

THE END OF THE STABILISATION OF CAPITALISM AND ECONOMIC STRUGGLES

(On the results of the XII Plenum of the E.C.C.I.).

THE XII Plenum of the E.C.C.I. established the fact of the end of the relative stabilisation of capitalism, and provided a fighting programme of action for the Communist vanguard, to enable it to lead the masses up to the battles for the dictatorship of the proletariat, by the development of the economic and political struggle.

The revolutionary upsurge, as the most important factor bringing about the end of the stabilisation of capitalism, has been expressed with particular clearness, during the recent period, in the *powerful development of economic fights*. A number of characteristic features of these struggles strongly expressed the increasing militant energy of the working class, the rapid and uneven *growth* of the revolutionary upsurge.

Since the XI Plenum of the E.C.C.I., the strike movement against the capitalist offensive on the standard of living of the masses has greatly *extended*. New strata of the proletariat have joined the struggle. This has found expression, chiefly, in the fact that the strike wave has extended to a number of countries (Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, etc.) which were particularly backward in the development of the economic struggle, up to the time of the XI Plenum. One of the *new features* in these strikes (mainly spontaneous) is the discovery of *an extensive stratum of active worker functionaries* in them, who have hitherto submitted to the leadership and discipline of the reformist trade union leaders, but are now standing actively at the head of the masses, in the struggle against these leaders, and the capitalist offensive. This was the case during the textile strike in Tvent in Holland, and especially in the miners' strike in Belgium, where thousands of rank and file worker activists showed the most tireless energy in rallying the strikers, and leading the strike, in spite of all the appeals of the reformist trade union centres to end the struggle. These strikes in which the masses took part; the overwhelming majority of them still following the Social-Democratic and reformist T.U. bureaucrats, particularly demonstrate very clearly what enormous changes are taking place among the widest strata of the proletariat.

Further, the widening of the international strike front finds special expression in those countries where the revolutionary upsurge is particularly high. In *Spain* there have been about 4,000 strikes since the XI Plenum of the

E.C.C.I.; in *China* during the last 16 months over 1,400,000 workers have struck; in *Poland* for the first three months of 1932 alone, the number of working days lost was almost twice as great as for the whole of 1931; in *Germany* where the wave of economic strikes weakened considerably for some months after the XI Plenum of the E.C.C.I., there have been 1,200 strikes in the last half-year, about 500 of them being in September and October this year. All this shows that new and fresh proletarian forces have arisen to resist the capitalist offensive.

The most important feature of the spreading strike wave is the *mass nature* of the economic battles, and the *revolutionary* character of the majority of them.

Up to the XI Plenum of the E.C.C.I., the majority of strikes, with the exception of the Berlin metal workers' strike, and the Ruhr miners' strike, were chiefly of a scattered character. But, during the recent period, the strikes have included tens, and hundreds of thousands of workers. 150,000 striking miners in Belgium, 50,000 miners in the strike in Czecho-Slovakia, over 40,000 miners of the Dombrov Basin on strike, and tens of thousands of textile workers at Lodz, in Poland, the huge strike of the Lancashire textile workers in England, the big miners' strike in Pennsylvania, Illinois and Kentucky in the U.S.A.—such is the picture of mass strikes, during the past year. The strikes have extended more and more to the *decisive* branches of industry. The miners have occupied the first ranks of the workers fighting against the capitalist offensive. A new feature is the drawing in of the metal workers, who lagged far behind in the economic struggle for a long period, into the strike movement. The commencement of a turnover among the metal workers was shown in the sympathetic strike of the metal workers in Belgium; the metal workers' strikes in Germany. (68 metal workers' strikes in September, 1932), in the movements of the metal workers in Poland, and that of the workers in the metal industry in Prague (Czecho-Slovakia).

A *new feature*, and the most important one in the majority of recent strikes, was the rapid speed at which they became revolutionised. This stood out very prominently in the strike of the miners at Brux in Czecho-Slovakia, where the struggle which commenced against the dismissal of workers in one pit ("Humboldt") grew into a mass strike of all the miners in the district,

grew further to the point of a general strike of the workers of the whole district, accompanied by mass district demonstrations in which 40-50,000 workers took part and bloody conflicts with the police and the troops. This was also the case in Belgium, where the miners' strike in the Borinage district grew into a general miners' strike, extending as the result of the metal workers joining the struggle, and was also marked by stubborn struggles in the streets against the armed forces of the bourgeois state apparatus. The revolutionary character of the Belgian strike was shown, among other things in the fact that the workers drove the "recognised" Social-Democratic leaders, like Vandervelde and Co. from their meetings. Not only the Polish strikes assumed a revolutionary character, but also such strikes as the fitters' in Zurich, in "democratic" Switzerland, during which the workers built barricades, and offered armed resistance to the police and the troops. A revolutionary character is more and more appearing in the partial strikes in Germany, which are taking place, in spite of the actual prohibition of strikes by the Papen Government. There was a clear revolutionary character in the strikes in Barcelona, Seville, and other towns in Spain, and the economic strikes in China and Japan, where they were closely interwoven with the anti-imperialist struggle, and the struggle against war. In the economic struggles of the recent period, the masses produced *new forms of struggle*. The seizure of the factory by the workers in the "Hortensia" factory in Poland, the successful struggle against the closing of factories and dismissals in Reichenberg (Czechoslovakia), the slowing down of the conveyor by the workers (in Germany) showed the great variety of forms in which the struggle of the workers against the capitalist offensive took place.

A new feature is the marked *strengthening of the leading rôle of the Communist Parties and the revolutionary T.U. movement* in the economic struggle. The Communist Parties and the red T.U. organisations in some of the big strikes have been able to give examples of revolutionary leadership to the struggling masses. In Poland, the number of strikes led by the Communist Party and the R.T.U.O. for the last two years has steadily grown. Whereas from September, 1930, to April, 1931, the R.T.U.O. in Poland led 53 per cent. of all the strikes, in the seven months (May to December) of 1931, the percentage rose to 67 and in the first quarter of 1932 it even rose to 82 per cent. The Communist Party and the red trade unions of Czecho-Slovakia led the heroic strike of the miners of Brux, and showed great initiative in establishing the united front

from below, and in revolutionising the struggle. Many of the strikes taking place in Germany in the last few months have been led by the Communist Party and the R.T.U.O. The Communist Party and red trade unions of Japan, though driven underground, have been able in the recent period to stand at the head of a number of strikes and some of them have been carried out in an exemplary manner (the strike of the underground railway workers in Tokyo, etc.). The growth of the leading rôle of the Communist Parties and the revolutionary T.U. organisations in economic struggles was accompanied by an increase in the number of *successful* strikes, especially in Poland, where in the first quarter of 1932 the workers won 60 per cent. of the strikes, in Germany—35 per cent. (in September and October) and in Czecho-Slovakia.

The powerful surge of economic fights and the successful results of numerous strikes, have utterly discredited the reformist-Trotskyist-Brandlerite theory of the impossibility of carrying on strikes under conditions of economic crisis. They have shown what a mighty lever the development of the economic struggle of the proletariat is for the revolutionising of the masses, and leading them to decisive struggles; with crushing force.

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The end of the stabilisation of capitalism, and the transition to a new cycle of revolutions and wars, not only does not minimise the rôle of the economic struggle, but, on the contrary, makes the development of all forms of this struggle a specially urgent task of the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary T.U. movement. The new feature consists in the fact, that the period of social reforms has come to an end. The bourgeoisie are unable to bribe certain strata of the workers to the previous extent. The wide capitalist offensive on the standard of life of all sections of the proletariat and the toilers is one of the main lines of the struggle of capital for a capitalist way out of the crisis. Hence, the "sharp contraction of the material basis of reformism," and hence the "cynical treachery to the workers' interests by Social-Democracy," because when Social-Democracy carries out its function as the chief social bulwark of the bourgeoisie, this means, under present conditions, the refusal to struggle for the slightest reforms, and direct support for the capitalist offensive. This is why "the struggle for the elementary needs of the masses brings them into conflict with the very foundation of the existence of capitalism" (XII Plenum). This is why this struggle plays such a tremendous rôle in the undermining of the

mass influence of Social-Democracy, and the reformist T.U. bureaucrats.

The development of economic fights is of special importance at the present time, for the very reason that, as the experience of the recent period entirely shows, it "brings the workers into conflicts" with all the forces of the bourgeoisie and their state apparatus, with Social-Democracy and the reformist T.U. bureaucracy, and makes it possible and necessary to revolutionise their struggle for everyday demands more than ever before, to raise them to higher and higher stages, *to convert them into a direct political struggle* against the capitalist system itself. The significance of the economic struggle is increased by the fact that the wave of economic strikes forms the best ground for the development of *mass political strikes*, which are the *concrete slogans of the present day* in a number of countries. The wide spread of the economic struggle helps to *combine* both forms of strike, which gives the struggle special intensity and force. It is possible to draw the widest strata of the workers into the struggle for the most urgent economic demands, including those who are not yet prepared to act on the political slogans of the Communist vanguard. But, having roused these masses to the economic struggle, it is possible and necessary to lead them further to bigger struggles. For this reason the Plenum pointed out that:

"The economic struggle of the proletariat . . . in the overwhelming majority of countries, at the present stage, is the *fundamental link* for leading the masses to the forthcoming big revolutionary battles."

The increasing importance of the economic struggle, under the conditions of the end of the stabilisation of capitalism, makes it still more impermissible to *lag behind*, in the organisation of the struggle of the masses for their urgent demands. The wide extent of the capitalist offensive, and the enormous intensification of the class antagonisms in capitalist countries, renders it possible to draw the *majority* of the working class into the economic struggle. This is, at the present time, the central task. In practice, so far, in the chief countries, only hundreds of thousands have been embraced by strikes for economic demands, and the actions of the unemployed; of the millions who are being subjected to a worsening of the conditions of labour and life. For this reason, the XII Plenum laid down, as the chief point in the lagging behind of the revolutionary movement, that:

"The Communist vanguard and the revolutionary T.U. movement however, has not since the XI Plenum of the E.C.C.I. succeeded in rousing the majority of the working class to

the struggle against the unceasing attacks of capital."

One of the chief causes of this lagging behind is rooted in the *insufficient* extent to which the majority of Communist Parties, and revolutionary T.U. organisations, took the line of the *independent* development of *all forms* of the economic struggle.

A large number of strikes, especially in France, U.S.A. and Great Britain, but also in Spain, China, India, and a number of other countries, were not only without the leadership of the Communist Parties and the revolutionary T.U. movement, but frequently took place quite apart from them. In particular, the under-estimation of partial factory strikes led to such a position in Germany, in 1931, that for several months, when the employers cut wages in various factories, the Red trade unions and the R.T.U.O. did not take steps to organise the masses for resistance to this offensive of capital, which played quite an important rôle in the weakening of the strike movement, for a certain period in Germany. This fact itself arose, because the Party cells, the sections of the red trade unions, and the groups of the R.T.U.O. had weak connections with the working masses. On the other hand, a correct line, for the everyday defence of the needs of the workers, and the principle of organising partial strikes in separate factories, by the Communist Parties and the Red T.U. organisations in Poland and Czecho-Slovakia, led to the development of an unbroken wave of strikes in these countries, and prepared the ground for mass economic strikes. The increased attention paid recently to the development of partial strikes in individual factories by the German C.P. and the R.T.U.O. was an important prerequisite for the new wave of strikes now taking place in Germany.

The chief cause of the insufficient development of the economic struggle of the masses, was the fact that the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary T.U. movement, still show very poor ability in overcoming the chief hindrance to the wide development of the strike movement of the workers—the mass influence of Social-Democracy and the reformist T.U. bureaucrats—in the process of the struggle, by establishing the united front from below.

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To prepare the masses for decisive fights means, above all, to tear them away from the influence of Social-Democracy and the reformist T.U. bureaucrats — the chief social bulwark of the bourgeoisie.

Social-Democracy and the reformist trade unions have unquestionably weakened, during the

recent period, but they still carry with them millions of workers, and in some countries, the basic strata of the proletariat. In face of the tremendous unrest, and the growth of the militant sentiments of the masses, the Social-Fascist leaders are adopting the most expert manoeuvres to keep the masses under their influence. They are not only increasing their "Socialist" phraseology, but they are heading given strikes, for the purpose of blunting their edge, which is directed against the whole capitalist system, and they even declare one-day general strikes (March 16 in Poland). The Social-Fascist leaders fully understand, that they can only fulfil their rôle, as the chief social bulwark of the bourgeoisie, when they have considerable proletarian masses with them. This is the reason they now select those forms and methods of wrecking the struggle of the working class, which will hide the treachery of these leaders, as far as possible, from the masses. Only right opportunists could fail to see, that the main feature in the tactics of the reformist trade union bureaucrats, when carrying out these "left" manoeuvres, including the declaration of individual strikes, is to guarantee such position for themselves as will enable them to strangle the militant initiative, and the militant actions of the masses. Their influence on enormous masses of workers, and the still feeble exposure of these manoeuvres by the Communist Parties enables them to accomplish this task in many places yet, hindering the revolutionising of the working masses in this way. Thus, they carry out their function, as the main bulwark of the bourgeoisie.

The ways and methods of surmounting this chief hindrance to the development of the struggle of the masses, are the organisation of this struggle by the extensive and consistent operation of the tactic of the *united front from below*, bringing about a transformation in the work *inside the reformist and other similar trade unions*, and correct mass work in the *factories* and among the *unemployed*.

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The programme of the Comintern* laid down that:

"United front tactics occupy an important place in the tactics of the Communist Parties throughout the whole *pre-revolutionary period*.

The correct and wide operation of this tactic is of special importance, at the present time, when it is necessary to prepare the masses at accelerated speed for the decisive struggle for power by the organisation of economic and political fights.

The possibilities of the *organisation of the united front* have increased enormously. The bourgeoisie are conducting their offensive on the standard of life of the proletariat on a wide front. This offensive is striking at every section of workers and wide masses of toilers. Illusions are shattering which have restrained backward masses of workers from joint struggle with the revolutionary workers. The world economic crisis, and the rapid complete impoverishment of masses has swept away the illusions of part of the workers, that a "planned" improvement of the standard of life of the masses under capitalism was possible. The rise of the strike wave, and the successful outcome of many strikes has delivered a shattering blow at the reformist theory, that it is impossible to conduct successful strikes during a period of crisis. The crisis of bourgeois democracy, such things as the decree, which swept the Social-Democratic ministers of the Prussian government from their posts, undermine the Social-Democratic theory of "the democratic conquest" of the bourgeois state among the masses. Great heavings are taking place among the broad masses of reformist workers. Ever new strata of the proletariat are feeling the strivings of the workers towards unity in the struggle.

The experience of the economic struggles of the recent period, has shown that the organisation of strikes, and their result depends, above all, on the *correct* application of the tactic of the united front *from below*. All opportunist and bureaucratic distortions of this tactic lead to the retarding of the struggle, the defeat of strikes, and damage to the influence of the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary T.U. movement. In some places in Germany, the development of the economic struggle was hindered, by an underestimation of the tactic of the united front, in the organisation of the economic struggle; and the replacement of *proletarian democracy*, by domineering, on the part of various organs of the R.T.U.O. This took place during the movement in the Ruhr in January, 1932,* and in some other places. It is very instructive to compare the results of the correct use of the tactic of the united front during the miners' strike in Brux and the opportunist distortion of it in Ostrau in April, 1932,† and in Kladno in September, 1932.‡ On the basis of the initiative and revolutionary activity of the red trade unions, the presentation of correct demands, the application of wide proletarian democracy, a correct approach to the masses, and the lower activists of the reformist and national-socialist trade unions, and

*See "Communist International," No. 11/12 (1932).

†ibid.

‡ibid.

a decisive struggle against the leaders of these unions, on the basis of the united front from below, it was possible to carry on a mass strike in Brux, to fight for over a month, to carry the strike to the point of a general strike of the whole district, to obtain partial successes, to expose the reformist T.U. bureaucrats, and to raise the authority of the red trade unions. In Ostrau, the leaders of the red trade union, when preparing for the strike, attempted to "supplement" the united front from below by concessions to the reformist leaders — the united front from above, — thus making it possible for the T.U. bureaucrats to carry through a series of deceptive manoeuvres ("we are fighting side-by-side with the red trade unions"), and it was impossible to develop a wide strike. The struggle was wrecked.

The attempt to form a united front from above, when preparing for the strike in Kladno, in September this year, the "trifling concessions" during the preparations when negotiating with the reformist leaders, led to the development of the struggle in Kladno being restrained for several weeks.

The revolutionary operation of the tactic of the united front includes, as an inseparable part, the confirmation of the *leading rôle of the Communist Parties and the revolutionary T.U. movement*, in the course of the struggle. This cannot be achieved by giving commands, but by practical initiative, and by concrete leadership of the struggle, by all the supporters of the red trade unions, and the R.T.U.O. In the strike at Brux, in the strike of the Warsaw tramway-men, in the Berlin metal workers' strike, the red trade unions, and the R.T.U.O. obtained the leading rôle by working out and formulating the slogans of the strikes, putting them before the workers for discussion, agitating for the struggle for these demands, being the most active members of the strike committees, mobilising the whole organisation to aid the strikers, bringing forward sharper slogans and higher forms of the struggle at suitable stages, making correct propositions, convincing the workers of their correctness and consolidating the united front of the strikers. It was precisely because the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary T.U. organisations, *as such*, and their members, were the foremost fighters, and the most active leaders in the struggle, not usurping the place of the organs of leadership, and their members in the struggle, but activising them in every way, that the masses saw and understood the leading rôle of the red T.U. organisations in these struggles.

These strikes, and the whole experience of the economic struggle in the recent period shows

that the successful realisation of the united front presupposes the most decisive resistance to opportunist attempts to hide the face of the Communist Parties and the red T.U. organisations, and obliterate their principal line in the struggle. *It will never be possible to split the reformist workers away from their leaders by making concessions in principle in the name of "unity at any price."* Such concessions frequently arise from an incorrect view, that there are no divergencies in principle between the revolutionary workers and the Social-Democratic workers. Such views promote the castration of the revolutionary content of the united front tactic. The purpose of this tactic consists precisely in drawing the reformist workers into the front against capital, by convincing them, by daily intercourse in the factories and the trade unions, by practical defence of the interests of all workers, and putting forward correct slogans, for which the reformist workers are prepared to fight now, and in the process of the fights for everyday demands, to show them that the path of the revolutionary class struggle is the only way to the liberation of the proletariat. The degree to which the illusions of the reformist workers are dispersed concerning bourgeois democracy, concerning the rôle of their leaders, depends, to a tremendous extent, on the degree to which the leading rôle of the revolutionary organisations has been confirmed in these fights, and the firm line of principle carried out by them. "An opportunist obliteration of differences of principle when operating the tactic of the united front" (resolution of the Plenum) can be of benefit only to the reformist T.U. bureaucrats.

The tremendous significance of the tactic of the united front, for preparing the masses for decisive fights, requires a determined elimination of the *underestimation and insufficient operation of this tactic and disbelief in the possibility of drawing the reformist, Christian, nationalist and other workers into the struggle*. The miners' strike and the general strike in Belgium, the Lancashire textile strike in England, the strike at Brux, are clear evidence that the reformist workers want to fight at the present time, and are fighting, against the wishes of their leaders. *Chatter about the impossibility of organising the united front for the struggle along with the reformist and other workers, which frequently arises from a sectarian estimate of the reformist workers and the lower activists of the reformist trade unions as "little Zoergiebels," serves as a cloak for opportunist passivity in the organisation of the united front*. This explains, to a certain extent, why the tactic of the united front has entered very weakly, as yet, into the practical

work of the red trade unions and the R.T.U.O. Even in Germany, the revolutionary T.U. organisations, in the course of many months in 1931 and the beginning of 1932, let slip many possibilities of appealing to the reformist, Christian "Hirsch-Dunker" and other workers, and to the lower activists of these unions, to enter into a joint struggle against wage-cuts, dismissals, and the reduction of unemployment relief. And the fact that such appeals, supported by suitable mass work, would have produced good results, is shown by the wide response given to the appeal of the C.C. of the German Communist Party and the all-German committee of the R.T.U.O. in April, 1932, to prepare for a joint struggle with all organisations which wish to take concrete steps for the mobilisation of the masses to resist the capitalist offensive. The weakness of the red trade unions of France, and the extreme backwardness of the Minority Movement in Great Britain, in the independent leadership of the economic struggle arise, to an extremely great extent, from the insufficient use of the tactic of the united front, by these organisations. A question which is closely connected with the tactic of the united front is the *exposure of the manœuvres of the reformist leaders in economic struggles*. When preparing and carrying on a series of strikes, the revolutionary trade union organisations have frequently been caught unawares, by the varied manœuvres of the reformist trade union bureaucracy. This was the case when preparing for the October strike of miners in the Ruhr in 1931,* when the leaders of the A.D.G.B. applied to the Brüning government with a demand to suspend the wage cuts, announced their willingness to fight, and together with the Christian and Hirsch-Dunker unions issued a declaration on the "united front of all trade unions." This was the case in the U.S.A. during the miners' strike, when the "left" reformist leaders issued a deceitful appeal for the "united front." This was the case with the declaration of the one-day general strike on March 16th, 1932, in Poland. Separate revolutionary trade union organisations either did not foresee the possibility of such manœuvres or did not react to them, did not take account of them or allowed themselves, to be deceived by their frequently very "left" maskings. This arises, on the one hand, from the underestimation of the manœuvring ability of the reformist trade union bureaucracy, particularly from the incorrect opinion, that the reformist trade unions will not lead any strikes and are unable to do so. On the other hand, this is explained by the insufficient initiative of the revolutionary trade unions,

in the organisation of the broad united front from below. In places where the red trade unions and the R.T.U.O. *actively and correctly* created the united front from below (Brux, the tramway strike in Warsaw, Borinage), the reformist manœuvres broke down against this united front of the proletariat.

For the successful organisation of the united front from below, it is necessary not only to eliminate the contemptuous attitude to the *material success of the strikes*, which is to be observed in some supporters of the revolutionary trade union movement. In addition to the fact that the material success of the workers in a strike hits at the capitalist plans for getting out of the crisis at the expense of the wide working masses, it still further rouses the fighting spirit of the workers and stimulates the extension of the front of the strike struggle. To the extent that the reformist or Christian workers become convinced by experience, that the supporters of the revolutionary trade union movement try in practice to improve their material situation with all their force by the struggle, it will be easier to draw them into the united front organised for this struggle.

The wide and correct application of the tactic of the united front below, is the chief weapon for undermining the mass influence of the reformist trade union bureaucracy, for the development of the struggle of the masses, and rousing them to decisive fights.

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The preparation of the masses for the struggle for power, the tearing of these masses from under the influence of the Social-Democratic and reformist trade union bureaucracy, requires a *radical change in the field of revolutionary work, inside the reformist, Christian and other trade unions*.

The reformist trade unions are the fundamental mass basis of Social-Democracy. Every position won by the revolutionary trade union opposition in the reformist trade unions, is a fissure in the basis of the main social bulwark of the bourgeoisie. To win the majority of the workers organised in the reformist trade unions to the side of Communism means, in the chief capitalist countries, to destroy the mass influence of Social-Democracy.

For this very reason, the Comintern, and the R.I.L.U., have repeatedly and insistently pointed out the necessity of extensive work by the adherents of the revolutionary trade unions inside the reformist trade unions. They demanded the strengthening of this work with special insistence at the beginning, and throughout the whole course of the revolutionary upsurge (the third

*See "Communist International," No. 11/12 (1932).

period). The IX Plenum of the E.C.C.I., the VI Congress of the Comintern, the X Plenum of the E.C.C.I., the V Congress of the R.I.L.U., the XI Plenum of the E.C.C.I., the session of the Central Council of the R.I.L.U., emphasised again and again, the urgency and enormous importance for the cause of the proletarian revolution, of work inside the reformist trade unions, particularly at the present period. In this connection, they pointed out that this work is the most necessary prerequisite for the independent leadership of economic struggles and the formation and strengthening of the independent revolutionary trade union movement, i.e., for the carrying out of the chief tasks of the sections of the R.I.L.U. in the period of revolutionary upsurge.

In spite of this, even in such countries as Germany and Great Britain, where there are old and really mass trade unions, the struggle for the organised workers inside these unions not only failed to strengthen but in some sectors it even became weaker.

The cause of this is rooted, above all, in the existence of a series of incorrect opportunist views in the ranks of the revolutionary trade union movement with regard to the work in the reformist trade unions, and in the estimation of the workers organised in these unions.

One of these ideas—the right opportunist view—is trade union legalism, retreats and capitulation before the trade union bureaucrats. Such ideas are concretely expressed in the fact that some sections of the revolutionary trade union opposition in the reformist trade unions have limited their work to the framework of the trade union rules, the framework “permitted” by the reformist trade union bureaucracy. And as the latter are fighting against the wide development of the economic struggle of the workers with all their strength, against the promotion of single lists at the elections for the factory committees with the inclusion of unorganised workers, against trade union democracy, against the breaking of government arbitration decisions, etc., the right opportunists stopped their oppositional work, on the grounds that such work will lead to their expulsion from the unions, or carried on their work in a reformist spirit. Opportunists of this kind where they have displayed some activity, have put forward the slogan “make the bureaucrats fight.” The idea behind this slogan is the abandonment of an independent struggle against the wishes of the reformist trade union bureaucrats, and to consent to fight only with the blessing of the bureaucrats. These opportunists have carried on an open and concealed struggle against

the formation and strengthening of the *independent* revolutionary T.U. movement.

Such a right opportunist line is chiefly explained by the fact, that the various positions which the revolutionary trade union opposition has, in the reformist trade unions (over 200 small local boards, and a number of officials in the reformist trade unions in Germany, about 100 officials in the unions in Austria, various positions in the trade unions in England, etc.), have in most cases been either utilised very poorly, or else not at all, for the struggle with the trade union bureaucrats and the extension of the influence of the trade union opposition in the unions.

Another opportunist line — the “left” line — consists mainly of an underestimation of the work inside the reformist trade unions, the confusing of the proletarian mass of members and the lower activists with the treacherous leaders, the statement that the workers organised in the reformist trade unions are a “solid reactionary mass” and the statement that, in view of this the “members of the reformist trade unions cannot be won over.” This theory, which has found the most complete expression in the views of Merker and his followers in Germany, has especially hindered the organisation of work inside the reformist trade unions, and to the extent that it has not been completely eliminated among some sections, it still hinders the work. Opportunists of this type draw a complete parallel between the labour aristocracy and the whole mass of skilled workers. And as the reformist trade unions are recruited principally among the skilled and trained workers, these “leftists” consider the whole mass of workers organised in the reformist trade unions and the lower reformist trade union activists to be a *social* group connected with the bourgeoisie and call them a “reactionary mass.” Therefore, the opportunists of the “left” declare the winning over of these masses for the revolutionary class struggle impossible, and work in the reformist trade unions, useless.

The whole of this “opinion” has nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism and is a “leftist” covering for capitulation to the reformist trade union bureaucracy, to the difficulties of hard everyday work for the winning over of the masses from under their influence. The aristocracy of labour *never was* equivalent to the whole mass of skilled workers, but consists, in the main, of Social-Democratic party functionaries, trade and municipal bureaucrats and others from the highest ranks of the skilled workers. Such a theory is still more harmful in the present period because, with capitalist rationalisation, which has led to a considerable levelling in the proletariat, and a contraction of the economic possibility for

the bourgeoisie to bribe certain sections of the workers to the *previous extent*, the face of the aristocracy of labour has changed.

Certain sections of the workers in industry who are bribed by the bourgeoisie are now recruited chiefly from the best paid; "boosters" at the conveyor, from foremen, overlookers and such like. The new feature at the present time is the fact that the wide offensive of capital on the standard of life of the masses is striking now at *all sections of the workers*, and strikes very strongly at the skilled and trained workers. The new feature is, that in connection with this general sharpening of class contradictions, and the open bankruptcy of the reformist theories, the extensive unrest among the masses is spreading to wider and wider groups of the lower reformist trade union activists. This creates enormous new possibilities for successful work in the reformist trade unions, for the winning over of the masses in them.

The development of work inside the reformist trade unions has been hindered also by the refusal of part of our supporters to fight for elected positions, and put forward demands, at trade union meetings and conferences. This refusal is explained away by the fact that as it is impossible to win the central apparatus of the trade unions, there is no sense in fighting at all for elective functions. However, the X Plenum of the E.C.C.I. pointed out—and experience has fully confirmed—that it is necessary to fight for the elected functions, and that it is possible to win a number of lower organs and functions in the trade unions. As for the putting forward of demands by the trade union opposition and the defence of them in the trade unions, this is absolutely necessary, so that the organised workers shall know what the trade union opposition is fighting for, what it concretely demands for the protection of the interests of the workers, and also for the exposure of the trade union bureaucrats who resist the mobilisation of the masses for the struggle and oppose these demands. The working out of demands by the R.T.U.O., their presentation at general meetings of the trade union, and the struggle for them, has nothing in common with the opportunist tactic of "making the bureaucrats fight."

The "leftist" slogan of "destroying the trade unions" has done much harm to the organisation of revolutionary work inside the reformist trade unions. This incorrect slogan led to the expulsion of revolutionary workers from the unions for a number of years, in the first revolutionary crisis, and thus to the strengthening of the influence of the reformist trade union bureaucrats, on the organised workers. During the

recent period, this slogan, which was long ago condemned by the Comintern and the R.I.L.U. has again been repeated by individual supporters of the trade union opposition. For instance, in Germany in the summer of 1932 this slogan was propagated in some of the organs of the revolutionary press, and put concretely, in the form of the demand not to pay membership dues to the reformist trade unions. The German Communist Party and the R.T.U.O. were perfectly correct in condemning this slogan, and preventing its dissemination. Not the "destruction" of the reformist trade unions, but the winning over of the masses organised in them, is the slogan of the Comintern and the R.I.L.U.

Something which inevitably hinders the development of the work of the R.T.U.O., in the reformist trade unions, is the mistaken statement that "the reformist trade unions are schools of capitalism." Such a definition of the essence of the reformist trade unions is not only incapable of mobilising the workers to strengthen revolutionary work in these unions, but it must lead to the slogan of "destroying the trade unions." The definition of the reformist trade unions as "schools of capitalism," presupposes, that the members of these unions, who go into the unions to defend their everyday interests, and join them voluntarily, are conscious helpers of the bourgeoisie, which is putting the real state of affairs upside down. To the extent that Communists, and the trade union opposition, led by them, carry on a struggle in the reformist trade unions, the latter are not schools of capitalism, but the arena of struggle between the Communist Party and the Social-Democrats for the masses. This incorrect idea cannot help in any way to expose the menshevik theory of the reformist unions as "schools of Socialism."

In Germany, a great rôle in the weakening of the revolutionary work in the reformist, Christian and Hirsch-Dunker unions was played by the completely incorrect contrasting of the task of forming an independent revolutionary trade union movement, to the task of work inside the reformist trade unions. This explains the fact that, after the formation of the red union of metal workers in Berlin and the red union of miners, the R.T.U.O. was liquidated in the Berlin metal works, and in the mines of the Ruhr.

The revolutionary trade union opposition is the organisation which must include in its ranks both the organised and the unorganised. Its chief tasks were defined by the XII Plenum as:

"The independent leadership of economic struggles, work in the reformist, catholic and other trade unions, the isolation of the treacherous trade union bureaucracy from the masses of

members, and the formation of a mass organisation linking up the Communist Party with the working class. . . . The revolutionary trade union opposition, on the wave of the growing revolutionary upsurge and the movement of the masses against the reformist trade union bureaucrats, must become a lever and an organisational base for the formation of independent red unions "

Some of the supporters of the R.T.U.O. have not understood the multiplicity of the tasks of this organisation, and in particular have almost entirely left out of account the task of work in the reformist trade unions. But the whole experience of the recent period has shown that the strengthening and growth of the red trade unions and the R.T.U.O. depends directly on the extent to which revolutionary work is carried on in the reformist, Christian and other trade unions.

The exposure of all right and "left" opportunistic attitudes is the primary prerequisite for a real turn towards work in these unions. Comrade Piatnitsky especially emphasised the importance of this task in his speech at the Plenum.

A very important matter is the question of the contents and the *methods* of the revolutionary work inside the reformist and other trade unions. The contents of the work must consist in the everyday defence of the needs of the organised workers, inside the unions and in the factories, the development of their struggle, for which purpose it is necessary to have an exact knowledge of their conditions of labour, the contents and the date of expiry of the collective agreements made by the union, to fight for trade union democracy, for the winning of elective positions in the unions so as to utilise them, for the mobilisation of the masses for economic and political struggles, to carry on agitation and propaganda among the members of the unions, and concretely expose the treacherous policy of the reformist trade union bureaucracy. For this purpose, the supporters of the trade union opposition must work out concrete demands corresponding to the most burning needs of the workers, must speak at all meetings, conferences, congresses of the trade unions, and take part in all the elections to the organs of the unions, etc. Revolutionary work will only be successful in the reformist and other trade unions when it is all carried on in a *decisive irreconcilable struggle against the reformist, Christian and other trade union bureaucrats.*

* * * *

The leading of the masses to the struggles for power means, further, the organisation and the wide extension of the struggle *and the movement of the unemployed.* In a number of the chief capitalist countries, the unemployed and the part-

time workers form half, or more than half of the whole proletariat. The bourgeoisie try in every way to sow dissension between the employed and the unemployed. In this respect, extremely characteristic is the emergency decree of the Papen government in Germany, which allows the employers to give some of the unemployed work, while keeping the total wages paid unchanged, i.e., by reducing the wages of the employed workers, and by giving subsidies from the government funds, which have been obtained from taxes on the toilers. This measure, which cannot either eliminate or reduce unemployment, is intended by the bourgeoisie to drive the employed and the unemployed against each other. On the other hand, experience has shown the great importance of the development of actions of the unemployed for the spreading of strikes and vice versa, the importance of the strike movement for the extension of the struggle of the unemployed. *The struggle of the unemployed for relief and against forced labour drives them into direct conflict with the bourgeois government.* All this shows the "growing political significance of the unemployed movement." Out of the millions of unemployed, only tens or hundreds of thousands have so far taken part in the activity of the unemployed. During the recent period, the unemployed movement, in a number of countries (Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, U.S.A.), has even weakened, and in almost all countries except Great Britain, where this movement has risen again, it is noticeably lagging behind the strike movement of the employed workers.

Such a situation can be explained, to a considerable extent, by the poor ability of the revolutionary trade union movement to put forward the partial demands which most excite the unemployed and to organise the struggle for these demands, and especially the insufficient work for linking up the struggle of the employed with that of the unemployed. In a number of countries, the struggle of the unemployed at the time of its highest rise (in Germany, winter 1931, in Czecho-Slovakia, autumn 1931 and winter 1932, etc.) began to develop precisely on the basis of partial demands such as a single grant of money, boots, warm premises for the unemployed, for the issue of coal gratis, against the eviction of the unemployed from their houses, and such everyday questions. The revolutionary trade union organisations, however, do not know how to evoke the movement of the unemployed systematically and every day in defence of these demands. Therefore, it becomes more difficult to organise and extend the movement for bigger demands. Many correct programmes of demands

of the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary trade union organisations, are not made well known to the wide masses of the unemployed, and therefore do not become real programmes of struggle. As for linking up the struggle of the unemployed with the struggle of the employed workers, it may be said that, although it has been possible to mobilise the unemployed to support the strikes of the employed workers, etc., very feeble steps have been taken to call strikes, and other forms of action, of the employed to defend the demands of the unemployed. The Plenum specially emphasised the necessity of linking these up, from this point of view, in particular. This, among other things, means a strengthening of the struggle against dismissals, for the payment of compensation to dismissed workers, and against the laws of forced labour for the youth and the unemployed.

The Plenum made it obligatory for all revolutionary organisations to make a start immediately to develop the struggle of the unemployed and to permeate all the work among the unemployed, with systematic explanations to the proletarian masses that "unemployment is an inevitable accompaniment of the capitalist system, and can only be eliminated by the dictatorship of the proletariat."

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The carrying out of all these tasks depends on the condition, and the concrete mass work of the red trade unions and the R.T.U.O. The red trade union organisations can carry out their function as the mass basis of the Communist Party and the transmission belts to the masses, if they are able to take in broader strata of workers, than those who are organised in the Communist Parties. However, the growth of the red trade union organisations, has lagged behind the growth of the Communist Parties in the recent period. In Germany, where the Communist Party has almost doubled since the XI Plenum, the R.T.U.O. and the red trade unions have been almost stagnant. In Austria, the Communist Party has grown to 7,000 members and the R.T.U.O. to only 3,400. In Czechoslovakia, where the Party has likewise almost doubled, the red trade unions, which are numerically stronger than the Communist Party, have increased by only 50 per cent. In France, where the unitary trade unions include several times as many workers as the Communist Party, the number of members of the red trade unions has even slightly dropped. This shows that the revolutionary trade union organisations still do not sufficiently know how to adopt those forms and methods which correspond to the aims of the

unions, as the broadest mass proletarian organisations. In the red trade union organisations, there is still a completely insufficient development of *trade union democracy*, to ensure the activation of all the members of the red trade unions, and the R.T.U.O., and their attraction into the work. In some of the red trade union organisations there is an absolutely impermissible super-centralism, and bureaucratic methods of giving commands, and substituting the mass of members by the trade union organs. Many of the red trade unions have not yet made the *factory* the principal basis of their organisation and their work. The basic work of the red trade unions and the R.T.U.O. is still carried on *outside* the factories and mills. And this, in turn, leads to weak contacts with the wide masses.

Contact with the masses is the chief prerequisite for the development of struggles, and the growth of the unions and the R.T.U.O. Without it, it is impossible to know the sentiments of the workers exactly, their needs; it is impossible to seize on the concrete link which can put the masses into motion. But close contact with the masses presupposes the activation of all members of the union, and the transfer of the work to the factory, with concentration on the *biggest* of factories, to the reformist unions, to the labour exchanges. At the present moment when we are on the threshold of new changes among the working masses, in a situation which was defined by the Plenum as "fraught with unexpected outbreaks and sharp turns in events," close everyday contact with the masses takes on unusual importance.

From the insufficient development of trade union democracy, and poor contact with the masses, arises the weakness of the *cadres* of the revolutionary trade union movement, their extremely slow renewal and enlargement, in spite of the discovery of tens of thousands of new activists in the numerous battles. And this, in turn, hinders the rapid elimination of Social-Democratic, and anarcho-syndicalist methods of work which still exist in some parts of the revolutionary trade union movement.

The main thing necessary to convert the red trade unions, and the R.T.U.O., into real mass organisations, is a clear line for the organisation and development of all forms of the economic struggle of the proletariat for their everyday demands, and an efficient participation in the struggle against Fascism, reaction and imperialist war.

The manner in which the transmission belt to the masses will function depends, above all on the motor—the Communist Parties. This is why the

Plenum made it obligatory on all the Communist Parties to form *fractions* in the red trade unions and the R.T.U.O., to see that they work properly and systematically, and thus to strengthen the Party leadership of the red trade union movement.

The conditions of the end of capitalist stabilisation make it necessary and possible for the *independent revolutionary trade union movement* to become consolidated in a short time and to become a real mass organisation.

* * *

In view of the approaching decisive fights of the proletariat, it is necessary to carry on a determined *struggle against opportunism*. The Plenum pointed out that:

"The development of the economic struggle of the proletariat under conditions of the end of capitalist stabilisation urgently requires that the Communist vanguard pursues a clear and distinct struggle against opportunism, which becomes more dangerous in proportion as the wave of the revolutionary struggle "of the proletariat rises higher."

There can be no question of a really wide development of the mass struggle, of the correct adoption of the tactic of the united front, of a transformation of the work of the reformist trade unions, of the formation of a mass independent trade union movement, without an increased struggle on two fronts, and without a concentration of Bolshevik fire against the right *chief* danger in the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary trade union movement. The red trade union organisations are obliged to embrace the widest strata of workers, including the backward workers, but frequently they have not reached the stage of understanding all the tasks of the Communist vanguard. Any weakening of the struggle against opportunism and the right danger, as the chief danger in the revolutionary trade union

movement, must inevitably have an exceedingly harmful effect on the winning over of the masses, and their consolidation in the revolutionary camp. The Plenum pointed out that capitulation to the reformist trade union bureaucracy and "bloes" with them, neglect to link up partial economic demands with final slogans, the hiding of the face of the red trade unions in economic struggles, neglect to form the R.T.U.O., and other right wing attitudes in the ranks of the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary trade union movement, are the *chief* danger at the given stage of development, to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat.

At the same time, it is necessary to carry on a most determined Bolshevik struggle against "left" sectarian ideas (the confusion of Social-Democratic workers with their treacherous leaders, underestimation of the tactic of the united front and work inside the reformist trade unions, the theory of "solid reactionary masses," "the destruction of the reformist trade unions," "the reformist trade unions as schools of capitalism," etc.), which hinder really close contacts with the masses, the development of fights and the struggle against the right danger.

The necessity of special vigilance in the struggle against opportunism is signalled by the right opportunist outbreak of Humbert Droz at the Plenum of the C.C.C.P. of Switzerland, and the revival of right opportunism in the C.P. of Poland.

The XII Plenum of the E.C.C.I., which took place under the slogan of the struggle on two fronts, mobilises the Communist Parties, and the revolutionary trade union movement to prepare, organise and lead the struggle of the proletariat against the capitalist offensive, against Fascism, against imperialist war and intervention in the U.S.S.R.

CORRECTION

Corrections to the article of L. Madyar, The World Economic Crisis, published in No. 16 and reprinted in pamphlet form.

Page 551 end of chapter 3, end of line 4 from bottom, instead of "where"—"what."

Chapter 4, line 16, "coal extracted" should read "in 1913," not 1931.

"Oil extracted" should read "in 1913," not 1931.

"Oil excepted," etc., not only fell below 1920, but below that of 1915.