

WAR *For Anarchism* COMMENTARY

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Twopence

Who are the INVADERS?

THE Government-controlled press is raising the invasion cry—though they do not say whether it is to be the Germans or the Japs whom we are to expect this time! We shall not here discuss, however, questions of the probability, possibility, or otherwise of invasion of these islands, but instead consider the real purpose of the people who raise the invasion scare.

Whenever the cry has been raised it has been used as an excuse for an increase in the dictatorial powers of the government and a worsening of working class conditions. The general idea is, of course, not new because governments have always acted on the principle that in order to govern men they must first make them afraid. A fearless man is a free man.

The present instance is no exception. Invasion stuff in the newspapers is always accompanied by legislation giving the government increased powers for oppression. The Ministry of Labour and National Service has issued a revised version of the Essential Works Order, the details of which we have no space to discuss here. It is sufficient to note that the newspapers have reported it under such headlines as "Idleness through Strikes—a New Order," "Employers Given New Power to Dismiss," etc. Obviously Bevin intends by this new order to try and curtail the effectiveness of strike action—in case of invasion, of course. Along with it go measures to tighten up control on Labour by penalties for "unpunctuality" and so on. The *Evening Standard* recently (4.3.42) re-

ported the case of a man, a laboratory assistant "in the employment of the Gas Light and Coke Co., who was stated to be 'an absolutely indispensable man engaged on vital work' who was fined £20 or three months imprisonment . . . for leaving his employment without the permission of the National Service Officer." This worker gave as a reason for his action "that he was not paid enough. He said he was only drawing labourers' wages." It is hardly necessary to point out that the management could have retained his services without any break in the "absolutely indispensable and vital work" quite easily if they had paid him a higher wage. But the National Service Officer is there to see that they can get their "indispensable men" without having to pay the price. As we pointed out at the time of its introduction, the Essential Works Order was not aimed at maintaining a reserve of labour power—that would have maintained itself anyway—but was a piece of legislation specifically designed to prevent the worker deriving advantage from the wartime relative labour shortage in the shape of an increase in wages. The case of the G.L.C. employee amply bears this contention out.

Further Food Control

It has been becoming more and more clear that the government aims at establishing a stranglehold control over the food supplies of the workers. Rationing has been extended not merely to scarce foods, but to most essential foodstuffs. Absolute control over essential means of life are thus assured to the ruling power. The tightening up of food control and extension of the points rationing

at a moment like the present, when the rigours of winter time feeding difficulties might reasonably have been expected to lighten, is also to be brought in under the invaluable scares about invasion—"Hitler's Spring Offensive" etc.

Intolerance of Criticism

At the same time the government has been steadily becoming less and less tolerant of criticism. Churchill can no longer explain away the defeats which have characterized his regime by means of scapegoats. So he makes every criticism an issue for a vote of confidence. Critics are denounced as "breakers of the nation's unity at a moment of crisis" and are sternly brought into line. As for the invaluable "Munichers," the "guilty men" of eighteen months ago, they have served and outworn their purpose. The stooges of the ruling class cannot shout "Churchill Must Go" as a substitute for the former battle-cry of "Chamberlain Must Go." The next step is therefore obvious; they must suppress hostile criticism (even friendly criticism will finally have to be proscribed). And of course the man who criticises authority at the moment when "invasion can be daily expected" is clearly a breaker of national unity, a stabber in the back, an agent of Hitler. We may expect further legislation of the "spreading Doubt and Despondency" type.

Uses and Limitations of the Home Guard

The Home Guard have now been given the power to "arrest or question" any "suspected person." Meanwhile a new Defence Law has been promulgated whereby "anyone must do any work in Battle area," as the *News Chronicle* put it—also under the caption "if invaders come," and the article adds "or if enemy action on land . . . is immediately expected." The government now have the power (according to press reports) to drag people from their beds to dig trenches or erect tank obstacles even without an invasion—just as part of "exercises." One can imagine the feelings of a dock labourer tired after a days work who has been dragged out of bed to go and play at Boy Scouts with the Home Guard, and then having to be at work on time in the morning on pain of penalties for unpunctuality!

According to many reports which have appeared in the press, the Home Guard seems to be very indifferently equipped. Factory guards are particularly poorly armed; and where a few obsolete rifles, broken down machine guns and bayonets are available, the men are not trusted with them. Instead they are locked up in the armoury, and the key is kept by the factory management. Meanwhile army pundits and other enthusiasts talk about the value of pikes and even bows and arrows as weapons against the invader. But it is obvious that so inadequately armed a force could only be a chopping block for invading parachute troops or assault battalions.

On the other hand the Home Guard, inadequately equipped even as it is at present, could be quite formidable to an unarmed and unorganized working class. It seems reasonable to conclude that it was designed for this purpose. In the early days, when other left wing bodies were acclaiming the H.G. as a "People's Army," we pointed out that it could be nothing but a strike breaking force, having nothing at all in common with the Spanish workers' and peasants' militias to which it was so often compared

by the British Guerilla leaders of Osterley Park and others of the "Left." What the government is preparing is a counter-revolutionary force and powers against a possible revolution.

The Real Invaders

Who are the real invaders? They are the people who have seized the land, who rob the workers of the fruits of their labour; the people who have enslaved us and degraded us, who threaten our lives with want, who send the young workers to fight for their profits and plunder. These are the real invaders—the capitalists and financiers and landlords of Britain who arm themselves all the time against the workers through their control of the state and its legal machinery and power of oppression. And in the face of the rising opposition of the workers the ruling class here will ally itself with the ruling class abroad whether allied or enemy in order to defend and maintain their domination. The "emergency powers" which are rushed through under cover of invasion scares show, on analysis, that the ruling class here will act in the same manner as their counterparts in France—to defend their class positions they will sell out the workers to Fascism. The real fight against fascism can only come from the workers themselves, and only when they have thrown off the shackles of capitalist bondage.

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A Red and Black Notebook

THE Government has begun the widespread distribution of a twopenny pamphlet "Income Tax Quiz" to industrial workers. The pamphlet is well produced and tells us most everything about income-tax—except how to avoid paying it.

Just in case any worker feels he isn't getting his money's worth, the Inland Revenue gives a few examples of how the tax is spent. "The Staff of an average factory employing 1000 men and women workers, with a total income tax payment of £35,000 a year, will pay for, in one week, one engine for a "Valentine" tank, or in one day, one armour-piercing bomb!" 1000 workers getting less clothing, tobacco or food for one day to provide one bomb, and ten to one it misses. Very encouraging.

THE ECONOMICS OF DESTRUCTION

THE pamphlet cheerily tells us "The cost of running the country is now £13,000,000 a day, of which about five-sixths is for actual war expenditure. This means that tenpence out of every shilling you pay in taxes goes to pay for victory." (Crete, Libya, Malaya and Singapore?)

As many of the present munition workers were unemployed in 1931 we are not surprised at the oft repeated references to that year, when National Expenditure was over two millions a day. Then Big Business shrieked "the pound is in danger," and the Labour Government began a panicky attack on the unemployed. The Anomalies Act, the benefit cuts and Means Tests which followed were justified by the plea "but where is the money to come from?"

Let us take a little mental exercise. Instead of calculating how many tanks or battleships our taxes will buy, let us find out how much of the good things of life they would pay for. Most of the workers of this country live in slums or drab overcrowded dwellings without bathrooms or like amenities, so let us spend the money on housing. One year's war expenditure could give every family, not already possessing it, a modern flat, or villa with front and back gardens, with spacious rooms, "hot and cold" and all modern conveniences. That means rebuilding the crowded cities of Leeds, Birmingham, Newcastle and the rest.

IF ONLY WE WERE MAD

BUT we have spent only one year's war budget, and the houses should last at least a lifetime. What shall we do with the second year's money? Let us give every man a handmade suit (not mass produced), an overcoat, shoes, shirts, hat and ties; let us clothe all women and children in like generous manner and we still have a lot of money left. Enough to give each family a piano, a car and a good holiday. But to suggest such things is to provoke the accusation of utopian, dreamer or even madman. Only hardheaded, practical people live in poverty and spend great wealth destroying themselves. Besides where is the money to come from?

QUICK MARCH STANDING STILL

"ONE side must go forward just as the other must hold itself back if we are to march forward along a common front."

Sir Stafford Cripps (*Daily Express* 26.2.42)

NEW JOB FOR THE POLICE

THE Glasgow Group of the Anarchist Federation continues its excellent propaganda work in spite of persecution and prosecution. But the fight is not all grim, it has its lighter side as when the group was fined £10 for refusing to join the fire-watching scheme. Preferring prison to paying the fine, they were told there was no alternative to paying. If they refused payment the authorities would take the stock of the Anarchist Bookshop, and sell it to meet the fine.

"Ah, cried Frank Leech, the group secretary, "that means the police will take our Anarchist pamphlets and sell them to raise the £10." We look forward with pleasure to the sight of Glasgow policemen patrolling the kerbstones of Sauchiehall Street crying "Read 'War Commentary,' the Anarchist paper."

PUTTING ON THE SCREW

LONDON workers would know what was coming to them if they read the provincial press, especially that of such industrial areas as Clydeside and Tyneside. Each edition of the local papers carries news of the growing prosecution of workers for being late for work or missing a night's fire-watch.

Fines and imprisonment are handed out with as much severity as we might expect on black market racketeers. In Gateshead a man who was completely deaf and had only one eye was summoned for missing fire-watch. In Glasgow a man who with his family, lived in a one roomed dwelling was kept awake all night by a teething child. Being late for work he was summoned to court and sentenced. Another Clydeside shipyard worker was several times late for work because of the bad transport. Inadequate bus and tram services are not denied by the authorities, but are excused by saying "there's a war on." At the same time as workers are standing on bus queues a wealthy man may employ a chauffeur and a car with an engine powerful enough to drive a bus, but that does not save shipbuilders from the wrath of the courts. To gaol they go!

The persecution of industrial workers is growing and is aided by the Stalinists and Trade Unions. When a worker is absent from the factory one hears "but what do the shop-stewards say to you?" Not what the boss says but what the trade union representative says is to be feared. How long shall we tolerate it?

SYNDICALIST

Next Issue of
WAR COMMENTARY
Out on the 1st of APRIL

Through the Press

What America is Fighting For

"Although it is still difficult to see clearly how the new American Production Minister is organising industry for war purposes, some trends have already become apparent in the United States which have no parallel here. Briefly, Washington is aware of the danger that industrial mobilisation for a common purpose is apt to increase the power of combines, associations, and trusts at the expense of independent private enterprise.

These ideas were strongly developed in the recent report of the Temporary National Economic Committee on which Senators, Congressmen, and Government officials sat together for several years to examine the effects of the New Deal. 'It will avail us nothing,' states the committee, 'to carry a gigantic defence programme to a successful conclusion if in so doing we lose sight of the basic philosophy of our American economy—a competitive system of private capitalism.'

Manchester Guardian, 5.3.42

"The cost—in blood, in sweat, in dollars—would be prodigious. For the coming fiscal year the President asked a war outlay of \$59,000,000,000—more than half the national income. Next day, in his budget message, he suggested nine billions in new taxes. Congressmen began discussing a new 5 per cent withholding tax on all income, to be levied at the source. For the average U.S. citizen, scarcely able to grasp the President's vast figures, but willing to undertake anything that would mean the end of Hitler, the war was coming closer. From now on, except for the bare necessities of living, everything that Americans could make or earn must go toward winning the war."

Life 19.1.42

Cripps' Quick Thinking

"My own plans? I want to sit on a back bench of the House of Commons for a while and think. I've been out of things a year or two. Now I have to get my bearings. The whole business, the whole atmosphere in Russia is so different from what it is here."

Picture Post 21.2.42

On the 24th of February Sir Stafford Cripps joined the Government.

The Cost of the War

"The Government are asking Parliament to grant two further votes of credit—one for £1,000,000,000, and another for £250,000,000. These are to defray war expenditure."

Evening Standard 4.3.42

"More people are dying in Europe and there is a sharp increase in infant mortality, according to the statistical year-book of the League of Nations. The death-rate figures do not include the war dead.

Examples of the increase in infant mortality in 1940 are Belgium 73 per 1,000 to 89, France 63 per 1,000 to 91, Italy 96 per 1,000 to 104. The general death rate in Germany per 1,000 of population increased from 11.6 in 1938 to 12.7 in 1940."

Manchester Guardian 9.3.42

The Way They Have in Russia

"The death sentence for failing to 'fulfil obligations of the State' has been imposed on V. M. Vasov, chairman of the 'Comintern' collective farm. He was the third collective farmer to be given the extreme penalty by the Kuibyshev provincial court.

He was stated to have delivered only 530 tons of bread grain to the State instead of 730 tons, let 70 tons of grain rot, and left cattle unfed, causing a plague which killed 12 per cent of his cattle and 19 per cent of his sheep."

Manchester Guardian 6.3.42

When the Red Army retreated to Moscow shouldn't Stalin as Commander of the Red Army have received at least the same punishment?

Democratisation of Army

"Princess Elizabeth has become a colonel in the Grenadier Guard"

Press report.

Who said we were not building up a people's army?

U.S.A. has "No Racial Bias"

"The U.S.A. Government are studying a proposal for a token relaxation of the Oriental Exclusion Act as a friendly gesture to Asiatics who are resisting the Axis.

The proposal is part of a programme which Britain is being urged to support to rally native populations to the United Nations.

The Exclusion Act, passed in 1912, was tightened in 1924 on the insistence of Pacific Coast labour groups who opposed the entry of cheap labour—Japanese and Chinese coolie workers.

The Act prohibits the entrance of all Orientals except students and businessmen who may stay temporarily, and also prevents Orientals already resident from becoming citizens.

Certain official quarters feel that the time has now come to change the law so as to impress on Asiatics that the U.S.A. harbour no racial bias.

Suggestions now under review which envisage token emigration quotas from each Asiatic country not exceeding 500 yearly, would require Congressional sanction.

Evening Standard 7.3.42

Chiang Kai-Shek's Career

"I remember only too well the days when the name of Chiang appeared for the first time in the European press as the great rival of the then famous Christian General Feng. I remember the violent agitation of Chiang's followers against Anglo-Saxon (especially British) imperialism in China; the time when

Chinese students in London, Paris and Berlin used to sell anti-British pamphlets denouncing the "Unequal Treaties." I remember very well the outcry raised later in protest against Chiang's blood-bath among the Communists of Canton and Hankow. I remember a May Day in Hyde Park—a few years later—when London Communists reverently carried large pictures of La Pasionaria, Josef Stalin—and of Chiang Kai Shek. I remember the fuss that was made about Chiang's relations with his German military advisers who were training his new army against the Japanese. Never mind my reminiscences. All I am saying is that History In The Making can sometimes be a little breathtaking."

Edward Hunt, *Tribune* 27.2.42

Gold for What?

"The United States Government may ask for a reduction of gold output in South Africa for the remainder of the war.

It has puzzled many people for some time why at this stage of the war great quantities of gold should be blasted out of the Transvaal rock, refined, and shipped to the United States only to be interred in the underground vaults of Fort Knox, Kentucky. More than 300,000 native labourers are employed in the mines alone: explosives, transport, and shipping space are used in this apparently futile traffic. But so long as the United States Government demanded gold in part payment for goods supplied to the sterling area the gold had to be raised and sent."

Financial Editor *Manchester Guardian*, 6.2.42.

Labour Minister Defined

"Members were surprised when Attlee and not Sir Stafford Cripps answered questions addressed to Churchill. *Everyone recognises that Attlee is only called deputy Prime Minister as a sop. He's really making a fool of himself.* Obviously he should have allowed Sir Stafford, the leader of the House, to discharge all the duties that naturally come within his province."

Tribune 27.2.42

A New Labour Leader Slogan?

"Murray, president of the C.I.O. has been appealing to his members throughout the country to adopt a new slogan "Work, Work Work. Produce, Produce, Produce."

Evening Standard 5.3.42

Capitalist Efficiency

"Last year, it is estimated, some ten million gallons of milk went bad, most of it in the hot weather. The figure is an estimate—but a conservative one.

Ten million gallons of milk is equivalent to a daily ration of one pint for 250,000 children for one year. This is the estimate of our loss through inefficiency.

Suppose this summer we get a hot spell of longer than a week; suppose, even, we get a hot spell as long as the winter cold spell. In this case, we should face the possibility of milk losses on an enormous scale."

Reynolds News 1.3.42

What Cripps said in 1936

"Not a Bad Thing for British Working-Class if Germany Defeated Us"

"The Edinburgh conference decision on re-armament showed that the delegates did not realise that the basic cleavage in this country, in the political field, is a class struggle. Can we trust the Government with more armaments? I would not trust it with a single man in any conceivable circumstances, even if it told me it wanted him to fight Hitler, because I have been told that sort of thing before. I believe at some time it may be necessary for the workers of the country to protect the England which belongs to them, but I am not prepared to reinforce the strength of the Duff-Coopers of this country. I want to get rid of them and we cannot do that by supporting the main planks of their policy."

Asked what the working-class attitude should be towards a future war, Sir Stafford said it was right in certain circumstances to fight, but not for something which is inherently wrong.

If the National Government engaged in

another war he was practically certain that it would be fought for capitalist and imperial ends which were basically wrong, and he would not fight to support them in any circumstances.

Referring to what a member of the audience described as "the menace of Germany," Sir Stafford said he did not believe it would be a bad thing for the British working class if Germany defeated us. It would be a disaster to the profit-makers and capitalists, but not necessarily for the working class.

"My greatest hope at the moment is that there may be a conscription Act, for there is absolutely nothing that would give us a better propaganda basis in the country. If we can only persuade the country to make a mass protest and refuse to be conscripted we shall have the Government beaten."

Manchester Guardian 16.11.36

Refugee Ship Sunk Government Responsibility

LAST month a small cargo boat carrying 750 Jewish refugees from Central Europe blew up and sank in the Black Sea off the coast of Turkey. Five survivors reached the shore, but of these three died of exposure; only two out of the original 750 escaped the tragedy. There is no information as to their subsequent fate.

Although most sections of the press mentioned the sinking of the "Struma," few went into any details or attempted to assess the responsibility. Here are the outlines of the story.

The "Struma" carried 769 Jewish refugees—men, women and children—from Rumania and Bulgaria, and sailed under the Panamanian flag. The refugees hoped to be admitted into Palestine. They arrived at Istanbul on December 15th, 1941, and lay there for two months under conditions of food and sanitation described as desperate.

The immigration schedule allows 3000 Jews to enter Palestine during the current six months, and the Jewish Agency made every effort to persuade the Palestine Administration to admit them. Meanwhile the Joint American Distribution Committee offered not only to pay all expenses incurred, but to give a subsidy of £6,000 for training those capable of entering industry. The Palestine authorities, however, refused to consider the claims of even those who had relatives already in the country and now serving with the British forces in the Near East. The matter was then taken up with the Colonial Office in London. Two arguments were advanced by the British authorities for refusing permission to those 769 refugees to enter Palestine. First, that they were enemy aliens, having been under the Nazis, and therefore there might be enemy agents among them. The Jewish agency repeatedly pointed out that they could be placed in internment camps until their bona fides had been investigated. Needless to say this argument had no effect since the whole excuse was manifestly a cover for simple refusal on the part of the British to accept these refugees. The fact that they had already suffered under Antonescu's anti-semitic terror simply had no effect at all on the officials concerned. The second "reason" put forward for not admitting them was that "there was a shortage of supplies in Palestine." Comment is scarcely required, but the Jewish agency nevertheless pointed out that under the schedule 3,000 Jews were to be admitted during the current six months. In *War Commentary* we recently quoted an extract showing the glut of products normally exported from Palestine now rotting on the trees there. This glut is termed by the British a "shortage of supplies."

At the last minute, the authorities gave permission for the children under 16 to be admitted. This decision was not however made known till after the Turkish government had ordered the ship to leave Turkish territorial waters. These children under 16 therefore went down with the rest.

The British authorities (and the Turkish government) were of course fully aware that in the event of permission to enter Palestine being refused the ship with its cargo of Jewish refugees would have to return to Rumania, to the anti-semitic regime from which they had attempted to escape. The re-

fusal of permission amounted therefore to co-operation with the Rumanian authorities (with whom, be it noted, the British government is at war) in the apprehension of these Jews who had managed to escape abroad. Not only did the British authorities show themselves to be entirely indifferent to the tragic plight of these wretched fugitives from Fascist Terror, but they were even cynical enough to display no show of zeal to implement all their promises of putting an end to the persecution of minorities under Fascism. They have shown what their much publicized indignation (in the Government's White Paper on "The Treatment of German Nationals." and the persecutions in Poland, for instance) really amounts to, when it comes to offering comparative safety to a mere 750 odd refugees.

It has been suggested that the blowing up of the "Struma" was not due to a mine, as at first reported, but was the work of the refugees themselves; they preferred to blow themselves up to returning to Antonescu's torturers. This report will seem quite likely to those who remember the mass suicides among Viennese Jews after the Anschluss. It indicates what the British government is prepared to do to fugitive workers from Fascist tyranny; what the "War for Freedom" really amounts to. Anarchists can show no surprise at this; they have been exposing the nature of governments for decades.

The left press has hardly raised its voice about the "Struma" tragedy—the *New Statesman and Nation* gave a lukewarm account of it at the end of its editorial recently. We are not surprised that the Social Chauvinists lay no stress on this instance of the hollowness of British War Aims. Their support for the authority which committed this crime, whose hands are stained with the blood of these 769 Jewish refugees, is only one more indication of the "socialists' treachery to the cause of the international working class which they claim to champion. But the workers should take note of the case of the "Struma," which shows that the European governments, no less than the South American governments which kept the refugees from Vichy France under the horrible conditions described in the February issue of *War Commentary* ("Hell Ships for Refugees"), are totally indifferent to the fate of the victims of Fascism. Whatever the professions of indignation and horror British politicians continually make in order to spur on the workers to fight for them, these actions clearly show the hollowness and hypocrisy of their pretensions.

Lecture series on the

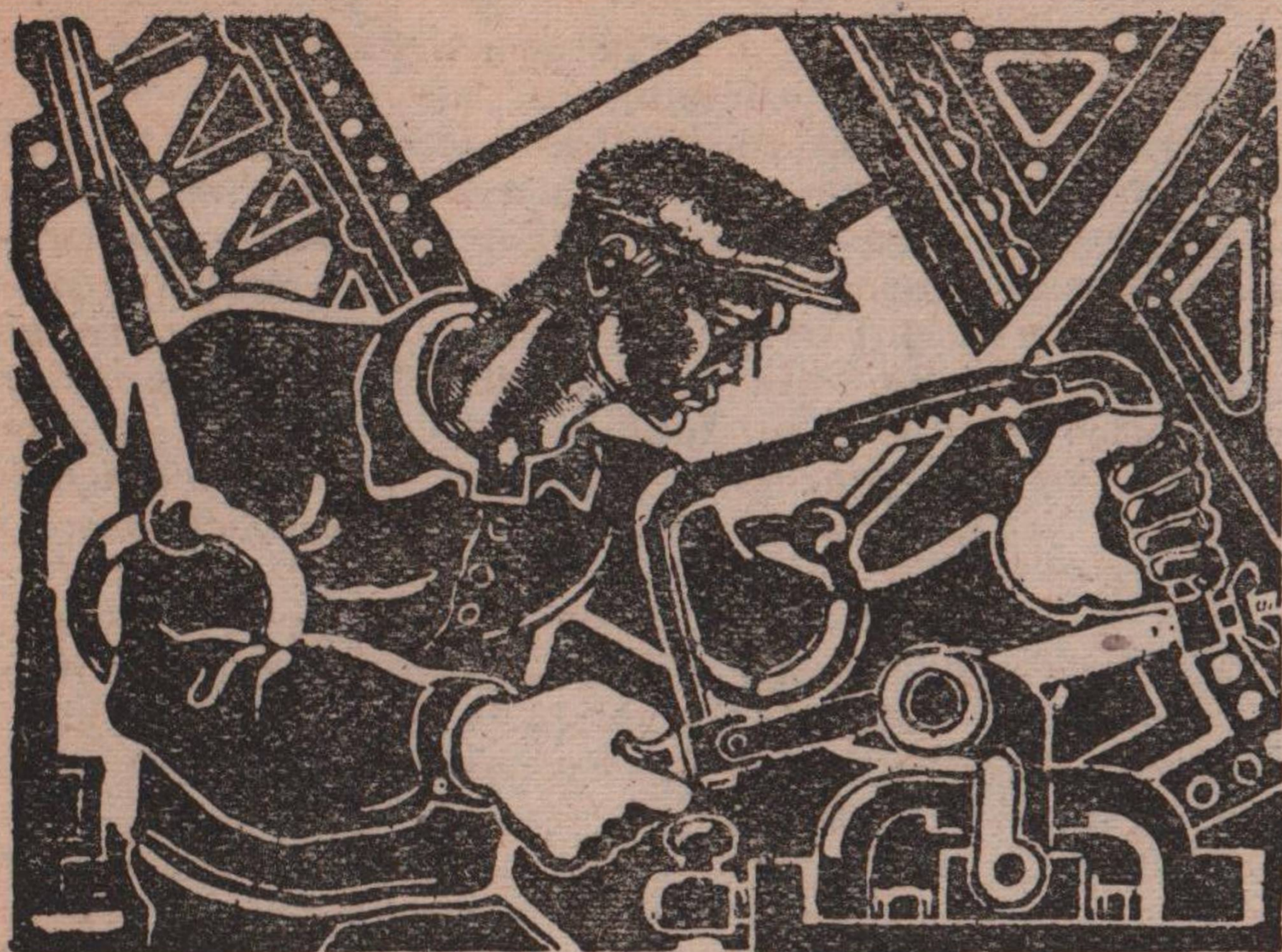
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Stakhanovism and the British Workers

to diminish scrap or breakages, to put an end to time wasting or unnecessary absenteeism, and to make the utmost use of the instrument of socialist emulation." (Soviet Communism S & B. Webb) Udarniks received all kinds of privileges in food, clothes and holidays which put them in a superior position to that of the rest of the workers. Piece work being general in Russia they also of course received better salaries.

Udarniks received, like stakhanovists later, the greatest publicity and encouragement from the government; but such publicity cannot have an everlasting effect and in 1935 a new publicity campaign was launched with the introduction of Stakhanovism. In May 1935 Stalin made a speech telling the younger workers of the U.S.S.R. that they must "master technique." This was the signal for a campaign for increased production, and in August of the same year the miner Stakhanov, with the help of the communist directors of the mine, established the first record of cutting 100 tons of coal in one day (the average coal cut in the Ruhr is 10 tons and the maximum 16 or 17 tons per day). All over Russia and in every kind of industry, from cotton weavers to shop assistants and trade union officials, Stakhanovists sprang up. The Government insisted on the spontaneity of the movement and explained it by the improvement in the conditions of the workers but it was obvious that it was inspired and supported by the whole governmental machine. Stakhanov's declaration praising Stalin as the originator of the movement can be taken literally more than as a compliment to the leader: "I really do not know why this movement is called the Stakhanovtchina it should be rather the Stalin-tchina (Stalin's movement)! The beloved leader of the Communist Party and of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., comrade Stalin and the Bolshevik party which he leads have inspired our victories."

The purpose behind the Stakhanovist campaign soon became obvious. The Central Committee declared that the enthusiasm shown by the workers was due to the betterment of their conditions of life and instead of rejoicing at this improvement immediately proceeded to decree the revision of all norms of work.

A revision of collective labour contracts was carried out which resulted in the increasing of the norms of work without a corresponding increase in wages and in the creation of a labour caste receiving higher wages and privileges. A Stakhanovist miner received 580 roubles in 11 days instead of a month. A Stakhanovist engine driver received 900 roubles a month instead of 400 etc. This created hostility and division amongst the workers.

The Stakhanovist method is not something new. Ford and Taylor had long before defined means by which the workers would produce the maximum work in the minimum time. Their methods were of course despised and hated by the working people all over the world. When a few years ago the Duke of Windsor wanted to visit an American factory in company of Bedaux the workers threatened to go on strike if he came with a man who had refined the methods of exploitation of the workers. The originality of the Russian method was to give a character of spontaneity to the movement, of cover-

WAR brings a need for increased production and for maximum effort on the part of the workers. This is what all the propaganda nowadays tries to impress on the workers. Since Russia has come into the war it is not surprising therefore that the Russian worker should be given as an example to the British workers in order to induce them to produce more. The Russian Trade Union delegation in all its speeches stressed the fact that production could be increased and that workers in Russia produce far more than they do here. The influence of Russian methods is already felt. The *Manchester Guardian* of the 8.3.42 under the heading "Stakhanovites" in Lancashire printed the following report:

"The Cotton Board's 'Trade Letter' reports the interesting methods adopted by one firm of cotton spinners and manufacturers to increase output. Production boards, especially floodlit have been set up in all rooms to show daily production and production aimed at. Special badges are being made for wear by operatives with good or increased output records. These badges have a design of the firm's crest with the words 'War Production Worker.'

Weekly five-minute 'pep-talks' are being given through microphones while the workers have meals in the canteen. A weekly or fortnightly letter to the operatives is being compiled to keep them in touch with all the latest developments."

Production boards and badges—these are familiar methods of stimulating the Russian workers but since the introduction of Udarnism and Stakhanovism the Russian Government has gone much further in its technique of increasing production. If Russian methods are going to be introduced in this country it may be of interest to the British workers to know what these methods really consist of.

According to Stalin, socialism can and will defeat the capitalist system "Because it can furnish higher models of labour, a higher productivity of labour than the capitalist system of economy. Because it can give society more products and can make society richer than the capitalist system of economy can." The aim of the Russian revolution has not been as one would have expected to reduce the working hours of the worker and to improve his standard of life but to make him produce more and more. Stakhanovism was not the first method used by the ruling classes of the Soviet Union to extract more work from the people. Already in 1928 brigades of udarniks were formed. The udarniks being workers who voluntarily undertook to work more and better, "to set themselves to raise the standard of output,

ing the dirty exploitation of the majority of the workers under a heap of socialist slogans. Stakhanovist workers did not find new methods of work, they rationalised production somehow by introducing more division of labour. Stakhanov for example was helped by a team which prepared the place and removed the coal while he concentrated on cutting coal. Stakhanovist salesmen quickened their service "by having already packed the quantities usually demanded of the commodities in greatest request." (*Soviet Communism*, S. & B. Webb) . . . The records achieved by Stakhanovist workers were obviously tricked (gangs worked at night in order to prepare the work, a gang of workers assisted the Stakhanovist etc.). This explains how certain Stakhanovist workers have achieved records which have aroused the incredulity of most western workers. Two months after Stakhanov cut 102 tons of coal in one day, for example, the miner Matchekin cut in the same time 1,466 tons of coal! The Government did not take the trouble to explain these figures—it merely wanted to impress the imagination of the average worker, make him feel ashamed of the little work he did. One should mention here that after having achieved these records most Stakhanovists were taken into rest houses, or were sent to lecture in Universities and factories. They did not go back to work, their job was done; they had proved that workers should produce more. In April 1936 an Institute of Work which prepared norms compatible with maintaining good health among the workers was closed as harmful, its scientific norms having been brilliantly demolished by Stakhanovist practice!

As might be expected, the already overworked and underfed Russian workers did not accept with enthusiasm an increase in the norms of production which for many meant a reduction of salary. The Soviet Press reported many cases where Stakhanovists met with the hostility of their fellow workers. "In the factory Krasny Shtampovtchik, a Stakhanovist worker found on her loom a dirty broom with the following note: 'To the comrade Belog, this bouquet is offered in order to thank her for having increased by three times our norms.'" (Troud 1.11.35).

"Horses are not men; they cannot follow socialist emulation." This is what Maximovitch had the audacity to say to Orloff, an official of the Communist Youth, who prosed that he increase the work of horse conductors at the bottom of the mine. When out in Loutch we learned by a local paper that out we asked how was the (stakhanovist) method carried of 38 pits 35 opposed the new method with a more or less open sabotage." (*Izvestia* 2.10.35)

In a factory where wagons were being repaired two workers were condemned to five and three years imprisonment for having stolen the instruments of a Stakhanovist worker (*Pravda* 2.11.35.)

The locksmith Konovalov killed the super-udarnik Rachtapa (*Izvestia* 23.8.35)

"The military tribunal has condemned the murderers of the Stakhanovist Schmirev, the brothers Kriachkov, to the highest punishment for social offence, to be shot." (*Pravda* 21-22.11.35)

Outside Russia the Stakhanovist movement was praised only by the communist and russophile press. Workers looked with mixed feelings of amusement and indignation to the 'records' of Stakhanovist workers in Russia. A French miner Kleber Legay denounced the dangerous conditions in which Russian miners accomplished their exploits. In France, communist leaders had to write to their communist newspapers to stop the publication of records achieved by Stakhanovist workers as they were received with

laughter by the miners. The word Stakhanovist was used by many as an insult!

The Stakhanovist movement is, according to the Webbs, a "revolution in the wage-earners mentality towards measures and devices for increasing the productivity of labour . . . (because) . . . in soviet industry, there is no "enemy party" . . . the manual worker in the factory . . . realises that the whole of the aggregate net product . . . is genuinely at the disposal of the aggregate workers . . . in such ways as they, by their own trade organisation, choose to determine."

The Stakhanovist movement is nothing of the sort. It is a method whereby a minority of workers stronger and more skilled than others receive a higher salary and privileges at the expense of other workers. The factory management could afford to pay Stakhanovist workers more than others because they helped to raise the norms of production and therefore lowered the wages of the other workers. As Taylor had already pointed out: "one must pay high salaries in order to have cheap labour."

If the workers in the Soviet Union really believed that by working harder they would increase "the whole of the aggregate product at the disposal of the aggregate workers" there would have been no need to encourage them to produce more by according special privileges to them. Furthermore by paying Stakhanovist workers more the Government made it plain that the aggregate product was not going to benefit equally each worker but only a minority.

The only difference between Stakhanovism and the old methods of capitalist exploitation consists in the fact that the workers are made to believe that they are not exploited at all but are, in reality, working for the building up of a socialist state. Workers are asked to stop defending their wages and trying to decrease their hours of work and to put the interest of the State before their own.

In Russia the workers are asked to do this under the pretext of building up a Socialist Country while in reality it is not Socialism which is built on workers' sweat but a class of bureaucrats and politicians. In this country workers are asked to help the Government to produce more, in spite of the capitalist system of economy, so that the war can be won quicker. In both cases the workers are asked to defend interests which are not theirs. Socialism is achieved in the factories and in the fields by the workers taking over production and distributing the products according to peoples' needs. It is not achieved by dividing the working class in categories of wage earners, by applying degrading methods of production: piece work and a sweating system.

When, with the pretext of fighting Fascism, British workers are asked to collaborate with the capitalists and the government to carry out their own exploitation by such means as setting up production committees or by introducing Stakhanovist methods, they should remember that Fascism is fought more efficiently in the factories than on the battlefields. Every defeat of the capitalist class is a defeat for fascism. Everytime the workers obtain a reduction in their hours of work and a rise in salaries, every time they affirm workers' solidarity by defending a victimized fellow worker, every time they abolish degrading methods of production, every time they achieve a victory over their boss, they win a victory against Fascism and pave the way to socialism.

When the revolution has been achieved there will be no need for Stakhanovist methods. All workers will give society labour according to their strength and ability, not in exchange for wages but for food, clothes, pleasures, to satisfy their needs. M.L.B.

In Reply to a Common Question

Why No Unity of the Left?

NEWCOMERS to political movements of the Left are unfavourably impressed by the fact that there appears to be a lack of unity and, in its Press, continuous polemics, outbursts and heated criticism by the different factions towards one another. New readers to *War Commentary*, particularly those whose Left sympathies have been only recently acquired, cannot understand why we should, for instance, criticise the Communist Party, the U.S.S.R., the I.L.P., the Trotskyist and other political parties, because they feel that by so doing we weaken the Left movement and play into the hands of the ruling class. Actually a clear distinction must be made between the Anarchist criticism and the polemics that are to be found in other left-wing journals, and we shall attempt to clarify this distinction in the course of this article.

The Anarchists are concerned with the emancipation of the workers by the workers. We are therefore opposed to centralised control and consequently to Power. We are equally strongly opposed to a "dictatorship of the Anarchists." In other words the function of Anarchists in the struggle against Capitalism is that of influencing the workers morally and practically along certain lines which in our opinion are the only ones which can result in a lasting victory for the working class. Our task is at the same time to point out what we consider to be the errors in pursuing other paths in achieving these ends. These are not just words. In Catalonia in 1936 the Anarchists, by their predominance in numbers and their leading role at the barricades could have been masters of Catalonia. Yet, as one writer put it: "The Anarchists had the power. *They refused to use it.*"* But for a considerable period that power which the militant workers had won by sacrifice and courage was used by them collectively in the control of industry and agriculture, and where Anarchist influence was strongest so in that particular factory, town, village or agricultural community social and economic organisation was based on Anarchist teachings. *But it is important to remember that there was not an Anarchist hierarchy to impose from above because, by their very structure, the Anarchist councils came from the base, i.e. from the factory and the workshop.* Therefore, the first point we must make clear is that Anarchism does not mean a political party participating in the game of power politics, but a philosophy for living so that the individual in society will enjoy a maximum of freedom and the good things of life, and in return will make his contribution to society in the form of productive work, and by his respect for his neighbour's equal right to freedom and the good things of life.

Now, why are we opposed to Capitalism and the Capitalist class? The answer is not difficult to discover. We are not opposed to those people who are called capitalists enjoying freedom and the good things of life. What we object to is the fact that

they have an idea that the good things of life are a privilege which *they* alone shall enjoy from generation to generation, and that *they* alone shall enjoy the products of the soil and the sub-soil, and that *they* have the right to live by another man's labour. In other words they achieve their well-being and freedom, social and economic, at the expense of our (the workers') freedom and well-being.

Why are we opposed just as strongly to the Communists? And this is where our new friends who, though they clearly see the need for struggle against the capitalists, yet cannot quite understand our feelings towards the Communists. "For, (they say) aren't the ultimate aims of the Communists the same as those of the Anarchists?" In the first place, the Communists are grouped in a political party. Secondly, the Communists believe in centralised control. As Lenin quite clearly put it:

"The Party must be the vanguard, the leader of the broad mass of the working class. The latter acts entirely (or almost entirely) under the control and leadership of the Party organizations."

(Collected Works, Vol IV. p.34)

The Party executive has autocratic powers over the workers, and nominates their local leaders. Thus we see that, by its structure, the Party hierarchy imposes its will from above, which is just the contrary to the Anarchist form of organisation. This is a cardinal point of difference and one which the Anarchists contend is sufficient to jeopardise the workers' revolution. The reason is simple and we think a practical answer to those of our critics who accuse us of being "dreamers" and "knowing nothing about human nature." In a centralised Party in which decisions are taken from above by a small group of people, there is the danger of those people enjoying too much power, with fatal consequences. Someone once said "Power corrupts." No truer words were uttered, and they apply not only to the leading capitalists but also to the so-called "champions of the working-class." Examples abound in the Trade Union movement, in the Labour Movement, and in all walks of life where a man is put in a position to take decisions without consulting those whom these decisions affect.† In the case of the Communist Party we have an even worse case of this autocratic rule in that the party line is not even formulated by the leaders in this country, but is imposed upon them by even higher authorities—the Comintern.

The twists and turns of the Communist Party since its inception (and other so-called Left parties) are not due to errors in policy or of judgment. These twists and turns are necessary when a movement engages in party politics. Thus we find not only Harry Pollitt and other leading Communists changing

† Limited space prevents a more detailed analysis, but the reader is recommended to refer to a series of articles by Reg. Reynolds entitled "Confound their Politics," published in "War Commentary" Vol. 1, Nos. 4, 5 and 6, copies of which can still be obtained from Freedom Press at 3d. each.

* Frank Jellinek in "The Civil War in Spain" p.322 —Left Book Club Edition—a pro-Communist work.

their line and holding diametrically opposite ideas three times in the course of twelve months, but such rabid anti-Russians as Churchill sending telegrams of congratulation to Stalin and the Red Army, and such pro-Fascists and Mussolini sympathisers as that same Churchill referring to the Duce in far from complimentary terms. This game which, as can be amply shown, extends to all parties of the Left and the Right, often goes by the name of "strategy" but actually is nothing more than power politics, with the contestants adopting every means, fair and unfair, to get POWER. Whilst we are not concerned with this lack of principle in the Right parties, the workers must take note when it concerns a party which is alleged to champion the workers' cause. Power politics weakens the workers' struggle for emancipation for these reasons: It implies collaboration with the ruling class, and compromise; it implies deviation from our aim (emancipation) through the necessity of always choosing the "lesser evil"; it implies a weakening of the spirit of direct action (strike action, control of the means of production by the producers) and a strengthening of the anti-revolutionary forces of reformism (Parliamentary action, supreme authority of the "leaders" over-riding popular feeling). It is on the grounds of the working-class struggle, therefore, that the Anarchists oppose all Left-Wing organisations engaged in power politics, and not because we are aspirants to power!

Why do we oppose the Labour Party? In principle the Labour Party aims at Socialism. In practice it has long ago put its Socialism into cold storage. Its whole policy has always been reformist and therefore, in the Anarchist's opinion, it is an obstacle to the workers' struggle for emancipation. As a result of its reformism, it has succeeded in becoming a mass party whose militancy is inversely proportionate to its large membership. Its role in the House of Commons has disproved any claims it might have to be the champion of the working-class. Its parliamentary representatives have proved themselves, with a few rare exceptions, simply "yes-men," concerned more with their positions than with any desire to bring about such social changes as are necessary for workers' emancipation and the ending of senseless wars. Far from doing this, we find members of the Labour Party in the Government performing all the dirty work of suppression of the people's rights (Bevin, Morrison etc.) and are more staunch Imperialists and warmongers than the most rabid Blimps. It is unnecessary to deal with this Party at any greater length. It has made itself conspicuous by its lack of working-class militancy.

There remain the smaller parties. Of these the I.L.P. is perhaps the best known, partly because

through its ranks have passed many careerists now leading lights of the Labour Party. But whilst there are to be found some intelligent people in its ranks, as well as a revolutionary element, it has been steadily losing influence among the workers. It still clings to parliamentary methods with very little success, and there again we find the curious phenomenon of M.P.s like Maxton enjoying popularity in the House ("Jimmy" to them), popularity which a true revolutionist would never enjoy from Tory or Labour. Further, this party too, though declaring itself revolutionary, indulges in the game of party politics with disastrous results. Fenner Brockway's election programme aimed at securing votes and not at testing the militant spirit of the workers, and was weak in every respect,** and the support of Russia, in spite of strong criticisms of Stalin, can only be explained as the weakness of parties striving for mass support and power. The good that is undoubtedly achieved by opening the minds of the workers to the class struggle are nullified by the Party's parliamentary and reformist policy.

We also oppose the Trotskyists, on grounds which can be simply defined. The Trotskyists, while showing a certain amount of clearness in their critical analysis of the Stalin regime, are blind to the faults of Trotskyism and Leninism, and its points common to Stalinism. Today, after years of criticism of the system in Russia, we find them advocating support for Russia "in spite of the Stalin regime"!

The S.P.G.B. advocates parliamentarism as a means to workers' control of economic resources. This will come about, they say, when there are sufficient S.P.G.B.ers in parliament. They have, incidentally, been proposing to put up a candidate for parliament for the past thirty years.

Now what is the effect produced by these movements, dealt with briefly in this article?†† In the work of awakening class-consciousness among the apathetic and servile working-class: excellent. But once aroused, what do they propose to the workers? Not direct action, not the fundamental right of the workers to possess that which they produce. No, the next step is that the workers should put that Party in power, and, in return, that Party promises all kinds of things, from increased pensions by the Labour Party to Socialism in Britain Now by the I.L.P. The Communist Party promises a Dictatorship of the Proletariat (changed to the dictatorship of the Party when they take power).‡‡

The Anarchists, on the other hand, offer nothing nor ask to be given power to execute an Anarchist paradise blue-print. We say that the emancipation of the workers will come about only as a result of

(continued on page 12)

‡ Actually, there is a number of individuals, not affiliated to parties, who call themselves Socialists or Anarchists who are pro-war—not because of any affection for British Imperialism but because they think that the present struggle can be converted into a genuine anti-fascist struggle. (It is to be noted that the fact of their wanting to convert it into an anti-fascist struggle implies that they are convinced that the struggle is not anti-fascist at present).

‡ See Attlee's book *The Labour Party in Perspective*.

§ Mr. R. Richards (Labour, Wrexham) in a recent debate asked "Behind the Far Eastern question there is another fundamental one. Was this generation to witness the disintegration of the British Empire? The Empire was the basis of the

high standard of living enjoyed here, and we must not let the Empire dissolve before our eyes."

** It is interesting to note that though the I.L.P. has been in existence for many years, the circulation of its organ "The New Leader" in Lancaster was 6 copies. Yet Brockway polled several thousand votes. Was a revolutionary spirit aroused in a week's campaigning, or was it the reformist programme which could appeal to any politically unconscious or just dissatisfied worker?

†† A series of articles dealing with "Left Movements and the War," published in "War Commentary" are particularly recommended to new readers. The issues containing the articles are Nos. 1, 2 and 3 in Volume II.

‡‡ Following Bolshevik tradition, vide Lenin.

Syndicalism

aims at

OF the many lessons to be learned through the Betteshanger and similar industrial disputes, two very important ones arise above all others. Firstly it is being made perfectly clear that in spite of the call for "Peace in Industry," and for everyone to "Go to it," the employers are not prepared to sacrifice one little bit of their power over the workers in industry and are not prepared to ease in any way the ruthless exploitation of workers in the interest of profit.

Secondly, the workers, realising that their leaders have once more betrayed them into the hands of the employers, and seeking a way of expressing their dissatisfaction with things as they are, now seek hope and inspiration from among their own ranks. On all hands workers can be heard talking of "Bigger Unions," "Rank and file control of workers' organisation," "The hope of peace when all can live together in security with no fear of poverty or war." It is good that these sentiments should be expressed by workers and it is the duty of Anarchists and Syndicalists to explain to the discontented workers the reasons why they have been betrayed, and also to point out to them the dangers that lie ahead unless they grip the true meaning of such desire for better organisation. The cry for bigger unions can be used by unscrupulous Labourites or Bolsheviks in order to further their aims at amalgamations of existing unions. When workers cry for bigger unions they really mean *more effective* unions because such a cry can only arise from the realisation of the ineffectiveness of the present organisations. An example showing how a "bigger union" can even be less effective as a fighting weapon in the hands of the workers than the smaller ones from which it grew, is the Transport and General Workers' Union. There will be few who, knowing the facts, can deny that the old Gasworkers' Union and the Dockworkers' Union were more effective fighting unions than the present "bigger union," the T and G. W. U. What is more important than the size of a union is its basis of organisation. How many answers would one get by asking union men "Why are you organised?" The overwhelming majority of union members today hold a card as a permit to go to work, but many hold a card as an expression of some definite purpose. Defence of working conditions, 8 hour day, wash-houses in factory and mine, higher wages, more pay for overtime, no overtime at all, etc., etc. These and many other "demands" would be given as reasons why workers organise in unions. The trouble with this sort of "demand" is that in no time the enthusiastic "demand fixer" will be calling for longer ladders for lamplighters and longer strings for yo-yos.

There are some workers however, who have a more basic purpose for their organisations. It is the purpose of these to organise in industry in order to take over control of industry and carry on production for the good of all. There is no trade union or political party in Great Britain which advocates this objective and because of this fact it is true to say that there is no trade union or political party in Great Britain today capable of serving the best interests of the workers of this country.

There is no need for despondency however. Workers who really wish to live as free people will seek the best form of organisation in order to achieve freedom.

The Industrial Workers of the World for instance is an organisation capable of freeing the workers from wage slavery by establishing a new society wherein all shall work according to their ability and receive according to their needs. Its purpose and basis of organisation is put forward in its Preamble.

The main points from this are as follows. The working class and the employing class can have nothing in common. "Between these two classes a

Workers' Control

struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system." Trade union organization places obstacles in the way of working class unity, by pitting one set of workers against another in the same industry, thereby helping to defeat one another in wage wars. Instead the working class should organize so that all workers in one industry (or in all industries if necessary) are organized in one union, and all "cease work whenever a strike or lock-out is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one, an injury to all."

The preamble concludes "Instead of the Conservative motto 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword 'Abolition of the wage system.' It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old." (The full text of the Preamble of the I.W.W. was published in the January issue of *War Commentary*)

Many questions will arise in the mind of the thinking worker. How do I know that the leaders of the I. W. W. will not betray me as the labour and communist leaders have done? Can we do without capital? Who is going to be in charge of the workshop? etc.

Prevention of Betrayal by Union Leaders

The question of betraying and misleading the worker is the most important one to be answered and the following may help to clear matters. It is possible for a worker to betray another only when full power and authority is given to make decisions and arrange with the master working conditions, etc. The master can only bribe a worker to betray other workers when the worker holds full authority. Therefore, to demand the right of acceptance or rejection of any agreement before it becomes operative is our way of keeping all representatives or delegates within the ranks of the honest workers. The right of recall at 24 hours notice of any official representative

or delegate will prevent any master having the chance to "buy" a worker. These two rights are entirely foreign to the labour and trade union movement. The members of a trade union are merely told what arrangements have been made for them, and the idea of "sacking" the president or general secretary or even a local official is never contemplated.

Is a Master Class Necessary?

Can we do without capital? It depends largely what is meant by capital. What should be clear to all is that to make or produce anything at all, only human energy plus nature is required. Therefore it is true to say that the worker produces everything. This being true, there is no need for a master at all. Who will do the "thinking out" and the organisation? That question is easy. It will be done by the workers, the very people who do it now.

The purpose of these notes is to stimulate discussion around the question of Syndicalism. Many other points will arise in the minds of workers and should there be any difficulty in finding an answer by the workers themselves, if the problem is put to the Editors of *War Commentary* they will be glad to assist in every possible way. In the meantime the following points should be kept present in the minds of workers.

(1) That before the workers can be free, the boss must go.

(2) That the boss will go when the workers organise to take from him the fields, mines, factories, transport, etc.

(3) That these things can be taken by organisation at the point of production and "locking out the boss" from all industry.

(4) That in order to keep a workers' delegate within the ranks of the workers, *see to it that the wages he is paid do not exceed the wage he would draw while at work in industry and that every delegate be subject to 24 hours notice*, must have worked in industry for 12 months preceding his appointment, to come up for re-election every 12 months and in no circumstances hold office for more than three years in succession. Such ruling will encourage workers to become fit for the work of delegate because so many will be required and none will decay into permanent officialdom.

Any questions?

Any objections?

Workers should now begin to prepare the groundwork for Syndicalism in Britain as a preliminary to the final struggle to abolish capitalism with its poverty and war.

BILL GAPE

MAY DAY, 1942

LONDON

PUBLIC MEETING

CONWAY HALL,

SUNDAY EVENING,

May 3rd

WHY NO UNITY OF THE LEFT

(continued from page 10)

the efforts of the workers themselves, and not through an "Anarchist Party" or "Party Executive." To do this the workers must start by developing new forms of organisation to replace the outworn, reformist, bureaucratic Trades Unions. They must base their struggle not so much on the 1d an hour increase bargaining, which is negative in that it implies a recognition of an employng class, and can never result in its defeat, but on the indisputable rights of the producers to be equal partners in the fruits of their labour, and have the leisure to enjoy the intellectual and social pleasures which today are denied to them. §§ This, the Anarchists maintain, must be the basis of struggle however slow it may be, and however small in numbers those of a like mind. "There are no short cuts to Socialism" we once wrote in *War Commentary*, and events have shown the truth of this statement. Those politicians who promise Socialism in return for your vote; those so-called revolutionists who, with the slogans of "Dic-

tatorship of the Proletariat" transfer your chains from one leg to the other; those "champions of the working class" who, in return for their £750 a year (which they draw from your dues) promise you a square deal at the hands of your employers . . . they are all leading away from the direct road to Free Socialism or Anarchism, and as such are pernicious, and must be attacked in the name of the militant workers.

In concluding, a word should be said about the Left Press. The general tone today is highly critical of the Government and the existing institutions. The *New Statesman and Nation* and *The Tribune* in particular containing important and interesting articles. Where they fail, where they negative the valuable work done in breaking down traditional ideas with facts, is by resigning themselves to choosing the lesser evil (which to day happens to be British Imperialism as against German Imperialism).

Today the workers have only one choice: between good and evil. Too long have they been goaded into the choice of the lesser evil, and, so long as their choice is thus limited, their chances of emancipation through struggle will remain dreams of a very distant future. May this article therefore serve to make clear to new readers the aims of *War Commentary* and of the Anarchists. May it also answer those friendly critics who could not see the purpose served by publishing such pamphlets as *The Russian Myth* and critical articles such as have appeared in *War Commentary* during the past two years.

Freedom Press exists to serve only the revolutionary workers' cause. Compromise, lesser evils, power politics—these we leave to those politicians who pose as "champions of the working-class."

V.R.

§§ In answer to the objection that today the cultural pleasures of life are available to all through the medium of the wireless and evening schools, we suggest that those who offer these criticisms work a 60 hour week in a factory or mine, and travel a couple of hours a day in a train and see how anxious they are at the end of the day to pursue a course of study at the evening classes, probably situated a few miles from their homes. On the subject of "culture," Herbert Read's "To Hell with Culture," (1/-) is a valuable booklet.

PALESTINE and the JEWS

Part 1

To civilised people today the position of the Jews is intolerable. In increasing numbers of countries the centuries' plague of the ghetto and the pogrom is reviving. Against the mediaeval curse of anti-semitism, on the one hand, and the inevitable Jewish reaction to its own nationalism on the other, there must be some method of struggle.

What is the method advocated by liberals and the left today? In the main it is agreed: the re-establishment of religious and racial tolerance in all countries, on the one hand; and the establishment of the Zionist aim—a Jewish National Home—in Palestine, on the other.

It is perhaps necessary to give first the background of Zionism, and the reasons why Zionism came into conflict with the Arabs in Palestine.

THE first modern exponent of Zionism was Theodore Herzl. Moved by growing anti-semitic feeling in France and in his native Austria, and later by the feeling of sympathy with the persecuted Russian Jews felt by all sections, Herzl evolved his plan of a Jewish State. His idea was that the Jews could form a small nation somewhere in the world, and so end the national distinctions pervading amongst the Jews themselves.

It is sometimes said by Zionists today that Palestine was the end-all and be-all of Jewish hope and aspirations for centuries. This is not so. True, the Jewish religion has centred around the idea of "the Promised Land" which the Jews would re-enter but it was thought that only Messianic times would see the "Chosen people" arrive in Jerusalem. In short, the rabbinical idea of the "New Jerusalem" was pretty much the same as the Christian. (The prayer concluding "Next year—in Jerusalem!", for instance, has always been and still is used by Jews in Jerusalem, too) Only the portents announced in the Talmud could herald the return of the Jews to the "Promised Land," and in fact the Jewish religion thought of Palestine as a spiritual, not a material, concept.

Prior to Herzl, hardly anyone ever dreamt of an actual return of the Jews to Palestine, and when Herzl's plan was published, its fiercest opponents were the rabbis, it being contrary to all their teaching. They cast doubts on Herzl's orthodoxy, helped by the fact that, like so many Austrian Jews, his father was a convert to Christianity and Herzl had been brought up as a Christian, returning to Judaism later in life. (It was asked contemptuously if Herzl considered himself King David!)

In addition to incurring the opposition of religious Judaism, Zionism was frowned on or ignored by the rich and powerful Jews, who naturally had no wish to see the *status quo* upset.

Herzl's scheme might have appealed to the homeless, hungry and persecuted Jews of Russia. But a vague promised land had nothing on a definite Promised Land—America! Like the rest of Europe's downtrodden they looked to the symbol of liberty that to Europe's millions was represented by the United States. The acute labour shortage following the Civil War gave rise to a demand for labour—for

immigrants—and the immigrants came in their thousands; Jews from the pogrom countries with the thousands of Italians, Irish, Latvians, Armenians, Poles, Czechs and the rest.

It rather seemed at first as if Herzl was to enjoy only the support of a handful of Jewish intellectuals and a number of influential anti-Semites (many of whom strongly advocated the acceding by the French Government of a plot of land in Africa for the settlement of the Jews—willy-nilly). At first the Zionists listened to the schemes of settlement in Africa, but under the influence of Herzl turned down all such promises. The choice was finally made—Palestine only. In this Herzl made a tactical move. He gave his movement a solid basis, by gaining religious Jewish support. While for long the orthodox opposition on the grounds that re-settlement in Palestine prior to the Messiah's belated arrival was contrary to teachings, the rabbis were shrewd enough to realise that their shibboleths were crumbling, not against persecution but against tolerance. America, the "melting pot" of all nations, was assimilating its Jewish citizens too. The same process was at work in South Africa, in Britain, in France, in Germany. Jews were losing their identity as Jews. Most of them were unable to believe in the God of their fathers (any more than their Gentile neighbours) they were forgetting the old codes and taboos. A "religious revival" was the Gentile reaction to 19th century agnosticism. This in turn passed to Fascism. With the Jews it was similar. The rabbis looked to a mystical nationalism, such as Herzl was advocating.

It cannot be said that the majority of Jews who pioneered Zionism in Palestine were orthodox Jews. Other than the Polish and Russian Jews, there were few orthodox Jews left. Palestine since has not been a home for orthodoxy. A modern Palestine Jew would not at all bother about a pork dinner in the shadow of the Wailing Wall. But orthodoxy has gathered more strength; and while it has not produced its goal—a Jewish religion and race separated from all others—it has helped to produce a separatist feeling amongst nationalist Jews that may (with or without the religious stimulus) have far-reaching effects. In all this the whole outlook of Zionism was and is essentially reactionary and of a fascist nature. Prior to his aping Hitler's anti-semitism, the Re-

visionists (right wing Zionist extremists) did indeed look on Mussolini as an inspired statesman.

On the other hand, it is unquestionable that side by side with the pipe-dreams of a Messianic Jewish community in the Near East, and the nationalist aspirations of others, there existed a number of Jews who, with no sympathy with their abandoned religion, hoped Zionism might be a symbol of regeneration. It may not be altogether possible for Gentile readers to appreciate how bitterly they detested the racketeering elements who figured so prominently in the early days of South Africa. The entirely unscrupulous Rand financiers were too often Jews. A product of the inferiority complex engendered by separatism, and of the city, the gambling mob that disgraced itself was unquestionably regarded by large numbers of decent Jews as "the type of Jew who causes anti-semitism." To get away from this city bred type they did hope for a national regeneration on the land. "To get back to the land"—"regeneration on the soil"—It is the usual mystical nonsense that has a great appeal to people who themselves have not experienced the narrowness of life in an agricultural community, but so far as it was a reaction it was progressive.

The above gives a clear picture of the whole tenor of Jewry prior to the 1914 war†

The Balfour Declaration gave the Jews the right to a National Home in Palestine. While promising the Arabs and other subject peoples of the decaying Ottoman Empire full liberty in the post war world (added to the specious promises made by Lawrence and others) the idea of a Jewish State in Palestine was given life (which to the majority of people, including most Jews, was as fanciful a project as the establishment of an Eireann state in Ireland, with the old Gaelic language—or, since this too happened after the war—as if Sweden suddenly went Viking).

Why was the declaration made? It must have been realised that the Arabs, when free of Turkish rule, would not voluntarily submit to any other foreign domination. But, since it was decided that this strategically important country must be in the jurisdiction of the British Empire (to safeguard the route to India and the Orient), some plan had to be evolved of colonising the country in part. Evidently the British Government was influenced by the Zionist minority in agreeing to the idea of a Jewish Home in Palestine. The only alternative (in fact) was to settle emigrants generally, as in South Africa and Australia. But British emigrants were few (as colonial experience had shown): and it may well be that European emigrants were simply not trusted. Already in Canada and Australia the door was barred to the "teeming millions" of European immigration.¶ In Palestine, too: none but the "reliable."

The British Government was assured of Jewish reliability. While the Arabs could not be trusted from an Imperial standpoint (they would, like the Egyptians, raise awkward questions about autonomy) the war had proved that the Jewish community would respond to a patriotic demand. The majority

† The interested reader will find profitable study in many of the novels of Israel Zangwill ("The King of Schnorrers," "Children of the Ghetto," etc.) whose pen has made a truly Dickensian survey.

¶ The U.S.A., when padlocking the doors to the European immigration that evolved it, gave the reason in its notorious declaration that all persons entering the U.S.A. (even on a visit) are compelled to make—one effectively ruling out anarchists, radicals,—even democrats!

of British Jews were viewed with suspicion at the commencement of the war of 1914. The fact that a majority of them were foreign born, and the anti-immigration agitation of the '00s had been mostly anti-semitic rather than anti-foreign, was an incentive to the suspicion against them. Looting of shops bearing German names soon spread to looting of shops bearing Jewish—even Russian (then Allied) names! The Jews had, however, not been provoked; had supported the war like the other communities.

Prominent in recruiting campaigns was the Chief Rabbi (Austrian born, and therefore an "enemy alien." The German Chief Rabbi was also an "enemy alien" being Russian born!). Jews were volunteering and being drafted into the army. But even more there had to be considered the tradition of the upper class Jews, which naturally had more influence on the Government. The Disraeli tradition persisted in Lord Reading, there were the Rothschild and Sassoon dynasties, men such as Lord Burnham (founder of *The Daily Telegraph*) the circle of Edward VII, the Montefiore family and others—the existence of whom assured the British Government of two things:

- (1) that the leaders of British Jewry could be trusted to influence the remainder into supporting any Imperial designs in Palestine, and in regulating the European Jewish immigrants into that country along the same road. (Foremost among the "safe men" chosen for the regulation of Palestine was, of course, Lord Reading; the prominent bourgeois statesman whose administration in Palestine, as in India, combined "reconciliation" with implicit obedience to Imperialist dictates).
- (2) that since the position of Jews in most countries was, following the changes made by the war, favourable, (and the Versailles Treaty was to last a thousand years!) only a minority of Jews from the ever-decreasing pogrom countries, plus a few Zionist idealists, plus some British Jews seeking administrative positions, would enter Palestine.

Hence immigration was intended to be controlled, regulated and shepherded into a steady colonising trickle that would act as a safeguard against anti-imperialist designs of the Arabs; would colonise the country; would build a European community able to commercialise the assets of the country and at the same time guard against foreign aggression towards the oil-fields of the Middle East, and the route to India.

At first Arab objection as such to the "Jewish National Home" did not arise. There was some Moslem rioting in Jerusalem in connection with the alleged "Holy Places"—but in Jerusalem, the "City of Peace" there has always been rioting over that! Trouble began first when the colonial enterprise became profitable, owing to the cupidity of both Jewish capitalists and Arab landowners.

Jewish capitalists from America were interested in the commercial proposition. They were building new industries and new towns. Tel-Aviv, for instance, rose from nothing to a new Chicago; farms appeared on what was once desert; Jerusalem, from being a sleepy Turkish provincial town where the different Christian priests quarrelled over their rights, became a hive of twentieth century industry. The Dead Sea became a live centre for tourists. In short, Palestine was being developed in the same way as South Africa had been, only in a much more rapid process. Un-

(continued on page 15)

Book Reviews

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM BLAKE

by Alexander Gilchrist (edited by Ruthven Todd).
Everyman's Library 3s.

LIKE Nietzsche and Lawrence, Blake has suffered much from his enthusiasts, and this century has produced a flow of misleading works by religious, artistic and social partisans who have distorted the true Blake by superimposing on his essential simplicity their own fantasies and interpreting his more ambiguous works in such a way as to give support to their peculiar opinions. In this way has arisen a mythical Blake whom the poet himself would certainly have regarded with far more astonishment than he experienced on beholding in childhood the tree full of angels on Peckham Rye.

It is because of the distortions practised by the later writers on Blake that the most satisfactory biography remains that of Alexander Gilchrist, published in 1880 and for many years out of print, which has now been reprinted in Everyman's Library. Gilchrist's enthusiasm was tempered by a conscientious Victorian manner that prevented undue distortion, and, though he had never known Blake, he had the advantage of having encountered many of his friends, from whom he was able to gain reminiscences and first-hand information of the poet's life.

A valuable first step towards the destruction of the "big man" legend and the presentation of Blake as he lived and thought would be the burning of all the partisan studies and the acceptance of Gilchrist as a basic biography. Until we have in our minds some balanced image of the man Blake, it is irrelevant to discuss whether he was anarchist, pacifist, communist, or merely John the Baptist to the community movement.

The present edition of Gilchrist has been effectively prepared by Ruthven Todd, who has carefully removed the inaccuracies left by Rossetti's editing and has provided valuable notes

GEORGE WOODCOCK

(continued from page 14)

fortunately, contrary to the opinions of idealists who had hoped to pioneer an agricultural socialism, the same faults and methods of colonisation appeared in Palestine as in South Africa. (It is sometimes argued, of course, that capitalists coming into a country and colonising it develop the land "and make work for the natives," an even more ironical statement than the old anti-socialist story that "the capitalist puts up the capital without which the worker could not work; hence the worker lives on the capitalist, not vice versa!")

As for the Arab landowners, they were no less culpable than the Jewish capitalists. They sold their land at high prices to the investors, stretching the price to the highest conceivable limit because of the need for land, knowing full well what the sale of land would mean to their own peasants. Having forced the peasants off the land which they had sold at high prices to the Jewish investors, they told the peasants that the Jews had stolen the land, and carried a political agitation on to win back the land—in order to sell it again.

By virtue of their ties with Mohammedanism, the Arab landowners were able to influence the British Government. They were politically identical with the

ASSIGNMENT IN UTOPIA

by Eugene Lyons
George Harrap & Co. Ltd., 15s.

(Limited number of second-hand copies obtainable from Freedom Press at 2/-)

EUGENE LYONS is best known in the Anarchist movement for his defence of Sacco and Vanzetti and other libertarian militants framed-up by the government of the United States in the years following the Great War. In "Assignment in Utopia," Lyons, who went to Russia at the beginning of 1928 as a supporter of the Bolshevik regime, gives a graphic description of life in the U.S.S.R., immediately preceding and throughout the first Five Year Plan. The story is one of regimentation, of mass executions and exile, of torture and starvation, of mass demonstration trials and the machinations of the G.P.U. and above all of the total disregard for all human values by the Bolshevik government and its toadying bureaucracy. To some extent the account is tempered by the fact that the author moved mainly in bourgeois circles during his six years in Russia as chief correspondent of the United Press, and lacked direct contact with the workers and peasants; hence at some points in the book superficial detail is included. Nevertheless, the conclusions he draws from his experience in the U.S.S.R., that any system based solely on economics and ignoring such human values as freedom, equality and self-respect must be fought by those desiring the emancipation of the workers is one with which few readers of "War Commentary" will disagree. H.K.

"Muslim League" minority in India, representing as it does the landowning and financial clique, and not the Arab peasants.

However, in saying that the Arab landowners took advantage of the Jewish influx to sell their land at high prices, and force down the standard of life of the peasant, this does not mean that it was not the case that the Arab peasant was forced off his land. The Jewish capitalist, and (playing a double game) the Arab landowner, were responsible. But because nationalist feeling is what it is, the Arab peasant thought of only the Jewish capitalist—and hence all Jews—as responsible. This explains the whole feeling of the Arab peasant. Led by a corrupt gang under the Grand Mufti, he could only see the whole thing as a national feud—Arab versus Jew.

In the same way, the average Jewish immigrant was not able to appreciate any reason for the disturbances that arose with intensity each year, culminating in the struggles of the late 'thirties. He came from Roumania, or Poland, or Hungary, where it was not unexpected for a sudden pogrom against the Jews. Escaping from his country, he arrived in Palestine, hoping to form a nation of his own. On arriving in Palestine, he found the Arabs incensed at the arrival of Jewish immigrants, hostile to the outlying settlements, unfriendly, and finally openly taking to arms. What could he think, except that the pogrom spirit had followed him across Europe to the "Promised Land"? What alternative could he see except the continuance of the national feud?

In short the Jewish immigrant was brought over on a short term policy of the Jewish capitalist: and the capitalist was aided by the Arab landowners to force out the Arab peasant. (To be followed by Part II—"Development and Solution.")

A.M.

Edinburgh and Glasgow Meetings

IN the first week of February our Glasgow comrade, Eddie Shaw, visited Edinburgh. He addressed a crowd of about 1,000 people at the Mound during the Sunday afternoon, and an indoor meeting with an attendance of several hundred in the evening. The anarchist position towards the war and the class struggle of the workers was attentively listened to and our comrade was well received. Any comrades or sympathisers in the Edinburgh region who are anxious to help the Edinburgh comrades in their work should write to the Anarchist Federation, 127, George Street, Glasgow, C.1.

OUR Glasgow Comrades held a meeting in the Central Hall on the 1st March. Tom Brown being the principle speaker. His subject: "Workers' Syndicates" bringing listeners of an unusually high standard of intelligence and sincerity. Many from the shipyards and from Lanarkshire. Their appreciation was expressed in the amount of literature sales; 5d average per head of the total audience. This is the highest yet for the Anarchist Federation in Glasgow.

There was none of the inane applause one hears at football matches or Communist Party meetings. Instead there was a keen interest, from start to finish, in Tom Brown's address. And a good response to his points. Everyone appreciated his opening remark that: 'The Working Class had tried everything but themselves.'

The questions were all to the point. The tendency being to bring out every detail in Anarcho-Syndicalist policy.

Upon the chairman announcing the closure of the meeting, although half-an-hour over the allotted time, the audience seemed reluctant to go.

Many comrades want to know when Tom will be back in Glasgow again.

Our Glasgow Group have meetings every Sunday as follows: Brunswick Street, 3.30 p.m. and Anarchist Federation Rooms, 127, George Street, at 7 p.m. Comrades desiring to link up should call at the last address.

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FEBRUARY, 1942

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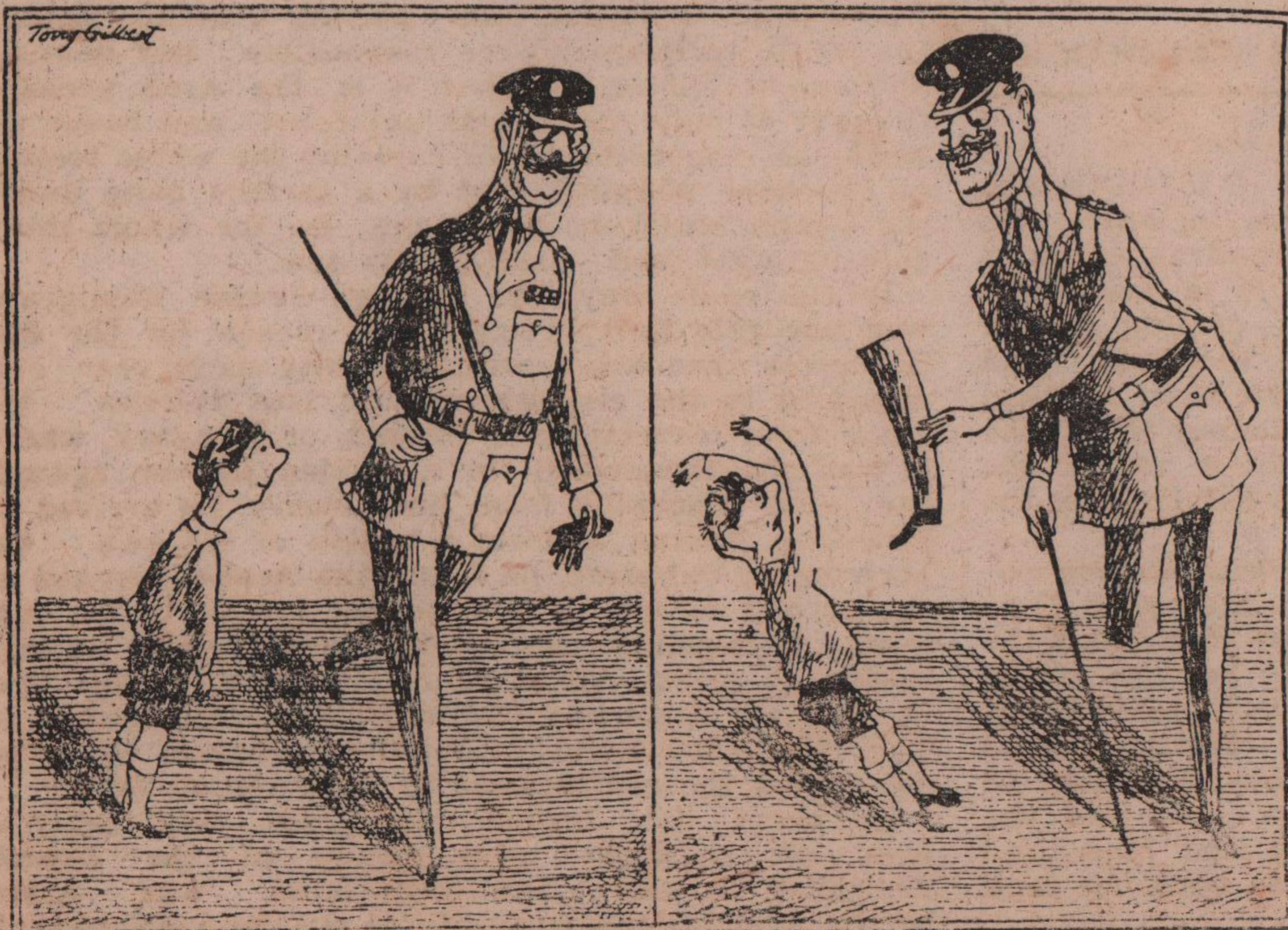
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THE Press Fund list this month is very short, and we appeal to our readers to help make a big increase next month. All kinds of difficulties and obstacles have to be overcome in order to produce *War Commentary*. And the course of the war only brings new problems in shortage of materials, increased costs and so on. We are determined to keep the price down to 2d but we can only do this if we

receive support from our readers. Show your solidarity with *War Commentary* by sending a contribution—however small—to the Press Fund now!

Editors

Any Souvenirs, Mister?



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