

ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

By A. A. ZHDANOV

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ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

By A. A. ZHDANOV

**and
Decisions of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party
of the Soviet Union
February, 1937**

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OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE LAST ORDINARY PLENUM OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION

A PLENUM of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. was held a few days ago. The plenum discussed the tasks of the Party organizations in connection with the forthcoming elections to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. on the basis of the new Constitution. The resolution adopted by the plenum on this subject is published below. The plenum further discussed questions concerning economic and Party affairs and adopted appropriate practical decisions. The plenum also examined the anti-Party activities of Bukharin and Rykov and adopted a decision expelling them from the ranks of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

PREPARATION OF THE PARTY ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE ELECTIONS TO THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE U.S.S.R. UNDER THE NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND THE CORRESPONDING REORGANIZATION OF PARTY POLITICAL WORK

*(Report Made by A. A. Zhdanov at the Plenum of the Central
Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,
February 26, 1937)*

OUR TASKS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY

COMRADES, in connection with the adoption of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. elections will shortly be held to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and to all Soviets of Toilers Deputies, from top to bottom, under the new electoral system. Our Party is faced with the task of preparing for the elections.

The character of these preparations, their extent and scale, and the reorganization of Party work they entail, are determined by the profundity of the changes caused by the new Constitution in the political life of our country.

The introduction of the new Constitution implies a change in the political life of the country. The character of this change is the further democratization of the electoral system, as expressed in the fact that not entirely equal suffrage in the elections to the Soviets is being replaced by equal suffrage, indirect elections by direct elections, and open ballot by secret ballot.

The introduction of the new Constitution eliminates all the restrictions that hitherto existed for the so-called "lishentsi", or disfranchised.

Whereas prior to the introduction of the new Constitution the suffrage in elections to the Soviets was not equal, now the necessity for any suffrage restrictions has disappeared and all citizens are entitled to take part in elections on an equal footing.

Whereas formerly elections to the intermediate and supreme organs of government were indirect, under the new Constitution all the Soviets will now be elected immediately by the citizens by direct elections.

Whereas formerly, under the old Constitution, balloting at the elections was open and voting was according to lists, under the new Constitution balloting at the elections will now be secret and the vote will be taken on the individual candidates nominated in each of the electoral districts.

Lastly, the Constitution introduces popular canvasses, or the referendum.

What do these changes in the electoral system imply?

They imply enhanced control of the masses over the Soviet organs and enhanced responsibility of the Soviet organs to the masses. The new electoral system will strengthen the contact between the elected representatives of the people and the mass of the electorate. It will provide a powerful stimulus in improving the work of the Soviet organs and in eliminating bureaucratic shortcomings and perversions in the work of our Soviet organizations, which defects, as you know, are very substantial.

The result of the introduction of universal, direct and equal suffrage with secret ballot will be to enhance the political activity of the masses still further and to enlist new strata of the laboring population in the work of administering the state.

In this way the dictatorship of the proletariat will become a more flexible and, consequently, a more powerful system of state guidance of society by the working class; the base of the proletarian dictatorship will be broadened and its foundations will become firmer.

Leninism teaches:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat has its periods, its special forms and diversified methods of work. During the period of civil war, the coercive aspect of the dictatorship is especially conspicuous. . . . On the other hand, during the period of socialist construction, the peaceful, organizational and cultural work of the dictatorship, revolutionary law, etc., are especially conspicuous. But here again it by no means follows that during the period of construction, the coercive side of the dictatorship has fallen away, or could do so. The organs of suppression, the army and other organizations, are as necessary now, in the period of construction, as they were during the civil war period. Without these institutions, constructive work by the dictatorship with any degree of security would be impossible. It should not be forgotten that for the time being the revolution has been victorious in only one country.

"It should not be forgotten that as long as we live in a capitalist encirclement, so long will the danger of intervention, with all the resulting consequences, continue."*

That the necessity for the coercive sides of the dictatorship, apart from its peaceful organizational and cultural sides, has not fallen away, is clearly demonstrated by the case of Bukharin and Rykov which we have just discussed. The dictatorship of the working class must continue mercilessly to crush the resistance of the remnants of the hostile capitalist classes and the agents of the fascist bourgeoisie—the Trotskyites, Zinovievites, the Right and other enemies of the people.

Comrade Stalin has taught us that we need a strong and powerful dictatorship of the working class so as to demolish the last remnants of the dying classes and to defeat their villainous machinations.

The holding of democratic elections is a highly important matter. It is a very serious examination for our Party which will test its contacts with the masses and the efficiency and prestige of our Party organizations among the masses. The elections will demand a great exertion of effort by all the forces of our Party.

In order to meet this change in the political life of our Party fully prepared, our Party must assume charge of this

* J. Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. I, p. 274.

change and ensure its guidance of the elections to the supreme organs of the country.

What is meant by the Party assuming charge of and insuring its guidance of the elections to the supreme organs? What tasks must the Party solve?

It must first of all be borne in mind that the situation will be a rather novel one for our Party workers. This is the first time elections will be held under the new electoral system. We have no practical experience in voting by individual candidates, secret ballot and so forth. This involves a certain difficulty for our Party organizations.

Second, assuming charge of the change in the political life of the country and guiding the elections mean that we must see to it that the new electoral system established by the Constitution is fully observed, *i.e.*, that the principles of universal, direct and equal suffrage and secret ballot are strictly adhered to. This means that our Party organizations must protect our new electoral system as the apple of their eye, that they must protect it against all violations.

Third, our Party organizations must be prepared for the election campaign. In the elections we shall encounter hostile agitation and hostile candidates. That this is a real possibility is shown by the fact that there is already a certain reanimation among the anti-Soviet elements, precisely in connection with the forthcoming elections. Our Party organizations must be fully prepared to counter the attempts of hostile elements to take advantage of the legal opportunities provided by the new Constitution.

While our people are dozing and only preparing to make a move, the enemy is already acting and energetically preparing for the elections.

Fourth, secret balloting and voting by individual candidates, as distinct from open voting by lists, will increase the responsibility of our Party for every candidate nominated. In order to be elected, our candidates must be well known to the electors in the district in which they are nominated, their activities must be well known to the electors.

The secret ballot will be a very thorough test for our people, because the secret ballot presents far greater opportunities than ever before of rejecting candidates whom the masses consider undesirable and unsuitable. This must be clearly realized.

Fifth, we must get rid of the harmful mentality of some of our Party and Soviet workers who assume that public confidence can be won without effort, that they can calmly go to sleep in expectation that their mandates will be delivered to them at their homes amidst thunders of applause, because of their former services. Under the secret ballot confidence cannot be won without effort.

There are quite a number of workers in our Party and Soviet organizations who consider that their task is over, so to speak, once they have been elected to the Soviet. This is shown by the large number of responsible workers who fail to attend the plenary meetings of the Soviets, or the deputy groups and sections of our Soviets and who evade fulfilling their most elementary duties as deputies.

Such hangovers in the mentality of our people must be smashed; we must train our people to realize that they are answerable to the electors, bearing in mind that every elected representative will be examined and tested in the most thorough and comprehensive manner by the masses themselves.

It would be a gross mistake to postpone combating these survivals until the moment the elections are held. We must begin without delay steadily to improve the work of our Soviet organizations and their contacts with the masses and to increase the answerability of our Soviet workers to the masses.

Sixth, we must at once begin to train our workers to realize that the new electoral system implies far greater publicity for the activities of the Soviet organizations, that their activities will proceed under the eyes of the masses, and that their answerability to the masses will be far more complete. Many Soviet deputies—members of our Party—are accustomed to give account only to their Party organizations. Many of our Soviet workers who are inclined to bureaucracy and whose

work suffers from grave defects, would ten times rather account for their work to the bureau of their Party committee, to a small family circle, than to get up at a plenary meeting of the Soviet, criticize themselves and hear the criticism of the masses. This practice of non-answerability must be put a stop to.

Seventh, assuming charge of the change in the political life of the country and ensuring democratic elections mean that our Party organizations must not wait to be jolted from below by the masses in respect to criticizing and raising objections to our candidates, but must themselves lead the criticism and the rejection of unsuitable candidates without waiting for them to be outvoted in a secret ballot. In this connection our Party organizations must learn to distinguish friendly criticism from hostile criticism. It frequently happens that the discontent of workers over individual defects and perversions in the activities of Soviet organs is regarded as hostile criticism. The ability to distinguish friendly criticism, which is sometimes very pungent, from the criticism of the enemy demands of our Party organizations a high level of Party and political training and great discernment.

During the new elections there may be attempts by hostile elements to agitate against our candidates. Our people have to conduct many a difficult campaign in various fields, supply, construction work, etc., and such campaigns are bound to involve a certain amount of pressure. This is part of the concept of the dictatorship of the working class. We shall not renounce the exercise of such pressure in the future, and it would be absurd to renounce it. Demagogic attempts will be made to inflate various shortcomings of our people along this line. I am referring to our members of village Soviets, district executive committees, etc. The Party organizations must be able to take these people under their protection. This must not be lost sight of.

Eighth, there is the question of non-Party people. It would be highly prejudicial and dangerous if the mistake made under

the old election system were repeated in the new elections, namely, inattention to non-Party candidates, when, in order to ensure the Party influence in the Soviets, non-Party candidates were not given the attention and support which are demanded by the very fundamentals of the Bolshevik conception of leadership and contact with the masses. Bear in mind that there are 2,000,000 Communists in our country, and that there are "rather" more non-Party people. Hence, if we want to guide the elections, we must enhance our influence and contact with non-Party people and support, instead of pushing aside, non-Party candidates who enjoy the confidence of the masses.

These are a few questions on the subject of leadership and organizing the preparations for the elections. They have arisen not as something in remote prospect, but as actual and absolutely urgent and essential tasks.

VIOLATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF ELECTING PARTY ORGANS INCOMPATIBLE WITH BOLSHEVIK PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION

WHAT is required of the Party so that it may assume charge of the thoroughly democratic elections? What are the chief conditions which will ensure the Party's guidance of the change in the political life of the country?

What is required is that the Party itself should consistently practice democracy, that it should thoroughly apply the principles of democratic centralism in its internal life, as the Party rules demand, that the necessary conditions should exist within the Party for the election of all Party organs, that criticism and self-criticism within the Party should be fully developed, that the answerability of Party organs to the members of the Party should be complete, and that the Party members themselves should be active to the highest degree.

Leninism teaches us that the enhanced activity of the working class we are seeking to bring about with the introduction of complete Soviet democracy is a serious and important

matter. In order to enhance the activity of the working class we must first of all activize the Party itself. The Party itself must firmly and resolutely adopt internal Party democracy, so that our organizations may secure the participation of the broad membership of the Party, on whom the fate of our Party depends, in the discussion of our affairs. Without this there can be no hope of increasing the activity of the working class. This is what Comrade Stalin teaches us.

Can it be said that all our Party organizations are already prepared to fulfil these conditions and that they have already reorganized themselves on democratic lines?

Unfortunately, this cannot be said with absolute assurance.

What facts go to show that this cannot be said with absolute assurance?

It is shown by the violations of the Party rules and the principles of internal Party democracy practiced in certain organizations. What are these violations?

The Party rules, as we know, prescribe the holding of elections to the committees of the primary organizations once a year, to the city and district committees once a year, and to the regional and territorial committees and the Central Committees of the national Communist Parties once in eighteen months. This is what the Party rules demand.

But if we turn to the facts we find that this requirement of the Party rules is violated by a number of organizations. During the past two or three years elections to regional and territorial committees and to the Central Committees of the national Communist Parties were held only in the case of organizations which were newly formed as a result of the creation of new regions (the Kalinin, Krasnyorsk, Omsk, Orenburg and Yaroslavl organizations). The majority of our regional and territorial committees and Central Committees of national Communist Parties, city committees, district committees and primary Party committees have been in existence ever since the Seventeenth Party Congress, that is, since the general election of Party organizations. The only exception to this, as

I have said, are the new territories and regions, and also a few district and city organizations, chiefly in connection with the gross mismanagement of Party affairs.

This means that the laws of our Party have been violated, although we swear by the Party rules, learn them by rote in study circles, and during the verification and exchange of Party documents demand that Party members should know the rules. When we come to examine it, we find that we ourselves are intolerably liberal in our attitude to our own Party laws.

Further, the rules of our Party prescribe that all leading organs of the Party, from the highest to the lowest, should be elected. This is demanded by the fundamental principle of organizational structure of our Party—the principle of democratic centralism.

Clause 18 of the Party rules reads as follows:

“The guiding principle of the organizational structure of the Party is democratic centralism, which signifies:

“(a) The application of the elective principle to all leading organs of the Party from the highest to the lowest;

“(b) Periodical reports of the Party organs to their respective Party organizations;

“(c) Strict Party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority;

“(d) The absolutely binding character of the decisions of the higher organs upon the lower organs and upon all Party members.”

This fundamental organizational principle of our Party has been violated in a number of organizations. The members of the plenum already know what harmful consequences to our Party affairs have resulted from the practice of violating the Party rules in the Kiev, Azov-Black Sea and other organizations, where non-compliance with the rules, as expressed in a departure from the elective principle, resulted in the extreme deterioration of Party work and facilitated the penetration of hostile elements into leading Party organs.

A similar gross violation of the Party rules with respect to the elective principle is the absolutely unjustifiable prevalence

of the practice of co-opting* leading workers as members of plenums of Party committees, district committees, city committees, regional committees, territorial committees and Central Committees of national Communist Parties.

Facts in the possession of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. go to show that the noxious practice of co-option has taken firm root and has gone very far. The practice of co-option violates the legal right of Party members to take part in the election of their leading organs. In cases of co-option Party members are deprived of the opportunity of participating in elections and of objecting to unsuitable candidates, and generally their opinion is not asked, because the co-option takes place at plenums.

Co-option is very prevalent. It is a vice from which many organizations suffer.

We find that 11.6 per cent of the members of plenums of the regional and territorial committees and of the Central Committees of national Communist Parties have been co-opted. This is the average figure. In certain organizations the proportion of co-opted members is as high as 22.8 per cent (Kiev) and even 26.2 per cent (Byelorussia), that is to say, in the latter case more than one-quarter of the plenum members have been co-opted.

The proportion of co-opted members of district committees and city committees is as follows: in the Moscow organization 17 per cent, in the Leningrad organization 17.2 per cent, in the Azov-Black Sea organization 17.5 per cent, in the Dniepropetrovsk organization 26.7 per cent, in the Byelorussian organization 28.9 per cent, in the Voronezh organization 29.8 per cent and in the Armenian organization 30 per cent, that is to say, in the latter case nearly one-third of the members have been co-opted.

The proportion of co-opted members of bureaus of district and city committees fluctuates in the various regional organ-

* Co-opt: To add a member to an elected body without a regular election.—Ed.

izations from 14 to 59 per cent of the elected members. In the Western Region, Armenia and the Ivanovo and Karelian organization more than half the members of the bureaus of the district committees and city committees have been co-opted. It is difficult to make out which of the members who were originally elected still remain.

Co-option has assumed such wide scope that at the plenum of the Kiev Regional Committee, for example, held on October 19, 1934, fourteen persons were co-opted to the plenum at one stroke, among them Ashrafyan, Dzenis, Senchenko, Toder and others who have since been exposed as enemies of the Party.

In Kharkov, of the 158 members and thirty-four alternate members of the city committee elected at the Fourth City Party Conference, only fifty-nine remain. The composition of the city committee can hardly be regarded as legitimate, since only one-third of the elected members remain. Since the last Party conference sixty-one persons have been co-opted to the city committee. Moreover, with the exception of one comrade, the bureau of the city committee consists entirely of co-opted members.

You know the state of affairs in the Kharkov Party organization to which this has led.

If we now turn to various district Party committees, you yourselves apparently possess enough material on the subject of co-option. I think that there are dozens of district committees where the majority of the members have been co-opted and not elected. For instance, in the Malo-Archangelsk District (Kursk Region) eighteen members out of twenty-three were co-opted; in the Mtsensk district (Kursk Region) twenty-two out of twenty-six; in the Gomel city committee (Byelorussia) forty out of fifty-two; in the Oranienbaum District (Leningrad Region) fifteen out of twenty-two; in the Ustyuga District (Leningrad Region) eleven out of twelve, and so on.

The practice of co-option is just as widespread in the case of the bureaus of certain city committees and district com-

mittees. Of the twelve members of the Ulyanovsk city committee eleven was co-opted. Shchuchansk district committee (Chelyabinsk Region) all members of the bureau co-opted. Semipalatinsk district committee (East Kazakhstan Region)—all members of the bureau co-opted. Asbestovsk city committee (Sverdlovsk Region)—all members of the bureau co-opted, and so on.

The methods of co-option have gone so far that co-option of members onto, or expulsion from a plenum is sometimes decided by a minority, that is to say, when there can be no question of legitimate quorum. This shows that in a number of places the idea of a quorum has been obliterated, forgotten. For example, in the Lenin district, city of Kharkov, a plenum of the district committee together with the active was held on April 4, 1936, at which the question of expelling a whole crowd of people from the district committee was discussed. Notwithstanding the fact that some considerable time has elapsed since the well-known decision of the Central Committee that actives should meet separately from plenums, a plenum of the district committee was convened together with the active. Why was this necessary? Because there were not enough elected members at the plenum. Only ten or eleven members of the city committee were present at the plenum, yet it expelled twelve of its members. Ten men swallowed up twelve men.

The comrades have apparently forgotten that even in the days when the Party was illegal and when co-option was a necessity, it was hedged around by a number of restrictions.

There are organizations which do not rest at co-opting plenums. For instance, a plenum of the Tuzhinsk district committee, Kirov Region, adopted a decision instructing the new bureau to co-opt members onto the district committee. In accordance with this decision the plenum of the bureau of the district committee co-opted seven persons, and endorsed the co-options made at the plenum only after the lapse of five months; and, furthermore, only six legally elected members of

the plenum of the district committee were present when these seven members of the district committee were confirmed.

The practice of ignoring the elective principle and resorting to co-option instead has spread to very many leading organizations, and with their connivance the primary Party organizations have followed in their footsteps. In Leningrad, for example, the Party committee of the Kanonersky Factory was elected before the Seventeenth Party Congress, and, with a Party committee consisting of only seven members, twenty-two members were co-opted in three years, that is to say, the Party committee replaced its members three times over without normal elections.

At the Kirov Works only three of the elected members of the Party committee remain; the rest have all been co-opted.

At the Zhdanov Works thirty-one persons were co-opted onto the Party committee at various times.

Owing to the fact that the established frequency of elections is ignored and that co-option has become a widespread phenomenon, a number of organizations have forgotten whom they elected. This alone can explain facts like the one you read about yesterday in *Pravda*, when the Odessa regional Party committee lost one of its members, Comrade Oleinikov, and remembered him only two years later when he himself was disturbed by the fact that nobody bothered about him or called upon him and went to see the regional committee.

In the Red Ceramics Works in Borovichi, Leningrad Region, the Party organization on January 4, 1937, discussed the election of additional members to the Party committee. I quote from the minutes: "Comrade Rodionov, secretary of the Party committee, reported on the fulfilment of the instructions given him by the Party meeting to 'ascertain by documents' the composition of the Party committee. He stated that in accordance with the documents in the possession of the Party committee, Svidersky, Kuznetsova, Danilov and Rodionov were members of the Party committee. Cromov, Sokolov and Kalinin figured in the list of members of the Party committee, but their mem-

bership is not confirmed by documents. Resolved: To introduce clarity into the composition of the Party committee and to elect capable comrades to supplement it."

Incidentally, at the meeting itself, two members of the Party committee, who were regarded as having been legally elected, categorically denied this, and earnest attempts were made to persuade them that they were mistaken. The secretary of the Party committee subsequently related how difficult it was to fulfil the instructions given him to "find" the members of the Party committee: "Oh, I searched and searched for the members of the Party committee, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that I found them."

Such is the state of affairs with regard to the gross violations of the laws of our Party which prescribe the election of Party organs, and with regard to the supersession of the elective principle by the practice of co-option, a practice which is incompatible with the spirit and traditions of our Party.

INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY—AN UNBREAKABLE PARTY LAW

REGARDING the way the elections themselves are practiced. The machinery of election is often such that Party members are deprived of the opportunity of freely expressing their opinion of the candidates or of exercising the right of objecting to and criticizing unsuitable candidates. The elections are not organized so as to ensure Party members a real opportunity to test every candidate, but so as to carry through the elections as quickly and as simply as possible and to escape irksome criticism of candidates by Party members. It is usually done as follows: several days before the conference the secretary of the Party committee jots down a preliminary list of candidates somewhere in his notebook. Then a meeting of secretaries is called at which the list is drawn up. Then the candidates are discussed in the council of seniors and at a delegate meeting. The discussion of the candidates is thus con-

fined to various closed preliminary conferences of a "family" character, without any special "bother".

It is quite clear that if the conferences of secretaries and delegates have settled the question in advance, it is extremely difficult to secure the rejection of any particular candidate at a general meeting or conference. As a rule, at the conferences themselves no discussion of the candidates is opened, the vote is taken on the whole list and not on the individual candidates, and the election procedure is thus converted into a sheer formality. The idea at the conference is speed. A chairman is chosen who, tucking up his sleeves, can "run through" the election of the list in about twenty minutes. In this way we get a manifestation of complete unanimity, and at the same time there is no opportunity to raise any serious objections. Instead of enabling people at the conference itself to participate in the discussion, instead of opening the way for broad criticism and objections to the nominated candidates, the whole thing is reduced to a narrow organizational "technique" which has only one purpose—to build a barrier against criticism by the Party members.

Such practices are incompatible with the spirit and traditions of our Party and with the tasks that confront us. It is a violation of the legitimate rights of the Party members, a violation of Party democracy, in a veiled form.

On the subject of co-option I should like to make one more remark. I should like to refer to the experience of the Central Committee of our Party. If our local workers learned more from the Central Committee, we should not have permitted the unbridled co-option which has been practiced in a number of organizations. During the whole course of its existence the Central Committee has not co-opted a single member or alternative member. This is a practice unknown to the Central Committee.

The next serious defect as far as respect for the principles of internal Party democracy is concerned is the widespread practice of appointing Party leaders secretaries of Party com-

mittees. This practice must be altered in the following way: if a Party committee proposes to change the Party leadership of a lower organization and has selected a candidate for the purpose, it shall be obliged, before applying for confirmation of the candidature by the higher Party instance, to submit it for discussion to the organization to which the secretary is being recommended, and only then apply to the higher organization for confirmation.

We have many secretaries of Party committees who are not elected members of the Party committee. I could name several dozen people who are secretaries of Party committees but have not been elected to the Party committees. They were appointed, given a mandate, arrived, and immediately took up their job, while the old secretary, as a rule, gives no account of his term of office. "Self-reports" are very widely practiced, but it is clear that reports of Party committees to the Party members are practiced all too little.

With regard to self-reports. In the form in which the self-reports of Communists are usually made they are a bureaucratic insult to Party members. In most cases self-reports are an occasion for delving into the private life, the family affairs of the Communist, and not for ascertaining whether he is playing a vanguard role and what work he is performing among the masses. What do these self-reports consist of? This is shown by certain facts. The Party organization of the Dzerzhinsky collective farm, Matveyev District, Orenburg Region, hears the self-report of a Party member named Sidorov, and this is the record: "He does not read or subscribe to newspapers. He lives on fairly good terms with his wife and also with his children. . . . Note be taken that Sidorov does not do enough to educate his family." This is a typical self-report.

This same organization recorded the self-report of Party member Mazin, who was in the habit of beating his wife, as follows: "Prohibit domestic stupidities. He must create a good family spirit without delay."

The Party organization of the Amosov State Farm, Ka-

zakhstan, heard the self-report of a Party member named Selirov and adopted the following trenchant decision: "Heard: self-report of Selirov. Resolved: That Selirov be arrested."

A VOICE: What for?

ZHDANOV: It is another question we must ask here: has a Party organization the right to arrest its members? The fellow had to pay for his report with his skin!

In many Party organizations the importance of plenums, as organs of collective leadership, is lowered. Plenums meet very rarely, and mostly for the discussion of ceremonial or general questions, while local affairs are rarely discussed. Elections and similar questions, as I have already said, are discussed and decided in the absence of the necessary quorum.

In 1936 the Vachi district committee, Gorky Region, did not summon a single plenum. In the Veselov district, Dniepropetrovsk Region, no plenum was held for ten months. In 1936 not a single plenum was held in the Chelhinsk district and other district committees in the Tatar Republic for seven or eight months. What sort of collective leadership is this?

A similar defect is to be observed in the primary Party organizations and results in lowering the importance of our elective organizations.

The draft resolution points out that we must create a state of affairs in the primary Party organizations which will guarantee strict observance of the procedure of electing Party committees at general meetings of the factory Party organization, and prevent the latter being superseded by conferences. The draft resolution also points to the necessity of putting a stop to the practice that prevails in a number of primary Party organizations whereby general meetings are virtually abolished and superseded by shop meetings and conferences.

Picture the situation in a large factory with 1,000 or 1,500 Party members. Instead of a general meeting of the Party organization of the factory being called for the purpose of electing the Party committee, a factory conference is called

on the basis of one delegate for every three Party members. Thus the general Party meeting of the factory is replaced by a conference at which the elections are held; in other words, two out of every three persons are virtually deprived of the opportunity of voting. Can this be tolerated? Obviously, it cannot be tolerated under any circumstances.

The importance of general meetings is lowered. In a number of organizations general Party meetings are rarely held and very little attention is paid to local Party affairs.

The principles of internal Party democracy are also violated by the way preparations are made for Party meetings, when the members of the Party are not duly informed of the questions to be discussed.

Regarding resolutions at Party meetings. Resolutions on certain questions are drawn up a long time ahead, or are scribbled at the meeting itself by people skilled in this sort of thing, without any reference to what is said in the discussion. Our people are very partial to the formula: a draft decision to be framed "on the basis of the opinions exchanged"—when in fact no attention whatever is paid to the "opinions exchanged."

This betrays a gross disrespect for the legitimate rights of the members, who are the masters of the Party.

Lack of order and unscrupulous negligence are displayed by our people with regard to Party documents and decisions. We should all learn from the attitude shown by the Central Committee to Party documents. While we have now enhanced the importance of the membership card and the respect it enjoys, this cannot be said of many other Party documents. How are they framed, executed, filed? Carelessly. We must learn from the Central Committee to handle every Party document with accuracy and care. Too much carelessness and negligence are displayed by our Party organizations in this respect.

It is by no means an unimportant matter, for instance, whether the members of the bureau of a Party committee have been supplied with material for the discussions at their sittings or not, or whether they receive it a day before or only at the

sitting itself. This is also a way of ensuring internal Party democracy.

These questions may seem trifling ones, but in the long run they do us harm, because they hamper the growth of the active and prevent it taking an active and independent part in the life of the Party. This gives rise to hectoring and so on.

I should like to mention another example of violation of the principles of collective leadership. I am referring to what are known as the "triangles". In a number of our organizations, under the guise of the "triangle", consisting of the secretary of the Party committee, the director of the factory or institution and the chairman of the local trade union organization, there exists a peculiar organization which stands apart from the normal elected organs (the Party committee and trade union committee), which functions officially and regularly and which is not provided for by any Party or Soviet law. It meets, adopts decisions, issues instructions for executions, and so on. From the standpoint of collective leadership, from the standpoint of the maintenance of proper relations among the Party organization, the business organization and the trade union organization, the triangle is an absolutely impermissible form. It is a family circle, a mutual understanding to make it difficult to criticize. Once these three people have come to an understanding, just try to criticize them! It robs the Party and trade union organizations of their character, disarms them in combating defects of business administration and, on the other hand, disarms the business administrator himself, because the triangle is something in the nature of a corporate managing body, whereas our methods of business management are built on entirely different lines.

The triangles are a parody, a caricature, a substitute for collective leadership. What does this lead to? Take Leningrad, where at the Kalinin Factory they expelled a Communist from the Party for criticizing the improper way the factory management directed the Stakhanov movement, for pointing to defects in leadership. He was listed as a trouble maker. We rein-

stated him in the Party and punished those who had treated him in this illegal and gross manner. But the fact itself was made possible by the existence of the triangle, which has come to an understanding beforehand. The factory manager came to the triangle and said: "This is intolerable, the management is being abused." He was seconded by the Party secretary and the chairman of the trade union committee. In this way criticism is stifled, which makes it difficult for the workers of such a factory to get at the truth.

It seems to me that the time has come to raise the question of abolishing the triangles.

Wherein lies the harm caused by the violations of the principles of democratic centralism I have mentioned? It lies in the fact that this practice hampers the growth of the activity and independent initiative of Party members, blunts the feeling of the members that they are the masters of the Party, hinders the ideological and political growth of Party members, deprives Party members of their legal right to control the activities of Party organs, and in this way prevents proper relations between the leaders and the members of the Party and weakens the Party in the face of the tasks it has to accomplish.

ELIMINATE EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS THE GROWTH OF THE PARTY ACTIVE *

EVERYBODY realizes what vast cadres we require so as to accomplish successfully the tasks dictated by the development of socialist construction in all spheres, by the introduction of the new Constitution and by the further struggle for communism, what a large number of devoted and self-sacrificing comrades we need both within the Party and outside the Party, among non-Party people!

We must eliminate from our Party practice everything that

* Leading members of the rank and file.—Ed.

hampers and prevents the growth of the active, the development of its independent initiative and the enhancement of its role in the leadership of Party life and the discussion of all questions of Party policy, as is enjoined by the principles of internal Party democracy.

Comrade Stalin is always teaching us that the Party active has a special political significance in the life of our Party. It is the vehicle by which the decisions of our Party are carried into effect. After a Party decision has been adopted its fate lies with the active. The Party active is the expression of the public opinion of the Party.

It is because our Party was able to forge and train a large active in the spirit of Lenin and Stalin that we succeeded in accomplishing the basic tasks of socialist construction and in securing such gigantic and fabulous victories.

It was precisely to further this that, on the initiative of Comrade Stalin, the Central Committee adopted the decision to summon Party actives to discuss the decisions of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.

And it is for this reason that we must eliminate everything that hinders the numerical increase of our active, its ideological and political growth, its Bolshevik steeling, its organizational consolidation. The tasks that confront us in the sphere of socialist construction and in connection with the forthcoming new democratic elections raise the important question of enhancing the activity of every Communist.

Every one of the 2,000,000 members of our Party must be activated to the maximum degree, every Communist must be an active organizer, agitator and propagandist for the cause of the Party. It is from this standpoint that our organizational, agitational and propaganda work must be reconstructed.

One remark on propaganda work. The chief defect of our propaganda work, a defect to which the Central Committee has repeatedly pointed, is that it is often conducted in a scholastic way, divorced from the current, the urgent daily tasks of the Party. Our propaganda must be so organized that the purpose

of every propagandist circle and every school should be to train Communists so that the increase in knowledge and perfection of Party members in the science of Marxism-Leninism should not be an aim in itself, but a means of training active propagandists for the cause of the Party. This must be borne in mind as one of the most important principles of our propaganda work.

Unless we get rid of the grave shortcomings in our internal Party practices and, in the first place, put a stop to the violations of internal Party democracy and the elective principle, we shall not be able to solve the new tasks of the Party that arise from the democratic elections, and the Party organizations may prove bankrupt in the face of these tasks. And if we want to carry out the elections under the new electoral system as is demanded by the Party and as is demanded by the Constitution, if we want our Soviet and Party workers to respect our laws and the masses to respect the Soviet Constitution, we must secure a reorganization of Party work based on the complete and unconditional observance of the principles of internal Party democracy laid down by the rules of our Party.

* * *

In pursuance of this, we must adopt the following measures:

First, we must unconditionally eliminate the practice of cooption and restore the principle of electing the leading organs of the Party organizations in accordance with the Party rules.

Second, we must forbid voting by lists in the election of Party organs and replace open voting by secret voting. In this connection the Party members must be ensured the unrestricted right to raise objections to the nominated candidates and the unrestricted right to criticize these candidates.

In this connection, in view of the serious violations of the elective principle by our Party organizations, we must within the next two months hold elections of Party organs, from the Party committees of the primary organizations to the terri-

torial and regional committees and the Central Committees of the national Communist Parties, the elections to be completed before the end of May. In future the frequency of elections of Party organs laid down in the Party rules must be observed: in the primary Party organizations once a year; in the district and city organizations, once a year; in the territorial, regional and republican organizations, once every eighteen months.

As regards Party meetings, we must categorically condemn and prohibit the practice of replacing general Party meetings by shop meetings or conferences, and we must not allow two-stage elections in Party organizations, but must make it the practice that primary Party organs should be elected directly at general meetings.

Such are the proposals I was called upon to formulate here.

REPLY TO THE DISCUSSION

(Concluding Speech of A. A. Zhdanov at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., February 27, 1937)

COMRADES, in the discussion the question of reconstructing the work of other organizations, chiefly Soviet organizations, was raised and discussed. Mention was made of the trade unions, the Young Communist League and other mass organizations. This is a very important matter and, of course, we shall have to reconstruct these organizations before the elections along the lines of the work we shall have to perform in the Party organization.

The condition for the reconstruction of the Soviet, trade union and Young Communist League organizations is the preliminary reconstruction of the Party organization itself, which is the principal guiding force and the leading nucleus of all our organizations, as is inscribed in our Constitution. I do not think that we should refrain even now from working for a decided improvement in the work of the mass organizations, trade unions, Soviets, Young Communist League and so forth; but a genuine reconstruction of the work will of course depend on the degree to which the Party organizations—which is the fundamental thing—succeed in reconstructing themselves.

Now, as to the violations of the elective principle by Party organizations, the prevalence of co-option and other violations of internal Party democracy and the principles of democratic centralism. It is apparent from the discussion that matters have gone very far, that the habits and survivals of the past are still firmly entrenched in the minds of our people, who have been carried away by our big achievements. These habits and survivals are undoubtedly associated with the non-Marxist views

which were flayed by Comrade Stalin as early as 1924 at the Thirteenth Party Conference and which are due to the absolutely non-Marxist idea that our Party is "not an independent organism living its own independent ideological and practical life, but something in the nature of a system of institutions, lower, intermediate and higher". Comrade Stalin pointed out at the time that it was the immediate task of the Party to combat these views. Comrade Stalin's recommendations should be recalled in connection with the bureaucratic perversions of the principles of democratic centralism.

A number of comrades, and Comrade Khatayevich most convincingly, spoke here of a certain divorcement of the responsible workers from Party life.

Citing the Dniepropetrovsk organization as an example, Comrade Khatayevich showed how over-preoccupation with current business affairs leads to a loss of taste for Party work and to a slackening of Party work. This situation is a typical one. It should be realized that when we become absorbed in petty business affairs to the detriment of Party work, we are forgetting that nobody will do the Party work for us. Guidance of Party work is the chief function of Party workers; the responsibility for the state of this work lies wholly and entirely on them.

The speech of Comrade Kabakov shows that Party work is being seriously forgotten by a number of organizations. Comrade Kabakov spoke about everything except Party work. He spoke about the cinema, cinema equipment and the radio. These are all very important and very essential things. But when Comrade Molotov asked Comrade Kabakov point blank what the situation was in the Urals with regard to co-option, he evaded the question. Consequently, questions of Party work are not the chief thing that interests Comrade Kabakov. This shows that underestimation of Party work has not been overcome, that the necessary change of attitude in this matter has not yet been achieved, and that we must begin with the leaders. A change in attitude toward Party work depends entirely on

the change in the attitude of the leaders of the Party organizations.

A few words about election procedure. Comrades spoke here about the necessity of issuing instructions on how to conduct the secret ballot—whether by the ballot box and ballot slip system, or by the ball system. This is a very important question, but what we need now is not instructions but to know whether the principle itself is approved. Nobody here objected to the principle of the secret ballot; on the contrary, comrades stressed the extreme importance and significance of the secret ballot in the matter of securing real freedom of election. The process of election itself will apparently be divided into two stages. The first stage will be an absolutely open discussion of the candidates. Everybody will have the right to nominate and advocate any candidate for election to the Party committee. That is the first stage. Then after the candidates have been discussed, the vote will be taken by secret ballot.

The procedure practiced in the election of the Central Committee at Party congresses, where voting is by secret ballot, may be taken as a model and example. I think that this procedure may be borrowed in its entirety by the Party organizations in the localities.

Now as regards co-option. Certain comrades pointed out that the extensive practice of co-option is due to the necessity of re-allocating secretaries and other responsible Party leaders, and consequently to adopt them onto the Party committees. If the elections in Party organizations are held precisely at the times established, no difficulty will arise from the fact that a man remains unelected for two or three months. He will fulfil the duties of secretary but will not be a member of the Party committee, and may be put up for election to the Party committee at the forthcoming conference. At present a Party leader becomes a member of the Party committee at the same time that he is assigned to a particular Party post. That is by no means obligatory. Let him fulfil the duties of secretary until the conference is held without being a member of the Party committee.

Another remark. Co-option was to a certain extent due to the turnover of responsible workers, to the frequent transfers of workers.

Comrades who spoke here referred to the "paucity" of cadres which, it was claimed, necessitates a constant regrouping and transfer of people. They forget that the reserves and possibilities we possess of advancing new cadres are exceptionally great. Just see how fast Party people and non-Party people develop, just see how rapidly the Stakhanovites develop, and not only the Stakhanovites. And take the movement of the wives of Red Army commanders and industrial executives, recall the recent all-Union conferences. In respect to the vividness, pithiness and value of their utterances, in respect to their selection of new forms and methods of agitation, in respect to the wealth of subjects they dealt with and the content and form of their speeches, I give you my word, many of them could teach a point or two to our stereotyped and humdrum agitators.

We have masses of people around us, people who should have been advanced long ago; but we fail to notice them because of our lack of democracy. Our lack of democracy prevents us noticing new people. And many people are kept waiting too long, and having been kept waiting too long; having been forgotten, they become a reserve of dissatisfied people within our Party. From this standpoint the adoption of the secret ballot and of the real elective principle in our Party organizations will help us to draw upon the vast reserve of cadres we possess. Lenin said, at a time when we really had very few cadres, that we must punish those who say that we have few cadres.

A word or two about agitation. Comrades were right when they said here that our agitation chiefly embraces the foremost workers and individual collective farms. It absolutely does not extend to vast sections of people who are prepared to help us, who are prepared at any moment to respond to our call, to become our friends, to become non-Party Bolsheviks. I am

alluding to the intellectuals, office workers, housewives, and not only to them. It must be bluntly stated that our agitational work does not embrace even all the workers in the large factories, while in the rural districts we are working only in a part of the collective farms. We have collective farms which are visited by district functionaries two or three times a year, but there are many collective farms, most of them weak ones—and that is the chief danger—in out-of-the-way places, to which Comrade Eiche referred, which nobody ever visits because they are ignored. This is absolutely wrong; we must intensify our work precisely among those workers, collective farmers, office employees and other members of the working population whom our political influence has not yet sufficiently embraced.

Our agitation frequently does not provide frank and direct answers to the questions raised by the workers. We receive a host of questions and responses in connection with every one of our measures. Lists of these questions are drawn up by the Party committees, but answers to the questions are very frequently not given, difficult questions are evaded. That is wrong; our agitation must be truthful, our agitation must furnish a reply to all the questions raised by the workers, and they must not be left without attention, without a reply, because if we do not reply to them, somebody else will—nature abhors a vacuum.

And, last, as to our agitational collectives, the work of which is also extremely neglected. They also for the most part serve the mills and factories. But as regards agitators who would work in dwelling houses, universities and technical colleges, among office workers and intellectuals—this is a matter which our Party organizations have not yet begun to tackle. We must acquire cadres of such people too. The opportunities here are exceptional. Everything is in our hands—radio, cinema, newspapers, and the devil only knows how many other means of agitation.

Are we utilizing these means? Quite inadequately. The question is to put this work on a proper footing, and that is a very big thing.

PREPARATION OF THE PARTY ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE ELECTIONS TO THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE U.S.S.R. UNDER THE NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND THE CORRESPONDING REORGANIZATION OF PARTY POLITICAL WORK

*Resolution Adopted by the Plenum of the Central Committee
of the C.P.S.U. in Connection with the Report of
Comrade Zhdanov, February 27, 1937*

THE introduction of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. signifies a definite change in the political life of the country. The essence of this change is the further democratization of the electoral system, as expressed in the replacement of not entirely equal suffrage in elections to the Soviets by equal suffrage, indirect elections by direct elections and open ballot by secret ballot.

Whereas before the introduction of the new Constitution there were restrictions of suffrage in the case of the clergy, former White Guards, the former rich and persons not engaged in socially useful labor, the new Constitution eliminates all restrictions of suffrage for these categories of citizens and inaugurates universal suffrage in the elections of deputies.

Whereas formerly the elections of delegates were not equal, since there existed different rates of representation for the urban and rural populations, now the necessity of restricting the equality of elections has disappeared and all citizens are entitled to participate in the elections on an equal footing.

Whereas formerly the elections of the intermediate and higher organs of Soviet power were indirect, now under the new Constitution all Soviets, from village and city Soviets to the Supreme Soviet, will be elected immediately by the citizens by direct elections.

Whereas formerly deputies to the Soviets were elected by open ballot and by lists, now deputies will be elected by secret ballot, and not by lists but by individual candidatures nominated in each electoral area.

Lastly, the Constitution introduces popular canvasses (referendums).

These changes in the electoral system signify increased control of the masses over the Soviet organs and increased responsibility of the Soviet organs to the masses.

The effect of the introduction of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot will be to enhance the political activity of the masses and to enlist new strata of the laboring population in the work of administering the state. The dictatorship of the proletariat will thus become a more flexible and, consequently, a more powerful system of state guidance of society by the working class, the base of the dictatorship of the working class will be broadened and its foundations will become firmer.

In order to meet this change fully prepared, the Party must assume charge of it and see to it that its leadership is fully insured in the forthcoming elections to the supreme organs of the country.

Are the Party organizations prepared for leadership of this kind?

What is required of the Party so that it may assume charge of this change, assume charge of the new, thoroughly democratic elections?

What is required is that the Party itself should consistently practise democracy, that it should thoroughly apply the principles of democratic centralism in its internal life as the Party rules demand, that the necessary conditions should exist within the Party itself for the election of all Party organs, that criticism and self-criticism should be fully developed, that the responsibility of Party organs to the members of the Party should be complete, and that the Party members themselves should be active to the highest degree.

Can it be said that all the Party organizations are already prepared to fulfil these conditions, that they have completely reorganized themselves on democratic lines?

Unfortunately, this cannot be said with absolute assurance.

This is shown by the violations of the Party rules and the principles of internal democracy practiced in certain organizations.

What are these violations?

The principle of election of Party organs laid down in the Party rules has been violated by a number of organizations. The frequency of election of Party organs laid down in the Party rules is not observed by Party organizations. The entirely unjustifiable practice of co-opting leading workers as members of plenums of district committees, city committees, territorial committees, regional committees and central committees of national Communist Parties has become widespread.

The system laid down in the Party rules whereby secretaries of Party committees are endorsed by superior bodies has virtually been transformed into a system of appointment in the case of a number of Party organizations. Secretaries of Party committees are frequently endorsed before their election by the local Party organizations, and the result of this is virtually to deprive local Party organizations of the opportunity of discussing the candidature of the recommended worker.

Endorsement of elected persons and removal of persons from posts are often decided by a canvass of the opinion of members of Party organizations and without the new workers being recommended to the plenum of the Party committee, and also without the motives for removing a given Party leader being explained to the Party organizations.

As regards election of Party organs, the practice still prevails of discussing the lists of candidates only at preliminary conferences, councils of seniors, or delegate meetings, and as a rule no discussion of the individual candidates is opened at the plenums and conferences themselves, voting is by list and

not by individual candidates, and in this way the election procedure is converted into a mere formality.

All these instances of violation of the principles of democratic centralism are injurious to the Party, as they hamper the growth of the activity of the members of the Party, deprive the active, which has a special political significance in the life of our Party, of the opportunity of participating in the responsible work, deprive the Party members of their legitimate right to control the activities of the Party organs, and thereby disturb proper relations between the leaders and the masses of the Party.

Striking examples of such practices are provided by the cases recently disclosed by the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. of extreme deterioration of Party political work in the Azov-Black Sea Territorial Committee, the Kiev Regional Committee, the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party and in other Party organizations, finding expression in gross violations of the Party rules and the principles of democratic centralism by departures from the principle of electing Party organs and the introduction of the intolerable practice of co-option.

The plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. emphasizes the fact that the examples of incorrect leadership disclosed in the case of the Kiev Regional Committee and the Azov-Black Sea Territory are not isolated instances but are present in one degree or another in all the territorial and regional Party organizations.

The plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. considers that the elimination of these and similar defects constitutes that indispensable condition without which the Party cannot accomplish the new tasks that confront it in connection with the change in the political life of the country, the adoption of the new Constitution and the forthcoming elections to the supreme organs of the country on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

It is therefore necessary to reorganize Party work from

the standpoint of the complete and unconditional application of the principles of internal Party democracy as prescribed in the Party rules.

The plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. considers it necessary to adopt and enjoins all Party organizations to carry out the following measures:

1. To eliminate the practice of co-opting members of Party committees and to restore the principle of election of the leading organs of Party organizations in accordance with the Party rules.

2. To forbid voting by lists in elections of Party organs. Voting should be on individual candidates, and every member of the Party should be insured the unrestricted right to raise objections to candidates and to criticize them.

3. To introduce the secret ballot in election of candidates to Party organs.

4. To hold elections of Party organs in all Party organizations, from the Party committees of primary Party organizations to territorial and regional committees and the central committees of the national Communist Parties, the elections to be completed not later than May 20.

5. To enjoin all Party organizations strictly to observe the frequency of election of Party organs laid down in the Party rules: in the primary Party organizations once a year, in the district and city organizations once a year, in the regional, territorial and republican organizations once every eighteen months.

6. To insure that the primary Party organizations strictly observe the system of electing Party committees at general meetings of the factory organization and that the latter should not be superseded by conferences.

7. To eliminate the practice prevailing in a number of primary Party organizations of virtually abolishing general meetings and replacing general meetings by shop meetings and conferences.

SELF-CRITICISM AND CONTACT WITH THE MASSES!

*Editorial in Pravda, Central Organ of the Communist Party
of the Soviet Union, March 6, 1937*

THE recent plenum of the Central Committee will constitute an important page in the history of our Party. The immense significance of the plenum is due to a number of causes, first and foremost to the fact that it was held soon after the introduction of Stalin's Constitution, which marks a definite change in the political life of the country.

The task of the plenum was to verify how far all links of the Party were really prepared to meet this change. The great significance of the plenum lies in the decisions it adopted, which, with the sharpness and self-critical spirit characteristic of Bolsheviks, expose grave defects and mistakes in the work of the Party organizations and indicate effective measures for the elimination of these unhealthy manifestations and their consequences.

The Stalin Constitution registered the great achievements of the socialist state of workers and peasants. The successes gained in the cause of the Party and in the cause of communism are indeed great. Their positive significance is immense. But there is also a seamy side to these successes. In the case of people who are not sufficiently tried and experienced, success, as Comrade Stalin has frequently pointed out, engenders boastfulness, pride, lack of vigilance and an idiotic devil-may-care attitude.

Many leaders of Party organizations have forgotten that the Soviet power has so far been established only on one-sixth of the surface of the globe and that our country is encircled by capitalism. And capitalist encirclement is not an empty phrase.

Bourgeois countries have always sent scouts, spies and wreckers even into each other's territories with the object of disorganizing and undermining the power of neighboring states. The bourgeoisie, which dominates five-sixths of the world's surface, cannot and never will reconcile itself to the success of the socialist state of workers and peasants. And the fascist states in particular rage against the Soviet Union. The capitalists send considerably more spies into our country than into other bourgeois countries. The Trotskyites are a real find for international fascism; they serve conveniently to screen the formation of anti-Soviet espionage and terrorist groups. Trotskyism has long ceased to be a political current within the working class; the Trotskyites have become a gang of murderers and fascist hirelings. We should not allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep by the numerical insignificance of this gang. We must be ten times as vigilant as ever before!

The Stalin Constitution of the U.S.S.R., which introduces universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot, is an example of genuine, socialist democracy which has no parallel in history. And in the resolution (published today) adopted by the plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., in connection with Comrade Zhdanov's report, the Party emphasizes the fact that under the new electoral system

"... the dictatorship of the proletariat will thus become a more flexible and, consequently, a more powerful system of state guidance of society by the working class, the base of the dictatorship of the working class will be broadened and its foundations will become firmer."

But the fact that the foundations of the dictatorship of the working class are being strengthened complicates rather than simplifies the tasks of the Party as the leader of socialist construction. The new elections will tremendously enhance the political activity of the population all over the country—in every territory, in every city and in every district. The Bolshevik Party organization must lead this activity. And this means in the first place that the whole membership of our

Party must be made active. It means that every Party organization must strictly observe the rules of internal Party democracy, which is one of the fundamental organizational principles of Bolshevism.

Yet we find the principle of internal Party democracy frequently violated in various ways. It is violated by the fact that the stipulated periods of election of Party organs are not observed and by the fact that, instead of being elected, various leading workers are often co-opted onto district, city and regional Party committees, while secretaries of Party committees are at times simply appointed. The plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. sharply condemned such infractions of the Party rules and violations of the principles of Bolshevism and pointed to the harm and danger of such violations.

The plenum of the Central Committee pointed out that such violations of the principles of democratic centralism are harmful to the Party first of all because they

“ . . . hamper the growth of the activity of the members of the Party, deprive the active, which has a special political significance in the life of our Party, of the opportunity of participating in responsible work, deprive the Party members of their legitimate right to control the activities of the Party organs, and thereby disturb proper relations between the leaders and the masses of the Party.”

And our Party, through Lenin and Stalin, has always demanded not only that the leaders should teach the masses, but that they should themselves learn from the masses, that they should be able to make use of the vast practical experience of the masses and should always be under the control of the masses.

The chief danger of the violations of the Party rules disclosed by the plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. is that leading Party workers may become divorced from the masses, that a number of Party workers may become bureaucratic and virtually escape the control of the Party masses.

And in its decisions the plenum of the Central Committee, after making a profound analysis of the defects in the work of the Party organizations, indicated measures for the elimination of these defects and violations. The chief of these measures is the decision of the plenum of the Central Committee,

"To introduce the secret ballot in election of candidates to Party organs.

"To hold elections of Party organs in all Party organizations, from the Party committees of primary Party organizations to territorial and regional committees and the central committees of the national Communist Parties, the elections to be completed not later than May 20."

The importance of these decisions of the plenum of the Central Committee to the whole life of the Party can hardly be exaggerated. The feature of the next few months will be the election of Party committees and extensive Bolshevik self-criticism. The Central Committee calls upon all members of the Party to enhance self-criticism, creative self-criticism, self-criticism which will help to rid the Party of all elements alien to Bolshevism.

Secret ballot in the election of candidates to Party organs will play a very important part. It will enhance the feeling of responsibility of the leaders to the Party masses. It will create the fullest opportunity in the Party organizations for wide self-criticism, without respect for persons. It will rouse the activity of all Party members and enhance their political discernment and vigilance.

And vigilance is a quality of indispensable importance to Bolsheviks at the present time. This has once more been demonstrated by the anti-Party, double-dealing activities not only of the Trotskyite bandits, but also of the Rights, whose ring-leaders—Bukharin and Rykov—the plenum of the Central Committee expelled from the ranks of the Party.

The decisions of the plenum of the Central Committee will put an end to the unpardonable, idiotic, devil-may-care attitude of certain leaders, among whom the rotten theory was current

that every success gained in socialist construction means that the struggle of the agents of capitalism against socialism becomes less and less acute. The decisions of the plenum will be effective in directing the attention of the Party organization to Party educational work. The Party has done not a little to help our cadres to master technique. We have done not a little for the technical education of the masses. The Central Committee and Comrade Stalin definitely demand that the old slogan of technical education should be supplemented by a new slogan—the mastering of Bolshevism, the political education of cadres. This will help them to detect the enemy no matter how he may mask himself.

The decisions of the plenum of the Central Committee will be a program for the whole Party for a long time to come. This program must be rapidly brought to the knowledge of every Party worker and of every member of our great Party. We must rapidly change our methods and begin to work and act on new lines.

The primary task now is to make a careful and profound study of the decisions of the plenum of the Central Committee and make them known to every Bolshevik. In these decisions the plenum of the Central Committee has provided the Party with a powerful instrument which will help the Party organizations to reorganize their methods of work, so that they may with greater assurance, strength and harmony lead the masses of the working class, the masses of the people, to fight the new battles for communism.

THERE MUST BE NO RESTRICTION OF RIGHTS OF PARTY MEMBERS!

Editorial in Pravda, March 7, 1937

THE activities of all government organs and of all Party and public organizations must now be concentrated on putting Stalin's Constitution into effect. This most important historical document signifies a tremendous change in the political life of the country.

The preparations for the forthcoming elections to the Supreme Soviet of the country will undoubtedly stimulate the Soviet people to a new and higher level of political activity and give rise to an unprecedented movement among all strata of the population. It is the duty of our Party, which is the vanguard of the working population, to assume charge of this movement and of this change in the political life of the country. It must direct the activity of the people into channels which will still further strengthen the dictatorship of the working class and the might of the great socialist fatherland.

Our Party is the sole and genuine party of the working class. In the gloomy days of underground life under the tsar, in the stormy days of the Civil War, and in the strenuous fight against every enemy of socialism it became steeled, acquired militant traditions, strengthened and multiplied its contacts with the masses, and perfected itself in the art of leading and triumphing together with the masses and at the head of the masses. The Bolshevik Party, which gave mankind Lenin and Stalin and which opened up a new socialist world, enjoys great popularity and an immense prestige.

The confidence and love of the Soviet people for their Party, for their leader, recognized, tested and steeled in the battles of socialism, are unlimited. All the greater is the responsibility

of the Party, all the more complex are its tasks, and all the more exacting are the demands made of every Communist. The Party must meet the change in the political life of the country fully prepared and completely ensure its leadership in the new elections. How this is to be done and what it entails have been set forth with exceptional clarity in the resolution of the plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. published yesterday:

“What is required is that the Party itself should consistently practice democracy, that it should thoroughly apply the principles of democratic centralism in its internal life as the Party rules demand, that the necessary conditions should exist within the Party itself for the election of all Party organs, that criticism and self-criticism should be fully developed, that the responsibility of Party organs to the members of the Party should be complete, and that the Party members themselves should be active to the highest degree.”

The plenum of the Central Committee noted the fact that in many Party organizations the Party rules are grossly violated and that democratic centralism is frequently replaced by bureaucratic centralism. The very dangerous practice of co-opting various responsible workers, appointing secretaries, restricting the right of Communists and stifling self-criticism is widely prevalent. Certain leaders of Party organizations have replaced the Bolshevik principles of selecting and promoting cadres by petty-bourgeois, family-circle principles. It is already the practice that when a responsible Party worker goes to take up a post in a new region he invariably drags with him an “entourage” of his own, supposedly tested workers.

For example, Comrade Vainov, secretary of the Yaroslavl Regional Committee, had scarcely taken up his duties in a new region, when he began to gather as his assistants acquaintances and friends from all parts of the country. His own people, of whom the organization had no knowledge whatever, who were selected purely on the ground of acquaintanceship and former ties, were appointed to the managership of many of the de-

partments of the Regional Committee, to the secretaryship of the Yaroslavl city committee, to the secretaryship of district committees and even to the managership of the City Trading Department.

The danger of this reprehensible practice consists in the fact that it engenders a spirit of toadyism and servility in the organization, hampers the growth of local cadres, tends to divorce the leadership from the masses, and facilitates the violation of the fundamental principles laid down in the Party rules. All this is corroborated by the state of affairs, for instance, in the Yaroslavl organization itself, where even the Regional Party Conference was marked by a spirit of toadyism, where co-option, decision of questions by private canvasses of opinion, and so on are markedly developed.

Forgetfulness of the basic demands of Party life, and the violation of internal Party democracy inevitably tend to divorce the Party organs from the masses and create a state of affairs in which the Party leader surrounds himself by people who in their sycophantic zeal create a stifling atmosphere of flattery and blunt the spirit of Bolshevik vigilance. And this is taken advantage of by the enemies, the agents of fascism—the utterly vile Trotskyites and the Right scum. And it is not without good reason that precisely in those organizations where the fundamentals of internal Party democracy were most grossly violated and where self-criticism was stifled the vile Trotskyites and Right scum found it easy to entrench themselves.

Striking examples of this reprehensible practice are provided by the facts of outrageous deterioration of Party work and violations of internal Party democracy recently disclosed by the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. in the Azov-Black Sea and Kiev organizations and in the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. Unfortunately, these are not isolated instances but are present in one degree or another in every Party organization. The plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. severely condemned the perversions and defects of Party work and demanded that every Party organ-

ization should strictly adhere to the Party rules and the principles of democratic centralism.

This is now the chief thing, for every one of us must realize that

“ . . . these instances of violation of the principles of democratic centralism are injurious to the Party, as they hamper the growth of the activity of the members of the Party, deprive the active, which has a special political significance in the life of our Party, of the opportunity of participating in the responsible work, deprive the Party members of their legitimate right to control the activities of the Party organs, and thereby disturb proper relations between the leaders and the masses of the Party.”

We must create a state of affairs in which all Communists without exception actively participate in Party life and all Party organizations work actively. This is what Lenin taught us, and this is what Comrade Stalin teaches us. We must see to it that

“ . . . the Party masses should decide both Party and general practical questions, that the Party masses should adopt their *own resolutions* and oblige their organizations to carry out these resolutions. . . . It is a question of democracy *in action*, when the Party masses decide questions themselves and act themselves.”
(*Stalin.*)

Self-criticism is an inalienable and permanently functioning instrument of Bolshevism. The secret ballot in the election of candidates to Party organs established by the plenum of the Central Committee will achieve the required results only if there is a new wave of Bolshevik self-criticism, without respect for persons, in the Party organization. A Party functionary who is unable to utilize self-criticism, let alone stifles it, is not a Bolshevik, but a bureaucrat who should be driven out of the Party apparatus. The widest development of self-criticism will raise the ideological level of our cadres and will enable the Party masses to advance to responsible work from their ranks people who have been really tested in the struggle against the enemies of the working class, people who are staunch and

thoroughly devoted to the Party of Lenin and Stalin and to its Central Committee.

And it should not be forgotten that when speaking of self-criticism we mean proletarian, Bolshevik self-criticism, which helps to expose and correct our shortcomings and which tends to raise the level of our whole work. This self-criticism has nothing in common with the "criticism" which proceeds from the hostile camp and which is directed against our Party and the Soviet power. In fighting the enemies of the working class we shall keep our powder dry!

The decisions adopted by the plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. in connection with Comrade Zhdanov's report constitute a big and important program for all the organizations of the Party. We must proceed to carry out this program immediately. This will be a powerful stimulus to the political activity of the Party masses and will facilitate the growth of Bolshevik cadres.

The militant vanguard of the working people, the Party of Lenin and Stalin, must meet the historic change in the political life of the country fully prepared and ensure an even more powerful growth of our country and of our people!

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