

WAR COMMENTARY

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Political Opportunism and Workers' Action

LAST month we dealt briefly with the burning question of revolution on the Continent of Europe as we see it and as Mr. Duff Cooper understands it. The question of revolution, in fact, has been occupying the minds of not a few politicians and journalists just recently, and the Beaverbrook Press in particular has been hammering away at that theme. Why? The answer is simple, and without wishing to infringe the Defence Regulations, it would seem that our ruling class realises that this country alone will not succeed in defeating Germany; that Germany's defeat depends on the assistance offered by the peoples now in German occupied territory, in the form of revolts, sabotage and defeatism. And the Press, which, after all, has in its midst intelligent people, in spite of much tripe published by the daily newspapers, has also come to this conclusion, especially after Hitler's spectacular advance across Europe. But we do not share Fenner Brockway's optimism, when he suggests that the outspoken articles of the Beaverbrook Press repre-

sent the "sincere views of some of Beaverbrook's men" and that they are possibly getting away with it, because his Lordship is otherwise engaged. The Capitalist Press is much too important a weapon in the hands of the ruling class for its political line to be overlooked! It is not, after all, surprising that this country should encourage any action to further its own ends. In point of fact, it can be shown that throughout its history Britain has resorted to any and every means, including revolution, so long as they suited her ends. And in the same

way as to-day this country is prepared to arm the Abyssinian people and help to foment revolts both in that country and in Albania, two countries which a short while ago were not "worth the life of a single British soldier"; in the same way that this country would, in the last resort, encourage a revolutionary movement among the Spanish workers for the overthrow of Franco in the event of his entering the war on Hitler's side, though a year ago Franco was a Christian gentleman and the workers just "Red rabble" — so

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throughout the centuries has the British ruling class sided with the down-trodden in their struggle against their masters, so long as those masters were Britain's enemies on the battle field or in the colonial scramble.¹

Britain's rulers are prepared to finance and attempt to foment revolutions in the Continent of Europe, making sure, of course, that such risings do not also take place in this country. And for this very reason, as we showed last month, their attempts are doomed to failure.

A workers' revolution alone can save the world from totalitarianism and all the horrors that such a system implies, but at present there are no signs of such a revolt.

Those politicians of the left who glibly talk of a "Socialist Government" taking control or of "conscripting wealth" are talking nonsense. At present, the revolutionary movement in this country is small and divided by tactical and fundamental differences. Nevertheless our position can be defined, so that when the mass war hysteria has abated, the workers will realise that the revolutionists alone took up a position that defended the interests of the working class.

Our attitude must be one of opposition to the war. For us there can be no alternative, no lesser evil; and we are glad to see that revolutionaries on the other side of the Atlantic, in spite of the war hysteria that is being worked up in U.S.A., share our views.

Our task is clear: the developing of the revolutionary spirit amongst the workers at the moment; the social revolution when we are strong and the moment is ripe.

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We need YOUR support

OUR appeal for funds which was published in our last issue has not remained unheeded, though we cannot say that all our readers have "gone to it" with the enthusiasm and vigour we had expected of them. A number of readers have responded to our appeal for contributions to the Press Fund and in many cases have added to their material support a few words of encouragement. One reader in N. Peckham, for instance, writes: "I send you a pound. I wish I could send you more. I would be pleased if you could send me another copy of August issue of War Commentary. It is the only publication I read without 'going off the deep end,'" whilst another reader in Liverpool writes: "Thank you very much for your August copy of War Commentary. It's always very interesting and educative on so many aspects of the social and political life of this strangely tortured world. Keep it up and all power to your elbow. . . ." Other readers who could not subscribe to the Press Fund have done their share by increasing their orders of *War Commentary*. Comrades in Welwyn have increased their supplies by 50 copies, Manchester by 100, Penzance by 24, and so on. Other readers have hastened to renew their subscriptions (though several have still not responded). But in case we have created a too optimistic picture of our financial position, may we point out to our comrades and readers that the position has only been temporarily relieved and that unless the response this month equals that of August our plight will be again similar to that described in our last issue.

Last month we published F. A. Ridley's pamphlet, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Modern Age*, which so far has sold well. This month we are publishing a new work by Herbert Read (see page 15), whose book *Poetry and Anarchism* was a valuable contribution to a better understanding of the ideals of Anarchism. We have gone to great pains and expense to produce a pamphlet well printed and on good paper, and hope all readers will get a copy for themselves and tell their friends to do likewise, or better still, take a supply.

Next month we are publishing F. A. Ridley's *Whither England?* and the following month a reprint of Peter Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Government*, with an extensive preface to bring it right up to date.

To do all this, and bring out *War Commentary* as well, means that we must have money. We repeat, there are at least three ways you can help: (1) by contributing all you can to the Press Fund; (2) by taking supplies of *War Commentary* and our pamphlets; and (3) by renewing your subscription if overdue, or if you are not a regular reader to send a year's sub. Please do something now!

THE EDITORS.

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MORE HYPOCRISY ON INDIA

SO they are going to confer "Dominion Status" on India after the war. . . . I seem to have heard that sort of thing before. The Arabs were to have had Palestine last time. British soldiers were to have had "homes for heroes." It is wonderful what promises people will make when they are in deep water—

*"The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be:
The Devil got well—the Devil a monk was he."*

And one of the damned funniest things in the whole set out is that these promises come from a Government of which some of the most prominent members (from Messrs. Churchill and Amery downwards), have been assuring us for years that self-government of any kind would be a catastrophe for India and that we withhold it for this reason—also (they told us) because Indians much prefer to be ruled by God's Englishmen! Even the tinkering "reforms" made in recent years were resisted passionately by Mr. Churchill as dangerous revolutionary steps. Well, well.

But mark the plans, the accompanying verbiage in the House. . . . This "Dominion Status" (so much nicer and better for the Indians than Independence—nobody wants that—why, we'd much rather be a Dominion of somebody else's if only they'd have us!), this "Dominion Status" exists as a kind of Pie-in-the-Sky for good Indians if they will play ball with us now. But even the Promissory Pie is so hedged around with IFS and BUTS that it is really a Hypothetical Promissory Pie. Indians must first "agree" on a constitution and by agreement—Mr. Amery makes this very clear—we don't mean a mere majority decision such as would satisfy the democratic standards of the House of Commons. For India a higher, nobler vision of democracy has been conceived by her well-wishers in Whitehall. **THEY MUST ALL AGREE.**



TURN up, if you have them, the newspapers of August 15th, or better still *Hansard* of the previous day. You will learn much about this New Democracy. Congress, said Mr. Amery, must be ready to compromise. They could not expect to decide the Constitution on a mere majority vote. In democracy the decision to act on the vote of the majority was only possible if the basis of the Constitution was agreeable to

all. In the formation of other federations in the past it had been found necessary to check the power of an absolute majority. . . .

Very neat, Mr. Amery, very cunning, I'm sure. I have often been informed by constitutional lawyers that *we in Britain have no constitution at all.* Suppose that our constitutionalists in Parliament (Mr. Churchill once stood for Parliament I believe as a "Constitutionalist"), decided one day that it was really time we made an Honest Woman of Parliament by giving her a

By

REG. REYNOLDS

Constitution. Should we *all* have to agree to it, I wonder? Or would a minority of us who disagreed be over-ruled? Now I come to think of it there is already a minority that objects to the unwritten constitution of Britain—to the assumptions of private property in land and the means of production and the whole economic set-up which is the real frame-work of our "democracy." Now I wonder why *we* aren't allowed to torpedo the whole bag of tricks? I submit, Mr. Amery, that it's most unfair to the minority of us that we have to live under this unwritten constitution merely because you and your friends have, at present, a majority behind you. . . .

How useful this argument is going to be when it comes to pay-day. No one in his senses imagines that 350,000,000 people are ever going to be absolutely unanimous to a man about *anything*. Their interests differ widely. There are landlords and tenants, capitalists and workers, princes and their wretched subjects. Mr. Amery specially mentions the princes among the "important elements" of Indian life with whom differences must be "bridged." Now there is as much in common between the interests of an Indian prince and his subjects as there is between me and a rattle-snake. Mr. Amery knows perfectly well that the All-India National Congress can only "bridge" its differences with the Indian princes by a complete and colossal betrayal of some 75,000,000 subjects of those princes. No doubt Mr. Amery hopes for that, but let us at least call things by their right names. For "compromise" read "betrayal" throughout.

Much the biggest play, however, is made with the Hindu-Moslem problem. Congress, as usual,

is represented as a "Hindu" organisation. The Moslems are assumed to be represented by Mr. Jinnah and The Muslim League. This in spite of the fact that by every test, including that of the elections, it has been shown again and again that the Muslim League only represents a thin crust of Moslems (those with land and money), whilst Congress has again and again justified its claim to represent the popular will, irrespective of race and creed. But for the necessity to keep the length of this article within limits, and the fact that I write in a hospital away from my files, I could substantiate that claim at length.



THERE is, however, a simpler answer to Amery. Congress has repeatedly demanded a *Constituent Assembly* to determine India's future. From such an assembly it would be possible to ascertain what actually *are* the views of Indians in general and even of the Moslem minority in particular. If such a course were followed it might well be found, however, that Mr. Amery's 80,000,000 Moslems "opposed to Congress" had melted down to about five millions or less, so that would never do. . . .

Or again, if the future of India is not to be decided by "absolute majorities," how precisely is it to be determined? This is where our Government sits in a very pretty position. As the precise nature of what is called "agreement" is undefined, obviously it will remain our own prerogative to define it eventually to fit the circumstances. It would be strange indeed if, in a country of 350,000,000 people, a few could not be induced by some form of bribery to oppose any form of freedom for their fellow countrymen. Indeed, there are plenty already who do not need to be bribed; for the retreat of British imperialism from India would mean, sooner or later, the end of the princes, landlords, money-lenders, capitalists and other parasites who now flourish under British protection. Nobody knows how soon social revolution might follow political liberation from our rule. And, however small this reactionary section of opinion may be, our Government can—without having broken its precious word, even—declare when the time comes that the stipulated agreement of "all sections of opinion" does not (alas!) exist. Drowning of Dominion Status follows in a flood of crocodile tears!

Meanwhile, in this country where democracy is to be so democratic that it must be unanimous, a rule of absolute dictatorship continues. Nearly all the young leaders of the Left—men of the Congress Socialist Party and the *Kisan* (peasant)

movement—are in jail. The methods we deplore in Germany are freely used to cow the population and exploit them to the last farthing. Compulsory service is to be introduced in the factories to conscript technicians into the munition works—that they may defend a "democracy" in which they do not share. Even the neat trap of Mr. Amery to bamboozle Indians into supporting the Government gapes at every point with hypocrisy. For not only are the promises sheer humbug, as we have seen, but the immediate proposals are utterly farcical. These immediate proposals are that "representative" Indians shall join the Viceroy's Council and so put a clumsy gloss on the despotic and dictatorial character of the government. But even these supposed representatives are to be appointed by the Viceroy and not by any representative Indian body. They will be responsible to no-one except—the British Government, which appoints them! Needless to say, only professional belly-crawlers will apply. . . .



ALL the newspaper hacks play up and perform their allotted task of throwing dust in the public eye as to the real nature of this Indian "impasse." Even Low (or perhaps nowadays we can delete the "even") gives us a cartoon representing an impasse between "Congress" and "The Moslems" as opening the road to India for "invaders." Not only is there *no* impasse between Congress and the Moslems (other than the fragment led by Jinnah), but the "invader" is already in India and has been there 200 years! When Viscount Samuel talks in the House of Lords about "our soldiers, sailors and gallant and brilliant young airmen . . . fighting and dying for India's cause as well as our own," he is merely lying, and lying deliberately, on Hitler's principle that the bigger the lie the more likely people are to swallow it. When he adds that we have "the right to demand, as an obligation of honour and duty, that India should fight by their side," he talks nauseating humbug. Indian honour and Indian duty are not involved in the preservation of British Imperialism—only when that *honour* has been vindicated by the freeing of India, then, and then alone, the preservation of independence won will become a *duty*.

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Bread--A Return to Realities

SOME months ago I read a Paper in which I described this war as the death struggle of modern capitalism. Analysing the European situation last May, I expressed the opinion that in order to create a totalitarian war machine of maximum efficiency, Hitler would be compelled by sheer economic necessity, to smash the capitalist system in Germany. This opinion was challenged on the grounds that this was quite impossible, since Hitler was himself the representative of capitalist interests, and could not—even if he so desired—double-cross his backers.

My critics, I feel, tended to oversimplify the origin and aims of German National Socialism. It has frequently been stated that Fascism and totalitarian organisation are purely developments of combine monopoly, the last ditch or almost the last ditch of capitalism. In reality it is a development out of capitalism, for it admits of no basic loyalty to any private interest or economic system, or even in the last resort to any ideological theory. Having no clearly defined objective, it is concerned purely and simply with the immediate necessity of maintaining Power. Its policy in fact is quite unashamedly opportunist. Herein lies the reason why it has secured such an amazing series of diplomatic successes. The capitalist governments of other countries can never be sure how far the Nazis will go, what exactly it is they want, or to what extent Hitler's Reich threatens the interests they represent; hence the vacillatory nature of their policies towards Germany.

Thus the Nazi Party has been at pains to conciliate the large industrial interests, exploit the fear of insecurity of the middle classes, and harness in revolutionary idealism the disillusionment of the working masses and the frustration of German youth. It has taken care to preserve the bureaucratic structure of the German Civil Service, building up a Party control organization parallel with, and complementary to, the State machinery. Old customs and traditions have been sedulously fostered by propaganda to aid the consolidation of the new regime. Even the campaign of persecution and economic discrimination organised against racial and political minorities, appears to be designed for the attainment of immediate party ends, rather than as integral part of long-range policy.

The Western democracies failed to appreciate the indeterminate nature of Nazi political objective. The totalitarian character of German economic organization from 1870 onwards (developed even under the liberalism of the Weimar Republic), was not sufficiently understood. There was a strong tendency to regard the suppression of liberty in Germany as unconnected with the world economic situation, so that no lesson was learned from it. Nazi-Fascism was never really a new political ideology with fixed principles and policy. It was a turgescent eruption born of despair and bitterness, and was used by reactionary interests to avoid revolution. Increasingly, however, economic necessity has compelled it to become the means by which the pent-up energies of industrial production will be released from restrictive capitalism.

Fascism, being in essence a destructive instrument in the grip of elemental forces, did not recognize this. It was incapable of creative effort, but since change was imperative and capitalism unwilling to renounce its

privilege, the resultant was total war. But total war represents the final expression of despair in futility, since its economic implications must commit capitalism to the very programme it seeks by the employment of total war to avoid.

The Government, therefore, could not logically commit itself to any clearly defined war aims, since the impossibility of their fulfilment would quickly become apparent. They used intangible aims such as Freedom, Democracy, Justice, etc., because being rigidly tied to interests which were on the defensive against relentlessly changing world conditions, they simply could not have any war aim except the Defence of these interests. Appeasement was not so much a surrender to German economic expansion, it was the only policy, however galling, they could adopt. To have adopted an aggressive policy against Germany would have accelerated the encroachment on private vested interests which the Government were pledged to serve. Appeasement could not, of course, reconcile the contradictions inherent in capitalist economics, and did not attempt to do so; but it did seek to stave off the day when the effects of these contradictions would confront them.

The worsening military situation forced into leadership a Government which recognised that the Nazis, under the pressure of economic necessity, were prepared to collectivise Germany. I doubt, however, if it was understood that determination to prosecute the war to the bitter end involved the destruction not only of lives and property, but of capitalism itself.

State Controlled Industry

Appreciation of the reasons compelling the Nazis' wholesale interference with private business, and the extension of State control of industry and distribution throughout Europe, indicates the course which must be adopted here if the war is to be continued. It explains the bellicosity of Government spokesmen in contrast to the lack of any enthusiasm for collectivising the State, necessary under Total War. Our rulers do not appear to understand the forces which are making for world transformation, but they dimly see their untenable position and realise that to win the war they must commit economic suicide. This, however, removes their only valid argument for carrying on with the stupid business; hence the tendency to wishful thinking and the fantastic disregard of the economic planning now being carried out on the Continent.

Incidents such as the Russo-German non-aggression Pact struck our Government as a thunderbolt of surprise, though to anyone observing the broad trend of economic development it was surely only to be expected. The capitulation of one country after another to the Nazi economic-drive, was manifestly not due merely to fear of their growing military might, but was also governed by the totalitarian structure of the German economic organization. The new economic arrangements forced upon Europe since 1918 by powerful British, French and American industrial and financial interests were bound to fail because they interfered with and arrested the economic machinery upon which most of Europe has been dependent since the middle of the nineteenth century. The political alliances and financial arrangements which sought to implement the Versailles Treaty, were designed to cripple the strength of this industrial organisation. In their anxiety to secure European markets at the expense of German interests, the Western democracies overlooked the contradictions contained in such a policy.

When Greece, followed by the Balkans, Turkey and even Russia co-operate as a continental bloc against the West, our Press will doubtless splash a series of "mailed fist ultimatums" across the front pages, once more ignoring the main reason for such absorption.

Regarding the course of the war in this light—what prospect faces us? Clearly the issue of "winning the war" is no longer of any moment. The issue is not Victory or Defeat, Democracy or Fascism, Freedom or Slavery; these are degrees of interpretation—all secondary to the vital problem of planning for economic survival. Crusades for Christianity on the British side—smashing Capitalist Plutocracy on the German side; these are all very well for Lord Halifax and the gullible German masses but the thing which mainly interests the workers of Britain and the Continent is FOOD, and the problem before us may well resolve itself into the paramount necessity for BREAD.

A Self-Sufficient Europe

I would suggest that the question seriously occupying the German Government to-day is "Can the Continent be somehow—anyhow—welded together into a self-sufficient economic unit to provide a standard of rationing sufficiently high to keep the workers content and quiet? People who imagine that the Nazis are now bending all their efforts towards an assault upon "our island fortress" are, in my opinion, deluding themselves. I do not understand, for instance, how intelligent people can be taken in by this invasion myth. If it ever comes, which is possible but highly improbable, it would be because the answer to this question of Bread is "NO." In any case it would be a desperate gamble. The Press last winter was full of hysterical articles which prophesied the coming of the great Blitzkrieg against us in the Spring. Now it is August, and the sporadic raids we have experienced cannot in any sense be interpreted as a Blitzkrieg. Obscure hack-writers and grand ambassadors were all wrong because they insisted on regarding war solely from a political angle, instead of approaching the question from an understanding of the economic tensions governing individual and international relationships.

The war has now shewn how industry can be speeded up; how factory systems can be co-ordinated for vastly increased production. Germany is already equipped to supply Europe's industrial needs—could even supply the world's. The lack of certain raw materials is probably not insurmountable. The problem does not hinge on industry—it is a question of FOOD. Scientific research will establish the minimum standard acceptable, and the question will be—can the soil of Europe produce it? I suggest that what is happening on the Continent now is re-construction to this end—the organisation of every facility for land cultivation to provide the basic reality of life—BREAD. With all Europe occupied with this tremendous problem, it is foolish to think that private interests of capitalist economy will be permitted to hinder its solution.

To imagine that the German Government is worried about British military initiative, or British war plans or aims, is to fail to recognise the developing situation. Great Britain can take no initiative; the control of future events is altogether out of her hands, and the future of Britain herself depends upon economic developments on the continent—repercussions of which cannot be side-tracked by turning our eyes to America or the Dominions,

What then of Britain's position? The Government does not appear to be alive to the situation. Private interest is still the paramount control. The Churchill clique to my mind has but one chance of survival; complete requisiting of all resources, and the distribution of food and goods on a moneyless rationing system. Complete disregard of disparity of income. The adoption of a programme of extreme collectivism under authoritarian control, a fantastic suggestion under our present rulers, would automatically necessitate the immediate institution of extreme measures to prevent private interests sabotaging the scheme. It would mean, in effect, Fascism of such an extreme character as even Hitler could never have enforced before the exigencies of war gave him supreme power. This would, in my opinion, be the only way by which a revolutionary situation could be avoided. Even if Churchill realised this, however, I doubt if he could get the power to carry out such a measure. The greed and stupidity of private profit here is too strong. Every action taken now of a nakedly "Fascist" character, designed to meet worsening war conditions, would engender corresponding obstruction from liberal elements, private enterprise and individual investment interests. There is not much likelihood of our Imperialists putting the old school tie before their masters' commercial interests. They will not realise the dilemma they are in until it is too late. Is there anything more indicative of the hopeless unawareness of our bourgeoisie than the little groups all over the country of well-meaning and kindly intentioned petty reactionaries who meet to discuss the academic virtues of democracy, etc., whilst daily the Horsemen of the Apocalypse ride the skies and draw relentlessly nearer our shores.

Results of a Long War

A long war means for us in Britain that the food problem assumes greater proportions. To talk of Empire food always available is to pre-suppose willingness on the part of the Dominions to exchange food for manufactured goods which they will be well able to produce in abundance for themselves. It is obvious that the factory systems built and organised to supply Britain with armaments will not voluntarily shut down and write off their capital investment.

Suffering and starvation will produce a revolutionary situation, but what are the potentialities of a revolutionary situation without revolutionaries? The apathy of the workers to-day indicates they would fall an easy prey to the counter-revolutionary influences of Fascism or Communism. (The revolutionary content of which I have been speaking in connection with German collectivism is, of course, not revolutionary in the sense I mean here, i.e., democratic control by the workers, but quite the reverse.) Spain has shewn how both Fascism and Communism are mercilessly opposed to the People's Commonwealth. Berdyaev said "the kingdom of Bread is a return to realities," and I see but one hope of avoiding the tyranny of collectivisation under Fascist or Communist brutality; for the workers to realise that in the last resort Bread is the one reality, and to understand that they must themselves control, in individually conscious co-operative responsibility, the means of providing it, and build up their new order from this.

FREDRICK LOHR.

[We publish this article though not in entire agreement with the analysis. We hope however that it will prove of value for a deeper understanding of Nazism and its relation to war.—Editor]

WHITHER ENGLAND ?

Some thoughts on the Passing of an Epoch

II★

The Anglo-German conflict for world supremacy, in 1914-18 and again in 1939-40—that modern “Punic War” for world supremacy which forms the central political drama thus far—cannot be considered in isolation: contrarily, it represents the last decisive stage in the world-evolution of the Island Empire—as Rosa Luxemburg indicated long ago in her once celebrated “Junius” pamphlet (1916). Germany declared war on England in 1898, the date of her official decision to build a great navy in order to challenge Britain’s world supremacy on her Holy of Holies, the sea. When, in fact, the then “Fuehrer” of the Second Reich, the melodramatic Kaiser Wilhelm II, declared that “Our future is on the water,” he might just as well have said “Our future is war with the British World Empire,” to which sea power is the vital blood that alone circulates life through her veins. Indeed, as “Junius” immediately went on to demonstrate, England answered that challenge sixteen years later, when in 1914 she declared war on Germany.

We have spoken above of the Punic Wars, and, indeed, that classic imperialist conflict, which gave the decisive turn to the last phase of the civilisation of antiquity, is, of all possible historical comparisons, the most apt and relevant in connection and in juxtaposition with the present Anglo-German world conflict. The militaristic-traditional land-lubber, Rome-Germany, painfully evolves from feudal-rusticity and forces her boorish way by armed might into the contemporary centres of wealth and power, and, for this end, strives to crash through the invisible ring of her rival’s sea-power into the Eldorado represented to a nation of frugal peasants by the dazzling riches of the contemporary World market. Contrarily, we see Carthage-Britain, the fabulously rich maritime oligarchy, the jealous monopolist of the world market, whose

shrewd plutocracy police the sea with their own ships and the land with hired armies of mercenaries. Seldom in history would it be possible to establish comparisons in which so many points of resemblance can be traced as in that between the imperialist wars of the 3rd century B.C. and of the 20th century A.D. respectively.

World history, however, despite a broad repetition of situations, never repeats a complete identity of detail. Accordingly this very important difference must be noted. In the modern, unlike the classical instance, it was the maritime empire which won: in the case of Carthage there was no “New Carthage”—no American offspring to render aid at the decisive hour. The Anglo-Saxon combination prevailed, the Kaiser and the patricians of the modern Rome were ostracised (in the classical sense) and fled abroad. In the Old World, at least, the British plutocracy was left supreme and dominated the post-war era surrounded by a ring of satellites. By the downfall of the Second German Reich that world-colossus, the British Empire, secured another generation of life.

It survived, but with a difference! For, as the Italian historian of British foreign policy, Signor Carlo Scarfoglio, has recently stated very aptly: in 1919-20, the years of the Peace Treaties and of the foundation of the League of Nations, a significant change—indeed, a transformation—came over not merely the foreign policy of Great Britain, but over her fundamental World-outlook. For in 1919-20, on the morrow of her first “Punic War,” a war which she could hardly have won without the aid of America, and, indeed, barely won as it was, the chill of old age began to pass into the bones of the now elderly empire, and with it, the consciousness of impending dissolution of “the shape of things to come.” The colossus began to rock on his feet of clay (cp. Carlo Scarfoglio, “England and the Continent”).

At this precise moment in history, the British Empire passed to the defensive; or, more exactly, in the profound metaphor of

★ The first section of this article appeared in last month’s issue of War Commentary still obtainable from the Publishers price 3d. post free

Scarfoglio, England became a church! The British Empire declared war on an historic process, which had now, it shrewdly suspected, nothing for it in change except multiplying disasters. In future, what is, is: the boundaries of this world, like the "flaming ramparts" beyond it, are fixed and eternally set. The division of the world, achieved at Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon, was sacrosanct and eternal. For ever, henceforth, would the League of Nations, that Delphic oracle permanently manipulated by its Anglo-Gallic priests, pronounce history finished, the boundaries of 1919 sacrosanct, and change henceforth, absolutely unthinkable.

In short, from 1919-1939 the world policy of the British Empire has been little more than a new condemnation of Galileo's "E pur si muove" ("And still the world moves on"), Not after Versailles, for a new and vigilant Anglo-French Inquisition sat at Geneva to watch over a petrified world frozen in the mould of Versailles and to condemn with the bell, book and candle of "Sanctions" any nation, any political Servetus, bold enough to recall that if there were kings before Agamemnon there might, perhaps, just possibly, be years after 1919.



Therewith, from 1919-1939, was inaugurated that strange and extraordinary era of decay, now as dead and gone as the Pleistocene era, when the British Empire, itself in full decay, but still governed by an oligarchy fabulously rich, petrified with age, and haunted by the creeping paralysis that precedes final dissolution, stood by everything that was, and against everything that might be, both internally and externally: a giant ostrich that sprawled across the world, with its head buried "five fathoms" deep in impenetrable sand, doing nothing, and yet, withal, still doing everyone.

That age, in short, presided over by the mystic cherubim and seraphim of Geneva and concealed by the smoke-screen of platitudes that ascended perpetually to the God of things as they are, and as, once disturbed, they can never by any chance become again.

Throughout that twenty years the British Empire, the chief beneficiary of the *status quo*, resembled nothing so much as that stationary god imagined by the metaphysicians of antiquity: as that "pure act" of Aristotle,

who, having done everything (and everybody!) reposes in blissful security beyond the risk or contemplation of change; with nothing in earth or heaven left for Him to do except eternally to admire in everlasting permanence his own permanent perfection.

Such, indeed, was the world role of the British Empire, the supreme enemy of change, the immobile enemy of all movement, in and throughout the transition era between her war against the second German Reich of Wilhelm and her war against the Third Reich of Hitler. This era was the era of MacDonald, of Chamberlain, of Munich, above all of Stanley Baldwin, the "culture hero" of this entire period: the "Fabius Cunctator" of an empire now permanently on the retreat, who raised absolute immobility to an art and perfect stagnancy to the supreme political science.



We have already alluded to the striking resemblance that is afforded by the Punic Wars of late classical antiquity and the Anglo-German wars of the late modern era. We again remind our readers that no historical comparison is ever absolutely exact: if the modern Carthage won her first "Punic" war, it was the modern Rome which in her hour of deepest degradation also found her "House of Barca." For, as Hamilcar Barca crushed the revolting mercenaries of Carthage—a grim drama of classical history portrayed for us by Flaubert in "Salaambo" in prose of incomparable splendour—and subsequently restored the power of Carthage laid in shattered ruins at the end of the First Punic War (268-241 B.C.), so likewise Hitler and the Nazis first crushed the Communists, and then again rebuilt the formidable German war machine, prostrated at Versailles, and then, a Hamilcar and a Hannibal rolled into one, hurled the renascent war machine in renewed conflict against her former conquerors.

And the British Oligarchy, along with its Continental satellites, stood by during the critical years which witnessed the rebuilding of the Nazi war machine; stood in impotent silence, and watched it rebuilding when it could so easily have crushed the infant Hercules in the course of his well-nigh defenceless beginnings. For what reasons? Satiety, self-complacency, obsession with the defensive? Doubtless, in what the Nazis themselves called

—correctly, as the sequel has proved—the “degenerate democracies,” all these elements played their part. But, beyond all else, England and France have fallen because of the obsessing class-consciousness of the effete oligarchies who rule them. They have kept their Junkers, whilst Germany, taught by bitter experience, has discarded hers: England has not been truncated by the shining sword of the new Wotan, she has not fallen in battle: she has been strangled by the old school tie.

Under a government of what we may perhaps term the “4th and a ½ column” (to avoid treasonable implications!) the last years of the British Empire have been engrossed by two exclusive preoccupations: to defeat Socialism—with which their atavistic judgment still associates the Russia of Stalin!—and to make still bigger profits. In Hitler and his resurgent Empire, up to the very last, they saw only an ally in the first, and a profitable customer in the second aim.



In the light of the revealing experiences of the last few years it is necessary to revise the celebrated proverb of antiquity, to “Those whom the Gods wish to destroy” they send, to-day, not “madness” but a Chamberlain!

Caught unprepared and sweating with fear — at the last minute, even, Chamberlain would have called the war off, but his own party refused to follow him — the governments of the Western “Democracies” declared war on September the 3rd, 1939. The blitzkrieg burst in the East and Poland vanished from the roll of nations. Then silence fell for six months and the frightened West began to breathe again: perhaps the German hurricane was spent; and, in any case, was there not still the impregnable Maginot Line? Hence, the military leaders of the Allies evolved a doctrine of the defensive—Gamelin (“The greatest soldier since Napoleon”) in practice and Liddel Hart in theory. It was a theory and practice that smelt of decadence and heralded sure disaster. For it is still true, and probably always will be, that in war, as Napoleon phrased it, “The moral is to the material as 3 to 1”: initiative is still supreme and the fetishism of the defence is the military counterpart of opium.

In April, 1940, thunder over Norway! air power beat sea power, and scarcely had the British public learnt the long-winded names of

tenebrous Norwegian fjords that they ceased to be of interest! Scarcely had the British Prime Minister enriched the world’s store of historic phrases with his momentous discovery, “Hitler has missed the bus,” scarcely was this *bon mot* out of the mouth of the Man of Munich when the British Army was hurled into the Norwegian sea, and the British Oligarchy, looking out of its Mayfair armchairs, dimly noticed that the contours of the European horizon were scarcely the same as those they had learnt at school. (N.B.: At this juncture the British Press came out with a phrase which still remains the classic summary of the war to date expressed in language of stark simplicity, “Nazis in Norway, British on the way.”)



Then—May 10th—the storm broke in full fury and the smug centuries-old smile of bottomless complacency was wiped for ever from the face of the British Oligarchy. (So, one imagines, must the Punic Oligarchy have felt when the Roman land-lubbers suddenly wrested from them their immemorial command of the sea.) In staggering succession the Netherlands were liquidated — including its famous liquid defences! — Belgium was reduced to chaos and capitulation, the British army was again hurled into the sea, this time at Dunkirk, the famous Maginot Line proved merely a “King Canute” against the German tidal wave, and General Gamelin — plus his famous theory of the defensive — vanished overnight. In 6 weeks the formidable French and British armies, their front protected by supposedly impregnable fortifications and their flanks covered by an overwhelming superiority in sea power, were not so much beaten as annihilated; never since the hurricane-like rise of Islam has history seen anything like it.

In this six weeks of war, the most incredible non-stop attack in all recorded history, Paris was taken without a blow, France finished — probably for ever, at least as a first-rate power — and “Federal Union” — “the United States of Europe” — was brought into existence overnight — not, it is true, the kind that idealists have foreshadowed!

And now — whither England? For if in the historic past England has established a traditional practice of losing her battles but of winning her wars, at the present juncture

she looks suspiciously like losing both the battles and the war. Even if she wins, it would seem that it could only be under conditions which would make her the vassal of America and/or Russia, for we recall the key aphorism of the shrewd 18th century Whig statesman (Lord Carteret): "England is safe only as long as Europe is divided." The practice of Whitehall — "the Balance of Power" — has always conformed to this profound aphorism. And now, Europe is virtually united against her under the German "Mohammed" — half Messiah, half Machiavelli — at the head of a war machine in which modern technique and mediæval fanaticism unite as never before. Nor is the sea — particularly a narrow sea — much of a bulwark against overwhelming superiority in air-power such as the Nazis possess; this lesson seems to be clearly taught by the Norwegian fiasco.



Whither England? By the time these lines appear in print it may be possible to give some definitive answer to this question. At the time of writing — June, 1940 — only one alternative seems to present itself: surrender or a last stand on British soil itself. The former alternative seems scarcely likely, particularly with the "gangster" element of British imperialism in power with Winston Churchill — besides, what peace terms would victorious Germany grant, except the annihilation of Britain by a super-Versailles and also the occupation of Britain herself by a puppet government of the "fifth column." Rather fight to the Nelson Column than that! (Fascism, in any case, never gives quarter, and a Germany miraculously restored by Hitler could not conceivably risk any British imitation — the Messiah, proverbially, only comes once!)

The alternative, however, a fight to the last ditch against the invader, now the declared resolve of the British Government, does not, at first sight at least, look a much more promising proposition. (It may of course be safely presumed that, in a "fight to the bitter end," the plutocracy will end in the New World and the masses in the next world! It will be by no means the first time in history that an aristocracy beaten by its own incompetence takes refuge in flight, and, en route for a place of safety, issues a passionate appeal to its dupes to stand firm.)

But England is, of all places in the world, the most unsuitable for a "people's war"; the masses, starved and degraded by the oligarchy since Chartist times, have long since lost the habit of bearing arms: street fighting is, and for long has been, a lost art in this plutocrats' playground. A war "to the knife" cannot be switched on at a moment's notice. It, more than most things, requires a historical background. This existed in Spain, but the English, those pre-eminently "constitutionalists," are the last people in the world to possess it. England has never been invaded since 1745, when a handful of half-naked Highlanders came within an ace of conquering it.



In this respect, the modern Carthage, again like its classical prototype, disabled by its habitual use of mercenaries, is weakest in its metropolis.

Whither England? A huge question-mark is, at present, the answer. But revolutionaries should not lose hope. Hitler may be a "Mechanised Attila" — as Leon Blum declared in excuse for his own poltroonery. But the parallel is incomplete — in this respect, at least, that Attila did not have to iron out the ever-augmenting contradictions of a moribund capitalist system. (Anyway, how long did the Empire of Attila last — I seem to remember that it survived its founder for barely a year!) A revolutionary England, led by the only class which can *really* fight "Hitlerism," viz., the working class — in the name of the only creed by which capitalism in decay (Fascism) can really be fought to a finish — viz., international socialism — may yet emerge from an England drastically purged by blood and fire of its mountains of bourgeois lumber, and of its second-hand "Labour" rubbish. The lesson of this debacle is surely plain: only a revolutionary war can defeat Hitlerism. In such a way England may at last find her revolutionary soul.

In conclusion, whatever the future may hold in store, this much, at least, is certain. The rise of the British world empire filled the 18th century, its meridian dominated the 19th, its final collapse will shake the 20th. One thing alone is certain, the next era in British history will in no way resemble its predecessor.

F. A. Ridley

Left Movements and the War

I. The Independent Labour Party

A MEMBER of the Independent Labour Party wrote to us after the publication of the last number of *War Commentary* asking on what official ILP utterance we based our statement that the ILP was only against war so long as it thought Britain was going to win, and that "now that the Empire is imperilled it is not so sure about it." Also what was our authority for asserting that the ILP "believes in defence against invasion." We based our statement on the articles and manifestos published in the *New Leader* during the past months. The present article is an attempt to substantiate these statements.

The recent defeats suffered by Britain caused the ILP to revise its policy. At the beginning of the war the battle cry of the party was "Stop the war." Their attitude was defined by C. A. Smith in *Left* (Nov., '39):

"Socialists should now strongly oppose the present war, and call for an immediate armistice and conference to settle the conditions of peace. Our slogan is 'For a Socialist Peace.' . . . Our 'Stop-the-War' campaign may fail. If so, we have staked our claim for the leadership of the revolting masses when war-weariness finally goads them into a frontal assault on the State. Protracted war may give the Socialists their opportunity—but not if they are pressing for a prolongation of the war."

At that time the ILP put up "Stop the War" candidates, Maxton signed a petition of the British Council for a Christian settlement to European problems in company with Mosley (*M. Guardian*, 24/10/39), and McGovern addressed a meeting at the Kingsway Hall "For Peace," having as chairman John Beckett.

The aim of the ILP now is to transform the present war into a revolutionary war under the leadership of a workers' government with the aim of defeating Nazism by bringing about the revolution in Europe.

The ILP is thus, in theory, opposed to the kind of war which is being fought now, a war which calls for sacrifices from the workers and increases the profits of the capitalists; a war which suppresses all democratic liberties and rights. But this does not mean that the ILP opposes this war effectively because in order to be able to transform it later, they have to accept it as it is, for the time being.

It is rather difficult to understand clearly what the ILP wants as regards to war. The opinions of its leaders differ greatly, and as C. A. Smith writes in the 27th June issue of the *N.L.*, clarity is wanted:—

"Some of them say 'Peace by Socialism' without making clear which they put first—i.e., whether they mean 'To Socialism through Peace' or 'To Peace through Socialism'—a vital difference.

"Some of them say they would fight for a Socialist Britain against Nazi Germany, and then speak of a mass revolutionary movement to stop the war. Some of them claim that their comrades in Germany have resisted Hitler even unto death, and then favour capitulation to Hitler now.

"When there are sharp differences of opinion within their ranks, they so frequently seek for a 'formula' to which all their followers can subscribe either because it evades the issue or because different groups each put their own interpretation upon it."

The "formula" as expressed in the Programme of the ILP shows clearly that the Party has abandoned the

slogan of a negotiated peace and has no intention of going towards "the transformation of the imperialist war in a civil war for the revolutionary conquest of power" as advocated by the International Workers' Front against war to which the ILP is affiliated.

In the programme of the ILP one reads:—

2. *A Workers' Socialist Government is imperative, which would*
3. *Conscript Wealth and adopt Socialist Planning.*
4. *Abolish penury and luxury by sharing out all available resources.*
5. *Establish Workers' Control Within Industry.*

What does the ILP mean by a revolutionary government? Who is going to take part in it? Who is going to direct it? Furthermore, how is this government going to come into power? Another mystery. If a revolution is going to take place it seems strange that the word should never be mentioned. Stranger still that the new government would have to conscript wealth, which means that the rich class will not have been abolished, and "establish workers' control within industry," which means that it is not through workers' control that the workers' government has been established.

Developing this programme in an article published in *Left* in June, '40, Fenner Brockway associates the Dominions in carrying through the social revolution:—

"We associated the Dominions with Britain in this section of our analysis. Australia and New Zealand would respond to the social changes in Britain. South Africa would become the scene of a racial struggle. Perhaps Canada, particularly if the British 'Government' and the Royal Family were stationed there, would remain the centre of an Empire which had dissolved in liberty."

No reasons are given for this optimistic statement. By what mysterious pressure will the Government be evacuated to Canada if as F. Brockway says in the same article: *"In war-time the capitalist State moves towards a fascist totalitarian State, and the British ruling class, fascist beneath the surface of the skin, will not hesitate to use it—part of the ruling class will not hesitate, as in France, to capitulate to Hitler—rather than see Socialism established here."*

Obviously the establishment of a workers' government is not as easy as it may seem in the columns of the *New Leader*.

It will mean a violent struggle against the ruling class of this country which would not hesitate to crush ruthlessly the slightest attempt at revolt and even open the door to Hitler if every hope of crushing the revolution were lost.

The ILP must realise that the establishment of a workers' government would require such a struggle against the ruling class that it would compromise the issue of the war. Hitler would obviously take the opportunity of internal troubles in order to attempt to invade Britain. It is dishonest (or stupid) not to accept this eventuality and want people to believe that the war against Germany (Nazism) could be carried out just as well if not better.

According to the ILP the task of the Workers' Government in order to stop the war would be "to appeal to the peoples in the occupied German territories to revolt against Nazi domination so that a peace could be established." "Who can doubt that there would be a vast

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Revolutionary Government

The following article is one of three written by Peter Kropotkin for a French publication many years ago. Yet, in spite of the years that have passed since they were first written, these articles are, in our opinion, as important to-day as they were then. For though Kropotkin used revolutionary France of 1871 as his example, exactly the same reasoning can be applied to the developments of more recent revolutionary movements during the present century. Limited space prevents us from giving specific examples, but this we hope to do when the three articles of this series are reprinted in pamphlet form. The present article deals with "Parliament." The second will deal with "Dictatorship" and the third with "The Impotence of Revolutionary Governments."

THAT the Governments at present existing ought to be abolished, so that Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity should no longer be empty words but become living realities, and that all forms of government as yet tried have only been so many forms of oppression, and ought to be replaced by a new form of grouping, will be agreed by all who have a brain and temperament ever so little revolutionary. In truth one does not need to be much of an innovator in order to arrive at this conclusion; the vices of the governments of to-day, and the impossibility of reforming them, are too evident to be hidden from the eyes of any reasonable observer. And as for overturning governments it is well known that at certain epochs that can be done without much difficulty. There are times when governments crumble to pieces almost of themselves, like houses of cards, before the breath of the people in revolt.

To overturn a government—is for a revolutionary middle-class man everything; for us it is only the beginning of the social revolution. The machine of the State once out of gear, the hierarchy of functionaries disorganised and not knowing in what direction to take a step, the soldiers having lost confidence in their officers—in a word, the whole army of defenders of Capital once routed—then it is that the grand work of destruction of all the institutions which serve to perpetuate

economic and political slavery will become ours. The possibility of acting freely being attained, what will revolutionists do next?

To this question the Anarchists alone give the proper answer: "No Government!" All the others say "A Revolutionary Government!" and they differ only as to the form to be given to that government. Some decide for a government elected by universal suffrage in the State or in the commune; others decide on a revolutionary dictatorship.

A revolutionary government! These are two words which sound very strange in the ears of those who really understand what the Social Revolution means, and what a government means. The words contradict each other, destroy each other. We have seen, of course, many despotic governments—it is the essence of all government to take the side of the reaction against the Revolution, and to have a tendency towards despotism. But such a thing as a revolutionary government has never been seen, and the reason is that the revolution—meaning the demolition by violence of the established forms of property, the destruction of castes, the rapid transformation of received ideas about morality—is precisely the opposite, the very negation of government, this being the synonym of "established order," of conservatism, of the maintenance of existing institutions, the negation of free initiative and individual action. And yet we continually hear this white blackbird spoken of, as if a "revolutionary government" were the simplest thing in the world, as common and as well known to all as Royalty, the Empire, and the Papacy!

That the so-called revolutionists of the middle class should preach this idea is nothing strange. We know well what they understand by Revolution. They under-

stand by it a bolstering up of their Republic, the taking possession by the so-called Republicans of the lucrative employments reserved to-day for the Royalists. It means at the most the divorce of Church and State, replaced by the concubinage of the two, the sequestration of the goods of the clergy for benefit of the State, and above all for that of the future administrators of these goods; perhaps it may mean the referendum, or some other political machinery. But that Revolutionary Socialists should make themselves the apostles of such an idea—we can only explain by supposing one of two things. Either they are imbued with prejudices which they have imbibed without knowing it from literature, and above all from history, written to suit middle-class ideas; or else they do not really desire this Revolution which they have always on their lips; they would be content with a simple plastering up of present institutions, provided that they would secure power for themselves, leaving to the future to decide what they should do to satisfy “the beast” called “the people.” They only go against the governors of the present time in order to take their places. With these people we care not to argue. We will then only speak to those who honestly deceive themselves.

Let us begin with the first of the forms of “revolutionary government” which is advocated—the elected government.

The power of the royalty or some other we will suppose has just been overturned, the army of the defenders of Capital is routed; everywhere there is fermentation, discussion of public affairs, everywhere a desire to march onward—new ideas arise, the necessity of important changes is perceived. It is necessary to act, it is necessary to begin without pity the work of demolition, in order to prepare the ground for the new life. But what do they propose to us to do? To convoke the people to elections, to elect at once a government and confide to it the work which we all of us, and each of us, should undertake of our own initiative.

This is what Paris did after the 18th of March, 1871. “I will never forget,” said a friend to us, “those delightful moments of deliverance. I came down from my upper chamber in the Latin Quarter to join that immense open-air club which filled the Boulevards from one end of Paris to the other. Everyone talked about public affairs; all mere personal preoccupations were forgotten; no more was thought of buying or selling; all felt ready body and soul to advance towards the future. Men of the middle class even, carried away by the general enthusiasm, saw with joy a new world opened up. ‘If it is necessary to make a social revolution,’ they said, ‘make it then. Put all things in common; we are ready for it.’ All the elements of the Revolution were there, it was only necessary to set them to work. When I returned to my lodging at night I said to myself, ‘How fine is humanity after all, but not one knew it; it has always been calumniated.’ Then came the elections, the members of the Commune were named—and then little by little the ardour of devotion and the desire for action were extinguished. Everyone returned to his usual task, saying to himself, ‘Now we have an honest government, let it act for us.’” What followed everyone knows.

Instead of acting for themselves, instead of marching forward, instead of advancing in the direction of a new order of things, the people, confiding in their governors, entrusted to them the charge of taking the initiative. This was the first consequence of wish realised, without knowing much how the inevitable result of elections. Let us see now what these governors did who were invested with the confidence of all.

Never were elections more free than those of March, 1871. The opponents of the Commune admit it themselves. Never was the great mass of electors more influenced with the desire to place in power the best men, men of the future, true Revolutionists. And so they did. All well-known Revolu-

tionists were elected by immense majorities; Jacobins, Blanquists, Internationalists, all the three revolutionary divisions were represented in the Council of the Commune. No election could give a better government.

But what was the result of it? Shut up in the City Hall, charged to proceed after the forms established by preceding governments, these ardent revolutionists, these reformers found themselves smitten with incapacity and sterility. With all their good will and their courage they did not even know how to organise the defence of Paris. Of course, people now blame the men, the individuals for this; but it was not the men who were the cause of this failure—it was the system.

In fact, universal suffrage, when it is quite free, can only produce, at best, an assembly which represents the average of the opinions which at the time are held by the mass of the people; and this average at the outbreak of the Revolution has only a vague idea of the work to be accomplished, without understanding at all how they ought to undertake it. Ah, if the bulk of the nation, of the commune, could only understand before the movement what was necessary to be done as soon as the government is overturned! If this dream of the utopians of the chair could be realised, we never would have had bloody revolutions; the will of the bulk of the nation once expressed, the rest would submit to it with a good grace. But this is not how things are done. The Revolution bursts out long before a general understanding has come, and those who have a clear idea of what should be done the next day are only a very small minority. The great mass of the people have as yet only a general idea of the end which they to advance towards that end, nor much confidence in the direction to follow. The practical solution will not be found, will not be made clear until the change will have already begun; it will be the product of the Revolution itself, of the people in action—or else it will be nothing, the brain of a

few individuals being absolutely incapable of finding solutions which can only spring from the life of the people.

This is the situation which is reflected in the body elected by universal suffrage, even if it had not the vices inherent in representative governments in general. The few men who represent the revolutionary idea of the epoch find themselves swamped among the representatives of the revolutionary schools of the past, and of the existing order of things. These men who would be so necessary among the people, particularly in the days of the revolution, to sow broadcast their ideas, to put the mass in movement, to demolish the institutions of the past, find themselves shut up in a hall, vainly discussing how to wrest concessions from the moderates, and how to convert their enemies, while there is really only one way of inducing them to accept the new idea—namely, to put it into execution. The government becomes a parliament with all the vices of a middle-class parliament. Far from being a “revolutionary” government it becomes the greatest obstacle to the Revolution, and at last the people find themselves compelled to put it out of the way, to dismiss those that but yesterday they acclaimed as their chosen. But it is not so easy to do so. The new government which has hastened to organise a new administration in order to extend its domination and make itself be obeyed, does not understand giving up so easily. Jealous of maintaining its power, it clings to it with all the energy of an institution which has not yet had time to fall into senile decay. It decides to oppose force with force, and there is only one means then to dislodge it, namely, to take up arms, to make another revolution in order to dismiss those in whom the people had placed all their hopes.

There you see the revolution divided against itself! After losing precious time in delays, it now loses its strength in internecine divisions between the friends of the new

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Books

The Guillotine at Work. Twenty Years of Terror in Russia. By G. P. Maximoff. (The Chicago Section of the Alexander Berkman Fund, 2422 N. Halstead St., Chicago, Ill.). \$3.50.

THIS is a formidable work of over six hundred pages, and is one of the most impressive indictments ever brought against a political regime. The author, a veteran revolutionist and active participator in the Russian Revolution, began with the intention of presenting a full picture of political persecution in Russia during the past twenty years, but the material was so overwhelming in quantity that it was decided to confine the book exclusively to material dealing with the persecution of the Anarchists. The Social-Revolutionists, the Social-Democrats, Maximalists, Social-Zionists, Tolstoyans, etc., all of whom have a similar tale to tell, must wait their turn. In view of the mass and complexity of the material, the author is to be congratulated on bringing such a difficult task to a successful conclusion, and the Berkman Fund and other groups which contributed to the cost of the publication on the magnificent use they have made of their meagre resources. At the same time the form of the book invites a word or two of criticism. The data and documents which give the volume its historical importance are preceded by a preliminary essay on "The Sources of the Russian Terror." This essay extends to 338 pages, more than half the book! Now admittedly the documents need some form of presentation, and it is important to show that the terror is not a recent development which we can label "Stalinism," but was inherent in the ideas and methods of Lenin himself. This fact the author demonstrates conclusively, mainly by the quotation of Lenin's own words. But we cannot help feeling that this polemical argument would have been better as a separate volume, and that the data and documents which form the second part of the present work would have gained in impressiveness if they had been presented with a minimum of comment, something not much longer than the introductory essay on "Anarchists in the Revolution,"

which does actually precede this second part. This purely formal criticism seems trivial when we pass to a consideration of the contents of the book, which are of a terrifying actuality. Both in extent and intensity the Russian Terror has exceeded any previous political tyranny of which we have historical record: it reduces the Terror which followed the French Revolution to insignificance and can only be matched by the exploits of Genghis Khan. At a conservative estimate the Russian Terror cost, in executions, epidemics and famine, from 20 to 22 million lives between the years 1917-34. The figures, as

torship leads to regression, to physical, social and moral decadence, toward slavery, toward complete, integral slavery, toward a sea of blood and an ocean of tears. It is natural, for dictatorship bases itself upon terror, upon the death penalty. But the death penalty, whoever uses it and wherever it is applied—on a large or small scale—results in moral corruption, brutalization, loss of human values, stultification of individuality, lack of respect for the rights of others and consequently lack of respect for civic liberties, which in turn sooner or later leads, with the inevitability of a natural

The Russian Terror

Maximoff says, numb one's brain, and the actuality is perhaps only to be grasped by focussing on individual cases. But what is demonstrated, by a consideration of the general features of the Terror, is that the ultimate cause was an idea, held on to with blind fanaticism. This idea expressed itself in the phrase "the dictatorship of the proletariat," which was innocent enough when first used by Marx, but which became fatal through the intervention of two political expedients—the identification of the proletariat with the Bolshevik Party, and the use of the State as an instrument of revolution. Expedients and compromises may have been necessary for the effective defeat of the reactionary forces; but there is no doubt whatsoever that what took place was a progressive brutalisation of Lenin's own mind under the corrupting influence of the exercise of power. Some day, perhaps, we shall understand this process from a psychological point of view; meanwhile it has to be recorded as an historical tragedy, involving the lives of millions of innocent people. "Dicta-

law, to the complete loss of all rights and liberties, to slavery, to a latent or expressly manifested dictatorship of a power-greedy and egoistic minority." Such is the lesson of the Russian Revolution.

It is impossible to review the second part of the volume in any detail. It consists of a year by year chronicle of arrests, persecutions and struggles of the Russian anarchists, together with letters from prison and exile. There are many important manifestoes and protests, extracts from newspapers and journals, and several "human documents" which rise to the heights of tragic pathos. Ciliga, in the book reviewed in the last number of *War Commentary*, has paid a disinterested tribute to the nobility of the Anarchists he met in Russian prisons and concentration camps. There are heroes in all sections of the revolutionary struggle, but in Russia, as more recently in Spain, the martyrdom of our comrades is an undying inspiration to all those who still work for a true socialism based on freedom, equality and brotherhood.

H. R.

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THE I.L.P. AND WAR

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response?" asked F. Brockway optimistically. Many, with a little sense of reality must doubt! Even if the Government as suggests F. Brockway would broadcast, distribute leaflets by aeroplane in order to convince the people of Europe to revolt, it would be very improbable to obtain any effective results in the German people's present victorious position. And even more so if "so long as the Nazi Government remained and continued the war, the workers' Britain would resist." Leaflets declaring Britain's will for peace dropped over Germany and followed by bombs can hardly be considered persuasive propaganda.

The principal mistake of the ILP is to believe that capitalism can be fought without fighting against war. The struggle against war and capitalism are bound together: if one accepts the capitalist war, even with the hope of directing it, the struggle against the capitalist class has to be given up.

This is clearly demonstrated by the present policy of the ILP which is a compromise with the capitalist class in order to prevent a German victory. How can the workers in the factories for example, defend their own interests without running the risk of obstructing the successful prosecution of the war? It is useless to think that the boss will ever give in; how can the workers then defend their own interests if they have to abandon their only efficient weapon of class struggle, strike action, as is suggested in the *New Leader*. "Shop Steward" writes in the issue of July 25th:—

"To-day I dealt with 'Strikes and the War,' and the rumour circulated among the men that the Stewards are 'Fifth Columnists.'

"I explain that the Stewards are against strike action as a tactic at this present stage, because we are against Fascism of any nationality. To-day our two enemies are fighting to decide which shall exploit us. If we use strike action, which means suspension of production, we are

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government and those who see the necessity of dissolving it. And all this happens because it has not been understood that a new life requires new forms; that it is not by clinging to ancient forms that a revolution can be carried out! All this for not having understood the incompatibility of revolution and government, for not having seen that the one is, under whatever form it presents itself, the negation of the other, and that outside of Anarchy there is no such thing as revolution.

It is just the same with regard to that other form of "revolutionary government" so often extolled—a Revolutionary Dictatorship.

(Next month: "Dictatorship.")

aiding German Fascism in the battle to decide whose slaves we are to be. But if the workers are under inefficient management, thus retarding production, then the workers should strike for removal of the cause of the retarding of output."

As far as the colonial problem is concerned, the position of the ILP is not clearer. In the *New Leader* of July the 11th, one read:—

"If the British people want the French colonial peoples as allies, the first thing they should do is to insist on an immediate amnesty to all native anti-imperialist and Labour leaders now held in prison."

And in the *New Leader* of July 18th, in an article by Fenner Brockway, we read:—

"There is one gesture which would immediately make clear to the peoples within the Empire that Britain sincerely desired to break with the old régime:—

"The liberation of the political prisoners—the nationalist and Labour stalwarts who have been imprisoned for their part in the struggle against British Imperialism and economic subjection.

"This should be done not only in the British Empire but in those parts of the French Empire which are now within effective British control. If Britain wants the support of the French colonial peoples against Nazism, it must prove that it stands for their freedom. It cannot do this for the French colonial peoples without doing it for the British."

Liberation of political prisoners in the Empire now will merely prove that Britain is in a bad military position and that being afraid of losing everything she has to make a few concessions. But the colonial people should not be deceived by the sudden generosity of a weakened oppressor, and they should not feel obliged to come to its rescue.

The political compromise has gone so far that nobody in the ILP seemed shocked by a letter written by Marceau Pivert, leader of the French PSOP, to General de Gaulle (to which the *New Leader* of the 1st of August gave great prominence) asking him to reprint and widely distribute, an appeal to the German Workers. How can a socialist leader collaborate with a reactionary as General De Gaulle? What would be the value of a leaflet asking the German people to revolt when distributed by the agents of De Gaulle, allies of Churchill?

This is but one proof that the ILP is unable to carry on the fight against war with working class methods of struggle, and must always resort to bourgeois tactics.

Like all the (intelligent) bourgeois papers the *New Leader* is calling for a revolution in Germany forgetting that it hasn't the moral right to do so in view of the fact that the party is not prepared to fight against British imperialism regardless of the outcome of the military situation. This method of struggle which seems nowadays completely forgotten was called "revolutionary defeatism." An out-of-date term in this epoch of subtle politicians.

There has been quite a long discussion about political honesty and clear thinking in the *New Leader* recently. We suggest that this should be applied to the ILP in order to help it to disentangle itself from its present muddle. There is already quite enough confusion in the ranks of the working class.

M. L. B.

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