

# WAR COMMENTARY

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## REFORMS or RADICAL CHANGE

**T**HE refusal of anarchists to enter politics or support parliamentary or municipal governments has sometimes given rise to the impression that we are unconcerned with the day to day struggle against poverty, oppression, unemployment, and slums, and all the other miseries with which the workers are burdened. Of course, this impression is erroneous, but it may be as well to examine it along with the differences between the anarchists and the political organizations in this matter.

Direct struggle for amelioration of working-class conditions is seen by both evolutionary and revolutionary socialists as an end in itself, as a means to the realization of socialism, concessions in these fields being regarded as so many steps nearer the ultimate goal. Anarchists are certainly concerned with working - class conditions: but we do not delude ourselves, nor — what is more important—do we delude the workers into thinking that gains wrung from the employers, or increased representation in parliaments, within the framework of a capitalist, class - divided society, have anything directly to do with

socialism. From the point of view of attaining a just society concessions to the workers are only of value in so far as they weaken the ruling-class and so facilitate the ultimate overthrow of capitalism itself.

It is frequently said that the so-called democratic rights “enjoyed” by the English workers today, were won by the bitter struggles of the early trade unionists in the nineteenth century. This is, however, only a half-truth. Such rights were conceded to the workers only after they had resorted to direct action, and threatened the actual power of the capitalist class. They were never achieved by merely constitutional

means, until the industrialists realized that in that epoch of expanding capitalism, expansion and therefore, profits, were actually facilitated by the extension of democratic rights. Once established, they were seen to be advantageous to the owners of industry as well as to the workers, and were therefore retained. In countries, however, which developed industry late (e.g. Spain), and which were, in consequence unfavourably situated for world competition, such concessions to the workers would

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have been, on balance, disadvantageous to the employers. Accordingly, they were never granted by constitutional means, and in those cases where the workers secured them for themselves by direct action, the ruling-class merely waited until it had recuperated its strength, and then promptly abolished the concessions which had been won.

In the present epoch, that of restrictive capitalism, the ruling-classes of all countries are competing with one another so fiercely for the world markets—having reached the final stage of armed conflict—that they cannot possibly afford to grant any concessions at all to the workers, scarcely even for the purpose of appeasing them. Hence, they can never, now, be achieved by merely democratic means. In France, in 1936, the stay-in-strikes “secured” for the workers such improvements as the forty-hour week, holidays with pay etc; but the ruling class merely bided its time. They had seen the danger light, and, unlike the workers, drew the conclusions from the foregoing struggle. Hence, when they were strong again, under cover of “national unity” they not only regained their former dominance, but entrenched themselves still further. So illusory do workers’ gains turn out, if, once they have achieved them, they relax the struggle!

One may state, therefore, in short, that the ruling class never did make concessions to constitutional agitation except when such were advantageous to themselves; and that now, in the present advanced state of capitalist development, they cannot afford to make any real concessions at all.

The result is that no advances made by the workers can be stable or permanent. This was never more so than today, when the international clash of ruling-class interests has driven them everywhere into war to maintain “their rights” in the ever-shrinking world markets. In such circumstances, it is merely deluding the workers to represent better working-class conditions, which, as we have seen, can at best be only temporary, as “steps to socialism.”

**B**UT that is not to say that the workers must not fight for such concessions.

And the anarchists have probably a better record in this struggle than any other working-class organization. We are, however, careful to point out that certain means of struggle are bound to fail, and that to place confidence in them only brings

disillusionment. Nor do we urge the necessity to struggle for better conditions primarily for their own sake, but rather because their attainment weakens the bourgeoisie in the class-struggle. But this weakening let us repeat, is merely temporary if the struggle is then slackened, instead of being maintained **all the time**.

Anarchists, therefore are not only more realistic regarding effective methods of fighting, but they lay the emphasis where it properly belongs—on the necessity to fight everywhere and always until the goal is reached. And the goal is not merely better living conditions within capitalism—after attaining which one can afford to rest—but the **ABOLITION OF THE CLASS-DIVIDED SOCIETY ALTOGETHER**.

We therefore, while struggling for them, point out that the battle is not won with the satisfaction of immediate demands. It is not that we underestimate the importance of ameliorating working-class conditions, but that we place the fight for them in its proper perspective within the struggle for the destruction of class-divided society itself.

**I**T may be objected that the marxist-revolutionaries take the same view. But this is not so. For them, the entry into the political arena, and the taking-up of the workers’ immediate demands as **political** slogans, is, in an important sense, an end in itself. They desire to secure the confidence of the proletariat in order that, finally, the workers will elevate them to **POWER**. They wish the workers to turn out the capitalist class, so that their party may rule instead; and they then hope to lead the masses to “socialism.” For us, on the other hand, socialism is not attained until the responsibility of governing themselves is in the workers’ **own** hands. It is only from that point that unfettered and unhindered development can start, and human potentialities really begin to progress.

We cannot support any system which vests the responsibility of government in the hands of a minority, however idealistically these may claim to represent the aspirations and wishes of the people as a whole. But this is the aim and object, in effect, of all **political** action. We refuse to have anything to do with political action; and we are determined that the principle of power, the power of one body of men to rule the rest, shall itself be abolished. We therefore

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# The Lesser Evil

WHEN Mr. Kennedy speaking some time ago in America, declared that the much advertised British war aim of defending Democracy was 'the bunk,' and prophesied that the next stages of Britain's political evolution would be National Socialism, the consternation the gaffe produced in Party circles was little short of sensational. It wasn't a question of outraged principles. British politicians, from blue to pink, are not really worried about having National Socialism, so long as it is inaugurated by the Labour Party (the historic role destined for it), and provided it is more National than Social, gives proper regard to private property, and takes British Imperialism under its protecting 'revolutionary' wing. No, the dismay was very properly and professionally concerned for the effect of the speech on the 'All Aid short of War' propaganda campaign. It was very irritating, at a time like this, having those sort of things broadcast over the air in America of all places. Goodness knows, it had been difficult enough, after Non-intervention, Munich, the Burma Road, and the unhappy affair regarding Negrin, to get the hardboiled Yankee to appreciate gallant little Britain as the bulwark of the democratic way of life, without cynical misanthropes like Kennedy throwing out rude remarks about War Aims.

The Socialist side of the House was particularly most upset. Hadn't the Labour Party so unselfishly sacrificed its class-representation in the common struggle of the Nation, and were not Morrison and Bevin doing their utmost, also most unselfishly, to push the Government and the Country into Totalitarianism for Freedom's sake? However, it would not have been politic to have made too much of a song over Kennedy's nasty speech, so beyond a few cutting remarks in the editorials of the most reputable Newspapers, the affair was soft-pedalled in the Press. The official front presented to the world was one of high-nosed disdain, tinged with that hypocritical air of injured innocence for which our politicians are justly famous. Judging, however by the speed with which Kennedy sought to counteract the effects of his oratorical bombshell,—his 'didn't mean to do it' splutterings in subsequent apologies—he must have received a considerable flea in the ear from the powers-that-be in America, whose reactions to his indiscretions were considerably less dignified and detached than they were here. However, the affair was not really of major importance, except that it was curious to note that the outspoken con-

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do not seek to curry favour with the masses so that they will raise us to power, but instead to urge them to organise with a view to taking power for themselves; and when they have secured it, never to relinquish it.

Examination of history, especially the history of the present century, confirms the correctness and realism of this attitude in every manifestation of the class-struggle, from Russia and Spain, to the present conflict.

tempt for the meagreness of British war aims, ventilated in so many blunt speeches by American democrats (Kennedy was not an isolated case) had no effect whatsoever on that section of the international socialist movement, generally classified as social-democratic, which regards the war as an issue of Democracy versus Fascism.

## "THE WAR FOR SOCIALISM"

The Social Democrats are in the main supporting the War. That is all right if they see the war as a means of smashing German fascism and are un-

By  
**Fredrick Lohr**

concerned with the future for socialism. But this is precisely with what they say they are concerned, and further, they maintain that support for the British war effort is tactically in line with socialist policy. Their case is something like this:-

Whilst they are under no illusions as to the capitalist nature of the conflict, the war cannot be approached from a socialist (class) viewpoint, because of the mass support behind the fascist direction of the Axis programme of aggression. This mass support for fascist ideology has destroyed whatever reality there was in the class-struggle, and reduced the issue to the choice between the lesser evil of British capitalist democracy and the greater evil of German Nazi-bureaucracy. Fascism is the greatest and IMMEDIATE menace to socialist-democratic progress, and therefore, since there is not the alternative of international working-class action against Capitalism and Fascism, socialists should collaborate with British Imperialism to destroy continental fascism, endeavouring at the same time vigilantly to guard their political and economic conquest of the past. Simply put, it means they consider the present military power alignment represents a threat to Democracy as a *political norm*, and necessitates the temporary abandonment of the 'social-economic-concept' of the class struggle, in order to prosecute the war to smash *the idea of Fascism and to save the principles of democracy*. Refusal to aid the British effort means, in effect, aiding Hitler to break up those institutions necessary to the existence of democracy, and necessary for the continuance of the struggle for social-emancipation of the working class after the war has been won.

## "NATIONAL UNITY"

Now we do not dispute that capitalist democracy is preferable to fascist bureaucracy, though even this opinion has far more point for the middle-classes than the proletariat. We fail utterly however, to comprehend what significance the opinion has in the world-crisis of capitalism of which this war is the major-symptom. As we see it, there is now no liberty of choice between capitalist or bourgeois democracy and fascism. The only issue before the working class is Fascism or Revolution.

Many people seem to regard fascism as a matter of choice. One often hears the saying "the German people chose National Socialism," citing the struggle

for Power in Germany as though it were touch and go which side won, left or right. But political regimes do not come into being through a sort of sporting rivalry for votes. They emerge as a result of the historical development of class interests. Fascism and democracy cannot be postulated as alternatives to be accepted or rejected by choice; they are the social-political expression of capitalist economic organisation in different stages of development. To consider fascism separately from capitalism, as a thing in itself, is to side track the motive of production, negate the class-struggle and deceive the workers. It is precisely the tactic adopted by the fascists themselves. Alliance with the capitalist class now, therefore, can only do what it has always done in the past: prepare the way for the victory of fascism. History has placed before the workers a clear guide to their course of action. That guide is still the same, the universality of their inferior class position, and there is nothing evidenced in this war which points to any contradiction of this position.

The war must develop according to its purposes. Its main purpose is to decide which of the European Powers shall survive as a major Imperial Power in an Imperialist world. Thus the war must become a Total war, in which all the reserves of capitalism will be thrown into the scales. In such a situation democratic institutions are anachronisms. The very existence of parliamentary procedure is an hindrance to efficiency. To agitate for the defence of civil liberties and the maintenance of working class organisations and at the same time advocate support for an imperialist war, is just downright silliness. The defence of democratic 'conquest' can be sustained only from a 'class' position, within the entire field of worker's struggle *against* bourgeois democracy and imperialist war. It is not a question of legitimate nationalism, the war is simply no concern of the working class internationally, no matter how oblivious they are to their true interests. It should be used by the workers, where-ever possible, as an opportunity to expose the class division of society, taking advantages of all the difficulties and weaknesses of the capitalist regimes to advance its own revolutionary purpose. If it is claimed that such tactics would weaken the totality of the British military effort, and strengthen the German, such a contention cannot be denied from a 'national' point of view. But, comrades, our objectives are not the objectives of either warring faction, we do not seek the preservation of a little liberty within a great shame, nor even the defeat of German fascism as an end in itself. To attempt even this by means of a capitalist-imperialist war, means eventually, if the implications of total war are really understood, the world-establishment of fascist totalitarianism. If, under the pretext of fighting Hitler and preserving freedom in England, we abandon our class-position and ally ourselves with bourgeois democracy in the defence of *their* own interests, we not only betray the cause of worker's democracy here, but we betray the *internationalism* of socialist ideology. Once we discard the central tenet upon which socialist theory is built, that of the fundamental tension existing between class-interests, then we have nothing left but the dream of utopian goodwill, or the nightmare of rabid nationalism.

#### THE GREATER EVIL

The argument of choosing the lesser evil has been the curse of political opportunism. Always it is used

to frustrate the efforts of the workers towards solidarity. In times of stress, when its privileged position has been threatened by economic crises, the ruling class has always been able to sidetrack the challenge of the working class by appeals for national unity. When at war it has always managed to present its own interests as those of civilisation and progress. Because in every war one side does appear to represent a lesser evil to libertarian ideals, it has been difficult to achieve any degree of mass-resistance to capitalist murder. Social-democracy has consistently aided the workings of this pernicious doctrine of the lesser evil, and history in Italy, Germany, France, and Spain, within the scope of the shortest memory, has always conclusively shewn it to lead inevitably to the acceptance of the greater evil.

If the working-class is ever successfully to challenge the power of its masters, it must see to it that its politics are determined in conformity with its class position, and ensure that its organisations are used to promote its own interests as a class. In spite of the efforts of their masters to coerce them into the 'common-struggle' for the protection of 'uncommon property,' they must drive forward in their own interests, always against, never in alliance with, the forces of reaction and repression. They must clearly understand that working-class interests and capitalist class interests are diametrically opposed and can never be reconciled. They must clearly understand that so long as capitalism lasts, National policies are always capitalist policies, and National interests are always capital interests, and that there is no point of social interest common to both classes.

And so, whilst the social democrats may abandon the class-struggle as being unreal in the grim circumstances of the moment, we maintain it is no 'social-economic-concept' but a bitter reality of everyday experience, a reality which we must seek to expose and sharpen, as exposed and underlined it will be as time goes on, for history is on our side, as events will shew.

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### NOTE TO READERS.

We have continued to edit and publish "War Commentary" throughout the London blitz so far, and trust that we shall remain able to do so. The paper has appeared regularly, and has been duly dispatched to all subscribers. However we have learnt from some subscribers that now and again a copy or so has not reached them, and we have forwarded them another copy. This is inevitable in the circumstances, and we mention it to ask all readers who may not receive any particular copy before the end of the month to write and let us know, when we shall send the copy free of charge.

In particular, we ask our overseas readers to let us know when copies do not arrive at the usual time—which is inevitably a little delayed—to let us know, so that we can send them a copy. The loss of mails at sea also makes us ask all overseas readers who do not receive a reply to any letter they send us to write again asking if we have received the letter.

THE EDITORS.

# India : The Roots of Poverty *By A. G. Stock.*

Three quarters of the Indian people are peasants and 90 per cent. of India's output is agricultural. This means that very nearly all the complicated structures of Indian society is built upon the peasants' labours: they feed and clothe the landlord and the priest, they, ultimately, find the profits for the banker and the industrialist, they pay for the army and the police and the Viceroy's salary. They are also the great reserve of labour power; most of the factory workers are villagers who have left their homes for a few months to find work in a town. No power, be it imperialist or nationalist or revolutionary can hope to solve the "problem of India" if it does not make life tolerable for the peasants.

The great majority of Indian peasants live in the worst poverty imaginable. It has been estimated that the average income of village-dwellers as a whole is 2½d per day, which means that many millions of them never see a square meal or a change of clothes; disease finds them without resistance, and drought and famine find them without reserves. The poverty is not lessening under British rule—if anything it is growing worse—and that is why peasants have flocked into the National Congress since Gandhi's genius made it intelligible to them. Today they are more than 90 per cent. of its members.

## WESTERN INDUSTRIALISM'S EFFECTS

As Gandhi has pointed out, this poverty is largely caused by the impact of western industrialism. Pre-industrial India was a country of villages, but agriculture was not the only occupation of the village. It was a little self-sufficing community which maintained its own handicraftsmen such as the potter, the metal-worker and the handloom-weaver, and as in pre-industrial England, families spun their own yarn. Today factory-made goods are rapidly killing the old crafts, and that ancient self-sufficiency is gone for ever. But the craftsmen whose work is gone are not absorbed into factories, as they eventually were in England when the same thing happened; because the

factories which supply the Indian village are mostly in Lancashire or Japan. They are thrown back on the land, and the land has to find work for more and more people. But this does not make the land itself more productive; on the contrary, it is divided into plots far too small to be economic, or even to find work all the year round for the families who live on them. Most Indian land-workers are unemployed for half the year or more: they either drift to the factories or away to the plantations or sit listlessly at home, too poor even to find the materials to spin and weave for themselves.

## IN THE HANDS OF THE MONEYLENDER

Out of poverty comes debt. An agriculturist, whatever he grows, lives from year to year on the expectation of his next crop; if it should fail, or if an unforeseen calamity such as a funeral or the loss of his cattle gives him extra expense, he has no choice but to borrow, and the Indian moneylender's rapacity is proverbial. His rates vary from Province to Province. They may be anything from 12 to 150 per cent. compound interest, but they are always inevitably, hardest on the poor man with no good security to offer. In the old days local public opinion may have been a rough-and-ready check and the moneylender who went beyond decent limits of extortion would perhaps be found one day with a knife in his back, but British justice has changed all that, and the courts of law will protect him and enforce his claims.

The great agricultural depression which began in 1929 plumped half the peasants of India into worse debt than ever, and nothing has happened since to pull them out again. Today they owe much more than the sum of their produce: if they all lived entirely on air and the whole of the harvests of India were handed over to the moneylenders it would still be many years before the debts were settled. They are born, live and die in debt, and work blindly on without the faintest hope of ever getting out of it.

Besides the moneylender, there is either the landlord or the revenue-collector to face.

In some Provinces, for instance Bengal, the cultivators are tenants of powerful landlords, who pay a fixed and very moderate rent to the Government for their estates, and let and sub-let them in smallholdings. They have no obligations to their land, and as there is usually a long chain of sub-tenants, each of whom takes his profit, between the landlord and cultivator, the latter is rack-rented. It was in Bengal that an official Health Report in 1927 remarked that the peasants were "subsisting on a diet on which even rats could not maintain life for more than five weeks."

In other Provinces, such as Bombay and part of Madras, the peasant is theoretically a direct tenant of the Government. But he is not so moderately assessed as the big landlord of Bengal. Every thirty years or so the land tax is assessed afresh; rates vary in different places, but are generally supposed not to exceed half the nett produce of the soil! As usual, it is the small man who suffers from this arrangement; once you fall below a certain level you cannot part with half your income without actually starving.

This, of course, is a very sketchy account of the condition of the Indian peasantry, for the subject is a complicated one, and their misery takes many different forms in different Provinces and districts. But everywhere, by whatever methods, they have arrived at unemployment, starvation and debt. Add to this a thousand and one forms of bullying and petty extortion, by the minor State officials as well as by the landlords; add to it innumerable forms of indirect taxation, on such necessities of life as salt, kerosene and matches, and niggling prohibitions against gathering fuel or using firearms to protect their property from the wild beasts of the jungle. All, finally, that in return for their taxes they get next to nothing in the way of social services—almost all villages are without any kind of sanitation, few of them have a hospital, a railway station, a Post Office or a school within easy reach and many have not even a road; all they see in the way of Government expenditure is the policeman who keeps them in order and the squad of soldiers who shoot them down on historic occasions such as that of Amritsar. Take all these things into account and you get a picture of the basic problem of India.

Wages in industry will not rise to a decent level while the peasants are so depressed, for as long as three-quarters of the people live in such abject want there will always be a

huge reservoir of blackleg labour. Thus the fate of the town proletariat depends on the villages. In the same way, the great host of petty clerks and minor officials of the lower middle class are kept poor by the gulf of poverty opening underneath them, they cut each others' throats and lower each others' standards in a struggle for almost unattainable results. This again underlies the bitterness of the so-called "communal struggles"; they are only another disguise for the everlasting fight for work and food.

### THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

When the National Congress began to connect independence with the renaissance of village India, when it began to take up the peasants' grievances and helped them to fight against unfair assessments, it brought new life to the peasants. Gandhi translated the abstract idea of freedom into terms they could understand—terms such as the abolition of the salt tax, the reduction of land revenue, the curbing of the power of the police and the return of the old handicrafts. He taught them the weapon of non-violent resistance, which enabled them to hold their own against armed force, and helped them in their local struggles against the Government with Congress leadership and organisation. It was all part of the fight against the British Raj, and the peasants began to flock into the Congress. They soon became its shock troops and its left wing.

But their own needs go much further than the National Congress will take them. It is true that they ask for hardly more than the necessaries of a decent life; but when three-quarters of the people of India ask for more land, for the halving of their rents and land-tax assessments, for the cancelling of arrears of debt, for money to be spent on education and health and social services instead of on the police and the payment of interest on foreign loans—the answer is a revolution. In getting what they want they must inevitably sweep away not only the British Raj but the Indian vested interests which join with it in exploiting them, and rely on it for protection. They must rebuild India as a workers' and peasants' country.

Since 1901, but especially in the last ten years the peasants have grown more and more aware of the meaning of this task.

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# The Technique of Armed Insurrection

F. A. Ridley

**H**ISTORIC progress does not normally proceed by purely gradualist methods, as in the social-democratic mythology; contrarily armed insurrection—"the revolutionary act"—represents a recurring phenomenon that, in a class divided society, is equally necessary to human evolution.

The ultimate success or failure of armed insurrection depends, it is true, in the final analysis, upon political and economic rather than on purely military factors. To be sure, it is the relationship of class-forces in the current social milieu, coupled with the concurrent state of the socially necessary productive forces, that in the last instance, decides the success or failure of a given armed revolt. Notwithstanding, the purely technical questions of arms, military tactics and strategy, play an important, if secondary, role.

In the course of this article, I propose to give some historical examples that may assist to elucidate this too much neglected aspect of social revolution. Whilst it is no doubt true that "he who has iron, has bread" yet so much depends both on the quality of the iron and on the science of him who wields it!

Speaking generally, one can accurately state that armed insurrection becomes practicable, and even easy, when the weapons of defence and offence used in war can be easily manufactured, and when their use can be easily mastered by the man in the street—I assume, of course, that current social and economic relationships are ripe for insurrection. Contrarily, when the dominant weapons of an era are expensive highly technical, and difficult to manufacture, the task of the revolution is enormously complicated, and the task of suppression by the State authorities and the ruling-class whom they represent becomes correspondingly easier.

This general "law" of revolutionary strategy can be illustrated from many historical epochs of class-struggle. In classical antiquity, for example, where infantry predominated, slave revolts were common, and their suppression was often a matter of great difficulty to the ruling-classes of the day. We remember, for instance, the brilliant victories won by Spartacus and his improvised army of escaped slaves over the Roman republic, the greatest of all the slave-holding states of the ancient world (73-71 B.C.). After all, swords and spears, the chief weapons of classical warfare, could be manufactured and their use learnt without much difficulty.

Actually, the only example that I can recall in antiquity of a popular rising suppressed by the use of an expensive technique only available to a wealthy ruling-class, was the suppression of the revolting mercenaries of Carthage by Hamilcar Barca after the first Punic War (239 B.C.). Readers of "Salamambo" will not forget the decisive part played in that "merciless war" (Polybius) by the war elephants of the Punic oligarchy—those temperamental tanks of classical warfare.

In the middle ages the vast technical superiority

enjoyed by the heavy cavalry and the formidable castles of the feudal knights for long made social revolution impossible. For example, when the French peasants rose in the "Jacquerie" (1358) the knights, clad in tortoise-like armour, rode down the half-armed peasants with scarcely any opposition.

But when, a few years later, long-range weapons—first the English long-bow, then the field-gun—made their appearance, a very different state of affairs was seen. For though the English peasants failed in 1381, yet this was due chiefly to their own inevitable political immaturity rather than to any military superiority on the part of the feudal knights. Nor dare the feudal order withhold necessary reforms after 1381. Such was the difference made by the long-bow.

As for guns, I have recounted elsewhere (in the "New Leader"), how impotent were the feudal cavalry against artillery—the pre-eminent weapon of the bourgeois revolution. It is, indeed, generally known how vital was the part played by firearms, and, in particular, artillery during the course of the bourgeois revolutions from Cromwell to the French revolution. To be sure, from a military standpoint, the proud but impecunious knights could make no headway against the expensive artillery which their class-enemies, the rich merchants, paid for out of the fabulous El Dorado of the newly-discovered world market.

In vain, the Pope, the moral mouthpiece of the feudal order, condemned artillery (and its predecessor the cross-bow) as "hateful to God": the pious Calvinist, Oliver Cromwell, that greatest of all bourgeois revolutionaries, answered this threat with the historic adjuration "trust in God and keep your powder dry." It should be noted in this connection, that the feudal military code did not recognise gunners as soldiers! Even the Chevalier Bayard, the Knight "sans peur et sans reproche," never gave quarter to artillery men—the class-war at work.

The French Revolution—1789-94—ushered in a century and a half of practically uninterrupted revolution. It was, indeed, the golden age of revolution, largely for technical military reasons. Its chief weapon was the musket—easy to manufacture and easy to learn to use; whilst its chief weapons for civil war were hand-grenades, pikes, and the barricade—all requiring no special aptitude to master or to build.

Hence the 19th century was the golden age of street fighting. Equally, it was the era par excellence of conscription, the military counterpart of (bourgeois) democracy. Without a mercenary army, the sworn enemy by definition of any and every popular uprising, the bourgeois governments of the 19th century were often helpless before the popular wrath, as in 1830 and 1848. **AN ARMED PEOPLE IS, INDEED, ULTIMATELY, THE ONLY REALLY EFFECTUAL SAFEGUARD AGAINST EITHER OPEN COUNTER REVOLUTION OR "THERMIDOR"—THE DEGENERATION AND BETRAYAL OF THE REVOLUTION FROM WITHIN. IT IS**

## THE ONLY CRITERION OF GENUINE DEMOCRACY.

It is evident that our own generation is much less favourable for armed insurrection than was the nineteenth century. In 1831 the ex-Buonapartist colonel Francis Macerone could place before the British masses an entire science of street-fighting and armed revolt with quickly improvised weapons, in his "Defensive instructions for the people," "the revolutionaries handbook" of the Chartist movements. Therein the British worker could obtain for a few coppers, the experience of a generation of continental revolutions, summarised within the covers of a pamphlet.

Already, however, by 1878, Engels in his "Anti-Duhring" ended a brilliant summary of modern military evolution, by warning that the age of street fighting and of sporadic revolt was nearing its end. A few years later in his pamphlet "The revolutionary Act"—this profound military philosopher expressed the opinion that street fighting and concurrent popular uprisings had now been out-moded by the advance of military science, and were, definitely, things of the past.

The course of subsequent revolutions, in particular in Russia, Spain, and China, suggests that Engels was premature in his anticipations. None the less, present day military evolution is undoubtedly moving in a direction sharply antagonistic to popular risings. We are moving into an age of costly, highly technical and specialised military science. Heavy artillery, tanks, above all, the Air-force represent anti-democratic weapons; weapons that need a plutocracy to buy them, State power to organise them, a specialised caste to handle them. Definitely, the air-force, "The MILITARY arm of 'upper-class' reaction, would seem to have ended the age of the barricade—at any rate in the major industrial lands.

So devastating is the new technique that even many professed revolutionaries foresee a new "age of the Caesars" (Oswald Spengler), in which all revolutionary activity will be effectually inhibited as at the close of antiquity, by a permanent military dictatorship resting on overwhelming military force.

We do not share this defeatist pessimism. Just as every thrust has its appropriate parry, and every poison its effectual antidote, so also, every reactionary regime, even the strongest, has its "Achilles heel," in the military sphere as elsewhere.

To say, accordingly, that we are finished with barricades and pikes, is not the same as to say that we are finished with armed insurrection itself. The only question is—With what arms? This is one of the most important problems that confronts the fast developing science of Revolution in the twentieth century. The revolutionaries of today will be well advised to "go to it" to seek a solution of this important technical problem.

"It is not in mortals to command success; we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it." Cp. Addison "Cato."

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They have supported the Congress loyally, but they have formed their own organisations too, and federated them into one big movement, the All-India Kisan Sabha, or Peasants' Association. The Congress contains within it many groups and interests, some of whom, hardly less than the British, live by exploiting the peasants. It cannot always protect the peasants or fight for their rights, and their own needs force them to press for a far more revolutionary programme than the Congress is prepared to stand for. Especially when the Congress took over some of the Provincial Governments, the Peasant Movement began to see itself as the vanguard of social revolt. In time, when Congress has done all it can against imperialism, and carried the struggle as far as its middle class leaders will allow it, the All-India Kisan Sabha will be ready to step into its place and carry out the social revolution in which imperialism is brought to an end.

The Kisan Sabha is Socialist and revolutionary in its outlook. Its chief work is to rouse and organise the peasants to fight for their own immediate rights and needs, but its leaders are fully aware of their direction. How clearly they see it, is best told in the words of one of their most active leaders, Swanie Sahajanand Saraswathi:

"Kisan is the source sending forth elements which run the entire affairs of the world. But he is not conscious of it. He is the producer and supplier of all the articles of food and raw materials. He also supplies men for army, police, jails, courts, etc., and not only drivers and coolies for the railways but also 99 per cent. of the passengers. He supplies workers to the factories and workshops, and blacklegs, too, when these go on strike owing to the desperation caused by hunger and ill-treatment of the employees. There is no proletariat here in the sense in which they exist in the west. The Kisans themselves go to the cities in their spare time or when they are unemployed. Thus it is evident that the entire social machinery of exploitation is being run by the Kisan who cannot help it. So if he awakens to the sense of his rights and responsibilities this machinery will automatically come to a standstill and the present social order based on exploitation will be shattered without shedding a drop of blood. This is the end which we are driving at and this is the secret of the Kisan organisation."

A. G. Stock.



## Anarchists and Socialists.

# PARLIAMENTARISM

This article appeared in the Paris Anarchist newspaper "Le Libertaire" some few years ago. It is by Gaston Leval, the author of "Social Reconstruction in Spain," the useful pamphlet published in England by "Spain and the World." He was sentenced by the Daladier government to four years imprisonment at the beginning of the present war for refusing to participate in the war of 1914—twenty-five years afterwards!

**O**NE can never, without being caught in the snare of Neo-Hegelian dialectics, adequately explain how, whilst being convinced that economics direct the course of history, and that it is necessarily so, one can yet claim, in one's turn, to direct the whole course of economics by means of a political party, and still remain faithful to the fundamental conception on which socialism is based.

It is true that according to this dialectic, the party is itself the vanguard of the proletariat. The State that it would establish or control would be from these facts—or line of reasoning—proletarian. And since it is considered to be an instrument of class domination and of social administration, it is claimed that it should be utilized to bring about the revolution.

The conquest of the Parliament, by which Reformist-Marxism hopes to gain possession of the State, is therefore added to the logical sequence of the dialectical method. This question, more even than the interpretation of history, has divided the anarchists and socialists in their pre-revolutionary activities.

Sixty-eight years of international experience shows who was right. We cannot prevent professional politicians, bourgeois parliamentarians or M.P.s who have become bourgeois, or opportunists, all of them insincere or cynical, in spite of the attitudes they adopt in front of the masses, from declaring that socialism can only be brought about by parliamentary means. We are only interested in these people in so far as we fight against them. I am addressing myself to those who really wish to struggle for socialism,

Let us look at the past. Let us examine facts. In spite of the opposition of the Anarchists, Marx drew first his German followers, then other socialists, into the parliamentary path. The results were immediate. Already in 1872, Bebel and his

friends were talking of a People's State, losing sight of the revolutionary spirit of their previous declarations according to which the conquest of political power must be a means of expropriating the bourgeoisie and the capitalist class.

In France, in Belgium, in Austria, in Italy, in Spain, everywhere, parliamentary socialism imposed itself. Not because it is more logical, but because it is less dangerous, because it allows one to live legally while appearing a revolutionary. If by some hypothetical nonsense the roles had been reversed, if the anarchists had advocated parliamentarism and the Marxists anti-parliamentary revolutionary action, it would have been we who would have formed enormous parties, and the followers of Marx would still be only a small minority.

From 1869 to 1914 we continually discussed that problem. Deviations occurred mainly in Germany, whose military victory in 1871 had been greeted by Marx because he believed that it would influence the direction of socialism, and that "now, German socialism will triumph in Europe." But German Socialism voted war credits long before 1914. In France, as in Italy, as almost everywhere, Parliament tamed the leaders. The party forgot more and more the class-struggle, in order to apply itself exclusively to political activity, since "the conquest of power was the first step towards the emancipation of the proletariat."

### EBERT APPEALS TO THE ARMY

The war broke out. It was the final treachery of the Second International.<sup>1</sup> Then, after the war, what is much more important, for it was no longer necessary to advocate as reasons for immediate

1. The attitude of the anarchists is too often compared with that of the Second International. Although about a dozen theoreticians supported the Allies in the war, not from patriotism, but from higher motives—though wrongly pursued—nevertheless, the great mass of international anarchism opposed their attitude. Furthermore, one can name a number of anti-war theoreticians; Malatesta, Fabbri, Rocker, Faure, Lorenzo, Mella, Ramus, etc.

and unavoidable defence, Tsarist barbarism in Germany, or Prussian militarism in France, there appeared possibilities of revolution.

The German people overthrew the monarchy. With what joy, with what immense hope, we read one evening the telegram in which the Soviet composed of the workers and soldiers of Berlin sent its greetings to the world proletariat. We did not know that at the same moment Ebert, the provisional head of the government was telephoning to the headquarters of the Kaiser's army to undertake the precautions necessary for *preserving order*.

The Republican regime stabilized itself. The Socialists were absolute masters. The moment had come to realize their programme, to expropriate the capitalists, to establish the domination of the proletariat.

What did they do? Insignificant reforms. Then seeing that the bureaucratization of the State put a break on any kind of action, some revolutionary Marxists entered the struggle. The Soviet Republic of Bavaria, the insurrection in Berlin, and other attempts were pitilessly crushed. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were assassinated. The theoreticians and the apostles had been defeated by the parliamentarians and the bureaucrats.

And Germany, paralysed by the Social-Democracy, retreated more and more. Discouraged, the electors turned towards the Centre, then, after a few years tried to find in Fascism a solution to their unhappy position from which only the social revolution could have rescued them.

### ITALY AND AUSTRIA

The precedent circumstances in Italy were however different. Parliamentary socialism took a longer time to implant itself. And it was Andrea Costa, a former anarchist, who was its founder.

Italian socialism was the most revolutionary in Europe. Its opposition to colonial wars had given rise to memorable insurrections. Perhaps on those occasions it might have been possible to go further. The leaders did not consider it. On the contrary they restrained the masses. They neither conceived or accepted the social revolution or expropriation of the capitalists by direct action of the proletariat. They only desired it through parliament.

The war broke out. Unlike their comrades in other countries most of the socialists opposed the massacre. Serrati<sup>2</sup> was imprisoned. There was still in Italy international spirit and a revolutionary outlook.

In spite of that, in spite of the enthusiastic outburst of the people who accorded triumphal elections to the party, parliamentarism prevented the revolution. And when in 1919 our comrades and the Italian revolutionary syndicalists occupied the factories and workshops, the socialist party refused to enter the struggle and held back the C.G.L.<sup>3</sup> the largest syn-

dicalist organisation in spite of the reiterated appeals of Malatesta, who proposed the United Revolutionary Front and with admirable foresight predicted the victory of reaction in the event of a hold up in the proletarian march.

In the reactionary counter-offensive, the massacre of revolutionaries by Mussolini's bands were resisted by the rank and file alone, without the smallest effort on the part of the leaders to retrieve the situation. Mussolini was able to seize power by direct action, even with exceedingly feeble resources compared with those that the parliamentary socialists had at their disposal.

Austria the romantic captive of Central Europe, had been starved, ruined, martyred by the Treaty of Versailles. The Socialists there had become the strongest party. Just as in Germany, where the Stinnes had been able to triumph while the people died of starvation, no energetic measures towards economic equality were introduced, no fundamental reforms. Instead, admirable educational reforms were brought in, worker's flats were built.....as if, notwithstanding their usefulness, these superficial improvements were able to remedy the situation as far as it was possible to remedy it. Parliamentary paralysis ended in the triumph of Dollfuss.

### FIRST LABOUR GOVERNMENT

1924. MacDonald in power. He was not marxist to the same extent as the German socialists, but he agreed with them regarding parliamentary tactics.

The English workers rejoiced like the Italian workers before them. No one expected a terrible revolution: The programme of the Labour Party spoke only of nationalisations. But the people's conception of nationalisations was different from that of their leaders, the "ministers of the Crown."

In India Gandhi was agitating. MacDonald issued a warning which indicated what could be expected of him and his friends: he would not tolerate the Hindu nationalists profiting from the setting up of a workers' government to spread discontent. And the reason given was that "*socialism being internationalist it could not tolerate nationalist movements.*"

Men capable of employing such sophistry could not go very far. But they were terribly well prepared to retreat. And MacDonald expropriated nothing, deceived the masses, made them kick their heels in idleness, allowed the crisis to increase without taking radical measures to alter it: he yielded to capitalist pressure and when everything had come to the worst MacDonald rallied round him a national government out of which came domination of the Tories.

### SPAIN

Spain. Socialism had not much strength, nevertheless the parliamentarians had refused to shoulder their small responsibilities in the insurrections of 1917. But in 1923 the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, whose aim was to bar the road to the menacing social revolution, was set up. The socialist party declared that it was only interested in the class struggle, and collaborated with the dictatorship. For the first time there were socialist councillors of State—Largo Caballero being one of them. The socialists took part in the National Assembly which elaborated the

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2. Geocinta Serrati, a member of the executive of the Socialist Party, editor of "Avanti," and one of the organisers of the Socialist Party in Italy. He was firmly opposed to the war.—Ed.

3. Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (General Confederation of Labour) was a moderate, reformist organisation, formed in 1912, at the Congress of Modena; its secretary was Armando Borghi.—Ed.

# This Month's Commentary

## CHINESE SEAMEN.

The imprisonment of Chinese sailors on a charge of broken contract, because they refused to go to sea without a £5 a month war bonus, provides an interesting sidelight on the war. British sailors receive a £5 a month bonus, and the Chinese have been demanding one for sixteen months. They, like the British, feel that the added dangers which the war brings demand some compensation. And since "the bravery of the men who brave the mines and submarines in order to bring the nation's food" is sufficiently exploited as a stick with which to beat the conscientious objectors and others who oppose the war, the claim is, to say the least, reasonable. Yet many of these men have not been legally represented in court, and in some cases have not even understood English. The mental sufferings of such uncomprehending victims of British "justice" may well be imagined, as they kick their heels in a foreign prison. One would not be surprised if it drove some of them to suicide, like the victims of Dachau, who are also treated as members of an inferior race...

## CLASS-COLLABORATION—OR THE LEGALITY OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.

Justice, however, tries to be impartial. The "Daily Telegraph" (20.2.41) under the heading "Industrial Court For One Man," unctuously remarks, "While Trade Union organizations in most of Europe have been smashed or partially stifled by Nazi oppression, all the industrial machinery of this country has been brought into play to decide the case of one British seaman." This man, it transpires, after being dismissed by Trinity House for refusing to transfer from his West Coast port to London, appealed to his union, the Transport and General Workers, and his action was accordingly considered by the Industrial Court. The "Daily Telegraph" concludes, somewhat lamely, "last night it was announced that the Court had decided that the seaman was wrong and his dismissal was justified."... Our splendid Trade Union organisations exist, in effect, to give a legal colour to the employers' actions. To bring into play "all the industrial machinery of this country" seems rather cumbersome for this purpose: the Nazi system certainly appears more economi-

cal, and will doubtless recommend itself on that account to the employers.

## AMERICAN AID TO BRITAIN?

Considering the space devoted by the daily Press to the "Lend-and-Lease" Bill, one might think that "America" (i.e. the American ruling-class) was all out to assist Britain to the utmost, and to boycott Germany. The "Times," at least, harbours no such illusions, perhaps because it knows the ruling-class in this country too well. On 16.1.41 it draws attention to the increase in American exports to the Soviet Union, reminding its readers, at the same time, of Senator Martin Dies' remark to the effect that America was in some ways giving more help to the Axis than to the Allies. (Mr. Dies presides over the Committee investigating un-American activities; this remark about ordinary business activity must have been made off duty.) "... from October 15th, Russia imported more cotton from the U.S. than her normal imports from all sources in a full year." The "Evening Standard" (22.11.41) states that "Russia was the U.S.A.'s best non-fighting customer in 1940" and imported about £17,400,000—"second only to the exports to Britain and France." This consisted principally of shoe leather, wheat, cotton, and non-aviation petrol—the latter "reported to be for use by Far Eastern motorized units." Under the renewed Soviet-German Trade Agreement ("Times," 13.1.41), Russia is to send Germany during the year raw materials, oil, and grain, to the value of £25,000,000 worth of German manufactured goods. This represents "the largest quantity of grain ever sent by one country to another." Other sources have reported that the U.S.S.R. is experiencing an agricultural crisis, so that if this is true it is not surprising that wheat imports from America have gone up.

## RUSSIA

Daily papers of February 22nd reported the dismissal from the Central Committee of the Communist Party, of Maxim Litvinov, Pauline Zhemchuzina, who is Molotov's wife and was appointed Vice-Commissar for the Food Industry with special charge of Fisheries in 1937 (is this a back-handed slap at the too-prominent Molotov?), and F. A. Merkuloff, the Commissar for the ferrous

metal industry. Litvinov was replaced as Commissar for Foreign Affairs by Molotov just before the signing of the Soviet-Nazi pact in August 1939. In each case the reason given for their dismissal was that they "failed to ensure that their obligations to the Soviet Union were fulfilled."

Internal affairs in the U.S.S.R. have been taking a peculiar turn for the past year. Last spring an offensive was launched against the Trade Union bureaucracy. There were, it was alleged, far too many paid Trade Union officials. Accordingly huge numbers of the lesser ranks of officials were dismissed—those principally in touch with the workers.

This measure, to which tremendous publicity was accorded in the Press, was clearly intended to prepare the ground for the anti-labour laws of June 26th, 1940. These were designed to increase the working day, to bind the worker to his job, and to enable the government to draft him to whatever industry or region they thought fit, especially to the newly expanded war industries. (It is ironical to reflect that the C.P.G.B. claim that the "Daily Worker" was suppressed because of the protests they would have made against Bevin's—by comparison—relatively mild conscription of labour laws)

Legislation against the ordinary workers was only to be expected; but on October 20th these laws were extended so as to embrace the privileged "labour aristocracy" as well. They now covered "engineers, constructors, technicians, foremen, draughtsmen, bookkeepers, economists, accountants, employees in the finance and plan departments, as well as skilled workers above and including the Sixth Category, (i.e. the Stakhanovists)."

It appears that Stalin has dealt a blow at that class of privileged workers who, on account of their comfortable positions, supported the regime, and which had been built up for that purpose. The State has now turned round on them. Just to make the lesson absolutely clear public trials were staged on October 24th, 25th, and 26th, the defendants in each case being technicians. They were all charged with being members of a "wrecking crew of slanderers who not only traduced honest Communists, but took under their protection acknowledged enemies of the people." Their crimes went back five years. All three confessed.

During the NEP period the State relied for support on the kulaks; they were liquidated by the first Five-Year plan, and their

place was taken by the "aristocracy of labour"—the technicians, engineers, and Stakhanovists. These latter now appear to be in course of liquidation. In another connexion the "Daily Telegraph" recently remarked that "for some time the Kremlin policy has been to break up the big State departments into smaller units, on the ground that they are too unwieldy." Presumably this move is also intended to diminish the power of the bureaucrats. The recent report regarding Kaganovitch, who was removed from his post as Commissar for the Aircraft Industry in January 1940 is interesting in this connexion. "Kaganovitch was sternly reprimanded for bad work, and warned that unless an improvement was shown he was liable to be dismissed," similar warnings were extended to the Commissars for the Chemical, Fish, and Electrical Industries and to the Merchant Marine. Kaganovitch used to be tipped off as Stalin's probable successor.

The attack on a class which had been relied upon to support the State—indeed created for that purpose—suggests that the regime is now turning to another. This would seem to be the army. The "Daily Telegraph" (6.2.41) states that "the sixtieth birthday of Marshall Voroshilov, the Soviet's chief marshal, was celebrated yesterday, on a large scale.... He received the Order of Lenin and the General Staff Academy was given his name. The Press devoted nearly its entire space to praising his fifteen years' work as Commissar for Defence and his early life struggle." Although the awarding of such honours is by no means incompatible, in the U.S.S.R. with summary arrest and the firing squad shortly afterwards, this may be perhaps interpreted as an external symptom of Stalin's increasing reliance on the army. It will be interesting to observe whether a purely military dictatorship will develop. In the past these have tended to be increasingly unstable.

### KRIVITSKY

Readers of W. G. Krivitsky's book "I was Stalin's Agent" published at the end of 1939 will doubtless have wondered how long he would survive. They will therefore not have been surprised to learn that he was found shot in his hotel bedroom in Washington on 10th of February. Although the coroner brought in a verdict of suicide, it is alleged that the Federal Police are not satisfied with this explanation.

# The End of the French C.G.T.

[The Confédération Générale du Travail (French T.U.C.) was based on the following declaration of principles, accepted at the Congress of Amiens in 1906 and known as the Charter of Amiens.]

## THE CHARTER OF AMIENS (1906)

"The Confederal Congress of Amiens confirms Article 2, on the Constitution of the C.G.T. (General Confederation of Labour).

"The C.G.T. group, independent of all political schools, all working men who are conscious of the struggle to be carried on for the disappearance of the system of wage-earners and employers.

"The Congress considers that this declaration is a recognition of the class-struggle which, on the economic field, opposes the working men in revolt against all forms of exploitation and oppression, material and moral, put into operation by the capitalist class against the working class.

"The Congress makes this theoretic affirmation more precise by adding the following points:—

"With regard to everyday demands, Syndicalism pursues the co-ordination of the efforts of the working men's welfare through the realisation of immediate ameliorations, such as the diminution of working hours, the increase in wages, etc.

"But this is only one aspect of its work; Syndicalism is preparing the integral emancipation which can only be realised by the expropriation of the capitalist class; it commends as a means to this end the general strike, and considers that the syndicate, now an organisation of resistance, will be, in the future, an organisation of production and distribution, the basis for social reorganisation.

"The Congress declares that this double task of everyday life and of the future follows from the very situation of the wage-earners, which exerts its pressure on the working class and makes it a duty on all working men, whatever their opinions or their political and philosophical tendencies, to belong to the essential group which is the syndicate.

"Consequently, so far as individuals are concerned, the Congress declares complete liberty for every Syndicalist to participate, outside of the trade organisation, in such forms of struggle as correspond with his philosophical or political ideas, confining itself to asking him in return not to introduce into the syndicate the ideas he professes outside it.

"In so far as organisations are concerned, the Congress decides that, in order that Syndicalism may attain its maximum effectiveness, economic action should be exercised against the employers, and the Confederal organisations must not, as syndical groups, concern themselves with any parties or sects, which, outside, and by their side, may pursue in all liberty the transformation of society."

Forty years after the C.G.T. had declared at the Congress of Amiens its will to achieve the emancipation of the working class by expropriating the capitalists and organising the new society on the basis of the syndicate, its leaders become the allies of Hitler's regime and declare their endeavour to carry out the "economic and social revolution indispensable to Franco—German collaboration."

The military defeat of France does not explain how, an organisation which was supposed to be one of the fundamental institutions of the democratic regime, can become overnight an equally fundamental institution of a fascist State, the change being not even followed by a removal of the principal leaders. The general secretary Leon Jouhaux remained at its post, the secretaries of the most important federations are still in office, the only change occurred was that the secretary of the C.G.T., René Belin was made minister of labour by Marshal Petain.

This news may bring comfort to the hearts of the Trade-Union bureaucrats in this country, but to the workers it must appear very strange news indeed. They thought that their French comrades had been expected to shed their blood in the defence of their glorious democratic organization, which they were repeatedly told, would be smashed to pieces if Hitler were allowed to invade France. Most of the French workers marched to defend their country, because it was democratic, because it allowed such organizations such as the C.G.T. to exist. They did not realise, just as the British workers do not realise now, that their trade unions had become the instru-

ments of the State and the capitalist class and that it could therefore work equally well under a Daladier or a Petain-Laval regime.

We shall recall here how the C.G.T. by a succession of compromises and capitulations and betrayals became an organization whose collaboration Hitler seeks in his "reconstruction" of France.

In June 1936 the C.G.T. could, if it had acted according to the Charter on which it is founded, have destroyed the capitalist class or at least weakened it enough to make the advent of fascism impossible. The French workers showed at that time a great fighting spirit. They occupied factories and workshops and organized their own stay-in-strikes. The frightened bourgeoisie was obliged to make some concessions. The eight hour day, holidays with pay, and improvement of working conditions were gained by the workers, and the Popular Front government was put into power. The membership of the C.G.T. jumped from 1,300,000 to five millions, but the leaders did their best to stop the revolutionary movement. Instead of relying on the workers and organizing them to resist any attack from the bourgeoisie, they turned to the Popular Front ministers and considered themselves safer with the support of a few politicians than with that of the working class.

Internal struggles between the reformists and the communists weakened the C.G.T. still further. The Communists were a minority at the beginning of 1936 but very soon the situation was reversed. Thanks to the lack of energy exhibited by the reformists, the communists in one year had succeeded in controlling most of the C.G.T.—But neither the communists nor

the reformists were concerned with the welfare of the French workers. The first wanted merely to defend Russian interests which consisted, at that time, in having a strongly armed France confronting Germany. They were therefore the most enthusiastic supporters of rearmament. The reformists were mainly concerned in defending the interests of the French government and the French capitalist class. They believed that a rapprochement with Germany was possible, supporting Daladier at the time of Munich, and did not consider rearmament to the teeth an immediate necessity. Jouhaux, the general secretary, was greatly influenced by the communists, but also had strong connections with the representatives of French capitalists interests.

The only people who could really call themselves syndicalists and defended the principles of the Amiens Charter within the C.G.T. were a small revolutionist minority which had to fight its way against both the reformists and the communists. They opposed themselves to every kind of collaboration with the government and the capitalists, and tried to animate the working class with the spirit of class struggle which had won them such important improvements in June 1936. They revindicated the right to use the strike weapon and to organize their self-defence against fascists and exploiters. As Internationalists, they opposed all kinds of chauvinist propaganda, to prepare the workers for war, and they equally opposed rearmament, as being the first step towards an imperialist struggle.

Unfortunately the ideas of the revolutionary syndicalist group did not influence the mass of the C.G.T. and did not succeed in preventing its decomposition. All through the years 1937 and 1938 the masses who had come with such a spontaneous enthusiasm to the C.G.T., began now to leave it, realizing how the leaders were deceiving them. And when the semi-reactionary government of Daladier came into power, the C.G.T., was already too weak to put up the opposition which could have brought the workers back to their strength and freedom of June, 1936.

The general strike of the 30th of November, 1938 offers an example of the confusion and corruption which had invaded the syndicalist organisation. It was called in order to protest against the reactionary decrees enforced by the Daladier Government. Taking as a pretext the necessity to speed up the programme of National Defence, these new laws deprived the workers of their right to strike, established sanctions for workers who refused to do overtime, and instituted a tax of two per cent. on salaries to be paid to the State through the employers. Such clearly reactionary degrees produced great indignation amongst the workers, and the C.G.T. decided to call a strike in order to save its face. But its leaders did all in their power to sabotage it. They left the government more than a fortnight to organise the repression, and they demoralised the workers by negotiating right up to the last moment with cabinet ministers. Furthermore, they prevented the strikers from taking any action against blacklegs. The strike was of course a failure and Daladier triumphed. The conditions of the workers were then made worse even than before June, 1936. The people who had taken part in the strike was sacked, some being thrown into prison, and no militant activity was tolerated any longer in the factories and the workshops.

The C.G.T., discredited both in the eyes of the Government, who did not fear it anymore, and of

the people who could not trust it, was still more weakened by the German-Russian pact which made inevitable the expulsion of the communists and pro-communist elements. The reformists then took complete control over the C.G.T. and when the war started they organised a systematic repression against all communist or revolutionary elements. Many of the reformists leaders, who like Jouhaux had at one time been closely connected with the communist party, suddenly discovered that they were Russian agents and treated them as enemies of their country. These people who had thought until the last moment that an "understanding" with Germany would be possible, now became the most ardent supporters of the war, and employed the most disgusting chauvinist propaganda. Moreover, being animated by that beautiful spirit of Union Sacrée, they forgot that the working class was supporting the whole weight of the cost of the war.

This attitude failed of course to gain them the popularity of the working class population, and they were unable to repair the loss in membership sustained after the expulsion of the communist controlled syndicates. In April, 1940, Jouhaux declared that the membership of the C.G.T. was now 800,000.

With the coming into power of the reformists in the C.G.T. the tendency to collaborate directly with the capitalist class became more apparent. Class struggle, and the vindication of workers' rights were considered by Belin, the reformist leader and his friends as being old-fashioned. A new formula of syndicalism was sought—that of collaboration with the bourgeoisie and the capitalist class. Efforts had been made already before the war by the reformist leaders of the C.G.T. to seek a basis of collaboration with some of the big bosses of industry and finance. They had held meetings together, and discussed ways of bringing about "social peace." During the war the idea of collaboration took a more definite shape. It became obvious that what the reformists meant by collaboration was the complete abandonment by the workers of class struggle. In exchange the bosses would grant the workers the right to participate in the administration of a certain number of institutions for the welfare of the workers, such as cheap working-class houses, hospitals and schools, unemployment funds, old-age pensions, etc. Instead of obtaining an increase in salary by the means of a strike or strike-threat, the workers' delegates would discuss with the bosses the possibility of an increase. In other words the reformists wanted to put the worker completely in the hands of the capitalists and reduce them to relying on their own good hearts!

The whole policy of the C.G.T. had come, during recent years, into complete opposition to the ideas expressed in the Amiens Charter; from an organism of class struggle whose aim was the abolition of class society, it had become the organ of the State. It is, therefore, a logical conclusion from the C.G.T. activities in the last few years that it should become an organ of collaboration with the Nazi regime. Those reformists who accused the communists of sympathy with the enemy, who put our anarchists comrades in prison as traitors, find themselves perfectly fit to become the instruments of a fascist State. They will now be able to put into practice their beloved formula of class-collaboration. Under a democratic regime there may be some chance of the workers revolting but under a strong fascist state the workers are unable to move and an "understanding collaboration" can operate perfectly.

M. L. B.

# Books

"Trade Unions Fight—For What?"  
by Herbert Tracey. Foreword by  
George Gibson. (Routledge,  
The Labour Book Service)

THIS is a book written in defence of the British Labour Movement, against those who claim that it has no purpose. Mr. Tracey very ingeniously grafts a purpose on to British Labour which it by no means possesses, coating with a thin progressive veneer the essentially reactionary character of the social-democrats. As chief publicist of the T.U. Movement Tracey has a good insight into what social-democracy really means, but this does not appear in his book.

The book begins with an apologia for supporting the war. Trade Unionism is essentially anti-fascist—no mention is, of course made of the T.U. gentlemen who in Vichy, Copenhagen and Oslo co-operate with the Nazis or of those who in Stockholm ban, in their capacity as Ministers, manifestoes issued by their own International. The International Federation of Trade Unions is only anti-fascist when the fascists attack their responsible positions: if the fascists leave them alone, they will co-operate with fascism. When fascism raises its head in any country, the trade union bosses never attack it, only behind a barrage of high-explosives do they attack the other side, and, as Vichy shows, they shut their mouths quickly if there is no one maintaining an armed barrier. Anyone can attack fascism in an enemy country in time of war: what matters to the workers is whether they maintain the class-struggle against the rulers, fascist or not, in time of peace or war.

Mr. Tracey paints a glowing picture of what free co-operation means. He shows how the trade union officials are gradually insinuating their way into more and more governmental departments and "freely co-operating with employers and the State, yes, "it is pattern of a free society that is coming to light in this war"! Conscription extends to every section of the people, but this means nothing to him: they cannot "freely co-operate," but their leaders can,

and that is all that matters. He says gaily "the spirit of a free people constrains their Government to make the fullest use of a peoples' capacity for voluntary organisation"! Nothing is unconscrip, but everything is voluntary! Mr. Tracey makes no mention of the fact that the workers when forced into the armed forces, are refused all possible forms of trade union rights, freedom of expression—such is tantamount to mutiny, sedition, treason and what have you. It is true the Government makes the "fullest use" of unions already established—it uses them to regiment labour—i.e. it

supply of labour, pressing the government to extend its plans for industrial conscription, which the Right-wing Chamberlain had never dared do.

Churchill's Coalition Government has succeeded because the Labour men could do to the workers what the Tories dared not. It had to have a Tory leadership because the industrialists would not tolerate any other sort of Government. This is what coalition and co-operation—class-collaboration means. It is shown in several of Mr. Tracey's chapters by the fact that he simply recounts what has occurred.

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## Trade Unions fight for class collaboration

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gives them the task of controlling industry side by side with the bosses that is the use of the Labour Movement in this war. It is significant that while the Minister of Labour is the trade union "fuehrer" Mr. Ernest Bevin—the Minister of War is the Tory "fuehrer" — lately Conservative Chief Whip—Captain Margesson. So the Right and Left co-operate, the Right controlling the feudally-managed armed forces, the Left controlling the workers largely trade union-organised. Some things are better left to the Left—e.g. suppression of free speech and press, because the Left has a reputation for believing in liberty, and Morrison can therefore do what Anderson dare not; other things are best left to the Right—e.g. modernisation of the Army (the Liberal Hore-Belisha was thrown out on his ear for daring to attempt it), or not balancing the Budget because everyone knows that the Right is the custodian of the rights of privilege and wealth. Thus Right and Left co-operate together voluntarily for the "national good"; the Left get the workers to sacrifice the Right gets the rich to agree to it. The "national good" becomes that of the Right, because it is bound to be the good of the class controlling the nation. This Mr. Tracey glosses over, but his extensive picture shows how it is worked—how the T.U.C. exerted its influence on the Government on all sorts of questions, such as the

The final chapter is of some interest: "Trade Unions Discover Their Mission." It is an attempt by Mr. Tracey to find some excuse for the existence of the T.U.s: he suggests that the State is to monopolistic, and that there must be some form of trade union control. His conception of trade union control faintly resembles a bastard form of syndicalism (workers' control). Revolutionary syndicalism believes in the workers at their place of work grouped together in councils, to control industry, united, industry by industry in syndicates (unions). Mr. Tracey's form of it is that he believes in craft unions exercising a form of control. By their form of organisation they are unable to effect direct workers' control, and it apparently means control of the State by the officials of trade unions. (This is no doubt a very welcome theory to Mr. Tracey, for as sole publicity controller of Transport House he would probably become Minister of Information!)

Mr. Tracey distorts the facts when he refers to what he calls "what Trade Unions have undertaken to do under revolutionary conditions in some other countries." He cites the collectivisation in Spain, quoting from the examples actually of anarcho-syndicalism in Catalonia. "Entire industries and services" did not, however, pass into the hands of the Unions in the

(continued on page 16)

sense in which Mr. Tracey refers to Unions, and it is completely untrue to state that such a pattern of economic organisation "existed, in fact, before the Civil War began." Mr. Tracey evidently knows nothing at all about the Spanish Revolution, which does not excuse his citing it. It is absurd to pretend that there was any collectivisation in Republican Spain before July 19th, 1936—it was against all the tenets of the liberal government. Only with the Revolution did the workers seize control. Then they ejected the owners forcibly, without the permission of the social-democrats. And the C.N.T. was hardly the same as the T.U.C. whose sister organisation in Spain was the U.G.T. The collectives of the U.G.T. were quite different from those of the C.N.T. (cf. "Spain and the World").

The U.G.T. opposed the revolutionary seizure of factories, preferring State control to workers' control. (This, and not the work of collectivisation is similar to the U.S. "Plumb Plan," by which the A.F.L. tried to group workers on railroads to share profits with the employers).

Then Mr. Tracey actually goes on to refer to the "non-success" of Spanish collectivisation, while in his foreword, Mr. Gibson, T.U.C. chairman points out that it was destroyed by counter-revolution!

Nothing in Mr. Tracey's book suggests that it was the social-democrats who hand-in-hand with the Stalinists were the people who destroyed it by counter-revolution. This sort of thing must be a habit of Mr. Tracey's. In the T.U. official journal, "Labour," which he edits, a reviewer of Froelich's book on Rosa Luxemburg refers to her fate "being sealed when the Nazis came into power"—he might have spared his sympathy for the great woman revolutionist had he read the book and known that it was not Hitler, but his own blood-brothers, the social-democratic trade-union government of Noske, who were the murderers!

A. M.

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PARLIAMENTARISM (continued from page 10)

constitution of the new regime. But popular reaction became stronger and stronger, and Primo de Rivera and Alfonso XIII had to get out.

The Republic was proclaimed. The socialists exerted an enormous influence in Parliament. They took advantage of this in order to prevent the revolution. Largo Caballero, minister of Labour was as implacable as Noske had been in Germany. Special laws were introduced against the C.N.T., (the anarcho-syndicalist workers' organisation) thousands of workers were imprisoned, a hundred and fifty were massacred, the Civil Guard, the hated instrument of monarchist repression, was reinforced, the Assault Guard was created, revolutionaries were deported, and a special prison for anarchists was built in North Africa.

Disgusted, part of the electors brought about the triumph of the reactionary leaders Lerroux and Gil Robles. During their government the Right took advantage of the opportunity to prepare its weapons. The Left returned to power but it was incapable of taking energetic measures against the Right. The Republicans and Socialists allowed the fascists to organise their coup. The anarchists alone warned the people and prepared their arms. Without them, the immediate popular resistance, fascism would have triumphed within forty-eight hours.

I have drawn attention to the most outstanding instances. There are others on which I have not dwelt, such as the overturning in Chile of Colonel Grove's government, which had begun to put socialism into practice, or the shameful retreat of Blum and his friends.

I said at the beginning of this article, that I do not claim to convince those people who live by these treacheries, and live comfortably although they often end stupidly by dying as a result of them.<sup>4</sup> But I do demand of those socialists who have not ceased to be revolutionaries, if so much experience is not sufficiently convincing. Marx in order to deduce the theory of concentration of capital did not need to analyse statistics for so long a period.

I am certain that many socialists have lost faith in parliamentarism, although they do not care to admit it, and they regard it as a mistake and a danger. This at least can constitute a point of agreement between us.

GASTON LEVAL.

4. This article was written some years ago. In the light of recent events, this remark appears prophetic; Blum is said to be in a Vichy concentration camp, awaiting trial before a selected bench of judges at Riom; Caballero also awaits "trial" in Spain, having been recently handed over to Franco by Marshall Petain; Companys was garotted; Azana died in exile. One wonders whether a similar fate awaits their opposite numbers in other countries?—Ed.

## **Press Fund.**

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