

# **DIRECT ACTION**

PRICE ONE PENNY

## **OUR TASK**

The great mass of people to-day are fully aware of the total inadequacy of our social system. Nearly everyone somehow desires to lead a life in which total liberty, equitable justice and the pursuit of happiness are not just vague aspirations but a secure foundation of existence. Yet very few people bother to analyse and learn from the factors which are responsible for the social and economic chaos to which we are subjected. Most of them, born in slavery and reared in ignorance, are content to resign themselves to "their fate". They would never dare to claim their rights or even try to find a way of obtaining them.

Lack of conscience and the opium of politics are the two cardinal factors which make for this degradation of men. At the price of their own independence and dignity they are content to delegate to others the task of emancipation, thereby reducing themselves to a perpetual state of submission and dependence. Every man on earth desires liberty and justice, but only few sufficiently understand what this vague desire involves to be ready to translate it into practical action. False propagandists and alleged "defenders of freedom and justice" will easily find a ready hearing. They will promise to do for the people what only the people can do for themselves, and the people will rest content and leave it at that.

It is the primary task of the conscious militant to open people's eyes to the absurdity of leaving others to act in their name, of pawning their inalienable right of self-determination, just to avoid the trouble of thinking on their own account. He must help in creating situations in which people can see plainly that their trust in others is misplaced, that no one will do for them, what they alone are able to do. In this way men will gradually become used to think for themselves, to decide their own issues instead of relying on others, to act in common agreement with their fellows. Such an attitude will put new heart into the cynical and despairing, just as it will give a good deal of thought to those who are so over-confident to-day, relying on the unwillingness of ordinary people to use their own heads.

The men of the Libertarian Movement dispersed over all the countries of the globe must ceaselessly point out to all people who suffer oppression and injustice the only practical way by which they can achieve the welfare and happiness to which they are entitled — their own action. It is necessary to propagate the ideas of human emancipation. Equally we must show that Man's right to self-determination and the administering of his own affairs are elementary principles underlying any successful transformation of society. But all this will avail us little, until we have convinced all those who suffer the ills of society that their's is not a pre-ordained fate. We must show

*(Continued on page 4)*

### **SPANISH REVOLUTION**

19th July 1936 - 1945

### **COMMEMORATION MEETING**

**HOLBORN HALL**

Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

**THURSDAY, JULY 19th, at 7.30 p.m.**

*Speakers:*

**J. Garcia Pradas,**  
(ex-Editor "CNT" Madrid)  
**Jimmy Dick** (A.F. Glasgow)  
**Tom Brown** (A.F. London)  
**Ken Hawkes** (A.F. London)



# "IN A LAND FIT FOR HEROES"

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse have run riot over Europe and over most of the world. The one representing War may seem to some unthinking people to have nearly run its course. Their mistake will soon become apparent. **Even if our masters** desire to smooth over the military and political crisis — **and they will if it is necessary to maintain their ghastly system** — it is clear that there is no chance of any permanent peace. Distrust and hate are being fostered everywhere. Even our children are taught to hate. Your children and mine are being inculcated with distrust of Germans and even our "gallant Allies" the Russians. Soon they will see the spectacle of German slaves working in our towns and villages. Anti-Semitism is being taught at school in a subtle manner, just as it was taught in the schools of Nazi Germany. Children are being told that we are the conquerors of this race of German barbarians. Conquerors, yes, but by the most horrible and perverted means science can invent. **As in all conscripted armies our men are forced to murder or suffer imprisonment.** In the case of the Germans, good, bad and indifferent, they are to suffer slavery and separation from their homes for an indefinite period. During that time the returned British soldier will again be reduced to selling bootlaces in the gutter. To use a Churchillian phrase "never was so much (misery) owed by so many to so few".

To come to a matter so near our minds in these days of food shortage: On May 25, the *News Chronicle* reported that there was a glut of herrings, most of which was expected to be thrown back into the sea in order to keep up the price. At the same time we read that hundreds of tons of good tinned foodstuff were burned in Warwickshire. Surely it is clear now that the system which permitted the destruction of food side by side with universal shortage before the war is still very active. Many families, with both parents working and unable to queue for food, have not tasted herring for months. Now that they might have had the chance to enjoy this dietetically valuable food we have to submit to the financier and continue to go without. Such is the system with which we have allowed ourselves to be saddled. **Our families all suffer from some form of malnutrition, but we are told "the Government is satisfied that the reduced scale of rations will maintain the caloric and vitamin value of our food necessary for full health and vigour."**

Do you really believe this? We, of the working class, have no access to chicken, trout and best farm butter, and even if we saw them on sale could we purchase these and similar things? We are now called upon to fight the war of Famine. As usual with wars it is the working class who bear the brunt. Do you wish to be a good soldier for Capitalism. Haven't you had enough? The protest of the women, overworked, harrassed housewives, who have **suffered such hardships, could and should be heard.** Women must make their objection resound throughout the country. Men at least have their unions — although they are betrayed by them. Women have no organisations to fight for them and theirs. **But there are ways and means to show that we women will not stand for this new imposition of reduced rationing, particularly when we are told that food is being destroyed.**

Make your stand with your menfolk, when they put up the fight for real freedom. Unless you do that, they will never find release from the chains which have bound them for centuries. Just as your menfolk you have everything to gain and nothing to lose. There is ample food for all. **By supporting your men in their fight against their oppressors you can make sure of getting your fair share.**

"A Woman Comrade"

## T. W. BROWN

No doubt many comrades and friends will easily recall "T. W." of Kingston Group who was sentenced last September at the Old Bailey to fifteen months imprisonment for Sedition. This sentence would, with full remission mean serving ten months. But Comrade Brown *again* expressed himself. For this he was hauled up before visiting Magistrates last December and further sentenced to loss of two months remission and privileges. We hope, therefore, to see him in early September. Friends of T.W.'s will be glad to know he is in excellent spirits and as good health as the diet at Wormwood Scrubs permits. He and other prisoners have obtained permission to commence classes on Economics and in many other ways he is making good use of his time. He is very conversant with conditions outside and writes: "I have a steadily rising anger at the fraud and betrayal which is being perpetrated on the people **and it makes me chafe to be out and doing."**

When T.W. is released it is hoped that he will not be burdened with the balance of the debt caused by the State in forcing his case to go to trial at the Old Bailey. The deficit is £26 and his Comrades regard it as a debt of honour to be cleared if at all possible before September. Financial assistance from all supporters and friends will be gratefully received by the Secretary, A.F. (London Group): Ken Hawkes, 15, Parliament Hill, N.W.3.

M.H.



# NOTES and COMMENTS . . .

In our last issue we published an appeal by the International Working Men's Association for a working class International. There is no need to emphasise how timely this appeal is to-day when the nations are engaged in political dogfights around the peace table. Unfortunately there is little hope at present that the appeal will find a wide spread echo in all countries. But substantial mass organisations in Spain, Sweden, U.S.A. and Latin America will be able to form an effective revolutionary nucleus, round which workers in other countries can gather once events shake them out of their passivity.

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The International on the other side of the fence, now sitting at San Francisco, is faithfully carrying on the Geneva tradition somewhat adapted to modern, bare-faced methods of inter-State relations. While the battle still raged everywhere and Tommy Atkins and G. I. Joe were dying on a dozen battle-fields there was a lot of talk about "what they were fighting for". So they devised the Atlantic Charter, a meaningless lot of high sounding phrases purporting to stand for human progress.

In these days of haggling over veto powers, the administration of Germany, shootings in Syria, conflict in Poland, Trieste, Bulgaria, India, Burma and all the other pawns in the imperialist chess game, can even the most guileless reader of the *Daily Express* find any traces of that famous "fight for Freedom"? Not that there has been any change in actual fact, but to-day our rulers can be outspoken while they were forced to pretend before, or where would they have found soldiers willing to die for them?

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Incidentally, the London International (World Trade Union Congress) had a happy knack of anticipating just what the International of San Francisco would be like. A case of like master, like servant. It is a pity that such worthy collaborators were barred from passing through the Golden Gate.

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In this country preparations for the first National Congress of our Federation are rapidly progressing. It will take place before the summer is over. The Congress does not aim at spectacular results. But frank and full debates, guided by the will of finding the best possible solution to the problems confronting us, will help us to pass an important milestone in our history. We will equip ourselves for the organisational tasks which lie ahead: to mould together in a fighting Federation the ever-increasing numbers of revolutionary militants prepared to act in accordance with what they believe to be right.

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Our unshakeable faith in human intelligence is put to a hard test in these electioneering days. The politicians appear to assume that we are all the worst kind of fools, and that no lie absurdity or contradiction is too big for us to swallow eagerly. Take Housing. Every party assures us that once they are in power, they will provide a perfect solution to present chaotic conditions. Yet in the debate on Housing on June 7th Mr. Strauss (Labour) said: "It would be unwise and wrong for any party to promise too much at the General Election". He was followed by the Tory Molson, who said he hoped "the Government would face any storm that might

spring up in the country over housing rather than (make promises which could not be fulfilled)." (*Times*, 8/6/45). So much for non-existent houses!

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Press and politics are showing their true colours not only in what they say but also in what they omit. The spreading unrest in industry over jobs and conditions barely receives a paragraph of misleading or mutilated report. "7,000 quit at Handley Page"; "Dispute at Napier's" followed by a two-line statement is about all one can find in the National Press. In fact the signs of the great battle which we have forecast are becoming clearer every day. The number of strikes is continually increasing. Reasons: Redundancy, low wage level rights and privileges of workers. Such actions so far are mostly defensive, fought to maintain rather than improve conditions. But there is a general feeling of expectancy. The air is charged with high tension in every factory and the first spark may set things off.

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The other day we witnessed a most encouraging example of this state of mind in a West London T.U. Branch. The Branch Secretary (a die-hard C.P.) called a special meeting to discuss the elections hoping to repeat all the official slogans with the inevitable result that some of the weaker-minded members would be bullied into offering their services for the election circus. He was overjoyed when he saw that attendance was five times the usual number. There was however a shock in store for him. As soon as the meeting started it was "moved, seconded and agreed (unanimously)" that the agenda he prepared be disregarded and the election not discussed. The poor fellow protested, nearly cried, tried to bully, all in vain. A strike was impending in a large factory in the district, and those present had come to discuss this topic. And discuss it they did. "We are not interested in this election business" one of the workers said bluntly, "we have more important things to do". The Communist T.U. Secretary is probably still wondering what hit him.

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This attitude is also expressed in the great numbers of letters received from all sections of the working class. Nearly every one though usually referring to the writer's particular trade, factory, mine, dock or building, is of general interest and significance. We only wish that the paper shortage would allow us to publish them.

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A place in the vanguard of the fight in industry, mine and dockyard belongs to the workers of Scotland and the North Country. All available evidence shows that they will, once again, lead the working class in the coming battle. *Direct Action* is pleased to announce that it will be able to give authentic news on the subject. Our comrades in the North will in future issues report on what is being done and thought in their part of the world.

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To all our correspondents past and future: As we cannot answer your queries in these columns we shall answer all of you direct. We will also see that what you tell us reaches other workers who face the same problems. We shall be proud to be a



link between those thousands of militant workers who have found to their cost that they cannot expect sound advice from their T.U. District Official or the C.P. talking shops describing themselves as "National Shop Stewards Movement". *Direct Action* has not the backing of Transport House money bags nor that now paid out by the defunct Moscow International under other names. But then neither have we an axe to grind. Our correspondents know that when they write to us they help themselves. Our only aim is to achieve the emancipation of the exploited.

## NAPIER'S 5,000 Sacked

Engineers are beginning to reap the "fruits" of Victory. The men who made some of the powerful aero-engines which had such wide publicity for their successful strafing and destroying power during the European slaughter, have already received notice to pack their tool-kit.

They were faithful to the A.E.U. and all the Communist inspired slogans. Unswervingly they "went to it" and "kept at it" during the worst periods of blitz and fly bombs. They never pressed any factory conflict beyond the usual "machinery for settling disputes" — a gadget mainly devised for whittling their claims down to zero. In this way they stupidly sacrificed the only chance they had of securing for the future the working conditions which are their due. Now they are no longer wanted, so they can go and rot in a queue at the Labour Exchange.

The heavy machine shop—H.M.—of Napier's in Acton Vale is one of several which are being closed down altogether. The experimental shop is still working, but only for a very short time. Yet, some sections of this shop were last week asked to work overtime! 2,000 men are already in the street, 3,000 are to follow suit in the near future.

"Give us the tools . . ." they said in the good old days of war. "I'll finish the job" to-day says Mr. Nelson, the big boss of the Employers' Federation, Managing Director of E.E.C. combine, which took over Napier's factories only two years ago.

"Your courage",  
Your resolution . . .  
will earn Mr. Nelson extra profits.

The necessity for a strong and conscious revolutionary spirit among the workers is daily becoming more evident.

"SACKED"

(Continued from page 1)

them that a vague yearning for Freedom and Justice, for "things getting better" is not enough. We must make them conscious of the fact that only a radical change in the present state of affairs will do. And that this change can only be made by their own hands. To create this consciousness and understanding is and always will be our primary task.

## Spanish Libertarian Movement in France National Congress

Revolutionary history was made in France last month. For the first time a revolutionary movement in exile held a nation-wide Congress. Delegates representing 35,000 anarcho-syndicalist militants of the Spanish Libertarian Movement from every corner of France assembled to consider the lines on which their future revolutionary activities should be based. The Congress was a great success and resulted in complete agreement on all points of discussion which ranged from an analysis of the part played by the Spanish Movement during the Civil War to the immediate future.

It was natural that a considerable part of the Congress should have been dedicated to a searching examination of the experience gained during the last nine years since the Fascist insurrection in 1936 as a preliminary to laying down future lines of action. Only by fully understanding the successes as well as the mistakes of the past can we be sure to choose the right way to achieve our aims. At the time our Spanish comrades took an active part in all spheres of life in Spain: economic, political, military, educational. Many divergent views exist to-day as to the success or otherwise of some of their actions during that period. All had a hearing at the Congress. Delegates expressed the view that collaboration with the other social and political organisations of the country had been necessary "because no revolution can be successfully achieved by any single sector of Society without implying a dictatorship" while others held the view that political collaboration had been "the greatest mistake and failure of our Movement."

The final interpretation of the experiences of the past was a unanimous decision that only those actions which arose spontaneously from popular initiative were positive revolutionary contributions. Congress went on to ratify the principles and tactics of the Movement as expressed by its Congresses and actions of the past and resolved to continue its historical course of revolutionary and anti-State action. The debates showed that Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalism is a dynamic and versatile force, capable of applying the necessary tactics to the problems of the day without utopian sectarianism and in a constructive spirit. To make the action of the working class more effective Congress resolved to pursue a course of syndicalist unity between the C.N.T. and U.G.T. members, as their class interests in the common struggle have more in common than would appear from their different social doctrines.

Congress also resolved to strengthen the links of solidarity among the workers of the world to ensure universal peace and oppose all wars of aggression or conquest. Another resolution demanded the struggle for Libertarian emancipation in Spain without any outside totalitarian or parliamentary interference. On such subjects as Federalism, Youth Movement, Culture and Education, Press and Propaganda, Solidarity towards the victims of the Civil War and the international struggle lines of future action were determined. The Congress ratified its adherence to the I.W.M.A. and called for the establishment of a section in France for Spanish militants.