

# WAR *For Anarchism* COMMENTARY

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MID-MAY, 1944

TWOPENCE

## *Britain's Fascist Allies*

HITLER REMINDED THE German people, in his speech of a few months ago (end of January), of the "great social reforms" which his régime had carried out, and he promised the 'liberated' people of Europe that the Nazi party would undertake a programme of socialization for them also. Similarly, the Republican Fascist Party in Northern Italy promises the Italian people nationalization of the major industries and the public services. It is not difficult to see that such rosy promises, offered at a time when an Axis victory seems increasingly improbable, are of a phantom nature.

Thus as the chances of victory get more remote, the Axis leaders get more and more generous in the future they hold out. In the democratic countries, on the other hand, a reverse process is taking place. The promises of socialist reforms which our government made at a time when there was not the least chance of carrying them into effect are now buried and forgotten. With the possibility of victory in sight our rulers do not even pay lip service to the principles which they claimed to hold in times when they were in greater need of popular support. So obvious is the change of face that even so orthodox a paper as the *Observer* expresses alarm at it:

"In 1940 a great message of hope and inspiration went out from our besieged island to the enslaved lands of the Continent. To-day, our island, no longer besieged, has become a formidable base for the attack, and great armadas will soon go out from it. But what message do they carry? Do we still stand for the safety of small nations and the world rule of law? Is it still our aim to restore 'the true greatness of Europe'? Does our victory still mean the victory of democracy and liberty? Of course that is the general purpose. But these general principles need definition as well as affirmation. Continental democrats see with misgivings old and new dictators making ready for their return behind our assembling armies. The new Concert of Europe, so hopefully initiated in the Assembly of St. James, has fallen into disuse. The Atlantic Charter, it seems, no longer wholly binds us. What is our policy, what our principles? Our friends in Europe who wait so bravely for our liberating armies, wait also for good tidings of our good intentions."

If there can be some doubt about Britain's principles, the same cannot be said about her policy. That has been made clear enough in the last two years, and

abundantly so in the last few months. Not the shadow of a democratic principle or ideal has ever been allowed to intervene; compromise is the keynote of British policy—compromise with fascists and reactionaries of all nationalities. Darlan, Badoglio, Mihailovitch, Franco; there is none so vile that the Tory-Labour coalition will not deal with him.

### SPANISH COMPROMISE

The policy of British and America towards Spain is one best calculated to entrench Franco's régime in power. The latest concession to this odious tyranny is the resumption of oil deliveries to Spain. These had been stopped a few months ago, but it is doubtful if the ban was ever intended either to last or to be effective. A few days after its imposition the American press came out with the news that oil was still being loaded on ships bound for Spain. Government officials explained that the ban did not apply to the kind of oil which was being shipped. In other words the ban was very far from being rigid while it was imposed, and in any case lasted for a few months only. In exchange for the lifting of the ban Franco agreed to cut down Spanish exports of wolfram to Germany to a "token export", either of 10 per cent. or of one third of that sent up to date. Some would say that a third was a respectable "token". Furthermore, according to *Reynolds News* correspondent, "only Franco and Hitler know what the amount is or what Spain's production is"—which, if true, makes nonsense of the whole agreement. The setting up of the whole ridiculous arrangement can only be explained on the assumption that "the U.S. has yielded to British economic interests on this point" (*Reynolds News*, 30/4/44).

The other points in the agreement with Franco are equally worthless if examined at all closely:

Franco agrees to withdraw the Blue Division from the Russian front, but individual members, if they wish, can transfer to the *Wehrmacht*.

Franco agrees to close down the German Consulate in Tangier. The Germans however have already taken steps to camouflage their future activity.



Franco is still holding out on the question of Italian warships in the Balearic Islands.

The Allies, nevertheless, seem to have secured that there will be no more orange bombs.

## NO SUPPORT FOR REPUBLIC

In return for these flimsy promises of Franco the Allies will not only supply him with oil, but have given political undertakings as well. According to *Reynolds'* Correspondent, Britain and America has reached the following points of agreement in the Stettinius talks:

1. There will be no support for Republicans of any sort. Any right-wing Government that can keep order will be backed.
2. Franco is to be persuaded to disband the Falange (Fascist) Party altogether.
3. Monarchist restoration will not be backed unless the Spaniards show signs of wanting it."

It is difficult to believe that the Allies are trying to salve their consciences by demanding the disbanding of the Falange. With or without the Falange, Franco is, and always will be a fascist. Only by means of the most brutal dictatorship can he hope to remain in power and rule the angry Spanish workers. He will gladly give up the name of the party which helped him to gain power in exchange for the help Churchill and Roosevelt are prepared to give him. For a fascist to have such valuable friends is worth a mere change of label.

Political memories are proverbially short. But there are few who do not remember the Spanish War, and the horrors of Franco's corpse-strewn road to power. What is one to think of the Labour collaborators of Churchill and Roosevelt who passively stand by while they so flagrantly support the Spanish butcher? Do those who honoured the Spanish workers' struggle look on with complacency at the scene which their support and adulation even of Churchill and Roosevelt now compels them to witness? Do the anti-fascist supporters of this soulless war learn any lessons from history?

## BADOGGIO HERE

Newspapers reported recently that Marshal Badoglio, another of those allies who shed glory on the Democratic cause, is expected to visit Britain shortly for military talks with the Allied war leaders, following the formation of Italy's new six-party cabinet. Badog-



lio is reported to be anxious to mobilize the Italian army against the Germans.

It is a bitter aspect of the Italian tragedy to see Marshal Badoglio, ex-Duke of Addis Ababa, who directed Italian troops to slaughter and poison-gas Abyssinians only a short eight years ago, now discussing new massacres with the so-called Democratic leaders. The irony is intensified by the reflection that Badoglio will already have discussed the matter with the members of his cabinet. He will be representing here the democrat Sforza, the liberal Croce, the Communist Ercoli. Only this time last year he was discussing similar questions with the Fascist Mussolini and Hitler's generals—questions concerning the war for freedom, the war against Fascism and tyranny. Could any mockery be more bitter?

These Italian, British and American politicians may plot round their green tables; the Italian soldiers will give them the answer they gave to Mussolini and their German masters. They are not greatly inspired by the cause of these "anti-fascists" who embrace Franco and Badoglio, Darlan and Peyrouton; nor will they fight with any great spirit for a cause which is not theirs, to support on the throne a rotten and traitorous king, to keep a murderer like Badoglio in office at the head of a jostling crowd of power-seeking politicians only anxious to secure for themselves cushy and profitable jobs.

As the war drags on the rulers of the world are compelled more and more to drop the pretence of idealism; and as the sordid motives which have lead them to drive the workers of the world into five years of fratricidal struggle come more and more into the light, these same rulers with blood upon their hands will feel the tremendous anger of the workers, the anger of the social revolution,



# ANARCHIST COMMENTARY

## RICH MAN'S BUDGET

THERE are few large companies who do not show markedly increased profits during the war. But for Sir John Anderson that seems no reason why they should be made to pay for the war, so the Excess Profits Tax (even if it couldn't always be fiddled round) is not extended in this year's Budget. Instead, the working class is going to be made to pay for the drawn-out stages of the war. There must be few households whose weekly expenditure has not had to be cut already since the Pay-as-you-earn income tax deductions came in. Now on top of that Sir John Anderson has decided that the cost of living must be raised by 5%. "The object," said the *Daily Mail* (28/4/44) "is to make a step in the direction of reducing the cost of subsidies paid by the Government to keep down prices of essential commodities, such as food, which last year cost the Treasury £190,000,000". So food prices will go up.

## MALNUTRITION AND THE WAR

THIS rise in food prices comes at a moment when several Medical Officers of Health have brought forward evidence which does much to destroy the easy optimism of those who declare that the war has brought improved health to the working class. Dr Kershaw points out in the *Medical Press and Circular* (5/4/44) that anaemia among women has increased, and ascribes this increase as being "to some extent due to the cumulative effect of sub-optimal qualitative nutrition". Dr. Brockington (in the 3/5/44 issue of the same journal) is very cautious about the position of children's health: "Whereas," he says, "by all accounts a disastrous deterioration in children's health has occurred in occupied Europe, there is no evidence of such a change in England, and the most that can be said on the slender evidence available is that there has been some deterioration in physique and possibly in 'positive health'." The evidence he refers to comes from three investigations in different parts of the country. In Glossop the children showed an increase in weight which was only 48% of pre-war standards, (their height increase was 79% of pre-war standards). Chorley showed an increase in the percentage of children suffering from malnutrition from 10.6% to 19.7% while children in Gloucestershire showed "deterioration in health".

It is against the background of these findings that one must consider the decision of the Government to raise the cost of living and the price of food.

## CAPITALIST MORALITY

THE *Daily Mail* and other capitalist papers lose no opportunity of denouncing as traitors any group of workers who defend their precarious incomes against the attacks of Government, the employers, or the Trade Union officials who sign away the workers' rights. And at the same time, the press praises those Trade Union leaders who have been most prominent in betraying the men they are supposed to represent. If one happens to be a worker, loyalty to one's class must be labelled (by the newspapers) treachery to "one's" country.

Yet the Press's own ideas of patriotism are far from exacting when applied to the ruling class. We have often seen them defending employers who hold up production (like coal-owners who close down the best seams during wartime) or who use cartel agreements to buy up patent rights in order to prevent existing methods of production being rendered obsolete by more advanced methods. But a still clearer view of capitalist conceptions of patriotism was given by the *Daily Mail* (1/5/44); it reported how Prof. S. Sakimura, trade expert on the Japanese Embassy Staff in Berlin, had deserted the Japanese Government. "Sakimura is the first Japanese of standing to desert in favour of the Allies since the days of Pearl Harbour". Every issue of the *Daily Mail* bears the bourgeois patriotic slogan "For King and Country"; but does this paper denounce the Japanese deserter in the same terms as it uses for English strikers? Not a bit of it! They praise and justify his action. "Yet Sakimura is not lacking in courage—moral and physical. He has risen above national arrogance (!) sufficiently to admit openly that the Axis cannot win this war, and has followed this belief to its logical conclusion and offered to put his special knowledge at the disposal of the Allies. On the face of it he seems genuine."

On the *Daily Mail's* own view of patriotism Sakimura is clearly a traitor. But traitors from other countries who help the British ruling class against their own are caressed by the *Daily Mail* as "genuine". Workers find capitalist morality rather sickening.

## MAY DAY BY PROXY

NEITHER the Socialists nor the Communists utilized May Day to urge their working class followers to follow the traditional down tools by all workers all over the world to demonstrate the solidarity of the working class against the employing class. That would never do at a time when these same Socialists and Communists are assisting the employing class to drive the workers of one country against those of another (but cartel agreements must be respected). The Italian Socialists and Communists are an exception however. Leading the struggle for freedom against the OVRA and the Gestapo from their arm-chairs in the Badoglio cabinet, they issued a stirring call to the workers of North Italy to down tools on May Day and demonstrate against the German occupation. They led the Italian workers from behind to a kind of May Day by proxy. Italian workers will not forget.

## BEVIN FAILS AGAIN

MR. BEVIN'S ballot scheme was supposed to provide 30,000 boys for the mines by the end of April. The actual result given in the *News Chronicle* (1/5/44) must have disappointed the Government. 8,412 boys are at work, while 4,244 are undergoing training. The other 17,344 seem to have disappeared in some mysterious fashion, at least the Ministry of Labour has not produced any explanation. Quite obviously what has happened

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is a new spontaneous refusal to be conscripted into mining, the most dangerous and one of the worst paid jobs in industry.

The object of the ballot scheme is not that there is a shortage of coal, but to provide cheap labour for the mine-owners. If they really wanted to increase the production of coal the government would release skilled miners from the Army, and would decidedly not export coal from this country to Portugal, as they have been doing.

Slave labour will not solve the crisis in the coal industry; only vast improvements in working conditions, which the capitalists cannot introduce, and which only the workers themselves can make, will bring peace to the coalfields.

## CHINESE DILEMMA

AN article in the *Sunday Dispatch* (23/4/44) by Simon Harcourt-Smith gives an outline of Chiang Kai-Shek's book *China's Destiny*. This book attacks the past record of the Western imperialists, and maintains that due to the special trading facilities taken by Britain, U.S.A. and other European countries, China has been so weakened that she was unable to resist the Japanese attacks.

The Unequal Treaties which the Europeans had gained gave them their own law courts, towns, post offices and railways; and their troops were stationed in China. But after the last war there was a Chinese national movement against European privileges, and the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) became dominant. Chiang Kai-Shek became the leader of this party, and during his ascendancy he has carried on a continuous campaign against the treaties which are so much in the favour of the Europeans. At the same time it relates these facts, the book puts forward China's claim for Outer Mongolia and Tibet, and hints that China should control Indo-China, Burma and Siam.

From the comments of it which have appeared in the Press Chiang Kai-Shek's book seems to breathe such hatred of the Western powers that it is not surprising that the book did not appear in Britain or America. Its publication would have caused some embarrassment to the Communist Party which is fond of representing Chiang Kai-Shek as a great democratic leader in spite of the fact that, in 1927, thousands of their members were shot down by his order, in Shanghai and Canton. It would also have dispelled some illusions as to the fraternal feelings which exist among the United Nations.

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## OUR MAY DAY MEETINGS

It was not without significance that the only meeting held in Hyde Park on the afternoon of May 1st was the anarchist meeting. Only the anarchist movement showed itself prepared to come out on May Day and demonstrate its belief in international solidarity. A large and interested crowd, including many comrades, listened for many hours to half-a-dozen speakers for Anarchism.

The Holborn Hall meeting on the Sunday before May Day was a great success. Probably it was one of the largest meetings we have held in London since the Spanish Revolution meetings at which Emma Goldman spoke. Nearly six hundred people crowded the hall and warmly applauded the speakers and the message conveyed by the film "Kameradschaft". No voice of dissension was heard and the meeting was a symptom of the growth of anarchist doctrines in Britain these last few years. Fraternal greeting conveyed by the C.N.T. (Spanish anarcho-syndicalist) group in exile were loudly welcomed. We were very pleased to see old and new faces in the audience, and to note comrades from all over London, and some from as far off as the West Country, as well as Spanish, Italian, French, German, Russian and Polish comrades who made this a really international gathering.

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# BRUTALITIES IN AMERICAN PRISONS

*We reproduce the following article from the New York World-Telegram, 9/2/44. It is necessary in times like these when Germans and Japanese are given the monopoly of brutality, to remind the public that acts of sadism are always committed whenever men are segregated in prisons or concentration camps in abnormal, inhuman conditions. It is not by wars that atrocities can be prevented from taking place, but by destroying a system which cannot exist without prisons and jailers.*

★ ★ ★  
By JAY NELSON TUCK

*World-Telegram Staff Writer.*

DETAILED CHARGES OF revolting and sickening brutality committed by guards upon prisoners at the Medical Centre of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Springfield, Mo., were brought to the attention of the *World-Telegram* to-day as Norman Thomas, Socialist leader, demanded a Congressional investigation of the institution.

Documents outlining the charges in great detail and listing a total of 72 witnesses were smuggled out by prisoners at the institution and are to be made available for a thorough and impartial inquiry.

The documents describe almost unbelievably savage attacks upon prisoners—many of whom were sent to the Springfield institution because they were invalids or mental cases—by guards who are named in most cases.

## Three-Year Period.

The brutalities described include beating, poundings with fire hose, deprivation of food, torture with burning cigarettes, kicks and punches to the most vulnerable parts of the body and confinement for considerable periods in stripped stone cells, without heat or furnishings of any kind, and prisoners being kept nude and forced to sleep nude on bare concrete floors.

The documents cite cases covering a period of three years, beginning in 1941. They were smuggled out of the prison by Louis Taylor, 995 Freeman St., the Bronx, who is at Springfield serving a term as a conscientious objector, and sent by him to Dr. Evan W. Thomas, a brother of the Socialist leader.

## Asked Protection.

Chief among the papers is a copy of a 36-page writ, drawn up and notarized by a prisoner who attempted last October to have it filed at the nearest Federal Court, in Kansas City. For attempting to file the writ, Mr. Taylor wrote, the prisoner was thrown into a stripped cell and later, with some of the witnesses he named, transferred to Leavenworth.

The writ included a pauper's petition, asking the court to waive filing fees and appoint counsel, a prayer for protection from punishment by the then warden, Dr. Ora H. Cox, and the main document, which asked that he be transferred from the medical centre to an ordinary prison for the remainder of his sentence.

The prisoner wrote that he was a sane and healthy man, and quoted the report of the prison psychiatrist to prove it,

but that he was confined with degenerates in a building where it "is and has been for years a common practice for the attendants in groups of from two to seven to attack inmates . . . and slap, whip, kick and beat said inmates unmercifully."

## Kicked and Beaten.

He asserted that brutalities were a daily occurrence and attached a documented list of cases. In order to prevent further punishment of the prisoners, the *World-Telegram* withholds their real names and prison numbers from the following descriptions, though they are given in the writ.

On Feb. 22, 1943, the sworn writ asserted, a prisoner who will here be called John Doe refused to give guards information they wanted, was stripped naked and thrown into a strip cell, a bare stone room. Kept without food for the rest of the day, he was thrown a blanket that night and told to lie down.

When he did not immediately do so, two guards named McDaniels and Hamilton entered the cell. The writ asserts that McDaniels removed his watch, put on a ring and began to beat the prisoner. He kicked Doe in the groin, and then both guards beat him while he lay prone.

## Witnesses Listed.

The following morning, the writ charged, the prisoner still had not been fed, and three guards named Lambeth, J. Morgan and E. Morgan repeated the beating.

"When the attendants were through beating him there was blood on both sides of the wall and on the floor," the writ charged. "Doe could not rise to his feet, so the attendants lifted him to his feet, shook and slapped him to try to bring him back to consciousness.

"When Doe gave signs of reviving once again he could not even stand. He had to hold on to the ventilator on the wall to keep from falling again. Both of his lips were cut, both eyes were swollen closed, his nose was bloody and swollen, his whole body was bruised and swollen. The attendants forced him to take a bath and clean up the cell."

Four days later, the writ asserts, Doe was visited by a doctor named Rosanoff, who ordered that he be given a mattress and told him "he only had a few scratches and bruises." Doe reported the beatings to Dr. Cox, the warden, the writ charged, but without results. The writ listed the names and numbers of seven prisoner witnesses to the story.

(Continued on p. 6)

## NORTH LONDON F.F.P. DISCUSSION GROUP

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## Blackjacked.

Prisoner Richard Roe was accused by a guard of looking out of his window after lights out, according to the writ, and then attacked by five attendants, three of whom were named Boles, Whipple and Rosenbaum.

"Boles grabbed Roe by the throat," the writ asserts, "and the other four attendants continued to beat Roe. After the attendant choked, beat and kicked Roe to the floor, they did not beat him any place, but picked targets such as his temples, under his heart, kidneys, groin and stomach. Two months later Roe had to have his appendix removed." The names of 10 witnesses are attached.

The writ charges that John Jones was "most murderously and inhumanly beaten and blackjacked" by guards named Rainey, Ganey, Boles and Rosenbaum. He then was thrown into a stripped cell, the writ asserts, and "his head had a large gash caused by the blackjacking he had received by the above-named officials.

"The boy was bleeding very bad, but the doctors would not sew his head up nor would the attendants let him wash the blood away. It was two days before he got his head sewed up." Nine witnesses are listed.

## Chaplain Protested.

In addition to the sworn writ, which listed 19 cases in addition to the three described above, Mr. Taylor's smuggled letter included "a note typical of many that I received as some effort to bring about a change here."

The note asserted that "150 inmate witnesses to 25 savage beatings in No. 10 buildings are trying to get out a writ to tell their stories in court. Administration blocking writ, throwing its writers in the hold. (Prison term for solitary confinement naked in strip cells.) Three riots in consequence."

"The note also told of four beatings, including the story of a man who was 'beaten insane in No. 2 building, brought to 1-4 for blood transfusion, kicked in shins and tortured with cigarettes, burned in ear. Father Nugent (the Catholic chaplain) protested this treatment to committee."

★ ★ ★

The *World-Telegram's* disclosures of alleged shocking brutality to prisoners at the Medical Centre of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Springfield, Mo., are too well documented with first-hand testimony and sworn affidavits to call for anything short of full, disinterested, unsparing investigation.

Prisoners beaten, kicked or starved to death, their bodies sent home covered with welts and bruises, others crippled by beatings or thrown naked into "strip" (bare stone) cells—and such atrocities charged, not to Jap savages but to government-paid guards in a United States prison hospital! Nor is it the first time such charges have cast a sinister shadow on this federal institution. There was similar scandal there last year.

Under the circumstances, the announced investigation to be conducted by James V. Bennett, director of the Bureau of Prisons, and a representative of the Public Health Service can hardly inspire full public confidence. Both these government bureaus are interested parties to the charges.

Neither is confidence deepened by Mr. Bennett's reported stressing of the point that some of the alleged victims were conscientious objectors or crackpot members of strange cults. As if that made a difference.

Whether conscientious objectors, cultists or whatever else, all prisoners held in confinement by the United States government are entitled to decent treatment befitting American civilized standards.

*New York World-Telegram* Editorial.

## NEWCASTLE JUSTICE !

Before the court on Tuesday, May 2nd, for the crime of posting a bill advertising an anarchist meeting on a dilapidated, unoccupied shop, Clifford Holden was fined two pounds.

The case was only one of a series of events which clearly showed political discrimination and victimisation by the police. For no apparent reason the police asked for a remand of seven days and bail of £20 was granted—this for contravening a bye-law for which the maximum penalty was £2.

Cross-examined in the witness-box Mark Sadler gave evidence that proved beyond all doubt that the whole building was in fact a David Allen bill-posting site, that it was plastered with posters, including three issued by the council, some signed by the Lord Mayor; he produced part of the bill as proof. The magistrate's clerk admitted that the council were "pirates" in this instance and held themselves liable for prosecution.

The I.L.P. group and War Resisters gave a fine example of solidarity by starting a collection to pay the fine.

★

## FOOD AND POLITICS

A group of prominent industrialists want to ban free speech in factory canteens.

They would like to see a big extension of canteens after the war and want them turned into modern, comfortable centres of rest and refreshment—but discussion of politics must be kept out.

An official of the association told me yesterday they were concerned about two forms of political agitation.

"First," he said, "there has been definite agitation—certainly not disinterested—in favour of the canteens being run by the workers for the workers without profits.

"Secondly, we don't think there should be any politics in the canteens. It's not fair to the workers."

*Daily Mirror*, 27/4/44.

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| Gateshead: J.E.S.     | 2  | 6  |                      |      |    |    |
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| Seattle: F.H.         | 1  | 9  | Prev. ack.           | £141 | 18 | 6  |
| Chinese comrades per  |    |    |                      |      |    |    |
| C.S.                  | 11 | 9  | TOTAL TO DATE        | £193 | 19 | 9  |



# The Strike Wave

THE STRIKE WAVE which has recently spread through the country is not a disease, but the manifestation of a natural law in society, the decay and death of outworn forms, within which the new develops in embryo.

The coercive forces of the whole state machine have been brought into play in an attempt to purge the economic organism of this so-called creeping paralysis. The 'persuasive' forces of the state, press, radio, cinema and pulpit, are vomiting their usual poison, made more virulent as the situation becomes more serious. They talk mysteriously of the insidious 'hidden hand', a fiction of the Sax Rohmer variety, and vilify as a 'stab in the back' the only saving force in a mad world bent on destruction—the revolutionary instinct of the toiling masses.

The ruling class has attempted to lend an air of reality to its vicious lies by raiding the offices of the Trotskyist organisation and making a few arrests in a spectacular and dramatic fashion. All this, of course, happens in a democratic country fighting to liberate the world from the evils of Fascist totalitarianism and to institute freedom from fear, freedom of speech, etc. However, the mask is thrown aside when, for instance, they 'award' 3 months' hard labour to four Belfast shop stewards for 'taking part in an illegal strike', and when they introduce penal laws to prevent agitation in the workshop, then surely the unmasking is complete. To use the language of Bevin and the T.U.C., 'Peaceful persuasion' has become an offence, whether it takes the form of shop meetings of discontented workers or propaganda meetings of organised workers not directly associated with this or that industry which may erupt into action.

Obviously the T.U.C. no longer believe in the class solidarity which springs from the common factor of exploitation.

Although the harshness of the measures used reflect more or less accurately the gravity of the situation, it is worthy of note that, whether or not the crisis could have been stemmed earlier, it was allowed to develop until now. Because the stoppages in the coal-fields (the basic industry) make themselves felt in many ways to the general mass of the workers, the ruling powers thought in this way to whip up 'public opinion' against the miners and at the same time use the excuse to reduce the wage level by instituting cuts in power supply to the factories. The over-production (or non-use) of many weapons of war which has been apparent for more than a year now has relieved the necessity to pay relatively high wages for long hours worked. The new reduction in wage levels is preceded by penal laws for industrial agitation.

The so-called 'illegal' strike action of the workers forcibly poses the question—Can the trade union bureaucracy any longer act in disguise as the paid hirelings and thugs of the boss class? Can they any longer pretend to be the traditional protectors of labour? When they openly form a united front with the ruling class for the avowed purpose of strike-breaking, then surely their days are numbered. They cease even to be of any use to their capitalist masters, because they no longer have anything to sell. The trade union machine as at present constituted is to-day disintegrating before our eyes. It will survive only as long as the workers take to forge in struggle their new and revolutionary forms of organisation for the immediate task ahead, the destruction of capitalist society in all its forms.

The open rule of force may stave off the crisis, even for the complete duration of the war, but it will ultimately defeat its own ends and the necessity for its use at this stage of the war, after 4½ years of reluctant acceptance of every sacrifice imposed, and when it might now appear that a short, sharp and final military operation would pull the trick, augurs ill for the ruling class and appears as the writing on the wall for all those who have eyes to see.

The fact that the youth in industry to-day (the men of to-morrow) revolt and challenge the state is an illuminating feature which illustrates the depths of the discontent prevailing and the impossibility of the ruling class being able to continue to regiment and bulldoze the worker into the quiescent acceptance of further immediate or post-war Fascist security measures for the maintenance of their rule. The strike of the apprentices has had a great measure of success in so far as in this skirmish they have learned to organise nationally as an independent class force, uncontaminated by and proof against all the reactionary forces ranged against them. This eliminated the possibility of these young stalwarts becoming propaganda-drugged tools after the fashion of the Nazi youth.

In full view of all this the Communist Party applaud the use of the mailed fist in industrial strife. They rejoice certainly for different reasons than Churchill, but they should remember that *common ground* is the name given to the place where paupers are buried.

Class divisions are becoming sharply defined again in Britain and present tendencies could, under certain conditions, easily develop and bring about a shift in relative class forces. However, that depends, among other factors, to some extent on events in Europe, both East and West.

EDDIE FENWICK.



## GUILTY UNDER IAA?

"Any worker who does not ask for fair wages is guilty of a wrong because he allows an injustice to continue," said the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Temple, at Swansea last night.

*Daily Herald, 5/5/44.*

It is pure cant to say that the worker is guilty for not getting fair wages, unless one grants the fact that there is only one way he can insist on them.

## WHERE DID AMERY GET HIS STATISTICS?

The controversy about the accuracy of Mr. Amery's statement on the number of deaths in Bengal in last year's famine is likely to be revived as the result of the Bengal Health Minister's replies to questions put in the Legislature at Calcutta.

He admitted that it was not possible to get figures of deaths from starvation, since the compilation was made by illiterate "chowkidars," or village officials, and the registers contained no column for recording such cases. Mr. Amery's statement, he added, related only to a particular period and not to the whole year, and further that the health department's figures were not accurate. Instructions had now been issued for the proper registration in future of deaths from starvation.

Another relevant factor is that since April of last year village officials who were responsible for the compilation of the statistics have either died or fled from their homes in a large number of instances and that estimates of the total mortality over considerable areas of the province are almost purely speculative.

*Manchester Guardian, 3/5/44.*

## LORD MAYOR'S KINDNESS

James Byrne, aged 70, an old age pensioner, was charged with begging in the City. Pleading guilty at the Mansion House to-day, he said he had difficulty with his private budget. The fact was that his expenditure exceeded his income.

The Clerk.—How much is your pension now?

Byrne.—£1 5s. 6d. a week.

Clerk.—And you can't live on that?

Defendant.—Live on it! There are boots to be mended, I have got to get shaves and haircuts, buy clothes and look after myself generally. When you consider all this and the cost of living how is it to be done? I've turned 70 and now I shall have to get a job.

A number of previous convictions for begging were proved and the Lord Mayor relieved Byrne's immediate budget anxieties by sending him to prison for one month.

*Evening Standard, 25/4/44.*

## HAND KISSING



In Italy's secret capital members of the new Cabinet took oath of allegiance to the King in the traditional Italian manner to-day, kissing the Sovereign's hand in token of their appreciation of his bestowal of power on them. Among them was Count Sforza, who until recently was demanding the King's abdication. The Cabinet's first business meeting is scheduled for Thursday.

*Manchester Guardian, 25/4/44.*

What a thrill for the Communist members of the Cabinet to kiss the hand which must have shaken that of Mussolini so often!

## NO REPLY

Sir Henry Morris-Jones (Lib.-National, Denbigh) asked the Labour Minister, Mr. Bevin, in the Commons yesterday:

"How much longer are you going to tolerate advertisements in the Press for an extra maid for a household of two, where two maids are already kept?"

He got no reply.

*Daily Mirror, 21/4/44.*

# Through

## WE DOUBT IT, TOO

Gil Robles, who is the sort of local Lord Baldwin in that he fought the last disastrous election on a "Safety First" platform, recently wrote to General Asensio Cavanillas, Franco's War Minister.

His solution is of course, the Monarchy, supported by the Army. Throughout his letter, the fear of Communism runs because he thinks that Communism (which in Spain means Anarchy) would be acceptable to the United Nations. Personally, I doubt if it would be acceptable to us.

Marquis of Donegall in *Sunday Dispatch, 30/4/44.*

Spanish Anarchism will not ask to be "accepted". The United Nations may have to put up with it.

## ANARCHIST LEADERSHIP?

To whom will the workers turn for leadership? The Communists will be unable to supply it, for their new line is to support national solidarity. It is no accident that they are playing the same part as Italy and France to-day. Their role has been completely reversed from what it was at the end of the last war.

That reversal, which was proceeding apace in the years before 1939 and received only a temporary check by the Russian-German agreement, is due to a fundamental change in policy. The preservation of the USSR is now the overruling aim of Communist policy, and any tendencies towards social revolution in the nations allied with USSR have to be suppressed.

If this policy is continued after the war—there is no obvious reason why it should change—the political leadership of the legions of restive workers will be going begging. Syndicalists and anarchists should have their opportunity. Their doctrines will be appropriate to the situation.

"Observer" in *Peace News, 28/4/44.*

Syndicalist and anarchist ideas will offer the workers solutions appropriate to the situation but a "leadership" either communist or anarchist would be harmful for the workers. Their emancipation will be achieved by themselves alone.

## M.P.'s INACTIVITY

I see that the National Union of Distributive Workers has asked Mr. W. A. Robinson, M.P., to resign from the House of Commons, "because of his inactivity." This, I believe, is the first time a union has taken such a step.

Mr. Robinson sits for St. Helens. He is one of five N.U.D.A.W. M.P.'s. He is a former chairman of the Socialist Party and was at one time general secretary of his union.

However, Mr. Robinson is not obliged to obey his union's demand. If he refuses, the union has another weapon. It can withdraw his retainer. I am told this sum is in the region of £250 a year. *Evening Standard, 4/5/44.*



## POST-WAR PROSPECTS

New York, Tuesday: New problems of crime prevention will have to be faced after the war with the return of the 10,000,000 American troops to civilian life, according to Mr. E. E. Conroy, head of the New York office of the F.B.I.

"Some of the returning Commandos might be particularly dangerous," he said, "because they have been taught to kill skilfully and silently." *Citizen, Gloucester, 21/3/44.*

# the Press

## T.U. OFFICIAL MAY GET SACK

Workers in London theatres and cinemas are demanding the dismissal of the general secretary of their union, Mr. Tom O'Brien, who is also a member of the Trades Union Congress General Council.

The annual meeting of the London branch of the National Association of Theatrical and Kinematograph Employees, in a resolution to be sent to the association's annual conference in June, declares that at a meeting last year to discuss negotiations with the Society of West End Theatre Managers, Mr. O'Brien told members that strike action was illegal under the Defence Regulations, although this was not the case.

By so doing, the resolution asserts, "he impaired the bargaining powers of the union, besmirched the good name of Trade Unionism, and impeded the recruitment of non-union members of the industry." *Daily Mirror, 25/4/44.*

## FORD AND FASCISM

About 600 workers went on strike in Rome on Wednesday, according to reports reaching the Swiss frontier.

Clashes occurred between strikers and German soldiers in two suburban factories.

*Daily Herald, 5/5/44.*

The Ford Motor Company yesterday asked the Canadian Government to send the Royal Mounties to its strike-bound plants at Windsor, Ontario, to "preserve law and order". A spokesman for the company said the request was made because officials wished to enter the plants and had been refused admittance.

*Daily Herald, 5/5/44.*

Once again Henry Ford's conception of law and order tallies with Adolf Hitler's.

## OPPOSITION TO IAA



WHILE the general Council of the T.U.C., as well as the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, yesterday approved the new Bevin anti-strike regulation, the union leaders are likely to be faced with trouble.

For among many unions the regulation has aroused stronger opposition than any other war-time issue. Engineers and miners are particularly indignant.

Mr. J. Scott, who spoke for the executive of the A.E.U. in London on Sunday, condemned the regulation as "unnecessary" and "dangerous".

The Shop Stewards' National Council have also attacked the regulation.

The Executive Council of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers has also called for its immediate withdrawal.

*Daily Mirror, 27/4/44.*

## THOSE WORKERS' WAGES



An investigation has been undertaken by the Oxford Institute of Statistics of the expenditure of working class families with at least one dependent child, carried on over the period 1940-43. The latest

investigation, in June-July, 1943, covered some 208 families and may be taken as representative.

The survey showed that the minimum amount of calories prescribed for health by the Ministry of Health was only just reached in 76 families which spent 9s. 7½d.—10s. 1½d. per person per week. The average number of persons in the family was 4.7, so that the food expenditure was from 44s. to 47s. 5d. per week per family. Further evidence showed that expenditure on food averaged 48 per cent. of total income. Thus these families, whose diets were barely giving sufficient energy, and may well have been deficient in vitamins and mineral salts, had an average income of about 110s. to 119s. on which to support less than five people in June-July, 1943.

In the light of these figures, and others from the same source, an income of £5 for man, wife and two children is probably too low to maintain a healthy standard of life in practice—to say nothing of whether it affords a desirable or satisfactory life to the workers.

The figures show that in a number of industries workers on average are still not earning even this minimum figure (the same is true, of course, of the less skilled workers or those not on piecework in the higher-paid industries). Those which are definitely below the minimum include four whole industrial groups.

The whole iron and stone mining and quarrying industry; the whole textile industry; the whole clothing industry; the whole of the public utility services.

In addition there are a number of sections of industry below the minimum including:—

Brick, tile and pipe; leather goods manufacture, dring, industries; cabinet making (under 10 workers); oil-cloth and linoleum; brushes and brooms, railway conciliation staff.

*Labour Research, April 1944.*

## THE TROOPS HAVE A WORD FOR IT!

|                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cabbage .....                  | "Gas Cape"            |
| Bread .....                    | "Rooty"               |
| Margarine .....                | "Maggy"; "Cartgrease" |
| Peas, Beans or Dumplings ..... | "Ammunition"          |
| Corned Beef .....              | "Dead Horse"          |
| NAAFI Tea .....                | —Censored—            |
| Cheese .....                   | "Mouse's Food"        |
| Sausages .....                 | "Hot Bread"           |

*P.N.R., 3/44.*

## PUBLIC LECTURE-DISCUSSIONS

EVERY FRIDAY EVENING 7.30 p.m.

19th MAY

Philip Sansom

Erich Muehsam

26th MAY

John Hewetson

William Blake

2nd JUNE

M. L. Berneri

The Spanish Labyrinth

FREEDOM PRESS ROOMS

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



## From the Ranks

### Passive Resistance Succeeds

The new Group Captain started off on the wrong foot with everyone; set about changing all the hours, and cancelled practically all the privileges we had. Firstly he stopped night shift, then the shift system of week-end passes which caused everyone to work to the same time-table and caused queues everywhere.

Result, whole camp in ferment, undercurrent of mutinous talk resulting in universal decision to set up passive resistance front. Demonstration of solidarity by boycott of first ENSA show the new Group Captain attended. The new Group Captain was booed whilst going down the road while his predecessor was cheered. At the ENSA concert five rows of seats were occupied by officers, senior N.C.O.s and families, the number of airmen present was between two and five plus fire picquet. The Manager of ENSA show enquired in NAAFI about poor attendance, was told the reason and said they were all behind us and he would explain position to his company, he had to apologise to the artists afterwards. Next morning he went to Group Captain's H.Q. Nobody knows precisely what he was told there but slight concessions were made on Saturday restoring most of the privileges we had before. The situation is now calmer but not yet satisfactory. I may also mention that production in workshops dropped about 50%.

R.A.F.

### Why am I in Uniform?

Whom we fight, whether Germany, Russia, or our fellow-countrymen, does not really matter. But whoever it is, they must give us a good fight (not like Denmark) so that we can use up lots of weapons and lives, and so make plenty of work for ourselves. You see, man has put into practice only one cure of unemployment that works, and that is WAR. Germany had very severe unemployment until Hitler came into power and applied the cure by arming, and we, ourselves, up to the economic slump of '30-'31, were all talking disarmament until our unemployment problem became so serious that we too had to apply the same cure, by opening "shadow factories". That Germany won the armaments race, was probably because she had more unemployed.

Of course, there is a much less exciting way than war, for dealing with this surplus section of the population who are not wanted in the production of necessities. We could drastically reduce the hours of work, and, by so doing, swell the leisure industries (books, amusements, travel, etc.) so that they would provide more work—but that is getting off the point. What is important to realize is the vast size of that section of the population that a country like England can pay for and keep, just for the sake of human destruction. When you realize the millions of people it involves, you see how inevitable war is, and also how pleasant the world could be if all the money spent on it were used instead for constructive purposes.

And now I suppose you are wondering why an individual like myself should continue in a degrading occupation, when I, like millions more, if they would but admit it, know no justifiable reason for this human slaughter.

Well, the answer is—because I am a coward! I know I am doing wrong by being in uniform, but it takes more moral courage than I possess to be a conscientious objector and refuse. Because I was an engineer and also because I am not religious, my only alternative to being a potential, legalised murderer-in-uniform, is to face the social degradation of going to prison. It is also so much easier to be what I am than to stick to what I know is right. What will happen when the time comes for me to slaughter or be slaughtered, I don't know, except that I hope I shall not kill anybody. And if I get killed myself, perhaps somebody will write this epitaph on my grave . . . "Here lies a coward and a fool who lacked the strength to stand up before humanity for what was right."

If the people ever become sane, they might understand what I mean.

ROBERT YEKAEL.

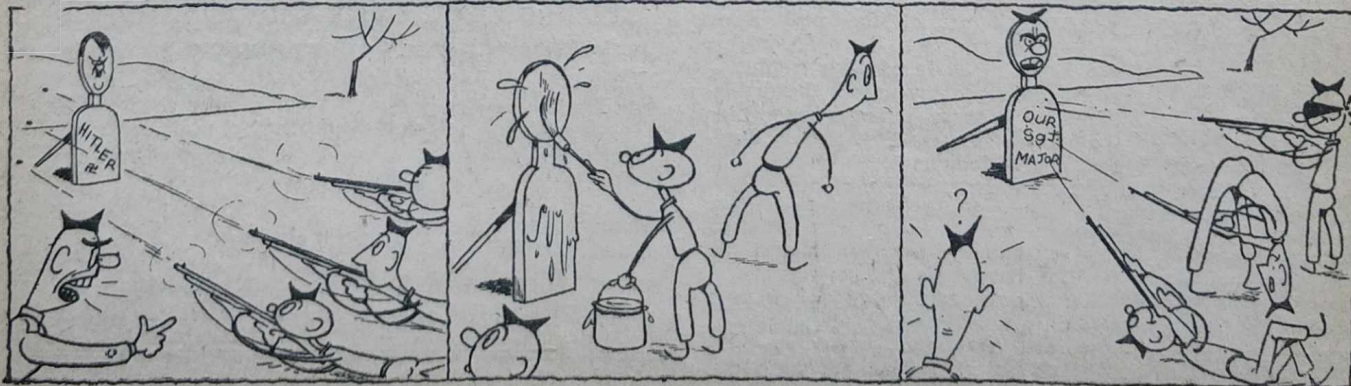
### What Are We Fighting For?

One thing I am sure that strikes organized by civilian workers are not regarded with scorn by ranks in the forces, but are interpreted as part of the necessary struggle for freedom, which is really for the forces' benefit.

To-day being St. George's Day, we had a compulsory (there were alternatives, but not advantageous) drum head service. The absolute hypocrisy of the service must have been apparent to most of the soldiers, for not a soul sang the first hymn, while the following hymns aroused only a few faint whispers. The chaplain's rhetoric was definitely supposed to be a morale-increasing lecture, but failed in the attempt. The usual patriotic nonsense was dished out, spiced with a few "religious" references to God. He told us that we were not fighting for democracy, the clearance of slums from our main towns, or for the betterment of our living conditions; we were fighting in the fight of good v. evil, and God was on our side. The same accusations could have been made against the contents of his "democratic" speech as Lord Vansittart made against the German leaders for saying that a just war is holy in his Win the Peace Movement pamphlet.

Not one man there would have minded to fight if we were fighting for a just cause. He would be really willing, without any disciplinary suggestion, to fight, if he was really protecting his family and friends against his real enemies. But he has heard of so much debating being made about adding petty amounts of money to allowances and pensions, he sees no chance of any decent material change under our present system of government, he reads of women and children being slaughtered for "democratic" ends and hears that starvation is running riot in liberated Italy. With such facts as these to counteract the military propaganda, it is no wonder that morale is on the decline.

F. R.





# Houses in the Air

IN THIS SURVEY of housing conditions in Britain, we have so far dealt with those existing before the outbreak of the war, and with the ineffectual measures taken to alleviate them during that period. Now we have to consider the further deterioration in housing caused by circumstances arising from the war, and also the plans so far produced by the Government for reducing the vast shortage which will become even more urgent when the demobilised soldiers and girls from the services return from camps and barracks to live again in what remains of the civilian environment.

The effect of the war on housing has been shown in two ways. Firstly, there are the direct effects of aerial bombardment, which destroyed or damaged several large areas not only of London but also of every other town of any importance in the country. Churchill himself, in a recent speech, stated that altogether a million houses had been either destroyed or damaged too severely to be put into anything like permanent repair. This is an official estimate, and would tend rather to minimise than to exaggerate a point of this kind. However, even this figure is a bad one from the point of view of people who need homes, and it can serve the purposes of our argument. In addition to these completely lost houses there were, of course, hundreds of thousands which suffered repairable damage—so far only 'patched up'—and which will need considerable reconditioning before they can be made decently habitable.

Even worse, however, than the effects of the bombing have been those of the almost complete cessation of house building during the five years of the war. Between the wars an average of 200,000 houses a year had been built, but by 1939 the annual figure was rising towards 300,000, and at this rate we can say that there was a loss of nearly 1,500,000 houses which might have been built had not the war intervened.

The cessation of work on houses has also meant that maintenance has largely lapsed. Most houses nowadays look shabby for lack of paint, and this external shabbiness conceals more radical faults which have been neglected during the war—bad roofs, woodwork deteriorating for lack of paint, inefficient grates, and all the obsolete and worn out adjuncts to houses which might have been modernised if the landlords had not such a plausible excuse as the war to leave them as they were.

But, quite apart from the question of poor maintenance and of minor damage through air raids, we find ourselves some 2,500,000 houses to the worse because the war brought something more profitable and therefore more urgent to the capitalist speculators even than building the jerry houses of the peacetime estates.

This radical shortage is evident in every part of the country. In London and the other large cities, where most of the demolished houses were in the thickly-populated working-class districts near railways, factories and docks, the workers who had to stay near their jobs were crowded into the remaining houses—in spite of the fact that in the residential quarters of all the large cities there were thousands of large mansions standing empty because their owners had fled for safety to their country retreats.

In the rural districts and the small towns the first days of the war brought thousands of evacuated school



children and mothers. Although a large proportion of these have returned to London, many still remain, and they have been joined from time to time by batches of middle-class people who had no need to live near their work. In addition, many small country towns and even villages, built to hold just the local trading and agricultural population, have become the sites of war factories, and large numbers of industrial workers have been squeezed into the quite inadequate accommodation. The result is that the country is, if anything, more taxed for housing room than the cities, and the only compensating factor for this is that those who inhabit the crowded cottages can at least enjoy untainted air when they are out of doors.

The excessive shortage of accommodation has led to an extravagant rise in rents on all property where adjustments can be made without a too blatant infringement of the rent restriction regulations. The introduction of the most meagre furnishings into houses, flats or rooms is the excuse for charging fantastic prices, and the interests of the profiteers have been maintained, particularly in the country districts, by the presence of middle-class people who are willing to pay almost anything for a *pied à terre* in the country to which they could retire from the effects of bombing. As always, the regulations were framed with a studied carelessness to allow a sufficiency of loopholes for those who wish to profit by their evasion. The result was, as always, that people with little money, even when other circumstances might have allowed them to get away from the towns, were quite unable to pay the prices demanded for the only accommodation available. The tendency to return to the cities in more recent times led to a similar burst of profiteering in the urban localities. The greater expenditure on rent, with its tendency to encourage malnutrition, has combined with the increased overcrowding to bring about a deterioration in standards of health due directly to wartime housing deficiencies, quite apart from that caused by other unhealthy factors in the wartime environment.

The figure of 2,500,000 houses short which we gave earlier in this article represented the number of dwellings of which we had been deprived through the incidence of the war. But in reaching the total housing deficiency at the present time we must take into account other considerations, and our total will be made up in something like the following manner.

Firstly the 1,000,000 houses destroyed or irreparably damaged during the air raids.

Secondly, the 750,000 houses scheduled in 1939 under either the category of overcrowded premises or that of slums awaiting clearance.



Thirdly, the houses which have become obsolete during the intervening period. If we estimate this at the rate of 2—2½% of the total houses (11½ million) per annum (thus allowing a house a useful life of nearly 50 years), the rate is 250,000 per annum, amounting in five years to 1,250,000 houses.

Fourthly, we have to take into account the extra families which have appeared during this period. Even if we assume a drop from the annual average increase of 175,000 recorded in the last (1931) census, and assume a figure of 100,000 extra families per annum, the total will reach at least 500,000.

Fifthly, we must consider all those families which, while their dwelling standard was above that condemned in the overcrowding laws, nevertheless lived in conditions of comparative congestion and little privacy. It seems to me a very modest estimate to put this figure at 500,000.

From a total of all these figures, it appears that at the present day we need at least 4,000,000 new houses to relieve overcrowding, and to replace slum and obsolete housing and dwellings destroyed in the air raids. This figure will increase by 350,000 for each year, if we assume the rates of obsolescence of houses and of increase of families to remain constant. It would be yet further increased by new air raids. Assuming two years—a hypothetical figure—before the war is cleared up in any final manner, we shall have a deficiency of nearly five million houses by the time new building starts. And this figure, enormous in itself, makes no allowance for rectifying the acts of the jerry-builders of the past quarter of a century. It comprehends merely the barest of necessities in the way of new housing, and does not go so far as to envisage a programme of thoroughly satisfactory dwellings for the whole community—which would make a total of something nearer to ten million new houses!

Taking five million houses as the figure required in two years time, with an increase rate of 350,000 houses every year, we can at least attain a standard by which to judge the government's proposals. On this or any other measure they make a poor justification for themselves.

It will be remembered how, earlier in the war, the mountain laboured and brought forth a mouse, in the shape of the ridiculous plan to solve the housing shortage in the rural districts by building 2,000 kennels, miscalled 'cottages' for farm labourers. This time the mountain has laboured to better effect—but its new progeny is by no means impressive. The programme issued by the Ministry of Health is for 100,000 new houses in the first year and 200,000 in the second year after the war—a total of 300,000 houses. This quantity will not only do nothing to break into the hard core of 5 million necessary houses—it will, according to our calculations, provide only about half of the houses which will become necessary in those two years *in addition to the original 5 million*. Moreover, it is only proposed that these houses shall be *started* in the first two years. When they will be finished is not prophesied.

This programme was received with such small enthusiasm that Churchill has now been moved to declare that the government will also erect 500,000 pre-fabricated temporary houses. The fact that these houses are classed as temporary shows what kind of accommodation they will provide. In their little iron boxes the workers will be toasted in summer and frozen in winter. And the extreme slowness with which the government proposes to tackle the housing shortage makes us imagine that these glorified rabbit hutches will live on to something like permanence and become the new slums of the future.

The promises of the government are scanty enough, but even when they are made there is no certainty that they will be kept. We are all used to the broken pledges of the politician, but in the housing question we have even more concrete evidence than we have on most other subjects. It

was exceptional indeed for a housing project made by a public authority before the war to be carried out both completely and on time. On the record of London, Sinclair says in his *Metropolitan Man*:

"... the London authorities, armed from time to time with eight conflicting Housing Acts, have planned much—and have achieved far less. The first post-war drive of 29,000 houses in five years became 376 houses in five years. The second drive of 6,000 houses became 2,055 houses. The great Wheatley Act drive of 20,000 led to fewer than 12,000 being built by 1927. From the 1928 plans, only 44 houses had emerged three years later. The 1930 plan for 34,670 houses to be achieved by 1935 materialised in 118 houses by the end of 1934. In 1931 379 slum houses were demolished, in 1932, 324 houses."

(These figures, incidentally, were made public by no less a figure than Herbert Morrison, then struggling to become Gauleiter of London).

In some parts of the country the record was not so bad as that of London, but rarely indeed were promises kept or the projected number of houses erected on time.

In view of this past record of the building activities of public authorities we should be foolish to imagine that the promises of the Government, meagre as they are, will ever be kept. It looks as though the rehousing of the population after the war will be once again in the care of God and the speculative builder.

In order to provide the minimum of five million new houses in the earliest possible time something much more drastic must be done than the Government's piffling programme, supplemented by the capricious efforts of the jerry builders. In a recent statement criticising the government's programme, Coppock, the secretary of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, said that the building industry could produce 50,000 houses a year if required. Even this, however, is not enough to make an adequate and speedy improvement in the housing of the people. To complete the job in a few years it will be necessary to build no less than a million dwellings a year—even then it would take between six and seven years, long enough for the workers to wait for decent housing conditions.

This may seem a fantastic figure—and so it is according to the pre-war standards of the building industry. Nevertheless, I believe that it could be done, given three conditions which are not fulfilled in the building industry under capitalism. The first is the straightforward designing of simple but adequate houses which can be built without unnecessary labour on unessentials. The second is the use of every resource of building technique in order to achieve the speedy building of dwellings without any loss to strength or comfort. The third is the purging of the profit motive from the building industry and its control and operation by free associations of the building workers, who would act in co-operation with local communal bodies for the planning of adequate housing.

These conditions will not be fulfilled while the state and capitalism remain, with their attendant corruption, greed and inefficiency. The workers will get good houses only when they have in their own hands all the means to make them. Until then they will have to put up with the slackness of state authorities and the greed of the speculative builder, while the attentions of the rent collector or the building society often deprives them of the very means of adequate nutrition.

In a future article in *War Commentary* I hope to give a more detailed idea of anarchist proposals for the organisation of housing and other communal services, such as water, sewerage, lighting, streets, etc., in an efficient and socially beneficial manner.

GEORGE WOODCOCK



## Pages of Revolutionary History

# BRITISH MUTINIES IN FRANCE

SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE strike action of the British Army in England came the strikes of British Army units in France. Little of these is recorded and many are entirely without printed word. Fortunately there existed the *Herald*, a weekly paper, which, early in 1919, became a daily, run by George Lansbury. The *Herald* and the *Daily Herald* of those days were very different to the *Herald* of the T.U.C. and Odhams Press. The files of Lansbury's old paper give us a glimpse, though only a glimpse of the unrest in the British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders.

Of the hitherto unrecorded mutinies one shall serve us as an example of many. The 4th Middlesex stationed at Caudry, Belgium was, like every other fighting unit, glad of the promise of relaxed discipline and parading brought by the Armistice. But the end of November, 1918, found them parading more often than ever, all the while being subjected to an intense "spit and polish" campaign. Utterly fed up, the men refused to parade further and, after holding a meeting, marched into the village where they were loudly cheered by the French inhabitants. Their action resulted in the immediate repeal of the "spit and polish" order, the lessening of parades and the relaxation of discipline.

Many protests against these and other grievances took the form of parading, but responding to all orders by the singing of soldiers' songs, not the songs of Peter Dawson or Rudyard Kipling, but real soldiers' songs—*Mademoiselle from Armentieres* and *Charlotte the Harlot*. Others just did not parade.

Certain other mutinies were much more serious. B. G. A. Cannell in his book *From Monk to Busman* describes one of them which he witnessed while at the Ordnance Depot at Vendroux.

"After the Armistice things began to get very unsettled. We heard that two men had been arrested for sedition, and were at Boulogne, and might be shot in the Tower.

A strike committee was hastily formed, and every soldier in the district marched down to Calais on January 27th, 1919."

Two divisions of troops, recently recruited boys, were sent against the strikers, but with little effect. The men took over the camp. When they reorganised the feeding of the troops they found the camp well stocked with food. Mr. Cannell states that this confirmed the belief of the men that their food was being illegally sold.

"Our food was being 'flogged' to the French people. In fact, I saw with my own eyes, clothes-baskets full of bully, cheese and bacon going out of the camps at night." (Ibid).

After about a week of the strike, General Byng held a conference in Calais and promised remedy of

the men's grievances. The two prisoners were released, food improved, new huts were built and Saturday afternoons and Sundays were made general holidays. The two prisoners, however, said they had been badly treated in prison and one of them died soon after. From their miserably small pay, the soldiers collected nearly £150 for his widow.

About this time a serious mutiny threatened at Dunkirk which was held by the 178th Brigade. The threatened outburst was staved off by the promise of immediate demobilization.

The most serious mutiny of all occurred at Calais, chief port of the British Army in France. In a rather obvious attempt to minimise the revolt and discredit the British soldiers, Winston Churchill wrote:

"A regular mutiny broke out at Calais. Between the 27th and 31st of January the Army Ordnance detachments and the Mechanical Transport, which were the least-disciplined part of the army, had seen least of the fighting and were most closely associated with political Trade Unionism, refused to obey orders. They met the Leave-Boats and induced a large number of returning soldiers to join them. In twenty-four hours the ringleaders were at the head of about three or four thousand armed men and in complete possession of the town."

Churchill, *The Aftermath*.

Churchill's account is important, not for what it tells, but for what it leaves out. Only from sheer necessity does he even mention the mutinies in his "history" of the war and its aftermath.

T. H. Wintringham's *Mutiny* contains a good account of one of the mutinies in the Calais district, written by an unnamed private soldier. An agitation for demobilization began in the Valdelievre camp and one of the ringleaders was arrested and given fourteen days field punishment for being a quarter of an hour late at work. The news quickly spread and, although it was pay day, the men, forgetting their pay, demonstrated outside the C.O.'s office. The officers began a long-winded argument of which the men soon tired. Refusing to be put off any further, they smashed open the prison and released their comrade.

Later an attempt to re-arrest him was prevented by the vigilance of the men who "by prearranged signal, swarmed out like bees." The imported military police then arrested the sergeant of the guard for failing to prevent the rescue. The angry soldiers at once released the sergeant. The C.O. then met the soldiers' committee and made general concessions, including a shorter working day.

Still suspicious, the men helped to organise the other camps in the district. A few days later came news of the re-arrest of their comrade. Strike action was decided.

"Although, as prearranged, every man was on the



parade ground, not one fell in when the bugle sounded, and our pickets had already taken the places of the sentries.

During the morning news came that at another camp, Vendraux, 2,000 men were all out and were marching down that afternoon. They arrived headed by the regimental band and with all their N.C.O.s participating. Both camps then joined in a march on the headquarters of the Calais area to interview Brigadier General Rawlinson.

Our bands were in attendance and the frightened French shopkeepers put up their shutters as 4,000 very determined men marched through the streets. The headquarters were surrounded and a deputation entered.

After a futile attempt to induce the besieging army to withdraw, the general agreed to release our comrade (who had been transferred elsewhere) and that he should be in camp by Tuesday\* midday.

The deputation resolutely refused to discuss any of our grievances or calling off the strike until our comrade had been released."

T. H. Wintringham, *Mutiny*.

\*It was Monday.

From Calais the strike organisation spread, greatly aided by the strike committee's control of road transport and the military railways. In this they were aided by the French railmen who, in a strike a short time previously, had been supported by the action of the British railway section of the Royal Engineers. The strike organisation was known as "The Calais Area Soldiers' and Sailors' Association."

Everywhere such organisations were victorious. Briefly, the fruits of victory were:

1. Rapid demobilization of millions of soldiers.
2. Pay was doubled.
3. Food, shelter and other conditions were improved.
4. Stupid parades and discipline were relaxed.

And perhaps greatest of all, the new war, the war on Russia, was checked.

TOM BROWN

# Letters to the Editors

## "DEMOCRACY" IN NEW ZEALAND

Your paper continues to arrive with surprising regularity. I admire your courage, your potent pungency, and your struggle to maintain a free press. I may say your difficulties would be greater here! In fact you would not be printing or publishing at all. O. E. Burton has not only been expelled from his Methodist Ministry but is serving a sentence of two and a half years gaol; his fourth prison term during this war. His crime this time consists in editing our cyclostyled Bulletin and in particular for his report and comments on my trials in the Supreme Court in 1942 when I was prosecuted for an article in the same bulletin—my first article after release from gaol at the end of 1941. His report and comments were as mild as Mothers' Union Messages compared with the articles and comments which appear month by month in *War Commentary*. And our bulletin is only privately circulated among members and sympathisers.

A. H. Carman, a bookseller friend of mine (who was among those who went to gaol with me) sells *War Commentary*. Recently someone complained to the police about it and they investigated the matter. So far there has been no result; but it is possible that action will be taken to stop bulk supplies through the customs. At one stage that was done with *Peace News*.

Fifteen or so of our members went to gaol in 1941 or early 1942 (some of them two or three times) in regular

succession following the prohibiting of our public meetings in halls. This followed the smashing of our regular open-air meetings by prosecutions, imprisonments and prohibitions. In 1940 in the course of a tour conducting open-air meetings (about 19 in 14 days), I was arrested and prosecuted in three towns and "marched out" by returned soldiers from three others. So that you will realise freedom is not all clear-sailing here.

A. C. BARRINGTON,  
Hon. Secretary,  
*New Zealand Christian  
Pacifist Society.*

★

## FIREMEN TO GO OVERSEAS!

Discontent is growing throughout the N.F.S. at the continued cancellation since January of this year, of all four days leave periods for firemen. Many thousands of N.F.S. personnel, men and women, are now stationed hundreds of miles away from home. Men, who are "fortunate" enough to live in lodgings during their 24 hours off, can enjoy some measure of freedom. The girls are not so lucky, having to conform to rigid restrictions at their communal quarters during this time. It is certain that this 24 hours off duty is hopelessly inadequate for personnel to travel 5 and 6 hours journeys each way if they wish to see wife, husband or family at home.

With this four days leave stopped all personnel have only 14 days leave every 12 months in which they can visit their hometown. I believe that men stationed overseas have, at least, breaks from duty more frequent than

this; while of course, the services in Britain have nine days every three months. Many have four or five evenings free each week, while N.F.S. personnel on 48/24 system have at the most, 3 evenings for relaxation.

The service is now asking for volunteers overseas. With past experience in mind firemen must know that they will be used *only* when military objectives are involved. Workers' homes and possessions will be left to burn. It will be seen that plants likely to be of use to an enemy force will be destroyed—or set alight. The N.F.S. will have little to lose or gain by extinguishing them. Neither will the people who must realise that they have been exploited during this war. In this country many workers are beginning to curse the system which shunts them from one factory to another—the European workers will feel relieved to see the factories destroyed, as will any of our own. The *owners* will have safe retreats, the N.F.S. will only be protecting the *owners* interests if they go abroad.

A. FIREMAN.

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## ★ ★ ★ ★ **Book Reviews** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# ★ **Lessons of the Past** ★

WHEN I OPENED "Why Don't We Learn from History?" by H. B. Liddell Hart (P.E.N. Books, 2/-) I read "If you can doubt at points where other people feel no impulse to doubt, then you are making progress." Accordingly, I approached the subject in a spirit of doubt.

I found myself doubting not the correctness of his logic, but whether he had carried it to its conclusion. For instance, he includes among the lessons that History teaches that "to be 'agin the Government' may be a more philosophic attitude than it appears. For the tendency of all 'governments' is to infringe the standards of decency and truth—this is inherent in their nature, and hardly avoidable in their practice." But he goes on, "it is a necessary evil." I doubt it.

Again, we are told that democracy "tends to result in the triumph of mediocrity." That I cannot doubt, for it is admitted by good democrats themselves. In the *News Chronicle* for April 19th is given a report of the Industrial Welfare Society. "They found," said the director of an engineering firm, "that exceptionally brainy people had too high an intelligence for industry—even on the directorates." The difficulty of using such men was corroborated by an Army psychiatrist. "But despotism," continues Captain Liddell Hart, "means the triumph of stupidity." This could probably be substantiated equally easily, but we cannot allow him to call democracy and despotism "alternatives". He is to be congratulated on not calling them opposites—a common fallacy adequately denounced by Herbert Read in *The Cult of Leadership*. But to call them alternatives is to imply a choice between two methods of organisation, and there are more than two. We can learn that from history—for example, the history of the Spanish Civil War.

The author shows, though, that he is aware of the possibility of other methods when, under the heading "Desire for Power", he says that the only hopeful system is rule by men who are truly cured of the lust for power, and that he would like to see a political movement which would tell the voter what checks it had designed on its own abuse of power. But why must he assume that power must be exercised by the few, and not by the "voter" himself? His phraseology

suggests that his mind, in spite of his wide study, is still circumscribed by the prevailing parliamentary and nationalist ideas.

Captain Hart's comments on war, also, will interest the anarchist, as a few headings—"The Illusion of Victory"; "The Illusion that the latest enemy is Different"; "The Illusion of Treaties"—may show. Anarchists, too, should interest Captain Hart. "The thinking man," he says, "must be against authoritarianism in any form." Are we not?

ARTHUR FRENCH.

## ★ **Welsh Reconstruction Advisory Council's First Interim Report. H.M.S.O. 2/-.**

WALES HAS ALWAYS been the Achilles heel of capitalism in the British Isles, the country of specialised industries depending largely on export trade, such as coal and tin-plate, and therefore peculiarly susceptible to the fluctuations of economic depression. Whenever a policy of retrenchment was embarked on, or when the political manoeuvres of the state had indirect effects in causing economic depression, such areas as Wales were always the first to suffer, and the consequent insecurity of life for the Welsh workers has led to a bitter economic and industrial struggle which has been waged almost perpetually since the growth of industry and large scale mining in the valleys and coastal areas of South Wales.

The capitalists themselves are now coming to realise the folly, from their own point of view, of allowing conditions to exist in any one part of the country which make its standard of living lower than the average and thus make it a centre from which discontent and social resentment can spread to the rest of the country. An Advisory Council has therefore been set up to look into conditions in Wales and recommend what might be done after the war to prevent a recurrence of the circumstances of the 1930's.

The report is frank about the extent of the distress and economic breakdown in Wales before the war, and even goes so far as to place the blame on certain acts of the ruling class during this period rather than on the mysterious historical forces which

capitalist economists would prefer to indict.

"Reparations deliveries, the return to the Gold Standard, the Irish traffic war, the abandonment of the agricultural policy promises in the Agricultural Act of 1920, sanctions against Italy, the Trade Agreements, and punitive taxation against coal-using steam wagons, were all deliberate acts of State policy. Their unforeseen adverse ricochet effects upon Wales gave rise to a general feeling that State policy in the inter-war years operated harshly on Welsh life and industries."

This effect was felt not only in the mining valleys, where the distress became notorious, but also in the rural districts, among the quarrymen of North and Central Wales, and among the little 50-acre farmers who form the majority of the Welsh agricultural population.

"As the years passed without hope of work, the unemployed and their families tended to withdraw into themselves. Poverty and a sense of inferiority both denied them participation in the essentials of a full and varied social life. Sub-standards of existence were accepted by the weaker members, while the migration of some 430,000 persons between mid-1921 and mid-1938 drained away the younger and more vigorous workers."

During the war unemployment has been greatly diminished in Wales, though never quite eliminated, and the terrible distress of the pre-war years has been to an extent alleviated. But after the war, when the arms factories close down, when coal needs diminish, this temporary improvement will lapse. In this report the Advisory Council recommend certain measures, such as the opening up of new industries, to offset the consequent depression, but, like most of the plans which are put before us nowadays, these ideas are completely unrealistic, and take no cognisance of the fact that, deprived of the exceptional market of war and going back into a world of diminishing foreign markets, British capitalism, with its exporting imperialistic basis, will be unable to open up vast new industrial ventures and, even if the ruling class wish to avoid the dangers of industrial distress, the very economic nature of their own machine will force them to carry out a policy of further retrenchment which will in the end precipitate their own destruction.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

### NOTE

Why don't we learn from History is obtainable from Freedom Bookshop. See advt. elsewhere in this issue.



# A RED AND BLACK NOTEBOOK

TRIBUTE, THOUGH NOT approval, comes from an unexpected source. Dean Inge writing in the *Evening Standard* of May 8, 1944, says goodbye to the "idols" of the last century:

"I agree that the idols of the nineteenth century are lying, rather battered, at the foot of their pedestals. These are liberalism, Democracy, Socialism, Communism, Rationalism. There they may lie, for me, except Liberalism, which unluckily seems to be broken beyond repair, and Rationalism, which is at any rate better than irrationalism and intellectual dishonesty."

He adds, "The statue which seems to be in the best condition is Syndicalism", though he regrets its association with class-war. It is just because Syndicalism has not repudiated the class-war, as have Socialism and Communism, that it can be respected.

## His Master's Voice

The new task of the trade union lesser official is being demonstrated in Scotland now. At the Gateshead Colliery, Lanarkshire, two miners, William Reid and David Brown were dismissed on the complaint that they were "instrumental in throwing the colliery idle on the 3rd of March 1944" and "took part in strikes 24-30th Sept., 1943, 17th Jan, 7th and 8th Feb., 1944."

On appeal, the victimisation of these workers' spokesmen was upheld by the Ministry of Labour. Notable was the action of Cassidy, Ayton and M'Kendrick, Gateside Branch officials of the Lanarkshire Mine Workers' Union, who appeared as witnesses on behalf of the colliery owners at the Appeal Board.

## Canteens

The workers of Handley Page Aircraft, London, have the canteen problems all too common to millions of other workers. The catering is undertaken by a well known firm, too well known to hundreds of thousands who are condemned to eat in factory canteens. When, recently, the Communist-dominated Shop Stewards Committee, which represents but a minority of the factory workers, called for a boycott of the canteen the workers were ready to respond.

What the workers did not at once realise was that the Communist stewards were not calling for action against the bad food, but only for action to secure the recognition of their own newly formed "canteen committee". Their circular did not say a word for action against bad food.

Securing recognition, the C.P.ers cancelled the proposed boycott. Since then they have published a report of the first meeting of the "Canteen Committee". Under the heading "Policy", they state, "That the initial policy of the Committee should be one of the fullest co-operation with the management and contractors".

Just to show what a fighting, working class body they

are, they invite to their meetings representatives of Handley Page Ltd., and the canteen caterer's general manager.

If Handley Page workers are to get better food and service from the canteens they must follow the example of certain other factories where the workers have taken over the canteens and run them as non-profit making concerns, thereby reducing prices, increasing canteen workers' wages and improving cooking and service.

## The Shadow of Unemployment

From Scotland comes news of a "Scottish Workers' Congress" to ensure work for Scottish workers. One point of its programme reads "An end to the closing down and shifting South of our industry". The invitation to the conference contains the statement, "Even during the war continuity and security of employment have not been provided. Witness the closing of Scots factories and the transfer of workers, especially women".

The slowing down of production and the dismissal of workers are not limited to Scotland. English workers, too, are threatened by the shadow of unemployment.

## Violence Against Strikers Threatened

From the *Evening Times* (Scotland) 13/4/44 comes the following threat to strikers:

"Mr. Bevin, the Minister of Labour, who is contemplating action against strikers, may be interested in a strike-breaking method which was adopted by the Navy. While the Clyde apprentice strikers resumed work the other day, I hear that there were six who remained on duty throughout the dispute.

The six boys were employed on a ship and were quartered on board. When the news came that their mates in the yard had downed tools the six apprentices held a meeting and decided to join them. The news was conveyed to the lower deck, and a company of A.B.s had a talk with the apprentices.

"So you are going to strike," said the leading A.B. "Well," replied the apprentices, "all our mates are out, and we have got to stick by them." Then the sailors held a meeting. The leader returned to the apprentices and said—"If we hear anything more about striking . . ." and then with a warning look, he jerked his thumb over his shoulder at the sea.

The apprentices thought better of their strike resolution and went back to work.

We do not, of course, accept such a story without supporting evidence. Such methods were commonly used by the capitalist press during the 1914-18 war. What is significant is the invention of such tales as a means of threatening strikers. But what if strikers threatened such violence? What if *War Commentary* published similar threats to blacklegs? It would be a long time before readers heard from the undersigned.

SYNDICALIST.

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