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Historical Questions -

A reassessment of the past

Part II

Stalin and the Role of the Peasantry

In the last issue (May-June) of *Lalkar*, we promised to deal with the three specific allegations levelled by Gorbachev against Stalin, these allegations being: First, that Stalin made an incorrect assessment of the role of the peasantry, in particular that of the middle peasantry, consequent upon which, it is alleged, great suffering was caused during collectivisation. Second, that Stalin weakened the Red Army by causing the arrest, trial and execution of top commanders. And finally that he suppressed all dissent and was instrumental in the liquidation of apparently loyal party leaders. We concluded our last article with the remark that these “*three specific allegations levelled by Gorbachev... have no basis in reality. We shall return to an examination of the same in the next issue. In particular, we shall examine the question of Stalin’s understanding of, and attitude towards, the middle peasantry. In connection with the question of the peasantry, we shall endeavour, inter alia, to reveal the secret of Gorbachev’s weakness for Bukharin and ideological basis for this affinity.*” By way of continuation, and in fulfilment of this promise we have given, we return to the subject.

Space will not permit the treatment of all these three allegations. We therefore confine ourselves in this issue to the peasant question, and will return to the other two in the next issue.

Stalin and the peasantry

Stalin was doubly fortunate in that not only did he have in Lenin such a giant of a teacher, but also, unlike the puffed up Trotskyite ‘Left’ and Bukharinite Right deviators, he was modest enough to acknowledge this fact and to follow faithfully the course

charted by Lenin. This is not to deny Stalin's original, and very great contribution, to the development of Marxist- Leninist theory, and even more important to its practice, but merely to stress that Stalin was never possessed of a desire to reinvent the wheel or to discover a new America.

When it comes to the peasant question, even a dilettante in the science of Marxism-Leninism in general, and the history of the Russian revolution in particular, cannot but be aware of the Bolshevik Party's three fundamental slogans on the question of the peasantry. These slogans had been worked out with great care and scientific accuracy by the undisputed leader of the Bolshevik Party and inspirer of the October Revolution, namely, V.I. Lenin, who, in working out the slogans on the peasant question, as indeed on any other question, never for a moment lost sight of the fact that "*the main question of every revolution is the question of state power*". (Lenin, *Collected Works* Russian edition, Vol. XXI p. 142). *In the hands of which class, or which classes, is power concentrated; which class, or which classes, must take power – such is 'the main question of every revolution.'*" (J.V. Stalin, *Collected Works* Volume 9 p.207).

Continues Stalin:

"The Party's fundamental strategic slogans, which retain their validity during the whole period of any particular stage of the revolution, cannot be called fundamental slogans if they are not wholly and entirely based on this cardinal thesis of Lenin's. Fundamental slogans are correct slogans only if they are based on a Marxian analysis of class forces, if they indicate the correct plan of disposition of the revolutionary forces on the front of the class struggle, if they help to bring the masses up to the front of the struggle for the victory of the revolution, to the front of the struggle for the seizure of power by the new class, if they help the Party to form a large and powerful political army from among the broad masses of the people, which is essential for the fulfilment of this task." (ibid.)

What were these fundamental strategic slogans, corresponding to different stages of the revolution, on the peasant question?

Slogan number one: *"Together with the whole of the peasantry, against the tsar and the landlords, with the bourgeoisie neutralised, for the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution."* – this was the fundamental slogan during the first stage of the Russian

Revolution. This is how Lenin formulated the Party's slogan in the period of preparation for the bourgeois-democratic revolution:

"The proletariat must carry to completion the democratic revolution by allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyse the instability of the bourgeoisie." (Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*).

Slogan number two: *"Together with the poor peasantry, against capitalism in town and country, with the middle peasantry neutralised, for the power of the proletariat."* This was the fundamental slogan during the second stage of the revolution. This is how Lenin formulated the Party's slogan in the period of preparation for the proletarian socialist revolution:

"The proletariat must accomplish the Socialist revolution by allying to itself the mass of semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie." (*ibid.*).

Explaining to Yan-Sky, and emphasising the "profound difference" between the above two strategic slogans, Stalin remarks: "As you see, Lenin repeatedly emphasised the profound difference between the first strategic slogan, the slogan of the period of preparation for the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and the second strategic slogan, the slogan of the period of preparation for the October Revolution. The first slogan was: together with the whole of the peasantry against the autocracy; the second slogan: together with the poor peasants against the bourgeoisie." (*ibid.*, p. 218, Stalin's emphasis).

Slogan number three: *"While relying on the poor peasants and establishing a durable alliance with the middle peasants, march forward towards Socialist construction!"* This was the fundamental slogan of the Bolshevik Party as from the early part of 1919, that is, from the period connected with the commencement of socialist construction. This is how Lenin expressed himself on this question in March 1919, at the opening of the Eighth Congress of the Party:

"The best representatives of Socialism of the old days – when they still believed in revolution and served it theoretically and ideologically – spoke of neutralising the peasantry, i.e., of turning the middle peasantry into a social stratum, which, if it did not actively aid the revolution of the proletariat, at least would not

*hinder it, would remain neutral and would not take the side of our enemies. This abstract, theoretical presentation of the problem is perfectly clear to us. But it is not enough. We have entered a phase of Socialist construction in which we must draw up concrete and detailed basic rules and instructions which have been tested by the experience of our work in the rural districts, by which we must be guided in order to achieve a stable alliance with the middle peasantry.” (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29 p. 144).*

Correcting Yan-sky, who mistakenly believed that the Bolshevik Party “adopted the policy of neutralising the middle peasant, not in the period of preparation for October and during October, but after October, and particularly after 1918, when the Committees of Poor Peasants were abolished, Stalin goes on to say.

“*That is entirely wrong. Comrade Yan-sky. On the contrary, the policy of neutralising the middle peasant did not begin, but ended when the Committees of Poor Peasants were abolished, after 1918. The policy of neutralising the middle peasant was abandoned (and not introduced) ... after 1918.*” (J.V. Stalin, *ibid* p. 219 – emphasis as in the original.)

And further:

“*The middle peasant snivelled and vacillated between revolution and counter-revolution as long as the bourgeoisie was being overthrown and as long as the Soviet power was not consolidated; therefore it was necessary to neutralise him. The middle peasant began to tum towards us when he began to realise that the bourgeoisie had been overthrown ‘for good’, that Soviet power was being consolidated, that the kulak was being overcome and that the Red Army was beginning to achieve victory on the fronts of the Civil War. And it was precisely after such a change that the third strategic slogan of the Party, announced by Lenin at the Eighth Party Congress, became possible, namely: | while relying on the poor peasants and establishing durable alliance with the middle peasants, march forward towards socialist construction!*” (*ibid*, p. 220).

These, then, were the Bolshevik Party’s three fundamental strategic slogans on the peasant question, by implementing which slogans the Bolshevik Party successfully approached the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution, and then successfully marched towards October and finally triumphantly constructed socialism in town and country – in industry and agriculture. The

correctness of these (above) slogans has been eloquently confirmed by the march of events. Only with the help, and implementation, of these correct slogans, based on a correct Marxist analysis of class forces, was it possible for the Bolshevik Party to bring the masses “to the front of struggle for the victory of the revolution” and to form “a large powerful political army from among the broad masses of the people” for the fulfilment of the historic tasks of overthrowing tsarist autocracy, establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, and marching triumphantly to the construction of socialism. To confirm that these slogans were known to, and, more importantly, fully understood by, Joseph Stalin, all that Gorbachev has to do is to get hold of Volume 9 of Stalin’s *Collected Works* and read the seventeen pages which comprise the article *The Party’s Three Fundamental Slogans on the Peasant Question, Reply to Yansky*. Stalin’s writings are littered with references to the Bolshevik Party’s stance on the peasant question. We have chosen this particular article because in it Stalin, in his inimitable style, disposes of a very difficult and complicated topic in a manner which is succinct and yet comprehensive. Although Stalin’s writings have long been suppressed by the revisionist rulers of the USSR (and Gorbachev’s *glasnost* has not made any change in this regard) one must presume that these writings are still in Soviet archives and there ought not to be any difficulty in Gorbachev having access to them. More importantly, although the first two slogans on the peasant question were put into effect during the lifetime of Lenin, the third slogan, that of durable alliance with the middle peasantry, although announced by Lenin in March 1919, was by and large put into effect, was implemented, under Stalin’s leadership. And had Stalin got it wrong, far from leading the struggle for the successful building of socialism in the countryside, he would have brought Soviet power to a virtual collapse. Anyone who has made even a casual study of the struggle waged by the Bolshevik Party, under the leadership of Stalin (after the death of Lenin in January 1924) against the ‘Left’ Trotskyist-Zinovievite and Right Bukharinite deviations cannot but be convinced of the correctness of the Leninist line of the Bolshevik Party. In the interests of those readers who have no knowledge of this controversy, and in order to refute Gorbachev’s groundless first allegation, we shall briefly delve into this controversy.

Two deviations from the Party's Leninist line on Collectivisation.

First Deviation – The 'left' (Trotskyist deviation

Briefly, the 'left' (Trotskyist) deviation can be summed up as follows: it saw the ENTIRE peasantry as nothing but an instrument for the restoration of capitalism; it looked upon the basic mass of the peasantry as a reactionary mass which could not be relied upon, and, therefore, advocated, not an alliance with this basic mass, but a "*discord*" with it; and above all, it believed in the impossibility of successfully building socialism in one country taken separately. All this explains the adventurism characteristic of the policies advocated by the Trotskyists. And this adventurism alone explains why Trotsky and Zinoviev tried to force on the Party full-scale collectivisation at the 14th Congress (December 1925) of the Party. The Party had little difficulty in rejecting this piece of Trotskyist adventurism, for reasons to be made clear shortly.

Since the rejection of this policy of adventurism, the Trotskyists spread the legend that collectivisation was undertaken too late, that the Party and Stalin did not realise the bestial nature of the kulak until the latter attempted in 1928 to threaten the very existence of the Soviet regime by refusing to sell grain to the Soviet state and thus presenting the towns and the Red Army with the spectre of starvation and famine. This accusation is baseless, founded as it is upon the substitution of wishful thinking for actual reality, which is typical of Trotskyism. We shall not waste time on refuting the assertion that the Party did not understand the bestial nature of the kulaks. We shall merely direct the reader to Lenin's writings in which he refers to the kulaks as "*most bestial, brutal and savage exploiters*" and as "*bloodsuckers,*" "*spiders,*" "*leeches*" and "*vampires*". *And all this was known to Stalin, for he, unlike the pompous Trotskyists and Bukharinites, knew AND understood each of Lenin's writings, and more importantly, spent all his life safeguarding Leninism and putting it into practice.*

The question, therefore, arises: in view of such enormous significance of collectivisation and of the necessity of eliminating the kulaks as a class, why was collectivisation not embarked upon earlier and why were the kulaks not eliminated earlier than they actually were? Why did the Bolshevik Party, as far back as the Eighth Party Congress proclaim the policy of RESTRICTING the

exploiting tendencies of the kulaks, rather than proclaim a policy of elimination of the kulaks as a class? Why did the Party reject the Trotskyist demand for elimination of the kulaks in 1926? The answer lies in the fact that had the Party undertaken an offensive against the kulaks without preparing the necessary conditions for the successful outcome of this offensive, then such an offensive would have proved to be the most reckless adventurism and would certainly have failed. And failure would have meant the strengthening of the kulaks. An offensive against the kulaks at an earlier time, say 1926-27, would certainly have failed, because at that time there did not exist in the Soviet countryside a wide network of state farms and collective farms which could furnish the basis for a determined struggle against the kulaks, because at that time the Soviet state was unable to replace the capitalist kulak production by the socialist production of state farms and collective farms. Here is what Comrade Stalin says on the point under consideration:

“In 1926-1927, The Zinoviev-Trotsky opposition did its utmost to impose upon the Party the policy of an immediate offensive against the kulaks. The Party did not embark on that dangerous adventure, for it knew that serious people cannot afford to play at an offensive. An offensive against the kulaks is j a serious matter. It should not be confused with declamations against the kulaks. Nor should it be confused with a policy of pinpricks against the kulaks, which the Zinoviev-Trotsky opposition did its utmost to impose upon the Party. To launch an offensive against the kulaks means that we must smash the kulaks, eliminate them as a class. Unless we set ourselves these aims, an offensive would be mere declamation, pinpricks, phrasemongering anything but a real Bolshevik offensive. To launch an offensive against the kulaks means that we must prepare for it and then strike at the kulaks, strike so hard as to prevent them from rising to their feet again. That is what we Bolsheviks call a real offensive. Could we have undertaken such an offensive some five years or three years ago with any prospect of success? No, we could not.

“Indeed, in 1927 the kulaks produced over 600,000,000 poods of grain, about 130,000,000 poods of which they marketed outside the rural districts. That was a rather serious power, which had to be reckoned with. How much did our collective farms and state farms produce at that time? About 80,000,000 poods, of which about

35,000,000 poods were sent to the market (marketable grain). Judge for yourselves, could we at that time have REPLACED the kulak output and kulak marketable grain by the output and marketable grain of our collective farms and state farms? Obviously, we could not.

“What would it have meant to launch a determined offensive against the kulaks under such conditions? It would have meant certain failure, strengthening the position of the kulaks and being left without grain. That is why we could not and should not have undertaken a determined offensive against the kulaks at that time, in spite of the adventurist declamations of the Zinoviev- Trotsky opposition.” (Collected Works, Vol. 12 pp. 174-5).

This then explains why the kulaks, why these “bloodsuckers”, these “spiders” these “leeches”, and these “vampires” were tolerated and why the Party pursued the policy of RESTRICTING their exploiting tendencies > rather than that of their outright elimination. This then explains why the Party at its Eighth Congress adopted the policy of RESTRICTING the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks, why this policy was again announced at the Eleventh Party Congress at the time of the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), why this policy was confirmed by the Fifteenth Congress of the Party, and why the Party pursued this line right up to the summer of 1929.

As Comrade Stalin correctly remarked: *“the proclamation of a slogan is not enough to cause the peasantry to tum en masse towards socialism.”*

The Trotskyist recipe for disaster through “discord” with the peasantry versus the Leninist formula for building socialism through a “stable alliance” with the main mass of the peasantry.

If the ‘left’ (Trotskyist) deviation had gained ascendancy in the Party, the result would have been the restoration of capitalism in the USSR. For what the Trotskyists were advocating amounted to no less than a declaration of civil war against the main mass of the peasantry, namely, the middle peasantry (60% of peasants being middle peasants at that time). The declaration of such a civil war against the middle peasantry would have meant the bringing of the Soviet regime into a “hostile collision” with the main mass of the peasantry. And such a “hostile collision” could not but represent a most serious danger to the very existence of the Soviet regime.

Small wonder that the Party rejected such an adventurist ‘policy’ advocated by Trotskyism.

Anyone who is in the least acquainted with Trotskyism would not be surprised by Trotskyism’s advocacy of the above adventurist policy towards the main mass of the peasantry. Such an adventurist policy is the direct outcome of Trotsky’s notorious theory of ‘permanent revolution’, which denies the revolutionary role of the peasantry and which claims that it is impossible to build socialism in a single country, according to this theory of ‘permanent revolution’ it is impossible for the working class to lead the main mass of the peasantry into the channel of socialist construction. Here are a few pronouncements of Trotsky on the matter in hand:

“The contradictions in the position of a workers’ government in a backward country with an overwhelming peasant population can be solved only on an international scale in the arena of the world proletarian revolution” (Preface to Trotsky’s book *The Year 1905*), and

“Without direct state support from the European proletariat, the working class of Russia will not be able to maintain itself in power and to transform its temporary rule into a lasting socialist dictatorship. This we cannot doubt for an instant.” (*Our Revolution*), and

“It would be hopeless to think ... that, for example, a revolutionary Russia could hold out in the face of a Conservative Europe.” (*Works* Vol. III pt. 1, p. 90).

Is it surprising then that Trotsky, who, flying in the face of all reality, so stubbornly held on to the above reactionary views, should have advocated a policy that would, if put into practice, have turned into reality his reactionary fantasia? Had Trotsky’s line been followed, the working class of Russia would doubtless have been unable to maintain itself in power.

Zinoviev, Trotsky’s ally in opposing the Party’s Leninist line on the peasant question, also did not believe in an alliance between the working class and the middle peasantry; instead he, departing from Leninism, advocated the neutralisation of the middle peasantry under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Here is what Zinoviev, who at the time was the chairman of the Comintern, wrote on this score in the *Pravda* of 18 January 1925:

“There are a number of tasks which are ABSOLUTELY COMMON TO ALL THE PARTIES OF THE COMINTERN. Such,

for example, are ... the proper approach to the peasantry. There are three strata among the agricultural population of the whole world, which can and must be won over by us and become the allies of the proletariat (the agricultural proletariat, the semi-proletarians – the small-holder peasants – and the small peasantry who do not hire labour). There is another stratum of the peasantry (the middle peasants) which must be at least NEUTRALISED BY US” (quoted according to Stalin, *Collected Works* Vol. 7, pp. 381-2).

The Trotskyist opposition’s chief economist, Preobrazhensky, even went so far as to declare the peasantry a “colony” for socialist industry, as an object to be exploited to the utmost.

Smirnov, another leader of the opposition, openly advocated “discord” with the middle peasants:

“We say that our state budget must be revised in such a way that the greater part of this five thousand million budget should flow into industry, for IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR US TO PUT UP WITH DISCORD WITH THE MIDDLE PEASANTS THAN TO INVITE CERTAIN DOOM” (Smirnov, speech delivered at the Rogzhsko-Simonovsky District Party Conference, 1927, quoted according to Stalin, *Collected Works* Vol. 10, p. 262).

One has only to compare the above-quoted pronouncements of the Trotskyist opposition with the following passages from Comrade Lenin’s writings to realise what a deep chasm divides Trotskyism from Leninism.

Whereas according to Trotskyism “*Without direct state support from the European proletariat, the working class of Russia will not be able to maintain itself in power...*” let alone build socialism, according to Leninism:

“Ten or twenty years of correct relations with the peasantry, and victory on a world scale is assured (even if the proletarian revolutions, which are growing, are delayed)” (V.I. Lenin, *Outline of the Pamphlet THE TAX IN KIND*, *Collected Works* Vol. 32 pages 302-3).

Whereas Trotskyism advocated “*discord with the middle peasants*” as the best method of avoiding “*certain doom*”, Leninism, on the contrary, advocates an alliance with the basic mass of the peasantry as the only means of ensuring the leading role of the proletariat and the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

“... the supreme principle,” said Lenin, *“of the dictatorship of the proletariat 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.”* (Report on the Tactics of the RCP(B), delivered at the Third Congress of the Comintern, 5 July, 1921, *Collected Works* Vol. 32 p. 466).

Thus it is clear that according to Leninism, it is impossible to build socialism successfully without *“a stable alliance with the middle peasants”* (Lenin, opening speech at the 8th Congress of the RCP(B), 18 March, 1919, *Collected Works* Vol. 29, p.125).

According to Trotskyism, however, *“discord with the middle peasants”* is ¹ the only means of avoiding *“certain doom”* (Smirnov, see above).

And it must not be forgotten that then, in 1927, the middle peasantry constituted 60% of the entire peasantry. A discord with the middle peasantry would, therefore, have meant driving it into the arms of the kulaks, strengthening the latter and isolating the poor peasants; in other words, a discord of the nature advocated by Trotskyism would have meant the starting of a civil war in the countryside and weakening the Soviet rule in the countryside most dangerously. Such is the logic of Trotskyism – its intentions notwithstanding. Here is how Comrade Stalin described the discrepancy between the opposition’s desires (its good intentions) and the inevitable disastrous results of its policy of discord with the middle peasantry.

“I am far from accusing the opposition of deliberately striving for all these misfortunes. It is not, however, a matter of what the opposition desires and is striving for, but of the results that must inevitably follow from the opposition’s policy of discord with the middle peasantry.

“The same thing is happening to the opposition here as happened with the bear in Krylov’s fable The Hermit and the Bear. (Laughter). It goes without saying that the bear’s intention in smashing the head of his friend the Hermit with a lump of rock was to deliver him from the importunate fly. The bear was prompted by the friendliest motives. Nevertheless, the bear’s friendly motives led to an action that was far from friendly, and for which the hermit paid with his life. Of course, the opposition wishes the revolution nothing but good. But in order to achieve this it proposes such means as would result in the utter defeat of the revolution, in the utter defeat

of the working class and the peasantry, in the disruption of all our work of construction.

The opposition's 'platform' is a platform for the rupture of the alliance between the working class and the peasantry, a platform for the disruption of all our work of construction, a platform for the disruption of the work of industrialisation." (Collected Works, Vol. 10 p. 265).

The year 1929 and the turn of the peasantry towards collectivisation

By the second half of 1929, however, the picture had changed drastically, and there were present all the pre-requisites for a determined offensive against the kulaks and for their elimination as a class. What were these prerequisites? These were the following:

FIRST: the state farms and the collective farms had been developed to a degree that they were able to replace kulak farming as regards the latter's marketable output. In 1929 the collective farms alone produced 29,100,000 centners of grain, of which 12,700,000 centners was marketable grain. Explaining why it was not possible to strike at the kulaks in 1927, and why an offensive against the kulaks had become a reality in 1929, this is how Comrade Stalin characterised the changes that had taken place since 1927, which made it possible for the Party to undertake a real Leninist offensive against the kulaks as opposed to Trotskyist declamations and phrasemongering' against the kulak:

"But today? What is the position now? Today, we have an adequate material base for us to strike at the kulaks, to break their resistance, to eliminate them as a class, and to REPLACE their output by the output of the collective farms and state farms. You know that in 1929 the grain produced on the collective farms and state farms has amounted to not less than 400,000,000poods (200,000,000 poods less than the gross output of the kulak farms in 1927). You also know that in 1929 the collective farms and state farms have supplied more than 130,000,000poods of marketable grain (i.e., more than the kulaks in 1927). Lastly you know that in 1930 the gross output of the collective farms and state farms will amount to not less than 900,000,000 poods of grain (i.e., more than the gross output of the kulaks in 1927), and their output of marketable grain will be not less than 400,000,000 poods (i.e., incomparably more than the kulaks supplied in 1927).

"That is how matters stand with us now, comrades.

“There you have the change that has taken place in the economy of our country.

“Now, as you see, we have the material base which enables us to REPLACE the kulak output by the output of the collective farms and state farms. It is for this very reason that our determined offensive against the kulaks is now meeting with undeniable success.

“That is how an offensive against the kulaks must be carried on, if we mean a genuine and determined offensive and not mere futile declamations against the kulaks.

“That is why we have recently passed from the policy of RESTRICTING the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks to the policy of ELIMINATING THE KULAKS AS A CLASS.” (Collected Works, Vol. 12, pp. 175-6).

SECOND, the Soviet state and industry was now in a position to help the collective farm movement through credit facilities and the supply of machines and tractors. In 1927-28, the Soviet government assigned 76,000,000 roubles for financing collective farms; in 1928-29 – 170,000 roubles, and in 1929-30 – 473,000,000 roubles were assigned. In addition 65,000,000 roubles were assigned during the same period for the collectivisation fund. Privileges were accorded to collective farms which increased their resources by 200,000,000 roubles. For use on collective-farm fields, the state supplied not less than 30,000 tractors with a total of 400,000 horse power, not taking into account the 7,000 tractors of the Tractor Centres which served the collective farms, and the assistance by way of tractors rendered by the state farms to the collective farms. In 1929-30 the collective farms were granted seed loans and seed assistance to the amount of 10,000,000 centners of grain (61 million poods). Lastly, the collective farms were greatly helped by the direct organisational assistance given them in the setting up of more than 7,000 machine and tractor stations.

The result of all these measures was a forty-fold increase in the crop area of collective farms in three years, and a fifty-fold increase in the grain output of the collective farms (with an increase in its marketable part of more than forty-fold) during the same three years, i.e., 1927-29.

THIRD, the turn of the peasantry towards socialism, towards collectivisation. This turn did not arise all of a sudden in an accidental or spontaneous way, it had to be prepared for in a

scientific manner and through hard struggle over a number of years, in which the Party led the people in clearing one obstacle after another from the path leading to collectivisation. Here is how Comrade Stalin described the process of development on the basis of which arose in the latter half of 1929 the mighty mass collective-farm movement of millions of poor and middle peasants:

“The turn of the peasantry towards collectivisation did not begin all at once. Moreover, it could not begin all at once. True, the Party proclaimed the slogan of collectivisation already at the Fifteenth Congress; but the proclamation of a slogan is not enough to cause the peasantry to turn en masse towards socialism. At least one more circumstance is needed for this, namely, that the masses of the peasantry themselves should be convinced that the slogan proclaimed is a correct one and that they should accept it as their own. Therefore, this turn was prepared gradually.

“It was prepared by the whole course of our development, by the whole course of development of our industry and above all by the development of the industry that supplies machines and tractors for agriculture. It was prepared by the policy of resolutely fighting the kulaks and by the course of our grain procurements in the new forms that they assumed in 1928 and 1929, which placed kulak farming under the control of the poor-and middle-peasant masses. It was prepared by the development of the agricultural co-operatives, which train the individualist peasant in collective methods. It was prepared by the network of collective farms, in which the peasantry verified the advantages of collective forms of farming over individual farming. Lastly, it was prepared by the network of state farms, spread over the whole of the USSR, and equipped with modern machines, which enabled the peasants to convince themselves of the potency and superiority of modern machines.

“It would be a mistake to regard our state farms only as sources of grain supplies. Actually, the state farms, with their modern machines, with the assistance they render the peasants in their vicinity, and the unprecedented scope of their farming, were the leading force that facilitated the turn of the peasant masses and brought them on to the path of collectivisation.

“There you have the basis on which arose that mass collective-farm movement of millions of poor and middle peasants which began in the latter half of 1929, and which ushered in a period of

great change in the life of our country.” (Collected Works Vol. 12, pp. 288-89, Report to the 16th Congress).

From the foregoing it is perfectly clear that the Bolshevik Party’s policy on collectivisation was a Leninist policy and the only correct policy. It is equally clear that the policy advocated by Trotskyism was fraught with the most dangerous and desperate adventurism, and, had this policy been put into practice, the result would have been certain doom. We can now say that the Bolshevik Party was a thousand times right in rejecting the Trotskyist demands for striking at the kulaks in 1926-27; also the Party was a thousand times right in 1929, having already prepared the necessary basis, in launching an offensive against the kulaks; the party was perfectly justified in 1929 in passing from the policy, followed hitherto, of RESTRICTING the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks to the policy of ELIMINATING THE KULAKS AS A CLASS.

The elimination of the kulaks as a class was not simply an administrative affair, as the Trotskyists thought; it was a matter of supreme economic importance. The class of kulaks could not be wished away with a Trotskyist decree, it could only be eliminated by taking concrete economic measures (of the type outlined earlier above) and preparing the necessary economic and political conditions. As Comrade Stalin says:

“Those comrades are wrong who think that it is possible and necessary to put an end to the kulaks by means of administrative measures, through the GPU: give an order, affix a seal, and that settles it. That is an easy way, but it is far from being effective. The kulak must be defeated by means of economic measures and in conformity with Soviet law. Soviet law, however, is not a mere phrase. This does not, of course, preclude the taking of certain administrative measures against the kulaks. But administrative measures must not take the place of economic measures.” (Collected Works, Vol. 10 p. 319).

What is more, the time for launching an all-out offensive against the kulaks had to be right; any mistake on this score meant playing at an offensive against the kulaks, meant risking the very existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat. One of the chief characteristics of Leninist leadership, of Bolshevik tactics, is to choose the correct time and the proper ground for launching an offensive against the enemies of socialism. To put this in the apt language of Comrade Stalin:

“The art of Bolshevik policy by no means consists in firing indiscriminately with all your guns on all fronts, regardless of conditions of time and place, and regardless of whether the masses are ready to support this or that step of the leadership. The art of Bolshevik policy consists in being able to choose the time and place and to take all the circumstances into account in order to concentrate fire on the front where the maximum results are to be attained most quickly.” (Collected Works Vol. 11 p. 55).

When the Party had, however, already passed from the policy of restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks to the policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class, Trotsky, who, as we have seen, had advocated de-kulakisation as early as the period immediately following the 14th Congress (1926- 27), demanded the abandonment of the Party’s policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class. In his *Open letter to the members of the CPSU*, 23 March, 1930, Trotsky demanded that the Party should:

“Bring the collective farms into line with their real sources of support”;

“... abandon the policy of ‘de-kulakisation’”

“... hold the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks in check for a long number of years.”

And that:

“The guiding principle in relation to the kulaks must be an iron ‘contract system [under which the kulaks were to supply the state with a certain quantity of their produce at fixed prices].

This is characteristic Trotskyism; Trotskyism with its truly absurd, anti- dialectical and reactionary content – de-kulakisation in 1926 and abandonment of the policy of de-kulakisation in 1930!

As if this absurdity were not good enough, Trotsky supplemented it by a \ new edition, as it were, in 1933. In 1933, when collectivisation in the main had already been achieved, Trotsky in the issues of his *Bulletin* demanded the dissolution of the state farms, on the grounds that they did not pay; the dissolution of the majority of the collective farms, on the grounds they were fictitious; the abandonment of the policy of eliminating the kulaks. And in the field of industry, Trotsky demanded a reversion to the policy of concessions and the leasing to concessionaires of a number of Soviet industrial enterprises on the grounds that they did not pay.

Comrade Stalin was perfectly justified in characterising this Trotskyist programme as counter-revolutionary and as one of restoration of capitalism:

“There you have the programme of these contemptible cowards and capitulatory – their counter-revolutionary programme of restoring capitalism in the USSR!” (Vol. 13 p. 370).

This is how the ‘Left’ Trotsky unmasked himself and revealed his true Rightness for all to see.

Having dealt with the ‘Left’ opportunist deviation above, let us now turn to Right opportunist deviation from the Leninist line of the Party.

The Right opportunist [Bukharinite] deviation

Whereas the ‘Left’ (Trotskyist) opportunists overestimated the strength of capitalism, did not believe in the possibility of the USSR successfully building socialism by its own efforts – without the aid of victorious revolution in Western Europe, and did not, therefore, favour even the idea of an alliance with the basic mass of the peasantry, the Right (Bukharinite) opportunists went to the other extreme, in that they underestimated the strength of capitalism, declared themselves in favour of any kind of alliance with the entire peasantry including the kulaks, and, disregarding the mechanics of class struggle under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, proclaimed that the kulaks will automatically “*grow into Socialism*”. (Bukharin: *The Path to Socialism*). Bukharin’s group maintained that with the advance of socialism and the development of socialist forms of economy, the class struggle would subside. This Right opportunist theory advocated by Bukharin’s group presented a most serious danger to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its harm lay “... *in the fact that it lulls the working class to sleep, undermines the mobilised preparedness of the revolutionary forces of our country, demobilises the working class and facilitates the attack of the capitalist elements against the Soviet government.*” (Stalin, *Collected Works* Vol. 12 p. 41).

And so it did. By the beginning of 1928, the kulaks, realising that the NEP, far from leading to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR as they had expected and hoped for, was, on the contrary, leading to the weakening and the rout of capitalist elements in the countryside and to the consolidation of socialism, began organised resistance to the Soviet regime. From 1928, this resistance assumed most acute forms. The resistance of the kulaks was a most eloquent

proof of (a) the fact that the socialist offensive against the capitalist elements was proceeding full steam ahead and according to plan; that the kulaks were, therefore, feeling the pinch, and had either to decide to resist desperately or to retire from the scene voluntarily, and (b) the fact that the capitalist elements had no desire to depart from the scene voluntarily. Comrade Stalin was absolutely right when, countering Bukharin's Right opportunist fairy-tales regarding the subsidence of class struggle, he expressed himself in the following never-to-be-forgotten words: ‘

“It must not be imagined that the socialist forms will develop, squeezing out the enemies of the working class, while our enemies retreat in silence and make way for our advance, that then we shall again advance and they will again retreat until ‘unexpectedly’ all the social groups without exception, both kulaks and poor peasants, both workers and capitalists, find themselves ‘suddenly’ and ‘imperceptibly’, without struggle or commotion, in the lap of a socialist society. Such fairy-tales do not and cannot happen in general, and in the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular.

“It never has been and never will be the case that a dying class surrenders its positions voluntarily without attempting to organise resistance. It never has been and never will be the case that the working class could advance towards socialism in a class society without struggle or commotion. On the contrary, the advance towards socialism cannot but cause the exploiting elements to resist the advance, and the resistance of the exploiters cannot but lead to the inevitable sharpening of the class struggle.

“That is why the working class must not be lulled with talk about the class struggle playing a secondary role.” (Collected Works Vol. 11 p. 180).

Notwithstanding Bukharin's silly little fables regarding the subsidence of the class struggle and the miracle of kulaks “*growing into socialism*”, the latter (the kulaks) began serious organised resistance to the Soviet government. And who but Bukharin and his group should come up in the Party to defend the kulak interests? The Bukharinites represented the decay of kulak farming as a decay of agriculture in the USSR. They demanded the slowing down of the rate of industrial development, relaxation of the monopoly of foreign trade, relegation of collectivisation to the background, and all-round concessions to the capitalist elements.

The first serious attack from the kulaks came at the time of the grain procurement crisis of January 1928. The kulaks refused to sell grain to the Soviet state; the Soviet government found itself with a grain deficit of 130 million poods. In the absence of any reserves, the Soviet government could not but resort to emergency measures, such as the application of Article 107 of the Criminal Code, which had the effect, in the case of the kulaks refusing to sell grain, of the latter's grain being confiscated. The application of emergency measures, which, despite individual distortions here and there, were a great success and had the desired effect of procuring from the kulaks the necessary supplies of grain required by the state, enraged the Bukharinites. Under the guise of combating "excesses", the Bukharinites were in fact engaged in combating the Party's correct policy and in the defence of the kulaks. Here is how Comrade Stalin exposed this fraudulent opportunist trick of the Bukharinites:

"The most fashionable word just now among Bukharin's group is the word 'excesses' in grain procurements. That word is the most current commodity among them, since it helps them to mask their opportunist line. When they want to mask their own line they usually say: we, of course, are not opposed to pressure being brought to bear upon the kulak, but we are opposed to the excesses which are being committed in this sphere and which hurt the middle peasant. They then go on to relate stories of the 'horrors' of these excesses; they read letters from 'peasants', panic-stricken letters from comrades, such as Markov, and then draw the conclusion: the policy of bringing pressure to bear on the kulaks must be abandoned.

"How do you like that? BECAUSE excesses are committed in carrying out a correct policy, THAT CORRECT POLICY, it seems, MUST BE ABANDONED. That is the usual trick of the opportunists: on the pretext that excesses are committed in carrying out a correct line, abolish that line and replace it by an opportunist line. Moreover, the supporters of Bukharin's group very carefully hush up the fact that there is another land of excesses, more dangerous and more harmful – namely, excesses in the direction of merging with the kulak, in the direction of adaptation to the well-to-do strata of the rural population, in the direction of abandoning the revolutionary policy of the Party for the opportunist policy of the Right deviators.

“Of course, we are all opposed to these excesses. None of us wants the blows directed against the kulaks to hurt the middle peasants. That is obvious, and there can be no doubt about it. But we are most emphatically opposed to the chatter about excesses, in which Bukharin’s group so zealously indulges, being used to scuttle the revolutionary policy of our Party and replace it by the opportunist policy of Bukharin’s group. No, that trick of theirs won’t work.

“Point out at least one political measure taken by the Party that has not been accompanied by excesses of one kind or another. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that we must combat excesses. But can one ON THESE GROUNDS decry the line itself, which is the only correct line?

“Take a measure like the introduction of the seven-hour day. There can be no doubt that this is one of the most revolutionary measures carried out by our Party in the recent period. Who does not know that this measure, which by its nature is a profoundly revolutionary one, is frequently accompanied by excesses, sometimes of a most objectionable kind? Does that mean we ought to abandon the policy of introducing the 7-hour day?

“Do the supporters of the Bukharin opposition understand what a mess they are getting into in playing up the excesses committed during the grain-procurement campaign?” (Collected Works, Vol. 12 pp. 96-97).

In defence of the kulak interests, Bukharin’s group went as far as accusing the Party of pursuing a policy of military-feudal exploitation towards the peasantry. It scarcely needs proof that Bukharin’s group borrowed this weapon against the Party from the arsenal of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

“In the history of our Party I cannot recall any other instance of the Party being accused of pursuing a policy of military-feudal exploitation. That weapon against the Party was not borrowed from the arsenal of Marxists. Where, then, was it borrowed from? From the arsenal of Milyukov, the leader of the Cadets. When the Cadets wish to sow dissension between the working class and the peasantry, they usually say: You, Messieurs the Bolsheviki, are building socialism on the corpses of the peasants. When Bukharin raises an outcry about the ‘tribute’, he is singing to the tune of Messieurs the Milyukovs, and is following in the wake of the enemies of the people.” (Vol. 12 p. 59).

Bukharin's group was opposed to the fight against the kulaks; it was in favour of an alliance of the working class with the ENTIRE peasant, y, including the kulaks. The Party, however, was most emphatically opposed to such an alliance.

"No, comrades, such an alliance [of the type advocated by Bukharin and his group] we do not advocate, and cannot advocate. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, when the power of the working class is firmly established, the alliance of the working class with the peasantry means reliance on the poor peasants, alliance with the middle peasants, and a fight against the kulaks. Whoever thinks that under our conditions alliance with the peasantry means alliance with the kulaks has nothing in common with Leninism. Whoever thinks of conducting a policy in the countryside that will please everyone, rich and poor alike, is not a Marxist, but a fool, because such a policy does not exist in nature, comrades. (Laughter and applause). Our policy is a class policy." (Collected Works, Vol. 11 p. 52).

Leninism certainly stands for a stable alliance with the main mass of the peasantry, but, according to Leninism, the whole purpose of the alliance of the working class with the basic mass of the peasantry is to ensure the leading role of the working class, to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to create the necessary conditions – material and spiritual (cultural) – which facilitate the abolition of the classes. In brief, Leninism stands for a stable alliance with the main mass of the peasantry (kulaks EXCLUDED), with the ultimate aim of abolishing classes; Leninism does not stand for just any kind of alliance. Here is how Comrade Lenin expressed himself on the subject:

"Agreement between the working class and the peasantry may be taken to mean anything. If we do not bear in mind that, from the point of view of the working class, agreement is permissible, correct and possible in principle only if it supports the dictatorship of the working class and is one of the measures aimed at the abolition of classes, then the formula of agreement between the working class and the peasantry remains, of course, a formula to which all the enemies of the Soviet regime and all the enemies of the dictatorship subscribe." (Collected Works).

And further:

"At present," says Lenin, "the proletariat holds power and guides the state. It guides the peasantry. What does guiding the

peasantry mean? It means, in the first place, pursuing a course towards the abolition of classes, and not towards the small producer. If we wandered away from this radical and main course we should cease to be Socialists and should find ourselves in the camp of the petty bourgeoisie, in the camp of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who are now the most bitter enemies of the proletariat.”

The alliance with the peasantry advocated by Bukharin, however, meant an alliance not only with the middle peasantry but also with the kulaks. It scarcely needs proof that such an alliance, far from securing the leading role of the proletariat, strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat, and facilitating the abolition of classes, would have led to the negation of the leading role of the proletariat, the weakening of its dictatorship, and the perpetuation of classes, for only an alliance with the middle peasantry, which is at the same time an alliance against the kulaks – only such an alliance can pave the way in the direction of the abolition of classes. Classes can only be abolished through class struggle against the exploiters – against the kulaks and other capitalist elements – and not through an alliance with the latter.

It scarcely needs proof that Bukharin’s Right opportunist group with its opportunist policies had to be defeated. Without its defeat, there would have been a sure restoration of capitalism in the USSR in the early 1930s. It must be said to the credit, glory and honour of the Bolshevik Party and its leader at the time, Comrade Stalin, that the Right opportunists of Bukharin’s group were just as assuredly routed as those of the ‘Left’ opportunist Trotsky-Zinoviev group. The defeated groups joined forces subsequently (just as they had done previously) in opposition to the Party, thus demonstrating their anti-Leninist and Right-reactionary essence. There was no difference between the two except of form of platform. The truth remains that the programme of the ‘Lefts’ led just as much as that of the Rights in the direction of restoration of capitalism. It is in this sense and because of this that Marxist-Leninists have always maintained that ‘Lefts’ too are in fact Rights. Here is how Comrade Stalin characterised the Right (Bukharinite) and ‘Left’ (Trotskyite) opportunists, bringing out what was common to both, namely, their respective platforms for the restoration of capitalism, albeit through different routes:-

“Where does the danger of the RIGHT, frankly opportunist, deviation in our Party lie? In the fact that it UNDERESTIMATES the strength of our enemies, the strength of capitalism: it does not see the danger of the restoration of capitalism; it does not understand the mechanism of the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore so readily agrees to make concessions to capitalism, demanding a slowing down of the rate of development of our industry, demanding concessions for the capitalist elements in town and country, demanding that the question of collective farms and state farms be relegated to the background, demanding that the monopoly of foreign trade be relaxed, etc., etc.

“There is no doubt that the triumph of the Right deviation in our Party would unleash the forces of capitalism, undermine the revolutionary positions of the proletariat and increase the chances of the restoration of capitalism in our country.

“Where does the danger of the ‘LEFT (Trotskyist) deviation in our Party lie? In the fact that it OVERESTIMATES the strength of our enemies, the strength of capitalism; it sees only the possibility of the restoration of capitalism, but cannot see the possibility of building socialism by the efforts of our country; it gives way to despair and is obliged to console itself with chatter about Thermidor tendencies in our Party.

“From the words of Lenin that ‘as long as we live in a small-peasant country, there is a surer economic basis for capitalism in Russia than for communism’, the ‘Left’ deviation draws the false conclusion that it is impossible to build socialism in the USSR at all; that we cannot get anywhere with the peasantry; that the idea of an alliance between the working class and the peasantry is an obsolete idea; that unless a victorious revolution in the West comes to our aid the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR must fall or degenerate; that unless we adopt the fantastic plan of super-industrialisation, even at the cost of a split with the peasantry, the cause of socialism in the USSR must be regarded as doomed.

“Hence the adventurism in the policy of the ‘Left’ deviation. Hence its ‘superhuman’ leaps in the sphere of policy.

“There is no doubt that the triumph of the ‘Left’ deviation in our Party would lead to the working class being separated from its peasant base, to the ^ vanguard of the working class being separated from the rest of the working- class masses, and,

consequently, to the defeat of the proletariat and to facilitating the conditions for the restoration of capitalism.

“You see, therefore, that both these dangers, the ‘Left’ and the Right, both these deviations from the Leninist line, the Right and the ‘Left’, lead to the v same result, although from different directions(Collected Works, Vol. 11 pp. 240-1).

The only difference is that the ‘Lefts’ (Trotskyites) use ultra-‘Left’ phrases, which incidentally explains

“... why the ‘Lefts’ sometimes succeed in luring a part of the workers over to their side with the help of high-sounding ‘Left’ phrases and by posing as the most determined opponents of the Rights, although all the world knows that they, the ‘Lefts’, have the same social roots as the Rights, and that they not infrequently join in an agreement, a bloc, with the Rights in order to fight the Leninist line.” (Stalin, Collected Works Vol. 11 p. 291).

Before proceeding further, it may be said in passing that most of the criticisms levelled by the ordinary bourgeois at the Bolshevik Party’s Leninist line on collectivisation are based on the platforms and line of argumentation of the bourgeois socialists within the Bolshevik Party, namely, the ‘Left’ (Trotskyist) opportunists and the Right (Bukharinite) deviators. Nor could it be otherwise, for the platforms of the ‘Left’ and Right opportunists were platforms of capitalist restoration, albeit in a disguised form and couched in even Marxian terminology. Hence the concurrence in the views of the ordinary bourgeois on the one hand, and ‘socialist’ opportunists such as the Trotskyists and Bukharinites on the other hand; hence the sympathy of the ordinary bourgeois for the representative of the interests of his class (the bourgeois class) in the communist movement, namely, the socialist opportunist; hence the anti-Stalinism and pro-Trotskyism (and pro-Bukharinism) of the ordinary bourgeois. The bourgeois does not mind what terminology is used; he does not object to the use of even Marxian terminology as long as it is used in the defence and preservation of capitalism rather than for its revolutionary overthrow. In fact under certain circumstances the only way to serve capitalism is through the use of Marxian phrases, for only such phrases can deceive the workers. How could the Trotskyites and Bukharinites, for example, openly demand the restoration of capitalism in the USSR when the working class was in power? They would have had to utter only one sentence openly for them to be flung out of every workers’ organisation, let

alone the vanguard Party of the proletariat, for them to be completely despised by every class-conscious worker. So they were obliged to present their programmes for capitalist restoration in the name of the working class and of Marxism. Herein lies their service to the bourgeoisie; and herein lies also their treachery to the working class and communist movement. It was precisely this treachery to the working class, their resort to wrecking, sabotage, terror and murder, not to speak of their agreements with fascist and imperialist powers, which brought them face to face with proletarian justice in the Moscow trials in the late 1930s.

The use of force and collectivisation

Trotskyists, revisionists, as well as the bourgeois of the ordinary type have levelled the allegation that Stalin collectivised the peasantry against the wishes of the majority of the peasantry and moreover by force. This allegation, based on ignorance, has through sheer repetition acquired the force of a public prejudice. Since this accusation has long been mouthed by the Soviet revisionist leadership since the 20th Party Congress, it has come to be believed even by people who call themselves Marxist-Leninists. As is clear from what has been said above, only incorrigible bureaucrats can believe that collectivisation in the USSR was, or could have been, achieved by force; only people who regard collectivisation as an administrative bureaucratic affair, rather than as an economic measure of the utmost importance, can regard collectivisation in the USSR in this light. If collectivisation could be achieved by a “sergeant Prishibeyev” armed with a Trotskyist departmental decree to collectivise, then indeed there would have been every reason to collectivise in 1926, as demanded by Trotsky and Zinoviev, or even much earlier during Lenin’s lifetime. In that case we would be obliged to admit that the Trotskyists were right in demanding collectivisation in 1926 whereas the Leninists were wrong in rejecting this demand. In demanding collectivisation in 1926, the Trotskyists obviously believed that such a measure could be achieved with a scrap of paper and the Prussian sergent’s stick. If the Party had been foolish enough to regard collectivisation in this light and put these methods into effect, the result would have been, as explained earlier, a “*hostile collision*” between the working class which was in power, and the basic mass of the peasantry, without an alliance with which the working class could not hope to stay in

power for long; the effect would have been a civil war and certain doom for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Party, however, regarded collectivisation as an economic measure which could not be achieved without creating the necessary economic prerequisites. To re-iterate, by the second half of 1929, all these pre-requisites having been realised, the Party moved in earnest in the direction of collectivisation with the enthusiastic support of the overwhelming mass of the peasantry. Successes in collectivisation were achieved precisely because of its voluntary character; the moment compulsion came on the scene, collective farms began to melt away and a section of the peasants who, to quote Stalin, “*only yesterday had the greatest confidence in the collective farms, began to turn away from them.*” (*Reply to Collective Farm Comrades*, Vol. 12 p.210).

None of this is meant to say that there were no distortions of the Party’s policy in individual cases by over-zealous Party functionaries and all sorts of ‘Left’ distorters. In particular there were: (a) violations of the principle regarding the voluntary character of the collective-farm movement – a violation which had the effect of causing collective farms to melt away, (b) violations of the principle which demanded that the diversity of conditions in the USSR be taken into account; and (c) violations of the principle which defined the ARTEL FORM of the collective-farm movement as the MAIN LINK IN THE COLLECTIVE-FARM SYSTEM – attempts were made to skip this stage and pass over straight to the commune system.

Had these violations not been removed and distortions corrected, there would have been no successes in the field of collectivisation. The Central Committee of the Party, headed by Stalin, took urgent and timely measures to root out these violations and distortions. On 2 March, 1930, Stalin’s article *Dizzy with Success*, was published in *Pravda*, in which he analysed the root causes of the distortions in the collective-farm movement and denounced attempts at collectivisation through coercion and use of force. Here are a few quotations from this very important article:

“The successes of the collective-farm policy are due, among other things, to the fact that it rests on the voluntary character of the collective-farm movement and on taking into account the diversity of conditions in the various regions of the USSR. Collective farms must not be established by force. That would be

foolish and reactionary. The collective-farm movement must rest on the active support of the main mass of the peasantry." (Stalin, *Collected Works* Vol. 12 p. 199).

And:

"What can there be in common between this Sergeant Prishibeyev 'policy' and the Party's policy of relying on the voluntary principle and of taking local peculiarities into account in collective-farm development? Clearly, there is not and cannot be anything in common between them." (ibid p. 201).

And further still:

"Who benefits by these distortions, this bureaucratic decreeing of the collective-farm movement, these unworthy threats against the peasants? Nobody, except our enemies!" (ibid)

Stalin denounced the attempt to replace preparatory work for the organisation of collective farms by *"bureaucratic decreeing of the collective-farm movement, paper resolutions on the growth of collective farms which have as yet no reality, but whose 'existence' is proclaimed in a heap of boastful resolutions"*. (ibid).

A month later, on 3 April 1930, Stalin published in *Pravda* yet another article on the same subject entitled *Reply to Collective-Farm Comrades*. In reply to the question: 'What is the ROOT of the errors in the peasant question?', Stalin gives the following answer:

"A wrong approach to the middle peasant. Resort to coercion in economic relations with the middle peasant.

"It has been forgotten that coercion, which is necessary and useful in the fight against our class enemies, is impermissible and disastrous when applied to the middle peasant, who is our ally.

"It has been forgotten that cavalry charges, which are necessary and useful for accomplishing tasks of a military character, are unsuitable and disastrous for accomplishing the tasks of collective-farm development, which, moreover, is being organised in alliance with the middle peasant." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 12, pp. 208-9).

Thus it can be seen that notwithstanding a few local distortions – which were swiftly got rid of by the Party – the Party's line on collectivisation was correct; by the application of this correct Leninist policy the main mass of the peasantry were drawn into the channel of socialist construction. The Party's policy carried the day because the Party waged a consistent and principled struggle against both the 'Left' (Trotskyist) and the Right (Bukharinite) deviations,

because the Party waged a ruthless struggle against those who tried to run ahead (Trotskyists) as well as those who dragged their feet (Bukharinites). Herein lies the secret of the success of the Party's policy on collectivisation as on other issues.

Surely, Gorbachev must have had the Bolshevik Party's principled and uncompromising struggle, described above, in mind when he stated in his 1987 Report:

“The Party's leading nucleus headed by Joseph Stalin safeguarded Leninism in an ideological struggle.”

In view of all that has been said above, Gorbachev's allegation that Stalin made an incorrect assessment of the role of the middle peasantry must be pronounced completely unfounded and motivated by his present preoccupation to de-collectivise Soviet agriculture and to introduce a market, i.e., capitalist economy.