

The “Professional Dangers” of Power

Friday 8 December 2006, by [RAKOVSKY Christian](#) (Date first published: 6 August 1928).

In this letter, Christian Rakovsky, member of the Left Opposition, discusses the roots of the process of bureaucratization of the State after the victory of the Russian Revolution.

Dear Comrade Valentinov,

In your *Meditations on the Masses* of 8 July, in examining the problems of the “activity” of the working class, you speak of a fundamental question, that of the conservation, by the proletariat, of its directing role in our state. Although all the political claims of the opposition aim at this end, I agree with you that all has not been said on this question. Up to the present, we have always examined it coupled with the whole problem of the taking and conserving of political power; to make it clearer, it should have been taken separately, as a question which has its own value and importance. The reality of events has brought it to the fore.

The opposition will always retain as one of its merits, as against the party, a merit which nothing can remove, the fact that it has, in good time, sounded the alarm on the terrible decline of the spirit of activity of the working classes, and on their increasing indifference towards the destiny of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the Soviet state.

That which characterizes the flood of scandal which has become public, that which constitutes its greatest danger, is precisely this passivity of the masses (a passivity greater even among the communist masses than among the non-party masses) towards the unprecedented manifestations of despotism which have emerged. Workers witnessed these, but let them pass without protest, or contented themselves with a few remarks, through fear of those who are in power or because of political indifference. From the scandal of Chubarovsk (to go back no further) to the abuses of Smolensk, of Artiemovsk, etc., the same refrain is always heard: “*We knew already for some time.*” Thefts, prevarications, violence, orgies, incredible abuse of power, unlimited despotism, drunkenness, debauchery: all this is spoken of as known facts, not for a month but for years, and also of things that everyone tolerates without knowing why.

I do not need to explain that When the world bourgeoisie vociferates on the vices of the Soviet Union, we can ignore it with a quiet disdain. We know too well the moral purity of governments and parliaments in the whole bourgeois world. But they are not the ones on whom we are to model ourselves. With us, it is a *workers-*’ state. No one today can ignore the terrible consequences of the political indifference of the working class. Moreover, the question of the causes of this indifference and that of the means to eliminate it is considered to be basic. But this obliges us to consider it in a fundamental way, scientifically, by submitting it to a profound analysis. Such a phenomenon merits our full attention.

The explanation which you give of this is doubtless correct: each of us has already laid them bare during our talks; they already form part of our platform [i.e. the platform of the left opposition of 1927]. None the less the interpretations and the remedies proposed to emerge from this painful situation have had and still have an empirical character: they refer to each particular case and do

not get to the basis of the question.

To my mind this has resulted because this question itself is a new question. Up to the present we have witnessed a great number of cases where the spirit of initiative of the working class has become weakened and declined almost to the level of political reaction. But these examples became apparent to us, as much here as abroad, during a period when the proletariat was battling still for the conquest of political power.

We could not have a previous example of the decline of proletarian ardour in a period when it already had power, for the simple reason that, in history, our case is the first where the working class has retained power for such a time. Up till now, we have known what could happen to the proletariat, that is, the vacillations of spirit which occur when it is an oppressed and exploited class; but it is only now that we can evaluate on the basis of fact, the changes of its mental state when it takes over *the control*.

This political position (of directing class) is not without its dangers: on the contrary, the dangers are very great. I do not refer here to the objective difficulties due to the whole complex of historical conditions, to the capitalist encirclement on the outside, and the pressure of the petty bourgeois inside the country. No, I refer to the inherent difficulties of any new directing class, consequent on the taking and on the exercise of power itself, on the ability or inability to make use of it. You will understand that these difficulties would continue to exist up to a certain point, even if we allowed, for a moment, that the country was inhabited only by proletarian masses and the exterior was made up solely of proletarian states. These difficulties might be called the "professional dangers" of power.

In fact, the situation of a class which is fighting to wrest control and that of a class holding control in its hands is different. I repeat that when I spoke of dangers, I did not think of the relationships to other classes, but more of those which are created within the ranks of the victorious class itself.

What does a class on the offensive represent? The maximum of unity and cohesion. All spirit of trade or clique, let alone personal interests, become secondary. All initiative is in the hands of the militant mass itself and of its revolutionary vanguard, which is bound to the mass in a most close, organic relationship.

When a class takes power, one of its parts becomes the agent of that power. Thus arises bureaucracy. In a socialist state, where capitalist accumulation is forbidden by members of the directing party, this differentiation begins as a functional one; it later becomes a social one. I am thinking here of the social position of a communist who has at his disposal a car, a nice apartment, regular holidays, and receiving the maximum salary authorized by the party; a position which differs from that of the communist working in the coal mines and receiving a salary of fifty or sixty rubles per month. As regards workers and employees, you know that they are divided into eighteen different categories ...

Another consequence is that certain functions formerly satisfied by the party as a whole, by the whole class, have now become the attributes of power, that is, only of a certain number of persons in the party and in this class.

The unity and cohesion which formerly were the natural consequences of the struggle of the revolutionary class cannot now be maintained but by the application of the whole system of measures which have for their aim the preservation of the equilibrium between the different groups of this class and of this party, and to subordinate these groups to the fundamental goal.

But this constitutes a long and delicate process. It consists in educating politically the dominant class in such a way as to make it capable of holding the state apparatus, the party and the syndicates, of controlling and of directing these organisms. I repeat this: it is a question of education. No class has been born in possession of the art of government. This art can only be acquired by experience, thanks to the errors committed, that is by each learning from his errors. No Soviet constitution, be it ideal, can ensure to the working class an exercise without obstacle of its dictatorship and of its control over the government if the proletariat does not know how to utilise its rights under the constitution. The lack of harmony between the political capacities of any given class, its administrative ability and the judicial constitutional forms that it establishes for its own use after the taking of power, is a historical fact. It can be observed in the evolution of all classes, in part also in the history of the bourgeoisie. The English bourgeoisie, for example, fought many battles, not only to remake the constitution according to its own interests but also to be able to profit from its rights and, in particular, fully and without hindrance of its right to vote. One of Charles Dickens's books, *Pickwick Papers*, contains many incidents of this period of English constitutionalism during which the directing group, assisted by its own administrative apparatus, overturns into the ditch coaches bringing the opposition's supporters to the ballot boxes, in order that they might not be able to arrive in time to vote.

This process of differentiation is perfectly natural for the triumphant, or almost triumphant bourgeoisie. In effect, in the wider sense of the term, the bourgeoisie is made up of a series of groups and even economic classes. We recognize the existence of the upper middle and lower (petty) bourgeoisie: we know that there exists a financial bourgeoisie, a commercial bourgeoisie, an industrial bourgeoisie and an agricultural bourgeoisie. After events such as wars and revolutions, regroupings take place within the ranks of the bourgeoisie itself; new strata appear, begin to play the role which is properly theirs, as for example the proprietors, the acquirers of national goods, the *nouveaux riches*, as they are called, who appear after each war of a certain length. During the French revolution, during the period of the directory, these *nouveaux riches* became one of the factors of the reaction.

Generally speaking, the history of the victory of the Third Estate in France in 1789 is extremely instructive. First, this Third Estate was itself made up of extremely disparate elements. It included all who did not belong to the nobility or the clergy; thus it included not only all the various branches of the bourgeoisie, but equally the workers and the poor peasants. It was but gradually, after a long struggle, after armed intervention repeated many times over, that the whole Third Estate acquired in 1792 the legal possibility of participating in the administration of the country. The political reaction which began even before Thermidor consisted *in this, that the power began to pass both formally and effectively into the hands of an increasingly restricted number of citizens*. Little by little, first by the force of circumstances and then legally, the popular masses were eliminated from the government of the country.

It is true that the pressure of reaction made itself felt initially along the seams joining together sections of classes which constituted the Third Estate. It is equally true that if we examine a particular group of the bourgeoisie, it does not show class cleavages as clear as those which, for example, as seen separating the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, that is, two classes playing a role entirely different in production.

Moreover, in the course of the French revolution, during its period of decline, power intervened not only to eliminate, following the lines of differentiation, social groups which but yesterday marched together and were united by the same revolutionary aim, but it disintegrated equally more or less homogeneous masses. By functional specialization the given class gave birth, out of its ranks, to circles of high functionaries; such is the result of fissures which were converted, thanks to the pressure of the counterrevolution, into yawning gulfs. Following on this the dominant class itself

produced contradictions in the course of the conflict.

The contemporaries of the French revolution, those who participated and even more, the historians of the following period, were preoccupied by the question of the causes of the degeneration of the Jacobin party.

More than once Robespierre warned his partisans against the consequences which the *intoxication of power* would bring. He warned them that, holding power, they should not become too presumptuous, 'big-headed', as he said, or as we would say now, infected with 'Jacobin vanity'. However as we shall see later, Robespierre himself contributed largely to the loss of power from the hands of the petty bourgeoisie which leaned on the Parisian workers.

We will not mention here all the facts given by contemporaries concerning the diverse causes of the decomposition of the Jacobin party, as for instance their tendency to enrich themselves, their participation in contracts, in supplies, etc. Let us rather mention a strange and well-known fact: the opinion of Babeuf according to which the fall of the Jacobins was much facilitated by the noble ladies with whom they entangled themselves. He addressed the Jacobins as follows: "What are you doing, pusillanimous plebeians? Today they hug you in their arms, tomorrow they will strangle you." (If the motor car had existed at the time of the French revolution, we would also had the factor of the 'motor-harem', indicated by comrade Sosnovsky as having played a very important role in the formation of the ideology of our bureaucracy of soviets and the party).

But what played the most important role in the isolation of Robespierre and the Jacobin Club, that which cut them off completely from the working and petty-bourgeois masses, was, in addition to the liquidation of all the elements of the left, beginning with the Enragés, the Hébertistes and the Chaumettists (of all the Commune of Paris in general), the gradual elimination of the elective principle and its replacement by the principle of *nominations*.

The sending of commissioners to the armies or in the cities where the counter-revolution was once more gaining ground was not only legitimate but defensible. But when, little by little, Robespierre began to replace the judges and the commissioners of the different sections of Paris, which till then had been elected in the same way as the judges, when he began to name the presidents of the revolutionary committees and even began to substitute by functionaries all the leadership of the Communes, he could not by all these measures but reinforce the bureaucracy and kill popular initiative. Thus the Robespierre régime, instead of developing the revolutionary activities of the masses, already oppressed by the economic crisis and even more by the shortage of food, aggravated the situation and facilitated the work of the anti-democratic forces. Dumas, the president of the revolutionary tribunal, complained to Robespierre that he could not find people to serve as jurors for the tribunal, as no one wished to carry out this function. But Robespierre himself experienced this indifference of the Parisian masses in his own case when, on the tenth of Thermidor, he was led through the streets of Paris wounded and bleeding, without any fear that the popular masses would intervene in favour of yesterday's dictator.

From the evidence given, it would seem ridiculous to attribute Robespierre's fall and the defeat of the revolutionary democracy to *the principle of nominations*. However, without any doubt this accelerated the action of the other factors. Among these a decisive role was played by the difficulties of supplying food and munitions, due largely to the two years of bad crops (as also to the consecutive perturbations at the transformation of the large rural properties of the nobility into small peasant culture), to the constant rise of the price of bread and meat, to the fact that the Jacobins did not at first wish to have recourse to administrative measures to repress the avidity of speculators and rich peasants. And when they finally decided, under the pressure of the masses, to vote the law of the maximum, this law operating in the conditions of the free market and of capitalist production could

not but inevitably act as a palliative.

Let us now pass to the reality in which we live.

I believe that it is first necessary to indicate that when we use expressions such as 'the party' and 'the masses', we must not lose sight of the content which these terms have acquired in the last ten years. The working class and the party - not now *physically* but *morally* - are no longer what they were ten years ago, I do not exaggerate when I say that the militant of 1917 would have difficulty in recognizing himself in the militant of 1928. A profound change has taken place, in the anatomy and the physiology of the working class.

In my opinion it is necessary to concentrate our attention on the study of the modifications in the tissues and in their functions. Analysis of the changes which have occurred will have to show us the way out of the situation which has been created. I do not pretend to present this analysis here; I will limit myself to a few remarks.

In speaking of the working class it is necessary to find an answer to a whole series of questions. For example, what is the proportion of workers actually employed in our industry who have entered it after the revolution, and what is the proportion of those who worked in it previously? What is the proportion of those who previously participated in the revolutionary movement, have taken part in the strikes, have been deported, imprisoned, or have taken part in the war or in the Red Army? What is the proportion of workers employed in industry who work regularly? How many work only on occasion? What is the proportion in industry of semi-proletarians, semi-peasants, etc.?

If we do descend and penetrate the depths of the proletariat, of the semi-proletariat and of the working masses in general, we will find there whole parts of the population who can hardly be said to be with us. I do not want to speak here only of the workless, who constitute an ever increasing danger which, in any case, has been clearly pointed out by the opposition. I think of the masses reduced to penury, or semi-pauperized who, thanks to the derisory subsidies given out by the state, are on the border of pauperism, theft and prostitution.

We cannot imagine how people live at times but a few steps from us. It sometimes occurs that we happen on phenomena whose existence would not have been suspected in a Soviet state, and which give the impression of having suddenly discovered an abyss. It is not a question of pleading the case of Soviet power, by invoking the fact that it has not succeeded in getting rid of the doubtful heritage passed on by the tsarist and capitalist régime. No, but in our time, under our régime, we discover the existence, in the body of the working class, of crevices into which the bourgeoisie would be able to push the thin end of a wedge.

During a certain period under the bourgeois régime, the thinking part of the working class carried with it this numerous mass, including the semi-vagabonds. The fall of the capitalist régime was to have brought the liberation of the whole proletariat. The semi-vagabond elements made the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state responsible for their situation; they considered that the revolution should bring a change in their condition. These people are now far from satisfied; their situation has been ameliorated little if at all. They are beginning to consider Soviet power, and that part of the working class working in industry, with hostility. They are especially becoming the enemies of the functionaries of the soviets, of the party and of the trade unions. They can sometimes be heard speaking of the summits of the working class as the "-new nobility"-.

I will not stop here to treat of the differentiation which power has introduced into the bosom of the proletariat, and which I qualified above as "-functional"-. The function has modified the organism itself; that is to say that the psychology of those who are charged with the diverse tasks of direction

in the administration and the economy of the state, has changed to such a point that not only objectively but subjectively, not only materially but also morally, they have ceased to be a part of this very same working class. Thus for example, a factory director playing the satrap in spite of the fact that he is a communist, in spite of his proletarian origin, in spite of the fact that he was a factory worker a few years ago, will not become in the eyes of the workers the epitome of the best qualities of the proletariat. Molotov may, to his heart's delight, put a sign of equality between the dictatorship of the proletariat and our state with its bureaucratic degenerations, and what is more with the brutes of Smolensk, the sharpers of Tashkent and the adventurers of Artiemovsk. By doing this he only succeeds in discrediting the dictatorship without satisfying the legitimate discontent of the workers.

If we pass to the party itself, in addition to all the other shades which can be found in the working class, it is necessary to add those who have transferred from other classes. The social structure of the party is far more heterogeneous than that of the proletariat. It has always been so, naturally with the difference that, when the party had an intense ideological life, it fused this social amalgamation into a single alloy thanks to the struggle of a revolutionary class in action.

But power is a cause, as much in the party as in the working class, of the same differentiation revealing the seams existing between the different social strata. The bureaucracy of the soviets and of the party constitutes a new order. We are not concerned with isolated cases, of failings in the conduct of a comrade, but rather of a new social category, to whom a whole treatise should be given.

On the subject of the draft programme of the Communist International, I wrote to Leon Davidovich [Trotsky] among other things:

As regards chapter four (The Transitional Period), the way in which the role of the communist parties is formulated in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat is somewhat weak. Without doubt this vague manner of speaking of the role of the party towards the working class and the state is not the result of hazard. The antithesis between proletarian and bourgeois democracy is clearly indicated; but not a word is said to explain what the party must do to bring about, concretely, this proletarian democracy. "Attract the masses and get them to participate in construction", "re-educate its proper nature-" (Bukharin makes a point of developing this last idea, more specially in connection with the cultural revolution): these are true statements from a historical point of view, known for a long time; but they are reduced to platitudes if they are not combined with the accumulated experience of ten years of proletarian dictatorship.

It is here that the question arises of methods of leadership, methods which play such an important role. But our leaders do not like to speak of these, being afraid that it might become evident that they themselves have still a long way to go before they "re-educate their proper nature". If I were charged with the writing of a draft of a programme for the Communist International, I would have given much space, in this chapter (The Transitional Period) to the theory of Lenin on the state during the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the role of the party in the creation of a proletarian democracy such as it should have been, and not one where there exists a bureaucracy of the soviets and of the party as at present.

Comrade Preobrazhensky has promised to consecrate a special chapter in his book *The Conquests of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Year Eleven of the Revolution* to the Soviet bureaucracy.

I hope that he will not forget the role of the bureaucracy of the party, which plays a much greater role in the Soviet state than that of its sisters, the soviets themselves. I have expressed the hope to him that he will study the specific sociological phenomenon under all its aspects. There is no communist pamphlet which, in relating the treason of social democracy in Germany on 4 August

1914, does not at the same time stress the fatal role which the top bureaucracy of the party and of the trade unions played in the history of the fall of the party. On the other hand, little has been said, and that in very general terms only, on the role played by our bureaucracy of the soviets and of the party in the splintering of the party and of the Soviet state. It is a sociological phenomenon of the first order, which cannot however be understood and appreciated in its entirety, if its consequences in changing the ideology of the party and of the working class are not examined.

You ask what has happened to the spirit of revolutionary activity of the party and of our proletariat? Where has their revolutionary initiative gone? Where their ideological interests, their revolutionary values, their proletarian pride have gone? You are surprised that there is so much apathy, weakness, pusillanimity, opportunism and so many other things that I could add myself? How is it that those who have a worthy revolutionary past, whose present honesty cannot be held in doubt, who have given proof of their attachment to the revolution on more than one occasion, can have been transformed into pitiable bureaucrats? Whence comes this terrible 'Smerdyakovshchina' of which Trotsky speaks in his letter on the declarations of Krestinsky and Antonov-Ovseenko?

But if it can be expected that those who have transferred from the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, the 'individuals' in general, slide back from the point of ideas and morality, how can we explain a similar phenomenon in respect of the working class? Many comrades have noted the fact of its passivity and cannot hide their feeling of disillusion.

It is true that other comrades have seen, during a certain campaign to collect in the wheat, symptoms of the robust revolutionary attitude, proving that class reflexes still exist in the party. Recently comrade Ishchenko has written to me (or more recently has written in theses which he has equally sent to other comrades) that the collection of wheat and the self-criticism are due to the resistance of the proletarian section of the party. Unfortunately it has to be said that this is not correct. These two facts result from a combination arranged in high places and are not due to the pressure of the workers' criticism; it is for political reasons and sometimes for group reasons, or I should say faction, that a part of the top men in the party pursue this line. It is possible to speak of only one proletarian pressure — that guided by the opposition. But it has to be clearly said, this pressure has not been sufficient to maintain the opposition inside the party; more, it has not succeeded in changing its political line. I agree with Leon Davidovich who has shown, in a series of irrefutable examples, the true and positive revolutionary role which certain revolutionary movements have played by their defeat: the Commune in Paris, the insurrection in December in 1905 in Moscow. The first ensured the maintenance of the republican form of government in France; the second opened the road to constitutional reform in Russia. However, the effects of such conquering defeats are of short duration if they are not reinforced by a new revolutionary upsurge.

The most unhappy fact is that no reflex occurs either from the party or from the masses today. During two years, an exceptionally bitter struggle took place between the opposition and the high circles of the party; during the last two months events have occurred which should have opened the eyes of the most blind. However, up till now no one has the impression that the masses of the party have intervened.

As comprehensible is the pessimism of certain comrades, which I can feel equally throughout your questions.

Babeuf, after his emergence from the prison at Abbaye, looking about him, began by asking himself what had happened to the people of Paris, the workers of the faubourgs St Antoine and St Marceau, those who on 14 July 1789 had taken the Bastille, on 10 August 1792 the Tuileries, who had laid siege to the Convention on 30 May 1793, not to speak of numerous other armed interventions. In one single phrase, in which can be felt the bitterness of the revolutionary, he gave his observation: -

"It is more difficult to re-educate the people in the love of liberty than to conquer it"-.

We have seen why the people of Paris forgot the attraction of liberty. Famine, unemployment, the liquidation of revolutionary cadres (numbers of these had been guillotined), the elimination of the masses from the leadership of the country, all this brought about such an overwhelming moral and physical weariness of the masses that the people of Paris and the rest of France needed thirty-seven years-' rest before starting a new revolution.

Babeuf formulated his programme in two phases (I speak here of his programme of 1794): -"Liberty and an elected Commune-".

I must now confess something: I have never let myself be lulled by the illusion that it would be sufficient for the leaders of the opposition to present themselves in party rallies and in workers meetings in order to make the masses come over to the opposition. I have always considered such hopes, coming especially from the leaders of Leningrad (this applies particularly to Zinoviev and Kamenev) as a sort of survival from the period when they took ovations and official approbation for their expression of the true sentiment of the masses and attributed them to their imagined popularity.

I will go further: this explains to me the quick about-turn which occurred in their conduct. They passed to the opposition, hoping to take power quickly. It was with this aim that they joined the opposition of 1923 (the first opposition being that of Trotsky in Moscow). When one of the -"group without leaders-" reproached Zinoviev and Kamenev with having let down their ally Trotsky, Kamenev answered: -"We needed Trotsky to govern; to enter into the party he is a dead weight".-

However the starting-point, the premise should have been that the work of educating the party and the working class was a long and difficult task, and that it was that much more so because the minds have first of all to be cleansed of all the impurities introduced into by them the practices of the soviets and of the party and by the bureaucratization of these institutions.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the majority of the members of the party (not to speak of the young communists) have a most erroneous conception of the tasks, functions and structure of the party, to wit the conception taught them by the bureaucracy in its example, by its practical conduct and by its stereotyped formulae. All the workers who joined the party after the Civil War, entered it for the most part after 1923 (the Lenin promotion); they have no idea of what the party régime was like previously. The majority of them are without the revolutionary class education acquired in struggle, in life, in the construction of socialism. But as our bureaucracy has reduced this participation to an empty phrase, the workers are unable to acquire any part of this education. I naturally exclude, as an abnormal method of class education, the fact that our bureaucracy, by lowering real wages, by worsening conditions of work, by favouring the development of unemployment, forces the workers to struggle and awakens their class consciousness; but then this is hostile to the socialist state.

According to the conception of Lenin and of us all, the task of the party leaders consists precisely in keeping the party and the working class from the corruption of privileges, of favours, of special rights inherent in power because of its contact with remnants of the ancient nobility and of the petty bourgeoisie; we should have been prepared against the nefarious influence of the NEP, against the temptations of the ideology and morality of the bourgeoisie.

At the same time we had the hope that the party leadership would have created a new, truly worker and peasant apparatus; new, truly proletarian trade unions; a new morality of daily life. We have to recognize it frankly, clearly and in a loud and intelligible voice: the apparatus of the party has not

accomplished this task. It has shown in this double task of preservation and education the most complete incompetence: it has become bankrupt: it is insolvent. We have been convinced for a long time and the last eight months should have proved to all that the leadership of the party was advancing on a most perilous road. And it continues to follow this road.

The reproaches which we are addressing to it do not concern so much the *quantitative* side of work, but rather the qualitative side. This has to be emphasized, otherwise we will be once more submerged by a flow of figures on the innumerable and complete successes obtained by the apparatus of the party and of the soviets. It is high time to put an end to this statistical charlatanism. Study the reports of the Fifteenth Party Congress. Read that of Kossior on organizational activity. What do you find? I quote literally: “-The prodigious development of democracy in the party... .The organizational activity of the party has widened considerably.-” And then to back all this up: statistics, more statistics and again more statistics. And this was being said at the time when there were in the files of the Central Committee documents proving the terrible disintegration of the apparatus of the party and of the soviets, of persecution, of a terror playing with the life and existence of militants and workers.

This is how *Pravda* of 11 April describes the power of the bureaucracy: -“Opportunist elements, idle, hostile and incompetent, spend their time in chasing the best Soviet inventors beyond the frontiers of the USSR. A great blow must be struck against such elements, with all our strength, with all our determination, with all our courage...” None the less, knowing our bureaucracy, I would not be surprised to hear again someone speaking of the -“enormous and prodigious-” development of the activity of the masses and of the party, of the organizational work of the Central Committee implanting democracy. I am convinced that the bureaucracy of the party and of the soviets that currently exists will continue with the same success to cultivate around itself such suppurating abscesses, in spite of the noisy trials which took place last month. This bureaucracy will not change merely because it is submitted to a cleansing. I do not deny, naturally, the relative utility and the absolute necessity of such a cleansing. I merely wish to underline that it is not only a question of a change of personnel but firstly a change in methods.

In my opinion, the first condition necessary to make the leadership of our party capable of exercising an educative role, is to reduce the size and functions of this leadership. Three-quarters of the apparatus should be done away with. The tasks of the remaining quarter should have strictly determined limits. This should apply equally to the tasks, the functions and the rights of the central organisms. The members of the party must recover their rights which have been trampled upon and be given worthwhile guarantees against the despotism to which the leading circles have accustomed us.

It is difficult to imagine what is happening in the lower ranks of the party. It is especially in the struggle against the opposition that the ideological mediocrity of these cadres has manifested itself, as has the corrupting influence which they exercise on the proletarian masses of the party. If, at the top, there existed a certain ideological line, a specious and erroneous line, mixed, it is true, with a strong dose of bad faith, in the lower ranks on the other hand demagoguery of the worst order has been employed against the Opposition. The agents of the party have not hesitated to utilize anti-semitism, xenophobia, hatred of intellectuals etc. I am convinced that all party reform which is based on the bureaucracy is utopian.

To summarize: while noting, like you, the lack of spirit of revolutionary activity among the masses of the party, I see nothing surprising in this phenomenon. It is the result of all the changes which have taken place in the party and in the proletariat itself. It is necessary to re-educate the working masses and the party masses within the framework of the party and of the trade unions. This process will be long and difficult; but inevitable. It has already started. The struggle of the opposition, the expulsion

of hundreds and hundreds of comrades, the imprisonments, the deportations, while having done little as yet for the communist education of our party, have in any case had more effect than the whole apparatus taken together. In reality the two factors cannot even be compared: the apparatus has wasted the party capital handed down by Lenin, not only in a useless way but in one which has caused difficulty. It has demolished while the opposition was building.

Till now, I have reasoned abstractly from the facts of our economic and political life which have been analysed in the platform of the opposition. I have done this deliberately, since my task was to underline the changes which have occurred in the composition and psychology of the party and the proletariat in relation to the taking of power itself. These facts have perhaps given a unilateral character to my exposition. But without proceeding to give a preliminary analysis, it would be difficult to understand the origin of the economic and political errors committed by our leadership in that which concerns the peasants and the problems of industrialization, the internal régime of the party, and finally, of the administration of the state.

Astrakhan, 6 August 1928

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Dear Comrade Valentinov,

In your Meditations on the Masses of 8 July, in examining the problems of the -activity- of the working class, you speak of a fundamental question, that of the conservation, by the proletariat, of its directing role in our state. Although all the political claims of the opposition aim at this end, I agree with you that all has not been said on this question. Up to the present, we have always examined it coupled with the whole problem of the taking and conserving of political power; to make it clearer, it should have been taken separately, as a question which has its own value and importance. The reality of events has brought it to the fore.

The opposition will always retain as one of its merits, as against the party, a merit which nothing can remove, the fact that it has, in good time, sounded the alarm on the terrible decline of the spirit of activity of the working classes, and on their increasing indifference towards the destiny of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the Soviet state.

That which characterizes the flood of scandal which has become public, that which constitutes its greatest danger, is precisely this passivity of the masses (a passivity greater even among the communist masses than among the non-party masses) towards the unprecedented manifestations of despotism which have emerged. Workers witnessed these, but let them pass without protest, or

contented themselves with a few remarks, through fear of those who are in power or because of political indifference. From the scandal of Chubarovsk (to go back no further) to the abuses of Smolensk, of Artiémovsk, etc., the same refrain is always heard: -We knew already for some time.- Thefts, prevarications, violence, orgies, incredible abuse of power, unlimited despotism, drunkenness, debauchery: all this is spoken of as known facts, not for a month but for years, and also of things that everyone tolerates without knowing why.

I do not need to explain that When the world bourgeoisie vociferates on the vices of the Soviet Union, we can ignore it with a quiet disdain. We know too well the moral purity of governments and parliaments in the whole bourgeois world. But they are not the ones on whom we are to model ourselves. With us, it is a workers- state. No one today can ignore the terrible consequences of the political indifference of the working class. Moreover, the question of the causes of this indifference and that of the means to eliminate it is considered to be basic. But this obliges us to consider it in a fundamental way, scientifically, by submitting it to a profound analysis. Such a phenomenon merits our full attention.

The explanation which you give of this is doubtless correct: each of us has already laid them bare during our talks; they already form part of our platform [i.e. the platform of the left opposition of 1927]. None the less the interpretations and the remedies proposed to emerge from this painful situation have had and still have an empirical character: they refer to each particular case and do not get to the basis of the question.

To my mind this has resulted because this question itself is a new question. Up to the present we have witnessed a great number of cases where the spirit of initiative of the working class has become weakened and declined almost to the level of political reaction. But these examples became apparent to us, as much here as abroad, during a period when the proletariat was battling still for the conquest of political power.

We could not have a previous example of the decline of proletarian ardour in a period when it already had power, for the simple reason that, in history, our case is the first where the working class has retained power for such a time. Up till now, we have known what could happen to the proletariat, that is, the vacillations of spirit which occur when it is an oppressed and exploited class; but it is only now that we can evaluate on the basis of fact, the changes of its mental state when it takes over the control.

This political position (of directing class) is not without its dangers: on the contrary, the dangers are very great. I do not refer here to the objective difficulties due to the whole complex of historical conditions, to the capitalist encirclement on the outside, and the pressure of the petty bourgeois inside the country. No, I refer to the inherent difficulties of any new directing class, consequent on the taking and on the exercise of power itself, on the ability or inability to make use of it. You will understand that these difficulties would continue to exist up to a certain point, even if we allowed, for a moment, that the country was inhabited only by proletarian masses and the exterior was made up solely of proletarian states. These difficulties might be called the -professional dangers- of power.

In fact, the situation of a class which is fighting to wrest control and that of a class holding control in its hands is different. I repeat that when I spoke of dangers, I did not think of the relationships to other classes, but more of those which are created within the ranks of the victorious class itself.

What does a class on the offensive represent? The maximum of unity and cohesion. All spirit of trade or clique, let alone personal interests, become secondary. All initiative is in the hands of the militant mass itself and of its revolutionary vanguard, which is bound to the mass in a most close, organic relationship.

When a class takes power, one of its parts becomes the agent of that power. Thus arises bureaucracy. In a socialist state, where capitalist accumulation is forbidden by members of the directing party, this differentiation begins as a functional one; it later becomes a social one. I am thinking here of the social position of a communist who has at his disposal a car, a nice apartment, regular holidays, and receiving the maximum salary authorized by the party; a position which differs from that of the communist working in the coal mines and receiving a salary of fifty or sixty rubles per month. As regards workers and employees, you know that they are divided into eighteen different categories ...

Another consequence is that certain functions formerly satisfied by the party as a whole, by the whole class, have now become the attributes of power, that is, only of a certain number of persons in the party and in this class.

The unity and cohesion which formerly were the natural consequences of the struggle of the revolutionary class cannot now be maintained but by the application of the whole system of measures which have for their aim the preservation of the equilibrium between the different groups of this class and of this party, and to subordinate these groups to the fundamental goal.

But this constitutes a long and delicate process. It consists in educating politically the dominant class in such a way as to make it capable of holding the state apparatus, the party and the syndicates, of controlling and of directing these organisms. I repeat this: it is a question of education. No class has been born in possession of the art of government. This art can only be acquired by experience, thanks to the errors committed, that is by each learning from his errors. No Soviet constitution, be it ideal, can ensure to the working class an exercise without obstacle of its dictatorship and of its control over the government if the proletariat does not know how to utilise its rights under the constitution. The lack of harmony between the political capacities of any given class, its administrative ability and the judicial constitutional forms that it establishes for its own use after the taking of power, is a historical fact. It can be observed in the evolution of all classes, in part also in the history of the bourgeoisie. The English bourgeoisie, for example, fought many battles, not only to remake the constitution according to its own interests but also to be able to profit from its rights and, in particular, fully and without hindrance of its right to vote. One of Charles Dickens's books, *Pickwick Papers*, contains many incidents of this period of English constitutionalism during which the directing group, assisted by its own administrative apparatus, overturns into the ditch coaches bringing the opposition's supporters to the ballot boxes, in order that they might not be able to arrive in time to vote.

This process of differentiation is perfectly natural for the triumphant, or almost triumphant bourgeoisie. In effect, in the wider sense of the term, the bourgeoisie is made up of a series of groups and even economic classes. We recognize the existence of the upper middle and lower (petty) bourgeoisie: we know that there exists a financial bourgeoisie, a commercial bourgeoisie, an industrial bourgeoisie and an agricultural bourgeoisie. After events such as wars and revolutions, regroupings take place within the ranks of the bourgeoisie itself; new strata appear, begin to play the role which is properly theirs, as for example the proprietors, the acquirers of national goods, the nouveaux riches, as they are called, who appear after each war of a certain length. During the French revolution, during the period of the directory, these nouveaux riches became one of the factors of the reaction.

Generally speaking, the history of the victory of the Third Estate in France in 1789 is extremely instructive. First, this Third Estate was itself made up of extremely disparate elements. It included all who did not belong to the nobility or the clergy; thus it included not only all the various branches of the bourgeoisie, but equally the workers and the poor peasants. It was but gradually, after a long struggle, after armed intervention repeated many times over, that the whole Third Estate acquired

in 1792 the legal possibility of participating in the administration of the country. The political reaction which began even before Thermidor consisted in this, that the power began to pass both formally and effectively into the hands of an increasingly restricted number of citizens. Little by little, first by the force of circumstances and then legally, the popular masses were eliminated from the government of the country.

It is true that the pressure of reaction made itself felt initially along the seams joining together sections of classes which constituted the Third Estate. It is equally true that if we examine a particular group of the bourgeoisie, it does not show class cleavages as clear as those which, for example, as seen separating the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, that is, two classes playing a role entirely different in production.

Moreover, in the course of the French revolution, during its period of decline, power intervened not only to eliminate, following the lines of differentiation, social groups which but yesterday marched together and were united by the same revolutionary aim, but it disintegrated equally more or less homogeneous masses. By functional specialization the given class gave birth, out of its ranks, to circles of high functionaries; such is the result of fissures which were converted, thanks to the pressure of the counterrevolution, into yawning gulfs. Following on this the dominant class itself produced contradictions in the course of the conflict.

The contemporaries of the French revolution, those who participated and even more, the historians of the following period, were preoccupied by the question of the causes of the degeneration of the Jacobin party.

More than once Robespierre warned his partisans against the consequences which the intoxication of power would bring. He warned them that, holding power, they should not become too presumptuous, -big-headed-, as he said, or as we would say now, infected with -Jacobin vanity-. However as we shall see later, Robespierre himself contributed largely to the loss of power from the hands of the petty bourgeoisie which leaned on the Parisian workers.

We will not mention here all the facts given by contemporaries concerning the diverse causes of the decomposition of the Jacobin party, as for instance their tendency to enrich themselves, their participation in contracts, in supplies, etc. Let us rather mention a strange and well-known fact: the opinion of Babeuf according to which the fall of the Jacobins was much facilitated by the noble ladies with whom they entangled themselves. He addressed the Jacobins as follows: -What are you doing, pusillanimous plebeians? Today they hug you in their arms, tomorrow they will strangle you.- (If the motor car had existed at the time of the French revolution, we would also had the factor of the -motor-harem-, indicated by comrade Sosnovsky as having played a very important role in the formation of the ideology of our bureaucracy of soviets and the party).

But what played the most important role in the isolation of Robespierre and the Jacobin Club, that which cut them off completely from the working and petty-bourgeois masses, was, in addition to the liquidation of all the elements of the left, beginning with the Enragés, the Hébertistes and the Chaumettists (of all the Commune of Paris in general), the gradual elimination of the elective principle and its replacement by the principle of nominations.

The sending of commissioners to the armies or in the cities where the counter-revolution was once more gaining ground was not only legitimate but defensible. But when, little by little, Robespierre began to replace the judges and the commissioners of the different sections of Paris, which till then had been elected in the same way as the judges, when he began to name the presidents of the revolutionary committees and even began to substitute by functionaries all the leadership of the Communes, he could not by all these measures but reinforce the bureaucracy and kill popular

initiative. Thus the Robespierre régime, instead of developing the revolutionary activities of the masses, already oppressed by the economic crisis and even more by the shortage of food, aggravated the situation and facilitated the work of the anti-democratic forces. Dumas, the president of the revolutionary tribunal, complained to Robespierre that he could not find people to serve as jurors for the tribunal, as no one wished to carry out this function. But Robespierre himself experienced this indifference of the Parisian masses in his own case when, on the tenth of Thermidor, he was led through the streets of Paris wounded and bleeding, without any fear that the popular masses would intervene in favour of yesterday's dictator.

From the evidence given, it would seem ridiculous to attribute Robespierre's fall and the defeat of the revolutionary democracy to the principle of nominations. However, without any doubt this accelerated the action of the other factors. Among these a decisive role was played by the difficulties of supplying food and munitions, due largely to the two years of bad crops (as also to the consecutive perturbations at the transformation of the large rural properties of the nobility into small peasant culture), to the constant rise of the price of bread and meat, to the fact that the Jacobins did not at first wish to have recourse to administrative measures to repress the avidity of speculators and rich peasants. And when they finally decided, under the pressure of the masses, to vote the law of the maximum, this law operating in the conditions of the free market and of capitalist production could not but inevitably act as a palliative.

Let us now pass to the reality in which we live.

I believe that it is first necessary to indicate that when we use expressions such as -the party- and -the masses-, we must not lose sight of the content which these terms have acquired in the last ten years. The working class and the party - not now physically but morally - are no longer what they were ten years ago, I do not exaggerate when I say that the militant of 1917 would have difficulty in recognizing himself in the militant of 1928. A profound change has taken place, in the anatomy and the physiology of the working class.

In my opinion it is necessary to concentrate our attention on the study of the modifications in the tissues and in their functions. Analysis of the changes which have occurred will have to show us the way out of the situation which has been created. I do not pretend to present this analysis here; I will limit myself to a few remarks.

In speaking of the working class it is necessary to find an answer to a whole series of questions. For example, what is the proportion of workers actually employed in our industry who have entered it after the revolution, and what is the proportion of those who worked in it previously? What is the proportion of those who previously participated in the revolutionary movement, have taken part in the strikes, have been deported, imprisoned, or have taken part in the war or in the Red Army? What is the proportion of workers employed in industry who work regularly? How many work only on occasion? What is the proportion in industry of semi-proletarians, semi-peasants, etc.?

If we do descend and penetrate the depths of the proletariat, of the semi-proletariat and of the working masses in general, we will find there whole parts of the population who can hardly be said to be with us. I do not want to speak here only of the workless, who constitute an ever increasing danger which, in any case, has been clearly pointed out by the opposition. I think of the masses reduced to penury, or semi-pauperized who, thanks to the derisory subsidies given out by the state, are on the border of pauperism, theft and prostitution.

We cannot imagine how people live at times but a few steps from us. It sometimes occurs that we happen on phenomena whose existence would not have been suspected in a Soviet state, and which give the impression of having suddenly discovered an abyss. It is not a question of pleading the case

of Soviet power, by invoking the fact that it has not succeeded in getting rid of the doubtful heritage passed on by the tsarist and capitalist régime. No, but in our time, under our régime, we discover the existence, in the body of the working class, of crevices into which the bourgeoisie would be able to push the thin end of a wedge.

During a certain period under the bourgeois régime, the thinking part of the working class carried with it this numerous mass, including the semi-vagabonds. The fall of the capitalist régime was to have brought the liberation of the whole proletariat. The semi-vagabond elements made the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state responsible for their situation; they considered that the revolution should bring a change in their condition. These people are now far from satisfied; their situation has been ameliorated little if at all. They are beginning to consider Soviet power, and that part of the working class working in industry, with hostility. They are especially becoming the enemies of the functionaries of the soviets, of the party and of the trade unions. They can sometimes be heard speaking of the summits of the working class as the -new nobility-.

I will not stop here to treat of the differentiation which power has introduced into the bosom of the proletariat, and which I qualified above as -functional-. The function has modified the organism itself; that is to say that the psychology of those who are charged with the diverse tasks of direction in the administration and the economy of the state, has changed to such a point that not only objectively but subjectively, not only materially but also morally, they have ceased to be a part of this very same working class. Thus for example, a factory director playing the satrap in spite of the fact that he is a communist, in spite of his proletarian origin, in spite of the fact that he was a factory worker a few years ago, will not become in the eyes of the workers the epitome of the best qualities of the proletariat. Molotov may, to his heart-s delight, put a sign of equality between the dictatorship of the proletariat and our state with its bureaucratic degenerations, and what is more with the brutes of Smolensk, the sharpers of Tashkent and the adventurers of Artiemovsk. By doing this he only succeeds in discrediting the dictatorship without satisfying the legitimate discontent of the workers.

If we pass to the party itself, in addition to all the other shades which can be found in the working class, it is necessary to add those who have transferred from other classes. The social structure of the party is far more heterogeneous than that of the proletariat. It has always been so, naturally with the difference that, when the party had an intense ideological life, it fused this social amalgamation into a single alloy thanks to the struggle of a revolutionary class in action.

But power is a cause, as much in the party as in the working class, of the same differentiation revealing the seams existing between the different social strata. The bureaucracy of the soviets and of the party constitutes a new order. We are not concerned with isolated cases, of failings in the conduct of a comrade, but rather of a new social category, to whom a whole treatise should be given.

On the subject of the draft programme of the Communist International, I wrote to Leon Davidovich [Trotsky] among other things:

As regards chapter four (The Transitional Period), the way in which the role of the communist parties is formulated in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat is somewhat weak. Without doubt this vague manner of speaking of the role of the party towards the working class and the state is not the result of hazard. The antithesis between proletarian and bourgeois democracy is clearly indicated; but not a word is said to explain what the party must do to bring about, concretely, this proletarian democracy. -Attract the masses and get them to participate in construction-, -re-educate its proper nature- (Bukharin makes a point of developing this last idea, more specially in connection with the cultural revolution): these are true statements from a historical point of view, known for a long time; but they are reduced to platitudes if they are not combined with the accumulated

experience of ten years of proletarian dictatorship.

It is here that the question arises of methods of leadership, methods which play such an important role. But our leaders do not like to speak of these, being afraid that it might become evident that they themselves have still a long way to go before they -re-educate their proper nature-. If I were charged with the writing of a draft of a programme for the Communist International, I would have given much space, in this chapter (The Transitional Period) to the theory of Lenin on the state during the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the role of the party in the creation of a proletarian democracy such as it should have been, and not one where there exists a bureaucracy of the soviets and of the party as at present.

Comrade Preobrazhensky has promised to consecrate a special chapter in his book *The Conquests of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Year Eleven of the Revolution* to the Soviet bureaucracy.

I hope that he will not forget the role of the bureaucracy of the party, which plays a much greater role in the Soviet state than that of its sisters, the soviets themselves. I have expressed the hope to him that he will study the specific sociological phenomenon under all its aspects. There is no communist pamphlet which, in relating the treason of social democracy in Germany on 4 August 1914, does not at the same time stress the fatal role which the top bureaucracy of the party and of the trade unions played in the history of the fall of the party. On the other hand, little has been said, and that in very general terms only, on the role played by our bureaucracy of the soviets and of the party in the splintering of the party and of the Soviet state. It is a sociological phenomenon of the first order, which cannot however be understood and appreciated in its entirety, if its consequences in changing the ideology of the party and of the working class are not examined.

You ask what has happened to the spirit of revolutionary activity of the party and of our proletariat? Where has their revolutionary initiative gone? Where their ideological interests, their revolutionary values, their proletarian pride have gone? You are surprised that there is so much apathy, weakness, pusillanimity, opportunism and so many other things that I could add myself? How is it that those who have a worthy revolutionary past, whose present honesty cannot be held in doubt, who have given proof of their attachment to the revolution on more than one occasion, can have been transformed into pitiable bureaucrats? Whence comes this terrible -Smerdyakovshchina- of which Trotsky speaks in his letter on the declarations of Krestinsky and Antonov-Ovseenko?

But if it can be expected that those who have transferred from the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, the -individuals- in general, slide back from the point of ideas and morality, how can we explain a similar phenomenon in respect of the working class? Many comrades have noted the fact of its passivity and cannot hide their feeling of disillusion.

It is true that other comrades have seen, during a certain campaign to collect in the wheat, symptoms of the robust revolutionary attitude, proving that class reflexes still exist in the party. Recently comrade Ishchenko has written to me (or more recently has written in theses which he has equally sent to other comrades) that the collection of wheat and the self-criticism are due to the resistance of the proletarian section of the party. Unfortunately it has to be said that this is not correct. These two facts result from a combination arranged in high places and are not due to the pressure of the workers- criticism; it is for political reasons and sometimes for group reasons, or I should say faction, that a part of the top men in the party pursue this line. It is possible to speak of only one proletarian pressure - that guided by the opposition. But it has to be clearly said, this pressure has not been sufficient to maintain the opposition inside the party; more, it has not succeeded in changing its political line. I agree with Leon Davidovich who has shown, in a series of irrefutable examples, the true and positive revolutionary role which certain revolutionary movements have played by their defeat: the Commune in Paris, the insurrection in December in

1905 in Moscow. The first ensured the maintenance of the republican form of government in France; the second opened the road to constitutional reform in Russia. However, the effects of such conquering defeats are of short duration if they are not reinforced by a new revolutionary upsurge.

The most unhappy fact is that no reflex occurs either from the party or from the masses today. During two years, an exceptionally bitter struggle took place between the opposition and the high circles of the party; during the last two months events have occurred which should have opened the eyes of the most blind. However, up till now no one has the impression that the masses of the party have intervened.

As comprehensible is the pessimism of certain comrades, which I can feel equally throughout your questions.

Babeuf, after his emergence from the prison at Abbaye, looking about him, began by asking himself what had happened to the people of Paris, the workers of the faubourgs St Antoine and St Marceau, those who on 14 July 1789 had taken the Bastille, on 10 August 1792 the Tuileries, who had laid siege to the Convention on 30 May 1793, not to speak of numerous other armed interventions. In one single phrase, in which can be felt the bitterness of the revolutionary, he gave his observation: - It is more difficult to re-educate the people in the love of liberty than to conquer it-.

We have seen why the people of Paris forgot the attraction of liberty. Famine, unemployment, the liquidation of revolutionary cadres (numbers of these had been guillotined), the elimination of the masses from the leadership of the country, all this brought about such an overwhelming moral and physical weariness of the masses that the people of Paris and the rest of France needed thirty-seven years- rest before starting a new revolution.

Babeuf formulated his programme in two phases (I speak here of his programme of 1794): -Liberty and an elected Commune-.

I must now confess something: I have never let myself be lulled by the illusion that it would be sufficient for the leaders of the opposition to present themselves in party rallies and in workers meetings in order to make the masses come over to the opposition. I have always considered such hopes, coming especially from the leaders of Leningrad (this applies particularly to Zinoviev and Kamenev) as a sort of survival from the period when they took ovations and official approbation for their expression of the true sentiment of the masses and attributed them to their imagined popularity.

I will go further: this explains to me the quick about-turn which occurred in their conduct. They passed to the opposition, hoping to take power quickly. It was with this aim that they joined the opposition of 1923 (the first opposition being that of Trotsky in Moscow). When one of the -group without leaders- reproached Zinoviev and Kamenev with having let down their ally Trotsky, Kamenev answered: -We needed Trotsky to govern; to enter into the party he is a dead weight.-

However the starting-point, the premise should have been that the work of educating the party and the working class was a long and difficult task, and that it was that much more so because the minds have first of all to be cleansed of all the impurities introduced into by them the practices of the soviets and of the party and by the bureaucratization of these institutions.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the majority of the members of the party (not to speak of the young communists) have a most erroneous conception of the tasks, functions and structure of the party, to wit the conception taught them by the bureaucracy in its example, by its practical conduct and by its stereotyped formulae. All the workers who joined the party after the Civil War, entered it

for the most part after 1923 (the Lenin promotion); they have no idea of what the party régime was like previously. The majority of them are without the revolutionary class education acquired in struggle, in life, in the construction of socialism. But as our bureaucracy has reduced this participation to an empty phrase, the workers are unable to acquire any part of this education. I naturally exclude, as an abnormal method of class education, the fact that our bureaucracy, by lowering real wages, by worsening conditions of work, by favouring the development of unemployment, forces the workers to struggle and awakens their class consciousness; but then this is hostile to the socialist state.

According to the conception of Lenin and of us all, the task of the party leaders consists precisely in keeping the party and the working class from the corruption of privileges, of favours, of special rights inherent in power because of its contact with remnants of the ancient nobility and of the petty bourgeoisie; we should have been prepared against the nefarious influence of the NEP, against the temptations of the ideology and morality of the bourgeoisie.

At the same time we had the hope that the party leadership would have created a new, truly worker and peasant apparatus; new, truly proletarian trade unions; a new morality of daily life. We have to recognize it frankly, clearly and in a loud and intelligible voice: the apparatus of the party has not accomplished this task. It has shown in this double task of preservation and education the most complete incompetence: it has become bankrupt: it is insolvent. We have been convinced for a long time and the last eight months should have proved to all that the leadership of the party was advancing on a most perilous road. And it continues to follow this road.

The reproaches which we are addressing to it do not concern so much the quantitative side of work, but rather the qualitative side. This has to be emphasized, otherwise we will be once more submerged by a flow of figures on the innumerable and complete successes obtained by the apparatus of the party and of the soviets. It is high time to put an end to this statistical charlatanism. Study the reports of the Fifteenth Party Congress. Read that of Kossior on organizational activity. What do you find? I quote literally: -The prodigious development of democracy in the party ... The organizational activity of the party has widened considerably.- And then to back all this up: statistics, more statistics and again more statistics. And this was being said at the time when there were in the files of the Central Committee documents proving the terrible disintegration of the apparatus of the party and of the soviets, of persecution, of a terror playing with the life and existence of militants and workers.

This is how Pravda of 11 April describes the power of the bureaucracy: -Opportunist elements, idle, hostile and incompetent, spend their time in chasing the best Soviet inventors beyond the frontiers of the USSR. A great blow must be struck against such elements, with all our strength, with all our determination, with all our courage ...- None the less, knowing our bureaucracy, I would not be surprised to hear again someone speaking of the -enormous and prodigious- development of the activity of the masses and of the party, of the organizational work of the Central Committee implanting democracy. I am convinced that the bureaucracy of the party and of the soviets that currently exists will continue with the same success to cultivate around itself such suppurating abscesses, in spite of the noisy trials which took place last month. This bureaucracy will not change merely because it is submitted to a cleansing. I do not deny, naturally, the relative utility and the absolute necessity of such a cleansing. I merely wish to underline that it is not only a question of a change of personnel but firstly a change in methods.

In my opinion, the first condition necessary to make the leadership of our party capable of exercising an educative role, is to reduce the size and functions of this leadership. Three-quarters of the apparatus should be done away with. The tasks of the remaining quarter should have strictly determined limits. This should apply equally to the tasks, the functions and the rights of the central

organisms. The members of the party must recover their rights which have been trampled upon and be given worthwhile guarantees against the despotism to which the leading circles have accustomed us.

It is difficult to imagine what is happening in the lower ranks of the party. It is especially in the struggle against the opposition that the ideological mediocrity of these cadres has manifested itself, as has the corrupting influence which they exercise on the proletarian masses of the party. If, at the top, there existed a certain ideological line, a specious and erroneous line, mixed, it is true, with a strong dose of bad faith, in the lower ranks on the other hand demagoguery of the worst order has been employed against the Opposition. The agents of the party have not hesitated to utilize anti-semitism, xenophobia, hatred of intellectuals etc. I am convinced that all party reform which is based on the bureaucracy is utopian.

To summarize: while noting, like you, the lack of spirit of revolutionary activity among the masses of the party, I see nothing surprising in this phenomenon. It is the result of all the changes which have taken place in the party and in the proletariat itself. It is necessary to re-educate the working masses and the party masses within the framework of the party and of the trade unions. This process will be long and difficult; but inevitable. It has already started. The struggle of the opposition, the expulsion of hundreds and hundreds of comrades, the imprisonments, the deportations, while having done little as yet for the communist education of our party, have in any case had more effect than the whole apparatus taken together. In reality the two factors cannot even be compared: the apparatus has wasted the party capital handed down by Lenin, not only in a useless way but in one which has caused difficulty. It has demolished while the opposition was building.

Till now, I have reasoned abstractly from the facts of our economic and political life which have been analysed in the platform of the opposition. I have done this deliberately, since my task was to underline the changes which have occurred in the composition and psychology of the party and the proletariat in relation to the taking of power itself. These facts have perhaps given a unilateral character to my exposition. But without proceeding to give a preliminary analysis, it would be difficult to understand the origin of the economic and political errors committed by our leadership in that which concerns the peasants and the problems of industrialization, the internal régime of the party, and finally, of the administration of the state.

Astrakhan, 6 August 1928

P.S.

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