

# DIRECT AFB ACTION

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January, 1949.

## TRUMAN'S PUPPET SHOW

### Baby-snatching on "Black Saturday"

The arguments put forward by the patriotic war-mongers have an amazing dexterity. It is always said during a war that "we have got to attack 'them' or they will attack us." On this argument a war can be commenced at any time; it will, of course, be just and righteous, and God will speed the victory.

Unfortunately even those who disagree with war, who are fed up with war, and who don't want to see any more war, can be caught by the arguments of "national defence".

The period of shaky peace cannot last long; while governments prepare for war in defence of their imperial interests, each will see in the others' preparations a threat to their own security. At the appropriate moment a spark will set off the world conflagration, and the arguments for war will assume logical reality in the minds of people who have no real wish to indulge in murder but who, once again, will take part in "war to end war."

We are by no means pacifists. We do not take part in pacifist propaganda. This is because we know that, ultimately, ideas cannot be defended by words alone. We are, however, opposed to militarism, and we point out the grave dangers in thinking along the lines of conscript state armies.

If the world is to be spared the act of universal carnage, of which the last war was merely the prologue, then the working people of this country must think and act for themselves, instead of for those who don't give a damn whether the workers live or die.

"Black Saturday" - January 1st - is the day on which the new Conscription Act became law. From that day all young men reaching the age of eighteen must register for full military service for eighteen months. Thus the Labour Government imposes the tradition expressed by Hitlerism - "In peace or war, the fatherland right or wrong."



Jan, 1949

We note that the Communist Party also cash in on this nationalist idea, supporting conscription for a year, under the slogan: "NOT A DAY OVER A YEAR!" We suggest that they print their "peace" appeals on the back of their old "Win the War" leaflets.

Whoever won the last war, it is certain that it was not the British ruling class. The boys of the Bulldog Breed are taking a back seat on the imperialist benches, and have to dance to the tune of Wall Street's fiddle.

In spite of the Labour Government's support of monarchofascism in Greece, its intervention in the Malayan struggle for independence, its fraternisation with Franco and Salazar, and its support for repression in Indonesia, the British Empire has been losing heavily. Gone are the days of Palestinian oil, Burmese rubber, jute and spices from the East, etc. The Empire cannot be revived by peanut expeditions to Africa. Fewer slaves than ever bow to the will of the King-Emperor. The country has, itself, become a slave: to the Stars and Stripes.

Now is the time to fight for freedom! Let us back up the many war-resisters in prison. Let us oppose the Conscription Act, and bring others also to defy it. Let us boycott the war criminals.

R.U.

#### WORKERS' CONTROL and the T.U.s

It's an old political trick - perfected by the Bolsheviks - to take a popular slogan and use it to mean something totally different from its original content.

The latest example of this gentle art is "Workers' Control." There was a time, only a year or two ago, when the Anarchist Federation was almost the only organisation advocating that industry should be owned and controlled by the workers. Up until recently the political "lefts" were so busy boosting "nationalisation" that any idea that industry should be brought under the control of the socially-useful section of the community, rather than boards of state bureaucrats, was dismissed by them as "utopian."

But the reality of nationalisation, and the disillusion which it has produced among the workers - particularly those in industries which the state has already taken over - has caused an abrupt about-turn, and the words "Workers' Control" are now being freely bandied about by the I.L.P., Common Wealth, and so on.

The dangers of the situation were shown at the T.U.C., during the discussion initiated by the Union of Post Office Workers. The U.P.O.W., and other union speakers, advocated, under the guise of "Workers' Control", that there should be union representatives on



the boards of nationalised industry. This tendency means, quite simply, a form of corporate state. The workers would be called upon to help administer production and social services under direct State ownership and control. In other words, the U.P.O.W. proposal was that the wage-slave should have a share in the administration of his own exploitation. Sir Oswald Mosley and the B.U.F. used to advocate the same thing - they still do so in fact.

In discussing workers' control it is essential to be clear on the role the trade-unions are playing today. George Gibson, then T.U.C. President, indicated the function seven years ago, when he stated:

"We can truly say that the unions have become an integral part of the State. Their status as such must be preserved and strengthened, nor must they be allowed to revert to a lower status following upon this war." (Presidential address at the 1941 T.U.C.)

In other words the unions should be regarded not as organisations of class struggle, but as permanent institutions within the capitalist state. Support for revolutionary ideas will obviously not come from those who have a stake in this set-up.

On November 14th a Conference was convened in London by members of the I.L.P. and Common Wealth, on the issue of "Workers' Control." The position put forward by the platform at both sessions of this conference was typically reformist. Both F. Andrews and J. Henry Lloyd gave the impression that the solution to the evils of the present form of nationalisation lay in the gradual participation of trade-union representatives on the State boards. Andrews, as was to be expected, explicitly opposed the syndicalist viewpoint. But many speakers from the floor, at both sessions, called for a revolutionary approach to the question of workers' control, and this view was pressed forward by A.F.B. delegates.

As a consequence of this conference, the London League for Workers' Control was constituted, and the first members' meeting was held on December 3rd. Membership of the League is on an individual basis. An A.F.B. comrade was among those elected by ballot to the executive committee of ten at this meeting.

Our advice to comrades and sympathisers is - join this League and prevent it from being sidetracked into paths of political reformism. Such a vehicle for putting forward the revolutionary idea of "Workers' Control of Industry" is long overdue. But don't be gulled into believing that it can be achieved without a revolutionary struggle.

K.H.

A Russian Komsomol boy doing his homework came across an old Russian fable of God sending a piece of cheese to a hungry crow. Remembering his party training, the boy said to his father:

"But this story is false. Surely there is no God?"

"Son," said the old man softly, "is there any cheese?"



RUSSIA REVIVES THE NAZI PARTY

A new German newspaper, organ of a revived Nazism, was licensed by the Soviet Military Government early in 1948, and has made rapid progress. It is the NATIONALZEITUNG (the name of Goering's paper) and it is sub-headed "The People's Paper for German politics.

The paper was licensed as a bi-weekly on March 22 last, and a few weeks later it became a daily. Its editor is Dr. Hans Hartmann, a well-known Nazi, author of books extolling Nazi principles. A de-nazification board in 1946 refused to clear him, and described him as "a despicable turncoat and ardent Nazi activist." Hartmann's assistant editor, Albrecht Albert, was one of Goebbels' principle assistants, and editor of the BERLINER 12 UHR BLATT, organ of Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda.

The paper is written in typical Nazi propaganda style. It claims to speak for the little party man, the "little Nazi", one editorial saying:

"The plutocrats from Western Germany and from foreign countries know only too well who is their most dangerous enemy - the little Nazi, who in 1918 and 1933 was betrayed in his Socialism. They are afraid that he, and especially he, will offer the fiercest opposition to the selling-out of Germany for the profit of international capitalism."

The paper's general theme is that "The Nazi party was alright but was betrayed by its leaders, and that Nazi Germany should have continued Hitler's 1939-41 policy of German-Russian alliance; the basic principle of Bismarck's politics too." Its first number called for the rebirth of the Nazi party. The new Nazi party, it said, should ally itself with Russia - Russia will help, it stated confidently.

The party was revived and assumed the name of the National Democratic Party (the name "democrat" is being used in much the same way as the Hitler gang used the name "socialist.") Russia gave permission to organise the new party, and it was registered with the Russian Military Government on June 17, 1948. Two of Hitler's generals - Lieut. General Arno von Lenski and Lieut. General Vincent Mueller - lead the party. Both of them have been in close touch with the Russian authorities for several years.

Russia has certainly helped the new Nazi gangsters; the Soviet Military Government supplies newsprint for 500,000 copies of their paper every day. Other papers in the Russian zone have a much smaller license and, even so, rarely get their full ration of newsprint; every week they are forced to miss one, two and even three issues. But the nazi rag churns out its half-



8-million copies every day.

It is well to note that Stalin favours and values the aid of Nazis far above that of German Communists, just as in Britain, during 1941-45, he valued the friendship of Churchill's Tories above that of the British Communists.

## Editorial

### THE WORKERS' PRESS

In September last, in these columns, we explained the difficulties which delayed the publication and limited the size of "Direct Action". Our promised issue for October did not materialise. In October, November and December we have had much to comment upon, many constructive ideas to put forward, but lack of means to publish "Direct Action" has held up our propaganda.

The efforts and sacrifice of a few comrades cannot keep pace with events: a sporadic dissemination of Anarchist ideas cannot combat the directed propaganda of power-mad groups.

This issue of "Direct Action" can only give a brief synopsis, a briefer analysis, from the material we wanted to publish. In particular we have been unable to deal, at length, with the growing demand for "Workers' Control" - one of the most important developments in the working-class movement for many years.

A movement that does not attempt to reach the public commits suicide. A movement that is prevented, by the apathy of its own supporters, from reaching the public, is murdered. "It is disgusting that workers will not support their own press", writes an old and valued American comrade in a letter just received.

We are no longer appealing to our readers to send us money to pay out heavy printing bills. Experience has taught us that only by securing a printing press of its own can the A.F.B. ensure the regular appearance of "Direct Action."

Printers' costs during 1948 amounted to more than the price of an efficient flat-bed press with accessories. London comrades with printing experience are willing to give their time to the task of producing our paper. An all-out drive has been launched to acquire a press. Within the next few weeks we must collect £120. Every comrade will realise the need and the opportunity and will, we hope, give all that he can possibly afford. Donations should be forwarded to:

"Direct Action" Administration,  
15, Parliament Hill,  
London, N.W.3.



Strike newsby Syndicalist.

## EUSTON WORKERS DEFEY BUREAUCRACY

The strike of the Euston railmen, in defence of established union practices, gave yet another proof of the urgent need to build a revolutionary industrial movement, which can link up direct-actionist groupings in all industries.

The issue on which the 500 railworkers struck at midnight on December 6th was the restriction, by the Railway Executive, of time allowed for union duties to the secretary of the Euston Terminus branch of the N.U.R., Jack Rice.

During recent years Rice had helped build the membership of his branch to about 2,500. The Railway Executive issued him with an ultimatum that he should, in future, devote only three-quarters of an hour a day to union business. Faced with the impossibility of dealing with union affairs in this time, Rice tendered his resignation both from the railway and the union. But his union activity had won him the confidence of the members of the branch, and the strike was called on the demand for a full inquiry into the circumstances which had led up to the Executive's action. The men knew full well that the employers' action was only the tail-end of a whole series of petty tyrannies and victimisations.

On December 8th the Executive Committee of the N.U.R., led by the (neo?philo?crypto?) Stalinist, Figgins, moved into action in support of the employers. Euston Terminus branch was suspended from all union benefits. Hand-in-hand the union bosses and the Railway Executive fought the strikers. The Railway Executive closed down the workers'-controlled canteen on Euston Station, and then, on the 13th, notices were posted up warning all strikers to resume work or be sacked. A mere handful were caught by this procedure and resumed, but the vast majority remained solid, and were joined by 100 van girls.

The catering staff at the Euston Hotel had come out in sympathy on Thursday the 9th. The hotel workers remained out for seven days, and gave a good demonstration of solidarity to their fellows in the station itself.

All channels of negotiation had been closed by the employers and the N.U.R. Executive.

On the 13th, 14th and 15th, at the invitation of the Strike Committee, delegates of the dockers rank-and-file movement, the Catering Action Movement, and the rank-and-file postal workers, addressed mass meetings of the strikers and pledged full support.

At this stage the men began to get really active and organised. Over 10,000 leaflets were distributed to the public. Euston rail traffic was declared "black" by the committee,



delegations with speakers addressed mass meetings in several of the London docks, others contacted all railway sections in London. St. Pancras Station workers refused to handle diverted traffic, refused to work overtime, went slow, and took a strike vote. Camden Town were prepared to strike in support. Reporting delegations came from the rail depots at Bricklayers Arms and Liverpool St. to see the Strike Committee.

Money for the strike funds was coming in well, sympathetic action was imminent. A general tie-up of rail parcels traffic in London was only a matter of days. It was at this stage that the reformist elements got the wind up. The union's Local Departmental Committees from a number of stations sought negotiation. The old terms were offered - resumption of work, reinstatement of Rice (on the company's terms), no victimisation, BUT NO INQUIRY. The strikers rejected this. Then the L.D.C.'s - fearing the generalisation of the strike - offered to make an "investigation". The mens' vote on this proposal favoured a return to work, and the strike was over.

A number of lessons emerge from the strike. The first is that a small, isolated strike in a large industry like rail transport stands little chance of success - the need is for a quick spreading of strike action to other sections, and the immediate enlistment of moral and financial support wherever this may be obtained.

An efficient information service is an essential to any strike committee, with the object of giving the general public the real reasons for the stoppage and the issues at stake. The capitalist press made great play with the line that "your Christmas parcels are being held up" during the Euston strike. A similar position was put forward during the June dock strike. This employing-class propaganda has to be offset.

But the most important lessons to be drawn from Euston were the complete exposure of the union leaders on the one hand, and the Railway Executive on the other. The actions of the bureaucrats of Unity House (the strikers pasted a poster stating: "WE DEMAND DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE UNION" on Unity House) both during the strike, and subsequently in suspending Rice, George Ives (Chairman of the Strike Committee) and 10 others from their branch offices, is once more that the trade-unions are completely washed-up as organs of class-struggle. At the same time the Railway Executive, like the National Coal Board, has shown its hand - nationalisation benefits only capitalist interests and state bureaucrats.

The railworkers need to link up with other sections of industry in forming a fighting rank-and-file organisation, based on syndicalist principles, and with the aim of Workers' Control and Ownership of the means of production, distribution and supply.



## COMMONSENSE IN EDUCATION

by A.S.

At first I was not very willing to contribute an educational column to DIRECT ACTION. Column-writing is a much abused art - so many journals have their tame "expert" always at hand to bring his ripened wisdom to the correction of the man on the job. If this column is to be of any use at all it must be quite different.

Every adult in the country is directly affected by industrial and political affairs - but only teachers and children go to school. There is probably a heavier "iron curtain" between teachers and parents than between any other equally important body of "producers" and "consumers". Few parents could give an intelligent account of what goes on inside the schools today; and the great mass of them have little desire to find out. One of the prices of social responsibility will be participation in all the primary functions of society. Until we wake up and take an interest in the proceedings of our schools we have little moral right to complain about their enactments.

My aim is to report matters of interest, with a view to assisting the growth of an informed opinion that will always be ready to urge the libertarian reform of the educational system.

The word "libertarian" raises an immediate discussion point. It seems to be the accepted practice that educational articles in libertarian journals should be largely devoted to laudatory accounts of work in the "free" schools. But 99% of the country's children pass through the State educational system (or other conservative establishments) and it is obviously to this field that a commentator's first attention should be given. Our concern must first of all be "What's happening to your child at the school round the corner" and "What you can do about it."

On the question of "State" education I'd better make my position clear. The choice before us at the moment is not "State" or "Libertarian" education. For some time yet children will probably be passing through a State educational machine, which will be guided by parliament, the teaching profession and (in the background) public opinion.

In the meantime, thousands of children leave the schools every year. They must be given a minimum equipment within a fixed time-limit. Education should aim at developing the personality of the child. But what chance is there of doing this in a class of fifty in an under-equipped and badly-built school? Mass instruction there can be, but education is difficult. As the "free" schools have shown, there are few



educational problems that won't yield to smaller classes and more equipment. The "mass" education problem is largely a material one.

But there are other limiting factors - the demands of parents and employers, for example. If employers require a "London Metric" and despise a "School Certificate", then so many boys will take Latin at School, when they might be devoting time to more personally suitable and useful subjects. It's as simple as that. The education your child receives is limited on the one hand by what the public demands, and on the other by what it will tolerate. Within these bounds the teaching profession is doing its best against tremendous material difficulties.

This is the general picture. In my next article I shall say something about the 1945 Education Act, the Emergency Training Schemes, and the position of the teacher today.

Libertarian Film Club

by F.R.

### BLUE PENCIL AND SCISSORS

The presentation of a silver-mounted travelling altar to the Pope by two prominent Hollywood producers recently granted an audience, and the true story of an American comic-strip writer, Phil Strong, whose juvenile "Honk the Moose" radio adaptation was cleaned of its periodic moose-calls because - as one Station official objected - "They're mating calls; they've got to come out; too sexy" - may seem only perversely associated. In fact they show the recognition by important bodies of two entertainment forms with an incalculable propaganda potential.

#### IN AMERICA

Pressure by influential groups is all too easily put upon American radio at the production end. Sponsored radio ensures business interests a stranglehold on programme selection.

Films in America receive correction at both ends. Bankers who finance the million-dollar productions demand in advance that the projected film should not conflict with "The American Way of Life" - does not antagonise influential opinion.

The Hays Office is an organisation set up by the producers to enforce conformity and thus ensure a market for their products.

At the consumers' end a crippling influence upon the film with ideas comes from the Catholic-sponsored League of Decency. Twenty-million strong, the League issues a weekly index of film gradings in all catholic papers. It classifies films "A"



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achievements have freely been granted licences. The moral seems clear.

"The Seashell and the Clergyman", a freudian psychological study, was refused in these immortal words: "It is so cryptic as to be meaningless. If there is a meaning it is doubtless objectionable."

The pacifist film, "To Hell with War", had its title changed to "War is Hell". "Die Dreigroschenoper", a German film, shows Queen Victoria recoiling in terror from a crowd of beggars who surround her carriage. Not only was this film banned in Britain - the Foreign Office persuaded the French Government to likewise act against it.

Censorship has thus come a full circle, for it was the political satire of Gay's "Beggars' Opera", from which "Die Dreigroschenoper" is adapted, that brought censorship of plays to this country 200 years ago.

G. Bernard Shaw, who has constantly campaigned against stage censorship, argued the case for Betty Baxter, who ran the "White Lady Canteen" of pre-war London. She made a film to show the social conditions responsible for girls leaving home and getting drawn into prostitution. G.B.S. received his reply: "If this film is shown publicly it will seriously hinder the supply of domestic labour which comes to London from the provinces."

The foregoing may conjure up a picture of State censorship equipped with life and death powers by the British Government. In fact, the B.B.F.C., whose familiar certificate, "A" or "U", appears before all films exhibited publicly, are, like the Hays Office, a private body, set up by the film trade, and have no legal status.

In addition, over seven-hundred local authorities claim the right to censor films. It is doubtful, however, if a public exhibition of unlicensed films could be proceeded against, other than under the 1857 Obscenity Act, dealing with theatres and publishing. The omnipotent power of the B.B.F.C. lies in the agreement of trade organisations to conform to its ruling.

The facts which emerge from this analysis provide remarkable evidence of the parallel interests of the private capitalist producer, religion, and state authority in regard to stifling progressive ideas. One further point. Not one among the 15 films were British or American. A writer needs only ink and paper. A film-maker needs far larger resources. Only on the Continent, where small individual film units are the rule can the film escape the dead hand of censorship - and often not even there.



## International Anarchism

TERROR CONTINUES IN BULGARIA

Moved by fear of the great influence exerted by the Anarchist Federation among the peasants and industrial workers of Bulgaria, the Dimitrov Government has intensified its repression against our comrades. A typical example was given on the anniversary of Cristo Boteff, famous Bulgarian poet and revolutionary hero, who was an anarchist follower of Bakunin. Those anarchists still not interned were called before the Communist Militia, who forced them to sign a declaration that they would not take part in the State festivals organised on this date, and that they would leave their homes within three days. Thus the Stalinists wish to be the only ones to commemorate the death of this teacher and revolutionary militant, who would have had nothing but contempt for them. Hundreds of students have been excluded from the university at the time of their final examination, and then, as "vagabonds", sent to the forced-labour camps with which the country is full. "Vagabondage" is the latest pretext for arrest and internment. The technique is simple: firstly the families of enemies of the present regime are expelled from their homes at 24 hours' notice, and then they are arrested as "vagabonds" and sent to forced labour.

We have received a quantity of the pamphlet, "Bulgaria - A New Spain", from the Alexander Berkman Fund of Chicago. This pamphlet is a translation from a publication of the Committee for Aid to Bulgarian Anti-fascists, and is available at 6d (8d post-free). All proceeds from its sales will be put at the disposal of the Aid Committee. The pamphlet, in 32 pages, gives an invaluable historical survey of the development of the working-class movement in Bulgaria, the tremendous role the Anarchist Federation has played in the workers' struggle, and documents relating to the present repression. We ask every comrade and sympathiser to get this pamphlet.

OUR NOBILITY: "There in Blenheim Palace, reputed the largest private home in England, the Duke of Marlboro', gayer than ever, entertained his guests by throwing raspberries high in the air, and catching them in his mouth. 'He rarely misses', commented his admiring duchess, who then confided: 'He often entertains our guests in this way. He is most amusing'" - A.P.