

WAR

For Anarchism

COMMENTARY

Vol. 4. No. 8

MID-FEBRUARY 1943

TWOPENCE.

FASCISTS AT WORK IN ALGERIA

THE LATEST POLITICAL moves in North Africa have been greeted with something approaching delight by certain sections of the English 'Left', and their press, from the *Manchester Guardian* to the *Daily Worker*, has praised the new set-up resulting from the latest reshuffle of reactionary bigwigs. The *Daily Worker* (8/2/43) describes the developments as a 'blow to Vichy men', and remarks that 'under the pressure of public opinion, Giraud has been enabled to make considerable headway against the Vichyites, but the Vichyites have by no means as yet exhausted their ammunition or their power to prevent a much bigger extension of unity under the banner of Fighting French'. A significant characteristic of their commentary is the way in which the Communists are trying to present Giraud as an angelic liberal struggling against the reactionary tendencies of his associates, whom even the *Daily Worker* cannot claim as enthusiastic anti-Fascists. The *Manchester Guardian* (8/2/43) appears to share this illusion of Giraud as the gallant democrat, for in its editorial remarks it says 'General Giraud has taken further measures to give a broader authority to his Administration and a more liberal character to his policy'.

Let us examine the measures taken by General Giraud, in an attempt to discover the liberalism on which his admirers are so emphatic, and also to elucidate the manner in which democratic principles are applied in the liberation of countries formerly subjected to Fascist tyranny.

To begin, let us admire the democratic way in which General Giraud reached his position. In fact, he was elected to it by himself and the few associates who formed Darlan's Imperial Council and now form Giraud's War Committee. These associates,

Peyrouton, Boisson, and Generals Nogues and Bergeret, are all supporters of Vichy and admirers, avowed or otherwise, of Fascist methods, which they have been applying in Africa for the last two years since the fall of France. Giraud, having been elected by the Imperial Council to the position of Civil and Military Commander-in-Chief, issued a proclamation saying that he had 'assumed' this position and that the new War Committee would consist of Governors and 'other persons who were being or might be invited by General Giraud'.

This assumption of power was not preceded even by the pretence of an accord between the various French parties and movements. General de Gaulle was not consulted, and the appointments do not appear to have been discussed even during the much-publicised conversation between Churchill, Roosevelt, de Gaulle and Giraud.

General Giraud also invested himself with the right to name governors, magistrates, university heads, etc. He has, moreover, the right to dispose of the 'legal and political status of any person', whether French or foreign, in Algeria. If this is democracy, then one wonders why Hitler should put his democrats in concentration camps. But perhaps the democrats in the concentration camps of Northern Africa think a little differently!

It is estimated that these concentration camps contain at least 65,000 prisoners, held in some 17 camps, 8 in Algeria and 9 in Morocco. It is further believed that a number of new camps have been established, and that since the arrival of the liberators in North Africa a number of new prisoners of revolutionary or de Gaullist sympathies have been added to those already incarcerated. The new measures have included the release of a number of

these internees, but it is significant to see how the released men have been chosen.

After the Communist deputy Grenier had pledged the official support of the Communist Party to the War Committee, some 27 Communist deputies who had been kept in prison in Algiers for more than two years were released. The propaganda value of this move is obvious, and it is further significant that there has been no general release of rank-and-file Communists or of revolutionaries or democrats.

Men of military age and fitness are to be released, whether they are Fascists or not. In this connection Giraud remarked: 'When I see a member of the S.O.L. (a French Fascist organisation) and I hear that he is imprisoned, I look at his record. I may find he is a good fighter. I release him.' Men not fit for military service, on the other hand, whether they are democrats or not, must await an investigation commission of mixed French and American representatives. The commission, however, has no power to release them. This can only be done by the French authorities, and as these are mostly Vichy men it will be seen how much this provision is worth.

Almost all the members of the War Committee have shown anti-semitic tendencies in the past, and Peyrouton was the originator of a number of laws against the Jews in Vichy France and one of the prime instigators of the persecutions of French Jews. It is therefore not surprising that Giraud should have announced that he was going to solve the Jewish problem gradually, and not 'by a stroke of a pen or a stroke of the sword'. The Jews have been given back their property, and Jewish children can attend schools, while a limited number of Jews are to be admitted to the professions. The Jews are still, however, deprived of their political rights, in spite of the fact that since 1871 all inhabitants of North Africa have been regarded as having equal rights to those of French citizens.

The right of association has not been restored, so that workers, whether French or native, are not allowed to revive their trade unions or syndicates. A number of syndicalists who took advantage of their liberation in this way have been placed in concentration camps.

From these facts it would appear that the measures taken by General Giraud are in fact intended purely as propaganda to nourish the illusion in England and America that the new French régime in North Africa is really democratic. In fact, it remains a dictatorial régime whose Fascist characteristics have been mitigated only to the least degree required for the purposes of the deception.

The Nazis are now celebrating the tenth anniversary of their acquisition of power in Germany. In that acquisition of power they were assisted materially by the reactionary interests of England and America. Later, when German aeroplanes and tanks were destroying the Spanish Revolution, they were again assisted by British and American conservative interests, while the representatives of the British government outclassed Pontius Pilate at the washing of hands. Now, after Britain has been nominally at war with Fascism for more than three years and America for two years, we find the same people aiding and abetting the perpetuation of Fascist government, under men like Peyrouton with recent records of close collaboration with Hitler, in the very countries to which their troops are supposed to have come as liberators. This was shown very clearly in the House of Commons on the 4th February, when Eden defended the Anglo-American position by saying that 'Both Governments wished to see that traditional freedom which flourished on French soil once more re-established both in North Africa and in France itself, and for this reason both were agreed that nothing must be allowed to distract them for the first and imperative duty of developing the maximum military effort upon which all depended.' (*News Chronicle* 4/2/43). The old story of pie in the sky!

LECTURES

EVERY FRIDAY EVENING

7.0 p.m.

- FEB. 19th. *The Future of Britain*
F. A. RIDLEY
- FEB. 26th *The Beveridge Report.*
TOM BROWN
- MARCH 5th. *Poetry reading.*
- MAR. 12th *The Colonial Blacks are on the Move*
CHRIS JONES
- MARCH 19th. *Bakunin*
GEORGE WOODCOCK
- MAR. 26th *The French Terrorists*
JOHN HEWETSON

QUESTIONS DISCUSSION
FREEDOM PRESS ROOMS

27, BELSIZE ROAD, LONDON, N.W.6.
(Swiss Cottage tube: 31 'bus route)

ANARCHIST COMMENTARY

TSARIST UNIFORMS FOR RED ARMY

and not on a revolutionary class appeal was evident years before the outbreak of hostilities. Already in the early 1930's the swing towards an attitude of extreme nationalism had begun, and this continued throughout the development of the five-year plans which crystallised the class basis of contemporary Russian society. In the middle years of the last decade the nationalist propaganda drive began to gain full swing, with the beatification of Holy Joe and the cult among the Stakhanovite versifiers and dramatists of the concept of the 'Soviet fatherland'.

This fostering of nationalist sentiment overlay an imperialist tendency within the new Russian class state which manifested itself at the end of the decade in the seizure of territory by the 'liberating' Russian armies in Finland, Poland, Roumania and the Baltic provinces. Later, when Germany in the pursuit of its own imperialist ambitions attacked its most dangerous rival in Europe, the Russian state did not fight back under the revolutionary banner of international brotherhood, but under a flag and under slogans as nationalistic as any that led the armies of the Tsars to battle.

As was to be expected, the army which is fighting this war is a nationalist military machine from which all the revolutionary vestiges have been eradicated in a process of years.

The final touches have recently been put which make the Red Army indistinguishable even in outward trappings from any nationalist army in the best Potsdam tradition.

As long ago as 1935 the Red Army gave up the ranks of the 'revolutionary' days and substituted the old ranks of colonel, major, captain, etc. Generals were re-introduced in 1939, with resplendent uniforms to fit their positions, and at the same time the practice of saluting officers was revived in the 'workers' army. At parades it became obligatory to use the goosestep beloved by Prussian marshals.

The latest decrees reintroduce forms of uniform which were abolished in 1917 as being symbolic of the counter-revolution. In particular, officers and men in Moscow are to wear epaulets of 'broad flat cloth with shoulder pieces embroidered in gold thread, with gold stars for the rank'. Officers' coats will be 'carefully waisted', and are to have 'high upstanding collars, on which also are embroidered gold or coloured thread marking the rank and corps'.

'Violators of this order,' says the decree, 'whatever their rank, will be detained and subject to severe correction.'

It is further provided for the Cossacks to resume the pre-1917 uniform of red-striped breeches, high black hats and black cloaks in which they became the knouted terror of the Russian people and the symbol of Tsarist tyranny.

Commenting on the changes, *Red Star* remarks 'After the October revolution, when reactionary officers took arms against Soviet power, the young Red Army rejected the uniforms which her enemies had worn. Since then much water has flowed under the bridges.' (As convincing an explanation as any!)

THAT the Russian governing class would fight this war on a nationalist appeal

A further return to Tsarist conditions is shown in the creation of a *corps d'élite* of 60 Guards Units, chosen from regiments which had distinguished themselves in fighting. The men in these units, who are evidently a kind of military Stakhanovite, receive double pay, and wear special badges. Each unit has a 'richly designed flag, handed to them at a ceremony when the commander knelt and kissed the cloth.'

But of all the changes in the Red Army, probably the most significant of the shedding of even the pretence of being a 'revolutionary' or even a Communist body is the abolition of the political commissar, last relic of the old Red Army, and the placing of command and responsibility in every respect in the commanding officer.

With these latest changes the Red Army, whose discipline is already notorious as being the most brutal in the world, becomes indistinguishable in general and in detail from the army of the Tsars, becomes a nationalist army which fights under nationalist slogans for an imperialist end, under a Tsar whose record of murder and tyranny make Ivan the Terrible an anaemic choirboy.

CONDITIONS ON THE LAND

PEOPLE who have never worked on the land still tend to regard agricultural work, even under present conditions, as an idyllic occupation. Indeed, at its best it is healthy, interesting work which develops the sense of individual initiative and lacks the monotony of factory work, with its extreme division of labour.

When, however, as in this country, the farm worker has to live in unhealthy and insanitary houses (it is estimated even by critics like Lt. Col. Pollitt that 700,000 agricultural labourers are unsatisfactorily housed), when he has to exist on a low nutritional standard, and when he cannot obtain the right clothing to protect him from cold and damp, he becomes as liable to disease as any industrial slum dweller. Similarly, the long hours many agricultural labourers still work and the narrow life they lead in moribund villages tend to produce a mental sterility approaching that of the majority of regimented factory workers.

It is easy for the town dweller to be sentimental about the country life. Thatched cottages and horses ploughing are fine things to look at. But the people who live in the damp rooms under the thatch would prefer roomy dry houses with electric light and running water, and most ploughmen feel more comfortable on the seat of a tractor than trudging all day long after a team of horses.

This war has forced a few townspeople into the country life, and has disillusioned most of them about the idyllic nature of work on the land under present conditions. A recent debate in the House of Lords publicised the facts which underlie the pleasant propaganda appeals for women recruits to the Land Army.

Lord Bingley revealed that many girls had been working for months without being given coats, or mackintoshes and boots that would keep out water.

Lord Cornwallis who is himself chairman of a War Agricultural Committee, said. 'If I could show you the results of the totally haphazard and inadequate medical inspections, you would be horrified. By not giving them proper medical examinations the country has ruined the

health of a great many girls. It is the only form of national service without its own medical service . . . Last month there was a record number of resignations, and the labour situation in agriculture is going to be so serious that it is essential to get double the number. If you don't treat them properly the nation will not get the food.'

The government spokesmen gave the usual vague promises to provide 'every possible comfort and equipment' and remarked that leather boots, properly greased, are an adequate substitute for rubber boots—a fatuity which anyone who has worked on the land will deride.

In the case of the Land Army the lack of recruits may force the government to do something to improve conditions. But the conditions of agricultural workers still remain inhumanly bad, in spite of the illusory wage increases which, owing to the rise in the cost of living, have left the farm worker just where he was before the war. Because of the preoccupation of political parties with the big votes of towns, the land workers have few champions, and among most so-called revolutionaries, the Marxist myth of the proletariat causes neglect of the land worker.

Under the present economy, based on industrial capitalism, the land worker has the least chance of gaining better conditions. A socialism based on industry would leave him in the same position. For him, more even than for other workers, the only society to which he can look for a good standard of life is one which has cut away from all the necessities of privileged interests and in which has been reached a balance of town and country, field and factory, that will give the farm worker true equality.

POLICE "PROTECTION"

of prisoners by the police. "I am convinced," he said, "that during the past 21 years there has been a lot of unnecessary violence by police officers against arrested persons. This violence is encouraged by lay magistrates, who seem to think it is their duty to support the police . . . Within the last two years, courts at Manchester and Liverpool have investigated no fewer than four cases of violence by police officers." The Recorder also mentioned cases at Birkenhead, Runcorn and Bridgnorth.

Militant workers have always known the violent propensities of the police, either from their own experience or from that of their fellow workers, but it is useful to have it corroborated by someone within the law machine who is honest enough to speak his thoughts.

Under the theory of English justice the defendant is deemed innocent until the prosecution has proved his guilt. In practice, however, in the majority of cases he is treated as guilty from the moment of his arrest, by the police and every other instalment of the judicial machinery through which he passes.

Police, in reality, do not exist for the protection of the ordinary citizen. They exist, like the law they serve, for the protection of property and the property-owning class. This is illustrated by the fact that in the City of London, the greatest concentration of property interests in the world, there are some 1,200 police officers and less than 14,000 residents, in other words *one policeman to every twelve people!* In England as a whole there is only *one policeman for every six hundred people!*

The police system, like the law system, is part and parcel of the property society, and its faults are those which it derives from being part of that society. There-

fore, the efforts of liberal-minded people like the Recorder of Liverpool, while they are well-meaning and in that sense, laudable, will be unavailing in present society.

State justice is based on violence, and it is not to be expected that its servants will be fastidious in their use of violent methods. The only way to end police violence is to create a society which has no need of police, in other words, a society without property.

STRIKES IN IRELAND

NEWS of social importance from Ireland is scanty, and it is difficult to form any clear idea of the currents operating there. Items of news or political comment published in English newspapers are mostly selected to serve the political end of discrediting the policy of the Irish Government, and, apart from the reports of scanty food, etc., there has been little to indicate the conditions under which the workers are now living and the social trends under the clerical state.

Recently, however, there has been news of unrest and strikes; particularly among miners in Ireland. *The Star* reports a pit strike at Arigna, co. Leitrim, involving eight hundred men, and one at Castlecomer, co. Kilkenny, involving two hundred. The latter is a stay down strike for increased wages. 'The men in the pit are resting on straw beds, and food is being sent down to them'.

It is good news that the Irish workers are beginning to use direct action (and in the case of Castlecomer the right kind of direct action) against their exploiters. It would be better still if they were using it for something more tangible and lasting than wage increases under the present system. The Irish have a great record of direct action against a foreign government and foreign landlords. Boycott, strikes, rent strikes, sabotage, assassination—every form of direct action figured in the struggle waged by the peasants and town workers. By a revolutionary method of warfare they ousted the British army, and freed themselves at least from the immediate rule of English masters. Their tragedy was that they gave over the power to politicians who, however good they had been as fighters in the struggle, became corrupted by their positions and perpetuated the exploitation and oppression of the Irish people. If the present strikes mean that the Irish are again on the move, it is to be hoped that this time they will aim at the complete social revolution and will not accept leaders who will inevitably betray them once they have gained power.

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“DEMOCRACY” IN THE ARMY

A letter from a Soldier

I HAVE BEEN in the Army for two years and all I have seen has made me lose my illusions about democracy in the Army. In an army which is supposed to fight for democracy there is in reality the greatest inequality between officers and men. Civilians who have read “What’s wrong with the Army” or who read the papers attentively can find here and there reports which shed some light on the unequal treatment received by privates and officers for offences committed. But what people outside the army don’t know is that the inequalities, the abuse of power by officers is part of the army life.

There have been so many injustices and wrongs committed that the War Office has judged it necessary to issue a booklet for officers on “The Soldier’s Welfare”. The aim of that publication and of similar ones is to tell officers how to handle men and how to make army life more pleasant so that they may be more fit to fight. These pamphlets do not get, however, much attention and in our company they seem to have failed to impress our officers, as no improvement has taken place since their publication. I believe that these documents merely give the War Office a chance of declaring that in theory all is well in the army. What happens in reality is not likely to become known, as the ordinary Tommy does not complain for fear of being given a “hell of a life”: difficulties in getting his leave, delays which prevent him from catching his train in time if he goes on leave, extra fatigues, extra guards, etc.

The War Office pamphlet on soldier’s welfare points out that there should be comradeship between officers and men; what this comradeship consists of I will try to illustrate by a few examples.

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One of our officers went recently to an ENSA concert and found that no seat had been reserved for him. He went indignantly to the cashier who offered him a set between the men. This excited the fury of the officer who declared in a loud voice: “You don’t really think I am going to sit among that muck.” After this incident he made arrangements with ENSA management and our concerts are now arranged as follows: the first two rows are reserved for officers only from our and neighbouring companies, then there are rows for sergeants, corporals and lance-corporals. A beautiful illustration of how the slogan “the man first” is put into practice.

That the welfare of the men does not concern the officers is shown by the fact that 250 men have to wash their plates, forks, spoons and mugs in a small basin, often with cold water, while there is plenty of hot water for the use of sergeants’ and officers’ mess.

Last winter during the very cold weather a company I know of had cold rations for the whole week and they were so meagre that they lasted only two days. The men were not allowed to light fires till after duty, they slept on damp floors with only a ground sheet and a very thin straw pailasse. The sergeants, corporals and officers had rooms with fires kept burning night and day and the officer had a fire especially lighted when he had to pay the company—which lasted half an hour.

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In November 1942, the food in the company I was in was uneatable. It contained nails, human hair, stones, bits of wood and brush hairs. The food was so bad that the boys complained to civilians and they protested in the local press asking for an investigation. The newspapers sent reporters along. The day the reporters were due to arrive the camp was cleaned, the fire places were lighted, cooks and orderlies were beautifully dressed in white, the food was excellent. Of course, favourable reports about the conditions in the camp appeared in the press, but the next day the boys managed to smuggle their dinner out of the camp and showed it to the disgusted civilians.

It was at that time that we experienced what Christian charity really means. We had only one decent place to go to—the service club; it was warm and we could get good food. Several times some of our boys collapsed while they were there, some due to epileptic fits, some to under nourishment. The manageress grew annoyed about those incidents; she made enquiries at the camp and as a result the service club was put out of bounds.

I happened to be salvage collector and I used to find milk tins, empty food tins, egg shells in considerable quantity in the rubbish bag of the sergeants. Sergeants and corporals used to keep tickets which should have gone to the boys in order to enable them to buy cheap cigarettes. Letters and parcels used to disappear and in one case we were able to accuse a senior sergeant of stealing an electric heater which belonged to one of the boys; though it was found in his possession the whole business was hushed up.

We are charged 1/6 for dances which cost very little to produce since we have our own orchestra. We tried to get a reduction in price by boycotting the dances. But we found that the dances were still attended by the neighbouring companies and we had nowhere to go, so that one night tear gas bombs were thrown in the hall; the price of the dances is still 1/6 but some attention was attracted to the racket.

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Leave is sometimes refused without any valid reason. I know of the case of a soldier in our company whose wife was expecting a child and was dangerously ill. No leave was granted to him.

In another case a soldier's wife came all the way from Winchester to Devonshire to see her husband. No sleeping-out pass was granted to her husband; this when every night sergeant-majors and officers bring their girl friends to camp, and have a fine time.

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Sick parades are made as uncomfortable as possible. We have to walk a long way to the hospital and have to wait for hours in the cold and rain. The Sergeant-Major gives us first a good telling off, bullying us, treating everyone as a dissimulator in the most humiliating way. Those who come back with M. & D. (medicine and duty) get extra work or special fatigues. Everybody is afraid of going sick and often prefers to suffer from complaints. In one week three boys dropped down during work and had to be taken away in an ambulance. The Medical Officer, after some of the men had complained to him about the Sergeant-Major, said that he would investigate. At the time the company had to be regraded and though the S.M. should have nothing to do with the decisions of the M.O. the S.M. was present at the visit, telling the M.O. to grade up people he wanted to keep and lower grade people he wanted to get rid of. The boys were so disgusted and felt so helpless that their hope to receive fair treatment from military authorities vanished completely.

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The behaviour of the officers is far from inspiring. Many of them are chronically drunk. Men were not able to buy any whisky or rum in the pubs because they were reserved for officers in spite of the fact that the officers get a fair share in their mess. Our captain used to be drunk every night, so drunk in fact that he was never able to stand up when "the King" was played, and had to be held up by two men. Another captain always appears at dances with a heavily guarded whisky bottle (one or two men follow him wherever he goes with the bottle and glass and have to keep an eye on them).

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There has been quite a talk in the newspapers

Americans win the War again!

From the American magazine *Life* (23/11/42) we reproduce the following extracts on the North African campaign showing first, jubilation:

But last week we felt what it was like to be Americans again—to do things in a big, imaginative way, to act with an efficiency that left observers breathless. Accomplishment and adventure came back into our lives.

But admitting that there was not opposition as the Germans had already been defeated by the British:

So electrifying was this adventure that it was hard for Americans to get a perspective on it. The temptation was to hail the seizure of North Africa as the opening of the so-called "second front." Possibly, hereafter, it would be well to expurgate that slipshod term from our vocabulary. But anyway, what the advocates of a "second front" have meant by the term is a direct attack on German arms. And of course the African campaign is nothing of the kind. Germany had only about four divisions in Africa, and these had already been routed by the British when our boys arrived. Thanks to intelligent work by the State Department and the Army, there was slight resistance even from the French, whom the Germans might have counted on.

Trying to present the victory as being a "political" one which it certainly isn't as Quislings and fascists have been put into power with the excuse that military considerations come first.

In fact, the supreme value of the African campaign is not yet military at all but, in the broadest sense, political. The electric current was not confined to the borders of the U.S. It ran like hidden lightning around the earth. Our best friends in South America, ordinarily jealous of U.S. power, took almost a proprietary pride in our achievement. The European underground grew hot. To Yugoslavs, Greeks, Czechs, Poles, even to Norwegians on the northern rim of Europe, this was a tangible promise of deliverance. The restless French heard Mr. Roosevelt in their own tongue. The Turks were strengthened in their stand against the Axis. And throughout the mysterious countries of North Africa and the Middle East, from Timbuktu to Saudi Arabia, chieftains passed the word along that a great new force had arrived, a force mightier than the Italians or the Germans, or even the British—men in round helmets who had guaranteed not to enslave them. In those lands ten years of Axis propaganda were undone.

about conditions in "glass houses". I heard of a case where soldiers under arrest were shut up in a barracks and were told to knock at the door if they wanted to go to the W.C. When they did so nobody answered, they were not allowed to go out the whole night and in the morning the sergeants insulted them for having soiled the room.

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People outside the army may think that these are isolated cases, exceptions to the normal army life, but I know that there are thousands of soldiers who have gone through similar experiences and who can only sneer when they hear all this talk about "democracy" in the army.

Scientific Workers Discuss War Problems

PACKING CAXTON HALL for nine hours in all, the annual open Conference of the Association of Scientific Workers, entitled 'Planning of Science', took place on Jan. 30th and 31st. Notwithstanding that it is frankly one of A.Sc.W's primary aims "to work for the most effective use of Science . . . in the welfare of society . . . particularly in its application to the present war effort", it was nevertheless surprising that not one of many intelligent and outspoken speakers in any way opposed the war or even expressed the slightest shame or regret concerning it. Maybe a safe reserved job affects you that way, or do scientists whose attitude precludes support for war simply stay out of A.Sc.W?

Ben Smith called for compulsion to force managements to share their power with workers and scientists, and E. Swann for enforced co-operation and pooling of trade secrets between firms in the same industry. Replying to both, Col. Devereux, managing director of High Duty Alloys Ltd., defended the real manager, as distinct from the Stock Exchange nominee, claiming that in his own firm he had a system of Committees giving full co-operation between management, scientist and worker, while confining the authority of each to his own field. Furthermore, within the light alloy industry there was complete pooling of research between firms. Three famous aero engine manufacturers were named as sharing all technical data down to the specification of the tiniest rivet.

Subsequent speakers however were not convinced. A Scottish worker called for a commission to locate Col. Devereux's alleged good managements. It was a remarkable fact that it was practically unknown anywhere in the country for a member of the technical staff to sit with the management and the workers on one of the much-boosted 'Joint Production Committees'. Was this because their presence might hinder the management's disposal of workers' suggestions with pleas of "for technical reasons", or was it simply that the gap between management and worker must at all costs be kept wide and clear? As to the claimed full co-operation between aero engine firms, it simply did not exist protested a laboratory worker from one such firm. If managements shared research, then they must be keeping it to themselves and not letting it reach their technicians, because the speaker was still having to struggle with problems to which he was well aware a rival firm had already found solutions.

From a Cambridge worker came a plea for 'Co-operation on a lower level'. Dr. Mees, head of Eastman Kodak Laboratories was quoted as having said: "The man who actually does a piece of research knows most about it, his immediate superior knows a bit less, and the head of the laboratory still less. The president of the corporation knows nothing". Unfortunately however, it is the president of the corporation who crosses the sea to bring co-operation and fraternal greetings to his opposite number abroad. There are practical details of the job, too subtle to be either recorded or reported to superiors, which are nevertheless exchanged in the first five minutes when two practical workers meet.

Shabby and publicity-seeking as ever, Prof. Haldane apologised quite unnecessarily for his late arrival, explaining that "the line of research on which I am engaged cannot be dropped at precisely a pre-determined hour," a remark which seems to embody a most discourteous attitude towards persons far more eminent than himself who can nevertheless arrive on time. Thus introduced, the pride of the Communist Party confined his remarks to

reiteration of the previous speakers plea for 'Co-operation on a lower level'.

A speaker from the staff of Dunlop Rubber Co. criticised the Government's rubber policy. Service specifications took no account of the need for economy, even using rubber where almost any material capable of filling space would be equally suitable. All manufacturers had received experimental samples of synthetic rubber, but none had sufficient to perform worthwhile tests, and no arrangements existed for pooling the results of such tests as could be made. Britain had been invited to send experts to Russia to study the production and use of synthetic rubber but it did not appear that advantage would be taken of the offer. A worker in the plastics field explained that this country could never go ahead in either plastics or synthetic rubber until abundant home produced chemical supplies were available. This would necessitate drastic restriction of the burning of our coal resources elsewhere than in the coke-retort of the gas works where the by-products could be recovered. In the absence of such a policy, we might eventually be "warming our bottoms at the expense of our belly".

A woman speaker called for equal post-war opportunity with men for qualified women scientists, and for equal pay for the job. It was sometimes claimed that women's needs were less. If so, why did a policy of 'to each according to his needs' operate only in this very convenient field?

Professors Blackett, Levy and others, speaking of the future of planned science, admitted the risk of original research being paralysed by bureaucratic planning from above. It was up to organised scientific workers to guard against such tendencies. The real job of planners was deciding which of thousands of pieces of original research should be selected for development. It still took about thirty years to develop a major invention, no matter how vital the need. This was not good enough. The success of the conference showed a determination that post-war science should work for the common man, a policy whose fulfilment would call for direct action by scientists themselves and could not be left to benevolent millionaires. Inspiration would come abundantly when the ordinary man knew he was working his world for himself.

The first speaker of the conference having been Sir Stafford Cripps, who had proudly and courageously listed the incredibly complicated system of scientific advisory committees through which the Government allegedly planned the war, the final summing-up came from Dr. Darlington who explained that Sir Stafford's committees were composed of the most distinguished men in the country, coming from the very best schools. Unfortunately their ages ranged from 60 to 90, but this was the fourth year of war and we had survived so far. It was amazing! Julian Huxley had promised the colonies a square deal from Britain after the war, but Dr. Darlington preferred to consider what had actually been done for them up to the present. India was experiencing famine. India's food was mainly vegetable. What work was done in Britain in the sphere of botany with a view to safeguarding India's crops? Kew had five million plant specimens, and the Natural History Museum four million. The Director of Kew was responsible to the Minister of Agriculture, and the Director of the Natural History Museum to the Archbishop of Canterbury! Did these two gentlemen ever meet? If so, did they discuss botany?

P. D.

CRIPPS IS NO COMRADE

"Sir Stafford Cripps, Minister of Aircraft Production, to-day visited a factory in the London area which makes small aircraft parts.

Sir Stafford said to the workers: 'The other day when I visited a large factory in the North I started my speech with the word 'Comrades.' The chairman of the firm has now written telling me that was not the right way to address the employees. He said I should have used the phrase 'Ladies and gentlemen.'

'I prefer, however, to stick to Comrades.' (Cheers)"

Evening Standard 30/1/42.

We would have liked to have heard that it was the workers who object to being called "comrades" by Sir Stafford.

CHILDREN VICTIMS

"The Bishop of Chichester's Famine Relief Committee is now busy in London gathering facts about winter conditions on the Continent and its effect on food supplies. So far the winter has been mild, but the continued strain of war conditions in the occupied countries is increasing.

In Rotterdam, an examination of school children showed that 64 per cent. of them were not getting enough vitamins to prevent rickets. Most of Holland's poultry and pigs have gone to Germany, and 40 per cent. of the cattle, too. So there are few fats available.

Ersatz food in Belgium is the cause of much poisoning. Anæmia is general among growing children, and the lack of calcium and phosphates is causing all kinds of nervous troubles. There is a considerable increase in premature birth.

By far the greatest danger is the spread of tuberculosis in its most acute form; the increase is estimated at 80 per cent. since 1940. Overdoses of vegetable diet, especially carrot, turnips and swedes is leading to intestinal troubles."

Evening Standard 25/2/43.

CASABLANCA—JOURNALIST'S IMPRESSIONS

"Of the Prime Minister, who sat on his left, it is possible to say only that he was the same as ever. He is when things are going well—Peter Pan with a cigar in his mouth.

Twice they shook hands for dilatory cameramen. For two days now De Gaulle—ill at ease this morning and puffing nervously at a damp cigarette—and Giraud, who is like a tailor's fashion plate of a suave old man who has kept his figure—have conferred."

News Chronicle 27/1/43.

FROM BEDLAM TO BARRACKS

"It was stated at Hove police court to-day by the acting chief-constable, Chief-inspector Lovell, that a man said to have been a patient in a mental home, voluntarily or compulsorily, for a total of eight years had just been passed A.I. by an Army medical board.

The inspector said that the man—Norman Astell (24), of Sussex Square, Brighton—had a mania for breaking into stables, stealing horses and riding them through the streets."

Evening Standard 2/2/43.

WAR PROFITEERS

"It is becoming more and more difficult to obtain a flat in London—and yet there are quite a number standing empty.

This is not so odd as it sounds, for if you are prepared to pay a rent of between £400 and £1,000 a year, you should be soon satisfied. Anything cheaper than that is almost impossible to get.

Thirty guineas a week was the figure asked for a furnished non-service Mayfair flat with two bedrooms, two sitting-rooms and a bathroom. Eighteen guineas was the rent of a first-floor service flat in the same neighbourhood which had two bedrooms and a sitting-room."

Evening Standard 18/1/43.

Through

COMMUNISTS APPEAL TO MORRISON

"Four days have now passed but up to late last night no arrests had been made in connection with the desecration of the Lenin Memorial in London.

Meanwhile, M. Maisky's formal note of protest to the British Government and the widespread demand for immediate Home Office action makes it imperative that there should be a thorough comb out of all Fascists and anti-Semites and of the organisations in which they have regrouped themselves.

"The desecration of Lenin's bust makes us fearfully aware of the growing Fascist activity within the camp of democracy," said Mr. Wal Hannington, national organiser of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, yesterday.

"We should demand that the Government rout out these rats and deal with them as they deserve—as traitors of the people. Anything less than this would put our nation to shame in face of the heroic struggle of our Soviet ally," he added."

Daily Worker 8/2/42.

Fascists and anti-semites must be fought against but it is Mr. Morrison, whom the Communists used to accuse of acting as a fascist when he suppressed the *Daily Worker*, the best person for the job?

BANKS PROFITS UP

"Results of the English banks for the year 1942 were about in accord with expectations. In all cases previous dividends were repeated, and there was some increase in net profits, in spite of a further increase in working expenses and the continuance of stiff taxation. The extent of the increase in gross profits (which was not disclosed) must have been fairly substantial, owing to the further expansion in deposits. It was generally believed that even if net profits had risen considerably shareholders' dividends would not have been increased, partly because of the cautious financial policy which is a tradition of British banking, but more because it would have been realized that the growth in profits was due to special conditions which were not likely to be permanent."

The Chamber of Commerce Journal Feb. 1943.

I.W.W. EDITOR BACK TO BENCH

"With this issue, the *Industrial Worker* takes on a new editor. From now on and until further notice Fellow Worker P. J. Read takes care of your editorial chores, while yours truly takes out for the brush to hunt himself a master.

In two hitches, with only a short interval between, I have held down the editorial seat for better than five years. Sometimes I have thought that was much too long a time to stay on a so-called pie-card job. Anyway, I am sure you will all agree that it was long enough. Like union officials, union editors should periodically renew their acquaintance with the way of the boss by actual contest on the point of production."

Industrial Worker 14/1/43.

the Press

MALNUTRITION CAUSES DELINQUENCY

"The suggestion that directors of education should be empowered to undertake, through a legal panel, the defence of all juvenile delinquents was made by Mr. H. G. Gates in his presidential address to the Manchester and District Schoolmasters' Association. He referred to the alleged increase of juvenile delinquency since the last war as due more to efficient prosecution than to an increase in crime.

'To me,' he said, 'juvenile delinquency is due to a physical defect in the machinery of the mind, as explicable and as preventable as rickets, and resulting from a similar cause—pre-natal and infantile malnutrition.' He advocated that the special schools for naughty children should be transferred to the Ministry of Health, and that they should have medical officers as superintendents."

Manchester Guardian 20/1/43.

NO PEACE EVEN FOR THE DEAD

America's Air Transport Command men fly everything in the air, from tiny Pipers to huge four-engined bombers. They fly food and refugees and generals going to confer quickly with other generals and guns and medicine and engines and clothing. Mostly they fly high.

"Except one pilot I flew with," said a sergeant. "He would always come down low over cemeteries and yell 'Wake up and fight for America!' He never missed a cemetery."

The Buffalo Evening News Magazine.

THIS SYSTEM

"Thousands of workers are compelled to cycle without lights because no batteries are available.

Policemen are obliged to prosecute them because cycling without lights is—very properly—an offence.

Magistrates ought to discharge them (though often they do not) because, lights or no lights, they must get to and from their work."

News Chronicle 5/2/43.

SPAIN

STRATEGY OF STARVATION

WHEN HE WAS asked, after the conclusion of a trade agreement between Spain and Argentina, what Spain would be able to export, the former Spanish Foreign Minister, Alvarez del Vayo, gave the cruel answer: "Corpses. I really don't know of anything else we could export. Corpses are the only things of which Spain has more than enough."

Official statistics have proved the truth of these terrible words. The Governor of Barcelona has admitted that 200,000 citizens are under-nourished, and that 12,000 have died of starvation. Neutral reports confirm these facts. Alexis Carrel, who has been studying the results of war-time malnutrition for the Rockefeller Institute, has established that the majority of Spaniards receive only a quarter—in quantity and quality—of the food which medical science has always claimed as the minimum necessary for the preservation of human life.

Whoever wishes to understand what is happening in the foreground of Spanish politics must consider this gloomy background. The real leader of Spain is starvation. Starvation prevents the masses conquered in the Civil War from rising in rebellion.

Franco's decision to dismiss Suñer even without knowing for certain that this action would mean a slackening of the blockade, is due partly to the exceedingly clever and efficient policy of the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Wedell. A few days before the change in the Cabinet took place, President Roosevelt had declared officially that the Allies would help to re-construct Spain after the war. By naturalizing twenty persons known to be followers of Franco in Puerto Rico, the U.S.A. tacitly declared that they only demanded a change in Franco's foreign policy, not in Spanish home affairs. Moreover, the United States sent American physicians to Spain, who have devoted themselves to the struggle against the persistent threat of an outbreak of typhus, due to starvation. American news-reels have shown national Spanish ceremonies, thus giving a helping hand to Franco's propaganda. All this was part of a considered and extensive policy, the United States being of the opinion that to obtain Spain's friendly neutrality was more important to the outcome of the war than to maintain an antagonism caused by ideological differences. This policy has proved excellent tactics not only in Spain, where the influence of the Axis has palpably diminished, but also in the South American states. In Central and South America a good deal of sympathy has been felt for Franco, especially in Conservative circles. By avoiding a break with Franco, the U.S.A. gained the confidence of these circles, persuading them to hint in their turn to the *Caudillo* that it would be a good thing to rid himself of the pro-Axis *Falange*. Lastly, the connexion between this U.S.A. diplomacy and the events in North Africa is too obvious to need emphasis.

Die Weltwoche, Zürich.

STATISTICS

"A recent inquiry of the Oxford Institute of Statistics suggests that instead of the 28 per cent. increase since the war shown by the cost-of-living index a truer figure would be 40 per cent. The index is prevented from rising because in it the stabilised prices are overweighted."

Manchester Guardian 27/1/43.

Pages of Revolutionary History

THE PARIS COMMUNE

Part II

The Parisians Rise

IT WILL BE REMEMBERED that under the armistice agreement with the Germans it was especially provided that the National Guards should be allowed to retain their arms. Among these, besides the small arms of the infantry battalions, there were a number of cannon and mitrailleuses. There are conflicting estimates of the numbers of these guns, but it would appear that there were at least four hundred field and siege pieces, and round about a hundred mitrailleuses, a formidable armament.

These guns had been bought by public subscription among the Parisians, who regarded them with considerable jealousy, and who had already been roused to indignation when the Government left many of them in the part of Paris which was temporarily occupied by the Germans. The National Guard dragged the guns to safe places in the centre of Paris and on Montmartre, and placed heavy guards over the gun parks. The incident helped to increase the discontent of the Parisians, who, rightly or wrongly, believed the guns had been left there deliberately for the Germans to take.

Thiers, on the other hand, regarded with concern this large armament in the hands of the National Guard, and, as the temper of Paris became more restless, decided it was necessary to remove such a danger. He realised that the seizure of the guns might provoke an open rising, but this he regarded as all to the good, for such an event would enable him to deal with insurrectionary Paris immediately and decisively.

GOVERNMENT PROVOCATION

Accordingly, after a week of provocation calculated to goad the Parisians into fury, he ordered the seizure of the guns of the National Guard. In the small hours of the 18th March a number of columns of regular soldiers were marched out of their barracks, and moved, cold and disgruntled, in the direction of the gun parks. On their way they met no opposition, and the sites were occupied after minor scuffles in which the guards were overpowered without awakening the surrounding districts.

So far all had gone well with the enterprise. But it was now discovered that no horses or gun carriages had been provided, and the soldiers had to wait in the cold, without food or drink, growing steadily more annoyed with their situation.

Dawn broke, but there were still no horses, and the waking Parisians began to realise what was happening. In Montmartre, where most of the guns were parked on the Butte and at the Moulin de la Gallette, the drums began to beat the warning through the steep, narrow streets, in the Place St. Michel in the Latin Quarter a hostile crowd gathered, and in the working class districts of Belleville and La Villette barricades were thrown up by the workers.

FRATERNISATION

On Montmartre the people gathered round the soldiers, offering them food and friendship. Very soon their comradeship broke down the resistance of the troops. Lecomte, the general in charge of the operation, ordered his men to fire. They replied by turning up the butts of their rifles and surrendering them to the crowd. Lecomte himself was immediately arrested. Later he was executed by his own soldiers, together with Clement Thomas, late Commander of the National Guard, who had gained an unsavoury reputation in 1848 and had been detected by the angry crowd in the Place Pigalle. Thiers was later to make great capital out of this incident in rousing the rest of France against the Commune.

By

George Woodcock

Everywhere else in Paris the rising of the people foiled the attempt, and the affair ended, almost without bloodshed, with the fraternisation of the soldiers and the people. By ten o'clock it was all over, and the guns thundering from Montmartre in the north and Gobelins in the south announced the victory of the people.

THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTS

For Thiers and the government the only course was withdrawal from the city. Their own troops had proved unreliable, the bourgeois National Guard had just stayed at home, and the city was already virtually in the hands of the armed people. Thiers decided immediately to withdraw to Versailles, and there reform his forces for a regular siege and assault of the city. He gave the order for an immediate evacuation of the city, and those of the soldiers who had not joined the insurgents were withdrawn, while the barricades rose in the streets and the tocsin sounded from the church towers. At half past ten the Hotel de Ville was occupied by the National Guard, and the last remnant of the Government's power were swept from the city.

The people's spontaneous uprising had expelled the government and had destroyed its power. But the people had no idea what they wanted in its place. Their mood was revolutionary, but it could crystallise into no definite line of social action. They were confused because they had as yet no clear vision of a society which would function without government or political leaders.

This confusion on the part of the people allowed the task of organising the situation to fall into the hands of the one representative body in the city, the Central Committee of the National Guard. The Central Committee were almost as confused as the people. They were not very pleased with their responsibility and made hurried arrangements for the election of the Commune.

They flirted with legality, as represented by the mayors of the Parisian districts, and seemed to have no real idea of the revolutionary implications of the situation in Paris. They appointed as new Commander of the National Guard a noted swashbuckler named Lullier, who later turned out to be in league with Versailles.

The Blanquists, who were put in control of the Ministry of War and the Prefecture of Police, began immediately to agitate for action against Versailles. They aimed at using the situation to gain power themselves and establish their 'revolutionary' dictatorship. The International remained silent until the 23rd March, when it issued a proclamation supporting the rising and making reformist demands for communal autonomy, compulsory secular education, and the organisation of mutual credit and exchange. As always, the thoughts of the leaders followed the actions of the people.

Under the conciliatory attitude of the Committee, which still failed to realise that the gloves were off and even now hoped for some amicable arrangement with the Assembly which would grant Paris the communal freedom its people demanded, the forces of reaction began to rise again. The reactionary mayors of the bourgeois districts were intriguing with Versailles, and a skeleton organisation for taking over power was formed. A procession of noisy top-hatted bourgeoisie marched on the Place Vendôme, flourishing revolvers and swordsticks, but were repelled by a volley from the National Guard. Certain *mairies* and the station of St. Lazare were occupied by the few bourgeois National Guards.

These events brought a hardening of the attitude of revolutionary Paris, which was increased by news of risings in the provincial towns. Lyons, Marseilles, Toulouse, Narbonne, Limoges and other cities raised the red flag, and, for a short time it seemed as if the whole of France would rise for the Commune. But these provincial risings were isolated by the unresponding rural districts, and the last stand was made at Marseilles on the 5th April. Nevertheless, short-lived as these risings were, they had the effect of increasing the resolve of the Parisians, and the National Guards proceeded to liquidate the reactionary movements in their midst.

THE COMMUNE

The elections for the Commune took place on the 26th March. Some 92 members of the Communal Council were elected, and of these 21, who resigned shortly, were anti-Communard Liberals and Republicans. Of the rest, 17 were members of the International, 16 members of the Central Committee, 9 Blanquists, and the remainder mostly Jacobins of the 1848 vintage, such as Delescluze and Pyat, and their followers. Only 21 were workers. The rest were journalists, writers, painters, clerks, petty tradesmen, etc.

On the 28th March the Commune was inaugurated with a great ceremony at which the members of the Commune stood on the beflagged balcony of the Hotel de Ville, while a quarter of a million armed Parisians marched past to the revolutionary songs of '93 and the guns of Montmartre saluted what seemed the dawn of a new era of liberty and justice. On that day the Parisians really thought they had elected a body of men who would lead them to a better society. The members of the Commune, whatever their creeds, were almost all men of honest ideals who really hoped to fulfil this function. But by making themselves into a government they merely became a drag on the revolution, and their interminable deliberations and bureaucratic duties at the Hotel de Ville severed them from the people and from the rapidly changing pattern of events around them. This many of

them realised when they left the Council Chamber in the last days to fight among the workers at the barricades.

Meanwhile, Thiers was methodically planning his campaign. So far he had not declared open war—it suited him much better to give the impression that he was still ready to reach a negotiated agreement. But he was busy gathering his troops, disciplining them, feeding them well, above all isolating them from contact with the outside world. Meanwhile he was negotiating with Bismarck for a return of some of the veterans who had been captured at Sedan and Metz.

When the Government troops were evacuated, they had also abandoned the forts on the south and west (those on the north were in the hands of the Germans). One of them, the vital Mont Valerien, guarding the approach to Versailles, was hurriedly reoccupied. The rest were occupied by the National Guards, but no attempt was made to seize Mont Valerien, because Lullier had misinformed the Central Committee that the commander was sympathetic to the Commune.

THE FIGHTING BEGINS

In Paris, by the beginning of April, everyone except the members of the Commune desired a sortie to Versailles. Thiers was well aware of this through his police spies, and, as even a slight success for the Commune would have shaken the morale of his own supporters, decided to forestall them. Accordingly, on the 2nd April he commenced the encirclement of Paris.

The first attack was made to the north-west, and the Versailles troops captured the bridge over the Seine at Neuilly. Later in the day they were withdrawn. The effect of this withdrawal was to convince the people of Paris of the weakness of Versailles, and the demand for a sortie increased to such an extent that the Commune were forced to accede to it. Preparations began to be made, and a new Delegate for War was appointed, a shady soldier of fortune named Cluseret, who had fought in the American Civil War and had helped to sabotage the rising of the Bakuninists at Lyons the previous year.

The sortie took place on the 3rd April. Three columns moved out of Paris by various routes to attack Versailles. It is difficult to imagine a more badly organised military operation. The main column, led by Bergeret riding in a cab, marched down the middle of the main road, with no scouts and no attempt at concealment. There was no sort of cohesion between the columns, and no provision was made for reserves or lines of communication. The operation was, in fact, farcical, whether one considers it as military or as revolutionary warfare. The columns made some progress, and then were turned back or surrounded by the Versailles. Many were killed and the prisoners numbered thousands. Among the dead was Flourens, the Blanquist leader.

The defeat materially decreased the chances of success for the insurrection unless it turned the struggle into a revolutionary war, which it did not until the very last days, when it was too late. Its effect on Paris was to increase the disorganisation which already existed there. On the other hand, it assisted Thiers by raising the morale both of his troops and of his supporters within Paris. He was further strengthened by the repatriated prisoners who were being returned from the German prison camps. He resolved to follow up his advantage, and on the 6th April began the bombardment of Paris, a more ruthless bombardment than any the Germans had perpetrated during the first siege. From this time the offensive lay almost continuously with the Government.

Their advance, however, was slow. On the defensive, the Communards fought tenaciously, and retook many of the positions they had lost. Nevertheless, the Versailles

advance was steady, and by the 21st April they were in a position to commence their attacks on the line of forts surrounding Paris.

Meanwhile, within Paris, the revolution was losing ground to the authority it had allowed to rise from the ruins of the old authority. Cluseret, at the Ministry of War, was spending his time reorganising the National Guard within Paris on military lines. In the meantime the service of supplies and reliefs to the forces on the outskirts was almost entirely neglected. On the 16th April Cluseret set up a court martial, and at the Prefecture of Police Rigault, later to become Public Prosecutor of the Commune, was arresting all kinds of people on the flimsiest grounds.

SOCIAL DECREES

Meanwhile the Commune itself was embarking on the series of mild reformist measures which were later to be hailed by the Marxists as a sign of its revolutionary character. Military conscription was abolished, but as service in the National Guard was compulsory, this act had little significance. The salary of members of the Commune was fixed at 6,000 francs a year—four times as much as that of a skilled artisan. On the 29th March a moratorium on rents was decreed, and on the 16th April a decree was passed providing for the payment of debts in instalments, without interest, spread over a period of three years. On the same day a decree was issued providing that workshops which had been abandoned by their owners should be taken over and run co-operatively by the workers. It also provided, however, for an indemnity for the owners on their return, and for an investigatory commission to decide which workshops should be appropriated. The commission was not appointed until a month afterwards, and no start was made on the work of collectivising the workshops. There were also a few decrees regulating working conditions, such as that forbidding night work for bakers. These were the principal social actions of the Commune, and we shall return to them later when we discuss the lessons of the Commune.

The situation outside Paris reached a crisis on the 30th April when one of the forts, Fort Issy on the southwest, was evacuated by its exhausted survivors. Fortunately, the Government forces did not realise that the evacuation had taken place, and Cluseret was able to re-occupy it the same evening. This, however, did not save him from the anger of his colleagues, and he was deposed from his office and put under arrest.

His place was taken by Nicholas Rossel, a regular army officer who had very little revolutionary knowledge and whose main object for supporting the Commune seems to have been that he felt it an antidote for the decay within the existing system. He was a man of strong authoritarian views, and in our own day would almost certainly have been a rabid Fascist. From the beginning of his term in office he began intriguing for the establishment of his own dictatorship, and in this he was at first encouraged by the Blanquists, who envisaged the establishment of a Jacobin terror like that of '93.

Within the Commune itself the tendency towards authoritarianism was increasing, and the majority section, with their minds still full of the ideas of two revolutions ago, decided, against the opposition of the International and a few other moderates, to set up a Committee of Public Safety, with dictatorial powers, to replace the present Executive Committee.

These authoritarian tendencies were by no means unopposed. The International was solidly against them,

and so also at first was the Central Committee of the National Guard, which resented the methods Rossel was using in his reconstruction of the National Guard. For the moment, however, the authoritarians were in the ascendant.

THE BREACH OF THE FORTIFICATIONS

While these antagonisms were rising in Paris, the renewed attack on Fort Issy was gathering weight, and both the fort and the walls of Paris on that side were subjected to a violent bombardment, which broke down the walls and wrecked the ramparts of the fort until only two or three of the guns were in action. There was no course left but abandonment, and the survivors retired. The Versailles occupied the fort, and pushed forward across the Seine at Boulogne. Their trenches were now only three hundred yards from the walls.

The battle for the inner defences now commenced. Again the stage in the battle was marked by a crisis within the city. The fall of Fort Issy demanded a scapegoat, and Rossel, his hopes of dictatorship gone, was displaced from office. To evade imprisonment, he went into hiding, and was only discovered, by the Government, after the fall of the Commune.

His place was taken by Charles Delescluze, the most seasoned revolutionary of the Commune, who had spent years of exile in the prison camps of Cayenne, and who was to become the most significant individual figure of the Commune.

(This series of articles on the Paris Commune will be completed in two further sections, dealing respectively with the Battle for Paris and The Aftermath of the Commune).

GLASGOW MEETINGS
CENTRAL HALLS, 25 Bath Street
 Every Sunday, 7 p.m.

Speakers :
 February 21st DENIS McGLYNN
 February 28th EDDIE FENWICK

SOCIAL AND DANCE
 in aid of FREEDOM PRESS Funds
CENTRAL HALLS, GLASGOW,
 Friday 5th March, 7 to 11 p.m.

TICKETS 2/6 from :
ANARCHIST FEDERATION
 127 GEORGE STREET, GLASGOW, C.I.

—○—
 OPEN-AIR MEETINGS, weather permitting:
 Brunswick Street, every Sunday, at 3.30 p.m.
 Gaol Square, Paisley, every Sunday at 4 p.m.
 DISCUSSION CIRCLE. Every Monday at 8 p.m., at
 127 George Street, Glasgow, C.I.

“There Ain’t No Justice”

By Tom Brown

GOVERNMENT IS NOT alone the House of Commons or the Chamber of Deputies. It is the total means of public coercion wielded by the ruling class; the army, the police, the “courts of justice” and the rest. If we are to judge the quality of democracy we must look, not only at the House of Commons, but also at the policeman on the street corner, the gaoler locked up with his wards and the magistrate mumbling his “to prison for three months.” Judged not only by the making of laws but, what is more important, by the practice of law, democracy in a capitalist society justifies the pronouncement of Roosevelt—with the accent on the mock.

Let us visit a police court, not as principals of course. Police courts are presided over by magistrates who, in the democratic manner, are appointed by the Lords Lieutenant of the counties (usually dukes) and the Lord Chancellor, the representative of that democratic institution the House of Lords. The Lord Lieutenant is assisted by an Advisory Committee. Advisory Committees were “meant” to check abuse in the appointment of magistrates, but they are only *advisory*, having no power, and in any case are dominated by Conservative landlords and business men.

Most magistrates are, of course, unpaid amateurs. The reason for their appointment is not always clear. Mayors and chairmen of district councils are magistrates *ipso facto*. The local party bosses, Conservative, Labour and Liberal are thrown in and a few trade union minor officials “represent” Labour. The great remainder is made up of local business men, property owners and church people; all these usually mean the same thing. The other chief qualification is that they should be very old. Shortly before the present war the *Daily Mirror* sent a representative touring the provincial courts of England. Every report he made condemned the advanced age of magistrates in every court. Over seventy years of age was common, over eighty often appeared, and any magistrate under seventy years was regarded as a young scamp.

As if their property qualifications were insufficient cause of prejudice, the noted bias of old age is added. Very old people resent being disturbed

and any defendant is regarded as a disturber of rest even before he is tried. Imagine the chance of justice in the case of a youthful offender. Old age is jealous of the energies of youth and old age is often very cruel. Further, some magistrates are so deaf as to miss most of the backchat and some appear to be in the last stages of senile decay. One court I attended had on the bench a J.P. so old he reminded me of the short story of an old lady who was daily paraded in a bath chair by her servants. Three days after her death they still wheeled her through the park—they had not noticed any difference. Had she been a magistrate maybe they would have wheeled her to the bench instead of Kensington Gardens and some poor democrat would have gone downstairs thinking he had had a fair trial.

But the magistrate is not the only enemy of the poor defendant (we speak in terms of enmity, for the whole atmosphere is hostile instead of judicial). Even the appearance of the court chamber is so hard and gloomy it might have been designed to intimidate the prosecuted. It is impossible without previous experience to understand the procedure of the court, and the case is usually aggravated by the inferior feelings of the poor defendant. There is no-one to advise him if he is unrepresented and he usually speaks when he ought not to and is bullied for doing so, or he remains silent when he ought to speak—this is taken as a sign of guilt.

If it is a police prosecution he is usually upset by the evidence of the police. Police evidence appears to be well rehearsed and the oath is read so quickly as to seem to be blown out rather than spoken. After swearing on a book which forbids swearing and judging to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, policemen, as I have often witnessed, will proceed to tell more lies to the square inch than Ananias and Saphira told to the square yard. If it brings a cry of indignation from the accused he is at once set upon by the chairman, the clerk and the police and loses his nerve for the rest of the case.

The magistrates are not alone in trying the case; the Magistrate’s Clerk does more than a bit of butting in and in some courts even runs the show.

The police too usually take a hand, quite against the rules, the police superintendant or chief constable butting in questions or sniping at the accused. The courts usually work closely with the police both in session and out, and the chances of poor men escaping a police prosecution are small. The courts are heavily biased in favour of the police. In this case and others I must quote a book I have just read a second time, *English Justice* by *Solicitor* (Pelican Books, 9d.). I first read the book expecting different ideas from my own, for *Solicitor* calls himself a Conservative. I was surprised to find that the book throughout confirmed my own experiences and observation. On page 38 *Solicitor* asks: "What are the prospects of an innocent man, poor and of no exceptional capacity or courage, who is brought before the magistrates charged by the police with an offence? I regret to say that over twenty-five years' experience of our police courts has satisfied me that he will probably be convicted."

The experienced poor know this and act on their knowledge, pleading guilty even when innocent, hoping to thus get a lighter sentence. Street prostitutes usually plead guilty (they are usually innocent of the exact charge which is one of soliciting, not practising). Regular drunks also plead guilty and are fined five shillings or even half-a-crown. A plea of not guilty may cost them twenty shillings. Readers may verify this by visiting the local police court, but as they may wish to avoid such places we shall again quote our book choice: "It is unfortunately true that magistrates resent a plea of not guilty. A defended case takes much longer to hear, and the Clerk has to take fuller notes. A typical case was reported in a provincial paper on 14th August, 1931. Seven men were fined 10/- each for gambling on waste land. They denied that they were gambling and suggested that the police were merely "making a case". The Chairman is reported to have said 'If you had been sportsmen and pleaded guilty we might have dealt a little more leniently with you, but you have flatly made out these two policemen to be liars.' On the same day nine other men came before the Court on a similar charge, and it is not surprising that they pleaded guilty. They were fined 2/6 each, the Chairman remarking 'You see that if you own up you get better treatment!'"

The accused suffers further by the almost incredible speed at which most cases are tried. Many cases are given only a few minutes each. Again I shall quote *English Justice*: "The speed at which proceedings are conducted in some courts is almost incredible. The London courts provide the worst instances in this respect but the provinces can show some almost as bad. In April, 1932, a certain provincial court dealt with thirty-nine motoring offences in eighty minutes. This would not now be

regarded as quick work. Several courts I know deal with cases much more rapidly (August, 1939). I have been told that an eminent London Police Magistrate, lecturing to students on the law of evidence, informed them that of course these rules had to be disregarded in the police court owing to want of time . . . I remember discussing this question with the clerk of one of the best-conducted courts I know. He said 'You know as well as I do that if we observed the law strictly we couldn't possibly get through the work.' This gentleman's Court sits once a week."

Law, like everything else in capitalist society, is a commodity. If you have much money you can have much justice, but if you are poor you cannot have any. As Mr. Justice Matthew said "In this country justice is open to all—like the Ritz Hotel." It is popularly supposed that poor persons have the *right* to legal defence. The truth is that the Poor Prisoners' Defence Act of 1930 declares that if it appears to a Court of Summary Jurisdiction that the means of a person appearing before that court are insufficient to buy legal aid and that the charge is grave they *may* grant him a legal aid certificate. *May* not *shall*. *English Justice* quotes as typical of many cases that of two young men charged with stealing property worth £29. 8. 0. Their families were very poor, the fathers being unemployed. "Legal aid was at once refused, the Chairman, a wealthy man, adding that the men were in receipt of unemployment benefit." I asked if the Court considered that a man could afford to pay for legal aid out of 15/3 a week, and the reply given, apparently as a considered opinion and without heat, was 'Yes!'"

In the ungrammatical but eloquent words of a poor prisoner "There ain't no justice!"

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LETTERS OF

SACCO and VANZETTI

Book Review

NICOLA SACCO, a shoemaker, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, a fish-peddler, were together arrested on a charge of murder in the state of Massachusetts in May 1920. The letters collected in this volume were written during their seven years long confinement awaiting sentence of death for a crime of which they were innocent.

The two accused brought many witnesses to prove their alibi, that they were at the time miles away from the scene of the hold-up, but the police induced other witnesses to perjure themselves in identifying Sacco and Vanzetti as being two of the gunmen. Although these witnesses for the prosecution were afterwards discredited, their perjury proved and new evidence submitted by the defence, they were not able to get a new trial throughout the long imprisonment, and it was gradually borne in upon their friends and supporters everywhere that the State was prosecuting them not for murder but for their ideas. They were and had long been known to be anarchists and labour agitators. Before the trial had even begun the foreman of the jury was heard to remark: "Damn them, they're Reds: they ought to hang anyway, even if they're innocent."

That the two men understood their position from the start, better than those who would defend them is clearly shown in their letters. At no time did they put their faith in the legal struggle but always in the solidaric action of their comrades all over the world. Sacco in particular refused to sanction an appeal to the Governor or even to discuss his case with Governor Fuller. Despite all the persuasions of his wife, friends and counsel he refused to sign the petition based on the affidavits of prejudice against Judge Thayer, in order to get a new trial. "He declared it futile and

a denial of his principles to make any more representations to the authorities." In writing to a friend he says: "My hope, the only one which I had always that to-day rest in my heart, it is that only the friends and comrades and the international proletariat can save us from the iniquitous execution." Vanzetti also wrote: "My only hope remains in the solidarity of friends and comrades and the inter-workers . . . The work of the lawyers are useless before the law." and "Only the thunders of a mighty world-wide agitation and protest could induce the enemy to free us."

They always recognised the State as their enemy, recognised the class struggle in society. In Sacco's words: "And certainly as long as this system of things, the exploitation of man on other men reign, will remain always the fight between those two opposite class, to-day and always." and "I have try to hit at the centres of this decrepid society, toward always the conquest of an integral happiness of all the exploit." Regarding the petition already mentioned, Vanzetti wrote: "I did it for conscience sake. For I know that for us there is no sympathy nor consideration: we are liberty and right, which means equality and justice; they are authority and privilege, which means tyranny and injustice. . . . Is there not eternal war between the two?" And further "The laws are the codified will of the dominating classes; the laws are made to legalise the State organisation of violence; the laws are therefore the tools of the bosses as the judges, police, hangers and spies are their servants."

From these letters emerges an avowal and confirmation of their anarchist principles, for which the state of Massachusetts murdered them on Aug. 22nd, 1927, despite the overwhelming evidence of their

innocence and of the corruption of their prosecutors. Demonstrations of public opinion came too late to be effective. Even the confession of one of the gangsters concerned in the crime and his affirmation that Sacco and Vanzetti were not implicated, was of no avail to save these two. The State had determined their end from the first and was not anxious to have the real murderers exposed. To the last Vanzetti asserted his innocence and that of his comrade Sacco (who understood little English): "Sacco is a heart, a faith, a character, a man; a man lover of nature and of mankind. A man who gave all, who sacrificed all to the cause of Liberty and to his love for mankind; money, rest, mundane ambitions, his own wife, his children, himself and his own life. Sacco has never dreamt to steal, never to assassinate."

"I have never committed a crime in my life . . . I have fought against crime, and I have fought and sacrificed myself even to eliminate the crimes that the law and church legitimate and sanctify . . . I am suffer because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical . . . but I am so convinced to be right, that you can only kill me once, but if you could execute me two times, and if I could be reborn two other times, I would live again to do what I have done already."

The dignity and courage with which they behaved, as true revolutionaries, throughout their ordeal are reflected in Vanzetti's statement on receiving sentence:

"If it had not been for these thing, I might have live out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's onderstanding of man as now we do by accident. Our words—our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! This last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph." ("The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti," originally published at 7/6, is now available from Freedom Press at 2/6. The spelling in the quotations given above is that actually used in the letters.)

P.E.

NOTE:—The third and last article on Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* will appear in the March issue of *War Commentary*.

INDUSTRIAL NEWS

"Sentence of four years' penal servitude was passed at a North-west assizes on Wednesday on Herbert Lomas (35), a native of Rochdale, who was found guilty on three counts of denting pipes in an aircraft engine at North-west aircraft works, having reasonable cause to believe that such an act was likely to interfere with the performance of the duties of persons in H.M. Services.

Lomas was found not guilty of sabotage.

It was stated that Lomas had prised away the pipes so that he could more quickly fix mechanism which issued gases to prevent fire. The effect would be that the pipes would weaken in the region of the dent, and if a fracture occurred the engine would seize up.

The defence was a denial of intent and that because of domestic worry Lomas became careless in his work and acted unthinkingly.

After the jury had returned their verdict Police Sergeant Dawson said that between fifty and sixty other aircraft damaged in the same way had got into service and had had to be grounded for the pipes to be replaced."

Manchester Guardian 29/1/43.

As aircraft workers know well enough, under the conditions of hurried work due to piecework methods it is impossible to avoid a certain amount of bad workmanship of this nature. Workers receive savage sentences for this kind of thing whereas inefficient members of the government are merely moved from one lucrative post to another.

SOLIDARITY STRIKE

"Thousands of war workers had to walk yesterday at Barrow-on-Furness, where, because of a shortage of drivers, Sunday workers' bus services are operated on an overtime basis. Drivers and conductors refused to work the overtime as a protest against the refusal to reinstate their union secretary. Half a dozen buses manned by officials brought in workers from long distances."

Manchester Guardian 8/2/43.

STRIKES INCREASE

"Over 338,000 workpeople were involved in strikes during 1942, the highest number since 1937. Figures issued by the Ministry of Labour show that there were 1,281 disputes last year, compared with 1,251 in 1941.

Many of the employees stopped work more than once and counting these as separate cases, 455,000 were involved, including 106,000 thrown out of work because of them.

These stoppages lost 1,500,000 working days last year, against 1,100,000 for the previous year.

The Ministry state that this number was only a small fraction of one working day per head of the wage-earning population.

About two-fifths of the stoppages last year and over half the working days lost occurred in the coal mining industry.

Among the principal strikes were two on the question of wages by coal miners employed at Lancashire pits, involving 28,000 men and an aggregate loss of about 140,000 working days.

A long strike at a Yorkshire colliery meant 40,000 days lost, although only 1,500 workers were involved.

The engineering, shipbuilding and other metal industries account for nearly two-fifths of the disputes, the largest involving 20,000 shipyard workers on Tyneside, with a loss of 135,000 days."

Daily Record 2/2/43.

SLUMS FOR AMERICAN WORKERS

"Home may mean a million different things to many people but to a Baltimore war worker it is likely to be anything with a top on it, according to a profusely illustrated article in the current issue of Pic Magazine.

'An influx of over 250,000 men and women into the city's war plants has taxed housing facilities beyond belief and has turned the entire edge of the city into a ragged and dirty border. Whole families are living in overturned boats, shacks, discarded and rotten houses, old buses and abandoned streetcars,' the magazine said.

'If these housing conditions seem bad, the sections available to Negro workers are completely unbelievable. Now comprising one fifth of the population of Baltimore, they are living on one fiftieth of its area. Old chicken houses, coal sheds and garages are typical residences for these Americans and their families . . .'"

Industrial Workers 12/12/42.

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