

Special Number

English Edition.

Unpublished Manuscripts - Please reprint

- INTERNATIONAL - PRESS CORRESPONDENCE

Vol. 2 No. 114

18th Dec. 1922

Central Bureau: Berlin SW 48, Friedrichstrasse 225, 111. — Postal address Franz Dahlem, Berlin SW 48, Friedrichstrasse 225, 111 for Inprekorr. — Telegraphic address: Inprekorr.

In Defence of the Eight Hour Day

By J. Watcher, Berlin.

The international capitalist offensive against the eight hour day has been carried on with special energy in Germany during the last few months. In this struggle no means is too small to be despised by the capitalists. At one time they throw a sop to the workers and another time they use the whip; anything to subdue them. But the greater the determination with which the German workers hold fast to the eight hour day, the more energetically they ward off all attacks, the greater the tendency of the capitalists to use the whip.

The situation of the German proletariat daily becomes worse. The wages are miserable. But it is just these miserable wages which render it possible for the German capitalists to sell at cut-throat competitive prices all over the world, and which thus give foreign capitalists a plausible excuse for introducing wage reductions and other retrogressive measures for their workers.

In Germany, the recognition that things cannot and must not go on as they are, has led to the mighty Shop Stewards Movement.

The German capitalists immediately recognized the dangers stored for them in the Shop Stewards Movement. They declared war against it, and threatened with dismissal every participant in the congress of German Shop Stewards. The capitalist exploiters were in such a hurry to carry out their threats, that even during the congress they conveyed notice of dismissal by telephone to a number of delegates from various provincial places.

In many cases the determined attitude and solidarity of the workers was successful in forcing the employers to withdraw the dismissals. But this was not the case with the Baden Aniline and Soda Factory in *Ludwigshafen on the Rhine*. The 22,000 workers of this factory had sent 3 delegates to the Shop Stewards Congress. These were dismissed without notice. All the workers immediately adopted passive resistance. The Shop Stewards negotiated with the directors with regard to withdrawal of the dismissals. The reply was the closing down of the works, the locking out of all the workers.

This impudent provocation roused the ire of the workers, to the boiling point. The next day a conference of the confidential representatives of the workers declared the general strike for the whole of Ludwigshafen. And not the workers of Ludwigshafen alone, but the whole proletariat of the province declared its solidarity with the locked-out workers. The general strike spread over the whole province.

The local representatives of the trade unions at first adopted an uncertain attitude. But the committees of the organisations involved, especially the Factory Workers' Union, whose attitude is decisive, declared the strike to be "wild", and refused to pay out strike benefit. This was not all; these same trade union leaders, whose duty it is to represent the interests of labor against capital, ranged themselves on

the side of the employers and of the occupation authorities, and organized a comprehensive campaign against the strike.

The brute force of the capitalists, the arbitrariness of the police, and the lies of the trade union bureaucracy and social democracy — this now quite customary trinity — combined to undermine the fighting will of the workers.

But this time, these methods, so often successfully employed, failed in their effect. The misery of the proletarians, exploited as they are by the most brutal group of capitalists, has become so extreme, that instead of being a subjugating factor it has become a revolutionary factor. Official statistics show 95 per cent of the children to be tuberculous. At a great women's demonstration held on the December 5., there were terrible and affecting scenes. Women tore off their clothes and showed that they wore only their upper clothing on their naked bodies. When the attempt was made to induce the women to persuade their husbands to return to work, in order to alleviate their misery, they replied: The more work, the more misery! We have nothing more to lose! We have lost everything already!

The misery has reached such a point that the fighters have adopted the one-time watchword of the Lyons silk weavers: "Live working or die fighting". This is the spirit inspiring the strikers.

The fighters will not return to the factory unless as victors. But left to their own resources, their own organizations against them, they are not in a position to win the victory. The victory can only be secured for them if the whole international proletariat unites in active solidarity. In Germany the whole of the class-conscious proletariat is demonstrating its solidarity with the strikers. Despite the threats of the employers, despite the counter-agitation of numerous trade union bureaucrats, collections are made in all large factories, etc.

Large sums are raised, but not sufficient to support 30,000 strikers, with wives and children, for many weeks.

At the present time about 40 million marks are required weekly. Such an amount cannot be raised without the aid of our class comrades abroad.

We are fully confident that the appeal to foreign comrades to aid the Ludwigshafen workers will not be in vain. But it is not only a question of giving, but of giving promptly. Here it is indeed the case: "He gives twice who gives quickly". Every individual foreign class comrade, if he thinks the matter over only for 5 minutes, must appreciate the fact that he is helping himself if he hastens to the aid of the strikers. The eight hour day is threatened throughout the world. We may say without exaggeration that the fate of the eight hour day is being decided in Germany. And as the real aim and object of this mighty struggle is to deprive the workers of the eight hour day, it follows that the workers of Ludwigshafen are holding the fort for its defense and retention, and therefore

they are the champions not only of the German proletariat, but also of the international proletariat.

The significance of this struggle should not be underestimated abroad. If the Ludwigshafen workers, thanks to the fraternal support of the workers of all countries, and despite the treachery of the Amsterdam trade union leaders, succeed in breaking the arrogance of the aniline kings, this will signify a turning point in the German labor movement. For then it will be proved that the time is at an end when the workers could only look on, in impotent rage, while the nerveless, battle-shy

trade union bureaucrats sacrificed the class interests of the proletariat on the altar of capitalist "reconstruction".

Remember, 30,000 militants are on strike in defence of the eight hour day, and against the general capitalist aggression which affects the entire world proletariat.

Contributions should be sent to:

Arthur Börner, Neuhölln, Elsenstraße 83,
or Berlin NW.7, Postscheckkonto No. 140 042.

To the Workers of France!

You are already aware that for two weeks 30,000 workers of the Rhine province have been in the midst of a severe struggle.

The workers here are being constantly provoked, in every possible and imaginable way, by a most brutal driving system. The participation of three shop stewards of the Baden Aniline and Soda Factory, Ludwigshafen, has now been seized upon as an excuse for provoking the workers to strike, with the object of finally attaining the employers' aim - the abandonment of the eight hour day.

This struggle is thus a defensive fight of the workers against the nine and ten hour day, and for the retention of the eight hour day.

This case shows plainly, how united and mutually helpful one-time enemies can be, when it is a question of taking action against the workers. Thus some of our fighting comrades have been forced to work by both the German and the French police. An alliance has been established, all along the line, between the *Cuno Government, the Baden aniline kings and the French occupation authorities.*

Our trade union bureaucracy declines to support and finance this struggle on the ground that it is a "wild" strike. Thus they attack these struggling workers from the rear, as they have so often done in similar cases. Our comrades are however, fully determined to carry on the fight with the utmost energy until victory has been attained, even without and against the trade union bureaucracy.

Recognizing the infamous betrayal by our trade unions, and recognizing the fact that if the workers here lose the battle, the eight hour day is endangered all over Germany, and thus all over the world, the German workers everywhere have organized voluntary collections. But the sums required are so enormous that we are not able to raise them alone. And therefore we appeal to you, workers of France, and beg you to help us in this bitter struggle by showing active solidarity, by aiding us financially. You will aid us to successfully ward off the attack on the eight hour day, you will aid us to victory.

Long live solidarity, long live the eight hour day!
The Committee of the Shop Stewards of Germany:
(signed) Grothe.

An Example of International Solidarity

French Workers Send 2 million marks to their Fighting German brothers

On December 11th, Henri Treint, the representative of the French C.G.T.U. (affiliated to the R.I.L.U.) appeared at strike headquarters, and handed over to the Strike Committee 2,000,000 marks. Comrade Treint declared: "When we read of the heroic struggle of the Ludwigshafen workers, our Central Committee met to take action in the struggle that affects all of us. With indignation we received the news that the German trade union 'leaders' not only refused to recognize the struggle, but that

they also had the audacity to launch a campaign against strike relief collections. In any other country where trade union 'leaders' would dare to stab striking workers in the back in such an outrageous and shameless manner, and so openly to serve as lickspittles to the capitalists, they would be thrown overboard in a fury.

Accept 2,000,000 marks from our trade union treasury with our sincerest fraternal wishes for success."