

WAR

For Anarchism

COMMENTARY

Vol. 4. No. 9

MARCH 1943

TWOPENCE.

Who are the British Fascists?

IN SEPTEMBER, 1939, that amorphous body the "left", a queer collection of labour leaders, publishers, journalists, unemployed "intellectuals", lawyers and neurotics, declared the second world war to be a war for freedom and announced the rapid radicalisation of the nation at war. "Revolution by War" was the favourite slogan, and pretty intellectuals, who had never heard a shot fired in anger, gave precise military instructions to the British General Staff. One might have thought the war was being run by the Left Book Club.

The fall of France and the invasion scare which followed gave a badly needed invigoration to the "war for freedom" merchants. Badly shaken by the steps towards the corporate state taken by the British government at war, the "progressives", the labour journalists and the left propagandists revived their notion that the war was making Britain and Europe more radical, that the nation at war must necessarily become more democratic, more "labour" and socialist. The newly formed Local Defence Volunteers or Home Guard were the "People's Army" and were likened to the Workers' Militia of the Spanish Revolution. There was to be no officer, no badge of rank, no saluting and no barrack square parade; just guerilla tactics and plenty of shooting. Wintringham and Levy opened a college for guerillas and there was talk of the British generals adopting the tactics of the Spanish Anarchists. It was a "People's War", they said.

Hitler's invasion of Russia in 1941 increased the stock-in-trade of the "People's War" merchants. The Communists executed their second double somersault of the war and everything that was bad became good, everything good became bad. Enemies were friends and friends were enemies. Capitalists became "comrades" and workers became "fifth columnists". More than ever it was to be a "People's War."

Alas! Life rarely supports the theories of Socialists and Communists. So far from becoming more democratic, more popular and more radical the war is strengthening all the tendencies towards the corporate state inherent in the British capitalist system. In war the nation becomes more conservative, more oppressive, more fascist. Less and less can the state at war tolerate the organisation and practices previously won by the workers—free trade unions, free speech, the right to quit the job. More and more are oppression, toil and care laden on the workers' backs, while the rich become more indolent, opulently arrogant and tyrannical. The war has turned right, not left.

The "war for freedom" has given us military conscription, labour conscription, home guard conscription, conscription for women, fire-watching conscription, forced labour for the mines and shipyards and the threat of serf labour for the farms. The "People's War" has given us the Essential Works Order, the forced transfer of labour, a new institution of "Income Tax at the Source," whereby the worker is robbed of a third of his wages at the source. It has given us "clothing rationing" whereby the worker pays his coupons for shoddy rags, while the ruling class may pay three or four pounds for a hat or fifty pounds for a coat. It has put the anti-militarists in Wormwood Scrubs and the war profiteer in a swanky West End hotel. It has abolished the free trade union and reduced free labour to serfdom.

The exigencies of war were to be applied to rich and poor alike, indeed the rich and poor have ceased to exist in the language of Communism. Just as Common Law is not applied in the same manner to rich and poor, just as "rationing" does not apply in the same way to either class, so there exists one war law for the rich and another for the poor. We have space for but one example, but that is a very

obvious one. While hundreds of workers are going to gaol for even slight infringements of the Essential Works Order, no employer has been imprisoned, nor is it intended that any shall be.

So far from the war "dishing" the Conservative Party and the British capitalist class it has completely tamed the trade unions, the Labour Party and the Communists. Trade Unions are now part of the British corporate state and gladly assist the smashing of trade union rights and conditions. A large body of shop stewards (Communist stewards at least) have become nigger-driving "production committees". The Labour Party, under the leadership of Bevin, Morrison and Silent Attlee is (apart from an occasional sham revolt) more conservative than the Conservatives. The Communist Party tries to be an advance edition of the Ministry of Information, not only in the infinitesimal amount of information it puts into the largest possible volume of sound but also in the exact line of propaganda of the day. The exact relationship of the two bodies is interesting but obscure.

How often when the *Daily Worker* attempts to popularise 'some new sacrifice, some government minister follows close behind. Some time ago *War Commentary* (in *Red and Black Notebook*) drew attention to the *Daily Worker's* advocacy of bread rationing and the adulteration of flour by potatoes. A few weeks later Woolton threatened bread rationing and the Ministry of Food began an intensive campaign for potatoes in the bread. (The reason for the propaganda aimed at the housewife is the difficulty of introducing potatoes during the milling of wheat). War has made stronger the Conservative Party and has harnessed to it all those "lefts" who yelled about a "People's War."

The recent labour "revolt" over Beveridge does not weaken our thesis. We cannot take it seriously. The leader of the "revolt" is Greenwood who, as the Minister who appointed Beveridge, instructed him to make it clear that the report was not the opinion or necessarily the policy of the government. (See *War Commentary*, Jan. 1943). The sham fight reminds us of the old nursery rhyme "Tweedledum and Tweedledee agreed to have a battle, Poor Tweedledum said Tweedledee had spoiled his nice new rattle."

But it is not alone for war that the Conservative Party marches towards the corporate state. There is only one real form of post-war planning in Britain now. That is the post-war plan to keep the Conservatives in power, and to increase that power. 1914 saw the Conservative Party well out of office and the Liberal Party strongly in power. After four years of war the Conservatives were in power (and, with two insignificant intervals, have retained office since) and the Liberal Party in collapse. The

end of the present war will bring about much the same, but with the Communist and Labour Parties playing the Liberal death-bed scene.

We are often asked "do you think that these things will continue after the war?" It is the intention of the government that they shall continue after the war, long after. Almost every week some spokesman of the government tells us that in his department the war measures will be continued after the cessation of hostilities; persons like the Commander of the A.T.S. who said that woman's conscription must be continued after the war—for the purpose of domestic service! Recently, within four weeks, we have had such statements from three government spokesmen. Bevin warned the trade unions that their restrictions would continue after the war. Morrison announced the intended continuance of rationing and a general spoke of the post-war Home Guard as a counter-revolutionary force. The latter person's statement is worth quoting: "When the Armistice is signed human nature being what it is there may well be an inclination for the discipline of the country not to be as steady as it should. That is why, apart from the responsibility of the Home Guard during the war, I would remind you of the great task members will have afterwards."

"Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Smith, G.O.C. London District, said this yesterday when he inspected the Second City of London Battalion of the Home Guard." *Daily Mirror*, 8/2/43.

There is one other newspaper we might quote on this subject. Alan Moorhead, writing from Algiers, reveals the Fascist nature of the Allied activity in North Africa, supporting the view of *War Commentary*:

"Look for a minute at this new Government Giraud is erecting so quickly. There is no elected assembly. Instead there is at the top the leader, Giraud.

A series of executive and advisory committees are being set up—one for finance, another for shipping, and so on.

Thus, in Algiers last week Peyrouton nominated a group of editors and newspaper proprietors to act as a committee to control the Press.

In general, then, it is a corporate State that is being erected here, with our approval and assistance—a corporate State with the object of waging war as quickly and efficiently as possible."

Daily Express, 22/2/43.

Moorhead goes on to say that it is this corporate state which will invade France and establish itself there. The Fascist corporate state in Africa, in France and in Britain; that is the plan of the Conservative Party and the British capitalist class, aided by Communists and Socialists. Anarchists oppose imperialist war and the corporate state. The fight against one is the fight against the other.

ANARCHIST COMMENTARY

PARTING WITH SOME OF THE SWAG

LORD NUFFIELD has recently given another £10,000,000

for Medical Research, and of course the capitalist press has been fulsome in its praise. The motor magnate is represented as being most "generous" and "public spirited". But where does the ten million come from? Who creates all this wealth which Nuffield hands out with such well publicized munificence? Does it represent the fruit of Lord Nuffield's own toil and labour? No, it is wrung out of the sweat of the workers in the Morris factories and the other concerns which he controls. That he can give away such vast sums as ten million pounds—and he has given more in the past—only indicates the vast scale of Lord Nuffield's plundering of the working class.

What a buffoonery that capitalists should gain credit and praise for giving away in "good works" wealth which they themselves have stolen from the workers! Lord Nuffield may sound very humane in the columns of the daily press, but he hardly appears in that light to the workers in his factories whom he debars from joining or forming unions. The philanthropist who gives huge sums for medical research is sufficiently hard headed and economical where labour is concerned. Regularly, at those seasons of the year when motor sales were slack, he would sack workers by the thousand, and send them to join that peacetime army of undernourishment, the unemployed. Medical research may be counted lucky for being allowed to share in the wealth plundered from the workers; but the latter are condemned thereby to live their shortened lives in poverty. And poverty, in the words of Dr. Aleck Bourne, "is the great underlying cause of ill-health, disease, and premature death". At least it gives medical research material to work on.

HOME GUARD CHAT

★ EVERY day one reads of workers being prosecuted for failing—at the end of their lengthened hours of war

work—to attend some absurd Home Guard parade. It doesn't matter that a man sweats his guts out all day in a factory or farm, he's still expected to play at soldiers in his "leisure" time. The following three items are all from the same issue of the *Sunday Express*, 14. Feb. 1943.

"Cyril Wesley, 25-year old Mansfield miner, fined £6 for being absent from Home Guard duty 38 times, said he was 'too tired' to answer official letters asking why he stayed away".

And on another page:

"A man who works 56 hours a week at a factory on a shift system must attend Home Guard parades. Lancaster county magistrates yesterday gave a verdict in favour of the Home Guard in a test case. Robert Leonard Walker, of Heysham, employed at a factory in the north-west, was fined £5 for failing to attend a parade".

But on the very same page as the last quotation, appeared the following item under the headline "Judge is H.G.—but no night duty":

"Sir Gonne St. Clair Pilcher, the High Court judge, is a private in the County of London battalion of the

Home Guard, but, in order to be fit for his judicial duties, he does not do night guards.

Colonel Murray V. Burrow Hill, his commanding officer, told the *Sunday Express* last night: 'Sir Gonne is not being detailed for night guard any night before he sits in court—that is to say, from Sunday to Thursday. But there is nothing to prevent his doing night guard on Friday or Saturday nights.'

The judge is to receive his commission soon, the colonel added. He will act as a liaison officer.

Sir Gonne Pilcher said: 'When I went to join the Home Guard, I pointed out to the commanding officer that it would be difficult for me to do duty involving my being up all night, as obviously I would not be best fitted to do my job next day. I was told I need not do night guards.'

Mere workers, however, are expected to be just as efficient next day.

And I would like to see the Commanding Officer's face if a factory worker were to "point out" to him that he didn't intend doing night duty "as obviously he would not be best fitted to do his job next day"!



"WHAT'S THE HOME SECRETARY DOING ABOUT IT?"

THE New York Anarchist paper *Why?* describes a Communist in "an Anarchist Alphabet":

C for Communist: a fellow working in a defence plant, his wife is six months gone with a baby, and he's yelling for a Second Front.

The Second Front hasn't gone down too well, factory workers are apt to look sideways at its well reserved protagonists; so the C.P. look around for other red herrings to distract workers away from the class struggle. The recent defacing of Lenin's bust in Holford Square (the bust itself is a pretty big joke on its own anyway) has provided a golden opportunity. At all events, they seized it with both hands. "This disgraceful hooliganism" shouts the Stalinist press in unison, "Ten days have gone by and still there is no arrest. What is the Home Secretary doing about it?" If some half-wit—another Van der Lubbe would do—were arrested and convicted and pilloried, the *Daily Worker* would no doubt be satisfied. Honour would have been vindicated.

But ten years ago the C.P. were engaging in just such acts of hooliganism. It was a Stalinist who boasted that he had daubed red paint all over the wax-work of Hitler in Tussauds (this was before 1939-41, of course). Everyone will agree this was a notable contribution to the anti-Nazi struggle. But it would have been a shade ridiculous if the opponents of hooliganism were screaming "Ten Years have gone by, and still no arrests. What is the Home Secretary doing about it? Workers! Protest! Bring the matter to your union's notice! Write to your M.P., Sir Kenneth Clark and the local Food Office!"

Daubing statues, tarring and feathering, and such like horseplay provide excellent political balderdash for shrill parties like the Communists and the Fascists. Symbols and gestures suit the communists but anarchists are not interested in such yellow-press trivialities. (N.B. The British Imperial Government has apologized for this insult to the Soviet Union—Stalin will be pleased.)

WHAT I STAND FOR

Ignazio Silone

IGNAZIO SILONE, the well-known anti-fascist author of *Fontamara*, *Bread and Wine*, *The School for Dictators*, states his attitude towards the war in the following letter to the New York Weekly, *New Republic*. We are glad to re-publish it in its entirety, as this has not yet been done in England (*The Tribune* recently printed parts of it, without, however, indicating that the letter had been cut.)

We are in agreement with the position taken up by Silone, for it is virtually an anarchist one, although he calls it "ethical socialism". He refuses to accept the choice of the two evils, EITHER capitalist democracy OR fascist dictatorship; instead he works for the "Third Front, which cuts through all and which, independently of any government, will lead to the real decisions." Like the anarchists, Silone also attacks the State as a social institution; and he also expresses that sympathy for and solidarity with the peasants' struggles which have always characterised the anarchist movements throughout the world. Finally, his rejection of the authoritarian principle, and his adherence to federalism are also fundamental tenets of anarchism.

ST. BERNARD speaks of men who were devoured, chewed to bits and swallowed by God. That is what life has done to many of my friends: it has crushed and ground them so with wars, revolutions and fascism that I am surprised not to find them dead or locked in padded cells. One poor devil came to see me the other day, his eyes shining as if he had made an important discovery. "One should always act toward others," he said with sober emphasis, "as one would like to have them act toward oneself." I hadn't the heart to tell him that this discovery was not precisely new, but expressed an ancient wisdom, for I saw that he had seized upon it by dint of struggles and sufferings; that he had, so to speak, created it anew. Truth is eternal, but nevertheless we must continually strive to recapture it, or else we are nothing but parrots repeating a catechism. *Multa rinascentur* Many things that were dispersed, buried and forgotten are coming back to life.

Friends have reproached me for having evaded the class struggle in my last book, "The Seed Beneath the Snow". They say I took refuge in the inner life of my hero and that I subjected social problems to a purely moral analysis. In spite of their reproaches, I can assure you that I haven't become a victim of loneliness and despair. But I didn't want to offer explanations in my novel, because a novel can't be explained without being demolished, and that is more than you can ask of any author. If I had written a commentary, however, I should have begun by saying that the tragedy of socialism reminds me of the hunter who went out to shoot quail and found wolves instead; he had the wrong ammunition. Socialism and communism have lost much of their contact with reality. They have suffered their worst defeats from forces which they thought had nothing to do with dialectical materialism or the class struggle, and which, for that reason, they refused to take seriously.

The most important of our moral tasks today consists in liberating our spirits from the racket of gunfire, the trajectory of propaganda warfare and journalistic nonsense in general. My hero, Pietro Spina, was snatched away from active work for the Party and from the frenzy of public meetings. Suddenly he was alone with himself, in a great quiet that enabled him to renew his contact with nature, with men, with elemental forces that he had forgotten. Before hearing the grass slowly stirring under the snow or mice darting through a cellar—and my book is alive with mice—one has to develop a highly specialized ear. But after one has learned to register the sounds of life, they soon become louder than any bursting bomb.

This is not a war like that of 1914. To be sure, it is another war for the imperialist repartition of the world,

but that is by no means the whole story. This time the outcome is not a matter of indifference to those who hope for a new society, for on it depends the survival of those vestiges of Christianity, humanism and democracy on which we can later build and rebuild. But the struggle between fascism and liberty will not be decided on the military plane. In this battle one must reckon with a Third Front, which cuts through all nations and which, independently of any government, will lead to the real decisions. *It is on this Third Front that I have volunteered to fight.* That is why you will not find me serving as a bombing pilot or a tank driver, but only as an isolated Partisan attacking the enemy behind his own lines—just at the point where he feels himself to be safest and most invulnerable.

I have been asked whether there is anything in the real world that corresponds to the society described in my novel or to their gloomy Mediterranean landscape with its neo-classic chapels and its tombs. I might be immodest enough to answer, "Yes, those people and places exist, because I created them. They have existed from the moment when I set them on paper," But I would rather not talk in riddles. It was the censors in Warsaw and Zagreb who really answered the question, by refusing to let my works be published in translation. They were convinced that the author must be a Polish or a Croatian agitator, and that he used a South Italian background only as an excuse for making subversive comments on events that had taken place in Poland or Yugoslavia. Other censors would have suppressed a translation of "Fontamara" into Bengali or Egyptian, since the poor peasants who speak those languages could also have recognized themselves in my *cafoni*. Cosmopolitanism is not something that peasants learn at Schwanneke's bar or the cafe du Dome. Only hardships are universal, and the genuine cosmopolitanism of this earth must be based on suffering.

The *cafone* is by no means primitive; in one sense he is over-civilized. The experience of generations makes him believe that the State is merely a better organized Camorra. He feels that the principal occupation of the intellectual classes which serve as intermediaries between himself and the State is to write letters of recommendation. And when peasant families make extreme sacrifices so that one of their sons can study, it is in order to have a friend at court. There are *cafoni* who, like many European Jews, have been so crushed by their painful experiences with the State that they can no longer conceive of an administration by, or a government of, persons. For them, the State is a mysterious something "up there", and the greatest boon they can ask is that this state will con-

sent to be tolerant and even to read their letters of commendation.

Marx often speaks of the peasants as having torpid minds, but what did he know about them? I imagine that he watched them in the market place at Trier and observed that they were sullen and tongue-tied. He would not stop to think that they had assumed this role deliberately. Believe me, the peasant is no more stupid than the factory worker, and I have found that he is likely to possess a deeper knowledge of human life than exists in the cities. Through nearness to animals and nature, through direct contact with great events, birth, love and death, many peasants acquire an immense wisdom. Such men might be compared to those humble-looking farmhouses that have vast cellars in their depths. Many Marxists have shown a sort of contempt for the inner life. Their ideal, as expressed in the novels of Malraux and Hemingway, is the man of steel, the man of action who never hesitates and has no scruples. This conception derives from Nietzsche, and it has lately been expressed much more compellingly by certain fascist writers—for example, by Ernst Jünger, with his glorification of the "Worker" (But Jünger has changed in his later novels, which are clearly anti-fascist.) The fact that these recent works of his are still published in Germany does not testify to any lingering respect for art or ideas, but rather to an utter contempt for the intelligence.

The life of a revolutionist is far more difficult, dangerous and full of pitfalls than that of a Nietzschean hero. It is, for example, dangerous to rush into battle without being fully in accord with oneself, to the very depths of one's being. We know the story of the hermit who, in order to give himself wholly to God and renounce his earthly desires, castrated himself with his own hand. He was, it is true, delivered from certain inner conflicts, but at the same time he lost the energy of his love for God; and he was forevermore incapable of returning to normal life. The case is the same with many Communist bureaucrats, who have lost their faith in the always-changing Party Line, but who, as a result of their spiritual self-mutilation, can never return to normal humanity. Often they act like men walking in their sleep, but behind their steely masks they are nothing but little, terrified people who have learned to be extremely prudent.

There is no theory whatever that is revolutionary in itself and that cannot be used for reactionary purposes. After being a doctrine, Marxism has become a sort of drug, a sedative, a sop to one's conscience. Perhaps one day we shall reach the formula: "Marxism is the opium of the people". What survives in Marxism is above all its ideological criticism. One cannot dismiss it as a tragically cold technocracy, but in its very essence it is humanist. Socialism, however, will outlive Marxism. The effort to transform Utopian dreams into scientific realizations was not terminated by Marx; it will continue forever. Today the problem before us is, "What sort of Socialism?" For fascism is also a type of socialism; and in one sense it has even played a useful role by absorbing and incorporating into itself all the harmful and diseased elements which socialism had suffered. Precisely for that reason, it has presented socialism with an opportunity for renovation and purification. Fascism has cried for Barabbas, has made him its leader, but that is nothing for which it should be envied. Let the fascists have their Barabbas, while we continue with the essential task of criticizing our own ideology.

The struggle between socialism and fascism will not be decided by war, the truth being that wars in general, decide nothing. It may well be that fascism will be conquered by force of arms, and nevertheless will develop in the

victor states—perhaps even with a democratic, or socialistic mask, under the form of a "Red fascism." History is made by men, not by social determinisms, and I confess that I am not pessimistic.

In summing up, I stand for: (1) an integral federalism and (2) an ethical conception of socialism. Federalism is often recommended these days as a penalty for defeated nations. But it would not be a penalty; it would be a triumph for our cause. As for the ethical conception of socialism, it does not demand a new morality; there is no question of seeking a new justification for socialism; all we have to do is to recognize its true potentiality. A society develops when the classes that have been most overburdened with hardships are recognized and judged at their true worth. I am proud of having given these hardships a new name, that of the *cafone*.

We have all heard it said that the masses will not fight except for material things, and hence must always be guided by mediocre ends and mediocre people. I believe, on the contrary, that the masses have rejected the leadership of the democrats and the socialists because it was middling and muddling. If mediocrity were good enough for the masses, the Social Democrats would never have lost their influence over the German workers. It is precisely because the masses suffer from a feeling of mediocrity that they refuse to accept mediocre leaders. The Church won the hearts of the masses in the days when it offered them the boldest and most difficult aims. It lost its spiritual leadership when it became prudent and conservative.

There is still another myth to be refuted. It is that in all countries where the means of expressing opinions are monopolized by the State, men can no longer think freely or boldly. But the truth is quite the contrary; that the greatest, the most audacious thoughts on liberty have come from nations where liberty had ceased to exist. The human mind will never let itself be transformed into a machine. Human liberty and human dignity are conceptions that will never perish.

LECTURES

EVERY FRIDAY EVENING

7.0 p.m.

MARCH 5th. *Bakunin*

GEORGE WOODCOCK

MARCH 12th *The Beveridge Report.*

TOM BROWN

MARCH 19th. *The French Terrorists*

JOHN HEWETSON

QUESTIONS DISCUSSION

FREEDOM PRESS ROOMS

27, BELSIZE ROAD, LONDON, N.W.6.

(Swiss Cottage tube: 31 'bus route)

The Local Government Myth

By Jim Barker

THE PAMPHLET "*Vote—what for?*" recently published by Freedom Press indicates the uselessness of voting as a means of attaining freedom. Although written more than 50 years ago, the position laid down by Malatesta is undoubtedly correct, whatever may be the objections of the parliamentarians.

And the same arguments apply to local government. Local government has never existed as a separate entity apart from the national government; the function of local authorities is to operate under the direction of parliament and the county councils. Local governments have practically no power of their own—their job, in the main, is to collect rates and perform the ordinary tasks of administration under the direction of Whitehall. The county councils, as precepting bodies, make demands on the local councils for the purpose of "collecting" for the Poor Rate, maintenance of asylums and hospitals, and for the upkeep of courts, etc.

Local taxes began with the Poor Law Act of 1601 when, for the first time, payment of a Poor Rate was made a statutory obligation on "all" occupiers of land and houses. National taxation dates from 1660, when the Restoration Parliament wanted money for Charles II. The Land Lords, who formed the Restoration Parliament divested themselves of the obligation to pay rent for their lands, while at the same time holding on to the land itself.

Local councils are responsible for the imposition of rates on "all" property, for the collection of the rates and for Court proceedings upon default in payment. They are also responsible, under the De-rating Act, for the amount of "reduction" in rates to be allowed. Under this Act, industrial concerns are relieved of the payment of rates by 75 per cent. In other words they only "pay" a quarter of the assessable rates. Firms thus relieved include railways, aircraft, laundries, coffin makers, masons, breweries, paint works, printers, mineral water and a host of others. In addition all churches, chapels and mission halls are completely exempt, never having paid rates and taxes. This loss of revenue totalling millions of pounds per annum, has to be made up by the local ratepayer, either directly or, as in most cases, through the landlord who makes a profit on the collection and receives a reduction of 10 per cent. on all his property.

Local government is a myth; it never has existed nor could it exist under the present system. Its orders are direct from Whitehall, except in the case of small matters such as refuse collection, street cleaning and so on, and the local councils cannot even pass bye-laws without the permission of the appropriate Minister.

Before any scheme can be put into operation it must first be submitted to the Minister for his approval and receive his sanction for the raising of the money required. Instructions are often received from Whitehall for some scheme or other that will involve the ratepayers in further expense. Some few years ago, for instance, it was suggested that local councils should purchase sites for municipal aerodromes. Some corporations fell for the idea, thus involving the local people in a further charge on their rates for subsidising the scheme.

The fact that local government is performed in a local area by locals does not make it a local affair. In housing, for example, the local council is informed by the Minister of Health that a re-housing programme is to

be embarked on, the Sanitary Inspector prepares a report of houses "unfit for human habitation" which is then submitted to the Minister. An enquiry is then usually held by an inspector of the ministry who hears all the objections of the landlords and sometimes decides against the views of the council. If he agrees however, details are then sent to the Minister with an approximate expenditure (this is for the sanction of the loan). If the Minister agrees the scheme is put out to tender and the generally accepted rule is that the lowest tender is always accepted. In the Minister's directions a clause always appears stipulating "that the houses shall be a type suitable to the working class." As most people are well aware of the type of council houses erected (barracks would be a more suitable name) we can be sure that the houses are as near as is possible to the railway, factories or sewage works.

Before a worker can obtain a house he has to submit to a regular inquisition (unless, of course, he is able to reach the ear of a councillor). The questions are fast and numerous: "are you in work? how much do you earn? how long have you been at your job? do you think you could keep the house clean? are you likely to keep your present job? Let's see your rent book . . . how many children have you? are you likely to have any more? . . . We notice you are only paying 10/6; do you think you could afford to pay 15/-? will your employer give you a reference?" This is only part of the performance.

If you have a large family, then council houses are too small; if you have one child they are too large: if you earn £3 a week then you could afford to take a house from a landlord; on the other hand if your wages are only £2 then you cannot afford one if you have a small family. The unemployed man must wait until he obtains a job, while the employed man must not earn too much.

The reason why the councils are so concerned about your earnings is that the Minister has given the councils sanction to borrow money, either from the Public Loans Board (whoever they may be), the Prudential or Pearl, or some other "finance" company, and has agreed to pay them—usually over a period of *forty years* interest ranging from 2½ per cent. to 4 per cent. per annum.

Councillors are unpaid: as "business" men they generally share out in the relief under the de-rating act. They are composed of retired kipper merchants, house agents, ex-politicians, civil servants (retired) and landlords masquerading as "independents" or "progressives", members of Rate-payers' associations and Labourites and sometimes even Communists. Whatever the colour of their old-school tie may be they are nothing more than figure-heads.

No council can make a bye-law, sack a town clerk, a medical officer or a sanitary inspector without permission. They cannot purchase land or property; they can however dismiss the dustman or the charlady, paint the fire-engine or engage a caretaker.

The real rulers of councils are the officials; councillors are only there to delude the public that local affairs are controlled by local people. The members meet on various committees and their decisions are sent to the full council, every month. This is presided over by a mayor, the chief representative of the King. A mock parliament takes place, where matters from other committees are discussed. The committees are usually Education, Housing,

Anarchist Movement In Japan

GOVERNMENT "EDUCATION" has been so effective that some radicals who should have sprouted brains by now look upon the Japanese as a single nationalist military unit, a yellow horde. All the lecturing in the world on class differences within Japan does not speak as plainly as this letter from one of the Japanese comrades, published in "Man!" during the invasion of Jehol Province by the Mikado's militarists:

"... Beside our organ there are many Anarchist journals and papers published in Japan. Among them the *Kaiho Bunka* (Emancipation of Culture) is an organ of the Anarchist artists' and intellectuals' group; the *Kokushoku Shinbun* (Black Journal) is that in Korean by the Korean Anarchist workers in Tokyo and the neighbourhoods. In Korea the Anarchist movement is very vigorous and subjected to the most brutal oppressions, and many comrades are put in prison.

"A great number of writings of the great European Anarchists like Bakunin, Proudhon, Kropotkin and others, was translated into Japanese. The complete works of Kropotkin are already published. Those of Bakunin are also to appear. Recently the translation of Malatesta's writings is appearing one after another. And all of these translations have had the greatest significance in advancing the Japanese Anarchist movement on its right way, and yet the Anarchism of Japan has its own origin in the thinkers some centuries ago.

"The renewal of the organ *Jiyu Rengo Shinbun* has hitherto been an organ of the Zenkoku Rodo Kumiai Jiyu Rengo Kai (National Free Federation of Anarchistic Labour Unions, and at the same time, performed its part as an integral militant paper of the Anarchist movement in Japan. In view of the obstacles, however, arising often from this fact, we decided to make it independent from the above Federation of labour unions...

"The third meeting of the Zenkoku Rodo Kumiai Jiyu Rengo Kai was held in Tokyo on April 2. But the meeting was suppressed and dispersed by the police soon

after the opening, the subjects being left entirely undiscussed.

"Under such a political and social situation our anarchist movement is... confronted with ever more difficulties. But at this time we are more firmly convinced of the importance of our movement, and notwithstanding the cruel suppressions and persecutions we are carrying out our campaign for the propaganda of anarchist-communism, for the emancipation of workers, for the Anarchist revolution..."

In March of 1935, the *Jiyu Rengo Shinbun* in a letter to the American comrades, outlined the unorganized farm and factory strikes then taking place in Japan, stating:

"... At any rate, it is time to fight more courageously against the State in view of the menace of war between Japan and other countries."

Then, on November 11 and 12, 1935, the Japanese Government conducted raids on the Free National Federation of Trade Unions at Kanda, Tokio, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, and many other centres of anarchist and syndicalist activity. 200 comrades were arrested, charged with responsibility for the existence of an underground anarchist communist movement.

The leading comrades were executed. Under the revised Public Peace Maintenance Law, many others were jailed for an indefinite period—"until they will shake off all dangerous thoughts they had ever entertained."

Labouring in Japan's penitentiary system are thousands of social rebels. Sweating in chain gangs, federal prisons and detention centres in America are thousands victimized under the criminal syndicalist laws or the Alien and Sedition Acts. These are our brothers, white, black or yellow!

Warm and comfortable in the Japanese Imperial Palace, the Royal Family gives its blessing to Japanese militarism. Snug and cozy in their Park Avenue apartments and Washington hotels, the Royal Families of America grin joyfully at the profitable antics of the ticker tape, noting the latest in Anaconda Copper and Du Pont de Nemours Preferred. THESE ARE OUR ENEMIES, WHITE, BLACK OR YELLOW!

FROM "WHY"

Public Health, Fire Brigade, Electricity, Finance and the Burial Board. Taking them in rotation, the qualifications for chairmanship of the above committees on the council to which I was attached for nine years were (1) a laundry proprietor, (2) a landlord, (3) a retired colonel, later a soap traveller, (4) a printer, (5) a "Cruelty to Animals" Inspector, (6) a dairy proprietor, (7) a church organist—all, you will appreciate, practical men.

The Education report, although submitted to the Council, could not be referred back on any grounds, Public Health reports could be challenged on small items, Housing likewise, while Finance and Burial decisions were beyond recall.

The Fire Brigade Committee has the most power as it is solely maintained by the rates. It is the committee that endeavours to abstract payment for attendance at fires; this attendance charge is illegal and is a method of obtaining money from the unwary; people who receive these accounts should ignore them; once paid, the money is not recoverable at law.

It is often claimed that "workers" on the council can obtain benefits for their fellows; this is an illusion owing to the Whitehall control. As a workers' representative I maintained that the workers were entitled to the use of electric light; against this it was contended that the workers could not afford it and that the cost of cabling

was too great. Eventually however the council agreed and the cabling was carried out. As a result, thousands of people had installations within a year.

Very good, say our politicians. Let us see just how good. The workers were charged 15/- a point although the council were paying only 10/6 a point. On top of this they were to pay 5 per cent. for a hiring fee (this payment went on forever) and 5d. a unit payable in advance. At the same time large business concerns, cinemas and factories were having a reduction, some being charged one penny and three-eighths per unit. These concerns paid one-quarter in arrears, men were employed to read the meters, and their accounts were often not paid under six months, whilst the workers paid in advance with no extra labour costs.

The great joke was that at the end of the financial year the Electricity Department made a contribution to the rates of £300 which they had made from the workers' increased charges. Everyone rejoiced... even the workers!

Local governments are merely debt creating agencies functioning in the interests of big business. This is demonstrated by the fact that Municipal Debts run into millions of pounds, even the annual interest being 40 millions a year, or £1 per head of the population. Never have the people been bled so much for so little.

WHILE INDIA STARVES

THEY ARE SICK OF CHICKEN.

"Americans are having to eat so much chicken that they are heartily tired of it. Beef has been practically unobtainable in New York suburbs for weeks, and the queuing housewives of the U.S.A. are hoping the Government will get a move on and ration meat and butter.

The average British housewife's eyes would pop out of her head if she were to enter an American grocer's just now and see the stacks of cheese and eggs on the counter and shelves."

Reynolds News, 7/2/43.

DEFINITIONS

"The case of Chile is characteristic. For nearly a hundred years the resources of the country had been developed by mines, railways, and other capital obtained from abroad through loans, and part of the fruits of this development was used for the orderly payment of interest and amortisation. It is fashionable to call such arrangements exploitation, and many cases of abuse can undoubtedly be quoted to support the general charge; but the lending of capital by an industrially strong country to one requiring development is really the only means of raising living standards throughout the world. If no interest were paid it is unlikely that the capital would be lent, and new words do not alter the old fact. It is important to realise that there was nothing wrong with British foreign lending in the past. Certain safeguards were undoubtedly lacking."

Financial Editor in *Manchester Guardian*.

VOTE—WHAT FOR?

"A change has occurred in the constitutional structure of this country which has profound and far-reaching consequences. The House of Commons no longer represents the constituencies in the ordinary sense. It prolongs its own life by statute, and it has co-opted nearly a hundred members without consultation with the electorate. The majority of M.P.s were elected on peace issues and to preserve the limitation of arms."

Lord Beaverbrook reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, 10/2/43.

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by ANTON CILIGA	2d.
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by HERBERT READ	1/-
God and the State			
by M. BAKUNIN	1/-
Revolutionary Government			
by P. KROPOTKIN	3d.
The Wage System			
by P. KROPOTKIN	2d.

THE GENTLEMAN'S GENTLEMAN —INDIAN VERSION

"Dear Mom, I got a valet."

Thus one American corporal began his letter home, after making his first delightful discovery of the Indian bearer system. A bearer is an Indian-style valet and quite an institution among the British officers in India. British privates have never had enough money to enjoy such service, but the high-paid American troops can afford it, jointly if not singly.

Used to doing such traditional chores as making small purchases (and getting a commission from the shopkeeper), laying out clothes, mixing drinks, bearers working for Americans find themselves oddly employed. One first sergeant, whose bearer has had some schooling, keeps his

Through

lad busy colouring duty rosters and various official documents. Another imaginative enlisted man makes his man spend several hours a day rolling dice over and over again. 'I have always wanted to see if the law of averages really works,' he explains.

British Tommies, whose salaries are smaller and who can't afford personal service on anything like the scale of the Americans, taunt the Yanks unmercifully: 'Hullo, dear. Did your bearer brush your teeth and tuck you in last night?'

So far no one has found any better answer than the simple 'Yes, he did.'

After all, he might have."

From the American Magazine *Life*,
quoted in *Reynolds News*, 7/2/43.

COST OF THE WAR

"It is just as well to be reminded that industrial mobilisation for total war is not achieved without its own type of casualty list. There was a plain enough reminder in the statement made to a health conference in London that industrial accidents to women have gone up by 192 per cent. since the war started and by 42 per cent. in the case of men. Nor is it only industrial accidents and dermatitis that have increased; it was mentioned yesterday that tuberculosis in London showed a rise of 43 per cent., with a death-rate increase of 72 per cent., and that infant mortality in the capital had risen from 47 per thousand live births in 1939 to 57 in 1941. These and other recorded aspects of vital statistics are evidence of hard times and lowered physical resistance; the greatly increased accident ratio among women proves that a sudden change-over to factory life is not achieved without cost. For three and a half years the pace has been quickening, and the strain undoubtedly tells on the weaker vessels."

Manchester Guardian, 22/2/43.

WAR-TIME BRITAIN

"Comment by a bus driver after the air raid in a Southern county area to-day:

'Not far from the scene of the bombing I was surprised to meet a pack of foxhounds going off to a meet in the same district. It's a funny war.'

Star, 9/2/43.

STILL WAITING

"We draw attention in our news columns to-day to a case which demands immediate action by the Ministry of Labour. A woman welfare officer, reinstated in her post by order of the National Service Officer, has been offered re-employment at a wage of 1d. per hour.

Mr. Bevin told the House of Commons recently that 774 workers had been sentenced to imprisonment for offences in connection with employment regulations. No employers have yet been sent to gaol. The time is ripe for equality of punishment for offences against both the letter and the spirit of the law."

Reynolds News, 14/2/43.

the Press

NO REMEDY TO BATTERY SHORTAGE

"Don't overdo the night-blindness story. There are many reasons for difficulty in seeing in the dark, including the simple reason that it's just dark. It may be that you are short of vitamin A. You may be short-sighted. You may be just nervous. Eat carrots by all means, but don't regard a carrot in the stomach as a sort of internal torch battery."

Letter to the Listener.

GOVERNMENT KNOWS BETTER

"The administration expenses of the egg scheme (excluding subsidy) are £500,000 a year. And this is what happens.

Last year, after the scheme had been running for eighteen months, and ought to have been in working order, 300 dozen eggs from this farm were wasted because no one in Eggs Branch was able or willing to make proper arrangements for marketing them. The loss fell on me, not on the Ministry of Food or the persons responsible. Another 500 dozen would have been wasted if I had not made my own arrangements.

During the week the eggs were being wasted I wrote, I telephoned, and I telegraphed. My 'phone costs came to over £5. Although I pointed out that by the exercise of just a little common sense not a single egg need have been wasted, I was assured that it was far better that the eggs should be thrown away than that the slightest departure should be made from the regulations."

Letter to the Manchester Guardian.

NOT SYNONYMOUS

"The Commissioners of Works, Lord Woolton (Minister of Food) and Mr. Ernest Bevin (Minister of Labour) were defendants in the King's Bench yesterday when their decision to take over a factory in North London for storage purposes was challenged.

Commenting on the case Mr. Justice Hilbert said: 'I have no power to sit here and say whether these departments have acted rightly or wrongly. I can only decide whether they acted lawfully or unlawfully.'

Newspaper report, 2/2/43.

THREE LYNCHINGS IN A WEEK

"Three recent lynchings in Mississippi have served the Axis cause more brilliantly than could any squad of saboteurs landed from a submarine. They have dealt a blow to the already shaken morale of the Negro tenth of our population, who have lived with the bitter realization that they are denied democracy in a democracy which is fighting for its life. Governor Paul Johnson of Mississippi in attributing the lynchings to Axis elements at work in Mississippi . . . is denying the ultimate and bitter truth. White Mississippians—probably not an Axis sympathiser among them—Mississippians with sons and brothers fighting courageously all over the world, murdered two fourteen-year-old Negro boys and an older Negro prisoner through their simple, implacable, arrogant belief that the Negro is a near-animal and must be kept in fear and respect of the white man.

War industries have brought the Negro workman better wages and have increased his self-respect and his feeling of independence. The loosening of the white man's economic control leads him to try to continue his control over the Negro by violence. Three lynchings within a week are bad enough, but even more tragic results can be expected unless the federal government quits dodging the issue and makes a strong and bona-fide approach to the problem."

The New Republic, 2/11/42.

LUCKY CHURCHILL

"Mr. Churchill smokes eight to ten cigars a day.

Senor G. de Blanck, the Cuban Minister, said yesterday to Torquay rotarians that the Prime Minister had told him this when Senor de Blanck gave him a present of 7,000 Havana cigars."

Daily Mirror, 16/2/43.

Our Prime Minister is not likely to be concerned by a rise in the price of tobacco. The Cuban Minister's cigars will see him through the war!

OPTIMISM

"Debate on the Beveridge plan was followed by an improvement in the shares of companies transacting industrial assurance. Prudential "A" gained 10s., Pearl 7s. 6d., and Britannic 5s."

Daily Express, 18/2/43.

OPEN LECTURE-DISCUSSIONS

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14th March **KEN HAWKES**

"Workers' Control"

Pages of Revolutionary History

THE PARIS COMMUNE

Part III

The Struggle for Paris

DURING THE DAYS following the breach of the outer defences the dissensions within the Commune became more pronounced, and the rule of the Communal Council less effective. The authoritarian majority of Jacobins and Blanquists became steadily more extreme, and in proportion as their dictatorial trends increased, the authority they attempted to wield diminished.

THE INTERNATIONALISTS PROTEST

In the Communal Council there became evident a difference of attitude between the Jacobin majority and the Internationalist and vaguely libertarian minority which would have become irreconcilable if outside events had allowed it to develop to any conclusion. The appointment of the Committee of Public Safety had been carried through against the opposition of the Internationalists, and at the general spread of repressive action which followed the minority could voice only unavailing protests. Their attitude was resented by the Jacobins and Blanquists, who attacked them both in their press and in the council, and they soon ousted the Internationalists from influential posts under the Commune. The minority finally decided that they could no longer be party to this state of affairs, and that they must therefore protest and abstain from further action in the Council.

On the 16th May they sent a protest to the papers, signed by some 21 members of the Commune. In this manifesto they declared:

'By a special and precise vote the Commune of Paris has abdicated its power into the hands of a dictatorship to which it has given the name of the Committee of Public Safety. By this vote the majority of the Commune has declared itself irresponsible and has abandoned to this Committee all the responsibilities of our situation. The minority to which we belong affirms, on the contrary, the idea that the Commune owes it to the political and social revolutionary movement to accept all responsibilities and decline none, however worthy may be the hands into which it is desired to abandon them . . . Devoted to our great Communal cause for which so many citizens are dying every day, we retire to our districts which have perhaps been too much neglected . . . There we shall serve our convictions usefully and will avoid creating in the Commune dissensions which we all reprobate; for we are persuaded that, majority and minority, despite our political differences, we are pursuing the same end, namely, political liberty, the emancipation of the workers.'

The minority saw, evidently, the bad effects of the kind of authority which was being established by the Jacobins within the Commune. They did not, however, realise that the fault lay not in one kind of authority, but in authority of any kind. This was shown by the fact that they were quite willing to participate in a rule by less than a hundred people in the Communal Council itself, while they were unwilling to agree to the rule of five in the Committee of Public Safety. If their expressed desire to return to their districts had sprung from a

genuine realisation of the futility of trying to run the Parisian revolution by a government, it might even then have been useful. That it sprang from no such idea was demonstrated when three days later most of them attended a meeting of the Council.

Their protest caused a sensation, especially as it coincided with a growing discontent among the National Guards and the workers generally with the actions of the Commune. Much popular feeling supported the minority merely because they were opposing the tendencies displayed by the Jacobins in the Council. The discontent among the National Guards also found expression in a strengthening of the influence of the Central Committee

By

George Woodcock

of the National Guard, which emerged from the obscurity into which it had sunk after the election of the Commune, and began to issue instructions conflicting with those of the military commanders, just as in the days preceding the Commune it had countermanded the orders of the Government's officers. The revolutionary people of Paris, although they were becoming conscious of the shortcomings of the Commune, were still by no means beyond the stage of looking for leaders.

COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY PLOTS.

While the revolutionaries within Paris disagreed among themselves, their common enemies both within and without Paris were working steadily towards the destruction of the revolution. There were still many of the bourgeoisie left in Paris who awaited anxiously the arrival of the Government troops, and in the National Guard itself were reactionary elements who plotted to assist Versailles, as well as a number of pure opportunists, soldiers of fortune who were willing to act as double agents for their own advantage.

A number of plots to open the gates of Paris all failed, either through discovery by Rigault's police or through betrayal by the double agents. A widespread plot for a bourgeois uprising on the entry of the Versailles troops into Paris was also uncovered, and some of its leaders arrested, but many of its members, wearing tricolor armbands smuggled in from Versailles, did actually assist the troops during the later street fighting.

Meanwhile, outside Paris, the army of Versailles was advancing steadily towards the inner fortifications. After the capture of Fort Issy, they began to attack the neighbouring Fort Vanves, which held out until the 14th May, its defenders retiring through the underground tunnels into Montrouge. At the same time a heavy bombardment was commenced, with the object of breaking down the walls of Paris on the western side. This was so severe that the fortifications very soon became almost untenable. Most of their guns were silenced, and the casualties among the artillerymen were very high. The western districts of Passy and Auteuil were almost deserted, except for a few people living in cellars, and communications and supplies to the men defending the walls were very bad.

THE VENDÔME COLUMN

The Commune, nevertheless, found time for the symbolic acts which served instead of the social revolutionary measures which might have saved the revolution. On the 16th May, while the walls were being smashed down and the enemy trenches were creeping steadily towards them, the Vendôme column, erected by Napoleon I to celebrate his imperialist victories, was felled with great ceremonial, to the tune of brass bands and windy speeches from the demagogues. The demolition had been ordered by a decree which declared the column to be 'a monument of barbarism, a symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism, a denial of international law, a permanent insult by the conqueror to the conquered, a perpetual attack upon one of the three great Principles of the French republic, Fraternity.' No doubt these sentiments were very enlightened and estimable, and the demolition of the column a necessary revolutionary act, but the day on which the danger to Paris was so close was hardly the time for pompous ceremonials.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE COMMUNE

The life of the Commune was almost ended, and its last few days were marked by an even greater attempt to tighten the authoritarian net. But it is significant that most of the expressions of power did not come from the Commune itself, but from the various bureaux into which its politicians have grouped themselves. Power was passing from the legislative to the executive. (It is surprising how faithfully the Commune demonstrated in miniature and in quick motion the manner in which government has developed with the growth of the state). The Committee of Public Safety was busy suppressing newspapers. Rigault, the public prosecutor, started on the 19th the trials to determine the fate of certain individuals, including the Archbishop of Paris, who had been taken as hostages when the news of the maltreatment of Parisian prisoners came from Versailles. Plans were made for the registration of all men and the issuing of identity cards, mainly in order to facilitate conscription into the National Guard. The Committee of Public Safety and the Central Committee of the National Guard reached an agreement regarding their respective authority over the military resources of the Commune.

Meanwhile, however, little of practical importance was being done. The few reformist social measures were hardly put into operation. The men on the walls and fortifications were inadequately supplied and relieved. The elaborate system of barricades within the city which had been talked of since the early days of the Commune was not commenced. The Commune continued to act as if it had years of life before it instead of only days.

On the 21st May it met to try Cluseret, the former Delegate for War, on charges of treason. The trial was suddenly interrupted by the news that the Versailles troops had entered Paris by the Saint-Cloud, through the action of a free lance traitor named Ducatel, who had informed them of the abandonment of the walls in that sector. The Commune hurriedly acquitted Cluseret, and broke up its meeting. It never assembled again, and the authority it had wielded vanished with it. The last tragic and heroic week of the revolution remained to the people of Paris.

THE BATTLE OF PARIS

At least one man among the revolutionaries realised at this hour the bankruptcy of the authoritarian and military tactics the Commune had up to now used so

ineffectively to counter the Government. This was Charles Delescluze, who in the early morning of the 22nd May issued his proclamation virtually abdicating military authority and declaring to the people of Paris that they alone could carry on the battle against the reaction.

'Enough of militarism, no more staff officers be-spangled and gilded! Make way for the people, the fighters, the bare arms! The hour of revolutionary warfare has struck! The people knows nothing of scientific manœuvres, but when it has a musket in its hand, paving-stones under its feet, it fears not all the strategists of the monarchist schools . . .'

In this act Delescluze cast aside the concepts of a life of Jacobinism and identified himself with the revolutionary people. To the credit of the Commune it must be said that most of its members, their fruitless functions ended, returned among the people and acted as heroically as their comrades in the bitter days than ensued.

Entering at the Saint-Cloud gate, the Versailles rapidly moved along the walls and seized the other gates on the south-west side of Paris. Some 70,000 troops entered and occupied the residential districts of Passy, Auteuil and Grenelle almost without a struggle. At one in the morning they captured the Trocadero, which had been turned into a fortress, and, by the time the tocsin began to gather the Parisians for the most terrible week in their revolutionary history, the Commander of the Government troops had already set up his headquarters there.

The next day the Government troops pushed on, cautiously but as yet with little opposition, and reached the Champs-Élysée, where they occupied the Élysée Palace and the Palace of Industry. They entered the Place de la Concorde, but here they were met by a volley from the Tuileries, which drove them back with heavy losses. In the north they advanced as far as the outskirts of Batignolles, on the edge of the revolutionary centre of Montmartre, and in the south they moved along the left bank as far as the aristocratic Faubourg St. Germain and through Vaugirard as far as Montparnasse railway station, which they took after very heavy fighting.

At noon on the 22nd the Versailles halted their advance. They now held all the western part of Paris, and after their suspiciously easy advance had come up against a stiffer resistance as they approached the revolutionary districts. The Communards busied themselves in building haphazardly the barricades which should have been there weeks ago. The various committees and delegations left after the dissolution of the Commune issued orders which nobody heeded. The insurgents, waiting to defend the revolution with all the strength at their command, were in no mood to obey the orders of those who had already shown their inability to act in any effective way for the preservation of the revolution.

That afternoon began the shootings and fires which were to augment the horror of the days that followed. A number of prisoners were summarily shot by the Versailles. The Ministry of Finance was set on fire by their shells, and the burning documents generated such a violent heat that the neighbouring barricades became quite untenable.

On the morning of the 23rd the bombardment started again, and the Versailles began to advance. Their main objective was Montmartre, and this they captured in the afternoon, after particularly hard fighting in which a great part was played by a detachment of women led by the anarchist Louise Michel, who in the earlier days of the Commune had organised the nursing service. South of Montmartre the soldiers were held up in the Rue Royale (continued on p. 15)

We Still Need Your Solidarity

WE APOLOGISE to those of our readers who contributed to the January Press Fund for this belated acknowledgment of their generous contributions. Though pressure of space for articles prevented the Press Fund being published in the last issue readers must not assume that we have suddenly become independent and do not need their solidarity! Our programme for this year is more ambitious than in 1942, and consequently if anything, we need your support more now than ever before. Some of our friends realise this and their contributions appear regularly each month. But what about the others who never think of Freedom Press finances? We know that there are some people who would like War Commentary to disappear because they don't like the ideas expressed in it, but we know by our large mail that there must be thousands of readers who look forward to receiving their copy of War Commentary each fortnight. What would their reaction be if War Commentary ceased publication or were obliged to come out in eight pages due to shortage of funds?

With paper prices again increased this month War Commentary will cost even more to produce and we must meet this increased cost through our Press Fund. One Glasgow comrade has taken the initiative by making a collection among comrades in his group and at Harland and Wolff with the result that our Funds have benefited by £2. 10s. 0d. What about all those other comrades who take supplies of War Commentary to sell among their workmates. Have they tried to see what kind of response their direct appeals will receive? Let all our sympathetic readers resolve now that the position will not arise where publication of War Commentary will be threatened by financial worries!

THE EDITORS.

Glasgow readers! Support the Social and Dance organised by the Glasgow comrades in aid of Freedom Press Funds (details in this issue of War Commentary).



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JANUARY, 1943.

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Chadderton: J.H.H.	2	6		Gillingham: M.C.	7	0	
London: V.R.	5	0	0	London: A.M.	5	0	
Sheffield: L.S.	3	6		London: E.G.	10	0	
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*Collected by J.D.:—

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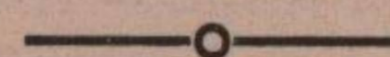
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127 GEORGE STREET, GLASGOW, C.I.



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127 George Street, Glasgow, C.I.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MUTUAL AID

THE CONCEPTION of evolution through mutual competition, the "Hobbesian war of each against all", which Huxley put forward as "Darwinism" was shown by Kropotkin to receive no confirmation at all from a direct study of nature; and in the last article we briefly sketched some of the evidence brought forward by modern anthropologists that mutual aid is an inborn tendency in human society.

Kropotkin sums the evidence regarding animal life in these words:

"Happily enough, competition is not the rule either in the animal world or in mankind. It is limited among animals to exceptional periods, and natural selection finds better fields for its activity. Better conditions are created by the *elimination* of competition by means of mutual aid and mutual support. In the great struggle for life—for the greatest possible fulness and intensity of life with the least waste of energy—natural selection continually seeks out the ways precisely for avoiding competition as much as possible. The ants combine in nests and nations; they pile up their stores, they rear their cattle—and thus avoid competition, and natural selection picks out of the ants' family the species which know best how to avoid competition, with its unavoidably deleterious consequences. Most of our birds slowly move southwards as the winter comes, or gather in numberless societies and undertake long journeys—and thus avoid competition. Many rodents fall asleep when the time comes that competition should set in; while other rodents store food for the winter, and gather in large villages for obtaining the necessary protection when at work. The reindeer, when the lichens are dry in the interior of the continent, migrate towards the sea. Buffaloes cross an immense continent in order to find plenty of food. And the beavers, when they grow numerous on a river, divide into two parties, and go, the old ones down the river, and the young ones up the river—and avoid competition. And when animals can neither fall asleep, nor migrate, nor lay in stores, nor themselves grow their food like the ants, they do what the titmouse does, and what Wallace (*Darwinism*, Ch. 5) has so charmingly described: they resort to new kinds of food—and thus, again, avoid competition." (*Mutual Aid*, pp. 72-3).

In regard to mutual aid among men, Kropotkin cites an exceedingly interesting passage from Darwin. "Darwin was quite right," he says, "when he saw in man's social qualities the chief factor for his evolution, and Darwin's vulgarizers are entirely wrong when they maintain the contrary."

"The small strength and speed of man (he wrote), his want of natural weapons, etc., are more than counterbalanced, firstly, by his intellectual faculties (which, he remarked on another page, have been chiefly or even exclusively gained for the benefit of the community); and secondly, by his *social qualities*, which led him to give and receive aid from his fellow men. (*Descent of Man*, 2nd Ed., pp. 63, 64.)"

Modern observations have only confirmed the formidable mass of evidence which Kropotkin adduced in *Mutual Aid*. Sociability has a pre-human origin, and mutual aid lies at the root of all social institutions.

"Sociability and need for mutual aid and support are such inherent parts of human nature that at no time of history can we discover men living in small isolated families, fighting each other for the means of subsistence. On the contrary, modern research . . . proves that since the very beginning of their pre-historic life men used to agglomerate into *gentes*, clans, or tribes, maintained by an idea of common descent and by worship of common ancestors. *For thousands and thousands of years this organization has kept men together, even though there was no authority to impose it.*" (*Mutual Aid*, p. 129).

Yet this evidence for the universality of the mutual aid tendency is tacitly ignored by all opponents of anarchism, whether capitalist, fascist, or socialist. Let us again quote Kropotkin himself:

" . . . though a good deal of warfare goes on between different classes of animals, or different species, or even different tribes of the same species, peace and mutual support are the rule within the tribe or species; and that those species which best know how to combine, and to avoid competition, have the best chance of survival and of further progressive development. They prosper, while the unsociable species decay.

"It is evident that it would be quite contrary to all that we know of nature if men were an exception to so general a rule: if a creature so defenceless as man was at his beginnings should have found his protection and his way to progress, not in mutual support, like other animals, but in reckless competition for personal advantages, with no regard to the interests of the species. To a mind accustomed to the idea of unity in nature, such a proposition appears utterly indefensible. And yet, improbable and unphilosophical as it is, it has never found a lack of supporters. There always were writers who took a pessimistic view of mankind. They knew it, more or less superficially, through their own limited experience; they knew of history what the annalists, always watchful of wars, cruelty, and oppression, told of it, and little more besides; and they concluded that mankind is nothing but a loose aggregation of beings, always ready to fight with each other, and only prevented from so doing by the intervention of some authority."

(*Mutual Aid*, pp. 74, 75).

That such views should be held by capitalists and supporters of capitalist society is not surprising. In order to justify support for a social and economic order based on competition, strife and tyranny, it is necessary to elevate competition, as the Manchester School of *laissez faire* did, into a positive virtue making for "progress". Acceptance of the principle of mutual aid demands the rejection of capitalist society, and *vice versa*.

But the implications of mutual aid are also ignored by socialists. Wells, for example, already implies the justification of government by his remark that before social forms could develop "a certain restraint upon the primitive egotisms of the individual had to be established". Wells may be a poor sort of socialist, but his views in this particular do not differ from those of other socialists, especially the followers of Marx. In defending their conceptions of the State against the critical attacks of the anarchists, these people declare that authority and power to enforce it are necessary to protect society from the antisocial inclinations of the individual. Attacking anarchism recently a socialist speaker declared that "you must have authority where a division of labour exists, otherwise everyone would do as they liked". The assumption behind all these arguments is that "doing what one likes" is automatically antisocial, and that social behaviour must be *imposed* on men by an authority outside of themselves, to wit, the State. Such a premise makes the erection of a central coercive authority a logical necessity.

But to assume that "doing what one likes" is necessarily to engage in antisocial behaviour is to ignore the whole evidence on which the conception of mutual aid is based, to deny its universality in human society and throughout the societies of animals. In effect, such an assumption destroys the whole basis of socialism itself. If authority and restraint are necessary, how are we to explain that in the primitive societies which exist to-day without recourse to authority or government, "freedom but not licence is the principle of the group and the characteristic of the individual"? How explain that "public opinion and tradition are the sole and sufficient sanctions of conduct" in these societies? The history of governmental and class society is at most only 7,000 years old, whereas the primitive communist society has existed since modern man himself appeared on the earth, while the social principle of mutual aid has existed in animal societies for longer still. As Kropotkin and more recent investigators have shown, men with their weak physical equipment, would never have survived at all in the struggle for existence but for their practice of that mutual aid and mutual support. Yet this social principle which is inherent in man, and has been the main factor in his evolution and survival is calmly ignored by socialist theory.

Like the capitalists with their economic theories of the necessity for competition, the socialists ignore the lessons of *Mutual Aid* because it destroys the premises on which their theories of the necessity of authority are based. These people are content to construct their social and political theories—especially political—in the study or the Reading Room

of the British Museum. Kropotkin, by contrast, was before everything else an observer of what actually happens in life, a realist who never permitted his theories to lose touch with the facts of human life. His study of animal life demonstrated quite clearly that the social instinct has a pre-human origin. So far from requiring a coercive authority to compel them to act for the common good, men behave in a social way because it is their nature to do so, because sociableness is an instinct which they have inherited from their remotest evolutionary ancestors. It is necessary to stress once again that without their inherent tendency to mutual aid they could never have survived at all in the evolutionary struggle for existence, much less developed the social arts and institutions which distinguish them from the other animals.

In the middle chapters of *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin shows how mutual support was the dominating feature not only of animal societies and primitive human communities, but also of the highly developed city communes of the Middle Ages. The central authority embodied in the National State is found only in the last three hundred years of our epoch, (though similar institutions have existed in previous eras) and despite all its attacks on local initiative, the principle of mutual aid still survives in all the vital institutions of society. However ruthlessly the State attempts to eradicate mutual combination and support among the workers it can never succeed in uprooting it altogether, for it provides the cement which binds society together and gives it whatever degree of cohesion it may possess.

"In short, neither the crushing powers of the centralized State nor the teachings of mutual hatred and pitiless struggle which came, adorned with the attributes of science, from obliging philosophers and sociologists, could weed out the feeling of human solidarity, deeply lodged in men's understanding and heart, because it has been nurtured by all our preceding evolution." (*Mutual Aid*, p. 229).

The socialists therefore who wish to set up an authority to compel men to be social are ignoring the historical fact that men cannot help being social, and that the authority they wish to set up in the shape of the socialist state can only act as a disruptive and antisocial force. Government by authority can only function on the eternal State principle of "Divide and Rule"; it can never act as a cohesive force. Nor is the imposition of such a force from outside necessary to compel men to act according to their nature—that is, in a social manner. Authority simply hinders men from giving free expression to their inherent social tendencies.

The social revolution which will bring a harmonious and developed life to men is seen therefore to imply a struggle to destroy all forms of coercive authority, and set men free to develop their innate social tendency. In every revolution of the past, the workers and peasants have thrown off their class

oppressors, and have then immediately set about organizing their lives on a basis of free agreement among themselves. The necessity for an authority to restrain the "primitive egotisms of the individual" is simply illusory, and a product of capitalist ideology. The institutions set up by the Spanish workers and peasants in 1936 were free collectives imposed by no authority, but built by the free co-operation of the workers themselves after they had overthrown the coercive power of the State. But when the counter-revolution ushered in by the Socialists and "Communists" established this State power once more it immediately set about destroying these free institutions of the workers, and in consequence destroyed the backbone of the struggle against Fascist tyranny.

Thus the study of primitive societies in which no government exists, and of the short-lived revolutionary societies of our own day, both confirm Kropotkin's teachings as profoundly realistic, and at the same time condemn socialistic ideas of authority as having no basis in nature, and being absolutely reactionary in effect. The struggle for freedom is the struggle against government for the purpose of allowing free development to man's nature. We anarchists are ready to do without all forms of authority because the study of men and of life shows that men do not need such restraints. As Kropotkin said, "We are not afraid to say: 'Do what you will; act as you will'; because we are persuaded that the great majority of mankind, in proportion to their degree of enlightenment, and the completeness with which

they free themselves from existing fetters, will behave and act always in a direction useful to society; just as we are persuaded beforehand that a child will one day walk on its two feet, and not on all fours, simply because it is born of parents belonging to the genus *homo*." (*Anarchist Morality*, p. 24).

The principle of mutual aid which is seen throughout nature and in all human societies is ignored by all authoritarian theorists, whether capitalist, fascist or socialist: but it is fundamental to anarchism. The great value of Kropotkin's book was his demonstration that freedom of scope for this principle was the essential pre-requisite for human happiness and progress. He showed that anarchism is the most realistic and practical method of all, because it is in line with the tendencies which have operated throughout the whole length of human history, and have their roots in nature itself. It is the schemes to bring about the revolution by means of coercive authority which are illusory and Utopian, and ultimately reactionary in effect.

J. H.



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THE PARIS COMMUNE (continued from p. 11)

and at the Tuileries. When the Communards finally evacuated the Rue Royale at midnight they had fired most of the buildings, and the flames effectively held up the advancing troops.

On the 24th and 25th the Versailles extended their hold on the centre of Paris and the Left Bank, capturing the Latin Quarter and the Pantheon, until the only quarters left to the Commune were the solid working class quarters, Belleville, Menilmontant, La Villette, the environs of the Bastille and a section of the Left Bank beyond the Pantheon.

In their retreat the Communards had set fire to the buildings which were in their minds symbolic of the past they were fighting. The Tuileries, the Palais de Justice, the Prefecture, the Hotel de Ville, most of the Ministries, all went up in flames in a great holocaust of revenge against the institutions which the Parisians had risen to destroy. Desperate, now almost hopeless of success, the revolution was fighting in a passion of destruction against the symbols of the forces that were destroying it.

In the Latin Quarter, Rigault, the terrorist Public Prosecutor, was caught by the soldiers and shot in the street. On the evening of the 25th Delescluze, worn out from a life of struggle and realising the futility of the Jacobin ideas he had held through his life, walked out of his office for the last time. Clad in the traditional garments of the '48, top hat, frock coat, red sash, gold-headed cane, he walked to the barricade in the Place du

Chateau d'Eau. When the fire became hot his companions stayed behind, but Delescluze walked to the barricade, climbed to the top, and stood there waiting to die. Almost immediately he fell, riddled by the Versailles bullets.

The ring closed in steadily over the surviving fighters, Barricade after barricade was turned after ferocious fighting. The fortified squares and buildings fell one by one. In every street from which the workers retreated buildings burned, and to add to the misery of the day a drizzling rain fell through the pall of smoke that hung over the city. As each Communard position fell the shootings went on methodically. There was very little quarter given now, on either side.

The last stronghold of the Commune was the revolutionary working class district of Belleville, where the Communards kept up the struggle until the 28th May. The workers fought steadily, street by street, barricade by barricade. The Cemetery of Pére Lachaise, the last fortress, fell, and 147 Communards were lined up against a wall and shot down. Varlin the Internationalist and Ferré the Blanquist still fought on with a few workers in a narrow circle of streets. By noon the fighting was almost over. The last barricade, in the Rue Ramponneau, was held by one man for a quarter of an hour after the rest of the fighting was over. When his ammunition was finished, he threw down his rifle and walked away.

The revolution had ended. The restoration of 'order' commenced.

(The series of articles on the Commune will be completed in a fourth article on "The Aftermath".)



WHY INDIA STARVES

Newspapers have attributed the famine in India to black marketeers and hoarders. No mention has been made of the enormous quantities of food of which the British Government has deprived the Indian people during the last few months. At the same time newspapers report a glut of wheat in Canada and the United States and that food is stored for starving Europe after the war. That Indians should starve by millions need not concern us, however.

"Dr. Gangulee, a former professor of Calcutta University and an Indian expert on nutrition, spoke on the drain on India's food supply for war purposes at a conference called by Swaraj House.

It had caused the normal shortage to pass to acute shortage, and to famine in far more districts than was officially admitted and in country places as well as urban areas. He said it had been calculated that from the beginning of the war until June of last year 827,000 tons of rice, 430,000 tons of wheat and flour, and 278,000 tons of grain and pulse had been purchased by the British Food Ministry and for the Army. Indian eggs had been brought over to test their 'suitability' for the English public and Indian milk was being exported as condensed milk powder, cheese, and butter.

India had also to relieve Iran's food shortage and feed the large proportion of the Italian prisoners taken in Libya, the Allied troops in the country and European refugees.

There were three types of hoarder. The large-scale hoarder is usually a British firm working in India as an agent for the supply organisation. The medium-sized hoarders are the grain dealers, some of whom lend grain instead of cash. The British Government have not controlled them. This is a form of appeasement. The small hoarder is merely storing for home consumption."

Manchester Guardian, 11/2/43.

War Commentary

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