

WAR COMMENTARY

Vol. 2 No. 1 Twopence
NOVEMBER, 1940

That Wonderful Spirit!

People seem to have forgotten all that previous experience might have taught them. They have forgotten all about the last war, about general strikes and the daily class struggle. Instead of remembering these things they have fallen back into an attitude of resignation and fatalism worthy of the middle-ages. Just as a thousand years ago, the devastation of war is accepted as something inevitable like an epidemic or an earthquake. There is no enthusiasm; there may be some grumbling; but the general attitude is one of apathy. People seem disillusioned about everything, too tired to think—perhaps afraid to think.

That's what the newspapers in Britain and America call the "wonderful spirit of the English." Thanks to that "wonderful spirit" we are ready to go back two hundred years in the march of progress. We are ready for an era of increased and unresisted exploitation.

The British worker seems prepared to accept any sacrifice, if it is called for in the name of "the war effort." They work a hundred hours a week without stopping for one minute to consider the soaring dividends paid out to the shareholders

of the company they are working for. When some gross curtailment of workers' rights compels him to "take a holiday" (elegant expression for going on strike) he hastens to assure the Government that he is on strike only to improve the efficiency with which the war is prosecuted. Elsewhere in this issue we print a letter from a Scottish comrade on the attitude of strikers concerning the dismissal of their shop-stewards. Anxious to stand up for their "rights" (as understood by the lick-spittling trades unions) they are only too willing to play the exploiters game, by not embarrassing them in their struggle to maintain the domination of their class.

The Government stands convicted of the grossest inefficiency; it has exposed the workers to the full blast of the aerial attack on London (the refusal to allow Finsbury Borough Council to build deep shelters more than two years ago is worth recalling in this connexion)—and with what do the workers reply? Letters, petitions, and—stupidity or naiveté?—they offer to supply voluntary labour to construct a "demonstration" shelter (New Leader, re Building Trade of

Contents

	Page
Out of Africa, by F. A. Ridley	3
Revolutionary Government, by Peter Kropotkin	5
Use of Land, by Herbert Read	7
How the History of the Spanish War is Written	9
Left Movements and the War. III: The Communist Party ...	11
The Philosophy of Anarchism, Review by Ethel Mannin ...	13
Friendly and Unfriendly ...	15
Shop Stewards' Dispute	16

Dundee, October 10th). Just as if the Government had never heard of deep shelters, had never rejected the scheme years ago and with their eyes open, preferring to spend "their" money on Mr. Duff Cooper's employees.

There was a time when the advanced workers regarded the Government as the hereditary enemy from whom one had to try and wring as many concessions as possible. But since they have been full of that "wonderful spirit" nothing is too much for them to do to get it out of its mess.

The capitalist press also praises the wonderful spirit of the housewives. Not only do they smile or laugh (or so Fleet Street would have us believe) when their homes are reduced to a heap of rubble, but they actually refuse to live in the luxury flats offered to them....

"Miss Ellen Wilkinson the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Home Security, describing to the National Council of Women in London some of her shelter problems, remarked that there were large houses in Mayfair—whole strings of them, in fact—where people could be billeted, but people could not be persuaded to go from the Isle of Dogs to live in Eaton Square. One woman who was offered a home for her large family in Eaton Square had said to her: "Well, miss, whatever would I do with a flat in Eaton Square? Where do you think I should do my shopping, Harrods?"

—Daily Telegraph, 10,10,40

It does not seem to have occurred to Miss Wilkinson that the Government might have provided food as well as flats in expensive shopping areas.

It is hardly necessary to refer to the wonderful spirit of our ministers. Sir Kingsley Wood announced on the 16th October that Britain's war expenditure is now over £9,000,000 a day, or more than £64,000,000 a week. It is only a little more than last year, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer assures us that next year will be even better. "These figures," he said, "afforded encouraging evidence of the progress of our war effort." "I hope," he added, "that the rate of expenditure will be even further expanded. According to the estimates I have, I am not asking for a sum sufficient for the rest of the financial year, but only a vote on account." (Daily Telegraph, 17th October, 1940.)

Stupid, unconscious, egotistical—that is our ruling class; and the workers do not put up the slightest resistance because they

don't understand the present situation; and are too apathetic and disillusioned to imagine a better future. If they had faith in it they would react, they would be shaken by an immense anger which would transform the world.

War Commentary cannot, because of lack of space, devote many articles to Anarchist theories. If you want to learn more about our ideas order some books and pamphlets from
Freedom Press Distributors.

On Anarchism

Anarchy by E. Malatesta	3d.
Modern Science and Anarchism, by P. Kropotkin	6d.
Anarchist-Communism, by P. Kropotkin	6d.
Anarchism, by Emma Goldman ...	2d.
Objections to Anarchism, by G. Barrett	2d.
The Anarchist Revolution, by G. Barrett	1d.
Anarcho-Syndicalism, by R. Rocker (postage 3d.)	1/3
Poetry and Anarchism, by H. Read (Postage 4d.)	6/-
Philosophy of Anarchism, by H. Read (Postage 2d.)	6d.

(Postage on all pamphlets 1d. extra unless otherwise marked).

Cash with orders should be sent to
FREEDOM PRESS DISTRIBUTORS
9, Newbury Street, London, E.C.1

OUT OF AFRICA

AT the commencement of the Christian era the Roman philosopher and politician Seneca declared that "Out of Africa, something new can always appear."

Modern Imperialist statesmen have effectually revised this aphorism, so as to read: "Out of Africa something new can always be got."

At least, that is the unwritten assumption upon which the practice of European governments in Africa appears to be invariably based.

Speaking generally, one can say that Africa, down to about 1870, remained essentially "the dark continent" par excellence. White settlements remained isolated in coastal "posts," and though a steady stream of "black ivory"—negroes en route for the slave markets of the Old and New Worlds—poured across the Atlantic, yet the African slaves were usually caught wholesale by other Africans and were only transported by ships of European origin. Such a mode of exploitation did not require the internal penetration of Africa by Europeans and the interior of the whole vast continent remained terra incognita down to the last generation of the 19th century.

(N.B.—Of course, religion, morals and unlimited humbug got mixed up with the slave trade. Queen Elizabeth had shares in a slave ship, appropriately known as the "Jesus." John Newton, a well-known hymn writer, was a practising slave-merchant. A. Dalsell in his standard "History of Dahomey" congratulated his slaving colleagues on "saving so many unhappy negroes from the blood stained altars of human sacrifice." Liverpool and Bristol were "made" by the slave-trade; as was the family fortune of that great champion of "democracy," W. E. Gladstone, the grand old man of British Liberalism).

The rise of Imperialism—using the term in its Leninist sense as the world politics of finance-capital—about 1870, completely changed the whole manner of European approach to Africa. Instead of slaves coming out, capital went in. Indeed, the wholesale export—slavery became "immoral" uneconomic, since the labour power of the "natives" was, now and henceforth wanted on the spot to produce dividends for the vast floods of capital which thereafter poured into Africa. It is obvious that this method of exploitation would be impossible in an un-

ganized society, and that consequently, the actual occupation of the soil was, henceforth, necessary. Hence there promptly began that "scramble for Africa," one of the greatest crimes in all history, which, between 1870 and 1936, divided up the whole of Africa

By F. A. Ridley

Author of "Mussolini Over Africa, "Next Year's War," etc., etc.

(with the nominal exception of Liberia, actually a puppet state ruthlessly exploited by American finance capital, as George Padmore has effectually demonstrated in a striking pamphlet).

The Ashantee and Zulu wars in the seventies may be styled the commencement of this process, which was ended by Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia in 1935-6. Throughout, the vast technical inferiority of the African races precluded all hope of effective African resistance. Though such isolated victories as Zulu Tsandewhana (1879) and Ethiopian Adowa (1896) demonstrated the military possibilities of Africa when once her technical handicap was overcome.

So much for the conquest and exploitation of Africa up to date. By September 3rd, 1939, the date of the second Imperialist war, the vast continent was effectively controlled by England and France, these "democratic" and "satiated" Empires owned virtually the entire continent (along with their vassals, "democratic" Belgium and "totalitarian" Portugal both equally pre-war pawns of Anglo-French Imperialism).

The only exceptions to the above were constituted by Mussolini's newly acquired African "empire"—actually some desert colonies in north and east Africa, plus an imperfectly subjugated Ethiopia; all of them previously passed by by the great Imperialist powers as not worth picking up! England temporarily occupied Ethiopia in 1868! There was also an insignificant Spanish coastal fringe in N. Africa, Morocco and the Sahara seaboard.

With these not important exceptions, the whole continent was an Anglo-French reserve—Britain predominating in the East and South, France in the North and West.

Germany which had belatedly joined the "scramble" at the very end of the last century, and had occupied some not very valuable colonies, mainly in East Africa, had been thrown bag and baggage out of the continent as a result of her decisive defeat in the first Imperialist war—1914-1918, which had made the world and Africa!—"safe for democracy," or, at least, for the democratic Empires—if such a contradiction in terms can be allowed to pass muster.

Everything now indicates that the present Imperialist war is due to expand from a European to the genuine world scale; and that Africa, in the first instance, Egypt, the all important key to Suez and Indian Ocean route is going to become a leading sphere of military operations.

The war, itself fought so largely for motives of African exploitation, is itself, if present indications can be considered as a reliable guide, destined to be fought out largely on African soil.

What is the political character of this war, both generally, and also specifically as far as Africa itself is considered? In general, it is hardly necessary to point out at this time of the day that the present world conflict has no conceivable relation to any kind of progressive ideas and this is so particularly with relation to the war aim of Anglo-French Imperialism—the latter now represented by General de Gaulle and his adherents.

In this struggle for political existence between not Fascism and Democracy—as in the Churchill-Labour Party-Popular Front (of yesterday) mythology—but between the "hungry" and the "satiated" empires—Germany-Italy-Japan versus Britain-America-France (pre-armistice)—such dynamic quality as there is, adheres to the former, by virtue of its historical background not, of course, that it is in itself in any way progressive, merely to revise the world-map in an imperialist sense. As for the "war-aims" of the "satiated" empires these can be stated quite briefly: to preserve the status quo ante unaltered down to the last collar-stud and court-flunkey's button exactly as they were on the 1st of September, 1939, at dawn, when Hitler initiated the present war by crossing the frontier of Poland.

In the case of Africa, this "programme" boils itself down to this: "What we have, we hold." Nowhere, in fact, was this fundamental attitude better stated than by the Liberal leader, Lord Crewe, in an article

recently published in De Gaulle's subsidized publication "France" (a periodical run in the closest connection with British Government circles). This article (written in French, and therefore not for the masses who read the "Left" Press on our supposed war aims) was quite explicit. The entire French colonial Empire Africa very especially is to be restored intact to its "legitimate" owner, Imperialist France. Considering who wrote it and where it appeared, we recommend it as an effective antidote to those benighted souls who still believe that this is a war for freedom (Cp. "France," 12th September, 1940).

In the military sense, though prophecy is outside the scope of this article, it would not be at all surprising if the coming invasion of Egypt proves to be decisive, not only with regard to Africa, but even as regards the British Empire taken as a whole. For as far back as 1798, long before the Suez Canal, Napoleon declared that, by conquering Egypt, British Power in India and the East could be most effectually destroyed. To-day, of course, this is so more than ever thanks to the Suez strategic route to the East. There is, in any case, abundant evidence to demonstrate how closely Hitler, Mussolini, and the German General Staff have followed in the footsteps of the Imperial Corsican; both the greatest of modern strategists and also the most dangerous enemy the British Empire has ever had to face until now. In fact, in the course of the last generation, two eminent political writers—Paul Kohrback and Max Gruhl, have indicated Egypt and the Red Sea littoral as the probable scene of the coming death blow to the British World Empire (cp. Kohrback "The Baghdad Route," and M. Gruhl, "The Citadel of Ethiopia").

Be that as it may, it is not open to dispute, that, as far as Africa is concerned, the present phase is one of a life-and-death struggle between Anglo-French and German-Italian Imperialism. Or, to take only the primary combatants; between Imperialist Britain and Imperialist Germany. So far, from Paris to Dakar it has been victory all the way for Germany and her satellites.

Who will win the war we do not know. But this, at least, can already be stated with absolute certainty; in Africa as elsewhere. Whoever wins, the masses will continue to be slaves. For light and dark continents alike; the future has only one hope; it is contained in two words: World Revolution!

Revolutionary Government

By Peter Kropotkin

This is the last of a series of three articles written many years ago. We are reprinting them in a pamphlet (see advt. on p. 14) together with an introduction. In this attention will be drawn to the correctness of Kropotkin's reasoning, as illustrated by specific examples from more recent revolutionary history.

III. The Impotence of Revolutionary Government.

TO imagine that a government can be overturned by a secret society, and that secret society can take its place, is an error into which have fallen all the revolutionary organisations which sprang to life in the bosom of the republican middle class since 1820. And yet facts abound which prove what an error it is. What devotion, what abnegation, what perseverance was not displayed by the republican secret societies of the Young Italy Party! And yet all this immense work, all these sacrifices made by the youth of Italy, before which even those of the Russian revolutionary youth pale, all the corpses piled up in the casemates of Austrian fortresses, and under the knife and bullets of the executioner — all this only brought into power the crafty, robbing middle class and royalty!

It is inevitable, it cannot be otherwise. For it is not secret societies nor even revolutionary organisations that can give the finishing blow to governments. Their function, their historic mission is to prepare men's minds for the revolution, and then when men's minds are prepared and external circumstances are favourable, the final rush is made, not by the group that initiated the movement, but by the mass of the people altogether outside of the society. On the 31st of August Paris was deaf to the appeals of Blanqui. Four days later he proclaimed the fall of the government; but then the Blanquists were no longer the initiators of the movement. It was the people, the millions who dethroned the man of December, and proclaimed the humbugs whose names for two years had resounded in their ears. When a Revolution is ready to burst out,

when the movement is felt in the air, when its success is already certain, then a thousand and new men, on whom the organisation has never exercised any direct influence, come and join the movement, like birds of prey coming to the field of battle to feed on the victims. These help to make the final effort, but it is not in the ranks of the sincere and irreconcilable conspirators, it is among the men on the fence that they look for their leaders. The conspirators who still are possessed with the prejudice of a dictatorship work then unconsciously to put into power their own enemies.

But if all this that we have just said is true with regard to political revolutions or rather outbreaks, it is much more true with regard to the revolution we desire — the social revolution. To allow any government to be established, a strong and recognised power, is to paralyse the work of the revolution at once. The good that this government would do is nil, and the evil immense.

What do we understand by Revolution? It is not a simple change of governors. It is the taking possession by the people of all social wealth. It is the abolition of all the forces which have so long hampered the development of humanity. But is it by decrees emanating from a government that this immense economic revolution can be accomplished? We have seen in the past century the Polish revolutionary dictator Kosciusko decree the abolition of personal servitude, yet the servitude continued to exist for eighty years after this decree. We have seen the Convention, the omnipotent Convention, the terrible Convention as its admirers call it, decree the equal division per head of all the communal lands taken back from the nobles. Like so many others, this decree remained a dead letter because in order to carry it out it was necessary that the proletarians of the rural districts should make an entirely new revolution, and revolutions are not made by the force of decrees. In order

that the taking possession of social wealth should become an accomplished fact it is necessary that the people should have their hands free, that they would shake off the slavery to which they are too much habituated, that they act according to their own will, and march forward without waiting for orders from anyone. And it is this very thing which a dictatorship would prevent however well intentioned it might be, while it would be incapable of advancing in the slightest degree the march of the Revolution.

But if government, were it even an ideal revolutionary government, creates no new force and is of no use whatever in the work of demolition which we have to accomplish, still less can we count on it for the work of reorganisation which must follow that of demolition. The economic change which will result from the Social Revolution will be so immense and so profound, it must so change all the relations based to-day on property and exchange, that it is impossible for one or any individual to elaborate the different social forms which must spring up in the society of the future. This elaboration of new social forms can only be made by the collective work of the masses. To satisfy the immense variety of conditions and needs which will spring up as soon as private property shall be abolished, it is necessary to have the collective suppleness of mind of the whole people. Any authority external to it will only be an obstacle, and beside that a source of discord and hatred.

But it is full time to give up this illusion, so often proved false and so often dearly paid for, of a revolutionary government. It is time to admit, once for all, this political axiom that a government cannot be revolutionary. People talk of the Convention, but let us not forget that the few measures taken by the Convention, little revolutionary though they were, were only the sanction of action accomplished by the people who at the time trampled under foot all governments. As Victor Hugo has said, Danton pushed forward Robespierre, Marat watched and pushed on Danton, and Marat himself

was pushed on by Cimourdain—this personification of the clubs of wild enthusiasts and rebels. Like all the governments that preceded it and followed it, the Convention was only a drag on the action of the people.

The facts which history teach us are so conclusive in this respect, the impossibility of a revolutionary government and the injurious effect of that which is called by the name are so evident, that it would seem difficult to explain the determination with which a certain school calling itself socialist maintains the idea of a government. But the explanation is very simple. It is that socialists, though they say they are the followers of this school, have an entirely different conception from ours of the Revolution which we have to accomplish. For them, as for all the middle-class radicals, the social revolution is rather an affair of the future about which we have not to think much at present. What they dream of in their inmost thoughts, though they don't dare to confess it, is something entirely different. It is the installation of a government like that of Switzerland or the United States, making some attempts at expropriation in favour of the State of what they call "public services." It is something after the ideal of Bismarck. It is a compromise made in advance between the socialistic aspirations of the masses and the desires of the middle class. They would, indeed, wish the expropriation to be complete, but they have not the courage to attempt it; so they put it off to the next century, and before the battle they enter into negotiation with the enemy.

For us who understand that the moment is near for giving a mortal blow to the middle class, that the time is not far off when the people will be able to lay their hands on all social wealth and reduce the class of exploiters to a state of impotence, for us, I say, there can be no hesitation in the matter. We fling ourselves body and soul into the social revolution, and as on the road we follow, a government, whatever may be its device, is an obstacle, we will sweep from our path all ambitious men, however they shall come to thrust themselves upon us as governors of our destinies.

Use of Land

Under this title, on October 1st, Bernard Shaw opened a debate in the "Times" which, at the moment of writing is still proceeding. It is an important subject, and one which will become desperately urgent in the years immediately ahead of us. Since the "Times" is not likely to give publicity to our views on the subject, let us begin our own debate. The subject has not been usefully considered by the anarchist movement since Kropotkin published his "Fields, Factories and Workshops," and meanwhile the elements of the problem have been completely transformed. I am not forgetting the instructive experiments that took place in Spain during the brief existence of the Republic, but there the conditions were so different that they have little bearing on the agricultural policy of this country.

Shaw exhorts us to take a leaf out of Stalin's book and organize our agriculture on modern lines. In a few sentences which summarize the facts but do not recount the cost, he describes the stages by which Russia passed from a primitive agricultural community to one vast collective farm. He invites this country to follow the same steps, if not the same stages: he seems to imply that we might even take a short cut.

It is difficult to discuss the working of the present Russian agricultural system because the facts are obscure; there are no reliable reports from detached observers, and no statistics of any value. All we can be reasonably sure of is that the position is much better than it used to be, and that if Russia is not producing enough to give a square meal and a little over to every inhabitant, it is at least avoiding the famines of recent years.

By comparison our own system is hopelessly wasteful and antiquated—and "antiquated" is perhaps not the appropriate word, for as Lord Bledisloe says ("Times," of October 14th) "we have to-day (unlike a century ago) an agricultural community which, taken as a whole, is more deficient in up-to-date farming knowledge and less adequately equipped with personal supervision and personal guidance than that of any other civilized country, not excluding those whose claims to civilization are temporarily blackened by insensate relapse into ethical

and physical barbarity." We cannot therefore claim that we have nothing to learn from the Russian experiments. We have, indeed, almost everything to learn from them, and the lesson is somewhat disingenuously hidden in a sentence of Mr. Shaw's. Stalin, he says, "found the solution

by Herbert Read

in collective farming, State and co-operative, but mainly co-operative." A truer statement of the facts would be: Stalin found the solution in a certain measure of collective farming, after he had failed to establish State farming. The orthodox Marxist scheme was a tragic failure, and merely resulted in famine and the deaths of untold millions of human beings. So State farming was abandoned and a compromise scheme of co-operative or collective farming quickly substituted, with much more success. In 1931, according to the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow, 1939) there were only 4,000 state farms as against 200,000 collective farms. Figures for later years are not given, but it is stated that by the end of 1934 the collective farms "embraced about three-quarters of all the peasant households in the Soviet Union, and about 90 percent. of the total crop area" (op. cit., p. 318). Trotsky (*The Revolution Betrayed*) states (1936) that "94 per cent. of the entire agricultural product is taken from the fields of the collective farms."

What is a collective farm in the Soviet Union? It is officially defined as "an agricultural artel in which only the principal means of production are collectivized." This means, in effect, that "the principal means of production, chiefly those used in grain growing, are collectivized, while household land, dwellings, part of the dairy cattle, small livestock, poultry, etc., are not collectivized" (op. cit., p. 308). Now, though this departure from Marxist socialism is justified as good Leninism, that is to say, good opportunism, in so far as it departs from centralized state control of farming, it actually represents sound agricultural policy and sound Anarchism. Its justification will be found in the works of Kropotkin rather than in those of Lenin. But let us leave polemics and turn to the English problem.

The solution of the agricultural problem in this country does not consist in expropriating the yeoman or tenant farmers, ploughing

up the hedges and ditches, and driving tractors over desolate stretches of open land—"cultivating these isles by the million acres," as Mr. Shaw puts it. It is true that the small farm of from fifty to five hundred acres is an anomaly—uneconomic in man power and machine power and in all the problems of distribution. It is true that many farmers are scientifically incompetent and, what seems to distress Mr. Shaw even more, incapable of making out their income-tax returns. But they have a good deal of traditional wisdom which is valuable, and they have an intimate knowledge of their land—and a good farmer must know the substance and texture of every square inch of his soil. All that knowledge goes down the drain if you simply expropriate these kulaks and replace them by a mechanic on a tractor.

The unrestricted application of mechanized methods to agriculture has not yet been proved an unquestioned benefit—any more than has the use of artificial manures. As the "dust-bowls" of America prove, the land is apt to resent such "inhuman" methods. Mr. Shaw's state farms "cultivating these isles by the million acres" would quickly bring about the same results here. Agriculture demands a certain minimum density of population, human beings and cattle, whose waste products feed the soil. But nobody but a medievalist or a mystic like Giono wants to abolish the tractor or to rely entirely on farmyard manure. What we want is a common-sense use of the power and products of modern science (and it is the scientists who have exposed the technical abuse of the soil), remembering that these should be used for the benefit of mankind, and not for the creation of profits or the provision of statistics for politicians.

What, then, is the solution of our land problem? I can best describe it in a series of practical proposals:—

- (1) Abolish the private ownership of land.
- (2) Abolish rent.
- (3) Abolish all farms of more than fifty acres in extent.*

*Fifty acres—it might be less, but it would have to be something a good deal more than Jesse Colling's "three acres and a cow." It must provide, not only

for a man's family, but for the daily needs of the workers on the collective, many of whom would normally belong to these family units.

- (4) Group these small-holdings round "open fields"—undivided land of several hundred (or even thousand) acres extent.
- (5) Plan these collective farms on a regional basis for the provision of the principal means of production, "chiefly those used in grain growing."
- (6) Establish for each region a fully equipped agricultural research station, where information and guidance will be freely available to all the collective farmers within the region.
- (7) In place of rent for small-holdings, exact a contribution of labour-units of work on the collective farm.
- (8) Let the workers on the collective farms elect councils whose duty it will be to appoint scientific managers, accountants, etc.
- (9) Abolish the Ministry of Agriculture.
- (10) In these, and many other subsidiary ways, preserve the essentials of sound farming, viz.:
 - (a) the interplay of individual and collective motives;
 - (b) a sufficiency of human beings and livestock on the land to maintain the organic life of the soil;
 - (c) the community life of the countryside.

Meanwhile another complementary process should be going on—the decentralization of industry. This would distribute the population more evenly, help to solve problems of transport and distribution, and generally make for balanced, harmonious communities.

NOTE.

Although we are not wholly in agreement with this article—especially regarding the author's view of collectivization in Russia—we, nevertheless welcome it as directing attention to a problem of outstanding importance. We hope that the suggestion of a debate on this issue will be followed up

EDITORS.

How the History of the Spanish War is written

*Freedom's Battle: J. Alvarez del Vayo. 1940. Heinemann. 15s.)

Alvarez del Vayo could have written an interesting book on the Spanish war, if he had wished to relate his experiences with sincerity. Unfortunately he has not disclosed anything about the internal politics with which he has been closely connected. The whole book (except where he deals with non-intervention) shows that he is anxious to prove that there has been no revolution in Spain; that what took place was merely a war for the independence of a democratic country against the fascist invader. To write the history of the Spanish war without mentioning the work carried out by the revolutionary parties and syndicalist organisations will seem a rather difficult task to those who know how closely the war was connected with the revolution for the Spanish people. But Alvarez del Vayo is writing for the average Englishman and American completely ignorant of Spanish affairs, and he knows that his tale will be accepted and believed, and this his distortions will pass unnoticed.

How is the seizure of the land by the armed peasants, and of the factories by the workers described in del Vayo's book? (p. 140):

"By a decree of October 7th, 1936, the Republican State carried out the expropriation of the estates of all landowners who had taken part in the rebel movement, and these were distributed among the smallholders and farm labourers . . . It was a strictly legal measure, based on Article 44 of the Spanish Constitution . . .

Needless to say that the Catalan and Castilian peasants didn't wait for the decree of the government in order to take their land, the government only legalised the state of affairs that had already been in existence for more than two months, because it was powerless to do otherwise.

The socialization of industry must have been another dream of exalted spirits, if one is to believe del Vayo:

"The Management Committees of these factories often consisted of simple workmen not because the Republic had decided, for any doctrinal reason, to socialize industry, but because in many cases the former directors of the factories had abandoned them in the early days of the war . . ."

Spanish War is written

What del Vayo is afraid to say lest he should hurt the feelings of his respectable readers is that when the directors or owners had not abandoned their factories they were often executed by the workers—a natural revenge after years of exploitation and repression—who then organized their factories on a socialist or anarchist basis, abolishing private profits and inequalities of salaries. Most of Spanish industry and transport was organized by the syndicates in the first days of the revolution with excellent results.

Another tale which it is difficult to believe is that Russia did not intervene in Spanish affairs. The communist press itself, the confessions of Stalin's agents, the testimonials of people cross-examined by Russian Cheka men, all give ample proof of the direct intervention of Russia. We shall not go into details here as these are well known facts accepted by everyone except people of ill-faith.

I want, however, to give an example of the way del Vayo writes history. Since it would be impossible, in one article, to deal with all the omissions and distortions contained in this book, I will confine myself to correcting the account of the events at Tarancon, which are not well known to the British public, but are of great significance for the understanding of Spanish affairs.

The Incident at Tarancon

When, at the beginning of November, 1936, Madrid was surrounded by the Fascist troops, the government decided to leave the capital for Valencia. The ministers left Madrid by car on the 6th of November but were stopped at Tarancon (a small village 45 miles from Madrid). Tarancon was occupied by the "Columna del Rosal" which was under anarchist control and whose leader Francisco del Rosal has been later military governor of Lerida. The commander of the column had received an order to prevent people with arms from leaving Madrid as all available arms were needed for the defence of the city. The cars of the ministers leaving Madrid were stopped like the others and when the militiamen

discovered to their great indignation, that the members of the government were fleeing to Valencia they prevented the cars from going any further. Jose Vilanueva and Feliciano Benito, leaders of the column, decided to keep the four ministers under control while they were getting in touch with members of the anarchist organization in order to know whether they were to be put under lock and key, or rather shot.

One may find it hard to understand why those anarchist militiamen thought of getting rid of the government at that critical moment. But it must be remembered that the government had shown once more its inefficiency by leaving the defence of Madrid in the hands of the syndicalist organizations and revolutionary parties and that it had aroused popular indignation by fleeing while thousands of militiamen were sacrificing their lives. The government appeared incompetent, cowardly, irresponsible; why not suppress it and go forward with the war and the revolution? The newspapers of those days came out with big headlines "Viva Madrid sin gobierno" (long life to Madrid without a government)—Madrid boasted of fighting better without a government but at the same time felt that a government which had no "raison d'etre," and only demoralized the people by its cowardice, should be suppressed. . . .

That's how the militiamen of Tarancon felt and while guarding the four ministers (the others had taken another route probably having an intuition of the danger) they phoned the headquarters of the anarcho-syndicalist organization (C.N.T.) in Madrid: "What are we to do with those ministers"—Eduardo Val, one of the best anarchist militants in Madrid and one of the organizers of the defence of Madrid, answered on the phone. He agreed that the ministers deserved to be brought back to Madrid to fight at the head of the Columna del Rosal or to be shot, but the whole government should have been suppressed. And the government contained four anarchist ministers since the beginning of November and those ministers, though opposed at first to leav-

ing Madrid, had agreed in the end and were already in Valencia. If the anarchist organization ordered the shooting of the ministers of other parties while its own had escaped it would be discredited before the masses. That is why Eduardo Val gave the order (by phone and then in writing) to free the captive ministers.

It is hardly necessary to point out the interest of this incident. The militiamen of Tarancon realized how harmful the government was, they wanted to suppress it, in order to give a new impulse to the revolution. The members of the syndicates were defending Madrid and it was to them that the task of ruling themselves should have fallen. What right had a Caballero or a del Vayo to rule them while outside the struggle? It was for the militiamen and workers of Madrid to take control of the finance and see that arms were bought, to take control of the supplies of arms and ammunitions and see that they were all sent to the front line and distributed equally. To ensure the success of the revolution the government had to be suppressed, but by entering the government, by allying themselves with the instrument of reaction the anarchist leaders had paralysed the rank and file and thereby prevented the revolution from being saved at Tarancon.

One of the ministers who had the misfortune to be stopped at Tarancon was Senor Del Vayo. When Jose Vilanueva reluctantly liberated him and his companions he told them:

"The organisation against my will frees you. You can go to Valencia. But don't forget your flight nor the heroism with which the people of Madrid is fighting." Senor Del Vayo did not forget and one can understand that the incident left in him some bitterness. However this does not justify the falsified account he gives of what happened and the accusations with which he charges the comrades who arrested him.

The Columna del Rosal composed of militiamen who had fought at Siguenza, and of Madrid workers and peasants becomes in Del Vayo's book the "Iron Column" behind which "fine sounding name"—according to him—"a whole series of undesirables, armed with rifles and obeying no law but their own, were sowing terror on all sides . . ." "The local chief," he goes on, "was a man whom I had known since the

revolutionary movement of 1930 preceded the Republic, and whose connections with the police of that time had given grounds for suspecting him of being nothing but a common informer."

A column of murderers and thieves whose leader was an informer—that's how Del Vayo describes the column which fought in Siguenza and in Madrid with great heroism. The name of the common informer is not even given though one might think that the least one can do is to name the person against whom such charges are brought.

Was the common informer Feliciano Benito, old anarchist militant, defender of Siguenza and shot by Franco after the defeat?

Was he Jose Vilanueva, commissar of the 12th division who fought on the Madrid front and died in the front line at Teruel?

Del Vayo assures us that a punitive expedition was sent from Valencia in order "to put an immediate end to the domination of the Iron Column over Tarancon." There was no punitive expedition. The Columna del Rosal left Tarancon in order to go to the defence of Madrid while the "Iron Column" incidentally was never at Tarancon, but operated exclusively in Catalonia and Levante.

Not content with falsifying the whole aspect of the civil war in Spain by forgetting to mention the revolution on the one hand, and the action of Russia on the other, Del Vayo modifies even the smallest incidents. I hope the example given above will show how careful one has to be when reading this kind of book.

M. L. B.

The Philosophy of Anarchism

by Herbert Read

The author of "Poetry and Anarchism" which was a revelation to so many struggling in the political wilderness, is a message to workers and intellectuals alike to struggle for a new world based on the principles which individually most men and women hold dear but which collectively are stifled by their rulers.

No one should miss Herbert Read's

Philosophy of Anarchism

attractively presented in pamphlet form price 6d. (postage 2d.) or in book form (edition limited to 500 copies) 2s. 6d. (postage 3d.) from your bookseller or by post from the publishers

FREEDOM PRESS DISTRIBUTORS,
9, NEWBURY ST., LONDON, E.C.1.

(Make sure that your public library includes The Philosophy of Anarchism on its shelves).

Left Movements and the War

III. The Communist Party

An article on Communist Party Politics and the war appeared in the first issue of War Commentary—one year ago. We do not therefore intend to recapitulate the notorious volte-face, and the abject "recapitulations" of Harry Pollitt and J. R. Campbell which followed. Nor is it necessary to dwell on the party's connection with Moscow, since their affiliation to the Comintern necessitates it, and it is not, from their point of view, something to be explained away. In the situation in which we find ourselves to-day, mere reviling of the opportunist tactics of the Communist Party is of doubtful value; we shall attempt a brief analysis of the effects of those tactics, in order to appraise them in the light of the revolutionary struggle of the working-class.

The change-over from open support ("How to win the war") to apparent opposition, has been widely discussed by the Left press, and is admitted by all party members; but the point that has not been made clear is that the Communist Party has never been opposed to the war in any fundamentally revolutionary sense at all.

Communist Party propaganda in support of the war was based on the "Democracy versus Fascism" myth, a hang-over from the Front Populaire days. This propaganda did untold damage to the Spanish revolutionary struggle, representing as it did the slogan of the counter-revolution. Since the volte-face the slogan has changed in form, but not in essence. R. Palme Dutt, in his recent report—unanimously accepted—to the Central Committee of the C.P.G.B. ("Daily Worker," 27th May, 1940) stated as one of the aims of the party "a new government based on the working masses of the people and for the working class way out of the war." The legend which now appears above the leading article in the "Daily Worker," reads: "for a People's government that will defend the people and lead forward to peace and a free Socialist Britain." (They do not state what a "people's government" is, nor indicate how it is to be achieved.) In short, we must have "real democracy" and smash fascism. The significant point is the failure to point out that revolutionary action is the only way to oppose both Fascism and bourgeois democracy. One recalls, in this connection, the denunciation in the "Daily Worker" for 6th August, 1936, of those who said that the Spanish people were fighting for anything other than bourgeois democracy, as "downright lying scoundrels." The tentative conclusion is that although the Communist Party is opposed to Fascism (but what about the Soviet-Nazi pact?) it is not against its precursor, bourgeois democracy. When Victor Gollancz attacked the French Communist Party, stating that to have attempted revolution would merely have opened the front to Hitler, the "Daily Worker" for 24th July, 1940, comes right out into the open:

"... in the first place, who asked for a revolution? If Mr. Gollancz will turn to the French Communist Declaration 'We Accuse,' and to the declaration issued just before the capitulation, he will find not a call to revolution, but for the restoration of democratic rights, and for a people's government."

Mr. Gollancz had evidently made the error of imagining that the French Communist Party, at all events, was a revolutionary party. But it is as well to remember the collaboration methods of the Popular Front, and the alliance of the Spanish Communist Party with the bourgeoisie for the purpose of destroying the collectivizations established by the Anarchists after the revolution of the 19th July. Lenin's remarks, in "State and Revolution," on the nature of "democracy," and his ridiculing of the "people's state," and the "people's free state," make instructive reading in the light of the recent trend in Communist propaganda.

Since the Communist Party is at such pains to rebut the charge of revolutionary intent, it is not surprising to find the following declaration in the Communist International Seventh Congress Thesis on War quoted by Palme Dutt:

"The Congress at the same time warns communists and revolutionary workers (!) against anarcho-syndicalist methods of struggle against war, which take the form of refusing to appear for military service, the form of a so-called boycott of mobilization, of committing sabotage in war plants, etc. The Congress considers that such methods of struggle only do harm to the proletariat."

Palme Dutt goes on to exclaim:

"It is infamous enough that such filthy lies (i.e., that the Communist Party engages in such methods of struggle) should be printed in the prostitute Press of the millionaires: what are we to say of "Socialists" and "Labour" spokesmen who repeat them and thus enter into the service of reaction for the destruction of democracy in Britain?"

There is no doubt of his indignation, nor of his concern for democracy. But what is the effect of this insistence on democracy, this soft-peddling of revolutionary action? Clearly to discourage the workers from taking the initiative themselves. Instead of adopting efficacious methods of struggle against the imperialist war, the Communist Party opposes their use, and limits itself to "demands" from the Government. Thus, prior to the collapse of France, the "Daily Worker" gave great prominence to Anti-War resolutions of local Labour parties, Co-op bodies and so on; since the Vichy capitulation "guilty men" resolutions, agitation for deep shelters and such like have been chiefly featured. From a revolutionary standpoint, these demands and petitions from the government are merely repellant. Concessions are wrung from the ruling-class only by the direct action of the workers. They must take what they want, not merely ask for it. The ineffectiveness of mere appeals, even when they have a considerable mass support, as in the demands for "Arms for Spain," has been demonstrated over and over again. The Communist Party leaders are sufficiently realist in political matters to be aware of this; but since they persist in the advocacy and employment of such methods one may reasonably conclude that they are

not interested in the achievement of their demands, but use them merely as propaganda. In the same way they draw attention to the evacuation of upper-class children to Canada, the empty mansions of the rich and the homeless poor, fur coats and cigars, etc.; the emphasis is laid so as to excite the envy of the workers. But they conclude by merely demanding higher wages, instead of pointing the way to the abolition of wage-slavery and the destruction of the class-society.



Denunciation of revolution and direct action; ineffectual demands from the government; appeals to the property sense; the effect of such propaganda is always the same. It deflects the attention of the working-class from the essential nature of the class-struggle, and from the only means of terminating class domination—the social revolution. Voicing the demand of the moment is a demagogic means of acquiring support for the party; but its chief effect is to assist the reactionary classes by pointing the way to allay the discontent of the masses, and to deflect attention from the class-struggle. Again, if one credits the party leaders with a degree of political realism, one must assume that this is the effect they aim at. Of course, revolution is frequently mentioned, but the origin of the party and its nominal adherence to the teachings of Lenin and Marx make that hardly avoidable; yet the official utterances already quoted make it possible to assess these “revolutionary” intentions at their true worth.

In one respect, nevertheless, the Communist Party have adhered very closely to Leninist theory—regarding the doctrine of the necessity for a highly disciplined “vanguard” minority to lead the masses. This “necessity” arises from a disillusionment in the ability of the masses to take the initiative themselves. Once accepted, however, it follows that initiative must be kept in the hands of the party alone; or, at the least, must always be directed by, and find its expression through, the party leadership. The point seems now to have been reached when the existence of revolutionary initiative on the part of the working-class would deprive the Communist Party of its *raison d'être*, so that it must at all cost be side-tracked and dissipated. The party has what amounts to a “vested interest” in keeping initiative from the workers, thereby exhibiting a certain parallelism of interests with the capitalist class. This does not necessarily imply an incredible degree of machiavellianism on the part of communists; Lenin's theory is exceptionally plausible, and since it opens the door to opportunist tactics, all that is required of rank and file members, to justify the party line, is faith in the working-class aim of the party. As we have seen, however, from our brief analysis of their propaganda, their Popular Front tactics, and their adherence to the power-political necessities of Stalin's foreign policy, it is just this integrity of aim that one has reason to doubt.

J. H.

To Our Readers

We have received recently many letters of encouragement and appreciation from our readers. Some of them contained a contribution to our Press Fund which has decreased our deficit a little. We are particularly grateful to our American comrades who gave us in the past such a great support—one of them S. L. S. (New York) sending 5 dollars writes: “Your little paper is excellent. I find its superior literary quality especially pleasing.” Another reader from S.W.18 writes: “Many thanks for War Commentary, which I read with great interest. I think it is about the only Left journal which has neither deteriorated nor ‘gone off the rails’ owing to the war situation.”

Several readers disagree with the paper but find it interesting and stimulating as this reader, F. R. (Ashford) who finds War Commentary “violent, brutal and therefore one-sided” but renews his subscription.

Because we are “extremists,” because we take an uncompromised attitude against Capitalism and war, because we remain alone in the Third Camp we need the support of our readers and comrades.

We publish below a list of the money received last month towards the Press Fund. Let us hope that it will be longer next time.

PRESS FUND

We would like to thank those comrades who have written to us letters of encouragement and appreciation. We hope that our other readers will assist us by subscribing to the press fund, renewing their subscriptions, and by making the paper more widely read and so increasing the number of subscribers.

Cornwall: R.A. ...	2/6	New York: S.L.S.	£1/4/8
Birmingham: A.P.R.	2/6	London: J.H.	£1/10/0
Conn (U.S.A.): J.P.	1/-	London: F.C.D.	1/-
St. Ives: J.P.	2/-	London: T.B.	5/-
Dartford: E.G.L.	2/6	Cornwall: R.S.B.	10/-
Stroud: L.W.	10/-	Dover: A. Mc.K.	5/-

NOTE

Owing to the present conditions of postal service, we request all our readers who send us money to send crossed cheques or postal orders payable to Freedom Press Distributors. Any treasury notes should be sent by registered post. We will acknowledge by return of post all sums of 2s. or more, and contributors not receiving this acknowledgment within 10 days of posting should inform us of the fact and at the same time make enquiries at their local post-office, in the case of P.O.'s. and registered letters.

Be sure of receiving War Commentary each month by becoming a subscriber.

12 months 2/6 post free

6 months 1/6 post free

FREEDOM PRESS DISTRIBUTORS
9 Newbury Street, London, E.C.1

BOOKS

The Philosophy of Anarchism

Review by Ethel Mannin

BECAUSE, "the characteristic political attitude of to-day is not one of positive belief, but of despair," to quote Herbert Read's own words, the timeliness of his little booklet, *The Philosophy of Anarchism*, cannot be over-emphasised. In his *Poetry and Anarchism* the case for anarchism as a philosophy for daily living was stated with passion and vision; in this present essay he shows that philosophy in relation to the crisis and chaos of our times. Half-measures, he points out, have failed in the solving of society's problems, "and now the inevitable catastrophe has overwhelmed us. Whether that catastrophe is the final paroxysm of a doomed system, leaving the world darker and more despairing than ever; or whether it is the prelude to a spontaneous and universal insurrection, will depend on a swift apprehension of the destiny that is upon us. Faith in the fundamental goodness of man; humility in the presence of natural law; reason and mutual aid—these are the qualities that can save us." And these are the essential qualities of anarchism. Read makes an important point when he declares that "thousands, if not millions of people . . . instinctively hold these ideas," and would accept the doctrine of anarchism if it were made clear to them. The popular conception of anarchism is of a wild disorder, mob rule, and a now singularly old-fashioned type of bomb. (It is now governments who throw the bombs!) But as Read says, "any vague or romantic associations the word has acquired are incidental. The doctrine itself remains absolute, and pure."

Any introduction to anarchist thought must stress the fact that society "without ruler"—the general loose definition of anarchism—is not necessarily society "without order." Nature itself, as Kropotkin has shown in his *Mutual Aid*, follows certain definite rules of equity; Kropotkin calls it the law of mutual aid; Read defines it as "the principle of balance and symmetry which guides the growth of forms along the lines of the greatest structural efficiency." Having deter-

mined the true laws of nature it is only necessary to "conduct our lives in accordance with them," to conduct them, that is to say, along balanced and symmetrical lines—the antithesis of that chaos, disorder, mob-rule, survival of the fittest, which is the product of the intensive competitiveness of the present system—in accordance with the natural law of mutual aid.

Statute Law and Equity

The abolition of the centralized government of the State, and its unnatural and unjust laws that pass for equity, does not mean the abolition of all discipline, but as Read points out "there is a distinction to be made . . . between a discipline imposed on life, and the law which is inherent in life." There is discipline for its own sake, such as imposed by parents and teachers on children, and the coercive discipline of a ruling class operating a repressive system, and there is the natural discipline of life itself, the discipline of freedom, emerging in terms of mutual aid, freely given, in the spirit of co-operation, as opposed to competition, each to each in a free society. In Read's words, "a system of equity, no less than a system of law, implies a machinery for determining and administering its principles," but the arbiter in an anarchist community would appeal to the principles of philosophy and commonsense in administering the principles of equity, instead of statutory law, "and will do so unimpeded by all those legal and economic prejudices which the present organization of society entails."

That this involves "idealistic notions" rejected by materialists is not denied, but as Read says "no enduring society is built "without some such mystical ethos." What Read excellently defines as "the natural authority of religion, as opposed to the artificial authority of the State, and the supernatural authority of the Church, is to be invoked. Religion tied to the Church and State is religion defeated, as the history of christianity, from the days of Early Christians, before Constantine, up to the bar-

barism and chaos of the present day—conducted with the full sanction of the Church—clearly shows. The natural ally of true socialism was obviously the Church, as Read points out, but the Church became corrupted into a dependency of the ruling classes, and the gulf between what passes for Christianity to-day and the basic ideals of socialism—as enunciated by Jesus and practised in community living by the Early Christians—needs no underlining. The failure of socialism to-day—and I cannot agree with Read that Russia has seen twenty years of socialism, since it is lacking in equality which is a basic essential of socialism—and its corruption into something called, significantly, "national socialism," or fascism, is directly due to the fact that it "linked itself to the dead hand of the State," instead of presenting itself to humanity as "something more, a bringer of new things"; in short, in terms of a new religion. It is in such terms that the philosophy of anarchism must be presented, for the creation of a new type of society; for the creation, that is to say, not of a remodelled society, in the Marxist tradition, in terms of state socialism, but of a revolution in the broadest and deepest sense of the term. The philosophy of anarchism is, in a sense, a new religion; it involves an entirely new conception of living, and its practice is dependent upon the natural "liberty, morality, and human dignity of man" insisted upon by Bakunin as a natural goodness only released in a free society, in which man does good not because he is commanded, but because he conceives it, wills, and loves it.

Read points to the fact that during the Spanish War many observers were struck by the religious intensity of the anarchists. A similar point was made by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell in his book, *My House in Malaga*. "In that country of potential renaissance," Read writes, "anarchism has inspired not only heroes but saints," men whose lives are dedicated, spiritually and in fact, to the creation of a new order.

Practicability of the Anarchist Ideal

Spain demonstrated the practicability of the anarchist ideal. Read makes reference to Gaston Leval's excellent booklet, *Social Reconstruction in Spain*, and points in passing to "the textile industry of Alcoy, the wood industry in Cuenca, the transport system in Barcelona, as a few examples of the many

anarchist collectives which functioned efficiently for more than two years. Catalonia demonstrated, as Read says "beyond any possibility of denial, that whatever may be the merits or demerits of the anarcho-syndicalist system it can and does work," adding that "once it prevails over the whole economic life of the country it should function better still and provide a standard of living far higher than that realized under any previous form of social organization."

That "there will be all sorts of practical difficulties to overcome" is not denied, "but the system is simplicity itself compared with the monster of centralised control, which sets such an inhuman distance between the worker and the administrator that there is room for a thousand difficulties to intervene." He sums the matter up with admirable conciseness when he says that "once you make subsistence and not profit the motive for association and mutual aid, there is everything to be said for local control, individual initiative and absolute equality."

The Strike as Instrument Against the State

How to achieve this ideal order of society? Here Read makes an important emphasis—"There is all the difference in the world between a movement that aims at an exchange of political institutions, which is the bourgeois socialist (Fabian notion of a revolution) and a movement that aims at getting rid of these political institutions altogether." The State, he points out, can be killed by the cutting of a single artery—a fact which the working-classes have lamentably, and tragically, failed to realise in their manipulation of their natural weapon, the strike. As Read says, "This supreme power which is in the hands of the working-classes has never yet been used with intelligence and with courage. The general strike—our General Strike of 1926, for example—is an imbecility. What is required is a disposition of forces in depth, so that the vast resources of the workers can be organised in support of an attack on a vital spot." To those who assert that the strike has been tried and failed he retorts that "the strike as a strategic force is in its infancy."

Beautifully produced, this little book, published at sixpence, is the

AGAINST THE WAR

Italian Anarchist Union

(We oppose the war and decline to choose between masters; in "War Commentary" we concentrate, on an analysis of the rule of British Imperialism and its allies because our circulation is amongst English-speaking people. Our comrades abroad take the same position as ourselves, concentrating on an analysis of the role of their own rulers. We reproduce here parts of a manifesto of the Italian Anarchist Union, reaching us from its Spanish translation in "La Obra," Buenos Aires. While space prevents us from reproducing the manifestoes in different languages we have received, they indicate that our international movement is standing firm. From the reports both in South American anarchist papers and in the old militant paper, "L'Adunata dei Refrattari," New York, we learn that our Italian comrades are facing the present crisis worth y of their long tradition of struggle.—Editors.)

As this criminal war extends, as its atrocities multiply in accordance with mechanical progress, as the peoples are bowed to the service of capitalism, and all tendencies save our own take the part of their respective governments to renew the "sacred union," as one side assumes the "defence of civilisation" and the other the "vindication of proletarian against plutocratic nations"; while the masses see no way out other than to take one side or the other, it is necessary for us anarchists to repeat again our position on the war, and to show the way that the proletariat has temporarily abandoned.

The duty of the proletariat is to oppose the war, and to refuse to serve the interests of any State, remaining its enemy always.

It must gather its strength to refuse to allow itself to be mobilised at the call of its masters, in defence of their privileges. We are against the State: that is, against all economic and political privileges, against militarism and war.

ideal "introduction to anarchism," because it presents anarchism both as a philosophy, a new conception of living, and as an entirely practicable proposition for the operation of an entirely new order of society, a way out of our present chaos, and as "a flame in which all virtues are tempered and clarified and brought to their most effective strength."

Published by the Freedom Press Distributors, 9, Newbury Street, London, E.C.1.

Though the militarists stop the revolutionary spirit of the workers, we do not want to disarm. We are for the revolution of the proletariat, that is only possible through a social revolution that will prevent from being built, on the ruins of the old society, a new privileged class.

A Message from the IWMA

Stockholm.

The anarcho-syndicalist International Working-Men's Association has issued a call to our comrades on the European continent, which we reproduce here:

"We hope that our comrades at present in the lands conquered by the Nazis, will maintain contact in spite of everything, and will carry on the struggle and the activity of the organisations in accord with the new circumstances. Together with the German workers, our comrades in these countries must begin the necessary struggle against war and against Naziism. It is the only means of ending these miseries. As a consequence of the development of the war, international relations have become immensely difficult. The I.W.M.A. has therefore had to curtail its contacts with affiliated sections. In spite of that, our comrades in all these countries should help us to maintain those connections to the best of their ability."

Revolutionary Government

by Peter Kropotkin

which has been published in instalments in War Commentary will shortly be available in pamphlet form, price 3d. (postage 1½d.) from

FREEDOM PRESS

DISTRIBUTORS,

9, Newbury St., London, E.C.1

Friendly and Unfriendly

A REVIEW OF PRESS VIEWS

Fascists

From the *Daily Telegraph*, 3rd October, 1940.

"Franco's magnanimity brought joy and relief to thousands of homes in Spain when he decided that all persons serving sentences of 12 years and one day should be given conditional liberty. This affects thousands of prisoners.

"The decision, of course, will not affect proved criminals, agitators and avowed enemies of the Franco regime, but to those found guilty of lesser offences and those known to have acted in ignorance and weakness rather than in malice."

It does not affect proved criminals: presumably it only applies to the thousands of innocent people condemned by Franco's magnanimous courts—now released, of course, because of their military experience. Magnanimity does not extend, either, to the militant workers who are "agitators and avowed enemies" and whom even "democratic" France, in the days before the deluge, treated as proved "criminals" when they were driven over the border.

Magnanimous. Even since the war started the "Daily Telegraph" cried "Evviva Mussolini" until Italy declared war too; now it is still crying "Arriba Franco." They need not trouble to do so: General Franco is not so magnanimous as to refrain from joining his confederates because of the applause of British Conservatives and Catholics.

Democrats

The Government is re-opening the Burma Road, and is so allowing China to import arms thereon. "That's right, sir! No more appeasement! The only thing democrats could do."

A possible reason, other than the idealistic one, may be ascertained from an important but unnoticed note in the "Manchester Guardian" (1st October, 1940):—

"That the Burma Road will be re-opened when in about a fortnight's time the agreement with Japan to restrict traffic upon it expires is taken as virtually certain in authoritative quarters here. There is a highly important reason why it will have to be re-opened—namely, it is the only route in the south through which China can send her exports free of Japanese control. This fact tends to be overlooked.

But how else can the United States, for example, receive the tungsten required from China at a time when the United States and Japan are approaching a state of economic semi-warfare?"

The American Elections

Most people in Britain know American politics as thoroughly corrupt and degenerate: America has well-advertised herself abroad through the motion-picture industry. We do not say that British politics are always spotlessly pure—it's just that British motion-pictures have a long way to go to catch up on the debunking business.

But, just as most Americans fool themselves they have a democracy and not a plutocracy whenever elections come round, most people abroad believe them.

Here's the way it's put over.

"In the '36 campaign, the Democrats spent \$582,387 for radio and the Republicans \$757,737. They pay \$50-\$100 a week plus expenses to professional orators. They were getting contributions up to \$100,000 from business men and corporations.

"The whole set-up is rotten with graft. 'You can buy your way into a first-class ambassadorship for from \$100,000 up—mostly up.' . . . Despite the famous Hatch Act the Democrats will have raised in 1940 close up to \$2 billion, much of it from federal employees.

"Fortune" which ought to know, says, ". . . while small contributions do pour in on a popular candidate, they are never enough, and the substantial money must be raised somewhere else. Almost without exception, it comes from a few rich men." In speaking of the finances of the McNutt (Democrat) campaign, "Fortune" says again, "Another strong possibility is that some of it has come out of the treasure-trove of 'Judge' Haussermann, Philippine gold-mining tycoon . . . Hausserman is on the Republican National Committee. In 1934, 'Joe C. Trees gave \$1,000 to the Republicans before the election but afterward saw fit to contribute \$5,000 towards lifting the Democratic deficit." Thus the bourgeoisie, after obvious benefits, keeps its foot in both camps.

From "Workers' Banner," Chicago.

Bigger and Better Big Business

"It is not generally realised how far the tremendous expenditure incurred by us and by the American Government on the American armament programme has lifted the volume of industrial production in the United States well above the boom level of 1929. The Federal Reserve Index of industrial production, which averaged 110 for 1929 (the base period is 1935-1939) has climbed from 104 for August, 1939, to 124 for last September.

"The New Deal and higher taxation may be holding back some of the more blatant evidence of prosperity which was so apparent in the boom of 1929, but there can be no doubt that the volume of production and the national income are well ahead of that earlier period.

"The present activity is, of course, most apparent in the iron and steel and engineering industries, but the money which is being poured out through these particular channels is steadily percolating throughout the industrial and commercial organisation of the country.

(continued on page 16)

"A private memorandum from a well-known firm of American brokers has some interesting up-to-date news on the situation. 'It is difficult,' they say, 'for the ordinary person to conceive of the tremendous lift the armament programme is having on our whole economic structure.' They remark that the directors of one of the large steel companies met about a month ago to decide whether the company could accept any further orders for the remainder of this year even from its best customers. A leading steel executive has recently predicted that the industry will be operating at capacity up to the end of 1942. The latest figure of production for the industry is 94.4 per cent. of nominal capacity, a figure which may be taken as indicating full effective capacity."

"Another example comes from the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company. In August it booked new orders" (oh, those New Orders) "to the value of \$57,000,000. Of this total, Government orders accounted for \$36,000,000. The balance of \$21,000,000 representing normal private business was exactly the total figure of business which the company was handling at the 1929 period."

"In spite of this intensive activity in American industry there is, fortunately, no sign of an inflationary boom. Wholesale commodity prices are still about 18 per cent. below the 1929 level (although in the meantime the dollar has been devalued by 40 per cent.). There is no indication of unhealthy inflation in profits, and Wall Street has certainly caught no contagion of the boom in industry. Whether or not it will do so must largely depend on the outcome of the impending Presidential election.—Oscar R. Hobson, City Editor, News Chronicle, 21st October, 1940.

Who can possibly doubt, after reading the above, that this is in very truth a War in Defence of Democracy, Decency, Justice, and Christian Civilisation? One can but hope and pray that Franklin Delano Roosevelt will break the record and be re-elected, thus setting Wall Street's altruistic mind at rest and enabling it to plunge head-first into the Ocean of Prosperity!

If there still remains some querulous doubter, the caption to a picture of evacuees in the same issue of the News Chronicle, "War gave these children richer life," should finally silence him. War did that, not peace. The perfect commentary.

WAR COMMENTARY

and other anarchist publications are
on sale at

★ IN LONDON

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP
11a, Red Lion Passage, London, W.C.1

★ IN GLASGOW

THE ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP
127, George Street, Glasgow, C.1

FROM A READER

Shop Steward's Dispute

A comrade in Glasgow has sent us the following letter, together with two leaflets; the latter were issued by the British Auxiliaries Shop Stewards' Committee in reference to a strike following the dismissal of their convener of Shop Stewards—the third to be dismissed in four months. They show considerable indignation at the unscrupulous and high-handed action of the management (which included an attempt to bribe the convener by the offer of a higher paid job). One admires the spirit of solidarity which makes them stay out on strike until their convener is reinstated, but certain features are astonishing. Great pride is shown, for instance, in the devotion of the men expressed in overtime and enlistment—devotion to their employers' war. The general tone suggests that the strike ("holiday") was called more in sorrow than in anger, and stress is laid on the "correctness" of the procedure followed by the Shop Stewards. One wonders when the Trade Unions will begin to recognize the existence of the class-struggle.

Glasgow, October 20th.

Dear Editor,

I have just read your issue for September with much interest and sympathy. However, I was interested in page 11 (I.L.P.) to page 16 where you express quite natural surprise "that nobody in the I.L.P. seemed shocked at Marceau Pivert's letter to General de Gaulle." While not in the I.L.P. (because I am a Socialist) I have to advise you that I wrote Brockway and condemned the stupidity of Pivert who claims that there are alleged Socialist aviators. How can a Socialist act as such while swearing allegiance and taking the oath? I asked Pivert why not distribute these same leaflets over the British workers who are equally serfs as much as the German workers. I contend that the conditions, etc., of the fighting forces is no concern of a real Socialist and I suggested that the N.L. would be better employed advocating resistance (productive and otherwise) to the war machine. My letter was never printed and no comment made.

A recent dispute in Parkhead Forge was characteristic of the Jingo printed tripe of the shop stewards who are all concerned about feeding the war machine (production, production). While clamouring and begging to get back to work, these "militants" brag about staying on holiday. Why the hell, if the bosses are so bad, do they feel so anxious to help these terrible bosses? I suggest it would be more in keeping with real militant Trade Unionism to strike (holiday) against a continuation of the war plus a strike against the A.E.U. who declare the strikes unofficial. But then these shop stewards are not concerned about such intelligent seriousness. They are not even concerned about the 40 hour week—instead they want 140. Stop the war and get back to some sort of real understanding, all else is illusion. If Capitalism 13 months ago had to go, why defend it to-day? All else is illusion.

H. D.

Published by Freedom Press Distributors, 9 Newbury St., London, E.C.1. and printed by C. A. Brock & Co. Ltd., 463 Harrow Rd. London, W.10.