

# AFTER FIVE MONTHS OF SANCTIONS

## WORLD OF LABOR

### Stakhanov Campaign Gripped by Serious Crisis in the Soviet Union

By JOHN G. WRIGHT

For months now the Stalinist press has been filled with ballyhoo for Stakhanovism. The February issue of the Communist International boasts that: "The words 'Stakhanovism' and 'Stakhanov methods' have become famous far beyond the confines of the first socialist state in the world." (p. 351)

At the very height of this campaign, news comes from Moscow, as reported by Harold Denny in the New York Times, that: "Stakhanovism has fallen back so completely in its birthplace that only one of the many Donetz Basin coal mining units was not falling in its production quota." (N. Y. Times, March 18.)

The breakdown is not limited to the coal industry. The situation is so serious that, according to Denny's dispatch, it "caused Communist party and government leaders to demand... that it (i. e. Stakhanovism) be revived and strengthened."

Is Denny perhaps vilifying Stakhanovism? Is there really a "breakdown", and how serious is it?

It is impossible as yet to gauge the situation fully, but sufficient facts are already available to enable us to outline it.

The introduction of what Denny calls the "Stakhanov speeding system" undoubtedly produced results at the outset. If we take the key steel and coal figures as the basis for a general orientation, we find that the output of steel increased from an average production of 35.5 thousand tons in September to 38 thousand tons in December; a like increase was gained in the production of coal (the Donetz Basin) which rose from the average daily output of 178.2 thousand tons in September to 229 thousand tons in December.

These were, so to speak, the honeymoon months of Stakhanovism. In January, we find the steel production still increasing. It rises to an average daily production of 42 thousand tons. But the figures for the coal industry already show a small but indubitable decrease. In January, the average daily output in the Donbas region fell to 223 thousand tons of coal. The February figures indicate a leveling off in the production of steel, the industry apparently maintaining its January output of 42 thousand tons per day, while a further decline is indicated in the Donbas coal production (221 thousand tons of coal). The figures of the Second Five Year Plan call for a daily production of 46 thousand tons of steel, and 230 tons of coal from the Donetz basin. (The above figures have been averaged from the daily data published in Pravda.)

In short, instead of steadily increasing, the output is either remaining stationary or declining. The question naturally arises how are we to reconcile these facts with the claims made by the Stalinists that the "Stakhanov movement ensures a gigantic growth of the productivity of labor..." etc., etc. (Communist Int. Feb. 1936, p. 35). The answer is that the facts give the lie to the Stalinist boasts.

The inability to maintain levels already attained can signify only one thing: that the gains have been made not so much on the basis of a scientific rationalization of industry as at the expense of an increased physical exertion on the part of the workers. The workers are unable to maintain the intense labor for more than a few weeks. Their physical exhaustion is reflected in the declining output. Moreover, there are many signs that the workers are resisting the attempts of the bureaucracy to load an intolerable burden on their shoulders. Born a few short months ago, Stakhanovism already faces a crisis.

The economic and cultural development of the U.S.S.R. is no longer compatible with the existence of a usurping, self-willed bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is now a brake upon further development and it must come into an ever greater conflict with the Soviet proletariat. That is the real meaning of the latest news from the Soviet Union.

**SPLIT IN THE SWEDISH C. P.**  
The European press reports that a split has taken place in the Communist Party of Sweden (section of the Third International).

A considerable section of the Swedish C.P. refused, it seems, to follow blindly the turn toward national defense that was ratified by the Seventh Congress. The section that split has issued its own organ, "Proletarian Unity", in which it charges the Third International with having betrayed the revolutionary tradition of Leninism.

The split in Sweden is the first open sign of the opposition that has been rumored to be stirring in the ranks of the Comintern, since the "new turn" was officially sanctioned six months ago. There are also continued rumors of a revolt in the Polish C.P.

The indications are that Stalin and his henchmen will not have internally the same easy sailing with their latest turn as they had with all the preceding zigzags.

**BELGIUM**  
A Special Congress of the Belgian Labor Party (P.O.B.) was held on February 22, for the purpose of ratifying the action of Socialist Ministers who had previously approved the military project of Duveze, as demanded by the French General Staff.

These proposals of the Belgian War Department proved somewhat embarrassing to the Socialist Ministers in the coalition Government. They had entered into this coalition ministry with the understanding that no matters relating to the army would be broached until after the next parliamentary elections; and they had been assured by the war ministry that the condition of national defense was perfectly splendid.

Unforeseen contingencies, however, suddenly compelled the Minister of War to demand that the compulsory term of military service be extended 6 months, that more millions be added to the army budget, and so on, in order to guarantee "collective security." The embarrassed Socialist Ministers did not hesitate for a moment to vote in approval of these measures. But, of course, there still remained the task of swinging the trade unions solidly in line. A series of maneuvers and "discussions" followed, culminating in the Special Congress.

It follows as a matter of course that this Congress adopted a resolution which admits "the possibility of a defensive war in certain circumstances." The resolution goes on to emphasize that such a defensive war in the international sphere "coincides with the struggle against Fascism." The P. O. B. went, of course, on record in favor of a collective security on the basis of the League Covenant for mutual aid.

Vanderveide, who had "retired" from active service on account of his age, can still summon sufficient strength to remain true to the betrayal of 1914, in company with Messrs. Spaak, De Man and Co.

Last January 25, Vanderveide celebrated his 70th birthday. On this happy occasion the Soviet ambassador to Belgium sent him a gift, no doubt in token of the fact that the preparation for the Second Imperialist War is proceeding full blast under the banner of the Second and Third Internationals.

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## Its Effect upon the Italo-Ethiopian War, The Great Powers and the Workers

By JOHN WEST

One of the crucial issues of the present war crisis has been the problem of so-called "sanctions." Sanctions, moreover, are not merely a question for theoretical analysis. Sanctions are being tested also by experience: during nearly five months they have been in operation against an "aggressor." In the light of the experience of these five months, therefore, I wish to test the analysis we have made of the problem of sanctions, and the position which we hold with respect to them.

The first point to make clear is that the sanctions which I am discussing—namely, the real sanctions which have really been in operation during these months—are in actuality certain economic, financial and commercial measures carried out by certain national states: Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and various of their satellites. This point may seem either so trivial or so obvious as to be hardly worth making. In fact, however, it is crucial. The reason why it must be understood is that these measures are usually referred to not as they really are but as "League of Nations sanctions." From this it is concluded that they differ fundamentally from measures carried out by national states, that they are collective acts of collective body which aims to uphold world stability and world peace.

The truth is that the idea of "League sanctions" is a mere legal fiction. The League of Nations is not a sovereign political unit nor an economic unit. It has no citizens nor army nor navy nor industries nor trade nor finance (other than the unimportant Bank for International Settlements, which to some extent it controls). Consequently there are no sanctions which the League could put into effect, no matter how desirous it

might be of doing so. Sanctions, as defined in the League Covenant, can be put into effect only by sovereign political states. The only reality they can even conceivably have is as acts of sovereign political states.

It is this basic fact which determines the attitude of the various tendencies within the working class toward sanctions. Revolutionary Marxists are opposed to sanctions, because they are on all occasions opposed to bourgeois national states; the strategy of Marxists aims always toward the overthrow of bourgeois states. The social-patriots, on the other hand, favor sanctions, because at bottom the social-patriots rest on bourgeois national states, and rely on collaboration with them. The social-patriots of the standard social variety, here as in every other crucial issue, function as the agents of the bourgeois bureaucracy within the working class. The new-style Stalinist social-patriots function within the working class as agents of the class enemy through an indirect route. These latter, committed to the building of socialism in one country, are consequently led to aid in maintenance of the status quo internationally—to enable socialism to be built "without interruption"—and thus must collaborate with and rely on the bourgeois states to whose immediate interest such maintenance is or seems to Stalin to be. In both cases, social-patriotism in general, and support of sanctions in particular, means nothing other than alliance with the class enemy.

Let us examine briefly what has happened in the case of sanctions, since their invocation in November:

Most of the nations belonging to the League have put into effect certain measures relating to their trade with Italy. These measures have included prohibitions on the

export to Italy of a number of materials and products related to the carrying on of war (implements of war, horses, trucks, etc.); and also certain restrictions on granting loans and credits to Italy. The United States, also, though not a member of the League, has carried out certain sanctions: the prohibition of the export of certain implements of war, as provided in the Neutrality Act; and restrictions on loans and credit, through the Johnson Act.

It is to be remarked that all these nations, including the Soviet Union, have been very zealous in sticking to the letter of the law on sanctions. They have been careful not to step over the bounds of "collective action" by extending sanctions to anything not specifically agreed upon—to, for example, oil.

Italy, on her side, however, has gone a little further, and has expanded the reign of sanctions by instituting what she has called "counter-sanctions": restriction of imports, prohibition of the sale of certain products from sanctionist nations, freezing of credits and other financial restrictions to prevent payment to these nations, etc.

What has been the effect of these measures?

First, it will require no argument to prove that their effect on the conduct of the Italian military campaign in Ethiopia has been zero. There is no indication that they have affected the campaign in the slightest. From a military point of view, Ethiopia has fared neither better nor worse than if sanctions had never been thought of. As means of stopping the war or of saving ravaged Ethiopia, sanctions have accomplished nothing.

Sanctions seem to have had some effect in adding to Italy's economic and financial burdens internally, in cutting down supplies of certain goods and in raising prices. How great a percentage of such dislocation can be traced to sanctions, however, and how much to what would have occurred in any case under the given circumstances, without sanctions, it is difficult to estimate. Certain economic and financial difficulties have also followed with the sanctions-invoking countries. Indeed, it is probable that sanctions have been as burdensome to Great Britain and France as to Italy.

This, then, is the sum of the effects of sanctions as pretended instruments for stopping war and maintaining peace. This does not, however, complete the story of the effect of sanctions.

### National Unity

The outstanding effect of the policy of sanctions has been: to aid in bringing to a new high point national unity within both the sanctions-invoking nations and Italy. The united support of sanctions by the dominant sections of the bourgeoisie together with the leadership of the dominant working class parties and organizations has meant in practice a coalition between the bourgeoisie and the working class. The crucial result of sanctions, thus, from the point of view of the working class, has been the weakening of the position of the working class, a shift in the relationship of forces in favor of the bourgeoisie, a set-back to the revolutionary struggle.

In Italy, the policy of sanctions has played neatly into the hands of Mussolini. He has been able to direct the resentment of the masses away from the enemy at home, away from himself, the Fascist state and Italian finance-capital, to the "enemy abroad"—to the sanctionist nations and particularly to Great Britain. Thus the process of conscious class differentiation in Italy, which might well have gone on at a rapid rate during this period, has had substituted for it a merging into patriotic support of the nation—that is, support of the class enemy.

Of even more importance, in the long run, is the degree to which sanctions have aided in accomplishing national unity within France and Great Britain (the same process has of course occurred within the lesser nations). In Great Britain, support of sanctions by the Labour Party and the Communist Party identified these parties with the Conservative Party on the war question, which has been, of course, the decisive question. It was this which made possible the sweeping victory of Baldwin in the November General Elections—since, with the same policy on the crucial question, the Labour Party could not furnish effective opposition. It is this, moreover, which is enabling Baldwin to carry through his argument program with hardly a voice raised loudly, and none convincingly, against it.

The same developments have occurred in France. Laval, Sarraut, the Peoples Front, all united for the League and for sanctions—of course, with suitable "modifications." And the effect has been

to re-unite France to a degree which would have seemed unimaginable a year ago. At that time, France was making rapidly ready, through a division into the two great class armies, for the struggle for power. The internal crisis in France has not of course been solved in favor of the bourgeoisie by the unification achieved with the help of the pro-sanctions policy of the Peoples Front. But the process of class differentiation has during these five months been set back heavily. The temporary weakening of the Croix de Feu and the Fascists generally, pointed to with such smug complacency by the Stalinists as proof of the great "victories" of the Peoples Front, in actuality demonstrates just the opposite. The Fascists have retired a little precisely because the policy of the Peoples Front has so weakened the position of the working class that it does not so imminently threaten the foundations of bourgeois rule. Consequently, in France, the attempt at a Fascist coup can be further postponed. Finance-capital does not call in the Fascists until it has to; if it can maintain itself securely with the aid of the working class parties, so much the better, and less troublesome.

Likewise, as in England, the pro-sanctions policy in France has made meaningless any opposition to the increased armament measures and speeded militarization. And it has played a great part in making the masses ready to defend, with full patriotic fervor, French finance-capital against Hitler, "Humanite" and "Populaire" outdo Flandin in their denunciation of the re-militarization of the Rhineland. And, quite naturally, they fail to notice that Flandin represents the class enemy at home—since their policy and Flandin's are fundamentally identical.

**Independent Action**  
Secondly, the pro-sanctions policy has sabotaged any effective independent working class actions against the war. With their customary hypocrisy and cynicism, the Stalinist spokesmen inform us that they are for both governmental and working class "sanctions"; and that the latter are more "basic." The C. I. "criticized" at length the British Labour Party because it advocated only governmental sanctions and neglected working class actions. But this is only rhetoric, only phrases to temper the social-patriotic wind. Governmental sanctions and independent working class "sanctions" do not supplement each other, as the Stalinists pretend, but contradict each other. The reason is easy to understand. Supporting governmental sanctions is supporting the government; independent working class actions are necessarily directed against the government (the representative of the opposing class) and its policies. You cannot simultaneously fight with and against the government. You can pretend to do so, in words, as the Stalinists do; but the logic of facts, not phrases, governs your actions. And, as the last five months proves, the logic of facts prevented those who stood for governmental sanctions from organizing any significant working class actions. The contradiction is somewhat obscured in the Italy-Ethiopian conflict, where the working class is on the side of one of the contestants and against the other. It would be glaringly obvious in the more important case of a conflict between two or more imperialist nations (e.g., France and Germany), where correct working class actions would have to be directed equally against all the contesting states, including the home government, but where any governmental sanctions would be directed against only one side.

To carry out working class actions would have meant a consistent policy against the government, against the national state. Such a policy, though under the given conditions it too would doubtless have been unable to bring about peace and stop Italy's campaign, on the other hand would have acted in a manner just the opposite of the pro-sanctions policy in its influence on the relationship of class forces: however unsuccessful it might have been "practically," it would have promoted the class differentiation, strengthened the independent struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie, and hindered the building up of national unity. It would have provided the basis for agitation to dispel and not to consolidate illusions. In short, it would have been the foundation for revolutionary, and not for social-patriotic strategy.

### The Real Meaning

To explain the role of sanctions intelligently, we must first understand what they are. And if we understand this, we know that they are not means for enforcing peace, but simply instruments of the policies of the national governments which invoked them, or consider invoking them. We judge and explain them, therefore, in the light of the whole policies of the given governments. For Great Britain and France, for example, they are part of the imperialist policies of two imperialist governments—that is, part of two war policies. For the Soviet Union, they are part of the world policy of Stalinism—of socialism in one country, preservation of the international status quo, and preparation for defense of the Soviet Union by alliance with capitalist states.

To understand sanctions in this manner—that is, as they are, not as pacifists and social-patriots dream of them—makes explicable what has actually happened, and the conflicts that have arisen.

In the Chaco War, the policies of France and Great Britain did not require any flirtation with sanctions. Indeed, Great Britain preferred that the Chaco War should continue, since Royal-Dutch-Shell had an important stake in the victory of Paraguay. Sanctions were therefore never mentioned. Likewise in the case of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Here was a perfect legal instance for the application of sanctions. But France, and particularly Great Britain, saw nothing to be gained from the use of such a risky weapon. Their imperialist interests were not immediately and directly affected to a sufficient degree. They consequently decided that the best "means for enforcing peace" at that time was to do nothing openly, to carry on diplomatic negotiations and financial transactions as be-

fore. To believe that sanctions are a means for enforcing peace leads, then, to a contradiction. It makes it impossible for us to understand sanctions in their true role, to interpret what actually has happened during the past five months, to explain the realities of world politics. It leaves it inexplicable why sanctions of a sort were applied in the case of Italy, but not in the case of Bolivia-Paraguay or of Japan in Manchuria, in both of which at least as good "legal" grounds existed for applying them. It leaves unintelligible the anti-sanctionist position of Great Britain now in the Rhineland dispute. With respect to "peace," Great Britain has had the same outlook during all four of these occurrences—and yet only in one did she advocate sanctions.

### Weapon of Peace?

"What went wrong with sanctions?" the confused but sincere believer in sanctions asks himself, after reviewing the results of the pro-sanctions policy. "Why didn't they work better?"

If we begin reasoning from the belief that sanctions are a "weapon of peace," then there is only one way to answer these questions. We must conclude that sanctions went wrong, that they didn't work, because they weren't supposed to.

## MARCH OF EVENTS

By JACK WEBER

### RELIEF—FOR BIG BUSINESS.

The process of whittling away relief for the unemployed by alphabetical strategy is carried a long step forward in Roosevelt's latest message to Congress on the budget. This is election year and Roosevelt intends to leave nothing undone in order to carol the support of business. Economy and the avoidance of taxation on business are the forms of relief proposed by the "humanitarian" President—for big business! The real purpose of the WPA is being rapidly unfolded. That purpose was to provide a clever intermediary to get workers off the relief rolls and then, after a short space of time, to lay them off and prevent them from getting back on the relief rolls. Each month a new batch of unemployed will be "laid off" to fend for themselves in this best of all possible worlds. Hopkins has given public assurance to the capitalist class by laying out a definite schedule of cuts in the WPA rolls. Of course Hopkins "hopes" that the needy will get back on relief. Or perhaps they will be shuttled from the WPA to the PWA! No doubt some shifts like this will raise false hopes in the minds of many unemployed that it is only a matter of waiting a short time for renewed work on federal payrolls. But the big majority will be doomed to bitter disillusion. Roosevelt is making it plain that after the elections—a little relief is still remaining for voters!—the Federal Government will wash its hands of the largest burdens of relief. On one condition! That the unemployed remain passive and put up only a scattered fight against the outright starvation being planned for them.

### DIVISION OF LABOR

In the division of labor for carrying out the demands of the capitalist class, Roosevelt occupies the position of the liberal demagogue "voicing" the interests of the masses. Thus he points to the NRA as the would-have-been solution of the problem of unemployment—if that other arm of capitalism, the Supreme Court, had not declared it unconstitutional. He is left to appeal to the voluntary action of the employers to "extend their operations so as to absorb an increasing number of the unemployed." And since this will not do if left to individual bosses, he calls for organized effort on a national scale. As though it was not the "voluntary" action of the bosses in the first place that had produced unemployment as the inevitable concomitant of the business crisis! Roosevelt suggests a campaign on the part of big business for shorter hours to provide more jobs. This demagoguery at a time when the average work week has grown three hours longer (from July to December 1935)! The A. F. of L. calculates that this increase in the work week resulted in the loss of

a million jobs to the unemployed. The only difference between Roosevelt and the more reactionary members of the capitalist governing staff is that Roosevelt wishes to act more cautiously and not so bluntly and speedily in letting down the unemployed from their present miserable status to one that is still worse.

It will be the function of Congress to start investigations of the undoubted political corruption that exists in the WPA (as in capitalist institutions in general) to force a quicker end to the system of work relief. Already this pressure is on due to the exposure of conditions in West Virginia. The attitude of Congress is shown by its refusal to continue the Florida and "Quoddy" ship canals by the grant of special fund. No doubt there will be some opposition to the measly sum of one and one half billion dollars asked for by Roosevelt, although it is unlikely that this will be refused. The CCC camps are also due for a liberal application of the axe. One hundred thousand youths are to be discharged from these camps by July 1st.

### UNITY OF THE UNEMPLOYED

It is no accident, under these circumstances, that the movement of the unemployed is taking on a new impetus. Objective conditions are forcing the unemployed workers to organize and to seek unity of effort to combat the plans of the capitalist class directed against their very existence. These workers note that in the past 6 months the profits of big corporations have gone up more than 140%. They note that in the "bull" stock market there has been a gain of 55% in stock quotations. They see that with some considerable recovery of business the reemployment of unemployed workers has made only a small dent in their ranks, continually augmented by the new generation of young workers ready and eager to earn a living. There are still some ten and one half million out of work, by conservative estimate. The capitalists make it difficult to obtain complete and reliable statistics on this question. These workers thrown out of industry in the crisis, must struggle for their very lives against the Roosevelt plan to slowly put an end to all relief to the "employables." Roosevelt and his masters are reckoning without the mass pressure that will be exerted by employed and unemployed alike to stave off starvation for millions of workers. For this gigantic struggle a firmly knit mass organization is essential. This organization is in the making in the promising efforts for unity of the unemployed movements, particularly the NUL and the WAA. Out of this unity will spring a stronger and more powerful organizing force for the coming battles.