

# WAR *For Anarchism* COMMENTARY

Vol. 5, No. 3.

DECEMBER, 1943.

TWOPENCE

## STRIKE STRATEGY

THE LAST FEW months have witnessed an intensification of the class struggle. The total number of strikes has been increasing, and several major strikes have occurred whose lessons are of great value to the revolutionary struggle of the workers for their own emancipation. The stoppages of the engineering workers at Barrow and the Rolls Royce factory in Glasgow, of the miners of Nottingham and Lanarkshire, show clearly that the working class is not prepared to tolerate indefinitely the anti-labour measures taken by the ruling class.

As with all strikes in war time, these strikes were unofficial and illegal. In each case, moreover, the strikers found themselves confronted not by the employers and the State only, but also had to fight against their own Trade Union leaders. The status which the reformist union leaders have acquired was shown by the fact that employers nowadays always refuse to recognize the strike committee (unless forced to do so), but only the union leaders who condemned the strikes! The reactionary Press, even the *Daily Mail*, declare that the principle of the union leaders' authority was at stake, and that these unofficial strikes must therefore be crushed. These leaders who have repeatedly declared their intention of making the Trade Unions an "integral part of the (capitalist) State", are now evidently the blue-eyed boys of the boss class. It is significant that in each of these strikes, the situation in which the strikers disregard their reformist leaders and proceed to organize their class battles by themselves has been described by the newspapers as *Anarchy*. It is a struggle between Union authority and anarchy—that is workers organizing on the job. The kept Press is of course all for Authority.

The union leaders attempt to cripple these strikes by refusing strike benefit from their enormous funds. But the strikes show that this refusal of funds is not necessarily crippling. The strikes have in most cases been entered into only after months or

even years of negotiation through the machinery for "adjustment" set up by the bosses and their government. In spite of the refusal of strike benefit, although they have not been completely successful, these strikes have gone further in a few days towards compelling the bosses to accede in some degree to the workers' demands, than negotiation has done in as many months.

In the last war, the trade union leaders played a similar role, so the workers set up their own defence organization in the shape of the Shop Stewards' movement. But in this war the Shop Stewards, mostly in the hands of the Communist Party, have also ranged themselves against the strikers. The C.P. stewards have rotted the shop organization long beforehand by preventing shop meetings from taking place. Unlike the old-fashioned, pre-Stalinist shop stewards, who regarded themselves as delegates of the workers in the shop, mandated to carry out their fellow workers' demands, the C.P. stewards of to-day simply tell the men what their policy is (Production Committees, etc.), or act without consulting the men at all. They even have deliberately acted *against* the expressed mandate of the workers (examples of this were given in an article entitled "C.P. Shop Stewards' Betrayals", in the October issue of *War Commentary*). These tactics of the Shop Stewards have been a powerful obstacle to the workers' struggle. There is a particularly dangerous type of Stalinist who at first sympathizes—perhaps genuinely—with strike proposals and supports them. But then the Party gets to work on him, and he swings back to the Party Line. William Rust, Editor of the *Daily Worker*, explained on October 5th, that *every Communist is against strikes*. It is certainly true that every waverer returns, at the crack of the whip, back to the party policy of blacklegging.

These betrayals are having their inevitable effect. Hostility towards the unions and the shop stewards is growing, and workers are looking about

for a new weapon of class struggle. The readiness to go on strike, however, has so far not been matched by the development of a readiness to form effective strike organizations. This has been true, at any rate, in a general sense. Nevertheless, there have been well organized unofficial strikes in the past.

This is the position. Where the workers have a grievance, they are referred to "Negotiation Machinery". But both the Employers, and the Ministry of Labour, which claims to approach industrial disputes "impartially", have used this machinery to temporize and procrastinate. Where they have been unable to put off the question indefinitely, the decision has invariably gone against the workers. Disgusted with the farce of Arbitration Tribunals and the like, the workers have turned to the strike weapon, only to find that their own unions, their own defence organizations fight against them, by sabotage or by withholding from them the funds they have subscribed to meet this very eventuality. In these circumstances what must be done?

The first necessity is a thoroughgoing organization of the Strike Committee and its sub-committees. The committee must examine every aspect of the strike situation, and prepare to meet every method of attack by the employers and the State (to say nothing of the Unions and the Stalinists and all other political hangers-on who wish to make capital out of strikers' militancy). It should endeavour to bring every single striker into activity. The strength of the working class lies in the conscious initiative of every worker. A strike is the business of every man and woman taking part in it, and the committee must see that its forces are utilized to the full. There is nothing more demoralizing than idly hanging round street corners wondering what is going to happen next. By striking, the workers take the initiative; they must see to it that they retain it.

Every striker recognizes the necessity to picket the place of work to prevent or discourage the black-

legs whom the boss hires against them. What recent strikes have shown is that certain other equally important measures are not so well understood however. In the face of capitalist distortion of the aims of the strike, and of the lying reports that the strikers have gone back to work (frequently echoed by union officials of late, for instance, as a means of deceiving imprisoned strikers into paying their fines), the committee must see that their own publicity is well organized. This they can do by issuing their own bulletins, by sending official statements to the left press and by any other methods which the occasion warrants, and which are feasible.

Other workers in the locality, and in the same industry, must be contacted, and appeals issued to them not to allow themselves to be used by the employing class in a manner which might weaken the strike. Where only one section of an industry is involved, or where the bosses can import reserve stocks, the committee must seek to spread the strike so as to paralyse the employers. Recent experience has shown that there is no unreadiness on the part of workers in other factories or mines to join a strike purely out of sympathy. Such action enormously strengthens the strikers, besides exerting a tremendous moral effect.

The question of strike funds is apt to induce defeatism. But here again, experience shows that when strikers have made well organized attempts to enlist the support of their fellow workers throughout the country, there has always been an instant and encouraging response. But where they wait and do nothing, the response is naturally poor and disheartening.

The circularizing of strike fund appeals to local union branches all over the country has brought to the surface conflicts between the rank-and-file and the union officials. Similar conflicts were revealed in the suspension of the local A.E.U. officials at Barrow and the sympathetic resignation of the Huddersfield officials.

There is never a lack of active and energetic men among strikers to undertake this work of organization. Time and again the ability of rank-and-file workers as far as organization is concerned has been fully demonstrated. But what is needed is a firmer grasp of the theoretical knowledge of class struggles required to direct that organization to a successful issue. This theoretical knowledge is supplied by Anarchist Syndicalism. If only a few even possess the necessary syndicalist understanding, they will be able to point the way to success in class conflicts. Here again, the recent strikes have a lesson to teach. While the syndicalists have urged workers to organize *themselves* for the struggle, and to take initiative into their own hands, the propagandists of political parties have urged the workers to throw out their present leaders, and put them, the propagandists, in charge instead. Anarchist Syndicalists seek power for the workers, not jobs for themselves.

Syndicalism is very much more than effective organization in strikes. For even successful strikes do not resolve the class struggle. They are merely symptoms of the class antagonisms in society, inevitable outbreaks of class warfare. But the aims of Syndicalism will only have been achieved when the working class has organized itself effectively enough, and with a sufficient grasp of class issues, to be able to initiate the Social General Strike which will deprive the owning class of the means whereby they hold the workers in subjection; when the workers take over and administer for themselves the instruments of production and distribution. Syndicalism will then have achieved the freedom and emancipation of the working class and of mankind.

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## PUBLIC LECTURE-DISCUSSIONS EVERY FRIDAY EVENING 7.30 p.m

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DECEMBER 3rd. G. Pittock-Buss

Anarchism in the Suburbs

DECEMBER 10th. John Hewetson

How Imperialist Wars End

DECEMBER 17. Frank Soden

The Child in Society

DECEMBER 24th & 31st

No Meetings

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# ANARCHIST COMMENTARY

## *The Lebanon Crisis*

THE INVOLVED POLITICAL manoeuvres of the French generals and the politicians who follow in their train have long made it obvious, as we have pointed out time and again in *War Commentary*, that these gentry have no intention of setting up anything other than an authoritarian régime of class rule as soon as France is "freed" from their German rivals. Their actions in North Africa and the petty struggles for power between the rival factions of generals, supported respectively by England and America, have already demonstrated the hollowness of their pretence to be fighting for "democracy". If any further confirmation of this were required, it would be found in their recent action in the Lebanon.

To recapitulate the series of events, on the 8th November the Parliament of Lebanon passed an act modifying the constitution in order to give them greater independence from the suzerainty of the French authorities. In doing this they were merely putting into action what had already been promised them by General Catroux in 1941. The French National Committee opposed the amendment of the Constitution ostensibly on the grounds that it must await the formal terminations of the League mandate and the formation of a French Government. Naturally, the Lebanese did not wish to wait for the League to rise from the grave in order to end the mandate, and they refused to withdraw the amendment. The French authorities then invented a fantasy of a "plot against France" (meaning French imperialism), and proceeded to assert the argument of brute force by arresting the President, Prime Minister, Cabinet and 48 out of 80 members of the Lebanese Parliament. They also proclaimed martial law and imposed a curfew throughout the country, dissolved the Chamber of Deputies and put one of their puppets in the place of the imprisoned Prime Minister.

The people of Lebanon did not accept this ruthless display of power without active protests. There were demonstrations in the principal towns and in many of the villages. Even the native police, who are usually ready to co-operate with the winning side, refused to help the French authorities, who had to use Senegalese troops in order to quell the demonstrators.

The situation has excited anger in a number of quarters where vested interests in Near East politics are concerned. The British Government has protested against such an action being taken without consulting the British representatives. It is obvious that the British Government is not concerned with the freedom of the Lebanese. Its own imperial record is enough to prove that. But it is concerned for its imperialist domination of the Levant, and regards with distrust an imperialist manifestation in the same quarter by a puppet government which it has itself given the shadow of power. A petty and nominally independent state in the Lebanon is better than a French dependency which at a later time might be used to undermine British influence. So General de Gaulle must be put in his place.

The Arab ruling class throughout the Near East are also alarmed at the course of events, which appear to threaten their own hopes of domination and exploitation. King Farouk and Nahas Pasha, the Prime Minister of Egypt, have protested and threaten to withdraw recognition of the French National Committee. The bourgeois Nationalist leaders of the Arabs of Palestine have urged a day's stoppage of work in protest. The Mohamedan and

Christian religious leaders of the Lebanon have taken the side of the Lebanese Nationalists. It seems likely that there will be further manifestations of alarm among the Islamite ruling class of the Near East. In this connection it can be seen how the British Government is trying to sell another Lawrence trick to the Arabs by pretending to support their desire for independence in order to gain their assistance in establishing its hegemony. The Arab bourgeois leaders will no doubt be willing to co-operate with the British, as they have done in the past. Whether the Arab workers will decide to trust the British any more than the French is another matter.

We do not discuss this matter in order to vindicate the claims of Lebanese Nationalist politicians, who merely wish to gain domination for themselves, and who, in the event of their gaining independence, will be no less exacting and corrupt than French overlords. We bring it forward as a further instance of the insincerity of the French politicians and generals in Algiers who claim to be fighting for freedom.

The salvation of the people of Lebanon does not lie in the hands of British, French or native political leaders. These will always betray them, as the French have already done. The only way by which the Lebanese workers can free themselves is by ejecting their foreign masters, while declining to accept rulers of their own race. If they act in this way they will not find themselves alone in the Near East. Already there are reported to have been demonstrations of sympathy in Damascus and other Syrian towns. The Arab workers of Palestine have not yet accepted British rule, nor are the Druse tribesmen of the Syrian mountains reconciled to alien domination. A revolutionary movement among the people of the Lebanon might well be the beginning of a widespread rising of the oppressed Arabs which could put an end to the games of power politics that have ravaged the Levant for many centuries.

**"INDIVIDUALISM"** IT has always been the custom of the more capable ruling classes, when faced by a dangerous opposition, to use the often successful ruse of adopting a false synthesis by paying lip service to the opposition doctrine while mutilating it in such a way as to justify a continuance of their practice of exploitation.

In the last few months there has been a growing reaction, among millions of people who have probably no idea of the meaning of anarchism, against the growing power of the state. A section of the ruling class has therefore made an apparent *volte face* in its policy. We find Tory M.P's and peers complaining about wartime regulations, and now Lord Beaverbrook is sponsoring in the *Daily Express* a great campaign of "Individualism".

The core of this movement is a body called the Society of Individualists, and from a brief glance at their statements we can gain some idea of the kind of individualism they desire.

The first section of their *Manifesto on British Liberty* sets out in plausible terms an aim which might be accepted in general by any anarchist.

"We reject the notion, common to all totalitarian systems, whether Communist, Fascist or National-Socialist (Nazi), that the state is a supreme and monopolistic super-entity, the sole source of authority and morality. 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely', the omnipotent State lacks the moral

elements inherent in the individual; it not only devours its own creators, but becomes a force for evil both inside and outside its own boundaries. The unit of existence is the natural human being, and his or her natural extension is the family, not the artificial personality of the state . . . ”

When, however, we come to examine further the nature of the “Individualism” advocated in the Manifesto, we find it is merely a revival of the Individualism of Exploitation advocated by the nineteenth century capitalists and their apologists.

“Trade, whether domestic or international, should be freed from unnecessary restrictions, and profit (regarded as a premium on economy and efficiency) should be regarded as a proper motive of commerce. Individual initiative, independence and achievement, within the limits of legitimate competition, should be regarded as virtues in the citizen.”

Should this leave any further doubts as to the nature of the “Individualism” preached by this Society, glance at its distinguished list of Vice-Presidents and committeemen.

The President is Sir Ernest Benn. The Vice-Presidents include seven noble lords. The Chairman is Lord Leverhulme, head of the great industrial combine of Unilever. The Committee includes General Gough and eight other senior Army officers, Dean Inge, Sir Felix Pole, head of Metro-Vickers, and Beverley Nichols. Whatever these people are after, one can be fairly certain it is not freedom for the workers.

An interesting example of the kind of recruit they desire is given in a circular issued by the Society in April, 1943 which began with the following paragraph:

“As a Director of Companies, you will be interested in the work which the Society of Individualists has undertaken for the resumption of private enterprise after the war.”

Private capitalists will no doubt have some reason to support the Society of Individualists, but to the worker it represents merely a perversion by the ruling class to suit their own interests of certain truths that form the basis of revolutionary activity. When a man hears the word ‘Freedom’, he should be careful to find out just what kind of freedom is in the mind of the speaker. In this case it is merely freedom to exploit.

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## ARGENTINE CENSORSHIP

BY order of the new government in Buenos Aires, no papers in the Yiddish language may reach the Argentine, and no such papers within may be published. This order is in accordance with the Nazi sympathies of a government economically colonised by the “democracies”. Like the Portugal of Salazar, its business interests are with one side in the war, and its political sympathies with another.

The order means more, however; it means that it intends to suppress the independent Press altogether. It commences with the Yiddish-language organs to secure anti-semitic support; it will soon, like Brazil, suppress all foreign-language organs, important in a multi-lingual country, and finally bring the Spanish-language organs to heel, suppressing those with which it disagrees. And the reason for censorship is not far to seek—it means the government must have something to hide, and indeed who knows which way the diplomatic cats are going to jump? If there were nothing to hide there would be no need to muzzle the witnesses.

In particular we regret that this act of dictatorship means the suppression of our contemporary *Das Freie Wort*, an anarchist paper in the Yiddish language which unlike many other papers radical in peace-time only, has maintained its consistent position as a militant organ in spite of war and persecution offering temptations to give up the struggle. We express our solidarity with the comrades of *Das Freie Wort*, and our Argentine movement generally, which, in whatever language, will likewise be contesting the struggle for freedom of the Press.

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## WARTIME HOUSING

IN the midst of all the beautiful dreams about post-war towns, which are called “planning”, “reconstruction”, etc., it is easy to forget that the question of slum clearance has only received any serious consideration because it has been forced upon the attention of the authorities simply by the devastation of bombing. But in the face of this summary slum clearance by the Luftwaffe; all they can offer the workers is talk. Even the much publicized 3,000 cottages for farm labourers only scratch the surface of the problem of rural rehousing.

In London the housing situation is particularly acute. Bomb destruction was, of course, severest in the crowded working class districts, particularly in South and East London. Thousands of houses, tenements, and blocks of flats were demolished, or damaged to an extent which rendered them uninhabitable until repaired and redecorated. London’s already overcrowded dwellings were thus rendered even more inadequate.

The situation has been rendered worse during the past year by the return of many evacuated families. It can be imagined how much worse it will be when the soldiers are demobilized, and workers who have been transferred to factories in the provinces return to London. So far from these difficulties acting as a spur to the government to relieve the housing shortage, the situation is being exploited by the landlords to raise rent. As in all other capitalist business, the shortage of a commodity immediately raises its price on the market. Our economic system does not in the slightest degree shrink from exploiting the disasters of war, to wring more rent out of the victims of these disasters.

As though to add insult to injury, the upper class districts are filled with houses which have stood empty and in good repair while their owners avoid the bombing by retiring to the country. The inhabitants of working class districts cannot leave such localities, because they are tied to the areas in which rents come within their wage limits—that is, the crowded districts which are the invariable targets of bombing raids. . . .

In this, as in all other aspects of capitalist society, one sees the human needs of the working class subordinated without further thought to the profit considerations of the rentier class, while the government limits itself to the preservation of these property rights. The problem is not insoluble in itself. It took incredibly little time for the government to erect fresh factories, aerodromes, etc., when they were needed for war (*i.e.* profit) purposes. Adequately to house the workers would be a simple business if it were tackled as a straight problem. For that reason it will present no difficulty to revolutionary economy. But it will not be until the revolution has destroyed capitalism, that problems involving human needs will be freed from the shackles of bosses’ greed.

# TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS NEEDS

THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT of world capitalist production reached a critical stage at the end of 1929. In the first half of the thirties decade the machines were overflowing the warehouses with every kind of commodity, shoes, clothing, books, metals, timber, hides; newly launched ships were left to rust on the beach without a maiden voyage; stacks of food were burnt or piled for the rats to harvest. As the commodities accumulated factories closed and farms were abandoned; millions of men and women joined the unemployed queues. For the people did not possess sufficient money to buy back the goods they produced. It is futile to say, "Why cannot the workers be given enough money to buy back the goods they produce?" for, as we demonstrated in a previous article, the wages system prevents the worker's income increasing with his productive power.

Given the capitalist system, there was only one way to employ the idle capital of the world. To turn it to war production; to producing shells and bombs instead of boots and food. To distribute them free to enemies and allies alike by dropping them on their cities. The other alternative was to end capitalist and state-socialist distribution and, continuing to make useful commodities, distribute them freely according to the needs of each. For the productive capacity of modern industry is such that everyone may have enough of the very best of food, clothing, housing, books and all the good things of life by the useful labour of each for a few hours a week. But it can never happen within the bonds of the wages and money systems.

The Syndicalist mode of distribution, then, causes the abolition of these systems and establishes the principle of "to each according to his need." Not according to the amount of money he has, or according to rank or birth, or according to strength or cunning, but according to need. There is more than enough for all, so why should any go short?

It is often asked (I cannot tell why) who shall determine the nature and limits of a person's needs? Obviously the person himself. If a number of us sit down to dinner at a common table, one may eat twice as much as the average person, another only half as much, but no one is troubled about this. It is left to each to judge the capacity of his own stomach.

So let it be with all utilities. One needs more food than another. One man has no child, another a few children, yet another, many children. Each will have greater or lesser needs than his fellows. Utilities must be free to all. Socialised production demands socialised consumption.

Every society has had some degrees of this mode of distribution. Primitive society a great deal, capitalist society very little. Nevertheless modern capitalist society does give us a glimpse of the principle of free access to goods and services. A hundred years ago many roads could only be travelled on payment of a toll, and some such still exist in England. But now most roads are free; each may travel them little or much, according to his own estimate of his needs. The same is true of bridges and even some ferries. We have public parks, museums and libraries. Is anyone upset if someone sits in the local park all day and every day, while another never enters it?

Does a man worry that he never reads a book while his neighbour brings home two or three from the public library twice a week?

A partial application of the principle was made by introducing the penny post. Now it seems strange that a London letter to Edinburgh should have cost twice as much as a letter to York. Yet the proposal of the penny post raised a storm of protest. It was said that some would abuse it, for to many it seemed strange that a man writing from London to York should pay only as much for his stamp as one writing to Croydon. And to apply the principle to letters going as far even as Australia was to conservative persons just the last word in lunacy. Yet now, in postal matters, everyone approves of the principle of "each according to his needs".

It is often said that if food were there to be taken some would eat too much. They might the first time, but I doubt if they would keep it up. Water is free, not in the sense that it is not paid for, that is gratis, but its personal consumption is unrestricted. Some drink about a pint a day each, a few several pints, while a few of my friends refuse to touch it, believing it to be a dangerous liquid which even rusts steel and rots shoes. Yet no one abuses the drinking of water. No one hoards it; accumulating buckets and barrels of it in garret and cellar. For each knows that there is plenty for him when he needs it. If bread were free would our attitude to it be different? Would anyone try to eat half-a-dozen loaves a day?

It will be readily seen that such a principle of distribution can only be applied when there is a sufficiency of production. If everyone's need of butter is 8 ounces a week and the stock available allows only of 4 ounces per head per week, then, obviously, another principle must be applied. While capitalist production is enormously high, most of it is designed for the manufacture of hardly useful, and even harmful, products. Until the Syndicalist productive organisation has brought order to the present chaotic industries, distribution must be equal between individuals. Of course, that does not mean that all will consume the exact amount of each particular commodity or utility, but that each shall have an equal share (choice of variety being left to each) of the aggregate of goods available for distribution.

In the case of certain goods being in very short supply the principle of rationing must be applied, but, let us make this clear, this case has nothing in common with the present system of rationing. The basic principle of the present government's rationing system is not the equal division of goods of which there is a natural shortage. There is no equality. If a person has a great deal of money he may buy whatever rationed goods he needs, even without breaking the law. On the other hand if a person be poor, and this is the case with hundreds of thousands of working people, he may be unable to buy his full ration, particularly of clothes.

Nor is the present rationing, in most cases, the result of shortage. It is an attempt to force the purchasing power of the people from the consumption of useful commodities to the production of munitions and governmental apparatus.

In the case of certain goods which are in very short supply, these would be reserved for those especially needing them. Black grapes were once associated with sick beds, but no invalid worker may now buy them at the present price of 23/- a pound. Nevertheless stout and hearty bourgeois may eat them to surfeit.

While Syndicalism would divide equally the social income and ration equitably goods in shortage, the productive power would be immediately reorganised and set in motion to cure the shortage and then create such a plentiful supply of goods as to enable the social distribution to be accomplished.

Although we could not attain at once the principle of "each according to his need" in all things, yet with some goods and services it would be possible to do this at once. The two principles we have outlined would, for a while, continue to exist side by side. The few cases of free distribution now existing would continue to exist and would be extended. All roads, bridges and ferries would be made free. Parks would be extended and multiplied and to them would be added the public access of moorland, mountain, stream and seashore. Public libraries would be increased and made into cheery, comfortable homes of books, instead of the ill-assorted collections of shabby volumes stored in mausoleums they now are. The same principle of distribution would be extended to other goods and services, two or three, or even half-a-dozen at a time. Speaking personally, I believe the change would be much more rapid than most would dare to believe possible.

Cases for the early application of the principle of free distribution will readily occur to all of us. Postal service, travel and education are obvious examples. House rent is another. On the outbreak of revolution everyone will, naturally, cease paying rent. After the revolution it

is unlikely that they will return to their former bad habit of sustaining the landlords.

It is often asked, "but if someone wanted a luxury steam yacht or a one hundred roomed mansion?" Well, such things are the product of social labour. At present a rich person may, by his use of money, force others to build him a steam yacht by keeping other employment from them. Under Syndicalism this would be impossible, and it is improbable that any greedy, selfish person would be able to kid a shipyard full of workers to build him a ship all for his own hoggish self. There would be steam luxury yachts, but they would be enjoyed in common. I apologise for introducing this question but it is a familiar friend at many of our meetings.

Whether you accept our view of distribution or wish to retain the present will depend on whether you are a "practical" person or an idealist. If you are "sane, level-headed and practical" you will want to live in poverty, dirt and ugliness. You will wear cotton suits and paper shoes; you will grow dyspeptic on a diet of cabbage and starch; you will work yourself to death in a factory or allow your body to be used as common meat. All in order that you may destroy the homes and cities of your Continental neighbour, while he, moved by the same "practical" principles, destroys yours.

But, if you are an "idealist and a dreamer" you will object to living on a poverty standard in a world of plenty. You will choose to enjoy your full share of the good things of life. You will build cities instead of destroying them and heal and make happy your neighbours instead of maiming and killing them. You will play your part in the building of the New World which is not only possible but whose coming is imperative.

*(A further article on Syndicalist distribution in our next issue.)*

## FIREWATCHING OPPOSED

OUR GLASGOW COMRADE, Frank Leech appeared before Sheriff Gillies on November 11th in answer to the summons under the Firewatching Order mentioned in the November issue of *War Commentary*.

Frank Leech delivered the following address from the dock:

"Twenty-seven years ago, during the war of 1914-18, I volunteered for the Armed Forces, being partly taken in by decoy phrases similar to those used in this war. They then were "Poor Little Belgium", "Land Fit For Heroes", etc.

Sheriff: "I will not listen to a political tirade. I also served in the last War, and perhaps did more than you."

Frank Leech: "I want to explain why I did not register. I discovered that our Ruling Class were not concerned with "Poor Little Belgium", or a "Land Fit For Heroes To Live In", but were only concerned with the preservation of their right to hold the common people up to ransom, demanding their labour or their life.

"I then determined to give my energies towards the destruction of this régime and all forms of tyranny. I determined never again to place myself voluntarily under a Government and to resist con-

scription. I have done so ever since and have also encouraged others to do likewise.

"To-day we are supposed to be fighting "Fascism", yet what have we here with our regulations and regimentation and with our concentration camps?"

Sheriff: "Would you rather be in Nazi Germany?"

Frank Leech: "No! We Anarchists opposed Hitler and Mussolini when your ruling class, including Winston Churchill, were praising and supporting them. To-day, November 11th, you hypocritically remember those who fell in the last war. But November 11th has another meaning for the Anarchists. It is the anniversary of the day on which the Chicago Anarchists were hanged on a framed-up charge in 1887. We still remember. To-day, you threaten me . . ."

Sheriff: "I don't threaten you."

Frank Leech: "The very fact of your position is a threat to me. You threaten me with imprisonment or a fine if I refuse to obey you, but neither of these punishments would be as heavy as the punishment to myself if I gave in to Authority in these issues. That is all I have to say. Do your worst."

Frank Leech was then fined £25 or, in default, 60 days imprisonment, and was given two months to pay. Needless to say, he has no intention of paying the fine.

# From the Ranks

We have received so many interesting letters from soldiers that we have decided to let them take over the soldiers' page in this issue. We only regret that lack of space prevents us from publishing more and longer extracts from letters as they all show that soldiers are struggling hard against the blind regimentation of army life, and the class inequalities on which it is based.

I should like to describe some of what I find in the army, even so, you probably know it all. Anyway, allow me to let off some steam. Naturally, the whole organization is based on caste. Nowadays the old type of birth and education superiority is part eclipsed, part reinforced by something just as odious—a sort of authority clique. The officers and N.C.O.'s are often together in their superior, unfriendly, petty, and unreasonable persecution of the private soldier. That the private soldier is not usually accepted as a reasonable, sensitive human being, you know well enough. Not that anything approaching the likeness of the treatment of Clayton is at all common or even the rule, it is not. I have never met anything approaching it. But the caste is always there and they don't let you forget it.

The keynote of the army is unfriendliness and a constant spirit of fault-finding, rendered all the worse by the silly formality, the heel stamping, the regimentation, and the shouting. To the public the subject of sergeant-majors is funny. To the private it is anything but funny; it is possibly a subject of miserableness, or anger, or even grim absurdity and ridiculousness; but hardly funny. Anyone coming suddenly into the army might think that the authorities were trying to pump one with anti-war dope, instead of encouragement. It would be difficult to find a better example of defeatist propaganda than the army. I suppose that applies to most modern armies.

Again to the outside world, spit and polish is an absurdity at the worst. To the soldier it is sufficient to make his life intolerable; more, possibly, because it is a completely worthless petty waste of time than because it takes time. Most men would rather work longer at their proper "worthwhile" job than have shorter hours and then have to spit and polish . . . Naturally spit and polish takes up the soldier's time, not the army's; such things as polishing equipment brass (still done in 50% of units), whitening water bottle cork strings, etc., etc., on top of the permanent spit and polish of kit arrangement. It is a long never-ending (they always think of something new) list of complete non-necessities. The uselessness of it all—the absolute unnecessariness—the wastefulness in fact—is so utterly amazing that sometimes one wonders if it can all be truly happening in reality. And all this, to a person who may have thought he was a dignified, civilised human being, sometimes makes him feel self-contemptuous through its infantile, unimaginative degradation. The effect, altogether, on many minds is such that they fall into a horrible drab rut of mental stagnation. No doubt, the authorities would say it encourages a healthy humility. In contrast to this is the inefficiency. The inefficiency grows in proportion with the spit and polish. The latter always takes precedent over military matters.

## ANTI-TANK REGIMENT.

Everyone would like to see the war over and get away from army-life. If the home-forces are getting fed-up the overseas armies must be more so. Personally I think the war will end when the mass of the people tire of it even if the Churchill Government still try to make it last longer as they are doing at present, I think the people still need a few more lessons to bring them back to their

senses. My one wish is to get out of it which is everybody's wish, I guess. I shall regret the day I came into it the rest of my life as I knew I was going to hate it before I was in it.

R. A.

★

Every now and then we have an inspection by a general. He informs the regiment two or three weeks before and then we start polishing up the tanks, blancing our kit, cleaning every corner he may look in. In fact the regiment wastes two weeks on spit and polish which hinders the war more than helps it, just so one man may walk through the lines and see everything in sight shining. Everyone bows before him as if he were a super-man instead of a man whom money or heritage has put into position.

LANCERS.

★

## Statement of a C.O. in the army to the court-martial.

My so-called "crimes", with which I am charged, have been committed solely on account of my attitude. As a Libertarian, I am conscientiously opposed to the whole structure of this oppressive system of rule by force, which has flung this war, with all its violence and brutality upon the working class of the world. I stand for the principle and practice, of non-co-operation where the ruling class are concerned. Only through the co-operation of the Workers of the world will security, peace and freedom, be established. I see no other course open to me other than to stand on the side of this higher morality and intellect, which in time will supersede all bloody weapons of war.

## Letter from another C.O. in the army awaiting court-martial.

80% of military offences are absenteeism (from 2 minutes late to 21 days) and desertion (over 21 days). Most first offenders except conchies are let out on "open arrest", we are on "close arrest", with criminals, regular thugs and all sorts of rogues. Despite statements by our democratic leaders to the contrary, "cat and mouse" is still in force.

Deserters who are "caught", including "conchies" and absentees, are generally sent to detention cells for 4 or 5 days under horrible conditions, including 24 hours lock-up, no baths, no medical inspection for infectious diseases, wooden boards for sleeping on, no mattresses, inadequate washing facilities, no exercise or fresh air, no reading or writing, or visits. After this democratic reception the unconvicted prisoner is handcuffed and escorted to a detention-room at some barracks, preferably a good way away from his local town. Here he spends sometimes up to 9 weeks for his case to be settled and a court-martial decided on, then a delay for promulgation of sentence. Then detention or civil prison. The offender is egged on to be a good soldier. Loss of privileges and showers of favours, alternate, to try and make a good soldier and fighter. If he is a C.O. and gets civil "clink", he is entitled to a Tribunal hearing. If turned down by the Tribunal he repeats the process *an infinitum*.

## CHRISTIAN CHARITY

A tramp approached a group of churchmen and asked for aid.

"No!" one of them told him. "I'm afraid we can't help you, but you see that big man over there?"—pointing to the bishop—"he's a very generous man; you might try him."

The tramp approached the bishop confidently.

The others watched with interest. They saw a surprised look come over the tramp's face. The bishop was talking eagerly. The tramp looked troubled. Then something passed from hand to hand, and the tramp slunk away. One of the churchmen called to him and said:

"Well, did you get something from our bishop?"

The tramp gave a sickly grin.

"No," he admitted. "I gave him half a crown for his new cathedral!"

The Walrus, in *The Zoutspansberg Review*, South Africa.

## LIBELLOUS STATEMENT

Mr. Evelyn Walkden, M.P. for Doncaster, has been criticising the expenditure of £24,000 in publicity to persuade men to work in coalmines.

In a statement to a *Y.E. News* reporter to-day he pointed out that only 3,500 new recruits had been gained over and above the 3,366 who had opted for the mines when they were called up.

"Such a poor result is due to the wrong kind of advertising," he said. "It is only to be expected if the money is spent in putting advertisements in such unlikely newspapers as the *Financial Times* and similar publications."

*Yorkshire Evening News*, 11/11/43.

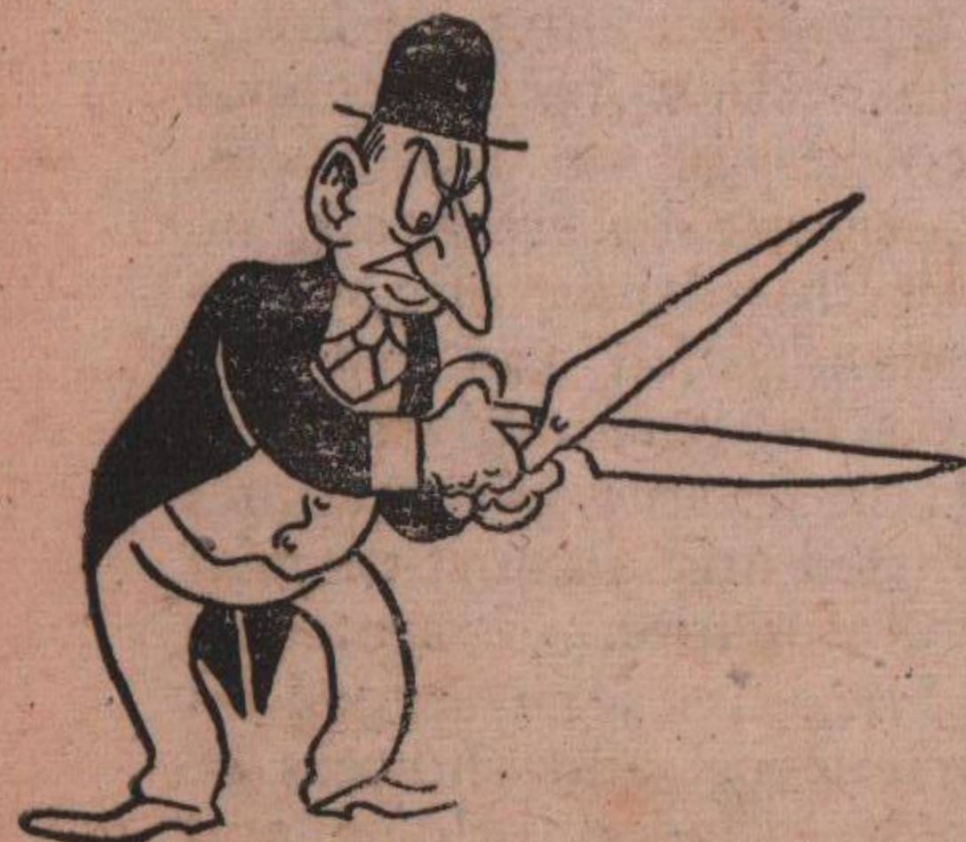
Why unlikely? Aren't the readers of the *Financial Times* good, patriotic Englishmen, ready to do their bit for the war effort?

## POST-WAR PROSPECTS

A comprehensive scheme of post-war aid has been adopted by the Law Society, in co-operation with the various Provincial Law Societies, with the object of effecting the speedy absorption into civil life of the 5,534 solicitors and 2,185 articled clerks now serving in H.M. Forces, and the many others engaged in various other forms of war service. It expects a rush of legal work after the war arising out of settlement of claims, administration and interpretation of new laws and regulations, and the sale and leasing of properties.

*The Chamber of Commerce Journal*, Nov. 1943.

## BANNED AGAIN!



government blokes who  
foreigners!

We are sorry to have to inform our readers abroad that the November issue of *War Commentary* has been stopped by the censor. It was a particularly good issue which brought us in many congratulations from readers in Britain, but apparently it didn't suit the tastes of the government blokes who decide what's good for

## GOTT MIT UNS

"I am a deeply religious man. I believe that when Providence has chosen a man for a special task it does not break him until he has achieved that purpose . . . God might have dealt more harshly with us. But He has kept the enemy away from the borders of the Reich . . ."

*Adolf Hitler's speech at Munich.*

Compare our last issue—"God is an Englishman". You pays your money and you takes your choice.

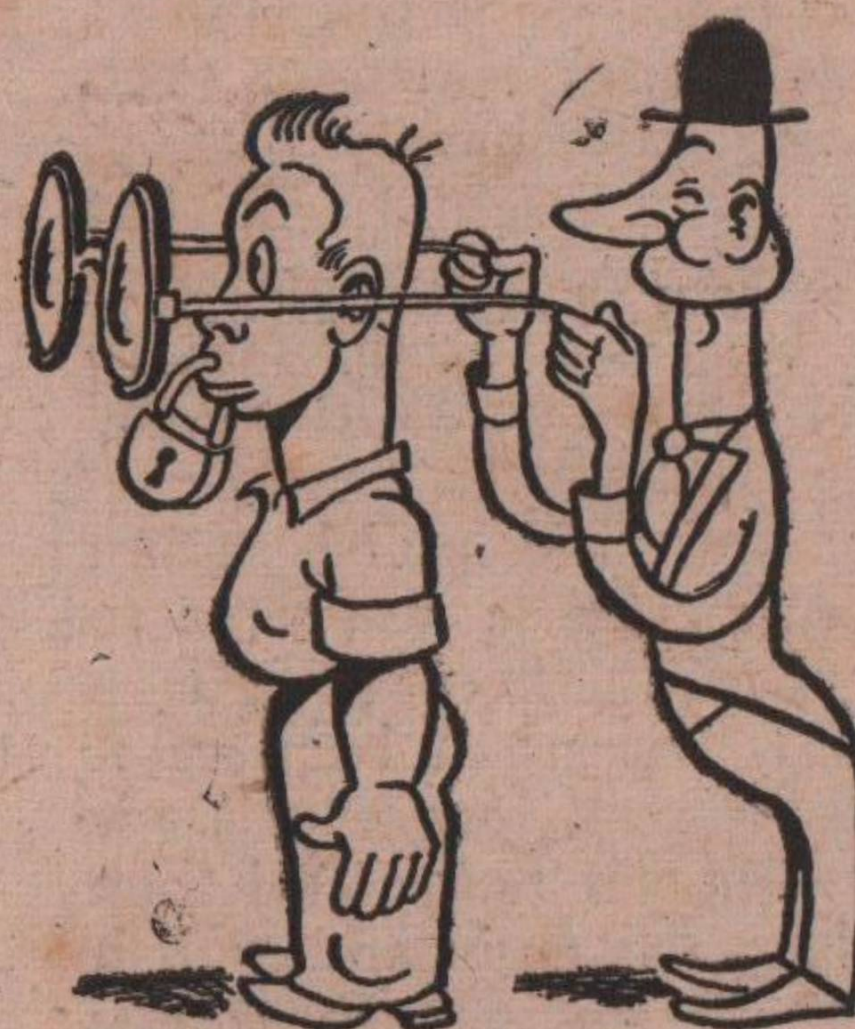
# Through

## "PARADISE ENOW"

"The conditions enjoyed to-day would have been considered as an El Dorado by the people of John Burns' time."

*Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour,*  
*"Daily Herald", 8/11/43.*

★



You can work this out for yourself, but . . .

If you get up at 4.30 a.m. and work from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. then

Go straight home from work to the Home Guard for an hour, then

Take an hour and a half break then

Return to Home Guard for all-night duty, then

Go to work from 6 a.m. to 6.30 p.m.,

. . . you'll find you don't get much sleep in 38 hours.

Ronald Pike, 18-year-old crane driver, who has one of the toughest jobs in the mill where he works, told the *Daily Herald* last night that he "found it just too much" for him.

Earlier in the day Ronald, who lives at Cubitts Cottages, Earlsfield, had been fined £1 at Mitcham for being absent without reasonable excuse from Home Guard mounting parade one day last August.

*Daily Herald*, 9/11/43.

## CRIMINAL WASTE

PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA—Thousands of oranges are being distributed in heaps by Eastern Province farmers to wild ostriches which roam the country outside Port Elizabeth, and to grateful elephants in the famous Addo reserve, a few miles outside the city.

Tons of other oranges lie rotting on citrus farms in the mellow Eastern Cape sun along the picture-postcard Sundays River valley.

*Daily Express*, 1/11/43.

Across the sea Indians starve. Orange juice could save lives of Indian children, it goes to ostriches instead!



## ENGLISHMAN—NOT A DIRTY HUN—SPEAKS

"I would use a green birch, and I would cut them with it," said Mr. John Robertson, Chief Constable of Renfrewshire, when the birching of juvenile delinquents was discussed at a conference in Greenock yesterday.

"I hear many controversies as to whether birching is right," said Mr. Robertson. "Birching, as it is done to-day, does not appeal to me. I do not say that because I

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# the Press

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think it is too harsh. I say that because it is not harsh enough.

"I have used the birch and I have refused to use it, and been threatened with dismissal for refusing to obey an order. I have seen a great many birchings. I have never seen a child benefit from a birching, because he found it was not half as bad as he thought it would be.

"Before a birch can be used it must be passed by the Sheriff, and I do not think it is possible to draw blood with the average birch now in use.

"If I had my choice I would use a green birch and I would cut them with it. They would not come back to the court again.

"You may think that I am the usual harsh policeman. I am a policeman, but I do think that this is one way of dealing with really bad boys."

*Daily Record, 11/11/43.*

## SOLVING FAMINE PROBLEM

Delegates to the United Nations' Relief Conference in Atlantic City—which is to work out the best way of aiding starving Europe after the war—had a dinner last night.

And this was their menu:

*Fresh fruit, chilled grapefruit juice.*

*Shrimps, chicken consomme, filleted sole.*

*Stuffed roast capon, leg of mutton.*

*Fresh runner beans, stewed tomatoes,*

*macaroni, flaked or baked potatoes, beet, salad.*

For dessert there was cherry pie, rum cake, chocolate sundae, and ice cream.

There were four kinds of cheese and eighty-six wines to choose from.

*Daily Mirror, 11/11/43.*

## IDIOCY OF THE LAW

When Leonard Atterton, express train driver, of The Drive, Dysart Road, Grantham, Lincs, was fined £5, with £1 is. costs, at Grantham yesterday for failing to perform fire-watching duties at the L.N.E.R. depot he said:—

"I would prefer the police court to the coroner's court. If my head hangs for a moment it is all up with my passengers."

He said his working hours were long, extra nerve was required, mechanical breakdowns were more frequent, traffic congested, and trains longer and heavier. His responsibility was increased by 100 per cent.

*Daily Mirror, 10/11/43.*

## DOWN WITH ANARCHY!

The whole Empire owes a debt of gratitude to a Labour M.P. who rose in his place during the debate on the Workmen's Compensation Act and declared that the House of Commons must support law and order and not stand for anarchy.

Hear, Hear! Hear, Hear! That M.P. should be promoted to the Front Bench immediately. I am strongly in favour of giving him a seat in the War Cabinet, making him either the Lord Privy's Squeal or Lord High Commissioner of the King's Toilet Paper.

Anarchy! The very word sends a shiver down our spines.

War, massacre, bloodshed, bombing, famine we can tolerate, but anarchy no!

As our beloved Prime Minister said in a recent speech in Parliament, we do not want to see anarchy in Italy, and, by Gad, sirs, if we do not stand for it in Italy, we cannot stand for it here.

Socialism does not frighten us, nor Bolshevism—yes, we can take it; but anarchy, no!

The very word makes us tremble for the Throne. Anarchy! . . .

Really, it is time we took a strong stand against the anarchists.

What is an anarchist?

We used to think that an anarchist was a man who threw bombs.

In those days beautiful bombs used to be referred to as "infernal machines."

But these are changed days. The M.P. who urged the House of Commons to do things "in an orderly fashion" believes in bombing, but the anarchists, out of sheer cussedness, don't.

Not that this Labour M.P. goes about throwing bombs himself; he believes in sending other fellows to do it. Bomb throwing must be done in orderly fashion, or else it becomes anarchy.

That is why our Labour M.P. believes in dropping bombs by proxy.

That is where he differs from the old-anarchists. They went and did the bombing themselves, and often blew themselves up too . . .

Is the Prime Minister then a super-anarchist? Certainly not. Look how upset he was at the very thought of Italy collapsing into anarchy and the Italian people getting rid of kings and marshals and generals and landlords and bankers and all the other people and institutions that uphold decency and law and order.

Even though Marshal Badoglio poured poison gas down on the Abyssinians, he was to be preferred to anarchy.

And you can depend upon it that when the British and American Armies march into Germany they will have to preserve law and order and suppress anarchy.

If the German people start killing the Nazis themselves we will have to prevent it, for that will be anarchy, and we have sworn that the war criminals shall be tried before a decent tribunal and not shot first and tried afterwards . . .

After all wars it has been necessary to deal firmly with anarchy, otherwise the common riff-raff that fought in the wars would have come home and upset everything.

So let us beware of anarchy now. I feel it in my bones that at the next General Election Mr. Winston Churchill will come forward once again to save us from anarchy and to champion law and order against violence and bloodshed which threatens the Throne, the Constitution and Empire and God.

Let us all unite to stamp out anarchy and violence and bloodshed. But isn't that what's going on now?

*Ikonoblast in Forward, 13/11/43.*

## *Pages of Revolutionary History*

# SACCO and VANZETTI

THE STORY OF Sacco and Vanzetti has been told many times.\* It is not the story of exceptional men, men like Bakunin or Kropotkin, whose struggle for the liberty of all was bound to be spotlighted as the struggle of exceptional men can be; it is the story of two ordinary men like ourselves, who happened to be picked out by chance for a long and drawn-out period of persecution. Both were similar to many other Italian immigrants to the United States.

Sacco arrived in the U.S.A. in 1908. He worked as a shoemaker in a factory at Milford until 1917, when like many radicals, he went to Mexico to avoid conscription. He went back to Massachusetts after the war and worked in another shoe factory until his arrest in 1920. Like Emma Goldman, he came to the United States believing in democratic republicanism; but experience of life in America, which all European immigrants looked on as the Mecca of Democracy, speedily disillusioned him, and he turned to socialism and then to anarchism. He was known to his workmates as a militant, a comrade who could be relied on in strikes. Although he spoke and wrote English badly, he took part in active anarchist propaganda, spreading literature and talking at street corners. Like Vanzetti he had, of course, no criminal record. Vanzetti had arrived in America about the same time, and after spending some years as a cook and a dishwasher at Italian restaurants in New York, he too went to Mexico in 1917. He returned to the States as a fish-peddler, and like Sacco he took part actively in the workers' struggle and in anarchist propaganda. He contributed to *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* (our contemporary in New York which continues to this day) right up to the time of his death. When, at the age of 31, he was arrested with Sacco, he was known as an agitator, within the boundaries of his town and amongst his comrades. Neither Sacco nor Vanzetti dreamt that their names would be coupled together in a case that would have repercussions all over the world.

### THE CASE

An armed hold-up, resulting in death, took place in South Braintree, Massachusetts. The murderers escaped, but were believed to be Italians. At the same time the police believed the case to be linked with the same gang that had attempted a hold-up in Bridgewater. In 1920 however the U.S. police had a far more important job than tracking down criminals—they were engaged in rounding-up "foreign agitators". Mass deportations had

\* There are many books and treatises on the subject including "The Sacco-Vanzetti Case" (a complete record in eight volumes, published in U.S.A.) and "The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti" by Felix Frankfurter (also U.S.), while Upton Sinclair's novel "Boston" first introduced me to anarchism. A dramatised story of Dante Sacco is told in "Winterset" but this is probably based on fiction. The film version certainly was. Many pamphlets and books were published at the time but the only book I can trace as being both authentic and still available is the volume, "The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti, 1920-27" (published in this country by Constable), which includes an outline of the framed-up case. There are a number of copies still available at 2/6 from the Freedom Press. There is much material written on Sacco and Vanzetti, and written by Vanzetti, which ought at some time to be re-published in this country.

taken place; thousands of Russians of all shades of working class opinion were deported on the "Buford" and the turn of all Europeans had come. The police had suspected (mistakenly) a man named Boda, whose car was believed to have been used in the hold-ups. They found Boda had been living with a radical named Coacci, who was hastily packing to return to Italy because of the red scare. It was assumed that Coacci had rushed off with the booty, but on his arrival in Italy his trunks were searched and it was found that he had nothing. But meanwhile the police had jumped to the conclusion that Boda was suspect. Orciani, Sacco and Vanzetti, as friends of another radical, Salsedo, who was either killed by the police or driven to suicide in the "red pogrom", had meanwhile approached Boda to borrow his car to hide their literature and notify their friends about the persecutions that would soon take place. The police (whose mentality grasped no difference between crime and radical propaganda) arrested them after they called for the car at the garage where it was awaiting repair.

Boda himself it is understood, returned to Italy; in view of the frame-ups he did not return. Orciani could prove an alibi on both days the two crimes had taken place, as he had been at work. The company's registers could not be altered so he therefore was released. Sacco could also prove he was at work when the Bridgewater crime took place. He was therefore charged only with the Braintree crime. Vanzetti, as a fish peddler and his own employer, could not prove the same alibi, but only that of his customers, who were Italians and not readily believed in Massachusetts at the time, with its anti-foreign hysteria. He was charged and convicted of the Bridgewater crime on such flimsy evidence. Yet lack of an alibi on that particular day could have convicted anyone! Moreover, the police theory that a gang was responsible for the two crimes was unsubstantiated, since Vanzetti if guilty would have had no confederates in the former crime. Moreover, the two men had only been arrested on their calling for Boda's car: the fact of Orciani's complete alibi ruled him out and ruled out the gang theory. Nevertheless in the fanatical hatred that these two "foreign anarchists" were held, it was easy for the State to convict. Vanzetti had to serve imprisonment for the Bridgewater crime, while he and Sacco awaited trial for the Braintree crime and murder.

Their first trial showed the prejudice against them. None of the evidence against them could stand the flimsiest investigation. True, they had been amongst the four who had called for Boda's car. But it was obvious they had never had anything to do with hold-ups; their life history was known to all. Nor would professional desperadoes have troubled about borrowing Boda's old car—the real gangsters were slick car-thieves. Judge Thayer said the evidence against them was "consciousness of guilt", but they had not hidden themselves, the spoils were not found, they stayed in their old lodgings, pursued their callings and when arrested Sacco was found with a bill announcing a meeting at which Vanzetti was to speak! The Judge meant that they had lied on one occasion, as they told the police on arrest they did not know Boda, and innocent men do not lie. This was simply answered: knowing nothing of the hold-ups, they had believed themselves arrested in the deportation-hunt; they were certainly guilty of being anarchists and liable for extradition. Hence they denied knowing Boda, since no sincere revolutionary would implicate anyone with the police, on arrest.

When this came out in court, however, the atmosphere changed. Up to then the prosecution had been dealing in "legal" terms: it was just a case of identification and the like. When it was found they were anarchists the whole prejudice came out: against these foreigners, "draft-dodgers", anti-war radicals, strike agitators and worse of all, anarchists. The prosecution made great play of this.

In 1921 they were found guilty of murder. A new trial was demanded in face of fresh evidence. But this evidence related to the truth about the crime—the only evidence that could save Sacco and Vanzetti was proof that they were not anarchists, which they never denied! Judge Thayer refused a new trial.

Up to 1925 in all the workings of the case the defence could only prove Sacco and Vanzetti not guilty. But they then found who *was* guilty. Celestino Madeiros was in the death-house with Sacco. Madeiros was a criminal, and had been convicted of another murder. Seeing Sacco's wife and children and feeling sorry for them, he admitted that he was the guilty party. He made a full confession that the gang to which he belonged committed both crimes, and the two anarchists had nothing to do with it. He would not admit who the gang was with him, but from following up his confession the defence could prove it to be the notorious Morelli gang. The evidence they unearthed was overwhelming: Madeiros and the Morelli gang were guilty, Sacco and Vanzetti not guilty. All the evidence brought for and against Sacco and Vanzetti dovetailed into the case against Madeiros and the Morelli gang, and fitted both the Bridgewater and the Braintree crimes. Madeiros made his confession in spite of an appeal on the charge he was convicted of; but was not listened to. He was electrocuted however for the later crime. In spite of all the petitions to Judge Thayer, the hidebound conservative Judge would not allow a new trial, in the teeth of all this fresh evidence!

The last appeal lay with Governor Fuller of Massachusetts. Sacco and Vanzetti would not sign any appeal for pardon, but Vanzetti made the petition for a new trial. (Sacco refused to do anything in the matter—he took the view that the State was determined to murder them anyhow). Evidence was submitted to the Governor that Judge Thayer was prejudiced. He had made statements throughout the seven years' proceedings which proved this. He referred to them as "anarchistic bastards" and the remark, "Damn them they're Reds—they ought to die anyway, even if they're innocent" summed up his true feelings. The proof of prejudice was made to the Supreme Court, but the decision stood. Sacco and Vanzetti were legally murdered by American lynch-law on August 22, 1927, in spite of all efforts on their behalf, and international demonstrations in their favour. Throughout America and the world, the justice of their case was recognised.

The workers everywhere—in the States, in London, Paris, Berlin even in fascist Italy—demonstrated against the persecutors of two of their comrades. Not only the workers, but many political parties, many of the so-called intellectuals, writers, lawyers, statesmen, were moved by the injustice of the case. Sacco was impatient of these gentry, however: he knew that politicians were moved not by his plight but by the fact that those who sympathised with his plight might vote for anyone shedding crocodile tears on his behalf. He realised that even the sympathetic lawyers did not mind him being killed, but resented the disgrace such a sentence would bring on American justice. He was not anxious to save the name of lynch-law justice. Certainly he wanted to be free—he keenly felt the separation from his wife, Rosa, and their children Ines and Dante—but he would not compromise with what we should now call popular-fronters, those Liberal gentlemen with high ideals and low motives.

He repeatedly, however, stuck to his conviction that he was framed up by the court, and told the court so. He knew the proletariat were with him, but that capitalist justice could not be deflected from its course. And in spite of his inability to express himself so many times, his last letter to his son, Dante, from Charlestown State Prison, is an appeal to the heart:

"Don't cry, Dante, because many tears have been wasted, as your mother's have been wasted for seven years, and never did any good. So, Son, instead of crying, be strong, so as to be able to comfort your mother, and when you want to distract your mother from the discouraging soulness, I will tell you what I used to do. To take her for a long walk in the quiet country, gathering wild flowers here and there, resting under the shade of trees, between the harmony of the vivid stream and the gentle tranquility of the mother nature, and I am sure that she will enjoy this very much, as you surely would be happy for it. But remember always, Dante, in the play of happiness, don't you use all for yourself only, but down yourself just one step, at your side and help the weak ones that cry for help, help the prosecuted and the victim, because they are your better friends; they are the comrades that fight and fall as your father and Bartolo fought and fell yesterday for the conquest of the joy of freedom for all and the poor workers. In this struggle for life you will find more love and you will be loved."

Nicola Sacco was a real fighter for anarchism, both in his life and in his death. Bartolomeo Vanzetti, when he received sentence, said of him that "Sacco's name will live in the hearts of the people and in their gratitude when Katzman's (the prosecutor) and yours (Judge Thayer's) bones will be dispersed by time, when your name, his name, your laws, institutions and your false god are but a deem rememoring of a cursed past when man was wolf to man."

#### VANZETTI'S PROPHECY

And of Vanzetti, too, we may say the same. Throughout his long incarceration he did not give way to despair. He continually wrote, letters, articles, books, and his reasoning in many of them stands crystal clear to-day. His attacks on Fascismo (which was no help to a man convicted by American courts then) were coupled with his disbelief in that type of anti-Fascism which is a fore-runner of present-day Phariseism:

"There are some, also among the so-called subversives, who are saying that the fascisti have taught to us how we must do, and they, these subversives, are intentioned to imitate and to exacerbate the fascisti methods . . . The Fascisti methods may be good for who inspires to become a tyrant . . . We remain as we always were, the partisans of the liberty, of all the liberty."

And this, written in 1924:

"Italy is weeping tears of blood, bleeding her best blood: The fascisti's crimes, especially their crime against Matteoti alive and Matteoti dead, have precipitated the events,—the historical Nemesis . . .

The opposition is composed of the Liberals, Democratic, Demo-socialists, the three differing Socialist Parties, the Republican, the Communist and the Anarchist, and the Popular (Catholic) Party. The Fascismo has on his side the Pope, the King, the financier, the industrial and rural Capitalism.

Now, the liberals who have helped the formation of the fascism are swinging. The Democrats are steadily against the fascismo, the republicans are also swinging and the Anarchist are firm; but the reformist are ready to betray again if Mussolini would be so gentlemanly to cut with them the power-pie . . .

Let us look at the other side. The king dislikes the Pope, and the Pope the King. But a common danger makes them allied. The King who has the army and officialdom faithful to him, dislikes the fascismo and Mussolini, but he must stick with them or end in the Rome's main sewer. Mussolini and the most intelligent head bandits would live to get peace, and ask the venal adversary to partake of the power's pie, but the dreadful condition of the people, the daily violence of the fascist thugs do not consent any normalisation, and Mussolini is practically blackmailed and slave of the capitalists who he has blackmailed and enslaved, and of the scum of his own band, to which he must obey or be stabbed. That Mussolini shall be killed is fatal, but most probably killed by his friends than by his enemy. Historical nemesis cynical as he deserves.

What about the Italian people? . . . they are dwarfed, brutalised, corrupted, cowardised by thousands of years of slavery, servilism, bestial toiling, sordity, poverty, unspeakable suffering, ignorance, and worse of all, by honours. But in spite of all this shame, horror and disgrace, they are the only ones to look to the stars and not the mud. Nor are they guilty. Guilty is the church, the monarchy, the capitalism, the militarism, the Bureaucracy, and the yellow, pink, red, scarlet, bad shepherds, demagogues and politician."

From this survey of 1924 many in 1943 might well profit. When the British editions of the Thayers and Katzmans were organising fascismo here, Vanzetti knew more about fascismo than they were to learn in twenty years. The same liberals and republicans who were swinging then, are still swinging now! Sforza arrives in Italy! The army and officialdom has stuck by the King, when Mussolini could no longer keep him from being chucked in the common sewer. Mussolini's friends have turned against him, and the scum of his own band made him stage a come-back after what to all intents and pur-

pose was his political death. And that the reformists would betray again if allowed to share in fascism's power is proved by their support of Badoglio. Vanzetti was no prophet, but he knew how to analyse fascism sincerely because he was an anarchist and a fighter. Winston Churchill was then a fascist and a crawling sycophant of Mussolini. It was easy for him to denounce Mussolini in 1940, and use some harsh words about jackals and monkeys, but even then, because his anti-fascism was not sincere, merely a pose for the moment, he could not maintain it for three brief years—he turned against Mussolini to support the King and Badoglio with reservations not owing to their fascism but to the fact of their being Italians! But it is an insult to our martyred comrades to compare them with politicians who make a career out of peoples' lives. These were the Thayers and Katzmans, who framed up the anarchists, and Vanzetti had no time for them. He scorned the mock-pacifism of the lawyers, who continually spoke of justice as if it meant anything, and one of whom asked Vanzetti to sign a public statement advising his friends against retaliating by violence and reprisal. These Christian ideals would have been better had they made any impression on Massachusetts, not on its martyrs. They were against violence on one side only, like the mock-pacifism of certain elements in this country to-day, dukes and parsons and many others, who, unlike the anarchists who find the enemy both at home and abroad, pretend to be anti-war only because they have fascist sympathies and record, or those German Lutheran pastors who ask Hitler to cease persecuting the Lutherans' Christian faith yet support the persecution of the Poles, and their talk makes no impression on the anarchist. Vanzetti's last words were, "I forgive *some* of my enemies." But *most* of his enemies, the unblinded and unduped leaders of capitalism, he did not forgive, for they knew perfectly well what they did, and he left his record and Sacco's record as a light for their comrades to come, to vanquish them.

A. M.

## Another Effort!

At the time of going to press our Fund had reached a total of £460. It means that we still need £40 and we have only this month in which to raise it. Surely our comrades and friends won't let this small amount defeat them? Well then don't waste time comrades, but send us your contributions now, and make the December list even longer than the October list which we are including below. Many thanks to all the October contributors, and November contributors (the list will be published in the next issue) and thanks in anticipation to our December contributors.

### PRESS FUND October 1943

£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Carshalton: E.A.B.	10	2	Dartford: E.G.L.	1	0
London: E.E.	1	0	Porthill: J.H.C.	3	0
Evesham: D.J.M.	3	4	Porthill: J.F.	1	6
Lanark: D.T.	5	0	London: Park		
Hadleigh: T.McC	1	3	Sympathisers	5	2
Leyton: J.W.W.	5	0	London: D.B.	2	0
London: A.W.	1	0	Oxted: M.T.	14	0
Blackpool: R.B.B.	10	0	Salford: H.R.	2	0
Gloucester: A.E.S.	2	6	Nottingham: H.M.	3	0
London: J.B.	4	0	London: F.C.D.	2	0
Saffron Walden:			London: A.W.	1	0
H.A.F.	4	0	London: B.M.H.	1	0
Plymouth: T.L.			Northwood: E.H.	4	0
(per H.W.)	10	0	Whiteway: P.P.	2	6

£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Kingston: T.W.B.	1	0	0	London: Park	
Gateshead: G.W.T.	2	6		Sympathisers	2
Gateshead: J.C.S.	2	6		Sheffield: H.W.	3
London: S.A.	1	3		Driffield: A.E.H.	3
Glasgow: J.T.	5	0		Carlisle: R.G.	4
Hounslow: G.T.E.	6	0		Stevenston: J.D.	3
B'ham: Sympathisers				Bexley: H.E.C.	5
(per C.H.)	4	0		Breaston: P. & J.E.	1
Aylesbury: H.J.D.	4	0		Breaston: A.W.	10
London: Mrs. W.	2	0		Tredegar: R.L.J.	3
Richmond: W.L.G.	5	0		London: V.R.	5
Cirencester: J.R.	5	0		Los Gatos, Calif.:	
Ledbury: Sympathiser	1	0		per L.M.	10
London: J.F.	3	3		London: G.W.	5
Peebles: W.D.W.	1	6		(per V.R.)	2
Glasgow: D. & M.T.	10	0			0
Edgware: L.L.	2	0		October Total	£30
Kenton: M.S.	10	0			3
Newquay: S.J.W.T.	10	0			2
Worcester:				Previously	
Sympathisers	1	0		acknowledged	£378
London: C.H.	8	6		TOTAL to end	4
				of October	10
					£418
					8
					0

### N.W. LONDON F.F.P.

Weekly meetings of the N.W. London F.F.P. are held on Tuesdays at 27 Belsize Road, London, N.W.6. commencing at 7 p.m.... Friends and sympathisers are cordially invited to attend.

# SIGNS OF COMING CHANGE

By Mat Kavanagh

ARE WE JUSTIFIED in thinking that the aftermath of the present war will be Social Revolution? There is ample ground for thinking so. The evidence of day to day events on the industrial field plainly points everywhere to revolt. The average worker does not bother much about politics, his common-sense and experience have taught him bitterly that there is nothing to be gained by supporting political Labour Parties. They have had a good innings, and he now knows—perhaps only sub-consciously—that, when once elevated to power, they no longer represent his class, but become an essential part of the property owners' government. In the present war crisis, they are the Left wing of the Conservative Party, and have on every occasion sided with the Master-Class and against the workers. For them, the class war is only a slogan, never a reality. Betrayers of the workers like Morrison, Bevin, and Attlee are not a rare occurrence; they are a type, whose name is legion. Every country that has been so unfortunate as to produce a parliamentary socialist party have had these careerists and adventurers.

The worker, therefore, can have no faith in the politician, and knows that only by industrial action can he defend his hard-won rights. To this end he built the Trade Union movement which, when it functioned as a fighting organization, justified its existence. The British have a great *past*, one they can be proud of. They were justly termed "the prize-fighters of the working class". To-day the trade unions are huge bureaucratic, due-collecting rackets, dominated always from above by men who have won their positions by attacking and accusing their predecessors of the very faults and crimes that they are themselves guilty of to-day. The funds, which run into millions, are in nearly every case invested in War Loan and Government stock, thereby helping the Government and the boss class to weather the storm and stabilize their positions of privilege. In the event of a General Strike, prices on the Stock Exchange would fall immediately, and they would cut off their own sources of supplies so far as money is concerned. For these exploiters of labour, the Labour leaders, have never yet been able to see any other method of fighting except on a money basis.

It is because of these obvious facts that the industrial workers are taking direct action. Such workers as women and young lads whose minds have not been debauched by the dope of the politician and

the Trade Union delegates of the Government, instinctively see the class issue, and know that it is at the point of production that they are robbed. They know that it is there that they must strike, that they must strike *now*, not after the war, when the discharged soldiers are begging for work or charity. *Capitalism's difficulties are Labour's opportunities.*

For these reasons the prospects of a Social Revolution are promising. The Capitalist system is past being mended—it must be ended. The only alternative is decay and reversion to an even lower type of society such as Totalitarianism, both political and economic. Such a system is already in the capitalist shop window in the shape of the Beveridge scheme. The worker will have less and less to say in the shaping of his life, or that of his children. The State will manage all things for him, and the Labour Party will call it Socialism, just as Hitler did.

Take affairs into your own hands, build your own Anarchist Syndicates and prepare for the Social Revolution.

MEETINGS IN THE  
ANARCHIST FEDERATION HALL  
23 WILSON STREET, C.I. (2nd Floor)  
Sunday, 7 p.m.

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| DECEMBER 5th  | Tommy Paterson                          |
|               | Why They are Afraid                     |
| DECEMBER 12th | Roger Carr                              |
|               | Menace from Moscow                      |
| DECEMBER 19th | Eddie Fenwick                           |
|               | The War and the Ruling Class            |
| DECEMBER 26th | Frank Leech                             |
|               | Practical Syndicalism                   |
| JANUARY 2nd   | Eddie Shaw                              |
|               | New Methods, New Forces, New Alignments |

★ ★ ★  
A SOCIAL EVENING

amongst comrades and friends will be held in  
the above hall on

Friday 14th December, at 8 p.m.

WILL YOU BE THERE?

## Scotch Fisheries

WHILE THE FISHING industry of almost the whole of Scotland is almost perpetually at a standstill owing to inadequate prices and lack of transport facilities, it would be well to examine the abominable labour conditions prevailing in that section of the industry where prices throughout the war have been excessively high—namely, the salmon fishing.

In the days before monopoly combines and invisible bosses were popular, the fertile lands on each bank of the River Tay comprised estates and large farms, the owners of which let the beaches, together with the fishing rights, to the local men from the Carse of Gowrie and Fifeshire. The rent paid varied from £2 to £3 and the men worked in a comparatively contented manner.

But to-day there is nothing but discontent and strife. The Tay Salmon Fisheries Co. Ltd., monopolises the whole river with the exception of two beaches that a rival company has been able to procure, but are deemed not worth fishing. Approximately fifty years ago the T.S.F. Co. Ltd. started in a small way but soon cleverly bought up all the estates for more than thirty miles on each bank of the Tay, split them up into small farms which were sold or let while the beaches and fishing rights were retained. The superstitious fishermen and crofters from the Isles of Sky and Harris, unable to make a living in their own locality, were imported to work for the company each season commencing February 5th and ending August 20th. As soon as the Spring work is completed in the crofts, these men journey to the Tay. This has been the practice for more than thirty years, the men seeming to regard the work as a privilege and are easily exploited. They live in huts or "bothies" very often situated in such remote places that they are only accessible by boat. This year several men complained of bugs in the bunks. One small fire has to suffice for seven men to cook all meals—when hungry and tired after a hard shift they queue before it and during stormy weather clothes are never dry. Although the initial capital outlay of the firm is small, and maintenance almost negligible, the work is made harder because most of the boats leak. *The Fairmaid*, the fish boat that carries the fish up-river to Perth, was purchased in 1916. 300 men are normally employed but owing to the labour shortage only about 150 were employed this season, many of these being medical and science students from Dundee and Edinburgh. Work is carried on by day and night with every tide so that each man works a minimum of two five hour shifts.

As usual the wage rates vary—four "boatmen" are paid £3. 10s. 0d.; two "towmen" £3 15s. 0d. and the "gaffer" gets £4. 3s. 10d. All work a fifty-hour week of ten tides, with an overtime rate of 1/9d. per hour. If the eleventh tide is worked on Saturday afternoons 2/- per hour is paid. It is fortunate that the Fishery Board regulations which prohibit a net in the water after 6 p.m. Saturday and not before 6 a.m. Monday, act unintentionally in the interests of the workers, in lessening the hours of work, although they were framed to protect the interests of the aristocratic rod-fishers up-river. A few students, Communists and Scottish Nationalists, angered by the colossal profits made by the firm, attempted to organise strike action. But such action failed owing to the apathy of the Highland men and the fact that the majority of the students were more concerned with the immediate issue of earning enough money to pay university fees. It is, however, significant that when news of the strike action and the refusal of many students to work overtime, reached the ears of the directors, the "gaffers" immediately received 3d. per hour increase on the overtime rates.

The competitive instincts of the men were stimulated so that they would vie with each other to catch the largest quantity of fish. Of course the work is easier if less fish are caught, and the men who were deceived by such clever psychological tricks are sneered at by the others as having caught the "fish fever".

Some idea of the profits accruing to the company will be realised from the fact that it is common knowledge that one good fish caught by each member of the crew on the first tide is sufficient to pay the wages. And each week a crew will catch from 90 to 200 good fish and double or treble the number of "grisle"—small first-year salmon.

Little wonder that there is opposition to the company in the form of organised poaching gangs recruited mainly from the sprat-fishers. To counteract these activities the company pays £1 per night to volunteers amongst the "gaffers" to patrol the river. In the inevitable conflicts, worker cracks workers' skull in a manner that puts shame to any policeman in a baton charge.

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## Films and Plays

# FOR WHOM THE COIN CLINKS

DISTRUST FOR THE self-styled "intellectuals" is likely to be deepened amongst the workers when they find how many of those who pretended to be on the side of the masses at the time of the war in Spain, have shown themselves in their true colours. In this country we have seen how all the ten apostles of a united front—influenced by the Stalin boys—have either departed out of the reach of the imperialist war they demanded, or found themselves billets in the Ministry of Information. In America, that staunch apostle of "Spanish Republicanism", Ernest Hemingway, cashed in on his pretended period of Spanish anti-fascism, by writing the best-seller "For Whom the Bell Tolls".

We do not blame him for that. Obviously, a professional writer makes his living, or otherwise, by writing books, and if he can colour his writings with his beliefs that is a very good thing. But Ernest Hemingway chose to prostitute his anti-fascism by selling the film rights knowing that no film company would produce such specific anti-fascism, affecting a neutral "friendly" nation, fascist Spain. When Franco's Ambassador protested to Paramount about the anti-fascist trends, these were immediately deleted, and with Hemingway's consent.

It is not merely that the blood and tears of the Spanish people has been utilised to provide a suitable background for a love affair between Gary Cooper and Ingrid Bergman. That after all is nothing uncommon in Hollywood. What is most certainly a betrayal is that Hemingway's novel as shown on the film has lost all its anti-fascism. While Franco's atrocities are referred to occasionally in dialogue they are never shown and make no impression—whereas the film takes care to show "atrocities" of the anti-fascists. Apart from a few lines of dialogue (which are doubtless cut out in most countries) the film could be shown in Madrid to-day. Franco's troops are called "the Nationalists"; the guerrilla fighters are mostly shown as half-witted (we recall that Hemingway, like all pro-Stalinists, strongly disliked the Spanish Anarchists), and the atmosphere is that of gangsters, not revolutionaries. It will please the friends of Franco-Fascism here. It will likewise please those who prefer to hear the coin clinking at the box office than the bell tolling.

The Left Wing intellectuals are by no means the only ones at fault. We read that it is stated that Churchill's "Life of Marlborough" has been bought for £55,000. As pointed out by Hannen Swaffer (*Daily Herald*, 16/11/43.):

"If this is true, it means that the money has been paid for the use of the Premier's name for publicity purposes, because any scenario writer of skill could adapt the life of the victor of Blenheim from sources easily accessible in the history books and biographies."

We do not blame Churchill for getting a good price for his story. If the film companies are willing to pay such enormous prices for stories, and the contradictions of the capitalist system makes it possible for this to be done, this cannot be helped. But it is evident that the film company are not buying the story of the life of Marlborough—they are buying the name of Winston S. Churchill. Not because of his skill as a writer, but because of his meteoric rise in other spheres, which has been made possible by the "blood, toil, tears and sweat" of the British people. Because they made it possible for Churchill's direction of the war to be successful, they have made such an offer possible. That other Right Wing author with a reputation established in other ways—Adolf Hitler—will yet live comfortably in the Argentine on the film rights of "Mein Kampf" we fear.

★

LATEST MANIFESTATION OF C.P. apologetics is given us through the medium of the drama. Glasgow Unity Theatre, with their recent presentation of John Kincaid's "Song of To-morrow", have demonstrated most effectively, that their "unity" lies not with the working class, but with these elements which will sell our heritage for a mess of Churchill pottage.

For two hours, we are subjected to a barrage of pep-talk, in the best Fireside Fusilier manner, exhorting us to greater efforts, demanding production, *ad infinitum*, and boosting Uncle Joe *ad nauseam*. "Song of To-morrow" is a very patriotic song indeed!

The principal character in this "go-to-it" epic, Andy, is a shop steward in an aircraft factory—of the old-fashioned type, who are so unpatriotic as to cling to the methods of direct action. On his dismissal for "gross misconduct", there is a spontaneous demonstration of solidarity from his fellow workers, and they are solidly in favour of strike action.

At this point, the "party line" enters, in the attractive guise of Andy's fiancée, whose undoubted charms are matched only by the intensity of her Stakhanovite utterances, delivered on every possible (or impossible) occasion.

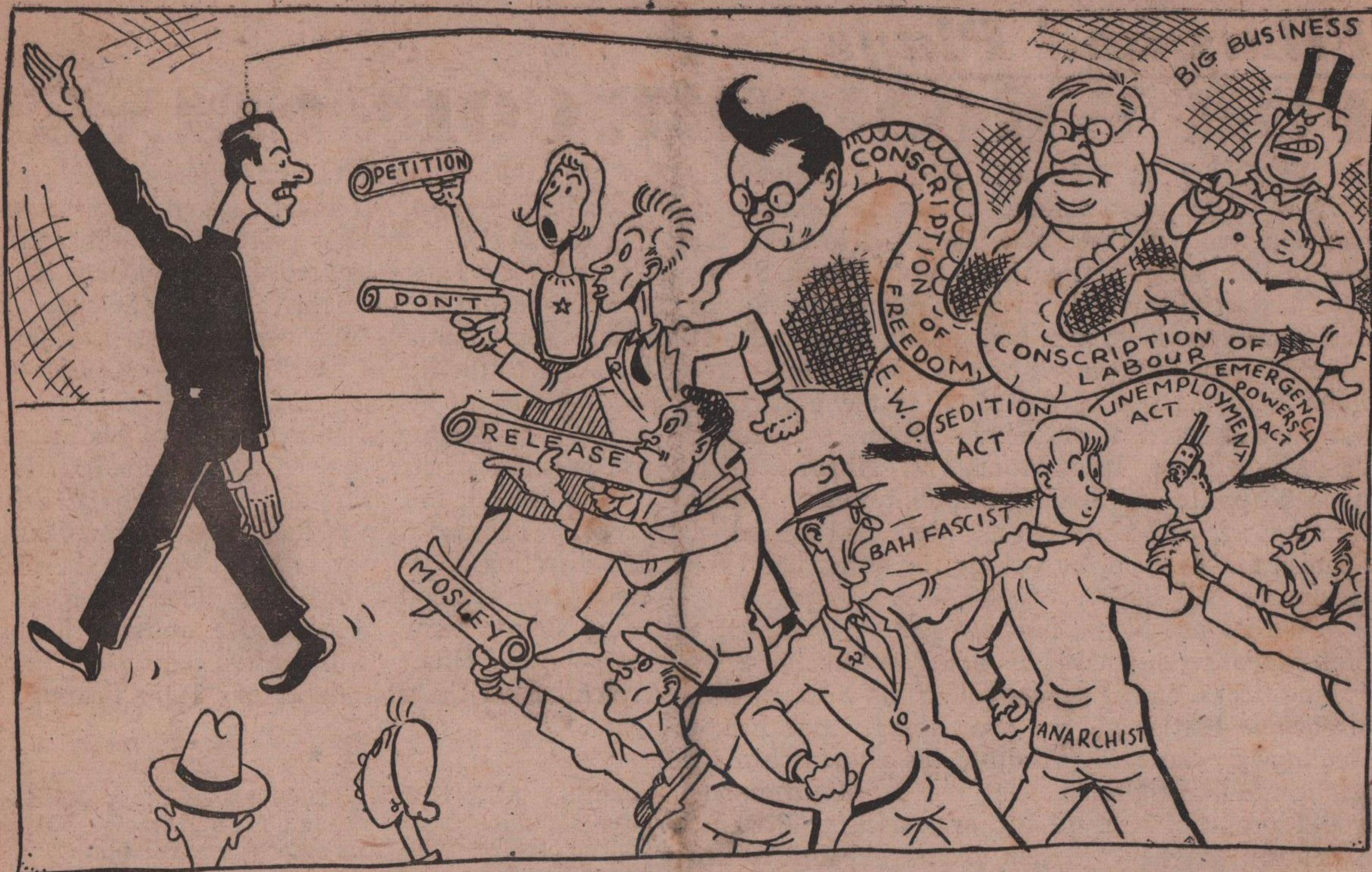
However, despite the protestations of this Stalin sob-sister, Andy is adamant, and all her appeals for "negotiations" are of no avail. Andy and his fellow-workers just won't see the light!

The conflict intensifies, but lo and behold, is interrupted by a dramatically convenient blitz.

Andy, accompanied by his friend, a bemused German refugee, goes forth into the night. Kurt, the refugee poet, is injured. Andy is hit on the head, and we can only assume, judging by their subsequent mental somersaults, that the other characters shared a similar fate! Kurt delivers an impassioned address in the best C.P. vein, the workers decide against strike action, and the Conciliation Officer reinstates Andy.

All live happily ever after, except such poor stooges as are prepared to swallow this brand of dope!

Truly, Glasgow Unity Theatre has hit a new low. By way of post-mortem, we can only say "Oh, the pity of it all!" Wake up and live, you have a great opportunity to build a working-class theatre. Don't let the Stalin stumblebugs run the show. It's not too late to exchange your hammer-and-sickle for a pair of pants!



## Behind the Slogans—“Jail Mosley!”

SIR OSWALD MOSLEY has been released from detention on medical grounds, following reports submitted by Lord Dawson of Penn, the King's physician, and Dr. Geoffrey Evans, as well as the prison medical authorities. On two occasions, at least, Mosley was allowed to leave prison in order to consult West End specialists.

Mosley's release brings up a number of questions. He had not changed his political ideas, and was released on medical grounds alone. But will Herbert Morrison accordingly sanction the release (on "medical grounds") of other prisoners who may be in equally bad health, though, perhaps, with fewer friends among the ruling class? There are hundreds, maybe thousands, imprisoned under wartime, basically political offences—Conscientious Objectors, deserters, absentees, and those who have infringed the industrial as well as the military code, by leaving their jobs without permission.

And since British Fascists are being let out, how about releasing Indian Democrats? Old Gandhi may die in detention at his age.

Fascism thrives on notoriety. If it can't get publicity, it remains an insignificant growth. Hitler deliberately went out of his way in the years before 1933, to court opposition.

Mosley, after a prolonged visit to Berlin, copied these tactics in London. He, too, began an aggressive propaganda which invited attack. The Communists, who also thrive on the same kind of publicity, of course played up to him, and very soon Mosley's party began to grow, and attracted a wide attention. This was just what he wanted.

The present outcry about the release of a few Fascist leaders, fanned chiefly once more by the C.P., also serves the ends of Fascism. The holding of counter-demonstrations is once more represented as "militant anti-fascism", while the revolutionary organizing of the workers is never mentioned. Just when the Second Front is at a pretty low ebb, and the Stalinists are beginning to feel the

come back from their reactionary strike-breaking policy, Morrison has supplied them with a programme—attack Mosley! They do not mind playing over again their pre-1933 policy of assisting the Fascists to keep themselves in the public eye—their own policy is not essentially different from the Fascists.

While Pollitt and the *Daily Blackleg* squawk against Mosley, the ruling class, with their politicians who backed Hitler and Mussolini, without a second thought include in the government Lennox-Boyd, who was so prominent a Franco supporter while the Spanish Anarchists were giving their lives in the revolutionary struggle against Fascism in Spain.

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