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Threepence

War Supplies to China

SOMETHING MORE MATERIAL THAN MORAL INDIGNATION BEHIND AMERICAN DEMANDS

THE issue of British trade with China illustrates the complications of apparently simple issues as soon as one digs beneath the surface. Chinese troops, supplied from China, have for the past six months been fighting against forces in Korea which include British troops. On the face of it therefore it would seem an obvious move to refuse to trade in war materials with China. Some would say that refusal of any trade contacts was morally inescapable. In actual wartime, acts of parliament forbidding trading with the enemy are regularly enacted, and to give succour or comfort to the King's enemies becomes treachery, punishable with death. Even then, however, some exchange of goods does go on between the warring nations, and it is one of the functions of neutrals to act as clearing houses

for such traffic. At such times it is customary for anti-militarist propagandists to denounce all this as flagrantly immoral (as indeed it is). But a more practical outlook observes that the trade world is so interlocked that national economies are interdependent, and that wartime trade represents a kind of blackmailing give and take, necessary in order that war economies can be maintained at all. No doubt it is true that such trade represents but a fraction of the normal, but it is quite enough to create a moral storm when "our boys are being killed by material supplied by ourselves".

Since the people who make most moral noise are often enough those who have best access to the facts, and who are accustomed to take a severely practical view of economic administration, we may perhaps not take their morality too seriously. One of the difficulties is to define war materials. "Senator Malone," wrote the *Times* on May 12th, "gave his ideas when he said that 'shirt buttons are war materials when a war is in progress'—an interpretation which would make General MacArthur a serious offender. But any less inclusive definition, though it would still leave Japan in difficulties, need not worry most of Western Europe." Since it was General MacArthur who started the hare about war materials for China,

this shows how easily such fowls may come home to roost—if we may be permitted a traditional political mixed metaphor.

In the last month before war broke out with Germany in September, 1939, the commerce in steel and other war material rose very sharply, the tense international situation notwithstanding. Similarly during the first

four months of this year, China's imports of rubber from British sources was enough, according to Sir Hartley Shawcross, the President of the Board of Trade, to suffice for Chinese civilian requirements for a year. (Mr. Raymond Blackburn, M.P., insists that the figures are in reality much higher.)

Now this fact in itself is in contradiction with the obvious propaganda question of "our boys, &c." and our doubts are given more substance by informed discussion of the likely results of the recently imposed ban on war materials especially rubber. The *Times*, for example, remarks (12/5/51): "Rubber prices have dropped steadily this week, shaking local confidence in the ability of the Singapore market to withstand price-depressing manœuvres, especially by

American buyers, which, many traders believe, are capable of being disastrously successful if British and European purchasers do not resume heavy buying." It seems that American demands for an embargo on goods to China has something more material behind it than mere honest indignation.

Indonesian Rubber

Another problem arises from the readiness of the Indonesian Government to sell to China if China can supply goods of which Indonesia is in need—a readiness which, according to O. M. Green, the *Observer's* Far Eastern expert, "threatens to make any ban on exports to China futile." Indonesia has an exportable surplus of rubber more than enough to supply China's entire war needs. Incidentally, the policy of the Indonesian

Government is not unaffected by the fact that it possesses a local Chinese colony numbering two millions, who practically monopolise the retail trade of the country—so that even here purely moral considerations, of which the Indonesian Government, like any other government, no doubt likes to make a show, probably have to give way to more practical pressures. Since this new nation exported no rubber at all to China in 1950, the British embargo presents a considerable trade opportunity.

In Singapore, the possible advantages are also being explored. "Government officials here believe . . . that . . . the rubber market will recover. Chinese buying of Indonesian rubber will displace the previous buyers who will naturally turn to Malaya for their purchases. It is pointed out that the total of Chinese rubber purchases in Malaya last year was little more than 7 per cent. of the total production, and that shipments to Hong Kong . . . were at a similar level—namely, 7.1 per cent" (*Times*, 12/5/51). In business it's an ill wind indeed that blows nobody any good!

Finally, there is yet another difficulty. To quote the *Observer* once more: "But . . . (the ban) does not mean that no more rubber will leave Malaya for China; these waters know too long and glittering a tradition of what ordinary people call smuggling for mere formal licences to stay their traffic" (13/5/51).

And so we come back to the moral indignation. Having used the hubbub about General MacArthur incidentally to put this propaganda pressure on the British Government, and at the same time to blow a loud moral trumpet, the American Government will return to more usual diplomatic methods of unseen pressure and compromise which constitutes the day to day commerce between the nations.

ANARCHIST.

FOREIGN COMMENTARY After Willy McGee, the "Trenton Six"?

SO deeply ingrained is racial prejudice in some parts of the United States of America that those men or institutions with the power to undo some piece of racial mischief, almost inevitably prefer to refuse in the teeth of world-wide protests and with the knowledge that their refusal will be used as a propaganda weapon by their political enemies among coloured people throughout the world, and not without effect.

These were the conclusions one came to in the shocking case of the Martinsville negroes, seven of whom, all youths with one exception were executed for the alleged rape of a white woman. Democratic consciences throughout the world were deeply disturbed, by this case. But as evidence that the American nation is completely impervious to world opinion where American domestic affairs are concerned, the Martinsville case has been followed by the McGee case which ended last week when the victim, 37-year-old

Willy McGee, father of five children was led to the electric chair.

ON May 3rd, 1945, that is just six years ago, a Mrs. Hawkins, a white woman living in Laurel (Mississippi), complained to the police that she had been raped by a man at 4 o'clock in the morning. The same evening, some thirty miles away a negro lorry driver, McGee, was arrested on theft charges at the instigation of his employer. Bloodstains having been found on his overalls, McGee was alleged to have made a complete confession of his crime—not of theft but of rape!

As in the Martinsville case, so with the McGee case, insufficient details are available for us to state without fear of contradiction that McGee was not guilty. That the woman was raped in a room adjacent to the one in which her husband and two children slept, without managing by her screams and struggles (she must have struggled if the prosecution's case that the bloodstains found on McGee were of her blood) to awaken them, seems too fantastic to be true. We will content ourselves with quoting the independent Paris paper *Le Monde* (3/5/51): "... an examination of the documents available to the public results in the existence of a very serious doubt as to the guilt of McGee. As in all civilised countries should not doubt weigh in favour of the accused?" Not in America, even if it takes five years to go through all the complicated processes of the law, to dispatch the victim to eternity.

McGEE was found guilty for the first time in December, 1945, but a retrial was ordered by the Supreme Court because of demonstrations against the accused during the trial which were meant, presumably, to intimidate the jury and the defence (shades of political trials behind the iron curtain, or indeed in France after the liberation!) The second trial which took place in a similar lynch atmosphere again resulted in a death verdict but was again dismissed, this time because the jury was composed entirely of white people. The third verdict of guilt was passed in March, 1948, and confirmed by higher Courts two years later in May, 1950. And in March of this year the Supreme Court of the United States (which deals not on the facts of the case, but on the constitutionality of the laws) refused to interfere thus leaving to the State Governor alone the decision whether or not to commute the death penalty.

The Governor may have dismissed from his mind a large proportion of the 15,000 letters of protest he is said to have received as emanating from Communist supporters making political capital out of the case. But he could not easily dismiss world liberal opinion which had been deeply shocked by this and other "racial" cases in America. Nor could he, from a purely opportunistic point of view, ignore the use Communist propagandists would make of this case in working up anti-American feeling in Africa and Asia.

Yet it is clear that these considerations were outweighed by the anti-negro prejudices of influential people in the State as well as, perhaps, his own prejudices in these matters (not to mention his slender chances at the next elections if he pardoned a "nigger"). If our conclusion is correct it would indicate that whatever progress has been made against racial discrimination in America, human rights are still only skin deep, however equal negroes may be with the whites in the eyes of the law.

The "Trenton Six" case

THE trial is still proceeding of six Trenton, New Jersey, negroes who were arrested three years ago and charged with murdering a shopkeeper. The county prosecutor is demanding that they be sent to the electric chair.

A defence motion to end the trial has been turned down by the Superior Court Judge. The defence argued that the state cannot produce the money Mr. Horner was carrying and contended that if the state does not prove robbery it cannot ask the death penalty against all six men.

The *Industrial Worker* (New York) furthermore points out that the identification evidence in this case has been weak and unconvincing.

"As an example of the type of evidence that is being presented: a woman testified that she had seen two of the defendants in the store where the crime occurred eleven days before it happened. Likewise, even this identification was subject to grave doubt. The woman at the time she identified the accused was looking through a small glass window at the police station at a time when she was only two days out of a hospital where she had been undergoing eye treatment. The case bears every evidence of being a frame-up."

LIBERTARIAN.

Can We Do Nothing for India?

Famine looms up in Bihar

The *Manchester Guardian's* special correspondent in Patna writes (9/5/51) that:

"A sort of torpor has slowly settled over the Bihar plains, as subtle as alluvial dust. There is no work on the land from Ganges to Nepal, there is no food to eat, so man and beast lie silently clustered in the shade of the mango groves. Even the small children are quiet as they chew acid green mangoes. In the Sitamarhi district most wells are parched, and

women and children scrape the bottoms of dried-up tanks in search of tadpoles and snails to eat. Ornaments have been sold or pawned, land is being mortgaged, and money borrowed at 70 per cent.

"The men of Bihar, by nature sturdy, are kept going by their robust constitution, but children and old people are already showing signs of starvation. Children's legs cave in and rickety ribs embrace bloated bellies; adults have lost their last ounce of fat so that healthy men look like adolescents. Deaths from starvation are not yet reported, but whether a man who has not eaten for several days dies of starvation or of dysentery when eating leaves, is a point for casuistry . . .

"A nursing mother gets 450 calories a day, a man gets 600, and not all get the ration. I have seen people who eat one meal every other day and one family whose members had not taken food for four days. The fair-price shops sell wheat and very inferior-quality millet, unfit almost for human consumption. "When you come back we shall be dead," people have said.

[Readers are referred to the two articles which appeared in *Freedom*, May 5th and 12th: *India Once More Faces Famine*, and *Famine and the Problem of Food Supply*, copies of which are still obtainable 7d. post free from *Freedom Press*.]

Earnings in India

The average Indian earned 255 rupees (£19) in the financial year 1948-49, the National Income Committee said in a report described as the "first scientific attempt made at estimating the national income."

Some Russian Wheat Ships on the Way

The Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, announced in Parliament last week that some Russian wheat ships were now on the way to India. Discussions were going on between the two countries about trade on a barter basis, he said.

No Buyers for American Dried Eggs and Potatoes

The government to-day offered for sale on the export market 10,000,000 pounds of dried eggs at 60 cents a pound. The eggs were bought at a cost to taxpayers of \$1.03 a pound to support prices.

Dried egg sales to foreign buyers from January 1st to April 20th totalled 1,507,549 pounds at an average loss of 68 cents a pound.

Included in the export sales list of surplus commodities for May was a "substantial quantity" of potatoes at a price ranging from one cent to 60 cents per 100 pounds. The same commodities were offered to the domestic market at current market prices.

FISH AND FINANCE

THOUSANDS of stones of fish are being thrown back into the sea because heavy landings at port have brought down prices. But, merchants say, "The collapse in price will not be fully reflected in the shops because there is a limit to which prices can be reduced if trade is to be carried on profitably." So, with all this abundance, prices still remain high in the shops.

Anarchists have always recognised that there could be enough food produced in the world to satisfy the needs of everyone, and this is just another example of the senseless waste of food carried out in the interests of profit.

We agree with some of the Labour Members of Parliament that "private enterprise should be stopped throwing fish back into the sea," but we do not agree that controlling prices in the interests of State enterprise is the answer to the

problem. We suggest that it would be much simpler to do away with prices altogether, and distribute the fish, and every other commodity, according to the needs of the people.

REDUNDANT

DELEGATES at the Electrical Trades Union conference at Hastings expressed dissatisfaction with the Nationalised Industries. Most of the complaints were against the preponderance of black-coated workers over manual workers.

One delegate said there were seven officials to four workers in his town in Lancashire. Another complained that there were five "engineers" to look after five manual workers in a South West city.

No wonder the pension schemes and pay increases for manual workers have not been worked out in all nationalised industries.

R.M.

