

Bukharin's Group and the Right Deviation in Our Party

*From Speeches Delivered at a Joint Meeting of the Political Bureau of the C.C. and
the Presidium of the C.C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) at the End of January and the Beginning of February 1929
(Brief Record)*

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Comrades, sad though it is, we have to record the fact that within our Party a separate Bukharin group has been formed, consisting of Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov. The Party knew nothing of the existence of this group before—the Bukharinites carefully concealed its existence from the Party. But now the fact is known and evident.

This group, as is seen from their statement, has its own separate platform, which it counterposes to the Party's policy. It demands, firstly—in opposition to the existing policy of the Party—a slower rate of development of our industry, asserting that the present rate of industrial development is "fatal." It demands, secondly—also in opposition to the policy of the Party—curtailment of the formation of state farms and collective farms, asserting that they do not and cannot play any serious part in the development of our agriculture. It demands, thirdly—also in opposition to the policy of the Party—the granting of full freedom to private trade and renunciation of the regulating function of the state in the sphere of trade, asserting that the regulating function of the state renders the development of trade impossible.

In other words, Bukharin's group is a group of Right deviators and capitulators who advocate not the elimination, but the free development of the capitalist elements in town and country.

At the same time, Bukharin's group opposes the emergency measures against the kulaks and "excessive" taxation of the kulaks, and unceremoniously levels against the Party the accusation that, in applying such measures, it is in point of fact conducting a policy of "military and feudal exploitation of the peasantry." Bukharin needed this ludicrous accusation in order to take the kulaks under his protection, and in doing so he confused and lumped together the labouring peasants and the kulaks.

Bukharin's group demands that the Party radically change its policy along the lines of the group's platform. They declare further that if the Party's policy is not changed, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy will resign.

Such are the facts which have been established in the course of the discussion at this joint meeting of the Political Bureau of the C.C. and the Presidium of the C.C.C.

It has been established, furthermore, that on the instructions of this group, Bukharin conducted secret negotiations with Kamenev with a view to forming a bloc of the Bukharinites and the Trotskyists against the Party and its Central Committee. Evidently, having no hope that their platform would carry the day in the Central

Committee of our Party, the Bukharinites thought it necessary to form such a bloc behind the back of the Party's Central Committee.

Were there disagreements between us before? There were. The first outbreak occurred prior to the July plenum of the C.C. (1928). The disagreements concerned these same questions: the rate of industrial development, the state farms and collective farms, full freedom for private trade, emergency measures against the kulaks. At the plenum, however, the matter ended with the adoption of a united and common resolution on all these questions. We all believed at that time that Bukharin and his followers had renounced their errors, and that the disagreements had been resolved by the adoption of a common resolution. This was the basis which gave rise to the statement on the unity of the Political Bureau and the absence of disagreements within it, which was signed by all the members of the Political Bureau (July 1928).

A second outbreak of disagreements among us occurred prior to the November plenum of the (C.C. Bukharin's article, "Notes of an Economist," clearly indicated that all was not well in the Political Bureau, that one of the members of the Political Bureau at any rate was trying to revise or "correct" the C.C.'s line. At any rate we, the majority of the members of the Political Bureau, had no doubt that the "Notes of an Economist" was an eclectic anti-Party article, designed to slow down the rate of industrial development and to change our policy in the countryside along the lines of Frumkin's well-known letter. To this must be added the question of the resignation of Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky. The fact is that at that time Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky came to the commission which was drafting the resolution on the control figures and declared that they were resigning. However, in the course of the work of the commission on the control figures all disagreements were smoothed over in one way or another: the present rate of industrial development was preserved, the further development of state farms and collective farms was approved, maximum taxation of the kulaks was preserved, the regulating function of the state in the sphere of trade was also preserved, the ludicrous accusation that the Party was conducting a policy of "military and feudal exploitation of the peasantry" was repudiated amid the general laughter of the members of the commission, and the three withdrew their resignation. As a result, we had a common resolution on the control figures adopted by all the members of the Political Bureau. As a result, we had the Political Bureau's decision to the effect that all its members should declare both at the November plenum of the C.C. and outside it that the Political Bureau was united and that there were no disagreements within the Political Bureau.

Could we have known at that time that Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky were voting for the joint resolution only for appearance's sake, that they were keeping their specific points of difference with the Party to themselves, that Bukharin and Tomsky would in reality practise what amounted to a refusal to work in the A.U.C.C.T.U., in the Comintern and on *Pravda*, that Ka-menev had among his private papers a certain "memorandum" which makes it clear that we have within the C.C. a separate group with its own platform, a group which is trying to form a bloc with the Trotskyists against the Party?

Obviously, we could not have known that.

It is now clear to all that disagreements exist and that they are serious. Bukharin is apparently envious of the laurels of Frumkin. Lenin was a thousand times right when he said in a letter to Shlyapnikov as far back as 1916 that Bukharin was "devilishly unstable in politics." [68] Now this instability has been communicated by Bukharin to the members of his group.

The principal misfortune of the Bukharinites is that they have a faith, a conviction that making things easier for the kulak and untying his hands is the way to solve our grain and all other difficulties. They think that if we make things easier for the kulak, if we do not restrict his exploiting tendencies, if we let him have his own way, and so on, the difficulties will disappear and the political state of the country will improve. It goes without saying that this naive faith of the Bukharinites in the saving power of the kulak is such ludicrous nonsense as not even to be worth criticising. The Bukharin-ites' misfortune is that they do not understand the mechanics of the class struggle, do not understand that the kulak is an inveterate enemy of the working people, an inveterate enemy of our whole system. They do not understand that a policy of making things easier for the kulak and untying his hands would worsen the entire political state of the country, improve the chances of the capitalist elements in the country, lose us the poor peasants, demoralise the middle peasants, and bring about a rupture with the working

class of our country. They do not understand that no untying of the hands of the kulak is capable of easing our grain difficulties in any way, for the kulak will not voluntarily give us grain anyhow so long as there exists the policy of procurement prices and state regulation of the grain market—and we cannot abandon the policy of state regulation of trade if we do not want to undermine the Soviet system, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Bukharinites' misfortune is that they do not understand these simple and elementary things. That is apart from the fact that the policy of untying the hands of the capitalist elements is absolutely incompatible, theoretically and politically, with the principles of Lenin's policy and of Leninism.

That is all very well, comrades may say, but what is the way out, what must be done in connection with the appearance on the scene of Bukharin's group? As to the way out of the situation, the majority of the comrades have already expressed their opinion. The majority of the comrades demand that this meeting should be firm and categorically reject Bukharin's and Tomsky's resignation (Rykov has already withdrawn his). The majority of the comrades demand that this joint meeting of the Political Bureau of the C.C. and Presidium of the C.C.C. should condemn the Right-opportunist, capitulatory platform of Bukharin, Tom-sky and Rykov, that it should condemn the attempt of Bukharin and his group to form an anti-Party bloc with the Trotskyists. I fully subscribe to these proposals.

The Bukharinites disagree with this decision. They would like to be allowed freedom of factional group-ing — in defiance of the Party Rules. They would like to be allowed freedom to violate decisions of the Party and the C.C. —in defiance of the vital interests of the Party. On what grounds, it may be asked?

According to them, if rank-and-file Party members do not obey C.C. decisions, they must be punished with all the severity of Party law; but if so-called leaders, members of the Political Bureau, say, violate C.C. decisions, not only must they not be punished, they must simply not even be criticised, for criticism in such a case is qualified by them as "being put through the mill."

Obviously, the Party cannot accept this false view. If we were to proclaim one law for the leaders and another for the "common people" in the Party, there would be nothing left either of the Party or of Party discipline.

They complain of "being put through the mill." But the hollowness of this complaint is apparent. If Bukharin has the right to write such a crassly anti-Party article as the "Notes of an Economist," then all the more have Party members the right to criticise such an article. If Bukharin and Tomsky allow themselves the right to violate a C.C. decision by stubbornly refusing to work in the posts entrusted to them, then all the more have Party members the right to criticise them for such conduct. If this is what they call "being put through the mill," then let them explain what they understand by the slogan of self-criticism, inner-Party democracy, and so on.

It is said that Lenin would certainly have acted more mildly than the C.C. is now acting towards Tomsky and Bukharin. That is absolutely untrue. The situation now is that two members of the Political Bureau systematically violate C.C. decisions, stubbornly refuse to remain in posts assigned to them by the Party, yet, instead of punishing them, the Central Committee of the Party has for two months already been trying to persuade them to remain in their posts. And—just recall—how did Lenin act in such cases? You surely remember that just for one small error committed by Tomsky, Comrade Lenin packed him off to Turkestan.

Tomsky. With Zinoviev's benevolent assistance, and partly yours.

Stalin. If what you mean to say is that Lenin could be persuaded to do anything of which he was not himself convinced, that can only arouse laughter. . . . Recall another fact, for example, the case of Shlyapnikov, whose expulsion from the C.C. Lenin recommended because he had criticised some draft decision of the Supreme Council of National Economy in the Party unit of that body.

Who can deny that Bukharin's and Tomsky's present crimes in grossly violating C.C. decisions and openly creating a new opportunist platform against the Party are far graver than were the offences of Tomsky and Shlyapnikov in the cases mentioned? Yet, not only is the Central Committee not demanding that either of them should be excluded from the C.C. or be assigned to somewhere in Turkestan, but it is confining itself to attempts

to persuade them to remain in their posts, while at the same time, of course, exposing their non-Party, and at times downright anti-Party, line. What greater mildness do you want?

Would it not be truer to say that we, the C.C. majority, are treating the Bukharinites too liberally and tolerantly, and that we are thereby, perhaps, involuntarily encouraging their factional anti-Party "work"?

Has not the time come to stop this liberalism?

I recommend that the proposal of the majority of the members of this meeting be approved, and that we pass to the next business.

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