

Throughout the World of Labor

The British Miners and the Labour Party

The question of coal is once more on the order of the day. On the occasion of the debate in Commons on the government project, the papers published numerous articles in which the ever-recurring problem is examined from its various aspects. A big space is naturally given to the length of the working day and to the wages of the miners, for the mine owners assert that it is the too high wages paid to the British miners that handicaps them in the struggle against foreign competitors.

The president of the Mining Association of Great Britain, Mr. Evan Williams in a letter addressed to the Times, asserts that in spite of the law voted on the morrow of the general strike and the great defeat of the miners, the working week is still shorter here than elsewhere. According to the figures he cites, it is 47 hours, 28 minutes (it is known that in certain regions the day is only 7 and a half hours), while the German miner works 49 and a half hours in the Aix-la-Chapelle district and 48 hours in the Ruhr, the Belgian miner 48 hours, the Polish miner 48 hours and 12 minutes in Upper Silesia and 49 hours in the Dombrow. In France, the average is only 46 hours and 42 minutes.

So far as wages are concerned, he maintains that the real wage of a miner in Great Britain is appreciably higher than in all the continental countries: 18 percent higher than in Germany, 47 percent higher than in France, 39 percent higher than in Belgium and 67 percent higher than in Poland.

The discussion of the government project in Commons was stirring. As is known it received a majority of only eight votes, and even then not for its final adoption; it was only the second reading and it is still the subject for a profound debate. This however is not the most important thing. The liberals having decided to vote against, it would not have had a majority at all. But since no party wants a general election right now, the conservatives will save the MacDonald government from defeat by partial abstention.

What characterized these debates was the brutality of the criticisms of the speakers, conservative and liberal, and the tone in which they were couched: that, even more than the vote that was humiliating to the government.

The conservatives confined themselves to saying to the ministers: your project is detestable; withdraw it. You say that you want to keep the promises made by you to the miners during the elections. But there are already so many engagements that you have undertaken and did not keep that another one more or less is of no importance.

But it is Lloyd George who delivered the big attack. The ground had been prepared by Sir Herbert Samuel, now considered an expert on the question of coal, who had made a condensed criticism of the project and posed some precise questions almost in the form of an ultimatum. Lloyd George adhered to generalities, to the essential features, and exercised his verve at the expense of the Laborites. It is known that the government first assured itself, and painfully enough, of the support of the Miners' Federation for restoring the working day to seven and a half hours. Then, to overcome the resistance of the mine owners, it accorded them a raise in the price of coal. The great Laborite project is thus reduced to a vulgar bargaining for which the consumer will pay.

"Incredibly bad project!" cried the liberal leader; "incredible project on the part of a Labor government." He continued by saying that nothing had been done to attack the roots of the crisis, the archaic organization of the mining industry. What is necessary is to make it obligatory upon the grouping of the enterprises to arrive at a rational exploitation. The project is confined to raising the price of coal. It is a project not of the Laborites but of the mine owners. And on this occasion, he rallied A. J. Cook, who defended its adoption before the Miners' Federation. "Blessed be the meek!" he cried, amid a general outburst of laughter in the Chamber.

The ministers were ill at ease under these lashing criticisms that could be directed against them by a more or less discredited politician. Moreover, they were

furiously because it is said that MacDonald in order to parry the announced attack had taken the trouble of having Lloyd George informed that he was quite disposed to accept long amendments. They say that, as ever, Lloyd George was interested only in creating an effect from the tribune, showing once more that he was a good demagogue.

What is certain is that the governmental project in its first form is dead. When it comes before Commons for its third reading it will have to be seriously touched up. But it may already be said that it will hardly be worth more, the Laborites constantly retreating before the radical measures that encroach upon the privileges of the bourgeoisie.

On the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary, the British Communist Party sent Stalin a telegram saying that the British Communists "promise to create a mass party which, armed with a daily paper, will be in a position to mobilize the masses in the political struggles against the social fascist government of MacDonald". Such promises do not cost much. But that is not the case with the paper.

—S. B.

London, December 23, 1929.

Φ

Opposition Progress in Spain

We are in the midst of a brutal attack by the acolytes of Stalin in Spain against the comrades of the Opposition.

Practically speaking, the Communist Party of Spain exists only in the mind of a few mediocre and ignorant functionaries, who have no clear understanding of their responsibility. Originally, we can say without fear of contradiction, the C. P. S. can count as its members only the adherents of the small circle of indolent bureaucrats who ramble around on a wage paid by Stalin. Let us work to remove this small circle to—Mars, without a return ticket.

The masses of the Spanish workers have no contact with "the elite of the vanguard of the Spanish proletariat" as Manuilsky would say; there is an absolute divorce between the bureaucrats and the Spanish working class. The district committees do not function and exist only on paper. Can even one hundred dues payments be counted in the Spanish party? No! Here is the true, the sad and chaotic reality. The C. P. S. is in a dying state and it lacks the most indispensable aid. The masses do not know of the party because it never shows itself anywhere; the party does not know of the masses of the workers because the bureaucrats lack a sense of Communist political orientation. The Executive Committee of the Comintern, in conformity with its destructive and spineless policy, gives its support to the leadership which, in Spain, is engaged in destroying what is left of the skeleton of the Spanish C. P.

The Young Communist Opposition had the boldness to denounce the present situation to the masses. It launched an appeal to the Communist workers (official or expelled) for the reorganization of Communism in Spain; it examined the causes of the disease and pointed out the remedy; the application of the methods of struggle recommended by the International Opposition, reorganization of the party based on the principles of the Leninist Opposition as the sole guarantee of the development of the party and its further consolidation. It is only in this way that the party will be able to make its way in the exceptional political situation through which Spain is passing.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, incapable of reacting against the prostration of the party, impotent before historical reality, found in the appeal launched by the Leninist Opposition an excuse for organizing a newspaper offensive of four columns against our comrades. Doubtlessly for want of any more appropriate means of defending and justifying their salaries (Stalin pays the enemies of "Trotskyism" well, which the leaders of the C. P. S. know quite well), they organized the battle against the counter-revolutionary Trotskyists who are pretending to maneuver in Spain. (Horror! Miserable "Trotskyists", dead so many times and many times revived!)

It was a battle organized according to the rules. The known Trotskyist victims at the moment I write these lines are not very numerous, but sure. One of the methods employed by the technicians of Spanish Stalinism against the Opposition is denunciation. The first attempts were made in the November number of central organ of the Party, *Bandera Roja*. A comrade was denounced in the central organ of the Communist Party by the bureaucratic leaders who took advantage of the circumstances, of the very gravity of the case and of the fact that the Spanish Opposition has as yet no journal of its own.

We will not lay stress on this case—for the time being; it is too dangerous. The comrades of the Communist Party have taken note of it and some of them are asking for the expulsion of the author of the article from the Comintern. We simply make a note of it. But we must remark that the act of expulsion against the author of the article in question (it was an editorial) would change nothing of the very causes of such acts. They have their roots in the composition of the Party itself, in the wrong political orientation. It is an evil that proceeds from the chronic crisis in the leadership and the orientation that is vexing the International: The discharge of a rotten functionary will not save from corruption the organism in decomposition, which is the bureaucracy of the Communist International, just as the amputation of a gangrened limb cannot save from death a cancerous organism. It is a question of giving the C. I. a competent leadership and a correct political orientation without which there is no solution possible.

In Spain, the C. P. is extremely weak, numerically and politically. The basis of the party has always lacked the most elementary political formation. The Leninist Opposition is also weak, as may be expected, but it is the Marxist school of the Party out of which will be born, because it must be born, a genuine Communist party to reconstitute on firm foundations the organization of the proletariat that an absurd and imbecile policy has led to dismemberment and ruin.

The Opposition is trying to reorganize the party, to cleanse it by pushing it along the Leninist-Marxist line, to strengthen it so that it may realize the historic mission assigned to it.

The bureaucrats may calumniate, denounce (to justify and defend their salaries). We will not swerve from the correct line to which we have bound ourselves; we are fighting without a truce until we will have attained our objective; to revive Communism in Spain on the basis of revolutionary Marxism, by unmasking the corrupted bureaucracy which disorganized the Communist Party of Spain, by educating the revolutionary working masses following the ideas of Marx and Lenin.

FERNANDO SALVATIERRA
Bilbao, December 8, 1929.

Φ

A New «Workers' and Peasants' Party» in France

The clique of Sellier, Gelis and Co., which we have denounced since its first acts, and fought inside the Communist Party as we will fight it outside the party, has just constituted itself into a "workers and peasants party". This buffoonery has but one meaning for its authors: to preserve before the electoral clientele the label which elected them, that of the workers and peasants bloc.

The constituent meeting of this party was held at Cluchy last Sunday. We do not yet know the details of the deliberations nor the documents that were worked out. But we did not wait for the constitution of the new party in order to say what was to be thought of the policy of the "elected", and we need not do any more waiting in order to give some estimates of the new party.

The absolutely ambiguous character of its constitution must be indicated first of all. It is already patent that a strong sec-

*Municipal councillors in the Paris district who left the Communist party a few weeks ago as the leaders of a Right wing split. They are the French allies of the Lovestone group in this country.

tion of the trade union minority, champion of "trade union independence", is participating actively in the work of constituting the party of Sellier. Deveaux presides over its meetings. Then, the comical and amicable negotiations with the Socialist-Communist Union of Paul Louis, the political leader of *Monde* (the Communist controlled "non-partisan", literary-political weekly edited by Henri Barbusse), are very indicative. Finally, the participation of the Alsatian deputy Mourer, the proclaimed sympathy of the organ of the Alsatian Communists-Autonomists (Hueber group)—with which Fourrier of the *Liberateur* collaborates actively—the amalgam of Villeneuve, mayor of St. Denis, of Chasseigne, suddenly disappeared from Communist Party activity for reasons unknown,—all these contribute to giving the new party a character loaded with rubbish, and also indicates that its career will be brief.

Many papers have already printed extracts from the declaration that will be made by the party. Pretty near everything that is needed to prepare a modest return to the waters of the social democracy can be found there. In language that attempts to be sharp, they raise against the Communist party the criticism made long ago by the Opposition, when the "worker-peasants" of today covered up the whole activity of the party leadership. And naturally they attack above all, like every good Right winger, the so-called "class against class" electoral tactic, which "if no other reason(!) experience proves today that it only consolidated the power of the worst bourgeoisie of the Right, without any profit for the party itself." In conclusion, they declare that there is a place to be occupied between Communism and Socialism, that is, in a particular nauseous swamp.

We will wait for the declarations and acts of this new party. But we already see—and it has always been clear—that it is taking a road that turns its back not only to the Communist Party, which the "worker-peasants" of today led to its present position and which they abandoned when the profit from it became too trivial for them—but to Communism, and nothing else. It is falling back into the morass of petty bourgeois electoralism where the Paul Louises and Selliers are pushing it.

A certain number of comrades will perhaps try to follow it for a while. We will appeal to them to reconsider, to abandon confusion, to come and strengthen the ranks of the Left Opposition. For us there is no neutral ground between Socialism and Communism. We want to fight on the historic ground of International Communism, and so far as it is indispensable, to denounce the faults, the errors, the crimes of the Communist International and the cadres of our party—even against those who would leave it today after having assumed full responsibility for it without saying a word.

—LA VERITE

Paris, December 27, 1929

JUST RECEIVED!

NO. 7

The BULLETIN of the Russian Opposition

The new issue contains articles by L. D. Trotsky on the Twelfth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Communism and Syndicalism, Syndicalism's Mistakes in Principle, the Austrian Crisis, China, etc., etc. Articles by Christian Rakovsky on Government Policy and the Party Regime, the Capitulators, Letters from Russian Oppositionists in Exile. An unpublished document of the Petersburg Party Committee on the eve of the uprising, concealed by Stalin. And many other important articles and documents.

ALL ARTICLES IN RUSSIAN

25c each 18c in bundles

Order From
THE MILITANT

25 Third Avenue, New York, N. Y.