

## **Primary Sources about COLLECTIVIZATION**

### **From *Spartacus Educational***

#### **(1) Joseph Stalin, speech (27th December, 1929)**

Our large-scale, centralised, socialist industry is developing according to the Marxist theory of expanded reproduction; for it is growing in volume from year to year, it has its accumulations and is advancing with giant strides. But our large-scale industry does not constitute the whole of the national economy. On the contrary, small-peasant economy still predominates in it. Can we say that our small-peasant economy is developing according to the principle of expanded reproduction? No, we cannot. Not only is there no annual expanded reproduction in the bulk of our small-peasant economy, but, on the contrary, it is seldom able to achieve even simple reproduction.

Can we advance our socialised industry at an accelerated rate while we have such an agricultural basis as small-peasant economy, which is incapable of expanded reproduction, and which, in addition, is the predominant force in our national economy? No, we cannot. Can Soviet power and the work of socialist construction rest for any length of time on two different foundations: on the most large-scale and concentrated socialist industry, and the most disunited and backward, small-commodity peasant economy? No, they cannot. Sooner or later this would be bound to end in the complete collapse of the whole national economy.

What, then, is the way out? The way out lies in making agriculture large-scale, in making it capable of accumulation, of expanded reproduction, and in thus transforming the agricultural basis of the national economy.

But how is it to be made large-scale?

There are two ways of doing this. There is the capitalist way, which is to make agriculture large-scale by implanting capitalism in agriculture - a way which leads to the impoverishment of the peasantry and to the development of capitalist enterprises in agriculture. We reject this way as incompatible with Soviet economy.

There is another way: the socialist way, which is to introduce collective farms and state farms into agriculture, the way which leads to uniting the small peasant farms into large collective farms, employing machinery and scientific methods of farming, and capable of developing further, for such farms can achieve expanded reproduction.

And so, the question stands as follows: either one way or the other, either back - to capitalism, or forward - to socialism. There is not, and cannot be, any third way.

The theory of "equilibrium" is an attempt to indicate a third way. And precisely because it is based on a third (non-existent) way, it is utopian and anti-Marxist.

You see, therefore, that all that was needed was to counterpose Marx's theory of reproduction to this theory of "equilibrium" of the sectors for the latter theory to be wiped out without leaving a trace.

Why, then, do our Marxist students of agrarian questions not do this? In whose interest is it that the ridiculous theory of "equilibrium" should have currency in our press while the Marxist theory of reproduction is kept hidden?

**(2) Ian Grey, *Stalin: Man of History* (1982)**

The peasants demonstrated the hatred they felt for the regime and its collectivisation policy by slaughtering their animals. To the peasant his horse, his cow, his few sheep and goats were treasured possessions and a source of food in hard times... In the first months of 1930 alone 14 million head of cattle were killed. Of the 34 million horses in the Soviet Union in 1929, 18 million were killed, further, some 67 percent of sheep and goats were slaughtered between 1929 and 1933.

**(3) Walter Duranty, *Write As I Please* (1935) page 288**

At the windows haggard faces, men and women, or a mother holding her child, with hands outstretched for a crust of bread or a cigarette. It was only the end of April but the heat was torrid and the air that came from the narrow windows was foul and stifling; for they had been fourteen days en route, not knowing where they were going not caring much. They were more like caged animals than human beings, not wild beasts but dumb cattle, patient with suffering eyes. Debris and jetsam, victims of the March to Progress.

**(4) Joseph Stalin, in conversation with Winston Churchill (August, 1942)**

It was absolutely necessary for Russia, if we were to avoid periodic famines, to plough the land with tractors. When we gave tractors to the peasants they were all spoiled in a few months. Only collective farms with workshops could handle tractors. We took the greatest trouble to explain it to the peasants. It was no use arguing with them. After you have said all you can to a peasant he says he must go home and consult his wife. After he has talked it over he always answers that he does not want the collective farm and he would rather do without the tractors.

**(5) Joseph Stalin, speech (22nd April, 1929)**

Comrades Rykov and Bukharin apparently opposed in principle to the application of any kind of emergency measures against the Kulaks... When they want to mask their own line they usually say: "We, of course, are not opposed to pressure being exerted on the Kulak, but we are against the excesses which are being committed"... They then go on to relate stories of the horrors of these excesses, they read you letters from "peasants", panic-stricken letters from comrades... and they then draw the conclusion: the policy of bringing pressure to bear on the Kulaks should be abandoned. How do you like that? It appears that because excesses occur in carrying out a correct policy, the correct policy must be abandoned.

**(6) J. N. Westwood, *The Soviet Union 1927-41* (1969)**

In the year 1932-33 famine raged throughout the richest agricultural regions of the USSR... Five and a half million people died in a man-made disaster unacknowledged by the Soviet leaders. Its principal cause was Stalin's collectivisation drive, which completely disrupted agriculture, and the government's requisition and export of foodstuffs to finance industrialisation. Starvation was compounded with terror - ten million peasants were killed or deported for opposing the state.

**(7) Yurij Borisovich Yelagin, *Memoirs* (1952)**

At each town along the way, we saw hundreds and thousands of starving peasants at the station - with their last ounce of strength they had come from their villages in search of a piece of stale bread. They sat against the station walls in long dreary rows, sleeping, dying, and every morning the station guard would have the corpses removed on wagons covered with canvas.

**(8) Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom* (1947)**

On a battlefield men die quickly, they fight back, they are sustained by fellowship and a sense of duty. Here I saw people dying in solitude by slow degrees, dying hideously, without the excuse of sacrifice for a cause. They have been trapped and left to starve, each in his home, by a political decision made in a far-off capital around conference and banquet tables... The most terrifying sights were the little children with skeleton limbs dangling from balloon-like abdomens.

**(9) M. Maksudov, *USSR 1918 -1958* (1977)**

During the famine of 1933-34, an incredible number of children perished, particularly new-born infants. Of those living in the USSR at the time of the 1970 census, 12.4 million persons were born in 1929-31, but only 8.4 million in 1932-34... Bearing in mind... that birth-control methods were virtually unknown in the Russian countryside at that time, it is undoubtedly the case that no fewer than three million children born between 1932 and 1934 died of hunger.

**(10) Yemelyan Yaroslavsky, *Landmarks in the Life of Stalin* (1940)**

In a number of districts, there were not a few "Left" distorters of the Party line who decided that explanatory work was superfluous and began to introduce collectivisation in districts where the conditions for it were absolutely unripe... Stalin attacked these dangerous distortions in his article "Dizzy With Success".

**(11) Yves Delbars, *The Real Stalin* (1951)**

Stalin felt that the time had come to absolve himself once more from personal responsibility for what was happening... he addressed a severe warning to all those who had been 'intoxicated by the success of the collectivisation and had forgotten the necessity of sparing the peasants unnecessary suffering.'... Stalin thus became to the peasants a sort of 'Little Father,' who listened to their complaints and endeavoured to right their wrongs. The fact that he himself was the immediate origin of their misfortunes was beginning to escape them. An image was taking the place of reality. It is paradoxical fact that these terrible years of collectivisation saw the origin and increase of Stalin's popularity among the Russian peasants.