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J. STALIN

WORK IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS

CO-OPERATIVE PUBLISHING SOCIETY OF FOREIGN
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J. STALIN

WORK IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS

*Speech delivered at the Joint Plenum
of the Central Committee and the
Central Control Commission of the
Communist Party of the Soviet Union
January 11, 1933*

THIS COPY BELONGS
TO NICK WRIGHT



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Comrades!

I think that the previous speakers have correctly described the state of Party work in the rural districts, its defects and merits—particularly its defects. Nevertheless, it seems to me they have not said the most important thing in regard to the defects of our work in the rural districts, they have not exposed the roots of these defects. And yet this aspect is of the greatest interest for us. Permit me, therefore, to express my point of view on the defects of our work in the rural districts, to express it with all the straightforwardness that is characteristic of the Bolsheviks.

What has been the main defect in our work in the rural districts during the past year, during 1932?

The main defect has been that this year our grain collections have been accompanied by greater difficulties than was the case last year, in 1931.

This cannot be explained by the bad state of the harvest, because this year our harvest has not been worse, but better than it was last year. No one can deny that the volume of grain collections in 1932 has been larger than in 1931, when the drought in five of the main districts of the northeast of the U.S.S.R. considerably reduced the grain balance of the country. Of course, in 1932 also, we have suffered a certain loss of harvest as a consequence of unfavourable climatic conditions in the Kuban and Terek, and also in certain districts of the Ukraine. But there can be no doubt

whatever that these losses do not represent half the loss we suffered in 1931 as a result of the drought in the northeastern districts of the U.S.S.R.

Hence, in 1932 we had in the country more grain than we had in 1931. And yet, in spite of these circumstances, our grain collections in 1932, have been accompanied by greater difficulties than last year.

What was this due to? What are the causes of this defect in our work? How is this discrepancy to be explained?

1. It is to be explained first of all by the fact that our comrades in the localities, our workers in the rural districts, failed to take into consideration the new situation created in the rural districts by the declaration of collective farm trading in grain. And precisely because they failed to take the new situation into consideration, precisely for that reason they were not able to reorganise their work in a new way, to fit in with the new conditions. When there was no collective farm trading in grain, when there were not two prices for grain, the state price and the market price—the situation in the countryside was one thing. When collective farm trading in grain was declared, the situation had to change sharply, because the declaration of collective farm trading implies the legalisation of a market price for grain, which is higher than the established state price. That this circumstance inevitably had the effect of causing among the peasants a certain restraint in delivering their grain to the state requires no proof. The peasants calculated in the following way: "Collective farm trading in grain has been declared; a market price has been legalised; in the market I can obtain more for a given quantity of grain than I can get for an equal quantity delivered to the state—hence, if I am not a fool, I must hold up the grain a little, deliver less to the state, hold more grain for collective farm

trade and in this way obtain more for the same quantity of grain sold."

This is the simplest and most natural logic!

But the unfortunate thing is that our workers in the rural districts, at all events many of them, failed to understand this simple and natural thing. In order to prevent the disruption of the grain deliveries set by the Soviet Government, the Communists, in this new situation, should have, from the very first day of the harvest, as early as July 1932—accelerated and speeded up grain deliveries. This is what the situation demanded. But what did they do actually? Instead of speeding up grain deliveries, they began to speed up the formation of all sorts of funds and by that increased the restraint of the grain producers in fulfilling their obligations to the state. Failing to understand the new situation, they began to fear, not that the restraint of the peasants in delivering grain may retard the grain collection, but began to fear that it would not occur to the peasants to hold up the grain in order later to bring it on the market for collective farm trading, and perchance, deliver all their grain to the elevators.

In other words, our rural Communists, the majority of them at all events, appreciated only the *positive* side of collective farm trading, understood and assimilated its *positive* side, but absolutely failed to understand and to assimilate the *negative* sides of collective farm trading—they failed to understand that the negative sides of collective farm trading would do great harm to the state if they, *i.e.*, the Communists, did not from the very first days of the grain harvest, accelerate the grain collecting campaign to the utmost.

And this mistake was not only committed by the workers in the collective farms. It was committed also by the directors of Soviet farms who criminally held

up grain which ought to have been delivered to the state and began to sell it on the side at a higher price.

Did the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee, in issuing their decree on the development of collective farm trade, take into consideration the new situation created by collective farm trading in grain? Yes, they did take it into account. In that decree it is definitely stated that collective farm trading in grain may commence only after the grain collecting plan has been wholly and completely fulfilled, and when the seed will have been stored. The decree definitely states that only after the grain collections have been completed and the seed stored—approximately on the 15th of January 1933—only after these conditions had been fulfilled would collective farm trading in grain be allowed. By this decree the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee, as it were, said to the workers in the rural districts: do not allow your attention to be obscured by worries about funds and reserves of various kinds, do not be diverted from the main task, develop grain collections from the very first day of the harvest and accelerate them, for the first commandment is—fulfil the plan of grain collections, the second commandment, is—get the seed stored, and only after these conditions have been fulfilled, can collective farm trading in grain be started and developed.

Perhaps the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars made the mistake of not having sufficiently strongly emphasised this aspect of the matter and did not sufficiently loudly warn our workers in the rural districts about the dangers concealed in collective farm trading. But there cannot be any doubt whatever that they did warn against these dangers and uttered the warning sufficiently clearly. It must be admitted that the Cen-

ral Committee, and the Council of People's Commissars somewhat over-rated the degree of Leninist tempering and perspicacity of our workers in the localities, not only of our district workers but also of a number of regional workers.

Perhaps collective farm trading in grain should not have been declared? Perhaps this was a mistake, particularly if we bear in mind the circumstance that collective farm trading not only has positive sides but also certain negative sides?

No, it was not a mistake. No revolutionary measure can be safeguarded against certain negative sides if it is not properly applied. The same thing can be said in regard to collective farm trading in grain. Collective farm trading is necessary and advantageous to the countryside as well as to the town, to the working class as well as to the peasantry. And precisely because it is advantageous it had to be introduced.

By what were the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee guided when they introduced collective farm trading in grain?

First of all, by the desire to widen the base of commodity circulation between town and country and thus improve the supplies of agricultural produce to the workers, and of urban manufactures to the peasants. There cannot be any doubt that state and co-operative trade alone are inadequate for this purpose. These channels of commodity circulation had to be supplemented by a new channel—collective farm trading. And we supplemented them by introducing collective farm trading.

Furthermore, the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee were guided by the desire, by means of collective farm trading, to give the collective farmers an additional source of income and to strengthen their economic position.

And finally, they were guided by the desire, by introducing collective farm trading, to give the peasants a fresh stimulus to improve the work of the collective farms both in regard to sowing and to harvesting.

You know that all the considerations by which the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee were guided have been wholly and entirely confirmed by the facts in the life of the collective farms in the recent past. The accelerated process of strengthening the collective farms, the cessation of withdrawals from the collective farms, the growing stream of individual farmers into the collective farms, the striving on the part of the collective farmers to accept new members with greater discrimination—all this, and much that is similar, undoubtedly shows that collective farm trading has not only not weakened, but on the contrary, has strengthened and consolidated the position of the collective farms.

Hence, the defects in our work in the rural districts are not to be explained by collective farm trading, but by the fact that it has not been always properly applied, by inability to take the new situation into consideration, by inability to reorganise the ranks, to make them fit in with the new situation created by the declaration of collective farm trading in grain.

2. The second cause of the defects in our work in the rural districts is that our comrades in the localities—and not only those comrades—failed to understand the change that has taken place in the conditions of our work in the rural districts as a result of the predominant position which the collective farms have established for themselves in the principal grain regions. We all rejoice at the fact that the collective form of farming has become the predominant form in our grain regions. But not all of us understand that this circumstance does not diminish, but increases our

cares and responsibilities in regard to developing agriculture. Many think that as soon as we have achieved, say, 70 per cent or 80 per cent of collectivisation in this or that district, or this or that region, we have got all we want, and can now leave things to take their natural course, to leave things to go their own way, on the assumption that collectivisation will automatically have its effect and will by itself raise agriculture to a higher level. But this is a great mistake, comrades. As a matter of fact, the transition to collective farming, as the predominant form of farming, does not diminish, but increases our cares in regard to agriculture, does not diminish but increases the leading role of the Communists in raising agriculture to a higher level. Leaving things to themselves is now more dangerous than ever for the development of agriculture. Leaving things to themselves may prove fatal to the whole cause.

As long as individual farming predominated in the countryside the Party could confine its intervention in the work of developing agriculture to certain acts of assistance, counsel and warning. At that time the individual farmer had to take care of his farm himself, because he had no one upon whom to throw the responsibility for his farm, which was his own personal farm, and he had no one to rely upon except himself. At that time the individual farmer had to care about the sowing and harvesting, and all the processes of agricultural labour generally, himself, if he did not want to be left without bread and fall a victim to starvation. When the transition was made to collective farming the situation changed materially. The collective farm is not an individual farm. In fact the collective farmers now say: "The collective farm is mine and not mine; it belongs to me, but it also belongs to Ivan, Philip, Mikhail and other members of the collective farm; the collective farm is common property."

Now, he is a collective farmer, the individual farmer of yesterday, and the collectivist of today—now he can throw the responsibility upon others and can rely on other members of the collective farm, knowing that the collective farm will not leave him without bread. That is why the collective farmer has begun to care less than when he was on his individual farm, because the cares and responsibility for the farm are now shared by all the collective farmers.

What follows from this? From this it follows that the burden of responsibility for conducting farming has been transferred from individual peasants to the leadership of the collective farm, to the leading core of the collective farm. Now the peasants demand care for the farm and the sensible management of the business, not from themselves, but from the leadership of the collective farms, or to put it more correctly, not so much from themselves as from the leadership of the collective farms. And what does that mean? That means that the Party can no longer confine itself to individual acts of intervention in the process of agricultural development.

Now, it must take over the leadership of the collective farms, take upon itself the responsibility of caring for and helping the collective farmers to develop their farms on the basis of science and technique.

But this is not all. A collective farm is a large undertaking. And a large undertaking cannot be managed without a plan. A large agricultural enterprise embracing hundreds and sometimes thousands of households can only be managed by means of planned leadership. Without that it must inevitably fall into ruin and decay. Thus you have another condition arising under the collective farm system which is radically different from the conditions of conducting individual, small farming. Can we leave such enter-

prises to the so-called natural course of things, to itself? Clearly, we cannot. In order to manage such an enterprise the collective farm must be provided with a certain minimum number of people with at least an elementary education, with people who are capable of planning the business and conducting it in an organised manner. It goes without saying that without the systematic intervention of the Soviet Government in the work of collective farm construction and without its systematic aid, it is impossible to organise such enterprises.

And what follows from this? From this it follows that the collective farm system does not diminish, but increases the cares and the responsibilities of the Party and of the government in regard to the development of agriculture. From this it follows that if it desires to lead the collective farm movement, the Party must enter into all the details of collective farm life and collective farm leadership. From this it follows that the Party must not diminish but multiply its contacts with the collective farms, that it must know all that is taking place in the collective farms in order to come to their timely aid and to avert the dangers that threaten them.

But what do we see in actual practice? In actual practice we see that a number of district and regional organisations are divorced from the life of the collective farms and from their requirements. People sit in their offices and complacently scratch with their pens and fail to see that the development of the collective farm is passing by their bureaucratic offices. In some cases this divorcement from the collective farms reached such dimensions that certain members of regional organisations learned of what was going on in the collective farms in their regions, not from the competent district organisations, but from members of the

Central Committee in Moscow. This is sad, but true, comrades. The transition from individual farming to collective farming should have led to the strengthening of Communist leadership in the rural districts. As a matter of fact, in a number of cases, this had led to a number of Communists resting on their laurels, boasting of high percentages of collectivisation, while leaving things to themselves, leaving them to the natural course of things. The problem of planned leadership of collective farming should have led to the strengthening of Communist leadership of the collective farms. As a matter of fact, in a number of cases, it found Communists quite out of it, and the collective farms were being run by ex-officers, ex-Pellura-ists and enemies of the workers and peasants generally.

That is the position in regard to the second cause of the defects in our work in the rural districts.

3. The third cause of the defects in our work in the rural districts is that many of our comrades over-rated the collective farms as a new form of farming, over-rated it and transformed it into an icon. They decided that as soon as the collective farms arose as the socialist form of farming nothing else was required, that that was sufficient to secure the proper management of these farms, for the proper planning of collective farming, for transforming the collective farms into exemplary socialist farms.

They failed to understand that in regard to their organisational structure, the collective farms are still weak and require considerable assistance from the Party, both in regard to providing them with tried Bolshevik cadres, as well as in providing leadership of the everyday affairs of the collective farms. But this is not all, and not even the most important. The most important defect is that many of our comrades over-rated the strength and the possibilities of the collective

farms as the new form of organisation of agriculture. They failed to understand that notwithstanding the fact that they are socialist forms of farming, the collective farms by themselves are not yet by a long way secure against all sorts of dangers and against the penetration of all sorts of counter-revolutionary elements into their leadership, that they are not secure against anti-Soviet elements, under certain circumstances, utilising the collective farms in their own interests.

The collective farm is a socialist form of *economic* organisation in the same way as the soviets are a socialist form of *political* organisation. Both the collective farms and the soviets represent great gains of our revolution, great gains of the working class. But collective farms and soviets represent only a *form* of organisation, a socialist form it is true, but only a *form* of organisation for all that. Everything depends upon the *contents* that are poured into this form. We know of cases when soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies, for a certain time, supported the counter-revolution against the revolution. That was the case in the U.S.S.R., for example, in July 1917, when the soviets were led by the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, and when the soviets shielded the counter-revolution against the revolution. That was the case in Germany at the end of 1918, when the soviets were led by the Social-Democrats, and when they shielded the counter-revolution against the revolution.

Hence, it is not only a matter of the soviets as a form of organisation, even though that form represents a great revolutionary gain. The matter lies primarily in the content of the work of the soviets, the matter lies in the character of the work of the soviets, it is a matter of *who* precisely are leading the soviets—revolutionaries or counter-revolutionaries. This, properly speaking, explains the fact that counter-revolutionaries do

not always oppose soviets. It is well known, for example, that during the Kronstadt mutiny, Miliukov, the leader of the Russian counter-revolution, expressed himself in favour of soviets, but without Communists. "Soviets without Communists"—that at the time was the slogan of Miliukov, the leader of the Russian counter-revolution. The counter-revolutionaries understood that it is not merely a matter of the soviets, as such, but primarily a matter of who is to lead them.

The same thing must be said about collective farms. Collective farms, as the socialist form of organisation of farming, may perform miracles of economic construction if they are led by real revolutionaries, Bolsheviks—Communists. On the other hand, collective farms may, for a certain period, be transformed into a shield for all sorts of counter-revolutionary acts if those collective farms are run by Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Petlura officers and other whiteguards. ex-Denikin-ists and Kolchak-ists. At the same time it must be borne in mind that the collective farm, as a form of organisation, is not only not secure against the penetration of anti-Soviet elements but, at first, even presents certain facilities which enable counter-revolutionaries to utilise them temporarily. As long as the peasants were engaged in individual farming, they were scattered and separated from each other and, consequently, the counter-revolutionary designs of anti-Soviet elements among the peasantry could not be very effective. The situation is altogether different when the peasants adopt collective farming.

The collective farm gives the peasants a ready-made form of mass organisation. Consequently, the penetration of anti-Soviet elements into the collective farms and their anti-Soviet activity may be much more effective. We must assume that the anti-Soviet elements take all this into account. It is well known that a

section of the counter-revolutionaries, for example, in the North Caucasus, themselves strive to create something in the nature of collective farms and use these as a legal screen for their underground organisations. It is also known that the anti-Soviet elements, in a number of districts where they have not yet been exposed and crushed, willingly join the collective farms and even praise the collective farms in order to create within them nests for their counter-revolutionary work. It is also known that a section of the anti-Soviet elements are now speaking in favour of collective farms, but they do not want Communists to be in the collective farms. "Collective farms without Communists"—that is the slogan that is now being borne among anti-Soviet elements. Hence, it is not only a matter of the collective farms themselves, as a socialist form of organisation, but primarily, it is a matter of the content that is poured into this form; it is primarily a matter of *who* stands at the head of the collective farms and *who* leads them.

From the point of view of Leninism, collective farms, like the soviets, taken as a form of organisation, are a weapon, and only a weapon. Under certain conditions, this weapon may be turned against the revolution. It can be turned against counter-revolution. It can serve the working class and the peasantry. Under certain conditions, it can serve the enemies of the working class and the peasantry. It all depends upon in whose hands this weapon is held and against whom it is directed.

The enemies of the workers and the peasants, guided by their class instincts, are beginning to understand this.

Unfortunately, certain of our Communists do not understand this.

And it is precisely because certain of our Communists

have not understood this simple thing—it is precisely for that reason that we have the situation now in which a number of collective farms are being managed by well camouflaged anti-Soviet elements who are organising wrecking and sabotage in these collective farms.

4. The fourth cause of the defects in our work in the rural districts is the inability of a number of our comrades in the localities to re-align the front of the struggle against the kulaks, their inability to understand that the face of the class enemy has changed in recent times, as also have the tactics of the class enemy in the rural districts, and that it is necessary to change our tactics correspondingly in order to achieve successes. The enemy has understood the changed situation, has understood the strength and the might of the new system in the countryside, and having understood that, has reorganised his ranks, has changed his tactics—has passed from frontal attacks against the collective farms to the work of quietly sapping and undermining. But we did not understand this, we failed to observe the new situation and continued to seek the class enemy where he no longer exists, we continued to apply the old tactics of simplified struggle against the kulak at a time when these very tactics had long become obsolete.

They seek the class enemy outside the collective farms, they seek for persons with ferocious visages, with enormous teeth, thick necks, and with short barrelled rifles* in their hands. They seek for kulaks like those depicted on our posters. But such kulaks have long ceased to exist on the surface. The present-day kulaks and their henchmen, the present-day anti-Soviet

* Service rifles with the barrels sawn off at the stock; an easily concealed weapon used by the kulaks in their struggle against the Soviet authorities.—*Ed.*

elements in the rural districts, are in the main "quiet," "smooth-spoken," almost "saintly" people. There is no need to look for them far from the collective farm, they are actually in the collective farm occupying positions as warehouse men, stores managers, accountants, secretaries, etc.

They will never say "down with the collective farms." They are "in favour" of collective farms. But inside the collective farms they carry on such sabotage and wrecking work that certainly do the collective farms no good. They will never say "down with grain collection." They are "in favour" of grain collections. They "only" resort to demagogy and demand that the collective farm should create a fund for live stock breeding—three times as large as that actually required. They demand that an insurance fund be formed—three times as large as is actually required; that the collective farm provide from six to ten pounds of bread per worker per day for public catering, etc. Of course, after such "funds" have been formed and such grants for public catering have been made, after such rascally demagogy, the economic power of the collective farm must be undermined and there can be no room for grain collections.

In order to be able to see such a cunning enemy and not to submit to demagogy, one must possess revolutionary vigilance, one must possess the ability to tear the mask from the face of the enemy and reveal to the collective farmers his real counter-revolutionary features. But have we many Communists in the rural districts who possess these qualities? Not infrequently Communists not only do not expose these class enemies, but on the contrary, they themselves submit to their rascally demagogy and drag at their tail.

Failing to observe the class enemy in his new mask, and being unable to expose his rascally machinations,

certain of our comrades not infrequently pacify themselves with the thought that the kulaks no longer exist, that the anti-Soviet elements in the rural districts have already been destroyed as a result of the application of the policy of liquidating the kulaks as a class, and hence, that it is now possible to reconcile ourselves with the existence of "neutral" collective farms which are neither Bolshevik nor anti-Soviet, but which, spontaneously, as it were, must come over to the side of the Soviet Government.

But this is a profound mistake, comrades. The kulaks have been defeated, but they are not yet crushed by a long way. More than that, they will not be crushed very soon if the Communists will sit around and yawn, sit around in smug contentment in the belief that the kulaks will themselves walk into their graves, in the process of their spontaneous development, so to speak. As for "neutral" collective farms, there is no such thing, nor can there be. "Neutral" collective farms is a fantasy conjured up by those who have eyes but do not see. With the acute class struggle that is now going on in our Soviet land, there is no room for "neutral" collective farms; in such circumstances, collective farms can be *either* Bolshevik *or* anti-Soviet. And if we are not leading certain collective farms it means that anti-Soviet elements are leading them. There cannot be the slightest doubt about that.

5. Finally there is one other cause of the defects in our work in the rural districts. This cause is the under-rating of the role and responsibility of the Communists in the work of collective farm construction. The under-rating of the role and responsibility of Communists in the work of grain collecting. In speaking of the difficulties accompanying grain collections, Communists usually throw the responsibility upon the peasants; they declare that the peasants are to blame. But this

is absolutely untrue, and certainly unjust. The peasants are not to blame at all. If we are to speak of responsibility and blame, then that responsibility falls wholly and entirely upon the Communists; we, the Communists alone, are to blame for all this.

There is not, nor has there ever been, such a powerful and authoritative government in the world as our Soviet Government. There is not, nor has there ever been, such a powerful and authoritative party in the world as our Communist Party. No one is preventing us, nor can anyone prevent us from managing the affairs of the collective farms in the manner that suits the interests of the collective farms, the interests of the state. And if we are not always able to manage the affairs of the collective farms in a way that Leninism calls for, if, not infrequently, we commit crude, unpardonable errors, in grain collections, say, then we, and we alone are to blame.

We are to blame for not having observed the negative sides of collective farm trading in grain, and for having committed a number of crude mistakes. We are to blame for the fact that a number of our organisations have become divorced from the collective farms, are resting on their laurels and are allowing themselves to drift with the stream of spontaneity. We are to blame for the fact that a number of our comrades still overrate the collective farms as a form of mass organisation and fail to understand that it is not so much a matter of the form as of taking the leadership of the collective farms into our own hands and ejecting the anti-Soviet elements from the leadership of the collective farms. We are to blame for their not having noted the new situation and not having appreciated the new tactics of the class enemy, the tactics of quietly sapping and undermining.

The question arises, why blame the peasants?

I know whole groups of collective farms which are developing and flourishing, which punctually carry out the requirements of the state and are becoming economically stronger day after day. On the other hand, I also know of a number of collective farms, in the neighbourhood of the first-mentioned collective farms which, in spite of the fact that their harvests are the same, and that they are working under the same objective conditions as the former, are nevertheless wilting and in a state of decay. Why is this? The reason is that the first group of collective farms is led by real Communists, while the second group is led by duffers, they have Party membership cards in their pockets, it is true, but they are duffers all the same.

The question arises, why blame the peasants?

The result of under-rating the role and responsibility of Communists is that, not infrequently, the cause of the defects in our work in the rural districts are sought for where it is no use seeking for them, and because of that, the defects remain unremoved.

There is no use seeking for the causes of the difficulties connected with the grain collections among the peasantry; we must seek them among ourselves, in our own ranks. Because *we* are in power, *we* are in command of the instruments of government, *we* are called upon to lead the collective farms and *we* must bear the whole of the responsibility for the work in the rural districts.

These are the main reasons which determine the defects of our work in the rural districts.

It may be thought that I have depicted too gloomy a picture, that all our work in the rural districts is just one mass of defects. That of course is not true. As a matter of fact, while we have these defects, we have a number of important and decisive achievements to record in our work in the rural districts. But I said

at the beginning of my speech that I did not set out to describe our achievements, that I set out to speak only about the defects in our work in the rural districts.

Can these defects be rectified? Yes, certainly they can. Will we rectify them in the near future? Yes, certainly we will. There cannot be the slightest doubt about that.

I think that the Political Department of the machine and tractor stations and of the Soviet farms* represent one of the decisive means by which these defects can be removed in the shortest time. (*Loud and prolonged applause*)

* Special departments to be set up in accordance with the decisions of the January Plenum for the purpose of guiding Party work in the rural districts which are served by machine and tractor stations. See: *Resolutions of the Plenum of the C.C. and C.C.C.—Ed.*



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