

Workers Age

A PAPER DEFENDING THE INTERESTS OF WORKERS AND FARMERS

Vol. 6, No. 7.

NEW YORK, N. Y., SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1937.

5 Cents a Copy

FDR Demands Supreme Court Enlargement

Seeks To Sustain New Deal Program Thru Personnel Shift

Forced again to face the problem of the courts, Roosevelt shocked the conservatives of both parties last week, by proposing that he be given the right to appoint new justices for each present Supreme Court member over the age of seventy. In addition, proposals to facilitate work in the lower courts and lessen their powers to declare federal legislation unconstitutional, were made. He proposed the appointing of 50 new lower court judges and making it impossible for such a court to hear a case involving federal laws without a government attorney being present to plead its case.

Essentially this is a move to capture the Supreme Court for the New Deal by a flank rather than a frontal attack. The political questions involved were not raised by Roosevelt at all. Instead of presenting this as a proposal to facilitate the passage of social legislation, he avowedly wishes merely "to infuse new blood into the courts." This is of course a political joke. Roosevelt needs to break down the resistance of the courts to the New Deal program, which is apparently in a state of qualified revival, and this age factor is a clever, tho rude, excuse.

The real political line-up in Congress, which has been blurred thru the period of the elections and after, once again sprang into sharp prominence when party lines were over-run on the issue of the courts. The Democratic and the Republican Conservatives presented a common front against this proposal to "tamper" with the courts, as Borah

(Continued on Page 6)

New Workers School Begins Lecture Series on Spain

The New Workers School, now located at 131 West 33rd St., announces a series of six Friday evening lectures on the Civil War in Spain, to begin February 12th. This vital subject, of importance and interest to every progressive worker, will be treated by three lecturers.

Bertram D. Wolfe, whose writings on, and understanding of, the history of Spain are well-known, will begin with two lectures, the first dealing with the "Background of the Spanish Civil War." (Feb. 12th), and the second (Feb. 19th) dealing with "Spain Under the Republic."

The third and fourth lectures will be presented by Geo. F. Miles, editor of the Workers Age. On February 26th, he will discuss "The Spanish Arena," concerning parties and programs, to be followed by a

General Motors Deadlocks Parley by Refusal to Recognize Auto Workers' Rights of Collective Bargaining

LABOR'S SOLIDARITY AGAINST G.M.



New York Unionists Protest Against G. M.'s Policies

Hundreds Of Trade Unionists, Including Auto Workers Of Tarrytown Hold Two Mass Picket Lines Before GM Building; Boo Sloan

On Monday, February 1st and again on Saturday, February 8th, New York workers of various trades and Tarrytown auto workers held a mass picket demonstration in front of the General Motors' building at 57th Street and B'way. General Motors saw to it that

their headquarters were well protected by a long line of policemen. Singing or the shouting of slogans were prohibited, but the second demonstration burst into expressions of solidarity that the police could not stop.

The slogans and signs carried by the workers were indications of widespread solidarity with the heroic auto workers in their struggle for collective bargaining. They denounced the use of force against the workers by General Motors, called attention very sharply to the shocking difference in the salaries of the executives and the meager wages of the auto workers, protested against the use of injunctions, exposed the tie-up between the magnates of steel, auto and Wall Street, and attacked the company unions.

The meeting was organized by Sidney Jonas, international representative of the United Automobile Workers Union, in the East.

discussion on the objectives of the revolution, "The Civil War In Spain," scheduled for March 5th.

The final two lectures will be given by Will Herberg, director of the New Workers School, on March 12th and 19th, respectively. The topics are "International Forces in the Spanish Civil War" which will deal with the role of the fascist and "democratic" countries, the policies of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals and the position of the Soviet Union; and secondly "The Road To Victory."

This comprehensive survey of the problems of the Spanish Revolution should do much to clarify knowledge of the conditions in which the Spanish struggle is being waged, and the nature of its proletarian goal.

Admission will be 25 cents for each lecture, starting at 8:30 sharp.

Flint's "G. M. Mayor" Given New Powers Against Workers

Auto Workers Extend Strike Strength To Plant Four, Chevrolet, Forcing GM Magnates To Negotiate With Union Representatives

More than a week of sitting at a conference table with the representatives of the CIO and the Auto Workers Union has not yet changed General Motor's stubborn attitude against recognizing the rights of the auto workers to collective bargaining. It is, indeed apparent that the corporation which exhausts its workers thru inhuman speed-up and starves them on pittance wages is treating the question of negotiations from the point of view of "making a good showing". That is, it cannot

openly present its case as being against even discussion of the issues involved.

John L. Lewis proposed that recognition be accorded the United Automobile Workers in twenty plants on strike as a basis for further negotiations. If such partial recognition of the union as sole bargaining agency were granted, then the union would be willing to send the men back to work and discuss the other questions, listed in its eight point memorandum, in further negotiations. This proposal was rejected by the magnates of General Motors. It is significant of the imperious attitude of the corporation's moguls that they prepared a statement for the press when they expected the conferences to collapse, and altho this breakdown did not occur, they issued the same insolent statement.

While General Motors succeeded in obtaining a blanket injunction against the sit-in strikers in the two Fisher Body plants (showing that the employers' control of the courts need not be so literal as in the case of Judge Black, the heroic auto workers of Flint gave the proper answer to the injunction and, at that time, the refusal of General Motors to even negotiate with representatives of the union. In a sharp battle, the auto workers succeeded in striking Chevrolet Plant number 4, thus giving new and added strength to their movement for collective bargaining. Whatever may or may not be true of phone calls from Washington, it was undoubtedly this extension of the union's strike strength that forced Knudsen to the conference table with Lewis, and that has so far delayed any attempts to apply the injunction.

At the same time, General Motors has been busy with its political stooges in Flint. A decree (!) declaring the existence of an emergency was declared and gave full powers into the hands of one man, the Mayor, to deal with the strike situation. And, "just by chance", the Mayor is on General Motors payroll.

Troops have not yet been withdrawn from Flint and they stand ready with machine-guns to carry out the orders of General Motors. The entire labor movement of America must attempt to force their removal.

Italian Ships Aid Franco's New Drive

Aided by Italian naval strength and German men and munitions, the Fascist forces of Franco registered some successes in their drive against Malaga. If it is possible to capture Malaga then the Spanish fascists will have made a broad flanking movement giving them a base for the drive against Madrid, which is still their goal.

The forces of the workers and peasants, under the defense junta of Madrid, are allowing the fascists to expend their energy in terrific drives against the Madrid front. Their strategy is to give up, in orderly and planned fashion, some mileage, rather than unnecessarily waste strength. This has been successful in repelling previous drives.

Certainly the new attack is the clearest answer to the inane diplomacy of France who is still "discussing" the question of the blockade of Spain and whether Russia can participate in this blockade. Italy and Germany are not discussing—they are effectively engaged in making possible new attacks on the Spanish workers and peasants.

The French Communist Party enthusiastically endorsed the plans of imperialist France to defend its booty from the rising aggressiveness of imperialist Germany.

Defense Minister Daladier presented the policies of France's war department, announcing the construction of new forts and also additional air forces. His statements were cheered by the Left benches which include the C.P.! The people's front policy now is clearly revealed as leading to outright chauvinism.

FLASH!

As we go to press, word comes from Madrid that the People's Front government has taken legal steps against the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity. Party leaders are being brought to trial on charges of "treason," i.e. opposition to the people's front. Their paper has been suppressed, their radio station closed and party headquarters padlocked. This is the logical culmination of the persecution of the POUM for its insistence on a revolutionary line.

**Aid the Auto Strikers!
Send Money Now!**

COMMUNIST PARTY REVIEWS "ITS" ELECTION VICTORY

By SAM ADAMS

(We present the following article on the recent plenum of the Communist Party by Comrade Sam Adams, a member of the Central Committee. Certain difficulties prevented earlier publication of this article, a delay which we regret—Editor.)

THE recent plenum of the Communist Party was the most extraordinary one ever held. The key-note, as sounded by Comrade Browder, was that we ought to be proud of the fact that the presidential vote fell off because this declining vote proved our Party to be stronger than ever before. And "our strategy was realized in its most satisfactory form" where we got no votes at all, by the simple expedient of not putting up a ticket.

Since our influence did not show in the results of the balloting, those attending the plenum were asked to take the word of Comrade Browder that it really existed. Central Committee members and those invited from the districts had come prepared to explain how it happened in their districts or in their particular field of work that the vote declined and not a few were ready to go down the line on self-criticism. But they were all wrong. We really won the election, or at least the outcome of the election was, in the words of Comrade Browder, "a smashing defeat for reaction." And this great victory came about because all the forces of progress were on one side and all the forces of reaction on the other side. And we, being with the forces of progress, naturally won, and hence although people did not vote for us our influence was never as great as now. If you don't believe this there is something wrong with you.

If any comrades came to the plenum with the notion that they could criticize the campaign on the basis of the decline in the vote, they had the wind taken out of their sails when Browder made his report and said:

"Some comrades are still influenced by the idea that the Party vote is the only correct measure of our achievements. To the degree that they are influenced by this idea they are somewhat pessimistic because our vote did not show any great jump forward."

Well, that had a restraining effect upon those who had prepared themselves to explain why they did not reach their quota in the quarter of a million votes that Browder had predicted before the election.

In fact the only one that was in-trepid enough to refer to some of the most glaring shortcomings in the campaign was the Boston district organizer, Phil Frankfeld. Half a dozen others expressed doubts and most everyone agreed that it wasn't exactly what could be called a Communist campaign. There was much corridor conversation and indignation. The most frequently voiced criticism was that during the course of the campaign there was not one mass action de-

veloped anywhere by our comrades. But others argued that even such ideas were wrong. The vote for Roosevelt itself was mass action and who can deny that we participated in that?

"Progress versus Reaction"

Seriously, however, the Browder report was a new low in political analysis. He did not even pretend to present an analysis of the economic conditions that aided Roosevelt. There was no criticism of the Roosevelt demagoguery, the Farley sleight-of-hand tricks. Just a struggle between progress and reaction—good and bad. Since the reporter hadn't said anything about the economic situation before and at the time of the election he did not find it necessary to dwell upon it after the election. On that point he simply said:

"Just a word about the economic prospects after the election. We do not need to take time for any extended economic analysis. It is clear that production and economic activity in almost every industry are denitely continuing upward."

But this, said Browder, will be of short duration and will not reach as many people as formerly. But there was not one word about the rise in prices; the danger of another dose of inflation; nothing that would guide Party members in responsible union positions when it comes to concluding agreements with bosses—whether such agreements should be long or short-term. But, of course, these are only practical questions asked every day by American workers. We cannot devote time to them when we have to show how Roosevelt's avalanche of votes was a Communist victory.

In dwelling upon the question of peace Browder elaborated further the theory of a world divided into war-like nations under fascist rule and peaceful nations under democratic rule. Praising the speech of Secretary of State Cordell Hull at Buenos Aires, the leader of the American Party, declared:

"But the main significance of this speech is that America is more and more emerging as the greatest power of the capitalist world on the side of peace, and against the fascist war makers. . . ."

Comrade Thorez will violently disagree with this sort of boasting. Has not Thorez claimed that place for his own France?

How far we have gone from fundamentals can be appreciated when we ask questions: Has the United States government, under Roosevelt, ceased to function as an imperialist power? Or was Buenos Aires just an interlude where, temporarily, the representatives of the greatest imperialist power on earth forgot they were spokesmen for imperialism? Or have we reached the stage where all democracies have given up imperialist aims and all antagonisms have vanished in the world except those between fascist and democratic nations?

Yankee Chauvinism

Unless at least two of the above questions are answered in the affirmative then the praise of Hull is a crime against the working class of this country and against the toiling masses of Latin America. But anyone who answers them in the affirmative is not a Marxist-Leninist, but a Yankee chauvinist, trying to play the old familiar game of imperialism using a pacifist cloak to conceal the iron fist. It was not mass support for peace that Hull was urging. It was mass support for Yankee imperialist policy. If Browder was really anxious to show where the Roosevelt government stands on war he might have quoted the current costs of armaments. He might also have

quoted facts regarding sales of Yankee arms and munitions to the Latin American governments, some of which, like Brazil, run Hitler a close second in atrocities against political enemies.

Such a line only shows more clearly the fatal road the official Party travels. It is a path that can lead only to chauvinism, to betrayal of the toiling masses. In the light of 1914 it is necessary that warning signals be held aloft by comrades in the Party who are, in increasing numbers, viewing with alarm the disastrous course.

At the plenum there were many indications from a considerable number of leading comrades that this course must soon be openly challenged. To specifically mention these comrades at this time would probably result only in a campaign to discredit and remove them from their posts. No one can doubt, however, that they will find ways to defend the principles of Marxism-Leninism, instead of going into the swamp of bourgeois pacifism and finally into the imperialist camp.

Trade Union Problems

The evening session of the first day was treated to a report on the Tampa AFL convention by Comrade Stachel. In that report the increasing strength and influence of the Party was again stressed. But, out of the 21 Party delegates, he admitted there was not one delegate from an international union; only a couple from Central Labor bodies. Most of them were from federal locals, and most of these were from agriculture. Following the line of Browder, no attempt was made by Stachel to analyze the economic position of the country or of the world. In the unions, as elsewhere, the struggle is between progressive and reactionary forces. There was some criticism by Stachel of comrades in districts

who did not pay enough attention to Central Labor bodies, etc.

Comrade Rose Wortis, following Stachel, dealt with some New York problems in the light of the Tampa convention, but did not explain why it is that of scores of delegates in the New York Central Labor Union we have no floor leadership. It did not occur to any of the reporters or to those who discussed reports that the effects of the disastrous ultra-left course of the Party from 1929 until two years ago might still operate against effective work in these bodies.

An interesting contribution was made by Roy Hudson, who spoke on the seamen's struggles, and repeated Browder's talk about the strike being on a much higher plane than before. Neither he nor any of those who participated in the discussion mentioned the fact that the East Coast and Gulf strikes had not stopped shipping.

The plenum revealed that the agricultural front is as little understood as other phases of work. For example, the Des Moines, Iowa organizer, said that Iowa could no longer be regarded as an agricultural state, but was an industrial state. Of course Mother Ebor, Lem Harris and other agricultural experts disagreed with this, but no one thought to question what conditions prevail that make possible such illusions on the part of comrades in responsible positions.

Discussion Needed

The three days' meetings of the Central Committee again shows the absolute necessity of a real discussion in the Party on the broadest democratic basis. The longer such a free, open discussion is postponed the more accumulation of errors will there be and the more dangerous it will be for those responsible for the present course. The number of those holding serious doubts is increasing. That was the one thing that stood out at the plenum. It would be much better for the leadership to launch such a discussion, reviewing the entire course over a period of years, than to face a condition where such a discussion will be forced upon them.

BOOKS of the AGE

PHILANTHROPY AND LEARN-
ING. By Frederick Paul Koppel.
Columbia University Press. 1936.

Reviewed by Stephen Cunningham

Let us assume that the reviewer of this book had heard of Dr. Koppel, the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, or Harvard University. Let us assume that the reviewer were an honest man who had taught in colleges and high schools and who had, buried deep in him, a desire for progress in the higher learning; but through bad fortune or hard work had never been able to get a scholarship or fellowship from these great organizations, for the main reason that he was buried in one of those remote "Universities" out in the religious Middle West or South. Let us assume that some friend who wanted to assist this hinterland scholar had presented him with a copy of Dr. Koppel's book. What would happen?

To tell the truth, the honest man would be thrilled! He would hardly have the courage to say anything more than "Thank you for the book," for Dr. Koppel had used a good binding and excellent print and sing the praises of his bosses. (Truly since the book is a collection of speeches which Dr. Koppel had made before learned societies, and nothing more.)

Like all public speakers in educational circles, Dr. Koppel made the type of speeches that the hinterland scholar had made since his own remote youth. For example, "In recent years have come superb gifts and bequests . . . those of Mr. Rockefeller to University of Chicago . . . Senator and Mrs. Stanford . . . The names of Sterling, Eno, Duke, Eastman, Baker, Cook, Whitney, and Harkness, . . . funds of this character held by four institutions alone, Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, and Yale, have risen from less than \$20,000,000 to more than \$80,000,000. . . ." (p. 5).

Dr. Koppel hardly dwells on the touchy subjects. Once he said of the Harvard Saint, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, that "Even the Sacco-Vanzetti Report, although disappointing to perhaps the majority of academic readers, never raised the slightest question of Mr. Lowell's devotion to duty as he saw it." Dr. Koppel appealed a great deal to the hinterland scholar. After all, it is better to die than to violate duty as laid down by the learned rich to the seething poor.

"Andrew Carnegie," says Dr. Koppel, "had a rule which he applied with singular success in his business affairs and which he had also in mind in establishing his philanthropies: 'Find the exceptional man and, having found him, give him a free hand!'"

The hinterland scholar laid down the book of a great apologist for the rich men who gave money to the poor.

But there was one phrase which the hinterland scholar did not grasp. What on the Earth does Dr. Koppel refer to when he talks about "pressure groups"? On page 138 the wise man at Columbia had recorded this choice phrase:

"The apostles of the new ignorance, the pressure groups (bold designating that which worried the county teacher), and the propagandists have all found the radio well adapted to their needs. Shall we leave the field to them?"

WORKERS AGE

Organ of the National Committee, Communist Party U. S. A. (Opposition).
131 West 33rd St., New York, N. Y.

Published every Saturday by the Workers Age Publishing Association. Subscription Rates: \$1.00 per year; \$75 for six months; 5c a copy. Canada \$1.50 per year; Foreign \$2.00 per year.

Entered as second class matter Nov. 5, 1934, at the Post Office New York, N. Y. under the act of March 3, 1879.

Vol. 6, No. 7. Saturday, February 13, 1937

Mexican Labor and Labor Leaders

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

(This is one of a series of articles on Mexico Today based on the closing chapters of Comrade Wolfe's forthcoming book, "Portrait of Mexico." The book which contains 248 full-page halftone reproductions of paintings by Diego Rivera and 211 pages of text by Bertram D. Wolfe will be on sale at all book stores after March 2 at \$4.75. The Workers Age offers it to its readers at \$4.00. We have only 500 copies at that price and orders will be filled as received. Make checks or money orders payable to New Workers School, 131 W. 33rd St., N. Y. C.—Editor.)

OBREGON and Calles received support from the Government of the United States by direct negotiation with the House of Morgan, Morrow. The popular support of the Mexican government needed at home it secured by direct control of the organizations of the masses. For this purpose government-instituted and subsidized labor and peasant movements were set up, captained by carefully selected agents of the administration. These agents disposed of funds, patronage, and occasional support in struggles with rivals, or with opponents of the government, or with economic interests which the government did not wish to protect.

Carranza's labor agent was Gerardo Murillo, the artist whose *nom de plume* or rather *de pinceau* is Dr. Atl. The little bearded second-rate painter suddenly appeared in the labor movement in 1915 armed with vast quantities of Carranza's own printing-press pesos, given him by Obregon to relieve the distress of the workers during the stormy war-torn days of a year of political chaos and economic prostration. Thereby Dr. Atl acquired sufficient influence to organize the famous "Red Battalions" for Carranza. Obregon further gave the nascent labor movement palatial headquarters: the Casa de Azulejos, formerly the Jockey Club and today the continentally famous restaurant, Sanborn's. But when Carranza had consolidated his power he outlawed the labor movement, prohibited and smashed its strikes, jailed its leaders and dispossessed it from its elegant home. Thereby Dr. Atl was discredited and went back to painting volcanoes. He was lost from the surface of political life until he bobbed up again last year as an agent of the German embassy in Mexico and a paid propagandist for fascism and anti-semitism. But Obregon, even while working through Dr. Atl in 1915, was already grooming a much more important labor lieutenant for his purposes.

The Rise of Morones

Luis N. Morones is the *caudillo* in the labor movement. The type is as old as Mexico, but the field of operations is a new one requiring new formulae and new methods. Gross, fleshy, thick-lipped, heavy-jowled, soft and pudgy-handed, redolent of perfume, fond of silk underwear and diamonds, he looks more like the newspaper cartoon conception of a capitalist than he does like a labor leader. His sly, sycophantic softness of exterior gives no inkling of the ruthless hardness and lust for power that enabled him to bestride the confused, chaotic, mistrustful and immature labor movement of the '20's and bend it to his will.

Obregon first met his future labor lieutenant during an electrical strike in 1915. The meeting took place in the course of one of General Obregon's intermittent occupations of Mexico City before Carranza's power was definitely consolidated. The General settled the

strike by "seizing" the properties of the British-owned telegraph and telephone company and "giving" them to the strikers to run under the management of a company foreman. The foreman was Morones. Like so many of the Mexican Government's melodramatic "seizures" of plants and properties, the arrangement was only temporary. But the association between Morones and Obregon there initiated was a prolonged one. With the disappearance of the diminutive Dr. Atl from the labor scene, Morones, the ex-electrical worker, became the main transmission gear from the government to the organized workers.

In 1918 the Obregonista Governor of Coahuila, Gustavo Espinosa Mireles, issued a call to the various local labor movements, unions and workers' propaganda groups, to unite in a single nation-wide labor movement. The call is typical and revealing:

"The Government of the State of Coahuila, watchful not to remain behind in the evolutionary march of time . . . desires that the worker himself meeting fraternally and freely should study and determine the points on which his well-being can be based . . . thinks that the opportune moment has come to invite all workers of the Republic to realize their unification and provide a solution of their needs. . . ."

This was accompanied by an offer to pay all expenses of the transportation, lodging, lost wages and other needs of the delegates, and provide free meeting halls and other expenses attendant on the holding of a national convention. Out of this government-fostered and government-financed meeting was born the *Confederacion Regional Obrera Mexicana* (Crom), with Luis N. Morones as its inevitable leader. The next year a similar conception and gestation process gave birth to the Partido Laborista Mexicana (Mexican Labor Party) again with Morones as its leader. True, not all labor elements accepted the new government gift horse; but state subsidies, government favors, and their obverse—government repression—soon made the Crom and the Partido Laborista dominant, and they continued so till 1935.

The following year, 1920, both movements supported Obregon against Carranza's handpicked candidate for the presidency, and backed the Sonora group (Obregon, De la Huerta, Calles) in their subsequent uprising. Morones was rewarded by appointment as the director of the government munitions factory (a strange revolutionary labor leader that can be put in charge of munitions!); his fellow laborite, General Celestino Gasca was made Governor of the Federal District with all the patronage involved, and a number of other labor leaders were given fat government jobs.

Rule by the "Crowbar"

Armed with government funds and political patronage, Morones gathered around him a little group of labor leaders of his own selection. He even included capable opponents and critics when they proved amenable to softening by the persuasive methods the administration had put into his hands. This little band of chieftains, never elected by any labor body, was known as the *Grupo Accion*. Limited at its height to twenty-five men of whom less than half were important, it nevertheless controlled an ever-widening circle of active agents in the labor movement, including the *Casa del Obrero Mundial* (House of the World Worker), also a non-representative body, the

THE MOSCOW TRIAL IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

(Concluded from last issue)

Historical analogies generally imp. It is tempting but dangerous to try to make any correlation between the groups and group struggles of the French bourgeois revolution of the eighteenth century and the Russian proletarian revolution of the twentieth. Besides that is not my point at all. From the material here presented, necessarily in sketchy form, I think the following two conclusions may be fairly drawn:

Political Conflicts Converted Into Criminal Cases

1. The conversion of political cases into criminal trials by charging political opponents with impossible and fantastic "crimes" is no diabolical invention of Stalin's, as some would have us believe, but seems to arise out of the very conditions of factional-political struggle in revolutionary times. Certainly it is to be found in full bloom in the French Revolution, as I have shown above.

It is curious to note how close is the parallel. Tory England was the bitter enemy of revolutionary France then, Nazi Germany of revolutionary Russia today; both appear as the mainspring in the foreign plots against the revolution. In place of efforts to bring about a monarchist restoration in France, we have charges alleging attempts at a fascist counter-revolution in Russia. Today we are told of the Trotskyites, working hand in hand with the Gestapo, organizing wrecking and sabotage in Soviet industrial plants; in 1794, the cry was that the Hebertists (and the Dantonists, too), under Pitt's instructions, were interfering with the food supply and trying to bring about a famine. About "amalgams" it is hardly necessary to say anything. If we wonder

5 One fundamental difference should be borne in mind. The conflicting tendencies in the French Revolution represented distinct and hostile classes or groups of classes. This cannot be said in the same way of the inner struggles of the Russian Revolution.

6 When taxed with the juridical "laxness" of the trials, Robespierre impatiently replied: "They wish to govern revolutions by lawyers' subtilities, to treat conspiracies against the Republic as if they were actions between private individuals. . . . It is not so much a question of punishing as of destroying them."

Crom, the Partido Laborista, the principal unions and state federations of labor.

A much less publicized organism than the *Grupo Accion* was the mysterious *Palanca*—the "lever" or "crowbar"—Morones' specially selected strong-arm squad. A Mexican *caudillo* cannot maintain power. (Continued on Page 6)

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that Karl Radek is about to face yesterday he was the official commentator of the Soviet government on foreign affairs, let us recall that a few weeks before Danton was sent to the guillotine, he was warmly praised, even sponsored, by Robespierre, at one of the regular "purges" of the Jacobin Club.

Political Trials In The Light Of History

2. History has a curiously objective way of looking back at these revolutionary trials. Today, in passing judgment on the suppression of Girondins, Hebertists or Dantonists, we do not base ourselves on whether the charges against them were valid or groundless. We do not say to ourselves: Saint-Just's accusations against the Girondins were full of "monstrous and unprovable" charges, of which, Brissot, "easily demolished by bringing out discrepancies of fact and date"; therefore the suppression of the Girondins must be condemned and the Jacobins branded as enemies of the revolution. Of course not! We pass judgment on the basis of political relations, on the basis of the political content of the various conflicting groups and tendencies. In effect, we practically ignore the charges, refutations and counter-charges, and ask ourselves: Which tendency was carrying forward the interests of the revolution and which was obstructing it? Some may be shocked at this utterly "unmoral" approach but it seems to be the approach of history!

It is therefore ridiculous to say: Stalin makes "monstrous and unprovable" charges against Trotsky, therefore Trotsky is political-right and Stalin politically wrong—which is essentially what the Trotskyites are saying. It is equally absurd to declare: Stalin must be wrong or else he wouldn't have to use such "methods" against Trotsky. Let us recall the "methods" the Jacobins used to suppress the Girondins and the Dantonists—and where there is a Marxist today who will dare assert that Robespierre was politically wrong as against them. The fact is our judgment cannot be based on the validity of the "criminal" charges and counter-charges; ultimately, fundamentally, it must be based on political considerations, on the political aims and programs that Stalin and Trotsky each represent. Ultimately, fundamentally, it must depend on whether we believe Stalin to be a Russian Robespierre sending his Brissot or Danton to death so as to remove an obstacle in the way of revolutionary advance or a Russian Tallien or Barere dispatching his Robespierre to the guillotine so as to open the way for a Thermidorian reaction.

Some Difficult Questions

These things are clear, at least, to me. Yet I am acutely conscious of the fact that many important questions raised by the Moscow trial have not been answered or even touched upon in these paragraphs. Some of them are:

1. The character of the "confessions." I have not been able to find any analogy for them in the revolutionary trials of 1793-1794. The usual Trotskyite explanation of torture, threats or promises seems to me untenable on the face of it. I think the explanation is to be sought for in the specific traditions, conditions and atmosphere of the Russian revolutionary movement.

2. Why was it necessary to disguise political conflicts as criminal trials in 1793-1794 and why is it necessary today? Is there any meaning or truth to the contention that a "higher" type of political ethics should characterize the conduct of the proletariat—socialist revolution of the twentieth century eighteenth?

3. Is it true that such "methods" tend to damage the revolutionary cause and undermine the revolutionary regime? What can we learn from the French Revolution in this respect? *

A New Viewpoint And A New Approach

It is pretty clear that the viewpoint I have just outlined is quite distinct from that presented either by the official Comintern or by the Trotskyite press; not only are the conclusions different but so is the basic approach completely and entirely different. The Stalinists want us to believe that, since Stalin is politically right as against Trotsky, therefore all the charges raised against the defendants at the Moscow trial, even those manifestly impossible or self-contradictory, must be gospel truth. But who would maintain that, because Robespierre represented the interests of the revolution, his accusations against the Girondins, Hebertists and Dantonists of necessity had to be and therefore were all true? On the other hand, the Trotskyites insist that, because many of

the official charges against the defendants were obviously such as could not hold water, therefore Stalin represents a conservative, Thermidorian force in the Russian Revolution. What would they think of the historian who would assert that, because Robespierre's accusations against Brissot and his friends were manifestly "monstrous and unprovable," the Girondins and not the Jacobins represented the progressive force in the French Revolution? Of course, neither the official communists nor Trotskyites put their argument in just so many words but they both plainly imply it in their polemics.

Now according to the approach I am here suggesting, the truth or untruth of the specific charges may be a very interesting and important consideration but it seems to me to be largely secondary and even irrelevant to the main question under discussion—our fundamental estimation of the Moscow trial as an act of political suppression. Are not such matters irrelevant today when we pass judgment on the trial of the Girondins, of the Hebertists, of the Dantonists? Why can't we, in facing the problems of the moment, attempt to look at them from the vantage point of historical objectivity, a standpoint that may appear to be somewhat harsh, unjust and even unmoral at the present time but one that we well know will ultimately prevail!

These things are clear, at least, to me. Yet I am acutely conscious of the fact that many important questions raised by the Moscow trial have not been answered or even touched upon in these paragraphs. Some of them are:

1. The character of the "confessions." I have not been able to find any analogy for them in the revolutionary trials of 1793-1794. The usual Trotskyite explanation of torture, threats or promises seems to me untenable on the face of it. I think the explanation is to be sought for in the specific traditions, conditions and atmosphere of the Russian revolutionary movement.

2. Why was it necessary to disguise political conflicts as criminal trials in 1793-1794 and why is it necessary today? Is there any meaning or truth to the contention that a "higher" type of political ethics should characterize the conduct of the proletariat—socialist revolution of the twentieth century eighteenth?

3. Is it true that such "methods" tend to damage the revolutionary cause and undermine the revolutionary regime? What can we learn from the French Revolution in this respect? *

I am well aware that many of my readers will be distinctly annoyed by the conclusions I have drawn and I share enough of their annoyance to understand the reason why. It seems impossible to escape the feeling that the validity of the specific charges—whether they are true or false and whether they are known to be true or false by the prosecution—must have something to do with our political estimate of the case. It seems positively outrageous to ignore as irrelevant the guilt or innocence of the accused of the specific charges made against them. Perhaps this feeling is right and proper. But if it is, why don't we invoke it in passing judgment on the revolutionary trials of the past; in other words, why has it no place in historical evaluation? I would welcome some discussion of this difficult and, in my opinion, fundamental question.

The International Class Struggle
Theoretical quarterly of the International Communist Opposition
WINTER ISSUE NOW OUT
On sale at stands
Single copy 25c
One year \$1.00
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New York, N. Y.

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LENIN SPEAKS ON DEMOCRACY

(Continued from last week)

11. In the most developed capitalist country on the Continent of Europe, in Germany, the first month of complete republican freedom, brought about by the defeat of imperialist Germany, has shown the German workers and the whole world of what the real class character of the bourgeois-democratic republic consists. The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg is an event of world historical importance not only because the best people and leaders of the really proletarian Communist International have perished, but also because in an advanced European state—it can be said without exaggeration in one of the most advanced states of the world—the class essence of this state has been laid bare to the end. If people under arrest, that is to say people taken by the state power under its protection, can be killed with impunity by officers and capitalists, under a government of social-patriots, then it follows that the democratic republic in which such a thing was possible is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. People who express their anger at the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg but do not understand this truth thereby only expose their own stupidity or their own hypocrisy. "Freedom" in one of the most free and advanced republics of the world, in the German Republic, means the freedom to murder unpunished the arrested leaders of the proletariat. And it cannot be otherwise so long as capitalism remains, for the development of democracy does not blunt but sharpens the class struggle, which by force of all the results and influences of the war and its consequences has been brought to boiling point.

Throughout the civilized world the expulsion of Bolsheviks is now taking place, they are being persecuted, imprisoned, as for example in one of the freest republics, in Switzerland, while there are pogroms against Bolsheviks in America, etc. From the point of view of "democracy in general" or of "pure democracy", it is absolutely comic that advanced civilized, democratic countries which are armed to the teeth should be afraid of the presence of a few dozen people from backward, hungry, ruined Russia, which the bourgeois newspapers in tens of millions of copies christen savage, criminal, etc. It is clear that the social atmosphere which can give birth to such a crying contradiction is in fact the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

12. In such circumstances dictatorship of the proletariat is not only completely legitimate as a method of overthrowing the exploiters and suppressing their resistance but it also is absolutely essential for the whole mass of toilers as the only defense against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie which leads to war and the preparing of more wars.

The chief thing which the Socialists do not understand and which comprises their theoretical shortsightedness, their captivity to bourgeois prejudices and their political treachery in regard to the proletariat, is that in capitalist society, with any kind of serious sharpening of the class struggle which lies at its basis, there can be no middle course save the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. And dream about any kind of third way is the reactionary lament of the petty-bourgeois. The experience of more than a hundred years' development of bourgeois democracy and the labor movement in all advanced countries, and particularly the experience of the last five years, is evidence of this. The whole science of political economy is also evidence of this, the whole content of Marxism which explains the economic inevitability of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in any kind of commodity economy and which no one can change save the class which is developed, multiplied, welded together, strengthened by the very development of capitalism, that is, the class of proletarians.

13. The other theoretical and political mistake of the Socialists consists in their not understanding that the forms of democracy have changed during thousands of years, beginning with its seeds in ancient history, in accordance with the replacing of one ruling class by another. In ancient republics of Greece, in the cities of the Middle Ages, in the advanced countries, democracy has different forms and a different degree of application. It would be the greatest stupidity to imagine that the deepest revolution in the history of humanity, the first transfer of power in the world from the minority of exploiters to the majority of exploited can take place within the old frames of old, bourgeois, parliamentary democracy, can take place without the sharpest changes, without the creation of new

forms of democracy, of new institutions which express the new conditions of its application, etc.

14. The dictatorship of the proletariat has this in common with the dictatorship of other classes; that, like every dictatorship, it is caused by the necessity of suppressing the violent resistance of a class which has lost its political domination. The fundamental difference of a dictatorship of the proletariat from the dictatorship of other classes—from the dictatorship of the landlords of the Middle Ages, from the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in all civilized capitalist countries—consists in the fact that the dictatorship of the landlords and of the bourgeoisie was the violent suppression of the immense majority of the population, that is to say, of the toilers. On the contrary, the dictatorship of the proletariat is the violent suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, that is of a tiny minority of the population, of the landlords and the capitalists.

Hence it follows in its turn that a dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably bring with it, not only a change in the forms and institutions of democracy, speaking generally, but precisely such a change in them as shall bring a widening of the practical utilization of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism, by the laboring classes, as has never yet been seen in the whole world.

And in fact that form of the dictatorship of the proletariat which has already been worked out practically, that is the Soviet Power in Russia, the Rate-System² in Germany, the Shop Stewards' Committees and other similar Soviet institutions in other countries all mean and actually carry out for the laboring classes, that is to say for the immense majority of the population, such an actual possibility of making use of democratic rights and freedoms as has never, even approximately, existed in the best and most democratic bourgeois republics.

The essence of Soviet power consists in the fact that the permanent and only basis of all state power, of the whole state apparatus, is the mass organization of precisely those classes which were oppressed by capitalism, that is, of the workers and semi-proletarians (peasants who do not exploit others' labor and who have to have recourse constantly to the selling, even though only partially, of their own labor power.) Precisely these masses, which even in the most democratic bourgeois republics, although they have equal rights according to law, are in practice prevented by thousands of shifts and tricks from participating in political life and from making use of democratic rights and freedom, are now being drawn into permanent direct and more-over decisive participation in the democratic administration of the state.

15. That equality between citizens, independent of sex, religion, race, nationality, which bourgeois democracy has always and everywhere promised but has never anywhere carried out, and because of the rule of capitalism could not carry out, Soviet power or the dictatorship of the proletariat realizes at once and completely, for only the power of the workers who are not interested in private property over the means of production and in the struggle for their division and re-division, is in a condition to do this.

16. Old, that is, bourgeois democracy and parliamentarianism was so organized that it was precisely the masses of toilers who were most of all kept away from the apparatus of administration. Soviet power, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat, is on the contrary so constructed as to bring the masses of toilers near to the apparatus of administration. This aim is served by the union of legislative and executive power under the Soviet organization of the state and the substitution of territorial electoral constituencies by productive units, such as the mills and factories.

17. The army was an apparatus of oppression not only under the monarchy. It remained so in all bourgeois republics also, even in the most democratic. Only Soviet power as the permanent state organization precisely of the classes oppressed by capitalism is in a position to smash the subjection of the army to bourgeois command and really to merge the proletarians with the army, really to carry out the arming of the proletariat and the disarming of the bourgeoisie, without which the victory of socialism is impossible.

² The Soviets of workers and soldiers which spread throughout Germany after the revolution of November, 1918, which overthrew the Kaiser and ended the war.

18. The Soviet organization of the state is fitted to the leading role of the proletariat as being the class most concentrated and educated by capitalism. The experience of all revolutions and of all movements of the oppressed classes, the experience of the world Socialist movement, teaches us that only the proletariat is in a position to unite and to lead the scattered and backward sections of the toiling and exploited population.

19. Only the Soviet organization of the state is in a condition really to smash at once and finally to destroy the old, that is the bourgeois, civil service and judicial apparatus which has been preserved and inevitably must be preserved under capitalism, even in the most democratic republic, as the greatest obstacle to carrying democracy into life for the workers and toilers. The Paris Commune took the first world historical step along this path, Soviet power the second.

20. The abolishing of state power is the aim which all Socialists have set themselves, Marx first among them. Without the realizing of this aim, true democracy, that is equality and freedom, is unrealizable. But in practice only Soviet or proletarian democracy leads to this aim, for by drawing the mass of organizations of the toilers into constant and direct participation in the administration of the state, it immediately begins to prepare for the complete dying away of any kind of state.

21. The complete bankruptcy of the socialists who met at Berne, their complete lack of understanding of the new, that is, proletarian democracy, is particularly clear from the following: On February 10, 1919, Branting opened in Berne the International Conference of the yellow International. On February 11, 1919, in Berlin, in the newspaper of its participants, *Die Freiheit*, an appeal of the party of the "Independents" to the proletariat was printed. In this appeal the bourgeois character of Scheidemann's republic is recognized and he is reproached with wishing to abolish the Soviets which are called the *Trager und Schutzer der Revolution*—the carriers and preservers of the revolution—and the proposal is made to legalize the Soviets, to give them state rights, to give them the right to hold up the decisions of the National Assembly³ and to pass questions to the decision of the plebiscite.

Such a proposal is the complete ideological collapse of the theoreticians who defend democracy without understanding its bourgeois character. The comic attempt to unite the system of Soviets, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the National Assembly, that is, with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, completely exposes both the ignorance of the yellow Socialists and Social-Democrats and their political reactionary character as petty-bourgeois, and their cowardly concessions to the unrestrainedly growing force of the new, proletarian democracy.

22. In condemning Bolshevism, the majority of the yellow International at Berne, which did not formally decide to vote a corresponding resolution because of its fear of the working masses, acted correctly from the class point of view. It is precisely this majority which fully agrees with the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries and with the Scheidemanns in Germany. The Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, complaining of persecution by the Bolsheviks, attempt to conceal the fact that these persecutions are caused by the participation of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries in the civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. In exactly the same way the Scheidemanns and their party have already shown in Germany the same participation in civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie against the workers. It is therefore quite natural that the majority of the participants in the Berne Yellow International should be in favour of condemning the Bolsheviks. In this is expressed not the defence of "pure democracy," but the self-defence of a people who know and feel that in the civil war they stand on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

That is why from the class point of view, it is impossible not to recognize that decision of the majority of the Yellow International as being correct. The proletariat must, without fear of the truth, look at it full in the face and draw from this all the political conclusions.

(Continued in next issue)

³ The "pre-Parliament" elected to decide on the Constitution of the new republic.—Ed.

Agrarian Problems In Catalonia

(Concluded from last issue)

It is normal that in a revolutionary period, when everyone is working feverishly in his own corner, without always being able to take the whole into consideration, and here changes in the state of mind of the masses often take place at lightning speed, the most varied opinions and affirmations should circulate on all kinds of questions. But no other subject finds so many contradictory replies as the subject of the peasants.

It is clear that the peasant knows what the revolution has given him and considers from now on that the revolution is his own. "After the Popular Front elections, you were still arguing whether you would turn 25% or 50% over to the proprietor. After the July events it is no longer a question of 50% or even 25%. The question is settled; you pay nothing," said Gorkin recently before an assembly composed chiefly of peasants, who greeted his statements with a burst of applause.

It is also clear that in Catalonia the worker is not the enemy or even a stranger in the eyes of the country man, but that a real brotherhood unites them. In peasant meetings calls to remember the military aid brought to the peasants by the town workers, exhortations to maintain this union and prophecies of future economic collaboration of the city and the country always bring a lively satisfaction to these profoundly attentive audiences.

But the question which occupies the attention of the workers' parties and organizations is to discover how strongly the peasants are still attached to their little pieces of ground. Must one, to assure the full sympathy of the peasants now, in this difficult period, let them parcel out the land as they wish to, thus making the organization of the society of the future more difficult; or should we can we force them even now to the maximum of collectivization? "The peasant hates the owner but he loves ownership," we hear said on one hand. "The peasant wants the fruit of his labor but not the land," we hear said on the other.

Collectivization Proceeding

This obviously reflects the fact that the peasant masses are at the present time in the midst of a process of evolution. In this respect the Union of Rabassaires is a typical case. The influence of the *Esquerra* is practically liquidated, but none of the workers' organizations can claim to have succeeded it, and the Union appears to be very anxious to preserve its own autonomy, at least outwardly. All that can be said is that the U.G.T. on one side and the P.O.U.M. on the other, have directing cells in the Union, and that certain centers, certain villages, and many of the younger elements appear to be marching at an accelerated pace toward collectivization. The example of Reimat is one of the most favorable cases, since it was a question here of large scale exploitation, of a semi-industrial nature; but there are smaller cases that show the anxiety of the peasants to group themselves and even to take new steps: the inhabitants of a rather poor village, Tortella, have been collectivizing their hog raising and sale of meat products for several months already.* In certain places, since the July days, the peasants have decided to turn over to the union the ground rents which they have ceased to give the proprietor. Elsewhere, a group of peasants

has written the P.O.U.M. to acquaint us of the decisions they have made: socialization of the land, regulation of wages and the hours of work. On the other hand, the Antifascist Committees and the popular committees which have sprung up in every village, in addition to their essentially political functions, have had to solve the economic and supply problems. From now on a good part of the Catalan peasants have the habit of organization, and, in a certain measure, of collective work. The decree on compulsory unionism was so carefully drafted that it looks as though it will meet with no serious opposition. This decree allows a re-evaluation of food products by the abolition of the middle man (the union is now responsible for his task) and a rationalization of machinery. From the point of view simply of the economic returns, these are the essentials of what one would desire for Catalonia.

In the months to come we will undoubtedly witness a polarization in the peasant masses, which as yet does not exist. But all the actual conditions allow us to hope, and even to prophesy, that the Catalan workers' revolution will not come into those conflicts with the peasants which are always so harmful for the proletariat.

Supplementary Information

In Spain there are over 50,000,000 acres of cultivated land. Of this area, 5,860,000 acres are divided into 5,127,000 holdings—an average of less than one and one quarter acre per holding. On the other hand 18,740 proprietors occupy 22,250,000 acres, each holding in this case being about 1,250 acres. Finally 967 landowners monopolize 26,250,000 acres—an average of 25,000 acres per estate. Let us add, by way of comparison, that 498,000 proprietors possess but two and a half acres of land. These figures mean that less than a thousand landlords are in possession of five times as much land as 5,000,000 small cultivators.

In Castile, the Levant, Andalusia and Estremadura, the percentage distribution of cultivated land (there are still vast regions entirely uncultivated) is as follows: 33% of the owners have less than 250 acres; 67% have more than 250 acres. The large owners occupy, then, at least two thirds of the cultivated land.

As we have indicated, agrarian reform was never achieved under the republic. In spite of the promises made, the violent opposition of the great land-owners was too big an obstacle for the feeble Spanish republic. Then came the fascist revolt. The peasants supported the working class in the July events and later bravely took their place by the side of their comrades on the battlefields of the civil war. The revolution in the country and in the small peasant villages had its repercussions in the agricultural sphere. The peasants who had fought against fascism had gained rights which had satisfied their desire for freedom.

We have given examples in Catalonia of the large estates abandoned by their owners being collectivized. The working class political organizations and the unions, fully aware of their duties toward their allies, the peasants, aided and even initiated these changes in ownership. This was, besides, an integral part of their program of revolutionary transformation of Spanish society.

Fruit Production Collectivized

In the Levant, a rich region producing fruits and rice, the ques-

* This was written in October 1936.

TRADE UNION NOTES

By S. J.

(For this issue we are turning Trade Union Notes over to a comrade who has long been active in and devoted to, the seamen's cause. His findings and opinions on the recent strike should interest all our readers. For special reasons his name cannot be divulged.—Editor.)

SEE the East Coast voted to return to work. This I can understand. The National Labor Board having agreed to take the case in order to decide whether or not it has jurisdiction, gave one reason for ending a strike which was becoming less and less effective. However, to say, as Hudson does, that "great victories were won" is sheer nonsense. And to place so much hope in the NLRB as he seems to do, is more nonsense. Since when has the miracle occurred that this or any other government agency is willing to stretch a point in favor of labor? I don't believe that has happened, not even under the great "Labor-friend," Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

However, apart from all that, it was time to end a strike that had lain hove-to with a lee shore dangerously close for weeks. The strike was not effective any longer and to continue it would be to play directly into the hands of both the shipowners and their stooges, the ISU officials. It is my opinion still that it was not the time to start, for little or no preparation had been made for it, and the leadership lot of these sailors will remain black-listed and will be unable to ship. Reaction will set in as a result of this. And Curran, well, he will continue his Washington lobbying for a while longer, under the direction of the Hudsons et al., and where will it end? And while on this Washington subject: there doesn't seem to be any definite arrangements made as yet among the seamen on this coast, as to what attitude to take toward the fnk book. Nothing has definitely been decided yet. (On the west coast what will happen here? The strike is ended. You return to a ship. Where do you get the ship? In the ISU hall. Who controls the ISU hall? The reactionary officials who signed the present agreement. You take the ship on their terms, whether you like it or not. Part of their terms is that you carry the fnk book. So what do you do? Precisely. What do you do? Nothing was decided on this. The result will be, some of the more militant elements will refuse the fnk book and the result will be that they will remain on the beach. The whole thing seems to me to be most unsatisfactory. It is a shame. These men fought a hard battle and they fought it bravely in the face of all kinds of difficulties and opposition. No, it was an adventure.

As things stand now, an awful lot of these sailors will remain black-listed and will be unable to ship. Reaction will set in as a result of this. And Curran, well, he will continue his Washington lobbying for a while longer, under the direction of the Hudsons et al., and where will it end? And while on this Washington subject: there doesn't seem to be any definite arrangements made as yet among the seamen on this coast, as to what attitude to take toward the fnk book. Nothing has definitely been decided yet. (On the west coast what will happen here? The strike is ended. You return to a ship. Where do you get the ship? In the ISU hall. Who controls the ISU hall? The reactionary officials who signed the present agreement. You take the ship on their terms, whether you like it or not. Part of their terms is that you carry the fnk book. So what do you do? Precisely. What do you do? Nothing was decided on this. The result will be, some of the more militant elements will refuse the fnk book and the result will be that they will remain on the beach. The whole thing seems to me to be most unsatisfactory. It is a shame. These men fought a hard battle and they fought it bravely in the face of all kinds of difficulties and opposition. No, it was an adventure.

is hereby authorized to take place without compensation.

Article II. In order to determine what persons are affected by this measure there will be constituted a local Committee consisting of trade union and workers' representatives with delegates from the Popu-ar Front. This committee will draw up the list of these proprietors who, having supported the rebel movement by money, etc., are liable to be classed as fascist enemies of the republic.

Article IV. The peasants in the locality or immediate neighborhood of the confiscated estates will be entrusted with their working and with the returns from them according to certain regulations, which can be summarized as follows: large estates are to be handed over to the peasants' organization to vote on the question of collective cultivation. Small holdings confiscated under the decree are to be given to the peasant or peasants working the land. Collectivization of separate small holdings is to be encouraged.

The agreement will terminate this year. The thing to do is to begin now and prepare carefully every stage; organize and be ready to strike at the expiration of the agreement and strike then for a full West Coast agreement, and strike also for the term the agreement is to run; that is, see to it that the agreement on this coast expires simultaneously with that of the west coast so that next time we will not be supplying the opposition forces with unnecessary munition.

We must use strategy in our battles and we must be able to see just a little ahead of the job boom or we are going to be caught again as we were this time with a gale blowing and lee shore and we unable to 'bout ship and lay her on the other tacks to take advantage of the gale. Our great strike in South America in 1919 showed us how to strike; our attempt here in 1921 showed us how not to strike. And the ten years that followed the 1921 disaster should have taught us the result of badly planned and adventurous strikes.

They make no such mistakes on the West Coast, for there—before they go out on strike—they make damn sure that unity of all the crafts in the maritime industry exists in fact, and not merely as wish fulfillment.

LEE MASON

"STEEL" - a review

With the production of *Steel*, lends the play its special appeal. If *Steel* tackled only this problem, it would be the usual propaganda piece. *Steel* boasts a Tony Jarrousse, a Jim Donovan, and a Big Pete, not to mention old Dan Raldney and the mirth-provoking Skinny. When such creatures of the steel mills, heroic of stature, simple of conception, and homely of attitude, are added to a play that has the correct labor view down to the last detail, you have a damn good play indeed. No wonder the Steel Worker Organizing Committee is interested in transporting the piece to the steel areas!

Labor Stage, Inc. has decked out the play in all the appurtenances that a first production deserves. First of all, the theatre itself, Labor Stage, is a triumph of the interior decorator's art. It is simplicity itself. And the sets, designed by Syrjala of Broadway fame, are wonderfully effective in their functional get-up. Altogether the production which was directed, incidentally, by Marck Schweid, is worthy of support on its own merits. It is a pleasure, not a duty, to see *Steel* in its current run.

But it is not his quandary that

Phila. Dress Makers Win

The threatened strike in the dress market of Philadelphia was called off on Friday, February 5, 1937, with important gains won by the Joint Board of the I.L.G. W.U.

After a month of negotiations during which the Manufacturer's Association proved to be absolutely unreasonable, the union began to prepare for a strike. Strike Committees were set up, a strike fund was established, and a monster mass meeting was called at the Broadwood Hotel on January 28 to take a strike vote. The mass meeting was a huge success with over 5000 workers in the hall, and thousands of others in the streets outside the Hotel, unable to get in. The membership in an enthusiastic meeting unanimously voted to strike, after hearing speeches by Samuel Otto, Manager of the Philadelphia Joint Board, and David Dubinsky, President of ILGWU.

The overwhelming support and militancy of the membership of the Union convinced the Manufacturer's Association of the necessity of settlement and the futility of fighting the Union. Negotiations were resumed and an agreement was soon reached.

The new agreement embodies many fundamental demands won by the Union. Some of these are: limitation and registration of contractors; recognition of shop chairmen to settle complaints; Union access to the books of the firm to check for evasion of the agreement; employers are to be prohibited from setting up factories outside Philadelphia for the duration of the agreement; Union Committees to have entrance to the shops after work to check for overtime work; abolition of all Saturday work; establishment of minimums for all crafts before January 1, 1938; 5% to 10% increases in pay.

A second meeting of the membership of the Joint Board was held at the Metropolitan Opera House, at Broad and Poplar Streets, on February 5th, 1937. As in the case of the previous meetings, every union shop in the industry was at a standstill while workers thronged to the hall to hear the reading of the new agreement and to express their approval.

The terms of the agreement, read by Samuel Otto, manager of the Joint Board, were enthusiastically endorsed by the membership. The importance of the gains was recognized by all, and the agreement was hailed as a landmark in the history of the ILGWU in Philadelphia.

CONFERRED ON AUTO STRIKE



JOHN L. LEWIS



WILLIAM KNUDSEN

ROOSEVELT ASKS POWER TO ENLARGE HIGH COURT

(Continued from Page 1)

would say. These are the typical die-hard elements who see in each move for necessary change not the careful calculations to better administer and preserve the capitalist system, but "change and chaos" in the abstract, the results of such "dabbling" being, in their opinion, a stimulus to the socio-political consciousness of the masses, a catalyst of revolution.

It is expected, however, that

Fear Harlan Miner Lost In Flood

Anxious inquiries by the Kentucky Miners' Defense here concerning the fate of the four Harlan county mine-strike life-termers in the Frankfort state reformatory flood-riots, resulted in locating three of the prisoners—but the whereabouts of the fourth remained a mystery at the end of six days.

Kentucky trade-union officials and other friends of the prisoners in the flooded area joined in the search. At every turn they encountered towering obstacles. The 2,000 reformatory inmates had been transferred to jails and improvised quarters in various cities. State

Roosevelt's proposal will be approved by Congress, for the most part because his is the machine.

The labor movement can support this proposed change, even tho it recognizes that it is a "soft" method of dealing with the problem of the judiciary, and that its political intention is probably to blunt the rising demand for a constitutional amendment giving Congress the right to pass social and labor legislation. Because the political purposes of this change are so clear and bound up with the "modernization" of governmental function, it is not opposed to labor's program. True, the character of the Supreme Court as a bulwark of capitalism's constitutional might-made rights, is not one whit altered. But certainly it is clear that Roosevelt intends to appoint, under this new order, such people as are favorable to labor legislation—something which could hardly be considered as worse than the present situation. Labor should not, however, forget its demands for a constitutional amendment because of this act. Insofar as

officials were hard to find, and nowhere, apparently, was there a composite list showing where all the prisoners had been taken. Meanwhile newspaper reports persisted that from 10 to 50 had been killed in the rioting.

The Kentucky Miners' Defense has been leading a campaign for the release of the four on the ground that their conviction in 1931 for alleged conspiracy to murder three coal-company mineguards was obtained through a frame-up. Hundreds of thousands of labor-union members and liberals throughout the country have petitioned Governor Chandler for liberation of the Harlan men.

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THIS POOR STEEL INDUSTRY

Early this week United States Steel Corp. reported a 1936 profit of \$50,525,684, compared with only \$1,146,708 in 1935. Bethlehem Steel Corp. Monday reported a 1936 profit of \$13,901,006, compared with \$4,291,253 in 1935.

Despite mounting operations which have reached 82 per cent of capacity, Bethlehem's president, Eugene G. Grace, said the company was unable to keep abreast of its mounting backlog of orders. At the end of 1936 Bethlehem had unfilled orders of \$123,690,462, the highest since war time.

"the law" does it any good (consider its illusions about the Wagner Act and General Motors effective conceptions of the "legality" of collective bargaining), an outright grant of such legislative power to Congress is a better guarantee than dependence upon the doubtful liberalism of individuals. And, of course, Roosevelt's move is still tacit recognition of the Supreme Court's powers over legislation.

While the international press takes a great interest in the matter, it is certainly incomprehensible to the "great sister democracies." In no other bourgeois-democratic country in the world does such a state of affairs exist in which legislation can be so invalidated and in which the machinery of government is so clumsy as to enable one branch of the government to dictate and veto the acts of the other two. Just so far as the proposed reorganization of the courts acts against this reactionary set-up, created by the Constitution, so can labor accept it for its worth.

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er merely by bribery of his enemies: he inevitably makes more of them than he can buy, and among them will always arise unpurchasable competitors who can be satisfied by nothing short of his displacement. Nor could Morones always count upon the government to put his enemies out of the way: sometimes they were even fostered by opponents in the cabinet or by the administration as a whole to prevent its agent from becoming too powerful. Hence the *Palanca*.

If one is active in Mexican political life he must expect to shoot and be shot at. Morones was shot at more than once, even wounded on occasion; but he was too good an organizer to do his own shooting. It got done just the same, as men like Senator Field Jurado could testify were it not for the proverbial reticence of the dead.

These opponents of Morones who were opponents on principal of the entire system of government-controlled unionism, the government itself took care of. Those who were not amenable to purchase, were taken care of by two other characteristic methods of "persuasion." "For foreigners," a high government official once told the writer, "we have the thirty-three, for natives the thirty-three."

"Thirty-Three"

The "thirty-three" in question refers to Article Thirty-Three of the Constitution of 1917 which permits the president "to expel from the republic forthwith, and without judicial process, any foreigner whose presence he may deem inexpedient." Under it Obregon and Calles deported dozens of Argentinians, Cubans, Spaniards, Americans and workers from various European countries: Communists, Anarchists, Syndicalists, and even the bombastic poet Santos Choca-

Supreme Court Bars Hearing Ferrero Case

A writ of certiorari in behalf of Vincent Ferrero, an Italian anti-Fascist worker, has been dismissed by the U. S. Supreme Court. This refusal of the highest tribunal of the land to argue the case terminates a legal fight which has been carried on for two and one half years in an attempt to save this deportee from the harsh fate that awaits him in Italy at the hands of the Fascist dictatorship. The case of Ferrero was brought to the Supreme Court after the lower courts refused to grant relief. The order of deportation was sustained by a decision of the District Court of the Southern District of New York late in March 1936, which was in turn sustained by the Circuit Court of Appeals in October.

The refusal of the Supreme Court to accept the writ confirms a settled policy of non-interference in cases of deportation which makes it almost impossible for an alien resident in the country to get any other trial than that given by Immigration Inspectors under star chamber proceedings.

The Ferrero-Sallitto Defense Conference—composed of numerous political organizations and trade union locals—announces that it will carry the fight back to the Department of Labor in an effort to keep Ferrero in the United States and save him from death at the hands of Italian Fascists. The Conference urges that individuals and organizations send telegrams to the Secretary of Labor requesting the cancellation of the deportation order against Ferrero.

no, of no particular ideology whatsoever.*

As to the instrument reserved for the native-born, the "thirty-three," it refers to the calibre of the rifle used in all Mexican revolutionary campaigns; the best, the most incorruptible and clear-eyed of the native leaders of the Mexican workers and peasants have been eliminated and their mouths have been stilled by its action. As victims of the Obregon and Calles regimes I cite at random: Mauro Tobon, tireless and selfless Communist textile worker and leader in the industrial center of Orizaba; Gutierrez de Lara, follower of Flores Magon and organizer of a copper mine strike against American interests at Cananea; Jose Guadalupe Rodriguez and Primo Tapia, two of the bravest and best beloved of Communist peasant leaders. These are the greatest of the victims of these "laborista" regimes, but the list could be extended to cover many pages and include local leaders in every village and industrial center of the country.

Next Week: A MEXICAN "LABOR GOVERNMENT".

* It is hard to believe that the well-informed Ernest Guening did not know this when he wrote:

Whereas in the United States a foreign labor agitator is deported for activities deemed against "our form of government," in Mexico it is the foreign capital agitator, the superintendent who violates constitutional provisions and refuses to comply with the labor laws, who may have Article Thirty-three applied to him—a policy both nationalistic and popular. (Mexico and Its Heritage, p. 358.)

Vastly more use has been made of Article Thirty-three against foreign-born labor leaders, including the Spanish-speaking Latin-Americans and natives of Spain, than against foreign-born capitalists or their superintendents.

GENERAL MOTORS FAKES PHOTOS TO HIT UNION

A neat instance of the way General Motors plants have been turned from car-production to opinion-production was seen at the Chevrolet Gear & Axle in Detroit.



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After the plant had been closed, the employees were all called in one day to receive their pay-checks. When they assembled by the thousands outside the plant, they were kept waiting for their checks while photographers were put to work on them. Three banners were stretched out in the foreground, before the photographers, with anti-union slogans on them.

Some of the union men in the crowd got an inkling of what was going on, and tried to shout their protests. But they were silenced by company tough-guys until it was too late and the picture had been taken.

The next day the Detroit papers blossomed out with pictures all across their front pages of the thousands gathered at Chevrolet Gear & Axle to receive their pay-checks, but with captions alleging that it was an anti-union back-to-work-demonstration.

From Union News Service