

Interview with Foreign Workers' Delegations

November 5, 1927

Source : *Works*, Vol. 10, August - December, 1927

Publisher : Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954

Transcription/Markup : Salil Sen for MIA, 2009

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Eighty delegates were present from Germany France, Austria, Czechoslovakia, South America, China, Belgium, Finland, Denmark and Estonia. The interview lasted six hours.

Stalin : Comrades, yesterday I received an unsigned list of questions in German. This morning I received two other lists, one from the French delegation and another from the Danish delegation. Let us begin with the first list of questions, although I do not know which delegation it comes from. Then we can take the other two lists. If you have no objection, let us begin. (The delegates agree.)

FIRST QUESTION. *Why does the U.S.S.R. not take part in the League of Nations?*

ANSWER : The reasons why the Soviet Union does not take part in the League of Nations have been repeatedly given in our press. I can point out some of these reasons.

The Soviet Union is not a member of the League of Nations and does not take part in the League of Nations, firstly, because it does not want to take responsibility for the imperialist policy of the League of Nations, for the "mandates" which are handed out by the League of Nations for the exploitation and oppression of colonial countries. The Soviet Union does not take part in the League of Nations because it is opposed to imperialism, opposed to the oppression of the colonies and dependent countries.

The Soviet Union does not take part in the League of Nations, secondly, because it does not want to take responsibility for the war preparations, for the growth of armaments, for the new military alliances, and so forth, which the League of Nations screens and sanctifies, and which are bound to lead to new imperialist wars. The Soviet Union does not take part in the League of Nations because it is wholly and completely opposed to imperialist wars.

Finally, the Soviet Union does not take part in the League of Nations because it does not want to be a component part of the screen, in the shape of the League of Nations, for imperialist machinations, which the League covers up by the unctuous speeches of its members.

Under present conditions the League of Nations is a "house of assignation" for the imperialist bosses who transact their nefarious business behind the scenes. What *is said* officially in the League of Nations is mere talk, designed to deceive the people. But what *is done* unofficially by the imperialist bosses behind the scenes in the League of Nations is real imperialist action, hypocritically covered up by the grandiloquent orators of the League of Nations.

Is it surprising, then, that the Soviet Union does not want to be a member of, and participant in, this anti-popular farce?

SECOND QUESTION. *Why is a Social-Democratic party not allowed in the Soviet Union?*

ANSWER: A Social-Democratic party (that is, a Menshevik party) is not allowed in the Soviet Union for the same reason that counter-revolutionaries are not allowed here. Perhaps this may surprise you, but there is nothing surprising about it.

The conditions under which our country developed, the history of its development, are such that, whereas under the tsarist regime Social-Democracy was a more or less revolutionary party, after the overthrow of tsarism, under Kerensky, it became a government party, a bourgeois party, a party standing for imperialist war, and after the October Revolution it became a party of open counter-revolution, a party standing for the restoration of capitalism.

You must surely be aware that the Social-Democrats in our country took part in the Civil War on the side of Kolchak and Denikin, against Soviet power. At the present time that party stands for the restoration of capitalism, the liquidation of the Soviet system.

I think that this evolution of Social-Democracy is typical of it not only in the U.S.S.R., but also in other countries. In our country Social-Democracy was more or less revolutionary so long as the tsarist regime existed. That, in fact, explains why we Bolsheviks, together with the Mensheviks, that is, the Social-Democrats, formed one party. Social-Democracy becomes a bourgeois party, of the opposition or of the government, when the so-called democratic bourgeoisie comes into power. Social-Democracy turns into a party of open counter-revolution when the revolutionary proletariat comes into power.

A delegate: Does that mean that Social-Democracy is a counter-revolutionary force only here, in the Soviet Union, or can it be described as a counter-revolutionary force in other countries too?

Stalin: I have already said that there is some difference here.

In the land of the proletarian dictatorship, Social-Democracy is a counter-revolutionary force striving for the restoration of capitalism and for the liquidation of the proletarian dictatorship in the name of bourgeois "democracy."

In the capitalist countries, where the proletariat is not yet in power, Social-Democracy is either an opposition party in relation to capitalist rule, or a semi-government party in alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie against the most reactionary forces of capitalism and also against the revolutionary working-class movement, or else an out-and-out government party directly and openly defending capitalism and bourgeois "democracy" against the revolutionary proletarian movement.

It becomes out-and-out counter-revolutionary, and its counter-revolutionary activities are directed against the proletarian regime, only when the latter has become a reality.

THIRD QUESTION. *Why is there no freedom of the press in the U.S.S.R.?*

ANSWER: What freedom of the press do you mean? Freedom of the press for which class—the bourgeoisie or the proletariat? If you mean freedom of the press for the bourgeoisie, then it does not and will not exist here while the proletarian dictatorship exists. But if you mean freedom for the proletariat, then I must say that you will not find another country in the world where freedom of the press for the proletariat is as wide and complete as it is in the U.S.S.R.

Freedom of the press for the proletariat is not a mere phrase. If the best printing plants and the best press clubs are not available, if there are no openly-functioning working-class organisations, ranging from the narrowest to

the widest, that embrace millions of workers, if there is not the widest freedom of assembly, there can be no freedom of the press.

Examine the conditions of life in the U.S.S.R., go into the workers' districts; you will find that the best printing plants, the best press clubs, entire paper mills, entire ink and colour factories needed by the press, palatial meeting halls, all these and many other things that are needed for working-class freedom of the press are wholly and completely at the disposal of the working class and the masses of the working people. That is what we call freedom of the press for the working class. We have no freedom of the press for the bourgeoisie.

We have no freedom of the press for the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who in our country stand for the interests of the defeated and overthrown bourgeoisie. But is that surprising? We never pledged ourselves to grant freedom of the press to all classes, to make all classes happy. When taking power in October 1917, the Bolsheviks openly declared that this meant the power of one class, the power of the proletariat, which would suppress the bourgeoisie in the interests of the labouring masses of town and country, who form the overwhelming majority of the population of the U.S.S.R.

How, after this, can the proletarian dictatorship be required to grant freedom of the press to the bourgeoisie?

FOURTH QUESTION. Why are the imprisoned Mensheviks not released?

ANSWER: Evidently this refers to the active Men-sheviks. Yes, it is true, the active Mensheviks in our country are not released from prison until their sentences expire. But is that surprising?

Why were not the Bolsheviks, for example, released from prison in July, August, September and October 1917, when the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries were in power?

Why was Lenin compelled to hide underground from July to October 1917, when the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries were in power? How can you explain the fact that the great Lenin, whose name is the banner of the proletarians of all countries, was compelled to go into hiding from July to October 1917, in Finland, far away from the "democratic republic" of Kerensky and Tsereteli, Chernov and Dan, and that *Pravda*, the organ of Lenin's Party, was wrecked by the bourgeois authorities in spite of the fact that prominent Mensheviks, active leaders of the Second International, were then at the head of the government?

Obviously, all this is to be explained by the fact that the struggle between bourgeois counter-revolution and proletarian revolution is bound to lead to a certain amount of repression. I have already said that in our country Social-Democracy is a counter-revolutionary party. But from this it follows that the proletarian revolution cannot avoid arresting the leaders of that counter-revolutionary party.

But this is not all. From this it follows also that the arrest of Mensheviks in our country is a continuation of the policy of the October Revolution. In point of fact, what is the October Revolution? The October Revolution is primarily the overthrow of the rule of the bourgeoisie. All more or less class-conscious workers of all countries now admit that the Bolsheviks were right in overthrowing bourgeois rule in October 1917. I have no doubt that you are of the same opinion. But the question is: whom did the proletariat actually overthrow in 1917? History tells us, the facts tell us, that in October 1917 the proletariat overthrew the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, for it was the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, Kerensky and Chernov, Gotz and Lieber, Dan and Tsereteli, Abramovich and Avksentiev, who were in power at that time. And what are the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties? They are parties of the Second International.

It follows, therefore, that in accomplishing the October Revolution the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. overthrew parties of the Second International. This may be unpleasant for some Social-Democrats, but it is an undeniable fact, comrades, and it would be absurd to dispute it.

Hence, it follows that in a proletarian revolution it is possible and necessary to overthrow the rule of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries so that the rule of the proletariat may triumph.

But if they may be overthrown, why cannot they be arrested when they openly and definitely go over to the camp of bourgeois counter-revolution? Do you think that overthrowing the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries is a milder measure than arresting them? The policy of the October Revolution cannot be regarded as correct without also regarding the inevitable results of that policy as correct. One thing or the other: either the October Revolution was a mistake—in which case the arrest of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries is also a mistake; or the October Revolution was not a mistake—in which case the arrest of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who have taken the path of counter-revolution cannot be regarded as a mistake. Logic demands this.

FIFTH QUESTION. *Why was the correspondent of the Social-Democratic Press Bureau refused permission to enter the U.S.S.R.?*

ANSWER: Because the Social-Democratic press abroad, and *Vorwärts* in particular, has outdone even a number of bourgeois newspapers in its monstrous slandering of the U.S.S.R. and its representatives.

Because a number of bourgeois newspapers, like *Vossische Zeitung*,¹ behave far more "impartially" and "decently" than *Vorwärts* in their struggle against the U.S.S.R. This may seem "strange," but it is a fact that cannot be ignored. If *Vorwärts* could behave not worse than some bourgeois newspapers, its representatives would most likely have a place in the U.S.S.R. among the representatives of other bourgeois newspapers.

A few days ago a *Vorwärts* representative asked a member of our Embassy staff in Berlin what conditions had to be complied with to enable a *Vorwärts* representative to receive the right to enter the U.S.S.R. In reply, he was told: "When *Vorwärts* proves by deeds that it is prepared to behave towards the U.S.S.R. and its representatives not worse than a 'respectable' liberal newspaper like *Vossische Zeitung*, the Soviet Government will have no objection to permitting a *Vorwärts* correspondent to enter the U.S.S.R."

I think that the answer is quite understandable.

SIXTH QUESTION. *Is it possible to unite the Second and Third Internationals?*

ANSWER : I think it is impossible.

It is impossible because the Second and Third Internationals have two entirely different lines of policy and look in different directions. Whereas the Third International looks in the direction of the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, the Second International, on the contrary, looks in the direction of the preservation of capitalism and of the destruction of everything that is needed for the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship.

The struggle between the two Internationals is the ideological reflection of the struggle between the supporters of capitalism and the supporters of socialism. In this struggle, either the Second or the Third International must be victorious. There are no reasons for doubting that the Third International will be victorious in the working-class movement.

I think that it is impossible to unite them at the present time.

SEVENTH QUESTION. *How do you estimate the situation in Western Europe? Are revolutionary events to be expected within the next few years?*

ANSWER : I think that elements of a profound crisis of capitalism are growing and will continue to grow in Europe. Capitalism may become partly stabilised, it may rationalise its production, it may temporarily hold down the working class—capitalism is still able to do all that, but it will never recover the "stability" and "equilibrium" that it possessed before the world war and the October Revolution. It will never recover that "stability" and "equilibrium."

That this is true is evident if only from the fact that every now and again the flames of revolution break out in the European countries and also in the colonies, which are the source of life of European capitalism. One day the flames of revolution break out in Austria, next day in Britain, the day after that somewhere in France or Germany, and then in China, Indonesia, India, and so forth.

But what are Europe and the colonies? They are the centre and periphery of capitalism. There is "unrest" in the centres of European capitalism. There is still greater "unrest" in its periphery. The conditions for new revolutionary events are maturing. I think that the clearest indication of the growing crisis of capitalism, and the clearest manifestation of the mounting discontent and anger of the working class, are the events connected with the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti. ²

What is the murder of two working men for the capitalist mincing-machine? Have not scores and hundreds of workers been killed up till now every week, every day? But the murder of two workers, Sacco and Vanzetti, was enough to set the working class all over the world in motion. What does that show? It shows that things are getting hotter and hotter for capitalism. It shows that the conditions for new revolutionary events are maturing.

The fact that the capitalists may succeed in sweeping back the first wave of the revolutionary outbreak cannot by any means serve as a consolation for capitalism. The revolution against capitalism cannot advance in one solid and unbroken wave. It always grows in the course of flows and ebbs. It was so in Russia. It will be so in Europe. We are on the threshold of new revolutionary events.

EIGHTH QUESTION. Is the opposition in the Russian Party strong? On what circles does it rely?

ANSWER : I think that it is very weak. More than that, its forces are almost insignificant in our Party. Here I have today's newspaper. It contains a survey of the last few days' discussions. The figures show that over 135,000 members of the Party voted for the Central Committee and its theses, and 1,200 voted for the opposition. That is even less than one per cent.

I think that further voting will show even more ignominious results for the opposition. Our discussion will continue right up to the congress. During this period we shall, if possible, canvass the opinion of the whole Party.

I do not know how discussions are conducted in the Social-Democratic parties in your countries. I do not know whether discussions are conducted at all in the Social-Democratic parties. We consider that a discussion is a serious matter. We shall canvass the opinion of the whole Party and you will see that the relative importance of the opposition in our Party will prove to be even more insignificant than is shown by the figures I have just read out. It is quite likely that at the Fifteenth Congress of our Party the opposition will not have a single representative, not a single delegate.

Let us take, for example, such huge plants as the Treugolnik Factory, or the Putilov Works in Leningrad. The number of workers at the Treugolnik Factory is about 15,000. The number of Party members is 2,122. The opposition received thirty-nine votes. The number of workers at the Putilov Works is about 11,000. The number of Party members is 1,718. The opposition received twenty-nine votes.

On what circles does the opposition rely? I think that the opposition relies primarily on non-proletarian circles. If you were to ask the non-proletarian strata of the population, those who are dissatisfied with the regime of the proletarian dictatorship, whom they sympathise with, they would unhesitatingly answer that they sympathise with the opposition. Why? Because, in essence, the struggle that the opposition is waging is a struggle against the Party, a struggle against the regime of the proletarian dictatorship, with which certain non-proletarian sections cannot help being dissatisfied. The opposition reflects the discontent of the non-proletarian sections of the population, it reflects their pressure upon the proletarian dictatorship.

NINTH QUESTION. Is there any truth in the assertion, circulated in Germany by Ruth Fischer and Maslow, that the present leaders of the Comintern and of the Russian Party are betraying the workers to the counter-revolution?

ANSWER : We must assume that it is true. We must assume that the Comintern and the C.P.S.U.(B.) are betraying the working class of the U.S.S.R. wholesale to the counter-revolutionaries of all countries.

More than that. I can inform you that the Comintern and the C.P.S.U.(B.) recently decided to bring back to the U.S.S.R. all the landlords and capitalists who have been driven out of the country and to restore their factories to them.

Nor is that all. The Comintern and the C.P.S.U.(B.) have gone even further and have decided that the time has come for the Bolsheviks to become cannibals.

Finally, we have decided to nationalise all women and to make it a practice to violate our own sisters. (General laughter. Several delegates: "Who could have asked such a question?")

I see that you are laughing. Perhaps some of you will think that I am not treating the question seriously. Of course, comrades, such questions cannot be treated seriously. I think that such questions can be answered only by ridicule. (*Stormy applause.*)

TENTH QUESTION. *What is your attitude towards the opposition and to the Ruth Fischer-Maslow trend in Germany?*

ANSWER : My attitude towards the opposition and its agency in Germany is the same as the attitude of the well-known French novelist, Alphonse Daudet, towards Tartarin of Tarascon. (*Signs of lively amusement among the delegates.*)

You have no doubt read Alphonse Daudet's famous novel about Tartarin of Tarascon. Tartarin, the hero of the book, was just an ordinary "good" petty bourgeois. But he had such a wild imagination and such a capacity for "good-natured lying" that in the end he fell victim to these extraordinary abilities.

Tartarin boasted to everybody that he had killed an incalculable number of lions and tigers in the Atlas Mountains. His credulous friends therefore hailed him as the greatest lion-hunter in the world. But Alphonse Daudet certainly knew, as Tartarin himself certainly knew, that Tartarin had never seen a lion or a tiger in his life.

Tartarin boasted to everybody that he had climbed Mont Blanc. His credulous friends therefore hailed him as the greatest mountain-climber in the world. But Alphonse Daudet certainly knew that Tartarin had never seen the top of Mont Blanc, for he had only roamed about the foot of it.

Tartarin boasted to everybody that he had founded a great colony in a country remote from France. His credulous friends therefore hailed him as the greatest coloniser in the world. But Alphonse Daudet certainly knew, as Tartarin himself had to admit, that the figments of Tartarin's imagination could only lead to his discomfiture.

You know what discomfiture and disgrace for the Tartarinites resulted from Tartarin's fantastic boasting.

I think that the boastful clamour that the leaders of the opposition have raised in Moscow and Berlin will end in similar discomfiture and disgrace for the opposition. (*General laughter.*)

Thus, we have exhausted the first list of questions.

Let us now pass on to the questions of the French delegation.

FIRST QUESTION. *How does the Government of the U.S.S.R. propose to combat the foreign oil firms?*

ANSWER : I think that the question is wrongly put. As it stands, one might think that the Soviet oil industry has set out to attack the oil firms of other countries and is seeking to knock them out and liquidate them.

Is that how matters actually stand? No, it is not. In actual fact, the situation is that certain oil firms in capitalist countries are striving to strangle the Soviet oil industry, and so the latter is compelled to defend itself in order to be able to exist and develop.

The fact of the matter is that the Soviet oil industry is weaker than the oil industry of the capitalist countries both as regards output—our output is less than theirs—and as regards connections with the market—they have better connection with the world market than we have.

How does the Soviet oil industry defend itself? It defends itself by improving the quality of its products and, above all, by reducing the price of oil, by putting cheap oil on the market, cheaper than the oil of the capitalist firms.

It may be asked: Are the Soviets so well off that they can afford to sell cheaper than the extremely rich capitalist firms? Of course, Soviet industry is not richer than the capitalist firms. On the contrary, the capitalist firms are much richer than Soviet industry. But it is not a matter of being rich. The point is that the Soviet oil industry is not a capitalist industry and, therefore, does not need enormous super-profits, whereas capitalist oil firms cannot do without colossal super-profits. And precisely because the Soviet oil industry does not need super-profits, it can sell its products cheaper than the capitalist firms.

The same can be said about Soviet grain, Soviet timber, and so forth.

In general, it must be said that Soviet commodities, and especially Soviet oil, are a price-reducing factor in the international market and, therefore, one that helps to improve the conditions of the mass of consumers. Herein lies the strength of the Soviet oil industry and its means of defence against the attacks of the capitalist oil firms. It also explains why the oil owners of all countries, and Deterding in particular, are howling at the top of their voices against the Soviets and the Soviet oil industry, covering up their policy of high oil prices and of robbing the mass of consumers with fashionable talk about "communist propaganda."

SECOND QUESTION. How do you intend to achieve collectivism in the peasant question?

ANSWER : We intend to achieve collectivism in agriculture gradually, by economic, financial, and educational and political measures.

I think that the most interesting question is that of economic measures. The measures we are taking in this sphere run along three lines :

the line of organising the individual peasant farms on a co-operative basis;

the line of organising peasant farms, mainly the farms of poor peasants, in producers' co-operatives, and finally,

the line of bringing the peasant farms within the sphere of operation of the planning and regulating bodies of the state both as regards the marketing of peasant produce and as regards supplying the peasants with necessary articles produced by our industry.

A few years ago the situation was that between industry and peasant economy there were numerous middlemen, private traders, who supplied the peasants with urban manufactures and sold the peasants' grain to the workers. Naturally, these middlemen did not "work" for nothing; they squeezed tens of millions of rubles both out of the peasants and out of the urban population. That was the period when the link between town and country, between socialist industry and the individual peasant farms, had not yet been firmly established. At that time the role played by the co-operatives and the state distributive bodies was relatively insignificant.

A radical change has taken place since then. At present, the role played by the co-operatives and state trading bodies in trade between town and country, between industry and peasant economy, may be regarded not merely as a predominant, but as a supreme, if not monopolistic, one. The co-operatives and state bodies handle over 70 per cent of the textiles supplied to the countryside. As for agricultural machinery, the co-operatives and state

bodies supply nearly 100 per cent. The share of the co-operatives and state bodies in purchasing grain from the peasants is over 80 per cent, and in purchasing raw materials for industry, such as cotton, sugar-beet, etc., the share of the co-operatives and state bodies is almost 100 per cent. What does that mean?

It means, firstly, that the capitalists are being ousted from the sphere of trade; industry is being directly linked with peasant economy; the profits formerly obtained by profiteers and middlemen now remain in industry and agriculture; the peasants are able to buy urban manufactured goods more cheaply, and the workers, in their turn, are able to buy agricultural produce more cheaply.

It means, secondly, that by ousting the middlemen and capitalists from the sphere of trade, industry is able to take the lead of peasant economy, to influence it and raise its efficiency to a higher level, to rationalise and industrialise it.

It means, thirdly, that by linking agriculture with industry the state is able to introduce the principle of planning in the development of agriculture, to supply it with improved seed and fertilisers, to determine the extent of its production, to influence it as regards price policy, and so forth.

It means, finally, that favourable conditions are being created in the countryside for eliminating the capitalist elements, for further restricting and ousting the kulaks, for organising the working peasants' farms in producers' co-operatives, for financing the latter out of state funds.

Let us take, for example, the production of sugar-beet for the sugar industry, and the production of cotton for the textile industry. The volume of production of these kinds of raw materials, as well as their prices and quality, are now not determined haphazardly, not by the play of forces in an unorganised market through middlemen and profiteers, the bourse, various capitalist agencies, and so forth, but according to a definite plan, by definite agreements concluded in advance between the sugar and textile syndicates on the one hand, and tens of thousands of peasant farms represented by beet and cotton growing co-operatives, on the other hand.

Here we no longer have the bourse, agencies, speculation on prices, and so forth. In our country, in this sphere all these instruments of capitalist economy no longer exist. Here, only two parties meet, without any bourse or middlemen—the state syndicates on the one hand, and peasant co-operators on the other. The state syndicates sign contracts with the corresponding co-operative organisations for the production of a particular quantity of sugar-beet or cotton, for the supply of seed, loans, etc., to the peasantry. At the end of the financial year the entire output is taken by the syndicates, and the peasants receive for it the amounts agreed upon in the contracts. That is what we call the contract system.

The advantage of this system is that it is profitable for both sides and links peasant economy directly with industry without any middlemen. This system is the surest path to the collectivisation of peasant economy.

It cannot be said that other branches of agriculture have already reached this stage of development; but it can confidently be said that all branches of agriculture, not excluding grain production, will gradually take this path of development. And that is the direct path to the collectivisation of agriculture.

All-embracing collectivisation will come when the peasant farms are reorganised on a new technical basis, through mechanisation and electrification, when the majority of the working peasants are organised in co-operative organisations, and when the majority of villages are covered by a network of agricultural co-operatives of a collectivist type.

We are moving towards this goal, but have not yet reached it and are not likely to reach it soon. Why? Because, among other things, it requires large sums of money, which our state does not yet possess, but which will undoubtedly be accumulated in the course of time. Marx said that not a single new social system in history established itself without being abundantly financed, without hundreds and hundreds of millions being spent on it. I think that we are already entering the stage in the development of agriculture when the state is beginning to be able abundantly to finance the new social, collectivist system. The fact that socialist industry has already

achieved the role of the leading element in our national economy and that it is taking the lead of agriculture is the surest guarantee that peasant economy will take the path of further collectivisation.

THIRD QUESTION. What were the main difficulties under war communism, when attempts were made to abolish money?

ANSWER : There were many difficulties, both in the sphere of internal development and in the sphere of foreign relations.

Taking internal relations of an economic character, three main difficulties could be noted.

Firstly, the difficulty was that our industry was ruined and paralysed, except for the war industry, which supplied our civil war fronts with munitions during the period of intervention. Two-thirds of our mills and factories were at a standstill, transport was disorganised, there were no manufactured goods, or hardly any.

Secondly, agriculture was in a bad way; the able-bodied men from the peasant farms had been sent to the fronts. There was a shortage of raw materials, a shortage of bread for the urban population, particularly for the workers. In those days the workers' daily bread ration was half a pound and sometimes only an eighth of a pound.

Thirdly, there was little or no smooth-running, intermediary, Soviet trade apparatus between town and country capable of supplying the countryside with manufactured goods and the towns with agricultural produce. The co-operatives and the state trading bodies existed only in embryo.

However, when the Civil War ended and the "New Economic Policy" was introduced, the economic situation in the country underwent a radical change.

Industry developed, gained strength and occupied a commanding position throughout the national economy. The most characteristic fact in this respect is that during the past two years we have been able to invest in industry over two thousand million rubles from our own accumulations, without assistance from abroad, without any foreign loans whatever. It can no longer be said that there are no goods whatever for the peasantry.

Agriculture has developed, its output has reached the pre-war level. It can now no longer be said that there is in general no grain or other agricultural produce for the workers.

The co-operatives and state trading bodies have developed to such an extent that they occupy a commanding position in the trade of the country. It can now no longer be said that we have no intermediary distributive apparatus between town and country, between industry and peasant economy.

Of course, all this is not enough to build a socialist economy at once; but it is quite enough to enable us to proceed further along the path of successful socialist construction.

We must now re-equip our industry and build new factories on a new technical basis.

We must raise the level of efficiency in agriculture, supply the peasantry with the largest possible number of agricultural machines; we must organise the majority of the working peasants in co-operatives and reorganise the individual peasant farms in a wide network of agricultural collective associations.

We must set up an intermediary distributive apparatus between town and country that will be capable of calculating and satisfying the requirements of the towns and villages throughout the country, in the same way that every individual calculates his personal budget of income and expenditure.

When we have achieved all this, it can be presumed that the time will have come when money is no longer needed.

But that is still a long way off.

FOURTH QUESTION. What about the "scissors"?

ANSWER : If by the "scissors" is meant the divergence between the prices of agricultural produce and the prices of manufactured goods from the standpoint of cost of production, the situation as regards the "scissors" is as follows:

Undoubtedly, our manufactured goods are still sold at a somewhat higher price than they could be sold under other circumstances. That is because our industry is young, because it has to be protected from outside competition, because conditions must be created which can accelerate its development. And its rapid development is essential for both town and country, for otherwise we shall be unable in proper time to provide the peasant farmers with an adequate supply of textiles and agricultural machines. This creates a divergence between the prices of manufactured goods and the prices of agricultural produce, which is somewhat to the detriment of peasant economy.

In order to relieve peasant economy of this handicap, the government and the Party have decided to pursue a policy of gradually but steadily reducing the prices of manufactured goods. Can this be called a feasible policy? I think that it is absolutely feasible. It is known, for example, that during the past year we have been able to reduce the retail prices of manufactured goods by about 8-10 per cent. It is also known that our industrial organisations are systematically reducing the cost of production and the wholesale prices of manufactured goods. There is no reason to doubt that this policy will be continued. More than that. I must say that the policy of steadily reducing the prices of manufactured goods is the cornerstone of our economic policy, without which neither the improvement and rationalisation of our industry nor the strengthening of the alliance between the working class and the peasantry is conceivable.

In bourgeois countries a different policy is adhered to in this respect. There, enterprises are usually organised into trusts and syndicates for the purpose of raising the prices of manufactured goods in the home market, of converting them into monopoly prices in order thereby to squeeze out as much profit as possible and to create a fund for the export of goods abroad, where they are sold by the capitalists at low prices with a view to capturing new markets.

The same policy was pursued here in Russia under the bourgeois regime, when sugar, for example, was sold at exorbitant prices in the home market, while abroad, in Britain, for example, this same sugar was sold so cheaply that it was used for feeding pigs.

The Soviet Government pursues a diametrically opposite policy. It holds that industry must serve the population and not the other way round. It holds that a steady reduction of the prices of manufactured goods is a basic means for ensuring the normal growth of industry. That is apart from the fact that the policy of reducing the prices of manufactured goods helps to increase the demand of the population, increases the capacity of the home market, urban and rural, and thus creates an ever-growing source for the further expansion of industry.

FIFTH QUESTION. What proposals does the Soviet Government offer the small French bondholders? How are they to be brought to the knowledge of the French rentiers?

ANSWER : Our proposals on the pre-war debts were published in the well-known interview with Rakovsky. I think you must be familiar with them. They are made conditional on simultaneous receipt of credits by the U.S.S.R. In this we adhere to the principle of give and take. If you give us credits you will get something from us in the way of payments on the pre-war debts. If you give nothing you will get nothing.

Does that mean that thereby we have in principle recognised the pre-war debts? No, it does not. It merely means that while leaving in force the well-known decree annulling the tsarist debts, ³ we are nevertheless willing to conclude a working agreement to pay some part of the pre-war debts, provided we are granted the credits which we need and which will also benefit French industry. We regard payments on the debts as extra interest on the credits received by us for the development of our industry.

Some talk about tsarist Russia's war debts. Some talk about all sorts of claims on the U.S.S.R. owing to the results of the October Revolution. They forget, however, that our revolution is the repudiation on principle of imperialist wars and the tsarist debts connected with them. They forget that the U.S.S.R. cannot and will not pay the war debts.

They also forget that the U.S.S.R. cannot wipe off the books the plunder and violence to which the country was subjected for several years, during the armed intervention of foreign states, and in connection with which the U.S.S.R. is making certain counter-claims.

Who is answerable for that plunder and violence? Who must be called to account for it? Who must pay for that plunder and violence? The imperialist bosses are inclined to forget these unpleasant things; but they must know that such things are not forgotten.

SIXTH QUESTION. How do you reconcile the vodka monopoly with the fight against drunkenness?

ANSWER : I think that it is in general difficult to reconcile them. There is undoubtedly a contradiction here. The Party is aware of this contradiction, but it deliberately invited it, knowing that at the present time such a contradiction is the lesser evil.

When we introduced the vodka monopoly we were confronted with the alternatives:

either to go into bondage to the capitalists by ceding to them a number of our most important mills and factories and receiving in return the funds necessary to enable us to carry on,

or to introduce the vodka monopoly in order to obtain the necessary working capital for developing our industry with our own resources and thus avoid going into foreign bondage.

Members of the Central Committee, including myself, had a talk with Lenin at the time, and he admitted that if we failed to obtain the necessary loans from abroad we should have to agree openly and straightforwardly to adopt the vodka monopoly as an extraordinary temporary measure.

That is how matters stood when we introduced the vodka monopoly.

Of course, generally speaking, it would be better to do without vodka, for vodka is an evil. But that would mean going into temporary bondage to the capitalists, which is a still greater evil. We, therefore, preferred the lesser evil. At present the revenue from vodka is over 500 million rubles. To give up vodka now would mean giving up that revenue; moreover there are no grounds for asserting that this would reduce drunkenness, for the peasants would begin to distil their own vodka and to poison themselves with illicit spirits.

Evidently, the serious shortcomings as regards the cultural development of the countryside play a certain role here. This is apart from the fact that the immediate abandonment of the vodka monopoly would deprive our industry of over 500 million rubles, which could not be replaced from any other source.

Does that mean that the vodka monopoly must remain indefinitely? No, it does not. We introduced it as a temporary measure. Hence, it must be abolished as soon as we find in our national economy new sources of revenue for the further development of our industry. That such sources will be found there can be no doubt.

Were we right in transferring the manufacture of vodka to the state? I think we were. If vodka were transferred to private hands it would:

firstly, strengthen private capital,

secondly, deprive the government of the opportunity to regulate properly the production and consumption of vodka, and

thirdly, make it more difficult for the government to abolish the production and consumption of vodka in the future.

At present our policy is gradually to reduce the production of vodka. I think that in the future we shall be able to abolish the vodka monopoly altogether, reduce the output of alcohol to the minimum required for technical purposes, and later on end the sale of vodka altogether.

I think that we should, perhaps, not have to deal with vodka, or with many other unpleasant things, if the West-European proletarians took power into their hands and gave us the necessary assistance. But what is to be done? Our West-European brothers do not want to take power yet, and we are compelled to do the best we can with our own resources. But that is not our fault, it is—fate.

As you see, our West-European friends also bear a share of the responsibility for the vodka monopoly. (*Laughter and applause.*)

SEVENTH QUESTION, *The judicial powers of the GPU, trial without witnesses, without counsel for the defence, secret arrests. Considering that French public opinion finds it hard to approve of these measures, it would be interesting to hear on what grounds they are justified. Is it intended to modify or abolish them?*

ANSWER : The GPU, or Cheka, is a punitive organ of the Soviet state. It is an organ more or less analogous to the Committee of Public Safety which was set up during the Great French Revolution. It punishes primarily spies, plotters, terrorists, bandits, profiteers and counterfeiters. It is something in the nature of a military-political tribunal set up for the purpose of protecting the interests of the revolution from the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie and their agents.

This organ was created on the morrow of the October Revolution, after the discovery of all kinds of conspiratorial, terrorist and espionage organisations financed by Russian and foreign capitalists.

This organ developed and gained strength after a series of terrorist acts had been perpetrated against leaders of the Soviet Government, after the murder of Comrade Uritsky, a member of the Revolutionary Committee, in Petrograd (he was killed by a Socialist-Revolutionary), after the murder of Comrade Volodarsky, a member of the Revolutionary Committee, in Petrograd (he was also killed by a Socialist-Revolutionary), after the attempt on the life of Lenin (he was wounded by a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party).

It must be admitted that the GPU at that time struck unerring and telling blows at the enemies of the revolution. Not only that, it has retained that ability to this day. From that time on, the GPU has been the terror of the bourgeoisie, the vigilant guardian of the revolution, the naked sword of the proletariat.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the bourgeois of all countries mortally hate the GPU. There is no limit to the legends that have been invented about the GPU. There is no limit to the slanders that have been circulated about the GPU. What does that mean? It means that the GPU is effectively guarding the interests of the revolution. The sworn enemies of the revolution curse the GPU. It follows, therefore, that the GPU is doing the right thing.

The attitude of the workers towards the GPU is different. Go to the workers' districts and ask the workers what they think of the GPU. You will find that they respect it. Why? Because they regard it as a loyal defender of the revolution.

I can understand why the bourgeois hate and distrust the GPU. I can understand why the first thing various bourgeois tourists enquire about on arriving in the U.S.S.R. is whether the GPU still exists, and whether it is not high time to abolish it. All this is comprehensible and not surprising.

But I cannot understand why some workers' delegates, on arriving in the U.S.S.R., anxiously enquire whether many counter-revolutionaries have been punished by the GPU, whether terrorists and plotters against the proletarian government will still be punished, and whether it is not high time to abolish the GPU.

Why do some workers' delegates show such concern for the enemies of the proletarian revolution? How can it be explained? How can it be justified?

Maximum leniency is advocated, we are advised to abolish the GPU. . . . But is there any guarantee that if the GPU is abolished the capitalists of all countries will give up organising and financing counterrevolutionary groups of plotters, terrorists, wreckers, incendiaries and dynamiters? To disarm the revolution without any guarantees that the enemies of the revolution will be disarmed—would that not be folly, would that not be a crime against the working class?

No, comrades, we do not want to repeat the mistakes of the Paris Communards. The Paris Communards were too lenient in dealing with the Versailles, for which Marx rightly reproved them at the time. They had to pay for their leniency by tens of thousands of workers being shot by the Versailles when Thiers entered Paris.

Do the comrades think that the Russian bourgeois and landlords are less bloodthirsty than the Versailles were in France? At all events, we know how savagely they dealt with the workers when they occupied Siberia, the Ukraine and the North Caucasus in alliance with the French and British, the Japanese and American interventionists.

I do not mean to say that it is the internal situation of the country that obliges us to have punitive organs of the revolution. From the standpoint of the internal situation, the revolution is so firm and unshakable that we could manage without the GPU. But the point is that our enemies at home are not isolated individuals. The point is that they are connected by a thousand threads with the capitalists of all countries, who support them with all their might and all their means. We are a country surrounded by capitalist states. The internal enemies of our revolution are agents of the capitalists of all countries. The capitalist states are a base and rear for the internal enemies of our revolution. Hence, in fighting the enemies at home we are fighting the counter-revolutionary elements of all countries. Now judge for yourselves whether, under these circumstances, we can manage without punitive organs like the GPU.

No, comrades, we do not want to repeat the mistakes of the Paris Communards. The revolution needs the GPU; and the GPU will continue to exist to the terror of the enemies of the proletariat. (*Stormy applause.*)

A delegate: Allow me, Comrade Stalin, to thank you on behalf of the delegates present for your explanations and for refuting the lies about the U.S.S.R. that are spread abroad. You need have no doubts that we shall be able to tell our workers at home the truth about the U.S.S.R.

Stalin: There is no need to thank me, comrades. I consider it my duty to answer your questions and to report to you. We Soviet leaders regard it as our duty to report to our class brothers on all questions on which they wish to hear reports. Our state is the offspring of the world proletariat. The leaders of our state merely do their duty to the international proletariat when they report to its representatives. (*Applause.*)

Pravda, Nos. 260 and 261, November 13 and 15, 1927

Notes

1. *Vossische Zeitung* — a German bourgeois newspaper published in Berlin from 1704 until April 1934.

2. Sacco and Vanzetti—Italian workers, immigrants in the United States, were arrested on May 5, 1920, in Brockton, Massachusetts, on a framed-up charge of murder and robbery and in 1921 were sentenced to death by an American reactionary court. Mass demonstrations, meetings and strikes in which millions of working people took part, were held all over the world in protest against this sentence. On August 23, 1927, Sacco and Vanzetti were executed.

3. The decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies annulling the tsarist government's state debts was adopted on January 21, 1918.

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