

Letters from the Soviet Union

The Five Year Plan And the Kulaks

At double pace the voids caused by the unfitness of the 5 year plan are being filled in haphazard and uncertainly. Suddenly half a million rubles are withdrawn from the food cooperatives; now, a figure of such magnitude has never been so easily conjured with in any plan. Wholesale prices are being increased. (You recall this was "a Trotskyist fraud", according to the Stalinist theory). What is more, this increase is retroactive. For all selling organizations, a revision of accounts is being made. Speed was ordered for those two measures and at the same time the press was kept quiet. How much ink was poured out against the rise in wholesale prices when it had been proposed by the Opposition not as a panic measure but in the name of economic foresight. All the symptoms of instability are clearly present...

Here is an extract of the leading article of a country newspaper of a hundred percent collectivized district: "The Kulaks and the middle peasants fraudulently kill their cattle..."

"The Kulak spirit has penetrated all departments of the local government (all this in hundred percent collectivized districts). They kill the horses of their own volition, cattle are chased into the forests and the valleys where they die of cold. In the forest of ... there are two hundred abandoned horses". And yet Pravda, full of authority, shows that if the middle peasant strangles his cattle, it is because he is firmly decided to enter the cooperative and this is why, before leaving, he liquidates his cattle! The base for the new adventurist bond of centrism is a break with the middle peasantry. Instead of squarely facing this difficulty, the Centrists think that a theory, scholastically elaborated and administratively applied, that is, collectivisation, can strike from the order of the day the fundamental question of irregular relations of the classes in the country. With this new formula they expect to exorcise the truth.

As I already said, the class relations in the country are disturbed. I believe that the offensive of classes hostile to the dictatorship of the proletariat is inevitable, under the guise of civil war supported by external intervention. Actually great confusion reigns in the circles of the Party base. This brings in a new stage in our work. It is necessary to leave home for free air. Some prefer to remain in waiting—because it is more dignified and more peaceful. We must break with them because passivity becomes a chronic disease. It is a serious danger. To enter the new activity a very precise and pointed appeal must be written. The country is being led towards catastrophe with bandaged eyes. The working class must take the fate of the U. S. S. R. in its own hands. The appeal must be made not only to Russia but to the international proletariat. The dictatorship is in danger. It can be saved only by bringing it to the Leninist path. Now, many signs show that interest in Leninism and the proposals of the Opposition are rapidly growing. Our appeal can and must play an enormous role.

As in one of Andersen's fairy tales (The Emperor's New Clothes), at the most solemn moment of the imperial procession our appeal must shout: "But Centrism is completely naked!" In Stalin's speeches it is stated that a completely new course is being instituted, that is, the liquidation of the NEP. That which interests me, above all, is to know whether this course is the product of an unavoidable necessity, of a blind alley which does not permit of maneuvering with respect to the peasant class, or whether it is a product of the theory of socialism in one country.

If one holds to the official ideas, to the phraseology of the leaders, it appears to originate from a "voluntary desire". Thus it is an adventure which allows of the catastrophes being foreseen. But many signs indicate that it is the result of the

precedent "no snail". (Allusion to "We shall construct socialism, even at a snail's pace" of Bucharin—N. D. L. R.) The verification of the theory of socialism in one country, whose hour is close, will show its complete failure.

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Stalin Endangers the Proletarian Dictatorship

January 25

I am sending you some bits of news. First, the oldest: at the October celebrations about a thousand of our comrades were "withdrawn from circulation" throughout the Union. This is very gladdening, isn't it? This shows the good feeling that still prevails. You certainly know that a short while ago the two musketeers (Zinoviev and Kamenev) issued a declaration whereby they once again (how many times already?) rejoined the Party. This is what took place. When Zinoviev had to present his statement at the purging of his nucleus, a great number of members showed up; he was given 20 minutes. He started out in this manner. "To narrate my autobiography would be to give the entire history of the Party." This introduction was greeted with applause. After 20 minutes he had not yet reached the Third Party Congress. His time for speaking was extended. He harangued for three hours. His speech was often interrupted by applause. At the end of his speech, he made it clear, with carefully chosen phrases, that the Opposition, although it had made some mistakes, had in general been correct. "Thus," he concluded, "we were fighting not against the Party but against the Right wing." The next day he was called before the powers above who washed his head, black soap being necessary. Then he entered his declaration. The secretary of his nucleus was designated as conciliator.

With Kamenev, matters were entirely different. During the purging, he was given six minutes to state his position and not a second longer. But a private paper was stolen from his house in some unknown manner (he has certainly no luck with private papers). In this paper, among other things appeared this phrase: "L. D. (Trotsky) was right in saying 'In the Party nothing can really be achieved.'" The matter of this paper was brought up in the Political Bureau. They even wished to expel Kamenev. But he had opportunely written his statement, and the tempest subsided. This is how the "sages" of the Party conduct themselves. Their life is droll indeed. It is enough to drive one to drink.

Morale of Opposition Excellent

As for ourselves, our morale is excellent. We are following the advice of old Spinoza which you suggested to us: "Not to weep; not to laugh; but to understand." As for weeping, we don't weep. As for laughing, at times we do laugh. One cannot help laughing, however much it may be mixed with bitterness, when one reads in Pravda that the middle peasant is killing his cattle and liquidating his possessions because he firmly intends to join the Collective. He sacrifices his cattle because of enthusiasm. Seized with the sacred fervor of "socialist construction" and the "general line" he sells everything in order to prepare himself for complete collectivization. One cannot help laughing at the "Marxist explanation" given to these disturbing phenomena. As for what concerns the "to understand" of Spinoza, we understand the situation thus:

The plan to appeal to the Party and to the working class must be realized in the quickest possible time. This appeal must be in as brief form as possible in order that it may affect the entire working class, the entire Party. We must tell the "Chief" (the Central Committee) not only the objective causes but also those who are directly responsible, denouncing them by name.

In this appeal light must be thrown

upon the following: the Party regime, the situation of the working class, the industrialization, the complete collectivisation, the situation in the country, the command to wipe out the Kulak and the Nepman as a class at a time when, thanks to the Centrist policies, the middle and poor peasants are lined up against us and when, still thanks to these same policies, the ties with the working class are beginning to weaken. We must shout at the top of our voices that Centrism is on the road to cutting down the branch on which rests the entire Soviet regime.

The Slogans of the Opposition

In a word we must say that Stalin is destroying the dictatorship of the proletariat. It seems to me that in this appeal, we must also point out in what manner it will be possible to get out of the impasse into which Centrism has led the Party and the country. The issues will concern the betterment of the position of the working class in the political and economic field, workers democracy, secret ballot in the Party and possibly in the trade unions, and a Leninist course in the country. As for the administrative introduction of socialism into the country on a very weak technical base, a sharp end must be put to this stupidity. The order for the complete collectivisation must be abandoned. We could break our heads on this course. The order for the liquidation of the Kulak through orders from above, when the

with the poor and middle peasantry is being weakened and when the working class is undergoing increased pressure from the apparatus, must be condemned as adventurist. The slogans "Long live the 5-day week; down with uninterrupted work; long live the collective rest of the workers;" must be put forward. We must warn the working class that after the present ultra-Leftist course, Centrism can, with the same facility, introduce a new NEP.

It is certainly necessary to stress the fact that events are confirming our Plat form.

The putschist tactics of Molotov result in the decomposition of the Eastern Parties. A great deal of attention must be given to the questions concerning the Communist International, as they deserve. The Opposition must be reintegrated. The Party must be left to its own course. We must appeal to all the workers to drive out the stranglers of proletarian democracy. We must appeal to the workers to purge, without waiting for authorization from above, the Party, the trade unions and the Soviets, of the Thermidorian bureaucratic scum. We must state openly that the present leadership is leading the country and the dictatorship of the proletariat towards destruction, and that their policies are paving the way for counter-revolution in the country.

Yours,
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Employment Sharks Exposed

By Federated Press

Admissions in the United States Senate that "known unemployment is now 3,100,000," while "the actual unemployment is twice that amount," give tragic emphasis to a report on fraudulent practices of private employment agencies just issued by the American Assn. for Labor Legislation, in New York.

The report, prepared by George H. Trafton, summarizes hundreds of pages of information buried in the unpublished proceedings of the New York State Industrial Survey Commission. "Witness after witness testifying under oath," says Trafton "described flagrant abuses practiced by some of these commercial enterprises, conclusively demonstrating that the fee-charging employment agency business is still infested with unscrupulous characters who do not hesitate to mule the helpless, and who find the jobless worker an easy victim."

One of the most common complaints before the commission was misrepresentation of jobs. "Witnesses testified," says Trafton, "that after paying fees they had been sent to jobs which obviously they could not fill and for which they had not applied." Others swore that they had been sent off to temporary positions which had been represented to them as "permanent." Some told of going to distant cities for jobs which did not even exist. Still others testified that "the wages paid on the job were much lower than the agency had represented."

Theft of fees, collected in advance for jobs, but not returned as the law requires when no job was found, was also charged against the private agencies. Sometimes the employment sharks flatly refused to return the fees. At other times they would send the disappointed workers off on other wild goose chases. In this way, one witness stated "they would keep the men going back and forth until they got tired so that they would not come any more and they would not go back for their fee." Another witness reported having "seen fellows thrown down the stairs," when seeking return of their money.

Employers in on Gypping Game

Charges of fee-splitting with employers or foremen, repeatedly made against the private employment sharks in the past, are confirmed by this latest report. Under the fee-splitting system, the boss fires the worker after a few days, and asks the

labor-agent for another man. From each man who is sent to the job the agent collects a fee, which he divides with the employer who obligingly makes the vacancy for him. Thus, as one expert has put it, the employment shark "has three men for each job—one on the way to the job, one on the job and one on the way home from the job". An investigator in Buffalo testified before the commission that in one case he had "affidavits of the man who saw the actual payment of money by the fee-charging agent to the employer".

During the investigation, the United States Supreme Court handed down the typically capitalist-minded decision that the fees charged by private employment agents are not subject to regulation by law. Hence the agencies can charge the workers their very eye-teeth for a short-lived chance to be exploited. One instance is cited of a "woman who paid \$18 for a job which lasted only two weeks; so that her job cost her half of the total wages received. She returned to the agency, but received neither another position nor a refund."

Sending of girls or women to immoral resorts is also a standing grievance against the private agents investigated in the report.

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HALF MILLION STRIKERS IN INDIA IN 1929

WASHINGTON—Half a million workers in India went on strike in 1929, in some 140 industrial disputes, according to a report cabled to the Department of Commerce from its agent at Calcutta.

"The unsettled labor situation is not expected to improve materially in the near future," this agent reported, "as the growing demand of labor for higher wages to improve living conditions will no doubt continue to make for protracted strikes."

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JOBLESS COSTS ON CHARITY MOUNT

ST. LOUIS—(FP)—Unemployment is responsible for 60 cents of every dollar the Provident Assn., local family case work society, is spending for relief nowadays. One third, or 33 cents, of each relief dollar is the average spent the two-year period 1928-29 on families whose need was caused by the wage earner's lack of a job. Each winter the proportion chargeable to joblessness rises sharply, but this winter it has climbed to unprecedented heights.