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Meeting of the Enlarged Executive of the C. I. Report on the Peasant Question.

Ninth Session. — April 2nd, 1925.

Chairman: Comrade Haken (Czechoslovakia).

Comrade Bukharin

(met with prolonged and stormy applause):

Many comrades in the foreign Parties, and even in the best Parties, believe that the peasant question is something of secondary importance. Although it is now the fashion amongst us to declare oneself a Leninist and of course to combat Trotskyism most energetically, nevertheless there are in reality many Parties which pay insufficient attention to the peasant question. Amongst many comrades and many Parties the opinion even prevails that the peasant question is important only for a backward country like Russia, and that this question could be assigned a minor place in the more advanced countries. Such a train of thought is entirely false and (by the way) rather Trotskyist. It is just Trotsky who developed the following ideas in his theory of the permanent revolution: in Russia the proletariat can only retain power after its victory with the aid of the State organs of the Western proletariat, because the population of our country is overwhelmingly agricultural. This statement is false: it is not only false, but the matter has not been thought to its conclusion. The victory of the international proletariat would then signify its world victory, the seizure of power all over the world — and then we should have to ask ourselves: "What is the composition of the entire population of the earth?" When we put the question in this manner we immediately see that the proletariat is relatively and absolutely the minority of the total population of the earth as against the overwhelming peasant majority. Can this question then be eliminated? Can it be said that the world revolution and the world victory of the proletariat will solve the problem? By no means. On the contrary, with the victory of the world proletariat this problem will be reproduced on the widest possible scale. Only a few figures to illustrate my idea: we know that the entire population of the earth is 1,700,000,000. More than half of this number live in Asia (approximately 900 millions). China alone has 436 millions. That means that a quarter of the earth's population live in China; and of these 436 millions — the statistics are, it is true, extremely poor — approximately 400 millions are peasants. In India this ratio of the peasantry to the entire population is

220 out of 320 millions; in the Union of Soviet Republics it is 111 out of 130 millions. The overwhelming majority of the colonial population consists of peasants.

We all know that the colonial question will play a great rôle in the process of the world revolution. We know that from a certain standpoint the antagonism between capital in the highly developed metropolis and the backward colonies is one of the chief contradictions of capitalism, that these contradictions are nothing else but — figuratively speaking — the contradiction between the world city, the centres of present industry and world economy, and the world village, that is the colonial periphery of the centres. Almost all of the principal questions of our policy are connected in one way or another with the colonial problem. Even the question of the unity of the trade unions in connection with the Left course of the British proletariat is closely related to the problem of the colonies. And the problem of the colonies is a specific form of the agrarian and peasant question. There is, therefore, no doubt that this problem is not a minor, secondary, subordinate problem, but that it may be called one of the most important problems of our epoch. However, this problem cannot be looked at exclusively from this standpoint but must be considered from the standpoint of production and of the seizure of political power by the proletariat. If the peasantry is so large a percentage of the entire population, it is evident that they are of rather great weight economically speaking. The industrial proletariat of the highly developed countries often have a certain false opinion, an illusion that this problem is not of importance. But how are matters in reality? As for the economic situation, Great Britain is in Asia, and France looked at economically is in Africa. It is evident that the close attention now paid by the British working class to the colonial problem contains a presentiment of future problems. The simple British worker, seeing the disturbances in India, must ask himself, "H'm, if I do not support India now and then it separates from Great Britain, what will I have to eat after the conquest of political power?" The putting of the question in this light is, we see, already taking place in many circles of the highly developed economically skilled proletariat. It is closely related to the circumstance that the problem of the conquest of political power by the proletariat has become one of the chief problems of our day.

How do matters look when we consider the peasant question from the standpoint of the **distribution of social forces at the present moment?** When we ask under whose influence the peasantry stands, how its forces are divided among the different classes, we must reply that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries we have great influence upon the peasantry, but that in the important industrial countries our influence is practically nil. In Germany, a country where the economic depressions after the war with their various consequences raged most violently, we see that the "Reichslandbund", which is under the leadership of large landowners, has more than two million organised members. Half of the agricultural proletariat is in this organisation.

If we consider the fact alone and then compare the number of middle, large, small and "dwarf" peasants, who also belong to this organisation, we will see that the overwhelming majority of the peasantry and one half of the agricultural proletariat are directly organised in hostile organisations. The social composition of the leadership of the Reichslandbund is as follows: at the top are large landowners and large capitalists. The ideology is monarchist, the backbone of the apparatus consists of ex-officers, and high officials. In France also, where the peasantry is not as reactionary as it is in Germany, the picture is, for all that, to say the least — frightful. Here, we have six or seven large peasant and agrarian organisations, and all of them without exception, are led by large landlords and large capitalists.

The organisational structure of these organisations is similar in all countries. Their mainstay is a political party, or several political parties. In form, they represent a sort of agricultural trade union, which organises all classes from the large landlord to the dwarf peasant, and even the agricultural labourer. Within these organisations, however, there is a sort of hierarchy at the top of which are the big capitalists. The cadres of these organisations are distinctly hostile to the proletariat.

In connection with these organisations, there are various cooperative societies, which economically, are bound up with the banks.

I have quoted here only two examples; that of the French and the German, but such a situation prevails everywhere.

Recently, a **process of differentiation** has been observed in these organisations. This is an extremely important and big process. But, when we examine the situation as a whole, when we draw the balance, excluding the colonies, we will see that our work is only in the preliminary stage.

In a period when the revolutionary wave is rushing forward we are able to carry large sections of the proletariat with us and "infuse" the other sections of the people with our ideas. In the present period of stabilisation, (temporary it is true) we are faced with the danger of all these strata being employed against the proletariat.

Fascism, black reaction, has its great reserves in the rural districts. It is really a scandalous situation when in Germany, half of the agricultural proletariat belongs to the enemy camp. It is very difficult to capture political power when the relation of forces are so arranged.

I can say here, quite bluntly, that from the standpoint of the revolutionary proletariat, as well as from the standpoint of Leninism, that it is a piece of utter stupidity to regard this question as a secondary question.

The bourgeoisie, the agrarian classes, the heavy industrialists, understand the position perfectly well. The professors serving the big landlords, and the big capitalists, regard the peasantry as the reserves of the anti-revolutionary camp, and base their hopes upon the conservative character of the peasantry.

Naturally, comrades, we can say that the hopes of the bourgeoisie and of the landlords are very limited. The bourgeoisie and the agrarians fail to understand that conservatism **under no circumstances is an eternal** feature of the peasantry, that there have been epochs as the peasant revolts, in which the peasants have shown that they have nothing in common with conservatism. And even today, the capitalist system is shaken so profoundly that various features of peasant conservatism have partly disappeared. We know that in the early period of the rapid development of capitalism, particularly in those countries which developed more rapidly, certain strata of the proletariat became bourgeois. The more explicable is it therefore, that various strata of the peasantry — for example those that own private property, individual farms, etc., —

should to an even greater degree have inclinations towards the bourgeoisie camp. But this organic epoch of capitalism was a specific epoch, and we cannot mechanically transfer the specific character of this epoch to another epoch, particularly to the present epoch. In fact, we can establish a thesis that simultaneously with the disappearance of the bourgeois elements in the proletariat, the "de-bourgeois" of the proletariat, if we may so describe it, a similar process is going on among the peasantry. This process commences first among the semi-proletarian stratum of the peasantry, the dwarf peasants, etc. Of course, this process will be much slower than that among the proletariat, and for that reason our task of bringing these strata of people under our influence, is much more difficult than winning that section of the proletariat, which has become bourgeois, and is influenced by social democracy. But the more energetically must we work in this field. We must bring numerous strata of the peasantry, the poor peasantry, the small peasants, under our influence, otherwise, we shall never achieve victory.

Roughly speaking, the present period in the development of capitalism, regarded from the social standpoint, is nothing **else than a fight for the peasantry between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat**, and I must say that the bourgeoisie understands this characteristic tendency much better than do the Communist Parties. Herein lies a great danger. We talk about united front tactics, we have spoken about the workers and peasants government, we have passed resolutions about the necessity for winning over the peasantry, etc. But we have done very little in this sphere. Whereas the bourgeoisie is conducting real united front tactics towards the peasantry, and have done a great deal in this respect.

In many countries: Germany, France, England and partly also in America, a discussion is now going on in the bourgeois press over such questions, for example as **self-sufficing economy**. Certain German economists desire to see an economic system in which the industry and the agriculture of the country can satisfy all the requirements of that country. This economic motive is accompanied by a military motive: "In war, we are at the mercy of the enemy because economically, we are dependent upon other countries". And third, there is a class motive: "strongly developed industry brings with it an increase in the urban proletariat, which is corrupted by communism, etc. We must have a process of developing backwards; we must become agrarianised."

It is no accident that this discussion is taking place at the present time. It is the expression of a **still more active anti-proletarian orientation of the ruling class**.

In France, there is at the present time, a strong movement in the French agrarian and bourgeois circles. The slogans of this movement are approximately as follows: "Back to the land", or "by the land and for the land", or "land for peasant families", etc. A whole literature has developed on this theme.

The discussion contains something that is of interest. There is a tendency, for example, which says more output. We must have large industrial farms. This is one of the orientations of the bourgeoisie. But, the overwhelming majority of the agrarians, say: "No! That's all very well from the standpoint of the immediate increase of output; but from our class standpoint, we must not advocate this. We must not permit such proletarians to be produced in large masses. From the social standpoint, we are on the contrary, for settling larger numbers of peasants". In France, numerous attempts were made to substitute the large number of agricultural workers who have been attracted from the land to the towns by foreigners: Poles, Czechs, Italians, etc., who very frequently obtain small grants of land, in order at the same time to extend agriculture and to secure a firmer social foundation.

In Germany also, an analogous controversy is going on between one wing, which has a strong agrarian colour, and another which is less agrarian in character.

I quote these facts in order to show that the bourgeoisie is conducting the united front tactics consciously and deliberately, not merely by means of fine phrases, as we often do.

A very precise formulation of the united front tactics as conducted by the bourgeoisie, is given in an American financial newspaper. This paper says to the farmers: "The demagogues (i. e. the communists) propose that you adopt united front tactics with the working class. The idea of united

*) re-translated from the German.

front tactics is a good one, the farmers stand in need of such tactics, of political assistance, but they should seek this with the big banks, with Big Business." This is a very precise formulation of the idea of the united front tactics with the peasantry, against the proletariat. How did they carry these tactics out? The tactics are expressed in various concessions made by the bourgeoisie to the peasantry and take various forms. First of all there are the agrarian reforms in backward countries. These reforms are not very extensive, we must fight against them and advocate greater and more extensive revolutionary demands, but these reforms exist and sometimes are very cleverly introduced. For example, the peasants in the border districts are first given small grants of land intended for distribution; then another small section of the peasantry, and then a third, and by this means the expectations and the hopes of the entire peasantry that their position will improve, are kept alive. That is how they keep the peasantry in hand. The situation is different in Roumania, where these reforms are not carried out so cleverly. Nevertheless, the bourgeoisie has managed to win over a section of the peasantry to its side. The second question arising out of these tactics, is that of agricultural credits for cooperative societies. In the formal aspect we have the same problem in Russia, but, from the standpoint of the class character and historical aims, the position is somewhat different. The whole weight is placed on the agricultural credits. The organisational form is the agricultural society.

I will give you a small example: the agrarian and peasant organisations in Germany have their own banks which are closely connected with the biggest banks in the country. In Finland the cooperative societies are concentrated in two private banks. In the United States of America, the farmers on the one hand, are ruined by the Trusts and by the financiers. On the other hand the latter give considerable financial aid to the farmers and in this way, hold them in power. Another form of united front tactics on the economic field is the demand for protective tariffs, by which during the agrarian crisis, the landlords were able to draw the peasantry into their sphere of influence.

I spoke here of the methods of the United Front tactics of the bourgeoisie towards the peasantry. If we do not shut our eyes to this danger, we must realise that a new orientation is needed in the Communist Parties. The main error of Trotskyism consists in the under-estimation of the peasant question. When many comrades who raise a hue and cry against Trotskyism still hold to their wrong standpoint in this question, I say that this is an impossible attitude.

We of the RCP have tried to find the right standpoint and we have found it. That is one of our main reasons for fighting against Trotskyism, and that is why the other Parties must do the same if they say that they want to oppose Trotskyism. Their foremost task is then to adopt the right attitude towards the peasant question, and what is more, not to swerve from the right political line of policy.

What then are the prejudices which exist in the Communist Parties against the right attitude? I think that these prejudices are mainly based on narrow guild ideology of the workers in the industrial countries. Thus, for instance some time ago, I had a conversation with a very fine German comrade, and in the course of the conversation he said to me: "What do you expect to achieve with this workers' and peasants' government. No one will have anything to do with this slogan." Now what does such a saying mean from the viewpoint of our prognosis? It means that we must concentrate all our energies on overcoming this ideology.

Lenin said once that most of the mistakes made during the struggles and in the revolution arose because slogans and devices, as well as the whole orientation which suited one epoch, are mechanically transferred to another epoch. In the earlier epoch of capitalism, the main question of our prognosis was: how will capitalism develop? Who will get the upper hand, big or small industries? What will be the process of differentiation among the former peasantry? How long will capitalism continue to develop in this way? The role of the fight was: whatever hinders the development of capitalism must cease to exist. We must do away with all the obstacles in the way of the proletariat. This was the general orientation. But to-day when we are confronted with utterly different tasks: conquest of political power, overthrow of capitalism, when we no longer pay attention to the prognosis, such an orientation is utterly wrong.

Formerly, the principle of organisation was: the establishment of one's own class is the main task. This was almost everything to us. But in the epoch when we are confronted by the task of conquering political power, the question of allies is one of the main questions of the entire policy.

In the epoch of conquest of political power, there is nothing more damnable than this narrow psychology. No matter how we embellish it, objectively it is opportunism.

Comrades, in what does Trotskyism consist? Among other things it consists of: "More proletarian", "more industrial", "not too much turning one's face to the villages". And this implies the risk of breaking up the workers and peasants bloc, consequently, the risk of destroying proletarian dictatorship.

It is just the viewpoint: "Why should I bother about these villagers?" which is the essence of Trotskyist opportunism, even if it flies proletarian colours.

In my draft theses all the great questions of the agrarian and peasant policy are considered from three main viewpoints.

1. Long before the conquest of political power,
2. Immediately before the conquest of political power,
3. After the conquest of political power.

The failure to understand these changes was the main error of the preceding period. We have always asserted against the views of the reformists — and our assertion was right then and is now right — that industry and agriculture on a large scale is economically more rational. We would be reactionaries if we hindered its development. But if for instance, before the conquest and immediately after the conquest of power we point blank refuse to break up big agricultural concerns to divide part of them among the peasantry for the only reason that they are economically more profitable, we lose the entire revolution.

In this connection I should like to mention the most striking of this, namely the examples of the Hungarian revolution. I maintain that we have not made the fullest possible use of this example given us by the Hungarian comrades. It would be very useful for all Communist Parties to read the books, documents and declarations referring to it and to try to understand what happened there. One is justified in saying that the main cause of the defeat of the Hungarian revolution was the agrarian question, the utterly inadmissible policy of our Hungarian comrades in this question.

The position in Hungary was such that 72% of all owners — peasants and big agrarians possessed only 15% of the total amount of land. To set free large territories was absolutely necessary under such circumstances. Instead of winning over the peasantry socially, bringing it over to the side of the proletariat creating thus a strong base in the midst of the peasantry and arousing enthusiasm within the Red Army for the purpose of overcoming the resistance of the peasants, a different policy was indulged in. No land was parcelled out on the plea that big agricultural concerns are technically more rational. A very interesting declaration was issued which was laid down before the meeting of the Workers' Councils by the Communist Party. The peasantry had revolted, the proletariat stood in need of an ally and now comes the Communist Party and says in this declaration that it would be utterly wrong to divide the big estates, as this would only strengthen private ownership. With such a policy, proletarian dictatorship was supported in a way to allow the former big landowners to be again in full possession of their former property. Even if we admit that the forces were inadequate and that were other reasons for the loss of power we would now have a strong reserve in the peasantry, if our action had been different at that time. The peasants would say: after all the Communists gave us the land, it is true that the landowners took it away from us, but the Communists are fine fellows nevertheless. This would be of course a great argument for us. But the recollection of such a declaration is a great disadvantage. Under such difficult circumstances, a proletariat without alliance was deemed to be the loser. But it is an interesting fact that some Hungarian comrades fail to understand this even to-day. In 1919, namely, about five years ago even Comrade Varso failed to understand what he of course understands to-day. But Comrade Hevesi does not understand it even now. We have statements from him in the organ of our Peasant International which are supposed to be a justification of that policy. He says that the situation in Russia is utterly different from the situation in Hungary. In Hungary it was a case of a small country with a higher industrial development than in

Russia, and the small industrial workers had to live. A big revenue from agriculture was required, and this could only be achieved through big agricultural concerns. He writes as follows: "Our mistake consisted only in not doing our utmost to impress social consciousness and especially the consciousness of the peasants with the correctness of this viewpoint."

"Consciousness" so to speak in the Hegelian sense, is rather good for Hungarian peasants. But the main thing is that they give nothing to the peasants, and we know that to give nothing or very little weighs heavier in the scales of history than some kind of consciousness. This applies of course in a much fuller measure to the peasantry. The Hungarian Soviet Government is really a great lesson to us. We have spoken at our Congress about Italy and Poland, and I think it would be as well to publish all documents from the history of Hungary as well as from the history of the revolutionary development in Italy and Poland and also in Russia.

Comrades, we must not forget the situation here previous to the October Revolution: enormous revolutionary ferment among the peasantry. Two hundred and forty two peasant demands formulated at various meetings were sent to Moscow and Petersburg from different parts of Russia. They included many stupid utopian demands, which of course we saw at once. But nevertheless we declared to the peasantry that immediately after the conquest of political power we would put their demands into law. We supported these demands and as soon as political power was in our hands we passed them into law.

As far as production and technique go, we probably lost by it, but this was the price we paid for victory and through which we consolidated the dictatorship and achieved the bloc between the peasantry and the working class. Thus, we must study the negative experiences of the Hungarian revolution, the negative Italian experiences and the positive experiences of the October Revolution. I am of the opinion that in order to make an end of all scepticism and in connection with this question the Communist Parties must make a careful study of these lessons in order to realise that the peasant question is not a secondary question, but a most important strategical task without solution of which victory is impossible.

In studying the present conditions in the village (in the widest sense of this word) we must first of all admit that **a change has taken place after the war in the mutual relations between town and country.**

Marx said once: the changes in the relations between town and country are a sign of changes in the whole epoch. This is perfectly correct. The development of capitalism meant inequality between town and country, and the present period has also specific features as far as relations between town and countryside are concerned. We notice that the relative importance of the village with relation to the town has increased. From the standpoint of economy, agriculture with relation to industry plays to-day a greater role than before the war. From the standpoint of class: the agrarians, the peasantry play to-day **relatively** (not absolutely) a more important role than the urban class. And therefore, also from the standpoint of politics: the influence and the political power of the village is greater than before.

The second important phenomenon on this field is **the agrarian crisis** which has already been dealt with in Zinoviev's report and in Varga's speech.

The third phenomenon connected with it is **the growth of peasant activity in all countries** without exception.

And the fourth fact of a social nature is the fact of **the differentiation of the peasantry and its organisations.** These are the specific features and the most important phenomenon of this situation.

Because of this situation there are the differences in the peasant movement which we have to record. The differences between the big agrarians and the peasants and the differences **ces.** Another set of differences are those within the peasantry itself. All these differences give us an opportunity to make use of the situation and to draw proper political conclusions. These differences develop in various forms. The difference between the peasants and big agrarians follows in backward countries the line of agrarian reform. This is the struggle for land. The gulf between the peasantry and the bourgeoisie in the so-called civilised countries follows two main lines, on the one hand it follows the line of taxation policy and on the other hand, the line of economic policy — of syndicates and trusts. The third feature of the situation is the war peril.

All this represents an objective basis for our policy. We have only to take advantage of **the differences between the big landowners and the peasants** in the backward countries to get a revolutionary solution of the agrarian question in the chief sense of the word. In connection with questions of taxation, corn prices and prices for manufactured articles, we must use the slogan of joint struggle against trust capital.

Comrades, I must declare here most emphatically that in some Communist Parties it has not yet been understood that **we must go to the peasants with wholly empiric, wholly concrete demands.** The Social Democrats and the bourgeoisie on the other hand proceed with concrete demands, and this makes a great impression on the peasants. The Communist Parties must not ignore these partial demands. On the contrary, in this respect we can give much more, but we must associate all partial demands with our revolutionary prospects. This is the main thing as far as we are concerned.

What is the best method to rouse the peasants against the bourgeois state? Evidently **the taxation problems.** Taxation policy is the policy of the state. When the peasants protest against the burden of taxation, they protest against the state. It is the most important thing for us to bring the peasants into conflict with the bourgeois State. Taxation policy and the communist demands in connection with it, that is the most important bridge to bring over the peasants from the standpoint of love for the bourgeois state to the standpoint of hatred of the bourgeois state.

There are comrades who hold the view that by decreasing the burden of taxation for the peasantry we are increasing it for the workers. This is a very bad argument. The contrary is the case: it is because the poor and middle peasantry is as interested in the lowering of the taxes as the working class that we must march together. The same applies to prices for manufactured articles. One of the most important causes of the problem of the scissors is the policy of the monopolist organs of capitalism. The slogan of struggle against monopolist capitalism, against cartel profits in the form of **struggle for lower prices for manufactured articles** is well adapted to bring together the forces of the peasants and the workers.

It is the same with the struggle against the war peril.

On the strength of this situation, we witness now various movements within the peasantry, movements of various types, revolutionary agrarian movements, movements based on the agrarian crisis, etc. A specific form was the **farmer movement in the USA** where close on a third of the farmers were ruined. Then there are movements based on bad harvests, as for instance in some parts of Germany. An important chapter in the history of movements are **Colonial movements.** There are also various mixed kinds of movements. But there is no doubt whatever that the magnitude, the intensity, the social weight of these movements has been in the ascendant of late. Moreover, the differentiation process within the peasant associations has been a general feature. This process takes place in all countries where peasant organisations exist.

I have already described the situation on this field. In all countries, except in the Colonies, the leadership of the peasant organisations was in the hands of the big agrarians and big peasants. Lately we witness a process of differentiation and splitting off of the organisations of the small peasants, dwarf farmers, etc. In Bulgaria there is a fairly big left wing within the former Stambolisky union, in Czechoslovakia there are the so-called independent small owners (Domoviny), and we see similar phenomena in Germany, Poland, France, etc.

This kind of differentiation in the peasant organisations is an incontrovertable fact. Here we are confronted with various questions of propaganda, agitation and organisation.

In connection with peasant organisations we must take into consideration various types and various possibilities. Where organisations already exist they probably exist in two different forms, in the form of a political party and in the form of the so-called peasant federation. I think that our tactics with respect to the already existing organisations, must generally speaking, consist in **supporting the left wings of these organisations or in forming a bloc with them.** The form and methods depend on various circumstances. In how far and when we should split off these left wings also depends on specific circumstances. The characteristic feature of all these organisations is that they embrace a variety of social elements,

from the big agrarians down to the agricultural labourer. This is even noticeable in organisations which have split off, for even they embrace various sections of peasants. We must support the left organisations within the Party and the federations. But when necessary must not be afraid of causing splits.

But the most important question is, which form of organisation we should give preference to **when the initiative is ours**. Not the form of a political party, I think, but **the form of a peasant federation**. Political parties are not suitable for various reasons. For instance, this would mean the adherence of our Party must be on the one hand members of the Communist Party and on the other hand members of another party. We would also have only communist groups, among the peasants, only a federation and not an extensive peasant organisation. We have no need for Communist peasant sects, little groups. We must capture and organise the large numbers of dwarf farmers and small peasants. For this the form of the peasant union is much more suitable. We need not offer these peasants the full communist programme. We do not want to bring about a state of communist constipation. We must bring forward elementary demands, we must be much more radical than any other organisation, we must give this organisation great scope and must establish our influence through the activity of our Party comrades. If necessary we can form fractions in this organisation. But under certain circumstances, the organisation can be under our influence even without fractions. Thus the form of a **peasant union** and not of political parties is the most suitable form. Some of our parties have already been successful in this direction. But in comparison with the great task which is before us, these are only the first timid steps on the way to the capture of the masses.

Comrades, I should like also to say something about the specific problem of **the relations between the working class and the peasantry in Russia**. But I think it will be more expedient to deal with it in my report on the Russian Party discussion.

I reiterate, it is a fact that very little study goes on in our Parties. And yet this is the most elementary necessity.

The bourgeoisie understands the problem much better, it studies more and is much more efficient on this field than the Communist Parties.

I close my report by expressing the wish and the hope that after this session of the Enlarged Executive and after the theses on the Bolshevisation of the Party, all Communist Parties and the Communist International will become truly Bolshevised and will above all turn their attention to the agrarian and peasant question, applying the Leninist policy on this field. (Loud applause.)

Comrade Powers (America):

The American farmer has always been a striking and important international figure. The United States is the greatest manufacturing and financial nation in the world, yet at the same time it is the leading agricultural nation in the world. There are in America over ten million people employed in agriculture. Agricultural products are about 40% of the value of the total production of the United States.

A word or two about the **social composition of the American farmers**. One sixth of all the farms are mortgaged, about one and a half million. In 1880 we only had one fourth of the farmers as tenants — today more than 70% of all the improved land is operated by tenants. Then there are two million agricultural workers and these farm hands are disfranchised because they are migratory. The standard of living of the American farmer is higher than that of the average European peasant but is not as high as is imagined. His average income is something like ten dollars a week.

In the United States we do not have a big special land-owning class in the European sense. The same bankers and manufacturers, who owned the mines, factories, etc. are the owners of the land used by the farmers. Another point is that conditions are such that many farmers are simultaneously farmers and workers; and industrial workers turn to farming for several months of the year.

The farmers of America have had a good deal of experience in political action and economic organisation. There are today more than ten thousand farmers cooperatives, and these are struggling against great odds because of the power-

ful organisations of the banks and railway systems, yet these farmers are making headway.

The agricultural crisis of the United States is a part of the international agricultural crisis and the reason that it was so severe is that in the United States the gap between the organisation, or rather lack of organisation, of agricultural economy and the high efficiency of industrial organisation is greatest.

Today the farmers' purchasing power is 20% less than before the war. Nearly 25% of the farmers in 15 mid western states are either bankrupt or are holding on to the land because their creditors, the bankers and mortgagees, cannot take it. One out of every twelve farmhouses is today deserted, not because the farmer does not want to use it, but because he cannot afford to be there. He cannot pay his taxes, his bills, nor for his machinery. Because of this condition we have had within the last 10 years six and a half million farmers migrating to the cities.

Recent months have shown a temporary improvement in the conditions of the American farming masses. This was occasioned primarily by a temporary condition under which the other grain producing countries had a poor harvest, and the United States had a better crop than in the preceding year. The wheat farmers have had to turn the financial gains resulting from this to their bankers to pay debts and taxes.

The President of a middle western band said:

"Just now, it is true that farmers are buying as little as possible. When they want something of the store, they are apt to put a few hogs into their wagons, drive into town, sell to some local shipper, and make their purchases with the hog money, instead of borrowing at the bank."

The representatives of the agricultural interest in Congress have likewise expressed their dissatisfaction with the present conditions, and are today as insistent as everyone as to the need for the government looking into the agricultural situation and providing so-called measures of relief. The capitalist interests in America are awakening to the fact that not only is the agricultural crisis not over, but that the already increasing signs of growing competition from Argentina and Australia, and the likelihood of European agriculture being revived through the improvement of economic conditions in Europe, will continue to serve as producing a source of difficulties, of intensification of the agricultural crisis.

What are the Party tasks in the light of this situation? First of all I think the American Party must pay much more attention to our agricultural work. The specific reasons I have stated already and Comrade Bukharin has emphasised the general more clearly. We in the last year have not given as much of our attention to our work amongst the agricultural masses as we had in the preceding year. For some time the American Party did make some headway in establishing contact with the poor farming masses, and in throwing them into the struggle against the big capitalists.

The tendency towards expropriation of the agricultural masses, affords us a peculiarly valuable point of attack. These farmers who are being expropriated, are now coming into the big basic industries. They are unskilled, but native elements. When one realises that so far the vast majority of the workers in the basic industries in the United States are foreign born elements, whence we have difficulties of language and nationality, because of this condition, and that a stream of native elements is coming into these basic industries one can see the importance of the communists concentrating on activities amongst these expropriated proletarianised agricultural masses. This hastens the creation of a homogeneous American working class. The Party must pay special attention to this.

A word or two upon concrete slogans. If there is any country in the world where the issue of taxation can be utilised by the communists to solidify the agricultural mass with the proletariat, it is in the United States. The cost of government in the United States has increased nearly five fold from 1916 to 1924, and the farmers are the worst sufferers from the increase in taxation. On the high cost of living issue the Communist Party in America has thrown out certain slogans which are very practicable and effective, in reaching the farming masses. The slogan "The Land to its Users", stirred the farmers because the American farmers are so rapidly being expropriated. The slogan of a five year moratorium on all farm debts and mort-

gages was a point of contact. Why? Because farm debts are increasing rapidly, the American farm debt today is close to fifteen million dollars.

We also have had some experience in maintaining our **political contact** with the farming masses. The Party can gain a good deal by rousing the awakening industrial masses, and getting them to organise into a Labour Party, and by getting these stirred agricultural masses to organise themselves into their own leagues, and form blocs and alliances with the political organisations of the working class as against the political organisations of the capitalist class. In certain states we have already peculiar American manifestations of political unity between the workers and the agrarian masses. In Minnesota and other states, for instance, we have the Farmer Labour Parties. In these the Communists are making headway.

In America hastening the revolution demands greater co-operation between the masses, with the revolutionary elements, the Communists, at their head, and the exploited, expropriated poor farming masses against the capitalist class and its executive committee, the capitalist state.

Comrade Boschkovitch (The Balkans):

Comrades, the workers' and peasants' revolts in Bulgaria, the peasants' revolt in Southern Bessarabia, the Albanian incidents, the peasant uprisings in Greece, the aggravation of the national problem and the intensification of the peasant movement in Yugoslavia prove that a political and social crisis is developing in the Balkans which can be made the starting point for a great workers and peasants movement. The fight for emancipation is being directed against the agrarian feudal relations and against national oppression. For three or four years after the imperialist world war, when the revolution was hammering at the door, the bourgeoisie in the Balkans became alarmed and attempted to solve the agrarian problem by means of agrarian reforms. But the efforts of the Balkan government did not soften class contradictions and only led to greater complications and aggravations of the class relations between the peasantry and the bourgeois state power.

Everywhere in the Balkan countries the agrarian reform was carried out in a mutilated form. The Stamboulsky Government, which is to be regarded as the first purely peasant government, went the farthest. With the overthrow of Stamboulsky, the new Tzankow Government began the liquidation of the agrarian reform. The lesson of the peasant government in Bulgaria is primarily that a stable, independent peasant government is impossible in modern states and that the power of the peasant parties accelerates the process of class differentiation in the country and the parties themselves and aggravates the class struggle within them, and that moreover the toiling peasants can only hold power in alliance with the working class.

Apart from agrarian policy and social relations a policy of colonisation is prevalent in the Balkans which is rendering the relations between the town and the country very acute. The policy of colonisation in Greece, Roumania and Yugoslavia is playing an important part. One can count in millions the unfortunate peasants who have been driven from their own places, where they could have received land from the land owners, where they have lived for centuries and to which they were bound all the methods of land cultivation. These peasants have been driven into regions occupied by national minorities.

In Greece also the agrarian and feudal relations are driving the peasants along the path of revolution. The Greek government has not gone beyond the mere promise of agrarian reform.

The recent revolution in Albania has rendered the situation so critical that this country may soon become the scene of revolutionary events.

As the result of agrarian and feudal social relations, a swing to the left is to be observed in the peasant organisations in the Balkans. Attention must be drawn to the vast number of peasant organisations which have come into existence since the war and to the left tendencies which have begun in the old existing organisations. The Farmers' League (Stamboulsky's Party in Bulgaria), has been in existence for 25 years. According to its statutes the League is an organisation of the whole peasantry. But after the overthrow of Stamboulsky a majority of the large peasants left the League.

The crisis within the Party revealed the fact that there existed three tendencies: a Right, a Centre and a Left.

The Right wing (Turlakov, Tomov and Manolov) have now left the Party. They advocate a compromise with the bourgeoisie and are in favour of a coalition with Tzankov. Their influence is insignificant.

The Centre (K. Pavlovitch, Smortchevsky and others) are advocates of the Stamboulsky policy and are in favour of a government of a left bloc with a platform of new elections and a democratic regime. The influence of the Centre is confined to the remnants of the intellectuals who have remained in the Party, the members of Parliament and the sections abroad.

The Left wing is led by the member of Parliament, Petrini and the lawyer, Grangarovy. This tendency is conducting a vigorous struggle against the Right for a United Front with the Communist Party and for a workers' and peasants' government. The peasant masses exclusively support the Left Wing in the League.

In Yugoslavia, the Croatian Republican Peasant Party, the party of Raditch, which became a mass Party only after the world war, thanks to its nationalist programme, is of great importance. The agrarian question, and other social questions are of secondary importance. Recently, the Right elements split off from the C.R.P.P. and became the agents of the Serbian Pashitch Government. The last elections prove that the Raditch Party is a mass Party but that the leaders are Centrists who advocate "the British type of monarchy" and have joined the bourgeois left bloc (the bloc of national compromise and peasant democracy). This fact called forth a violent protest from the Left Wing of the Raditch Party which is now in process of formation, and which will in the long run win the following of the peasant masses while the Centrist leaders will remain leaders without a follower. In the summer of 1924 the C.R.P.P. joined the International Peasants' Council but the leaders are for the present moment declaring that this is purely a formal move. In addition to the Raditch Party, there is the Farmers' League in Yugoslavia formed since the war. According to the programme of this League, the consumers cooperatives will form the nuclei of future society, labour is to be compulsory and the means of production is to belong to the toilers. The land should belong to those who have always occupied and cultivated it, and landowning, serf and wage labour relations are to be abolished. Monarchists, large peasants and intellectuals, are at the head of the League. The Left elements are conducting the fight against the monarchist leadership, as was revealed at the Fifth Congress of the League held in Belgrade last year. In the elections before last the League obtained 30,000 votes, while at the last elections it obtained 120,000 votes. It is a great peasant Party.

A Slovenian Republican Peasant Party was recently formed in Slovenia; it is in reality a Slovenian branch of the Raditch Party.

There exists only one peasant party in Roumania (the Zaranists). The party advocates the transfer of the land to the peasants and the creation of a democratic peasant state. According to the programme of the Party, large estates are to be limited to from 100 to 500 hectares, according to the density of population and the character of the soil.

In this party also there are three tendencies, a Right, a Centre and a Left. Apart from fundamental agricultural demands, the national factor plays an important part in this party, as closely concerning the Bessarabian organisations.

In Greece there is the League of Ex-Service-men, which has 60,000 members and numerous organisations in towns and villages. Apart from its immediate economic demands, the League carries on anti-militarist propaganda and organises the peasantry for the fight for the land. The recent peasant uprising proved that the League enjoys considerable influence. The government persecutes the organisations that are members of the League. The existence of this organisation proves that the fight is now going on in the Balkans for the conquest of the peasantry. The Communist Party is also active in this fight. Our Party for many years committed many errors and mistakes were made with relation to the peasantry and to the estimate of the rôle of the peasantry in the revolution. Owing to these errors we failed to win the peasantry and to establish our influence over them.

In order to win the peasant masses for the Communist Party we must advocate the organisation of the peasants and

support the work of the International Peasant Council. Moreover, where the peasant organisations are ideologically and organisationally under the control of the large peasants and the intellectuals, the Communists must support the Left Wing and assist the Left elements in creating fractions of the International Peasant Council in order to deprive the class enemy of the leadership and to transform the organisations into fighting organisations affiliated to the International Peasant Council.

In order to establish the closest possible cooperation between the organisations of the proletariat and the peasantry and to create permanent or temporary blocs between the workers and the peasants, we must enlist the intermediate organisations of land and forest workers as well as the building workers and wood-workers trade unions, which are active in the industrial undertakings in the countryside and in the large agrarian estates, the wounded soldier organisations, the leagues of ex-combatants, etc., all of which can be of considerable use.

Our Party should direct particular attention to the **agricultural consumers' cooperatives** especially where no other peasant organisations exist. Fractions of the International Peasant Council should be formed within these cooperatives.

Apart from the creation of economic organisations of all kinds, it is the duty of the Communist Party to advocate the formation of non-party peasant organisations, such as the **Toiling Peasants' Defence Committees, Peasants' councils** may also be formed. The aim of the peasants' defence committees is to advocate concrete political and economic aims; these are represented by the peasants' organisations of the transitional type. If the struggle of the toiling masses in the towns and countryside reaches the stage of insurrection, peasants' councils are to be formed, since the seizure of power will be involved.

In order to give the work among the peasantry an active turn, sections of the Central Committees of the Parties are to be formed for work in the country. An authoritative member of the Central Committee should be placed at the head of each section. The first task of these sections is to study the agrarian question and the peasants movement. Moreover, they must maintain permanent contact with the International Peasant Council.

In the Balkans, a land of peasants, the Bolshevisation of the Parties is unthinkable without a correct policy on the peasant question. Our task is completely to liquidate all Right deviations on the peasant question. Only by conducting a correct policy in the spirit of the resolutions of the Communist International and the International Peasant Council will our Party be able to repair its former errors and defects in the peasant question and enter on the right path of bolshevisation, through which the peasantry will be won over.

Comrade Bela Kun :

Comrades, my main intention in speaking is to express my solidarity with what Comrade Bukharin said in connection with the criticism of the agrarian policy of the **proletarian dictatorship in Hungary**. I should say that this criticism ought to have been still more emphatic.

It would, of course, be an exaggeration to say that the sole cause of the collapse of the Soviet dictatorship was the mistakes we committed in relation to agrarian policy.

The mistakes of the Communist Party are of extreme importance, as we know now. Another important fact was that the proletarian revolution in Hungary was a rearguard fight of the international proletariat in a situation in which the Russian proletariat was not in a position to offer aid.

Another decisive cause of the collapse was the strategic situation, the fact that there was no hinterland, no country to which to retreat.

But the internal social cause of our defeat was **mainly our agrarian and peasant policy**. That must be very seriously emphasised. That error arose out of the so-called proletarian-communist viewpoint, which was not unknown in Russia also. I must take advantage of the opportunity in order to defend my friend, Comrade Varga. He was not responsible for the declarations of the Communist Party, for at that time he was still zealously opposing us from within the ranks of the Social Democrats. Neither can I blame Comrade Hevesi for the article which he wrote in 1923 in the heat of a fractional struggle directed against me.

(Bukharin: A very good defence! — Laughter.)

He has also abandoned the old point of view, like all of us. I must point out that all these illusions were connected with the industrial from of agriculture, and were empty combinations, especially that of the "continuity of production", which was justified by the maintenance of the industrial from of agriculture. Our experience was that the poor peasants who were members of the agricultural productive cooperatives would in the first days have given something to the town workers. But in the very first months of the Soviet Government in Hungary they showed a disinclination to deliver to the town workers a part of the products they had received from the former large estates. Had we still retained the government, it would of course have been much worse in succeeding years. The main cause was that, by the maintenance of the large estates in the legal form of the agricultural productive cooperatives, the landless workers did not feel that a revolution had taken place in Hungary. It is very characteristic that the workers who were formerly employed as servants on the large estates were during the Hungarian Soviet dictatorship openly regarded as state servants.

The worst was the further consequences, namely, the absence in the army of the feeling that revolution had taken place. In the very first month the demand was heard for the dividing up of the land. Since the division did not take place, whole regiments refused to fight on the Czechoslovakian front. I remember the telegram received from Comrade Pogany, who was then commanding an army corps against the Czechs, demanding the dividing up of the land. He wired that the peasants from Trans-Danubia — the classic land of the agricultural productive cooperatives — refused to go to the front because the division of the large estates had been refused.

During the last few weeks of the Soviet Government, we were compelled by the pressure of the agricultural population to distribute building sites, and I am convinced that had we continued to exist as a Soviet Government we should, as was the case in Russia, have been compelled to divide up the land.

Let me quote another thing from the experience of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in the peasant question, which is now very important, namely, the attitude of the industrial proletariat on the question of an alliance with the peasants. Many of the German comrades, who are not anxious to advocate the slogan of the workers and peasants government, claim that the workers, the industrial proletariat, are not at all favourable to that slogan. There are even some comrades who think that the slogan of the workers' and peasants' government can only be advocated in peasant districts, and had therefore better not be mentioned in Berlin or the Ruhr. I think that is a very erroneous policy. In Hungary the Social Democrats had so trained the working class that among many sections of the proletariat a really hostile attitude towards the peasants existed. If we do not advocate the slogan of the workers' and peasants' government among the industrial working class, if our Parties neglect to educate the masses outside the Party in the spirit and necessity of an alliance between the workers and peasants, we shall be faced with a very serious danger when we come to seize power. The experience gained of the necessity for educating the working class masses in the need for an alliance between the workers and peasants has been a very important one (applause).

Comrade Varga :

I think that several important things were omitted in Comrade Bukharin's thesis. In the first place, there is no reference to a class of great importance to us, namely the **village poor**, i. e. the class of allotment-holding peasants, small farmers, etc. etc., that large section which is only outwardly independent; but which in reality has been completely proletarianised and can be won over to our side. Secondly, I think that the role of the Social Democrats in this question as the allies of the bourgeoisie has not been sufficiently emphasised in the theses. The Social Democrats, who have always set up a wall between the industrial proletariat and all sections of the peasantry, even those who have become proletarians, are doing a great service to the bourgeoisie by facilitating the creation of a united front between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry against the proletariat.

I further think that we should underline the fact that the peasantry as a class are not able to rule alone in a bour-

geois state in opposition to the bourgeoisie. That is important because, as Comrade Bukharin rightly stated, the political development and the class consciousness of the peasants since the war has become intensified.

There is another question, a very contentious one, namely, **the formation of peasant parties.** Of course, as Communists, we cannot make it our aim to create, in addition to the existing Communist Party, a second Communist Party consisting of peasants. But I believe that if we work successfully among the peasants, new peasant parties will of necessity spring up among the sections which follow us, the leadership of which will be assumed by the Communist Party.

When we say that we want to organise peasant leagues, we have not carried the thought to its conclusion. A peasant league bears no analogy to a trade union. The trade unions are directly opposed to the individual employers, whom they fight, conduct strikes, etc. If it is our intention to form an analogous organisation among the peasants in the form of a peasant league, it will be only possible in the case of the former organisations. In such cases it is possible to organise the farmers, for instance, to carry on purely economic struggles against the large landowners. But the fact is that the main demands of the peasants are directed against the state. On the question of taxation, the division of land and the determination of prices, the peasant league, if it is active, must be directed against the state, and when the main aim of an organisation is directed against the state, it differs only in form from a Party. If, moreover, our aim is the general political development of the peasant class, we cannot say to them: "have nothing to do with politics; you must only work within the peasant league". Whether we want it or not, the result must be that the peasants who are influenced by us will organise themselves into peasant parties. We cannot take the large masses into the Communist Parties, because they are too numerous and because their entry into our parties would endanger their proletarian character. Therefore, although we do not make it our aim to create such parties, the natural consequence will be — if we work properly — that revolutionary peasant parties will spring up under our leadership. I believe that even though it is understood that we cannot create peasant Communist Parties, in addition to the existing Communist Parties, we nevertheless, should foresee that the consequence of our work will be the creation of great revolutionary peasant parties.

Comrade Mestcheriakov :

I fully agree with Bukharin's theses and also with the argument in his report. After his speech I heard several foreign delegates expressing their agreement with Bukharin's arguments. But I feel rather sceptical about it, for the peasant movement is a very difficult proposition which foreign comrades have not yet quite grasped. I will limit myself to one example. In a certain country, which I am not going to name here the peasants demanded of the Communists to include some non-Party peasants in the list of the Communist Party. Our comrades refused to do so saying that they include in the list only peasants who are members of the Party. This shows you that our comrades have not yet a right conception of the work among the peasants. Here is another example. I proposed in the Colonial Commission that work among peasants in the Colonies should be carried on by organisations which are not strictly Communist organisations. When I made this proposal I had in mind a peasant organisation affiliated to the International Peasant Council. On the strength of this I have been accused of imperialism, and I am afraid that the International Peasant Council is not even mentioned in the draft resolution of this commission.

In my opinion the **International Peasant Council** should be designated in this resolution as the organisation through whose medium the work among peasants, especially in the Colonies, should be carried on. A very important question for the peasants is credit which has almost entirely ceased since the war. At present the peasants are exploited by the capitalists. Comrade Bukharin says in his theses that we should form agricultural labourers unions which could also include peasants. On this point I cannot agree with Comrade Bukharin. We have the experience of the Italian Agricultural Labourers Federation to go upon, and it shows us very clearly that the

agricultural labourers and the peasants cannot be organised in one and the same union. This is the only opposition I have to offer to Comrade Bukharin's theses.

Comrade Bodnar :

Comrades, I consider it my duty to make you acquainted with the miserable condition of **Carpathian Russia** which has been for over a thousand years under the yoke of the bourgeois Hungarian monarchy.

At present its sufferings and misery are still greater under the yoke of the Czech bourgeoisie.

Our poor Carpathian Russia lies between rocky mountains and is covered with forests which are the property of the State and the big landowners. Not more than from two to six yokes of land are allotted to the peasants, but this land is so bad that it is hardly worth while to till it. Two-thirds of the land belong to the State and to the big landowners. Only one-third belongs to the population of 600,000, and the result is that most of the peasantry has either very little or no land at all. The land confiscated from the Hungarian bourgeoisie was put under corn by the Agrarian Minister for state purposes. In the whole of this region new colonies of Czech legionists were established, and the whole area is in the hands of the followers of the Czech bourgeoisie. But when the land poor and landless peasants who are suffering hunger and cold demand land, they are shot by the Czech bourgeoisie or sent to prison. The prisons are in fact full to overflowing with peasants. It can be truly said that Slovakia and especially Carpathian Russia are for the Czechs a new America and territory for colonisation.

Our wealth in land, salt and forest is exploited in a predatory manner, and only the stony ground is left us.

The taxes are so high that the peasants cannot pay them. The tax collectors go in the company of gendarmes from cottage to cottage and take the last clothes from the people's shoulders, or sell their last pig. And the buyers are the Czech officials who go in mufty and the gendarmes themselves.

In Carpathian Russia unemployment and the economic crisis are very acute. Workers have to slave from morning till night for 5 to 10 Czech kronen, whilst a kilo of bread costs 4 Czech kronen. And even such work cannot always be found.

Our raw material is taken to Czechia and from there the manufactured articles are sent here at high prices. In the salt mines where one could always find work and where our workers were employed since times immemorial, they are now thrown into the street and their place is taken by supporters of the Czech bourgeoisie.

As I already said, in their quest for a piece of bread, the peasants run the risk of being persecuted, imprisoned or shot by the Czech bourgeoisie.

All Carpathian Russia is in a ferment, and I can proudly say that Carpathian Russians are ready at any moment to take up the fight against their oppressors.

We have also every hope to be successful in the next elections. Every Carpathian Russian rejects indignantly chauvinism and opportunism and is faithful to his revolutionary principles and the Red banner of the Third International.

Comrade Grieco (Italy) :

The European War and the economic crisis it created brought on to the scene of Italian politics large masses of peasants who had formerly not been in evidence. The creation of independent peasants' organisations which began after the war was a factor of note in the development of the revolution in Italy.

The general economic and peasant crisis, varying according to exceptional conditions, began to make itself fully felt with the end of the war. The peace threw millions of workers into the country. The bourgeoisie, frightened by the working class ferment, issued the slogan: "**Back to the Land**". The return of huge numbers of workers to the country struck the first blow at the small peasants.

In order to calm the discontent of the peasants the bourgeois parties during the war issued the slogan: "**The Land for the Peasants**", a slogan which had not been put into effect by the time of the demobilisation.

It was then that the first seizures of the land by the demobilised soldiers began.

The seizure of the land by the free peasants is one of the most remarkable manifestations of the after-war economic crisis in the countryside.

The economic movements of the peasants and the agricultural labourers which began in Italy after the war tended towards the conclusion of labour pacts and collective contracts for leasing and working farms. The day labourers wanted to be guaranteed work all the year round, and increases of wages in proportion with the increase of the cost of living. The tenant farmers and small colonies fought to secure the longest possible leases and the largest share of the harvest. The small farmers fought against the increase of rents. Many of the rural bourgeoisie, alarmed at the labour struggles which developed at that period, transferred their properties to the peasants who had enriched themselves during the war and to speculating middlemen, who in turn re-sold them at high prices. The division of properties was thus avoided. The fiscal policy of the bourgeoisie, the agricultural crises of recent years, the exhaustion of the savings of the peasants, difficulties of obtaining credit, etc. are today compelling the poor peasants in many districts to sell their land and emigrate.

Fascism was originally started as the armed defence of the large rural bourgeoisie against the medium and poor peasants and against the agricultural labourers. After the revolutionary wave of 1920, the bourgeoisie organised themselves in order to prevent a fresh offensive by the proletariat. It saw danger in the awakening of the peasant masses. Fascism does not wish to hinder this awakening, but desires to discipline and control it in order to isolate the working class and to deprive it of the possibility of success.

The scissions which fascism provoked or attempted to provoke in the popular party and the Peasant Party, the destruction it wrought in the agricultural labourers' federations, etc. prove:

- a) that the Italian peasants play an important part in political life, and
- b) that capitalism is concerned in preventing the development of the political capacity of the peasant classes.

The Italian peasants before the war had no independent organisation. The war convinced them of the necessity for organising autonomous associations. The Popular Party was then formed under the direction of the great landed proprietors, which represented the first effort of the peasants to create a political organisation. Later there were formed the Party of Ex-Service-Men the Sarde Party of Action, the Italian Peasant Party and the Christian Labour Party. These petty bourgeois parties advocate vague reformist programmes. Each of them sent their own representatives to the Chamber of Deputies where they supported the reactionary policies of the various governments which succeeded each other from 1918 to 1925. Fascism frequently creates crises within these Parties and disrupts them in order to absorb them. But its economic policy in the attempt to balance the budget, injures the middle and poor peasants. The fiscal policy of the fascists is particularly anti-rural. The cancellation of the contracts and agreements concluded up to 1920—21 and the rise in the price of land is aggravating the already hard lot of the peasants. The Parties which sprang up after the war have failed to achieve their aim.

How can the peasant masses resume political action? How will fascism be crushed in the countryside? Those are the problems with which the Italian peasants are now faced. To those questions we reply with our programme for the creation of **a united independent association of poor peasants.**

The constitution of a united independent organisation of poor peasants is the result of the experience gained in the last five years. The immediate problem of the poor peasants is to emancipate themselves from the large proprietors and from taxation. The bourgeois and rich peasant parties, which have hitherto controlled the peasant organisations and parties, are unable to solve that problem. The solution of the problem belongs to the working class and the revolutionary workers. A peasant state and a peasant dictatorship are not practicable. That is what the Italian communists must teach the peasants. The unity of the Italian working class and the united action of the workers will be realised in an alliance of the workers and the peasants on the basis of the programme of the Communist Party.

With the defensive association of the poor peasants we supply a solution for the tendency of the peasant masses to organise independently. We regard the problem of the peasant revolution from the same angle as the working class revolution, and we can now organise an effective alliance between the revolutionary proletariat and the poor peasants for the control of the Italian working class state.

The call for the formation of an association of poor peasants has aroused the fury of all the parties against us. The Social Democratic Party (reformists and Maximalists) accuse us of schism because we want to organise the poor peasants outside of the agricultural Labourers Federation which is an organisation of wage labourers. If we were to advocate a common organisation of agricultural labourers and poor peasants we should not achieve our aim. Italian experience has even proved that the co-existence of peasants and agricultural labourers within the same organisation destroys that organisation.

The revolutionary workers of Italy understand better everyday that they alone are able to assure the victory of the poor peasants. That is why they are supporting the formation of united organisations of poor peasants and are fighting within the workers' and peasants' committees. The peasants must realise that the revolutionary workers cannot make them a present of the revolutionary transformation of agriculture. **The peasants must conquer their own rights. They must fight energetically on the side of the workers.**

Comrade Broniewicz (Poland) :

The peasant question in Poland and its correct solution by our Party is of decisive importance for the victory of the proletarian revolution in Poland. Out of a population of over 27 million, only 7 million are settled in towns, whereas 20 million live in the country. The statistics of the conditions of property ownership give evidence of the land poverty of the population. Out of a total area of 37,661,300 hectares, we have only 18,307,000 hectares of arable land. There are 18,906 country estates of over 50 hectares, with a total area of 10,104,522 hectares, of which 4,000 estates have over 500 hectares, or a total of 7½ million hectares; whereas over 2,100,000 peasant enterprises have less than 5 hectares with hardly 4 million hectares altogether. There are 2,513,000 landless peasants, composing 15% of the rural population, and 8,094,000 dwarf peasants (owning less than 2 hectares), or 50% of the rural population. There are 5,072,000 so-called small and middle peasants, who have from 5 to 10 hectares, or 30%; and 541,000 rich peasants, or 3% of the rural population; the rich peasants with their families and higher personnel number 310,000 or 2%. Then there are about 700,000 agricultural workers and cotters who number about 3 million together with their families. The slogan "Land to the Peasants" therefore affects over 90% of the rural population. This favourable condition for the union of the agrarian revolution with the proletarian revolution is made still more acute by the fight for national independence on the part of the Ukrainian, White Russian and Lithuanian peasants, who compose about 25% of the total population of Poland.

The situation of the masses of peasants has become a great deal worse during the last few years. These circumstances led to an ever increasing ferment among the peasant masses, which crystallised during the last year into spontaneous mass actions and even in peasant uprisings. This was most strongly marked in the so-called "border districts", that is, in occupied West Ukraine and White Russia. Since July 1924 the peasant masses, oppressed nationally and socially, have conducted an obstinate fight which takes the form of an uprising against the Polish occupation. This mass movement began with a **vast campaign for a taxation boycott.** Besides this campaign the peasant masses of West Ukraine and White Russia are conducting a fight for the **national school**, against the Polish colonisation policy, against the predatory acts of violence or the police system, etc. But even in the purely Polish districts we had similar mass actions and sporadic uprisings of peasants last year. In the Kovno district, for instance, when the government tried to collect taxes by means of a punitive expedition, there developed the famous "march on Kovno", when several thousand peasants, armed with scythes and pitchforks march on the district town to release their arrested brothers. Conflicts occurred with the military, some were killed and

wounded, the peasants were beaten, back, but the government was compelled to give in. Similar incidents occurred in Warsaw, Kielce and other districts; the number of encounters is constantly increasing.

Since the formation of the independent Polish state, the ruling classes have taken account of the frame of mind of the peasants and tried in various ways to hold the masses in check by the illusions of agrarian reform. For 6 years the peasants were deceived in this manner, and now that a strong revolutionary wave is again sweeping the country, the possessing classes are again playing with an agrarian reform. A new project has again been introduced by the government. The large landowners succeeded in concluding an agreement, the so-called "Landkorona Pact", with Vitos, the leader of the rich peasants in Landkorona, which is reflected to a certain degree in the present government project. This sort of Stolypin agrarian reform is creating a chasm between the rich peasants and the masses of peasants which cannot be bridged, and is thus smoothing the way for the realisation of an alliance of workers and peasants.

The peasant parties and groups in Poland which have some strong traditions in the worst sense of the word, have speculated on this frame of mind of the peasantry, exploited their hopes in a parasitic manner, and played a miserable comedy of opposition. But at the decisive moment they held the masses in check in order to help the government out of its critical situation. Naturally this gradually aroused ill-feeling in the peasant masses, and they deserted these peasant parties in ever greater numbers.

Our Party, which has already taken the initiative in the peasant movement to some extent, did not overcome the former false attitude in the peasant question until after prolonged internal conflicts, and adopted the correct Leninist policy. The Second Party Congress, held in November 1923, was the turning point in this question. It issued the slogan "land to the peasants" and emphasised the necessity for utilising the peasant movement. But this turning point does not represent a complete bolshevist standpoint, since the decisions did not take the existing class antagonisms within the peasantry into consideration, but planned the alliance between the workers and peasants in the spirit of the general opportunist tactic of the united front, and tried to interpret the slogan of the workers' and peasants' government as a parliamentary combination with treacherous parties. Thus this ideological turn in the Party had no practical results on account of this attitude.

The Third Party Congress, held in March 1925, endorsed the correct Leninist position of the new Party executive. It determined the correct slogan of the alliance of workers and peasants as the absolute necessity for the liberation of both the workers and the peasants from the yoke of the capitalists and rich landowners, and in connection therewith put forth as a current political question the immediate expropriation of the great landowners without compensation. Thus the Party Congress made the everyday tasks of the Party definite in the country, incorporated the everyday demands of the masses of the peasants with the slogan of the revolution, and gave the revolutionary peasant movement concrete **organisational forms as peasant defence committees**, which must develop into organs both of the everyday struggle of the peasantry and the fight for land expropriation and distribution.

The Party Congress also determined the attitude of the Party to all the peasant parties and political organisations active in the country. The Party Congress especially determined that the Party must support all revolutionary efforts and activities of the independent peasant party, still every vacillation of this Party, all lack of energy in the fight for the interests of the peasant masses should be subjected to sharp criticism. The Party must see to it that its own Party organisation be extended and strengthened throughout the country and that it retain the initiative and leadership of the peasant masses in its own hands. The Party Congress emphasised the necessity of using all legal opportunities and the development of our Party nuclei and fractions in peasant organisations. The Party is devoting specially great attention to the work and organisation of agricultural workers, who have got into an extremely miserable condition during the past few years in consequence of the treachery of the SPP.

The results we have obtained recently in the country show that the Party is on the right path.

Comrade Dombal:

In Comrade Bukharin's theses, submitted on the peasant question, all chapters are very clear and give indications and definite replies. But in the chapter dealing with the **attitude to peasant organisations** I do not find the same clarity.

Taking Point 50 which states that peasant leagues might be formed, whereas parties were not recommended, the differentiation between them must certainly be explained. I wish to emphasise that I am not in favour of forming peasant parties but rather in favour of winning over the peasantry, and we may approach the organisational question among the peasantry only from this point of view. In practice there is absolutely no difference between peasant league and peasant party except in designation. In Bulgaria there is a peasants' popular league which actually has the character of a peasant party; in Serbia — the peasants' league; in Poland the same, and so on. The analogy between the trade unions and a peasant league is incompatible. These sections also give no indications of what is to be done in the organisational question. With the growth of its class-consciousness, a striving is developing among the peasantry which is favourable for us. This is a striving for release from the bourgeoisie, the estate owners and rich peasants. This is observable in Germany, for instance. At that time, our comrades made one mistake. They tried to drive the peasantry into purely economic unions and opposed the formation of political organisations. Thus our comrades who were working on the peasant question practically formed a united front with the Fascist Seeckt. It must be pointed out how the peasants must be approached and the principal thing is not what designation we give the peasant organisation, but rather what form we give it, and it is necessary to give this definite expression in the theses. In consequence of the false attitude in the question of the peasant organisation which had about 1½ million members and was under the leadership of the German Communists, only a handful of peasants remained and instead of winning over the peasantry, the very opposite occurred.

In **France** the work is also not progressing for this same reason.

Under such conditions we simply say that we cannot recommend the formation of peasant parties. But such an answer does not give a clear and concrete indication and besides, Parties will be found without our consent.

There is a further differentiation. Among the peasants there is a striving for the formation of parties and political organisations and it must be concretely determined what our comrades must do — some indication is needed, if only a very general one.

Therefore it is necessary to explain, even though only in general terms, what a peasant league is and how it is differentiated from the Party. Moreover, Communists will have to explain to the peasants that the peasantry itself cannot free themselves under the leadership of their own organisations, and that they need the alliance with the working class under the leadership of the proletariat. The ideology which Stambulisky proclaimed, and which even today is leading various peasant leaders astray, must be combated.

With regard to what sort of organisations are to be formed I will say that **political organisations of the peasantry are not injurious**; they are an indication of the fact that the peasantry is breaking with the bourgeois and we must therefore strive to take the initiative in this tendency into our own hands and to form transitional peasant organisations. These organisations may be called "bund", "league", etc., **but they must be based on concrete demands**, on a concrete programme, on a platform of demands of a political and economic character, covering all vital questions, serving as a basis for the peasant organisation. The best form is that of the peasant committee for the wider tasks of the moment. We must not strive for the formation of firm and strong peasant organisations, but it must be our aim to form provisional transitional organisations in this manner, in order to penetrate into the peasant masses. Therefore the principal thing is to form fighting organs, peasant committees. This attempt is beginning to be successful in Poland, Italy, Yugoslavia, etc. The cooperatives also must be strengthened, for they give us the opportunity of conquering power and the possibility of supporting ourselves exclusively on the economic organisations of the peasants.

We must use the peasant organisations as transitional organisations and it might be advisable to say that every form of peasant organisation may be used for the purpose of winning over the peasantry.

Comrade Bukharin (Closing Speech):

Most of the speakers did not oppose the theses, but made various remarks of a supplementary nature.

Comrade **Varga** proposed including a special passage on village poverty, in other words, on small peasants and peasants on small allotments. I formulated the theses in the Russian terminology. We make a distinction between small peasants and peasants on small allotments, and in order to be precise, I believe that we can accept this subdivision.

We can also accept the suggestion of Comrade **Varga** in connection with the thesis stating that in the present epoch it is impossible for the peasantry to be an independent governing force, to say instead "a lasting governing force".

On the other hand I do not share the view of Comrade **Varga** on the formation of peasant parties, nor of the analogous statement of Comrade **Dombal**.

Varga's whole argument consists in his stating that we ourselves claim that the peasantry is becoming political. The political party is the expression of this development, and therefore we must have a political party of the peasants. That may be correct from a vulgar formal standpoint, but viewed dialectically, this is not correct and does not conform with reality. Can one say then that a peasant league is a non-political formation? I believe it is false to say that a class organisation can exist without having a political character. The peasant organisations have a political character just as the trade union organisations have. Does, for instance, the ADGB (General Federation of T. U.) in Germany play no political role? Of course it does, and yet it is not a political party. Did the peasant league here in Russia play no political role? Of course it did, but it was not a political party. Here the Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and other parties carried on activity within the framework of the peasant league. That is also the case with the peasant organisations already in existence. They exist, they grow, new organisations are formed, but within these organisations not only one, but sometimes many political parties engage in activity. It may be that these parties differ from one another in very few respects, but that is a fact.

Varga states that the principal demands of the peasants are counter to the bourgeois state. It is a bit strong to say against the "bourgeois" state. One might get the impression that the peasant organisations are the greatest revolutionary organisations against the state. They are not counter to the state, but they put forward demands to the state which have both an economic and political character, for instance, the question of taxation.

Most of the demands of the peasants are of such a nature. The revolutionary elements among the peasants are not so advanced that they set up direct revolutionary demands. It is not right to say either politics and then the political party, or only economic demands and then **NO** political party. This is how **Varga** puts the question and **Dombal** repeats it. Therefore it is no accident that the peasants organise carefully, not in the conventional political form, but in the form of the peasant league. The question which **Varga** puts and which **Dombal** repeats can also be raised logically and tactically. They ask whether there is any difference whether some peasant league engages in politics and when it does so as a political party. What is the difference? No difference can be drawn here because the economic demands are closely bound up with the political demands. And yet a relative difference exists. It consists in the political party being a much firmer organisation, which has a definite programme, strict discipline, etc. Within one Party there cannot be three or four other parties. That is possible in a league. And there are such political parties who to some extent have such a character; for instance, the British Labour Party; but everyone understands that the Labour Party is a peculiar structure. It is a cross between a league and a political party in the real sense of the word. What is specific in a peasant league is its mixed character. For us it is better to have such an organisation, if only for the possibility of its great extent. In a political

party only those may enter who seriously accept the programme and do everything the Party asks.

There is a great deal of liberty of movement in the Peasant League. Our people can enter it, and in the amorphous conditions of the peasantry, can create a situation in which we can win more and more new followers. What sort of slogan does **Dombal** suggest. Not a league, not a party, but a transitional form. In this way we would merely create a different term, nothing else. The specific character of the peasant league is its loose organisation form, the possibility of uniting members of various parties and even non-party people into organisations which have not so strict a discipline, and which put forward demands of a mixed character. No positive arguments were produced against such a conception. It was merely stated that if the peasantry is developing politically, the parties will grow. I can reply to that that the peasant leagues will also develop politically. That depends on the various circumstances and on whether we work well or badly in these organisations.

Comrade **Dombal** brought forward two arguments. He says that the theses state that we need a policy which will separate the left organisations from the joint organisations. That is quite clear: we must use them for spreading our influence for the purpose of winning over the majority of the toiling population. By what means? That is the question of our policy, our political and organisational methods, and of the method of drawing the masses into real action. All that is fairly clear.

Comrade **Meshtcheryakov** made two observations on the **credit system**. The theses also speak of this subject but perhaps this sentence can be developed. As far as the second observation of Comrade **Meshtcheryakov** is concerned, I believe that there is either a misunderstanding or that he represents a false standpoint. The theses state that we need a separate organisation of the agricultural workers and it was added that these organisations of agricultural workers cannot and must not enter the organisations of the peasants. I believe that is correct. Comrade **Meshtcheryakov** says that the Italian experiences have proved the contrary. Comrade **Grieco** says that the Italian experience shows that in mixed meetings of peasants and agricultural workers, chaos ensued but he says further that it was evident at the same time that federated alliances of the organisations, joint centrals, etc. are possible. Thus the concrete form did not prove feasible in Italy, but generally speaking it was proved that these organisational connections are possible and desirable. If we want to win over the small peasants, and on the other hand, already have won the agricultural proletariat, the latter must somehow or other influence the peasantry.

A few more words about **Varga**. In the preface to his book: "The Status of the Peasant Movement", there are two paragraphs which are absolutely incorrect. He says:

"Social Democracy has always prevented the creation of a class alliance between the workers of town and country in two ways, and thus had a counter-revolutionary effect. Firstly, by issuing the slogan "Those who possess and those who do not", in the interpretation of which the toiling and even the poor peasants were placed in the ranks of those who possess. In this manner the Social Democrats brought about a formal distinction in place of the class distinction between exploiters and exploited, and thus objectively served the interests of the exploiters and enlarged their camp at the expense of the proletariat."

The fault of the Social Democrats did not lie in their having spoken of possessing and non-possessing classes. Naturally a distinction must be made between possessing and non-possessing, between class strata which are linked up with private property and those which have no private property whatever. But this distinction is not everything. In his polemic against **Plekhanov**, **Lenin**, in formulating our first party programme, observed that we must first become separate, we must first differentiate ourselves as a revolutionary class, as the proletariat which stands in a peculiar relationship to all other classes. Then, after we have constituted ourselves, the time comes when we must determine our attitude to other classes. And in this second phase, let us say, lies the fault of the Social Democrats — I determine myself as a class and am seeking an ally. Here I differentiate between various classes, between earned property and capitalist property, between

property which is bound up with exploitation and that which is not. That is a further separation, and here the Social Democrats began various blunders and political crimes. But to formulate the matter as Varga has done, is theoretically incorrect:

Varga says:

"Both standpoints were the natural consequence of the general attitude of the Social Democrats who always considered themselves the party of the industrial working class in the narrow sense and followed the policy of improving the condition of the industrial working class within the framework of capitalism by changing the distribution of income."

That is, mildly speaking, a very careless formulation. That means that there is no agricultural proletariat. I believe that Varga wanted to say something different. Two things must be borne in mind: we are the workers party, not a workers and peasants party. We are first of all the party of the industrial proletariat. When we declare this, it is no betrayal of the cause of the workers. The mistake is not that we are a pure proletarian party. But the mistake of the Social Democrats, the political crime of the Social Democrats, consists in the fact that the party placed the working class in an incorrect relationship to the peasantry, that it sees only that which goes on within the proletariat, and does not understand that this class, or this party of the class must have an ally.

Why do I say all this? Two dangers menace us: that we maintain a passive attitude in general towards the peasantry, and the other danger, that we dissolve into the peasantry. If we dissolve we are no Marxists and no workers party and cannot claim the dictatorship of the proletariat. Leninist teaching about the workers' and peasants' bloc does not consist in our being the bloc of workers and peasants, but in the working class retaining the hegemony within this bloc. That cannot be eliminated. The same thing is true after the conquest of political power. The bloc does not consist in our realising a workers' and peasants' state. Sometimes we call ourselves a workers' and peasants' government. In reality it is the dictatorship of the working class, a class which constitutes itself as state power, which has formed a bloc with the peasantry. We have very good connections with the peasantry, we lean on the peasantry, but from the point of view of class character, we are a proletarian power.

In Varga's formulation this "nuance" is a very important thing. I believe that these corrections were necessary, for in itself this booklet of Varga's is an excellent piece of work. These introductory remarks might cause a certain degree of confusion, especially in a period when most of our parties have become contaminated by the narrow guild spirit; such a representation might have a repelling effect in the present situation; therefore complete theoretical clarity is necessary. Then we can determine a clear political line, and that is what we need. (Applause!)

Tenth Session. Moscow, 3rd April 1925.

Report on the Discussion in the Russian Communist Party.

Chairman, Comrade Sanborn. (United States of America.)

Comrade Bukharin (Greeted with applause.)

The discussion in the Russian Communist Party was not over the appreciation of any individual but of a **political line of policy**, therefore in order to judge this question properly, we must eliminate all personalities and only investigate and estimate the various political tendencies.

We are living in the period of the development of the revolutionary, the communist movement in which in Western Europe we have the protracted development of the revolutionary movement, and in which, in spite of the growth of the Soviet economy, fresh obstacles arise in our path.

If we analyse the position in all our Parties carefully and soberly, we will observe on the one hand, a serious opportunist danger and on the other certain ultra-left deviations. We however, — and this is the principle doctrine of Leninism — must have **neither a left nor a right policy**, but a correct Marxian policy. We must therefore not only combat the opportunist danger but also the "ultra-left" deviations.

When we examine the **relation of forces within the Comintern**, we immediately observe that a bloc exists, to which the elements of the Russian opposition and the right elements of the Comintern generally belong (and this was brilliantly illustrated in Comrade Kreibich's speech here at the Plenum) and to which also the "ultra-left" belong. It is well known that Comrade Bordiga has associated himself with Comrade Trotzky. When certain comrades say that there is no such thing as Trotzkyism, that no such tendency exists at all, we can refute this by the mere fact alone that within the Comintern there is at least an attempt to concentrate the forces against the official policy of the Comintern. The Comintern must combat and overcome these ideological deviations and these politically harmful tendencies.

There is not the slightest doubt that the crises in the Comintern are the more significant for the fact that they are immediately exploited by our avowed and semi-avowed enemies. You know that all the ex-members, all the expelled members of the Comintern, who now have become the avowed opponents of the Comintern, support the Russian opposition

and all the elements in our Parties which support the Russian opposition. Of this we can be convinced by the statements made by the Höglunds, the Tranmaels and Balabanova, of the Italian Maximalists, of Rosmer and Monatte and others. Moreover, not only the renegades but also the bourgeois politicians who fully appreciate the significance of the discipline in the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern desire to exploit the incidents in the Russian Communist Party. The discussion and the expressions even of the whole extreme imperialist press of all capitalist countries adopt the policy of objectively supporting our opposition. Of course, it cannot be said that our opposition and Comrade Trotzky are personally connected with these elements. It is in the mechanics of these social forces that every disruptive factor in our ranks is immediately supported by our enemies.

We must refer to another category of individuals to be found to a certain extent in our ranks, namely, the individuals who might be described as **sentimental Communists**. These usually are very good fellows, but they totally lack political sense. They are pained by these discussions and regard them not from the political standpoint but from the sentimental standpoint. They say that we ought not to ill-treat a comrade like Trotzky and that generally it is unpleasant to discuss such things. This of course is all very virtuous and no doubt these people will find their reward in heaven, but from the political standpoint, from the standpoint of the class struggle, this kind of criticism is of course useless. Our task is to find the correct line of policy and to appreciate properly the incorrect line of policy of our opposition.

Many foreign comrades may put the following question to us: How is it that Comrade Trotzky has for so many years done brilliant work in the Party and that now a conflict should have broken out? There is a very "popular" explanation to the effect that while Lenin lived everything was kept together and now that he is dead all his pupils are beginning to come to loggerheads and that Trotzky is one of the first victims of the conflict. Of course Lenin's role cannot be minimised, but the fact that our controversy with Comrade Trotzky has assumed an acute form has no connection at all with Comrade Lenin's death.

The two specific features of Trotzkyism in its present form are on the one hand, **under-estimation of the role of the peasantry** and the **over-estimation of the role of the State**

apparatus on the other. During the period of war communism, these features of Trozkyism were not so dangerous only after we adopted the New Economic Policy. Nep demands other methods, more subtle abilities of differentiation and the elements which were useful in the previous period are dangerous in the new period. During the period of war communism, our relations with the peasantry were very simple. It was a military alliance. On the other hand, the interference of the apparatus of the State in social life was developed to the maximum and for this period this was normal. As soon as we adopted the New Economic Policy, however, the situation changed.

The social importance of the peasantry came to the forefront, quite different, less elementary methods had to be adopted and it was on this account that the antagonisms between the majority of the Central Committee and Comrade Trozky became more acute on the threshold of the New Economic Policy.

The controversy commenced over the **Trade Union Question**. Later differences over important political and more particularly over economic questions became more acute and developed into the discussion of 1923 and the recent discussion.

Among foreign comrades there is a widespread view that Trozkyism is nothing else but Menshevism, but that is a very crude estimation of the subject and is absolutely false. We must understand Trozkyism in its specific form as a peculiar system. I think that the best way of describing Trozkyism would be to explain certain concrete questions.

Is it an accident that the last discussion broke out just at the moment when the Party was adopting a new orientation towards the peasant question? The objective grounds for this discussion were that in this new epoch of peaceful development, of the recognition of the Soviet Government by capitalist powers the relations between the workers and the peasants assume other forms. We must seek new methods for maintaining the hegemony of the proletariat. We are in a new economic situation, new social relations exist between the classes and consequently we are in a new political situation. The whole Party is with difficulty seeking new paths in this situation and this was reflected in the discussion with Comrade Trozky.

The following questions were discussed. **The question of the so-called dictatorship of industry, economic planning, the prices policy of our trusts and syndicates, the monetary reform, the question of socialist accumulation and the fight against private capitalism.**

There are comrades who will probably ask whether differences of opinion cannot here be tolerated, and whether differences of opinion on these questions are so very terrible. We must, however, bear in mind that we in Russia are not conducting a mere literary discussion. When we were in opposition such literary discussions and such deviations from correct policy were not so dangerous, since the literary exercises were not transformed into practical politics. It is different, however, today. Immediately the Party comes to a decision on a question of prices policy, that decision immediately becomes the decision of the government and affects our economic life, and therefore our political life. From these concrete questions depends the whole of our economic life and our whole economic development. By such literary exercises we may wreck the dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently, such divisions — especially on such an acute question as the relations between the working class and the peasantry — are for us a question of life and death.

* * *

The relation between the working class and the peasantry have recently become rather acute — or rather have assumed a quite different footing. The conflicts that formerly arose between the working class and the peasantry were owing to the process of impoverishment. But now we are on the rise, our economic life is developing; the output of our industry last year increased by more than 30% and our agriculture is also expanding. In many branches of industry wages have reached the pre-war level, and in some branches have even exceeded it. The peasant is selling more. So is industry. On the basis of this expansion, new dangers have arisen.

The reason for these dangers is that the more the peasant sells, the more interested he is in the price of necessities. On the other hand the working class is interested in the low price of bread. And this contradiction of interests be-

ween the purchaser and seller furnishes the basis for various discontents within the peasant class.

There is also a social economic difficulty. The forces of production in agriculture and industry are developing rapidly. The number of employed workers is increasing; yet overpopulation is so great that in spite of the expansion of industry unemployment in the towns is growing, and in spite of the expansion of agriculture, there is apparently a large overpopulation in the countryside. In this connection we observe the following interesting phenomena in agriculture. The village poor, who have no opportunity of employing their labour power, are often opposed to us because we forbid wage labour in agriculture. In the same way the upper sections of the village are also against us because we do not allow them to employ wage labour. Naturally there are powerful counter-tendencies, but the whole process results in powerful contradictions.

Politically, the position is that **the peasant is far more active**, his horizon has become far more extended, and he is taking a much more energetic part in political life, in the work of the Soviet machine, the village soviets, the cooperatives etc. For this there are also specific motives.

Formerly, we held a great trump card in the hegemony of the proletariat over the peasantry. Our trump card was the fact that the Bolshevik Party was the only party which divided the landowners' land among the peasants. During the civil war the most powerful argument in our agitation was that the landowner would take back the land in the event of the dictatorship of the proletariat collapsing. Many years have passed since then. A new generation has grown up in the villages. Our enemies have already lost all hope of recovering the land. And as a result we have lost our best trump. It is the result of our growth, it is true, but that does not alter the fact.

As I said in my report yesterday, the characteristic factor in the situation from the point of view of the social relation of forces, is that **the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are carrying on an obstinate fight against the peasantry**. That is also the case with us. We are growing, but at the same time the danger of a rupture between the proletariat and the peasantry is also growing. We cannot employ the old methods any longer, we need new methods and those methods take two forms. **Economically we must so improve our industry** that the peasantry can obtain cheaper goods from the state industries than from the bourgeoisie. And **politically, we must not relax our dictatorship**, and must under no circumstances so change our policy that the class domination of the proletariat becomes the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. We must create such circumstances that the dictatorship is consolidated by new methods consonant with the new class relations. The main thing today is persuasion, so called peaceful methods, rather than the methods of pressure which were specific and characteristic of the time of military communism.

This task is an extremely difficult one: the cadres which lived in the villages are blood of our blood and flesh of our flesh: they grew up in the period of military communism. To re-educate them is very difficult. That is the objective basis of our discussion. It was therefore not a personal collision, as vulgar people think. Of course without the personal element, a conflict between human things is unfortunately impossible. **But the objective basis of the conflict was the necessity for a new orientation by our party in the most important question of social life, i. e. the relation between the proletariat and the peasantry.**

At the beginning of the discussion we were in the midst of a **great economic crisis**. Our industry was unable to sell its products. The circulation of goods was hampered. That was the first fact. The second fact was that the soviet rouble had sunk to zero. The peasants would no longer accept soviet money. We had not a "Smytchka", not an alliance, but rather a rupture between the town and the country. These were the circumstances in which the party had to find a solution. It was not a question of theory, but in very fact a question of life and death for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Two political or economic-political policies existed, representing, so to speak, two systems.

Comrade Trozky asserted that the cause of the crisis was to be sought in the fact that **there was no plan in industry**. The only way of saving the situation was to increase the elements of planned economic life by a drastic concentration of

industry, by various administrative measures in the sphere of the organisation of industry, etc. All the opposition comrades shared this point of view. Comrade Trotzky said: We have now the dictatorship of our Commissariat for Finance, but the Commissariat for Finance often does not give enough money to industry. That was the expression of anarchy and absence of plan in the conduct of industry. Everything else must be considered of secondary importance. Comrade Trotzky and the opposition adopted a similar attitude towards the question of prices and the monetary reform. For them they were secondary and of subordinate importance. The central point was economic planning.

Our Party Central Committee had an entirely different view of the situation. Its opinion was that we were faced with two important problems: the problem of monetary reform and the problem of lower prices, a prices policy which was bound up with the reduction of the cartel profits of our trusts and syndicates. Of course planned economy is better than anarchic economy, it is the approach to socialism.

There is no question here of a fight with liberals to prove that socialist economy is better than anarchic economy. The question is one of practical measures, as to what steps are to be taken in order to achieve planned economy.

In the situation which then existed all talk of planned economy was empty words, unless the monetary reform could be carried out. What was the most important thing? We have to count with the fact that in our country we have millions of people living under conditions of commodity economy. Industry is in the hands of the state. But the peasantry consists entirely of small producers. How can we then approach planned economy when the monetary system has gone to pieces. What sort of plan can we construct when the peasant is unable to calculate, when he cannot sell, and when he receives worthless money. Industry was also unable to calculate, to draw up a balance sheet, or to start enterprises. We had no markets for our goods, and in general there could be no rational elements in our economic life. Consequently, the first step towards planned economy was the monetary reform. But in order to bring about monetary reform, we had to adopt various measures. With a state budget which was based upon paper issues, monetary reform was impossible. Consequently, we had frequently to give the various branches of industry too little money, in order to maintain a stable currency, to make it unnecessary to resort to currency issues, and to be in a position to carry out the monetary reform.

Under these circumstances what does the demand of the dictatorship of industry over our "Ministry of Finance" mean? I must point out here that our Commissariat of Finance is not the same thing as a Ministry of Finance in a bourgeois state. Our state budget affects the entire economic life of the country. The Finance Commissariat is for us a directing organ: it is the most important thing in all of our social, economic life. Much has been said about the plan. In what can such a plan consist? Only in a certain proportion between industry and peasant agriculture. However, the ratio of industry to agriculture as a whole is the basis of various ratios within industry. The plan of proportionality only within industry is an empty abstraction, a dilettante's toy. Therefore, if the Commissariat of Finance is the kind of authority we have pictured it to be, whose dictatorship do we need, provided that we use this term at all? Only that of the Finance Commissariat, of course. And what does the dictatorship of industry over the Commissariat of Finance signify? Nothing but an inability to comprehend that our industrial production should be dependent upon the agricultural markets. Of course, Trotzky admits theoretically that we must have a bond between the proletariat and the peasantry, between town and country. Several comrades believe that when Trotzky makes that statement, the matter is settled. But it is not a question of the statement, but of the actual economic and political orientation and the corresponding practice.

The policy of the dictatorship of industry was incorrect. It was based on the underestimation of the peasant market in relationship to our industry. In the question of the plan it is clear that the entire problem was put incorrectly by Trotzky. The root of this mistake was the sceptical attitude toward currency reform.

You may ask, "Good, but why such a hubbub about it?" I repeat: everything depends upon this question. An incorrect policy in this problem leads us to destruction. If we should

now ask ourselves, after the experience of the last few years, What would have happened if the reform of the currency had not been carried out, we should have to reply that we would have collapsed, for working with a ruined financial system would have meant a breach between town and country and, in consequence, between the proletariat and the peasantry. Hence, the reason why our discussion was fought out so bitterly.

Now for a second question. Is it perhaps an accident that in four or five of the most urgent and important political questions Comrade Trotzky, and with him a number of other comrades, acted incorrectly? Can one from that already determine the existence of Trotzkyism or not? We must analyse that conscientiously. In the first phase the discussion was carried on upon very definitely practical questions. At the beginning of the last discussion, the so-called preface to the new (or rather the old) book of Comrade Trotzky illuminated for us the entire situation within the Party. What was the most important thing in this preface? Many comrades believe that what was most important was the attack upon several comrades because of their position during the October Revolution: they believe that caused all the fuss and was why the heated discussion began within the Party, a discussion which has in part made its way into the Communist International. This point of view is a very superficial view of the entire situation.

The most important thing in this preface is the statement that his estimate of the driving forces of the Russian Revolution, which were crystallised in the so-called "theory of the permanent revolution", had proved to be correct. One might ask what harm or advantage can such a theory cause us. That is, comrades, no literary question but the most vital problem of our policy. And we have seen that all through the entire policy of Comrade Trotzky there runs a red thread, the underestimation of the peasantry.

Is that connected with Trotzky's false theory of the permanent revolution? Of course, root and branch. Trotzky's wrong proposals are deeply rooted in the previous theory of the permanent revolution which we fought for decades as a political form of reformism.

Now a few words on this theory of the permanent revolution. As you know, our Party, the Bolshevik Wing of the Social Democratic Party, with Lenin at its head maintained during the revolution of 1905 that in Russia the bourgeois-democratic revolution was pending and that the key of this social transformation lay in the agrarian problem. Lenin formulated this thesis very definitely. He said that the national peculiarity of the Russian Revolution lay precisely in the agrarian problem. The principal slogan issued by us at that time was that of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. For instance, we at that time fought against the formulation of our Polish comrades: "The dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry". Trotzky and Parvus had a third slogan: "Down with the czar, and up with the Workers Government". That was, however, no concession to the Brandlerists. (Laughter). What were the differences between these slogans? We maintain that the bourgeois revolution was impending, that the vitalising forces of this bourgeois revolution are the peasantry and the proletariat. After the victory of the revolution we would have the victorious revolution, the Jacobin dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry; and that the axis around which this whole movement would revolve is the peasantry and the agrarian problem. Hence, our entire agrarian programme, etc.

Comrade Trotzky now says and writes: I am right! I said at that time that the proletarian dictatorship would be established; that has happened. I said at the time that not the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, but the proletarian dictatorship must be established.

At that time he said: Socialist revolution. Lenin said: bourgeois revolution. Trotzky now maintains that he was right. He had demanded the Socialist revolution, and the Bolsheviks had not. Hence, Trotzky maintains, — and that is the logical development of his train of thought — Bolshevism was one thing prior to February 1917, and has become something else after the February revolution. The nature of Bolshevism, he maintains, has changed: Bolshevism has been Trotzkyised, and this Trotzkyised Bolshevism is the correct tactical and strategical doctrine. In an essay by

Lenin written in 1917, we find a note upon a discussion with Trotzky. Lenin quotes several words from one of Trotzky's speeches and says: Trotzky maintains that Bolshevism has reorganised itself; it has become a new Bolshevism. He can therefore call himself a Bolshevik, he will collaborate with the Bolsheviks, but just because they (the Bolsheviks) have changed. Trotzky believes — that is the vital point — that not he has come to Bolshevism, but vice versa: Bolshevism has come to Trotzky, and therefore it has been possible for him to become a member of our Party.

That is the logic of Comrade Trotzky's argumentation. We should clearly understand wherein his errors lay and why his argumentation is dangerous, extremely dangerous. Many years elapsed from the first revolution and the February revolution. When Comrade Trotzky advocated this point of view as against the Bolsheviks, he developed amongst others the following train of thought: The Bolsheviks are not dangerous before victory; they are however extraordinarily dangerous after victory. The Party has two souls: a revolutionary one and a counter-revolutionary one, that is, the soul of the peasant, of the small owner of private property; and that is why the Bolsheviks are dangerous after the victory, must be dangerous because their counter-revolutionary allies, the peasants will necessarily and inevitably proceed against the proletariat. And the Bolsheviks will support these counter-revolutionary tendencies.

That was Trotzky's standpoint during the first revolution. In general, he spoke as follows of the relationship of the peasantry to the proletariat: after the victory of the revolution we will inevitably have bitter and very violent conflicts with the peasantry, and with Russia's social composition we are irreparably, necessarily lost without the State aid of the victorious Western European proletariat. Now comrades, we see that the Russian Revolution is not lost even without the governmental aid of the Western European proletariat. We have, it is true, various conflicts with the peasantry, but they are not of such a nature as to lead us to destruction; and we believe that in this respect we are rather immortal.

Trotzky's error consisted and still consists, frankly speaking in the incorrect estimate of the class relationships and of the misunderstanding of the fact that these relationships are continually changing. If, for instance, in the first revolution we had followed Comrade Trotzky and had issued the slogan of the Workers Government in the expectation that immediately after the seizure of power we should have had a breach with the peasantry, we would have lost the revolution entirely. During the first revolution we had to consider the peasant question as the axis of the revolutionary movement. That was absolutely correct, and the slogan "Workers and Peasants Government" was at that time also absolutely correct. Our Bolshevik tactics led to victory just because we understood how to utilise all social forms in the process of the developing revolution and to concentrate all our energy against the enemy forces. Our revolution did not develop according to Comrade Trotzky's plan, and our tactics were not Trotzkyist, but specifically Bolshevik, Leninist tactics.

Remember the February Revolution. We even at that time emphasised the slogan, "The Land to the Peasantry". We did not issue the slogan of the Workers Government even eleven years after the first revolution; but Lenin wrote after his April thesis: "Petty bourgeois Soviets with a peasant majority". Immediately after the October Revolution, he accepted the platform of the Social Revolutionaries, as I have pointed out, we even formed a coalition government with the Left S. R. after the seizure of political power.

We utilised against czarism and the Kerensky Government not only proletarian forces, but the proletariat and the entire peasantry, including the rich peasants. Later, the struggle developed further and further. We founded committees of the village poor. The class struggle flared up with greater violence in the villages, and that is why the Left S. R. left the Government, and not in connection with the murder of Mirbach. The splitting off of the rich peasants and of a section of the middle peasants is the further development of the class struggle. We have gone through all phases, the bourgeois revolution in February and the

October Revolution, which also contained elements of the Socialist and bourgeois revolutions. **As a result of this process, we obtained the proletarian dictatorship.** That is exactly the opposite of what Comrade Trotzky imagined the line of development would be.

Now Trotzky has the subjective illusion that Bolshevism has been transformed with Lenin's aid in the spirit of Trotzky. Lenin is dead, the old "counter-revolutionary" features can now again make their appearance within Bolshevism and therefore the alarm must be sounded and the Party must be won for real Trotzkyism. This illusion is by no means neutral, but has a practical effect and the entire dictatorship of the proletariat would be destroyed if we were not to combat this.

From Comrade Trotzky's conception there follows that if Bolshevism can manifest counter-revolutionary features the present epoch is the most suitable for this. Lenin is dead. The peasantry is becoming more and more active and wants a stronger opposition. The Party membership must therefore be gained for Trotzkyism and the Bolshevik Old Guard must be shaken up a bit.

The Central Committee is continuing the policy of Leninism, which is developing continuously and always adapts itself to the situation. The principle Leninist teachings upon the relationship of the proletariat to the peasantry are being put into practice by the Central Committee and are being attacked by our Opposition with Trotzky at the head.

It would, of course, be entirely false to believe that we have here a subjective lack of sincerity on Trotzky's part. He is an absolutely honest Party comrade. Objectively, he is playing a great disorganising role within the Party.

Now this question of "shaking up" the Old Guard played an important role in the first discussion. The Opposition said that the Central Committee of the Party had led the country to the edge of the abyss; that there is the possibility of the degeneration of our Central Committee. They maintain that the youth must come to the fore; and then there was the question of the freedom of factions and of groupings within the Party.

We all know that the organisational principle of Leninism is that all questions can and must be discussed, but not in accordance with the principle of factions. And when Trotzky now says that that is not correct, that the individual groupings must have greater freedom, he pursues a strategical and tactical goal. There was a period when the majority of the Moscow comrades were in the same opposition. The Opposition hoped that with the demand for the freedom of groupings they could win the Party. This hope however, has proved false. Only a few comrades of the old Opposition have held to their old standpoint, but we have had to fight this out, just because the ideological standpoint of our Opposition and especially of Comrade Trotzky, represented a deviation from the line of Leninism, a deviation in so important a question as that of the relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry.

There were many other questions which I cannot take up here. I will only say a few words upon the tendency towards the separation of our state apparatus from the Party. This tendency was present in many proposals of Comrade Trotzky and of the opposition, and was justified by the necessity of a better division of labour. This tendency was and is dangerous. Of course, the Party should not interfere in all the small problems of the state apparatus, but it is an absolutely necessary prerequisite for the existence of the proletarian dictatorship that the Party retains a position of leadership with respect to the state apparatus. This overestimation of the state apparatus and underestimation of the role of the party in the state apparatus is one of the tendencies branded as petty bourgeois deviations by our Party Conferences and Party Congress. We must therefore understand that our Party and our CEC had to commence the most determined struggle against all these deviations. When several foreign comrades, oppositionally inclined, write articles in which they do not discuss the fundamental problems, but only the chatter, they show that they are politically bankrupt. If we solve incorrectly the problem of the role of the state apparatus, of the relationship between

the proletariat and the peasantry and the problem of discipline within our Party, that leads irrevocably to the liquidation of our dictatorship.

And, it is no accident that all our enemies within and outside of the country immediately began to support the Party Opposition. Why? Because they expected that the Opposition would undermine the forces of the Party.

The last move of Comrade Trotzky brought this question up before the International, and as I have already mentioned, there is a certain bloc of Robinson Crusoes of Trotzkyism in the various countries.

Comrades, in this discussion, in this struggle, we naturally did not only take organisational steps. We mobilised all the intellectual forces of our Party. We have created a whole new literature. We have experienced a great ideological mobilisation of our Party and we can assure you that after these two discussions our Party has risen a stage higher. It has no longer only the old Bolshevik cadres but also many new elements which also have the necessary experience. One of the comrades told me that he did not know that he formerly was no Bolshevik, but now he knows it. That was symptomatic of the situation in the Party. We do not want to maintain that our Party is now 100% Bolshevik. But in this first and second discussion we have won a brilliant Bolshevik victory. We have overcome Trotzkyism ideologically; we have isolated the oppositional leaders and only then did we take various organisational measures. You know all our measures and the decisions of the Party Central Committee concerning Comrade Trotzky's last move and which was connected with Comrade Trotzky's removal from the War Commissariat. However, I emphasise here that we did

a great work of preparation and this had a highly educative effect upon the development of our entire Party.

As for the further development of our Party, the Central Committee will in the future also consider it its primary obligation to carry on the most resolute struggle — connected with the most extensive work of enlightenment — against deviations. We cannot exist, the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot exist, if within our ranks such grave deviations from the Leninist standpoint make their appearance.

There are comrades who say that Trotzky is a great man and that therefore we should have acted otherwise. It is just because Trotzky is a great man that his deviations are dangerous, for they become an event in the life of the Party, a disorganising force.

Comrades, we have been recognised by most of the imperialist powers; we are thus at peace. We see our growth politically and economically. But we have an extremely contradictory spirit of development. I have already pointed out the difficulties within the country. But even outside the country, the difficulties continue to exist. The extraordinary growth of the Soviet Union gives rise to new endeavours of the world bourgeoisie to fight against us. We are in a transition period, and we therefore by no means require less discipline than before. We need a finer, more varied method of support of the proletarian dictatorship, but the finer the methods we employ, the more we require absolutely homogeneity in the entire leadership of our Party.

I, therefore, on behalf of our Party, request the Enlarged Executive to lend its complete support to the measures of the Central Committee against Trotzkyism.