

Throughout the World of Labor

Conditions of the German Workers and the Communists

Berlin

The past few weeks have evidenced new surges in the unemployment wave. Each month adds at least 40,000 new recruits to the army of the jobless. But the work is still in the stage of ascent and has not at all reached its high point as yet. No one has any illusions about this. Quite the contrary:

The statistical publication of the *Institut für Konjunkturforschung* reckons with an enormous growth of unemployment in the spring, due to the matriculation and introduction into industry of about half a million young workers, apprentices. This is aside from the regular conjunctural increases (seasonal, etc.). It adds: that in order to keep unemployment from becoming menacingly critical, Germany would have to increase its exports at the present rate of 100 million Reichsmarks per month. Which looks quite impossible at present.

Another issue of the same periodical reports a semi-monthly decrease of .1% in the consumption of nourishing foods among the working class population. When we keep in mind the recent fall of prices in eggs, milk, butter, meat, "colonial wares" (cocoa, etc.) and in food products in general, we can realize the importance of even such a "harmless" figure to its full extent.

Unemployment, and the reduction of maintenance for the unemployed (*Hilferding* only prepared the ground for a steady procedure towards the liquidation of the maintenance) in direct proportion to each other and—inversely with food consumption. Three million unemployed—with their families this means: nine million beings on starvation rations. This means the most gruesome misery for one-seventh of the population, a fate that awaits millions more in the period to come.

Bourgeoisie on the Offensive

So entrenched has the ruling class become with the aid of their reformist lackeys, that it has resolved to discard them completely from their employ in politics and to subjugate them completely in their service as trade union agents. The bourgeoisie are out for the whole booty. In a recent number of its official organ, the *Arbeitgeber*, it demands of the A.D.G.B. leaders, half in threat, half in entreaty, full subordination. It demands that the reformist bureaucracy surrender the "American" theory that high wages bring prosperity; it demands of them (who have shown such concern for the "recuperation" of "German" industry, for the promotion of the "national" export trade, etc.) a promise not to ask for a wage increase when most of the wage-agreements in the metal and textile industries terminate (in the spring and fall of this year). Because, they entreat: all the benefits that you and we, in our concentrated efforts to "unburden industry" by recoiling from all mention of industrial increases, by stuffing the "broad" shoulders of the proletariat—because, all this noble work which we have accomplished for the "national weal"—will be spoiled by such a demand.

Social Democrats Continue to Sell Out Workers

And they hold up the shining example of sacrifice that Bill Green and the other darlings of the American bourgeoisie made for the "common good", when these A. F. of L. fakers, in the now famous conference with Hoover and the bosses, promised not to "annoy" the latter with similar demands in "the period of national crisis".

The reformists will capitulate here too—according to precedent. For the ultimate good of their economic philosophy is the accumulation of capital for the promotion of the export trade and the capitalist import. No sacrifice, no working class sacrifice, is too great for these reptiles

who still have the audacity to call themselves representatives of the workers. (In their zeal for betrayal they are far to the right of even some bourgeois liberals, like the well-known economist, Prof. Bernhard, who sees a solution to the capitalists' troubles in price sinking in the domestic market, in place of what he calls wasteful dumping on the foreign market.) The main things for them are the government posts and their salaries. For the sake of these, everything else will be surrendered. Amsterdam and the A. D. G. B. have moved so far in the direction of Mathew Woll, that it becomes really difficult to find the least distinction between them. Each delivers the goods to the national bosses. Each according to the local needs.

The Attacks on the Workers' Organizations

Naturally, the economic offensive of the bosses is only the axis of an offensive all along the line. While the unemployed are being robbed of their last support, the bourgeoisie are feverishly arming the soldiers of civil war, the police. The state budget "cannot" meet its slightest obligations to the starving, but it can and does proportion enormous sums for the equipment of churches and for every other means of strangling the working class. But the hungry masses can't and won't let themselves be intimidated by the black-jacks of the police, by lead balls, or by horses' hoofs. There is a limit to silent suffering.

The bosses and their social-democratic police sergeants think that by slandering the Soviet Union, that by jailing the editors of the militant labor press, that by dissolving the proletarian defense organizations and by driving the leader of the working class, the Communist Party, underground, they will stifle the angry protest of the hungry nine millions. They will be sadly disappointed.

The party, overpowered and made impotent by its hazardous course of empty phrases, is struggling to disentangle itself from the self-imposed shackles. It is having a very hard time. It has lost many positions in the trade unions; a rebellion has spread among its own functionaries.

The Opportunism of the Brandlerites

Now that the militant spirit of solidarity has really impregnated a broad layer of workers and unemployed, with and without the aid of the Party, the Brandlerites are very reticent with "positive proposals" for action, of which they usually have their mouths full. The 6th of March they don't consider worth noticing. Instead of making any move for a united front (desired or not) with the Party, to exploit the favorable situation for immediate action, the programists, the apostles of "mass work", are concentrating all their attention to win the trade union rebels of the Party for their factional platform. Their "emergency program" is an opportunist piece of work. It appeals for a broad proletarian defensive struggle, for immediate demands for relief and unburdening of the masses. Very good. But it does not point out a single guiding principle, by which the social democratic, Catholic workers can find their way after the experiences of the impending struggles, into the red front of the proletarian revolution, into the ranks of the Communists.

The Need For a Clear Left Communist Opposition

The Communist Party is in agony. The leaders are helpless. They have shown themselves as pitifully incompetent as theoreticians and, consequently, as organizers. A strong left opposition, clear in principles, homogeneous in its own ranks, equipped with a real bolshevik platform and an unequivocal attitude toward the role of the Party, could fill a burning need in Germany at present. The masses are ready to begin the struggle, which is to mold them into a solid phalanx against the tottering capitalist order.

March 2nd.

S. GORDON

The Labor Movement In South Africa

(The following excerpts of a letter take up questions that are yet in the process of discussion and decision in the Communist League of America. No doubt its contents will prove of interest to our readers, besides giving further evidence that the Opposition is making its way into every section of the world.—Ed.)

Johannesburg

The Militant

I was indeed glad to get your letter of the 18th. January, and more particularly the copies of the *Militant*.

It will also interest you to know that I was a member of the Communist Party (South African section of the Communist International) of which I was a foundation member. The section was formed in 1921, and for many years prior to that I was an active member and official of the Industrial Socialist League which afterwards became the Cape Town branch of the Communist Party. In the Communist Party I held at various times the respective positions of Treasurer, Assistant Secretary and Acting Editor of the party organ, whilst for several years in succession I was a member of the Central Executive. In addition I was for many years secretary of a large trade union (Witwatersrand Tailors' Association) and treasurer and executive member of the South African Trade Union Congress (an exclusively European body, excluding native workers from membership) which posts I relinquished over two years ago.

The cause which led to the severance of my connection with the Communist Party was the newly-adopted policy of "An Independent Native Republic, with autonomy for national minorities" (meaning the whites mainly) was one to which I was unable to subscribe. In the circumstances it seemed to me to be a gross departure from the principles of Marxism and Leninism. Let me give you a brief outline of the position in South Africa.

The Working Class in South Africa

Our working class is divided on racial lines—Europeans and non-Europeans. The hostility of each of these sections towards the other has been born of their relative positions of superiority and inferiority in every sphere. This hostility has been aggravated by discriminatory laws and more particularly by the action of the Europeans in maintaining a rigid "color bar". Most of the natives are disenfranchised, they are made to carry "passes" (licenses to be abroad), are subjected to gross ill-treatment and brutality. The native who attains high educational standards is no less contemptuously treated on that account. Europeans refuse to work with natives on certain (skilled or semi-skilled) jobs and they debar them from entering their trade unions (the natives have now commenced organizing their own trade unions).

The white population of the Union of South Africa is approximately 1 3-4 millions; the native approximately 6 millions. The majority of the native workers are agricultural laborers, whilst those whom the development of industry has driven to the towns are engaged in unskilled occupations. The key positions in industry, commerce and communications are held by white workers. On the average natives' wages are about one quarter of what the whites earn. Needless to remark, the comparatively high wages of the whites in the town are possible because of the very low wage-standards of the native workers—a parallel position with that of British and Indian workers before the war. Capitalism uses the bribe of high wages to retain the loyalty of the whites who can in the circumstances be relied upon to police the mass of discontented under-paid natives.

The artificial color-bar raised by the

whites has for some time shown signs of relaxing. It has been found that measures such as these do not stem the advancing tide of the cheap native worker. Europeans' wage standards were definitely endangered when by a court decision, the color-bar in the gold-mining industry, which debarred natives from skilled occupations, was declared *ultra vires* the constitution and upset. The European workers then lent readier ear to the message of the Communist Party, bidding them assist, if for no higher motive than self-interest, the native to secure higher wages and thus eliminate competition based on differing wage-standards. The legal color-bar, having gone by the board it was natural that the rest should follow. The Communist slogan: "Workers of all lands, Unite!" found a more ready response among the whites. Some trade unions went the length of admitting non-Europeans to membership.

The Comintern Policy

Then came the Comintern's new slogan for South Africa: "An Independent Native Republic, with autonomy for racial minorities". The Europeans naturally asked: "Why a Native republic? Why not a Workers' and Peasants' Republic?—why is the white working class (a not insignificant part of the proletariat) contemptuously left out of the programme and relegated to a definite position of inferiority?" To these plain questions there has been no answer forthcoming. Within the C. P. these have been the effects of the new policy:

1. Racial animosity on the part of the native members towards the European members has grown and is developing to an almost incredible degree, the native members logically interpreting the slogan as implying superiority for themselves over the hated oppressor (white Communists are included here) and

2. Wholesale desertion of the white proletarian members who would not subscribe to the abandonment of the Marxian slogan "Workers of all lands, unite!" and its substitution by a black (native) chauvinism. Comrade S. P. Bunting, who attended the last world congress in Moscow was contemptuously dubbed a "Social Democrat" when he said that the white workers in South Africa must be taken into account in the framing of the programme. (These same comrades, Bunting and E. R. Roux, voted for Trotsky's expulsion from the Comintern against their own convictions on the matter.)

The above have been the effects within the Party of the new policy. Translate this to the wider field of the whole working class movement and it will be seen that the Party is now completely isolated from the white section of the proletariat—the most advanced, the most intelligent, the most class conscious, whilst the old racial antagonism has revived in active form. Many native workers have been won by the new policy, but at the price of the relinquishment of Marxism and the adoption of petty bourgeois slogans.

It seems to me that the Marxist-Leninist structure of the Comintern has been dangerously undermined, its fundamental principles thrown overboard. For freedom of discussion in the Party ranks has been substituted a so-called discipline which requires as the only virtues in a Communist ability to speak heatedly of the "errors of Trotskyism" and preparedness to sacrifice good comrades to the fetish of the "third period". Healthy inner-Party criticism is dead (Shades of Lenin!). Loyalty to Stalin and Co. is the supremem virtue.

There are adherents of the Opposition in this country. But we are all scattered. We are, nevertheless, much interested in what is going on in other countries and I welcome the receipt of your paper and will be glad to hear from you from time to time.

With comradely good wishes,

Fraternally yours,

C. FRANK GLAZIER