

Colonial Workers Are Refusing to Bear the Burdens of War

British Soldiers Shoot Down Blacks

Negroes of Africa, in Plight as Tragic As that of Jews under Hitler, Fight Back in Militant Strikes

A special cable in the New York TIMES (April 4) reported that in Northern Rhodesia troops killed ten natives and wounded twenty others when they fired on copper mine strikers. The shooting started when 3,000 strikers, who have been out since March 17 to enforce demands for a 25 per cent increase in wages with a further 5 per cent to cover the rise in the cost of living, tried to prevent 150 strikebreakers from drawing their pay.

Back of this strike is a story of miserable conditions, exploitation and oppression hardly equaled elsewhere. Politically these natives are completely disfranchised, and economically are reduced to the status of slaves. Robbed by the British of their lands, deprived of all means of economic existence, taxed in order to compel them to go to work for the Europeans at starvation wages, herded into reserves and compounds, the lot of the natives of South Africa, and the Rhodesias is no less tragic than that of the Jews under the swastika.

Racial Laws Enforced
The liberties of the natives in employment are restricted. The main laws are the Pass Laws and the Masters and Servants Ordinances. The Pass Laws are a series of ordinances detailing a dozen or more passes that the natives must in various circumstances secure and carry with them. They include the labor contract, giving details of tribe and pay, which has to be stamped by the employer each month—providing him with a useful weapon; the "special pass" required by a native moving from one district to another; the night pass which a native needs if he is abroad after the hour of 9 p.m.; and the receipt for the current poll tax.

West Indian Negro Dock and Plantation Workers Striking

Three trade unionists in Port-of-Spain, British Trinidad, were convicted in March on a charge of violating the war regulations; the Emergency Defense Act. The men were arrested for demonstrating in sympathy with striking employees of the Trinidad Electric Board at Belmont in defiance of the ban against the assembling of more than ten persons.

Shouts of "This is an example of British justice!" greeted the judge as he fined the workers \$15 each or 21 days in prison, at the same time imposing a \$50 bond upon each to guarantee their "good" conduct henceforth.

Alloy Donawa, one of the defendants, had raised a large red flag during the demonstration and O'Connor, another of the defendants, denounced the judge and British justice.

The Amsterdam News reported: "With attempts by the local government, hiding behind its so-called war powers, to crush the strikers and deny their demands for higher wages and humane working conditions, the people of the city and country as a whole are aroused to the point of violence, a dispatch stated. But British oppression continues to keep the working masses at a starvation level of existence while it takes everything it can get to fight a war in distant lands, it concluded."

Uriah Butler, the crippled labor leader is still held in "preventive arrest" at a concentration camp on Nelson Island. Butler is held "as a native whose

work on the plantations of the whites or in the mines in order to pay the taxes.

The effect of these laws can be judged by the number of convictions under them. In Rhodesia they rose from 8,940 in 1927 to 19,773 in 1935 and have been on the increase since.

Slaves Are Profitable
The Masters and Servants Ordinance classifies as punishable offenses the breaking of a labor contract, absence from work without leave, refusal to carry out instructions, neglect of duty, etc. The punishment is one month imprisonment or more, and fines. Enormous profits are extracted from the mines of Northern Rhodesia. The value of copper produced by the mines in 1938 was \$8,210,000. Out of this aggregate, \$3,100,000 was paid in dividends, while \$1,750,000 went in wages, the bulk to 1,800 European employees, who received \$1,250,000. The 15,000 Africans employed in the most arduous labor, earned among them \$500,000. This latter figure includes the cost of food, housing, etc., supplied by the mining companies.

Coolie Wages
The natives are thus paid a coolie wage of from 7 and a half shillings to 23 and a half shillings (\$1.30 to \$5.00) a month. Although the native workers are in an overwhelming majority in the mines, there is a rigid Color Bar Act, which prevents them from holding any skilled or unskilled job.

General Strike in 1935
This is not the first time that the native copper miners have gone out on strike. All the native miners went out on a general strike in May, 1935. The soldiers opened fire and killed ten natives and wounded others. The miners were supported by the native domestic servants employed by the Europeans. The strike at that time, like the one now, had a definite political character. It protested the policy of the government of Northern Rhodesia, which increased the poll tax from 10 to 15 shillings, while the mining companies refused to increase wages.

Unions Growing
Trade unionism, as a result of Butler's efforts, has made remarkable progress in Trinidad. Today there are 18 trade unions. Collective bargaining is developing on a permanent basis in the major industries and promises to extend to the less well-organized ones.

Old field workers have just won a further wage increase of two cents per hour plus a war bonus of one-half cent per hour for every five points rise in the cost of living. Workers now receive 90 cents to \$1.12 per day according to the job and skill. Out of about 9,000 oil workers in Trinidad, 8,000 are organized.

Kingston Dockers Strike
In Kingston, Jamaica, British West Indies, workers on three docks went on strike, demanding 48 cents an hour and an eight hour day, charging that since 1938, they have been paid 20 cents an hour and forced to work eleven hours.

A speaker at a meeting the last week in February of the Industrial Trade Union led by Bustamante "called upon the working classes not to allow hypocrit-

Together with Workers at Home They Will Smash the Rule of Slaveholders

One after another the leading spokesmen of the British and French Empires repeat reassuring speeches about the "unity" of their empires with the motherlands in the European death struggle for domination of the world's wealth.

Anthony Eden the other day contrasted the barbarism of Hitler's domain with the "equality of development" under British rule. But behind these empty phrases lies the harsh hunger of 500,000,000 black, brown, and yellow peoples, held in the iron vise of a rule no less barbaric than that of Hitler.

It is this rule that Hitler seeks in this war to grasp for himself. It is this rule that the British Empire is fighting to maintain. That is the sum and substance of the war.

But if the peoples of Asia and Africa had only the choice between Hitler and the British there could be no hope left at all for a freer world to come.

Fortunately they are not confined to these choices. They have the alternative choice of fighting and winning their own freedom, of uniting in a socialist commonwealth with the workers of the Western world and setting out with them to build a new kind of world from which war and oppression shall be forever banished.

Although the war is only a few months old and the struggle is only in its first stages, there is already ample evidence that this fight for freedom is on its way. It is not the fight for Britain against Germany, or for Germany against Britain, but the fight of all the oppressed peoples against all the rulers who hold them in subjection.

The British Empire, greatest imperial conglomeration of them all, the product of five centuries of wars, massacres, rap-

ine, and successive seizures of the resources of vast areas of the five continents, is already displaying great rents in its fabric. India, greatest of all colonies, a nation of 375,000,000, is once more pregnant with revolt. The workers of India have already shown in great mass strikes that they do not intend to take on their knees the war lash of the British raj. Under the pressure of these great masses, the Indian nationalist movement is advancing into an era of fresh open struggle against Britain.

In the House of Commons last week, a government spokesman warned that this movement will be met with force. He said Britain would not and could not give India its independence. He was right. The Indian people will have to take it.

Not even wartime censorship has been able to conceal completely the growth of unrest among the colonial peoples. Strikes in all parts of the empire from Africa to the West Indies are beginning to reveal what really lies behind the "unity" of the great domain. In these unfolding struggles the determination of the black, brown, and yellow peoples of the world to cease being the pawns of Western capitalist civilization grows and in the end will prevail.

Indian Masses Answer British Masters With Waves of Militant Strikes

By ROBERT L. BIRCHMAN
Since the war began, India has been swept by a wave of militant strikes that constitute the real pressure force behind the Indian nationalist movement.

When you read about Gandhi coming around to talking about a "civil disobedience campaign" you know he is feeling the scorching heat of the Indian mass movement.

Despite the wartime censorship, it is now possible to give a considerable list of these Indian struggles of recent months. The "Times of India" of Bombay, in January and February, published almost daily reports of these strikes. Here are a few of them:

Over 1,000 workers at the General Motors, Ltd., Bombay, organized in the General Motors Workers Union, were on strike for 13 days in February. The workers won 10 to 15 percent wage increases. The workers picketed the roads leading to the plant in order to prevent scabs from entering the factory.

The strike of over 3,000 workers at the brick kilns at Cawnpore ended following the granting of wage increases.

At Dacca, the management of the textile mills declared a lock-out after 6,000 workers went out on strike. Forty of the strikers were arrested for picketing.

A general strike was called for March 1, by the Nagpur Textile Workers Union. This step was taken after the mill owners refused to grant the demands of the union for full restoration of wage cuts and for a 35 percent increase in wages to meet the increased cost of living. A meeting of the Provincial Trade Union Congress was called to consider steps to help the general strike of the textile workers.

On February 14, the workers in the weaving department of the local imperialism to fool them in the colonies."

Jamaica "Okies" Strike
In Jamaica the workers on the various farms of the United Fruit Company went out on strike on April 2 and latest reports are that the strike is rapidly spreading. The workers are striking for higher wages and against the repressive actions of the officials of the company.

Jamaica is faced with a constitutional crisis because the governor used his veto to retain the tax commissioner for another two years. The elected members of the Legislative Council are protesting the governor's use of the "paramount importance" clause of the Jamaica Constitution.

British "Democracy"
By invoking the "paramount importance" clause, the governor orders the members of the Legislative Council to vote with the government on any question which is considered essential to the maintenance of British authority and prestige. The combined vote of the government members, a sort of House of Lords group in the Legislature, is used to vote down the elected members.

Victoria Mills No. 2 in Bombay staged a sit-down strike, demanding wage increases. Workers in Mill No. 1 struck a few days previously.

A general strike was called on February 26 by the Joint Board of Representatives of the Ahmedabad Textile Labor Association, after a ballot of the membership had been taken in which not one member was reported as voting against the strike. The strike is the largest in Ahmedabad since 1923 and involves over 100,000 workers. The workers are demanding a 25 percent increase in wages. "The view is held in militant circles that the strike declared by the Textile Labor Association will be a tough and prolonged struggle."

Two of the strike leaders have been arrested. Latest reports are that the sit-down strike at the Saharanpur Cigarette Factory at Cawnpore, United Province, which began on February 15 still continues. Over 1,200 workers including clerks are participating. The main demand of the workers is for wage increases.

Behind the Lines

The Struggle Between Japan and U. S. Over Which Is to Plunder the Indies
By GEORGE STERN

Stories and the screen have made familiar to us the manner in which vultures begin to swoop and circle over a man lost in a wilderness waste, waiting to pounce down upon him for the feast as soon as life leaves him.

We're witnessing now a similar sort of scene, with the Great Powers hovering hungrily over the Dutch East Indies, waiting their opportunity to sink their claws into it as soon as Holland is laid prostrate by war in Europe.

Chief of the waiting vultures are, of course, the U. S. and Japan, both of which have now served notice upon each other and upon the world that they intend to have the final say about the fate of the Indies.

That the great archipelago stretching 3,000 miles across the South Seas is lost to Holland seems a foregone conclusion. The Dutch have extracted its wealth for nearly three centuries and now, with the world being re-divided by the greater, more powerful plunderers, the time has come for them to be displaced. The Dutch capitalists realize this well enough.

Workers of Shanghai Face Guns and Bayonets of Invaders and Other Powers in Broad Revival of Union Struggles for Living Wage

Shanghai, scene of a minor industrial boom because of the increased demand for domestically-produced goods, has also been the scene in recent weeks of a sharp revival of working class activity. This period has been marked by a series of important strikes, fought with the dogged militancy so characteristic of the Chinese workers.

Strikers in Shanghai not merely have ordinary police to contend with but come into almost immediate direct conflict with soldiers and marines of the powers who have divided the city into "defense" zones. The Japanese, Italian, British, French, American marines and troops are used regularly to eject sit-down strikers and to patrol struck plants.

Despite these odds, the strikes have been growing in numbers and effectiveness. The most recent report to reach here is of a strike on Feb. 29 of 2,000 employees of a British-owned omnibus company which won a 30 percent wage increase and a fixed price on rice bought through the company. The strikers in this case were tear-gassed out of the bus depot by Italian marines called in by the British-dominated Municipal Police. The depot was in the Italian "zone."

A few days earlier the same Italian marines used their tear gas bombs to drive sit-downers out of the plant of the American-owned China General Edison Company.

Other Notable Strikes
Some 2,500 laborers employed by the Shanghai Municipal Council struck for and won additional rice allowances. Other strikes were occurring at the Chinese Wing On textile mill, the British-American tobacco company plants, and along the waterfront where dock workers of the Shanghai Tug and Lighter Co. struck for increases from their \$17 (Mex.) per month wages.

This, together with rice allowances, represents a wage in U.S. equivalent of less than \$2 a month.

On March 2 the China Weekly Review said editorially: "Industrial plants and enterprises, in nearly all their main branches, made record profits last year, while on the clear cut showing of the competent authorities the producers of this profit have never been worse off. While company chairmen have sat in comfortable board

rooms congratulating shareholders on exceptionally successful working years, hungry crowds have been raiding rice shops in the often vain hope of purchasing a little of the food whose price has soared way beyond the reach of their slender pocket-books. Investigators have ascertained that workers in the Western District, largest industrial area of the city, are now reduced to living on rice alone—and not very much of that. Vegetables, meat and fish—not to speak of such luxuries as fruit—are utterly beyond their reach. Malnutrition is beginning to sap the strength of those now living and threaten the generations unborn."

Rice is now more than four times the price at which it could be bought prior to the hostilities in 1937. There have been huge increases in nearly all commodities, both locally produced and imported.

Strikers Quadruple In Year
In 1939, according to the annual report of the Shanghai Municipal Police published the last week in February, there were 96 strikes involving 24,628 workers in the International Settlement as compared with 21 involving 6,149 workers in 1938. Forty-six of the 96 strikes were directly connected with the wages and cost of living problem; the others were linked to the same problem in one way or another.

It is from such beginnings, rooted in the starkest necessity known by any workers in the world, that the re-grouping of the Chinese workers in the imperialist-occupied centers will take place—indeed, is already taking place.

The situation in Shanghai is duplicated in one degree or another in all the principal industrial centers seized by the Japanese.

Burma Protests Forced Role As Supporting Britain's War

The House of Representatives of Burma passed a resolution on February 24 protesting that the British had included Burma in the war between Great Britain and Germany "without the consent of the people of Burma and have further, in complete disregard of Burmese opinion, passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Burma Government."

The resolution demanded "that Burma should be recognized as an independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution and further that suitable action should be taken, in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to the government of Burma."

In Singapore, main naval base of British imperialism in the Far East there have been important strikes recently. From the milder press reports it appears that what was described as only a strike among dock workers employed by the Harbor Board was, in fact, a movement of much larger proportions.

The Jan. 18 London Times mentioned casually that three to four hundred workers engaged in the hospitals also struck. Workers in a cane factory besieged four English officials of the factory and fought the police who had been summoned to release the officials, using bottles as missiles. The Times correspondent declared emphatically that the strikes would "not hamper naval work and shipping will not be affected."

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