

# SOCIALIST APPEAL

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# MERSEYSIDE DOCKERS STRIKE

By Jimmy Deane

18th August, 1943.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ISOLATED GROUPINGS ALMOST ALL OF THE DOCKERS WERE OUT ON STRIKE. THE STRIKE ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED OVER THE SUSPENSION OF 34 MEN. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY A HUNDRED MEN STOPPED WORK, LATER THEY WERE JOINED BY THOUSANDS. TROOPS WERE CALLED IN TO WORK THE SHIPS.

## ANGLO-U.S. STRATEGY: WEAKEN RUSSIA!

### FOUR YEARS OF WAR

Four years of war, and famine and disease destroys and weakens the peoples of Europe and Asia, conquered and governed by brutal military power.

Four years! First the fortunes of war smiled on Germany and her Axis satellites, now it is the turn of the Anglo-American bloc. Russia, almost entirely unaided, climbs out of the depths of history's bloodiest defeats and slaughters and can no longer be destroyed by military means.

Four years of black reaction and now the first days of the dawn. Revolution in Italy; unrest in Europe: a new day in history, revolutionary history begins!

No country has escaped the effects of the war. Few are not immediately involved in the bloodshed and massacre.

In Nazi Germany, the anti-capitalist demagoguery of Hitler is bared. Monopoly capitalism, whom Nazism serves, has piled up the most gigantic fortunes and stores of loot that has been known in German history. But in four years, the living conditions of the masses has steadily declined.

To create these fortunes, millions of German workers have toiled, sweated, fought and died; and become objects of hatred to the oppressed peoples of Europe. The "living space" for which the German masses are asked to die, becomes a grave for the workers and peasants of Europe. German capitalism thrives like a ghoul amongst the graves.

In Democratic Britain and America, "everyone must sacrifice"! But behind this fraud, the same situation as in Germany: Monopoly capitalism dictates government policy, monopoly capitalism piles up super profits, monopoly capitalism dictates the life of the nation.

Democratic slogans! Yes; but more reactionary and totalitarian legislation for the masses. Sacrifice for the workers, but increased loot for the ruling class. "Freedom for Europe" tomorrow, but military dictatorship in India, the colonies and the "reconquered" countries today. The politics of monopoly capitalism, democratic and fascist, are based on the protection of property the protection of the right to exploit and make profit. The political slogans are formulated and adapted from one day to another only to suit that end.

Fascism, as a mass political creed in Europe, has been destroyed by four years of war. Nazis, Fascists, Quislings, all are intensely hated as a breed, a tendency and an ideological

political bloc. Yesterday and today the fascists ruled, tomorrow the workers and small farmers will present a heavy bill for fascist rule to its inspirers and organisers.

Of voluntary collaboration from the masses, of fraternity between Europe's nations, the New Order has non-the whip, the firing squad; these are its organs of rule. Even the relative freedom of the satellite countries is now being destroyed by the demands of total war.

"Democracy" which suppresses the national aspirations of colonial millions; which links arms with fascists and neo-fascists, with Darlans and Girauds; which seeks to lean on Badoglio to retain the House of Savoy; "democracy" which could not prevent the war, nor unemployment, nor crisis, which allows monopoly capitalism to remain in control of the nation's wealth and loot the treasury in the midst of a bloody war; that type of democracy is being questioned by millions throughout the world. In Australia, Canada, Ireland, Britain, parliamentary figures tell their tale. In America, North and South, labour is on the march. Labour's turn to the left is a world turn and will have world shaking results.

For the past two years, Churchill and Roosevelt have lavished fulsome praise upon the Soviet Union... and some arms. The policy of Anglo-American imperialism has revealed itself as dictated by class aims, economic and political.

These pseudo democrats hoped that Russia would be destroyed by Germany after a bloody and exhausting war. Two birds would be killed with the one stone and they would emerge on top. With the workers state destroyed and their German capitalist rival bled to death, peace would result in victory and a strengthening of their domination and control.

This programme, though denied, was blurted out by the impetuous and indiscreet Moore-Brabazon two years ago or more. In the *Sunday Observer* for Aug. 29th, the Editorial columnist once again lifts the screen, praising the brilliant strategical leadership of Churchill which has resulted in the exhaustion and decline of Germany at small cost... to Britain!

Continued on Back page.

## AIRCRAFT STRIKE VICTORY

The strike at a North West aircraft factory reported in the last issue of the "Socialist Appeal", won a magnificent victory for the workers. The militant action taken defeated the employers. At the Central Conference held on Friday, August 13th, it was proven that the attacks on piece-work rates were unjustified; the original rates now remain.

A defeat for the management also meant a defeat for the Stalinist shop-stewards as this fraternity stood shoulder to shoulder in opposing the strike. The C.P.ers are now faced with a hostile factory. Already the workers have begun to kick out this miserable gang from the shop stewards committee and to date five Stalinists, have been removed and replaced with militant

and loyal shop stewards. The final reckoning will come at the annual elections in December.

The Stalinists are on the retreat and quite apologetic too. It is reported that McLaughlan, a well known C.P.er, stated at a shop stewards committee meeting on Friday morning, August 20, that his party had pursued the wrong policy in the recent strike. This steward had the recent experience of being moved out of the chair by a vote of no confidence at the mass meeting of the Tool-room block when they supported strike action.

The beating back of this assault on piece-work earnings has great significance for the working class movement. Let us understand it not as an isolated event by a particular employer, but, as the present situation shows clearly, the spearhead of an attack by the bosses Federation to lower the standard of living of the British Working Class.

and millions of men have destroyed uncalculable wealth and blasted each other to death. Rotterdam, Coventry, London, Hamburg, Berlin, Stalingrad, Turin and Milan, and dozens more of the great cities of Europe which were built by centuries of labour, blasted, ravished and ruined by the nightly pounding of the bombs and guns.

## NORTHUMBERLAND COAL OWNERS Sabotage Production

By H. PARKER

416 miners at the Nelson Pit, Northumberland, have handed in 14 days' notices of their intention to terminate their employment with the Hartley Main Collieries Ltd. This action followed a lightning strike on Friday night, August 20th.

Until recently the cutters at this colliery were cutting in a band 12ins. thick. The fitters who followed up behind them were paid 11d. per Judd (bord) for "scuffling" the cut but since their agreements did not cover an increased tonnage rate in bands of 6ins. or less, the management refused to pay them for throwing back the rock.

Negotiations were proceeding for the application of a rate for this work. At the same time the cutters were protesting at having to cut in "the band, claiming that the dust thrown up by the cutters was extremely injurious to their health. Samples of the dust were submitted to the King's College, Newcastle, and the findings of the analyst was that it was definitely injurious to the miners' health.

This matter was finally referred to arbitration and on the basis of the analyst's report the arbitrators were compelled to give a decision in the workers favour. In the course of the discussion at the same meeting the miners' representative raised the question of the fillers' grievances. The coal owners' agent, Major Thornton, denied

having any knowledge of the existence of the dispute and the tribunal instructed the men's representatives and Major Thornton to take the matter up between themselves.

As a result of the arbitration decision, the cutters now began cutting at the coal immediately above the band. The fillers now had to scuffle the cut in the coal and to throw back a 12in. layer of stone for which they expected to be paid at 11d. per Judd for scuffling and 1d. per ton extra for the 12in. band.

For two weeks they carried on doing this work expecting to receive the appropriate rates, but in their pay checks which they received on the Wednesday, they had been paid the 1d. per ton extra, but they had not been paid for scuffling.

The matter was immediately taken up with the management who was adamant in his refusal to pay the fillers both rates. Under pressure he agreed to have the scuffling done by dotal workers, in spite of the tremendous difference in cost. (One dotal worker scuffles only 2 or 3 judds per shift, i.e., at a cost of 5- to 7/5d. per judd against the 11d. paid to the fillers for the same job.)

The result of this decision was that some 500 tons of coal a week were lost as there were insufficient dotal workers to keep the fillers going. It

Continued on page 4.

## MILITANTS SUPPORT ITALIAN REVOLUTION

How militant class conscious workers are reacting to the revolutionary events in Italy can be seen by the following resolutions sent to the "Socialist Appeal". Militant workers throughout the country should raise the question of the Italian revolution in their trade unions, labour parties, and co-operatives.

From a group of Students at a National Council of Labour College's day school held in Southall, Middlesex, a resolution in Italy was sent us:

"This meeting of students hails with enthusiasm the overthrow of the Fascist Mussolini regime by the Italian workers and peasants.

We pledge our full support to them in their struggles. We condemn the friendly overtures of the British and American Imperialists to the reactionary House of Savoy. The Badoglio Government is a capitalist military dictatorship and can only be overthrown by the efforts of the Italian workers.

We have no desire to see the Italian Revolution suppressed by British and American bayonets. No intervention by Allied imperialism! Only the seizure of the factories by the workers and the land by the peasants will solve the situation.

For the Success of the Italian Revolution!

From the National Committee for the Co-ordination of Militant Industrial Activity, we received the following resolution, which was unanimously passed at the meeting of its national

executive, held in Nottingham on Sunday, August 1st, 1943.

The National Committee for the Co-ordination of Militant Industrial Activity hails the commencement of the struggle of the Italian workers and peasants for social and economic freedom, which has already forced the collapse of the Mussolini regime and is being continued against the present reactionary government and the House of Savoy.

The Committee sees in this struggle the forerunner of the European revolution, and the British working class must rally to the support of the Italian workers and peasants, and prevent the use of arms by the "Allied" capitalist governments to quell their struggle for freedom.

Organised trade unionists and workers in the Labour movement must rally to the defence of the Italian revolution against the imperialists of the "democracies" who will unite with the Italian capitalists to crush it. The British workers must demonstrate to the Italian workers their determination to aid the revolution and must denounce the treacherous labour leaders who pretend to align themselves with the Italian workers and peasants while stabbing them in the back by demanding "unconditional surrender" to the allied imperialists.

HANDS OFF THE ITALIAN REVOLUTION!

FULL SUPPORT FOR THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' COMMITTEES AND THE WORKERS' MILITIA!

FOR A SOVIET ITALY!

Although the strike developed over what seemed a minor issue it concerned the entire questions of Wages, Conditions, and the Dock Labour Scheme. The suspension of 34 men was only the match to the fire. J. Donovan, national secretary of the T.&G.W.U. Docks Section, admitted this when speaking at the White City Stadium yesterday. He said that he was not surprised to find the dockers not working. He pointed out that attempts to reduce the disciplinary power of the Port Authorities had met with absolute refusal; he also pointed out that the dockers had no wages increase since June 1940, and agreed that the dockers had quite legitimate grievances.

The 34 men were suspended for refusing to work overtime between 7 and 9 p.m., because instead of receiving the full pay for these two hours they only receive 3s. 9d. This is how a docker explained it to a local press reporter: "Our grievance is that if we work two hours overtime, from seven to nine p.m., for which the rate of pay is 3s. 9d. we actually lose 3s. 9d. on the full day. This is how it comes about: For the morning shift from 8 o'clock to 12, the rate is 7s. 6d. Attendance Pay, whether there is work to be done or not. For the afternoon shift, from 1 o'clock to 5, the pay is also 7s. 6d. Overtime pay from 5 to 7 is 7s. 6d. But if we work the additional two hours from 7 to 9 the Attendance Pay of 7s. 6d. for the morning shift is deducted from our wages for the day. For refusing to work from 7 to 9 p.m. we have been suspended."

For the past year discontent has been growing amongst the dockers. Dockers have been suspended for the least thing, and swindled out of their "Guaranteed Week" by the sharp practices of the bosses and Ministry of Labour Officials. Union militants have been continuously hounded and victimised and in some cases prevented from working on the Docks. Far from Bevin's Scheme (Bevin called it the Docker's Charter) giving the dockers better conditions and guaranteed wages it placed them, bound hand and foot, at the mercy of the bosses and Port Labour Authorities. This means that the question of wages depends upon whether such authorities like the worker's face or not. The slightest sign of militant union activity is sufficient for these "would be dictators" to have one suspended and deprived of wages. The Dock Labour Scheme is nothing but a vicious Docks Essential Works Order. Because of the lack of leadership both from the Union and job organisation it is only now, when things have reached a critical stage, that the dockers can conduct a determined struggle.

At a meeting held in the White City Stadium a committee composed of re-

presentatives from each Control put forward a seven point programme, as follows:—

1. That all suspensions should be lifted and the men taken back with retrospective pay;
2. That a committee should be formed with men's lay representatives to deal with all complaints, in conjunction with the union officials;
3. A full and complete investigation into the operation of the dock labour scheme N.W. area.
4. That the basic wage rate be increased by 5s. making £1 a day;
5. That Sunday work shall be continued, but not on the basis of the guarantee;
6. Income-tax should be on a "pay as you go" basis
7. That men should work until 5 p.m. on Thursday and 12 noon Saturday, except in essential circumstances.

Apparently this committee, after consultation with Union officials agreed to get the men back at work in exchange for the promise of investigation and negotiation.

Mass sympathy exists amongst all ship workers for the dockers' case. Even the Union officials have to concede that the strike is the responsibility of the bosses and Port Authorities who have made the dockers' conditions intolerable.

The demand for job organisation has revealed itself as an urgent problem. The Stalinist strike breakers have put forward the call for Control Committees. They hope in this way to capture the job leadership and thus convert such would-be militant committees into something approaching the infamous Production Committees, that is, organise the boss-class collaboration. But they are mistaken! The dockers are seeing the Stalinists in their true colours. Such Control Committees would be composed of militant rank-and-filers. It is imperative that the dockers organise these committees.

It is too early to say what the strike will gain. Certainly it will gain certain concessions. However, the least it will do, is to break the tremendous apathy on Merseyside. It will also teach the dockers many valuable lessons for the future, the most important of which is the need for militant organisation.

All Merseyside workers must support the dockers' struggle. Too long have they suffered thanks to an incompetent and reactionary union leadership.

Full support for the dockers' demands! Abolition of the Slave Scheme! Increase in wages to meet the increased cost of living!

Dockers:  
Organise your struggle effectively!  
Organise militant Control Committees!  
Solidarity against the bosses attacks!

## Pte. SAM GOLD SENTENCED

BY F. EVERTON

For taking "an active part in the affairs of a political organisation", Private Sam Gold, a member of the Independent Labour Party, at present serving in the R.A.S.C., has been tried by Court Martial and was sentenced to 28 days.

The 'Democracy' of which our rulers babble is not to be allowed the soldiers who do the dying for it.

The 'crime' for which Private Gold was charged was, that while on leave he had addressed an open-air meeting held by the I.L.P. at "the mound", Edinburgh, on May 16th. Before he had been called up he had been a regular speaker at these meetings. As soon as he became a serving soldier however, it became a 'crime' for him to speak out. According to the evidence presented at the Court Martial, he put the socialist case on the war, that it was a struggle for profits and the world's markets in the interests of Big Business. It is for this that he has been found guilty.

That the soldier-worker, fighting for what is claimed to be a democracy, should be denied the right to participate in the political life of the country is a vicious injustice. The extent of the restrictions on political activity of any kind, blasts to high heaven the myth of 'democracy'. King's Regulations, Para 541 under which Pte. Gold was charged, reads as follows:

"No officer or soldier... is permitted to take any active part in the affairs of any political organisation or party, either by acting as a member of a candidate's election committee,

or by speaking in public or publishing or distributing literature in furtherance of the political purposes of any such organisation or party or in any other manner..."

The 'any other' manner' has been ruled as including mere presence on a political platform, and even prohibits the asking of questions at almost any political meetings. In the face of this, prattle about 'freedom', is just so much hypocrisy.

The case of Pte. Gold, however, is not just a routine enforcement of this regulation. It is the first time in this war that it has been used. No prosecution has ever been made of the numerous so-called 'patriots' who have appeared in uniform on pro-Government platforms. Had Pte. Gold, instead of putting the socialist case, been speaking in support of the Government, needless to say he would never have been prosecuted. Whenever Churchill has spoken there have been high-ranking officers present on the platform, and who can pretend Churchill doesn't make any platform a reactionary political one. In the Portsmouth by-election, the Conservative candidate, was an Admiral who incidentally went unpunished despite breaking regulations by wearing his uniform during his campaign, had (a Petty Officer/Naval personnel) speak on his platform in uniform to support the Conservative case. The so-called Communist Party at 'Second Front' meetings and at its 'Wings for Victory' demonstrations in London has had officers and ranks on its platform in uniform, some putting its case such

Continued on back page.