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On the Grain Front

From a Talk to Students of the Institute of Red Professors, the Communist
Academy and the Sverdlov University

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Publisher's Note

The present English edition of J. V. Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* corresponds to the eleventh Russian edition of 1952. The English translation up to page 766 (including the relevant notes at the end of the book) is taken from Stalin's *Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953-55, Vol. 6 and Vols. 8-13, while the rest is taken from the same publishers' 1953 edition of *Problems of Leninism*. Minor changes have been made in the translation and the notes.

ON THE GRAIN FRONT

Question: What should be considered as the basic cause of our difficulties in the matter of the grain supply? What is the way out of these difficulties? What, in connection with these difficulties, are the conclusions that must be drawn as regards the rate of development of our industry, particularly from the point of view of the relation between the light and heavy industries?

Answer: At first sight it may appear that our grain difficulties are an accident, the result merely of faulty planning, the result merely of a number of mistakes committed in the sphere of economic co-ordination.

But it may appear so only at first sight. Actually the causes of the difficulties lie much deeper. That faulty planning and mistakes in economic co-ordination have played a considerable part—of that there cannot be any doubt. But to attribute everything to faulty planning and chance mistakes would be a gross error. It would be an error to belittle the role and importance of planning. But it would be a still greater error to exaggerate the part played by the planning principle, in the belief that we have already reached a stage of development when it is possible to plan and regulate everything.

It must not be forgotten that in addition to elements which lend themselves to our planning activities there are also other elements in our national economy which do not as yet lend themselves to planning; and that, lastly, there are classes hostile to us which cannot be overcome simply by the planning of the State Planning Commission.

That is why I think that we must not reduce everything to a mere accident, to mistakes in planning, etc.

And so, what is the basis of our difficulties on the grain front?

The basis of our grain difficulties lies in the fact that the increase in the production of marketable grain is not keeping pace with the increase in the demand for grain.

Industry is growing. The number of workers is growing. Towns are growing. And, lastly, the areas producing industrial crops (cotton, flax, sugar beet, etc.) are growing, creating a demand for grain. All this leads to a rapid increase in the demand for grain—grain available for the market. But the production of marketable grain is increasing at a disastrously slow rate.

It cannot be said that the grain stocks at the disposal of the state have been smaller this year than last, or the year before. On the contrary, we have had far more grain in the hands of the state this year than in previous years. Nevertheless, we are faced with difficulties as regards the grain supply.

Here are a few figures. In 1925-26 we managed to procure 434 million poods of grain by April 1. Of this amount, 123 million poods were exported. Thus, there remained in the country 311 million poods of the grain procured. In 1926-27 we had procured 596 million poods of grain by April 1. Of this amount, 153 million poods were exported. There remained in the country 443 million poods. In 1927-28 we had procured 576 million poods of grain by April 1. Of this amount, 27 million poods were exported. There remained in the country 549 million poods.

In other words, this year, by April 1, the grain supplies available to meet the requirements of the country amounted to 100 million poods more than last year, and 230 million poods more than the year before last. Nevertheless, we are experiencing difficulties on the grain front this year.

I have already said in one of my reports that the capitalist elements in the countryside, and primarily the kulaks, took advantage of these difficulties in order to disrupt Soviet economic policy. You know that the Soviet government adopted a number of measures aimed at putting a stop to the anti-Soviet action of the kulaks. I shall not therefore dwell on this matter here. In the present case it is another question that interests me. I have in mind the reasons for the slow increase in the production of marketable grain, the question why the increase in the production of marketable grain in our country is slower than the increase in the demand for grain, in spite of the fact that our crop area and the gross production of grain have already reached the pre-war level.

Indeed, is it not a fact that our grain crop area has already reached the pre-war mark? Yes, it is a fact. Is it not a fact that already last year the gross production of grain was equal to the pre-war output, i.e., 5,000 million poods? Yes, it is a fact. How, then, is it to be explained that, in spite of these circumstances, the amount of marketable grain we are producing is only one half, and the amount we are exporting is only about one-twentieth, of the pre-war figure?

The reason is primarily and chiefly the change in the structure of our agriculture brought about by the October Revolution, the passing from large-scale landlord and large-scale kulak farming, which provided the largest amount of marketable grain, to small- and middle-peasant farming, which provides the smallest amount of marketable grain. The mere fact that before the war there were 15-16 million individual peasant farms, whereas at present there are 24-25 million peasant farms, shows that now the basis of our agriculture is essentially small-peasant farming, which provides the least amount of marketable grain. The strength of large-scale farming, irrespective of whether it is landlord, kulak or collective farming, lies in the fact that large farms are able to employ machines, scientific methods, fertilizers, to increase the productivity of labour, and thus to produce the maximum quantity of marketable grain. On the other hand, the weakness of small-peasant farming lies in the fact that it lacks, or almost lacks, these opportunities, and as a result it is semi-consuming farming, yielding little marketable grain.

Take, for instance, the collective farms and the state farms. They market 47.2 per cent of their gross output of grain. In other words, they yield relatively more marketable grain than did landlord farming in pre-war days. But what about the small- and middle-peasant farms? They market only 11.2 per cent of their total output of grain. The difference, as you see, is quite striking.

Here are a few figures illustrating the structure of grain production in the past, in the pre-war period, and at present, in the post-October period. These figures were supplied by Comrade Nemchinov, a member of the Collegium of the Central Statistical Board. It is not claimed that these figures are exact, as Comrade Nemchinov explains in his memorandum; they permit of only approximate calculations. But they are quite adequate to enable us to understand the difference between the pre-war period and the post-October period as regards the structure of grain production in general, and the production of marketable grain in particular.

What does this table show?

It shows, firstly, that the production of the overwhelming proportion of grain products has passed from the landlords and kulaks to the small and middle peasants. This means that the small and middle peasants, having completely emancipated themselves from the yoke of the landlords, and having, in the main, broken the strength of the kulaks, have thereby been enabled considerably to improve their material conditions. That is the result of the October Revolution. Here we see the effect, primarily, of the decisive gain which accrued to the main mass of the peasantry as a result of the October Revolution.

It shows, secondly, that in our country the principal holders of marketable grain are the small and, primarily, the middle peasants. This means that not only as regards gross production of grain, but also as regards the production of marketable grain, the U.S.S.R. has become, as a result of the October Revolution, a land of small-peasant farming, and the middle peasant has become the "central figure" in agriculture.

It shows, thirdly, that the abolition of landlord (large-scale) farming, the reduction of kulak (large-scale) farming to less than one-third, and the passing to small-peasant farming with only 11 per cent of its output marketed, in the absence, in the sphere of grain production, of any more or less developed large-scale socially-conducted farming (collective farms and state farms), were bound to lead, and in fact have led, to a sharp reduction in the production of marketable grain as compared with pre-war times. It is a fact that the amount of marketable grain in our country is now half what it was before the war, although the gross output of grain has reached the pre-war level.

That is the basis of our difficulties on the grain front.

That is why our difficulties in the sphere of grain procurements must not be regarded as a mere accident.

No doubt the situation has been aggravated to some extent by the fact that our trading organizations took upon themselves the unnecessary task of supplying grain to a number of small and middle-sized towns, and this was bound to reduce to a certain extent the state's grain reserves. But there are no grounds whatever for doubting that the basis of our difficulties on the grain front lies not in this particular circumstance, but in the slow development of the output of our agriculture for the market, accompanied by a rapid increase in the demand for marketable grain.

What is the way out of this situation?

Some people see the way out of this situation in a return to kulak farming, in the development and extension of kulak farming. These people dare not speak of a return to landlord farming, for they realize, evidently, that such talk is dangerous in our times. All the more eagerly, however, do they speak of the necessity of the utmost development of kulak farming in the interests of—the Soviet regime. These people think that the Soviet regime can rely simultaneously on two opposite classes—the class of the kulaks, whose economic principle is the exploitation of the working class, and the class of the workers, whose economic principle is the abolition of all exploitation. A trick worthy of reactionaries.

There is no need to prove that these reactionary "plans" have nothing in common with the interests of the working class, with the principles of Marxism, with the tasks of Leninism. Talk about the kulak being "no worse" than the urban capitalist, about the kulak being no more dangerous than the urban Nepman, and therefore, about there being no reason to "fear" the kulaks now—such talk is sheer liberal chatter which lulls the vigilance of the working class and of the main mass of the peasantry. It must not be forgotten that in industry we can oppose to the small urban capitalist our large-scale socialist industry, which produces nine-tenths of the total output of manufactured goods, whereas in the countryside we can oppose to large-scale kulak farming only the still weak collective farms and state farms, which produce but one-eighth of the amount of grain produced by the kulak farms. To fail to understand the significance of large-scale kulak farming in the countryside, to fail to understand that the relative importance of the kulaks in the countryside is a hundred times greater than that of the small capitalists in urban industry, is to lose one's senses, to break with Leninism, to desert to the side of the enemies of the working class.

What, then, is the way out of the situation?

1) The way out lies, above all, in passing from small, backward and scattered peasant farms to united, large socially-conducted farms, equipped with machinery, armed with scientific knowledge and capable of producing the maximum amount of marketable grain. The way out lies in the transition from individual peasant farming to collective, socially-conducted economy in agriculture.

Lenin called on the Party to organize collective farms from the very first days of the October Revolution. From that time onwards the propaganda of the idea of collective farming has not ceased in our Party. However, it is only recently that the call for the formation of collective farms has met with a mass response. This is to be explained primarily by the fact that the widespread development of a co-operative communal life in the countryside paved the way for a radical change in the attitude of the peasants in favour of collective farms, while the existence of a number of collective farms already harvesting from 150 to 200 poods per dessiatin, of which from 30 to 40 per cent represents a marketable surplus, is strongly attracting the poor peasants and the lower strata of the middle peasants towards the collective farms.

Of no little importance in this connection is also the fact that only recently has it become possible for the state to lend substantial financial assistance to the collective-farm movement. We know that this year the state has granted twice the amount of money it did last year in aid of the collective farms (more than 60 million rubles). The Fifteenth Party Congress was absolutely right in stating that

the conditions have already ripened for a mass collective-farm movement and that the stimulation of the collective-farm movement is one of the most important means of increasing the proportion of marketable grain in the country's grain production.

According to the data of the Central Statistical Board, the gross production of grain by the collective farms in 1927 amounted to no less than 55 million poods, with an average marketable surplus of 30 per cent. The widespread movement at the beginning of this year for the formation of new collective farms and for the expansion of the old ones should considerably increase the grain output of the collective farms by the end of the year. The task is to maintain the present rate of development of the collective-farm movement, to enlarge the collective farms, to get rid of sham collective farms, replacing them by genuine ones, and to establish a system whereby the collective farms will deliver to the state and co-operative organizations the whole of their marketable grain under penalty of being deprived of state subsidies and credits. I think that, if these conditions are adhered to, within three or four years we shall be able to obtain from the collective farms as much as 100 million poods of marketable grain.

The collective-farm movement is sometimes contrasted with the co-operative movement, apparently on the assumption that collective farms are one thing, and co-operatives another. That, of course, is wrong. Some even go so far as to contrast collective farms with Lenin's co-operative plan. Needless to say, such contrasting has nothing in common with the truth. In actual fact, the collective farms are a form of co-operatives, the most striking form of producers' co-operatives. There are marketing co-operatives, there are supply co-operatives, and there are also producers' co-operatives. The collective farms are an inseparable and integral part of the co-operative movement in general, and of Lenin's co-operative plan in particular. To carry out Lenin's co-operative plan means to raise the peasantry from the level of marketing and supply co-operatives to the level of producers' co-operatives, of collective-farm co-operatives, so to speak. This, by the way, explains why our collective farms began to arise and develop only as a result of the development and consolidation of the marketing and supply co-operatives.

2)The way out lies, secondly, in expanding and strengthening the old state farms, and in organizing and developing new, large ones. According to the data of the Central Statistical Board, the gross production of grain in the existing state farms amounted in 1927 to no less than 45 million poods with a marketable surplus of 65 per cent. There is no doubt that, given a certain amount of state support, the state farms could considerably increase the production of grain. But the task does not end there. There is a decision of the Soviet government on the strength of which new large state farms (from 10,000 to 30,000 dessiatins

each) are being organized in districts where there are no peasant holdings; and in five or six years these state farms should yield about 100 million poods of marketable grain. The organization of these state farms has already begun. The task is to put this decision of the Soviet government into effect at all costs. I think that, provided these tasks are fulfilled, within three or four years we shall be able to obtain from the old and new state farms about 80-100 million poods of grain for the market.

3) Finally, the way out lies in systematically increasing the yield of the small and middle individual peasant farms. We cannot and should not lend any support to the individual large kulak farms. But we can and should assist the small and middle individual peasant farms, helping them to increase their crop yields and drawing them into the channel of co-operative organization. This is an old task; it was proclaimed with particular emphasis as early as 1921 when the tax in kind was substituted for the surplus-appropriation system. This task was reaffirmed by our Party at its Fourteenth [1] and Fifteenth Congresses. The importance of this task is now emphasized by the difficulties on the grain front. That is why this task must be fulfilled with the same persistence as the first two tasks will be, those concerning the collective farms and the state farms.

All the data show that the yield of peasant farms can be increased by some 15 to 20 per cent in the course of a few years. At present no less than 5 million wooden ploughs are in use in our country. Their replacement by modern ploughs alone would result in a very considerable increase in grain production in the country. This is apart from supplying the peasant farms with a certain minimum of fertilizers, selected seed, small machines, etc.

The contract system, the system of signing contracts with whole villages for supplying them with seed, etc., on condition that in return they unfailingly deliver a certain quantity of grain products—this system is the best method of raising the yield of peasant farms and of drawing the peasants into the co-operatives. I think that if we work persistently in this direction we can, within three or four years, obtain additionally from the small and middle individual peasant farms not less than 100 million poods of marketable grain.

Thus, if all these tasks are fulfilled, the state can in three or four years' time have at its disposal 250-300 million additional poods of marketable grain—a supply more or less sufficient to enable us to manoeuvre properly within the country as well as abroad.

Such, in the main, are the measures which must be taken in order to solve the difficulties on the grain front.

Our task at present is to combine these basic measures with current measures to improve planning in the sphere of supplying the countryside with goods, relieving our trading organizations of the duty of supplying grain to a number of small and middle-sized towns.

Should not, in addition to these measures, a number of other measures be adopted—measures, say, to reduce the rate of development of our industry, the growth of which is causing a considerable increase in the demand for grain, which at present is outstripping the increase in the production of marketable grain? No, not under any circumstances! To reduce the rate of development of industry would mean to weaken the working class; for every step forward in the development of industry, every new factory, every new works, is, as Lenin expressed it, "a new stronghold" of the working class, one which strengthens the latter's position in the fight against the petty-bourgeois elemental forces, in the fight against the capitalist elements in our economy. On the contrary, we must maintain the present rate of development of industry: we must at the first opportunity speed it up in order to pour goods into the rural areas and obtain more grain from them, in order to supply agriculture, and primarily the collective farms and state farms, with machines, in order to industrialize agriculture and to increase the proportion of its output for the market.

Should we, perhaps, for the sake of greater "caution," retard the development of heavy industry so as to make light industry, which produces chiefly for the peasant market, the basis of our industry? Not under any circumstances! That would be suicidal; it would undermine our whole industry, including light industry. It would mean abandoning the slogan of industrializing our country, it would mean transforming our country into an appendage of the world capitalist system of economy.

In this respect we proceed from the well-known guiding principles which Lenin set forth at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern[2] and which are absolutely binding for the whole of our Party. Here is what Lenin said on this subject at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern:

"The salvation of Russia lies not only in a good harvest on the peasant farms—that is not enough; and not only in the good condition of light industry, which provides the peasantry with consumer goods—that, too, is not enough; we also need heavy industry."

Or again:

"We are exercising economy in all things, even in schools. This must be so, because we know that unless we save heavy industry, unless we restore it, we

shall not be able to build up any industry; and without it we shall be doomed altogether as an independent country." (Vol. XXVII, p. 349.)

These directives given by Lenin must never be forgotten.

How will the measures proposed affect the alliance between the workers and the peasants? I think that these measures can only help to strengthen the alliance between the workers and the peasants.

Indeed, if the collective farms and the state farms develop at increased speed; if, as a result of direct assistance given to the small and middle peasants, the yield of their farms increases and the co-operatives embrace wider and wider masses of the peasantry; if the state obtains the hundreds of millions of poods of additional marketable grain required for manoeuvring; if, as a result of these and similar measures, the kulaks are curbed and gradually overcome—is it not clear that the contradictions between the working class and the peasantry within the alliance of the workers and peasants will thereby be smoothed out more and more; that the need for emergency measures in the procurement of grain will disappear; that wide masses of the peasantry will turn more and more to collective forms of farming, and that the fight to overcome the capitalist elements in the countryside will assume an increasingly mass and organized character?

Is it not clear that the cause of the alliance between the workers and the peasants can only benefit by such measures?

It must only be borne in mind that the alliance of the workers and peasants under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat should not be viewed as an ordinary alliance. It is a special form of class alliance between the working class and the labouring masses of the peasantry, which sets itself the object: a) of strengthening the position of the working class; b) of ensuring the leading role of the working class within this alliance; c) of abolishing classes and class society. Any other conception of the alliance of the workers and peasants is opportunism, Menshevism, S.-R.-ism—anything you like, but not Marxism, not Leninism.

How can the idea of the alliance of the workers and peasants be reconciled with Lenin's well-known thesis that the peasantry is "the last capitalist class"? Is there not a contradiction here? The contradiction is only an apparent, a seeming one. Actually there is no contradiction here at all. In that same speech at the Third Congress of the Comintern[3] in which Lenin characterized the peasantry as "the last capitalist class," he again and again substantiates the need for an alliance between the workers and the peasants, declaring that "the supreme principle of the dictatorship is the maintenance of the alliance of the proletariat and the

peasantry in order that the proletariat may retain its leading role and state power." It is clear that Lenin, at any rate, saw no contradiction in this.

How are we to understand Lenin's thesis that the peasantry is "the last capitalist class"? Does it mean that the peasantry consists of capitalists? No, it does not. It means, firstly, that the individual peasantry is a special class, which bases its economy on the private ownership of the instruments and means of production and which, for that reason, differs from the class of proletarians, who base their economy on collective ownership of the instruments and means of production.

It means, secondly, that the individual peasantry is a class which produces from its midst, engenders and nourishes, capitalists, kulaks and all kinds of exploiters in general.

Is not this circumstance an insuperable obstacle to the organization of an alliance of the workers and peasants? No, it is not. The alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat should not be regarded as an alliance with the whole of the peasantry. The alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry is an alliance of the working class with the labouring masses of the peasantry. Such an alliance cannot be effected without a struggle against the capitalist elements of the peasantry, against the kulaks. Such an alliance cannot be a stable one unless the poor peasants are organized as the bulwark of the working class in the countryside. That is why the alliance between the workers and the peasants under the present conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat can be effected only in accordance with Lenin's well-known slogan: Rely on the poor peasant, build a stable alliance with the middle peasant, never for a moment cease fighting against the kulaks. For only by applying this slogan can the main mass of the peasantry be drawn into the channel of socialist construction.

You see, therefore, that the contradiction between Lenin's two formulas is only an imaginary, a seeming contradiction. Actually, there is no contradiction between them at all.

Notes

[1] The Fourteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.) was held in Moscow, December 18-31, 1925. Stalin delivered the political report of the Central Committee. The congress put as the central task of the Party the struggle for the socialist industrialization of the country, as being the basis for building socialism in the U.S.S.R. In its resolutions, the congress stressed the importance of further strengthening the alliance between the working class and the middle peasants, while relying on the poor peasants, in the struggle against the kulaks. The congress pointed to the necessity of supporting and furthering the

development of agriculture by means of more efficient farming methods and drawing an ever greater number of the peasant farms, through the co-operatives, into the channel of socialist construction. (For the resolutions and decisions of the congress, see Resolutions and Decisions of C.P.S.U. Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums, in Russian, 1953, Part II, pp. 73-137. For the Fourteenth Congress, see History of the C.P.S.U.(B.), Short Course, FLPH, Moscow, 1954, pp. 428-33.)

[2] This refers to Lenin's report on "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and the Prospects of the World Revolution" at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, held November 5-December 5, 1922. (See Lenin, Selected Works, FLPH, Moscow, 1952, Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 688-703.)

[3] This refers to Lenin's report on "The Tactics of the R.C.P." at the Third Congress of the Comintern, held June 22-July 12, 1921. (See Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 32, pp. 454-72.)