

The British Scene

The Unemployment Problem

Two years ago when the British Labor Party won the parliamentary elections, aided by its glittering promises of gradual development into "socialism" and of a definite cure for the unemployment situation, it naturally stood out in bold contrast to the reactionary Baldwin Tory government. However, when in power, the labor agents of imperialism, even to attain their promised reforms, would be compelled to go beyond the bounds of reformism and engage in a struggle with the actual rulers of the system from which they would again have to draw certain revolutionary conclusions. Such are the relations between yesterday and today. And in politics, it is one thing to promise and another thing to attain. Of course, the MacDonald coterie of leadership never had any serious intentions with their promised reforms.

But the working masses who expected something from their support of MacDonald have received nothing but disillusionment. What among the grotesque figures in knee-breeches at the British court, may be considered quite brilliant victories won in the diplomatic field, are not worth a brass farthing to the masses. On the contrary, it has only helped further to reduce their position and hence their dissatisfaction with the "labor" government is now growing apace. Thus the future does hold promises for the British workers, and far more real than MacDonald's election promises. The future holds promises of defeat of the disgraceful illusions of laborism.

In the two major problems facing the British working class directly at home to which splendid promises had been given, those of the unemployment situation and the repeal of the anti-trade union act, the "labor" government failed signally—or what would be more correct to say—it acted precisely as a government, capitalist also in name, would have acted.

The Serious Unemployment Situation

At the time of the liberal labor politicians taking over the golden reins of his majesty's government, in June 1929 there were a total of 1,100,125 unemployed officially registered. On July 6, 1931, their numbers had more than doubled and were 2,634,288. The dole system initiated in 1929 and intended then as a temporary measure, has since become permanent in character. And while the weight of the dole is becoming rather irksome to British capitalist society the "labor" cabinet is considering means of lightening this "burden" by shifting the load to the backs of the workers.

It attempted to substitute migration of the unemployed to the Dominions. But this had to be discarded even by the hidebound reactionary Jimmie Thomas lord privy seal and first minister of unemployment. The Dominions, having such problems of their own, did not want the unemployed. He found a perplexing problem and succeeded in getting relief only for himself in form of a change to the Dominions. His successor to tackle the unemployment problem, Vernon Hartshorn, died in office. So while the unemployment problem remained and became more acute, all parties—exclusive,

of course, of the Communist party—were called upon for help. The Royal Commission was created and it returned a report for a cut in the dole and an increase of payments to the fund. According to the report unemployment relief would be reduced, for example for a family with three children, from \$8.00 weekly to \$7.25. Workers with jobs would be required to pay to the unemployment fund 4 cents more weekly, employers 2 cents and the state 3 cents more. However, this was too raw even for the "labor" government to support. It would have become dynamite to the growing dissension within its own party ranks, so it confined itself to sponsoring a bill for the elimination of "abuses" of the dole evidently hoping that in the process, in committee, more teeth could be put into the bill. For the sake of facilitation Snowden had already announced, prior to presenting his budget, that, only drastic and disagreeable means would prevent the country from slipping into bankruptcy.

The Communist Party and Unemployment

It seems quite paradoxical that the British Communist Party has proven itself almost entirely unable to take advantage of this long protracted serious unemployment problem. It has, of course, religiously observed all the Stalinist calendar dates of unemployment demonstrations, but they have become mainly formal exercises. Their significance as well as the number of participants have dwindled. The party in the unemployment situation has not been able to set the workers into motion around a revolutionary perspective, nor to instill the life and spirit necessary to advance.

The crux of the party's demands has been to shift the burden of unemployment from the workers to the bourgeoisie. Thus its outlook became limited to one of a purely national reformist character. It could make little or no distinction from the views of the "Left" within the labor party and the trade union officials who contends that if the state—that is the capitalist state—cannot assure work for its citizens it must provide them with a free living. For the workers, there could hardly be anything else to do than attempt as best as they could to adjust themselves to the "inevitable" dole. Until the British Communist Party is able to extricate itself from such views it will remain pretty well paralyzed.

The Anti-Trade Union Act

The vicious Trades Dispute and Trade Union Act, legislated by the preceding Baldwin government after it had become so frightened during the general strike, increased the miners' workday from seven to eight hours; it prohibited any coercive strike over wages or similar disputes which may tend to have a direction against the established order; it prohibited civil service employees from joining unions; finally it also prohibited any levy upon trade unions for political purposes. To the liberal labor party lacks the latter clause became the only real obnoxious part and accounts for their zeal in election promises to repeal the act. But then, after assuming power a way was easily found to overcome that,

so when the so-called bill of repeal was promulgated it could easily be allowed to be ditched and die in committee. Meanwhile when the Scottish and Welsh miners fought against the spread-over (the eight hour day) and to uphold the more recent Coal Miners Act which provided first for a seven and a half-hour day and by July a seven-hour day, MacDonald advised the miners to accept the spread-over in return for a promised minimum wage law for miners.

To expect from this champion of gradualness to sponsor a movement for the shorter workday to relieve unemployment would, of course, be ridiculous. His "gradualness" leads in the opposite direction knowing, as he does that the shorter workday would cut directly in to the absolute surplus value still pocketed by the lords of finance and industry. Yet it is absolutely certain that the productive capacity of British industry and the output per man has grown to an extent making a demand for a six-hour day without reduction of pay as potent as the demand for the eight-hour day when first advanced. There are at least good reasons to assume that it could become, in the present unemployment situation, a powerful rallying cry for the working class and a means of unifying the employed with the unemployed. It could become a means to help bridge the gulf of the present retreat and defensive toward the working class offensive. From the point of view of building a class movement if utilized by the Communist Party, this slogan could undoubtedly become an effective supplement to the feeble demands of the charter movement. Oh yes, the party has already adopted the seven-hour day slogan; but apparently it overlooks (?) the fact that the seven-hour day is today supposed to be law for the coal miners and as a slogan for a movement it could hardly mean much to them.

What Does the Balance Sheet Show?

The salient fact is that the considerable and militant unemployment movement once existing has practically disappeared. The British Communist Party failed to consolidate this movement and to help assure its revolutionary course. It failed in the necessary class education and thus could not raise the general class level of this movement. It is now falling to take advantage of the costly experiences of the British workers who put their fate into an excursion in the degenerate field of laborism. Yet the unemployment problem is still the center of gravity in England pressing ever more acutely for a solution. A beginning can be made only when the masses are actually set into motion upon a definitely revolutionary course.

With its two years in power the Fabian gradualness of reformism has quite clearly revealed its miserable role. From once having played a historically progressive role, it is reaching its inevitable conclusion. At its very apex its true character is being exposed. The labor party leadership as a reactionary obstacle is losing its hold upon the masses. There is today a mighty abyss created by the contradiction between the vital needs of the masses and the reactionary imperialist course of the "labor" government. In this lies the great future prospects for the British Communist Party. Despite all its wasting of the capital of the world revolutionary movement it still has the opportunity to utilize these possibilities.

—ARNE SWABECK.

The Catalonian Federation's Platform

I have just read for the first time in La Lutte de Classes of the platform of the so-called "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc" under the name of which the Catalonian Federation acts. I acknowledge that the document is translated in La Lutte de Classes in a thorough and a correct manner. The document as a whole, from beginning to end, produces a painful impression. All that I have written in my latest work: "The Spanish Revolution in Danger", against the official policy of the C. I. in the Spanish question, applies entirely to the Catalonian Federation. Even more, the latter commits errors which the leadership of the C. I. has already given up, at least in words.

1. The document is issued by the "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc". What is this? A pseudonym for the Catalonian Federation? The bloc, that is, the union of the workers and the peasants, is a gigantic political task which the proletarian vanguard must accomplish. This task must be written into its platform. In place of this, the "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc" becomes the name of the revolutionary organization. This is nothing else but a new edition of the workers' and peasants' party. Yet even the Sixth Congress of the Comintern denounced this reactionary idea under the criticism of the Left Opposition.

Menshevik Criticism

2. In all the documents the word Communism is not pronounced a single time. Whoever hides his Communism from the masses, ceases to be a Communist.

3. They speak of the democratic revolution, of the democratic republic, of the popular revolution, without the slightest attempt at a class analysis. The government is accused of indecision, of vacillation, etc. . . . But nowhere is it said that it is a government of the bourgeoisie, an enemy of the people. The criticism of the Zamora government coincides entirely with the criticism addressed by the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionists to the government of Prince Lvov-Kerensky. On the subject of the Macia government nothing is said.

4. The document speaks of a "rational construction of society", without explaining what this means. It is the language of the "true" socialists of before 1848. Then it says: "The republic must signify a new social organization" Which? Is it a question of a bourgeois regime or of a socialist regime? The platform plays hide and seek with capitalism and with socialism.

5. The fact of having given Alfonso the possibility of fleeing abroad is presented as a "first profound mistake of the provisional government." Mistake? Is this to mean that Zamora is not sufficiently "sensible" in his revolutionary policy? This is how the Russian Mensheviks put the question. To call a "mistake" that which with the bourgeoisie is a deliberate counter-revolutionary calculation, means to whitewash the bourgeoisie and to cover it up before the masses.

6. "The republic must not only be a conquest for the bourgeoisie but also for the workers." What is the meaning of this neatly-mouthed, vulgarly democratic and profoundly false phrase?

Where and when has a republic existed which satisfied at the same time the interests of the bourgeoisie and those of the workers? From the republic bourgeoisie, we can and should demand democratic rights and social reforms, ceaselessly exposing the bourgeois, even the arch-democratic republic as a machine which the bourgeoisie uses to squeeze the sweat and blood of the workers and the peasants.

7. The reference to the republic of 1873 is accompanied by this incredible moral: "Thus, a complete division was created between the power and the people." The abstraction of the people is separated from the abstraction of the power. Perhaps the bourgeoisie separated itself from the working people? The example of 1873 must be referred to not in order to insist that the bourgeoisie becomes softer, better, more generous more tender, but in order to teach the masses not to believe for a single instant in the more "generous", the "softer", the "tenderer" bourgeoisie. That is how the Marxists put the question.

8. The platform calls upon the "working masses to organize themselves in all the provinces upon the basis of revolutionary Juntas." To what end? No program is indicated. Not only is it not indicated that Juntas of this kind will have to guarantee the revolutionary passage of power into the hands of the workers and the poor peasants, but a program of transitional demands is not put forward: 7-hour working day, control of production, organization through revolutionary Juntas of workers and of soldiers for the agrarian uprising. They do not mention by a single word that the Junta is an organization of the proletariat and the exploited masses against the class which is in power, that is, against the bourgeoisie. The Junta is taken as a "revolutionary organization" in the spirit of the Spanish petty bourgeois tradition.

9. In speaking of the importance of the agrarian uprising the platform refers to the French and the Russian revolutions. Not a word about the experience of the Chinese revolution which, under our very eyes, has just been strangled by the leadership of the C. I. Did the Comintern "solve" the agrarian question in China correctly? Not a word about that. The Communist who has not profited by the lessons of the Chinese revolution has no right to address himself to the masses in order to teach them and to issue appeals to them, especially in a revolutionary country.

10. The platform says: "We are supporters of a State for each nation." What does this mean for Spain? What nation is involved? The Pan-Spanish state organization is defined as follows: "The Union of the Republics of Iberia." What does this mean? If it means a federation, it would be better to say so.

11. "The defense of the revolution must be the supreme law." Defense against whom? The bourgeoisie in power defends "its" revolution against the proletariat. Whoever conceals this fact behind hollow phrases on the defense in general of the revolution in general against enemies in general, helps the bourgeoisie to stifle the proletariat under the banner of the revolution.

12. The "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc", that is, the workers' and peasants' party, promises at the end of its platform to "fight with all its strength for the complete realization of the democratic revolution." Does this mean the bourgeois republic on the basis of democratic parliamentarism? Then one must say so, but in this case it is necessary at least to put forward demands for democratic electoral rights, inasmuch as before the "rational" republic and the "rational organization of 'society' is realized on the Iberian Peninsula, it is necessary that the bourgeois republic of Zamora at least gives to the workingman and the workingwoman, the peasant and the peasant woman, the right to vote.

13. The name of the Socialist party is not mentioned in the platform. Not a word is said about the anarcho-syndicalists. The official Communist party is not mentioned. One might say that the "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc" is prepared to act in the void.

Spanish Kuo Min Tangism

These are the rapid objections that I believe it necessary to make on the basis of the text published in La Lutte de Classes. It is possible that, already, the Catalonian Federation has introduced into its platform some change, correction or amendment, or other. I am ready, to be sure, to welcome every step of the Federation in the sense of Marxism. But the document as it stands represents a pure "Kuo Min Tangism" transported to Spanish soil. The ideas and the methods against which the Opposition fought implicitly when it was a question of the Chinese policy of the Comintern, find their most disastrous expression in this document. As far as I know, the leaders of the Catalonian Federation systematically draw a line of demarcation from the Left Opposition. This is not enough: the Left Opposition must draw a line of demarcation in a clear and precise manner from the ideas and the methods which are expressed by the leaders of the Catalonian Federation in the document which we have just analyzed briefly. A false point of departure during a revolution is inevitably translated in the course of events into the language of defeat. The Spanish Left Opposition, weak though it is, can render enormous services to the proletariat and to the Spanish revolution. But in order to fulfill this mission, it must establish in its own ranks a regime of clarity, of honesty and of transparency. It is to this that I call our Spanish friends.

June 12, 1931

—LEON TROTSKY.

ALFA: Notes of a Journalist

MANULSKY, THE LEADER OF THE COMINTERN

Nothing can be done about it: Manulsky is at present the leader of the Comintern. The strongest side of this man lies in the fact that he does not take himself seriously. This is evidence that he is inclined to self-criticism. Whether it is because Stalin does not take the Comintern seriously, or for some other reason it was nevertheless decided that Manulsky, who does not take himself seriously, is the most suitable man for the most suitable place. And who else was to be put there?

If a complete collection of the "works" of Manulsky should be gathered, they would have, if not an instructive, at any rate an entertaining book. Manulsky was always somebody's armor-bearer, moreover, he changed his "knights" many times: he stayed longest with the not unknown Alexinsky. At present, Manulsky as Yaroslavsky's armor-bearer is one of the prosecution apprentices in matters of Trotskyist ideology. Under his own name and under pseudonyms, he has again and again proved the irreconcilability of Trotskyism and Leninism. But he has not always spoken this way. In 1918, Manulsky issued a pamphlet in which he wrote that the "honor of liberating Bolshevism from national-limitedness and its transformation into a theory of international proletarian revolution, belongs to L. D. Trotsky". At one of the Plenums of the Comintern, Trotsky quoted this citation, "famously" in his way. In the presence of Manulsky and with full justification ridiculed the citation and its author. The pamphlet was written by Manulsky after the October revolution and what is more after its publication not a single hair fell from his head. It is true, it may be said but this was prior to the . . . "trade union discussion", and later on Manulsky changed his views. Not in the least. Recently, we came across a quotation from an article by Manulsky written in

1922, consequently, at the time when Lenin's illness was already drawing its final balance under the relationships between Lenin and Trotsky. Here is what Manulsky wrote in the article, devoted to the memory of Chudnovsky: ". . . The Social Democrat, published in Switzerland by comrades Lenin and Zinoviev; the Paris Golos, which was subsequent to its suppression by the French police, renamed Nasha Slovo, directed by comrade Trotsky will be for the future historian of the Third International the fundamental fragments out of which the new revolutionary ideology of the international proletariat has been hammered out." ("Annals of the Revolution", No. 1, page 229, 1922.)

At present Manulsky proves that during the war Trotsky was a pacifist and a Kautskyan, that Leninism and Trotskyism—are two irreconcilable entities, but in 1922, he maintained neither more nor less than that "the new revolutionary ideology of the international proletariat", that is, the ideology of modern Communism, was created by Lenin and Trotsky. Precisely when did Manulsky see the light of truth? Neither in 1914-1916 when he worked with Trotsky in the Paris paper, Nasha Slovo, nor in 1917-1922, when Manulsky, together with the whole party, worked under the leadership of Lenin, was the light of truth revealed to him. Only after illness and later on, death took Lenin out of the ranks, and the epigrams spurred on by a wave of Thermidorian reaction, declared war upon the ideological heritage of Lenin under the name of "Trotskyism", did Manulsky begin to recover his sight. By the way, not all at once. The "trinity" (Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev) kept him in the background for a long time, and only after it had by that brought him to semi-repentance, did it give him an ultimatum: open up a campaign against Rakovsky as an introduction to a campaign against Trotsky. Manulsky, after wavering (Rakovsky's prestige was too high) accepted the condition and thus bought himself a place on the Central Committee of the party. This deal was no secret to the broad party circles, be-

cause Manulsky himself, with his characteristic cynicism, portrayed this deal with reference to persons, revealing his high talents as a raconteur of national and other anecdotes. We repeat, this man never took himself seriously, either politically or morally. And he has now been put at the head of the Communist International. And he is now working out the routes for the Spanish revolution!

AUERBACH CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS

In Moscow, there is published a Literary Gazette, the organ of the Federation of Soviet Authors. The critic of this paper is Auerbach. His rights to leadership of literature are determined, on the one hand by the fact that he deserted in time, the ranks of the Opposition, into which he came accidentally (I. N. Smirnov used to say about him: "He won't stay with us—he's too glutinous"), for the ranks of the bureaucracy, where he is quite at home; on the other hand, by the fact that he has absolutely no literary flair, to which every line of his own writings bear witness. In the Literary Gazette for February 19, Auerbach wrote an enormous article entitled "Tempos of Self-Revelation (On Trotsky, Mayakovsky, and Fellow-Traveling)". In the center of the article is a note by Trotsky devoted to Mayakovsky's suicide. From this note, Auerbach extracts a quotation devoted to proletarian literature. The "self-revelation" consists of the fact that Trotsky has finally recognized openly the complete opposition of his views in the question of proletarian culture and proletarian literature to the views of Lenin. However let us produce the quotation from Trotsky's article in the form in which it is quoted by Auerbach with his own parenthetical remarks.

"The struggle for 'proletarian culture' [quotation marks by Trotsky.—L. A.]—something in the form of 'general collectivization' [his own quotation marks.—L. A.] of all the intellectual achievements of humanity in the framework of the Five Year Plan—still had at the beginning of the October revolution a Utopian, idealistic character. It is significant that in this sphere, even then, the contradiction between Lenin and the author of these lines was revealed." The whole quotation, as we see, is in quotation mark, and what is more, Auerbach correctly points out the single

quotation marks by Trotsky himself. Auerbach is exact and scrupulous. But in spite of this, the Auerbachian style of the quotation, and particularly of its last phrase—"It is significant that in this sphere even then, the conflict between Lenin and the author of these lines was revealed"—is puzzling. Thus, Trotsky not only points out that he had disagreements with Lenin on a definite question, but he even hurries to emphasize the "significance" of the fact that these disagreements were revealed "even then", that is, it would appear that Trotsky makes it his aim to reveal himself. This sounds somewhat puzzling. Auerbach, however, does not spare any comment. "First of all, what is most obvious," he says, "is the frank declaration about the disagreements with Lenin." Really Auerbach is correct. Something is obvious. Further on, it says: "We must be grateful: What is more pleasant to read than the acknowledgment by Trotsky himself of Lenin's disagreement with his views on literature and general questions of culture." The phrase is constructed in an illiterate manner, like the majority of Auerbach's phrases, but it is possible to understand. The whole article ends with the conclusion: "The speed of the self-revelation is significant."

In this manner, in the year 1930, Trotsky revealed himself in the fact that he did not agree with Lenin on his views on literature. On this score, Auerbach celebrates a victory and speaks of the speed of self-revelation. But in the year 1928, Trotsky was exiled to Alma-Ata, and in 1929 was expelled from the country for counter-revolutionary activity and the preparation of an armed uprising against the Soviet power. Of what significance, in comparison with this "fact", is Trotsky's disagreement with Lenin on his views on proletarian literature? Where and in what does the speed (!) of self-revelation lie here? Is it not the other way around? Does not this "disproportion" in the accusations reveal — Auerbach's employers? Such is the political side of the matter. But there is also another.

The fact is that Auerbach lied from beginning to end. The quotation which he made is not a quotation; it is a falsification: crude illiterate, insolent—a la Auerbach. Here is word for word the passage from Trotsky's article which Auerbach disguised:

"The struggle for 'proletarian culture'—something in the form of 'complete collectivization' of all the achievements of humanity in the framework of the Five Year Plan—had at the beginning of the October revolution a character of Utopian idealism—and precisely along this line met with a rebuff from Lenin and the author of these lines."

In this manner, Trotsky says that the philosophy of proletarian culture "met with a rebuff from Lenin and the author of these lines". But Auerbach says: "even then, the conflict between Lenin and the author of these lines was revealed"—neither more nor less! The man who poses as a proletarian critic turns out to be simply a base literary swindler. This time, he has been caught with the goods too crudely and in reality, relieves us of the necessity of making any further comment. However, we cannot help reminding that Auerbach's mendacity assumes a still viler character because he himself is very well informed about Lenin's and Trotsky's relations to the Auerbachian margarine of literary and cultural philosophy. Auerbach knows how rigorously Lenin came out against the theoreticians of the so-called "proletarian culture" in the years when this movement had a revolutionary content, and was not gripped in the hands of the bureaucratic charlatans. Auerbach knows that if Trotsky had "disagreements" with Lenin on this question, they were perhaps expressed in the fact that Trotsky had a softer attitude than Lenin to the infatuations of the ideologists of proletarian culture and at times defended them before Lenin. Auerbach knows that Trotsky wrote his book on literature in agreement with Lenin, who insisted more than once that Trotsky should first of all work out the chapter devoted to proletarian culture and print it in Pravda. By the way, its publication was not accompanied by any comments or footnotes by the editor, Yaroslavsky—Yaroslavsky himself!—wrote to Trotsky that he agrees with the viewpoint he expressed. All this is known to Auerbach, because as one of the young aspirants to "proletarian literature," he attempted more than once in those years to find in Trotsky a defender against Lenin's views, but invariably met with rebuff.

Literally, whichever aspect you touch, the ideology of the Centrist bureaucracy is built upon lies, falsifications, on the

disfigurement of the past. Just think of it: Here this Auerbach comes out as an instructor and tutor of the proletarian youth! He, Auerbach, paves the way for "proletarian" (!) "culture" (!). People who can judge by symptoms should understand from this example alone what a fatal danger the present party regime represents for the development of a socialist society and a socialist culture.

Note by the Editor: In corroboration of Alfa's remarks, we print the following parts of a speech of Trotsky together with the quotation by Manulsky to which Alfa refers, as well as the interjections by Manulsky during Trotsky's speech:

TROTSKY: I know of only one single literary product—and I became aware of it also only a few weeks ago—in which the attempt is made to make a universal theory out of this theory, to present it as an improvement upon the theoretical attitude of Lenin. I will read this quotation to you. I need not say that I have absolutely nothing in common with this interpretation:

"Russian Bolshevism, born in the nationally-limited revolution of 1905-1906, had to go through the purification ritual of emancipation from all the typical features of national peculiarities, in order to receive all the civil rights of international ideology. Theoretically, this purging of Bolshevism of the national tinge adhering to it was carried through in 1905 by Trotsky, who sought to bring the Russian revolution into harmony with the whole international movement of the proletariat in the idea of the permanent revolution."

This was written not by me, it was written in 1918 by a comrade who bears the name of Manulsky.

MANULSKY: So I did say something stupid, and you repeat it! TROTSKY: Something stupid? Absolutely right! (Laughter). But you need have no concern about comrade Manulsky: naturally this is a painful subject, for he himself calls it a stupidity. But comrade Manulsky who has here attributed to me a tremendously heroic deed, without my having earned it, will soon again, without my having earned it, attribute to me two mistakes and in this manner draw his balance. (Laughter);

From the Minutes of the Plenum of the E. C. I., November 22-December 13, 1926. German edition, page 583. Berlin,

*Unfortunately, I am obliged to make this quotation from memory, but I fully guarantee the accuracy of thought. A.