

Grain Procurements and the Prospects for the Development of Agriculture

From Statements Made in Various Parts of Siberia in January 1928 ¹ (Brief Record)

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I have been sent to you here in Siberia for a short visit. I have been instructed to help you to fulfil the plan for grain procurements. I have also been instructed to discuss with you the prospects for the development of agriculture, the plan for developing the formation of collective farms and state farms in your territory.

You are no doubt aware that this year our country's grain accounts show a shortage, a deficit, of more than 100,000,000 poods. Because of this the Government and the Central Committee have had to tighten up grain procurements in all regions and territories so as to cover this deficit in our grain accounts. The deficit will have to be met primarily by the regions and territories with good harvests, which will have not only to fulfil, but to over fulfil the plan for grain procurements.

You know, of course, what the effect of the deficit may be if it is not made good. The effect will be that our towns and industrial centres, as well as our Red Army, will be in grave difficulties; they will be poorly supplied and will be threatened with hunger. Obviously, we cannot allow that.

What do you think about it? What measures are you thinking of taking in order to perform your duty to the country? I have made a tour of the districts of your territory and have had the opportunity to see for myself that your people are not seriously concerned to help our country to emerge from the grain crisis. You have had a bumper harvest, one might say a record one. Your grain surpluses this year are bigger than ever before. Yet the plan for grain procurements is not being fulfilled. Why? What is the reason?

You say that the plan for grain procurements is a heavy one, and that it cannot be fulfilled. Why cannot it be fulfilled? Where did you get that idea from? Is it not a fact that your harvest this year really is a record one? Is it not a fact that Siberia's grain procurement plan this year is almost the same as it was last year? Why, then, do you consider that the plan cannot be fulfilled? Look at the kulak farms: their barns and sheds are crammed with grain; grain is lying in the open under pent roofs for lack of storage space; the kulaks have 50,000-60,000 poods of surplus grain per farm, not counting seed, food and fodder stocks. Yet you say that the grain procurement plan cannot be fulfilled. Why are you so pessimistic?

You say that the kulaks are unwilling to deliver grain, that they are waiting for prices to rise, and prefer to engage in unbridled speculation. That is true. But the kulaks are not simply waiting for prices to rise; they are demanding an increase in prices to three times those fixed by the government. Do you think it permissible to satisfy the kulaks? The poor peasants and a considerable section of the middle peasants have already delivered their grain to the state at government prices. Is it permissible for the government to pay the kulaks three times as

much for grain as it pays the poor and middle peasants? One has only to ask this question to realise how impermissible it would be to satisfy the kulaks' demands.

If the kulaks are engaging in unbridled speculation on grain prices, why do you not prosecute them for speculation? Don't you know that there is a law against speculation—Article 107 of the Criminal Code of the R.S.F.S.R., under which persons guilty of speculation are liable to prosecution, and their goods to confiscation in favour of the state? Why don't you enforce this law against the grain speculators? Can it be that you are afraid to disturb the tranquility of the kulak gentry?!

You say that enforcement of Article 107 against the kulaks would be an emergency measure, that it would not be productive of good results, that it would worsen the situation in the countryside. Comrade Zagumenny is especially insistent about this. Supposing it would be an emergency measure—what of it? Why is it that in other territories and regions enforcement of Article 107 has yielded splendid results, has rallied the labouring peasantry around the Soviet Government and improved the situation in the countryside, while among you, in Siberia, it is held that it is bound to produce bad results and worsen the situation? Why, on what grounds?

You say that your prosecuting and judicial authorities are not prepared for such a step. But why is it that in other territories and regions the prosecuting and judicial authorities were prepared for it and are acting quite effectively, yet here they are not prepared to enforce Article 107 against speculators? Who is to blame for that? Obviously, it is your Party organisations that are to blame; they are evidently working badly and are not seeing to it that the laws of our country are conscientiously observed. I have seen several dozen of your prosecuting and judicial officials. Nearly all of them live in the homes of kulaks, board and lodge with them, and, of course, they are anxious to live in peace with the kulaks. In reply to my question, they said that the kulaks' homes are cleaner, and the food there is better. Clearly, nothing effective or useful for the Soviet state is to be expected from such prosecuting and judicial officials. The only thing that is not clear is why these gentry have not yet been cleared out and replaced by other, honest officials. I propose:

that the kulaks be ordered to deliver all their grain surpluses immediately at government prices;

that if the kulaks refuse to obey the law they should be prosecuted under Article 107 of the Criminal Code of the R.S.F.S.R., and their grain surpluses confiscated in favour of the state, 25 per cent of the confiscated grain to be distributed among the poor peasants and economically weaker middle peasants at low government prices or in the form of long-term loans.

As for your prosecuting and judicial officials, all who are unfit for their posts should be dismissed and replaced by honest, conscientious Soviet-minded people.

You will soon see that these measures yield splendid results, and you will be able not only to fulfil, but even over fulfil the plan for grain procurements.

But this does not exhaust the problem. These measures will be sufficient to correct the situation this year.

But there is no guarantee that the kulaks will not again sabotage the grain procurements next year. More, it may be said with certainty that so long as there are kulaks, so long will there be sabotage of the grain procurements. In order to put the grain procurements on a more or less satisfactory basis, other measures are required. What measures exactly? I have in mind developing the formation of collective farms and state farms.

Collective and state farms are, as you know, large-scale farms capable of employing tractors and machines. They produce larger marketable surpluses than the landlord or kulak farms. It should be borne in mind that our towns and our industry are growing and will continue to grow from year to year. That is necessary for the industrialisation of the country. Consequently, the demand for grain will increase from year to year, and this means that the grain procurement plans will also increase. We cannot allow our industry to be dependent on the caprice of the kulaks. We must therefore see to it that in the course of the next three or four years the collective farms and state farms, as deliverers of grain, are in a position to supply the state with at least one-third of the grain required. This would relegate the kulaks to the background and lay the foundation for the more or less

proper supply of grain to the workers and the Red Army. But in order to achieve this, we must develop the formation of collective and state farms to the utmost, sparing neither energy nor resources. It can be done, and we must do it.

But even that is not all. Our country cannot live with an eye only to today's needs. We must also give thought to the morrow, to the prospects for the development of our agriculture and, lastly, to the fate of socialism in our country. The grain problem is part of the agricultural problem, and the agricultural problem is an integral part of the problem of building socialism in our country. The partial collectivisation of agriculture of which I have just spoken will be sufficient to keep the working class and the Red Army more or less tolerably supplied with grain, but it will be altogether insufficient for:

providing a firm basis for a fully adequate supply of food to the whole country while ensuring the necessary food reserves in the hands of the state, and

securing the victory of socialist construction in the countryside, in agriculture.

Today the Soviet system rests upon two heterogeneous foundations: upon united socialised industry and upon *individual* small-peasant economy based on *private* ownership of the means of production. Can the Soviet system persist for long on these heterogeneous foundations? No, it cannot.

Lenin says that so long as individual peasant economy, which engenders capitalists and capitalism, predominates in the country, the danger of a restoration of capitalism will exist. Clearly, so long as this danger exists there can be no serious talk of the victory of socialist construction in our country.

Hence, for the consolidation of the Soviet system and for the victory of socialist construction in our country, the socialisation of industry alone is quite insufficient. What is required for that is to pass from the socialisation of industry to the socialisation of the whole of agriculture.

And what does that imply?

It implies, firstly, that we must gradually, but unswervingly, unite the individual peasant farms, which produce the smallest marketable surpluses, into collective farms, kolkhozes, which produce the largest marketable surpluses.

It implies, secondly, that all areas of our country, without exception, must be covered with collective farms (and state farms) capable of replacing not only the kulaks, but the individual peasants as well, as suppliers of grain to the state.

It implies, thirdly, doing away with all sources that engender capitalists and capitalism, and putting an end to the possibility of the restoration of capitalism.

It implies, fourthly, creating a firm basis for the systematic and abundant supply of the whole country not only with grain, but also with other foodstuffs, while ensuring the necessary reserves for the state.

It implies, fifthly, creating a single and firm socialist basis for the Soviet system, for Soviet power.

It implies, lastly, ensuring the victory of socialist construction in our country.

Such are the prospects for the development of our agriculture.

Such is the task of victoriously building socialism in our country.

It is a complex and difficult task, but one that is quite possible to fulfil; for difficulties exist in order to be surmounted and vanquished.

We must realise that we can no longer make progress on the basis of small individual peasant economy, that what we need in agriculture is large farms capable of employing machines and producing the maximum marketable surpluses. There are two ways of creating large farms in agriculture: the capitalist way—through the wholesale ruin of the peasants and the organisation of big capitalist estates exploiting labour; and the socialist way—through the union of the small peasant farms into large collective farms, without ruining the peasants and without exploitation of labour. Our Party has chosen the socialist way of creating large farms in agriculture.

Even before the victory of the October Revolution, and then, immediately after that victory, Lenin set the Party the task of uniting the small peasant farms into large collective farms as the prospect for the development of our agriculture, and as the decisive means of securing the victory of socialism in the countryside, in agriculture.

Lenin pointed out that:

"The small-farming system under commodity production cannot save mankind from the poverty and oppression of the masses" (Vol. XX, p. 122²);

"If we continue as of old on our small farms, even as free citizens on free land, we shall still be faced with inevitable ruin" (Vol. XX, p. 417³);

c)"Only with the help of common, artel, co-operative labour can we escape from the impasse into which the imperialist war has landed us" (Vol. XXIV, p. 537).

Lenin further points out:

"Only if we succeed in practice in *showing* the peasants the advantages of common, collective, co-operative, artel cultivation of the soil, only if we succeed in helping the peasant by means of co-operative, artel farming, will the working class, which holds state power in its hands, actually prove to the peasant the correctness of its policy and actually secure the real and durable following of the vast masses of the peasantry. Hence the importance of every kind of measure to promote co-operative, artel agriculture can hardly be overestimated. We have millions of individual farms in our country, scattered and dispersed in the depths of the countryside. . . . Only when it is *proved in practice, by experience* easily understood by the peasants, that the transition to the co-operative, artel form of agriculture is essential and possible, only then shall we be entitled to say that in this vast peasant country, Russia, an important step towards socialist agriculture has been taken" * (Vol. XXIV, pp. 579-80).

Such are Lenin's directives.

In pursuance of these directives, the Fifteenth Congress of our Party ⁴ stated in its resolution on "Work in the Countryside":

"In the present period, the task of uniting and transforming the small individual peasant farms into large collective farms must be made the Party's principal task in the countryside."⁵

That, comrades, is how matters stand in regard to the socialisation of agriculture in our country. Our duty is to carry out these directives.

* *My italics.— J. Stalin*

[1.](#) During his journey in Siberia, lasting from January 15 to February 6, 1928, J. V. Stalin visited the principal grain-growing regions. He attended a meeting of the Bureau of the Siberian Territorial Committee of the C.P.S.U. (B.) in Novosibirsk, meetings of the bureaux of okrug committees of the C.P.S.U.(B.), and conferences of the actives of the Barnaul, Biisk. Rubtsovsk and Omsk okrug Party organisations, together with representatives of the Soviets and the procurement bodies. Thanks to the political and organisational measures carried out by J. V. Stalin, the Siberian Party organisations were able to ensure fulfilment of the grain procurement plan.

[2.](#) See V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 24, p. 51.

[3.](#) See V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 24, p. 465.

[4.](#) The Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.) took place in Moscow, December 2-19, 1927. The congress discussed the political and organisational reports of the Central Committee, the reports of the Central Auditing Commission of the Central Control Commission and Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, and of the C.P.S.U.(B.) delegation in the Executive Committee of the Comintern; it also discussed the directives for the drawing up of a five-year plan for the development of the national economy and a report on work in the countryside; it heard the report of the congress commission on the question of the opposition and elected the central bodies of the Party. On December 3, J. V. Stalin delivered the political report of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.) and on December 7 he replied to the discussion. On December 12, the congress elected J. V. Stalin a member of the commission for drafting the resolution on the report about the work of the C.P.S.U.(B.) delegation in the Executive Committee of the Comintern. The congress approved the political and organisational line of the Party's Central Committee and instructed it to continue to pursue a policy of peace and of strengthening the defence capacity of the U.S.S.R., to continue with unrelaxing tempo the socialist industrialisation of the country, to extend and strengthen the socialist sector in town and countryside and to steer a course towards eliminating the capitalist elements from the national economy. The congress gave instructions for the drawing up of the First Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the U.S.S.R. The congress passed a resolution calling for the fullest development of the collectivisation of agriculture, outlined a plan for the extension of collective farms and state farms and indicated the methods of fighting for the collectivisation of agriculture. The Fifteenth Congress has gone into the history of the Party as the Collectivisation of Agriculture Congress. In its decisions on the opposition, directed towards the liquidation of the Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc, the congress noted that the disagreements between the Party and the opposition had developed into programmatic disagreements, that the Trotskyist opposition had taken the path of anti-Soviet struggle, and declared that adherence to the Trotskyist opposition and the propagation of its views were incompatible with membership of the Bolshevik Party. The congress approved the decision of the joint meeting of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the C.P.S.U.(B.) of November 1927 to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Party and decided to expel from the Party all active members of the Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc. (On the Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.), see History of the C.P.S.U.(B.), Short Course, Moscow 1954, pp. 447-49. For the resolutions and decisions of the congress, see Resolutions and Decisions of C.P.S.U. Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums, Part II, 1953, pp. 313-71.)

[5.](#) See Resolutions and Decisions of C.P.S.U. Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums, Part II, 1953, p. 355.