

J. V. Stalin

Reply to Comrade M. Rafail

(Regional Trade-Union Council, Leningrad)

Copy to Comrade Kirov, Secretary, Regional Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.)

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Comrade Rafail,

Owing to lack of time, I shall answer briefly:

1) There is, and can be, *no* analogy between the C.C.'s action in March of this year against excesses in the collective-farm movement and the Brest period or the period of the introduction of NEP. In the latter cases it was a matter of a turn in policy. In the first case, in March 1930, there was no turn in policy. All we did was to put a check on the comrades who had got out of hand. Consequently, all the arguments you base upon analogy, even though an incomplete one, fall to the ground.

2) There really was a turn in policy in the affairs of the collective-farm movement (as a result of the turn towards the collective farms on the part of the mass of the middle peasants) but it was not in March 1930, but in the latter half of 1929. The beginning of this turn in policy was already made at the Fifteenth Congress of our Party (see the resolution on "Work in the Countryside").

This turn, as I have already said, assumed a purely practical character at the close of 1929. You undoubtedly know that the C.C. gave precise shape to the new policy and laid down rates of development of the collective-farm movement for the various regions of the U.S.S.R. in its decision of January 5, 1930. The facts bear out that this decision of the C.C. was fully and entirely correct on all points.

Was there any lag on the part of the C.C. behind the progress of the movement? I think that, as far as theoretical prevision and elaboration of an appropriate political line are concerned, there was no lag whatever. Was there a lag on the part of any considerable sections of the Party or of individual members of the C.C. in their practical policy? There certainly was. Otherwise, there would have been no fight for the general line and against deviations either in the Party or in the C.C. itself.

3) Is it possible for a ruling party instantaneously to grasp the coming into being of new processes, and also instantaneously to reflect them in its practical policy? I think it is not possible. It is not possible, because the facts occur first of all, then their reflection in the consciousness of the most advanced elements of the Party, and only after that does the moment come when the new processes are perceived by the minds of the mass of Party members. Do you remember what Hegel said: "The owl of Minerva makes its flight only at night"? In other words, consciousness lags somewhat behind the facts.

The difference in this respect between the turn in our policy in the latter half of 1929 and the turns at the time of Brest and the introduction of NEP is that in the latter half of 1929 the Party became conscious of the new

processes in objective reality sooner than it did in the case of the turns at the time of Brest and the introduction of NEP. The explanation of this is that in the interval the Party had succeeded in perfecting itself, and its cadres had become more perceptive.

With communist greetings,

J. Stalin

May 31, 1930

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