

Bálint, Alexander

Hungarian Communist agitator
NY Times, June 11, 1941

X 1912, + 1948 July 4

(Obit. N.Y. Times, 1948 July 5) 15

7,000 Idle at Aluminum Plants; Speakers Denounce President

Mass Meeting of Strikers Puts Off a Vote on Peace Terms Until Today—Night Shift Stays Out—Another Parts Plant Hal'ted

By JAMES C. HAGERTY

By Telephone to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

CLEVELAND, June 10—The five large plants of the Aluminum Company of America remained closed tonight pending acceptance by the strikers of the terms agreed on in Washington for submission to them. Pickets still held the entrances and the midnight shift was ordered not to return to work.

Whether the 7,000 strikers, members of the C. I. O. die-casters' union, would sanction a settlement is to be decided at a membership meeting in C. I. O. headquarters in downtown Cleveland tomorrow.

Not a single wheel turned at the great buildings at Newburg Heights on the production of nearly \$80,000,000 in defense orders for aluminum castings and parts needed for war-plane engines.

The second day of the strike brought no trouble, although the city heard rumors that the Federal Government was about to take immediate action to break the strike by sending in troops as it did at the North American Aviation plant at Inglewood, Calif.

At a mass meeting held near the plant tonight, local strike leaders denounced President Roosevelt and the National Mediation Board for methods used to send the tie-up of

aluminum production. They charged that the government was resorting to "Fascist" methods.

The meeting was attended by about 1,000 men. The speakers addressed their audience from the tailboard of a truck by the light of red flares and electric lanterns.

Paul Martin, local president of the union, and Alex Bálint, union organizer, who had been in Washington at today's negotiations, flew to Cleveland, leaving the capital before the agreement was reached between other union representatives and the National Mediation Board.

Mr. Bálint told the meeting the strike would continue pending ratification by the local union and appealed to the men to remain on the picket lines. Other local leaders previously had told the men that the government was using "Hitler tactics" to end the strike.

Mr. Martin and Mr. Bálint amplified this statement by contending that the mediation board was using "fascist" pressure on union leaders. Mr. Bálint, who was brought before the Dies committee on subpoena just before he left Washington, took

occasion later to deny that he is or was a member of the Communist party.

Speakers also assailed the use of troops to break the North American Aviation strike. Mr. Balint paraphrased the cry of leaders on the West Coast that "troops can't make airplanes." He said:

"Troops can't manufacture aluminum castings that are needed now. That's our job and only we can do it."

Other speakers were Albert C. Skinner, chairman of the meeting, and A. E. Stevenson, secretary of the Cleveland Industrial Union Council, who assured the strikers of the support of 85,000 C. I. O. members in the city.

The union officials assailed the subpoenaing of Mr. Balint by the Dies committee. They contended that Mr. Balint, whose recent application for citizenship papers was held up pending an inquiry by the Federal Bureau of Investigation into his alleged communistic activities, was being "persecuted."

Late today another C. I. O.-sponsored strike began in the plant of the Lamson-Sessions Company here, when more than 400 members of the United Automobile Workers, Local 217, C. I. O., walked out, stopping work on production of lock nuts used in airplane manufacturing.

Arthur Peterson, business agent of Local 217, contended that the Lamson strike was "spontaneous," resulting from the management's "stalling over shop grievances." He said that his local was organizing the plant, but had not yet obtained exclusive bargaining rights. A meeting between the local and company officials had been called for tomorrow morning "to settle the differences," he said.

While no action was taken by the Federal Government today for ordering troops to take over the plants of the Aluminum Company, it became known that the local selective service boards were ready to carry out the orders issued in Washington yesterday to reclassify striking defense workers who had been granted occupational exemptions.

Lieut. Comdr. C. D. Finn, liaison officer for the Navy in Ohio, who has been serving for several months as coordinator of the fifty-one local draft boards here, said:

"It is certain that the local draft boards will reclassify all strikers on defense projects."

He asserted that if the aluminum strike continued for any length of time those strikers who were within the qualifications for military service would be put in class 1-A, eligible for immediate service.

Other C. I. O. Groups Plan Aid

A possibility that the aluminum strike might be supported by the other C. I. O. organizations here developed this afternoon when local C. I. O. organizers met to plan "city-wide support" for the strike. After the meeting, telegrams were sent to 200 C. I. O. representatives here asking them to attend a meeting of the Cleveland Industrial Union Council tomorrow night.

Ted Cox, editor of The C. I. O. Union Leader, weekly newspaper, said that plans for "the mobilizing of the full strength of Cleveland's 85,000 C. I. O. members" would be discussed at the meeting.

In behalf of the Cleveland Industrial Union Council, Mr. Stevenson made public a telegram he sent to President Roosevelt protesting the use of troops in the North American Aviation strike and by implication condemning such a step here.

"This action, along with your de-

light over the strike-breaking, meets with the most vigorous protest of the Cleveland Industrial Union Council," the message said.

"We urge you to withdraw the troops, cancel the forced labor formula in industrial relations and to restore democratic processes in American labor relations."

The aluminum strike was called unexpectedly yesterday while representatives of the union and the company were negotiating with Mediation Board officials at Washington.

The strikers are demanding a blanket 4½-cents-an-hour increase for all production workers in the plants. In addition they are seeking a one-week vacation with pay for all workers employed at the plant for more than a year instead of the present one-week vacation for employes with more than two years' service, a 10 per cent bonus for night shift workers, an anti-discrimination pledge by the company permitting employment of workers regardless of race, creed, color, nationality or sex, and provisions of top seniority rights for union officials, with an allowance for one year's absence without loss of seniority rights and without pay to direct union affairs.

The strike call caught the company off guard and the plants, as a result, were completely closed soon after pickets appeared on the scene just before the second shift of workers reported for duty. Some 6,000 production workers and about 600 office employes were affected.

With the plants closed the company officials set up a temporary headquarters in a downtown building, where they awaited word from the mediators in Washington.



J. C. Smith, company spokesman, told reporters that the five plants here were the company's principal foundry division and were turning out aluminum forgings, alloy ingots and cast magnesium and aluminum aircraft parts vital to defense.

"Effects of this tie-up won't be felt immediately throughout the country," he said. "But if the strike lasts and when the reaction does begin to show it will be felt in defense plants all over the country."

"Many aircraft and other preparedness plants have small backlogs now, but their plant expansion programs will find them with empty stock bins several months from now if the strike continues any length of time."

Company officials said late today that they had received word that the Curtiss airplane plant at Buffalo had informed the Mediation Board in Washington that it would be unable to mount its aircraft on wheels within a week if the strike here lasted more than a few days.

Company spokesmen were inclined to hold to their position concerning the union's wage-increase demand. They pointed out that in April the company had granted an 8-cent increase to all production workers.

Resentment against the strike was manifested on every hand in Cleveland. During the day the strike was the major topic throughout the city and strong Federal action was being widely advocated.

The Cleveland Press printed a

front-page editorial urging the strikers and the company to come to an early agreement. The article was headed, "To the 6,000 aluminum workers now on-strike: every hour lost to production aids our country's enemies." The Cleveland News headline read: "Work stopped on \$60,000,000 in U. S. defense orders at aluminum plant."

At the company's plants the strike was marked by orderly picketing. During the early morning nearly 1,500 pickets paraded along the steel fences bordering the plants, but by noon and throughout the rest of the day the hot sun had driven away all but a few pickets before each entrance.

Many of the union members hung around a temporary field headquarters in a vacant field opposite the plants. Sandwiches and cold drinks were handed out. Others lolled in the grass in the fields playing cards or dice or just loafing.

When local police broke up the dice games and threatened arrests and possible fines of \$100 for each participant, the union officials brought a sound truck to the plants. From its loudspeakers came the message, "this battle can't be won by shooting dice. It must be won

on the picket line." Later, when the dice players were dispersed, the truck played swing music for the pickets outside the plant.

Pickets handed out mimeographed throwaways which asserted that the national officers of the die casting workers union and the C. I. O. were supporting the strike "100 per cent," and that the Cleveland C. I. O. Council was planning to engage the support of their 85,000 C. I. O. workers here for the strike.

The possibility that the Army would be called in to take over the plants remained hanging over the heads of the strikers and the company tonight, with both sides saying that such a step would not be to their liking. It was thought here that the dispatching of troops to the plants would be the last resort of the government, to be taken after all other efforts to bring about a settlement had failed.

The nearest Army posts with any considerable number of troops are Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indianapolis, and Fort Knox, Kentucky. Ohio has not yet formed a State Guard to take the place of the Federalized National Guard, and therefore Army troops would be necessary if the government decided to act.