

# WAR COMMENTARY

Vol. 2 No. 9 Twopence  
JULY, 1941

## *U.S.S.R. — Anarchist Position*

**F**OR anarchists the war between Germany and Russia does not create a fresh problem. It is therefore necessary to give only a brief outline of the important features of the new war situation.

Our programme published in the May issue of War Commentary declared: "We oppose the war as the outcome of the clashing interests of rival imperialisms." It is rivalry of interests between the rulers of Russia and the rulers of Germany that has brought them to armed conflict. Germany does not wage war on Russia for fear of revolution, but to reap the economic gains of victory. Stalin is defending not the revolution, but the economic foundations of the Soviet ruling bureaucracy. This new phase in the world war cannot be interpreted as though the Reichswehr fought for the capitalist ruling class, while the Red Army defended working class interests. In this sense Churchill was quite correct when he portentously declared in his broadcast speech of June 22nd, that: "This is no class war."

Those who have hitherto opposed the imperialist war but believe that Russia is not an imperialist state, have now to revise their attitude, but it is clear enough that the U.S.S.R. has always pursued an imperialist foreign policy, and that it is the state and not the workers which owns and controls the whole life of the country.

As the Bolsheviks settled down to establish their industry and increase their trade with foreign capitalist countries, the idea of extending the revolution abroad gradually disappeared. In Hungary, in Italy, three times in Germany, and most glaringly of all

in Spain in 1936 and '37 revolutionary situations were neglected and even sabotaged. Those who believe that the Communist International existed to produce revolution abroad, must face the fact that its record, in spite of several opportunities, has been one of absolute and total failure. Even after the Spanish Revolution of 19th July, 1936 was an established fact over Catalonia and a large part of Spain, as a result of the efforts of the workers of the Anarcho-Syndicalist C. N. T., the "Daily Worker" (6th August, 1936) declared that those who said that the Spanish people were fighting for social revolution, or anything other than bourgeois democracy, were "downright lying scoundrels." Stalin's agents then proceeded mainly by economic strangulation, to crush the achievements of the Spanish Revolution.

The world revolution was abandoned in favour of alliances with capitalist countries. Like the bourgeois states the U.S.S.R. took part in the manoeuvrings to establish a balance of power in Europe—in reality the encirclement of Germany. Those were the glorious days when the powerful French Communist Party became the most nationalistic and patriotic party on the left advocating rearmament and a larger army to make war on Germany. Stalin's somersault in August, 1939, came as a surprise only to those who thought of Russia as outside the imperialist game. Those who recognised that the Soviet Union fully entered into international power politics, saw in it nothing more surprising or immoral than the alliance with imperialist France or semi-fascist Turkey; or than the trade pact with Mussolini's

Italy. The crude lack of preparation of public opinion, the rapidity of the change over in policy were the only causes of astonishment though Hitler had done just the same kind of volte-face before.

It is obvious that Russia's aim in foreign policy was not to help revolution in Europe but to avoid isolation by lining up with capitalist states. Indeed the behaviour of the Comintern in Spain revealed the apparent paradox that revolution in Europe was a greater menace to Stalin and his imperialist aim than the European imperialist rivalries!

Although Stalin had attempted to deny it by means of his doctrine of "socialism in a single country," it is obvious that a state which pursues an imperialist foreign policy cannot itself be revolutionary. We have briefly indicated that Soviet foreign policy proves this. But there is also abundant information regarding the internal life of the U.S.S.R. which makes it even more clear. The regime is not a Communist one in which the workers own and control the means of wealth production. On the contrary, these are owned by the state which represents, as always, a privileged class—the bureaucracy—controlled by the Bolshevik party under the supreme dictator Stalin. The workers in the Soviet Union do not, either individually or collectively own anything, and so, as elsewhere, are compelled to sell their labour power to the employer, in this case the State. Moreover the concentration into its own hands of the means of production, the control of the army, the huge police organisation, the Party and the bureaucracy, renders the state extremely powerful... Hence the dictatorship is far more efficient, all-pervading, and oppressive than for example, the British capitalist state. Thus, no party but the Bolshevik party is allowed, no opposition within the party tolerated; there is no liberty of thought or speech; nor are the workers allowed any liberty of association or even of assembly. Inequality of income and privilege is extreme, and is the more offensive because of the hypocritical reiteration that the workers hold power.

The true nature of Stalin's regime is known to all but the ignorant and those blinded by Communist Party propaganda. One can concur with Mussolini's remark after the purges in the party: "Stalin is a good fascist but too barbarous." Nevertheless, it remained for the German attack on Russia to

expose to the gaze of all the contradictions in the supposedly anti-war attitude of the Stalinists and Trotskyists. The former, of course, now have to abandon their propaganda for a People's Peace. They must demand the fullest possible support for the Government's military and economic aid to Russia. The wheel of August 1939 has come full circle, and they are back at the Popular Front. To avoid the humiliation of an about turn once more as ridiculous as that of October 2nd, 1939 they are driven to such shifts as pretending a distrust of the Churchill government (at first) and warning their followers of the "treacherous sections of the government who even now would switch the war." But the switch the war bogey has rather lost its point seeing that the former interventionist Churchill evidently has no fears about sending aid to the supposed "workers state," represented by the Stalinists as "the spearhead of the attack on world capital." Evidently Churchill, who, as leader and champion of British capitalist imperialism, should know what he is about, regards German fascism as offering a much more serious threat to British Capitalism, than the Moscow leaders of the "Communist" International. Roosevelt apparently shares his contempt for the "Red danger of Moscow."

The Trotskyists also have now to face the consequences of their belief in the socialist content of the U.S.S.R. The necessity to defend the workers' state has driven them also into the pro-war camp. Their support for the Anglo-American-Soviet bloc is not however, quite so unqualified "in theory" as the Stalinists; they urge the defence of the U.S.S.R. but attack "the decadent bureaucracy of Stalin." This theoretical qualification however can make no difference to the practical support for the war effort which their hallucinations regarding the working-class structure of the Soviet state compels them to demand from the British workers.

The anarchists by opposing themselves to all imperialist wars have adopted the only logical position. They refuse to side with any enemy of the working class. They concentrate all their energies in fighting against the State, now becoming more and more powerful in all the countries of the world. Only when it will be crushed will the workers be able to organise themselves in complete economic and political freedom.

## THE STATE AND—

CONSIDERABLE advantage accrues to the ruling class if factory (and other) workers can be organised on a military basis. In the first place, labour armies, like military armies, are debarred from organizing themselves into unions, so that the rulers can prosecute the class struggle almost unhindered. Secondly, it offers a means of securing far stricter control and longer working hours, while wages can be reduced virtually to military levels. War-time gives them manifold excuses for effecting this—the need for increasing production in the “national cause” for instance.

Now, if the militarization of labour is a possibility here, it will be valuable to examine, from the workers point of view, the attitude of the various sections of the left on this issue.

During the intervention period in Russia, Trotsky had, early in 1920, introduced conscription of labour, with special labour “shock battalions” for the key industries. At the same time special units of the Red Army were diverted from the military to the “economic” front—i.e. were turned over to work certain industries. Moreover, in order to quell unrest among the Transport workers, Trotsky militarized the whole industry. The workers’ committees were suppressed and normal union organization replaced by commissars, military tribunals, and intelligence departments; elections were totally abolished and all officials appointed from above by the Chief Commissar.

During the latter half of 1920, strikes and absenteeism were a conspicuous feature in Russia, threatening to bring the economic life of the country to a standstill. Trotsky, therefore, pleased with his “Transport Army,” proposed the complete militarisation of the whole of the Trade Unions as a means of increasing industrial efficiency. After a stormy controversy, a more tactful plan of Lenin’s—which had, however the same effect of making the trades unions completely subordinate to the State—was adopted instead.

The Workers’ Opposition, which advocated the restoration of power into the hands

of the factory committees, was defeated at the Party Congress, and its supporters on the Central Committee removed from their offices or otherwise “corrected.” While this controversy was raging, the Kronstadt sailors, the “flower of the Revolution,” raised the standard of revolt against the centralisation of control and dictatorship of the Central Committee, demanding instead the old slogan of “All power to the Soviets.”

## —THE WORKERS

Following a repulsive campaign of calumny and misrepresentation instituted by Lenin himself, they were massacred by Trotsky and the Red Army. The Russian trade unions have since been merely part of the State machinery, and have wholly ceased to act as organizations for the defence of the working class rights. The attitude of the Third International is therefore clear enough. The Nazi Labour Front of Dr. Ley exhibits similar features in the complete subordination of the unions to the State

In all countries overrun by Hitler so far, the leaders of the Second International have also betrayed the workers and have handed over the trade unions to collaborate in the “New Order.” At the same time the Nazis are being compelled to introduce direct military intervention and control, together with martial law, in order to crush labour unrest in occupied countries like Holland, Norway and Denmark.

On June 9th, Roosevelt sent thirty truckloads of soldiers armed with bayonets, machine-guns and tin hats, to occupy the North American Aviation Company’s plant at Inglewood, California, where the workers were on strike for higher wages. According to Raymond Gram Swing, in the “Sunday Express” (15. 6. 41) strikers’ pickets were bayoneted. Thus “order” was restored and the men went back to work. Meanwhile the President had passed a decree granting himself power to intervene and settle any labour dispute arising in the defence industries.

The value of labour goes up during a period of intensive rearmament so that workers striking for higher pay have an advantage over employers at such periods. Two methods are open to the employers to settle the dispute and get the men back to work; they can grant their demands and give higher pay, or they can call in the State to aid them by direct physical coercion. Needless to say, the latter is, for them, the method of choice.

In ordinary circumstances such a measure would be correctly interpreted as an open manifestation of class violence. But in wartime—the U.S.A. is virtually under wartime conditions at the present time—in

wartime, the "national" interest is plausibly represented as being "above" the workers' class interests (we have seen that the employers called in soldiers to bayonet the pickets at Inglewood rather than give an inch of *their* class position), so that the capitalist press labels strikers as "unpatriotic."

The attitude of the American Union leaders in this affair is of interest. They of course support Roosevelt's arms drive, like the British trade union bureaucrats. The Inglewood strikers had been advised by Frankenstein, the head of the United Autoworkers and Aviation division of the C. I. O., to return to work. A similar plea was telegraphed to them by Philip Murray, the president of the C.I.O. The latter is since reported (Daily Herald 13. 6. '41) to have denounced the President's new powers, declaring that "they are intended to destroy organized labour, and must be defeated." By whom? the workers will ask, since he himself had urged *them* not to fight. Presumably the new decrees must be fought then by the C.I.O. leaders; but since they are hand in glove with the government, and like Bevin and Co., here, accept its programme, it is difficult to see how they can put up an effective opposition. At any rate, it is clear that neither Murray nor any other union leaders regard the workers in the plant, who were the victims and were actively engaged in the dispute, as adequate judges of their own grievances and of the best means for settling them.

Now the majority of workers in England and America may be unwilling to see aircraft production slowed up. Yet, even though they may think that the workers at the Inglewood plant were ill-advised to strike, they cannot regard the employment of soldiers as strike breakers otherwise than with dismay and anger. The important question immediately arises as to who is to judge whether a strike is justified or not? The union bosses (in Washington or Whitehall) who have given no very clear evidence of fighting vigorously for workers' rights; or the men on the job, who have to fight for every step in the amelioration of factory and living conditions, against the employers and the rising cost of living? The answer is obvious enough. The workers in the factory (or other place of work) are themselves the best judges of when and why and how to strike for better conditions. Yet the Trade Unions are organized on the assumption that their officials shall judge when to call a strike. The attitude of the C.I.O. leaders in this dispute, and that of the T.U.C. officials in England who cheerfully agree to strikes being made illegal, is clear on this point. So much for the Second International.

The Marxist parties, the Stalinists and the Trotskyists, similarly make a cardinal principle of centralized control, and we have already drawn attention to the formidable ruthlessness of their practice in this respect. Lenin's dispute with Trotsky in 1921 over the role of the trade unions indicates clearly enough the attitude of such leaders towards the vesting of power and initiative in the rank-and-file of the workers' organizations. As with the capitalists and fascists, the bolsheviks have always displayed complete distrust of the masses.

We see therefore that it is the workers on the

spot, and not their salaried officials elsewhere, who must decide how the working class struggle is to be carried on; and we see also that this principle is denied both by the method of organization of the existing unions, and also by the various marxist schools of political thought. In striking contrast, the principle of vesting power and initiative in the hands of the workers in the factories, is the central principle of syndicalism. It is therefore of immediate practical concern to the workers, faced with the lessons of the recent strike breaking in America, to consider whether the existing trade unions are of the slightest use in fighting against the oppressive measures of the State. On this issue the proposal to place the Building Trade under direct State control is a highly significant symptom. Employed by the State, the workers will find their trade union leaders as officers of the State—that is, in the role of employers. In conjunction with the collaboration methods of the union leaders on the continent and in Scandinavia, the fact that power resides in the hands of the "leaders" instead of in those of the workers, acquires an extremely sinister complexion.

The workers course is therefore clear. They must organize themselves afresh, *on a basis of class struggle, for workers' control of the means of production, and not merely for better wages.*

This means, as we have seen, that the new organizations or unions must be designed so that the power to make rapid and effective moves in the class struggle is wielded by the factory workers themselves, or in their factory committees (this goes for workers in any trade or occupation, all organized in their local committees), and not in those of centralized bureaucrats. For example, the funds collected for strike and other purposes must be retained by the local branches and not sent to a central fund (where it is invested in some capitalist enterprise!). The factory branch must not be placed economically at the mercy of some "higher" central authority in the union. In short, the new organizations must not repeat the errors of the old ones, as has happened almost invariably in breakaway reorganizations before. The new unions, having a different object—class struggle, instead of merely bargaining—need to organize themselves on the different lines which their different object demands.

Fresh methods are already beginning to appear. In the war industries, as Tom Brown points out elsewhere in this issue, the pay is very frequently higher than the trade union rates. How has this been achieved? In nearly all cases by individuals and groups within the factory, and sometimes the whole factory, bargaining directly with the employers, and themselves getting their higher rates. Different situations require different methods, and the workers in a particular industry will know where they are strong and the employers are weak. It is at these points that they must band together to enforce better conditions. And they must rely on their points of vantage to defend them when they are exposed to attacks from the employer and/or the State. The closest solidarity must exist and make itself effectual between all workers in whatever occupation. "*The injury to one is the concern of all.*"

J.H.

# Is Gandhi a Reactionary?

Dinah Stock discusses in the final article of her series on India, Gandhi's position and the effect of his influence on the Indian revolutionary struggle. As indicated in a previous issue, the editors dissent from the implications of some of the views expressed in the series; we therefore publish a short editorial comment at the conclusion of the present article.

**M**ANY readers of War Commentary will probably think, as the Editors hinted, that the eulogy of Gandhi in my last article was overdone, and that from a revolutionary point of view Gandhi's influence in India has done more harm than good. And although in general the weighing up of an individual leader seems to me a waste of time and energy, this man's work is worth particular discussion. It raises questions which bear on the understanding of the Indian struggle as a whole, and perhaps through it of a wider issue.

There is a strong surface case against Gandhi. He is not and never has claimed to be a revolutionary leader: his ideas are almost as subversive of Marxism as of the British Raj. He uses the language of a religious conservatism with complete sincerity, reaches non-violence not merely as a useful tactic but as the most fundamental principle of life, advocates a return to handicraft economy, at the same time makes friends with cotton capitalists and steel magnates, and never gives up hope that the British Government will undergo a change of heart. Does this sound like a leadership which the workers ought to have accepted? Worse still, he has preached and practised class collaboration, and has invariably checked the mass movement which he led at the very point where it showed signs of turning into a genuine class struggle. By endowing the bourgeois Congress leaders with the germ of social conscience he has blurred the real cleavage of interest between them and the mass, and put social revolution so much the farther off.

There is some truth in all this indictment. Gandhi will not lead the masses to a social revolution; they will have to do that for themselves with a revolutionary movement and leadership of their own. I have indicated that this movement already exists, and

that up to the outbreak of the War it was growing rapidly in numbers and understanding. Eventually it will have to break with the bourgeois elements in the Congress and make its own way to freedom, and when that break comes it is probably true that Gandhi's sole influence on the other side will do more than any other force to make it difficult. Many western Marxists think that the Indian workers and peasants made their greatest mistake when they did not foresee this from the start, did not remain aloof from the nationalist movement which Gandhi set going, and attack him as a reactionary bourgeois leader. And yet, every active Indian revolutionary, whether Kisan or Congress Socialist, thinks twice before calling Gandhi a reactionary. However strongly they may oppose his policy at any particular moment they seem to feel that his inspiration is something the Indian masses could not have done without, and that to make him out an enemy to the working class would be to put themselves in an utterly false position.

This is not the judgment of opportunist leaders blinded by their own mistakes. It is hard for the western Marxist to assess the work of Gandhi truly, because we tend to see the Indian class struggle too exclusively in terms of the town proletariat. Indian workers in mill, mine and dockyard suffer the same wrongs and fight the same battles as workers in the west. When they awaken to class-consciousness they find a ready-made philosophy in the pages of Karl Marx which accurately fits their case and brings them into the comradeship of the class struggle. We understand their meaning, recognise their heroism, and think of them as representative of the Indian struggle. Yet the masses of India are mainly peasants, and the root of all India's problems is in the poverty and exploitation of the peasants. The town proletariat is not big enough to solve their problems or even its own out of its own strength; if they come to the villages with the traditional Marxist slogans and tactics of fight, they do not speak to the villagers experience. The peasants themselves must develop a movement out of their own needs, and a revolutionary philosophy expressed in the terms of the countryside, to bring about the liberation of India.

Gandhi's great achievement is that he set going a ferment which made this development possible. No one else had done it. Indian Nationalist leaders were English-educated men, more at ease with a British Civil Servant than with a peasant from their own villages. A few revolutionaries studied Marx in Europe, and returned to see in the mill-workers of Bombay and Calcutta an exact illustration of his meaning. They did good work in the towns, but neither they nor the nationalists could make the peasant understand them. Gandhi it was who looked straight at India and saw it as a land of millions of village-dwelling peasants suffering in their own homes from poverty and unemployment and the exploitation of western industrialism. He made the peasant see himself as the representative, responsible man of

India, and in doing so set him on the way to understanding, confidence and power. Once people have taken courage they can learn from experience, but experience can teach them nothing until they have dared to believe something and act on it. It was the stimulus of Gandhi's vision which first nerved millions of peasants to take an active part in the struggle for independence, and it was vitally important to India that they should be thus roused.

Indeed, a great revolutionary movement of peasants may have implications which go far beyond India. When Marx formulated his revolutionary philosophy he drew on the history of western industrialism, and the whole course of class struggle since then has tended to throw the emphasis on the organised industrial workers and to create a tradition and a set of concepts which mean more to them than to the agriculturists. The peasants have been left behind, without international contacts and lacking a vision which would explain the world to them in their own language. Yet they are as vital to the world as the industrial workers and must fight beside them on equal terms, not as mere camp-followers, before the freedom of humanity is achieved. It is just because India's problems can only be solved by a peasant revolution that the awakening of India's peasantry is of such deep significance: the very nature of their struggle will force them to work out the meaning of the revolution in terms of the land and the man who ploughs and sows it. Gandhi has not done it for them, but he has spoken to something in the peasants' consciousness which will impel them to do it for themselves, and if we keep a sane sense of proportion, we must see his reactionary words and deeds as the backwash of a stronger tide than he or any other leader can stem.

Gandhi not only awakened the peasants but taught them organisation and tactics. Most of what he taught them has been of practical value in the class struggle, although that has not been his direct motive. Hand-spinning and village industries may not be a solution of India's labour problems but they have served a fighting purpose: they have really to some extent preserved the economic balance of the village and defended the villagers against capitalist exploitation. The campaign against Untouchability, undertaken in the name of religion, is a most practical way of uniting the Indian workers from the bottom upwards. It is an absolutely necessary step towards the solidarity of the masses, and Gandhi, in making it an issue for which he was prepared to die, has clearly stated its importance.

Then there is the strategy of non-violent resistance—a much-argued topic. Gandhi's own view of the matter is plain and unequivocal. He believes that the use of violence leads inevitably to the perpetuation of tyranny, and that if his countrymen are to become genuinely free they must find some other way of liberating themselves from British rule. He would rather that every one of them died than that they poisoned the freedom for which they are fighting by mixing it up with the rule of force. He is so sure of this that he opposes every suggestion to use force, and even opposes any tactics which, if successful, must eventually lead to an impasse which force alone can break. This is the reason of his many

capitulations and compromises. Yet he preaches no gospel of submission, and has tried to evolve a strategy and a discipline which, when carried out in full seriousness, will make the people invincible in their resistance to a Government whose right they do not recognise.

Many, probably the great majority, of his followers do not accept this doctrine of non-violence as an absolute creed. But they do accept Gandhi's method of non-violent resistance, because in present-day India they find it the only practically effective way of fighting against the Government.

Armed revolt is impracticable in India, not because of any inherent quality in Hindu nature, but because India is a disarmed country where all force is concentrated in the hands of a foreign Government. It would be just as impracticable in England, if the Government possessed tanks and aeroplanes, and the workers had nothing but street barricades and park railings: no discipline or heroism would give it a chance of success. Organised Civil Disobedience, on the other hand, can bring the Government to a standstill. To be successfully operated it needs tremendous discipline, considerable heroism and uncommon strategic ability, but given these qualities it can turn them to some purpose instead of wasting them in a glorious martyrdom. It is, moreover, a controllable weapon: it does not automatically generate an armed dictatorship, nor does it plunge the users into unforeseen battles on the enemy's ground. It is one-edged: non-violent resistance is feasible, whereas non-violent aggression would be a curiously difficult task. It is essentially a peasants' strategy, lending itself to the use of people who can feed themselves and so hold out against blockade. Finally, its ethics link up with the Hindu peasants' highest ideals and beliefs and raise him in his own esteem; by the use of it revolt ceases to be a mere breakdown of endurance and becomes an adventure to be undertaken with courage and hope.

As a matter of historical fact, it was through the tactics of civil disobedience that the peasants learnt that it was possible to stand up for themselves against the Government. There had been peasant revolts in India before Gandhi's day, but successful revolt was a new experience. For all these reasons, whether or not non-violence is the last word in Indian revolutionary tactics, it has certainly justified itself as a beginning.

I have not tried to assess Gandhi's religious philosophy in itself, but to see what his effect has been on the peasant masses of India. It was his electrifying clarity which roused them to social consciousness and his organising genius which showed them how to use their power. If after such a start they follow him unreasonably without learning from experience and passing beyond his limitations—that will be the fault not of the leader but of the followers. Indian revolutionary leaders who come after him must build on his foundations, reap the benefit of his thoroughness and be judged by the standard of his own wisdom and integrity, and that in itself is no small bequest to the future.

**DINAH STOCK**

## INDIAN NATIONALISM AGAINST THE INDIAN REVOLUTION

**I**n our April issue we expressed editorial dissent from certain implications of Dinah Stock's articles, more particularly in regard to Gandhi and the Indian Nationalist movement. We are not here concerned with Gandhi's qualities as a man, but with the theoretical tendencies of which he is the expression.

Gandhi has built the Congress Nationalist movement and no one can deny the past achievements of that movement in the struggle against British Imperialism. But one may recognize the historically progressive elements of a nationalist movement—Mazzini's for example—while at the same time making a radical criticism of its policies, by pointing out certain elements which may stultify its final achievement.

In effect, Gandhi has successfully erected a huge Indian Popular Front, embracing on the one hand sections of the bourgeoisie, and on the other the tiny urban proletariat and the vast mass of the peasants. He has consistently advocated the subordination of the struggle between classes in India to the "common" struggle against the imperialist oppressor, and has always taken immediate steps to check his peasant followers whenever they have threatened to carry the struggle with British Imperialism against their own bourgeoisie at home also. His policy is one of class collaboration to overthrow the British Raj.

Now it is clearly a waste of time to speculate on what might have happened if this policy had not been followed. But one may legitimately point to certain situations that are likely to arise in the future as a result of it. As Dinah Stock observed in her article in the April issue of "War Commentary" ("Gandhi and the Indian Revolution"). The Indian bourgeoisie are weak and need the peasants' aid in order to carry on their struggle with their imperialist competitors (we may state that such a struggle in itself has no interest for the Indian workers, any more than the present war between rival sections of the international ruler class has for the European workers). But just because the Indian bourgeoisie are weak they will also look to the British to protect them when their struggle with the Indian workers becomes acute. Hence, at every decisive phase in the "National" struggle against imperialism, the bourgeois elements, in order to save themselves, will hold back the workers who form the rank and file of the movement.

Indian Nationalism, therefore, is no different from any other Popular Front; because of the diverse class interests represented in its leadership, it will always be weak and vacillating, even treacherous, at any moment of crisis. Although the Congress has many achievements to its credit, one must bear in mind, if one has any thoughts beyond mere material betterment within the framework of class society, the fundamental weakness inherent in all methods of class collaboration. Whenever the workers thrust the movement to the brink of real achievement, fear for their own positions and those of the class they represent will always compel their "leaders" to betray them. From such betrayals, and the reprisals which follow them, the workers reap only disillusion and bitterness, which may hold up the social revolution to an incalculable extent.

Nationalism, and appeals for national unity,\* have always the same aim and effect. They represent some cause to the workers as being more important or immediate than the class war (cf. the present war). Such unity always breaks down at the point where the bourgeoisie stand to lose ground in the underlying class struggle which they at least never forget, not for one moment. France supplies the most recent instance, and in the imperialist field the same role was played by the Chinese ruling class in the last century. There is no reason to think that the Indian bourgeois elements in the Nationalist movement will behave differently from their class representatives elsewhere. Gandhi calls for unity of all classes in India against the British on the grounds that such "unity" will bring strength; in effect, however, it is this substitution of "unity" for the workers' fight for their own class interests against all exploiters, that will destroy the movement's strength at the very moment when the issue is most seriously joined.

It may be that the failure of the Congress Nationalist movement to seize the opportunity offered by the war, in spite of their exceedingly unequivocal analysis of the relation of India to the war situation (in the working committee's statement of September 1939), is the result of just this vacillating quality inherent in the leadership, by reason of its bourgeois elements.

Gandhi has declared that if self-government for India is not to be achieved by Non-Violence, he would rather not have it at all. Since the emancipation of the Indian peasant can only be brought about through class struggle, this does not augur too well for the Indian revolution. In effect, his attitude is not different from that of the Bolsheviks who refuse to support any revolutionary attempt of the workers that they do not themselves control. Both cases moreover are characterised by a distrust of the worker's ability to work out their own methods of securing freedom from class domination; both insist that the masses must be led.

Gandhi is certainly no revolutionary. Yet the agrarian problem in India, the fundamental problem of the ghastly poverty of the peasants, can only be solved by the social revolution. Hence, when revolutionary opportunities arise, Gandhi's influence over the peasants and their devotion and trust in him can only be severely detrimental to the cause of social revolution—their only road to salvation. The very qualities which have given to the Nationalist movement its past successes are likely to act as the most serious barriers to the peasants final emancipation.

Recognising all other aims as subsidiary to the revolution, we have always fought against any tendencies (and they are frequent enough) towards class collaboration. Whatever gains such methods may achieve within the framework of capitalist imperialism, they can only act as obstacles to the final goal, to which unremitting devotion to class struggle provides the only road. That goal is the overthrow and destruction of capitalist-imperialism, and with it the whole system of class rule itself. The British workers must fight shoulder to shoulder with the Indian workers and peasants in their common struggle for freedom from all exploiters.

### THE EDITORS

\*...National unity, that is to say, between classes; we wholeheartedly support all efforts to overcome disunity within the working class, such as Gandhi's campaign, referred to by Dinah Stock, against Untouchability.

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON ANARCHISM

We start in this issue to answer questions received on anarchism. The answers will have to be short and cannot pretend in any way to treat the subject considered completely. We shall as often as possible refer the persons interested to literature on the subject. We invite readers to send us their questions.

## 1. ANARCHISTS AND THE QUESTION OF MONEY

DO anarchists believe in abolishing money? If they do obvious questions arise. Is the "demand" of the individual in any way to be limited? If so, how? Can I help myself to half a dozen cars, luxurious furniture, etc? Who apportion things of which supplies are limited (antiques, valuable pictures etc)? What prevents the growth of a new parasitism—the people who help themselves to everything and do nothing.

All anarchists want the revolution to abolish the money system. They believe that the wage system, which consists in giving people the equivalent of their work in money or labour-notes, should be abolished as well. Peter Kropotkin in "Anarchist Communism" expresses the anarchist position as follows. "The present wage system has grown up from the appropriation of the necessaries for production by the few; it was a necessary condition for the growth of the present capitalist production; and it cannot outlive it, even if an attempt be made to pay the worker the full value of his produce, and hours-of-labour cheques to be substituted for money. Common possession of the necessaries for production implies the common enjoyment of the fruits of the common production; and we consider that an equitable organisation of society can only arise when every wage-system is abandoned, and when everybody, contributing for the common well-being to the full extent of his capacities, shall enjoy also from the common stock of society to the fullest possible extent of his needs."

The "demand" will be limited not by the amount of money the individual will earn but both by his needs and the amount of products the community will possess.

The wage system does not abolish injustice or inequality. Kropotkin in his pamphlet "The Wage System" has clearly demonstrated this. Another system must be introduced after the revolution based on the principle to each according to his needs. Here we must distinguish between the situation which will follow the revolution and that of an anarchist society. Money will be abolished but products will have to be distributed by the syndicates as fairly as possible among the whole population. It will be a period of rationing, due to the fact that after the revolution the amount of products which can be distributed to the community will probably be relatively small. It would therefore be unjust that certain members of the community should satisfy their needs completely while others go without the primary necessities of life.

As soon as the restrictions which capitalist and bureaucratic organization of society imposes on pro-

duction have been removed, many primary necessities will become plentiful and people will be able to help themselves to what they need; this is what the French anarchists have called "la prise au tas." Anarchists do not believe that this will encourage waste. People will realise that by wasting food or other commodities they will harm not only the whole community but also themselves because it means wasting work. Just as now we do not waste water even though we do not pay for it we shall then take just what we need of food and other necessities. The products which exist in the community only in a limited quantity will have to be shared out according to peoples' needs. If there is for example a scarcity of milk, chicken or fruit it will go first to children and invalids etc,

In the period of rationing which will be the transition between the present system and the ideal system of the "prise au tas" it will be impossible for the individual to get more than his fair share. When he is able to help himself freely we believe that the education provided by living in a revolutionary society will have taught him not to take more than his share. Will he be able, asks our reader, to help himself to a dozen cars, or luxurious furniture? Obviously not. What need is there for a private car in an anarchist society? If one needs a car one will apply to the transport syndicate and borrow it from them. Cars and similar things will be at the disposal of all those who need them, and if there is not enough for everybody, people will be able to have a car to do their business and go for a ride, in turn. Similarly what need will there be for luxurious furniture? In an anarchist society there will be no need to produce limited luxury products. They are produced now for privileged classes. When classes disappear all products will be well-made and comfortable (i.e. they will be "luxurious" in all but the rarity-value sense, in which we are not interested) but they will have approximately the same value. As for the stocks of luxurious objects which may exist when the revolution takes place, they will be requisitioned by the respective syndicates of distribution and given to people who need them most, or communal buildings (e.g. libraries, hospitals, clubs, etc.) Suppose for example that there are only a few thousand pianos which the syndicate of distribution has to deal with. Should they not be given to concert halls, clubs, musical societies, where all who want to play may go? Antiques, valuable pictures and so on, should no longer be owned by individuals. Everybody has a right to enjoy beautiful paintings, sculptures and interesting collections of books. They will be placed in museums, galleries and libraries, where anyone can enjoy them.

Since people will be able to satisfy themselves according to their needs and not according to the

Continued at foot of next column.



## Anarcho-Syndicalism and the Busmen

**E**XISTING society is based upon the ownership of all factors necessary to the production of wealth by one class, a minority, and the consequent enslavement of the other class, the workers, the majority.

Owning nothing in their own right save their labour power which they are forced to sell in order to satisfy the most elementary of human needs, the workers, far from rendering each effort of work as a contribution towards the welfare of society are forced to prostitute their labours and produce shoddy profit-making goods.

Prostitution of their labours it certainly is for it is a fact that by far the greater proportion of the commodities which are produced for consumption are poor, synthetic and disgracefully lacking in quality. Think of the foods which are offered for sale in the market. Think of the paper shoes displayed played in the windows. Think of the "houses" in which a great number of people are forced to live. There is little need for me to give here a comprehensive list of the "achievements" of modern civilised society. Busmen, to whom I address this article, are not in any way protected from face to face contact with the capitalist cess-pool of "achievements" any more than they

(Continued from previous column)

work done, will people help themselves to everything and do nothing?

Work in an anarchist society will no longer be an unpleasant occupation. The individual who refuses to work nowadays does so because he cannot adapt himself to work he does not like. If everyone was given interesting work very few would refuse to do it. Work is a natural instinct in men.

Under the profit system much work (e.g. in drains, garbage disposal, etc.) remains unpleasant because it is unprofitable to develop machinery to replace human labour in its performance. Unavoidable unpleasant work can always be shared among the community on the basis of a voluntary rota system. If some individuals refuse to work we shall not starve them, we shall not put them in prison. Their punishment will be to be looked down upon by the productive members of the community as parasites. We believe that example will be more successful in inducing them to work than punishment. From a practical point of view it may be noticed that to establish repressive measures against them creates another problem. People would lose time looking for the shirkers, others would have to sit in tribunals to judge them, others would have to look after them in prisons etc. To let non-workers starve would be both inhuman and dangerous

are protected from "Economic Blizzards." They are forced to sell their labour to those who, because as a class they own the means of the Busmen's lives, in effect own the Busmen themselves.

An impotent working class has to remain content with the scraps which are fed to them. They must needs inhabit the tenements which are provided for them; and on occasion they must exhibit

by

FRANK SODEN

Member of The

NATIONAL PASSENGER WORKERS UNION

an unparalleled degree of gratitude for those good things and Fight Like Hell to retain them. They must submit to being inspected even, lest perhaps their emaciated bodies do not conform with the standards required by a benevolent capitalist democracy before it grants them the dubious honour of being blown to pieces . . . .

Who will deny that there are good materials available with which to make good food in plenty?

Who, if anyone, can show the necessity for making shoes of PAPER and can tell me of their own knowledge that there is not, or could not be sufficient LEATHER?

Who will contend that there must be some POOR BRICKS to make POOR HOUSES and some GOOD BRICKS to make GOOD HOUSES?

Only those in whose interest shoddy goods are produced would contend such a thing.

The facts are that the materials and the tools necessary to the production of these necessities are owned and controlled by a class which claims the absolute right, to allow their use only with a view to profit. And the strength of their claim is force! That brutal force which they used against the workers of America when they coerced them back to the slavery of their machines by means of tear-gas and the threat of machine-guns: that brutal, obscene force which was used against the Spanish Workers during their struggle for liberation from the oppressive, frustrative and insane system of bondage which was and still is, theirs and ours.

You and I have felt that force, coercing us into acceptance of conditions sufficiently unbearable of themselves but accentuated even by the manner of their application.

Introduction of "Speed," increased mortality rates and appalling health conditions are items of everyday life for the Passenger Transport Industry. There is little need of recounting the STOCK grievances, shelved for ever by the powers that be, never to be considered. Busmen today, owe it to the dignity of their manhood to do more than recognise the incidental grievances of their industry.

**They owe it to humanity to recognise the miseries of their class.**

**It is time that this historically militant body declared its intention of assailing the position of the ruling class. More than that, of assailing the whole basis and rotting fabric of society as constituted. And it can do this only through anarcho-syndicalist organisation.**

The soundest organisational basis for the continual waging of the class war will be found in that organisation which ensures that the workers themselves hold the reins, in which their organised power is retained at the seat of its origin and not despatched to headquarters in an envelope.

Trade Unionism cannot offer workers control either within the organisation or as an ultimate industrial objective but Anarcho-Syndicalism offers both.

While the funds are sent to headquarters to come under the control of an Executive Committee the acting-power of the membership is reduced since action on the part of the members depends upon the support of the E.C.

Anarcho-Syndicalist Organisation declares that all power shall be in the hands of the members in the branches and groups. Therefore the funds contributed by the membership shall remain in the branches and groups.

The funds belong to the members and while they retain them in the Branches they retain control of their organisation. Immediately they part with them, the members incapacitate themselves in their activities. This provides one reason why the autocracy

of Trade Unionism has assisted largely in bringing about its own destruction. Add to this the fact that these huge, State approved organisations are rapidly denuding themselves of even the last glimmerings of struggle, even for concessions. It becomes apparent that if the membership continues blindly to follow its "Leadership" it will BE LED as were the workers of France into the condition of impotency which is their unhappy lot today.

In Italy; in Germany; in France, Trades Union Organization crumbled before the fascist onslaught. Its leaders led its adherents right up the garden path, in through the front door and called them to attention smartly before Hitler, Mussolini and Petain.

Only in Spain, where the workers' Anarcho-Syndicalist organisation nourished, developed and defended the revolution was any resistance offered to fascism. Britain, France, Germany, Italy and all the artifices known to underhanded diplomacy and shameless intervention managed in three years temporarily to subdue those heroic millions.

Anarcho-syndicalism still lives in Spain. It will never die for it is born of the workers themselves. It has its roots in the struggles and sufferings of the oppressed. The workers of Spain are fighting now and will continue to fight for they have learned the great lesson of Anarcho-Syndicalism.

In 1936, the Spanish Passenger Transport industry was controlled for the first time by the Syndicates. The industry flourished as it had never done before. It is up to the Busmen of this country to take up the fight in the light of the experience of their fellow workers in Spain. It is up to them to organise now into syndicates which have as their object the complete destruction of the property-relations of society.

Order your copy of

## **SOLIDARITY**

FROM

Unity Press, 65 Burnside St., Glasgow.

Price 1d. (postage 1d)

**IF IN GLASGOW CALL AT**

Unity Press Rooms, 65, Burnside Street.

FREEDOM PRESS PUBLICATIONS SOLD

# STALIN—THE RED TSAR

**T**HE actual course of historic evolution conclusively demonstrates that events rarely turn out as their active participants expect them to do. Most of the great historic movements have illustrated this principle. For example, the founder of Christianity, in the apt phrase of Alfred Loisy, "expected the Kingdom of Heaven, but it was the Church which arrived!" Similarly, the French Revolution aimed at an earthly Utopia, connoted by the slogan: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." But what the Great Revolution actually brought into being was a capitalist society wherein, in the classic bon mot of Karl Marx, as far as the French workers were concerned: "Liberty meant cavalry, equality meant infantry, fraternity meant artillery." The original revolutionary slogan—originating in the lodges of the Free-Masons—had become merely a cloak for bourgeois reaction.

It has not been otherwise with the Russian Revolution. History has played the same kind of trick with the work of Lenin and Trotsky as it had done previously with that of Danton and Robespierre. (More unfortunate than his Gallic prototypes, the creator of the Red Army lived to see, and to denounce "the Revolution betrayed" by Stalin, the Man of "Thermidor") The Russian Revolution, originally intended to emancipate mankind finally from that historic trinity of classes, exploitation and the State, has ended by creating a new ruling class, "the dictatorship of the secretariat"—a new mode of exploitation, that of the bureaucratic trustees of collectivised capital,—and a new "total" State, encrusted with all the old prejudices of a forever outmoded nationalism. (In this last connection, we do not envy the native of the "socialist fatherland" who should repeat, with regard to present-day Russia, that "forgotten word" of Lenin, that "a patriot is an international blackleg!" Yet, historically the phrase is more glaringly obvious today than it was when it was first uttered by the great Russian Revolutionary).

What, in fact, we see in contemporary Russia is an outstanding example of one of those colossal distortions which seem to indicate the activity of a "spirit ironic" in the conduct of sub-lunar affairs! The Russian

Revolution has finally proved to be "more royalist than the King," more Tsarist than the Tsar. In place of the decrepit Empire of the effete Romanoffs we have an empire under a Tsar who, whatever else he may be,

---

*By F. A. Ridley*

---

is the reverse of senile. "The Tsar is dead, long live the Tsar."

People are, unhappily, prone to be deceived by mere names: revolutionaries who are always (necessarily) repeating slogans are more than any usually liable to this form of psychological self-deception. (The supreme example in the present instance are the Trotskyists, whose whole stock-in-trade consists in a Herculean effort to find a positive content in present-day Russian conditions for revolutionary slogans which have no longer any correspondence with the actual conditions in the contemporary Soviet Union. The "Fourth International" resembles those belated Christian "Fundamentalists" who essay the hopeless task of trying to square the teachings of the New Testament with the current practice of the Christian Churches. History has jumped over their heads!)

What did the Russian Revolution attempt to do, and what has it actually done? I draw up this double book-keeping entry in these terms:

The Bolsheviks operated, so to speak, in parallel columns: they visualized (in 1917) a set of ends, and concurrently, a set of means wherewith to achieve those ends. Below we set out, first, the projected ends, then, the actual means. We can then see what has happened, first to the ends, then to the means.

The men who made the (November) Revolution in Russia were genuine revolutionaries and sincere idealists according to their lights. I do not believe the suggestion of Max Nomad, for instance, that Lenin and his associates were simply Russian nationalists using international slogans to further purely nationalist ends: that phase came later. They aimed at the abolition of international capitalism and imperialism, the abolition of

classes, the (eventual) abolition of the State. These were the principal "ends" of the Russian Revolution in the minds of its original participants.

Now for the "means" through which their "ends" were eventually to be achieved. These were: a highly centralized monolithic political party, an omnipotent "Soviet" state conceived originally as a temporary makeshift, in accordance with the classic Marxist theory of "the withering away of the State" as expressed by Lenin himself on the eve of the Russian Revolution itself (cp. his "State and Revolution").

Now what was it that actually occurred? **The "means" of the Russian Revolution were only too successful; but all the "ends" failed to materialise.** The parallel columns (of ends and means) failed to parallel. **Inside** Russia everything succeeded; **outside** everything failed; in both cases completely. The Russian ruling classes were swept away: both the old ruling classes; Tsar, landed squires (Boyars), Church, Tsarist bureaucracy; and, equally, the new rising classes, capitalist landlords, native "compradores," foreign investors and the whole native bourgeoisie. What was the result of this clean break with the Russian past? The Bolsheviks realised upon, so to speak, virgin soil, "the dictatorship of the proletariat," in a country where—outside a handful of industrial centres—there was no proletariat to dictate! In consequence, the Bolshevik "means" had succeeded beyond their wildest dreams. Instead of the Russian Revolution being, in the words of Lenin himself, merely "an alarm-bell for the revolution in the West," it had given the Bolshevik regime a degree of power unknown since the Incas of Peru—and even those despotic sun-kings of South America never had the radio at the disposal of their regime! The slate was clean for Bolshevism to make its own State **inside** Russia.

Inside Russia, but not outside! For, if the Revolution was a howling success inside Russia, it proved a complete fiasco outside. (We lack space to go into the causes of this: the major one being, unquestionably, the strength of Imperialism in the West: the tactical blunders of Moscow were an accessory cause.)

Hence, from 1923, when the European Revolution collapsed, down to 1941, when I write these lines, Russian society can be de-

finied as a set of means operating in a void, with no ends in view! As, in fact, a sort of political Mohammed's coffin swinging unattached, between Heaven and Earth! The State, the Party, the "Soviet" dictatorship, were all intended as means to an end: the World Revolution. The end was **non est**, but the means were only too successful!

In the opinion of the present writer, more nonsense has been talked about Stalin and the Russian Revolution than about any other subject whatsoever, doubtfully excepting Fascism. The present "Soviet" State has got precisely as much to do with world revolution as, to return to our former parallel, the Christian Churches have to do with the Kingdom of Heaven which they were originally supposed to represent. Again we must not be taken in by slogans—whether those of the Kremlin or of the Vatican: such atavistic rituals are merely part of the official mythology, which is now too sacred to be changed. In real life there is nothing that Stalin and Co. want less than a real world revolution, any more than the Pope and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury want the return of Christ and to "apostolic" poverty: it just doesn't mean a thing in either case—mere regulation patter!

Whilst, however, present-day Russia means precisely nothing from the revolutionary standpoint we should not fall into the equally childish delusion of seeing in "Stalinist" Russia simply a monumental red herring trailed across the revolutionary path. Whilst the Russian Revolution now belongs irrevocably to the past, as far as the world in general is concerned, its influence on modern Russian history has been profound. Russian nationalism, freed from the semi-feudal yoke of the senile Romanoffs, advances rapidly along the road already taken by the industrial West. The State Capitalism of Stalin, is we believe, the very reverse of an earthly paradise for its "proletarian dictators". None the less, it is an important historical phenomenon. The sense of historic proportion is outraged at every step by the continuous dirge of "back to 1917," set up by the Trotskyist "fundamentalists." History does not consist in going *back*. The vocal protagonists of "integral Bolshevism"—that is, Bolshevism as it was in 1917-23—are as wearisome and utopian as their religious counterparts, who ceaselessly reiterate "back to the New Testament."

Let us survey the course of Russian history since the death of Lenin (1924) who died just at the right

(continued on page 14)

# BACK TO THE BRASS COLLAR

by Tom Brown

**T**HERE is nothing new under the sun" said the ancient maker of proverbs, and modern legislators seem unable to develop any new ideas. The Labour Decrees of Bevin are curiously like the Statute of Labourers and other laws of the fourteenth century. Before Bevin became Minister of Labour many workers were taking advantage of a shortage of labour to change their employment, to hire out their labour power to the highest bidder. Against this rising wage tendency the Minister of Labour introduced his Essential Works Order and other measures. Workers in certain industries were forbidden to change their employment at their own will, but may have jobs chosen for them by the Minister of Labour; and employers are forbidden to "poach" labour—that is, advertise enticing wages.

Now let us look back 600 years to England after the Black Death. Shortage of labour created a kind of demand that had hardly existed before this time . . . . "It became worth while to leave one's district to seek work elsewhere. A royal proclamation of 1349 tried to deal with this novel situation. It commanded everyone, free or villein, to remain with their masters until their contracts of service had expired, and to work for the accustomed wages. When Parliament met in 1351, complaints were made that the provisions of this proclamation had not been observed. The labourers were demanding much higher wages, and going where they could obtain them. The Statute of Labourers was therefore passed in order more effectively to enforce the principles of the proclamation. Men were to accept work when it was offered to them at rates of wages prescribed in detail for labourers and artisans" . . . . "The government attempted rigorously to enforce this law by appointing local justices with power to punish offenders." (H. de B. Gibbins: "Industrial History of England") Not very different from English labour laws today.

Gibbins shrewdly adds "The first experiment in controlling labour conditions by

governmental intervention was inspired by the desire to prevent workers from securing for themselves the advantages of the free play of the principle of supply and demand." Exactly. The first experiment and the latest.

The complaints of the Parliament of 1351 are echoed in 1941. The select committee on National Expenditure, publishing its report at the end of May, laments the high competitive wages being received by many workers. "But" adds the sub-committee, "it had had evidence of firms in the aircraft industry deliberately paying their operatives more than the agreed district rates, and by doing so disturbing other firms in that district." "The Ministry should do everything in its power to ensure that factories working for it, either commercially or on a management basis, observe strict federation wage rates and keep their bonus percentages in line with those of their neighbours." (Financial Times, 29th May, 1941.) Look out, aircraft workers! Its your wages they are after.

It may be necessary to explain the bonus system spoken of by the Select Committee's sub-committee. This bonus is a form of piece-work, or payment by result. In its most common form a worker is given a certain time, let us say ten hours, to do a job. If he finishes this job in eight hours he is credited with two hours bonus. This is spoken of as a time-and-a-quarter (Note; the extra hours are not paid for at the usual rate of wages. Usually the bonus hours are underpaid by sevenpence-farthing per hour.).

Now the standard bonus rates referred to by the sub-committee are trade union rates, rates long since outstripped by individual and group bargaining outside of the union apparatus. The customary standard aimed at is double time (or much higher), one hour extra for each hour worked, but the trade union agreement fixes bonus rates at time-and-a-quarter. If a worker is reduced to the trade union standard he must sweat, worry and run about like a mad horse for a few pence per hour extra. Wherever a mis-

guided operative appeals to the union agreement (as in demonstration of bonus times) he is defeated, for the trade union rates are below the prevailing wage rates.

The ruling class employment of labour leaders to subdue labour is not new. It has gone on almost continuously since over thirty years ago a French Socialist Minister used soldiers to break the railway-men's strike. We must not think of the Minister of Labour as the solitary trade union official in the service of the State, though he gets most of the publicity. Hordes of trade union officials have obtained leave of absence to take up positions in the Ministry of Labour. The new bosses have nothing further to learn to become efficient taskmasters. Here is Trevor Evans of the "Daily Express" writing on the Merseyside dockers' dispute, a dispute of food, wage rates and workmens' buses, "One Man Smashes Docks Plot" . . . "A plot in the Merseyside ports to smash the Bevin scheme for dockers has been smashed. It was wrecked by the firmness of one man—Mr. Harry Pugh, who, after being a trade union official for 30 years, is now Port Labour Director for the North West region." Last night, it was reported, after practically the whole of Manchester's dockers had been suspended by Mr. Pugh, that the majority either had resumed work or had agreed to start work again to-morrow under Bevin scheme rules. There are still 500 men undecided, and Mr. Pugh announces that any man who does not restart to-morrow will be suspended and subsequently dismissed. "And" he (Mr. Pugh) added "if we are forced to do it, we will not hesitate to bring in the Pioneer Corps to discharge our cargoes." At the docks there will be "cages" with gates in which the dockers will await their duty. Gates will be closed punctually at 8 a.m. Malingerers and those persistently unpunctual will be punished (Daily Express 13th June, 1941).

Cages for discontented dockers! Bring 'em back alive! Call in the military, forbidden to change employers, prison to tame the unsubdued! All that is left is to re-introduce the brass collar of the mediaeval serf, stamped with the employers' name and address. But this is a democratic regime and Labour will insist that the collar bears a union label—"Made throughout by trade union labour."

(continued from page 12)

time for his fame, when Bolshevism was coming to the historic parting of the ways. Had the modern Mohammed lived another decade he would have become a "Stalin" or a "Trotsky"—whether a nationalist or an internationalist.

The fundamental facts about the Russian Revolution were, externally, that it failed to spread; internally, that it swept away the old (feudal) ruling classes before their natural historic successors, both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, were ready to fill the vacant throne. Only two classes were left to seize power: the bureaucracy, a necessary appendage of any State socialist regime, and the "professional revolutionaries," mostly ex-emigres, with a culture rather Western than Russian, and with but little root in Russia itself! The struggle between "Stalin and Trotsky" was, in the last analysis, not an essay in "the great man theory of history"—as one would imagine from perusing the literature written on both sides by its protagonists, "Marxists" included!—but was a struggle for the vacant sceptre of the Romanoffs between the bureaucracy led by Stalin on the political field, and the "professional revolutionaries," whose outstanding personality was Trotsky. The bureaucracy won, not because Stalin had a greater intellect than Trotsky—the very suggestion is absurd—not even because he was a better politician, more adroit in the field of party tactics—though, in that restricted field, he was probably Trotsky's superior, but fundamentally, because the bureaucracy fitted in better with local Russian needs in a period characterised primarily by the retreat of the Revolution abroad, under a corresponding disillusion and exhaustion in Russia itself, coupled naturally with a growing disinclination for adventures, for anything in the nature of "permanent revolution" which would necessarily have involved fresh efforts and fresh sacrifices.

The history of the bureaucracy, "Stalinism," means therefore, that Russian History pursues its pre-1917 continuity. It is a new Tsardom, in effect, that we witness, with Stalin as its "Peter the Great," the bureaucracy as its ruling-class—a totalitarian one (to be sure, it was not unknown under the Romanoffs where it already wielded immense power) with Trotsky as its symbolic spirit of evil, and with Lenin as its canonized Messiah.

It is evident that, today, the new Tsardom walks faithfully in the footsteps of the old: the OGPU is the old Ochrana (Tsarist secret police) under a new name; both at home and where possible, abroad, the enemies of the regime are "liquidated," viz: Trotsky, Krivitsky, Willi Münzenberg, etc. Now, as formerly, the Kremlin keeps its foreign political pensioners—in particular, that "hard core of permanently—employed!"—the official nucleus of the foreign "communist" parties now simply the pensioners of the Kremlin. Now, as before, the "Red" Tsar, like his "White" predecessors, pursues the historic power-politics of the Muscovite Empire: yesterday, Finland, Poland, and the Baltic States; tomorrow, Constantinople, historic goal of the Tsars!

Such are, it would seem, the long-distance ambitions of the New Russian Empire. The transformation of the Russian Revolution into its opposite is an intriguing study: but I hasten to add that it belongs to the sphere not of revolution, but of the contemporary counter-revolution.

# A Peasant Experiment in Anarchist Communism

This is an extract from H. E. Kaminski's book "Ceux de Barcelone" (which unfortunately was not published in English). We do not publish this description of how the peasants of Alcora established "comunismo-libertario" in their village in order to show how anarchism should be put into practice. The books of Kropotkin and all anarchist theoreticians would have objected to the family card; to the coupons given in exchange of labour they would have advocated a distribution of the resources of the village according to the peasants' needs and not according to the work done. What is interesting however is to see that the peasants got rid as soon as possible of money the symbol of capitalist society, they understood that to suppress it was the best way to break with the old system. It not only prevented the formation of a new bourgeoisie but had a moral effect on the people. The answers given by the peasants to Kaminski are interesting too. They show how common-sense can solve most of those problems which men take pleasure in inventing in order to demonstrate the impossibility of establishing a libertarian society.

**T**HE village of Alcora has established anarchist-communism. One must not think that this system corresponds to scientific theories. Anarchist-communism in Alcora is the work of the peasants who completely ignore all economic laws. The form which they have given to their community corresponds more in reality to the ideas of the early christians than to those of our industrial epoch.

The peasants want to have "everything in common" and they think that the best way to achieve equality for all is to abolish money.

In fact money does not circulate amongst them any longer. Everybody receives what he needs. From whom? From the Committee, of course.

It is however impossible to provide for five thousand people through a single centre of distribution. Shops still exist in Alcora where it is possible to get what is necessary as before. But those shops are only distribution centres. They are the property of the whole village and the ex-owners do not make profits instead. The barber himself shaves only in exchange of a coupon.

The coupons are distributed by the Committee. The principle according to which the needs of all the inhabitants will be satisfied is not perfectly put

in practice as the coupons are distributed according to the idea that every body has the same needs. There is no individual discrimination; the family alone is recognised as a unit. Only unmarried people are considered as individuals.

Each family and person living alone has received a card. It is punched each day at the place of work, which nobody can therefore leave. The coupons are distributed according to the card. And here lies the great weakness of the system: for the lack hitherto of any other standard they have had to resort to money to measure the work done. Everybody, workers, shopkeepers, doctors, receive for each day's work coupons to the value of five pesetas. On one side of the coupon the word bread is written; each coupon is worth one kilogram. But the other side of the coupon represents explicitly a counter-value in money.

Nevertheless these coupons cannot be considered as bank notes. They can be only exchanged against goods for consumption and in only a limited quantity. Even if the amount of coupons was greater it would be impossible to buy means of production and so become a capitalist, even on a small scale, for only goods which can be consumed are on sale. The means of production are owned by the community.

The community is represented by the Committee, here called the Regional Committee. It has in its hands all the money of Alcora, about a hundred thousand pesetas. The Committee exchanges the village products against products which it does not possess, and when it can not obtain them by exchange it buys them. But money is considered as an unavoidable evil, only to be used as long as the rest of the world will not follow the example of Alcora.

The Committee is the *pater familias*. It possesses everything, it directs everything, it deals with everything. Each special desire should be submitted to it. It is the only judge in the last resort.

One may object that the members of the Committee run the risk of becoming bureaucrats or even dictators. The peasants have thought about that too. They have decided that the Committee should be changed at brief delays so that every member of the village would come to take part in it for a certain time.

All this organisation has in its ingenuity something moving. It would be a mistake to see in it anything more than a peasant attempt to establish anarchist communism and unfair to criticise it too seriously. One must not forget that the agricultural workers and even the shopkeepers of the village have lived very poorly up to now. Their needs are hardly differentiated. Before the revolution a piece of meat was a luxury for them, only a few intellectuals living amongst them wish for things beyond immediate necessities.

The Anarchist-communism of Alcora has taken its nature from the actual state of things. As a proof one has to remark that the family card puts the most oppressed human beings in Spain, the women under the complete dependence of man.

"What happens if somebody wants to go to the city for example?"

"It is very simple" I am answered. "He goes to the Committee and exchanges its coupons for money."

"Then one can exchange as many coupons as one wants for money?"

"Of course not."

COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE SPANISH REVOLUTION  
COME TO OUR MEETING AT THE  
GONWAY HALL

(Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.)

Saturday, 19th July, 7 p.m.

ANARCHIST SPEAKERS

Rally at Hyde Park in the afternoon. Speakers  
on the Anarcho-Syndicalist platform from 3 p.m.

These good people are rather surprised that I understand so slowly.

"But when can one have money then?"

"As often as one needs. One has only to tell the Committee."

"The Committee examines the reasons then?"

"Of course."

I am a little terrified. This organization seems to me to leave very little liberty in an anarchist-communist regime. I try to find reasons for traveling that the Alcora Committee would accept. I do not find very much but I continue my questioning.

"If somebody has a fiancee outside the village will he get the money to go and see her?"

The peasant reassures me: he will get it.

"As often as he wants?"

Thank God, he can still go from Alcora to see his fiancee every evening if he wants to do so.

"But if somebody wants to go to the city to go to the cinema. Is he given money?"

"Yes."

"As often as he wants to?"

The peasants begin to have doubts about my reason.

"On holidays, of course. There is no money for vice."

I talked to a young intelligent looking peasant, and having made friends a little with him I took him on one side and said to him:

"If I proposed to give you some bread coupons would you exchange them for money?"

My new friend thinks a few moments and then says:

"But you need bread too?"

"I do not like bread, I like only sweets. I would like to exchange all I earn for sweets."

The peasant understands very well the hypothesis but he does not need to think very long; he starts laughing.

"It is quite simple! If you want sweets you should tell the Committee. We have enough sweets here. The Committee will give you a permit and you will go to the chemist and get them. In our village everybody receives what he needs."

After this answer I had to give up. Those peasants live no longer in the capitalist system, neither from a moral or a sentimental point of view. But did they ever live in it?

## £100 THIS MONTH

**T**O those comrades and friends who have so readily responded to our appeal for funds go our thanks and appreciation for their solidarity. But there are still a tremendous number of comrades who have not responded. We once more appeal to them to help us make good the loss sustained by **FREEDOM PRESS** as a result of the air-raids on May 10th which resulted in most of our stock of literature being destroyed.

In the June issue of War Commentary we appealed for £500 during the next six months in order to stand us on our feet, and enable us to extend our work for **WAR COMMENTARY** and reprint as many of the destroyed pamphlets as possible, besides printing new works from time to time. In the first month we have received just over £37. We appeal to comrades to make this £100 by the end of July. Remember, everything helps, and though your contribution may be a modest sixpenny bit or a shilling, it will be appreciated and welcomed as much as the large contribution.

**I**N the appeal in the last issue of **WAR COMMENTARY** we wrote "We will do the work willingly and enthusiastically if you will supply us with the money to buy paper and pay for printing charges!" Well, since that appeal appeared, the new edition of Ridley's pamphlet **FASCISM—What Is IT?**, and the new edition of Herbert Read's **PHILOSOPHY OF ANARCHISM** have been printed and are now on sale, and furthermore, we printed an extra 500 copies of the June issue of **WAR COMMENTARY**, making an increase in circulation of the paper of 1,000 copies in 3 months. We are sure you will agree that we have kept our part of the bargain and are getting on with the job. Are you doing your share? If you haven't so far, do something now without further delay. Send literature orders and contributions to our Reconstruction Fund to:

**FREEDOM PRESS**  
27, BELSIZE ROAD  
Swiss Cottage LONDON N.W.6

**W**E have pleasure in publishing below a complete list of contributions received so far for our

### FREEDOM PRESS RECONSTRUCTION FUND

London: T.B.	10/-	London N.W.: K.H.	10/-	London: Group of workers (per T.B.)	£1
Stroud: L.G.W.	£5	Cornwall: T.F.G.V.	3/0	Peckham: P.P.U. group (per F.L.)	£1/1/-
Crawley: J.C.W.C.	£5	London S.W.: F.C.D.	1/0	London: Collected by F.L. at meetings	19/-
London: C.P.S.		Stroud L.G.W.	£1	Brooklyn, U.S.A.: Circolo Volonta, 58 contributions totalling \$26.50	£6/10/0
(per F.L.)	11/3	Stroud: P.P.	2/6	Huddersfield: Branch of N.C.L. (per L.H.)	10/-
Gloucester: T.H.C.	3/0	London: L.P.T.B. worker	2/0	Kingston: Kingston Comrades and sym'thisers	£1/10/0
London, N.20: D.H.M.	2/0	London: Sympathisers	3/-	Leicester: Leicester Sympathisers (per L.W.)	£2
London N.: A.M.	5/0	London: L.H.	1/6	Somerset: Mrs. W.S. "in memory of a French Anarchist."	£5
London N.9: W.B.	1/0	Reading: D.G.	10/-		
London N.5: H.W.	10/6	Rochdale: V.H.L.	1/4		
Edinburgh: W.C.	£1	London: J.H.	£1		
Barnet: T.B.	£3				
London N.22: C.S.	2/-				

**TOTAL £38 : 11 : 1.**

**NOTE OUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS from 9 Newbury Street to  
27 BELSIZE ROAD, SWISS COTTAGE, LONDON, N.W.6.**