

WAR COMMENTARY

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C.I.R.A.

Strike at the Root!

DURING the past few weeks the civil population has begun to feel the impact of the war. Although bombing has been expected for a long time, now that the struggle has started in earnest people seem to be unprepared for what has come. While the war was waged on foreign territory many people were quite complacent about it, and merely grumbled at the black-out and the butter-ration. They had forgotten its tremendous powers of destruction, which had been predicted long before its outbreak.

In a totalitarian war there is no civilian population. The population is forced into the front-line, and into the war machine. "International laws" are completely disregarded. Even Buckingham Palace is bombed now there is no Kaiser to prevent it—as one Londoner observed, "Hitler hasn't got any cousins". Now that they see what war is really like, people should realise how futile merely palliative measures are. Foresight is not to be expected from the Right parties, but the lack of realism exhibited by the Left press is almost as pathetic. They have forgotten about the fight against capitalism and war in their outspoken demand for deep air raid

shelters. Even if deep air raid shelters for many millions were capable of being constructed in time to prevent even greater casualties, they will still be insufficient. There is the gas-war that has not been launched. There is starvation, disease, etc., sure harpies of war.

Those who demand deep shelters, claiming that these will solve everything, are deceiving the people. It is simply demagoguery, this voicing of the demand of the moment. The situation at home and abroad needs radical treatment. The war may be protracted, and become a war of exhaustion and attrition, involving immense privations and sufferings for the peoples of the belligerent countries. But

even if a speedy termination of the war were effective, whether by victory or capitulation on the Vichy model the problems of the war would be by no means ended.

Mr. Greenwood, who cannot be accused of defeatist talk, estimates post war unemployment at seven millions (Manchester Guardian, 29.4.40), while the loss of export trade, contraction of world markets, and decrease of gold reserves would seriously embarrass the importation of adequate food materials into this country. Further, in the face of Amer-

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ican competition, the belief that this war (like its predecessor) could end war must be regarded as nonsense.

The capitalist class by the conduct of this war has proved itself inefficient and selfish. The left parties have no radical solution to the problems of the moment. They continue to adhere to the outworn slogan of "democracy versus fascism", which in reality hides the struggle between rival imperialisms. The trade union leaders are tied to capitalist policy. They talk proudly of the Labour movement's positions in the government and in collaboration with the State machinery, and say they have gained control of the capitalist state, which in reality has gained control of them. At last we have got the big battalions to march with us, they declare: easy enough at any time for people who carry out the orders of the big battalions.

The workers have today no more control over their unions than the soldiers have over the army. The time for a revaluation of organisation and the building of a genuine industrial movement, collaborating between all sections of workers, has come.

When the bombs fall, some can only swear at Hitler and his airmen, others at Anderson and his preparations. British workers blame Goering and the Luftwaffe, German workers blame Churchill and the R.A.F. But the only way of finishing the business once and for all is by the workers in both countries pressing forward independently to get rid of those responsible—to end capitalism and fascism and so end war.

The moral responsibility for the revolution in Europe that alone can end the war lies upon every man and woman in all the belligerent countries.

NOTE

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Out on Time!

ONCE again War Commentary appears on time in spite of circumstances which have made our work doubly difficult during the past two months. And with this issue, we complete the first year of our publication. During this time we have disappointed our readers only once when no War Commentary appeared in June. Otherwise month after month, in spite of all kinds of difficulties and setbacks we have been out on time! Now, we address a special appeal to our subscribers, as with this issue a great number of subscriptions fall due. If your subscription has run out please renew it immediately (1/6 for 6 months, 2/6 for 1 year). By so doing you will be helping us to meet our financial burden and also assure yourself of a copy of War Commentary during the coming months.

The administration of a paper like War Commentary is a difficult task, even though our overheads do not include any salaries for the staff or fees for articles published. We started the paper with only a few pounds; we have no revenue for advertising and those comrades who would gladly contribute large sums to our Press Fund are either unemployed or can afford so little as to be able to help in only a small way. (Also for previous publications of ours we have been able to count on a considerable income from readers in USA and the Dominions. Many factors have contributed to our loss of almost all this source of income). We have however amongst our readers and sympathisers, a small but not insignificant number, who could afford to contribute sums to our Press Fund which would appreciably affect our financial position and give it the stability which is essential if we are to develop and circulate the paper in all parts of the country. For the past three months, we freely confess, we have been unable to insert a single advertisement for War Commentary in the Press, and we have been unable to send out a single specimen copy to any of the addresses in our possession of possible new readers. As a result our postal subscribers list has had very few additions made to it. Fortunately our sellers in the provinces have shown increased activity so that more copies of War Commentary have in actual fact been sold.

Now comrade reader, if you want War Commentary to continue, first make sure that you have renewed your subscription, and if you can afford a contribution to the press fund let us have it now, and get us new readers in your district. A good plan is to distribute back numbers of War Commentary (which we can supply at 2/- for 50, 3/- for 100 copies post free) and follow this up by selling them the current issue. Even if it is only six or twelve copies each month, it means that a number of people who would otherwise ignore the existence of War Commentary will be now acquainted with and possibly interested in our point of view.

Remember, no effort is too great for the furthering of an ideal like Anarchism and for the ending of wars and the systems which, by their very structure, breed them.

THE EDITORS

VOICES FROM THE PAST

(or Rip Van Winston)

MR. Winston Churchill has had a rich and varied career. At one time he was regarded as the White Hope of Liberalism. Those were the days when he wrote this sort of thing about the British Army in the Sudan—in his book *The River War*:—

"There was a very general impression that the fewer the prisoners the greater would be the satisfaction of the commander. The unmeasured abuse heaped upon the Dervishes by the newspapers, and the idea, laboriously circulated that they were avenging Gordon, led many of the soldiers to think that it was quite correct to regard the enemy as vermin, unfit to live. The result was that many wounded Dervishes were killed

The statement that "the wounded Dervishes received every delicacy and attention" is so utterly devoid of truth that it transcends the limits of mendacity and passes into the realms of the ridiculous."

This passage is not, of course, cited as having any bearing on the present war. It is well-known that our newspapers no longer heap abuse on the enemy, certainly not "unmeasured abuse," nor do they nowadays laboriously circulate ideas of revenge. As to lying about what happens in war, no one would suspect any newspaper, still less the B.B.C., of doing that sort of thing today. Besides, we have the Ministry of Information.

* * *

YEARS ago Winston said: 'We know what to expect when the Tories are in power; corruption at home, aggression to cover it abroad; the trickery of tariff juggles; patriotism and imperialism by the imperial pint; dear food for the million and cheap labour for the millionaire.' This party he called, "The party of the rich against the poor, of the classes and their dependants against the masses, of the lucky, the wealthy, the happy and the strong against the left-out and the shut-out millions of the weak and poor."

That also of course, is no longer true. The Tory party improved so notably that Mr. Churchill entered into a coalition with them, in company with Mr. Lloyd George and other Liberals, to fight the last war. With their backing he broke strikes and boasted of the fact afterwards in *The World Crisis*. After that he never looked back, but spoke and wrote as a good Tory.

But even as a Tory, Winston knew how to change his mind; and the electors of West Essex must have found him difficult to follow. When the "National Government" was formed he appealed for their support as one of its pillars. He praised MacDonald and Simon—they had "cut themselves adrift from ordinary party ties in order to serve the nation at this juncture." But later he

By

REG. REYNOLDS

got fed up with these people, and then he told the people of Chingford that:—

"The Socialist leaders of many years quitted the Socialist ship. They did better than that—they happened to be passing by, and they climbed onto it and took command."

Apparently Sir Herbert Samuel and others, according to the same speech, also climbed aboard this old dreadnought and took a hand at the wheel; and it began to distress Mr. Churchill, who had previously welcomed their help. After all, he had climbed aboard himself much the same way, but that was a long time ago, as we say about our Empire when people want to know the difference between conquering a new colony and trampling on an old one

* * *

BUT the ability to change one's mind is a sign of real greatness. Mr. Churchill had welcomed the pirates on board, but he discovered quite definitely, after they had been helping to steer the ship for some years, that they were pirates. That is what it is to be a great statesman. Mr. Churchill therefore appealed to his electors and to the country at large to help him throw the pirates overboard again, and restore the leadership to the competent people who had invited the pirates to join them.

For years nobody would listen to poor Mr. Churchill. He became a kind of Rip Van Winston, vainly appealing for the removal of the gang which (he had once said) was our one hope if England was to be saved. Then he

got his chance. The Conservative iron-clad had hoisted an umbrella, which fell with a crash on the captain's head. Without more delay Mr. Churchill gathered together a motley crowd of die-hards and bosses of the Labour Party and Trade Unions. The old dreadnought was boarded again.

No one would suggest that there was any similarity between the boarding party of Messrs. MacDonald and Simon and this later scramble of Messrs. Bevin, Morrison, Attlee and Co. Nor do we imagine that when these gentlemen have served their purpose they will be accused of piracy by Mr. Churchill. They have sunk class differences for ever, to fight for our Common Heritage.

* * *

WHAT is our Common Heritage? Mr. Churchill told us years ago, at a banquet on St. George's day in 1933.

"England," he said, "is still the best country for the duke and the dustman." The report does not say how many dustmen were at the banquet, but as they carried away the remains they no doubt said, "Hear, hear." Their Common Heritage with Mr. Churchill, the dukes and the banquetters was England.

In those days the Labour and Trade Union bosses did not know about this or they were not quite clear about it. Or maybe they did know (for two Labour Governments had looked after ducal interests very well and kept the Union Jack flying over gold mines and cotton mills) but in that case they must have thought the time was not ripe to talk about it.

So instead of joining in the lusty cheer of the banquetters the T.U.C. growled in those class-conscious accents that so often terrified the old ladies at Eastbourne until their bank managers assured them that all was well—why, even now one often mistakes a friendly

booming of barrage guns for hostile bombs.

Industrial News, issued by the T.U.C. Publicity Department, appeared on April 25th, 1933 with a proper telling-off for Winston. "He would say just that thing," said Industrial News, quite cross.

"He is the scion of the ducal family of Marlborough, which has always done pretty well out of patriotism since the first Duke made a bit on the side by selling military secrets to the enemy on Tuesday and Friday—and double-crossing them over the week-end."

The article rumbled on about dustmen, miners, transport workers and others (including soldiers and sailors) having "something else to say." They had, as the years went on, "more to put up with and less to get." It appeared that there was a "narrow, spiteful spirit of fascism" in the Government's dealings and—oh, seditions, revolutionary utterance!—that "England could, at any rate, be a good deal better for the dustman his comrades."

The T.U.C. was not supposed to love Mr. Churchill at all in those days. "As for the dukes," they said, "trust the devil to take care of his own." It was really quite rough, the sort of thing Industrial News used to say then.

I don't know who took care of the dukes but God himself must have taken care of Mr. Churchill and the T.U.C., for he brought them together to save England. So here we all are, the Prime Minister who used to be called such nasty names by the T.U.C. (rather specially during the General Strike in 1926) the T.U.C. and Labour Party Big Shots, who were once denounced by Mr. Churchill as wicked Reds, and the Tory Party, no longer corrupt, no longer the party of the rich against the poor . . . Only God could perform a miracle like that. But then, with God all things are possible; and we know He is on Our Side.

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Herbert Read's

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Revolutionary Government

The first section—dealing with “Parliament”—of his article appeared in last month’s issue of *War Commentary*, still obtainable from the publishers price 3d. post free. The third section, on “The Impotence of Revolutionary Government”, will appear in next month’s issue.

II. DICTATORSHIP

THE dangers to which the Revolution is exposed when it allows itself to be controlled by an elected government are so evident that a whole school of Revolutionists entirely renounces the idea of it. They understand that it is impossible for a people in insurrection to give themselves, by means of elections, any government but one that represents the past, and which must be like leaden shoes on the feet of the people, above all when it is necessary to accomplish that immense regeneration, economic, political, and moral, which we understand by the Social Revolution. They renounce then the idea of “legal” government at least during that period which is a revolt against legality, and they advocate a “revolutionary dictatorship.”

“The party,” say they, “which will have overturned the government will take the place of it, of course. It will seize upon power and proceed in a revolutionary manner. It will take the measures necessary to secure the success of the insurrection. It will demolish the old institutions; it will organise the defence of the country. As for those who will not recognise its authority, why the guillotine will settle them, whether they belong to the people or the middle class, if they refuse to obey the orders necessary for the advance of the Revolution.” The guillotine still in action! See how these budding Robespierres argue, who know nothing of the grand epic of the century but its period of decline, men who have never learned anything about it except from speeches of the hangers-on of the Republic.

For us Anarchists the dictatorship of an individual or of a party (at bottom the very same thing) has been finally condemned.

We know that Revolution and Government are incompatible. One must destroy the other, no matter what name is given to government, whether dictatorship, royalty, or parliament. We know that what makes the strength and the truth of our party is contained in this formula—“Nothing good or durable can be done except by the free initiative of the people, and every government tends to destroy it”; and so the very best among us, if their ideas had not to pass through the crucible of the popular mind before being put into execution, and if they should become masters of that formidable machine—the government—and could thus act as they chose, would become in a week fit only for the gallows. We know whither every dictatorship leads, even the best intentioned—namely, to the death of all revolutionary movement. We know also, that this idea of dictatorship is never anything more than a sickly product of governmental fetish-worship, which, like religious fetish-worship, has always served to perpetuate slavery.

But we do not now address ourselves to Anarchists. We speak to those governmental Revolutionists who, led astray by the prejudices of their education, honestly deceive themselves, and ask nothing better than to discuss the question. We therefore speak to them from their own point of view.

To begin with one general observation: those who preach dictatorship do not in general perceive that in sustaining this prejudice they only prepare the way for those who later on will cut their throats. There is, however, one word of Robespierre’s which his admirers would do well to remember. He did not deny the dictatorship in principle; but “have good care about it,” he answered abruptly to Mandar when he spoke to him of it, “Brissot would be the Dictator!” Yes, Brissot, the crafty Girondin, deadly enemy of the levelling tendencies of the people, furious defender of

property (though he once called it theft), Brissot, who would coolly have consigned to the Abbaye Prison Hebert, Marat, and all the moderate Jacobins!

Now this was said in 1792! At that time France had already been three years in Revolution! In fact, royalty no longer existed; it only awaited its death stroke. The feudal régime was actually abolished. And yet even at this time, when the revolution rolled its waves untrammelled, it was still the counter-revolutionist Brissot who had the best chance to be made dictator! And who would it have been previously, in 1789? Mirabeau is the man who would have been acknowledged as the head of the government! The man who made a bargain with the king to sell him his eloquence—this is the man who would have been thrust into power at this time, if the insurgent people had not imposed its sovereignty, sustained by its pikes, and if it had not proceeded, by the accomplished facts of the *Jacquerie*, in making illusory every government constituted at Paris or in the departments.

But governmental prejudice blinds so thoroughly those who speak of dictatorship, that they prefer the dictatorship of a new Brissot or a Napoleon to abandoning the idea of giving another master to men who are breaking the chains of their slavery!

The secret societies of the time of the Restoration and of Louis-Philippe contributed powerfully to maintain this prejudice of dictatorship. The middle-class Republicans of the time, aided by the workers, made a long series of conspiracies, with the object of overturning Royalty and proclaiming the Republic. Not understanding the profound change that would have to be effected in France before even a Republican régime could be established, they imagined that by means of a vast conspiracy they would some day overturn Royalty, take possession of power and proclaim the Republic. For more than thirty years those

secret societies never ceased to work with an unlimited devotion and heroic courage and perseverance. If the Republic resulted from the insurrection of 1848, it was thanks to these societies, and thanks to the propaganda by deed made by them for thirty years. Without their noble efforts the Republic would, up to the present, have been impossible.

The end they had in view was to get possession of power themselves and to install a republican dictatorship. But, of course, they never succeeded. As ever, from the very nature of things, a conspiracy could not overturn royalty. The conspirators had indeed prepared the way for its fall. They had spread widely the republican idea; their martyrs had made it the ideal of the people. But the final effort which definitely overturned the king of the bourgeoisie was much greater and stronger than any that could come from a secret society; it came from the mass of the people.

The result is known. The party which had prepared the way for the fall of royalty found itself thrust aside from the steps of the Government House. Others, too prudent to run the risk of conspiracy, but better known, more moderate also, lying in wait for the opportunity of grasping power, took the place which the conspirators hoped to conquer at the point of the bayonet. Journalists, lawyers, good talkers who worked hard to make a name for themselves while the true republicans forged weapons or expired in jail, took possession of power. Some of them, already well known, were acclaimed by the people; others pushed themselves forward and were accepted because their name represented nothing more than a programme of agreement with everybody.

It is useless to tell us that this happened because of a want of practical spirit in the party of action, and that others will be able to do better in future. No, a thousand times

(continued on page 8)

Behind the Slogans

THE inefficiency of Ministers used as a slogan for victory? It sounds almost incredible, and maybe it would be in another country, but it is a fact today in Britain. The Tory leaders are thoroughly discredited: Chamberlain has been an omen of disaster to the Conservative Party, and his followers, local Tory M.P.s. who were full of praise for Hitler and Mussolini, would have no chance in the country if—as is not now possible—a General Election came. The man-in-the-street would be very likely to agree now with the statement of one Conservative M.P. some years ago: "The Blackshirts have

to defend the ridiculous methods of the Ministry of Information, sure Minister-breaker, since the Ministry can only give official policy, while the nation wants the soothing syrup of Transport House variety, the "better land after the war" type, which the rulers may promise but cannot specify too closely. Also, he has had to tread on the corns of newspapermen by censorship of news—always a risky business! But apart from that, what significance has Mr. Duff Cooper's inefficiency? True, propaganda could be a great force in the war, and he is retarding it; but no more than any other member of his class would.

The reason seems clear: the Cabinet may be likened to the proverbial Russian sledge,

“Ministerial Inefficiency”

what the Conservatives need,”—not dictatorship but Brixton!

This is shown by the phenomenal success of the book, "Guilty Men." It had a very good send-off by being unofficially banned, but it created a sensation apart from that. "Guilty Men" tells the familiar tale, of a complacent Chamberlain leading a Hitler-loving Conservative solid majority in the days of Munichism. More and more people are coming to recognise this fact: yet, conversely, the Government does not lose in popularity. The antidote to all criticism is: "But now it is all different." A Chamberlain is out, a Churchill is in. Apart from Mr. Churchill looking more like a bulldog than his colleague and the more important fact that his support and warmhearted defence of Fascism under Signor Mussolini has had a chance to be forgotten while Mr. Chamberlain's visits to Munich are too fresh in the public mind, there is little difference. But the man-in-the-street is fooled: he is led to believe we have suffered some defeats because of inefficient Mr. Chamberlain, and now we are to be led to victory, via the change of Prime Minister, by Mr. Churchill.

Even now, with the change of Ministry to "efficient" Ministers, criticism of them has to continue. Mr. Duff Cooper went into office in a blaze of glory, having made a brilliant speech crying out to Chamberlain, "Go, go, in heaven's name, go!" It was a dangerous speech, though, for now everyone is crying that at Mr. Duff Cooper. True Mr. Cooper has

after which the wolves of public opinion run. The mother on the sledge has to throw off her babies one by one: a hard parting, but inevitable, anything to allay the wolves. And this mother is distinctly hard-hearted and will throw them all off if she can maintain her position on the sledge. Some of the babies, though, are lusty brats and run after the sledge crying, "Shame!"—e.g. Mr. Hore-Belisha!

The ruling-class can well afford one or two Ministers as a burnt offering if it can stop the public from thinking and acting thereby.

At the moment, there is some denunciation of Sir John Anderson, and a demand that he should resign, because of the suppression of liberty underneath him, and also because of the internment of so many refugees either anti-Nazi or friendly to the Allied cause. But we are not concerned with whether Sir John would resign or not: the question is whether such practices would stop if we had a new Home Secretary. The agitation must be against the offence, not the individual acting as figure-head or held responsible.

In the trade unions it is the same: agitation against any particular person sometimes leads to their being replaced by better men, who in turn, because of the method of trade union bureaucracy, become equally reactionary. The introduction of Labour leaders into the Government has not altered the character of the war: Mr. Attlee, who before had led the demand for a statement of peace aims, once Lord Privy Seal, had to declare that the

time for stating peace aims was "inopportune." Labour M.P.s. led the demand for such things as nationalisation of mines; now a Labour Minister of Mines has to state that this cannot be done. So it seems that change of Ministers does not lead to a change of methods. But the agitation against inefficiency leads to a lessening of the struggle against the system, and that, of course, is what the ruling-class want.

It might be stated that there is an interesting exception to the rule that inefficiency against individual Ministers is largely inspired by a desire to avoid essential criticism rather than to face actual criticism. That is the widespread belief in this country that Britain is inefficient, too lenient, too humane, etc. which is, of course, fostered with the intention of making the people believe that we must be less lenient, less humane, etc. If it were stated bluntly; "We must be intolerant, we must be inhumane" etc. it is doubtful if the British people would agree. But they are told that we are notoriously lenient, ridiculously humane, and are likely to remain so, and the result is support for the reverse action to be adopted. Then, when the news comes out, the reaction is, "Well, its about time too!" or the like.

It is, by the way, a remarkable illusion that inefficiency does not exist in Germany—a thing which all good patriots here believe! Why this illusion I cannot fathom: it may have arisen as a means of exhorting people to do their bit, but it has never been very true.

In the last war the myth of German efficiency rose to an alarming extent, but was grossly exaggerated. Hasek has portrayed the corrupt and decaying Austro-Hungarian Army for ever in the "Good Soldier Schweik" while as to the German Army in the last war, Bernard Shaw—who has written on everything—pronounced the truest words, in the mouth of a member of the ruling-class, who says, "if the British public knew that I had said it, I should be at once handed down as a pro-German," it is:—

"Our people have for some reason made up their minds that the German War Office is everything that our War Office is not . . . My own view . . . is that the German War Office is no better than any other War Office.

I found that opinion on my observation of the character of my brother-in-law; one of whom, by the the way, is on the German General Staff." (Augustus Does His Bit, 1917).

Today, of course, the Nazis have got rid of the aristocratic Junkers: whereas we retain the aristocratic junk. Nevertheless, today in Germany the State is in control: and the State, in its totalitarian stage, though it eliminates capitalist waste and oligarchic inefficiency, creates bureaucracy and its attendant "red tape." When we get much better information on how Germany wages this war, (which will only, perhaps, be afterwards) we shall very probably see that Germany has not been winning victories because of the superior efficiency of Nazism, but because of bourgeoisie of the west are fearful, and therefore timid. They fear that a major war of destruction will ruin their property, and expediate social revolution: the Nazis, representatives of a "Have not" nation against the "Have" imperialisms, and who have deluded at least themselves that revolution is impossible, for they are the revolution, have no such trepidations, and so take the initiative and the drive. They err in underating social revolution, for it is becoming ever more of an imminence, and will sweep away both them and their bourgeois "sisters under the skies."

Albert Meltzer.

(Continued from page 6)

no! It is a law as immutable as that which governs the movement of the stars, that the party of action must be thrown aside, and the intriguers and talkers seize upon power. They are always better known to the great mass that makes the final effort. They get more votes, because with or without voting papers, by acclamation or by the ballot-box, at the bottom it is always a kind of tacit election which is made in such cases by acclamation. They are acclaimed by everybody and above all by the enemies of the revolution, who prefer to put forward nobodies, and thus by acclamation those men are accepted as rulers who are really either enemies of the movement or indifferent toward it.

The man who more than any other was the incarnation of this system of conspiracy, the man who by a life spent in prison paid for his devotion to this system, on the eve of his death uttered these words, which of themselves make an entire programme—"Neither God nor Master!"

Left Movements and the War

II. The Pacifist Movement

Very heterogeneous elements compose the Pacifist movement. They are united, not from identity of political conviction or class interests, but solely in their opposition to war. And this opposition may be religious or agnostic, political or non-political, humanitarian or utilitarian. Pacifist policy, having such a varied background, is difficult to define; but one may attempt to distinguish general trends, and the following remarks are made as a general criticism of the movement—they may not necessarily apply to all individual pacifists.

Pacifists regard war as the prime evil; they are not necessarily concerned with other social ills. Their main endeavour, in the years preceding the present conflict, was to mobilize public opinion against war, and so to influence national policy by mass appeals to governments. Seeing world problems mainly in terms of war, and more or less disregarding the other manifestations of capitalist imperialism, their viewpoint has tended to be narrow, so that the course of events over the last decade has frequently placed them in equivocal positions.

Pacifists and Spain

Opposing the war in Abyssinia, Aldous Huxley, in a leaflet published by the Peace Pledge Union, also opposed Sanctions as being not only morally indefensible, but also inefficacious, since they were likely to extend the war; but the Union did not offer any adequate analysis of Italy's aggression, and hence no positive suggestions of a practical nature. Regarding Spain, Huxley again, in a P.P.U. leaflet, "Pacifism and Civil War," voices the liberal-reformist tendencies of the movement . . . it was, to say the least, unfortunate that the Popular Front should have allowed so much power to pass into the hands of the Communists and Anarcho-Syndicalists composing its left wing. It was unfortunate that it permitted the ordinary machinery of administration to be supplemented by unofficial committees appointed by the parties of the extreme left." Believing that the employment of violence precluded the realization of any desirable aims, pacifists opposed the appeals for arms for Spain; they held that further bloodshed was futile in any event, and urged the earliest possible cessation of the war. Their activities were therefore limited to purely humanitarian work in medical aid and shelter for refugees. Conviction of the futility of the Spanish struggle prevented many pacifists from examining its true nature, and hence from learning any political lessons from it. The non-intervention policy was uneasily supported, in spite of its obvious injustice and farcical application, the excuse of the British government that it would prevent extension of the war being accepted almost without question.

Imperialism and Appeasement

Fear of war also governed the attitude towards Appeasement. Recognizing the broken faith and "injustices" of Versailles, the German claim to share in the advantages enjoyed by the British and French

empires, was regarded sympathetically, since failure to remedy those "injustices" would lead to further war. But, although certain writers in "Peace News"—Reginald Reynolds and Wilfred Wellock, for example—urge the complete liquidation of imperialism, the main body of pacifists have been content to advocate a more "equitable" imperialist share-out, without attacking imperialism itself. Native interests were guilelessly confided to the care of Mandates Commissions under a reconstituted League of Nations. (More recently, the Federal Union idea has been widely embraced—for instance by Dr. Joad, Prof. Catlin, Gerald Bailey, and others).

Not recognizing the true motives of the government, the Appeasement Policy was generally supported by the movement. When it broke down in March 1939, with Hitler's entry into Prague, the National Peace Council organized a petition to the government to institute immediately an international conference "directed towards remedying the economic and social conditions likely to lead to war." Over a million signatures were collected. Mr. Chamberlain, replying to the deputation of distinguished men who presented the petition, "expressed his general agreement with the aims which had been put before him . . . He agreed, also, with the general line of approach suggested, and declared his intention to watch for any opportunity of following it up." This touching faith in the good intentions of our rulers occurs frequently in pacifist writings; it was expressed even as late as 12th January, 1940, by Dr. Herbert Gray, who wrote in the front page article in "Peace News," without a trace of cynicism: "I believe our present Prime Minister has gone as far in the pursuit of peace as was possible for any man with the followers he has behind him."

Pacifists have been content to decry war as an isolated phenomenon without making any fundamental analysis of its causes; they have consequently failed to recognize that it is a symptom, like unemployment and poverty, of an underlying disease—the contemporary social and economic order. They attack the effect, but neglect the cause.

Pacifist Defections

The present war has underlined these confusions of thought. Still endeavouring to organize a mass opposition to the war only, the P.P.U. instituted in the autumn of 1939 a "Stop-the-War" campaign. With the rejection of the mediation offers of Leopold and Wilhelmina, the slogan was changed to "Negotiate Now." But at no point in the propaganda for an immediate negotiated peace was any mention made of the economic and industrial disorganization which would inevitably follow the transfer from a war-to a peace-economy. The whole problem was treated as though it were merely a question of goodwill. Meanwhile the invasion of the Low Countries caused the defection of some of the one-time leaders of pacifist thought—Joad, Bertrand Russell, Philip Mumford. With the collapse of France several pacifists—Vera Brittain, Prof. George Catlin, and Storm Jameson—

signed an appeal addressed by the P.E.N. club—"to the conscience of the world," which, in effect, endorses the familiar war-aims of the official propagandists: "... we with our allies are not fighting only for ourselves but for the belief we share with every man of any race and religion, who holds that men should respect each other and minds should be free. We are fighting for our lives ..." and so on. Much pacifist thought about this war appears to have been founded on the unconscious assumption of a British victory; serious military reverses caused a radical modification of outlook.

The leading article in "Peace News" for June 21st welcomed the capitulation of the French government without qualification and without expressing any fears regarding the intentions of such notorious reactionaries as Pétain and Laval, to whom on the contrary it incongruously attributed humanitarian motives: "a slender hope that the war might yet be ended before the nations involved became utterly exhausted appeared this week. It grew even as the French government prepared to spare its citizens the agonies involved in a continuation of the war; and as Mr. Churchill repeated the British government's determination to fight on." (Mr. Churchill, at least, is presumably not a humanitarian!).

The Dangers of Unrealism

Meanwhile some of those who grasp the political realities of the situation, Middleton Murry and Wilfred Wellock, for example, reject revolution, holding that violence would inevitably stultify its aims, but they lack any alternative, and so resign themselves to an indefinite period of Totalitarianism. A minority in the P.P.U., however, the Forward Movement together with the Activists in Manchester, from their analysis of the causes of war (see their pamphlet, "Why We Are At War," advertised in our August issue) do recognize the necessity for revolution; but they failed, at the P.P.U.'s Annual General Meeting in April, to affect the Union's policy.

On the whole it is fair to say that pacifists' outlook and attitude has been characterized hitherto by a lack of political realism, of understanding of the class-struggle and the motives animating governments. The obvious horrors of war, and the continual fear of it which hung over Europe in the years preceding September 1939, gained for them considerable numerical support. Gerald Bailey in the report on the petition referred to above, remarks that "the obtaining of over a million signatures in a little over three months of effective campaigning constitutes a record for a petition of this kind. Moreover, since reports from canvassers indicate an overwhelming response from those invited to sign, it is permissible to claim that the petition represents the authentic voice of the British people." It is true; everyone detests war. But pacifist propaganda has almost invariably neglected to point out (there are laudable exceptions) that war is the most glaring demonstration of the failure of capitalist social and economic organization. No emphasis is laid on the necessity of destroying capitalism as a pre-requisite of the abolition of war—the necessity is even, on occasion, denied. Everyone hates war, but almost no one understands it. The results are now apparent; the workers of Europe are plunged into suffering, but appear powerless to escape from it. By directing their appeals to

(continued at foot of next column)

- Captain White -

A LETTER appealing for unity amongst Irish-General Sir Hubert Gough, G.C.M.G. and men in the present "national crisis", signed by Captain J. R. White was refused publication in numbers of Irish papers, and was reprinted in the London labour weekly, *The Tribune*. The letter was the usual blarney: the North and South had to be united because of the menace etc. Its notoriety lay in the two signatories. General Gough is an Orangeman of sorts: he refused to carry out the orders of the Government in Ireland in the Curragh period, following the Carson reactionaries who opposed Home Rule. Later, of course, he became famous as Commander of the Fifth Army at the third battle of Ypres.

Captain White, on the other hand, had previously been active in the struggle for Irish independence. During the last war he organised Ireland's Citizen Army, to follow Jim Connolly in the defence of Irish labour and independence. That he is today in such bad company may come as a surprise, particularly to those who know something of Capt. White's later history. After his experiences in the Boer War—his father was General White, of Ladysmith—he embraced a form of Tolstoyism, but later joined with Connolly. After the war, he joined the Irish Communist Party but resigned from the C.P. after the May Days in Catalonia, where he had joined in the Spanish workers struggle, with volunteers from Ireland. Capt. White later spoke in support of the Spanish Anarchists in London.

At that time he wrote: In Ireland (in 1916) Republican Nationalism combined with Irish International socialism (Connolly and the Citizen Army) against the common Imperial enemy, and in so doing made the only repudiation of the Great War in Western Europe long before the chaos and military breakdown caused by the war compelled that repudiation, as in Russia and to some extent in Germany. The "common Imperial enemy" was represented by the Goughs of this world. How on earth can Captain White defend his present action—unless he has shifted back completely to his original position at the time of the Boer War?

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the deaf ears of governments, the leaders of pacifist thought have deflected the energies of their followers into unproductive, and occasionally downright reactionary channels. Given a more realistic analysis, the pacifist movement would doubtless have been smaller, but its energies might have been usefully directed towards a radical attack on the causes of war and social misery.

J. H.

The Abolition and the Withering of the State

WHILST we anarchists desire the abolition of the State, through the social revolution, and the constitution of a new autonomist—federal-order, the leninists wish for the destruction of the bourgeois State, but they want also the conquest of the State by the "proletariat."

The "Proletarian State"—they tell us—is a semi-state, since the integral State is that bourgeois state which has been destroyed by the Social Revolution. Even this semi-state would according to the Marxists die a natural death.

This theory of the withering of the State, which is at the basis of Lenin's book, "State and Revolution," was drawn by him from Engels who in "Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science" writes:

"The proletariat seizes state power, and then transforms the means of production into state property. But in doing this, it puts an end to itself as the proletariat, it puts an end to all classes differences and class antagonisms, it puts an end also to the state as the state. Former society, moving in class antagonisms, had need of the state, that is, an organisation of the exploiting class at each period for the maintenance of its external conditions of production; therefore, in particular, for the forcible holding down of the exploited class in the conditions of oppression (slavery, bondage or serfdom, wage-labour) determined by the existing mode of production. The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its embodiment in a visible corporate body; but it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which itself in its epoch, represented society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of the slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, of the feudal nobility; in our epoch, of the bourgeoisie. When ultimately it becomes really representative of society as a whole, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished, there is nothing more to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a state, is no longer necessary. The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the seizure of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of a state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then becomes dormant of itself. Government over persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not "abolished," it withers away. It is from this standpoint that we must appraise the phrase "people's free state"—both its justification at times for agitational purposes, and its ultimate scientific inadequacy—and also the demand of the so-called Anarchists that the state should be abolished overnight."

Between the present-day-State and the Anarchism-of-tomorrow there would be a semi-State. The State which dies is "the state as the state" or, in other words, the bourgeois state. It is in this sense that this phrase, which at first sight seems to contradict the thesis of the Socialist State, should be interpreted. "The first act in which the state really comes forward as a representative of the society as a whole—the seizure of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a state." Taken literally and out of its context, this sentence would come to mean that economic socialization would take place at the same time as the withering of the State. In the same way, taken literally and out of its context, the section referring to the proletariat as abolishing itself as a proletariat in acting to take possession of the power of the State would come to mean the non-necessity of the "proletarian state." In point of fact, Engels, under the influence of the "dialectic style," expresses himself infelicitously. Between the bourgeois state of today and the Socialist-Anarchist society of tomorrow, Engels visualizes a chain of successive stages, in which both state and proletariat persist. To shed light on the dialectic darkness, is the final reference to the Anarchists who demand "that the state should be abolished overnight," or in other words that they do not agree to the transition period in the State, whose intervention according to Engels, becomes superfluous "in all fields one after the other," that is to say, gradually.

It appears to me that the Leninist position with regard to the State, coincides exactly with that taken up by Marx and Engels if one interprets the spirit behind their writings without being deceived by the ambiguity of certain statements.

The State, in Marxist-leninist political thought, is the transitory political instrument of socialization, transitory by reason of the very nature of the State, which is that of an organism of domination of one class over another. The socialist State, by abolishing classes, commits suicide. Marx and Engels were metaphysicians who often schematized historical processes just for the love of system.

"The proletariat" which takes possession of the State, while relegating to it all the machinery of production and which destroys itself as a proletariat and the state "as the state," is a metaphysical fantasy, a political hypostasis of social abstractions.

It is not the Russian proletariat which has taken possession of the power of the State, but the Bolshevik Party which has not in any wise destroyed the proletariat, but has instead created a state capitalism, a new bourgeois class, an ensemble of interests bound to the bolshevik state, which tend to preserve themselves by preserving the state.

The withering of the State is more than ever remote in U.S.S.R. where state intervention is always more extensive and oppressive and where classes are not in the process of disappearing.

The Leninist programme of 1917 contained the following points: suppression of the police and of the permanent army; abolition of the professional bureaucracy, elections to all public functions, revocability of all functionaries, the wages of bureaucrats to be the same as those of a worker, a maximum of democracy, pacific competition of the parties within the Soviets, abrogation of the death penalty. Not one of these points of the programme has been realized.

There exists in U.S.S.R. a government, a dictatorial oligarchy. It's Central Committee (19 members) dominates the Russian Communist Party, which in turn dominates the U.S.S.R.

All those who are not "subjects" are branded as counter-revolutionaries. The bolshevik revolution has created a saturnine Government which deports Riazanov, founder of the Marx-Engels Institute, whilst he is preparing the integral and original edition of the "Capital"; which condemns to death Zinoviev, president of the Communist International, Kameneff and many others among the greatest exponents of leninism; which excludes from the party and then exiles and then expels from U.S.S.R. a duce like Trotsky which, in short, attacks 80 per cent. of the principal exponents of leninism.

In 1920 Lenin wrote an eulogy of self-criticism within the Communist Party but he was speaking of the "errors" already recognised by the "party," and not of the right of the citizens to denounce the errors, or what they considered as errors in the governing party.

While Lenin was the dictator, whoever denounced vigorously these very errors which Lenin himself recognised retrospectively, risked or suffered ostracism, prison or death. Bolshevik Sovietism was an atrocious joke even for Lenin who boasted of the demiurgic power of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party over the whole of U.S.S.R. saying "No important question, either of a political or organizational order, is decided upon by a state institution of a republic, without directive instructions emanating from the Central Committee of the Party."

Whoever says, "proletarian State" means "State Capitalism"; whoever says, "dictatorship of the Proletariat" means "dictatorship of the Communist Party"; whoever says, "strong Government" means "tzarist oligarchy" of politicians.

Leninists, Trotskysts and Bordighists are divided only by different conceptions of tactics. All bolsheviks, no matter to which faction they belong, are supporters of political dictatorship and State Socialism. All are united by the slogan; "dictatorship of the proletariat," an equivocal slogan corresponding to the "sovereign people" of Jacobinism. Whatever the variety of Jacobinism, it is bound to deviate the Social Revolution, and when it deviates there arises in its midst the ghost of Bonaparte.

One must be blind not to realise that Stalinist bonapartism is none other than the shadow of leninist dictatorshipism come to life.

Camillo Berneri.

This article was published in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, in the Italian paper "Guerra di Classe". Several of the author's articles were published in "Spain and the World". He was killed by the Stalinists in Barcelona during the May days of 1937.

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Grim & Gay

by

Ethel Mannin

BY the label on the cardboard box she was carrying I guessed that the shabby little woman opposite me in the corner of the railway carriage came from the same town, and with recent air-raid experiences in common we fell into conversation. She was a railway worker's wife and had two children evacuated to the West of England. One of them was ill and she was going down to see the child. We agreed that eight shillings a week a head is a lot to "fork out" out of three or four pounds a week, especially when there are several children. She herself simply could not afford the sixteen shillings a week and had "appealed" and was paying eight shillings, but even that "took a bit of finding," with seventeen and six a week for rent, and everything gone up so.

Some houses had been blown up in her street and the people were housed for the time being in the town-hall. We agreed that about the most terrible thing that could happen to you would be to lose your home like that—everything. "You can't tell me," she said, "those pictures you see in the papers of people smiling beside the ruins of their homes are genuine! As if anybody would! And then you read about Buckingham Palace being bombed and the papers say its the royal family's home the same as our places are our homes, but its not the same for them. They haven't got only one home, and if one place gets bombed they aren't out in the street like us. You can't tell me they'd put the royal family in the town hall or a cinema or a school not even if Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle and all the rest of their places was blown to smithereens! It makes you sick," she added, hugging her cardboard box.

"I suppose they've got deep shelters to go to," I said, "fitted up with every convenience—comfortable beds and electric light and proper heating. I don't suppose," I added, profoundly, "Sir John Anderson spends his nights catching cold in an Anderson shelter."

"It's always the poor people's homes that come off worst."

"They tried for Downing Street," I tried to comfort her.

"You bet that's nothing to what its like round our way."

"It's a people's war," I told her grimly. "The papers are always telling us so. Just as they're always telling us that very few lives are lost. A thousand and seventy-five in the month of August, but Mr. Churchill pointed out that really that's very few taken against the 'general background of the war' and compared with 'the majestic issues at stake,' And eight hundred houses, wasn't it, but what's that out of 13 million? Besides, it didn't include Number Ten Downing Street. Since then 493 people out of 500 homeless people in a school have been killed, but again what's that out of 45 millions? Its sad of course, and one is very sorry for the bereaved and for the people who copped it, but we must keep a stiff upper lip and be grim and gay and all that, mustn't we?"

"Human life's nothing nowadays," she sighed.

"When that shelter was bombed 'only 14' people were killed out of a thousand. They said so on the wireless. Only fourteen. Once upon a time if fourteen people had been killed anywhere we should have said in awed tones, 'You know—it's dreadful—fourteen people people were killed.' Once upon a time," I pursued, bitterly, "if only one person was killed it was a serious matter. We should have said, 'A man was killed, you know,' and everyone would have been shocked. Remember how wrought up everyone was over the Thetis? But how many times has a similarly horrible story been repeated since the war began, do you suppose? It must be an everyday occurrence now."

"It can't go on," the little woman said, "There's a limit to how much people can stand. If people can't sleep they can't work. Everything will come to a standstill."

"People are expected to go on producing with the bombs falling all round them and after spending sleepless nights in Anderson shelters."

"It can't go on," she insisted, "Everything depends on the working people really, doesn't it?"

She got out, with her shabby old suitcase and her cardboard box, leaving her simple wisdom behind her.

It will go on so long as people are prepared to lead insomniac nights under three feet of earth and a sheet of corrugated iron

in their backyards and gardens. Hope for humanity lies in the old truth that though you can fool some of the people some of the time you cannot fool all the people all the time. Presently—and it may come any time—the masses will wake up to the bitter realisation that the only sense in which it is a people's war is that the people pay for it, with their smashed homes, their lost lives, their murdered dear ones; that they are being used, in the name of an ideal, in a war between rival imperialisms; a clash of great powers, of trade interests. That a whole system of living is fighting for its rotten life, and that Fascism is merely a part of that system; that more than Fascism has to go—the whole capitalist-imperialist governmental system which produces it.

With that realisation, then you get down to the people's war; then the issues at stake become of immediate importance to the common people.

We have the lesson of Spain vividly before us. So long as the revolution was at stake it was a people's war; so long as Catalonia was under the control of workers' syndicates the ideal of freedom was living and real. The revolution was defeated by the cry "smash Fascism first," which is the cry of the labour movement in this country, the slogan to which even the hitherto extreme Left is now slowly but surely rallying. There has been some bitter talk in the Left wilderness of the futility of "a red flag flying over a graveyard." But at present all we can be certain of is the graveyard—with the present tendency of the so-called Left there will be no red flag to run up; exhausted, sleepless, deluded men and women do not make a revolution in any case.

Peace now will mean a bad peace, a crooked peace, a corrupt peace. But when the workers have come out of their holes in the ground and got some sleep they might begin to think again. They might wake up to the simple realisation that everything depends on them. That the corrupt wars and peace treaties alike of statesmen are not their affair, but that the war against Fascism begins at home. . . . Mr. Bevin has told us time and again how everything depends on the workers, whom he has the audacity to call his "mates"; well, everything does depend on the workers, but not quite in the way Mr. Bevin means. To begin with how much longer the present nightmare life for the masses is to go on depends entirely on the workers themselves. In the last analysis it is the

people themselves who make wars possible, by their sanction and co-operation, and theirs is the power to stop wars. At present the bitter and tragic paradox is that in a sleepless world the people sleep.

Prosecution Fails

Glasgow.

THE trial of our four comrades, James Kennedy, Frank Dorans, Frank Leech and Eddie Shaw on an allegation that they had incited men to evade military service by the holding of a mock tribunal for conscientious objectors was held at Glasgow, the 20th and 22nd August. Some papers referred to the cheap gibe of the poor-man's-solicitor McSporrán that he had "a conscientious objection" to appearing for the accused—no reference was made to the fact that Eddie Shaw, for the accused, denied he had been asked to do so.

The four comrades cross-examined the crown witnesses, and produced Sir John Anderson's statement that it was no offence merely to state the statutory of men to claim exemption on conscientious grounds, or to give guidance to anyone desiring same. The remarkable genius acting as Fiscal had to stoop to the production of a small swastika pin-flag he discovered: which proved to belong to a "Daily Express" war map, taken from comrade Dorans. (Will Beaverbrook be arrested?)

The case for the defence was not required: the Sheriff gave his verdict that the case for the Crown was not only not proved but disproved. "One can hardly say that a man whose ambition was to swim the channel was incited by his swimming instructor. 'Incitement' means to imply something more than assistance. I declare the accused 'Not Guilty'". There was a spontaneous burst of applause from the public section of the court. Since then the attendance at our meetings and interest in our activities in Glasgow has increased considerably.

Madland National Prayer

*Our Father, which art a Bomber,
Terrible be thy name;
Thy squadrons come.
Thy ill be done on earth
As it were from heaven.
Give us each day our daily dread,
And forgive not our misses
As we forgive not those that miss us,
And lead us not into temptation
To deliver men from evil.*

W. A. RATHKEY.

A Criticism

WE have now reached the stage when anarchists must make up their minds. It has hitherto been possible to shelve the issues which politics have brought about by not only exercising the limited liberty of opinion, but also the liberty to be inconsistent. The fascist state (or the servile State which Hilaire Belloc showed 30 years ago was in process of formation owing to the imbecilities of labour leaders and trade unionists) has arrived in its completeness, and anarchism of all brands is doomed to extinction unless it speedily decides to put its house in order.

The meaning of the word "anarchism" is "a society without rule", i.e., without coercive rule, in contradistinction to the methods by which society is now ruled, or would like to be ruled. It is a negative sort of creed, and has always been open to criticism by people of all classes who are such sadists themselves that they cannot imagine anyone behaving decently if coercive restrictions were to be withdrawn. . . .

Thus there has been a development in anarchist theory in two directions. There has first been an acknowledgement that society must be organised even under anarchy, and this has led to anarchist syndicalism, which dodges round the obstruction that coercion is an evil, by throwing out all the previous systems of force and their exponents, and substituting gangs of workers, labelled "committees" to do the work instead. To sit on a council or in a parliament is a villainous betrayal of the rights of man, but to call that council a "committee" and let it do the same work is quite legitimate.

The general justification of anarchism is that men are either too wicked to rule each other (as Reynolds puts it), or they are reduced to villainy only because the ruling classes coerce them, and that if there were no ruling classes, they would naturally live in harmony with each other. But the curious thing is that anarchists are just as much upholders of violent methods of settling disputes, as the socialists and the imperialists. We had a practical example of it in Spain, and we have it in theory in "War Commentary".

If you are anarchists, and not socialists or marxists or bolsheviks, why the devil do you advocate (P. 2, August, 1940) the taking over of the armed forces and putting them under workers' control? It is a pre-requisite of anarchism that their should be no armed forces, and that workers should refuse to become part of these armed forces. And again what the devil does Albert Meltzer mean when he says, "I want to see a world in which violence, the organised violence of State and warfare, is abolished, and I would only use violence in defence of the revolution"? In other words, he would kill the blackguards who oppose him, just as our imperialist blackguards kill those who oppose them! Cannot Meltzer see that the Slave State can only exist so long as the workers are prepared to be the thugs of the ruling classes, and that the remedy is not to kill the ruling class, but to decline to be ruled by them?

The second direction in which anarchists have moved is paralleled by all the other political reformers. The acceptance of atheism as a corollary of anarchism has had a paralysing effect on the moral responsibility of anarchists and their individual actions. If we base our new society on the "nationalisation of the means of production and distribution",

or upon "the dictatorship of the proletariat", then it is obvious that we can do nothing but talk about it until the millennium comes to pass. But with anarchism, we have no need to wait until we've all got a share in the coalmines, we can start here and now by refusing to accept coercion as a basis of society. "War Commentary" has high praise for comrade Michael O'Dea, who refused to put his name on the compulsory National Register, and who goes about without an identity card, but why is it left to comrade Michael O'Dea?

For years anarchists have paltered with their principles, until to save their consciences, they have evolved a system of coercion themselves, which absolves them from being the nucleus of a just society. They can congratulate a comrade—from a safe distance—who really takes his anarchism seriously.

Anarchists at Bay! I wonder,—for "at bay" implies defiance even to the last ditch. The wolf of totalitarianism is rounding up the peoples, and you, like the social democrats of Germany, bear a heavy responsibility for it, for you have only kept the flag of freedom flying—on paper.

A. G. HIGGINS.

—In Reply

TO answer A. G. Higgins properly would require an entire issue of War Commentary, as it would be necessary to explain to him what we mean by the word Anarchism. The early anarchist theory has developed in more than two directions and we, having adopted one of these many directions cannot help it contradicting any minor variant. As a movement we had to choose between different opinions, expressed and to compose our line and programme accordingly. Before he advises us to "make up our minds", our correspondent should ascertain whether we haven't made them up already.

He does not seem to grasp why, while opposing a parliament we advocate workers' committees ("gangs" to him). The difference is that while parliamentarism gives power to a limited number of people, the ruling class, the system of workers committees gives equal power to all members of the working society: i.e., abolishes the oppression of one class by another. The decision of a government is the decision of a small number of people, whereas that of the workers' committees is that of the whole society. The majority will rule the minority, our correspondent may object. Yes, we agree that the decisions of the majority will be carried out, but we don't believe in the suppression of the opposition. We, in company with the great majority of anarchists from Bakunin to Berkman, from Malatesta to Makno and Durruti recognise violence as a means of reaching our aims.

One must not confuse the use of violence with the use of power. Anarchists are all opposed to the latter but do not believe that violence can corrupt as power does. As long as the use of violence is not confined to one class, or to a government, it will not give opportunity for any individual or group to rule the others. It is easy to say "the remedy is not to kill the ruling class but to decline to be ruled by them". The ruling class force us to do as they wish and the only alternatives are to die of hunger, live in one of H.M. prisons (which is perhaps also doing as they wish) or to find some monastic shelter away from the world, if we reject the means of revolution.

Books

"Caesar's Mantle" by Ferdinand Mainzer

Hamish Hamilton).

"The Roman Revolution" by Ronald Syme (Oxford University Press).

THE study of classical history, particularly in its social-revolutionary aspect, has been too long neglected by modern revolutionaries. This is the greater pity since in classical Graeco-Roman antiquity alone is it possible to study in its entirety the evolution of a cultural phase in many respects similar to our own: a secular culture free from the dominion of the theocratic ideas of the archaic age which preceded it, and of the Catholic Middle Age which succeeded it.

From the standpoint of social science the ancient civilisation reproduced the main political phases which, albeit at a faster technical tempo, have also characterised our own: dictatorship in its maturity and a totalitarian "Fascism" in the course of its decline.

The transition from maturity to decay was accomplished in antiquity in the generation immediately prior to the inauguration of the Christian era—which latter event, one can add, misty as its historic origins still are, was evidently not unconnected with its contemporary social transformation. It was signalled in the political sphere by the collapse of the Roman Republic and by the inauguration of the Empire of the Caesars, the

(continued from page 15)

Comrade O'Dea action has a value as propaganda. It is a symbolic action: by refusing to register he refuses to recognize the right of the State to interfere with the rights of the individual. We recognize the value of such actions but believe that our activity should not be limited to them as we have other tasks. Explaining such actions is one of them and if we were all in jail nobody would be able to publish *War Commentary* and let people know about the actions of our comrades O'Dea, C.O's., etc.

Nor do we keep the flag of freedom flying in Russia when the Makno peasant movement seized the land and distributed it amongst the peasants, when the Kronstadt sailors rebelled against Bolshevik dictatorship, when Italian anarchists occupied the workshops and opposed Mussolini's rise to power, when the Spanish anarchists crushed the fascists on the 19th of July and built a new society, when for years the rulers, tyrants and exploiters of the world were fought and often destroyed by anarchists in the whole world.

"Fascist" phase of classical civilisation.

It is precisely this phase which our two authors describe: the inauguration in Ancient Rome of the permanent dictatorship—the stabilisation of social decay by a political despotism—which thereafter presided over "The Decline and Fall" of the Roman Empire, the political and social cul-de-sac in which finally culminated the entire Mediterranean culture of the classical epoch in human history. We may add that the books under our present notice, typical academic products of, respectively, a German and an English University—Leipzig and Oxford—show no understanding whatsoever of these fundamental perspectives. None the less, as the work of

the permanent dictatorship of the Caesars, which lasted thereafter until the end of the ancient world, forms the subject-matter of Mr. Syme's monumental work, in which the fascinating career of this super-gangster—a sort of merger of Stalin, Al Capone and a Tammany Hall boss—is described with a wealth of detail which would be fascinating if not quite so completely overwhelmed by the author's colossal erudition and concealed by a style reminiscent of sawdust or of "The Cambridge Ancient History," to which our author is a contributor.

We see the super-gangster, Octavian, the murderer of Cicero and countless others, who waded through blood to his throne, event-

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specialists in Roman history, they demonstrate with a wealth of contemporary detail the basic facts which represent the raw material of the transformation in question.

"Caesar's Mantle" has as its especial theme the final attempt of the Republican assassins of Caesar to restore the tottering Republican regime of the plutocratic Roman oligarchy. This corrupt and decadent regime was already undermined by the era of social revolution, of which the risings of Spartacus and Catiline formed the outstanding feature—73-71 B.C. and 63-62 B.C. respectively. To ward off an evidently approaching dissolution the Roman State called in the "strong man," the military demagogue Julius Caesar, who restored "Law and Order" by the usual methods, and promised to create a new State, the exact nature of which, like his modern Fascist antetypes, he took good care not to describe too closely!

His assassination by Brutus and Cassius—44 B.C.—a pair of aristocratic "Liberals," threatened a return to the bankrupt and outmoded rule of the Roman plutocracy, which must have ended in social revolution or chaos. From this fate Ancient society was rescued by "the Roman revolution"—counter-revolution would actually be a more accurate term—led by Augustus (Octavian) Caesar, the nephew and adopted son of Julius. (63 B.C.-14 A.D.).

The inauguration by Augustus of

usually become "Augustus"—"The Blessed"—a saint, indeed, almost a Messiah, in the new patriotic mythology created by his poets and historians. For, more fortunate than his modern Fascist antetypes, the Roman Dictator commanded the professional services of such gifted apologists of the new regime as Virgil, Horace and Livy. It is through the transforming medium of their genius that we view the historic achievements of a glorified gangster. Thus is orthodox "history" compiled. "The ideas of every age are the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx).

Augustus, however, succeeded in permanently stabilising his authoritarian regime. No more slave revolts took place in the ancient world. The slaves, beaten on earth, took refuge in Heaven, in a religion that centred around the Roman instrument for executing slaves, the Cross. In a society with a stable and unchanging technical foundation, as was that of antiquity, "the Servile State" could arise and last indefinitely. In this respect, modern society, founded on a basis of technical change, is differently constituted.

For this reason, the historic odds are now weighted in favour of social change and not against it, as in the pre-industrial age. This is the most important lesson which modern revolutionaries can learn from the rise of Ancient Caesarism and from the social evolution of the classical civilisation in general.