

Strictly and minimally, *kulturnost* turns into a fetish notion of how to be individually civilized. In the panoramic view of Soviet society, there is much more to it. *Kulturnost*, admonitory and educative, and at first denoting little more than personal hygiene, expanded into a commodious umbrella under stalinism. It began to mean more important things than clean nails, abstinence from cursing and spitting, a required minimum of good manners. It began to mean the only desirable conduct, the self-image of dignified citizens. Those alone could now be models. The notion of *kulturnost* had grown out of mores; in turn, it began to shape them, in accord with the regime's predilection for ponderous, monumental *meshchanstvo*.

The usefulness of *kulturnost* to the regime, which exhorted the people to implement it, was manifold. Like ideological orthodoxy, it became a device for control. As a purpose shared by both the regime and the middle class, it lent support to the relationship between them. As a prescription for proper conduct, it helped build a clearing house where middle-class ways were recommended by the regime to everybody.

The artifacts of the postwar middle-class culture must be seen through the prism of *kulturnost* for, after the war, it was *kulturnost* which helped to channel the direction of sanctioned aspirations. Most of all, *kulturnost* helped to bestow on material possessions attributes of dignity and of virtue.

Vera S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 3-5, 11-23.

Joseph Stalin, "Dizzy with Success: Concerning Questions of the Collective Farm Movement"

MARCH 2, 1930

The vicious onslaught of party workers and activists, policemen, and even the army against the peasants heightened in the first months of 1930. That year alone, peasants fought back in more than 13,000 instances of mass protest or armed resistance. In a superb book on this last-ditch fight of Russian villagers, Lynne Viola tells how peasants used everything from killing livestock, murdering officials, to spreading rumors of the coming of the Antichrist to resist the seizure of grain and the destruction of their traditional way of life. Though other historians have accentuated the lack of cohesion and class ties among peasants, Viola emphasizes the cultural elements and the shared social position of peasants that empowered them to act as a class. At a moment when the economic survival of the peasantry was at stake, women in particular emerged as initiators and principal participants in thousands of so-called bab'i bunty (women's uprisings). By March, the stability of the state itself was threatened, and Stalin issued his famous article, "Dizzy with Success," in which he called for a halt to the rush to collectivize and blamed lower officials for the very excesses that his policies had allowed. Peasants rejoiced, read the article aloud in villages, and even used it to justify further resistance when collectivization efforts resumed. Ultimately, at a slower pace but with relentless determination, the state collectivized almost all of peasant agriculture. The peasant war was over, and the state was the victor. "In the end," Viola concludes,

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peasant rebels were no match for the vast police powers of the state, and, like most other peasant rebellions, this one was destined to fail. The main element in the peasantry's defeat was state repression. Millions of peasants were arrested, imprisoned, deported, or executed in the years of collectivization. The state dismantled existing authority structures in the village, removing and replacing traditional elites. The economy of scarcity complemented state repression, first robbing peasants of their grain and then depriving millions of their lives in the famine that followed collectivization.¹

The Soviet government's successes in the sphere of the collective-farm movement are now being spoken of by everyone. Even our enemies are forced to admit that the successes are substantial. And they really are very great.

It is a fact that by February 20 of this year 50 per cent of the peasant farms throughout the U.S.S.R. had been collectivised. That means that by February 20, 1930, we had *overfulfilled* the five-year plan of collectivisation by more than 100 per cent. . . .

What does all this show?

That a *radical turn of the countryside towards socialism may be considered as already achieved.*

There is no need to prove that these successes are of supreme importance for the fate of our country, for the whole working class, which is the directing force of our country, and, lastly, for the Party itself. To say nothing of the direct practical results, these successes are of immense value for the internal life of the Party itself, for the education of our Party. They imbue our Party with a spirit of cheerfulness and confidence in its strength. They arm the working class with confidence in the victory of our cause. They bring forward additional millions of reserves for our Party.

Hence the Party's task is: to *consolidate* the successes achieved and to *utilise* them systematically for our further advancement.

But successes have their seamy side, especially when they are attained with comparative "ease"—"unexpectedly," so to speak. Such successes sometimes induce a spirit of vanity and conceit: "We can achieve anything!," "There's nothing we can't do!" People not infrequently become intoxicated by such successes; they become dizzy with success, lose all sense of proportion and the capacity to understand realities; they show a tendency to overrate their own strength and to underrate the strength of the enemy; adventurist attempts are made to solve all questions of socialist construction "in a trice." In such a case, there is no room for concern to *consolidate* the successes achieved and to *utilise* them systematically for further advancement. Why should we consolidate the successes achieved when, as it is, we can dash to the full victory of socialism "in a trice": "We can achieve anything!," "There's nothing we can't do!"

Hence the Party's task is: to wage a determined struggle against these sentiments, which are dangerous and harmful to our cause, and to drive them out of the Party.

1. Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 238–39; see also her *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

It cannot be said that these dangerous and harmful sentiments are at all widespread in the ranks of our Party. But they do exist in our Party, and there are no grounds for asserting that they will not become stronger. And if they should be allowed free scope, then there can be no doubt that the collective-farm movement will be considerably weakened and the danger of its breaking down may become a reality.

Hence the task of our press is: systematically to denounce these and similar anti-Leninist sentiments. . . .

Clearly, the principle of taking into account the diversity of conditions in the various regions of the U.S.S.R. is, together with the voluntary principle, one of the most important prerequisites for a sound collective-farm movement.

But what actually happens sometimes? Can it be said that the voluntary principle and the principle of taking local peculiarities into account are not violated in a number of areas? No, that cannot be said, unfortunately. We know, for example, that in a number of the northern areas of the consuming zone, where conditions for the immediate organisation of collective farms are comparatively less favourable than in the grain-growing areas, attempts are not infrequently made to *replace* preparatory work for the organisation of collective farms by bureaucratic decreeing of the collective-farm movement, paper resolutions on the growth of collective farms, organisation of collective farms on paper—collective farms which have as yet no reality, but whose “existence” is proclaimed in a heap of boastful resolutions.

Or take certain areas of Turkestan, where conditions for the immediate organisation of collective farms are even less favourable than in the northern regions of the consuming zone. We know that in a number of areas of Turkestan there have already been attempts to “overtake and outstrip” the advanced areas of the U.S.S.R. by threatening to use armed force, by threatening that peasants who are not yet ready to join the collective farms will be deprived of irrigation water and manufactured goods. . . .

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

What may these distortions lead to? To strengthening our enemies and to discrediting the idea of the collective-farm movement.

Is it not clear that the authors of these distortions, who imagine themselves to be “Lefts,” are in reality bringing grist to the mill of Right opportunism?

Such is the line of the Party at the present moment.

Can it be said that this line of the Party is being carried out without violation or distortion? No, it cannot, unfortunately. We know that in a number of areas of the U.S.S.R., where the struggle for the existence of the collective farms is still far from over, and where artels are not yet consolidated, attempts are being made to skip the artel framework and to leap straight away into the agricultural commune. The artel is still not consolidated, but they are already “socialising” dwelling houses, small livestock and poultry; moreover, this “socialisation” is degenerating into bureaucratic decreeing on paper, because the conditions which would make such socialisation necessary do not yet exist. One might think that the grain problem has already been solved in the collective farms, that

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it is already a past stage, that the principal task at the present moment is not solution of the grain problem, but solution of the problem of livestock- and poultry-breeding. Who, we may ask, benefits from this blockheaded "work" of lumping together different forms of the collective-farm movement? Who benefits from this running too far ahead, which is stupid and harmful to our cause? Irritating the collective-farm peasant by "socialising" dwelling houses, all dairy cattle, all small livestock and poultry, when the grain problem is still *unsolved*, when the artel form of collective farming is *not yet consolidated*—is it not obvious that such a "policy" can be to the satisfaction and advantage only of our sworn enemies?

One such overzealous "socialiser" even goes so far as to issue an order to an artel containing the following instructions: "within three days, register all the poultry of every household," establish posts of special "commanders" for registration and supervision; "occupy the key positions in the artel"; "command the socialist battle without quitting your posts" and—of course—get a tight grip on the whole life of the artel.

What is this—a policy of directing the collective farms, or a policy of *disrupting* and *discrediting* them?

I say nothing of those "revolutionaries"—save the mark!—who *begin* the work of organising artels by removing the bells from the churches. Just imagine, removing the church bells—how r-r-revolutionary!

How could there have arisen in our midst such block-headed exercises in "socialisation," such ludicrous attempts to overleap oneself, attempts which aim at bypassing classes and the class struggle, and which in fact bring grist to the mill of our class enemies?

They could have arisen only in the atmosphere of our "easy" and "unexpected" successes on the front of collective-farm development.

They could have arisen only as a result of the block-headed belief of a section of our Party: "We can achieve anything!," "There's nothing we can't do!"

They could have arisen only because some of our comrades have become dizzy with success and for the moment have lost clearness of mind and sobriety of vision.

To correct the line of our work in the sphere of collective-farm development, *we must put an end to these sentiments.*

That is now one of the immediate tasks of the Party.

The art of leadership is a serious matter. One must not lag behind the movement, because to do so is to lose contact with the masses. But neither must one run too far ahead, because to run too far ahead is to lose the masses and to isolate oneself. He who wants to lead a movement and at the same time keep in touch with the vast masses must wage a fight on two fronts—against those who lag behind and against those who run too far ahead.

Our Party is strong and invincible because, when leading a movement, it is able to preserve and multiply its contacts with the vast masses of the workers and peasants.

Pravda, no. 60, March 2, 1930; translated in J.V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955), XII, pp. 197–205.