

due military-political negotiations with the agrarians with a view to an agreement regarding the reorganisation of the Danish army in keeping with the war preparations against the Soviet Union. The Social Democratic leaders have already declared in favour of negotiations with the Agrarians on the basis of a military budget of 37 or 38 millions, whereas the original proposal of disarmament, which served as a platform of the election-demagogues for the purpose of hoodwinking the masses, envisaged a budget of only 17 millions. Messrs. Stauning, Borgbjorg, and Co., the pronounced agents of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism, knew quite well in advance that there could be a question at most of a modernisation and rationalisation of the Danish army in the service of the imperialist plans of attack, but by no means of any serious disarmament.

The Radical-Social Democratic Coalition Government will not draw the line at employing the "jail law" against the strikes which are bound to break out in consequence of rationalisation. Similarly, the reorganisation of the military defences will be carried on, according to the British recipe, under cover of "disarmament". Both these tasks, the continuation of the capitalist offensive and the war-preparations against the Soviet Union, are fully endorsed by the counter-revolutionary Social Democrats of Denmark.

AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION

The General Strike of the Bombay Textile Mills.

By A. G. E. (London).

The General Strike which began on the 26th April and which involved about 140,000 Textile mill workers of Bombay, marks the culminating point of a long period of irritation and consequent sporadic sectional struggles on the part of the workers, ably led by the Girni Kamgar Union (The Red Flag Union as it is called by the workers).

For about eight months last year the heroic mill workers conducted a bitter struggle against the millowners. The terms of settlement, to submit the Standardisation Scheme of the employers and the 17 Demands of the workers to a Government Committee of enquiry, was even then not wholly acceptable to the mass of the workers, and the leaders of the Girni Kamgar Union, in reporting the terms of the settlement to mass meetings exhorted the workers to "organise for resistance" when the report of the inquiry would be published. "This is a period of truce, we must utilise this truce to reorganise our forces for battle" was, in effect, the call of the leaders.

Immediately the workers resumed work it was quite clear that the employers did not intend submitting to the demands of the workers. They instituted new schemes of operations piecemeal, cut wages and wholesale dismissals took place. Members of strike committees and leading members of the Girni Kamgar Union were victimised. Several sectional strikes took place and general resentment expressed against the employers.

Meanwhile the Government took a hand in the game of Law making. Strikes; agitators and workers' newspapers are a menace to the peaceful conduct of industry they argued. It means a loss of profits, therefore steps must be taken to stop this.

The Public Safety Bill has now been imposed. It was rejected on its first appearance at the Assembly, to be later forced as part of the Statutes by the ruling of the Viceroy of India, the representative of British Imperialism, the "Democratic" custodian of Indian liberty. This Act legalised what had hitherto been simply acted upon; to transport every non-Indian from the shores of India. (It will be recollected that Comrade George Allison was deported without the necessary enactment.)

The Trades Dispute Act was carried in the Assembly, despite the opposition of many trade union organisations, but accepted "in Parts" (which is the way of reformists) by a number of the reformist leaders of Indian Labour. The intention

of this act is to cripple the revolutionary workers organisations and make possible a tame, pliable, trade union machine suitable to the bosses (just as the British T. U. Act will not be repealed but "amended" by the next Labour Government).

On March 2nd, unable to endure further the repression of the owners, 15,000 workers of the Wadia group of Mills struck work. Their grievances were that 6000 workers had been dismissed and others taken in their place and the strikers demanded their reinstatement and also that of the 17 members of the Mill Committees and the recognition of these Committees which have been functioning since the last strike.

About three days prior to the issuing of the Government Committee of inquiry report — the Fawcett Report — a complete round up took place of the leading and active Trade union leaders all over India. They were charged with "Conspiring against the King". The chief leaders of the Girni Kamgar Union were amongst them. Undaunted the workers declared a stoppage in protest and the members of the Girni Kamgar Union immediately elected a complete new group of officials, mainly from their own ranks, and reopened their offices which had been raided by the police.

The "agitators" and "extremists" having been safely put aside, the findings of the Fawcett Committee was discussed at Conferences of the representatives of the Millowners and the Joint Strike Committee.

This farce could not be prolonged as expressed by a statement read out by the new Secretary of the Girni Kamgar Union to the Conference on April 16th. The Statement dealt with the treatment accorded to the Union and its members by certain individual Mills and maintained that until the grievances referred to had been redressed the representatives of the Union on the Joint Committee were not prepared to continue the discussion on the Fawcett Report.

A letter was issued to the press by the Union declaring that a systematic campaign of victimisation and to destroy the Union, intensified since the arrest of the 31, had been carried on by the owners and that if a satisfactory arrangement was not reached by the 24th a General Strike would be called in the Bombay Mills.

On the 23rd a group of Women strikers demonstrating against blacklegs were assaulted by the police and about 17 women were arrested.

At the discussion of the Report Conference on the 24th the representatives of the Girni Kamgar Union informed the Chairman, Mr. Mody, of the Millowners Association, that as, "their demand for taking oral evidence of the various witnesses in each case of alleged victimisation had not been met and as there was no response to their demand for the reinstatement of the workers in the Wadia Group of Mills, they would have to reconsider their position".

Mr. Bakhale, the henchman of the reformists, thereupon stated that this did not commit himself or his union — the Bombay Textile Labour Union — and suggested the appointment of a sub-committee to deal with the question of victimisation raised by the Girni Kamgar Union.

At mass meetings on the 25th the workers of Bombay resolved that "as efforts at compromise had failed the union should declare a General Strike in all the Mills in Bombay at 12 noon on Friday the 26th April". A Leaflet was published in Marathi, giving a resolution of the Managing Committee of the Union as follows:

"Whereas the Millowners Association has been carrying on a hostile propaganda against the Union by making it impossible for the Mill Committees to proceed with their work, by sacking such of the workers as take a prominent part in the activities of the Union, by refusing to receive letters of the Union regarding complaints, by not allowing the collection of Union fees, and whereas the Association has offered a determined opposition to all efforts at compromise and has been audacious enough to refuse to hear the evidence of workers and has insisted upon keeping 5000 workers out of employment, this managing committee resolves that workers should go on General Strike at 12 noon on Friday, and refuse to resume work till their grievances are redressed".

On Thursday evening at mass meetings the workers un-
animously decided to obey the instructions of the "Red Flag
Union" to go on Strike.

Mr. R. R. Bakhale, the General Secretary of the Labour
Union issued a leaflet exhorting the workers not to resort
to a General Strike, giving the usual reformist reasons that
"a strike was a double edged weapon"; and suggesting that
the strike is forced on unwilling workers and that they should
not "take a leap in the dark".

On April 27th out of 84 Textile Mills the workers of
the Mills of Bombay had downed tools, true to the call of
the Girni Kamgar Union, the largest Textile Union in Bombay,
with a membership of over 70,000. This was the workers reply
to the reformist sabotage. (The Bombay Textile Labour Union
according to the official Bombay Labour Gazette has a member-
ship which has decreased from over 8000 during the last
quarter to a little over 6000.)

A Strike organisation was immediately set up and pick-
etting commenced; a volunteer force of 400 picked mill hands
with their Red Badges were posted around the mills. Day by
day leaflets giving instructions and bulletins were issued
countering the strike breaking leaflets of the reformists and
the employers and contradicting the lies of the press concerning
the strike.

On May 1st, a huge and spectacular May Day demon-
stration organised by the Girni Kamgar Union, was broken up
by the Police. A vast concourse had assembled and the **Bombay
Chronicle** reporting on the meeting said that the "noteworthy
aspect of it was that they were perfectly peaceful and disciplined.
That a mere handful of "Red Badge" volunteers could so
wonderfully manage such a tumultuous gathering of people
spoke volumes for the discipline and organisation of these
workers". The meeting lasted for about 2 hours. The police
forced the demonstrators into three groups and due to the
extreme restraint exhibited by the workers a clash was averted.
Again that evening a mammoth meeting was held at which the
message of International May Day was given.

On the same day the General Member to the Government
of Bombay invited the representatives of the Girni Kamgar
Union and the Millowners Association to discuss the strike
situation. The **six demands**, on which no compromise would
be accepted, and on the acceptance of which depended the re-
sumption of work:

1. That the policy of victimisation which is being
pursued by the owners should immediately stop.
2. All workers who are now on strike including the
old operatives in the Wadia Mills should be forthwith
reinstated.
3. The Mill Committees should be allowed to function
without any impediments being brought in their way.
4. The collection of union funds within the mill pre-
mises should not be prohibited.
5. That the Millowners Association should give full
recognition to the Girni Kamgar Union.
6. That the owners should put a stop to the sur-
reptitious efforts to crush the Labour unions.

Nothing came of this meeting and the strike is still on,
the workers battling against tremendous odds but in magnifi-
cent spirit. They are fighting against Law and order; the
Trades Dispute Act and its application; the treachery of Joshi,
Bakhale and others; the fight against the lies of the press,
and worst of all the tremendous loss of their late officials, cast
into jail. Despite this the workers are being steeled in struggle,
their complete emancipation is not far off. Their struggle is a
lesson to British workers who are fighting the same boss
the same imperialist statesmen, the same reformist leaders.
The lessons are being learnt. There is a great need for streng-
thening the links of the International revolutionary organisation
— the **Communist Party** — the only Party that will lead the
workers to complete emancipation.