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TWOPENCE

BRITISH BAYONETS IN 'LIBERATED' BELGIUM

By Girand — Belgium

BRITISH TROOPS HAVE BEEN PUT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE BELGIAN CAPITALIST GOVERNMENT TO HELP DISARM RESISTANCE FORCES.

While, on Sunday, 19th November, thousands of workers and members of the Belgian Resistance Forces demonstrated in Brussels against the Belgian capitalist government's order to disarm the Resistance Movement, British troops stood by to help the Government.

General Erskine, head of the Allied Military Mission, publicly stated that the decision of the Pierlot Government to disarm the Resistance forces had the approval of S.H.A.E.F.; and that if necessary British troops would be placed at the disposal of the Government, should the Resistance refuse to give in.

On the 25th, a demonstration of 10,000 people organised by the Resistance, demanding the resignation of the Government, a new democratic government, and the organisation of food and coal supplies, was fired on by the gendarmerie, after a group of demonstrators had broken a police cordon in front of the Rue de la Loi (the Belgian Whitehall).

37 demonstrators were wounded by machine-gun fire and 4 were killed. The demonstration continued with thousands chanting in unison: "Pierlot, assassin!"

Thus once more the warning of the Trotskyists that this "war against fascism" was a sham, and that the real purpose of the war was the furtherance of the profits and power of Big Business, is shown to be true by events as they unfold.

THE COLLABORATORS ARE IN CONTROL

The Government of M. Pierlot is hated by the overwhelming majority of the Belgian workers. If the masses had their way the Pierlot Government would be swept away. It is kept in power against the wishes of the people, with the help of British bayonets and Tommy-guns.

Under the German occupation, the greater part of the capitalists, bankers etc. carried on "business as usual"—Factories and mines worked at full capacity, producing coal, tanks, lorries, machinery etc. for the German "New Order"—at a handsome profit for the shareholders. In fact the Belgian (like the French) capitalists relied mainly on German bayonets and execution squads to protect them from strike workers. When wages and rations, against the wishes of the workers, were called in the Gestapo and the S.S. to suppress the workers.

The "liberation" has changed nothing. A lot of small fry among the collaborators have been arrested to create an impression. Poor prostitutes who have slept with German soldiers are condemned, but not a single big industrialist or banker who made millions out of the blood, sweat and toil of the workers and collaboration with the Nazis has been arrested. The big capitalist firms, which yesterday produced material for Germany, now hope to amass new profits—producing this time for the Allies.

THE PEOPLE STARVE

"Business as usual" under the control of the capitalists means misery and starvation for the masses. The bread ration is 300 grammes (11 ozs.) per day; sugar, meat and butter are unobtainable at official prices. The black market, however, continues, and while the rich can still eat their fill, the ordinary worker who relies on his official ration must see his children go short. But there is meat, butter and sugar in the country. In some country districts butter is going rancid, while in the next town the housewife has forgotten what it looks like. The big farmers refuse to sell it at the official price and keep it back for the black market, where it sells at 300 to 400 francs a kilo. The small working farmers are forced to do the same, having to pay for their fertilisers, farm implements, etc. at inflated prices to the big trusts; they would sell at a loss at the official price. Moreover, big dairies and marketing firms and the flocks both the small consumer.

The Government has done nothing to smash the black market and organise a fair distribution of food. It cannot, for the simple reason that the biggest profiteers of the black market are the big landlords, the agricultural banks, the big dairies, the fertiliser trusts, etc., who have their representatives and stooges both in the Government and in the whole Civil Service.

Since the "liberation" complete chaos has existed in industry. Many factories are shut down, or work only one or two days a week, through lack of coal and other materials. Belgium was a coal-exporting country, yet there was no coal distribution for industry in October, and at the time of writing, none for November. Thou-

sands of homes will be coal-less this winter. The coal-owners give the lack of wood for pit-props as an excuse. Yet in the Ardennes forests there is plenty of timber, which could have been used. Delivery was held up for a long time by a dispute over prices between the coalowners and the timber capitalists.

The workers, however, were determined to have their say as well. All over the country strikes and demonstrations have been taking place since September. At Charleroi and in the mining region, there was a one-day general strike for better rations. In Brussels in October, 10,000 women demonstrated with posters in French, Flemish and English: "We want butter and coal", "Milk for our babies", "Down with the black market".

WORKERS OCCUPY THE FACTORIES

The Belgian workers are not accepting this passively. In most factories the workers have elected "purge committees" which "accuse and try" the directors and managing personnel. For example, in the big engineering works of the ACEC trust at Charleroi, the workers, tired of waiting for the authorities to arrest a certain managing director, demonstrated with the help of the local Resistance forces to go to arrest him. The water arrested was not at home when released by the in Brument!

The re-starting of industry is a matter of life and death for the workers. Without work and wages they are faced with starvation; even when at work, wages will not feed a family at black market prices. It is estimated that out of a total population of 8 million there are 300,000 unemployed. The Belgian workers are beginning to understand that as the capitalist class and its government cannot or will not give them work, they—the workers—must take control themselves. In one factory, for example at the SAFEA chemical fertiliser works—the works manager having been arrested, the workers elected a workers' committee to organise production. When the bosses told them to shut down the factory on the pretext that they could not draw money to pay wages, the

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EBBW VALE STRIKE

AT 10 P.M. ON NOVEMBER 29th, ALL MEMBERS OF THE A.E.U. AND THE BOILERMAKERS' UNION EMPLOYED AT THE GREAT STEEL AND TIN WORKS AT EBBW VALE, RICHARD THOMAS, CEASED WORK AS A PROTEST AGAINST THE SPYING METHODS USED BY THE MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY POLICE. ALSO INVOLVED IN THE STRIKE WERE SOME MEMBERS OF THE BRICKLAYERS ASSOCIATION AND SECTIONS OF THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION.

The dispute originated in the Victoria fitting-shop on the night of Nov. 21st. 2 machinists, whose work involved long and slow processes requiring little attention were filling in time by making toys for their kiddies Xmas. They were discovered by the County Police who stated that they had spent the previous 10 minutes spying on the men through the window.

The workers in this shop, whilst they recognised that the police had a "legal" case against the "toymakers", nevertheless strongly resented the snooping, spying methods used to catch the "culprits".

After a joint meeting had been held with the oncoming day shift, it was decided to approach the management for a clear definition of the rights and duties of the County Police. The bosses treated the whole matter with complete levity and stated that they saw no reason at all to interfere with the behaviour of the police. In view of this obvious approval by Richard Thomas of the despotic methods used by the police, the day and night shift of the fitting-shop downed tools. This prompt and vigorous action was quickly followed by sympathetic strikes in the boiler-shop and the electrical-winding shop.

The tremendous anger aroused by this action of the County Police can only be properly understood when it is realised that the workers at this plant have suffered for years under an elaborate spying system introduced by the management. The works police (as distinct from the County Constabulary) have repeatedly stopped and searched workers suspected of stealing the Company's property, and it is common knowledge that spies and informers have been sent to work among the workers. The spying incident in the fitting-shop was merely the spark which ignited the smouldering anger of these exasperated workers.

By Friday, November 24th, after meetings of the various unions involved, all members of the A.E.U., E.T.U. and Boilermakers—that is, the skilled men—had ceased work. From thereon the dispute was handled by the Ebbw Vale Joint Skilled Trades Committee, representing all the unions of the skilled men. As is usual, the management refused to negotiate with the above Committee whilst the strike was in progress. However, since they had previously washed their hands of the whole affair it was clear that Richard Thomas's were not prepared to negotiate at all—on strike or not.

ANEURIN BEVAN CALLED IN

A mass meeting on Saturday, November 25th decided to continue the strike until the Company would agree to negotiate, and also endorsed the action of the Committee in asking the local M.P.—Aneurin Bevan—to address a further mass meeting on Monday, November 27th.

Nearly 2,000 workers attended this meeting to hear Bevan's position. He justified the strike action but, nevertheless, advised a return to work. His case being that, from a purely legal point of view, Richard Thomas had no more control over the activities of the State Police than had the workers and that, consequently, the men's objections to the behaviour of the police should be raised, not with Richard Thomas, but elsewhere—if needs be in Parliament.

However, it must be pointed out that Richard Thomas's alleged inability to interfere with the activities of the Police is a purely legal fiction. The Police Force are not neutral—they are the servants of the capitalist class as a whole. Their task is to protect the property and privileges of all the Richard Thomas's, i.e. of the ruling class. It is quite true, as Bevan pointed out,

that the struggle against the State Police cannot be settled in Ebbw Vale alone. It is also correct to give publicity to the anti-working class character of the Police Force by raising the issues in Parliament. But it must never be forgotten that the struggle to control the Police Force is a struggle for power—a struggle to smash the forces of the capitalist class and to create the forces of the working class. That is a national and a class struggle. Meanwhile, vigorous action such as was taken by the workers at Ebbw Vale will serve to check the more brazen boss-class activities of the so-called "neutral" police force.

In the course of many questions to Aneurin Bevan, three points were very clearly established:

1. Richard Thomas's private police force have no right at all to search any worker;
2. Action had not been taken to defend so-called "illegal" practices (toy making) but to stop spying on the workers and to prevent the County Police usurping the normal duties of the supervisory staff—chargehands, foremen etc., and;
3. That no stoppage would have taken place had the management agreed in the first place to clearly define the precise duties and responsibilities of the staff.

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MANCHESTER GAS STRIKE

BY R. RYAN

In face of the threat of the Manchester gas strike spreading throughout Lancashire, the Ministry of Labour served notices on 36 men of the Bradford Road Works. They were told that unless they returned to work immediately, they would be charged under an old Defence of the Realm Act, dug up for the purpose.

Undaunted by this threat the men failed to turn in, and as a result appeared in court on November 9th, 1944 where they were fined £10 each, with the threat of imprisonment if the strike continued.

The men had no money to pay the fines—workers can't save on £3:19:10 per week—but they declared that even if they had the money, they would not pay it themselves.

Solidarity with their cause has been shown by workers' collections which have been sent in to Bro. Moores, secretary of the Bradford Road, Union Branch (N.U.M.G.W.).

The Trade Union has refused to help with payment.

THE JUST DEMANDS OF THE GAS WORKERS

"We want time and a third for night shift." This is the demand of the Corporation Gas Workers throughout Lancashire. In spite of the hard and dangerous nature of their work, long hours and bad pay is the rule in these works. The top rate is 16/6d per shift. The average weekly wage is £3:19:10, without deductions.

These men work a 7 day week, with only 6 days holiday in the year.

Over a year ago, the men's claim for time and a third for night shift came before the Joint Industrial Gas Council. But the men were granted the insulting concession of 1d. per hour for day workers, and 2d. per hour for night shift.

This sop naturally enraged the workers, and in April they came out on

strike for 3 days, but returned without satisfaction. They then pressed the officials of their Union to place the demand for time and a third on the agenda for the Joint Industrial Gas Council—a body composed of representatives of the Trade Union and the Employers' Federation. The Union officials refused to take this matter forward immediately.

After months of delay, the Bradford Road Branch of the Union met on October 31st, and the shift workers involved decided by a vast majority, to give 3 days' notice of their intention to strike. The organiser, Mr. H. Butters, had promised to attend this meeting. His failure to turn up was the last straw for the men.

SOLDIERS USED TO BREAK THE STRIKE

The strike began on November 6th. The Government, prepared for this, sent in 100 soldiers to do the strikers' work in an attempt to break the strike. Thirty of these soldiers were men just returned from Burma, who did not like the job they were forced to undertake. Some of them expressed the opinion that they would sooner be at the front and would not have the gas workers' jobs for £12 a week.

STRIKE THREATENED TO SPREAD

The Stockport shiftworkers decided to come out on strike on 7th November. They carried out this decision despite the appeals of the union organiser, Mr. H. Butters and the secretary Mr. Eccles.

The strike showed signs of developing further. Meetings were to be held at Rochdale, Stretford and throughout Lancashire to consider what action to take. At Bradford Road, the day shift workers were coming out in support.

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WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH THEM?



Nazi at 14 Nazi at 10 Nazi at 9 Nazi at 8
These four German boys were snipers captured near Aix-la-Chapelle—they fired on U.S. troops

I have looked into the souls of these Nazi boys—they are black

by Maj. R. Crisp, D.S.O., M.C.

"Daily Express"

"KILL THE KIDS"

Anti-German Hate Propaganda Infuriates Soldiers at Front

Some weeks ago, the yellow press, including the "Daily Worker" featured a disgraceful propaganda story of four German children between the ages of 8 and 14, who were arrested as snipers at Aachen.

Photographs were displayed, such as the one reprinted above, to show how behind the mask of innocence, lies beastly characteristics and "black souls". The "Daily Mirror" sought the opinions of its readers as to what should be done with these children. Fifty percent said "Kill the Kids."

ALL THIS FOUL EVIDENCE WAS FAKED. We could have said this in advance.

The "Tribune" this week reports: "We now learn from an officer at the front that the incident, as reported never happened. What did happen was that two boys found an unattended machine-gun, started playing with it, it went off, hurt none and scared the life out of the boys."

The officer reports that his comrades at the front were furious at the manner in which the London press presented this 'news' and the way it provided Goebbels with one of his best propaganda and morale-building stories.

None of the yellow papers who printed the story denied it—even after it was disproved. Nothing else can be expected from them. But the "Daily Worker" claiming to be a

workers' paper, has sunk so low that it too did not issue a denial. In order to facilitate its Vansittart, anti-German hate campaign, it allowed this lie to circulate unrefuted. The rank and file of the Communist Party and the workers will not let these despicable methods go unnoticed.

This campaign is specially conducted against the German youth. The Allied workers and soldiers must be convinced that the problem of the German youth is insoluble without a military occupation of Germany.

A letter published in the "Manchester Guardian" of 29th September, gives an effective answer to this propaganda. A neutral reporter, who was in wide contact with cross-sections of the workers in Berlin for four years—1940-44, writes:

"The majority of the younger generation of class conscious workers resisted Hitler's youth education and remained surprisingly accessible to socialist influences, partly from their families, partly from older co-workers."

In the coming period of struggles, the German youth, inspired by the socialist traditions of their fathers, will be in the forefront of class battles. Brushing aside with contempt, the poisonous propaganda of the Capitalist press and the renegade "Daily Worker", the British workers must extend a hand of solidarity to the revolutionary German youth in its fight for a Socialist Germany.

Tyne Naval Workers Still Out

BY H. LEE.

As the weeks pass by, it becomes more and more obvious that the employers are determined to establish a precedent, while the Industrial Truce remains, that the new American machinery they are rapidly introducing into the shipbuilding industry shall be operated by semi-skilled workers at the labourers rate.

Workers, members of the Boilermakers Society, who are being displaced by the new flame-plane gas-cutting machine at Vickers Naval Yard, Walker, are putting up a magnificent stand against the bosses and in the interest of trade unionism.

Their fellow Boilermakers all over the country have rallied to their aid and have made it possible for these 500 workers to live for the 7 weeks that they have been locked out. During the last few weeks delegates of the locked-out workers have visited the Clyde-side, Barrow, Leith, Aberdeen and Cardiff and have presented the true facts to shop stewards in these areas.

The outcome of the discussions has been that the Boilermakers Shop Stewards will be calling a National Conference in the next few weeks. It appears obvious, that the Employer's Federation have decided that Vickers Armstrongs will fight this case on their own and establish a precedent, by forcing the workers in their works to accept "even if only temporarily as a war time measure" the employment of semi-skilled labour which is not controlled by the Boilermakers Society.

Once they can establish this precedent, they will be able to argue "past practice and custom" and force the issue on a National scale.

Up to the present all the big Shipbuilders on the Clyde, the Forth and Cardiff are employing members of the Boilermakers Society on the flame-plane machines, but if Armstrong Vickers win the present issue they will be able to compel the boilermakers in other areas and works to accept the thin edge of the wedge.

The dispute over the flame-plane machine is only the beginning. New

American machines of amazing types are being introduced daily. Ormston, Manager of the Naval Yard has told the shop stewards that they intend Americanising the industry. This means the introduction of mass production methods on an unprecedented scale. It also means the revolutionising of technique and an extension of pre-fabrication. This raises a whole series of new issues. For example, I am given to understand that a similar machine to the flame-plane cutter has been installed in the fitting shops in the Naval Yard and that an unskilled man is handling the machine. There will be nothing (except perhaps the expense of transportation) to prevent the bosses from building a shop far away from the works, call it a fitting-shop or any other name and employ cheap labour on the job.

Pre-fabrication and mass-production raise sharply before the workers the need for new organisational forms. There must be far closer collaboration between all unions in the Shipbuilding industry. This can be achieved by re-organising the works Committees in shops and yards where they are dormant and by a similar link-up to that which the Boilermakers Shop Stewards propose on a National scale.

The vital danger to trade unionism is demonstrated in the present dispute since the unskilled man who was operating the machine before the lockout, claims that he is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. The danger of inter-union strife is a very real one, and will become even worse when there are thousands of workers unemployed. Closer co-operation on a workshop and factory basis, the industrial form of organisation, is in the last analysis the only safeguard in the mass-production period which lies ahead. The conference called by the Boilermakers shop stewards is one of the most progressive steps taken by any section of the British working class in the course of the present war.

At this conference the demand must go forward for the Rate for the Job on a national scale.