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PARTY DISCIPLINE AND PARTY DEMOCRACY
(USSR)

[Translation]

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PARTY DISCIPLINE AND PARTY DEMOCRACY
(USSR)

Partiynaya Zhizn'
[Party Life]

Unsigned Article

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The struggle to carry out the Seven Year Plan is at present the decisive factor of the life of the country. The entire activity of our Party is subordinated to this as well. In order successfully to resolve the complicated tasks of the period of extensive construction of Communism, there must be a high degree of concentration and organization in Party ranks, purposefulness, vigor and initiative in the actions of all members of the Party. How can each individual Communist go about achieving this? By strict observance, active effectuation of the principles of party life, particularly of the cardinal principle of the organizational structure of the Communist Party, which is democratic centralism.

Democratic centralism, as the CPSU Statutes indicate, signifies that all directorial agencies of the party are elective from the bottom up, that they are periodically accountable to their party organizations; it signifies, too, strict party discipline and the subordination of the minority to the majority, the unconditionally obligatory character for the lower agencies of the decisions of the higher. Or it can be put this way: it is party discipline and party democracy, organically interrelated in practice and calculated to guarantee a high degree of combat readiness to the party in general and to each of its organizations in particular. In its resolutions, the 21st Party Congress emphasized that it was essential to strengthen party discipline and develop intra-party democracy in order to enhance the role of the party organizations in the Seven Year Plan. This is an affair not only of the directorial staffs, of the party activists, but of every Communist as well.

Party discipline, emphasized V. I. Lenin, guarantees "unity of action, unity of practical stand." It cements party ranks, makes the party into a monolithic fighting force, whose strength is ten times, yes even a hundred times and more, greater than its numbers. The party, in rallying people who know what they are fighting for, became

an enormous transformative force in society. Everyone who is even slightly acquainted with the history of the CPSU knows this. But this is true not only of the past but of the present as well. Take the party campaign to raise the standard of farming, to achieve technical progress -- what guarantees success here is the fact that every Communist, as one man, is carrying out party resolutions and mobilizing the broad masses of the workers to do the same.

It is not the case in the Party that all its members are always agreed on all questions. Different shades of opinion are not excluded; some individual Communists may even occasionally not agree with the point of view of the majority on this or that concrete question. But the Party Statutes stipulate that the minority is subordinate to the majority. The Communist acts in concert with all. He reasons that the majority is less frequently mistaken than the minority and that the unity of action of Communists is an indispensable condition for a successful campaign to build Communism.

The main demand on all Communists at the present moment is that each put forth his fullest efforts on the spot successfully to cope with the tasks of the Seven-Year Plan. This is equally obligatory for all members of the party. At the June 1959 Plenum of the CC, CPSU, Comrade N. S. Krushchev especially stressed the need for observance of discipline in directorial staffs. He said: "The question of party and state discipline is the basic consideration in the activities of all those staffing party and state machinery. There must be no place for those official who argue, after receiving a particular directive: 'I'll carry it out if I want to, I won't if I don't.' Once a decision has been taken, no one has the right to violate it. It is essential to take a strong stand against violations of party and state discipline in whatever form they crop up."

A violation of discipline in any form delays fulfillment of plans elaborated by the Party for the Seven-Year Plan. For instance, when certain National Economic Council leaders, despite party decisions, neglect cooperative deliveries in favor of local interests, this is a hindrance on the path of our forward progress. Or when statistical padding and fraud against the state is tolerated, as once happened in Novosibirsk oblast' in the procuring of grain, this inflicts damage on the common cause. The former leading officials of the Murmansk oblast' arbitrarily revised prices for several industrial products and foodstuffs. These acts on the part of high officials undermine the efforts of the party to make the economy run smoothly and are intolerable violations of party discipline.

Party discipline is equally obligatory for a Communist working at a lathe in a plant or in a livestock farm on a collective farm. Each must fight for the fulfillment of the assignments outlined by the Party

for the Seven-Year Plan. All decisions of the Party for the raising of labor productivity, the incorporation of achievements of science and technology into production, and on the fight against survivals of the part in people's minds are obligatory for all Communists.

To a real Communist this is no burden. Discipline in our Party is a conscious affair; it is based on voluntary subordination. This is so even when it is necessary to overcome many difficulties in the fulfilling of Party decisions and to forego certain comforts and the customary way of life in the interests of the common cause. And this is still not excluded in our present conditions. From time to time the need arises to send certain Communists to lagging sections to strengthen weak production links. And it must be said in such cases Party members as a rule display a high sense of duty.

But individual cases are still encountered where certain party members place their personal interests above public interests, which leads to violation of party discipline. For instance, Comrades Kisel', Krasnikov, Mokrov and several others, were sent from Moscow to work in the North Kazakhstan National Economic Council. Instead of getting to work energetically and devoting all their forces to fulfillment of the party assignment, they directed their efforts toward returning as soon as possible to their Moscow apartments. This conducts damages the interests of the party, and, naturally party agencies brought these Communists to book with a strict party disciplining.

Or consider another example. Communist Chuprov, from the Komi ASSR completed the republic party school, was head of an agitprop section, later a secretary of a rayon party committee, and a secretary of the Ukhta and Vorkuta urban party committees. He was recommended as chairman for a backward collective farm, in the hope that he would help the collective farmers to raise the economy. This was a very important assignment and one that was expedient in every respect. Chuprov himself took a different view of the matter. He considered this assignment to new work to be a sign of disrespect for his person and decided that this was a catastrophe in his life. He did not really get down to work, did not roll up his sleeves, and even began to "drown his sorrows." The result was a sad one; the work suffered and the Communists of the collective farm excluded Chuprov from the party.

And there is nothing else to be done in such cases. What does such a person, who breaks party discipline and places himself above other members of an organization, have in common with the party? A Communist who has a profound sense of party duty works wholeheartedly at any post. He does not become despondent when he encounters difficulties in fulfilling his party duty. It is not vulgar careerist interests that govern his actions. He finds satisfaction in concern

for the national welfare and successes in the struggle for the workers' cause. The following example is instructive in the highest degree. The remarkable revolutionary Kamo performed many truly legendary heroic deeds in the struggle against the exploiters. He was well known in the party and was an acquaintance of Lenin. After the revolution, Kamo held a modest post in a customs house in Georgia. When he was asked once if he was satisfied with his post, Kamo replied: "Party discipline is binding on all. Of course I am satisfied. Even a small matter which is advantageous to socialism must be attended to joyfully and properly."

The more our party develops and consolidates, the higher becomes the conscious conviction of Communists, the more does the party discipline become for them self-discipline. The sort of discipline of which V. I. Lenin said that it is "a discipline of independence and of fighting initiative."

Typical, for instance, is the following occurrence. In recent years, when there emerged the task of a radical boost of the standard of farming and in connection with this there arose the necessity of strengthening collective farms, state farms and party organizations of the village with staff workers, many thousands of Communists voluntarily went off to work there. It is a known fact that no extraordinary mobilizations or allocations were decreed in this connection; the call of the party, the presentation of the common task was enough to make Communists respond. What made them do it? This is the answer given to this question by three Communists -- Comrade Stepanov, secretary of the Poddorsk rayon party committee, Comrade Kolle, head of the rayon farm inspectorate, Comrade Lobach, head of the forestry sector of the Lumber Industry Council -- all of whom were asked recently to work in collective farms: Right now the party is setting a task -- the raising of the standard of the backward collective farms. We have certain definite experience in farming, we are ready to work to aid the weak collective farms to get up there among the progressive ones. All these comrades were chosen to be chairmen of collective farms. The Novgorod oblast' party committee approved their actions and that is for them the highest accolade.

Such actions are everyday examples of what ought to be the Communist's attitude to the fulfillment of party duty. He does not even wait for a special assignment; he tries himself to determine where is his place in the common struggle, where he is most needed at the moment, and tries to act accordingly. And it goes, of course, without saying, that this Communist fulfills an assignment of a party organization in the way Kamo advised.

We are speaking not only of fulfillment of party decisions and assignments by the party organization but also of strict observance of the norms for party morals. Violation of them weakens our ties with the masses and the party's influence on them. A Communist who, let us say, behaves incorrectly in private life, tips, strives for personal enrichment, is a violator of party discipline, even though he may at the same time be fulfilling party assignments irreproachably. Strict observance of party morals is in full accord with the demands of party discipline.

All party organizations and each individual Communist must be solicitous for the overall strengthening of party discipline. Both conviction and trenchancy are needed here. No violation of party discipline whatever must be ignored. Any undervaluation of the campaign for its observance has a most invidious effect on the training of political fighters. But these cases still occur in practice. For instance, over half of the Communists failed to attend one party meeting at the Kaluga Transport Machine Building Plant. The bureau of the party organization winked at this violation of party discipline; moreover, it was stated that a majority was in attendance. The urban party committee was compelled to abrogate the meeting and to schedule a new one. And rightly so.

Party discipline is strong when its observance is being constantly checked on. It is inculcated day after day. And, of course, it is intolerable if even the elementary obligations, as they say, are not fulfilled.

Party discipline and centralism strengthen the ranks of the party as a fighting force and every fighter, every organization, marches, as it were, in solid file. The supreme party authority is the Congress, which defines the general party line on basic questions of policy for one or another historical segment of time. In the intervening periods between Congresses, all party work is directed by the Central Committee. The resolutions and decrees of the CC are the law and the basis of action for all party organizations and all individual Communists. With such a unification of forces, any goal is attained more rapidly, obstacles are overcome more easily, all tasks become easier.

Discipline and centralism are inseparably linked with party democracy. The party is a union of like-minded partners. Entry into it is, as V. I. Lenin wrote "by a decision, freely taken." And so the whole activity of the party is likewise based on independence and initiative of the party members themselves. And when speaking of coping with the tasks of the Seven-Year Plan, the development of the keenness of all Communists must not be forgotten. And this keenness develops in conditions of intra-party democracy. Then discipline too

becomes more conscious and consequently stronger, while leadership becomes authoritative because it is collective.

Both party discipline and party democracy are as necessary to the party as air. But the degrees of development of party democracy in a particular period depends largely on the conditions in which the party is operating. During the years of the underground, the civil war and World War II, it was necessary to set about consciously limiting party democracy. The present stage of party life is characterized by a course directed toward the broad development of intraparty democracy. The 20th Party Congress put an end to violations of Leninist norms and principles of party life. In the struggle against the negative consequences of the cult of personality it was necessary to overcome both the force of habit of a certain portion of the staffs, used to excessive centralization and bureaucracy in party practice and obsolete organizational structural forms of the party machinery. Implementation of the party line directed to reestablishment and development of Leninist norms of party life encountered specially stubborn resistance on the part of the anti-party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, Bulganin and Shepilov. The Central Committee routed this group and got it out of the way. Thus the path was cleared for the further development of party democracy.

A most important element in intraparty democracy is the elective character of the directorial agencies from the bottom up. Beginning with the bureau of the primary party organizations and right up to and including the CC, all the directorial agencies of our party are elected at party meetings, conferences, congresses. Open discussion of the candidatures and secret balloting guarantee Communists the opportunity of expressing their real desires and of selecting such leaders as best implement the policy of the party. Occasional efforts to present Communists at meetings in primary party organizations with a fait accompli, as it were, (previously prepared lists of candidates, persons proposing them, primed orators and the like) meet with a vigorous rebuff.

In the recent past, the directorial agencies have been noticeably expanded in size. More innovators of production are being elected to them. An ever expanding circle of the aktiv is taking an active part in the direction of party life as a whole.

Another important feature of intra-party democracy is the periodic accountability of the party agencies to Communists. It is not simply a matter of reports being heard at the expiry of a term of office. More and more common in party organizations is becoming the presentation of reports on how the resolutions of Communists, submitted in the past, are being implemented. Several rayon and urban committees are giving periodic lectures on their work in the primary party organizations.

In this way, the activity of the directorial agencies and the leaders is being put more and more broadly under the supervision of party members.

Much has changed in the workings of the leading organs themselves. The principle of collectivity of party leadership has been reestablished; under this principle, decisions are discussed and adopted by the collegium and not by the leader alone. Moreover, important questions are discussed by ever broader collegiums -- committee plenums. The Central Committee of our Party serves as an example. Central Committee plenums are now convened regularly, within the time limits stipulated by the Party Statutes. Thus, according to the Statutes, Central Committee plenums must be held at least twice a year. How fully this statute is being observed is borne out by the following fact: through December, 1959, 15 Central Committee plenums have been held since the 20th Party Congress, February, 1956. Moreover, Communists have been able to express themselves beforehand and make their proposals on many questions which were being reviewed at the plenums. This was the case in 1959 when the Central Committee plenums reviewed questions of technical progress and development of agriculture.

We see that the principles of intraparty democracy, ratified in the Party Statutes, are being ever more fully implemented, when every party member directly or through his representatives participates in the administration of party affairs, in the elaboration of party policy and party decisions, and in their practical implementation. V. I. Lenin emphasized that only he merits the title of Communist "who attentively studies, thinks through, and independently decides questions and the fate of his party." Every Communist in our country has the right to participate in free discussion of questions of party policy at party meetings and in the party press. All conditions have been created for each and every one to make use of this right. And it depends only on the party member himself just how actively he will participate in party life.

True there still do occur attempts to curtail this active participation, even to see in it something undesirable. This case occurred in Balashikha, Moscow oblast'. A comrade was being received into the party. Right at the meeting, he took exception to the speakers on certain questions. Thereupon Communist K. proposed that he be not received into the party. "If we accept this person into the party, he will be defending his own convictions at meetings." The writer of a letter to the editorial board asked how correct such a stand was. Of course, there are convictions and convictions. But it is obligatory for a Communist not to conceal his opinion from his comrades and to defend that conviction. And whoever considers defending one's own opinion undesirable, is wrong. How on earth can party members participate in the

elaboration and discussion of decisions and party policy if they will not try to work out their own opinions on particular questions? Of course, it is clear that all this must be within the bounds of the Party Statutes and not exceed the limits of party-mindedness.

Undoubtedly, no matter how great the significance of these discussions, another thing is also important: by whom and in what way is party policy implemented daily, by a narrow circle of people, the machine, or the broad strata of Communists? Much has been done by the Party recently so that the initiative and independence of Communists would develop ever more broadly. The paid party machine has been reduced considerably in numbers, including rayon and urban party committees. Such non-elective party organs as political sections in transport and also the post of Central Committee party organizers in enterprises have been done away with. The creation of commissions in primary party organizations for implementation of the right to check on the activities of plant administrations and other measures implemented on the initiative of the Central Committee were aimed at enlisting more Communists in direct leadership of party affairs.

In speaking of party democracy, it must be remembered that it is not limited to discussion and voting. The democratism of our party is the democratism of action. Each Communist must actively participate in party life. This is the concern first of all of the primary party organization. It must act in such a way that each Communist knows his specific sector of work, his place in the common cause. Sometimes the necessary significance is not attached to this. For instance, many Communists at the Armavir Plant for Railroad Machine Building do not have specific assignments. There the bureau takes on itself the fulfillment of all decisions of the party organizations. The formula "the party bureau and its secretary Comrade Lyakhovich are assigned this matter" is sprinkled throughout almost all decisions. The matter has gone so far that attempts to give Communists an assignment do not always succeed. Usually the bureau secretary hears a refusal based on the following: "You know, they elected you, they assigned it to you -- so you do it." Now in such conditions, when party democracy is understood in a purely formal sense, it is reduced, to put it bluntly, to mere talk; and this lowers the effectiveness of the party organization.

Development of the active work of the Communists leads directly to the growth of independence of party organizations. But there arises this question: Does not centralism hinder it? No, it does not. As is well known, democratic centralism stipulates that all party organizations are independent in the decision of local questions, so long as these decisions do not run counter to the party program and Statutes. The scope of these questions does not remain static. The

party adjusts the demands of centralism in accord with the new conditions under which party organizations are operating. Thus, in recent years, the Central Committee has considerably broadened the rights of local party organizations. They have every opportunity to show their initiative, to give full consideration to local peculiarities and to elect their own most suitable methods and forms of operation in contemporary conditions.

All that has been done by the party for the development of party democracy has had a beneficent effect on the growth of the activity of Communists and party organizations, has been reflected concretely in the economic successes of the country, as achieved in recent years, in the creation of that state of creative upswing in which our people is presently enveloped. But even in these conditions, real effort is required so that party democracy shall develop still further.

It is especially important to direct attention to assuring that all the democratic procedures in the party are applied not as mere formalities but directed toward a genuine development of the active work of Communists. It is no secret that there have been times when everything seemed correct in form but was not so in essence. For instance, the Rovensk urban party committee convened the party aktiv. It looked as if the Urban Party Committee really wanted to take counsel on several questions. But the agenda published by the Urban Party Committee included 13 questions, among them, the results of studies in the party training system, reports and elections meetings, the work of Communist Labor Brigades. Of course, there was no discussion. And the result was a pure formality.

And cases of another sort are encountered too: numerous discussions and conferences are held, the question is examined in detail and in every aspect, but practical deeds do not follow. This too has nothing in common with genuine democracy.

To develop the activity of Communists signifies to use every means to promote criticism and self-criticism and to create all the conditions needed for their manifestation. The strength of honest criticism lies in the fact that it is impartial, helps objectively to disclose shortcomings, and furnishes a basis for the elaboration of a correct decision. However, the full and thoroughgoing statement of the opinions of Communists is hampered by the actions of those leading officials who try to guide criticism into channels which are desirable or advantageous to themselves. For instance, this attitude toward criticism was quite obviously in evidence at a reports and elections meeting in the Checheno-Ingushsk ASSR Culture Ministry. This meeting went off with no sharp criticism, chiefly because of the conduct of Minister Tatayev. Elected to the presidium of the meeting and holding

the post of chairman, Comrade Tatayev commenced monitoring the discussions in his own way. First, he proposed that one of his deputies speak, then another. The chairman was continually "correcting" the speakers and prompting them as to what they should say.

In the party, each Communist has the right to criticize whatever he considers needs it and he is equally bound to listen to criticism from others. Otherwise, the development of real Communist activity is impossible.

The development of party democracy and the enlistment of all Communists into active work is an important condition for further enhancing the role of party organizations in building Communist society. This must be borne in mind both by party officials and by all Communists and practical conclusions must be drawn from it.

The Communist Party is the directive nucleus of all workers' organizations. Therefore the development in it of Leninist norms and principles of party life has a direct effect on the activity of the Soviets, Trade Unions Komsomol and other organizations, on the strengthening of their hand in economic construction.

Party discipline and party democracy are not in opposition; each supplements and conditions the other. After all, for party democracy to be firm and effective, it must be based on democracy. And for democracy in its turn to lead to the achievement of concrete aims, discipline is indispensable.

Democratic centralism, indissolubly combining in itself party discipline and party democracy, guarantees in the party unity of action, of will, which are based on inner conviction, on an understanding by each and every party member of the goals of the struggle. It is not for nothing that the open foes of the working class and their masked henchmen from among the revisionists are raising such a downright howl at the very mention of the words "discipline" and "centralism". The reason is because for the working class and its party, democratic centralism is the strongest weapon in the fight for a better life, for Communism. And when new tasks are looming before Communists, each and every one of them cannot but reflect on what must be done to strengthen and develop democracy in the party, so as to operate with more vigor, more coordination and more purposefulness, to push forward.

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