p. 74)

Were there miscarriages of justice?

Interestingly Molotov, while defending the Trial evidence and counter-attacks on the hidden enemies, accepts there were miscarriages of justice in instances:

“(Do) I completely reject the very possibility of the existence in the period under review of facts of arbitrariness, condemnation of innocent people, etc.?
No, it doesn’t. Not only was I not going to and am not going to reject this possibility, but I fully agree that the facts of arbitrariness, careerism, condemnation of innocent people, etc. things were widespread in the period under review. (p.69)

Bland had argued the same. However, Bland’s account gives a far better sense of the overall strategy of a hidden network of counter-revolutionaries, using the state apparatus itself to attack socialism:

⁴⁴ Here the text matches the translation in the Moscow ‘Works’: J. V. Stalin, “Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.)” June 27, 1930; ‘Works’ Volume 12, Moscow, 1955, pp. 242-385. See; ‘7. Difficulties of Growth, the Class Struggle and the Offensive of Socialism Along the Whole Front’; at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1930/aug/27.htm>

“Stalin's 'pathological suspicion' of some of his colleagues, of which Khrushchev complained so bitterly in his secret speech to the 20th Congress, was not pathological at all!

On one allegation both Stalin and the revisionists are agreed -- that in Stalin's time miscarriages of justice occurred in which innocent people were judicially murdered.

The revisionists, of course, maintain that Stalin was responsible for these miscarriages of justice.

But there is a contradiction here.

Khrushchev himself said in his 1956 secret speech (and I quote):

“The question is complicated here by the fact that all this was done because Stalin was convinced that this was necessary for the defence of the interest of the working class against the plotting of enemies. He saw this from the position of the interests of the working class, of the interest of the victory of socialism”. (unquote).

“But only a person who was completely insane could possibly imagine that the arrest of innocent people could serve socialism. And all the evidence shows that Stalin retained his full mental faculties right to his death.

However, the contradiction resolves itself if these judicial murders were carried out, not at the behest of Stalin and the Marxist-Leninists, but at the behest of the revisionist opponents of socialism.

At his public trial in 1938, the former People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Genrikh Yagoda, pleaded guilty to having arranged the murder of his predecessor, Vyacheslav Menzhinsky, in order to secure his own promotion to a post which gave him control over the Soviet security services. He then, according to his own admission, used this position to protect the terrorists responsible for the murder of prominent Marxist-Leninists close to Stalin -- including the Leningrad Party Secretary, Sergei Kirov, and the famous writer Maksim Gorky. And in order that the security services should not appear idle, Yagoda arranged for the arrest of many people who were not conspirators, but had merely been indiscreet.

After Yagoda's arrest, the conspirators were successful in getting him succeeded by another conspirator, Nikolai Yezhov, who continued and intensified this process.

It was because of the suspicions of Stalin and the Marxist-Leninists that the security services were acting incorrectly -- were protecting the guilty and punishing the innocent -- that they began to use Stalin's personal secretariat, headed by Aleksandr Poskrebyshv, as their private detective agency.

And it was on the basis of the evidence uncovered by this Secretariat and submitted directly to the Party -- that the concealed revisionists, to maintain their

cover, were compelled to endorse the arrest of genuine conspirators, including Yagoda and Yezhov.

And it was on Stalin's personal initiative that in 1938, his friend, the Marxist-Leninist Lavrenty Beria, was brought to Moscow from the Caucasus to take charge of the security services.

Under Beria, political prisoners arrested under Yagoda and Yezhov had their cases reviewed and, as Western press correspondents reported at the time, many thousands of people unjustly sentenced were released and rehabilitated.”⁴⁵

The role of Khrushchev

Molotov certainly attacks Khrushchev. He makes repeated references to Khrushchev as being a ‘Cult propagator’ – for example p. 76. However, this lacks an explicit framework of the conscious anti-Marxist-Leninist plan that the revisionists had planned. As discussed above for example, Stalin had himself predicted the Cult would be used to denigrate him (See p.10 above citing Bland). Undoubtedly Molotov paints Khrushchev in his true colours not stinting on abusive words (“toady” p. 77). But I think that Molotov does not quite ‘put his finger on it’.

Rather than a conscious revisionist long-term plan, it at first seems a ‘careerist’ path that Molotov sees Khrushchev as taking:

“The question is - could Khrushchev, being the first secretary of the Moscow City Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, not know about the repressions against his closest assistants and employees? And does this mean that the repressions against these persons, his deputies, and subordinates, were primarily beneficial and needed by Khrushchev himself for careerist or even directly hostile purposes?” (p. 79)

Perhaps this does Molotov an injustice. For Molotov then does highlight a Zhdanov speech on using the pretext of ‘vigilance’ to “disguise hostile activity”:

“A. A. Zhdanov, was the main speaker on this issue at the 16th Congress of the CPSU (b). Here is what he said in his big speech:
 “At the February-March Plenum of the Central Committee of 1937 and the January Plenum of the Central Committee of 1938, the party condemned the practice of a formal and callous attitude to the question of the fate of party members - Expulsions from the Party, as well as by disguised enemies within the Party, who sought, through the widespread use of measures of repression, to kill honest members of the Party and sow excessive suspicion in the ranks of the Party. “Vigilance” to kill as many honest communists as possible (*was – HK*) meant to sow mutual distrust and disorganize our ranks.
 Slandering honest communists under the banner of "vigilance" is at present the most widespread method of covering up and disguising hostile activity. Look for undiscovered hornets' nests of enemies first of all among slanderers.” (p. 79-80).

⁴⁵ Bland WB, "Stalin: The Myth And The Reality"; *Op Cit*²⁷ ; at: <http://ml-review.ca/aml/STALIN-TXT/WBBSTALINMYTHSPARIS1999.html>

Molotov explicitly labels Khrushchev as one of those who has laid repeatedly false, and dangerous accusations against honest comrades in the Ukraine – those “cockroaches, any vile creature that is sent to Ukrainian soil by foreign intelligence services” etc (p.82-84).

Lenin’s view of dealing with counter-revolutionaries

One notable feature of Molotov’s “Long Letter” is the profuse citation of Lenin, in the defence of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. That the struggle for socialism is no love-in, is a matter somewhat overlooked by various followers of Trotsky nowadays. For example:

“The instructions of V. I. Lenin (were – HK) that
 “What our job is to put the question straight. Which is better? To catch or imprison, sometimes even shoot hundreds of traitors ... who spoke (some with weapons, some with a conspiracy, some with agitation, etc.) against Soviet power ..? Or take matters to the point of allowing ... to kill, shoot, flog to death tens of thousands of workers and peasants? The choice is not difficult.” (p.87)

“V. I. Lenin said:

“I argue soberly and categorically: what is better - to imprison a few dozen or hundreds of instigators, guilty or innocent, conscious or unconscious, or to lose thousands of Red Army soldiers and workers? - The first is better. And let me be accused of any mortal sins and violations of freedom “I plead guilty, and the interests of the workers will win.” (vol. 29, p. 274). “ (p. 87)

In an especially lucid passage Molotov writes:

“Supporters of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU began to portray V. I. Lenin, based on a legitimate and accurate characterization of him as the most humane person on earth, as a sort of soft-bodied intellectual type, for whom “universal” feelings of justice, humanism, love, and friendship for comrades were above all else.

In my opinion, this is a false, incorrect interpretation of the personality of V.I. Lenin - the leader of the revolution, the communist revolutionary.” (p.88)

Molotov here is in full agreement with an arch-Priest of bourgeois academia Richard Pipes, who enjoyed rubbing the nose of liberals and followers of Trotsky into quotations from Lenin in “The Unknown Lenin”.⁴⁶ In any case over these next pages Molotov places several more pointed citations from Lenin to corroborate his point. Namely that Stalin was no different from Lenin in insisting on a disciplined proletarian democracy. Such as this instance from Lenin:

“Comrade Hungarian workers! Be firm. If there are vacillations among the socialists who joined you yesterday, the dictatorship of the proletariat, or among the petty bourgeoisie, suppress the vacillations mercilessly. Execution is the legitimate fate of a coward in war” (vol. 29, p. 360 - 361).” (p.89)

⁴⁶ Richard Pipes, “The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive”; Yale 1999.

“There is hope that we will remove one hundred thousand from our party. Some say that there are 200 thousand - and I like these last ones more” (vol. 33, pp. 50 - 52).“ (p. 89)

While I found it difficult to quickly trace many of these quotes precisely, I am reasonably sure they are there in the original Russian texts. After all, Lenin’s texts are abundant in this sentiment and very blunt.⁴⁷

One other particularly important example (this time Molotov’s wording is precisely paralleled in the English “Collected Works” of Lenin) follows. It is on the use of ‘revolutionary terror’ – in a letter to the jurist D.I.Kursky, Where Lenin states:

“The court should not eliminate terror; to promise this would be self-deception or deceit, but to substantiate and legitimize it in principle, clearly, without falsehood and embellishment. It is necessary to formulate as broadly as possible, because only revolutionary legal consciousness and revolutionary conscience will lay down the conditions for practical application, more or less wide” (Emphasized by me. - G. M., vol. 32, p. 76). (p.92 ‘Letter’; and in the English Collected Works (CW)).⁴⁸
(Here Molotov’s text, has an addendum by GM – Gregori Malenkov - HK).

In the original English CW of Lenin – the quote is prefaced with this remark:

“I herewith enclose the draft of an article supplementary to the Criminal Code. It is a rough draft and, of course, needs altering and polishing up. The main idea will be clear, I hope, in spite of the faulty drafting-to put forward publicly a thesis that is correct in principle and politically (not only strictly juridical), which explains the *substance* of terror, its necessity and limits, and provides *justification* for it.”⁴⁷

Lenin’s quotations as offered by Molotov, do not only come from the time of the open White vs. Red Civil War - which even liberals could expect. But during the building of socialism after the end of the open Civil War, Lenin continued to stiffen the Bolshevik spine into a “*stone-hard*” “*firm-line policy*”. As for example in a quote not used by Molotov, he says in “Fourth Anniversary Of The October Revolution”:

“We are learning how to continue erecting the socialist edifice in a small-peasant country without committing such mistakes. The difficulties are immense. But we are accustomed to grappling with immense difficulties. Not for nothing do our enemies call us “stone-hard” and exponents of a “firm- line policy”.⁴⁹

However more precise citation referencing would have been appreciated.

⁴⁷ Vi.I.Lenin ‘Purging The Party’; September 21, 1921; pp.39-41; Volume 33 Collected Works (CW) Moscow 1965; also at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/pdf/lenin-cw-vol-33.pdf>

⁴⁸ V.I.Lenin, Letter To D. I. Kursky, 17 May 1922; Moscow, 1965, CW Volume 33, pages 358-359. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/may/17.htm>

⁴⁹ Fourth Anniversary Of The October Revolution”; October 14, 1921; Volume 33 Collected Works Moscow 1973 p.58; also at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/pdf/lenin-cw-vol-33.pdf>

The notion of class peace

Molotov makes an important bridge between Khrushchevite rejection of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' and advocating that in the USSR a class peace has been achieved. Instead of dictatorship of the proletariat said Khrushchev, what was on hand in the USSR was a 'people's state':

"Rejecting the dictatorship of the working class on the grounds that, with the liquidation of the exploiting classes, there are no more classes in our society in respect of which dictatorship is necessary, and, as already mentioned, emphasizing its violent side, the theorists and defenders of the Program of the CPSU for some reason forget about inevitable bourgeois character of the state of the transitional period from capitalism to communism, that the basic principle of socialist distribution "to each according to his work" necessarily needs to be put into practice in bourgeois law as a regulator of the distribution of products and the distribution of labor." (p. 194).

Actually the Khrushchevite Programme took it to the extent of saying the CPSU was no longer the "party of the working class.... But (of) the whole people":

"The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has not ceased to be the party of the working class, for it has been and remains the spokesman of its communist ideals. But the Communist Party in our country has become not only the party of the working class, but of the whole people, because the whole people have adopted the Marxist-Leninist worldview of the working class, his ideals" (collection "From the party of the working class to the party of the whole people", 1964). (p. 217)

And yet – wonder of wonders - Molotov points out that Khrushchev himself acknowledges that the work of the state has not been achieved. There were an awful lot of things still to be accomplished:

"The list of tasks facing our state, given in "the Program of the CPSU" (see p. ... of this section), indisputably indicates that our society, if we do not want to enter into a dispute with Marx and Lenin, has not yet entered into, not completed the construction of a socialist society, that our state has not yet fully completed any of the main tasks by which a society can deserve the name socialist." (p. 201)

Molotov can easily point to the inconsistency of thinking between Khrushchev and Lenin – as to the stages of socialism and communism. Khrushchev in pushing 'peace' is deliberately confusing the various distinctions.

World peace

Moreover all this presages a 'world peace' with hitherto imperialist nations such as the USA, as stated in the Khrushchev party programme:

"For the complete withering away of the state, it is necessary to create both internal conditions - the building of a developed communist society, and external conditions - the final resolution of the dispute between capitalism and communism in the international arena in favor of communism." (p.204)

Molotov pointed out this is quite a different formulation from that advocated by Lenin:

“If the power of the Soviets is exercised, if the bourgeoisie is overthrown in one country, the second task is to fight on an international scale, fight on a different plane, the struggle of the proletarian state among the capitalist states” (vol. 29, p. 40).

“We will come to final victory only when we manage to finally and totally break international imperialism... We will come to victory only together with all the workers of other countries...” (Speech in the Moscow Soviet, 1918).” (p.207)

“You can finally win only on a global scale ...” (Report on foreign policy at a meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Moscow Council).” (p. 208)

The Khrushchevites twisted this by claiming that the People’s Democracies were an equivalent guarantee of the ‘final victory’ of workers inside the USSR. Molotov says:

“Some comrades, defending the position of the “Program of the CPSU” on the final victory of socialism in the USSR, are trying to prove that V. I. Lenin, speaking of a number of victorious socialist revolutions in other countries as the only absolute guarantee of the victory of socialism, precisely meant by these revolutions a number of post-war socialist revolutions in the people's democracies.” (p.207)

The Khrushchev forces were inflating the economic power of the Peoples Democracies says Molotov (p.209). In contrast Lenin argued that before any **‘finality’** of revolution in a country was achieved, there had to be other **advanced** countries taking the same path. This is not the same interpretation of the Trotskyites of course.

Khrushchev’s path of thinking says Molotov, in its’ international manifestation takes on the notions of “peaceful coexistence” of socialism with capitalism. (p. 221). This is where:

“Peaceful coexistence implies: the rejection of war as a means of resolving disputes between states, their resolution through negotiations; equality, mutual understanding and trust between states; consideration of each other's interests; non-interference in internal affairs, recognition of the right of each people to independently resolve all issues of their country strict observance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries development of economic and cultural cooperation on the basis of complete equality and mutual benefit
“Peaceful coexistence” is the basis of peaceful competition between socialism and capitalism on a world scale and is a specific form of class struggle between them... Peaceful coexistence of socialist and capitalist states - an objective necessity for the development of human society ...Peaceful competition or a catastrophic war - this is the only way history has posed the question” (Programma KPSS. Gospolitizdat. 1961, pp. 60-61). (p. 222)

Naturally this is easy for Molotov to expose as nonsense. He uses extensive citation from Lenin on the nature of imperialism, to do so.

The peaceful road to socialism

If there is a peaceful co-existence between socialism and capitalism in the world, in each country the working class:

“By uniting broad sections of the working people, the working class can force the ruling circles to stop preparing a new war, to use the economy for peaceful purposes, can beat off the offensive of fascist reaction, achieve a national peace program, national independence, democratic rights, and a certain improvement in the living conditions of the people....” (Programme of the CPSU under Khrushchev p. 264)

As Molotov summarises, this enables the working people of each country to take the peaceful road to evolution and socialism:

“As regards the problem of the socialist revolution, the Program of the CPSU interprets the revolution as follows:...

In the first part.. the Program of the CPSU assures us that peace, national independence, the use of the economy for peaceful purposes, the expansion of democratic rights, and a "known" further improvement in living conditions in many capitalist countries can be achieved without overthrowing the power of capital, but only by fighting with his omnipotence.

In the second part of the section, the Program of the CPSU assures us that if we are to speak of a revolution, we should first of all speak of a peaceful revolution, for which all the conditions are ripe in many capitalist countries, of a revolution by parliamentary means, by "democratic" means, without civil war.

And, finally, in the third part of its section devoted to the question of the socialist revolution, the Program of the CPSU very briefly, as if in passing, says that we have in mind the "possibility" of a non-peaceful transfer of power from the hands of the bourgeoisie to the hands of the working class.” (p.264-267)

This theory is also easily demolished - again by detailed reference to Lenin (p.269 onwards).

Khrushchev's accusations repeat those of Trotsky and his followers

Molotov now enumerates how Khrushchev has established the “Cult of Khrushchev's personality.” Indeed a more vain man than Khrushchev is difficult to imagine. (to p.106). This long section that recites the words of Khrushchev's lackeys segue ways into an extended discussion of Lenin's views on the balance between discipline in the party and the CC versus “the opportunity to speak freely within the Party” (Stukov) (p.109). Of course this discussion has to lead to Trotsky and his platform of the so-called “New Course” invoking 'democracy' and 'non-bureaucratic-ism' (p. 112).

These are important discussions to remind ourselves of, and readers can negotiate this by themselves. Trotsky's sophistry remains alive around the world in several Trotskyite parties and sects. The defeat of the many oppositionists by the 15th party congress is noted by Molotov (p.133).

The point Molotov is making seems to me, to be that the shrill accusations by Khrushchev and his team against Stalin – are not in essence new. They had been made before to the party, which had rejected them long ago.

This long section reiterates the internal squabbles inside the oppositionist movement, and how those such as Zinoviev and Bukharin initially attacked the oppositionists. A useful and detailed section, although nothing intrinsically novel for Marxist-Leninists. (to p. 151). Molotov gives individual speeches from party members who were purged by Stalin, and were rehabilitated by the Khrushchev 22nd Congress. This eloquently shows how these same individuals were baying for Trotsky's blood in the 15th Congress.

But Molotov brings all these strands together to make a more general summary. This firstly invokes a pattern whereby defeated political lines within the party retort by raising charges of 'arbitrary and individual dictatorship':

"All "oppositions" and opposition groups, as soon as they found themselves in the minority in the party on the POLITICAL issues put forward by them, immediately and inevitably began to accuse the majority of "silencing", repressions, violations of inner-party democracy, etc., immediately and inevitably they began to oppose the party to its apparatus, to tear the party away from its apparatus, from its acknowledged leaders; immediately and inevitably all these opposition groups and little groups raised the cry of collective leadership in the party, of democratic centralism, accusing the leaders of the party of dictatorship, of individualism and arbitrariness." (p.152)

And the second general point Molotov makes is that these oppositions target the "person who, by the "will of the party" is the leader. This was in turn, Lenin, and then Stalin.

"Using the example of all the oppositions in the history of our party, we can also easily see that in their attacks on the organizational principles of building our party, the oppositionists paid the most attention to the person who, by the will of the party, was placed in the most important and authoritative place in the party." (p.158)

This latter is a fairly obvious point, but perhaps needs saying bluntly, in the way Molotov does. The corollary, that of the parallel between the largely 'swept under the carpet' shouts against Lenin – and those made against Stalin (p.159) – is very worthwhile to make. Molotov might have ended this section by asserting, rightly in my view, that:

"Until the end of his days, J. V. Stalin enjoyed great authority and trust of the people only because this authority and this trust were based on the only possible, from the point of view of Marxism-Leninism, solid foundation - on the basis of real, tangible successes of the party policy by every Soviet person in raising the living and cultural level of our socialist society." (p.161)

However he goes on to cite Bukharin saying in even more dramatic form, the same things – for example:

"the struggle against the Party regime was connected with and inevitably flawed from another, anti-Party political line, just like the struggle against Comrade Stalin, as the best spokesman and inspirer of the Party line, Stalin, who won a deep victory in the internal political struggle, principles of Leninist policy, and it was on this basis that he received the ardent support ... of the overwhelming mass of the party and the working class." (p.162-3)

Many of such quotes given in this section, are not very well known, coming as they do from stenographic recordings of party congresses. They are thus useful.

How was Khrushchev able to succeed in his attack?

Molotov recognises that this is a central question. His answer is a combination of at least *four factors*.

The first factor, is a ruthless purging – removal from leading positions – of those willing to challenge Khrushchev:

“The June Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1957 was the first plenum in the history of our party, at which seven of its eleven members - Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Bulganin, Saburov and Pervukhin - were immediately removed from the Presidium of the Central Committee.” (p.167)

Yes again this may be self-serving of Molotov. But he cogently argues that this deprived the Congress of the ‘right’ to hear the defences of those attacked (including Stalin who was of course dead). (p.167-8).

“at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, 26% of the members of the old Central Committee did not get into the number of the new Central Committee, and at the 22nd Congress this figure reached 55%. Consequently, the Central Committee of the CPSU, elected at the 22nd Congress, included only 19% of those comrades who at the 19th and 20th Congresses of the CPSU were members or candidates for membership in the Central Committee of the CPSU.” (p. 175)

The second factor, was “an attempt to intimidate the congress delegates” – by threatening reprisals for any defending the “anti-Party group. (p. 171)

Thirdly, as well as removal of the leaders of the ‘anti-Party group’, there was a wholesale purge of the Plenum’s members, and a ‘swamping’ – that is my phrase not that of Molotov – by new and thus possibly in-experienced members:

“During the period from the 18th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks to the 19th Congress of the CPSU inclusive (1939-1952), the membership of the party increased from 2.5 million members to 6.9 million members, i.e. almost 4.5 million people; at the same time, it must be taken into account that on the fronts of the Patriotic War, about 9 million new members were accepted into the ranks of the party; that by the end of 1945, when the total number of party members was 5.5 million, there were 3 million 325 thousand communists in the army and navy, or about 60% of the entire membership of the party (see “History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union”, 1961, p. 593); and, finally, that during the period from the 19th to the 20th congress, 333,360 people were admitted to the party, while during the period from the 20th to the 22nd congress, over 2.5 million.” (p. 172)

The purge of old comrades extended down to local levels:

“it is difficult to get rid of the impression that this extra-statutory event was a kind of officially carried out, but not announced, purge of the party, a purge of local

party bodies, that is, those bodies from which the delegations to party congresses are mainly formed.” (p. 176)

Finally as many of these new members were from military ranks, correspondingly the delegates to the Congress were also – in the majority – from military ranks:

“Let us dwell on such an indicator as the number of delegates with military and post-war party experience. ... At the XIX Congress of such delegates there were 20% of the total number of delegates to the congress, at the XXI - already 48%, and at the XXII - 68%, and, as you know, two and a half times more delegates.” (p. 171-2)

Molotov’s overall conclusion on the discussions of the 1937 trials and the cult of personality

In any case, Molotov – arrives at a firm conclusion:

“I believe that by questioning the legitimacy of the trials of 1937-1938, by pushing the masses to look at the allegedly falsified nature of these trials, by retrospectively justifying many of the main accused, by clearly refuting the version of the murder of S. M. Kirov that existed before the congress and officially confirmed by these trials - The 22nd Congress, both logically and in fact, takes under its protection such people as Zinoviev and Kamenev, like Bukharin and Rykov, like Pyatakov and Radek, and the like. ...

I believe that the direction that was given by the XXII Congress of the CPSU to the question of the so-called personality cult of I. V. Stalin, was a direction directly aimed at undermining the authority of the party among the working people of our country and the whole world, at discrediting the policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a party represented by the 22nd Congress as a blind and obedient executor of the will of a tyrant - its general secretary; party, represented by the XXII Congress as a hotbed of squabbles and "court" squabbling for power, for proximity "to the throne." (p. 94).

Other questions

I have been reasonably detailed on the above matters, as they are of course key political issues, and also they are the ones that Molotov himself felt were core.

But there are two other questions to briefly address.

The economic reorganisation of the USSR

From p.308, Molotov critiques the changes to the economy made by Khrushchev. These consist of responses made to what the Khrushchevites called:

"increased demands for more efficient and concrete local leadership of industry." (p.309).

Molotov makes clear this was a pretext, in order to dissolve a centralised planned economy. In this regard he once more, cites Lenin – who was adamantly against “localism”:

“V. I. Lenin warned:

“Perhaps you will say, is it really so bad in the Soviet Republic that it is necessary to force the fulfillment of the will of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. Comrades, you have to force it, and it’s better to say it frankly than to hide it under your wing and imagine that everything is going well ... It is better to tell the truth, that our local bodies must be compelled steadily and mercilessly... This is very difficult... The struggle against localism, against small-ownership habits is difficult. so that they repeat this truth and put it into practice, because without this it is impossible to build socialism” (vol. 28, p. 377). “ (p. 311).

This is a point well made. The Khrushchevites devolved production targets and management to the local levels. This included crippling a state-wide ‘branch specialization’; so that each local unit had to build up its own expertises within smaller territories. The effects were devastating:

“the reasons for the deterioration in the work of our industry should be sought in the fact that, firstly, 102 economic councils and a dozen government committees headed by the Supreme Economic Council turned out to be not the best, but the worst management system than fifty-two branch union and union-republic ministries, and, secondly, that thanks to the new, territorial management system, the branch specialization of enterprises was violated.” (p.320)

Since localized control also dissolved central accounting, how costs of production balance out against state planned prices – and hence profit – was quite unclear. (p.320). Molotov asks pertinent questions:

“And I ask myself: is it possible to establish sufficiently correct state prices for commercial products without taking into account and planning in a centralized manner all those indicators and standards that ultimately determine this price itself? Is the establishment of state planned prices conceivable without taking into account and planning the needs of society in each specific type of product, without taking into account and planning the needs of each specific enterprise in raw materials and materials, machine tools and equipment, fuel, and transport, etc.? etc.? Is it conceivable to establish state planned prices without taking into account and planning the quantity and assortment of coal mining, oil production, steel smelting, non-ferrous metals, production of machine tools, aircraft, instruments, etc.? etc.?”

It seems to me that it is unthinkable. “ (p. 321)

Overall, Molotov shows that there was a decrease in economic outputs for a range of industries from 1953 onwards inside the USSR. Moreover the USSR lag behind the USA got worse. This comes out especially in the first table on p. 316 (per capita production of the main types of industrial products in the USSR and the USA was (in 1963); and the table on p. 319. However it must be said that the presentation of the raw data in the various tables is certainly not the clearest.

But there is less detail as to what exactly Khrushchev did to disembowel the socialist economy, than I would have liked. It remains true that one of the best sources to understand this process in its details, is Bland.⁵⁰

Agricultural functioning

Molotov starts here with pointing out that agricultural development had been a problem for some time, as Stalin had acknowledged. The devastation of the Second World War compounded matters, and extraordinary statistics are cited (p. 331). To cite a small part of this:

“17 million heads of cattle were exterminated out of a total of 31 million heads; 20 million heads of pigs were destroyed out of a total of 23.6 million heads; 27 million sheep and goats were exterminated out of a total of 43 million ... The material base of the mechanization of agriculture was undermined: 137,000 tractors, 49,000 combines were destroyed or stolen by the invaders in the areas of the USSR that were occupied ...” (p. 331, citing Voznesensky "The Military Economy of the USSR during the Patriotic War").

While Molotov's tables are not reproduced in the current text, Molotov states:

“Crop yield is the most important indicator in agriculture. From the above table it can be seen that if in the prewar years there was still a clearly expressed tendency to increase the yield of all crops, which was observed, however, to a lesser extent and not for all crops, until 1958, then starting from 1959 our agriculture actually marking time - gross crop yields barely follow the expansion of sown areas, and for the most part do not keep up with it.” (p. 334)

It was proposed by Khrushchev to resolve this problem by expansion further, into 'virgin lands'. But Molotov points out that this was a problem as it diverted resources from more productive lands, and from mechanization and "chemicalization" i.e. concentration on fertilisation. (p.337). The policy entailed:

“the state's losses from the costs of annually sending hundreds of thousands of people to virgin regions, and on the annual transportation of numerous detachments of machine operators from other regions to virgin regions. with its own fleet of vehicles, etc. etc. With these expenditures taken into account, the overall balance of state expenditures and revenues for the development of virgin and fallow lands will undoubtedly be reduced to a minimum, if not to zero.... the enormous funds that we have invested in the development of unproductive and uninhabited virgin areas, would be used for the mechanization and chemicalization of our agriculture” (p. 339).

In toto the table on p. 340 shows a major lag behind advanced capitalist countries, in the years 1950-52. Molotov's data does not enable us to see in detail, if this lag was made worse under Khrushchev. But he cites articles showing major lags in mechanization by 1965. (p. 340). He provides an interesting table, of which I show a small portion here – which shows steady declines in grain harvest in the post-Stalin years (p. 350).

⁵⁰ W.B.Bland op cit – see full reference at ³: “*Restoration of Capitalism in the Soviet Union*”; at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bland/1980/restoration-capitalism-soviet-union/appendix-3.htm>

Gross grain harvest (in million tons)

years	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963
RSFSR (as a whole)	76.8	68.4	76.2	73.7	86.7	65.8
including districts						
Development of virgin lands	38.6	35.9	40.0	36.0	40.1	27.3

In what is partly an allusion to the Lysenkoist approach promoted by Khrushchev, a plenum report in 1965 admitted:

“The subjectivist approach to solving the most important problems of the development of the national economy and especially agriculture was manifested in a gross violation of the principles of planning, in administration and ignoring the basic laws of economic development, and in many ill-conceived restructurings.... Also confusing was the unjustified patronage of some scientists and, I would say, the cruel attitude towards others ...” (p. 352-352)

Again, Molotov does not explore adequate details. Some of this background is provided elsewhere.⁵¹ However, Molotov does discuss the destruction of the Machine Tractor Stations and their privatization to peasants. This was a key step in opening the economy to developing non-state (private) capital:

“the reorganization of the MTS, the SALES OF BASIC AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT TO KOLHOZES, was an event fundamentally erroneous in its very idea. I. V. Stalin was fully and completely right when, in *The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, he said that the sale of agricultural machinery to collective farms would undermine the economic foundations of our agriculture, and would undermine not only because our collective farms for the most part still are economically weak to acquire basic agricultural machinery, and MAINLY BECAUSE THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTINUOUSLY FOLLOW THE SAME CONTINUOUS AND INCREASING PROGRESS IN AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY.” (p. 357)

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The personality of Molotov was extremely complex. While a Marxist-Leninist in his years up to 1945, increasingly worrying features came to the surface. After Stalin was removed from the scene, he was unable to see through Khrushchev until quite late. He participated at the start of eroding the prestige of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress, by his silence. He came to oppose Khrushchev too late, and even then – was too mild.

This ‘Letter’ contains details of help to Marxist-Leninists. However I find that Molotov has not clearly outlined the destruction of socialism in the USSR. Possibly this is because he knew that he was complicit. In addition he was deluded about the nature of the Party, and desperately wanted to re-join it. The ‘Letter’ certainly deserves a critical review by the movement. The puzzling questions posed at the start of the Review are not resolved entirely by this ‘Letter’.

⁵¹ Hari Kumar, ‘Engels, Engels, Reductionism and Epigenetics’; *Marxism and Sciences 2022; Vol1, Issue 1*; at: <https://marxismandsciences.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/MS-FULL.pdf>