

J. V. Stalin

A Year of Great Change

On the Occasion of the Twelfth Anniversary of the October Revolution

Source: *Works*, Vol. 12, April 1929 - June 1930, pp. 124-141

First Published: *Pravda*, No. 259, November 7, 1929

Publisher: Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954

Transcription/Markup: Brian Reid

Public Domain: Marxists Internet Archive (2008). You may freely copy, distribute, display and perform this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit "Marxists Internet Archive" as your source.

The past year was a year of great *change* on all the fronts of socialist construction. The keynote of this change has been, and continues to be, a determined *offensive* of socialism against the capitalist elements in town and country. The characteristic feature of this offensive is that it has already brought us a number of decisive successes in the principal spheres of the socialist reconstruction of our national economy.

We may, therefore, conclude that our Party succeeded in making good use of our retreat during the first stages of the New Economic Policy in order, in the subsequent stages, to organise the change and to launch a *successful offensive* against the capitalist elements.

When NEP was introduced Lenin said:

"We are now retreating, going back as it were; but we are doing this in order, by retreating first, afterwards to take a run and make a more powerful leap forward. It was on this condition alone that we retreated in pursuing our New Economic Policy . . . in order to start a most persistent advance after our retreat" (Vol. XXVII, pp. 361-62).

The results of the past year show beyond a doubt that in its work the Party is successfully carrying out this decisive directive of Lenin's.

* * *

If we take the results of the past year in the sphere of economic construction, which is of decisive importance for us, we shall find that the *successes* of our offensive on this front, our *achievements* during the past year, can be summed up under three main heads.

I **In the Sphere of Productivity of Labour**

There can scarcely be any doubt that one of the most important facts in our work of construction during the past year is that we have succeeded in bringing about a *decisive change* in the sphere of productivity of labour. This change has found expression in a growth of the *creative initiative* and intense *labour enthusiasm* of the vast masses of the working class on the front of socialist construction. This is our first fundamental *achievement* during the past year.

The growth of the creative initiative and labour enthusiasm of the masses has been stimulated in three main directions:

- a) the fight—by means of self-criticism—against bureaucracy, which shackles the labour initiative and labour activity of the masses;
- b) the fight—by means of *socialist emulation*—against the labour-shirkers and disrupters of proletarian labour discipline;
- c) the fight—by the introduction of the *uninterrupted working-week*—against routine and inertia in industry.

As a result we have a tremendous achievement on the labour front in the form of labour enthusiasm and emulation among the vast masses of the working class in all parts of our boundless country. The significance of this achievement is truly inestimable, for only the labour enthusiasm and zeal of the vast masses can guarantee that progressive increase of labour productivity without which the final victory of socialism over capitalism in our country is inconceivable.

“In the last analysis,” says Lenin, “productivity of labour is the most important, the principal thing for the victory of a new social system. Capitalism created a productivity of labour unknown under serfdom. Capitalism can be utterly vanquished, and will be utterly vanquished, by the fact that socialism creates a new and much higher productivity of labour” (Vol. XXIV, p. 342).

Proceeding from this, Lenin considered that:

“We must become imbued with the labour enthusiasm, the will to work, the persistence upon which the speedy salvation of the workers and peasants, the salvation of the national economy now depends” (Vol. XXV, p. 477).

That is the task Lenin set our Party.

The past year has shown that the Party is successfully carrying out this task and is resolutely overcoming the obstacles that stand in its path.

Such is the position regarding the Party’s first important achievement during the past year.

II In the Sphere of Industrial Construction

Inseparably connected with the first achievement of the Party is its second achievement. This second achievement of the Party consists in the fact that during the past year we have in the main successfully solved the *problem of accumulation* for capital construction in heavy industry, we have *accelerated* the development of the production of means of production and have created the prerequisites for transforming our country into a metal country.

That is our second fundamental *achievement* during the past year.

The problem of light industry presents no special difficulties. We solved that problem several years ago. The problem of heavy industry is more difficult and more important.

It is *more difficult* because its solution demands colossal investments, and, as the history of industrially backward countries has shown, heavy industry cannot manage without huge long-term loans.

It is *more important* because, unless we develop heavy industry, we cannot build any industry at all, we cannot carry out any industrialisation.

And as we have not received, and are not receiving, either long-term loans or credits of any long-term character, the acuteness of the problem for us becomes more than obvious.

It is precisely for this reason that the capitalists of all countries refuse us loans and credits, for they assume that we cannot by our own efforts cope with the problem of accumulation, that we shall suffer shipwreck in the task of reconstructing our heavy industry, and be compelled to come to them cap in hand, for enslavement.

But what do the results of our work during the past year show in this connection? The significance of the results of the past year is that they shatter to bits the anticipations of Messieurs the capitalists.

The past year has shown that, in spite of the overt and covert financial blockade of the U.S.S.R., we did not sell ourselves into bondage to the capitalists, that by our own efforts we have successfully solved the problem of accumulation and laid the foundation for heavy industry. Even the most inveterate enemies of the working class cannot deny this now.

Indeed, since, in the first place, capital investments in large-scale industry last year amounted to over 1,600,000,000 rubles, of which about 1,300,000,000 rubles were invested in heavy industry, while capital investments in large-scale industry this year will amount to over 3,400,000,000 rubles, of which over 2,500,000,000 rubles will be invested in heavy industry; and since, in the second place, the gross output of large-scale industry last year showed an increase of 23 per cent, including a 30 per cent increase in the output of heavy industry, while the increase in the gross output of large-scale industry this year should be 32 per cent, including a 46 per cent increase in the output of heavy industry—is it not clear that the problem of accumulation for the building up of heavy industry no longer presents insuperable difficulties for us?

How can anyone doubt that we are advancing at an accelerated pace in the direction of developing our heavy industry, exceeding our former speed and leaving behind our “age-old” backwardness?

Is it surprising after this that the targets of the five-year plan were exceeded during the past year, and that the *optimum* variant of the five-year plan, which the bourgeois scribes regard as “wild fantasy,” and which horrifies our Right opportunists (Bukharin’s group), has actually turned out to be a *minimum* variant?

“The salvation of Russia,” says Lenin, “lies not only in a good harvest on the peasant farms—that is not enough; and not only in the good condition of light industry, which provides the peasantry with consumer goods—that, too, is not enough; we also need *heavy* industry. . . . Unless we save heavy industry, unless we restore it, we shall not be able to build up any industry; and without it we shall be doomed altogether as an independent country. . . . Heavy industry needs state subsidies. If we do not provide them, then we are doomed as a civilised state—let alone as a socialist state” (Vol. XXVII, p. 349).

That is how sharply Lenin formulated the problem of accumulation and the task of the Party in building up heavy industry.

The past year has shown that our Party is successfully coping with this task, resolutely overcoming all obstacles in its path.

This does not mean, of course, that industry will not encounter any more serious difficulties. The task of building up heavy industry involves not only the problem of accumulation. It also involves the problem of cadres, the problem:

a) of *enlisting* tens of thousands of Soviet-minded technicians and experts for the work of socialist construction, and

b) of *training* new Red technicians and Red experts from among the working class.

While the problem of accumulation may in the main be regarded as solved, the problem of cadres still awaits solution. And the problem of cadres is now—when we are engaged in the technical reconstruction of industry—the key problem of socialist construction.

“The chief thing we lack,” says Lenin, “is culture, ability to administer. . . . Economically and politically, *NEP* fully ensures us the possibility of laying the foundation of a socialist economy. It is ‘only’ a matter of the cultural forces of the proletariat and of its vanguard” (Vol. XXVII, p. 207).

It is obvious that Lenin refers here primarily to the problem of “cultural forces,” the problem of the cadres for economic construction in general, and for building and managing industry in particular.

But from this it follows that, in spite of important achievements in the sphere of accumulation, which are of vital significance for heavy industry, the problem of building heavy industry cannot be regarded as fully solved until we have solved the problem of cadres. Hence the task of the Party is to tackle the problem of cadres in all seriousness and to conquer this fortress at all costs.

Such is the position regarding our Party’s second achievement during the past year.

III In the Sphere of Agricultural Development

Finally, about the Party’s third achievement during the past year, an achievement organically connected with the two previous ones. I am referring to the *radical change* in the development of our agriculture from small, backward, *individual* farming to large-scale, advanced, *collective* agriculture, to joint cultivation of the land, to machine and tractor stations, to artels, collective farms, based on modern technique, and, finally, to giant state farms, equipped with hundreds of tractors and harvester combines.

The Party’s achievement here consists in the fact that in a whole number of areas we have succeeded in *turning* the main mass of the peasantry away from the old, *capitalist* path of development—which benefits only a small group of the rich, the capitalists, while the vast majority of the peasants are doomed to ruin and utter poverty—to the new, *socialist* path of development, which ousts the rich and the capitalists, and re-equips the middle and poor peasants along new lines, equipping them with modern implements, with tractors and agricultural machinery, so as to enable them to climb out of poverty and enslavement to the kulaks on to the high road of co-operative, collective cultivation of the land.

The achievement of the Party consists in the fact that we have succeeded in bringing about this *radical change* deep down in the peasantry itself, and in securing the following of the broad masses of the poor and middle peasants in spite of incredible difficulties, in spite of the desperate resistance of retrograde forces of every kind, from kulaks and priests to philistines and Right opportunists.

Here are some figures.

In 1928, the crop area of the state farms amounted to 1,425,000 hectares with a marketable grain output of more than 6,000,000 centners (over 36,000,000 poods), and the crop area of the collective farms amounted to 1,390,000 hectares with a marketable grain output of about 3,500,000 centners (over 20,000,000 poods).

In 1929 the crop area of the state farms amounted to 1,816,000 hectares with a marketable grain output of about 8,000,000 centners (nearly 47,000,000 poods), and the crop area of the collective farms amounted to 4,262,000 hectares with a marketable grain output of about 13,000,000 centners (nearly 78,000,000 poods).

In the coming year, 1930, the crop area of the state farms, according to the plan, will probably amount to 3,280,000 hectares with a marketable grain output of 18,000,000 centners (approximately 110,000,000 poods), and the crop area of the collective farms will certainly amount to 15,000,000 hectares with a marketable grain output of about 49,000,000 centners (approximately 300,000,000 poods).

In other words, in the coming year, 1930, the marketable grain output of the state farms and collective farms will amount to over 400,000,000 poods or more than 50 per cent of the marketable grain output of the *whole* of

agriculture (grain sold outside the rural districts).

It must be admitted that such an impetuous speed of development is *unequalled* even by our socialised, large-scale industry, which in general is marked by the outstanding speed of its development.

It is clear that our young large-scale socialist agriculture (the collective farms and state farms) has a great future before it and that its development will be truly miraculous.

This unprecedented success in the development of collective farming is due to a variety of causes, of which the following at least should be mentioned.

It is due, *first of all*, to the fact that the Party carried out Lenin's policy of educating the masses by consistently leading the masses of the peasantry to collective farming through implanting a co-operative communal life. It is due to the fact that the Party waged a successful struggle against those who tried to run ahead of the movement and force the development of collective farming by means of decrees (the "Left" phrasemongers) as well as against those who tried to drag the Party back and remain in the wake of the movement (the Right blockheads). Had it not pursued such a policy the Party would not have been able to transform the collective-farm movement, into a real mass movement of the peasants themselves.

"When the Petrograd proletariat and the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison took power," says Lenin, "they fully realised that our constructive work in the countryside would encounter great difficulties; that there it was necessary to proceed more gradually; that to attempt to introduce collective cultivation of the land by decrees, by legislation, would be the height of folly; that an insignificant number of enlightened peasants might agree to this, but that the vast majority of the peasants had no such object in view. We, therefore, confined ourselves to what was absolutely essential in the interests of the development of the revolution: in no case to run ahead of the development of the masses, but to wait until, as a result of their own experience and their own struggle, a progressive movement grew up" (Vol. XXIII, p. 252).

The reason why the Party achieved a great victory on the front of collective-farm development is that it exactly carried out this tactical directive of Lenin's.

Secondly, this unprecedented success in agricultural development is due to the fact that the Soviet government correctly recognised the growing needs of the peasants for new implements, for modern technique; it correctly recognised that the old forms of cultivation leave the peasantry in a hopeless position and, taking all this into account, it came to their aid in good time by organising machine-hiring stations, tractor columns and machine and tractor stations; by organising collective cultivation of the land, by establishing collective farms, and finally, by having the state farms give every assistance to peasant farming.

For the first time in the history of mankind there has appeared a government, that of the Soviets, which has proved by deeds its readiness and ability to give the labouring masses of the peasantry systematic and lasting assistance in the sphere of *production*.

Is it not obvious that the labouring masses of the peasantry, suffering from age-long lack of agricultural equipment were bound to reach out eagerly for this assistance and join the collective-farm movement?

And can one be surprised if henceforth the old slogan of the workers, "face to the countryside," is supplemented, as seems likely, by the new slogan of the collective-farm peasants, "face to the town?"

Lastly, this unprecedented success in collective-farm development is due to the fact that the matter was taken in hand by the advanced workers of our country. I am referring to the workers' brigades, tens and hundreds of which are scattered in the principal regions of our country. It must be acknowledged that of all existing and potential propagandists of the collective-farm movement among the peasant masses, the worker propagandists are the best. What can there be surprising in the fact that the workers have succeeded in convincing the peasants of the advantages of large-scale collective farming over individual small farming, the more so as the existing collective farms and state farms are striking examples of these advantages?

Such was the basis for our achievement in collective-farm development, an achievement which, in my opinion, is the most important and decisive of all our achievements in recent years.

All the objections raised by “science” against the possibility and expediency of organising large grain factories of 40,000 to 50,000 hectares each have collapsed and crumbled to dust. Practice has refuted the objections of “science,” and has once again shown that not only has practice to learn from “science” but that “science” also would do well to learn from practice.

Large grain factories do not take root in capitalist countries. But ours is a socialist country. This “slight” difference must not be overlooked.

In capitalist countries large grain factories cannot be organised without previously buying a number of plots of land or without the payment of absolute ground rent, which cannot fail to burden production with colossal expenses, for private ownership of land exists there. In our country, on the other hand, neither absolute ground rent, nor the sale and purchase of land exist, which cannot fail to create favourable conditions for the development of large grain farms, for in our country there is no private ownership of land.

In capitalist countries the large grain farms aim at obtaining the maximum profit, or, at all events, a profit equal to the so-called average rate of profit, failing which, generally speaking, there would be no incentive to invest capital in grain production. In our country, on the contrary, the large grain farms, being state undertakings, need neither the maximum profit, nor the average rate of profit for their development; they can limit themselves to a minimum profit, and sometimes even manage without any profit, which again creates favourable conditions for the development of large grain farms.

Finally, under capitalism large grain farms do not enjoy special credit privileges or special tax privileges, whereas under the Soviet system, which is designed to support the socialist sector, such privileges exist and will continue to exist.

Esteemed “science” forgot all this. There have collapsed and crumbled to dust the assertions of the Right opportunists (Bukharin’s group) that:

- a) the peasants would not join the collective farms,
- b) the accelerated development of collective farms could only cause mass discontent and estrangement between the peasantry and the working class,
- c) the “high road” of socialist development in the countryside is *not* the collective farms, *but* the co-operatives,
- d) the development of collective farms and the offensive against the capitalist elements in the countryside might deprive the country of grain altogether.

All that has collapsed and crumbled to dust as old bourgeois-liberal rubbish.

Firstly, the peasants are joining the collective farms; they are joining by whole villages, volosts, districts.

Secondly, the mass collective-farm movement is not weakening the bond, but strengthening it, by putting it on a new, production basis. Now even the blind can see that if there is any serious dissatisfaction among the main mass of the peasantry it is not because of the collective-farm policy of the Soviet government, but because the Soviet government is unable to keep pace with the growth of the collective-farm movement as regards supplying the peasants with machines and tractors.

Thirdly, the controversy about the “high road” of socialist development in the countryside is a scholastic controversy, worthy of young petty-bourgeois liberals of the type of Eichenwald and Slepko. It is obvious that, as long as there was no mass collective-farm movement, the “high road” was the lower forms of the co-operative movement—supply and marketing co-operatives; but when the higher form of the co-operative movement—the collective farm—appeared, the latter became the “high road” of development.

The high road (without quotation marks) of socialist development in the countryside is Lenin's co-operative plan, which embraces all forms of agricultural co-operation, from the lowest (supply and marketing cooperatives) to the highest (producers' and collective farm co-operatives). To *counterpose* collective farms to co-operatives is to make a mockery of Leninism and to acknowledge one's own ignorance.

Fourthly, now even the blind can see that without the offensive against the capitalist elements in the countryside, and without the development of the collective-farm and state-farm movement, we would not have achieved the decisive successes of this year in the matter of grain procurements, nor could the state have accumulated, as it has already done, an emergency reserve of grain totalling tens of millions of pools.

More than that, it can now be confidently asserted that, thanks to the growth of the collective-farm and state-farm movement, we are definitely emerging, or have already emerged, from the grain crisis. And if the development of the collective farms and state farms is accelerated, there is no reason to doubt that in about three years' time our country will be one of the world's largest grain producers, if not the largest.

What is the *new* feature of the present collective-farm movement? The new and decisive feature of the present collective-farm movement is that the peasants are joining the collective farms not in separate groups, as was formerly the case, but by whole villages, volosts, districts, and even okrugs.

And what does that mean? It means that the *middle peasant is joining the collective farm*. And that is the basis of that radical change in the development of agriculture that constitutes the most important achievement of the Soviet government during the past year.

Trotskyism's Menshevik "conception" that the working class is incapable of securing the following of the main mass of the peasantry in the work of socialist construction is collapsing and being smashed to smithereens. Now even the blind can see that the middle peasant has turned towards the collective farm. Now it is obvious to all that the five-year plan of industry and agriculture is a five-year plan of building a socialist society, that those who do not believe in the possibility of completely building socialism in our country have no right to greet our five-year plan.

The last hope of the capitalists of all countries, who are dreaming of restoring capitalism in the U.S.S.R.—"the sacred principle of private property"—is collapsing and crumbling to dust. The peasants, whom they regarded as material that fertilises the soil for capitalism, are abandoning en masse the lauded banner of "private property" and are going over to the lines of collectivism, of socialism. The last hope for the restoration of capitalism is collapsing.

This, by the way, explains the desperate efforts of the capitalist elements in our country to rouse all the forces of the old world against advancing socialism—efforts which are leading to an intensification of the class struggle. Capital does not want "to grow into" socialism.

This also explains the furious howl against Bolshevism which has been raised recently by the watchdogs of capital, by the Struves and Hessens, the Milyukovs and Kerenskys, the Dans and Abramoviches and their like. The last hope for the restoration of capitalism is disappearing—that is no joke for them.

What other explanation for the violent rage of our class enemies and this frenzied howling of the lackeys of capital can there be except the fact that our Party has actually achieved a decisive victory on the most difficult front of socialist construction?

"Only if we succeed," says Lenin, "in practice in showing the peasants the advantages of common, collective, co-operative, artel cultivation of the soil, only if we succeed in helping the peasant by means of co-operative, artel farming, will the working class, which holds state power in its hands, actually prove to the peasant the correctness of its policy and actually secure the real and durable following of the vast masses of the peasantry" (Vol. XXIV, p. 579).

That is how Lenin put the question of the ways of winning the vast masses of the peasantry to the side of the working class, of the ways of transferring the peasants on to the lines of collective-farm development.

The past year has shown that our Party is successfully coping with this task and is resolutely overcoming every obstacle standing in its path.

“In a communist society,” says Lenin, “the middle peasants will be on our side only when we alleviate and improve their economic conditions. If tomorrow we could supply 100,000 first-class tractors, provide them with fuel, provide them with drivers (you know very well that at present this is fantasy), the middle peasant would say: ‘I am for the kommunia’ (i.e., for communism). But in order to do that we must first defeat the international bourgeoisie, we must compel it to give us these tractors, or we must so develop our productivity as to be able to provide them ourselves. That is the only correct way to pose this question” (Vol. XXIV, p. 170).

That is how Lenin put the question of the ways of technically re-equipping the middle peasant, of the ways of winning him to the side of communism.

The past year has shown that the Party is successfully coping with this task too. We know that by the spring of the coming year, 1930, we shall have over 60,000 tractors in the fields, a year later we shall have over 100,000 tractors, and two years after that, over 250,000 tractors. We are now able to accomplish and even to exceed what was considered “fantasy” several years ago.

And that is why the middle peasant has turned towards the “kommunia.”

Such is the position regarding our Party’s third achievement.

Such are the fundamental achievements of our Party during the past year.

Conclusions

We are advancing full steam ahead along the path of industrialization—to socialism, leaving behind the age-old “Russian” backwardness.

We are becoming a country of metal, a country of automobiles, a country of tractors.

And when we have put the U.S.S.R. on an automobile, and the muzhik on a tractor, let the worthy capitalists, who boast so much of their “civilisation,” try to overtake us! We shall yet see which countries may then be “classified” as backward and which as advanced.

November 3, 1929