

The Cause of the Unemployed is the Cause of the whole Working Class.

By A. Lozovsky.

Unemployment is now occupying the chief attention of millions of proletarians, for in the big capitalist countries there is hardly a worker's family which is not affected by unemployment. Capitalist stabilisation, which was lauded to the skies by the bourgeois and the social fascists, is now cracking at every joint. The wave of unemployment is mounting steadily higher and is confronting the international proletariat with a number of exceedingly important and complicated problems.

The first question that must be answered is whether it is possible at all to set up the slogan, "Fight against Unemployment". The fight against unemployment is organically connected with the fight against capitalism. Whoever separates the one from the other, whoever thinks that it is possible to solve the problem of unemployment under capitalism, is a reformist and not a revolutionary. All this is an elementary truth. The slogan of fight issued by the C. I. and the R. I. L. U. includes within it the slogan of fight against the system which creates unemployment.

Mass unemployment is one of the elements tending to disturb capitalist relations. Every unemployed worker constitutes a centre of ferment: hundreds of thousands of unemployed are a menace to the prevailing capitalist system. It is this that causes the bourgeois and social fascist parties to pay special attention to the unemployed. The starving and exhausted worker can for a time be deluded by the demagogy of the fascists. He may for a time deviate from the class path, but the objective situation, the situation which has caused him to be eliminated from the process of production, impels him to protest against the prevailing system. Great discontent is accumulating among the masses suffering from unemployment. Wholesale unemployment is a reservoir of revolutionary energy. We must understand how to organise this force, to divert this energy into proper channels, to translate the demands of the unemployed into definite, correct economic and political slogans. We must find suitable forms and methods of organisation in order by this means to guide the whole energy of the unemployed in the same direction.

What is the best way to organise the unemployed? According to occupation, round the factories, at the Labour Exchanges, by the creation of elected committees or unemployed councils, at the same time rousing the initiative of the masses of unemployed. The unemployed represent a powerful revolutionary force: but this force can be made use of only if we create an appropriate organisation, if the unemployed are firmly united, and if we succeed in getting the unemployed and the workers in the factories and workshops to realise that their interests are identical with the interests of the working class as a whole.

Our fundamental task is to link up the movement of the unemployed with the general class movement of the proletariat. There must be no organisation which consists entirely of unemployed. We must not regard the fight of the unemployed as a particular form of movement, for unemployment is not a calling or occupation, as the worker who is out of a job to-day may find work tomorrow, while on the other hand the worker who at present has a job may find himself on the street tomorrow. The isolation of the movement of the unemployed can result in splitting the working class into two separate groups, into those who have work and those who are out of work; this however can involve disastrous consequences for one or the other party. Therefore, the revolutionary trade unions must devote chief attention to the task of creating an organic contact between the employed and the unemployed workers, drawing both categories into the fight and setting up joint demands, which must be fought for not by the unemployed alone, but by all organisations of the whole working class. **The cause of the unemployed is the cause of the whole working class.**

If we, however, know beforehand that unemployment cannot be got rid of without the abolition of the capitalist system, what object is there then in demanding state unemployment insurance, in submitting demands to the municipalities and parliaments? Is this not making a misuse of partial demands? This question leads us to the question of partial and general demands.

There is no doubt that in the present period the bourgeoisie is by no means inclined or in a position to grant any serious concessions in the sphere of social reform. This does not mean, however, that nothing can be forced from the bourgeoisie. It would be political puerility to say to an unemployed worker: wait with your demands and starve until capitalism has been abolished. We must rather say to the unemployed: "organise, wrest from the clutches of the bourgeoisie everything you can by joint demonstrations of employed workers and the unemployed, by fights on the barricades, by mass actions, including the armed revolt; fight for your demands and proceed from partial demands to the general demands of the working class; keep in mind the fact that only by destroying the capitalist system is it possible to put an end to unemployment". In this way we can mobilise and unite the unemployed and the workers in the factories; in this way it will be possible to concentrate the whole energy of the working class and to link up the present demands of the empty stomachs with the problem of overthrowing capitalism and setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, we must most emphatically reject the formula "Either partial demands or general demands". We set up partial demands (state provision for the unemployed, seven-hour day etc.) and link up these demands with the fight against the whole capitalist system. Neither the slogan "Only partial demands", nor the slogan "Only general demands", but linking up of the partial with the general demands — that is the sense and meaning of the international day of fight against unemployment. This day is in essence a day of fight against the whole capitalist system.

With the growth of unemployment we witness a recurrence of social-reformist schemes and projects. There are no statesmen, from the most rabid reactionaries to the social fascists, who do not recommend their own prescriptions for solving the unemployment problem. Particularly rich in such plans is England, where Mr. J. H. Thomas is busy inventing ever fresh palliative measures. What does Mr. Thomas suggest to the unemployed? That they shall give up demanding a reduction of the working day, and go and try their luck in the colonies. What do the German and the Polish social fascists recommend? They shed crocodile's tears over the hard fate of the unemployed, but at the same time do not consider it possible to put forward with all seriousness the demand for adequate support for the unemployed, but devote themselves chiefly to trying to persuade them not to give ear to the advice of the wicked communists.

Against the demagogy of the social fascists we must set up plain concrete demands. We must reply to their attempts to bind the unemployed hand and foot and disarm them both ideologically and politically in the interests of national capital, by putting forward our own non-compromising line, which is directed towards organising all sections of the workers against capital and social fascism. A specially important role in regard to making plain the true character of social fascism is played by the bloody suppression of unemployed demonstrations by the social fascist parties. He there is shown most strikingly how far the social democratic parties have travelled on the road to fascistisation. Our most urgent task in the fight against unemployment is to increase the fight against social fascism.

The mass unemployment confronts us with the question, whether under the present conditions it is possible for the workers to fight, and whether it is not necessary to postpone the demands of the workers, their collective actions, such as strikes, until such time when unemployment is at an end.

Strikes can arise directly in connection with unemployment: for example, on account of mass dismissals from the factory. Shall the workers quietly submit when a fourth or a third of their workmates are thrown on to the street? Shall they not put forward the demand that not a single worker be discharged? Shall they not stand for a shortening of the working day with the continued employment of the whole of the staff rather than the dismissal of a considerable portion of the working men and women? A depressed business situation naturally renders an economic struggle more difficult, but it does not make it impossible. In connection with the growth of unemployment, political actions of the workers (demonstrations, armed collisions with the police etc.) will become more frequent even than economic conflicts. The economic struggles are not done away with because of unemployment: strikes can and must be organised. The slightest attempt to renounce the strike weapon, pleading the bad business situation as an excuse, must be ruthlessly opposed.

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The mass unemployment has everywhere dealt a severe blow to the legend of capitalist prosperity. Herein lies the great political significance of the present wholesale unemployment.

If the most powerful country of present day capitalism, the United States, is now experiencing a most severe crisis, what is to be said of the other countries? The events taking place at present in all countries (Germany, France, Poland the Balkans and Latin-America) show how rapidly unemployment is revolutionising and rousing the masses.

The upsurge of the Labour movement is calling forth the fierce resistance of the bourgeoisie and the social fascists. Inspired by the desire to divert the attention of the broad masses from the difficult and hard situation at home, the bourgeoisie and their social fascist lackeys have increased their incitement and agitation against the Soviet Union. They are increasing this incitement also because the crisis and unemployment in the whole of the capitalist world occurs at a time of powerful economic advance and growth of the Soviet Union: This contrast is so striking, this fact has such a revolutionising effect upon the masses, that the bourgeoisie and their social fascist lackeys are doing their utmost to weaken the impression created by this contrast which is so unfavourable for them.

The II and the Amsterdam Internationals are now occupying a special place among the war-inciters. They are now mobilising the masses against the Soviet Union. Herein lies the meaning and purpose of the white-guardist speeches delivered by **Kerensky** before the socialist fraction in the French Parliament and in the presidium of the French reformist C. G. T.

Hence it is necessary to increase the vigilance of the workers, to link up the problem of the fight against unemployment with all the questions of domestic and foreign politics of every single country, and to lead the masses to the fight on the basis of the programme of the C. I. and the R. I. L. U.