

# **DIRECT ACTION**

PRICE ONE PENNY

## **ATROCITIES**

### **Allied Policy Threat to Workers**

TWELVE years have passed since the Nazis seized power in Germany. Twelve years of blood-stained rule and unspeakable brutality. For twelve years the British capitalist press has withheld the facts of the bestiality with which the victims of Hitlerism have been treated in the concentration camps.

Only now does the gutter press publish these facts.

The camps are no new invention. Years before the war, while our war-time "anti-fascists" praised Hitlerism, German workers were dying by the thousand in the hell of Dachau. Thousands were tortured and killed in Buchenwald and Oranienburg while London's ruling-class was dining and entertaining the Nazi Ribbentrop. Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, Jews and other anti-Nazis were slaughtered and imprisoned by Hitler's S.S. in the years 1933-1939.

But the capitalist press was silent. "Order", we were told, had been restored in Germany.

"If this country ever finds herself in the position of Germany after the last war," proclaimed Churchill in 1938, "I hope we find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful place among the nations."

Suddenly, in April 1945, the facts are published. The festering horror of the camps is described in the papers which praised Hitler before 1939. M.P.s are sent to Buchenwald to report on the conditions.

Does the British Government expect us to believe that they were not previously aware of these conditions? It is obvious that they have known of the horrors for twelve years. Why, then, do they only bring the facts forward now?

Anarchists and other anti-fascists attacked Hitlerism before the war. Many of our German comrades, like Erich Muehsam, died in the camps at the hands of the S.S. during those years.

We knew the conditions then: to the best of our ability we made them public. The British ruling-class also knew: they remained silent.

Why then, do they speak now? The reasons are not hard to find.

It would, of course, be difficult to remain silent now that the conditions have been seen at first hand by thousands of Allied soldiers. This, however, is not the reason for the campaign of hate which is being worked up against the German people.

The Anglo-Russo-American plan to convert Germany into a pool of slave-labour needs justification. Even the junior partner of Churchill & Co., the British T.U.C., has shown slight misgivings at this policy. To justify themselves the Allied imperialist gang seek to make the German workers responsible for the crimes of their Nazi oppressors.

The horror stories are to be used as a red herring. If the ruling-class succeed in their plan—succeed in making you believe that the German workers must pay—the road will be clear for them in the post-war period.

The orders to Allied troops in Germany against fraternisation with the German people has the same end—divide and rule.

Reports recently appeared that the military authorities were finding it increasingly difficult to prevent fraternisation. The present anti-German campaign is obviously intended to deter the British and American soldiers from mixing with the German workers.

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# REDUNDANCY

by  
Cliff Holden

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet—and so would wild garlic. Redundancy is but the new, sweet sounding name of the old curse, unemployment. Every day thousands of factory workers are being declared "redundant" by the Man Power Board and the National Service Officers. Their total is many hundreds of thousands. In a few months, or weeks, it could be many millions.

Bomb damage repair has provided temporary jobs for many, while thousands of others have been sent back to their redundant jobs by the Labour Exchanges which have no new work for them. Such respite is but temporary and may be taken away at twenty-four hours notice. The shadow of unemployment, the threat of "out of work", hangs over millions of homes.

## WE CAN FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT!

The tragedy of the home without work or wages need not be. The hopeless search for work, the gradual malnutrition, the growing shabbiness; these we should not tolerate. In pre-war years mass unemployment and poverty existed because the majority of the people agreed to that condition of affairs. When the majority determine that these scourges are unnecessary and intolerable they will be swept away.

Given general apathy, the ruling class is able to perpetuate mass unemployment because of the division of the workers ranks. Men are sacked a few at a time. Trade unions cease to be interested in men who no longer can pay weekly dues. Separate organisations for the unemployed are formed. The employed, however temporary, and the unemployed become two distinct classes.

To fight unemployment is the task, not only of the out of work, but of the whole working class. Syndicalists are against the organisational separation of the employed and unemployed, but we know that organisational unity cannot be achieved by mere membership of trade unions. Trade unions are interested in dues collecting and in making long-winded and tortuous agreements for the regulation of wages and working conditions. When they are faced with a general social problem they just adopt the policy of the Tory arty.

There already exists a form of working class organisation capable of tackling the job. In most factories, bus garages, pits and mills there are committees of the workers, shop-stewards and

such like committees. Where these do not already exist, they can be formed in a few hours. Let all of these committees in any one district, such as London, the Clyde or Tyneside, federate into District Federations of Factory Committees, and let each District Federation send delegates to a National Federation of Factory Committees.

These Federations, uniting employed and unemployed, would be capable, more than any other organisation, of fighting redundancy and its evils. The alternative is to leave the unemployed to become the victims of vote catching political parties with their common programme of "wait until the next general election."

## THE RIGHT TO LIVE

The much boosted Beveridge Plan is designed by the ruling class to meet such a situation by providing a red herring for the hungry unemployed to chase. Beveridge promises the out of work 20/- a week—but only if the rate of unemployed is very low, which is very unlikely.

Yet, in November 1918 the discharged soldiers and dismissed munition workers were given 25/- a week, and this was quickly raised to 29/- when they became indignant. Within a few years, when the workers had become divided into two sections, each with its own form of organisation, and when ruling class propaganda had prepared them to accept it, the 29/- was reduced to 15/-.

We should scorn 20/- a week—or 25/- —or 29/-. It is not the fault of the unemployed worker or discharged soldier that he is out of work. It is the fault of capitalism and those who uphold it. Why should a man and his family be punished for being unemployed?

Our minimum demand for the unemployed then must not be less than Work or Wages.

There is never any lack of work, maybe, even, there is too much of it. There are human needs to be met. Houses to build, coal to dig, food to grow, cloth to weave. What is lacking in capitalism is work from which the capitalist can make a profit. Remove the private ownership of the means of life, land, factories and minerals, and the workers will, by co-operative organisation find work and wealth for themselves producing the goods they need.

Until the day dawns when that shall be, let us not starve in silence, waiting for a job, but live in decency by insisting on the full right to live.

Tom Brown  
on

# FACTORY COMMITTEES

"Wait until the General Election and vote in a Labour Government," we are told by Labour men, Communists, Commonweathers and I.L.P.ers. Well, how long ago was the last General Election? Ten years ago; May 1935. During those ten years how life has changed. Millions who were out of work, have worked regularly since. Millions who knew only very low wages, have enjoyed comparatively high wages. Hosts of men and women have been sent into industry and the forces. Almost every worker has had to make radical adjustments in his life. We could not wait until the next Election to make a change in our arrangements or order our households by the conditions of the 1935 Election. Other means than waiting for the next Election had to be found.

When, during 1935-36 and '37, men who had been without work for years entered the factories of the South, they found unorganised workshop conditions, they found wages of about £3 to £3 5s. a week. Did they say, "Let us wait until 1945 or '46 and vote Labour and may be the Labour Government will give us a rise." No, they set about organising. The most thoughtful, the most alert, drew together at dinner break. They talked things over, they called shop meetings. The workers appointed shop-stewards and factory committees and by various forms of working class action, too various to catalogue here, they improved their working conditions.

New wash places and lavatories followed the workers' demands. New ventilation and electric lights appeared, new canteens were built. Snarling foremen learned good manners. Most notable of all, wages rose rapidly, in many cases from £3 to £10 per week. In many cases they became double, even before the war. Men felt a new dignity and independence. Life was easier too.

How did they accomplish this? By waiting until the next Election? No, that hasn't arrived yet. They improved their daily lot and brought new life and hope to their homes by Workshop Organisation. That is Direct Action. To wait for the General Election to vote for better conditions is Indirect Action. That is why Syndicalists think that Factory Committees are more important than voting every ten years.

But don't think, fellow worker, that Factory and Pit Committees as they exist are all that we wish them to be. Some committees are bad, some indifferent and some not so bad. The Communists have turned some into Party organs. Some have become weighed down by an overload of trade union rules and "procedures". All can be improved by sincere criticism and experiment. But the greatest need of the movement

of Factory Committees is a general body of facts and theory. This Syndicalism, and Syndicalism and Revolutionary Industrial Unionism alone, can supply.

Science is nothing without experiment; technics begins as workshop experience; true theory is but the generalisation of experience. Syndicalist working men by their daily experience in factory, pit and aboard ship have gained knowledge of workshop organisation. Applying scientific processes of thought to the problem, they have produced a theory of working class action and organisation which it will repay any shop-steward or class conscious worker to examine. Space here is too small to develop that theory. That we will do in our further literature, but let us at least consider the main lack of the present committees.

Factory Committees are now too limited in their outlook. They exist, in the main, to improve working conditions and protect wages. When bad times come and a factory is closed down, the committee is automatically dissolved. Faced by widespread depression, existing committees find it increasingly difficult to protect wages.

Syndicalists want Factory Committees to look ahead so that they might become the delegates of the workers in taking over the factory or pit and running it by the workers, for the workers. Don't you think that the men on your job could make just as good a job of running the factory as the management, or a better job than do the hordes of Whitehall officials who invent thousands of red tape regulations to snarl up the wheels of industry? When the progress of your job has been jammed in a bottle-neck who set it going again? Usually the workers. Never the big wigs of Whitehall.

But it's not just to have a smooth running factory that Syndicalists stand for Workers' Control of Industry. For by Workers' Control we could abolish finance and the wages system and thereby end unemployment. Each factory, mill and pit would be a producers' co-operative linked to all other productive units. In these units we could produce masses of food, clothing and all the good things of life as easily as tap water. Even more than we do now.

But when we do that under capitalism we can't buy back the goods we produce because we haven't the money. Abolish the finance system and freely distribute the goods we make. And if we produce too much let's knock off and have a holiday—not unemployment and the dole. There's plenty for all fellow worker. Don't let them kid you.

# International News

## 35,000 SPANISH ANARCHO-SYNDICALISTS HOLD CONGRESS IN FRANCE ON MAY DAY

Our Spanish comrades, exiled in France since 1939, have always maintained their organised activities. In the shameful system of concentration-camps, to which they were submitted by the Popular Front leaders of the liquidated 3rd Republic, they established a skeleton organisation which has successfully lasted to the present day.

Throughout the period of German occupation the underground activities of the C.N.T. men were maintained, in spite of terrible reprisals which cost them hundreds of invaluable comrades. However, their main objective—that of maintaining their regular contacts and keeping the organisation alive in preparation for the day when they will be able to resume their revolutionary work in their own country—was achieved with complete satisfaction.

Today they are able to appear openly in France, powerful as ever, and determined to continue the fight to make the old Anarchist slogan:

"The World is my Fatherland, and  
Humanity my Family."

a reality.

They meet in Congress at Toulouse on May Day and we are confident that the spirit of the First International will prevail in any resolutions they make.

Delegations of Spanish comrades in exile and likewise organised in other countries will be present. These comrades, who have not seen each other for more than six years will gather to exchange and study their experiences and ideas. Mexico, Britain, North Africa, etc., will send delegates, and a delegation from the National Committee of the Underground C.N.T. in Spain will be present.

The problems to be dealt with by this Congress concern mainly, as was to be expected, the final reorganisation of the Spanish Libertarian Movement. The "Spanish Question" takes a prominent place on the Agenda. International cohesion through the I.W.M.A. forms another of the vital points and in all 23 different items constitute the questions in debate.

Three hundred local Federations have taken part in the preliminary study of motions and suggestions for the Agenda.

In all, through the hundreds of delegates attending this Congress, more than 2,000,000 workers will be represented. The enormous significance of such an event today—in the midst of so many pseudo-"progressive" and "democratic" gatherings, speeches and meetings—means that at heart the workers are not deceived by symbolical "freedoms" offered from above by professional politicians, priests and demagogues.

We shall keep readers informed of the proceedings and resolutions of our comrades, to whom we have sent the following greetings:

Spanish Libertarian Movement in France.

To the National Congress.

Comrades:

The A.F.B. salutes the meeting you are holding. We see, in it, the revival of the invincible forces of progress and revolutionary justice which Spanish Anarchism has always held.

We look forward to the time when you will be able to return to Spain to continue the struggle of July 19th, 1936, for a free system of society.

We expect to meet you half-way in the mutual struggle and work towards an effective co-operation of International Anarchism.

# Atrocities

(Continued from page 1.)

Let there be no mistake. Slave-labour in Germany means unemployment and wage-slashing here.

If German industry is controlled, as we are told it will be, by Allied capital, and the ruling-class are permitted to exploit German labour at a slave wage rate, they will use the labour in preference to labour at a higher rate in Britain.

The result can only be mass-unemployment here, and a return to the grim days of the P.A.C., the Means Test and Distressed areas.

That is the issue which faces us now. On May Day let us remember and work for the internationalism of the world's workers.

The history of the years since the last war has been one of consistent betrayal of the working-class everywhere. Today we are at the crossroads—the future will depend on which road we follow.

Ruling-class propaganda everywhere is directed to one end—the protection of a system of exploitation and greed. That is the aim of the present hate-campaign.

To make the German workers responsible for the crimes of their Nazi rulers is to make the British workers responsible for the crimes of the Black and Tans in Ireland, for the murder by starvation and other means of millions of workers and peasants in India and for the slave conditions in Britain's Colonial Empire. This is the logic of the present press-campaign.

The struggle of the workers everywhere is the same. That is the real struggle to which we must go forward, in solidarity with the workers of all lands—including the Germans.

KEN HAWKES.

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## The Anarchist Federation

The Anarchist Federation of Britain is a working-class organisation whose aim is the abolition of capitalist society and the establishment of a free and classless society built upon the common ownership of the means of production and distribution by workers' control of industry. It is based on the inevitable struggle of the workers against the capitalist class and will continue that struggle until the workers themselves control the means of production.

The A.F. is anti-parliamentary, recognising that reform measures are only ruling-class insurance against revolution.

The A.F. is organised in conformity with its aims. All members have equal rights and duties, and all means of the organisation are controlled by, and form part of, the Federation as such. There are no paid officials and members designated for any task or office may be recalled at any time.

If this brief statement, together with the other material in this publication has interested you, write to the London A.F. Secretary:—

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