Report by E.A. Preobrazhensky to the Commission of the Central Committee of the R KP(B) on the Question of Eliminating Inequality in the Ranks of the R KP(B)¹

No later than 24 August 1920²

Symptoms of demoralisation in our Party

At a whole series of provincial conferences that have taken place since the Ninth Congress (and in some cases, before the Congress) an intensive struggle has been revealed between the so-called lower and upper ranks of our Party. This struggle, which often gets mixed up with struggles of a different sort – for example, along the lines of a clash of Communists with peasant-sympathies with those from the cities, of workers from the trade-unions with the intelligentsia, of ‘centrists’ with local comrades, of civilian Communists with those in the military – has appeared to one degree or another in the Samara, Severodvinsk, Ufa, Ryazan, Don and Orenburg conferences, and to a lesser degree in those of Yaroslav, Tula, Bryansk and Orel. Often the struggle also takes other forms; for example, a mass exodus from the Party (two hundred people left the city-organisation of Velikii Ustyug), unwillingness of a number of worker-Communists to re-register (Samara), the demand for re-registration of members of provincial committees, and so on. Finally, the most

² [Dated by reference to a letter from N.N. Krestinsky to V.I. Lenin (see the Appendix to Document 2:79).]
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acute and dangerous expression of this struggle can be seen in the insurrection of Sapozhkov’s division in Buzuluk,\(^3\) where a majority of the insurrectionary leaders were Communists (up to one hundred and thirty persons were implicated) some of whom had been in the Party since 1917 (six persons), and one worker, Osipov, even since 1916.\(^4\) After the city was occupied by the insurrectionists, some of the Communists and workers (mainly soviet-workers) retreated, while some stayed and, together with the trade-unions, organised a new executive committee.

Apart from the kulak- and anti-Semitic slogans of the Sapozhkov insurrection, it involved the same demands that are uniting the so-called lower ranks of our Party in the struggle against the upper ranks at the conferences already mentioned and within almost every organisation of the RKP (‘Down with bourgeoisified false-Communist generals and self-seekers’, with party-bureaucrats, ‘Down with the privileged caste of Communist uppers’). One can certainly say that the latter slogans evoke sympathy amongst a large number of the rank-and-file members of our Party, and the split in our ranks along these lines is growing by the day. Even in Moscow itself, Communists in the districts pronounce the word ‘Kremlin’\(^5\) with hostility and contempt.

In view of the fact that a diminished military threat on the fronts, and even more the end of warfare on the main fronts, is weakening many of the bonds that welded together all the Soviet ranks in the rear, in the army and the Party, we must expect a certain reaction against concentrated dictatorship, together with revelry in petty-bourgeois spontaneity. At this moment, the Party must be especially strong and united. Meanwhile, it is precisely the Party that is already displaying all the signs of internal division that might, at some fine moment, set Communists against Communists. For this reason, the attitude of the rank-and-file members of our Party must be studied more closely by the Central Committee of our Party, and it must meet halfway with the middle-ranks on matters where, as Communists and proletarians, they are perfectly correct. While continuing to struggle against such menaces as Makhno, against lack of discipline and petty-bourgeois decentralism in our ranks, in the interest of this very same struggle, we must adopt an entirely different attitude to the protest of rank-and-file Communists against their systematic exclusion from any influence over party-affairs, from real participation in party-life; and the same applies to protests against the rude behaviour of über-commissars and the insensitivity of some of the Party's

\(^3\) The anti-Bolshevik uprising, headed by the Left S-R Sapozhkov, affected the Buzuluksky and Samarsky areas of Samara province in July-September 1920. The main slogan of the insurrectionists was ‘Down with grain-requisitions, long live free trade!’ The insurrection initially involved up to two and a half thousand people.

\(^4\) The text is not clear. It appears to say 1916.

\(^5\) That is, the adjective ‘Kremlin’ (кремлевский).