

"Declaration of the 46" to the Politburo of the CC RCP(b)

15 October 1923¹

Top Secret

TO THE POLITBURO OF THE CC OF THE RCP¹

The extreme seriousness of the situation forces us (in the interests of our party, in the interests of the working class) to tell you openly that continuation of the policy of the majority of the Politburo threatens the entire party with grave misfortune. The economic and financial crisis beginning at the end of July this year, with all the political consequences flowing from it, including those within the party, has mercilessly revealed the inadequacy of the party leadership, both in the economic realm, and especially in the area of inner-party relations.

The haphazard, poorly thought through, and unsystematic decisions of the CC, which hasn't made ends meet in the economy, have led to a situation where, given the presence of undoubtedly major successes in the realm of industry, agriculture, finances and transport, - successes which were achieved by the economy of the nation spontaneously, not thanks to but in spite of the inadequate leadership, or, to be more precise, the absence of any leadership, - we are faced not only with the perspective of the halting of these successes, but with a severe crisis of the economy as a whole.

We stand before the approaching break-down of the chervonets currency, which spontaneously turned into the basic currency before the liquidation of the budget deficit; we face a credit crisis in which the State Bank cannot, without the risk of severe shocks, finance not only industry and the trade of industrial goods, but even the purchase of grain for export; we face the cessation of the sale of industrial goods because of high prices, which can be explained, on the one hand, by the complete absence of planned, organizational leadership in industry, and on the other, by incorrect credit policy; we face the impossibility of carrying out the grain export program because of the inability to purchase grain; we face extremely low prices for food products, which are ruinous for the peasantry and which threaten massive cutbacks in agricultural production; we face the interruption of wage payments, which evokes the natural dissatisfaction of the workers; we face budget chaos, which directly creates chaos in the government apparatus; "revolutionary" means of cutbacks in drawing up the budget and new, unplanned cutbacks during its realization have gone from being temporary measures to a permanent phenomenon, which relentlessly jolts the state apparatus and, as a result of the absence of planning in the cutbacks - causes accidental and spontaneous shocks to it.

All these are elements of an economic, credit and financial crisis which has already begun. If we do not immediately take extensive, well thought out, planned and energetic measures, if the present lack of leadership continues, we face the possibility of unusually sharp economic shocks, inevitably bound up with domestic political complications and with the complete paralysis of our foreign activity and capability. And the latter, as everyone understands, is now more necessary than ever before; upon it depends the fate of the world revolution and the working class of all countries.

In precisely the same way, we see in the realm of inner-party relations the same incorrect leadership, paralyzing and demoralizing the party, which is particularly clearly felt during the crisis we are passing through.

We explain this not by the political incapability of the present party leaders; on the contrary, no matter how much we differ with them in evaluating the situation and in choosing

¹ Dated according to the contents of the resolution of the Politburo of the CC RCP(b) from 18 October 1923. Editor.

the methods to change it, we think that today's leaders under any conditions couldn't help but be appointed by the party to leading posts in the workers' dictatorship. Rather we explain it by the fact that, under the guise of official unity, we actually have a one-sided selection of personnel, who can adapt to the views and sympathies of a narrow circle, and a one-sided direction of activity. As a result of the party leadership being distorted by such narrow considerations, the party has to a significant degree ceased to be that living, independent collective which is sensitive to the changes in living reality, precisely because it is connected with thousands of threads to this reality. Instead of this, we observe an ever progressing, barely disguised division of the party into a secretarial hierarchy and into "laymen", into professional party functionaries, chosen from above, and the other party masses, who take no part in social life.

This is a fact which is well known to every member of the party. Members of the party who are dissatisfied with this or that directive from the CC or even a provincial committee, or who are plagued by doubts, or who have noted "to themselves" various mistakes, things out of line or disorder of some sort, are afraid to speak about it at party gatherings; even worse, they are afraid to talk to one another unless they consider their interlocutor to be absolutely reliable, in the sense of not being "talkative"; free discussion within the party has virtually disappeared, party public opinion has been stifled. Now it is not the party, it is not the party's broad masses who nominate and choose provincial conferences and party congresses, which in turn nominate and choose provincial committees and the Central Committee of the RCP. On the contrary, it is the secretarial hierarchy, the party hierarchy which to an ever greater degree chooses the delegates to the conferences and congresses, which to an ever greater degree are becoming the executive conferences of this hierarchy. The regime which has been established within the party is absolutely intolerable; it is killing the independence of the party, replacing the party with a selected bureaucratic apparatus which functions smoothly during normal times, but which inevitably misfires during moments of crisis, and which threatens to become absolutely helpless when confronted with the serious events which lie ahead.

The situation which has developed is explained by the fact that the regime of fractional dictatorship within the party which unfolded after the Xth Congress has outlived itself. Many of us consciously chose not to resist such a regime. The about-face of 1921,² followed by Lenin's illness, demanded, as far as some of us were concerned, a dictatorship within the party as a temporary measure. Other comrades from the very beginning reacted to it skeptically or opposed it. In any case, by the XIIth Party Congress this regime had become obsolete. It began to show the other side of the coin. The inner-party bonds began to weaken. The party began to wither. Extreme oppositional, even openly unhealthy, tendencies within the party began to take on an anti-party character, for there was no inner-party, comradely discussion of the most acute questions. And such a discussion could have revealed, without any difficulty, the unhealthy character of these tendencies, both to the party masses, and to the majority of their participants. As a result, we have seen the formation of illegal groupings, which draw party members away from the party, and we have witnessed the party losing contact with the working masses.

If the situation which has developed is not radically changed in the very near future, the economic crisis in Soviet Russia and the crisis of the fractional dictatorship within the party will strike heavy blows to the workers' dictatorship in Russia and to the Russian Communist Party. With such a burden on its shoulders, the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, and its leader, the RCP, cannot enter the field of the impending new international shocks in any other way than with the perspective of failure along the entire front of proletarian struggle. Of course, it would at first glance be easiest of all to resolve the question in the following sense: in view of the situation, there is not and there cannot be any place now

² This refers to the decision of the Xth Congress of the RCP(b) in March of 1921 to go over to the NEP (New Economic Policy). Editor.

for raising the questions of changing the party's course, of placing on the agenda new and complex tasks, etc., etc. But it is absolutely clear that such a point of view would be a position of officially closing one's eyes to the actual situation, since the entire danger lies in the fact that there is no genuine ideological or practical unity in the face of exceedingly complex domestic and foreign situations. In the party, the more silently and secretly the struggle is waged, the more ferocious it becomes. If we raise this question before the Central Committee, then it is precisely in order to find the swiftest and most painless resolution of the contradictions which are tearing the party apart, and to rapidly place the party on healthy foundations. We need real unity in discussions and in actions. The impending ordeals require the unanimous, fraternal, absolutely conscious, extremely energetic, and extremely unified activity of all the members of our party.

The fractional regime must be eliminated, and this must be done first of all by those who have created it; it must be replaced by a regime of comradely unity and inner-party democracy.

In order to realize all that has been outlined above, and to take the necessary measures to extricate ourselves from the economic, political and party crisis, we propose that the CC, as a first and most urgent step, call a conference of members of the CC with the most prominent and active party cadres, in order that the list of those invited include a number of comrades who have views concerning the situation which differ from the views of the majority of the CC.

E. Preobrazhensky
S. V. Breslav
L. Serebriakov

While not agreeing with certain points in this letter explaining the causes of the situation which has developed, and feeling that the party has come up against problems which cannot fully be resolved by the methods employed up until now, I fully endorse the final conclusion of the present letter.

A. Beloborodov
11 October 1923

I am in complete agreement with the proposals, although I differ with several points concerning motives.

A. Rozengolts

M. Alsky

In general, I share the thoughts of this appeal. The need for a direct and open approach to all our sore points is so overdue, that I fully support the proposal to call the indicated conference, in order to choose the practical ways capable of leading us out of the accumulated difficulties.

Antonov-Ovseenko

A. Venediktov
I. N. Smirnov
G. Piatakov
V. Obolensky (Osinsky)
N. Muralov
T. Sapronov
A. Goltsman

The situation in the party and the international situation are such that they demand the extraordinary concentration and unity of party forces more than ever before. While ascribing to the declaration, I view it exclusively as an attempt to create unity in the party and to prepare it for upcoming events. Naturally, at the present moment there can be no talk of inner-party struggle in any form whatsoever. It is necessary for the CC to soberly assess the situation and to adopt urgent measures to eliminate dissatisfaction within the party, as well as within the non-party masses.

12 October 1923. A. Goltsman

11 October 1923. V. Maksimovsky
L. Sosnovsky
Danishevsky
P. Mesyatsev
G. Khorechko

I do not agree with a number of assessments in the first part of the declaration; I do not agree with a number of characterizations of the inner-party situation. At the same time I am deeply convinced that the state of the party demands the adopting of radical measures, for things are not well in the party at the present time. I fully share the practical proposal.

A. Bubnov
11 October 1923

A. Voronsky
V. Smirnov
E. Bosh
I. Byk
V. Kassior
F. Lokatskov

I am in complete agreement with the evaluation of the economic situation. I consider the weakening of the political dictatorship at the present moment to be dangerous, but things must be aired out. I find a conference to be absolutely necessary.

Koganovich

Drobnis
P. Kovalenko
A. E. Minkin
V. Yakovleva

I am in complete agreement with the practical proposals.

B. Eltsin

I sign with the same reservations as comrade Bubnov.

M. Levitin

I sign with the same reservations as Bubnov, sharing neither the form, nor the tone, which all the more convinces me to agree with the practical part of the given declaration.

I. Poliudov

O. Shmidel
V. Vaganian
I. Stukov

A. Lobanov
Rafail
S. Vasilchenko
Mikh. Zhakov
A. Puzakov
N. Nikolaev

Since during recent times I have been somewhat removed from the work of the party centers, I abstain from the judgements of the two leading paragraphs of the introductory part; I agree with the rest.

Averin

I am in agreement with the part outlining the economic and political situation of the country. I feel that in the part which depicts the inner-party situation, a certain exaggeration has been allowed. It is absolutely necessary to immediately take measures to preserve the unity of the party.

M. Boguslavsky

I am not fully in agreement with the first part, which speaks about the economic situation of the country; the latter is indeed very serious and demands great attention, but up until now the party has not advanced people who would have been able to lead better than those who have been leading until now.

Regarding the question of the inner-party situation, I feel that there is a significant portion of truth in everything which has been said, and I consider it necessary to take emergency measures.

F. Dudnik

Notes:

1. This document was published in full but with inaccuracies in English in the book: E.H.Carr, *The Interregnum 1923-1924*, London, 1954, pp.367-373. Separate fragments were introduced in the anthology, "The 1923 Discussion. Material and Documents", M.-L., 1927, pp.9-10. In Russian it was first published in full abroad, in the book: "Communist Opposition in the USSR. 1923-1927. From the Archive of Leon Trotsky", in four volumes, Volume 1 (1923-1926), compiled by Y.Felshtinsky, 1988, p.83-88. The original of the document consists of two typewritten texts with minor differences (not altering the meaning). The first text contains 34 signatures, the second - 12.

[Further notes: the main text and signatures are followed by a glossary of names from the journal "Izvestiia TSK KPSS," which is marred by incomplete entries and several errors. For instance, the year of death is wrong for at least three of the signatories: Breslav is listed as 1943 instead of 1938; Voronsky as 1943 instead of 1937; Danishevsky as 1941 instead of 1938. This reflects an old practice of listing deaths in the 1940s, to "cover up" the scale of the executions in 1937. Until recently, the old Stalinist liars gave the reason that many political prisoners were shot as the Germans advanced in 1941. Although this is indeed the case with some victims (Rakovsky, Spiridonova, Yakovleva [one of the 46]), most had been shot three or four years earlier.

Eleven of the signatories have no year of death indicated; it is more than likely that they died in the purges of 1936-38.

Goltsman is listed twice. Probably the first listing is incorrect, although this must be checked.

Glossary of Names: Signatories of the "Declaration of the 46"

Averin V.K. (1885-1945), member of the party from 1904, from 1923 worked in aviation industry, then chairman of the board of the Moscow-Kazan railway.

Alsky A.(M.)O. (1892-1939), member of the party from March 1917, from 1921 Deputy Narkom [People's Commissar] of Finances of the RSFSR, from 1923, of the USSR.

Antonov-Ovseenko V.A. (1883-1938), member of the party from June 1917, in the revolutionary movement from 1901, from 1922 head of the Political Directorate of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (RKKA) and member of the Revolutionary Military Council (RVS) of the Republic.

Beloborodov A.G. (1891-1938), member of the party from 1917, from 1923 Narkom of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR.

Boguslavsky M.S. (1886-1937), member of the party from 1917, from 1921 Deputy Chairman of the Moscow Soviet.

Bosh, E.B. (1879-1925), member of the party from 1901, professional revolutionary, from 1922, in connection with her illness, was ordered by the CC to go to Italy and Germany for treatment.

Breslav B.A. (S.V.) (1882-1943), member of the party from 1903, from 1922 head of the Political Directorate of the Moscow Military District. [Shot in 1938].

Bubnov A.S. (1884-1938) member of the party from 1903, from 1922 head of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the CC RCP(b). Candidate member of the CC RCP(b).

Byk I.M. (1882- ?), member of the party from 1918, from 1923 chairman of the Auditing Commission of the Sugar Trust of the Supreme Council of People's Economy (VSNKh).

Vaganian (Ter-Vaganian) V.A. (1893-1936), member of the party from 1912, 1922-23 editor of the journal "Under the Banner of Marxism." [One of those at the Trial of the 16, the first Moscow Frame-up Trial, shot in August 1936].

Vasilchenko S.V. (1884-1937), member of the party from 1901, from 1920 chairman of the board of the Publishing House "Moscow Worker."

Venediktov A.G. (1884- ?), member of the party from 1904, from 1923 headed the editorial section and economic department at the State Publishing House.

Voronsky A.K. (1884-1943), member of the party from 1904, from 1921 editor of the journal "Krasnaia nov" [Red Virgin Soil], simultaneously from 1922 editor of the journal "Prozhektor" [Beacon]. [Arrested in February 1937; shot in August 1937].

Goltsman A.Z. (1894-1933), member of the party from 1917, from 1922 member of the presidium and head of the Main Electrotechnical Directorate of the VSNKh.

Danischevsky K. Yu. Kh. (1884-1941), member of the party from 1900, from 1921 head of the Central Directorate of the Timber Industry, chairman of the board of the trust, "Northern Forest". Expelled from the party in 1921, restored to membership in 1922. [Shot in 1938].

Drobnis Ya. N. (1890-1937), member of the party from 1906, from 1923 member of the

Administrative-financial Commission under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

Dudnik F. - not established.

Zhakov M.P. (1893-1936), member of the party from 1911, from 1923 student at the Institute of Red Professors.

Kassior (Kosior) V.V. (1891-1938), member of the party from 1907, editor of the newspaper "Trud" [Labor].

Kovalenko P.A. (1888- ?), member of the party from 1911, from 1920 writer for the newspaper "Pravda."

Koganovich P.K. (1887- ?), member of the party from 1905, from 1921 member of the board of Tsentrsoiuz.

Levitin M.F. (1891- ?), member of the party from 1916, economic work in the agencies of the VSNKh and STO (Council of Labor and Defense).

Lobanov M.(A.)I. (1887-1937), member of the party from 1904, party work in the Moscow Committee of the RCP(b).

Lovatskov F.I. (1881-1937), member of the party from 1904, in 1923 chairman of the Presidium of the Ural Regional Council of the People's Economy.

Maksimovsky V.N. (1887-1941), member of the party from 1903, from 1922 Deputy Narkom of Enlightenment of the RSFSR, professor and dean of the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy.

Mesyatsev P.A. (1889- ?), member of the party from 1906, from 1921 member of the collegium, then Plenipotentiary of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the RSFSR.

Minkin A.E. (1887-1955), member of the party from 1903, from 1922 worked at the Executive Committee of the Comintern, from 1923 member of the collegium of the Narkomprod.

Muralov N.I. (1877-1937), member of the party from 1903, from 1921 commander of the Moscow Military District.

Nikolaev N.I. (Bezchetvertny) (1895- ?), member of the party from 1914, from 1922 deputy chairman of the board of the publishing house, "Krasnaia nov."

Osinsky N. (Obolensky V.V.) (1887-1938), member of the party from 1907, from 1921 Deputy Narkom of Agriculture RSFSR, Deputy Chairman of the VSNKh, from 1923 ambassador from the USSR to Sweden.

Poliudov E.(I.)V. (1887- ?), member of the party from 1907, from 1923 member of the collegium of the People's Commissariat of Finance.

Preobrazhensky E.A. (1886-1937), member of the party from 1903, from 1921 chairman of the Finance Committee of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars, chairman of the Glavprofobr of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment of the RSFSR.

Puzakov A.M. (1884- ?), member of the party from 1905, from 1922 secretary of the Kursk Regional Committee of the RCP(b), from 1923 secretary, then chairman of the District Control Commission.

Piatakov Yu.(G.)L. (1890-1937), member of the party from 1910, from 1922, Deputy Chairman of Gosplan and from 1923, of the Supreme Council of the People's Economy of the USSR. Member of the Central Committee RCP(b).

Rafail (Farbman R.B.) (1893-1966), member of the party from 1910, from 1922 head of the Moscow Department of People's Education.

Rozengolts A.P. (1889-1938), member of the party from 1905, from 1922 member of the commission of the People's Commissariat of Finance of the RSFSR, from 1923 head of the Main Directorate of the Air Force, member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR.

Sapronov T.V. (1887-1938), member of the party from 1911, from 1922 secretary and member of the Presidium of VTsIK [All-Russian Central Executive Committee].

Serebriakov L.P. (1888-1937), member of the party from 1905, from 1922 Deputy Narkom of Transportation.

Smirnov V.M. (1887-1937), member of the party from 1907, from 1921 member of the collegium and chairman of the finance section of Gosplan of the USSR.

Smirnov I.N. (1881-1936), member of the party from 1899, from 1923 Narkom of Post and Telegraph of the USSR.

Sosnovsky L.S. (1886-1937), member of the party from 1904, from 1918 chief editor of the newspapers, "Bednota" and "Kommunar".

Stukov I.N. (1887-1937), member of the party from 1905, from 1923 chief editor of the publishing house, "Moskovskii rabochii."

Kharechko T.(G.)I. (1893- ?), member of the party from 1914, from 1922 member of the board of Leningrad University, head of the regional department for press affairs, member of the collegium of the Leningrad department of Tsentrkhim.

Shmidel O.K. (1889- ?), member of the party from 1917, from 1922 secretary of the party cell of the RCP(b) and bursar of the factory "Kauchuk," of the Khamovichesky region of Moscow.

Eltsin B.M. (1875-1937), member of the party from 1897, from 1921 chairman of the Collegium and member of the Board of Glavpolitprosvet.

Yakovleva V.N. (1884-1941), member of the party from 1904, from 1920 secretary of the Moscow Committee of the RCP(b), from 1921 secretary of the Siberian Buro of the CC RCP(b), and from 1922 Deputy Narkom of Enlightenment RSFSR.