

DIRECT A F B ACTION

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FOR WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

May Day, when workers of all lands traditionally demonstrate their identity of interest in hostility to that of the ruling class, will again be marked this year by an absence of any reason for festivity.

Four years after the most costly war in human history - a war allegedly fought to defend freedom against tyranny - millions of workers throughout the world are still subjected to the rule of naked force. The governments of practically every country are preparing feverishly for a third and yet more bloody war. The ranks of the working-class are split by rival political factions. Unemployment, the fruit of a rotten economic system, is growing daily.

Let us recall the reasons why May the First is celebrated as International Workers Day.

Sixty-three years ago, in Chicago, eight anarchists were framed-up on a charge of throwing a bomb during a demonstration for the eight-hour day. During their trial it was proved that they were innocent of this charge. They, like so many others since, were really on trial for having been in the forefront of the struggle against the capitalist system. Four of them - Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engel - were hanged. Lingg committed suicide in his cell the night before his death sentence was to be carried out. Three more, Schwab, Neebe and Fielden, served long terms of imprisonment for a crime they did not commit.

It was in memory of these martyred Anarchist fighters that the Labour movement internationally decided to dedicate the First of May each year to the celebration of the workers' struggle. On this day the workers would declare a general strike and hold meetings and demonstrations.

But with the growth of reformism and political "labour" parties the revolutionary significance of May Day was gradually forgotten and May Day meetings were increasingly devoted to vote-catching

speeches by the politicians.

The time has surely come to be finished with political parasites of all colours, and to return to the real struggle of the working-class - the struggle for economic emancipation by the direct action of the exploited - the struggle for which the celebration of May Day was initiated.

International solidarity must once more become something more than an empty phrase if our struggle is to be effective. Let us not forget the millions of human slaves in the concentration camps of the so-called "Communist" countries, and in the openly-fascist dictatorships of Spain and Portugal.

To the workers of all lands, and in particular to those militants who, through their determined stand on behalf of their revolutionary principles, today find themselves behind prison bars, or the barbed wire of a concentration camp, the Anarchist Federation sends its greetings. The struggle will go on until capitalism and the state are overthrown, and the social revolution achieved.

ANARCHISTS ON TRIAL IN BULGARIA

The Stalinist government of Bulgaria is preparing a new "show" trial, by means of which it hopes to wipe out the revolutionary element of the Bulgarian people - the Anarchists.

Two days before the Communist Party Congress was held in Sofia on December 18th last, more than a hundred anarchist and syndicalist militants were arrested. For the past two months eight of them have been held in the special cells of the Militia Headquarters at Sofia. These eight comrades are soon to be brought before the courts in one of the carefully-prepared political trials for which Stalinism is infamous.

Among these eight comrades the best-known is the surgeon, Doctor Ivan Baleff, formerly director-in-chief of one of Bulgaria's most important hospitals - at Corna Djoumeia. The only crime that Baleff and his seven fellow-prisoners have committed is that of being anarchists. Nothing more.

Before Stalin is allowed to add another eight names to the tens of thousands of his political victims, a world-wide protest must be raised against this new atrocity. Demand their immediate and unconditional liberty, the ending of political repression, and the liquidation of all concentration camps and forced labour in Bulgaria.

AID COMMISSION TO THE BULGARIAN ANTI-FASCISTS.

LIBERTARIAN FILM CLUB: Next presentation Sunday, May 15th, 6.50 p.m.
at DENISON HOUSE, Vauxhall Bridge Rd.,
London S.W.1. D.W.Griffith's "TRUE HEART
SUSIE", and two documentaries, "NIGHT MAIL" & "INSTRUMENTS OF THE
ORCHESTRA". Admission - Members 2/-, Guests 2/6.

UNIONISM - WITH TEETH!

Whatever the trade-union movement was in the days of Tom Mann, let us face this fact - it is now a tool in the hands of the bosses and must be torn from their grasp, even though it should be destroyed in the process. For years we have patiently watched retreat and compromise follow one another. For years we have seen ambitious men donning their first top-hats - bought from union funds, shaking hands with the boss, and selling their former comrades of the class struggle. There is something rotten in trade-unionism today, and it is not the rank and file.

But the rottenness of the "leadership" is not the basic trouble with the unions - that is to be found only in the form of organisation itself, of which the leadership is a logical result.

The fact is that a union based on craft distinction or the location of one's bed is a very ineffective weapon in the industrial struggle. The only effective type of organisation is that which is based on the point of production, and in which the rank-and-file is always in control. In other words, revolutionary unionism or syndicalism. This much was realised years ago in France and Spain, and in the early years of this century there was a Syndicalist League in Britain. But the movement here disintegrated under the impact of World War I, and when the Armistice was signed Bolshevism had become the hope of the workers. Bolshevism has since been proved a vain hope, and today the tendency is once more towards Syndicalism.

This tendency has manifested itself in the formation of a Syndicalist Workers Federation, which sets itself the dual task of carrying on the class war in its day-to-day aspect, and finally overthrowing capitalism completely. As the means to achieving this end, it is proposed to replace the present obsolete trade union movement with a fighting working-class organisation.

Unions will be organised on an industrial and federal basis, and linked together in a National Confederation of Labour. The new Syndicalist Workers Federation sets itself the task of propagandising these ideas and of putting them into practice as soon as possible.

This new union movement will win because it will be designed to hit and hit again, till the bosses squeal for mercy - it will ignore their squeals and strike again and again, until they no longer exist as a class; for in this war of the dispossessed against the exploiters there must be no quarter. We shall win only if we have Unions - with teeth!

- MAKHNOVIK -

For full information about the Syndicalist Workers Federation, membership, etc., write to: S.W.F. Provisional Committee, 25A Amberley Road, London W.9.

Industrial frontREDEPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

There is one word that is heard throughout the textile industry - it is on the tip of everybody's tongue, masters and men, weavers and spinners, tacklers and loomsweepers alike, all are discussing it. That word is "redeployment".

This bastard offspring of officialese, masterpiece of capitalist obscurantism, denotes an encroachment into standard union practice; like the word "redundancy" it is a new term for an old stink. When the bosses produce a new word which has an oblique quality, then the time has come to lay down the pipe of peace and hold a council of action.

Redeployment means more looms in weaving, more ends in winding, and so on. Your wages will be increased, say the time and motion wizards, but then so will profits. . .

Profits in the textile industry have increased at a terrific rate, as this last year end's figures show, and the millowners have stated that they have every confidence that they will continue to increase during this year. Naturally, if redeployment is accepted - and undoubtedly it will be unless the workers revolt against it - the profits WILL increase.

The average and traditional number of looms per weaver is four. Say the weaver earns £5 a week. It is proposed to increase this number of eight and even ten looms; the boss gets double his previous profit out of the one man, and the weaver gets - in all probability - an extra pound, a fifth of his previous wage. What a racket!

It will mean shoddy cloth for the market, it will mean a combing-out of "undesirable" elements and unemployment, it will eventually mean a slump in the textile industry. Once again the employers are having to compete with Japan for markets. The Japanese textile industry, resuscitated by the U.S.A. under the old sweatshop conditions, means that the textile barons have to cut their employees' working standards - that is the reason for redeployment. They want to make certain of their soaring profits when other countries are rising to compete for world markets - and so they prepare sweatshop piecework conditions in readiness in the mills, and a surplus of unemployed labour to draw on and to keep wages down.

What is the "Weavers, Winders and Beamers" doing about this? Acceding. They are treading warily, for they know there is considerable opposition to redeployment among the textile workers. First they asked for a 10/- rise, and eventually got 4/6 pending redeployment. Note the "pending redeployment". This rise is tacked on to the cost of living bonus, which now amounts to 26/-, and which will be annulled when the time and motion study charlatans have finished their present work. This rise, in actual point of

fact, belatedly covers the increased insurance only.

The system of assessing wages proposed is quite arbitrary, and is actually a mathematical formula which sounds important and convincing, but really is just a preconceived minimum. Here is an example: Wage equals work load multiplied by 90 divided by x, "x" being the worker's standard or norm, and ensuring that no two workers will receive the same money for the same amount of work.

To this state of affairs the "socialist" government gives its blessings, eagerly displayed by the bosses on posters in every mill.

"Workers' control is the only answer to this capitalist economy. Direct Action is the only weapon for the workers - the only weapon the bosses understand. The cycle of capitalism sows always the seeds of its own destruction, for capitalism is shortsighted. Only a workers industrial democracy can give the security and freedom that is every man's right.

J.O.Pilling

MINERS AGAIN REJECTED

The miners' request to the Coal Board for a review of their present cost of living bonus was met by a flat rejection at a special meeting on February 16th.

A laconic official statement said: "The Board refuse to admit any liability under the agreement for more than the 2/8 a shift they are now paying.

The National Union of Mineworkers replied, in a frightened tone, that it would "consider the position further in view of the Board's attitude." The present bonus is paid under a war-time agreement based on the old cost-of-living index - and we all know what these indexes of cost-of-living are like. . . they add up how much a man can earn working every hour of the day, review how much he will spend (leaving out entertainment, sickness and increases in the family), then they knock a bit off their total and we are all back where we started.

The agreement was not revised when the Inex was replaced by a new Index of Retail Prices in 1947, and the 1947 rate of 2/8 a shift has remained unchanged. The miners say that it should be increased to meet the rise in cost of living since 1947, but the Board argues that general improvement in the miners' wages has more than made up for the out-of-date cost-of-living index.

This is "socialism" under a Labour Government. Here are the pitworkers arguing for a rise in their wages with a group of Civil Servants, generals and so-called socialists on the National Coal Board. And, according to the Labour Party, the NCB is there on behalf of the working-class!

The miners, working 45 hours - and maybe more - a week, down a hole in the ground get a measly £6, £7 or £8, while the NCB

officials, drawing thousands a year, sit around talking politics with the NUM.

Our tip to the miners is this. If they won't give you what you want, refuse to work, and tell the NCB officials to dig the coal. Then we'll see who are more useful to society - the armchair officials or the miners.

NORMAN ASHTON

Theory

by Donald Room

THE ANARCHIST STRUGGLE

People who write about Anarchism without reference to the syndicalist method of revolution are often, no doubt, well-to-do crackpots who believe in a free society consisting entirely of supermen. But so many writers in "Direct Action" concentrate purely on the day-to-day struggle that - if nobody concentrates purely on the remainder of anarchist ideas, the new readers will not know, and some old comrades may even forget, the reason for all this struggling. Here, then, is something about "why". . .

The most noticeable feature of contemporary society is authority, the power of some people over others. Employers have power over those they employ, governments have power over those they rule, and - in "civilised" countries at anyrate - nobody is without a master. Authority, anarchists believe, is a harmful institution which should be abolished, and which, moreover, can be abolished.

In this country at this time, when the churches and the authoritarian family are declining, the two major forms of authority are economic (the power of rich over poor) and legal (the power of state over subject). All forms of authority are based on threats, and the threats in these two cases are "Do as I say or go without" and "Do as I say or go to gaol" respectively.

If people as a whole refused to listen to such threats, authority would collapse. But most people do heed these threats, because they believe, usually without consciously thinking about it, that economic authority provides us with the means of live, and that legal authority protects us from anti-social elements. Anarchists, and many other students of sociology, think these widely held beliefs to be false.

To abolish economic authority it would be necessary to make everything the property of every person, so that no person could be richer than another. This would entail the cessation of money, wages, and all forms of trade or exchange. It would mean that no-one need go short when his needs are at hand, no time and energy need be consumed in financial calculation, supervision and similar tedious unproductive work, and that all work would be more agreeable because it would be voluntary.

The destruction of prisons and other means of punishment, with frank ignoring of laws, would mean the end of legal authority and the end of war, which is always between governments. People would then be free to conduct their relations with others according to their own reason and social conscience.

But is human nature such that people would work voluntarily for the general good, or that they would, without coercion, maintain friendly relations with their fellows? The basis of anarchism is the belief that human nature is like that, in spite of the fact that some people today appear completely selfish, and that organised religion has been propagating the idea of "original sin" for centuries.

We believe, in agreement with all schools and branches of psychology which were represented at the International Conference to Inquire into Mental Health (Berne, 1948) that man is a social animal by nature, and the unsocial type the product of environment.

Anarchy is the name we give to any society without authority, the evil institution with which men, in their ignorance, encumber and constrict themselves. The anarchists do not, like the marxists, want power for themselves "to decree anarchy". We believe that only direct action by the workers, the chief sufferers under authority, can bring Anarchy into being.

And to this end we struggle.

LETTER FROM BELFAST

The recent election was not brought about by the wishes of the residents of the north, but was a natural outcome of the Dublin Government's desire to sever, for all time, their very slim link with the English crown, and so fulfil the Southern politicians' age-long wish to have no connection with the English Government.

As far as the workers of Northern Ireland are concerned, this election was merely a fight between two sets of exploiters as to who would rule and exploit them. There was, however, this material difference to the Northern wage-slaves: the northern workers at present get the same Social Benefits as to unemployment and sickness as the English workers, but under the Dublin regime the rate of social benefits are on a lower scale. Then there is a strict censorship on all newsprint and general literature entering that part of the country - there are several English Sunday newspapers that are not allowed entry into the South at all.

With regard to the above mention of different rates of social benefits: it has been stated to the writer by those who are for an Irish Republic that, if this regime were to materialise and take over the industrialised north, then the social rates now in operation in the South would be raised to the English level in other words, the industrialised north would raise the living

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standards of all-Ireland! What a farce when we remember that the industries in the North are not capable of absorbing the unemployed in this area due to a falling-off of overseas orders and a home market that we know to be overstocked.

If the Irish workers throughout this island would but forget their religious and political differences of opinion, and unite in a general fight against their common enemy, the capitalist system, for a better living standard and full employment for all, then we should see the politicians, North and South, forgetting all about elections, and coming to grips with the workers in a fight to retain their ill-gotten gains.

G.WILLIAMSON.

Book review

by Frank Rowe

"THE CASE FOR COMMUNISM" by William Gallacher. Penguin. 1/6.

In Gallacher's latest book, "The Case for Communism", the art of the innuendo has acquired a polished finish. Distortion has taken the place of the fantastic fairytales and hair-raising accusations which are characteristic of communist literature generally, and in particular of such notorious penny dreadfuls as "Hitlers Agents Exposed" and "The Great Conspiracy Against Russia." Dogmatic assertions, unsupported by fact, are the main trademark of this book. With these we do not intend to deal - 400 words are incapable of dealing with 208 pages of close print. We shall consider, instead, what the book fails to say, and the way in which Gallacher gets round awkward questions.

The method is obvious from the first page of the book. It becomes crystal clear, however, in the three-page Chapter on the second world war. Three pages, as compared with eight pages for the first world slaughter!

Half a page is devoted to the European resistance movements, and the remaining two and a half pages review the military feats of Russia. Not a word, however, is written concerning the four and a half weeks, from the outbreak of war, during which the Communist Party supported the war, or of the subsequent somersault when the meaning of the Stalin-Hitler pact became apparent. No mention is made of the period from October, 1929 to June, 1941, during which the C.P. opposed the war and conducted a campaign for a negotiated peace with Hitler. That period, for Gallacher, simply does not exist. The history of the second world bloodbath dates, for Stalin's chosen, from the day on which the un-soviet union became involved in hostilities. To say the least, the method is hardly honest.

In a similar way Gallacher deals with the embarrassing problem of explaining the history of the First International. Devoting 25 lines of his four-page chapter to the most important struggle

struggle within the International, that between the Marxists and the Anarchists, he generously allows the Anarchists two lines in which to state their case. That is two lines of Gallecher's interpretation of the Anarchist position, suitably enclosed in quote marks. The whole thing is prefaced, just to make sure that everybody understands from the outset who was in the right, as follows:

"The Anarchists wanted an International without responsibility of any sort whatever."

Again the method is hardly honest. Responsibility implies liability to answer for something. Anarchists have never refused to accept such liability. What we have refused to do is to claim authority. Authority, which the dictionary defines as "legal right." We have no such "legal right" over our fellow workers, and we will commit ourselves to no such pretence.

That is an essential difference between the libertarian Socialism of the Anarchists and the totalitarian state-capitalism of the pseudo-communists.

APPEAL TO COMRADES

In order that our propaganda efforts may be carried on more effectively this appeal to comrades should be short and to the point.

Our main spearhead of attack is our paper, "Direct Action", leading anarchists and syndicalists forward in the day-to-day struggle with clear constructive reasoning. We plan to again produce a monthly PRINTED issue of "Direct Action" from the beginning of June. To assure the paper's regular appearance we need money. Isn't it worth the effort to keep "Direct Action" going.

We ask you to help this work forward by sending donations to our Press Fund. They should be forwarded to: "Direct Action" Administration, 25A Amberley Road, London W.9.

PRESS FUND (Up to 15th April, 1949).

LONDON: E.S. 5/-, L.F.C. £3, M.H. 8/-, K.H. 10/-, W.O. 2/-;	
GOSPORT: F.G. 5/-; CARDIFF S.F. 10/-; HODDESDON: A.R. 10/-;	
HUDDERSFIELD: A.L. 5/-; NELSON: J & L.P. 3/-; PORTLAND, ORE., U.S.A.	
A.S. 9/4; SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA A.W. £1.	TOTAL -- £7. 7. 4
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	<u>£107. 8. 6</u>

CATERING WORKERS!

Read "CATERING NEWS", monthly organ of the syndicalist "Catering Action Movement." Join the C.A.M. For details, write to the secretary: James Brady, 8, St. Olave's Mansions, London S.E.11.

MAY DAY RALLY

For Workers' International Solidarity

Sunday, May 1st, at 7.0 p.m., at
DENISON HOUSE, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1.

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G.W. Pabst's famous International film:

" K A M E R A D S C H A F T "

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ANARCHIST SPEAKERS

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Admission 2/-

Doors open 6.30

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Comrades and sympathisers are advised that the A.F.B. (National Committee and London Group) have recently taken over premises at:
25A, Amberley Road,
London, W.9.

All correspondence concerning DIRECT ACTION, the National Cttee., and the London Group should, in future, be sent to this address. Papers and periodicals sending exchange copies please note.

LIBERTARIAN FORUM :

Weekly meetings are held at 25 Amberley Road, London W.9 (nearest stations: Warwick Avenue and Royal Oak; 36, 18, 6 & 187-bus routes) on Friday evenings at 7.30 p.m. Future meetings include:

Friday, April 22nd: "MYSTICISM AND VIOLENCE" - Dick Farley.

Friday, April 29th: "JAZZ AND SOCIETY" - Stuart Maxwell (this lecture will be illustrated with gramophone records.

Sympathisers are cordially invited to attend these meetings.

NELSON (Lancs) ANARCHIST GROUP : For information about this recently formed group, write to the secretary : Lillian Pilling, 9 Height Croft, Marsden Heights, Brierfield, Nelson, Lancs.