THE WORKERS' STATE

Lies about Soviet Russia answered

by

J. STALIN

(Interview with Foreign Workers' Delegation)

1d.
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Foreign Delegation's Interview
with J. Stalin, on November 5th, 1927

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PREFACE

At the wish of eighty delegates who had come to the USSR for the October celebrations from Germany, France, Austria, Cecho-Slovakia, Denmark and Esthonia, Comrade Stalin gave them an interview on November 5, 1927. The interview lasted six hours. A stenographic report is given in this pamphlet.

The tenth anniversary of the October revolution—whether its enemies want it or not—has demonstrated the world importance of the October revolution, whether the enemies of the October revolution want it or not—and they do not want it—the tenth anniversary has deeply stirred the entire international Labour Movement. Whilst leaders, the upper stratum of the Labour bureaucracy, the petty bourgeois lackeys of the bourgeoisie in the Labour Movement—the MacDonalds, Thomases, Snowdens, Hickses, Renaudels, Vanderveldes, Hilferdings, Kautskys, Bauers, etc., have chosen America as their Mecca, whence they learn the methods of SUBJECTING THE WORKING CLASS TO THE BOURGEOISIE, THE LOWER STRATA, the genuine proletarians, in spite of their formal adherence to reformism, are drawn irresistibly by their class instinct to the October celebrations in Moscow to learn the methods by which the workers can be liberated from the bourgeoisie, by which THE BOURGEOISIE CAN BE OVERTHROWN and proletarian Socialism can be built up. The gulf between reformism and the masses is becom-
ing deeper, Communism is becoming the policy of ever-growing proletarian masses. The World Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union held in Moscow between November 10 and 12, 1927, was not only a symbol of this, but a big stride on the road to the capture of the masses by the ONLY proletarian revolutionary doctrine. To deny after this that October is getting hold of ever-growing sections of the populations of all countries, one must either be a scoundrel or a simpleton or simply a madman. The tenth anniversary of the October revolution has shown this to the full, and this is its most important feature.
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FOREIGN DELEGATION'S INTERVIEW WITH STALIN ON NOVEMBER 5TH, 1927

There were eighty delegates present from Germany, France, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, South America, Mexico, China, Belgium, Finland, Denmark and Estonia. The interview lasted six hours.

Stalin: Comrades, a list of questions was handed over to me yesterday in the German language without any signature. This morning I received two other lists, one from the French Delegation and another from the Danish Delegation. Let us begin with the first series of questions, although I do not know from which delegation it emanates, and then we will be able to take up the other two lists. If you do not mind, we shall begin. (The delegates consented.)

Question 1.—Why does the USSR not participate in the League of Nations?

Answer.—Much has already been said on the reasons of our non-participation in the League of Nations. I can point out some of these reasons.

The Soviet Union is not a member of the League of Nations and does not take part in it because first of all it does not want to take the responsibility for the imperialist policy of the League of Nations, for the “mandates” which are handed out by the League of Nations for the exploitation and oppression of colonial countries. The Soviet Union does not par-
ticipate in the League of Nations because it is completely opposed to imperialism, and against the oppression of colonial and subjugated countries.

The Soviet Union does not participate in the League of Nations, secondly, because it does not want to take responsibility for military preparations, for growing armaments, for new military alliances, etc., which are covered and sanctioned by the League of Nations and which cannot but lead to new imperialist wars. The Soviet Union does not participate in the League of Nations because it is completely against imperialist wars.

Finally, the Soviet Union does not participate in the League of Nations because it does not want to be a component part of that screen of imperialist machinations which the League of Nations represents and which are concealed by the honeyed phrases of its members. The League of Nations is a “rendezvous” for imperialist chiefs, who do their business behind the scenes. What the League of Nations SAYS officially is empty twaddle, intended to deceive the workers. But what the imperialist chiefs DO unofficially behind the scenes is real imperialist business, which is pharisaically concealed by the eloquent orators of the League of Nations. What can there be surprising over the fact that the Soviet Union does not want to become a member and participant of this anti-nation comedy?

Question 2.—Why does the Soviet Union not allow the existence of a Social-Democratic Party?

Answer.—A Social-Democratic Party (i.e., a Menshevik party) is not suffered in the Soviet Union for the same reason that counter-revolutionaries are not allowed here. This, perhaps, may surprise you, but there is nothing extraordinary about it. The conditions of development of our country, the history of its development, are such that the Social-Democrats, who constituted under Tsarism a more or less revolutionary party, have, after the overthrow of Tsarism, under Kerensky, become a Government party, a
bourgeois party, a party of imperialist war, and after the October Revolution, an avowedly counter-revolutionary party against the Proletarian Dictatorship. You surely know that the Social-Democrats in our country have participated in the civil war on Koltchak's and Denikin's side against the Soviet Government. At the present time this party is a party of capitalist restoration, a party which stands for the liquidation of the Proletarian Dictatorship. I think that this development of Social-Democracy is typical not only of the USSR but also of the other countries. In our country Social-Democracy was more or less revolutionary so long as Tsarism existed. This, as a matter of fact, explains the circumstance that we Bolsheviks were then together with the Mensheviks, with the Social-Democrats in one party. Social-Democracy becomes an opposition or government and bourgeois party when the so-called democratic bourgeoisie comes into power. It becomes a party of avowed counter-revolution when the revolutionary proletariat seized power.

Interjection by a delegate. Does this mean that Social Democracy is a counter-revolutionary force only here in the Soviet Union, or can it be classified as a counter-revolutionary force also in other countries?

STALIN: I have already stated that, in this respect, there is a certain difference. In the country of Proletarian Dictatorship Social-Democracy is a counter-revolutionary force fighting for the restoration of capitalism and the liquidation of the Proletarian Dictatorship in the name of the "bourgeois" democracy. In the capitalist countries, where the proletariat is not yet in power, the Social-Democrats constitute either an opposition party or a semi-governmental party in coalition with the liberal-bourgeoisie against the most reactionary forces of capitalism, or a thoroughly governmental party openly and avowedly defending capitalism and "bourgeois" democracy, against the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. Social-Democracy becomes openly counter-revolutionary, and its counter-revolutionary action is directed
against proletarian governmental power, only when proletarian governmental power becomes an actual fact.

Question 3.—Why is there no freedom of the Press in the USSR?

Answer.—What freedom of Press have you in mind? Freedom of the Press? For which class,—the bourgeoisie or the proletariat? If it is a question of freedom of Press for the bourgeoisie, then it does not and will not exist here as long as the Proletarian Dictatorship is in power. But if it is a question of freedom of Press for the proletariat, then I must say that you will not find another country in the world where such broad and complete freedom of the Press exists as in the USSR. Freedom of the Press for the proletariat is not an empty phrase. And without the greatest freedom of assembly, without the best printing works, the best clubs, without free organisations of the working class, beginning with the narrow and ending with the broad organisations, embracing millions of workers, there is no freedom of the Press. Look at conditions in the USSR, survey the workers' districts, and you will find that the best printing works, the best clubs, entire paper mills, entire ink factories, producing necessary material for the Press, huge assembly halls — these and many other things which are so necessary for the freedom of the Press of the working class, are entirely and fully at the disposal of the working class and the toiling masses. This is what we call freedom of the Press for the working class. We have no freedom of the Press for the bourgeoisie. We have no freedom of the Press for the Mensheviks and social revolutionaries, who represent the interests of the beaten and overthrown bourgeoisie. But what is there surprising in that? We have never pledged ourselves to grant freedom of the Press to all classes, and to make all classes happy. Taking power in October, 1917, the Bolsheviks openly declared that this Government is a government of one class, a government of the proletariat, which will subdue the bourgeoisie, in the interests of the toiling masses of town and country
representing the overwhelming majority of the population of the USSR. How can one, after this, demand from the Proletarian Dictatorship freedom of Press for the bourgeoisie?

Question 4.—Why are not the imprisoned Mensheviks Released?

Answer.—Evidently this refers to the active Mensheviks. Yes, it is true the active Mensheviks in our country are not released from prison until their sentence expires. But why wonder at this? Why did they not release from prison, for instance, the Bolsheviks in July, August, September, and October, 1917, when the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries were in power? Why was Lenin compelled to keep in hiding and under—August, September, and October, 1917, when the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries were in power? How can you explain the fact that the great Lenin, whose name is the symbol of revolt of the proletarians of all countries, was compelled to keep in hiding from July to October, 1917, in Finland, far away from the “democratic republic” of Kerensky and Tseretelli, Chernov and Dan, and that the “Pravda,” the organ of Lenin’s Party, was smashed by the bourgeois junkers in spite of the fact that prominent and active leaders of the Second International were then in power. This can be explained evidently by the fact that the struggle between bourgeois counter-revolution and proletarian revolution cannot but lead to repression. I have already stated that the Social-Democrats in our country are a counter-revolutionary party, but from this it follows that the proletarian revolution cannot help arresting the active leaders of this counter-revolutionary party.

But this is not all. From this it further follows that the imprisonment of Mensheviks in our country is a continuation of the policy begun with the October Revolution. After all, what is the October Revolution? The October Revolution means first of all the overthrow of the bourgeois Government. All more or less conscious workers of all countries now admit that the Bolsheviks
were right in overthrowing bourgeois power in 1917. I have no doubt that you are of the same opinion. But the question arises, whom did the proletariat actually overthrow in 1917? History tells us, and facts go to prove that in October, 1917, the proletariat overthrew the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, as it was precisely the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, Kerensky and Chernov, Gotz and Lieber, Dan and Tseretelli, Abramovitch and Avksentiev, who were then in power. And what are the Menshevik and Social-Revolutionary Parties? They are parties of the Second International.

It therefore follows that in accomplishing the October Revolution, the proletariat of the USSR overthrew the parties of the Second International. This, perhaps, is not very pleasing to some Social-Democrats, but it is an undeniable fact, comrades, over which it would be absurd to argue.

Consequently, it follows that at the moment of proletarian revolution, it is possible and necessary to overthrow a Menshevik and Social Revolutionary government, so that proletarian power may triumph. But if they may be overthrown, why cannot they be arrested if they go over openly and determinedly to the camp of bourgeois counter-revolution? Do you think that the overthrow of the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries is a milder act than their imprisonment? One cannot consider the policy of the October Revolution correct unless he also considers the inevitable results of that policy correct. One of the two, either the October Revolution was wrong, in which case the imprisonment of Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries is also wrong, or the October Revolution was right, in which case, one cannot regard the imprisonment of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries wrong. Logic must take its course.

Question 5.—Why has not the correspondent of the Social-Democratic Press Bureau been permitted to enter the USSR?

Answer.—Because the Social-Democratic Press abroad, particularly the “Vorwärts,” excels in its
monstrous slander of the USSR and its representatives, even the bourgeois Press. Because many newspapers, such as the "Vossische Zeitung," for instance, behave by far more "impartially" and "decently" in their struggle against the USSR, than the "Vorwärts." This may seem strange, but it is a fact which cannot be ignored. If the "Vorwärts" could behave not worse than some of the bourgeois papers, then its representatives would surely find their place in the USSR together with the representatives of the bourgeois papers. A few days ago a "Vorwärts" representative addressed himself to one of the employees of our diplomatic delegation in Berlin, with a question concerning conditions necessary to be complied with for a "Vorwärts" representative being permitted to enter the USSR. In reply, he was told: "If the 'Vorwärts' will prove, in deed, that it is prepared to behave towards the USSR and its representatives not less 'decently' than the Liberal Press, such as the 'Vossische Zeitung,' the Soviet Government will have no objection to permitting a 'Vorwärts' representative in the USSR." I think that the answer was quite reasonable.

**Question 6.—Is it possible to unite the Second and Third Internationals?**

**Answer.**—I think it is impossible. It is impossible because the Second and Third Internationals have two entirely different viewpoints and have two different objects in view. If the Third International looks forward to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, the Second International, on the contrary, looks forward to the safeguarding of capitalism and the annihilation of everything which is essential for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The struggle between these two Internationals is the ideological expression of the struggle between the adherents of capitalism and those of Socialism. In this struggle, either the Second or the Third International will be the victor in the Labour Movement. I think that unity between them is impossible.
Question 7.—How do you regard the European situation? Is there reason for expecting revolutionary events in the next few years?

Answer.—I think that elements of a profound capitalist crisis are growing and will continue to grow in Europe. Capitalism can be partly stabilised, it can rationalise its production, it can temporarily stifle the working class. Capitalism is still able to do these things, but it will never return to that stability and that equilibrium which existed prior to the war and before the October Revolution. It will never again return to that stability and equilibrium. And that this is so can be seen from the fact that in the European countries, as well as in the colonial countries, which are the source of life of European capitalism, we see one revolutionary outburst after another. To-day we see a revolutionary outburst in Austria, to-morrow in England, and the day after somewhere in France or Germany, and then in China, Indonesia, India, etc. And what is Europe and its colonies? It is the centre of capitalism and its periphery. There is "unrest" in the centres of European capitalism. There is still greater "unrest" in its periphery. Conditions are ripening for new revolutionary events. I think that the clearest sign of the growing capitalist crisis, the clearest example of accumulated discontent and dissatisfaction among the working class, are the events connected with the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. What did the murder of two workers mean to the capitalist butchers? Have they not been murdering workers up to now in tens and hundreds, day in and day out? However, it sufficed to kill two workers, Sacco and Vanzetti, to set the working class all over the world in motion. What does that show? It indicates that the ground is getting too hot for capitalism. It indicates that conditions for new revolutionary events are ripening. The fact that the capitalists could succeed in sweeping back the first revolutionary wave, cannot by any means serve as a consolation for capitalism. The revolution against capitalism cannot rise in one continuous wave. It always develops in
the form of ebbs and flows. Such was the case in Russia. Such will also be the case in Europe. We are on the eve of new revolutionary events.

Question 8.—Is the Opposition of the Russian Party strong and on what circles does it rest?

Answer.—I think that it is very weak. Moreover, its strength is rather insignificant in our Party. I have before me to-day's newspaper. It contains a survey of the last few days' discussions. The figures show that over 135,000 members of the Party voted for the Central Committee and its theses, and only 1,200 voted for the Opposition. This is even less than 1 per cent. I think that the future votes will be even more disastrous for the Opposition. Our discussion will last up to the Congress. We will try to question the whole Party during that period if possible. I do not know how discussions are conducted in your Social-Democratic Parties. I do not know whether discussions are carried on at all in the Social-Democratic Parties. But we regard a discussion as a serious matter. We will test the whole Party and you will see that the relative strength of the Opposition in our Party will even be more insignificant than the figures I have just given. It is quite possible that at our Sixteenth Party Congress the Opposition will not have a single representative, a single delegate. Let us take, for instance, such huge works as the "Treugolnik" or "Putilov" in Leningrad. The number of workers employed in "Treugolnik" is about 15,000. The number of Party members is 2,122. The Opposition received thirty-nine votes. The number of workers in the "Putilov" is about 11,000. The number of Party members is 1,718. The Opposition received twenty-nine votes.

On what circles does the Opposition rest? I think that the Opposition is supported primarily by non-proletarian circles. If you ask the non-proletarian sections of the population, those which are discontented with the proletarian Dictatorship, with whom they side, they will unhesitatingly reply that they sympathise with
the Opposition. Why? Because the Opposition struggle is essentially a struggle against the Party, a struggle against the regime of the Proletarian Dictatorship, with which certain non-proletarian sections cannot but be dissatisfied. The Opposition reflects the dissatisfaction of the non-proletarian sections of the population with the Proletarian Dictatorship and their pressure exerted upon it.

Question 9.—Is Ruth Fischer's and Maslow's Contention, now circulated in Germany, that the present leaders of the Comintern and the Russian Party are betraying the workers to the counter-revolution, correct?

Answer.—We must assume that it is correct. There is also reason to think that the Comintern and the CPSU are betraying the working classes of the USSR to the counter-revolutionaries of the world. Moreover, I can inform you that the Comintern and the CPSU recently decided to bring back all landlords and capitalists, who have been driven out of the country, to claim their property. And that is not all. The Comintern and the CPSU went even further than that, and decided that the time has come for Bolsheviks to become cannibals. Finally, we have decided to nationalise all women and to make it a practice to violate our own sisters. (General laughter.—Voices from the crowd: "Who could have asked such a question? "). I can see that you are all laughing. Perhaps some of you will think that I am not serious on the question. Yes, comrades, one cannot be serious in dealing with such questions. I think that such questions can be answered only by ridicule. (Stormy applause.)

Question 10.—What is your attitude to the Opposition and to the Fischer-Maslow tendency in Germany?

Answer.—My attitude to the Opposition and its German agency is similar to the attitude of the famous French novelist, Alphonse Daudet, to his Tartarin of Tarascon (general hilarity). You have probably read
this novel? Tartarin, the hero of the book, was essentially a common, "good-natured" petty bourgeois. But he had such an extravagant imagination and such a capacity for telling "cock and bull" stories that, eventually, he became the victim of these unusual abilities, Tartarin boastingly assured everybody that he killed an innumerable number of lions and tigers on the Atlas Mountains. His credulous friends bestowed on him the order of the greatest lion-hunter in the world. Tartarin boasted of having climbed to the peak of Mont-Blanc. His credulous friends therefore bestowed on him the order of the greatest mountain-climber in the world. However, Alphonse Daudet surely knew that Tartarin never even saw the peak of Mont-Blanc, because he was only at the foot of it. Tartarin boasted that he founded a great colony in a country, a long distance from France. His credulous friends, therefore, bestowed on him the order of the greatest coloniser in the world. However, Alphonse Daudet surely knew, as Tartarin himself had to admit, that nothing but disgrace could result from Tartarin's imaginations.

We have now exhausted the first list of questions, let us now deal with the questions of the French Delegation.

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Question 1.—How does the USSR Government propose to struggle against the foreign oil concerns?

Answer.—I do not think that this is the right way to raise this question. One might think that the Soviet oil industry intends to make an attack on the oil concerns of other countries and aims at their overthrow and liquidation. But is this really the case? Certainly not. The fact is that certain oil concerns in capitalist countries are endeavouring to throttle the oil industry of Soviet Russia, whereas the latter has to defend itself in order to be able to exist and develop. The Soviet oil industry is weaker than the oil industry of the capitalist countries in regard to production—we produce
less than they—and also in regard to markets—they are better connected with the world market than we. How does the Soviet oil industry defend itself? It defends itself by improving the quality of its production, and above all, by lowering oil prices, by throwing cheap oil on the market, cheaper than the oil of the capitalist concerns. You will probably ask me: Are the Soviets really so well off that they are able to sell cheaper than the wealthiest capitalist firms? It goes without saying that the Soviet industry is not wealthier than the capitalist firms. On the contrary, the latter are considerably wealthier than the Soviet industry. But it is not a question of wealth here. The main thing is that the Soviet oil industry is not a capitalist industry, and, therefore, does not require extravagant excess profits, whereas capitalist oil concerns cannot do without such profits. Just because the Soviet oil industry does not require excess profits it can sell its produce cheaper than the capitalist firms. The same can be said about Soviet grain, timber, etc. It should be pointed out that Soviet goods, particularly Soviet oil, are a factor on the international market, which reduces prices and improves thereby the position of the mass of consumers. This constitutes the strength and at the same time the means of defence of the Soviet oil industry against the attacks of the capitalist oil concerns. This is also an explanation for the violent opposition of the oil concerns of all countries, and particularly of Deterding to the Soviets and the Soviet oil industry; they disguise their policy of high prices and robbing the consumers by the now fashionable phraseology about "Communist propaganda."

Question 2.—How do you think you will achieve collectivism in the peasant question?

Answer.—We think of achieving collectivism in the peasant question gradually, by economic, financial and cultural-political measures. I think that the most interesting question is that of economic measures. In regard to this we adopt measures which follow three lines. We organise individual peasant holdings on a co-operative basis, we organise peasant holdings, mainly,
the poorest producers’ societies, and last, but not least, our planning and regulating State organs come to the assistance of peasant holdings by helping them to place peasant produce on the market and by supplying the peasants with the necessary articles produced by our industry.

A few years ago there were middlemen between our industry and the peasant farms, private traders who supplied the peasantry with the necessary manufactured goods and sold the peasants produce. It goes without saying that these middlemen did not work for nothing, but got tens of millions out of the peasantry, and also out of the urban population. This was the period when there was no proper union between town and countryside, between Socialist industry and individual peasant holdings. At that time co-operatives and State distributive organs played a comparatively insignificant rôle. A radical change has taken place since then. At present the rôle of co-operatives and State trade organs not only predominate in, but dominates, if it does not monopolise, trade between town and countryside, the exchange of goods between industry and the peasant economy. Co-operatives and State organs supply over 70 per cent. of the textile goods absorbed by the countryside. In regard to agricultural machinery, co-operative and State organs are responsible almost for 100 per cent. of the total supply. The share of co-operatives and State organs in the buying up of the peasant grain is over 80 per cent., and in regard to the buying up of raw material for industry, such as cotton, sugar beet, etc., the share of co-operatives and State organs is almost 100 per cent.

What does this mean?

It means, firstly, that capitalists are being frozen out of trade transactions, industry is in direct contact with the peasant economy, the high profits of speculating middlemen remain in the industry and agriculture, the peasants can buy manufactured goods cheaper, and urban workers are on their part enabled to buy agricultural produce cheaper.
It means secondly, that by eliminating capitalist middlemen from trade transactions, industry is enabled to give a lead to the peasant economy, to influence it to raise its productivity, to rationalise and industrialise it.

It means, thirdly, that by linking up agriculture with industry the State is in a position to develop agriculture according to plan, to supply it with first-rate seeds and fertilisers, to determine the volume of its production, to influence it in regard to prices, etc.

It means finally, that favourable conditions are created in the countryside for the liquidation of capitalist elements, for a further limitation and gradual elimination of kulakdom, for the organisation of non-kulak peasant homesteads into producers' societies, for bringing about the financing of these societies out of State funds.

Let us take, for instance, the production of sugar beet for the sugar industry and the production of cotton for the textile industry. The volume of production of this kind of raw material and prices for them, as well as their quality, are determined, not by the elemental play of forces on an unorganised market, through profit-making middlemen, marts and other capitalist trade organs, etc., but according to a definite plan, by definite preliminary agreements between the sugar and textile syndicates on the one hand, and tens of thousands of peasant farms represented by beet and cotton sowing co-operatives on the other hand. Here we have no more marts, exchanges, commercial offices, and price speculations, etc. All these adjuncts of capitalist economy no longer exist with us in this sphere. Here two parties meet without any middleman, marts, etc.—State syndicates on the one hand, co-operative peasants on the other hand. The State syndicates sign contracts with corresponding co-operative organisations for the production of a certain quantity of sugar-beet and cotton, for supplying the peasantry with seeds, loans, etc. At the end of the financial year the total production is placed at the disposal of the syndicates, and the peasants receive for it the amounts agreed upon
in the contracts. This is called here the contract system. The advantage of this system is that it is profitable to both sides, and links up the peasant economy with industry directly without middlemen. This system is the surest way to the collectivisation of the peasant economy.

One cannot say that other branches of agriculture have already reached this stage of development. But one can safely say that all branches of agriculture, including corn production, will gradually take this form of development. And this is the direct road to the collectivisation of agriculture.

All-embracing collectivisation will come when peasant farms are reorganised on a new technical basis—mechanisation and electrification, when most of the working peasants will be co-ordinated in co-operative organisations, when most of the villages will have a network of agricultural associations of a collectivist type. We are developing towards this, but we have not yet reached this goal and are not likely to reach it soon. Why? Because, among other things, large sums of money are needed for this which our State has not yet at its disposal, but which will no doubt be accumulated in the course of time. Marx said that not a single new social order in the history of mankind established itself firmly without being generously financed, without absorbing hundreds and hundreds of millions. I think that we are already entering upon the stage in the development of agriculture when the State is beginning to be able to give adequate financial support to the new social order. The fact that socialised industry has already acquired the leading rôle in our national economy and is carrying with it agriculture, is the surest guarantee that peasant economy will pursue the road of further collectivisation.

Question 3.—What were the main difficulties under military Communism when efforts were made to abolish money?

Answer.—There were many difficulties, internal
and external. The three main internal difficulties were as follows:

Firstly, our industry was ruined and paralysed, except the war industry which supplied our civil war fronts with ammunition and arms during the intervention. Two-thirds of our works and factories were at a standstill, transport was disorganised, there were no, or hardly any, manufactured goods.

Secondly, agriculture was lame on both legs, working peasants were at the fronts, there was lack of raw material, of bread for the urban population and particularly for the workers. In those days the ration of workers was half a pound and sometimes only an eighth of a pound of bread a day.

Thirdly, there was no or hardly any Soviet distributive apparatus between town and countryside capable of supplying the latter with manufactured articles and the former with agricultural produce. Cooperatives and State trade organs were in an embryo state.

However, at the end of the civil war and when the New Economic Policy was introduced the economic position of the country underwent a radical change.

Industry developed and consolidated itself. It took up a commanding position in the whole national economy. The most characteristic fact in respect to this is, that during the last two years we have been able to invest in industry over two billion roubles from our own savings, without help from outside, without any foreign loans whatever. One can no longer say that there are, generally speaking, no goods for the peasantry.

Agriculture has developed, its production having reached the pre-war level. One can no longer say that there is no bread and other agricultural produce for the workers.

Co-operative and State trade organs have developed to such an extent that they occupy a commanding place in the trade of the country. One can
no longer say that we have no distributive apparatus
between town and countryside, between industry and
the peasant economy.

All this is, of course, not enough to construct
there and then a Socialist economy. But it is quite
enough to proceed along the road of successful Social-
list construction.

We must now re-equip our industry and must
build new works and factories on a new technical basis.
We must develop agriculture, supply the peasantry
with a maximum of agricultural machinery, we must
co-operate the majority of the working peasantry and
must reorganise individual peasant farms into a big
network of agricultural associations. We must organ-
ise a distributive apparatus between town and coun-
try-side capable of ascertaining and satisfying the require-
ments of the urban and rural districts of the whole
country, just as every individual draws up his budget,
his revenue and expenditure. When we will have
achieved all this, then, I should say, the time will have
come when there will be no more need for money. But
this time is far away.

Question 4.—What about the "Scissors"?

Answer.—If by "scissors" we are to understand
that discrepancy between agricultural produce and
manufactured goods prices from the viewpoint of cost
of production, the question of "scissors" is somewhat
as follows: there is no doubt whatever that our manu-
factured articles are still sold at a somewhat higher
price than they could be sold under different circum-
stances. This is because our industry is very young,
because it is necessary to protect it from competition
from outside, because it is essential to create for it
conditions which will accelerate its development. Its
rapid development is needed for our urban as well as
our rural districts. Otherwise we would be unable to
supply the peasant homesteads with the necessary tex-
tile goods and agricultural machinery. This creates
a discrepancy between prices for manufactured articles
and prices for agricultural produce to the slight detri-
ment of the peasantry.
In order to relieve the peasant economy of this drawback the Government and the Party have decided to follow the policy of a gradual but steady reduction of prices for manufactured goods. Can this be called a practical policy? I think so. It is, for instance, a well-known fact that during the last year we have been able to reduce retail prices for manufactured articles by 8 to 10 per cent. It is also a well-known fact that our industrial organisations are systematically reducing the cost of production and wholesale prices for manufactured articles. There is every reason to believe that this policy will be continued. Even more than that, I must say that the policy of a steady reduction of prices for manufactured articles is the corner-stone of our economic policy without which improvement and rationalisation of our industry and consolidation of the union between the working class and the peasantry are impossible.

Another kind of policy is adhered to in this respect in bourgeois countries. Enterprises are usually organised there into trusts and syndicates to raise within the country prices for manufactured articles, to make them monopoly prices, to make on this basis as big profits as possible, and to create a fund for the export of goods abroad where the capitalists sell these goods at low prices in order to secure new markets. The same policy was pursued here in Russia under the bourgeois regime, when, for instance, sugar was sold in the country at exorbitant prices; for instance, in England this sugar was sold at such low prices that it was used as food for pigs. The Soviet Government works on diametrically opposite lines. It holds that industry must be at the service of the population, and not vice versa. It holds that a steady reduction of prices for manufactured articles is the fundamental means, without which a normal growth of industry is impossible, apart from the fact that the policy of reducing prices for manufactured articles contributes to increased consumption by the population, increases the demand of the urban and rural home markets and creates in this manner an ever-growing source to feed the further development of the industry.
Question 5.—What are the proposals of the Soviet Government to the French small holders of the Russian bonds? How are they to be brought to the notice of the French rentiers?

Answer.—Our proposals re the pre-war debts are published in Comrade Rakovsky's well-known interview. I think you must be familiar with them. The condition is: simultaneous credits for the USSR. We follow in this respect the well-known principle: if you give I give. If you give us credit you will receive something from us on account of the pre-war debts, if you do not give anything you will not receive anything. Does this mean that thereby we have recognised in principle the pre-war debts? Certainly not. It means only that while leaving in force the well-known decree about the annulment of old Tzarist debts, we are prepared at the same time, in the form of a practical agreement, to pay a part of the pre-war debts if we get in return the credits which we need, and which will be at the same time useful to French industry. We look upon payments on account of the pre-war debts as additional interest on the credits which we will receive for the development of our industry.

People talk about the war debts of Tzarist Russia, of all sorts of claims on the USSR connected with the results of the October Revolution. But people forget that our Revolution is in principle negation of imperialist wars and Tzarist debts connected with them. People forget that the USSR cannot and and will not pay war debts. People also forget that the USSR must take into account the robberies and violation to which the country was exposed during several years, during the intervention of foreign States with which certain counter-claims on the part of the USSR are connected. Who is responsible for these robberies and the violation? Who must pay compensation for them? Imperialists at the head of affairs are inclined to relegate these unpleasant matters to the limbo of the past, but they must know that this cannot be done.
Question 6.—How do you reconcile Vodka monopoly with struggle against alcoholism?

Answer.—I think that it is difficult to reconcile them; one goes certainly against the other. The Party is aware of this, and it took up this policy deliberately knowing full well that at present such a seeming contradiction is the lesser of the evils. When we introduced the vodka monopoly we were confronted with the alternative: EITHER creep under the capitalist yoke by ceding to capitalists a whole number of our most important works and factories, receiving from them in return the necessary means to get out of our temporary difficulty; OR introduce the vodka monopoly in order to get the necessary revenue for the development of our industry with our own resources. The members of the CC, including myself, had a talk with Lenin, who admitted that in the event of not getting the necessary credits from outside the vodka monopoly was inevitable as a provisional means of an extraordinary kind. This is how matters stood when we were introducing the vodka monopoly.

Of course, generally speaking, it would be better without vodka, for vodka is an evil. But in that case it meant creeping under the yoke of capitalism, which is a still greater evil. Therefore we preferred the lesser evil. At present the revenue from vodka is over 500 million roubles. To give up now the vodka monopoly means to give up this revenue. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that this would lessen alcoholism, for the peasants will begin to distil their own vodka and to poison themselves with this inferior home-distilled stuff. In this respect the great cultural backwardness of our countryside evidently plays a certain rôle, apart from the fact that giving up the vodka monopoly is tantamount to depriving our industry of over half a billion roubles which cannot be derived from any other source.

Does this mean that the vodka monopoly is to stay with us for ever? Certainly not, we introduced it as a provisional measure. Therefore it must be abolished as soon as we discover in our national economy new sources of revenue for the further development of our
industry. That such sources will be discovered is certain.

Were we right in leaving the production and distribution of vodka in the hands of the State? I think so. If vodka were handed over into private hands this would, firstly, lead to strengthening private capital, secondly, the Government would not have been able to adequately regulate the production and consumption of vodka, and thirdly, this would have made it more difficult for the Government to repeal the production and consumption of vodka in the near future. At present our policy is: to gradually reduce the production of vodka. I think that in the near future we will be able to abolish the vodka monopoly, to reduce the production of spirits to the minimum required for technical purposes, and subsequently to abolish the sale of vodka.

I think that we would not have to do with vodka and many other unpleasant things if the Western European proletarians took power into their hands and gave us the necessary help. But what are we to do? Our Western European brothers do not as yet want to seize power, and we are obliged to do the best we can with our own means. But it is not our fault, it is destiny. As you will admit, our Western European friends are also partly responsible for the vodka monopoly. (Laughter and applause.)

Question 7.—Judicial powers of the GPU, trial without witness, without defenders, secret arrests. Considering that these measures are not approved of by French public opinion, it would be interesting to hear their justification. Is it intended to substitute or abolish them?

Answer.—The GPU or the Cheka is a retributive organ of the Soviet Government. It is more or less similar to the Committee of Public Safety which existed during the Great French Revolution. It punishes primarily spies, plotters, terrorists, bandits, speculators, and forgers. It is something in the nature of a military political tribunal set up for the purpose of protecting the
interests of the Revolution from attacks on the part of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and their agents.

This organ was created on the day after the October Revolution, after all kinds of plots, terrorist and spying organisations, financed by Russian and foreign capitalists were discovered. This organ developed and became consolidated after a series of terrorist acts perpetrated against the leaders of the Soviet Government, after the murder of Comrade Uritsky, member of the Revolutionary Committee of Leningrad (he was killed by a Social-Revolutionary), after the murder of Comrade Volodarsky, member of the Revolutionary Committee of Leningrad (he was also killed by a Social-Revolutionary), after the attempt on Lenin (he was wounded by a member of the Social-Revolutionary Party). It must be admitted that the GPU aimed at the enemies of the Revolution without missing. By the way, this quality of the GPU still holds good. Since it has become the scare of the bourgeoisie, the indefatigable guard of the Revolution, the unsheathed sword of the proletariat.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the bourgeoisie of all countries have such hatred for the GPU. There is no legend which has not been invented in connection with the GPU. There is no such slander which has not been circulated about the GPU. And what does that mean? It means that the GPU is properly defending the interests of the Revolution. The sworn enemies of the Revolution curse the GPU. Hence, it follows that the GPU is doing the right thing.

But this is not how the workers regard the GPU. You go to the workers’ quarters and ask the workers what they think of it. You will find that they regard it with great respect. Why? Because they see in it a loyal defender of the Revolution.

I understand the hatred and distrust of the bourgeoisie for the GPU. I understand the various bourgeois tourists who, on coming to the USSR inquire before anything else as to whether the GPU is still alive and whether the time has not yet come for its liquidation. This is comprehensible and not out of
the ordinary. But I cannot understand some workers' delegates who, on coming to the USSR, ask with alarm as to whether many counter-revolutionaries have been punished by the GPU and whether terrorists and plotters against the proletarian Government will still be punished by it and is it not time yet for its dissolution. Where does this concern of some workers' delegates for the enemies of the proletarian revolution come from? How can it be explained? How can it be justified?

They advocate a maximum of lenience, they advise the dissolution of the GPU. . . . But can anyone guarantee that the capitalists of all countries will abandon the idea of organising and financing counter-revolutionary plotters, terrorists, incendiaries, and bomb-throwers after the liquidation of the GPU? To disarm the Revolution without having any guarantees that the enemies of the Revolution will be disarmed—would not that be folly, would not that be a crime against the working class? No, comrades, we do not want to repeat the errors of the Paris Communards. The Communards of Paris were too lenient in dealing with Versailles, for which Marx rightly denounced them at the time. They had to pay for their leniency, and when Thiers came to Paris tens of thousands of workers were shot by the Versailles forces. Do the comrades think that the Russian bourgeoisie and nobility were less bloodthirsty than those of Versailles in France? We know, at any rate, how they behaved towards the workers when they occupied Siberia, the Ukraine, and North Caucasia in alliance with the French and British, Japanese and American interventionists.

I do not mean to say by this that the internal situation of the country is such as makes it necessary to have a retributive organ of the Revolution. From the point of view of the internal situation, the Revolution is so firm and unshakable that we could do without the GPU. But the trouble is that the enemies at home are not isolated individuals. They are connected in a thousand ways with the capitalists of all countries who support them by every means and in
every way. We are a country surrounded by capitalist states. The internal enemies of our Revolution are the agents of the capitalists of all countries. The capitalist States are the background and basis for the internal enemies of our Revolution. Fighting against the enemies at home we therefore fight the counter-revolutionary elements of all countries. Judge for yourselves whether under such conditions we can do without such retributive organs as the GPU.

No, comrades, we do not want to repeat the mistakes of the Paris Communards. The GPU is necessary for the Revolution and it will continue to live and strike terror into the heart of the enemies of the proletariat. (Stormy applause.)

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ONE OF THE DELEGATES: Allow me, Comrade Stalin, to thank you on behalf of the delegates present for the explanations you have given us concerning the falsehoods circulated about the USSR abroad. You can rest assured that we will be able to tell our workers at home the truth about your country.

STALIN: You are welcome, comrades. I consider it my duty to answer your questions and to report before you. We Soviet leaders hold ourselves duty-bound to report to our class brothers on all questions of interest to them. Our State is the child of the world proletariat. The leaders in our State merely do their duty to the international proletariat in reporting to its representatives. (Applause.)
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