

Reply to the Discussion on the Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.) [1](#)

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Comrades, after the discussion on the Central Committee's report and after all that has happened at this congress in connection with the statements made by the former leaders of the Right opposition, little is left for me to say in my concluding remarks.

I stated in my report that the Sixteenth Congress is one of the few congresses in the history of our Party at which there is no opposition of any crystallised kind, able to lay down its line and to counterpose it to that of the Party. That, as you see, is in fact precisely what has happened. Not only has there been no definitely crystallised opposition at our congress, the Sixteenth Congress of the Party, but there has not been even a small group, or even individual comrades, who have thought fit to come forward on the platform here and declare that the Party line is wrong.

The line followed by our Party is clearly the only correct one, moreover its correctness, it turns out, is so evident and indisputable that even the former leaders of the Right opposition considered it necessary unhesitatingly to stress in their pronouncements the correctness of the Party's entire policy.

After all that, there is of course no need to dwell at length on the correctness of the propositions expounded in the report. There is no such need because, in view of its evident correctness, the Party's line stands in no need of further defence at this congress. And if, nevertheless, I have not waived my right to reply to the discussion, it is because I do not think it will be superfluous to answer briefly some notes handed up by comrades to the congress Presidium, and then to say a few words with regard to the utterances of the former leaders of the Right opposition.

A great many of the notes concern questions of secondary importance: why was no mention made of horse-breeding in the reports, and could not this be touched upon in the reply to the discussion? (*Laughter.*)

Why did the reports not mention house-building, and could not something be said about it in the reply to the discussion? Why did the reports say nothing about the electrification of agriculture, and could not something be said about it in the reply to the discussion?

And so on in the same strain.

My answer to all these comrades must be that I could not in my report touch on all the problems of our national economy. And I not only could not but had no right to, since I have no right to invade the sphere of the reports

which Comrades Kuibyshev and Yakovlev are to make to you on concrete problems of industry and agriculture. Indeed, if all questions were to be dealt with in the Central Committee's report, what should the reporters on industry, agriculture, etc., say in their reports? (*Voices: Quite right!*)

In particular, as regards the note on the electrification of agriculture, I must say that its author is wrong on several points. He asserts that we are already "confronted squarely with" the electrification of agriculture, that the People's Commissariat of Agriculture is blocking progress in this matter, that Lenin thought differently on the subject, etc. All that is untrue, comrades.

It cannot be said that we are "confronted squarely with" the problem of electrifying agriculture. If we were in fact confronted squarely with the electrification of agriculture we should already have ten to fifteen districts in which agricultural production was electrified. But you know very well that we have nothing of the kind as yet. All one can say at the present time about the electrification of agriculture in our country is that it is in the experimental stage. That is how Lenin regarded this matter, encouraging such experiments.

Some comrades believe the tractor is already out of date, that the time has come to advance from tractors to the electrification of agriculture. That of course is a fantastic notion. Such comrades should be taken down a peg or two. And that is precisely what the People's Commissariat of Agriculture is doing with them.

Hence the note-writer's dissatisfaction with the People's Commissariat of Agriculture cannot be considered justified.

The second batch of notes concerns the national question. One of them — the most interesting, in my opinion— compares the treatment of the problem of national languages in my report at the Sixteenth Congress with the treatment of it in my speech at the University of the Peoples of the East in 1925 ² and finds a certain lack of clarity which needs elucidating. The note says: "You objected at that time to the theory (Kautsky's) of the dying away of national languages and the formation of a single, common language in the period of socialism (in one country), while now, in your report at the Sixteenth Congress, you state that Communists believe in the merging of national cultures and national languages into one common culture with one common language (in the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale). Is there not a lack of clarity here?" I think that there is neither lack of clarity nor the slightest contradiction here. In my speech in 1925 I objected to Kautsky's national-chauvinist theory on the basis of which a victory of the proletarian revolution in the middle of the past century in the united Austro-German state was bound to lead to the merging of the nations into one common German nation, with one common German language, and to the Germanisation of the Czechs. I objected to this theory as being anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, and in refutation of it quoted facts from life in our country after the victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R. I still oppose this theory, as can be seen from my report at this Sixteenth Congress.

I oppose it because the theory of the merging of all the nations of, say, the U.S.S.R. into one common Great-Russian nation with one common Great-Russian language is a national-chauvinist, anti-Leninist theory, which contradicts the basic thesis of Leninism that national differences cannot disappear in the near future, that they are bound to remain for a long time even after the victory of the proletarian revolution on a world scale.

As for the more remote prospects for national cultures and national languages, I have always adhered and continue to adhere to the Leninist view that in the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale, when socialism has been consolidated and become the way of life, the national languages are inevitably bound to merge into one common language, which, of course, will be neither Great-Russian nor German, but something new. I made a definite statement on this also in my report at the Sixteenth Congress.

Where, then, is the lack of clarity here and what is it exactly that needs elucidating?

Evidently, the authors of the note were not quite clear on at least two things:

First and foremost, they were not clear on the fact that in the U.S.S.R. we have already entered the period of socialism; moreover, despite the fact that we have entered this period, the nations are not only not dying away, but, on the contrary, are developing and flourishing.

Have we, in actual fact, already entered the period of socialism? Our period is usually called the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. It was called a transition period in 1918, when Lenin, in his celebrated article, "'Left-Wing' Childishness and Petty- Bourgeois Mentality,"³ first described this period with its five forms of economy. It is called a transition period today, in 1930, when some of these forms, having become obsolete, are already on the way to disappearance, while one of them, namely, the new form of economy in the sphere of industry and agriculture, is growing and developing with unprecedented speed.

Can it be said that these two transition periods are identical, are not radically different from each other?

Obviously not.

What did we have in the sphere of the national economy in 1918? A ruined industry and cigarette lighters; neither collective farms nor state farms on a mass scale; the growth of a "new" bourgeoisie in the towns and of the kulaks in the countryside.

What have we today? Socialist industry, restored and undergoing reconstruction, an extensive system of state farms and collective farms, accounting for more than 40 per cent of the total sown area of the U.S.S.R. in the spring-sown sector alone, a moribund "new" bourgeoisie in the town and a moribund kulak class in the countryside.

The former was a transition period and so is the latter. Nevertheless, they are as far apart as heaven and earth. And nevertheless, no one can deny that we are on the verge of eliminating the last important capitalist class, the kulak class. Clearly, we have already emerged from the transition period in the old sense and have entered the period of direct and sweeping socialist construction along the whole front. Clearly, we have already entered the period of socialism, for the socialist sector now controls all the economic levers of the entire national economy, although we are still far from having completely built a socialist society and from having abolished class distinctions. Nevertheless, the national languages are not only not dying away or merging into one common tongue, but, on the contrary, the national cultures and national languages are developing and flourishing. Is it not clear that the theory of the dying away of national languages and their merging into one common language within the framework of a single state in the period of sweeping socialist construction, in the period of socialism in one country, is an incorrect, anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist theory?

Secondly, the authors of the note were not clear on the fact that the dying away of national languages and their merging into one common language is not an intrastate question, not a question of the victory of socialism in one country, but an international question, a question of the victory of socialism on an international scale. They failed to understand that the victory of socialism in one country must not be confused with the victory of socialism on an international scale. Lenin had good reason for saying that national differences will remain for a long time even after the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat on an international scale.

Besides, we must take into consideration still another circumstance, which affects a number of the nations of the U.S.S.R. There is a Ukraine which forms part of the U.S.S.R. But there is also another Ukraine which forms part of other states. There is a Byelorussia which forms part of the U.S.S.R. But there is also another Byelorussia which forms part of other states. Do you think that the question of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian languages can be settled without taking these specific conditions into account?

Then take the nations of the U.S.S.R. situated along its southern border, from Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan and Buryat-Mongolia. They are all in the same position as the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Naturally, here too we have to take into consideration the specific conditions of development of these nations.

Is it not obvious that all these and similar questions that are bound up with the problem of national cultures and national languages cannot be settled within the framework of a single state, within the framework of the U.S.S.R.?

That, comrades, is how matters stand with respect to the national question in general and the above-mentioned note on the national question in particular.

Allow me to pass now to the utterances of the former leaders of the Right opposition.

What does the congress demand of the former leaders of the Right opposition? Repentance perhaps, or selfchastisement?

Of course not! Our Party, the congress of our Party, will never go to the length of requiring Party members to do anything that might humiliate them. The congress demands three things of the former leaders of the Right opposition: firstly, that they realise that there is a gulf between the line of the Party and the line they were advocating, and that the line they upheld leads objectively not to the victory of socialism, but to the victory of capitalism (*voices: "Quite right!"*); secondly, that they brand that line as an anti-Leninist line and dissociate themselves from it frankly and honestly (*voices: "Quite right!"*); thirdly, that they fall into step with us and, together with us, wage a determined struggle against all Right deviators. (*Voices: "Quite right!" Stormy applause.*)

That is what the congress demands of the former leaders of the Right opposition. Is there anything in these demands humiliating for them as people wanting to remain Bolsheviks?

Obviously, there is nothing here that is or could be humiliating. Every Bolshevik, every revolutionary, every self-respecting Party member will realise that he can only stand higher and gain in the eyes of the Party if he frankly and honestly admits facts that are clear and indisputable.

That is why I think Tomsky's talk about people wanting to send him to the Gobi Desert to eat locusts and wild honey is on a par with the flat jokes of a provincial variety theatre and has nothing in common with the question of a revolutionary's self-respect.

(Laughter. Applause.)

It may be asked: why is the congress once again making these demands of the former leaders of the Right opposition?

Is it not a fact that these demands were presented to them once before, in November 1929, at the plenum of the Central Committee ⁴? Is it not a fact that they, the former leaders of the Right opposition, accepted those demands at that time, renounced their own line, admitting its erroneous character, recognised the correctness of the Party line and promised to fight, together with the Party, against the Right deviation? Yes, all that was so. What is the point then? The point is that they did not keep their promise, they did not fulfil and are not fulfilling the pledges that they gave seven months ago. (*Voices: "Quite right!"*) Uglanov was quite right when he said in his speech that they had not fulfilled the pledges given to the November plenum of the Central Committee.

That is the source of the distrust which they are now encountering at the present congress.

That is why the congress is once more presenting its demands to them.

Rykov, Tomsky and Uglanov complained here that the congress was treating them with distrust. But whose fault is that? It is their own fault. One who does not fulfil his pledges cannot expect to be trusted.

Did they, the former leaders of the Right opposition, have any opportunities, any occasions to fulfil their promises and turn over a new leaf? Of course they did. And what advantage did they take of these opportunities and occasions during the seven months?

None.

Recently Rykov attended the conference in the Urals. ⁵ Consequently, he had an excellent chance to correct his mistakes. And what happened? Instead of frankly and resolutely shedding his vacillations he began to play tricks and manoeuvre. Naturally, the Urals Conference could not but rebuff him.

Now compare Rykov's speech at the Urals Conference with his speech at the Sixteenth Congress. A gulf lies between them. There he played tricks and manoeuvred, fighting the conference. Here he tries frankly and publicly to admit his mistakes, tries to break with the Right opposition and promises to support the Party in the struggle against deviations. Whence such a change and how is it to be explained? It is to be explained, obviously, by the precarious situation that has arisen in the Party for the former leaders of the Right opposition. No wonder then that the congress has gained this definite impression: You'll get nothing out of these people unless you put the screw on them. (*General laughter. Prolonged applause.*)

Did Uglanov have an opportunity of fulfilling the promise he made to the November plenum of the Central Committee? Yes, he did. I have in mind the non-Party meeting at the Moscow Electric Works which he recently addressed. And what happened? Instead of speaking there as befits a Bolshevik he began to find fault with the Party line. For that he was, of course, suitably rebuffed by the Party unit of the works.

Now compare that speech with his statement printed in today's Pravda. A gulf lies between them. How is this change to be explained? Again by the precarious situation that has arisen around the former leaders of the Right opposition. Small wonder then that the congress has drawn a definite lesson from this: You'll get nothing out of these people unless you put the screw on them. (*General laughter. Applause.*)

Or Tomsky, for instance. Recently he was in Tiflis, at the Transcaucasian Conference. ⁶ Consequently, he had a chance to make amends for his sins. And what happened? In his speech there he dealt with state farms, collective farms, co-operatives, the cultural revolution and all that sort of thing, but he did not utter a word about the chief thing, that is, his opportunist work in the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions.

And that is called fulfilling pledges given to the Party!

He wanted to outwit the Party, not realising that millions of eyes are watching every one of us and that in this matter you cannot outwit anybody.

Now compare his Tiflis speech with the one he delivered at this congress, where he directly and openly admitted his opportunist mistakes in leadership of the A.U.C.C.T.U. A gulf lies between them. How is this difference to be explained? Again, by the precarious situation that has arisen around the former leaders of the Right opposition. Small wonder then that the congress tried to exert due pressure on these comrades to get them to carry out their obligations. (*Applause. General laughter throughout the hall.*)

That is the source of the distrust which the congress still entertains for these comrades.

How is this more than strange conduct of the former leaders of the Right opposition to be explained?

How is the fact to be explained that during the past period they did not make a single attempt to fulfil their pledges voluntarily, without pressure from outside?

It is to be explained by at least two circumstances :

Firstly, by the fact that, being still not fully convinced that the Party line was right, they continued to carry on a certain factional activity surreptitiously, lying low for the time being and waiting for a suitable occasion to come out openly once more against the Party.

When they gathered at their factional meetings and discussed Party questions they would usually calculate in this way: let us wait until the spring; maybe the Party will come a cropper with the sowing, then we will strike, and strike hard. The spring, however, gave them no advantage, as the sowing proceeded successfully.

Then they calculated afresh: let us wait until the autumn; maybe the Party will come a cropper with the grain procurements, then we will strike at the Central Committee.

But the autumn, too, disappointed them, giving them nothing for their pains. And as spring and autumn recur every year, the former leaders of the Right opposition continued to bide their time, repeatedly pinning their hopes now on the spring and now on the autumn. (*General laughter throughout the hall.*)

Naturally, as they kept biding their time from season to season in expectation of a favourable moment for striking at the Party, they were unable to fulfil their pledges.

Lastly, the second reason. It consists in the circumstance that the former leaders of the Right opposition do not understand our Bolshevik rates of development, do not believe in those rates and, in general, will not accept anything that goes beyond the bounds of gradual development, beyond the bounds of allowing matters to take their own course. Moreover, our Bolshevik speeds, our new methods of development bound up with the period of reconstruction, the sharpening of the class struggle and the consequences of this sharpening fill them with alarm, confusion, fear and terror.

Hence it is natural that they should shrink from everything connected with the most incisive slogans of our Party.

They are afflicted with the same disease as that of Chekhov's well-known character Belikov, teacher of Greek, "the man wrapped in padding." Do you remember Chekhov's story, "The Man Wrapped in Padding"?

That character, you may recall, always went about in galoshes and a padded coat, carrying an umbrella, in hot and in cold weather. "Excuse me, but why do you wear galoshes and a padded coat in July, in such hot weather?" Belikov used to be asked. "You never can tell," Belikov would reply, "Something untoward might happen; a sudden frost might set in, what then?" (*General laughter. Applause.*) Everything new, everything that was outside the daily routine of his drab philistine life, he feared like the plague. If a new restaurant was opened, Belikov promptly took alarm: "It may, of course, be a grand idea to have a restaurant, but take care, something untoward might happen!" If a dramatic circle was formed or a reading room opened, Belikov again fell into a panic: "A dramatic circle, a new reading room—what could they be for? Take care—something untoward might happen!" (*General laughter.*)

The same thing must be said about the former leaders of the Right opposition. Do you remember the case of the transfer of the technical colleges to the economic People's Commissariats? We wanted to transfer only two technical colleges to the Supreme Council of National Economy. A small matter, it would seem. Yet we encountered desperate resistance on the part of the Right deviators. "Hand over two technical colleges to the S.C.N.E.? Why? Would it not be better to wait a bit? Take care, something untoward might happen as a result of this scheme!" Yet today all our technical colleges have been transferred to economic People's Commissariats. And we are getting along all right.

Or take, for example, the emergency measures against the kulaks. Do you remember the hysterics of the Right opposition leaders on that occasion? "Emergency measures against the kulaks? Why? Would it not be better to adopt a liberal policy towards the kulaks?"

"Take care, something untoward might happen as a result of this scheme!" Yet today we are carrying out the policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class, a policy in comparison with which the emergency measures against the kulaks are a mere trifle. And we are getting along all right.

Or, for example, the question of the collective farms and state farms. "State farms and collective farms?"

"What are they for? Why hurry? Mind you, something might happen as a result of these state and collective farms." And so on and so forth.

It is this dread of the new, this inability to approach new problems in a new way, this apprehension that "something untoward might happen," these traits of the man wrapped in padding that prevent the former leaders of the Right opposition from merging properly with the Party.

These traits of the man wrapped in padding assume particularly ridiculous forms with them when difficulties arise, when the tiniest cloud appears on the horizon.

As soon as any difficulty or hitch occurs anywhere in our country they become alarmed, fearing that something untoward might happen. Should a cockroach make a rustling sound somewhere, they start back terror-stricken even before it has had time to crawl out of its hole, and they begin to howl about a catastrophe, about the downfall of the Soviet regime. (*Loud laughter.*)

We try to calm them, to convince them that as yet nothing dangerous has occurred, that after all it is only a cockroach, which no one need be afraid of. But it is of no avail. They keep on howling: "What do you mean, a cockroach? That's not a cockroach, it's a thousand wild beasts! It's not a cockroach, but the abyss, the downfall of the Soviet regime." . . . And—there is a regular commotion. Bukharin writes theses on the subject and sends them to the Central Committee, asserting that its policy has brought the country to ruin and that the Soviet regime will certainly perish, if not at once then in a month's time at most. Rykov associates himself with Bukharin's theses, with the reservation, however, that he has a most serious point of disagreement with Bukharin, namely, that the Soviet regime will perish, in his opinion, not in a month's time, but after a month and two days. (*General laughter.*) Tomsy associates himself with Bukharin and Rykov, but protests against their inability to do without theses, to do without a document which they will have to answer for later on: "How many times have I told you, 'do as you please, but don't leave any documents behind, don't leave any traces!'" (*Roars of laughter throughout the hall. Prolonged applause.*)

True, later on, when a year has passed and every fool can see that the cockroach peril was not worth a rap, the Right deviators begin to come to and, gaining courage, are not averse even to boasting a little, declaring that they are not afraid of any cockroaches, and that, anyway, that particular cockroach was such a frail and puny specimen. (*Laughter. Applause.*) But that is after a year has passed. In the meantime—be good enough to put up with these procrastinators.

These, comrades, are the circumstances which prevent the former leaders of the Right opposition from coming closer to the core of the Party leadership and completely merging with it.

How can the situation be remedied here?

There is only one way to do so: by breaking once and for all with their past, equipping themselves anew and merging completely with the Central Committee of our Party in its struggle for Bolshevik rates of development, in its struggle against the Right deviation.

There is no other way.

If the former leaders of the Right opposition are able to do this, well and good. If not, they will have nobody but themselves to blame. (*Prolonged applause from the entire hall. An ovation. All rise and sing the "Internationale."*)

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Notes

1 The Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.), held in Moscow, June 26-July 13, 1930, discussed the political and organisational reports of the Party's Central Committee; the reports of the Central Auditing Commission, the Central Control Commission and the C.P.S.U.(B.) delegation to the Executive Committee of the Comintern; and reports on the fulfilment of the five-year plan in industry, on the collective-farm movement and the promotion of agriculture, and on the tasks of the trade unions in the reconstruction period. The congress unanimously approved the political line and activities of the Central Committee of the Party and instructed it to continue to ensure Bolshevik rates of socialist construction, to achieve fulfilment of the five-year plan in four years, and to

carry out unswervingly the sweeping socialist offensive along the whole front and the elimination of the kulaks as a class on the basis of complete collectivisation. The congress noted the momentous importance of the crucial change in the development of agriculture, thanks to which the collective-farm peasantry had become a real and stable support of the Soviet regime. The congress instructed the Party's Central Committee to continue to pursue a firm policy of peace and to strengthen the defence capacity of the U.S.S.R. The congress issued directives : that heavy industry should be developed to the utmost and a new, powerful coal and metallurgical base created in the eastern part of the country; that the work of all the mass organisations should be reconstructed and the role of the trade unions in socialist construction increased; that all workers and the masses of the working people should be drawn into the socialist emulation movement. The congress completely exposed the Right opportunists as agents of the kulaks within the Party, and declared that the views of the Right opposition were incompatible with membership of the C.P.S.U.(B.). The congress instructed the Party organisations to intensify the fight against deviations on the national question— against dominant-nation chauvinism and local nationalism and conciliation towards them—and to firmly carry out the Leninist national policy, which ensures the broad development of the cultures—national in form and socialist in content — of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. The Sixteenth Congress is known in the history of the Party as the congress of the sweeping offensive of socialism along the whole front, of the elimination of the kulaks as a class, and of the realisation of complete collectivisation. J. V. Stalin delivered the political report of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) on June 27 (see Works, Vol. 12, pp. 242-385), and replied to the discussion on the report on July 2. (For the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.), see History of the C.P.S.U. (B.), Short Course, Moscow 1954, pp. 481-84. For the resolutions of the congress, see Resolutions and Decisions of C.P.S.U. Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums, Part II, 1953, pp. 553-616.)

[2.](#) J. V. Stalin, The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East (see Works, Vol. 7, pp. 135-54).

[3.](#) V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 27, pp. 291-319.

[4.](#) The plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.), which took place on November 10-17, 1929, discussed the following questions: control figures for the national economy for 1929-30; results and further tasks of collective-farm development, etc. After reviewing the question of the group of Right deviators, the plenum declared that propaganda of the views of Right opportunism and of conciliation towards it was incompatible with membership of the C.P.S.U.(B.), decided to expel Bukharin, as the ring-leader of the Right-wing capitulators, from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.) and issued a warning to Rykov, Tomsky and other members of the Right opposition. (For the resolutions adopted by the plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.) see Resolutions and Decisions of C.P.S.U. Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums, Part II, 1953, pp. 500-43.)

[5.](#) The Tenth Party Conference of the Urals Region took place in Sverdlovsk, June 3-13, 1930. It fully approved the political and organisational line of the C.C. of the Party. After exposing the Right-opportunist manoeuvres of Rykov and emphasising the counter-revolutionary, treacherous role of the Right deviation in the communist movement, the conference in its decisions called upon the Urals Party organisation to wage a relentless fight against all attempts of the Right capitulators to oppose the line of the Party and its Leninist Central Committee.

[6.](#) This refers to the Sixth Congress of the Communist Organisations of Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia), which took place in Tiflis, June 5-12, 1930. The congress fully approved the political and organisational line and the practical work of the C.C. of the C.P.S.U.(B.).