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Leon Trotsky

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LEON TROTSKY

**WORLD
UNEMPLOYMENT
AND THE FIVE
YEAR PLAN**

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Communist League of America (Opposition)
New York 1931

TRANSLATED BY MORRIS LEWITT

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

On September 2, 1930, the director of the United States census, Mr. William M. Stewart, acknowledged in a radio address that the number of unemployed in the country was probably between 7,000,000 and 9,000,000, out of the approximately 40,000,000 members of the working class in the country. In other words, in the country where the technique of production and distribution has been developed to its highest point, with enormous natural resources at its service, the capitalist system has proved incapable of providing anywhere from fifteen to twenty percent of its working class with the work that supplies the latter with even that minimum of sustenance required to maintain life. There can hardly be a more illuminating proof than this of the fact, for decades evident to the advanced workers, that capitalism has long ago ceased to be a progressive force and has instead become a reactionary fetter on the feet of humanity's advancement.

It would be carrying coals to Newcastle to enlarge here upon the ravages of unemployment: degradation, misery, hunger, that "breaking up of the family" which is the favorite bourgeois epithet against the Marxists, despair and death. What is worth noting is the state of desperate bankruptcy into which the capitalist legislators and statesmen have sunk under the blows of the unemployment situation.

There was no lack of "optimism" at the early stage of the present crisis. The host of flunkies of capitalism, the bankers and industrial magnates, all hurried forward with assurances that "prosperity" was right around the corner

again; the whole difficulty, according to them, was rather a psychological one. Alas, the months went by, the crisis became deeper, unemployment grew and the celebrated "American rugged individualism", so grandiloquently proclaimed by President Hoover, continued to collapse. Today, at the beginning of 1931, all these "experts" have become extremely cautious in their predictions.

Capitalist society in the United States has been compelled to acknowledge the serious proportions of unemployment, of which the long bread lines in every city are portentous proof. Its world wide scope, embracing every capitalist country, has long since been established. Capitalism is indeed on trial.

At this point the American Federation of Labor, through its mouthpiece, the pious William Green, comes forward to proclaim its "solution" and preventive of future unemployment by increasing the purchasing power of the consumers. It is already engaged in a campaign against what it terms an orgy of saving. How palpably shallow this must sound to the men and women without jobs, or is it perhaps the rich, even at this moment revelling in luxury, who are referred to here? In sum and substance, however, this merely amounts to another form of supporting the slogan of the merchants: "Buy more, help the unemployed." That, on the other hand, the question of purchasing power, which to the workers, means their wage level, plays a conspicuous part in this situation, is, of course, true. But it is precisely here that the pious Green has proved himself the handmaiden of the depraved capitalist system when he promised at the "famous" Hoover economic conferences that there would be no demands for wage increases and no strikes. This helped to give a free hand to the employers to inaugurate their campaign of wage slashing which has been on the order of the day especially since mass unemployment began.

Through a complete vulgarization of Marxism, this false conception of increased purchasing power as a pre-

ventive for unemployment under capitalism has been dragged to the front in a somewhat different form by the Stalinized leadership of the official Communist Party. In a resolution of the national committee of the T. U. U. L. to the Chicago unemployment conference, it says: "The basic cause of this mass unemployment is the fact that the workers receive as wages only a fraction of the value they create and cannot buy back their product . . . (DAILY WORKER, July 2, 1930).

The revolutionary classics gave the appropriate answer to such notions in the words of Engels: "The underconsumption of the masses is a necessary condition of all forms of society in which robbers and robbed exists, and therefore the capitalist system. But it is the capitalist system which first brings about the economic crisis. Underconsumption is a prerequisite of crises, and plays a very conspicuous rôle in them, but it has no more to do with the economic crisis of the present day than it had with the former absence of such crises." (*Landmarks of Scientific Socialism*, page 237.)

For the advanced worker an understanding of the cyclical nature of the capitalist system of production is necessary. Especially has this nature become pronounced during the latest decades in the capitalist United States with its conscious technical application of science to the machinery of production, resulting in rapidly increasing productive capacity through growing rationalization and speed-up of the workers. The process has run its continuous cycle, being now essentially a negative process, from depression through revival and "prosperity" to depression again—the periods of depression tending to become constantly deeper and those of revival and "prosperity" shorter. Not only are these tendencies manifest everywhere in the capitalist world, but, by and large, due to the present economically dominant position of U. S. capitalism, the crises appear with almost exact precision in every capitalist country simultaneously. The contradictions of capitalism

are no longer confined to each individual country in which it exists but have become world-wide and can ultimately find their solution only on a world scale.

In this epoch of the general decline of imperialist capitalism, the present cyclical crisis is of far deeper consequences to the existing system than any preceding ones. One of its distinctive features is that more than ever before, we will have in the United States a standing army of unemployed workers, with its numbers constantly augmented even during the most "favorable" periods of the capitalist production cycles. There is no escape from this inevitable consequence of the capitalist system which, as a whole, presents itself on the one hand as excess of means of production and on the other hand as excess of laborers without employment and without means of existence. And there is no real solution to the unemployment problem within capitalism.

It is, however, precisely during the periods of mass unemployment and misery that liberal and social reformers step forward, proposing their palliatives as solutions. They fear the potentialities of revolt within the army of unemployed no less than the magnates of industry, the bankers and the capitalist politicians whose supporters they are, and thus hurry forward only to attempt to stem the tide. But history is replete with proof of the fact that these reformers have not the slightest intention of actually fighting even for their own proposed reforms.

There are nevertheless deep-seated needs of the working class, made more acute by the unemployment crisis, for the alleviation of which a militant fight, correctly planned and organized, brooks no delay. Moreover, the adoption of tactics which will unite the broadest strata of the working class, employed and unemployed, in this struggle is of vital importance, tactics which will further strengthen their ranks and bring them, step by step, nearer to the final solution of the unemployment problem through the socialist revolution. This is a central problem of Com-

munist policy today.

In this pamphlet comrade Trotsky elucidates concisely the proposal of one such means of ameliorating the heaviest burdens of unemployment through the demand for large-scale credits from the capitalist countries to the Soviet Union. Its attainment would serve also to cement further the community of interests of the Soviet Union and the world proletariat, as well as to help build the revolutionary working class republic. It should hardly be necessary to emphasize that United States capitalism in particular is in a position to advance such credits. The demand is one of the important instruments for building an international basis for the unemployment movement.

Upon the American Communist movement rests the specific duty of correctly analysing the present objective developments of the unemployment crisis as well as the actual political level of the American working class. Proceeding therefrom it must advance the slogans and immediate demands which will set these workers into motion against their class enemy. Not the analysis of the Stalinist party leadership of "widespread workers' radicalization" and of a fictitious "revolutionary upsurge of the American masses". This is false to the root and leads only to the kind of adventurism which has been the distinctive mark of the most recent policy of this leadership, resulting in the decline of a potentially strong movement. The immediate congressional unemployment relief "bill",—signature gathering and all—are thus converted into a shabby opportunist campaign. Such bills are deceptive and little better than the almost exact counter-parts proposed by the social reformists. They can only result in preparing the basis within the working class for illusions of social reformism.

This serious problem of Communist policy in the United States demands first of all a recognition of the main, outstanding features of the present situation: (1) The natural concomitant of the unemployment crisis, the capitalist offensive, proceeds savagely against the working class. It

glaringly expresses the capitalist effort to overcome their economic difficulties by further reduction of the working class standard of living. (2) The defensive character of the general working class movement. By and large, even the majority of the unemployed are yet entirely passive, offering little or no resistance.

Our basic strategy must follow the rhythms of the ebbs and flows of the workers' movement and not run counter to it. Hence, a correct Communist policy today can proceed only from a recognition of these basic features. We must of necessity reject the artificial limitations the official party leadership sets up in advance, which act as a brake upon the development of a broad unemployment movement, and its opportunist dilution as well. It must proceed from a utilization of agitation and struggle for immediate demands primarily as a means of setting the masses into motion for united action, as well as to prepare the basis and give correct direction to the next stage of active working class resistance.

Naturally this should imply a concentration on immediate demands having such a quality. The outstanding one must hence become the slogan for the *six hour day without reduction in pay*.

Essential also is the slogan for "immediate unemployment relief from the bosses and their government" and the struggle for its attainment must not be limited to the uncertain and purely parliamentary channels of congressional bills. Similarly, the slogan of "fight against the rapacious capitalist rationalization and speed-up!"


These demands correspond with the actual needs of the working class and offer the opportunity for the Communists to apply the Leninist united front, based upon serious efforts to embrace all working class organizations within a broad unemployment movement. Even more, this has become an absolutely vital necessity which can allow nothing to stand in its way. Hence, the first task is to reorganize the narrow unemployment councils now in

existence in such a way that organization can grow out of the movement and become genuinely representative of the working masses.

— Correct Communist policy facilitates the important task of drawing the full revolutionary implications of the agitation and struggle for the needs of the unemployed. The economic crisis only makes this more mandatory. Communists must clearly present the maxim to the American working masses that that the final solution to their problems can be found only in the socialist revolution.

New York, January 1931.

Arne Swabeck.



World Unemployment and the Five Year Plan

THE internal development of the Soviet Union has reached a critical point. No matter in what way we evaluate the present course of the collectivization which, in one year, has surpassed by two and a half times the plan elaborated for the whole five years (fifty percent of the peasant holdings collectivized instead of the twenty percent prescribed at the end of the five years), it is clear that the tempo of collectivization has already blown up the whole five year plan. Up to now, the official leadership has maintained silence on this point. But it would be impossible to be silent for long. To imagine that all the other elements of the plan—industry, transportation, commerce, finance—can develop on the formerly prescribed scale while agriculture makes totally unforeseen jumps, would signify to see in the economic plan not an organic whole but a simple sum of departmental orders. Until recently it was recognized, at least in principle, that the relations between industry and agriculture (*smytchka*) form the principal axis of the plan. Well, what has happened to this axis? If the *smytchka* was taken into consideration in the plan, then it must now have been destroyed by the prodigious leaps of the collectivization which nobody foresaw. In what direction will the line of the plan be straightened out?

At this very moment, “complete collectivization” has already called forth among the frightened leadership a cer-

tain movement *backward*. At what point will the commenced retreat come to a halt? It is as yet impossible to foretell. It is probable that this time also the retreat will extend much further than is required by the objective conditions. But the retreat itself is unavoidable. It is quite probable that because of the effects of the inflation there will begin a revision of the slogan: "The five year plan in four years".

Retreat is always a painful operation, in the military field as well as in politics. But a retreat carried out in time and in an orderly manner can prevent unnecessary losses and prepare the possibility for developing an offensive in the future. The fatal danger is always a belated retreat, panic-stricken, under fire, when the enemy is at your heels. And that is why we, the Left Opposition, are not afraid to call to the bureaucracy which is running ahead blindly: *Back!* It is necessary to call a halt to the prize races of industrialization, to revise the tempo on the basis of experience and theoretical foresight, to coordinate collectivization with the technical and other resources, to subordinate the policy towards the Kulak to the real possibilities of collectivization. In a word, after the periods of *Chvostism* and *adventurism*, it is necessary to take the road of *Marxist realism*.

The plan corrected in this sense would present a *minimal* variant. It would necessarily proceed from the situation which has been created up to now as a result of great successes and no less great mistakes. Such a plan cannot eliminate the contradictions that flow from the historical past and the world environment. But it must reduce to a minimum the results of mistakes, partly mitigating and partly postponing the manifestations of a crisis, and in this manner gain a new breathing space for the isolated workers' state. *The task of the moment is a planned retreat from the position of adventurism.*

However, in addition to this "minimal" variant, it is necessary to prepare immediately another, more extended

variant, calculated not only on the internal but also on the external resources. The perspective of the proletarian revolution in Europe is by no means less of a reality than the perspective of a genuine collectivization of the Russian peasants. More correctly, the second perspective becomes a reality only in connection with the first. The official leadership of the Communist International conducts its policy as though we were on the eve of the insurrection of the European proletariat. At the same time, the economic plan for ten-fifteen years is constructed with the aim of "outdistancing" the whole capitalist world by means of an isolated workers' state. This duality flowing from the reactionary, utopian theory of socialism in one country, runs through the program of the Comintern and all its policies. Nobody knows the dates, but one thing can be said with certainty: the conquest of power by the European proletariat is undoubtedly closer to this date than is the liquidation of the classes in the Soviet Union.

The elaboration of a minimal plan with the aim of mitigating the approaching crisis must necessarily proceed from the fact of the present isolated position of Soviet economy. But simultaneously it is necessary to create a variant based on the broad, mutual interlinking of Soviet and world economy. The general plan elaborated for ten, fifteen or more years cannot be constructed any other way.

Obviously, systematic and all-embracing economic cooperation of an international character will become possible only after the conquest of power by the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries. Firstly, however, the time of this overthrow cannot be foreseen. That is why preparations must be made in time, politically as well as economically.

Secondly, there is every reason to count that under the conditions of the present *commercial and industrial crisis*, particularly in case of its further aggravation, the Soviet government, by a correct policy, can gain an incomparably larger access to the resources of the world market. Unem-

ployment is a factor of huge importance which can make its impression upon the whole politics of the near future. Under the blows of unemployment the powerful edifice of the conservative trade unions and the social democracy can suffer deep-going cleavages before the infinitely more powerful edifice of the capitalist state begins to crack. But this will not happen of itself. The correct direction of the working class struggle acquires an exceptional significance in the conditions of a social crisis. The general strategic line of Communism must obviously, more than ever before, be directed towards the revolutionary conquest of power. But this revolutionary policy must be nourished by the concrete conditions and tasks of the transition period. Unemployment occupies an ever more central place among them. One of the most important slogans of the transition period can and must become the demand for *economic collaboration* with the Soviet Union. But the agitation under this slogan must in turn have a thoroughly concrete character, armed with facts and figures. It must base itself on a general economic plan which takes into account the ever-increasing interlinking of Soviet with world economy. This signifies that the general plan must be built upon a genuine Marxist foundation and not upon the theory of an isolated socialist society.

* * *

In the present European and world unemployment, conjunctural events are bound up with the organic processes of capitalist decay. We have more than once repeated that conjunctural cycles are inherent in a capitalist society at *every* stage of its development. But at different stages these cycles have a different character. Just as in a person's declining years a flow of strength is always uncertain and brief, and every illness, on the contrary, affects the whole organism, so the conjunctural cycles of imperialist capitalism, especially in Europe, show a tendency towards the diseased swelling of crisis by comparatively short rises. The question of unemployment, in these conditions, can be-

come the central question for the majority of the capitalist countries. It is here that the knot is tied between the interests of the Soviet Union and the interests of the world proletariat.

The task by itself is clear and indisputable. It is only necessary to approach it correctly. But that is precisely where the difficulty lies. At the present time, the international education of the world proletarian vanguard is based on two ideas: "The Soviet Union will build socialism without us" and "The Soviet Union is the fatherland of all the toilers." The first idea is false, the second abstract. Moreover, the one belies the other. This explains the astonishing fact that the struggle against unemployment is now directed by the pocket calendar of Kuusinen and Manuilsky ("March 6th", etc.), and passes over the economic problems of the Soviet Union. Yet the connection between the one task and the other is quite obvious.

* * *

Complete collectivization on the basis of the peasants' holdings is an adventure pregnant with a crisis in agricultural production and with dangerous political consequences. But if the possibility arises to fructify the collective farms in time by an influx of advanced technique, then collectivized agriculture could pass far more easily through the period of infantile illness and be able, almost in the next few years, to realize a greatly improved harvest, with such stocks for export as would radically change the picture of the grain market of Europe and later on put the consumption of the working masses on a new foundation. The menacing disproportion between the swing of collectivization and the state of technique flows directly from the economic isolation of the Soviet Union. If the Soviet government could even use only the capitalist credits "normal" in interstate relations, the tempo of industrialization, as the framework of collectivization, could even now be considerably enlarged.

By all these circumstances, the Communist parties of

the West are placed before the task: of linking up, in their agitation, the question of unemployment with the most essential factors in world development, and, in the first place, with the economic development of the Soviet Union. And what is needed for this?

First, to stop fooling the workers of the West with regard to the real situation in the Soviet Union. Together with the indisputable and immense successes arising out of nationalization, to show them honestly at the same time the internal contradictions arising out of the isolation of the Soviet Union and mistakes of leadership, which threaten it with political dangers.

Second, to explain to them that these dangers could be considerably diminished, and later overcome, by the establishment of a broad and coordinated interchange between the Soviet Union, on the one side, and Germany and England, for example, on the other.

Third, to demonstrate that many tens, and later on hundreds, of thousands of workers would be able to find work in the annual, planned orders by the Soviet Union for machinery and agricultural implements.

Fourth, to explain that through these conditions the Soviet Union would receive the possibility to export a far greater quantity—besides lumber and other raw materials—of grain, butter, meat and other products of consumption of the broadest masses.

The importation of machinery and the exportation of raw material and food products could, by an adequate agreement, be set into direct dependence upon each other, on the basis of an extensive plan, equally accessible to the understanding and the verification of the Soviet as well as the foreign workers.

The successes hitherto achieved by Soviet industry assure a necessary basis for this entrance into the international arena. It is not a question of bare agitation, but of serious, well thought-out economic proposals, motivated by all existing experiences and clearly formulated in the

language of technique, economics and statistics. In this connection, the Soviet government must certainly proclaim its full readiness to facilitate an all-sided examination of the accomplishments of the economic agreement for interested labor organizations (trade unions, shop stewards' committees, etc.).

If we approach the question politically, and in the first place, from the point of view of the relations towards the social democracy and Amsterdam, the task can be formulated as an application of *the policy of the united front* on a scale such as has not been and could not be practiced up to now.

But is it possible to hope that MacDonal, Hermann Müller, the trade unionists of Amsterdam and the American Federation of Labor will consent to such a combination? Then is it not utopian? Is it not conciliationism? And so forth. Such an objection will undoubtedly be made by those who yesterday hoped that the British trade unionists would struggle against imperialism for the defense of the Soviet Union (Stalin and Company). We did not nourish these pitiful illusions at that time and we do not nourish them now. But it must be considered that economic agreements of a social democratic government with the Soviets for the diminution of unemployment in its own country is nevertheless far more probable than a struggle of the reformists against imperialism. If the crisis develops further, the reformist governments, which base themselves upon millions of organized workers, can be wedged into such a vise that they are compelled—to one extent or another—to yield to economic collaboration with the Soviet Union.

We have no desire or need to guess the extent to which it would be realized in actuality. Should the social democracy even be averse to the discussion—in the first period that is most likely to be the case—then the plan will at the very outset impel the masses of the workers to struggle against the social democracy. In any case, the reformists in power will find it more difficult to defend themselves from

an agitation based on a concrete plan of economically advantageous collaboration with the Soviet Union than from the shrill outcries on the theme of "social fascism".*

It is evident that this plan of campaign in no way assumes the *softening* of our political relations towards the social democracy. On the contrary, by correct direction the campaign outlined above can seriously shake the positions of the international social democracy which for the last few years was given invaluable support by the policies of Stalin-Molotov.

The necessity of posing the task of socialist construction in an international sense rises out of the internal needs of the economic development of the Soviet Union and, at the same time, represents the most persuasive and irrefutable propaganda in favor of international revolution. But in order to enter upon this road it is necessary to learn over again. Instead of a soporific optimism, the revolutionary tocsin must be sounded. It is impermissible to be content with the ritualistic imprecations against military intervention. It is necessary to put the economic problem squarely. The Communist agitator must say openly and honestly to the masses of the West:

"Do not think that socialism will be built up in Moscow without you. They have accomplished quite a bit, but they cannot accomplish everything. The many things they have already accomplished are only a small part of what is still to be done. In order to help them, such measures must be taken now as will at the same time help you workers against unemployment and the high cost of living. The Soviet government has an economic plan for collaboration

* The paper of the Italian Left Communists, PROMETEO, says quite appropriately that if it is very difficult for the social democrats to refute the accusations that they are agents of the bourgeoisie, it is, on the other hand very easy for them to refute the affirmation that they are Fascists. In labeling the social democrats social fascists, the Comintern renders them a signal service.

with foreign industry.* Everybody can familiarize himself with it. To be sure, you are not obliged to put blind faith in me or in the Soviet government. Demand the examination of the Soviet proposals by your trade unions, your party, or by your social democratic government (Germany, England). This government must be compelled finally to take the road of economic agreement with the Soviet Union because that is the most effective and advantageous road of struggle against unemployment."

But is there any hope that with their present leadership the Communist parties are capable of a serious revolutionary mobilization of the masses? We will not decide this question beforehand. The policy which we defend has such profound roots in the objective situation and in the historical interests of the proletariat, that it will finally make its way through all the obstacles. It is entirely a question of time. But that is a very important question. The duty of the Left Communist Opposition, therefore, is to exert all its strength to shorten the period.

PRINKIPO, *March 14, 1930.*

A Letter to the Communist Workers of Czecho-Slovakia

IN THE international press of the Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists), we advanced several months ago the absolutely simple and irrefutable idea that the Communist parties of the capitalist countries, in connection with the enormous growth of unemployment, should raise an agitation for all-around extension and facilitation of industrial

* We proceed from the assumption that such a plan must be created.)

commodity credits to the Soviet Union. We proposed to give this slogan even more concrete forms: on the basis of its Five Year Plan (the present plan or a modified one, we shall not deal with this question now), the Soviet government declares that it can give the United States, Germany, England, Czecho-Slovakia and others, such and such quite definite orders for electro-technical units, agricultural machinery, and so forth, on the condition of credits for a definite number of years.

In this connection, the credit reliability of the Soviet government in the eyes of the capitalist world could be fully secured by the simultaneous growth of Soviet exports. Under the condition of large and well-apportioned industrial credits, the collective farms could really acquire a great economic significance in the near future, and the resources of agricultural exports could speedily increase. In the same way, with the receipt from abroad—on acceptable, that is, commonly capitalistic conditions of credit—of additional industrial equipment, the export of oil, timber and so forth, could be considerably increased. With regard to Soviet exports, the conclusion of planned agreements for a number of years would also be possible.

The Soviet government is most directly interested in a detailed acquainting of workers' delegations, factory committees and representatives of trade unions on the one hand, and representatives of capitalist governments and trusts on the other, with the corresponding planned propositions—it is understood, very strictly established technically and economically, and therefore capable of raising in the eyes of the workers the authority of the Soviet government as well as of warranting in the eyes of the capitalists the credits demanded. Whoever knows how the economic relations of the Soviet Union to the capitalist governments were established, or, whoever knows even theoretically the A B C of the economic policy of the workers' government in the capitalist encirclement, will not find anything contestable or dubious in the plan proposed above. At the same time, the

necessity and urgency of an energetic campaign in favor of this campaign will flow quite obviously, from the present unemployment in capitalist countries, on the one hand, and from the acute need of foreign credits to Soviet economy, on the other.

Nevertheless, with regard to our propositions, the Stalinist apparatus has given the signal: Reject, expose, condemn. Why? There are two reasons. There is no doubt that many Soviet bureaucrats consider that an education of this sort will not help but injure foreign credits. Let their Sokolnikov negotiate quietly with Henderson, and let the Communists rather keep still, so as not to frighten the bourgeoisie and not to repel it. There is no doubt that this is precisely the idea that animates the Stalinist bureaucracy and, above all, Stalin himself, when they come forward against the campaign proposed by us. For the august national-socialist bureaucrats talk with great contempt among themselves about the foreign Communist parties, considering them incapable of any serious action. The apparatus men, the Stalinists, have learned to place confidence only in the governmental summits and plainly fear the direct intervention of the masses in "*serious*", "*practical*" matters. This is the basic reason for the absurd and malicious rebuff which our proposal met with.

But there is also an additional reason. The Stalinists are in mortal fear of the growing influence of the Left Communist Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists) throughout the world, and therefore they consider it necessary to reply with slander and vilification to every word it pronounces. Such directions are invariably issued to the whole apparatus of the Comintern.

The central organ of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, RUDE PRAVO, has fulfilled the commission as best it could. In its issue of June 24, the campaign on behalf of unemployment proposed by the Czech Left Communists is subjected to a criticism which can only be termed rabid. With all its fury, it strikes one with its impotence. We

will analyze the objections and accusations of RUDE PRAVO line by line. Not because we are interested in the officials who substitute the lack of ideas and arguments by rude abuse, but because we want to help the advanced workers of Czecho-Slovakia orientate themselves in this big and serious question.

RUDE PRAVO says that the Czech Left Communists (Bolshevik-Leninists) demand that the Soviet government "*together with the Czecho-Slovak government, shall elaborate an economic plan for the solution of the crisis!*" The paper derides this idea which really is absurd, but which was invented by the editors themselves. The Soviet government should arrive at an agreement with the capitalist trusts and the bourgeois governments (in the event the latter take it upon themselves to guarantee credits) about a definite system of orders and payment for them (but not at all a "plan for the solution of the crisis"). Each of the parties pursues its own aims. The Soviet government is interested in extending the resources of socialist construction, to assure in this way its high tempo, and to raise the living standards of the workers. The capitalists are interested in profits. The workers of Czecho-Slovakia, as well as of any other capitalist country suffering from unemployment, are interested in ameliorating unemployment. The worker-Communists and sympathizers pursue in this struggle also another, no less important, aim: to help the workers' state. But the task of the struggle in itself is accessible to the understanding of the broadest and most backward circles of workers, consequently also to those who look upon the Soviet Union with indifference.

As for a common plan "for the solution of the crisis" nobody even speaks about that. Only a socialist revolution can abolish the crisis. To permeate the workers with this idea is the direct duty of the Communist party. But it does not at all flow from this that the workers should not advance immediate demands for the *diminution* of unemployment and the *amelioration* of its heaviest consequences.

The reduction of the working day is one of the most important demands of this kind. Alongside of this stand: the struggle against the present rapacious "rationalization", the demand for a broader and more genuine insurance of the unemployed at the expense of the capitalists and government. Perhaps RUDE PRAVO is against these demands? The granting of industrial credits to the Soviet state would have as its consequence, not the liquidation of the crisis, but the amelioration of unemployment in a number of branches of industry. This is precisely how we must pose the question, deceiving neither ourselves nor others.

Or perhaps RUDE PRAVO has the point of view that Communists in general must not demand any measures capable of ameliorating the disastrous consequences of capitalism in relation to workers? Perhaps the slogan of the Czech Stalinists has become: "the worse the better"? This was the point of view held by the anarchists before the Flood. The Marxists never had anything in common with this position.

But here RUDE PRAVO advances the objection that according to our plan, "*the contradiction of principle between the Soviet state and the capitalist world is to be replaced by their mutual collaboration*". What this phrase signifies is hard to understand. If it has any sense at all, it can only be one: The Soviet state, in order to insure the contradictions of principle, must avoid economic connections with the capitalist world, that is, must neither export and import nor seek credits and loans. But the whole policy of the Soviet government, from the first day of its existence has had the directly opposite character. It has proved unalterably that in spite of the contradictions of principle between two economic systems, collaboration between them is possible on the very broadest scale. The leaders of the Soviet state have more than once declared that even the principle of the monopoly of foreign trade presents advantages to the large scale capitalist trusts, in the sense that it insures systematic orders for a number

of years ahead. It cannot be denied that many Soviet diplomats and administrators have fallen over themselves in their advocacy of peaceful collaboration of the Soviet Union with the capitalist world and presented arguments incorrect in principle and out of place. But this is a question of another order. At any rate, principle contradictions of two economic systems that co-exist for a comparatively long time are not destroyed and not weakened by the fact that they are compelled, in this transition period, to conclude large scale economic transactions with each other, and sometimes even political agreements. Is it possible that there are still "Communists" who have not yet understood this?

Further on, RUDE PRAVO writes still better: "*The chief concern of the Soviets should be the elimination [?] of the capitalist crisis so that [!] the capitalist system, this blessing of humanity, should be further preserved.*" Every new phrase increases in senselessness, multiplies it, raises it to a higher degree. Does RUDE PRAVO mean that the Soviet republic, in order not to alleviate the capitalist crisis, should renounce the import of foreign commodities, of American technique, of German and English commercial credits, etc.? Only by drawing these conclusions would the phrase quoted above have any sense. But we know that the Soviet government acts to the contrary. At this very moment in London, Sokolnikov is negotiating economic relations with England, trying to obtain credits. In America, the president of the Amtorg, Bogdanov, is engaged in a struggle against that part of the bourgeoisie which wants to break off economic relations with the Soviet Union, and, what is more, Bogdanov demands the extension of credits.

It is clear that RUDE PRAVO was overzealous. It no longer strikes at the Opposition, but at the workers' state. From the point of view of RUDE PRAVO, all the work of Soviet diplomacy and the Soviet commercial representatives appears to be work for the insurance of the capitalist system. This is not a new idea. The same point of view was,

held by the deceased Dutch author, Gorter, and the leaders of the so-called Communist Labor Party of Germany, that is, by people of a utopian and semi-anarchist frame of mind, who thought that the Soviet government should conduct its policy not as if it existed within a capitalist encirclement but in space. In their time, these prejudices were crushingly refuted by Lenin. Now the views of Gorter are served up by the editors of the Czech Communist paper as profound arguments against the Left Communist Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists).

These considerations take on a particularly ridiculous aspect by the fact that the Soviet government, especially in recent times, has considered it necessary once more to repeat that it even agrees, within certain limits, to pay the old czarist debts—provided that new credits are made available to it. On the other hand, the Soviet government recruits unemployed miners in Germany. Is it not thereby saving German capitalism? Repeating empty phrases, the pseudo-Communist officials simply close their eyes to everything that is going on in the world. Our proposal has two aspects: first, we want the bonds between Soviet and world economy, at present accidental, partial and unsystematic, to be included by the Soviet government itself into the framework of an extensive plan (we are not considering this question here now); and secondly, to draw into the struggle for the international economic positions of the Soviet Union the vanguard of the world proletariat, and through it—also the millions of workers. The whole essence of the campaign proposed by us lies in the fact that it can bind by a new and firm knot the need of the Soviet government for foreign products with the need of the unemployed for work, with the need of the proletariat for the alleviation of unemployment.

Further on, RUDE PRAVO becomes ironical: "*It is a pity that the Messrs. Trotskyists did not tell us on what principles the general Czecho-Slovak-Soviet plan for the solution of the crisis should be constructed: on capitalist*

principles—but by that, aid would be given to the victory of capitalism within Russia; or on socialist principles—this would mean that the Trotskyists believe in the readiness of the capitalists themselves to introduce socialism.”

Human stupidity is truly inexhaustible, and the worst form of it is the stupidity of the self-contented bureaucrat.

On what principles could the economic relations of the Soviet Union with the world market be based? Of course, upon capitalist principles, that is, on the principles of buying and selling. This is how it has been up to now. It will be that way in the future as long as the workers of the other countries do not abolish capitalism. And they will not do that—let us observe parenthetically—until they carry out a merciless purging among their “leaders”, chasing out the self-contented chatterers, and replacing them with honest proletarian revolutionists capable of observing, learning and thinking. But this is a question of a different order. Here, we are concerned with economics.

But will not collaboration on capitalist principles lead, in reality, to the victory of capitalism in Russia? This would be so if Russia had no monopoly of foreign trade, supplemented by the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the nationalization of land, factories, mills and banks. Without a monopoly of foreign trade in the hands of the workers’ state, the victory of capitalism would be inevitable. But do the Left Communists (Bolshevik-Leninists) propose to abolish the monopoly of foreign trade? It was Stalin, together with Sokolnikov, Rykov, Bucharin and others, who made an attempt upon the monopoly in 1922. Together with Lenin, we fought for the monopoly of foreign trade and defended it. It is understood that the monopoly of foreign trade is not an all-saving remedy. Correct economic plans are necessary, correct leadership, a systematic drawing of the costs of production in the U. S. S. R. closer to the costs of production of the world market. But this, again, is a question of a different order. We, at any rate, have in view such plans for foreign orders and credits as

flow from the internal needs and tasks of Soviet economy and which are to serve the consolidation of its socialist elements.

Then it means, RUDE PRAVO becomes ironical, that the bourgeoisie will aid socialism! A fabulous argument! But why does it come into the world so late? The majority of the complicated machines in the Soviet factories are imported from abroad. The Soviet trusts have concluded scores of agreements with the world monopoly trusts for technical aid (machines, materials, plans, formulæ, etc.). The enormous Dnieper hydro-electric station is constructed to a considerable degree with the aid of foreign technicians and with the participation of German and American firms. It would appear, then, that the bourgeoisie is helping to construct socialism. And at the same time, the Soviet government, by making purchases in foreign countries, and alleviating the crisis, is saving capitalism. It would seem that the rôles have changed. Only they have not changed in reality, but in the head of the functionary of RUDE PRAVO. Alas, it is an altogether unreliable head!

How do matters really stand with the exchange of "services"? Of course, economic collaboration between the workers' state and the capitalist world gives rise to a number of contradictions. But these are contradictions of life, that is, they are not invented by the Left Opposition but are created by reality itself. The Soviet government considers that the capitalist machines it imports strengthen socialism to a greater degree than the gold paid for them strengthens capitalism. And that is true. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie, in selling its machinery, is primarily concerned with its own profits. Some capitalists simply do not believe in the possibility of constructing socialism. Others do not even think of it. Finally, the bourgeoisie now finds itself under the lash of a crisis and it is worried about its own salvation. This circumstance should be utilized for the strengthening of the Communist positions among the unemployed.

Learning from us for the first time that the bourgeoisie, in spite of its will, helps to construct socialism, RUDE PRAVO exclaims: "In this case, the ultra-Left Trotskyists are spreading worse illusions about world developments than the social-fascists."

In this phrase, again, every word spells confusion. First of all, we appear as "ultra-Lefts", when we never were such. The deceased Gorter, mentioned above, was an ultra-Leftist and that is what his present followers remain. In their opinion, foreign trade, concessions, credits, loans, etc., mean the death of socialism. RUDE PRAVO repeats these arguments, only less literately. The whole article of RUDE PRAVO analyzed by us is a sample of the most absurd ultra-Leftism directed against Leninism.

Further: What "illusions about world developments" are they talking about? Economic negotiations and agreements between two governments are calculated, it is understood, for peaceful relations, but they are far from a *guarantee* for such relations. When war flares up, all agreements are blown to perdition, even between two capitalist states. It is also clear that if the proletarian revolution should conquer, let us say, in England, the agreements of Stalin with MacDonald would be thrown away and substituted by a brotherly union of two proletarian states. However, in spite of the inevitability of wars and revolution, the Soviet government has concluded and still concludes economic agreements, sometimes for long terms: thus, some concessions are made for ninety-nine years! The ultra-Leftists concluded from this that the Soviet government laid aside the proletarian revolution for ninety-nine years. We laughed at them. Now the officials of RUDE PRAVO have carried over this argument against . . . the "Trotskyists". But by the change of address, the argument has not become any wiser.

If RUDE PRAVO seriously considers it its duty to defend proletarian principles in the sphere of the international politics of the Soviet government, why was it silent when

these were actually trampled under foot by the present Stalinist leadership? Let us recall two examples out of scores.

After the union of the Stalinists with the British strike-breakers—the trade union leaders—had thoroughly revealed its reactionary character, Stalin and Bucharin explained to the Præsidium of the Comintern that the Anglo-Russian Committee could in no way be broken up because it would worsen the mutual relations between the U. S. S. R. and England. Out of the hostility of Baldwin and Chamberlain, Stalin attempted to find cover for his friendship with Purcell. This disastrous policy, which undermined British Communism for a number of years and did not serve the Soviet Union one particle, met, so far as we know, with the unalterable support of RUDE PRAVO. And where were these saviors of principles when the Soviet government adhered to the Kellogg Pact, committing at one and the same time a crime in principle and a stupidity in practise? The Kellogg Pact is an imperialist noose for the weaker states. And the Soviet government adhered to the Pact as an instrument of peace. This is a sowing of illusions in reality, an inadmissible smearing over of contradictions, an outright deception of the workers in the spirit of the social democracy. Did RUDE PRAVO protest? No, it merely joined in the chorus. What was the reason for the Soviet government's adherence to the Kellogg Pact? The absurd hope of Stalin that in this way he would secure the recognition of the American government, credits, etc. The capitalists pocketed the Soviet's adherence, very advantageous in fooling the American workers, and, it is understood, they gave nothing in exchange. Against such methods of struggle for capitalist credits, the Bolshevik-Leninists conduct an irreconcilable fight, while the officials of RUDE PRAVO join the chorus of their superiors. On the other hand, however, the plan of the campaign proposed by us does not contain even the shadow of a surrender of principles to the bourgeoisie or to the social democracy.

These are all the arguments of the central organ of the Czecho-Slovak Communist Party. They should arouse a feeling of shame in every serious Communist for the political level to which the leadership of one of the largest sections of the Comintern has sunk.

But all these arguments probably pale before the concluding argument of the article. RUDE PRAVO declares that our whole proposition is a sort of snare and has as its aim to mask "*the real attempt at a manœuver, to be precise: the responsibility for unemployment is to be thrown upon the Soviet Union which does not give us sufficient orders . . . instead of compromising the worthless capitalist system, the industrial crisis is to serve to compromise the Soviet Union*".

These lines seem incredible, but here too we are quoting verbatim. If RUDE PRAVO considers our plan erroneous, it has, of course, the full right to prove that such a mistake may help the class enemy. Every mistake in the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat is of advantage to the bourgeoisie to one degree or another. Every revolutionist can make a mistake and thus *unwillingly* help the bourgeoisie. A mistake should be criticized mercilessly. But to accuse proletarian revolutionists of consciously constructing a plan with the aim of helping the bourgeoisie and compromising the Soviet Union can only be done by functionaries without honor and conscience. But it is not worth thought: all this is too stupid. It is only too obvious that it was done under orders. The executors of the order are but too miserable. But on the other hand, we must not forget for a minute that these gentlemen ceaselessly compromise the Soviet Union and the banner of Communism. . .

So we Bolshevik-Leninists want to throw the responsibility for capitalist unemployment upon the Soviet Union. What opinion has RUDE PRAVO of the intellectual abilities of the Czech workers? It is understood that not one of them will take it into his head that the Soviet Union is capable of placing orders to an extent that would liquidate

unemployment in the capitalist world, or even in one large capitalist country. Any one of ten workers met on the streets of Prague would declare the very idea absurd that such inconceivable demands can be made upon the Soviet Union or that it can be compromised for "insufficient" orders. Why is all this? What is all this good for? Matters are just the other way around. The political aim of the campaign is to attract to the side of the Soviet Union those workers who are at present indifferent to it or even hostile. In so far as the capitalist governments and parties, the social democratic included, counteract the campaign, they will compromise themselves in the eyes of the workers. Their political loss will be all the greater, the more seriously and practically the Communists carry on the campaign. No matter what the economic results may be, the political advantages, at any rate, are guaranteed. The workers drawn into the campaign around this live and acute question of unemployment will, in the future also, come forward as the defenders of the U. S. S. R. in the event of a war danger. Such methods of mobilization of the workers are far more substantial than the repetition of naked phrases about an imminent intervention.

But we will not conceal from our comrade workers that we would by no means entrust the execution of such a campaign to the editors of RUDE PRAVO. These people are capable of ruining every action. They do not want to think; they are incapable of learning. But from this it does not flow that we should give up the mass struggles for the interests of the Soviet Union, but merely that we must renounce the good-for-nothing leaders. Here we approach the general question: the régime of the Comintern, its policy, and the selection of its bureaucracy. We need a proletarian purging, a renewal of the apparatus, a renewal of the course, a renovation of the régime. This is precisely what the Left Communist Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists) is fighting for. The most immediate aim of our struggle

is the regeneration of the Communist International upon
the basis of the theory and practise of Marx and Lenin.
PRINKIPO, *August 21, 1930.*

The Militant

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