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Nikolai Kondratieff: In the Millstones of History

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Abstract

The article examines the reasons for the arrest, strategy and tactics of the investigation, as well as the evolution of N. D. Kondratieff's behaviour and views. It also raises the question of the correlation between fiction and reality in his criminal case.

Keywords: *N. D. Kondratieff, Labour Peasant Party, rehabilitation, collectivization, 'rightism'.*

Problem Statement

In 1963 and 1987, Nikolai Dmitriyevich Kondratieff was rehabilitated on two criminal and political charges, first on the 1938 verdict and only 24 years later on the case of the Labour Peasant Party of 1932. The scientific heritage of N. D. Kondratieff began to return to the current creative process. His lifetime editions, as well as works and personal correspondence of the Suzdal period (1932–1938) have been published. Interrogation protocols and other materials of the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) investigation of 1930–1932 have been partially made public. However, the manuscripts of scientific works from the period of his stay in the 'Suzdal Bastille', which are considered lost, some pre-revolutionary works, as well as the main materials of the investigation into the case of the Labour Peasant Party and other related cases, have not yet been introduced into the fund of Kondratieff studies.

Due to the publication of N. D. Kondratieff's famous letter to the then leadership of the country which contained a careful analysis of the dynamics of the investigative interview, the logic of his behaviour and the denial of his earlier testimony, due to rehabilitations and the atmosphere of general condemnation of the practice of repression, there was an almost unambiguous and generally accepted opinion about the fictitiousness of all the accusations against the scientist, as well as the theatricality of the Labour Peasant Party case itself.

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Meanwhile, the resource of perception of history and human destinies in the dichotomous polarity 'villainy – innocence' is hardly unlimited. Understanding the real motivation and behaviour of both Kondratieff himself at the critical stages of his life and his ruthless opponents is obviously of greater scientific value than some or other popular clichés. Moreover, nowadays we have good reasons to uncover new essential layers of the tragedy that eventually absorbed N. D. Kondratieff's life.

Legal rehabilitation which occurred several decades after unjust conviction is undoubtedly an important argument in assessing the presence or absence of an offence. But legal norms, firstly, are historically changeable, and secondly, they strongly depend on the legal knowledge of society. Accordingly, the legal rehabilitation also reflects the current state of society. It cannot be timely; it is always late and reflects not only the desire to restore justice that has been violated, as it is usually assumed, but also opportunistic interests. Therefore, in any case, rehabilitation is an important indicator of both ideological and psychological evolution and the public's awareness of the circumstances that caused the series of events and repressions that will later be recognized as unjustified.¹

In this context, the acts of rehabilitation of N. D. Kondratieff in 1963 and 1987 are certainly important for us. But it is significant that among the arguments for rehabilitation in 1963, the investigator of the General Prosecutor's Office called 'lack of evidence', as well as the case itself (!) for sentencing in 1932.

However, five volumes of the case against Kondratieff alone, not to mention the cases of other defendants, were not provided by the Committee for State Security of USSR to the Prosecutor General's Office. The case materials were also not shown to Nikolai Dmitriyevich's widow. To this day, many pages of even declassified volumes of the case remain sealed in white envelopes.

All this points to a certain secret. It is important to understand it in terms worthy of the era and the personality of both N. D. Kondratieff himself and his opponents in the end. It is also worth mentioning that among those who interrogated him in the Joint State Political Directorate and those who were addressees on the mailing list, almost no one survived the investigator. On the other hand, some of the victims of the repressions of that time lived a long life, though not an easy one.

And now, when the socio-economic structure and the political regime radically changed and by its constitutional nature became exactly the one to which, in fact, Kondratieff adhered, when it became more difficult to understand the real social dynamics in the USSR of the late 1920s – early 1930s, conjunctural explanations of the tragedy of many fates, including N. D. Kondratieff's, cannot

¹ Thus, three attempts to rehabilitate Y. S. Agranov, who was shot in 1938 a month earlier than N. D. Kondratieff, were unsuccessful (the last one in 2013).

satisfy us. The complexity of fate must be explained by an adequate apparatus for analysis, at least because the scientist's heritage is not only his scientific and literary works, but also the main work – his life itself.

Meanwhile, as early as the mid-1950s, prosecutorial investigation was initiated and many of those who had been tried in the Labour Peasant Party case were interrogated in a number of regions of the USSR, especially in Ukraine. The Joint State Political Directorate investigators involved in the case were also questioned. The attitude of the defendants to the past significantly differed. In fact, it reflected the duality of assessments that persisted at that time. To assume that today we can assess the events of that time in a purely unambiguous way, that today we understand unambiguously 'why and who needed that', would be a forced narrowing of the spectrum of analysis.

The first polar and still relevant position was expressed by Zhigalovsky, one of the defendants in the Labour Peasant Party case in the Ukrainian SSR, in a letter to Maksim Gorky,

What sense and what justification can there be for fabricating from me and from those who were arrested together with me on this accusation, people absolutely innocent of anything, state criminals, counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs (Article 58 of the Criminal Code)... Answer me, you who sit at the top of the prosperity, what state necessity makes plunge innocent citizens and their families into the abyss of despair? To destroy their health, their capacity to work and their lives, to shed rivers of tears, to put their wives and children into poverty, to take them out of work when every labour force counts? Will not these sacrifices be in vain and will not the court of impartial history condemn this unnecessary and unprecedented cruelty of our days as mercilessly as it condemned us?.. All the merits of my public and official activity have turned ... into a testimony against me. I was subjected to a system of... continued moral torture for a month and a half. I was finally broken down by being forced to confess to crimes of which I had no knowledge prior to my arrest. This confession was extracted from me at the cost of the complete destruction of my health and ability to work. I entered the Joint State Political Directorate full of energy, and I came out of there a sorry-looking wreck ... (Grigorieva and Ocheretyanko 2010: 184–185)².

N. D. Kondratieff did not get out of this alive. Although he obviously had more potential advocates than Zhigalovsky.

The other pole of judgement was expressed by almost all, though few surviving investigators. At present, this approach is practically out of use, and there has been established the generally accepted understanding of what happened to Kondratieff as 'unjustified repression' on the part of the Stalinist regime. Strictly speaking, the political and legal rehabilitation could be considered complete at that point.

² The letter reached its addressee. Gorky intervened in the case and the prisoner's fate was softened.

However, this does not mean that ‘the incident is over’.

Firstly, not all the scientific heritage of the scientist has been returned to the scientific space, not to mention five of the six volumes of works created in the Suzdal politisolator that have not been found yet and are considered lost³; the main part of the materials of the personal file 33480 is out of scientific circulation. Meanwhile, Kondratieff in his own testimony repeatedly turned to urgent theoretical and practical issues of economic policy and its contradictions. Records of only a few interrogations are published in *Special Opinion* and *Suzdal Letters*, there is a profile dissertation by P. N. Klyukin. However, there are more than 50 protocols of interrogations in the file, it is more than 500 sheets. Not all interrogations have a typewritten copy, there are also missing originals. The distribution of protocols included V. R. Menzhinsky, G. G. Yagoda, S. A. Messing, E. G. Evdokimov, G. E. Prokofiev, and Y. S. Agranov. The originals of some protocols were sent personally to Stalin. He kept this case under his personal control. This was due to the socio-political and international situation of 1930, as well as to the scale of Kondratieff's personality. It would be naive to believe that these ‘readers’ could easily be ‘fed’ with lightweight documents, hastily concocted by the result of fabrication.

The second argument that makes us to take a closer look at the depths of that tragedy is related to the need for a non-linear understanding of the nature of the revolution and the social dynamics it generates.

P. A. Sorokin rightly emphasized, ‘Every revolution means the outbreak of a turbulent, uncontrollable element’ (Barsenkov and Vdovin 2010: 77).

F. I. Shalyapin echoed him, ‘Why was the revolution necessary? But the fact of the matter is that the revolution asks no one about anything. Having received a push, it goes as it pleases’ (*Ibid.*). Let us also remember A. Blok, V. Mayakovsky, and a little-known excerpt from S. Yesenin:

Now October is not the same...
 In a country where bad weather whistles,
 October roared and howled
 Like a beast,
 October of the seventeenth year...
 And it began...
 The glances flickered,
 Burning with the civil war,
 And with the smoke of the fiery ‘Aurora’
 The iron dawn rose.
 The fateful fate was fulfilled,
 And over the country, with the cries of swearing
 The inscription of fire was raised:
 ‘Soviet of Workers' Deputies’.

³ Information about the destruction of the archive of the Suzdal political isolator in October 1941 has not been confirmed.

The revolutionary breakdown of the social order did not end in 1920. That year, the Soviet government was forced to abandon 'war communism' and introduce the NEP. Lenin pointed out, '...we will have to deal with the muzhik⁴ for, perhaps, six years' (Barsenkov and Vdovin 2010: 122). N. Osinsky, who asked to remove N. D. Kondratieff from the list of passengers of the 'philosophical steamer' for deportation, believed that the NEP would last 10 to 25 years. In fact, the resources of the NEP lasted for seven years. As V. P. Danilov noted, the year 1928 was 'the time of transition to the frontal breakdown of the NEP, and in 1929 it was finished' (*Ibid.*: 126). It was at the turn of the 1930s that the fundamental transformation of society took place. Therefore, all the characteristics of 1917 apply to the 'second civil war', as the period of collectivization was rightly called.

As early as 1927 there was the grain procurement crisis. The export of capital increased sharply. Market prices increased several times. At the same time, barrier troops appeared again, ration cards were introduced for citizens, and speculators began to be clapped en masse in prisons.

The situation was aggravated in the spring of 1927 by the breakdown of relations with England and rumours of war with it. And after the poor harvest of 1928, the peasants refused to hand over grain for export, which had already been advanced on account of future supplies. This could not but cause pressure on the relatively well-to-do peasantry, and it could not but affect the intra-party alignments.

Already in the spring of 1928, after the weakening of L. D. Trotsky's supporters, the struggle between Stalin's group and the adherents of the NEP in the top leadership began. N. I. Bukharin's group advocated high rates of industrialization with the preservation of the NEP system. The rate of accumulation was expected to be ensured by increasing taxes on the 'top' peasantry and increasing the output of manufactured goods. A. I. Rykov believed that it was possible to close the gap between industry and agriculture in two years.

There were still many years left before the complete elimination of the 'Right-wing deviation' from the political arena of the country. It would happen in 1937, but the operation for the final concentration of power in the hands of the Stalinist group began in advance and, obviously, on the distant approaches to the 'right deviators', by undermining their scientific, organizational, media, reputational, socio-economic, and power base. N. D. Kondratieff with his entire life objectively found himself in this camp, doomed to defeat by the logic of the struggle.

The Scale of Personality

Why was N. D. Kondratieff arrested on 19 June, 1930? If we provide preliminary answer to this question, then the reasons can be reduced to a simple

⁴ A Russian peasant.

formula: 'the millstones of history', the history of both the country and the struggle of the most powerful political groups for control over the country, its 'commanding heights'. In a Russian proverb 'When wood is chopped, woodchips will fly' (English equivalent 'you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs'), if time and place came together under the axe of the woodcutter, then who is to blame? Not the victim?

However, N. D. Kondratieff inevitably fell into the orbit of the Joint State Political Directorate's attention for four reasons. And this is a lot for those times, when even incomparably smaller offences were enough for repression.

First of all, he was a Socialist-Revolutionary, albeit having renounced the membership in this party long ago and not taking any part in its destiny since 1918. However, the Bolsheviks had their own scores and operational games with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. And in 1930 no one forgot that it was the Socialist-Revolutionaries who had almost a million members, compared with a little more than 24,000 Bolsheviks in 1917. Both in 1917 and later, the social base of the Socialist-Revolutionary agrarian ideology was impressive. In 1917, the Bolsheviks simply adopted it, and after 'War Communism' it was embodied by the course of the NEP. When NEP was condemned to its collapse, sympathy for the political founders of the stake on the peasantry in the political struggle naturally revived. And these were first of all, the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

Secondly, N. D. Kondratieff, with all the diversity of his scientific interests, was one of the leading agrarian scientists in the country. The knot of the socio-political and economic situation of that time was tightly tied precisely by the contradictions caused by the fate of the peasantry under the conditions of the policy of accelerated industrialization and ensuring the security of the USSR. It is worth remembering that it was Kondratieff who was first an adviser to A. F. Kerensky and then a Deputy Minister of Supply in 1917.

Thirdly, although Kondratieff was not formally a political figure on the eve of his arrest, he became one in potentially crisis conditions, even regardless of his desire, at least by virtue of his political experience, connections, international recognition and scientific authority. In 1930, the crisis conditions were evident. The resistance of the peasantry caused by forced collectivization reached a critical point. Stalin's article 'Dizzy with Success', which appeared in February 1930, produced the intended PR effect: partly cooling down the most zealous administrators, it also brought a note of hope to the mood of the peasantry which considerably calmed the unrest on the eve of the sowing campaign. Later it would become obvious that neither the Joint State Political Directorate, nor the party organs, nor the propaganda machine received the 'stop' command from the top leadership. Mass protests, including armed uprisings, unfolded almost throughout the country, creating a state of 'second civil war'. They were suppressed, ensuring the realization of a fundamental social upheaval. Its fun-

damentality lies in the fact that in 1929–1932 the carriers of bourgeois-democratic ways of life in Russia were liquidated in the social, political, ideological and mainly in physical sense; and the social structure of the peasantry was completely reformatted. This upheaval was also marked by the establishment of complete control over the country by Stalin's group⁵...

In the circle of N. D. Kondratieff's colleagues and associates, and with his active participation, topical socio-political issues were certainly discussed repeatedly and quite critically. This can be easily assumed, and it is also reflected in the interrogation protocols. To believe that such stories were simply made up by Y. S. Agranov, even at Stalin's prompting, is undoubtedly an overstrain of the hypothesis. The interrogation protocols reflect echoes of real conversations of the defendants in the case. The similarity of the testimony of those under investigation can be explained both by the framework⁶ set by Agranov (it is also undoubtedly), and by the fact that the prisoners recalled not something invented for them by someone else, but something that had actually taken place. Another question is whether it was political, counter-revolutionary activity or innocent professorial grousing? Taking into account the age of the interlocutors (mostly under 40), their memory of February and October 1917, which was the time of their early social maturity and political activity, to what category could their conversations be attributed? Moreover, if the government coup had taken place, would Kondratieff have remained unaffected by the whirlwind of events? Especially being, on the one hand, deprived of means of subsistence, in fact being a social outcast, on the other hand, a world-famous scientist with an expressive political past, on the third hand, an expert in the key socio-economic problems of the historical moment... The scale of Kondratieff's political ambitions, revealed by the investigation, was no more and no less than a claim to the post of Prime Minister. No one studying the materials of the investigation questioned 'whether the cap fits him'.

Fourthly, N. D. Kondratieff's international connections should be taken into account. Only at the very end of the interrogation conveyor belt he named people with whom he had cooperation in science. Among them were not only a friend of his youth who was destined for execution by Lenin, Pitirim Sorokin, but also such 'close scientific connections' as J. Keynes, W. Mitchell, T. Parsons, R. Mills, D. Robertson... More than 20 foreign famous scientists were

⁵ In a letter to V. M. Molotov of 22 September, 1930, Stalin made this task very clear, 'It seems to me that the question about the Soviet top leadership must be resolved by fall. At the same time it will be the resolution of the question of leadership in general, since the Party and the Soviet are intertwined, inseparable from each other' (Kondratieff 2004: 691).

⁶ The first testimonies in the records of N. D. Kondratieff's interrogation, although signed by him, were probably written in the hand of Y. S. Agranov. The subsequent ones were already recorded in his own hand, reflecting his state in the handwriting.

named. All correspondence with them, as well as photo albums were seized during the arrest⁷.

It can be assumed that Kondratieff mentioned these names with the purpose of mild intimidation of his investigators, a kind of blackmail. He said about it straight: the connections have 'also political significance, increasing our authority in the eyes of the foreign scientific world, which was politically objectively important for the future, if the Labour Peasant Party had to play a state role at that time' (Central Archive of Federal Security Service of Russia Case File R-33480. Vol. 4. P. 255).

But there was a fateful person among those foreigners, about whom little is still known. He was A. Coffod, an employee of the Danish embassy, who lived in Moscow and whom until 1925 Kondratieff knew 'not only as the author of a number of books on land management in pre-war Russia... Coffod knew Smirnov and Teodorovich' (*Ibid.*: 250–251). After their resignation they had several contacts, including even those with attributes of a spy character (evading surveillance, code words on the telephone).

Coffod had meetings with a number of people, members of the Labour Peasant Party: with me, with Makarov, Chayanov, Teitel, *etc.* During our meetings, he learnt our moods, our views on the economic processes taking place in the USSR, thus obtaining necessary information... (*underlined by N. D. Kondratieff*). Coffod could pass the information he received to others and, in particular, to emigrants... I know that in Germany Coffod met, for example, with Brutskes... (*Ibid.*: 253).

Conversations with A. Coffod covered not only the reasons for the resignation of N. D. Kondratieff, but also the problems of agricultural policy, 'growing food difficulties, which, intensifying, can cause a general economic crisis in the country', the course of collectivization, including discussion of 'methods of collectivization' with 'elements of direct administrative coercion'. Moreover,

⁷ From the testimony of N. D. Kondratieff (the style and orthography of the original have been retained): '...In various years I was elected a member and corresponding member of the following foreign, mainly American scientific societies: American Economic Association, Statistical Association, Agricultural Association, Sociological Society, American Academy of Social Sciences, London Economic Society. At the same time, until recently, I was a contributor to the following foreign journals: *Archives of World Economy*, *Archives of Social Sciences*, *The Proceedings of the German Conuncture Institute*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *The Journal of Harvard University*, *The Economic Journal* (in London), *The Social-Abstract*, *etc.* In Moscow, until recently, especially until 1928, foreign scientists who were my acquaintances or who had the recommendations of acquaintances came to visit me... The conversation with them concerned either purely scientific questions, or questions of our reality, if they did not understand something, or questions of assistance in its study... I kept rather strict limits in my conversations. Therefore, all of my connections with foreign societies, scientists and journals were primarily of a purely scientific nature and only indirectly, as a result, could have a political character, making me famous abroad, especially in America, England and Germany' (Central Archive of Federal Security Service of Russia File R-33480. Vol. 4. P. 250).

Kondratieff admitted that ‘since in my judgements ... I gave some factual data from the field of our agricultural reality and reported them to an employee of the embassy of a foreign country, my behaviour had elements of economic espionage (*underlined by N. D. Kondratieff*)’ (Central Archive of Federal Security Service of Russia Case File R-33480, Vol. 4, P. 254).

At one of his meetings with Coffod, Kondratieff gave him ‘a letter to be sent to Prof. Towley’ with a request: ‘...whether I can count on work in academic and scientific institutions in case I leave the USSR. I intended to leave the USSR illegally under the influence of the difficult conditions that had developed for me through my own fault’ (*Ibid.*: 252). It is clear that in the strict legal sense this was not espionage activity. By the way, the investigation did not even seriously take this point into account.

However, even earlier he also provided the facts which the investigation was already well aware of. These were the contacts in the emigration: A. F. Kerenky, P. N. Milyukov, A. V. Peshekhonov, S. N. Prokopovich, E. D. Kusko-va, P. A. Sorokin, and S. S. Maslov. About each of these persons there may be a bundle of opinions. But in any case they were significant people, almost all of them with a strong anti-Soviet reputation.

In addition, the Joint State Political Directorate penetrated the emigration with a dense network of agents, conducted large-scale operations involving the military, political, and scientific circles of the emigration. But the most compromising external link was Sergei Maslov, the founder of the Peasant party with headquarters in Prague. Realizing this fact, Nikolai Dmitriyevich described the history of their relationship in detail, seeking to neutralize this accusation. The investigation did not even need to make a ‘big deal out of it’: it was Kondratieff who wrote the introduction to the programme of the foreign emigrant party (also, by the way, the Labour Peasant Party); contacts with S. Maslov's relative Y. T. Dedusenko and the fact that he passed him materials for Maslov were recognized by him. And his attempt to present this introduction as an analytical note was a useless nuance⁸.

Fifth, one of the key political problems in 1930 was the threat of intervention. The documents available today allow us to reasonably regard this risk as quite realistic not only in the Far East, but also in the western direction – from Poland and Romania, with the participation of white emigrant forces sponsored by the Nobels, Denisov, Gukasov and others. But what is more valuable for understanding the situation is that it was the argument of expected intervention

⁸ This testimony written by him was one of the last; it has no typewritten copy and is one of the most valuable and interesting. It was made after a crisis in the investigative process at the end of December 1930, when Kondratieff, apparently, seriously grumbled about those interrogating him, and as a result received in return a toughening of the prison regime. This was a great blow, after which he was forced to go for more ‘disarmament’ in order to ‘restore the confidence’ of Y. S. Ag-ranov.

that was consciously used by the Joint State Political Directorate led by Menzhinsky in the interests of the victory of Stalin's group. This motive – the attitude to intervention – runs like a golden thread through the main interrogations. Kondratieff tried and eventually succeeded in mitigating the charge which was reduced to complicity in preparations for intervention. Nikolai Dmitriyevich sought to limit this guilt to the theorizing and talking about the use of a hypothetical intervention which undoubtedly took place. In the meantime, the prosecution considered the offence up to the preparation of rebel groups and subversive activity in the Red Army. At that point, the investigation was still leading the case to the ‘firing squad article’.

In addition, Kondratieff's political significance and danger were determined by two other factors: his connections in the leading circles of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the community of experts, ex-politicians and public figures with anti-government sentiments that clustered around him, a well-founded sense of forthcoming economic and political crisis, and a thirst for personal participation in public life.

N. D. Kondratieff's contacts in the leading circles of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks included M. I. Kalinin, A. F. Smirnov, I. A. Teodorovich, G. Y. Sokolnikov, V. V. Kuznetsov, and G. G. Yagoda. It is quite impressive for a citizen of the USSR working as a simple professor at the Timiryazev Academy. Let us take, for example, Genrikh Yagoda, at that time deputy chairman of the Joint State Political Directorate. Was it easy to get an audience with such a person, even for the director of a scientific institute? Kondratieff said in his testimony,

I was abroad in 1924–1925. And since at that time I was working with the Soviet power... purely, sincerely and earnestly and I was far from counter-revolutionary actions, before my departure I had a special audience with Comrade Yagoda, asking him to give me advice, which in my voluntary and involuntary meetings abroad could protect me from mistakes. He told me that it was not important who I would see and what I would hear, but what I would say myself, whether I would establish any organizational anti-Soviet ties. This formula gave me some freedom, and it seems to me that I even used it (Central Archive of Federal Security Service of Russia File R-33480. Vol. 4. P. 249 [manuscript]).

There were quite working and even trusting relations with the other persons mentioned. Kondratieff told about his conversations with them, trying not to compromise them in any way (constant reservations that nothing was said to them on behalf of the Labour Peasant Party). But the content of the conversations in any case indicates two points: a) they were serious and were devoted to our country; b) due to such a ‘report’ (coincidence) of opinions with serious nomenclature figures Kondratieff hoped to demonstrate to the investigation his loyalty to the authorities and his great connections.

Guilt

The anti-government community (the Labour Peasant Party), albeit in a networked and, undoubtedly, in embryonic form, still existed. In various formulations, it was a soft network structure, called by A. Chayanov 'a political current of the non-proletarian part of the Soviet apparatus against the background of the crisis of the proletarian dictatorship', but more generally it was about an organized activity in the name of evolution or some other approximation to a bourgeois-democratic republic. The final image of this community was largely constructed by the joint efforts of Agranov and Kondratieff with his colleagues. More than a thousand people representing explicit or mythical structures of the Labour Peasant Party were arrested in this case: in Moscow and Moscow region, in Leningrad, in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and in other regions. Undoubtedly, some of them, perhaps even most of them, were 'directional findings' of the Joint State Political Directorate in Moscow and other regions. But there is also no reason to doubt that some of the grass-root structures of the Labour Peasant Party were active structures of the foreign Labour Peasant Party headed by S. Maslov.

As a matter of fact, the identification of the real community around the group of N. D. Kondratieff and his colleagues with the real party (the Labour Peasant Party), formed in 1924 and headed by S. Maslov, which had its headquarters in Prague and really had its underground supporters in the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR with the same name, was the original investigative stragem of Y. Agranov. This type of logical trick is called 'unlawful generalization'. But it would be simplistic to reduce the whole drama only to the tricks of Y. Agranov and to the desperation and self-incrimination of those under investigation.

The fact is that the Joint State Political Directorate had the necessary information about the activities of the Czech version of the Labour Peasant Party and its attempts to expand into Soviet territory. This was a trump card in the investigative strategy.

It is obvious that Kondratieff had less information about Maslov's current activities than the Joint State Political Directorate. But the facts, 'stubborn things', showed that the last almanac 'Peasant Russia' was read occasionally in the circles of Soviet agrarians, and that contacts occurred: in particular, N. D. Kondratieff through N. Volens and Y. T. Dedusenko. A. N. Chelintsev, N. P. Makarov, as well as the son of M. I. Tugan-Baranovsky returning from business trips told about Maslov's activity. The distance from these scattered facts to the treatment of the community of scientists and co-operative workers first as a prototype of the party and then as the party itself ('of a new type') is very short. Moreover, the development of the plan of future victims of the Soviet version of the Labour Peasant Party apparently began as early as December 1926, when the struggle with L. D. Trotsky was still a priority on the agenda of

Stalin's group. The reprisal against N. I. Bukharin and other 'right-wingers' was postponed until a later time.

In this semi-mythical construction of the Labour Peasant Party Kondratieff was its leader and a contender for the post of prime minister. But what was most important for the investigation was not even this unfulfilled future, but the fact that Kondratieff, Chayanov, Makarov and other members of the 'Politbureau' of the Labour Peasant Party showed theoretically that the strong kulaks and farmers as a class 'hostile to the proletariat and socialist construction', 'at the moment of their sufficient economic strengthening... will enter into a struggle with the proletariat for the division of power and, if victorious, will lead to the creation of a two-class society in the form of a bourgeois-democratic republic' (Grigorieva and Ocheretyanko 2010: 8).

As those who were in one way or another in contact with the main defendants in the Labour Peasant Party case showed, 'all the work was aimed at bringing the moment of the immediate struggle for power closer by distorting Soviet policy... In the field of land management, credit, supply... we always constructed and carried out measures so that the upper strata of the village would develop... so that the differentiation of the village would proceed at the fastest pace' (*Ibid.*). This thesis runs like a golden thread through the materials of the investigation,

As a result of our economic wrecking, the kulak class would grow and become stronger. First united through co-operation, the kulak would have made certain economic demands on the Soviet government through the mouths of our leaders. The economic demands would be followed by its political demands for participation in the administration of the country, which would mean a demand on the proletariat's renunciation of dictatorship and declaration of war in the literal sense of the word. Such a demand would have led to an open armed revolt against the Soviet power (*Ibid.*: 72).

The reality of the forced collectivization of 1929–1932, with thousands of uprisings in which not only OGPU (The Joint State Political Directorate) troops but also active Red Army units took part, was not relevant to this testimony? (for more details see Top Secret... 2001–2008).

Finally in January 1931, six months after his arrest, N. D. Kondratieff pleaded guilty on the following:

- a) that for the last four years he has taken an ideological position hostile to the tasks of socialist reconstruction of agriculture;
- b) that by taking this position, he contributed to the formation and participating in the Labour Peasant Party, which aimed at the peaceful change or violent overthrow of the existing system of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the establishment of a democratic republic instead of it;

- c) that he was a member of the organization, a member of its central leading group (CC) and in fact played the role of its chairman and leader;
- d) that in this capacity he took part in the dissemination of the ideas of the Labour Peasant Party and in the expansion of its cadres, as well as in its practical counter-revolutionary work aimed at counteracting measures for the socialist reconstruction of the agricultural economy and in attempts to train cadres with the task of leading a mass uprising of the peasantry against the Soviet power at the time of intervention, if such an uprising were to take place;
- e) that as one of the leading members of the Central Committee of the Labour Peasant Party, he had links with other counter-revolutionary organizations, such as the Industrial Party and, in particular, the Groman-Sukhanov faction;
- f) that he had illegal counter-revolutionary links with the republican-democratic circles of the emigration and had personally maintained them through several meetings with Coffod;
- g) that at the end of 1929, realizing the inevitability of the collapse of his counter-revolutionary plans, being in a state of terrible isolation from the Soviet public and not relying on the return of its trust, he intended to secretly emigrate from the USSR (Central Archive of Federal Security Service of Russia Case File R-33480. Vol. 5. P. 326–327).

No matter how these confessions and accusations may sound today, at that time they had a concrete meaning both for the investigation and Kondratieff himself. Being in agreement with the principles of the NEP, he had no internal contradiction with the practical policy before 1927, openly defended it, justified it, including the materials for M. I. Kalinin's brochure on the subject. In the conditions of open discussion both in the Party and in the country about the ways of industrialization and agricultural development, all this was both legal and quite in the spirit of scientific discussion. After the aggravation of the intra-party struggle in 1927, the defeat of Leonid D. Trotsky and his supporters, all those who adhered to evolutionary views, to the NEP, in one way or another politically found themselves on the platform of the 'right-wing deviation' in the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (for more details see Zhukov 2017). The blows against the Right were struck both by the Left, later identified as Trotskyists, and by supporters and allies of Stalin, who at that time was already preparing to establish full control over the administrative, scientific-ideological and media apparatus (for more details see Rybas 2007).

It was into these millstones of the epoch that N. D. Kondratieff fell, who was honoured with his place, called 'Kondratievism', in the political palette of that time. On the whole, he could not get out of this 'tunnel', at the end of which there was no light. But after his resignation and before his arrest, he was

given two years. The crystallization of a community of energetic and competent individuals who not only clearly understood the consequences of the pressure of force on the peasantry, but also predicted them, was perhaps inevitable. But they underestimated the strength and sustainability of the established regime, its readiness to ruthlessly suppress resistance not only of its opponents but also within its own ranks.

A more important question is how realistically did N. D. Kondratieff and his colleagues understand the international status of the USSR, risk of the threat of intervention, the severity of the economic crisis and social contradictions in Soviet society (between the city and the countryside and within the countryside)? With all the harshness of the phrasing of the accusation, it shows the measure of 'disarmament' which Kondratieff took, not even as a person, but as a scientist. The nuances are very significant: only 'attempts to train personnel ... who had the task of leading a mass uprising of the peasantry against the Soviet power at the time of the intervention', but with the specification – 'if such an uprising had taken place'. The ultimate goal of the investigation was undoubtedly higher – to 'prove' his involvement in preparing the intervention. Any aspect of admission of guilt would have been sufficient for the final verdict.

After admission of his guilt, Kondratieff stated that he had been 'deeply mistaken' 'not believing in the past in the successful construction of socialism in our country and, in particular, in the possibility of a rapid socialist reconstruction of agriculture'. After 'sincere' regretting 'his past counter-revolutionary behaviour and blind struggle (*underlined by N. D. Kondratieff*), which he led with the Soviet power', in that subtle intellectual and psychological game with the investigation, Nikolai Dmitriyevich still wanted to get a chance for 'positive work' 'in a narrow area of my scientific and economic speciality', completely and finally abandoning political activity (Central Archive of Federal Security Service of Russia File R-33480. Vol. 5. P. 328).

Before making such a statement, Kondratieff had formed essentially a theory that would reconcile him with his own evolution under prison conditions.

In a statement to the Collegium of the OGPU on 25 January 1931 (*Ibid.*: 329–338 [manuscript]), he emphasizes⁹,

...no matter how much I analyze my social-class past, I cannot find in it the grounds for any irreconcilable hostility to the revolution... In the conditions of my past life I can find no grounds for hostility to the idea of socialist revolution: as far as I could, in the past I contributed to it. And if I nevertheless found myself in conflict with it at the very first time after October, if I have moved into the camp of counter-revolution during the last three years, I see the basis for this... in the nature of the

⁹ In these fragments both the underlines of N. D. Kondratieff himself and numerous pencil underlines and notes on the side of the 'reader', probably made not only by Y. S. Agranov, have been removed.

socio-political views I have learnt in the course of my development. Socialism has always been my social ideal. However, I understood the path to it essentially in a reformist way... I considered our historically backward country, especially under the conditions of isolation, to be unprepared for the socialist revolution and for the direct construction of socialism.

I saw the main obstacle to this as the existence of a patriarchal, subdivided, multi-million peasant economy, which in some large areas had not yet far outlived its most primitive forms... It seemed to me logically necessary and reasonable to provide appropriate scope and opportunities for the development of individual peasant farms. I knew that this would lead to an increase in the stratification of the village and the appearance of not only the more powerful, but also clearly kulak farms.

Subjectively, I did not feel any interest in the growth of kulak farms... I believed... that the desire to bypass the above-mentioned transitional period, the desire, contrary to the historical situation, to force the socialist construction in the agricultural sector would lead to the destruction of its productive forces and disorganize the entire national economy, turn into a system of open violence against the peasantry and could set the country back not only economically, but also politically... (Central Archive of Federal Security Service of Russia File R-33480. Vol. 5. P. 336).

Expressing his opinion on the course of collectivization and industrialization, Kondratieff noted that the achievements

are the result of a historically unprecedented rate of accumulation... Such a high rate of accumulation requires significant sacrifices on the part of the working people of a given generation. And if these people continue to make sacrifices with the greatest endurance year after year, it shows that they consider the socialist construction as their work and accept its programme. This is supported by the fact that there is labour enthusiasm of the people, the creative value of which I had previously clearly underestimated (*Ibid.*).

Thus, by January 1931 N. D. Kondratieff's consciousness had undergone a serious evolution and experienced a worldview crisis. It would be a far-fetched argument to reduce these changes only to the skillful work of the investigators, who forced Kondratieff to accept 'disarmament'. The interrogations show severe battle of minds and wills at a time when the country was undoubtedly undergoing fundamental shifts. With all the sacrifices, all the mass unrest, all the losses, both collectivization and industrialization were accomplished. This fact alone shows the social basis of this 'great turning point' that had developed by 1930. Obviously, it was this fact that N. D. Kondratieff implied when he underestimated the 'labour enthusiasm' and willingness to sacrifice of the entire generation of that time. These were not the first and not the last sacrifices of this generation.

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