3 Bauman and the Crisis over Collectivisation, 1929–30

Moscow’s political instability did not end with Uglanov’s demotion. The following winter saw a different kind of crisis, this time the result of excessive zeal for current policies. Like the whole history of collectivisation, the events of 1929–30 in Moscow are still poorly documented. But the broad outlines of the crisis are clear, and more details may be available in future if the sources have survived. Collectivisation in the Moscow region was carried out at an alarmingly rapid rate, even by the standards of the time. The Moscow leadership, scrapping earlier plans for a phased campaign, pushed the province forward into line with the priority collectivisation areas. They may also have resisted the slow-down called for in Stalin’s article, ‘Dizziness with success’, of March 1930. The impetus for the excesses came mainly, but not exclusively, from the MK. Local secretaries in the okrugs also played a part in forcing the pace. When the policy was formally abandoned in April, Bauman, the new Moscow party secretary, was removed, and with him over one hundred okrug-level party officials.

Bauman’s enthusiasm for the programme was considerable. His speeches up to 1929 had consistently shown him to be an advocate of sterner measures in the countryside. His career was in many ways a preparation for the Moscow campaign of 1929–30. He encouraged local officials to compete with each other in February 1930, helping to whip up a pace unequalled even in the priority grain areas. But other factors contributed to the crisis. First, undoubtedly, official reaction against the Right encouraged redoubled zeal for new campaigns. Survivors of the anti-Right campaign were generally committed to rapid change in both industry and agriculture. This was true both for MK secretaries and for local officials. Many of the latter no doubt hedged their bets in 1928, leaving the way open for unfriendly critics to accuse them of Rightist sympathies. The 1929–30 campaign gave them a chance to clear their names. When the Moscow leadership was so enthusiastic, it would have been fatal to have appeared to be dragging their feet. And other considerations, such as personal animosity towards individual farmers, resentment against prosperous kulaks or against peasants they...
viewed as backward, sullen and hostile, weighed in many cases. Added to this was the vanguardism generated by Moscow’s status as the capital, and the revanchist enthusiasm of some Moscow workers. Finally, Moscow was the capital, a fact of which both leaders and rank and file were aware. The consciousness that it was a national showpiece affected the tenor of the campaign, especially after a period when the Moscow leadership had failed to put the capital in the forefront of change.

The chief among these causes was almost certainly the attitude of the MK leadership. It is true that this was influenced by interaction with other institutions and groups. But it was mainly determined by the preferences of individual politicians, including the new first secretary. Karl Yanovich Bauman, the son of Latvian peasants, was born in Lifiesand guberniya in 1892. In 1906 he joined the Social Democratic group at the Pskov agricultural school, affiliating himself with its Bolshevik wing. According to his Soviet biographer, he displayed great leadership qualities from this early stage, and was the organiser of a local circle by 1910. After several terms in prison, during which he read widely, he succeeded in getting a place at the Kiev Institute of Commerce, where he was among the best students of his generation. While Uglanov, fishing for sympathy at the October Joint Plenum, declared that he was ‘not a Red Professor, but Nikolai Uglanov, who did only four years at a rural school’, Bauman had a degree in economics, specialised in price theory, and began his career in banking, becoming a senior official in Gosbank for a short period after the Revolution.

A series of misfortunes drove him from Kiev during the Civil War. A bout of pneumonia in 1919 sent him back to his parents for several months, though he returned to the Ukrainian capital to manage the National Bank. Later that year, however, he contracted spotted typhus while fleeing Denikin’s troops, and again took leave from party affairs with his parents in the Kursk guberniya. This time he stayed for four years, working as a secretary of the guberniya party committee and leading the campaign against kulak grain hoarders in the area. In 1923 he moved to Moscow to work in the Central Committee apparatus. He served first as deputy head of the Central Committee cadres (raspred) department, and then, from 1924, as head of the organisation department of the MK. This orgraspred background suggests that he was a protégé of Stalin’s from an early stage. In 1928 he moved back to the Central Committee, this time as the head of the department for rural affairs (otdel po rabote v derevne), although he remained a member of the MK