

WAR

For Anarchism

COMMENTARY

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Twopence

CHURCHILL'S WAR

CHURCHILL'S last broadcast speech has done far more than anything we can say to destroy the illusion of those who want to see this war as a war against fascism, a war for democracy and for a better world.

He does not try and disguise his reactionary feelings and ideas under the cloak of pseudo-revolutionary demagogy. He stands cut nakedly as an imperialist and a tory, and makes it quite clear that this is an imperialist war and that that's how he intends to conduct it. His speech contains none of that talk about fighting Hitler but not the German people. For Churchill the German worker is a Hun. He is responsible for Hitler's crimes (even though they are committed against the workers!) and he is going to be made to pay for them.

There was none of the popular talk of bringing the revolution to Europe or of drastic social changes on the continent after the war. France must be "restored to her place among the Great powers of the world" because "it is indispensable for the future of Europe." Mr. Churchill's frankness does not carry him so far as to declare his real meaning—that it is indispensable to the Balance of Power in Europe on which British domination depends.

He declares bluntly that "we" conquered the Italian Empire, that we have "successfully protected Palestine, Syria, Persia and Iraq from German designs." Here speaks the hard faced imperialist.

He gloats over the millions of Germans who have already perished among the Russian snows saying that "it is probably an understatement" to say that the number is "certainly more than were killed in the whole

four and a quarter years of the last war."

Most repulsive of all, however, is his cynical and vengeful attitude towards the German workers. The wickedness of their rulers is to be brought home to the Germans by intensified bombing of German towns! He describes it as "poetic justice" that "those who have loosed these horrors upon mankind shall now in their own homes and persons feel the shattering strokes of retributive justice." Hitler and the Nazis have tortured and oppressed the German workers for nine long years, and Churchill describes with relish the additional horrors which he also proposes to subject them to under the guise of "retributive justice." What revolting self-complacency and sadism! The spectacle is rendered even more repulsive when one remembers that it is only a few years since this same Churchill was speaking of Hitler's attractive personality and disarming smile; was praising him as a great leader who had brought the German people back to their rightful place among the nations.

As if all this were not enough, Churchill must needs also treat the plight of the German workers with a kind of revolting levity. "The civil population of Germany have," he said. "an easy way to escape from these severities. All they have to do is to leave the cities where munition work is carried on, abandon their work, and go out into the fields and watch the home fires burning from a distance. In this way, they may find time for meditation and repentance." For Churchill, who supported the Nazis, who was proud to be the first Englishman to wear the fascist blackshirt, to talk to the German workers, the victims of the regime he formerly praised, of "repentance"—the foul

mouthed hypocrisy of the ruling class could find no higher expression than this!

And the French workers, of the Renault works, the "gallant allies" of the Commando raids—were they, too, expected to go out into the fields when their places of work were bombed in daylight during working hours? Does Churchill urge their survivors also to "meditation and repentance"?

To such mockeries he added cynical threats. If the Germans use Gas on the Russian front (and who is to tell which side uses it first?) the R.A.F. "will carry gas warfare on the largest possible scale far and wide against military objectives in Germany." Since when has poison gas destroyed machines and munitions? Poison gas is directed at men and women and children, who will die in agony, or cough their lungs out for the years of shortened life that remain for the survivors. It is clear enough that these are the "military objectives" Churchill has in mind.

This is the man whom the Labour Party, the Liberals, and the Communists support.

AN ANNIVERSARY

IT is just a year since the air-raid on London in which Freedom Bookshop was destroyed by fire, and with it thousands of Freedom Press books and pamphlets. The immediate response to our appeal for funds was a real indication that our readers wanted us to carry on the work we had started in spite of this terrible set back. Freedom Press showed their appreciation of this encouragement by redoubling their efforts, and since then not only has WAR COMMENTARY been appearing regularly twice a month, but a whole string of books and pamphlets have come off the presses bearing the Freedom Press imprint.

But we have actually been too ambitious, in that we have produced more literature than our funds would permit, and at prices which are in many cases far below the actual production costs. We have already indicated that WAR COMMENTARY is produced at a loss, and we are sure readers will readily agree that this is so, when they compare the amount of material contained in their twopenny WAR COMMENTARY with that of other left wing publications of the same price or even at 3d an issue. But on top of that we have produced large editions of such pamphlets as the Russian Myth and the A.B.C. of Anarchism, at uneconomic prices from the point of view of covering costs. In the A.B.C. of Anarchism the paper alone required to produce this 45,000 word volume cost nearly 6d per copy. To this must be added all the setting, machining, folding, stitching, etc. . . and it will then be realised that at 1/- it is impossible to cover the cost. But we are not concerned with making a profit. What we do ask is that our comrades should provide us with the necessary means to keep up a steady production of litera-

After this speech they will need to summon up all their reserves of hypocrisy (but is it possible that they have any reserves left?) to try and justify this war as a progressive war against Fascism, brutality and tyranny. Churchill has made clear what he is fighting for. He speaks not as the "leader of the British people" as the protagonists of class-collaboration like to represent him, but as the leader of the Tory party, the leader of reaction and imperialist oppression. He speaks for the ruling class in Britain competing on battlefields flowing with the blood of the workers, against the fascist ruling class of a rival imperialism. He fights for the maintenance of the British capitalists' right to exploit the riches and markets of the world, to exploit the workers at home and in the colonies and wring from them the wealth they produce. Poison gas and bombing of workers' houses are the fabric of his war. They have no part in the workers' struggle. Our fight for freedom is directed against the rulers who deny it to us, not against the German workers whom they exploit and terrorize.

ture at a price within the reach of all workers. This means helping us financially to the utmost and also by assisting us with the distribution of our literature so that in every town and village throughout the country workers will be aware of the existence of the Freedom Press.

May 10th, 1942 is a grim anniversary, and the only way by which we can make it unimportant in the history of the Freedom Press is by our being able to replace the literature destroyed and all the work it necessitated by more and better books and pamphlets bearing our imprint, and we can only do this, in present society, by having the money with which to buy paper and to pay the printers bills.

THE EDITORS

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INDIA AND THE LEFT

CRITICAL situations in history compel the real nature of political forces to be revealed in action, and the crisis brought about by the Japanese threat to India was no exception. In recent issues of *War Commentary* we have analysed the motives of the British Imperial government, on the one hand, and the Indian Congress leaders on the other, as they were uncovered during the negotiations of the Cripps mission.

Reports now coming through of the Japanese invasion of Burma lend further point to our analysis. It is becoming clear that the British forces had to fight not only against the Japanese but also against the Burmese themselves. Oppressed for generations by the British invaders, the colonial peoples of Burma seized the opportunity which was presented to them when the imperialist hold slackened in the face of the Japanese attack. At the time of the fall of Singapore we noted that the British left a thousand soldiers on guard in the streets to prevent "disturbances" among the civil population while the Japanese took over. Imperialism regards it as more important that the colonial slaves be kept in subjection, *even by a hostile imperialist power*, rather than that they should win freedom by throwing off *all* oppressors. The fight for the liberation of oppressed peoples is revealed as a struggle for the right to exploit colonial populations, in which it is so important to the British imperial trustees that natives be kept in subjection that they are prepared to act as police for hostile imperialists even after control has slipped out of their own hands.

It is said that when the Japanese invaders were approaching Rangoon the civil population rose in revolt against their British masters. The British forces thereupon beat a hurried retreat and the situation was saved for the principle of authority by the Japanese occupation of the town. This incident represents another demonstration of the sanctity of the authoritarian principle in the eyes of the British ruling class such as the policing of Singapore had made clear. But it is also interesting from another point of view. Following the failure of the Cripps mission, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution concerning these happenings in Rangoon and expressed a fear that the same thing might happen in India. We have remarked before that the Congress leaders, in spite of their protestations, have no faith in the Indian masses. They are scared stiff of the one means of defeating the Japanese threat—by the armed revolutionary uprising of the Indian workers and peasants. This abhorrence of revolutionary action is reflected in this resolution regarding Rangoon—they are afraid that the Indian people will rise up and throw off their British gaolers and their satellites in the Congress.

The British authorities suppressed all publication of this resolution in India, and heavily censored all newspapers in which it appeared. They are afraid that the Indian worker will see through the Congress politicians who like the Labour Party and C.P. over here, perform the valuable service for the British Imperialists of keeping the workers quiet, of restraining them from taking the initiative themselves.

Recent events therefore in India have confirmed our analysis with regard to the chief participants in maintaining the status quo. But what of the

political hangers-on of the Left, those who are not in power now, but themselves aspire to hold the reins of government and form the ruling minority (or "Vanguard," as it is called in Marxist socialist phraseology) to direct ("lead") the workers?

The Labour Party, tied hand and foot to the capitalist regime in England, backs the Tory promises of "dominion status" after the war. The events in Malaya and Singapore, coupled with the fact that Churchill, who has so often acted as Imperialist spokesman regarding Indian policy, sent Cripps with his lukewarm proposals to India only at the very last minute when the Japanese were on the border, must have made clear how "sincere" these promises were. But the Labour Party leaders are too well versed in hypocrisy to feel uncomfortable about a fresh declaration of the identity of their interests with those of the capitalist class. Bevin indeed even went so far as to dilate on the duty of the British to "protect" the untouchables in India from the Hindu majority. Just what status or rights the miserable untouchables possess for the British to protect is not clear.

Although the Labour Party claim that they stand for freedom of the colonies, their period of office in 1924 showed them to be more imperialist than the imperialists. It is time that their deluded rank-and-file supporters realized what events in this war have abundantly demonstrated: that the Labour leaders have no interest whatever in freedom or socialism, in the colonies, or anywhere else. The Indian workers, from both past and present experience, can hope for nothing at all from Bevin and Co.

We have seen that the emancipation of the Indian workers must be the work of the Indian workers themselves. And it is certainly clear that neither the British nor the Congress leaders will free the Indians' hands for that task. The Communist Party however proclaim the contrary. After making some superficial criticisms of the Cripps proposals they demand "the full co-operation and the common action of the Indian peoples in the fight against fascism." In the nature of the relationship which must subsist between an Imperialist power and its colonial subjects, however, the idea of "co-operation" is ridiculous enough, even if events in Malaya and Burma had not already shown how it works out in practice. The Communist Party as always, however, see here yet another chance to try to confuse the workers. Hence their attempt to represent this war of rival imperialisms, as a "common fight against Fascism." Historical events, however, are likely to prove more effective in teaching the workers than the Labour Monthly Discussion Groups of Dutt and Pollitt!

The C.P. urge "freedom for India now" through proposals for a "truly" National Government in India which commands the confidence of the people and a Constituent Assembly. "Public opinion must assert itself" so that "negotiations shall be re-opened immediately." Instead of urging the British workers to stand shoulder to shoulder with their Indian comrades by fighting the Imperialist ruling class in this country, the C.P. seeks to dissipate any militant action in mass meetings and conferences organized by the Stalinist controlled India League and its cheer-leaders Pollitt, Sorensen, Gallacher and Krishna Menon. It is the People's Convention tactics all over again.

The I.L.P. as usual backs the horse of the hour, and boosts Cripps as a possible leader out of the Indian deadlock. They too are for "freedom for India" but they make no concrete suggestions about how it is to be brought about, except through "pressure" on the Government. They certainly have no belief in the Indian workers themselves taking positive steps to seize their freedom through revolutionary action. Meanwhile they sit on the fence and are careful not to commit themselves.

The need for revolutionary action by the workers and peasants in India, is clear in the present situation. Events elsewhere in the Far East have shown the futility of any other measures. Yet the political parties over here, committed as they are to the principles of political leadership of the workers by a party—i.e. the party intellectuals and office-holders themselves—are compelled by the logic of their own principles to repudiate the revolutionary direct action of the workers, and offer instead "Constituent assemblies," "really democratic governments" which will "faithfully represent the Indian people," and such like chimeras. Faced with a situation which demands revolutionary action, the political parties are, as always, bankrupt. By their recoiling from direct action they become, in effect, impotent or counter-revolutionary.

The Indian workers must seize the land and the factories; they must free their arms to overthrow the Imperialisms of both the British invader and the Japanese attacker. But the seizing of the means of life is not, in itself, enough. The workers must smash the State machinery of bureaucracy, army, and police, and above all destroy the wage system that is at the bottom of all inequality and class privilege. It is through the State machinery that the British Government and its Indian lackeys now control and oppress the Indian people. It is that State machinery that the Japanese imperialists seek to seize, so that they can exploit the wealth and labour and markets of India for the benefit of their own ruling class. While any vestige of that state machinery, which is the machinery of government, of oppression, remains, such revolutionary gains as the Indian workers and peasants may achieve, can be snatched back from them by any political party ruthless and astute enough to grasp it and so impose their tyranny upon India.

Seize the land and the factories. Utterly destroy the State. Abolish the Wage System: These are the prerequisites of Indian Freedom.

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THROUGH

American View of Singapore

"Though the defeat was military, the 15,000 English civilians of Singapore and Penang in a way had to share the blame. Relaxing and bickering in the level heat of the tropics, they had simply ignored danger. The most fortunate people in the British Empire, they bitterly resented paying a 10% income tax to support that Empire. They tolerated no political or economic frictions or changes in their priceless little preserve. They refused to give guns to the 425,000 Chinese of Singapore until the Japs were on their island. Evacuating 7,000 white women and children by Jan. 31, they had the gall to announce that "lack of passage money" was no hindrance. As late as Feb. 9, they began building public bomb shelters. At that point they urged the people to plant vegetables, preferably such "fast growing" ones as tapioca and sweet potatoes, for a siege. They had closed the native dance palaces of the New World, the Great World and the Happy World, but the tea dances at the Raffles Hotel went on, to the sound of gunfire. The huge naval base, that had cost the British \$400,000,000 and could have harboured all the Allied Navies, had been evacuated Jan 31. The official advice of Governor Sir Shenton Thomas to his fellow whites war: "We are all in the hands of God."

The fall of Singapore was a step in the Axis campaign to cut China and Russia from their allies. This was the great peril, surpassing the possible loss of the Indies, Australia and India. Among the superstitious millions of the East, it was a portentous thing that the little yellow men of Japan had toppled the great bastion of the British overlords, who had ruled so long. The Asiatic peoples had won equality in the only way that has ever counted, by force of arms."

Life 23.4.42

Socialist Emulation

Socialist emulation does not apparently always do the trick in Russia. As in our own backward capitalist country the government is obliged to use compulsion whenever it wants people to work or to direct them to do certain jobs. The **Manchester Guardian** 18.4.42., reported that a new order affecting industrial mobilization in the Soviet Union had been broadcast by the Moscow radio.

"The order, made by the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, provides for (1) raising the number of annual compulsory work days for workers in collective farms, with penalties for default, and (2) mobilising all persons capable of work and setting out the order in which they will be mobilised.

School children and all able-bodied people in Russia who are not engaged in industry, transport, or necessary Government services will be mobilised for farm work under the decree.

The minimum amount of work which has to be done by members of the collective and State farms has been raised. Members of the collective farm system who do not complete the new minimum will be considered to be excluded from the scheme, and they will lose the small plots of land which most of them own."

THE PRESS

“Democracy” in the Army

The *Tribune* (8.4.42) published the following extracts from a book entitled *Customs of the Service—Advice to those Newly Commissioned* which is presented to R.A.F. officers when they get their commission and was published in 1939 with the approval of the Air Council.

“Choose your drink with at least the same care that you would your food. Unless you wish to appear uneducated in these matters never drink more than one sherry or other short drink before a meal, you will spoil your palate. . .”

It glitters with pearls of wisdom slung together by an anonymous author—obviously a Service chief—and its enlightened democratic spirit must prove a source of inspiration to many a young R.A.F. pilot taking his commission. Ponder, if you will, on this shining example:—

“Men like to look up to you as their superior; they object to being led by equals.”

There are concise instructions about behaviour in the mess, a warning not to discuss women during dinner and precise instructions concerning the right and wrong way to travel. With so few trains having first-class compartments these days, the travelling R.A.F. officer must have some pretty anxious moments, because he is told to *‘avoid, if possible, travelling in the same railway compartment as other ranks for the reason given. You are expected to live up to your status as an officer and travel in a first-class carriage. If funds make this impracticable, find a compartment not occupied by your men.’*”

Imminence of Victory

“In a few days plans will be announced, I understand, for a nation-wide expansion of the Army Cadet movement, which provides boys with pre-entry training for the Army and also feeds the Home Guards with promising recruits.

Boys can join at 12, but it is preferable they should stay with organisations like the Boy Scouts until they are 14—then they can have three years with the Army Cadet Force and one year in the Home Guard before being called up for the regular forces.”

Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 21.3.42

Workers are always Wrong

“Said to have written ‘Lazy,’ ‘Bad morning for getting up,’ ‘Burnt the toast and slept over,’ on the chits put in to explain his lateness, Michael Kilroy (24), Bard Street, Sparkhill, Birmingham, was sent to prison at Birmingham for one month for three offences under the Essential Works Order.”

News Chronicle 6.4.42

The Home Secretary refused to reconsider the case of two Scottish girls Jean Addiston and Jean Fotheringham who have been sentenced to 28 days’ hard labour at Coventry for absenteeism from work. This in spite of the fact that the Coventry City Council “passed an amendment that the 28 days’ sentence on the two Jeans was harsh and should be commuted.”

We have still to hear of cases of society women sent to prison for not pulling their weight.

“That is the Law”

“A Crawcrook family of ten, evicted from their homes for overcrowding by a Newcastle County Court order in March, have been living in an Anderson air raid shelter since last Friday when the order took effect.

Mr. and Mrs. Hardy were unable to obtain a bigger house for their daughter, and their case was reported to the Ryton U.D.C., who instructed their landlord, Mr. Jasper Charlton, of Main Street, Crawcrook, that they must leave the house if they did not alleviate the overcrowding.

“For nearly two years, ever since their daughter came to live with them, I have been telling Mr. and Mrs. Hardy that they couldn’t go on living as they were in two rooms,” Mr. Charlton said, “and when the eviction order was made I could do nothing for them but comply with it.

“Under the Housing Act the cottage is to be inhabited only by three people people. That is the law.”

Newcastle Evening Chronicle 21.3.42

The Failure of Slave Labour

It was expected that the war would reduce the number of fires other than those caused by enemy action. In London many buildings are unoccupied, (fires do not occur where humans are absent) and a large portion of the city has been destroyed by air raids. Also, the vast increase in Fire Brigade personnel, equipment and stations aided by tens of thousands of fire-watchers ought to have nipped in the bud any fiery blossoms. Instead the number of fires has remained about the same. Indeed spread over the much fewer buildings, it is actually an increase.

Official figures for London are: March 1937, 978; March 1938, 984; and March 1942, 943.

According to the *News Chronicle* (20.4.42.), insurance companies state “fire watchers through carelessness in dropping matches and cigarette ends start fires.” “We look upon fire-watching as a curse,” said an official of one society. “During the present lull in bombing, fire-watchers are causing more fires than they are putting out.”

The Yankees of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” days knew slave labour to be unprofitable. “You may drive a horse to the water. . .” Mr. Morrison.

Defeat in 1942

The Trade Unions have forgotten their long struggle, lasting almost a hundred years, against the thoroughly bad principle of employers fining workmen for bad timekeeping or bad work. The unions have now voluntarily returned to this principle. One example among many, is in the recently published report of an agreement reached between the A.E.U. and other unions and Imperial Chemical Industries, “That the war addition be increased by 4/- per week making the total weekly war addition 13/-.”

“The joint unions also agreed to the following clause being inserted to govern the payment of war addition in the future. The war addition will not be payed in respect of any worker who absents himself from work for three days or more without reasonable cause.” So, if the worker is absent from work for three days and works four (a seven day week is common in the I.C.I.), he not only loses his wages for the three days absence, but receives a lower wage for the remaining four.

George Woodcock

HIS Catholic Majesty of Spain held empire over his dominions in South America by authority of the Church of Rome. More paradoxically, His Protestant Majesty of England holds titular sway over his dominions in North America by grace of that same unchanging power.

For it can be said, with little exaggeration, that the early history of all Canada, and the entire history of French Canada, is that of its Roman Church, whose Ultramontane column of the faithful has kept on the shores of the St. Lawrence its most loyal province.

Roman priests and religious orders took an active part in the inception of the French settlements. Montreal, the largest city in Canada, was founded by a religious community, and during the seventeenth century the missionaries of the Jesuit, Sulpician and other orders were—it must be said to their credit—the most courageous explorers of the Canadian hinterland. Their many martyrs did not die in vain, for during that century the Church gained in Quebec a predominance it has retained to this day. Laval, first bishop of Québec, and the Company of Jesus established an uncompromising ultramontanism which has characterised the Canadian church ever since, and in the struggle that took place under the French regime between the church and the colonial authorities it was the church which kept the advantage—to such an extent that any governor who attempted to curb the ecclesiastical power found his position so difficult that he either capitulated or returned to France.

The civil administration of the country ran parallel with that of the church. The unit of administration was the ecclesiastical parish, and the priests, as the only body of educated men in the country, became virtually the representatives of government in their districts. Thus they could influence administration in the interests not so much of the French crown as of the indivisible and international Catholic Church. They consolidated this influence by gaining control of education at a very early date. The Jesuit College was founded as far back as 1637 and Laval's Seminary in 1663.

When the British arrived in 1763, the ecclesiastical authorities, true to ultramontanism, did not waste time resisting the new masters. The ultramontanist, like the pre-Stalinist proletarian, has no fatherland, and one government is as good as the next, so long as it can be made to serve the purposes of the Catholic Church. The clergy decided to make peace and to endeavour to develop French Canada as a preserve of the Holy Church in which they would have the advantage of being well established before the invading civil power had reached the country.

The English government saw the value of an arrangement with an organisation which could guarantee—for a consideration—the loyalty of the French population. In the treaty following the annexation of Quebec, the right of religious freedom was granted to the Canadians. This meant in fact a confirmation of the Roman Church in its spiritual monopoly and its share of material power. In 1774 this was confirmed in the Quebec Act, which recognised the right of the French to retain their own religious and legal systems and renewed the grant to the clergy of their traditional dues on the produce of the land.

FRENCH

A Study in

The Quebec Act was passed at an opportune time—just before the rebellion of the American colonies. It is interesting to contrast the foresight of the British Government in this instance with the crass stupidity of their attitude towards the American colonists at the same time. Whatever may have been the cause of their astuteness, it was repaid in the following year, 1775, when the Americans advanced into Canada. At first the Canadian farmers were inclined to sympathy, but their attitude was changed to hostility by the action of the ecclesiastical authorities who realised their power would be diminished in a province of an American republic. Thus Quebec was saved for the British crown—in order that it might grow as a jewel in the papal diadem!

In 1793 the established order was again jeopardised by the arrival of the agents of Revolutionary France. At first the example of the French revolution caused much unrest—particularly among the town population of Montreal and Quebec. But the Church had no desire for a Jacobin and anti-clerical regime. It proceeded to denounce the Satanic emissaries and persuaded the people to retain their loyalty to the English Government. From this date until recently the connection between French Canada and France became tenuous and, on the French Canadian side, tinged with suspicion. In spite of the myth propounded in France, influential circles in French Canada had no sympathy with the irreligious republic, and even feared its contaminating influence to such an extent that the church maintained a close vigilance on all people who had visited France for study or any other purpose.

In 1812 came the war between England and the United States, one of the most fruitless and ridiculous wars of recent history. The American forces again crossed the border, and among the English settlers in Upper Canada (now Ontario) they found some support. Again, however, the Roman church supported the Protestant king against his Protestant enemies, and the American forces were routed by Frenchmen fighting under a British flag.

This was the last open threat to Canada from outside, but in the following years the authorities had to face trouble from discontented forces within. First, in 1837, there was an armed rising to set up an independent Canada, and then, in 1849, a manifesto was issued by the leading citizens of Montreal, demanding amalgamation with the United States. Again the Church acted, to such effect that the revolt of 1837 proved abortive and the manifesto of 1849 awoke no response in the rest of Canada.

In the years from 1850 onwards, as Canada grew into a dominion in which Quebec was only a fraction and the French people the largest of many racial groups, the Church contrived to retain a hold over the individual consciences of its followers and to consolidate its power to such an extent that Quebec became in almost all but name a theocratic province. As education spread, the Church maintained its influence both in the schools and colleges actually financed and operated by the clergy, and in the state

CANADA

Theocracy

schools, in which they give religious instruction. In the civil administration the church kept its position of importance, owing to the retention of the parish as the local unit and the consequent power of the priest in local affairs. The extent to which the provincial government recognises the power of the church in matters secular is shown by the fact that when local government is extended to undeveloped areas it is done by the creation of parishes and the appointment of "coloniser priests" to represent the civil as well as the ecclesiastical power.

The following extract from a Pastoral Letter of the Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec, written in April, 1935, gives an interesting insight into the position of the Church in French Canada:

"By tacit mutual agreement, and reciprocal esteem, an advantageous relationship has been maintained between the Church and the State. In Canada, and especially in our province, the Church has generally been able to develop in an atmosphere of happy liberty, and her sons have been able to benefit thereby. *The civil authorities adopt a respectful attitude towards her, and are not indifferent to her consideration.*"

The interference of the church is not limited to education and administration. Like that of the mediaeval church in Europe, it has extended into every plane of the communal life, and this infringement has been particularly important in the organisation of producers. For example, the farmers' organisation, the Union Catholique des Cultivateurs, which arranges co-operative buying and selling, is entirely administered by the church, and the priests act as its local representatives.

The administration in which the church holds so important a place is, in general, repressive and hostile to any form of radical activity. The standard of political freedom in Canada is nowhere high and has deteriorated since the beginning of the war. (Those interested will find a more detailed account, by George Carpenter, in the *Tribune*, 16th January, 1942) But in Quebec, even before the war, the repression was of the most severe kind—an example being the notorious Padlock Act, by which any premises could be sealed if they were found to contain 'subversive' writings.

Throughout the recent history of Canada the French Canadians, the largest racial group in the country, have acted largely through the lead of the church, as a disruptive element in national unity. The Church has deliberately encouraged hostility towards the so-called "English" Canadians, and the separatist movement which has sprung from this hostility. It has also set its face against any idea of merging into the United States. In too close an identification with either Middle and Western Canada or the United States, the leaders of the Church see a threat to their ascendancy in Quebec.

They are, however, astute enough to realise that an independent Quebec cannot survive, economically or

politically, in isolation. It must acquire some protector, strong enough to prevent American absorption, but too distant to be in itself an immediate danger. Britain was the obvious candidate, and, while there was much talk in Quebec about leaving the Dominion, the Church and most of the separatist leaders were at pains to emphasise their loyalty to the British Empire. Thus, by acting as a dissident element in the Dominion and seeking British friendship, the French Canadians became virtually Westminster's Fifth Column in Canada.

But they have done this only insofar as it has suited them. In spite of their professed loyalty to the Wettins, few French Canadians volunteered during the 1914-18 war, and when compulsion was introduced thousands of young men went on the run in the forests and the Laurentian mountains and were encouraged and assisted by the population. The connection with England has never been one of sentiment or loyalty, but of convenience merely, because England has happened throughout this time to be the protector who would allow the Roman Church its greatest authority. But recent events have changed many allegiances, and the rise in France of a regime in which the church is once more treated with respect has revived the ties of sentiment which loosened during the years of French secularism. Quebec is sympathetic towards Vichy, and bids fair to become, instead of Britain's fifth column, that of Continental reaction in the Empire. The imperialists of Ottawa, Washington and Westminster must all have been, like Marx on a famous occasion, "extremely displeased" at the latest gesture of this minority of nearly 40%, which on the national referendum voted three to one against the government's request for authority to impose conscription.

The Law gets you all ways!

OUR Comrade C. Santini was summoned on January 1st of this year for refusal to attend a medical examination. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Under the new scheme however he appealed, after two months in gaol, and his case was re-heard by the Appellate Tribunal at Ebury House. The Appeal Tribunal upheld his claim to exemption from military service and directed that his name be placed on the Register of Conscientious Objectors, on condition that he undertook agricultural work. He was released from prison in March.

But while our comrade was in gaol, he was sent a summons for refusal to register for Fire-Watching. This summons was not delivered of course. But three weeks after his release a fresh summons was served on him on April 10th. The magistrate sentenced him at first to six months imprisonment. When it was pointed out to him that this was twice the maximum for the offence, he reduced the sentence to three months (i.e. the maximum) but added a £20 fine. Our comrade, of course, refused to pay this, so the magistrate gave him two months instead—making a total of 5 months in all. So he was almost able to restore his original sentence of 6 months!!

Our Comrade's case shows not only that the law is framed in such a way that the C.O. who escapes one pitfall is driven into another; but also that the objector, almost regardless of the legal limitations is at the mercy of the magistrate—the law gets you all ways!

Anarchism and War

IN the opposite page we publish the first of a series of articles by Marcus Graham on "the Issues of the Present War." These articles were written to rebut the charges made by Rudolph Rocker that the Anarchist theory regarding war has no application to the present struggle. It is with great regret that we have to record that so old and respected a militant in the Anarchist movement should have taken up a position of support for capitalist war. It is not, unfortunately, the first time that war has split the Anarchist movement. But we are proud to be able to declare that in this country, at least, the great majority of the Anarchist militants have from the first taken up a stand of definite opposition to this and all other wars waged by governments. And we can state that the attitude taken by Rocker is shared only by a minority in the Anarchist movement both here and elsewhere.

In the last war the anti-war marxists who followed Lenin made a bitter denunciation of those few anarchists who supported the Allies. But we do not admit the right of Socialists, least of all Marxists, to criticise the Anarchists in this regard. Anarchism has always taught that wars are fought between capitalist ruling groups for states in which the workers have no interest. We have always urged the workers to refuse to slaughter their class-brothers to serve the ends of the ruling class. It is for us to attack our fellow anarchists when they depart from this teaching.

But the socialists follow Marx. Believing that "progress" is possible, nay, "inevitable," within capitalist society, they teach that wars between capitalist states can be "progressive" or "reactionary" according to the nature of the governmental regimes which wage the war. For them it is a theoretical issue, and the workers' blood shed for their rulers' interests is only secondary. Thus in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, believing that the highly centralized state of Bismarck was "progressive" compared with the "reactionary" regime of Napoleon III, Marx,

like the "Times" supported Germany. The logic of the Socialist position compelled him to do so. But the absurdity of his position—paralleled by the somersaults of the Communist Party in the present war—was made manifest when Bismarck annexed Alsace and Lorraine. His formerly "progressive" war then became, according to Marx, "reactionary." The Anarchists of that time looking at the question from the workers' point of view, saw no difference between the regime of Louis Napoleon and that of Bismarck. Just as we do now, they urged both the French and German workers to fight a revolutionary struggle to overthrow their rulers and turn the nationalist war of capitalist groups into an international class-war against all tyranny and for the social revolution.

It is not for Marxists who make fine distinctions between respective tyrannies, and lead their supporters into the "choice of the lesser evil," to reproach those anarchists who desert their anarchism, and support this or that ruling group. But we would emphasize that we do repudiate such defections, and remain true to the anti-militarist principles of Anarchism. For us, in peace or war, the first duty of the workers remains to fight unremittingly and without stint the class struggle against the ruling class in their "own" country, and to join with their comrades in other lands to bring about the social revolution.

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THE ISSUES in the PRESENT WAR

The present article is one of a series from which we hope to publish a selection by Marcus Graham, the editor of the Los Angeles anarchist paper "Man." Rudolph Rocker's support for the "democracies" in this war has caused a great deal of discussion in America, and we are pleased to be able to publish so able a criticism to his standpoint, by a militant well known to American comrades. Further articles in the series will follow in subsequent issues of "War Commentary."

"That the present war...cannot be measured with the standards of past military conflicts, is beginning to be realised even by those who believe, that historical facts can be denied through aged theories."—
Rudolph Rocker

SO Rocker begins his dictum article "The Order of the Hour." First, he declares the attitude of the anarchist "theories" as "aged," that is, no longer valid. Second, he charges some in our movement with using "aged theories" in order to "deny historical facts," and winds up this accusation with the assertion that even all such have also "realised" this.

In so far as Rocker attempts to include everyone in the anarchist movement as holding now the same position as he does, he does not back this up by a single proof.

In Great Britain the anarchist movement publishes the periodical *War Commentary*, now in its third year. It is unalterably opposed to the present war upon the very grounds of these "aged theories" that Rocker has discarded. In the United States there was the publication *Man!* which was forced to suspend publication in May, 1940—because it was uncompromisingly opposed to the attempt of the "democratic" Government to drag that country into the present war. In the same country there are also the organs of the Italian and Spanish speaking anarchists who have remained true to their principles in their attitude to the present war. In Argentine we have the Spanish and Jewish organs, of our movement doing likewise. Anarchist organs, in whatever language they appear, in all those countries where such exist have also remained true to their ideas.

There are few, very few, exceptions. There is the organ of the Jewish speaking anarchists in the United States on whose pages Rocker's article originally appeared. It takes the same position as Rocker. And there is also G. Maximov, the editor of the Russian anarchist language organ in the U.S., who has taken a similar position on the pages of the same publication in which Rocker wrote.

Rocker's sweeping statement, quoted above, is then, to say the least, a misstatement of the factual situation.

We shall now proceed to examine the causes for the present war, in order to see whether the anarchist approach towards past wars is also applicable to the present one. And in order to back up our affirmation that this position has remained as sound as it ever was, we shall not make use of any statements or studies that emanate from the press of our movement or from the books of our theoreticians. Instead, we shall make use of the most recent available expressions by all such who are espousing the cause of the democracies in the present war.

Economics in this War

What are the principle causes that brought about the present war? The rich man's magazine,

Fortune, published in the U.S., answers this question in its issue of January, 1942. It offers an article by a prominent attorney and a lengthy study of its own, both dealing with the background causes of the present war. We quote, first, from the article of attorney John Foster Dulles:

"The outbreak of the second world war was preceded by trade strangulation without precedent in the time of peace. No one can doubt that this was a contributing cause of the war. It is demonstrable that trade controls relate directly to peace. . . There is in Japan a population of 75 millions occupying an area smaller than California. Japan is almost barren of natural

Marcus Graham

resources. . . it must have large exports. Otherwise they cannot pay for their needed imports. Without such means of payment Japan is in effect blockaded."

Now we quote from the editorial *Europe*:

"Germany's economic problem...was to secure through war the European production she could not get through free trade. . . If she is left in unchallenged possession of the Continent. . . she will make all of it a German colonial empire, a supplier of foodstuffs and raw materials and a consumer of German manufactures. . . The ultimate objective of the New Order. . . is the capture of industrial machinery and services of Europe."

And a United States Senator, Edwin C. Johnson, speaking before a convention of the International Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers at Denver, Col. on July 7, 1941 said, in part:

"The challenge which the despised Nazis have forced upon us, luckily largely due to the fortunes of geography, is not military—it is industrial. . . The extraordinary efficiency of the Nazis has staggered the imagination of the world. . . Those who can have no faith that we, as firemen, can become equally efficient are demanding that our competitors be crushed now with our military might. . . Isn't it just a little illogical to think that we can crush them with military might, but cannot compete with them in commerce?"

Balance of Power in the Present War

Imperialism, the reign and exploitation of countries outside of a given country's domain, plays perhaps the most important role in the manifold causes of the present war. How closely involved the democratic and fascist countries alike are in playing this imperialist game is made quite clear in an article that appeared in the daily newspaper *The Christian Science Monitor* of December 11, 1941. The writer of it, Argus, heads the article with this significant title: *Japan Shakes World Power; Policy of Britain*

and the United States at Stake. We quote from it, in part:

"This policy, though it has had different names at different times, has always been some form of balance of power. . . Britain has not always tried for the same balance. When Russia, by the treaty of San Stefano in 1878, threatened to increase its hold on the Balkans bringing it close to Constantinople, Britain joined Germany in blocking the move. When Germany began warring over the Berlin to Bagdad Railway in 1914, Britain joined with Russia to block the move. Despite reshufflings, however, the principle of the balance remained. . . Ever since Lord Salisbury in 1902 dignified the oriental island kingdom with a treaty virtually guaranteeing it a free hand in the Far East, British imperialists have looked upon the Japanese not only to safeguard their Far Eastern possessions, but more especially to preserve the general balance by serving as a check on Russia who, whether friendly or otherwise, whether Czarist or Stalinist, was so huge and so eager for a warm port around the East Mediterranean. . . Today Russia is the ally: Japan is the enemy, with Tokio's policy expanding far beyond its early role of obliging a zealous collaborator. . . If Japan were to develop ambitions, however, they were not likely to be held in check either by the British or by the French, who also needed Japan's co-operation for maintaining the security of their empire in Indo-China. . . The British treaty. . . virtually guaranteed Japan freedom from British interference in any adventure against China or Russia. . . so Japan, with Britain's blessing walked into China and out of the League (of Nations). . . But Japan intimated that it considered Britain's star in the Pacific to be on the decline, and in 1936 signed the anti-Comintern Pact with Hitler, soon setting out upon the full invasion of China. . . As recently as July, 1940, the present Churchill Government made a further attempt at appeasement by closing the Burma Road to Chinese supplies. . . It was this process that first opened the way for an aggressive policy, not only in Japan, but also Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In each case the needs of balancing up have caused imperialists to overlook initial lawless moves that have led to the appalling conditions that now face the world."

No worse and more terse indictment could be brought forward against the so-called "democratic" powers than is made in the above quotation. If the interests of the imperialists of the United States appear to have been left untouched by Argus, we shall avail ourselves of other sources in order to complete the picture of the "democracies."

United States' Role in Imperialism

In an article headed: "Japan's Dilemma," appearing in *The Yale Review*, Winter Issue for 1942, Prof. Nathaniel Peffer writes, in part:

"The first principle of the so-called 'new order' in East Asia is regional self-sufficiency. The projected design is that of an autarchy in which all economic activity would be rationalised with the object of military power. . . China's place in that design would be that of a reservoir of raw materials. And since China would not be industrially developed the prospect of a Chinese market for American and other Western countries would fade."

How the U.S., as a power, was gradually drawn into the present imperialist war as a result of its capitalistic interests aiming to retain old markets

and the acquiring of new and as yet undeveloped ones, is made only too clear by Upton Close in "America's Role in the Pacific," appearing in the *American Mercury* of September, 1941. He writes, in part:

"We Americans—though anti-imperialists in temper and intention as we block the empire-building of Hitler and Hirohito—are having an empire dumped in our laps. It is an empire larger, richer in potentialities, than all the realms bounded in "Mein Kampf." The Empire of the Pacific. . . We are saving the Pacific basin from the cruder sort of empire-building by others, and in doing it are setting up an American protectorate. Americans are still largely unconscious of this, but the Japanese are not. . . Our expansion is not theoretical and not temporary. We are building permanent works from Bering Strait to the South Sea, we are lending money—in the old days it would have been called subsidising—to imperial dependencies. . . It does not follow that Britain is through in the Pacific. . . Protectorate is the first step of empire. We rather than Germany or Japan or Russia or England seem likely to emerge from this war with the making of an empire."

One of the leading U.S. army men in the last world war, General Hugh S. Johnson, penned these prophetic words in his syndicated column for Nov. 11, 1941:

"We don't want war. The Japanese people don't want war. It is hard to say what verdict history will write of our getting into war. . . but if the writing of past history is any guide, it won't be very flattering. It will probably be that we did it to destroy a rival naval power that we felt might some day menace us, and to preserve the British Empire."

If the statements of Upton Close and those of Hugh S. Johnson do not stress the economic issue of markets as does Nathaniel Peffer, it does not follow that this is not one of the main causes for the present war. For, imperialism is based upon the exploitation of markets by capitalist interests. The Governments serve but as the armed force, constituting the imperialist set-up by and through which the capitalist system achieves—through wars, economic as well as physical, its designs and aims.

For a much clearer picture of the U.S. role in the present war, as well as in revealing the economic issue of its imperialist game in behalf of the capitalist interests, we shall quote from a trenchant study "*Economic Defense*" of Latin America by Percy W. Bidwell, Director of Studies of the Council of Foreign Relations. It was published in May, 1941, by the Peace Foundation of Boston, Mass. He writes, in part:

"Public opinion in the U.S. was not greatly concerned about the inroads of the Nazis in the economic and political life of South-Eastern Europe. Our trade interests in that area were small. . . imports from that area. . . less than 2% . . . exports. . . were 1%. . . But Latin America was a horse of another colour. Popularly, as well as officially, the Monroe Doctrine had been interpreted to mean that we had special interests in that area. We regularly sold between 15 and 20% of our exports to Latin America purchasers. . . The requirement that purchases should be matched by purchases from Germany diverted

(continued on page 11)

Syndicalism v. Trade Unionism

T.U. SQUABBLE FOR PRIVILEGE

TWO pamphlets have appeared recently among passenger transport workers. One entitled "The Price of Privilege," and the other a reply to it. These pamphlets concern a High Court action taken by Driver Moscrop against his employers, the London Passenger Transport Board, under the Trades' Disputes Act 1927. The sponsors of the action on Moscrop's behalf, the National Passenger Workers' Union, sought to establish their right to a privilege regarding certain conditions when a member of their organization appeared before a Disciplinary Board. One Trade Union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, has been a party to this disciplinary machinery for some time and has obtained certain privileges. The other, arriving on the scene much later, felt no doubt that they also should have a basinful.

(continued from page 10)

buying from American suppliers† . . . In competing with these trading methods the U.S. exporters were greatly handicapped. . . We had no vast rearmament programme like Germany's. Unemployment held down our consumption of tropical foodstuffs. . . They (Latin America) furnish a market for 500-600 million of American products . . . Our investors have lent freely to the republics, and our business men have large commitments in branch factories, in mines and oil wells, and in public utilities."

What all the evidence we have presented makes quite clear beyond the shadow of any doubt is, that: *exploitation of markets by the industrialists of the so-called "democracies," as well as those of the fascist and nazi countries, has been the central cause for the bringing about of the present war,—just as it was the cause that brought on the last world war.* It is then the industrialist class, known as the capitalist class, that alone derives benefit from all such wars, whereas the masses are the sole losers.

There is but one conclusion to be drawn from the evidence we have brought forward, and this is: that the present war can only be measured by the same standards that the anarchist movement has done this in the past. A truth—even though *aged*—doesn't by virtue of such a fact make it an untruth.

It is only when one changes front as to one's beliefs, and lacks the forthrightness to admit this, that one has to resort to hiding such a change by assuming a contemptuous attitude towards, and distortion of, one's former principles. And this is what we believe Rudolph Rocker has proved himself guilty of by his article "The Order of the Hour."

So far we have but dealt with one of the chief issues that he has raised. With other, equally important issues, that call for clarification in more than one way, with these we shall deal in subsequent articles.

† This is the so-called "barter-trade" that Nazi Germany had introduced in her market dealings throughout the world, and which in turn, made the "gold standard" valueless. It is also this "barter trade" method that was one of the main factors in the declaration of war upon Germany by the "democratic" powers of Great Britain and France.—M.G.

The practice at these Disciplinary Boards is for the disobedient one to have his hand held by a union official. In other words, told when to say yes or no, and when to crawl on his belly before the High Priest. The action to establish this "privilege" as a legal "right" for the N.P.W.U. members has cost much money, much time, and much effort in words.

Now to fight to establish any part of the "regulation of relations between workmen and employers" is to fight for the perpetuation of the root cause of all problems facing passenger workers—or any other workers—today. We will quote from the pamphlet "The Price of Privilege":

"The 'mighty' Transport and General Workers' Union stands revealed—as we have been saying for four years it was—as the instrument of the very people it is supposed to be fighting. It can represent Busmen so long as the London Passenger Transport Board is agreeable; so long as it does nothing to offend that mighty monopoly. But if the Transport and General Workers' Union shows signs of fighting the Board—and there are no signs of it at the moment—the moment it really starts to do the job it should do, etc., etc."

For "the job it should do," let us quote from the Constitution of the T. & G. W. U. On page 6, Rule 2 (1) the principal object of its formation is set out—"The regulation of the relations between workmen and employers."

The simple facts are that between employer and employee there can be no 'regulation' of relationship. Between the working class and the capitalist class there exists a *class struggle for existence* or in other words, a struggle for control of the means of existence. No Trades Union can bridge that struggle by organising to 'regulate.' No glib tongued Trades Union Leaders can gloss over the fact that the life and death struggle can only be ended by the complete subjugation of the working class or the abolition of the capitalist class. We witness today in Germany and in Europe generally, attempts to completely subjugate the working class, and active assistance in this direction has been rendered by Trades Union Leadership.

Any battle, any strike for the purpose of establishing agreed relations between those who own and control the means of life, on the one hand, and the non-owning working-class on the other hand, are useless, since only hostile interests can exist between master and slave. You alone can alter your own condition. The working class fashion every conceivable commodity and like fools turn them over to their masters.

There are three factors necessary to the production of wealth:

- The land containing the raw materials;
- The Tools, which you yourselves fashion;
- The Labour, which you yourselves wield.

Production without any of these three factors is impossible. But the Land and the Productive Machinery is owned and controlled by the ruling class.

Therein lies your slavery for they own and control the means whereby you live.

It is this division of society into classes with opposing interests, a class that owns and does not pro-

duce, and a class that produces but does not own, and the consequent production of goods and services for sale with a view to profit, which gives rise to the social evils of war, unemployment, intensification of working conditions, etc.,

Employer and Employee. Controller and Controlled. Master and Slave.

That is the class basis of society, and that you must organise to alter.

Therefore we suggest that, recognizing the grim nature of the passenger workers struggle (and that of all workers for that matter) the weapon to be forged by the workers for the carrying on of the class struggle should be on the basis of the following resolution presented at a Biennial Conference of passenger workers held in July of last year.

This conference recognises the class basis of society and the consequent necessity for active participation in the class-struggle.

The conference declares that the complete economic emancipation of the working-class is realisable only by the expropriation of the capitalist or owner class; and that, therefore, whilst continuing the day-to-day struggle for easement of working conditions, such struggle shall no longer be considered as an end in itself, but as a preparatory manifestation of the intention of the workers to assume complete control of all productive, distributive, and administrative components of their industry. It further declares that such control shall be wielded to the benefit of society as a whole, and that no absolute power shall be delegated to those serving in an administrative capacity.

It declares that such control cannot be realised through the medium of political action, and states its intention of wielding Direct Action, i.e., Conscious Organisation for Control of ALL Living Potentialities.

The conference further declares itself the active enemy of each and every attempt at the perpetuation of the capitalist exploitative system, and recommends that the strike weapon in its many forms shall be used, not only as a means of obtaining "concessions," but as being demonstrative of working-class power against particular inevitable manifestations of class society such as war, unemployment, etc.

To the end that the working class shall become the instrument of its own emancipation the conference recommends that the existing organisation shall become Anarcho-Syndicalist in its totality, and that therefore its present Rules, Constitution and Schedule shall be meticulously examined and amended to conform with the principles contained in this declaration.

The conference hereby expresses its solidarity with the workers all over the world and pledges itself to fight unceasingly for their liberation from the yoke of "Nationalism" and the removal of national barriers to working-class co-ordination of effort.

It is on direct struggle along anarcho-syndicalist lines that the workers must rely. It is useless to fritter away their strength on legal action through union officials. Let the workers rely on their own strength and their own methods, not delegate the responsibility to others who try to use capitalist institutions (law, etc) to achieve workers' ends.

FRANK SODEN

British Stakhanovites

World News and Views (12.4.42) proudly reported the following cases which conclusively show that the British workers are on the way to becoming like the Russian workers the "willing slaves" of the ruling class.

"A production Committee was recently set up in an East Midlands shell-filling factory. The stewards followed its establishment with a rousing call for maximum output to beat Hitler in 1942 and themselves set the pace. The workers (two-thirds of whom are women and girls) went to it with a will. The result was that in six weeks output was trebled. The figures are official and there is no catch in it. *We have heard for some time about Soviet 200 and 300 percenters. Now we have our own.*"

Have the zealous stewards found out who got the profit caused by trebling the output?

"Bishopsgate L.N.E.R. goods porters recently tackled, with outstanding success, a congestion which followed the introduction of a new rota system. First, they cleared all foodstuffs. Then, on the day after a Ministry of War Transport inquiry started, men on "tonnage" work (a form of piece work) shifted 923 tons of goods—a record. This was despite the disadvantage of the new rota which made the work more difficult, and the fact that they received *not one half-penny more than if they had sat around doing nothing all day.*"

We hope that when next year railway companies announce a further increase in dividends they will not forget to thank Bishopsgate goods porters.

"Men employed at the Amalgamated No. 2 Colliery of the Amalgamated Anthracite Company (where the silicose rate is high), had in some cases tended to leave work before the end of the shift. Particularly was this the case on Saturday when the number leaving early often reached a high level. The practice, however, was a source of friction between the workers and management and had an obviously bad effect on output. The matter was discussed by the Workers' Pit Committee who proposed imposing a fine of 2s. 6d. for each offence. The fine would go to the workers' sick fund. The proposal when placed before the men was accepted in principle, but with an amendment. The workers themselves decided to double the fine! This self-imposed discipline is reported to be bringing good results."

This moving story would be still more moving if it was followed by an account of Directors of Mines and Mine owners arriving to work on time or indeed going to work at all.

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PETER KROPOTKIN

His Federalist Ideas

This is the second part of Camillo Berneri's article on Kropotkin's Federalism, of which the first appeared in the May issue of "War Commentary." The concluding section will appear in the next issue (June).

IN trying to draw examples from mediaeval society, Kropotkin fell into various errors of interpretation, due more than anything else to the fact that the texts that he consulted (such as the writings of Sismondi) were not so advanced as the historical studies of to-day. There is no need to think however, like certain superficial people, that Kropotkin envisaged the epoch of the communes as a kind of golden age. "It will be said, no doubt, that I forget the conflicts and the internal struggles with which the history of the communes is filled; the embittered battles against the nobles, the insurrections of the "young arts" against the "old arts," the bloodshed and the reprisals which always occurred during those struggles. . . No, I forget nothing. But, like Leo and Botta—the two historians of Southern Italy—like Sismondi, Ferrari, Gino Capponi and so many others, I hold that these struggles were in themselves the proof of the freedom of life in the free cities." (see "Conquest of Bread") It was these intestine struggles according to Kropotkin, that permitted of the intervention of the king and the tendency of the Communes to enclose themselves within their walls. ("Paroles d'un Revolté")

Another historical field explored by Kropotkin was the French Revolution. He was opposed to the bourgeoisie of 1789 whose "ideal was to abolish all the local powers which at that time constituted so many autonomous units in the State. They meant to concentrate all governmental power in the hands of a central executive authority, strictly controlled by Parliament, but also strictly obeyed in the State, and combining every department—taxes, law courts, police, army, schools, civic control, general direction of commerce and industry—everything." ("The Great French Revolution") He reproached the Girondins for the attempt to dissolve the communes and demonstrated that their federalism was merely an opposite slogan, and that in their actions they showed themselves to be as much in favour of centralization as the Montagnards.

According to Kropotkin the communes were the soul of the French Revolution and he gave extensive illustrations of the communalist movement, seeking to show that one of the prime causes of the decadence of the cities was the abolition of the plenary assemblies of citizens which held control of Justice and the Administration.

The epoch of the Communes and of the French Revolution were for Kropotkin, as for Salvemini, the two historical fields in which he found the confirmation of his own federalist ideas and the elements of the development of his libertarian conception of life and politics. But there always remained alive in him the record of his observations on the Russian *mir* and of the free associations among primitive peoples, and these recollections confirmed in him his federalism, and sometimes makes him err into a populist naïveté as in the *Conquest of Bread*.

When he studied the various socialist theories, Kropotkin adopted a negative attitude towards the Saint-Simonians and the so-called Utopians, in particular Cabet, because they founded their systems on an administrative hierarchy; but he showed on the contrary great enthusiasm for the communalist theories of Fourier (see "Modern Science and Anarchism"). He opposed State collectivization because although it decidedly modified the capitalist regime "it does not abolish the wage system," because "the State, that is to say the representative government, national or communal, puts itself in the place of the boss," so that its representatives and bureaucrats absorb, and render necessary, the surplus value of production. (See "Conquest of Bread" and "Modern Science and Anarchism") Also true of the socialist State is the following remark: "How much work do we yield to the State? No economist has ever tried to work out the number of work-days that the worker in field or factory gives every year to this Babylonian idol. It is in vain that one searches through books of political economy in order to arrive at an approximate estimate of what man, the producer of all wealth, gives of his labour to the State.

A simple estimate based on the State budget, of a nation, of the provinces and communes (which contribute to the expenses of the State) would have no significance because one would have to work out not what goes every year into the Treasury coffers, but what every shilling paid to the Treasury represents in real value by the taxpayer. All we can say is that the amount of work given every year by the producer to the State must be enormous. It must reach, and for certain classes exceed, the three days work a week that the serf used to give his lord." ("Modern Science and Anarchism") Even the socialist State would try to increase its exactions because "every party in power is obliged to create new jobs for its supporters" and it not only would burden the economic life of the country with administrative expenses, but also set up an oligarchy of incompetents. "What is needed, on the contrary, is the *collective spirit of the masses acting on concrete affairs*."

The *collective spirit*, is a generic term which in the *Conquest of Bread* became "the people," "the commune," "society" etc., which administers justice, organizes everything, and resolves the most complex problems. It is a kind of divinity which Saverio Merlino described with just irony as playing the part of the chorus in Greek tragedy, and which the most profound anarchist theoreticians are far from adoring. But if Kropotkin's federalism lacks precision and puts excessive faith in the political capacities of the people, it is nevertheless remarkable for its breadth of view. No federation can be consistent if it is not integral. And it can only be such if it is socialist and revolutionary.

The integral nature of Kropotkin's federalist ideas is proved by many passages in his writings. The following declarations are the most explicit ones. "Federation and Autonomy are not enough. They are only words which cover the authority of the centralized state." "To-day, the State has succeeded in controlling every aspect of our lives. From the cradle to the grave it holds us in its grip. Sometimes under the guise of the centralized state, sometimes as a provincial or cantonal government, sometimes as a State-Commune, it follows our every step, appears at the street corner, it holds us and torments us." The *free commune* is, according to Kropotkin, the "political form which the social revolution should take." He exalts the Paris Commune because its communal independence was a means, and the social revolution the aim. *The Commune* of the twentieth century "will not only be *communalist*, but *communist*; revolutionary in politics, it will also be so in the field of production and exchange. Either the Commune will be absolutely "free to give itself the institutions it desires and to make all the reforms and revolutions it finds necessary," or else "it will remain merely a branch of the state, hampered in all its actions, always on the verge of coming into conflict with the state, and certain to be defeated in its struggle with it." For Kropotkin, then, the free communes were the necessary channels through which the revolution could reach its maximum development.

His federalism aspires to "the complete independence of the Communes, the Federation of free communes and the social revolution in the communes, that is to say the formation of associated productive groups in place of the state organization."

Kropotkin said to the peasants: "At one time, the land belonged to the Communes, composed of those who themselves cultivated the land, with their own hands," but thanks to the fraud, molestation, and violence, the communal lands have become private property. "The peasants must therefore organize themselves in communes and take back this land in order to put it at the disposal of those who are willing to work it." And again, "Do you need a road? Then the inhabitants of the neighbouring communes will reach an agreement between themselves and will make one better than the Minister of Public Works. Do you need a railway? The Communes concerned in a whole region will make one better than the contractors who pile up millions building bad railways. You will need schools? You can make them yourselves as well as these Paris gentlemen and make them better than they. The State has nothing to do with all this; schools, roads, canals could be built better by yourselves and at less expense." These passages from *Paroles d'un Revolté* make it clear that in those places in the *Conquest of Bread*, where he says that the Commune will distribute goods, ration wood, regulate the pasture land, divide the land, etc., he does not mean the Commune as a "branch of the State," but the free association of the members concerned, which may be either a co-operative, or a corporate body, or simply a provisional union of several people united by a common need.

Kropotkin, although he realizes the seriousness of them, is not too much concerned with the dangers inherent in the autonomy of small groups. There is a characteristic passage on the subject: "Even in our time parochial feelings may give rise to much jealousy between two neighbouring communes, pre-

vent their direct alliance, and even give rise to fratricidal struggles. But even if these jealousies can effectively prevent direct federation between two neighbouring communes, it is by means of the great centres that this federation will stabilize itself. To-day, two very small neighbouring boroughs have nothing which unites them directly; the few relations they have between themselves will serve more likely to cause conflict than to draw closer the bonds of solidarity. But both of them have already a common centre with which they are in constant touch, and without which they could not exist; in spite of all parochial jealousies they will be constrained towards union by means of the great city, where they provision themselves, and whither they bring their products; each of them must take part in the same federation in order to maintain their own relations with this centre of co-ordination, and unite themselves within it."

Here again we have a simplification of the federalist problem. But, in order to judge Kropotkin fairly one must take account not only of what he has written but also of what he has been unable to write. Some hasty statements, some lacunae, some oversimplification of complex problems are not due only to his habit of mind, but also to the material impossibility of developing his point of view. Kropotkin almost always wrote for newspapers intended to be read by workers. Being profoundly democratic he always voluntarily renounced the mantle of the doctrinaire in order to roll up his shirt sleeves. Malatesta, who was also an original theoretician and a cultivated man, did the same. Even his pamphlets do not represent the whole expression of his ideas, a complete exposition of his researches. He himself explains the reason in his *Memoirs*: "I had to elaborate a completely new style for these pamphlets. I confess that I often regarded with envy those writers who had as many pages as they liked at their disposal for the development of their ideas, and those who could use Talleyrand's excuse, 'I had no time to be brief.' When I had to condense the work of several months, for example, on the origin of law, for a penny pamphlet, I needed quite a lot of time for abbreviation."

Kropotkin met with those material difficulties only towards 1884; afterwards for almost thirty years he was able to write considerable books. But in this second period he was more a theoretician than an agitator, and his thoughts were more occupied with historical researches and scientific studies, so that *Les Paroles d'un Revolté* remains his best anarchist work for freshness of expression and ideological coherence.

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PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

FOLLOWING Cardiff East, which demonstrated the apathy of the public towards the Government even if it did not result in a Government defeat, there came two bye-elections at Rugby and Wallasey, which to the great surprise of the Cabinet registered definite defeats for the Government, and set an indicator as to the way the political machine was regarded. Independents were returned, in spite of the all out support given to the National candidate by the four main political parties. As a result, a spate of Independent candidates are rushing for each fresh bye-election, splitting each others votes by doing so. As a result (or perhaps this is merely a remarkable coincidence, as we cannot imagine the great Mr. Churchill, who regards with equanimity the fulsome tributes his lickspittles in and out of Parliament pay him, would be so petty) the Prime Minister rushes to denounce with bell, book, candle and the Churchill prestige, the candidate in the following election—Capt. Acworth—as a defeatist and a pro-Japanese appeaser. Sir Walter Womersley declared himself at Putney indignant that Capt. Acworth should deny the words of the great Churchill—"it is an extraordinary thing that a candidate should venture to say that the Prime Minister, the greatest man this country has produced, is not telling the truth etc." (Apparently Independent candidates, like the French government, are not expected to retaliate! Will the American Ambassador intervene in the next bye-election?)

LABOUR PARTY CUTS ITS OWN THROAT

The major political parties are combining to send down speakers to support the candidate (usually a Conservative, since a preponderance of Tories were returned in the 1931-1935 elections, and the seats are now filled by a member of the same party as the outgoing candidate). Consequently, the Labour Party, which has had a chance to defeat the Conservatives in any representative election since Munich, is tied to the Carlton Club machine. In order to observe the election truce faithfully, the Labour Party is obliged to expel its vigorous parties which support, or lend indirect aid to an independent candidate; it is not only losing its opportunities to win seats but is destroying itself into the bargain. The decay of the Labour Party has been noted in detail by the Shinwell—Bevan group of M.P.s whose aims would be to re-assert the Labour Party as an independent force of the Conservatives. The Labour voters unquestionably prefer the vague "independent progressives" and what not to the Tories, especially when they themselves are not members of the Labour Party, and Mr. Attlee's drives to destroy the independent candidate movement are likely to react more unfavourably against the Labour Party than against its opponents.

APATHY ABOUT POLITICS

From this observation of the political scene we gather the following conclusions about the future of British politics:

First, that dissatisfaction with the Government is likely to produce all sorts of heterogeneous elements into the Commons, with varying "independent" programmes (and no programmes). So far from this being what the *Daily Express* calls "choosing the best men irrespective of party" it simply means

taking any political flotsam and jetsam seeking the quick way to a career. Mr. W. J. Brown, victor of Rugby, is an instance of the unstable politician who goes from cause to cause, as and when its popularity seems assured for the time being—hence his unpopularity with Transport House, whose corns he has trodden on during his trade union career. Mr. Brown is typical of many politicians who have fallen foul of Transport House in representing the professional politician class against the union bureaucracy—the class includes Cripps and Mosley, the former having reinstated himself!

HOW TO "WIN" A SAFE SEAT

Secondly, that since the Government win the majority of bye-elections, especially the safer seats, the usual yes-men and "somebody's sons" will find their way into the Commons. Mr. Churchill's son, Randolph, tried at many elections to win his way into the august body his family had for so long decorated; apparently we had to go to war in order to get a political truce for Randolph to get in on an unopposed seat.

Thirdly, that the Labour Party is in the process of destroying itself. Its leaders, secure in office at the moment, cannot see that they are digging a pit under their own feet. Whereas, before the last war, the Labour Party struggled to free themselves from the Liberal Party, succeeding only when the Liberal Party was destroyed by the war, they are now tied even more firmly to the Conservative Party, and both will be destroyed by this war. Conservatism is doomed; the Chamberlain tradition alone is enough to damn it, and the Labour Party has tied itself to a dead cause.

What therefore, will be the trend of political parties? The events in this war certainly go to show that a "New Party"—in spite of the nonsense sometimes talked about it by Hulton and others—is in the offing. The elements that once foregathered to form a "New Party," that were led by the Commons "rebel," Mosley, formed themselves into a political group that became the British Union of Fascists. These same elements are once again asking for a New Party. They consist of the same type of political oddments that formed fascist parties in every country, the same assortment that, with no firm background but that of the bourgeois careerist, turn to whatever is thrown up, whether it is patriotic evangelising, or Vichyism.

We are not just referring to the particular people who happen nowadays to find themselves in political opposition to the Cabinet, while reserving, as they nearly all do, the right to bow in reverence before Winston Churchill. No, these "new party" elements are the whole rag-tag and bobtail of political manoeuvring today. The so-called "young Conservatives," the New Tories who have followed the star of Churchill rather than that of Chamberlain since Munich; the Labour politicians who may be out of a job when the Labour Party is through, and the Trade Union caucus is able to dictate its own terms; the Chamberlain Ghosts; the Liberals belonging to all parties and none; the ever-changing Stalinist

fellow-travellers; the dull retired officers and brilliant successful lawyers who swarm in St. Stephens; all these elements will go to the making of a New Party in Britain after the war.

A NEW POLITICAL SET-UP?

Reconstruction after the war will see varying elements from all of these groups seeking the way to forge ahead, and the almost universal adulation of Mr. Churchill today may provide the movement with a figurehead, just as reaction after the Napoleonic wars found a figure-head in the Duke of Wellington, covered with glory for his part in Waterloo.

Only a growing tide of dissatisfaction, of Republicanism and Jacobinism, which in this respect was coupled with the champions of the Reform Bill, laid low the Wellington legend. That growing tide brought Wellington to be mobbed by a hostile crowd within fifteen years of Waterloo, since Wellington, more than any other, was the figure-head of the British Government, though Sidmouth and Castle-reagh were its arch-reactionaries. Then, as now, the great political parties (Whig and Tory) had been split profoundly, and it was after that transformation

that the Imperialist Disraeli founded the new party of Imperialism, the Conservative Party.

Are we to see history repeat itself? Is the exaggerated worship of Churchill (which far exceeds that accorded by America to Roosevelt, since the American public will go in raptures about any man of the moment, from Valentino to MacArthur, and much more closely resembles that demanded by Hitler) to become such that the prestige of Mr. Churchill's name will carry any Government through? This is dangerous in war as well as in peace as is shown by the way in which the French people have allowed themselves to be duped by the "glorious hero of Verdun"—the "old soldier" Petain. And though Vichyism may not arise in Britain, Mr. Churchill himself stated that if Britain were defeated in war, we should need a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful place among the nations. He said this at a time (November, 1938) when, as his admirers have so often said, he had known for years what the rearmament of Germany might lead to. Is Churchill, then, to carry through reactionary governments until the new party of British imperialism, the dictatorship of the politicians, rises to power? **A.M.**

Socialist Standard on Anarchism

THE *Socialist Standard* (the organ of the Socialist Party of Great Britain) has recently published two articles entitled "Socialism and Anarchism." The writer ("H.W.") displays such a formidable ignorance of Anarchism that it is impossible in the space at our disposal to cover all the blunders he makes.

He declares (*S.S.* March 1942) that "Neither Kropotkin, Bakunin or Proudhon advocated the common ownership of the means and instruments of production." Yet in the very opening paragraph of Kropotkin's *Anarchist Communism—Basis & Principles*, we read:

"In common with all socialists, the anarchists hold that the private ownership of land, capital, and machinery has had its time; that it is condemned to disappear; and that all requisities for production must and will, become the common property of society, and be managed in common by the producers of wealth."

A great part of what follows is overturned by this statement of the actual teaching of anarchism.

The writer goes on to accuse Kropotkin of infatuation with the mediaeval guilds and communes. Camillo Berneri, in his article on Kropotkin's Federalist ideas in this issue effectively demolishes this "criticism."

In the second article (*S.S.* April, 1942) H.W. makes great play of the question "Can we do without capital" and suggests that the writer of the article "Syndicalism aims at Workers' Control" in the Mid-March "War Commentary," does not know what capital is. He is presumably relying on his readers not having read the article in question.

Discussing the question of "Prevention of Betrayal by Union Leaders" our comrade wrote "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 wages he would draw while at work in

industry." It is made clear that our comrade was stating the syndicalist position of opposition to high wages for a trade union official, yet H.W. declares, that the passage "indicates the continuance of the wages system. If this is not what is meant then it means nothing." If he had read the article with even ordinary care H.W. would have noted perhaps the following passage: the "struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the land and the machinery of production and abolish the wages system."

It is a pity that H.W. has found it necessary to try and cloak his ignorance in this trivial kind of distortion and jesuitism. The "Socialist Standard" articles represent a watered down version of a type of polemic for which the Bolsheviks are justly famous. But it is doubtful if the cause of socialism is greatly advanced by misrepresenting anarchism and by relying on a reader's ignorance of the articles from which H.W. quotes.

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