

Failure in Heart of America

by Jay Lovestone

Detroit has often been called "The Heart of America." It is the cradle of mass production. Precisely those industries on which the last "prosperity" illusions so largely rested are the basis of Detroit's world renown as a great manufacturing center. It is the centre of the world's automobile production. And the auto was the hub of the last "prosperity" days. This city also leads the world in the manufacturing of all kinds of motors, metal airplanes, gasoline engines, adding machines, pharmaceuticals, alkalies, vacuum cleaners, and oil burners. Its annual products are valued at two and a half billion, or more than of many a country in Europe.

Just because this has been the marvel of American capitalist organization, the home of the newest industries and highest development of industrial technique, the economic crisis is here most acute. Because yesterday the symbol of "prosperity", today the symbol of mass misery at its worst!

A Sad City

The city is now sad. A stroll up the swellest shopping streets like Woodward Avenue, Washington Avenue and the busiest thoroughfares like Gratiot Avenue gives one the feeling that the town has gone thru a war or some epidemic.

Even the richest stores have not escaped the plague. The ritzy haberdashers, George & Henry, have been forced to close two of their shops. Capper and Capper, among the swellest of gent's furnisiers, have been granted one year credit extension. Crowley and Milner, department store, has been laying off help. The J. L. Hudson Department Store, highest of them all, was saved from disaster only thru marriage, only thru the good fortune of having Edsel Ford as son-in-law.

How bad things are can be seen from the State Automobile License Bureau's being compelled to extend the period for getting 1931 license plates

to February 1 and then to March 1. Still, after this sixty-day grace period passed, 800 cars were tagged by the police in Detroit for not having new plates. On March 1, 175,000 1930 Michigan automobile owners had not yet gotten their 1931 license. Today, there are 100,000 less auto licenses in the State than a year ago at this time.

Auto Plants Anchored in Silence

I talked to many auto workers. Their suffering is acute. Part-time workers consider themselves lucky.

A visit to the Hudson plant, one of the biggest and most efficient independents, tells the story. Entering the plant, one is greeted by the eternal apple in the office door and at the factory gate. A heavy pallor of depression hangs over everything here. The crisis atmosphere is felt everywhere.

From a manager I learned that the men are working only one shift—instead of three—these days. At that, there are only at most 12,000 out of 25,000 on the job. But I have my serious doubts whether there are even 12,000 now working. I saw a surprisingly large proportion of women.

There seems to be fewer Negroes employed but those working were of splendid physique and were on the heaviest and most difficult jobs. Few men over forty could be seen working. "Yes, business has fallen badly. Our export is especially hard hit. They have just slapped another tariff duty on American cars in Canada. I guess we will have to throw up another plant there to leap the tariff fence getting higher all the time. But there has been a little pick-up in the last two weeks. We have managed to raise our daily production from 515 to 585 cars." These few remarks of the manager told more than a mouthful.

With less workers more autos are being turned out. The speedup is devastating. Efficiency is constantly increasing. It is very significant that

while auto plants are reducing the working forces, the biggest motor corporations are increasing their research staffs.

A Ford worker clinched the matter with the following facts: "Before the times became so damned bad, twenty-four men were employed in the crankshaft department of the River Rouge plant. Each one of us then turned out 40 to 45 crank shafts per hour. But a few weeks ago, during the last shut down for 'inventory', Henry put up some new machines on a patent he brought from Germany. Today, eight of these German machines are on the job manned by only eight workers each one of whom turns out eighty to eighty-five crank shafts per hour. Good-bye jobs for sixteen of us already and who knows how many of us will be left."

I asked the Hudson plant if there were any wage cuts recently: "And how! In every department! And big ones too!" said the manager. "Well, what about Ford's boast that he won't cut any?" I inquired. "That's just the bunk. Ford has cut 'em and cut 'em deep. He has slashed the hourly scale to the bone", shot back the manager. Workers told me that the average hourly wage runs from 25 to 65 cents, depending on the skill. Before the crisis it was 50 to 95 cents per hour. The unskilled who always get the lowest pay and could lose the least got the heaviest cuts and lost the most—about 50% of their wage rate. The skilled and semi-skilled workers were also hit very hard—about 33 1/3% average cut.

And it is precisely Henry Ford's wage slaves who are suffering most these days. 36 out of every 100 families cared for by the City of Detroit are dependent on the Ford plants. Only the other day W. C. Bergman, the organizing secretary of the Detroit's Mayor's Committee on Unemployment, was compelled to grumble aloud that Ford's policy is to "care well for idle machinery", but to "turn idle men into the streets to care for themselves as best as they may."

The Circle of Misery Widens

As you walk thru these towering auto plants you are bound to get a feeling that the machinery is anchored solidly in a gripping silence. Really your ears hear the silence more loudly than anything else. In fact, the Hudson plant is now one of the busiest. In some of the other factories the stillness is so deep that you can hear your heart beat.

Only a couple of weeks ago the Oakland Pontiac auto corporation took a census of all its employees regarding their families, dependents, etc. These workers are now living in the terror of being fired. The dreadful fear of another layoff haunts them. Already, affairs here are intolerable. Oakland County (Pontiac) is now bankrupt. In January it was forced to pay out in relief for the hungry, in groceries and clothing \$180,000. The workers' misery defies description.

But the workers are not the only ones who are up against it. The middle class, the storekeepers, the farmers are with their backs to the wall. The farming masses are in a desperate plight. You can hear many a farmer saying in despair: "We will live on the country. And if things keep up as they are, then we will do what the Russians did."

In the Ranks of the Workers

There is much serious discontent in the ranks of the workers. Here and there the mood is ugly, tho in general, they feel that the present crisis is only a passing affair and that prosperity is the normal thing and is bound to come back. This is only a reflection of their generally undeveloped political conceptions and subjection to the illusions of capitalism and its propaganda.

The trade union bureaucrats have sold out lock, stock and barrel. In the unions there is not a voice of protest. The left wing workers have either been expelled or have fled in disgust or under the order of the new line of the Communist Party. The trade union movement, thus robbed of its reddest blood, is paralyzed.

The new unions, like the Auto Workers Industrial Union, the serving as a haven of rest from the bitter struggles in such organizations as the International Association of Machinists, are really no unions. They have neither membership nor life. The Communist Party, despite all official bluff and bombast, is a pitifully dwindling sect with about three hundred members in the whole district—the smallest on record.

But in the ranks of the workers as a whole, there is a growing interest in the class struggle and its problems. With a proper approach and a correct program, splendid foundations could now be laid for building up a real, mass revolutionary movement. This day isn't here yet. It is not being done today.

Today, Detroit—this failure in the heart of the mightiest capitalist country—is only beginning to have a telling effect on the minds and hearts of the workers. It will take quite some time yet. But its effects on the labor movement will be very far-reaching. Mighty forces of disillusionment with the Wall Street prosperity and government have been let loose. The finale in which these forces will end will be a revolt against the costly futility of the capitalist system in the United States.

ANTI-FASCIST STRUGGLE IN GERMANY

The Program of the German Communist Opposition

We publish below the "Program of Struggle Against Fascism" issued by the German Communist Opposition. The world significance of German Fascism makes the problem of international struggle against it of international importance. American Communists and revolutionary workers should study this program carefully.

—The Editor.

INTRODUCTION

Just two years ago, on February 23, 1929, the German Communist Opposition issued a Proletarian Program of Action.

"Such a step" it was then declared, "is made necessary because in a situation in which the Social-democracy strikes blow after blow against the working class in the service of the big bourgeoisie, the official committees of the C. P. G. are unable either to elaborate a concrete program of struggle or to outline a revolutionary perspective."

"In the masses of the proletariat and of the poverty-stricken middle strata there is brewing heavy discontent. This dissatisfaction is directed against the Social-democratic party leadership and extends deep in the ranks of the Social-democratic workers; but it is not transformed into confidence in Communist leadership, which, unfortunately, is either absent or else misleading."

"It is high time that an end be put to this situation which not only opens the way to reformist treason but also makes possible the exploitation of the dissatisfaction by the forces of extreme reaction."

What we said then... has now happened. Extreme reaction, Fascism, has taken full advantage of the continued treason of the Social-democracy and the continued incapability of the Communists. Fascism has risen into a monstrous danger for the working class, for its economic existence, for its political organization and for the maintenance of its organizations. The rise of Fascism has always gone hand in hand with capitalist attack on the standard of living and rights of the toilers.

There can be no delay in organizing to close the ranks of the toilers against Fascism and the offensive of capital. For this a common program of action for all toilers, containing concrete objectives corresponding to their needs and to their understanding, calculated to develop the class struggle on a broad basis and to counterpose the political struggle for power of the working class to the struggle of the Fascists for power, is needed. The CPG-O therefore proposes the following Anti-Fascist Program of Action.

YOUNG PLAN AND VERSAILLES TREATY

I.

For the Struggle Against the Young Plan and Against the Versailles Treaty

The German bourgeoisie is striving with greater energy than ever for an imperialist revision of the Versailles Treaty and the Young Plan, particularly the revision of the Eastern frontiers and the provisions of the Versailles Treaty which hinder the military preparations of German imperialism.

An imperialist revision of the Versailles Treaty and the Young Plan can only be realized thru a new imperialist world war, thru Germany's joining one of the groups of imperialist powers. The war preparations of the international bourgeoisie are directed more and more against the first Workers State, against the Soviet Union. The desire of attack of the imperialist powers against the Soviet Union has been sharpened to the highest degree by the world economic crisis which strengthens the imperialist striving for the violent appropriation of new markets and which makes the danger of Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. appear all the greater to the world bourgeoisie. Fascism represents this imperialist policy in its most extreme form.

The German working class must unconditionally reject the line of carrying on a struggle against the Young Plan and the Versailles Treaty in connection with and under the leadership of the German bourgeoisie. The working class must refuse to carry on the struggle against the robber-treaties on an imperialist basis or to further the imperialist aims of the German bourgeoisie. The German workers must carry on the struggle both against the imperialists of their own country and against the foreign bourgeoisie. The German workers must not carry on this struggle together with its own bourgeoisie but in revolutionary struggle against its own bourgeoisie as well as against foreign imperialism—side by side with the revolutionary working class of all countries and above all with the Soviet proletariat.

The demand for the imperialist revision of the Versailles Treaty and of the Young Plan must be countered by the German working class with the slogan of the nullification of the Versailles Treaty and of the Young Plan, of the realization of the right of self-determination of peoples, of the annulment of the war debts, thru the international proletarian revolution, thru the struggle of the international working class for the overthrow of the rule of capital. This obliges the workers of every country to fight above all for the overthrow of their own bourgeoisie and to defend the victorious working class of the Soviet Union against all attacks.

Particularly must the German working class come out with the greatest sharpness against all attempts of the German bourgeoisie to reach an understanding and conclude an alliance with French imperialism—which can only be realized as a military alliance directed against the Soviet Union. The German working class must reject any cooperation with the League of Nations which is no force for peace and the conciliation of nations but is an imperialist league of robbers.

(Continued in the next issue)

ceding. Last week auto production fell somewhat. The ANNALIST wholesale commodity index has fallen to a new low, caused mainly by another severe drop in farm prices. Signs of pessimism are multiplying as summer approaches. Authoritative comment on the outlook runs along this line: "It is apparent that not a great deal of headway has been made in business recovery." "The major demands which stimulated the 1921 recovery are lacking."