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**THE FIRST SOVIET FIVE-YEAR PLAN – AS REFLECTED
IN THE ROMANIAN ARCHIVAL SOURCES**

Abstract. The Purpose of the Research. *The article refers to the economic policy enforced by I. V. Stalin during the first five-year plan (lasting from 1 October 1928 until 31 December 1932); a policy whose goal was – according to the CPSU documents – “the modernisation of the Soviet Union by employing two fundamental mechanisms: collectivisation and industrialisation”. The Scientific Novelty.* *In the present article – based on the Romanian archival sources as well as specialised literature – it has been emphasised that, in order to put into practice the plan to centralise and control the entire national economy, the Soviet state forced villagers “by using the toughest means” to enter collective farms or mobilised them forcefully to ensure the industry development. The research methodology – the principles of scientificity, objectivity, historicism, the methods of an external and internal critique of sources. The Conclusions.* *The Romanian archive documents contemporary to the researched events mention the abuses committed by the Soviet authorities in enforcing the country’s collectivisation and industrialisation. Thus, the Soviet authorities accomplished their goals by enforcing great difficulties upon the population as well as a military-type mobilisation of the country in a supreme effort. Even the lexical choices of the collectivisation and industrialisation period – such as “the battlegrounds of iron and coal “the shock brigades”, “deportation of the kulaks”, “permanent briefings” and the others – made the impression of the society at war. The aim of this collectivisation and industrialisation programme was in reality the development of a war economy, the “destruction of the hostile classes and factions within the Soviet Union”, and preparation for war “against the capitalist enemies abroad”. Thus, the industry was to contribute to the technical modernisation of the army by building a strong maritime and airborne fleet. The endpoint of the development programme was the transformation of the Soviet Union from an agricultural into industrial country “with the aim of leading the rest of Europe to communism”.*

Key words: *the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Bucharest, first five-year plan, forced labour, kolkhoz, industrialisation.*

ПЕРШИЙ РАДЯНСЬКИЙ П'ЯТИРІЧНИЙ ПЛАН: ВІДОБРАЖЕННЯ У РУМУНСЬКИХ АРХІВНИХ ДЖЕРЕЛАХ

Анотація. Мета дослідження – проаналізувати відображення в румунських архівних джерелах аспектів проведення “економічної політики”, запровадженої Й. Сталіним у рамках п'ятирічного плану (тривав від 1 жовтня 1928 р. до 31 грудня 1932 р) політики, яка, відповідно до документів ВКП(б) трактувалася як “модернізація Радянського Союзу двома основними методами: колективізація та індустріалізація”. **Наукова новизна.** У цій статті, яка базується на румунських архівних джерелах і спеціальних дослідженнях, підкреслюється той факт, що Радянська держава задля реалізації на практиці плану централізації і контролю всієї національної економіки найжорсткішими засобами змусила селян до увійти до колгоспів, тобто бути насильно мобілізованими для розвитку сільськогосподарської галузі. **Методологія дослідження** – принципи науковості, об'єктивності, історизму, методи зовнішньої та внутрішньої критики джерел. **Висновки.** У румунських архівних документах відзначені зловживання радянською владою у здійсненні колективізації та індустріалізації країни. З аналізованих документів випливає, що радянська влада досягала своїх цілей тільки шляхом нав'язання великих труднощів населенню та здійснення мобілізації трудових ресурсів для побудови країни військового типу. До румунських документів потрапили характерні для радянського політичного словника періоду колективізації та індустріалізації терміни: “залізни і вугільні фронти”, “ударні бригади”, “депортація куркулів”, “постійні комунікації”. Це складало враження суспільства, що перебуває у повномасштабній війні. Документи показують, що програму колективізації та індустріалізації насправді було спрямовано на розвиток військової економіки, щоб “знищити ворожі класи і групи всередині Радянського Союзу”, а також здійснити підготовку до війни “проти зовнішніх капіталістичних ворогів”. Тож усі галузі економіки мали внести свій вклад у технічну модернізацію армії, побудову сильних морського і повітряного флотів. У румунських джерелах стверджується, що “кінцевою метою програми розвитку є перетворення Радянського Союзу з сільськогосподарської країни в промислову з метою привести до комунізму решту Європи”.

Ключові слова: Архів Міністерства Закордонних Справ – Бухарест, перший п'ятирічний план, примусова праця, колгосп, індустріалізація.

The Problem Statement. In the article there have been described a number of scenes illustrative of the manner in which industrialisation in the Soviet Union occurred during the first five-year plan. Evidently, the official Soviet statements included – in time – great exaggerations, which are difficult to assess due to the limited and often obscure nature of the Soviet statistics, but also due to the Western observers' subjectivity and self-interest. The article focuses on the analysis of the USSR's position in the context of international relations; the evolution of the Soviet economy during the first five-year plan; the extremely harsh measures adopted by Stalin in order to impose the accomplishment of the five-year plan; the Soviet state's endeavours to develop the navy and commercial aviation – in the interpretation given by the Romanian archival documents.

The purpose of the research is to highlight the way in which the USSR became an industrial state and the phenomena accompanying this ‘industrial enthusiasm’: forced labour, shortage of consumer goods, political imprisonment, quasi-military mobilisation, etc. All these phenomena were enforced in Eastern Europe after 1945, in the Soviet Union's client states.

The source of the research is based on unpublished documents (found in the archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest – fund 71/Anglia, dossier no. 16, fund Londra, dossier no. 260, fund 71/România, dossier no. 361) and published documents, corroborated with specialised bibliography.

The Statement of the Basic Material.

Introduction. The Soviet State's Duality of Behaviour in International Relations

At the threshold between the third and the fourth decades of the last century, the evolutions and the relations between the great powers were unfolding under the convulsion created within the international system by the economic crisis of 1929 – 1933, with its effects on the social and political stage through the escalation of both left-wing movements (including the communist left), and the right-wing ones (represented by Fascism and Nazism).

In this international context, Stalin (through his enforcer in matters of a foreign policy between 1930 and 1939, Maksim Litvinov) sought a new approach in international relations, one that sought closer alliances with the powers that were in favour of preserving the *status-quo* (Riasanovsky, 2001, p. 526). However, history has proved that the main characteristic of the Soviet foreign policy was the duality of their behaviour in foreign relations: on the one hand, their concern with having normal diplomatic and commercial relations with other states, and on the other hand the endeavours of the Comintern, meant to destabilise governments (Ciorbea, 2006, p. 163).

Referring to the politics of the Soviet Union, Winston Churchill drew attention – in his article entitled “*The Bolshevik Threat*” in August 1931 – that: “The focal point of all perils is the Soviet government in Russia. Outside the community of the other nations, a gigantic centralised state of 160 million inhabitants came into being here and lives in the utmost enmity with the other nations, is knowingly armed to the teeth, is full of abjectness and unfulfilled desires. Along the Russian border, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, there is a string of newly born or reborn states (Turkey, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland), which owe their existence or their rise to the Russian disaster in the World War. They form Europe’s outpost against the notions of Asian communism. For these countries, bolshevism is more than a simple ‘matter of opinion’. It is the enemy, the foremost enemy, which – after a savage battle – was brought to its knees and is being brought to its knees every month. The border between Russia and all these new states is not only a frontier between opposing interests, but also between opposing ideas. From its waves of protection in the East, the gigantic Russian state, a communist one at heart, preaches the world revolution as a political means, at the same time embodying the old tsarist imperialism, which lingers in its blood [...] Although nowadays Russia commands the army, which is by far the biggest in the world, it continues to arm itself. It specialises in the newest, the most terrifying and disturbing means of a deliberate war and that is: the terrible aviation, capable to bombard great cities like a football goal, tanks and combat vehicles. It is the duty of Western democracies to hope for the best. However, there is enough time to indicate that in a year or so Russia will be better prepared for war than ever before. The extent of its armour will be so great, that Russia will become invincible to its neighbouring states” (AMAE, f. 71/Anglia, d. 16, pp. 170–171).

Winston Churchill’s vision of the Soviet Union was not shared by all western politicians and diplomats. Even as early as in 1922, in the Treaty of Rapallo, Russia and Germany agreed on diplomatic relations, they each renounced all war debt and compensation claims against the other and granted the most favoured nation status to each other on the basis of their economic relations (Duroselle, 2006, pp. 52–53); during 1924 – 1925 the states such as Great Britain, Italy, France, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Greece, Denmark, Mexico, China, Japan officially recognised the Soviet Union and re-established diplomatic and economic relations (Riasanovsky, 2001, p. 525; Duroselle, 2006, p. 64; Cîrstea & Buzatu, 2007, p. 187); in 1928 the Soviet Union adhered to the Briand-Kellogg Pact (after initially declaring that “the pact

was aimed against it”), while in 1929, in Moscow Protocol, proposed an extension of the Pact at the regional level (to include Poland, Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Turkey, Persia and the Free City of Danzig) (Vlad, 2014, p. 102; Cîrstea, 2017, pp. 16–18). Gradually, during the fourth decade of the last century, using all levers of power, Stalin managed to dominate both the domestic and the international political scene – making use of occasional alliances as well as former adversaries to achieve his goals, which were mainly “*imposing the USSR as a global force*” and “*attaining universal revolution.*”

The Collectivisation and the Industrialisation of the Soviet Union – in the Romanian Archival Documents

At the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth decades, the Soviet Union, under Stalin’s direct coordination, embarked on a massive programme of collectivisation and industrialisation. Thus, in *The Principles of Socialist Industrialisation*, Stalin emphasised the following: “The Essence of industrialisation does not consist in a mere industrial growth, but in the development of heavy industry and primarily in the development of its foundation, the motor vehicle manufacturing, since it is only the creation of heavy industry and our own motor vehicle manufacture that can guarantee the material basis of socialism, rendering the country of socialism independent from the capitalist world” (Buzatu & Chirițoiu, 1999, p. 120). The apparent success of the Soviet planning contrasted with the great crisis traversed by Western states, which seemed to predict the collapse of capitalism and could be interpreted as evidence of the superiority of the Soviet system.

The construction of the new socialist system started with the “forced collectivisation, which was an authentic war unleashed against an entire people of peasants and farmers” (Courtois, 1998, p. 139). Stalin defined collectivisation as the constitution of *kolkhozes* (collective farms) and *sovkhozes* (state farms) to “banish all the capitalist elements from agriculture” (Cîrstea & Buzatu, 2007, p. 182). In order to organise the renowned *kolkhozes* (the purpose being the construction of socialism in rural areas), tens of thousands of trusted communists and proletarians – the infamous ‘twenty-five-thousanders’ – were sent simultaneously from cities to villages (Riasanovsky, 2001, p. 512). At the time, Stalin decided “to finish irreversibly with the un-socialised peasantry and embark on a policy of a massive collectivisation [...] The entire Russian peasantry is at the mercy of the sadism and the arbitrariness of the proletarian government and, in their turn, the population of the cities begin to suffer [...] An inevitable corollary of peasant movements, famine sprawls in villages and cities equally. The Kremlin panics [...] Stalin must resort to a new compromise. On the 2nd of March 1930, he publishes in Moscow press the famous article entitled *Dizzy with Success*, in which, applauding the triumph of collectivisation [...], accuses provincial communists of being too zealous, of forcing peasants to enter *kolkhozes* against their wish and of thus betraying the cause of the revolution” (Buzatu & Chirițoiu, 1999, p. 138; Souvarine, 1999, p. 426). It is worth emphasising that one of the main goals of the first five-year plan (a model transferred to East European countries after 1945) and thus of collectivisation, finding a solution to the problem of the chronic scarcity of grains, was never fulfilled; on the contrary, nationalisation, planning and collectivisation had immediate noxious consequences (Guzun, 2011, p. 37). Collectivisation, as Stalin designed it and the thousand of party activists and state functionaries put into practice brought “nothing else than destitution and brutality”, as N. S. Khrushchev noted in his memoirs (Ciorbea, 2006, pp. 151–152). At the same time, the First Secretary of the party organisation in Ukraine, Stanislav V. Koșior, also admitted that in many villages collectivisation was “compromised and created artificially, the population did not participate and has no idea about it – but, he added cautiously – its numerous dark aspects

cannot obscure the overall image of collectivisation” (Țărău, 2006, p. 216). The main ‘mistakes’ made during that period of a total collectivisation were: forcing the peasants to enter kolkhozes; the dekulakization of large circles of a rural population – in a proportion of up to 15% in certain areas, including here even poor peasants; the establishment of kolkhozes without any consultation with the peasants; the excessive ‘socialisation’ during confiscations, for instance, of all the peasants’ cattle (Conquest, 2003, p. 172). Exceedingly harsh measures were inflicted upon the collectivised peasants in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Kuban (together with the Don and Volga regions) through ‘excessive requisitions’, which led to ‘a serious food crisis’ (Conquest, 2003, pp. 331–338), which will result, in the following years, “in millions of people dying of hunger in Ukraine and Northern Caucasus” (Souvarine, 1999, p. 531).

The collectivisation of agriculture – which substituted an individual peasant property by the state property of the land – was a means of achieving a well-defined purpose, that of meeting the needs of the industrialisation process, which commenced with the introduction of the first five-year plan for the period between 1928 and 1932. “*The Industrial Revolution*” – devised by Stalin – was founded on “the class struggle” fought against a numerous and completely disarmed minority of their own population; the liquidation of the “class of kulaks”; the starvation of the entire population of the country; the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the Orthodox Church; the requisition of properties belonging to the relatively wealthy peasants; “the military feudal style exploitation of the peasantry” (Nolte, 2005, pp. 215–217). In relation to the need to fulfil the five-year plan, Stalin maintained in a famous speech of the 5th of February 1931 in Moscow: “Lessening the work, which we embarked on means agreeing to drop backward. But the ones, who drop backward will be vanquished. We do not want to be vanquished. The entire history of old Russia only shows that Russia was always defeated because it was the most backward. The Mongol khans, the Turkish beys, the Swedish feudal lords, the Polish-Lithuanian lords, the Anglo-French capitalists, the Japanese barons, they all defeated Russia because it was backward in the military, culture, industry, agriculture and especially government regime. They defeated it because no one was able to oppose all this. Once we didn’t and couldn’t have a country. But now, when we have established the power of labourers, when we have a country, we will know how to defend her independence. We are fifty to a hundred years behind advanced countries; we must cross this distance in ten years. We will do it or be crushed” (Dukes, 2009, pp. 255–256; Lynch, 2002, pp. 36–37; AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

Stalin’s programme for the industrialisation of the USSR may be taken as an attempt at forging a war economy (Lynch, 2002, p. 43). Thus, “industrially – a document entitled *News about the social and political situation in the USSR* (1931) shows – nowadays Soviet Russia is the most completely militarised state the world has ever known. All men and many of the women are completely at the state’s disposal. They are regimented and brigaded and receive orders just like the military forces do” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

The costs of industrialisation were enormous. The Soviet authorities accomplished their goals by imposing great challenges on the population and through a military-style mobilisation of the country in a supreme effort. Even the vocabulary of five-year plans, with their battlegrounds of iron and coal, their shock brigades and permanent briefings, gave the impression of a society at war. The same archival document – regarding Soviet Russia (1931) – mentioned the following: “Forced labour will be carried out to excess and the Central Labour Committee gave orders for another 100 000 peasants to be placed at the disposal of the industry, so that work can be continued ceaselessly both day and night – the expectation being that production will double” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

During this period the Soviet Union insisted greatly on the development of heavy industry, the extractive industry, the petroleum industry and transports. Referring to the likelihood of fulfilling the national production plan in 1931, Stalin stated: “We possess an enormous natural wealth; we have iron, coal, ore, grains and cotton in bigger quantities than any other country in the world. The Ural alone represents a combination of riches, which cannot be found elsewhere, in a year or two we shall have rubber as well” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagged). Thus – continued the communist leader – “the Soviet Union is the most focused industrial country and this proves we can build our industry on the most perfectionist technical basis and can ensure an unprecedented level of production, due to this technical basis. In the past, our weakness originated from the fact that this industry was exploited by peasants, but today the situation is completely different. Tomorrow or maybe in one year, we will become the biggest agricultural country in the world, the ‘Kolkhozy’, and this year we have procured half of the wheat destined to be sold. This means the Soviet regime allows for such a rapid development, that no bourgeois country can compete with us. To ensure our results are increasingly better, the communist party has to be cohesive enough to lead the efforts of our best representatives in the labourers’ class towards a single objective; skilful enough to never capitulate when faced with difficulties, so that it systematically enforces the Bolshevik revolutionary national politics. Our party’s government is fair, for it grants great success; it is not only our friends, but also our enemies that acknowledge it” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagged).

The main objectives of the first five-year plan were represented by the modernisation of the industry and the transformation of the Soviet Union from an agrarian into a heavily industrialised country, which needed to be economically independent from capitalist countries, and also the strengthening of its defensive potential. 1500 great factories were built during the first five-year plan and the basis was laid for certain industrial branches, such as: the construction of machine tools and electrical machines, automobiles, tractors, chemical industry, aeronautical industry, and the others; great industrial platforms were also created in Asia Minor and Transcaucasia, Kazakhstan and Tartary, Buryatia-Mongolia, in the Urals or Serbia (Medvedev, 1991, p. 104; Riasanovsky, 2001, p. 511).

The basis of the industrialisation was, among the others, coal extraction which, between 1929 and 1930, reached the figure of 54,000,000 tons, a great amount of it being exported. At this time coal export was permanently increasing; therefore: 1st October 1927 – 1st October 1928: 500 000 tons; 1st October 1928 – 1st October 1929: 1 500 000 tons; 1st October 1929 – 1st August 1930 (10 months): 1 400 000 tons (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagged).

The total imports of coal made by England from Soviet Russia reached the following figures: in 1928 – 500 000 tons; in 1929 – 600 000 tons; in 1930 – 554 000 tons (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagged). It is interesting to mention that in 1913 tsarist Russia bought 6 000 000 tons of coal from England, while in 1930 Soviet Russia purchased less than 40 000 tons (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagged).

Country allocation of Russian coal exports for a period of 6 months, from 1st October 1929 to 1st April 1930, was the following: Italy – 180 000 tons; the United States – 118 000 tons; Greece – 108 000 tons; Turkey – 83 000 tons; France – 68 000 tons; China – 23 000 tons; Japan – 26 000 tons (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagged). On the other hand, during January – October of 1930 Canada imported 260 000 tons of Russian anthracite while during the same period in 1929 there were only 95 000 tons (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagged).

An essential target of the great transformations was the development of rail transportation. The most substantial achievement of the first five-year plan was the completion of the almost

1500-kilometre Turksib railway, which brought Central Asia in the Union's rail transport system. Extremely harsh measures were taken to ensure the fulfilment of the planned targets in the construction of the railway infrastructure. Thus, the 25th January 1931 issue of the Pravda newspaper published a decree by which the Council of People's Commissars allowed unrestricted powers to the heads of the state railway carrier: "Any breach of labour discipline by transport workers (breach of regulations regarding traction, poor rehabilitation of the rolling stock, or the railroads, etc.) is punished with imprisonment up to ten years, if the breach has led or might have led to either the degradation or the destruction of the rolling stock, the railroads or the buildings, or a delay in the departure of trains and ships or the accumulation in the landing site of the empty material, or the immobilisation of wagons and ships, or any other act liable to obstruct the fulfilment of the transportation programmes established by the government or able to compromise traffic regularity and safety. If these criminal acts are premeditated, the maximum measure of a social protection will be applied (the death punishment) with asset confiscation" (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagéd).

In order to meet the requirements of the first five-year plan, Stalin imposed extreme measures, deeming 'national sabotage' any failure to fulfil or resistance in reaching the planned objectives. He made use of a series of public trials of industrial 'saboteurs' to warn the party and the masses against the futility of their protest against the stringency of the industrialisation process. Thus, "the Soviet authorities – was underlined in a document – gave orders to the central engineers' organisation to gather the necessary material for two new trials against engineers, one in Moscow and another in Leningrad, with a view to combating the specialists' refusal to go to Siberia, to the Kuznetsk coal basin [...] The industrial conference of the Soviets convened at the beginning of February to discuss the obstacles to the 5-year plan created by a great number of engineers and workers not going where they were sent or deserting immediately upon arrival" (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagéd).

The Soviet Interest in Developing the Navy and Commercial Aviation

To achieve the economic policy enforced through the first five-year plan, the Soviet Union also needed a powerful commercial fleet. Consequently, the Work and Defence Commissariat gave an order that on 1st of April 1930 all the trust ships (which navigated on the sea or the rivers) should be put under the management of the Commissariat for railways and the River Transport Society. At the same time, the five-year plan envisaged an increase by 25% in the number of commercial ships "that is, 492 ships with a total tonnage of 873 000 for the European side of the USSR and 374 ships for its Oriental side. It greatly surpasses the production capacity of national shipyards during the allotted time. They are distributed in Leningrad, Odesa, Mykolaiv and Sevastopol. Simultaneously, the 'Sovtorgflot' designed the plan for a shipyard for big and medium-sized vessels in Mariupol [...] and it is anticipated that they will build 116 ships for maritime service (173 million roubles), passenger ships, river freight ships, barges, tanks (total value 103 million roubles)" (AMAE, f. 71/România, d. 361, p. 409).

Referring to the Soviet policies that provided for the modernisation and development of the commercial fleet, the following comment was made in the British newspaper 'The Times': "On the 17th of April the Soviet Council of Labour and Defence decided to inaugurate a new ship building programme immediately, since the Soviet commercial fleet proved insufficient for the government's export plans. Therefore six shipbuilding sites will be established at the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Azov Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Pacific and the Arctic Ocean. The programme provisions the construction of 44 ships with a total capacity of 175 000 during 1931. Before

the end of June, the appointed authorities will have to gather all sailors and officers, formerly employed by the commercial navy, who found other employment and force them to resume their service for the new commercial fleet” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

While the commercial fleet was developed, the Soviet state also attempted to assemble a modern air fleet. Thus, the 30th March 1931 issue of ‘The Daily Telegraph’ published the following: “The Soviets are making an extraordinary effort to build an enormous air fleet, which is expected in 1933 to comprise more planes than the United States itself. During the aviation conference held on the 18th of February, the commander of a civil aviation made it known that 15 000 people will be enlisted as pilots and 50 new airfields and 250 other landing sites will also be established. During 1931 75% of the existing planes will be replaced by new ones, each endowed with more engines, so that the total number of planes will increase by 70%. The Soviet government issued a number of decrees, which give special privileges to the domain of aircraft construction [...] The role of the Soviet aviation during peacetime is to contribute to an economic prosperity, while during the wartime it is an excellent weapon. This year the sum of 150 000 000 roubles was allocated for the construction of new planes, a sum, which few capitalist countries can afford the luxury of spending for this particular purpose” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued). At the same time, the February issue of the ‘Journal R.U.S. Institution’ magazine showed that “The Soviets have recently built a great dirigible of 2 500 cubic meters named Komsomolskaia Pravda, which at present performs successful flights. It is the flexible type and can transport six passengers. This machine is said to be only one in a series which is to be constructed for the transport of passengers and to meet various other needs in northern Siberia” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

The Conclusion. At the end of the third decade and the beginning of the fourth one, during the last century, Stalin imposed a ‘*revolution from above*’ (Conquest, 2003, p. 156) to change the economic structure of the state, which, in its turn, was meant to determine a new political supra-structure and institutional organisation; at the same time pursuing the “final liquidation of nationalist and autonomist manifestations cultivated by the majority of the inhabitants of Ukraine, satiated with the suzerainty of Moscow” (Țărău, 2006, p. 222).

Collectivisation – Industrialisation – Planning, represented the signal words for the state, which was constructing the soviet socialism (a variant of socialism so altered, that some historians consider it would be more appropriate to call it “the state capitalism”). In fact, at the 16th Party Congress (26th June – 13th July 1930) Stalin was going to maintain that the Soviet Union “*entered socialist times.*” Starting with the first five-year plan (1928 – 1932), a new strategy of development was asserted, based on a forced industrialisation and achieving gigantic goals. Valerian Volodymyrovych Kuybyshev, who chaired the Supreme Council of the National Economy, emphasised that “The five-year plan will be followed by another economic plan for a period of 7 – 10 years, which will allow a radical reconstruction of all the industrial and agricultural branches” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

The first five-year plan emphasised the need for heavy industry, approximately 85% of all the investment in industry going in this direction so that a big number of factories were built and new cities were constructed. Thus, the Kuzbass area (the Kuznetsk Basin) represented – according to the five-year plan – “a vital element of the development” so that in 1933 “this area, together with the metal industries in the Urals, must be sufficiently developed to prevent the industry from plummeting during the war, in case the enemy took control of the Donets Basin and destroyed it” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued). To meet this objective,

335 000 labourers were brought in 1931 and 48,000 hectares were made available to them “to transform in a few months into poultry gardens and special farms with 107 000 cattle” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

To stimulate production, “the Soviet government divided the labourers into two categories: *the good* and *the bad*. The work of a good labourer has to surpass the standardised plan by 20% and that entitles him to a special food card for a period of one month” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

The Russian labourer and agriculturalist were completely under control of the state “since the forced labour decreed by the government sent them wherever the stated deems it necessary,” the ones, who do not submit “being sentenced for political or criminal reasons as counter-revolutionaries or kulaks” and sent to labour camps – as it emerges from an archival document from 1931, which offers relative data regarding the number of people sentenced to labour camps in the northern R.S.F.S.R.: Vishesky on the Dvina – 30,000; Ussoisk – 10,000; Arhangelsk– 18,000; Penujsky – 25 000; Kotlas – 30 000; Murmansk – 20 000; Sovetsky – 20 000); Kema – 20 000 (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued). Faced with back-breaking labour, awful food and a terrible winter, over 73,000 are said to have died during the last months and several thousands were shot because they were unable to do the work they were asked to do (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

The financial effort made by the Soviet state with a view to industrialisation was huge; enormous amounts of the gold reserve were sold. “Selling off the gold is explained by the Soviets’ need to pay 11 000 000 pounds to Europe and America,” at the same time “the gold which is now being sold to Germany is said to represent what was left from the Romanian treasure sent to Moscow during the war” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

Important financial efforts were also being made to modernise the army, the Soviet state gathering annually “over 1 200 000 people to receive military training. 450,000 of them are chosen for the regular and the territorial army, 350,000 receive instructions in factories and other organisations while the rest are sent back, because they do not meet the regime’s requirements” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

The Soviet youth was educated in the spirit of a ‘universal revolution,’ and the fulfilment of the five-year plan was considered “a prelude to the great war for world revolution” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued).

“The 5-year plan – another document states – aims at transforming Russia from an agrarian country into an industrialised one and this is not an internal matter, as some wrongly believe, but an international issue, designed to lead the rest of Europe to communism” (AMAE, f. Londra, d. 260, unpagued). However, at the end of 1932, despite numerous resolutions and proclamations of increasing “*historical importance*” and “*global interest*” and the enormous various sacrifices, the economic programmes (devised during the first five-year plan) remained unaccomplished in all their indicators; the USSR did not catch up with and did not overcome any industrialised country in Europe or North America.

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