

British Troops Kill 17 Rhodesia Strikers

How Democracy' Is Defended in the Empire

By GEORGE PADMORE

London, England

THE killing of 17 African miners and the wounding of 29 other strikers in the Copper Belt of Northern Rhodesia has served once more to unmask the ruthless character of British imperialism. This massacre of defenseless natives has blown sky-high all the official propaganda about happy, prosperous natives subscribing to buy warships and airplanes "to fight Hitler."

The Negroes asked for bread, but their masters gave them hot lead!

No doubt, official apologists will soon be telling us that these blacks were the dupes of Nazi agents. For whenever colonial peoples revolt against the intolerable conditions imposed upon them by their so-called "democratic," peace-loving British "trustees," the blame is never placed where it should be, but is attributed to the machinations of the wicked dictators—Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin, according to which one happens to be the chief villain at the time.

BACKGROUND OF UNREST

Even many so-called British socialists subscribe to this nonsense. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the background of the present unrest in this part of Africa.

Despite the drastic censorship and the hush-hush policy of the Colonial Office, as revealed by the suppression of the West Indies Royal Commission report, the truth, like murder, will out!

During recent years, the mining companies of Northern Rhodesia have been speeding up production to meet the increased demand for copper by the armament industry. But while output and profits have gone up considerably, the wages of the native miners have remained stationary. On the other hand, the taxation and the cost of living have increased.

On March 17th, the miners employed at the Mufulira concession demanded 25% increase in wages to meet the rise in the cost of living occasioned by the war. The local management refused to negotiate and the men declared a strike, which spread to the Nkana mines. More than 3,000 miners were involved.

Trouble started when the company officials tried to carry on operations with the aid of black-legs (scabs). Clashes occurred between the men and the strike-breakers. Police reinforcement was brought to the mines and tear-gas bombs turned on the strikers. But even this form of intimidation failed to have the desired effect.

Determined to break the strike, but unable to rely upon the local forces, the governor appealed to the prime minister of Southern Rhodesia for military aid.

European troops were rushed from Bulawayo, in Southern Rhodesia, to Nkana, where the shooting took place. Martial law was proclaimed and the strikers driven back to work at the point of the bayonet.

This is the second time within five years that native miners in Northern Rhodesia have been killed by British troops. In May 1935, widespread labor disturbances occurred thruout the Copper Belt. On this occasion, the government attempted to increase the rate of poll tax upon the miners from 12s. 6d. to 15s., while the mining companies refused to make a corresponding increase in wages.

To appreciate the hardship of this measure, it must be realized that, while the Rhodesian miners are considered among the best paid workers in Africa, they only receive 18s. to 20s. per month for surface work and 32s. to 40s. for underground. White workers, on the other hand, receive an average wage of £60 per month!

Incidentally, this tremendous difference in the scale of wages between white and black explains the reason why European workers in the colonies do not admit natives into their trade unions.

The 1935 strike was crushed with the aid of the Royal Air Force. Commenting upon this action, the Report of the Commission of Enquiry (C.M.D. 5009, page 10) states:

"Mr. Pirow, Minister for Defence in the Union, who was staying at Government House, offered to telephone instructions to Pretoria that a Hercules airplane should be sent up before dawn with a supply of tear-gas bombs, in case it was necessary to use it. The offer of assistance by the Minister was accepted.

"Thereafter the situation quieted and the troops were withdrawn."

They left behind six dead workers and twenty-two wounded!

HOW "LAW AND ORDER" IS MAINTAINED

Defending the action of the government, Lord Swinton, the then Colonial Secretary, told the House of Commons that: "It is the duty of the government to preserve law and order, and that they acted as any government would have been bound to act."

Rhodesia, annexed by and named after the imperialist Cecil Rhodes, is one of the greatest copper-producing countries in the world.

The British South African Company, founded by Rhodes and used

as the chief instrument of his imperialist policies, has a monopoly over the mineral rights in Northern Rhodesia. The minerals, however, are exploited by Anglo-American financial interests.

In return for the right of mining copper, the three operating companies—the Roan Antelope, the Rhokana and the Mufulira—pay to the directors of the South African Company about £500,000 annually. Hence, without lifting a finger, the shareholders of this Rhodes concern get a substantial rake-off every year.

LIVING OFF NEGRO LABOR

This shows the parasitic character of imperialism. Completely divorced from active production, all that the British rentiers associated with the South Africa Company have to do is to clip their coupons.

The mining companies have been making tremendous profits out of the sweated labor of the natives.

In 1937, the Roan Antelope made £2,078,207 and paid 80% dividend, together with a bonus of 200%; the Rhokana corporation, of which Sir Auckland Geddes is chairman, made during the same year £2,319,883 profits and paid a dividend of 62½%; while the Mufulira the smallest company, of which Sir Auckland is also a director, netted £775,401 profits and paid 150% dividend!

Gitlow Descends to Sheer Falsification

Third Article in the Series

By B. HERMAN

(This is the last of a series of three articles by B. Herman reviewing Benjamin Gitlow's book, "I Confess." The other articles appeared in the last two issues of this paper.—Editor.)

BENJAMIN Gitlow's book, "I Confess," reveals that deep within him there has smoldered for two decades a consuming ambition for leadership together with a burning resentment against all other leaders of the movement who have displayed greater ability, intellectual capacity and energy. This was never so evident as in his "confession." His book reveals that he was always obsessed with fantastic notions of conspiracies afoot to keep him from his rightful place of leadership. For example, when he came out of prison in 1922, he saw a conspiracy to keep him out of the post of party secretary. Leaders in the communist movement at that time tell me that they were totally unaware of any such conspiracy for **the simple reason that no one then had the slightest idea that Gitlow was a fit, capable or appropriate candidate for the post as against Charles E. Ruthenberg.**

EXAMPLES OF FALSIFICATION

Gitlow's estimates of other people are generally lacking in the most elementary honesty. I do not have the space here in which to follow him thru every one of his falsifications, but I will deal briefly with three examples.

Jay Lovestone, leader of the "Majority" group in the Communist Party, secretary of the party, and now secretary of the I.L.L.A., naturally appears as Gitlow's chief target. In the entire book, he devotes only one favorable line to Lovestone—that in 1929, Lovestone alone among the American party leaders (Bertram D. Wolfe was then out of the country) opposed the pushing thru of a shameful resolution condemning Bukharin, at a time when the real issues dividing Bukharin and Stalin were quite unknown in this country. Otherwise, Gitlow misses no opportunity to libel Lovestone. Having no basis of fact for his attack, he simply invents. Lacking any great capacity for invention, he is compelled to turn to Stalin's Daily Worker for the inspiration of his major "revelations."

In 1924, Lovestone sent Gitlow a letter in which he referred to "John" and "Zinn." Gitlow explains: "'John' is John Pepper and 'Zinn' is affectionate New York City College style for Zinoviev." The level of this comment is an accurate indication of the Gitlow calibre. Does one have to be a college graduate to abbreviate names? How infinitely petty! Apparently, Gitlow has never forgiven Lovestone for having had a college education!

WHAT GITLOW HAS "FORGOTTEN"

But even Gitlow realizes that a case cannot be built up on abbreviations of Russian names, or on a rather imaginative description of Lovestone's facial characteristics. So he "confesses" the 1920 "defection" of Lovestone "who came to an understanding regarding his freedom from prosecution by appearing as a witness for the state against Harry Wintsky." What he fails to mention is that this revelation is simply a carbon copy of the slanderous attack made on Lovestone by Earl Browder in Stalin's Daily Worker, December 23, 1929.