

INSIDE BRITAIN'S WAR FACTORIES

The production conferences in the country's workshops. New spirit and efficiency. How the traitors and tricksters are being inspired by certain Washington senators.

London (by cable).

BY THE time you read this, delegates to the British Trades Union Congress will be preparing to leave for Edinburgh to attend their annual congress, which may prove of immediate and historic importance. The congress opens September 1, and it opens after six weeks of such an upheaval in British factories and in the trade union world as has not been seen for many years. As *NEW MASSES* readers know, for weeks I have been drawing attention to the fact that great and crucial developments of vital importance to the anti-Hitler war effort have been in progress in British factories. And in my opinion it is so important a fact that the American public should be fully informed about it.

This week, for the first time, this fact has broken into the British national press in a big way. The occasion was a sensational "production conference" in London, called by the National Council of Shop Stewards of Engineering and Allied Trades. As I have repeatedly pointed out in these dispatches, it is the shop stewards who have been taking the lead in the tremendous new movement within British war industry. As a matter of fact, the London conference was only one of many "production conferences" which have been either held or are about to be held in many industrial areas. In London itself there had already been a somewhat similar though rather smaller shop stewards' conference called by the former editorial board of the *London Daily Worker*. At the most recent conference 200 delegates from basic arms factories were present, representing approximately 200,000 key engineers. If you wanted to see the men who really make the wheels go around in Britain, here they were. If you wanted to see the muscles, as it were, of Britain's war effort, you had only to look around. And the striking thing is—coming simultaneously with Churchill's return and the resultant "activation" in high places to which I referred last week—that for the first time the press has been compelled to recognize this as something new and something big—very big. The *Financial News*, the leading City organ owned by Brendan Bracken, Minister of Information, reported on this conference as follows:

"The fact that a changed atmosphere has begun to sweep through the factories and workshops of the country in recent weeks is insufficiently appreciated, and it is to be hoped that the government departments concerned will take steps to obtain a full report of this and other evidences of the change. The entry into the war of Russia, with her large and effective land army, has brought about a transformation of military strategy. It is now becoming equally clear that the new situation demands a similar change in industrial strategy. The prospect of early victory held

The Grain the Nazis Wanted

Moscow (by cable).

ACCORDING to even the most moderate estimates, the state and collective farms of the USSR have grown more than 131,000,000 tons of grain this year. It may already be stated with every confidence that the high yields of 1937 will be left far behind. Testifying to this, are excellent yields that have been reported from the Kuban, Kazakhstan, and Stalingrad regions, the Voronezh region, and the Ukraine, Altai, and many other districts. The winter grain crops are equally good in the Moscow district and the Altai region. Corn crops are exceptionally good this year. High yields of sugar beets may be expected in most beet-growing districts. Potatoes are also maturing rapidly.

From an agricultural point of view, this year will be remembered for the peculiar course taken by the weather during the spring and early summer. Cold weather prevailed over a considerable part of the USSR not only during April, but also during May and the first part of June. Only early sowing regions—Central Asia, the North Caucasus, and the southern Ukraine—were able to complete planting before the advent of cold weather which retarded the development of crops even in these parts. Sowing was delayed in all other parts of the Soviet Union for ten, fifteen, and even twenty days.

Grave doubts prevailed in May and June regarding the ripening of the summer crops. Hot weather in July, however, did much to improve the situation. As a result, harvesting proceeded considerably earlier than formerly anticipated.

Grain harvesting is steadily moving northward. The first days of August saw reaping begin in many districts north of the Black Earth zone. Grain was already being gathered at the end of last month in the Gomel district, in Byelo-Russia, the Kuibyshev, Ckalov, and Gorky regions, in the Volga area, and in the Tatar republic. In the North it is reported that harvesting has begun in both the northern and southern parts of the Ivanovo region. A start on harvesting winter wheat was made in the Moscow region on August 4, on the fields of the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy. The rye harvesting began on August 3 in several regions of Altai in the East. Grain from the new crop is already being delivered to the state elevators. Rye is also being harvested in some parts along the Pacific coast.

It is gratifying to note that difficulties arising from wartime conditions have been successfully overcome in the countryside. Excellent crops are being harvested rapidly and without loss. Women are replacing tractor drivers and combine operators who left for the front. In the Stalingrad region alone, over 10,000 more women collective farmers have already learned to operate these machines. The urban population of the countryside is doing its bit to bring in the harvest. Workers, students, and housewives are working shoulder to shoulder with collective farmers and state farm workers.

Fieldwork is in progress from sunrise to sunset. As a result of this, heroic harvesting has been completed in many southern districts of the country much earlier than last year. All grain had been gathered in the Zaporozhye region, the southern Ukraine, and in Kuban, by August first. Crimea completed reaping two weeks earlier than last year. Determined to bring in the harvest in the shortest possible time, the collective farmers are employing all available equipment and power. The simplest machines and implements appear on fields everywhere side by side with combines. Crops reaped by ordinary machines are being bound immediately in sheaves, and threshers are working day and night. It should not be thought, however, that combines are not being used to the utmost. The proportion of combine harvesting has been particularly high, for example, in southern districts.

The task for the current autumn is to complete the harvest as rapidly and with as little loss as possible. All crops grown on the country's fields are being gathered in and stored in good time. The speedy, efficient harvesting of this year's excellent crops will undoubtedly play no small part in the destruction of the fascist invader.

I. V. YAKUSHKIN.

out by the possibility of a war against Hitler on two fronts seems to have wrought a transformation in the mood of the personnel of the industrial front. Speaker after speaker at the conference," the *Financial News* goes on to say, "made clear the workers' readiness to forego privileges, provided they were only given the opportunity, through more efficient workshop organization, to turn out more arms. Among the concrete proposals for contributions which the workers themselves could directly make to the war effort were: establishing a minimum basis of overtime working for every employee, collective discipline against bad timekeeping, and the elimination of inefficient workers, especially in key posts. . . . The whole conference concentrated on the vital issue of how to secure higher output particularly through more efficient management. . . . It was quite clear that the new spirit glowed most brightly in shops where trade unionism was strongest. . . . It would appear that a low level of trade union organization is now a positive deterrent to increased production."

One speaker at the conference, head of shop stewards in one of the biggest London war factories, said: "Today marks the end of an era, and the opening up of a new epoch. This meeting may be historic. On our deliberations here may depend the future of the British people. The lead for getting increased production has got to come from us, the men and women who are active in the workshops. The drive for production, decent food, adequate transport, and housing facilities, is our responsibility and privilege. This gathering will start something that will sweep the imagination of every worker in the country, surprise the employers and the government by its strength, and create hope again in the hearts of the people. It will help America to understand our determination and to give us her greater assistance."

Another shop steward in an equally key position declared: "When we come up against criminal mismanagement that reduces production by two-thirds and throws idle those skilled hands, we are angry. But anger is not enough. We must insist upon taking our rightful place as craftsmen alongside the employers in the management of industry. We know that we can double production."

Now those quotations pretty well sum up the new background against which the Trades Union Congress will be meeting in Edinburgh September 1. Whether the congress will fully and energetically reflect that great new spirit in workshops remains to be seen. It is a fact that the new demands for increased production, demands for better cooperation between workers and management, are coming above all from the most strongly organized factories. It is equally true that because these are factories wherein Communists are most active in the leadership of workers, there have been in the past somewhat uneasy relations between these shop stewards and some of the "old guard" of the Trades Union Congress and Transport

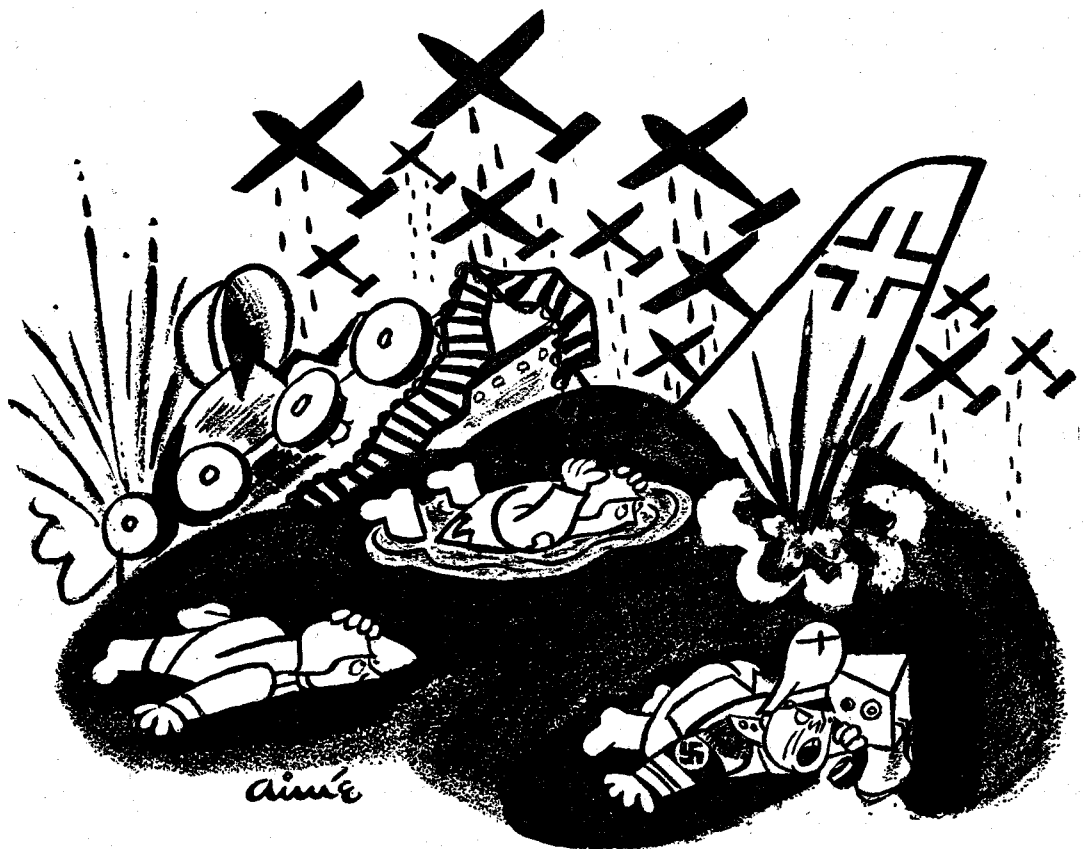
House. The thing that will be seen soon is just how fast the new spirit, the new urgency, the new realization of the immense dangers and equally immense possibilities ahead, can inspire the whole trade union movement. Sooner or later it will happen. But time is vital. The question is how long will it take? Part of the answer to that question will be heard at Edinburgh. It is clear that if the Edinburgh congress were really conducted in the spirit of the National Council of Shop Stewards Conference, the whole British war effort in the factories would take almost immediately a bound forward—a bound equivalent to a major military victory with incalculable effects upon the whole balance of the war.

MORE IMMEDIATELY it has to be understood that these developments are vital. Everything else depends upon them. No second front can be sustained, not even the British end of the new common front in Iran, without them. And of course the longer it takes to get production speeded up here, the longer it will take to batter down the opposition of the "Do nothing" and "Don't help Stalin" saboteurs of the people's war effort. Make no mistake. The extreme Right is active here. Only this week the magazine *Truth*, whose editor has just been publicly lashed in a British court of justice for anti-Semitism, and which has or had until very recently, fairly close connections with the central office of

the Conservative Party, has come out with a veiled appeal for a negotiated peace as an alternative to the maximum use of British forces in support of the Soviet Union.

It must be remarked that every traitor and trickster in the country is eagerly utilizing statements of certain senators in Washington who would rather see Hitler in Kiev and London, than support Roosevelt and Churchill and assist the Red Army. We see here the preposterous paradox of the men from the Middlewest and other grass roots of America who believe themselves the champions of the common people against plutocracy, now unconsciously allied with the most virulently reactionary aristocrats, landowners, and stock exchange swindlers in Europe, entangled in the political maneuvers of the great finance trust of Berlin, Essen, and Paris, plus their underground adherents in London. Churchill's speech is a guarantee that he and those who are with him—and there are mighty millions of them here—will stand against the British Quislings and all who seek to give them aid and comfort. And the shop stewards' conference is the guarantee that the Quislings will be discomfited. But speed and still more speed is still the central theme. When Herbert Morrison, British Home Secretary, himself admits that we are still not catching up fully on industrial production in German-occupied Europe, the gravity and the urgency of the situation must surely be clear to all.

CLAUDE COCKBURN.



"But listen, mein Fuehrer, we are on the road to Moscow!"