

The Economic and Political Situation of the U.S.

In a dispatch cabled to Pravda, organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Earl Browder, General Secretary of the Communist Party, U. S. A., yesterday declared that:

"Mussolini's announcement that Italy's frontier is the Panama Canal, has served to emphasize the lessons of the Lima Conference. In this connection the visit of Colonel Batista of Cuba, with President Roosevelt and now with President Cardenas of Mexico indicates the emerging outlines of the only possible combination of forces that can really protect the Panama Canal against fascist aggression.

"These three heads of states (Roosevelt, Cardenas and Batista) are all basing their policies upon the democratic masses at home, for opposition to fascist aggression abroad." Earl Browder declared that "Republicans and tory Democrats are more and more coming out against the orientation of Roosevelt, demanding an iron policy towards Latin America and a friendly attitude to the Rome-Berlin-Tokio alliance."

The full text of Browder's dispatch to Pravda, which contains an evaluation of the current political situation in the United States follows:

By EARL BROWDER

The conditions of the working class in the United States continue below the pre-war level, far below 1929,

but considerably better than 1933 at the end of the disastrous Hoover regime, and somewhat improved over a year ago. In the center of all factors determining conditions of life is unemployment. More than ten million workers remain unemployed, of whom about three million are engaged in public works at relief wages which are about half the rate of private industry. There is little prospect of total unemployment being reduced below ten million, while the number receiving public jobs will be sharply reduced (by a million at least) if the anti-Roosevelt majority in Congress maintains its stubborn opposition to the President's plans to maintain relief work at present levels.



EARL BROWDER

American statistics do not provide an accurate picture of living standards of the toiling masses. Wage figures for example are lumped in with all "Compensation of employees" which includes the fantastically high salaries of corporation executives which individually run up to half million dollars per year. But even with this distortion some idea of collapse of American standard of living may be gained from the following figures:

From 1929 to 1932 inclusive, the period of Hoover, total compensation paid to all employes declined 40 per cent. During Roosevelt's first term one-half of this loss was regained. In 1937 the recovery exceeded three-quarters, but the new crisis soon more than wiped out the new gains. During 1938 renewed improvements still lag behind the high point of 1937. Taking into consideration the big increase in population depending upon wages, rise in the cost of living, and increased weight of corporation executive salaries in these totals, there remains at least a net loss in living standards of 25 per cent, probably more, below the standards of 1929. This is further substantiated by records of retail distribution, which reveal 1937 as 20 per cent below the 1929 level, with 1938 still lower. Factory employment remained from 10 to 20 per cent below the average of 1923-1925, during 1938, with the general average for the year around 15 per cent. Total factory payrolls during 1938 were, however, around 25 per cent below the 1923-25 average, which would indicate a much greater proportionate lowering of general living standards of the masses.

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This year opens with Congress and the country sharply divided in two opposing camps on both domestic and foreign policy. The cleavage on domestic policy is most sharply and clearly expressed on issues of relief and public works. The progressive camp, headed by Roosevelt, insists on maintaining public works at the present level to employ three million otherwise idle workers. This was embodied in the President's recommendation for an appropriation of 875 million dollars for this work to complete the fiscal year to June. Congress, controlled by the coalition of Republicans and Tory Democrats, cut 150 millions off this figure, but under the pressure of mass sentiment left the door open for another request from the President, who on the same day he signed the appropriation for the smaller figure again renewed his request for the additional 150 millions. The entire labor movement, together with the National Conference of Mayors (executives of municipalities) had demanded a much higher figure, but faced with the reactionary control of Congress, united with the President to maintain at least the present scope of public works. On foreign policy, the division has become in the last weeks equally sharp and clear. The progressive camp, with Roosevelt's leadership, has clearly come out for a policy of halting the aggressor powers, and for armaments adequate to support such a policy. Republicans and Tory Democrats have equally demonstrated their support to an American equivalent of the policy of Chamberlain, modified by opposition to American armaments, openly repeating in Congress and the press all the slogans of the Axis powers against Roosevelt. Thus, the main alignment in American politics takes on essentially the same character as in France. Where previously we could only note strong tendencies in this direction, we must now register this as the dominant feature, fully crystallized.

Mussolini's announcement that Italy's frontier is the Panama Canal has served to emphasize the lessons of the Lima Conference. In this connection the visit of Colonel Batista of Cuba with Roosevelt and now with President Cardenas of Mexico indicates the emerging outlines of the only possible combination of forces that can really protect the Panama Canal against fascist aggression. These three heads of states are all basing their policies upon the democratic masses at home, for opposition to fascist aggression abroad. Republicans and Tory Democrats are more and more coming out against this orientation of Roosevelt,

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demanding an iron policy toward Latin-America and a friendly attitude to Rome-Berlin-Tokio.

Within the progressive camp the main organized force is the labor movement. Despite the split of the trade unions into two centers, with many independent bodies, organized labor is stronger than ever before. There are now eight and a half million trade unionists compared with little more than four millions in 1936. And whereas the unions were formerly quite passive in politics they are now very active and accumulating much experience. Their alliance with the city middle classes becomes more conscious and thereby less subject to split under the assaults of reactionaries. But connections between labor and the farmers remain the weakest link in the democratic front. The biggest problem of labor is the fight for unity against monopoly capital and reaction, for a single federation of the growing trade unions. Reactionary leaders of the A. F. of L., trying to shift their followers over to alliance with the Republican reactionaries as a measure of struggle against the CIO, meet a growing resistance in their own ranks. A great demand for unity is rising, which is being stimulated by the excellent campaign being conducted by Tom Mooney, recently released from prison after twenty-two years by the electoral victory of the democratic front in California.

The strengthening of reaction in the U. S. Congress, resulting from

lack of unity of progressive forces in the last elections, must not be understood as showing a weakening of progressive trends among the masses. A summary of recent polls of public opinion on a variety of questions will demonstrate this. These polls were taken by an Institute which can not be suspected of progressive sympathies, and will be in error only in favoring the reactionary side. On the question of general direction of public policy fifty-five percent support Roosevelt with the following class differentiation; upper classes 34 percent, middle classes 51 percent, lower classes 71 percent, relief workers separately 84 percent. On the attitude toward Hitler's attacks on Jew and Catholics, 94 percent condemn and 6 percent approve anti-Semitism, 87 per cent condemn and 3 per cent approve anti-Catholicism. In relation to Spain, the 65 per cent supporting the Republic two years ago has now increased to 78 per cent. Among Catholics 42 per cent support Republic with 58 per cent voting for Franco, while Protestants vote 83 per cent for Republic. The question was placed where will American sympathy lie in event of war between Germany and USSR resulting in 83 per cent support to Soviet Union. All these various demonstrations of trend of mass opinion reveal overwhelming national trend. That these opinions do not find adequate expression in governmental policy is the result of lack of organization and unity among the masses contrasted with

maximum organization and unity of the reactionary camp.

In this situation the reactionary camp uses anti-Communist slogan as its main weapon to scatter the democratic mass movement. Stupendous efforts are being made to identify Communism as merely a variation of the fascist menace and as a threat of violent upheaval against American democratic institutions. The fantastic Dies Committee has been renewed by Congress to continue this work. The Communist Party has now intervened in a case before the U. S. Supreme Court involving its legal status in order to establish juridically its correct position as the unhesitating defender of democracy against fascism in all its forms, champion of majority rule, rejecting all cults of conspiracy and violence, upholding social and national security of the American people, cooperating with all democratic and anti-fascist forces in the country.

The Communist Party is still a very small minority in the country. But the influence of its political thought and slogans spreads among growing millions. Its membership is now approaching close to one hundred thousand, with an additional twenty-five thousand youth. These members are among the most active and intelligent workers in all the mass organizations of the people, inseparable from the masses and more and more helping them to find the road to victory in their immediate struggle for a better life, and opening up for them the perspectives of the final victory, through socialism.