

WAR COMMENTARY

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STATE CONTROL OR WORKERS' CONTROL ?

MANY of those pro-war-for-democracy-and-socialism people realise now that, far from abolishing privilege and inequalities this war is putting an increased burden on the shoulders of the working class. Up to now the working class has had to suffer from the loss of its political rights, and on the material side from an increase in the cost of living, rationing, longer hours etc., Mr. Bevin's new decree adds further restrictions to the liberty and welfare of the workers. Labour in "scheduled establishments" is to be conscripted. A worker will no longer be able to choose the job he likes or to leave a place where he does not earn enough or where he has been submitted to some injustice by the boss or foreman. He will not be able to leave his job without the permission of a National Service officer. Furthermore he can be ordered to take an unwanted job as well as prevented from leaving it. The Defence Regulations provide penalties for those who refuse to comply with the orders received.

To give the decree a certain flavour of impartiality the following rules which have

the appearance of restricting the liberty of the employer have been laid down.

The employer will not be allowed to dismiss a worker except for "serious misconduct." Now that labour, especially in war industries is scarce, it is obvious that it is in the interests of the employer not to dismiss a worker for a trifle anyway.

The workman will receive a guaranteed wage week by week in accordance with the time wages recognised in the trade, or in collective agreements. This sounds better than it really is as in many factories the wages are nowadays superior to those recognised by the T.U. Furthermore with the rapid increase in the cost of living there is no agreement or contract which can be of any value for any length of time.

Tribunals by representatives of the employer and the workers with an impartial chairman will advise the National Service officers. Considering the results of other tribunals (C.O's for example) based on similar lines one may safely predict that they will be a farce like the others and that there will be no need to modify the old saying "might is right."

Now, what do our pro-war-for-democracy-and-socialism partisans advocate against this unjust suppression of the workers' liberty? Nothing against the conscription of labour itself. They think it necessary but they demand equality of sacrifice. And they expect

the State to impose that equality. They would like it to take over essential war industries so as to impose some sacrifices on the capitalists. The New Statesman and Nation (1st March) says:

"If the workman is to be forced to serve in a particular factory, whether he likes it or not, and whether or not he could better his economic position by going elsewhere the factory in which he is to serve must belong to the State. To compel him to serve the private capitalist is—Nazism and nothing else."

How will the State take over war industries? Will it just deprive the capitalists of their property or give them a compensation? If the capitalists have to be compensated the workers will have to sacrifice themselves in order to pay that compensation. To what extent this will improve their morale we don't know.

To imagine that the State is going to establish equality of sacrifice is to assume that the State is impartial, that it has no interest in favouring one class rather than another. But who forms the State? Who controls it? Who is employed in it? If not the representatives of the capitalist class, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie? When people like Mr. Bevin are allowed to join the government it is because they have abandoned all that made them the representatives of the working class (their actions in the government well prove it).

In this country BIG BUSINESS still reigns and the State is an embodiment of it. No political party, no Trade Union organization has been strong enough to master the State and succeed in controlling the capitalists. This does not mean that Big Business will not have to put itself on rations. It may have to do so if it sees (or is sufficiently alive to its own interests to see) that there is no other way of emerging from the war still on top. It will not be done from an altruistic desire to establish equality of sacrifice but because there will be no other way out.

The same article of the New Statesman and Nation refers to the closing down, ordered by the Board of Trade, of a large number of factories which do not produce essential products for the war. Thus we

assume that the factory owners will be compensated for the losses they may have incurred in the closing down or transformation of their factories. This may be the beginning of the restrictive measures that the capitalists have to impose upon themselves. But could this be called a socialist measure? Not at all. The factories which will be closed will be most of them factories whose trade was declining because of the war restrictions. The owners of big armament factories remain in their privileged situation. In the capitalist class itself the Darwinian law of disappearance of the weakest still finds its application.

In democratic countries as we know them now, it is useless to place one's hope in the struggle of the State versus private capital. The struggle cannot exist as the State is in the hands of the capitalists. In Germany on the contrary, the fascist party was strong enough to take control to a large extent, of the State and impose sacrifices on the capitalist class. If therefore the New Statesman wants to find a country where compulsion is applied by the State it has only to look at Germany.

The extraordinary ignorance of the pro-war "socialists" of the nature of fascism make them want to fight fascism with exactly fascist methods. We, who are often accused of not opposing fascism in an effective way, want on the contrary to fight it with means which have not a fascist nature. We do not want a fascist State to control both workers and capitalists, we want to abolish the State which is always an instrument of domination of one class over another. We want the workers to control the land and the factories as well as the means of distribution, so that they will be always able to defend their rights. This will be the safest way of abolishing any kind of totalitarianism, fascist or democratic.

WHAT BEVIN SAID ABOUT CHURCHILL IN 1926.

"It would be a Godsend for this country if Churchill was out of office for evermore. It is not that he is not brilliant; but it is not safe to leave the destiny of millions of people in the hands of a man of unstable mind."

women, war and conscription

THE last war ended just in time to save women from conscription; this time it has overtaken them, and it is going to be interesting to see how it operates and to watch feminine reaction to it. We are assured there is to be no class distinction; women of all classes, married and single, will register and will be set to work where they are likely to be most useful. We have already seen the hosiery factory and mill workers transferred to munitions' factories; one may perhaps be forgiven a little scepticism as to whether we shall see a similarly wholesale transference of middle-class girls and women—many of whom have never earned their livings in their lives, having been supported by their fathers until they married and then by the husbands they secured in the marriage market—to such work. As the majority of middle-class women workers are employed in offices, and office work is apparently a reserved occupation—the burden of the industrial conscription of women falls where it might have been expected to fall—on the working-class.

According to a Ministry of Labour statement the question of any conscientious objection on the part of women conscripts "does not arise" as women may be drafted to other occupations than munition making. That a woman might object to being conscripted for any war work at all does not seem to have occurred to the Ministry. Such a phenomenon as an out-and-out female objector to any kind of participation in what is popularly called "our war effort" is apparently unthinkable to the official mind. What is the position of such a woman? The Appeal Board is not prepared to consider any "frivolous" appeal—such as disinclination to participate in the national war effort;

it will presumably consider only cases of hardship, domestic difficulties, unsuitability for the appointed work, etc. In the opinion

by ethel mannin

of the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors the out-and-out female objector has no choice but to refuse to register . . . and "non-compliance with any regulations will, in the absence of specific penalties, be those laid down for general offences under the Defence Regulations." That is to say imprisonment or a fine or both. The Appeal Board would "no doubt" take into consideration any pacifist objection to the manufacture of munitions, though such an objection would not be a specific ground for exemption.

The industrial conscript, in short, both male and female, is in the same position precisely as the military conscript, except that the industrial conscript is not to be allowed to "make known conscientious scruples" at the time of registering—in case these should "turn out to be quite irrelevant." But "it is not the Minister's intention so far as it can be avoided to direct persons to perform services against which they have genuine conscientious objections."

The emphasis is mine. It is all very vague, as will be seen, and somewhat contradictory, and the Minister seems to overlook the fact that you can send a mare to the water . . .

Crèches are to be provided for the children under school age of conscripted mothers, and the children, we are assured are to be properly cared for. It seems odd to recollect the outcry there was in this country a score of years ago over the alleged wicked-Bolshevist break-up of home-life by sending the mothers to work in factories and leaving

their children to be cared for by the State in nursery-schools and crèches. Where now is all that fine sentiment about the sacredness of motherhood? Mothers now are asked—nay more, compelled—to do their bit in co-operating in the murder of other mothers and their children in German and Italian towns. As I write this, how the women will take it remains to be seen. Complaint is likely on two scores—the class distinction operating, securing the better jobs for the “better” class women, the assumption that a factory girl is only fit for factory work; and on the score of relegating the children under school-age to crèches. The conscientious objectors are likely to be a mere handful, because the mass of women are still no more than grumblers over the criminal insanity of war. They grumble about the “nuisance” of it, the black-out, the difficulty of getting different things from the shops, the increased cost of living, but the mass of them never ask themselves whether war is the only solution of international problems—still less what causes those problems. The majority even of women who are opposed to war are deplorably lacking in any realisation of the causes of war innate in the State system of society. Their opposition to war is purely pacifist, nothing to do with any anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist attitude, still less to anything so profoundly revolutionary as the realisation that the State, by its very nature, is the source of all evil. The conscription of women may assist the slow process of thinking. The mass of women who support war can have no logical objection to their own conscription—though they may and should object to sex differentiation in the rates of pay in the trades to which they are conscripted. In spite of all the talk of sex equality—and the bland general assumption that it is a fact—the fact still remains that woman labour is cheap labour. It is up to women to see that they are not exploited in their forced labour—but more importantly it is up to women to begin to think, instead

of merely acquiescing in everything the capitalist Press tells them in its rôle of mouth-piece of “democracy’s” dictators, or at most grumbling. War is a man-made affair, but the conscription of women brings it into the very heart of the home; women are no longer to be allowed merely to acquiesce—or to volunteer their services; they no longer have any choice but to become part of the war-machine along with the men—or go to prison for resistance. Forced out of their homes and out of jobs of their own choosing—or idleness and parasitism according to class—resentment may smoulder into a spark of revolt which might well express itself in a stubborn, sullen, incompetence Mr. Bevin had not bargained for. So long as women acquiesce and co-operate in wars they sanction wars and have no right to complain either over the horror and stupidity of it, or the inconvenience and disruptiveness of it where ordinary living is concerned. If instead of acquiescing and co-operating on the side of war they gave their support to the opposition to it, to the exposure of it as a capitalist-imperialist racket from which the common people may expect to gain precisely nothing—despite the hot-air of the press and the glib assurances of politicians—what immense potentialities for peace would the vast “regiment of women” represent.

“If it was left to women I am sure there would be no wars,” a woman whose husband was in France wrote to me early on in the war. The trouble is that the women have always left it to the men—and in doing so have given them a free hand to wreck their world.

The conscription of women gives them a chance to protest—beyond mere grumbling—at the man-made folly they have sanctioned for so long. It is woman’s opportunity to range herself on the side of sanity and peace, and instead of encouraging men in their madness begin a long over-due process of bringing them to their senses.

WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT REVOLUTION ?

APPARENTLY the reactionary press so fears the approach of a genuine revolution that it strives to divert us with the date of the British Revolution one day last week! Everything from added wartime restrictions to trade-union-leader and Royalty get-togethers have been hailed as heralding the millenium. This balderdash does not impress any one in this country, of course—though it enjoys a certain vogue in America, where British propaganda falls between two stools—one, persuading American opinion that “class-distinctions” have been abolished; two, persuading it that Britain is not “going Socialist.”

Apart, however, from propaganda in America, there are a lot of people here persuading themselves that there will be a “better world after the war”: these are the social-democrats, pinning their hopes on a transformation of the government (having ceased to believe in the class-struggle) or on a declaration of peace aims by the present government. This is their idea of a “revolution.” Mr. J. B. Priestley put it, “They (the ruling-class) did not like my Sunday night broadcast because I was trying to warn the people that this is no war like the last war and that when it is over there will be no going back to 1939. They did not like my suggestion that this is as much a social revolution as a war and that it must be met in that way.” (cf. “Daily Herald,” 13.3.41., report of Mr. Priestley’s speech to the National Trade Union Club the previous day). Mr. Victor Gollancz, whose Left Book Club was once the wooden horse of Troy for the Stalinists in the Popular Front days, has declared that the aims of the L.B.C now are identical with those of the “Daily Herald” (i.e. of Transport House) “in logical continuation of its pre-war campaigns”: in short, that the policy of the left fringe of the Labour Party represented by Gollancz and Cripps (the “Tribune” pro-war socialists) is identical with the right-wing—it wants to win the war and establish a Labour Govern-

ment similar to all other social-democratic governments that have proved traitors in the past. Thus not only do they announce their refusal to face the class-struggle now: they also admit their logical continuation of their present policy afterwards, for the aim, of the “Daily Herald” is nothing more than a government of Attlee, Bevin, Morrison and Co. (all in the present government) without co-operation with the Tories and Liberals.

Normally we need not listen too much to the advice of the Liberals—no-one pays much attention to financial advice given by a man three times bankrupt. But the Liberal policies are all being trotted out again, and in many cases—owing to the lack of anything concrete offered by the Labour movement—are coated with a socialist veneer and adopted by the rest of the Left.

They began with a typical Liberal scheme of Federal Union, the League of Nations re-hashed, which lost much of its popularity when Herr Hitler expropriated it. Mr. H. G. Wells too, who coined the phrase “a war to end war” last time, was rash enough to re-coin another slogan this time “A Declaration of the Rights of Man,” formulated in the newspapers. This set the ball rolling, and Sir Richard Acland began “Our Struggle”—a similar idea of declaring the peace aims of the government for it.

The Communist Party finds itself nearer sections of the liberals than anywhere else—fine “liberalism” that finds itself allied with the Chekists! In its People’s Fronting days it threw out all the remnants of its proletarian past, save those who recanted, and filled itself with bourgeois-minded followers of Deans and Barristers. As a result, when Stalin changed his mind about supporting the war he had got his followers to urge for—the C. P. was unable to re-adapt its old pseudo-revolutionary policy. It probably intended to at first—the wistful plea “We have not studied our Marx and Lenin sufficiently” will, long be remembered—but its “People’s Convention” episode shows it is still hankering for the “People’s Front”: in spite of returning the last “People’s Government” it agitated for (Churchill, Attlee and Sinclair) it now wants another one, the most important feature of which will be “friendship with the Soviet Union.” Its alliance with second-hand liberals who want Russia to join the war so that it can be won more easily was made clear by the declarations of the banned

B.B.C. artists—to take two typical cases, Guy Verney and Michael Redgrave, who both issued public statements that they were not opposed to the “national war effort” but wanted to strengthen it and their participation in the People’s Convention was in their mind consistent with that end.

Just as the C.P. has never forgotten the People’s Front, so the Right cannot forget its eulogies for Hitler. Even now the majority of them, while detesting him for being the leader of the Germans, have pains to conceal their admiration of “what he had done,” which is shown in their admiration of the British Government’s emulation of his policy.

The more intelligent section, however, realise which side their bread is buttered, and have dropped their pro-Hitlerism in out-vying the left in talk of “revolution.” Thus Lord Beaverbrook’s press, which during the Spanish War was notorious for its pro-fascist yellow journalism now takes up the cudgels for “left wing revolutions in Europe.” (For the benefit of American readers, when an Englishman talks of “Europe” he does not include England!) This section of the Right has shed its fascist skin with the rapidity of a snake: readers of the London “Evening Standard” may compare the present series of “democratic revolution” articles by Michael Foot with the lies and distortions against Spanish democrats and revolutionaries alike by Manuel Chaves Nogales of an earlier date.

We have often wondered why some enterprising American Nazi did not distribute some of the past arguments of certain British newspapers against intervention in European affairs! Some equally enterprising American Rooseveltian might then distribute forgotten German and Italian defences of interventionism!

But apart from these people who have apparently changed their mind, and who represent the Tory line, of Churchill, there is a solid phalanx of (Chamberlain) Tories who are desperately opposed to the fear of playing with fire. The Imperial Policy Group in the House of Commons, for instance, warns its Colleagues against tampering with revolution in Europe, in spite of the fact that this is the only method by which Hitler can be

overthrown. These are identical with the anti-change men—in particular the Army ruling clique.

The real Tories are not at all anti-Nazi, only anti-German: this is proved by the broadcasts of Sir Robert Vansittart, breathing across the ether the insidious poison of racial hatred: talking of the Germans as Julius Streicher talks of the Jews. Pierre Laval of the English or Oswald Pirow of the Negroes.

But while the Tories may hate the Germans while the Left is only supposed to hate the Nazis, in effect it comes to the same thing. It makes not the slightest difference that the Laschi-Acland-Wells theories are for supporting the war for “internationalist” motives whereas the Captain Margessons support it for “patriotic” reasons. The Left keeps “its workers” in order, and the Right allays the doubts of the City of London. There is no doubt—in spite of some persiflage by Left cetions about “winning the war by and for Socialism,, (Gollancz)—that the war will be won or lost by a combination of all the pro-war sections, each working in their own sphere, with occasional tiffs such as all coalitions are bound to occasion (especially when it comes to sharing the Governmental positions).

But if the war is won by coalition, can that coalition be broken down immediately afterwards? There are too many obvious difficulties in the way. The quarrels over the Peace Treaty should one section want to build a federation of Europe and the other to smash Germany and her allies are obvious. But more than that: the war itself is bringing great changes, which cannot be wiped off by a stroke of the pen the day after Armistice is signed. The war is bringing us nearer the totalitarian state: every new decree is a step in that direction. The Labour leaders have no objection to it: it turns out (as the Anarchists have always predicted) that the bureaucratic state is their real ideal. Fascism, without the brutalities often attendant on it, is in reality the Fabian-Socialist theory elaborated before Hitler was born. But what of the Tories? Have they any objection to the bureaucratic state, so long as they do not sacrifice their positions under it? On the contrary, the more intelligent of them realise it is their only chance of sur-

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Gandhi and the Indian Revolution *By Dinah Stock*

IT was Gandhi, more than any other individual leader, who vitalised the Indian National Congress in the years after the first World War. He was then a Hindu religious leader, trusted and respected, and had already tried out his tactics of non-violent resistance in defence of the peasants in one or two local disputes. It was characteristic of his outlook that his first appeal to all India was made on behalf of the Khilafat, which was a Moslem movement.

Incidentally, this shows just how little the "communal problem" of India is worth when a real religious issue is at stake. For unlike the disagreement over seats in legislatures, the Khilafat was a genuine religious movement of indignation, which swept the Moslem world when the British, against their pledged word, took away the holy places of Islam from the keeping of the defeated Sultan of Turkey. Indian Moslems had fought for Britain against Turkey on the understanding that the integrity of Islam would be respected, and they found themselves trapped into a position of treachery to their faith. Gandhi recognised the justice of their grievance and carried Hindu feeling with him to their support. He became the president of the first Khilafat Conference, and for the moment at least, Hindu-Moslem unity was a reality.

It was at about the same time that the Rowlatt Acts and the massacre of Amritsar had opened his eyes to British imperialism. He saw then that these were no accidental mistakes, but consequences springing inevitably from the return of British rule in India, and that his countrymen would never be free, with the spiritual freedom he cared for, so long as they acquiesced in a dominion which bore such fruits. He promptly led the Congress into the great Non-Co-operation Campaign of 1921, and the feeling of the Khilafat Movement swung after him into an Indian nationalist awakening.

He did more than unify the anti-imperialist feeling of the two great communities; he gave nationalism a meaning for the peasants of India, when hitherto it had been outside their terms of thought. If it had not been for that campaign and the direction which

it gave, the Indian National Congress might have remained an organisation of intellectuals and middle-class business men, lacking contact with the masses and therefore ineffectual so far as the British Government was concerned. Gandhi made it the expression of a great national regeneration, spiritual as well as political, and in taking it beyond mere politics, he lifted its politics to a plane which even the simplest peasant could understand. In 1922, when he was called on to justify his actions before a British High Court, he spoke in the name of the ancient village India against the evil effects of Western industrialism:

"Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history."

Nationalism, interpreted in words like these, became for the first time a living issue to the village-dwelling peasants. They could feel its bearing on their life, and it gave them something of that consciousness of the world in relation to themselves which is a necessary condition of the mastery of power, something of the understanding which Marx had given to the workers of Europe. Nor did he teach the lesson by words alone. In 1921, as part of the Non-Co-operation Campaign, the people of Bardoli in Gujerat refused to pay their land-tax to the Government. Other peasants in other parts of India followed suit spontaneously, and for a few months whole Provinces were swept by something almost amounting to an agrarian insurrection. It came to a sudden end when Gandhi called off the campaign, for reasons which many of his more radical followers thought mistaken—but it would take too

long to discuss them here. As a result, hundreds of thousands of peasants, deserted by the Congress organisers, were victims of the reaction which followed. Yet the movement had its effect: Nationalism to the villages was thence forward associated with the non-payment of rent or land-tax, and a free India became in his mind an India where he could enjoy the fruits of his labour.

From that time onward the Indian National Congress had to become a mass movement or nothing. In the twenty years since then it has gained strength by drawing more and more of the peasants into its activities, taking its colour more and more from their needs and demands in the process, so that its declared social programme has advanced to the verge of an agrarian revolution. Yet its leaders are not, on the whole, revolutionaries: most of them are still the business-men and middle-class intellectuals whose self-interest is bound up with the existing social order. But without the support of the peasants they cannot make the British Government fear them, and to win that support they must, to some extent, sink their sectional and communal interests and serve the needs of three hundred millions whose miseries nothing short of a social revolution will ever cure.

Between the leaders and the rank-and-file Gandhi has been the interpreter and the unifying force. He has laboured for twenty years to make the leaders more peasant-minded, to focus the energy of the peasants against the British rather than the Indian exploiter, and to draft a programme of action which would really advance the cause of the masses without alienating from the Congress a single influential Indian who might have been made its friend. He has given a new impetus to Hinduism, and where the rigidity of its traditions tended to make it a force of disunity, he has broken them down in the name of a religious brotherhood.

The most persistent of all his campaigns has been against "untouchability." There are about sixty million "untouchable" Hindus, cut off by tradition from the religious and social life of their fellow-men. For the most part they are the poorest of the poor, the scavengers of the town and the unskilled wage-labourers of the villages, and the Hindu code forbids them any escape from social humiliation. To Gandhi the existence of Untouchability is a blot on Hinduism, and he has set himself to wipe

it out. He renamed them the "Harijans" or "People of God," and sent all his young Congressmen into the Harijan quarters, educating and helping them and breaking down the barrier between them and Hindu society. Had he not done this the British might have used the Harijans as they have used the Moslems, as a weapon to divide the Indian people; but as it is the sixty million have learnt to look not to the British but to the Congress as their champion.

One of his hardest tasks, perhaps the hardest of all, began after the elections of 1937, when the Congress decided to take office in six Provinces where it had won a majority. So long as they were in opposition to the Government, it was comparatively easy for its diverse elements to maintain a united front. But now, when Congress took over the administration under a Constitution which gave them the semblance of responsibility without the power to accomplish anything real, the clash of interests began to make itself felt. The peasants pressed vigorously for more drastic social legislation; the right-wing leaders held back and tried in the name of national unity to forbid strikes, hunger-marches and agrarian demonstrations. Congress was on the point of being split in two, when Gandhi began his fast on behalf of the people of the little native State of Rajkot. It was a symbolic gesture, which turned the attention of Congress once again from its own quarrels to an outside enemy, and showed them that there was still much for a united nationalist movement to do. For the time being, the danger of a split was postponed, and when the War broke out Congress could still speak with one voice.

Thus at every stage in the last twenty years Gandhi has been the awakener, the unifier, the far-sighted statesman, who could build and organise a popular front and make it effective against British imperialism. He has acted in the name of a united India, not of the peasants and workers as a class, but in doing so he has roused the common people to consciousness and taught them to organise under the shadow of Congress. His strength is that the common people, knowing his utter sincerity and disinterestedness, trust him even when he holds them back, and at the same time, because of his influence over the common people, the rich cannot do without him even when his policy seems to them foolishness. As far as a united nationalist movement can go in the fight

TRADE UNIONS IN THE WAR

THE casualties of war are not limited to persons and buildings, social institutions also fall in the armed conflict of nations. The war of 1914-18 brought the rapid decline of the Church, which entered the war with a large membership, property and influence, but whose influence was almost destroyed by its support of the war. In this war the Church seems to be coming out rather better, the institution marked down for destruction being the trade union movement. Although it possesses wealth, political influence and a large membership it cannot escape the result of its own cynical betrayal. Whom the gods would destroy . . .

The trade unions were formed as instruments of class war using the strike. They now collaborate with employers and the State and abandon the strike. Most of the war time measures of repression directed against the workers are operated by such trade union representatives as Bevin, in the service of the State. As all this is done in the name of national unity one might expect it to be applied to all classes, but it is a very one-sided business. Men who have worked all their lives are forbidden to leave work or even the service of a particular employer, but we have yet to see the Mayfair playboys formed into labour gangs. Workers are being fined and threatened with imprisonment for refusing to

against imperialism, Gandhi's leadership will take it.

The time will come when national unity must break down, and the workers and peasants must accomplish a social revolution for themselves.

Whether it must come before or after the formal withdrawal of British rule, no one can foresee; but there is no real independence for the masses except on a basis of revolutionary Socialism, when they face that issue the peasants must go beyond what Gandhi has taught them and rely on their own leadership and creative initiative. In the meantime, however, there has been much for a united nationalist movement to achieve. It is due largely to Gandhi that so much has been achieved; he is neither Socialist nor revolutionary in the ordinary sense, but without his leadership the ground for an Indian revolution could not have been half so well prepared.

We are not wholly in agreement with certain implications of this article. We shall reserve comment until after Miss Stock's next article—ED.

do unpaid fire-watching, thus giving to their employers one week's labour per month without wages. Yet when Morrison was asked in Parliament if he would conscript directors he declined to do so, declaring they might have responsibilities elsewhere.

The sacrifice of working class gains is made easier

By Tom Brown

by the promise to restore them after the war. Exactly the same promise was made during the last war, but of course, it was never kept. The story of this broken promise is told by Sydney and Beatrice Webb in "The History of Trade Unionism":

"Nor did the Trade Union Movement make any serious revolt when the Government found itself unable to fulfil, with any literal exactness, the specific pledges which it had given to Organised Labour. The complications and difficulties of the Government were, in fact, so great that the pledges were not kept." P. 641.

"The Trade Unionists, in fact, who had at the outset of the war patriotically refrained from bargaining as to the price of their aid, were, on the whole, 'done' at its close." Pp. 643-644.

The unions are curiously short-sighted in their sell-out. Most unions, particularly the Amalgamated Engineering Union, have for years refused to recognise the existence of women in industry but the A.E.U. has signed an agreement to give men's jobs to women. If women engaged in engineering wish to join a union they are told to go to the Transport or Municipal Workers' unions.

Little opposition to this can be seen. For the first time in 50 years the trade unions are without an opposition point of view. This is an outward sign of inward decay. Social bodies survive in changing conditions by developing the faculty of self-criticism. There may be a little grumbling in the union branches, but there is no constructive idea with which to combat the leaders. In the meantime the active trade unionists, the one-time militants, continue to pay and collect contributions to the funds controlled by the reactionary leaders.

STALINISTS IN THE UNIONS

The policy of the Communist Party is 100% Trade Unionism—but if 20% is ill 100% cannot be much better: what is needed is a change in quality, not in quantity. The only objection of the Communists is that the bureaucrats' jobs are not entirely held by Stalinists: They desire only a change of personnel, not of principle. The Communists who do achieve

office act pretty much the same as the other trade union bureaucrats.

Two weeks ago I received a challenge to debate from a Communist union branch secretary. He asked me to meet a C.P. member to debate the issue of "Trade Unionism versus Syndicalism." Of course, I accepted, but the Stalinists have now declined their own challenge (this is the unchanging habit of the C.P.). We cannot rebuke them for this: he would be a bold man who defended trade unionism where contradiction was allowed. The excuse of the Stalinists was we did not have a mass following. Well, the only mass following seems to be that of Churchill, but that does not prove anybody correct.

The Communists' favourite fairy tale is that of their mass following. A pretty myth—the C.P. has never been able to get a firm foothold in the unions or industry. In the early "twenties" they formed the British section of the Red Trade Union International. After a short and unsuccessful career the outfit was dissolved. In 1929 and the early "thirties" they attempted to break the old unions and set up "red unions." Their first success was in the Tailors' and Garment Workers' Union. In the London district of that union two of the officials, Sullivan and Elsbury, were C.P. members. A break-away of the London district was staged. Sullivan recanted but Elsbury and the Communist Party set up the United Garment Workers' Union. Within a few months Elsbury and the C.P. Executive were calling one another vile names—another breakaway and the new red union turned over and died.

Next came the turn of the red seamen. Deep discontent of the seamen against the National Union of Seamen was the fertile ground of the Marine Section of the Minority Movement (C.P. set-up). The M.M. under the guidance of Fred Thompson, an ex-organiser of the Dockers' Union, made some headway when the leadership was snatched from his hands by the jealous and quite incompetent Communist Party officials. A red seamen's union was to be formed. On the North-East Coast a strike was called, a pitched battle between white and coloured seamen at South Shields was caused, and the "red" seamen, if any, never got their bright red union.

The only other success was among the Scottish miners. A union styled the United Mineworkers of Scotland was formed (all breakaways are called "united"). After a few months it became difficult to scratch together enough contributions to pay the officials' salaries and after living in name only for a few years the poor thing was laid to rest.

Little success came to the C.P.'s Minority Movement, although Lozovsky at the 1928 Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions declared the British M.M. had one million members. Probably less than one hundredth part of this was the truth, and a few years later the movement was dissolved.

Such is the record of the Communist Party in the unions, a record of bombast, intrigue and incompetence. If the industrial workers are to revive the class struggle and protect their wages and conditions they must quit the leadership of politicians, social-democratic or Stalinist. They must build in the factories and other places of production militant groups of class-conscious workers who will create new organs of struggle free from the old regime. Alone Syndicalism gives to such workers a programme of struggle, a technique of class-war.

Press Fund.

We would like to thank those comrades who have contributed to the Press Fund. We hope that our other readers will also contribute to it and renew their subscriptions.

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AN ERROR IN OUR LAST ISSUE

In the article on "Parliamentarism" by Gaston Leval, translated in our last issue, footnote 3 on page 10 should have read:

The C.G.L. (General Confederation of Labour) was a moderate reformist organisation, formed in 1912 at the Congress of Modena; as opposed to the Italian Syndicalist Union (U.S.I.) the anarcho-syndicalist organisation, whose secretary was Armando Borghi.

The omission of two lines made it appear that Borghi was the C.G.L. secretary.

Borghi is, of course, a well-known anarchist, known in this country through his exposure of Mussolini some years ago: "Mussolini, Red and Black" (Wishart, 1935: original French edition 1932).

PUTTING THE C.O. ON THE SPOT

AS Minister of Labour, Mr. Bevin recently moved the second reading of the National Service Bill, amending the previous Bill, and proposing drafting of men into Civil Defence Services. More particularly, it contains a number of legislative measures directed against Conscientious Objectors.

Mr. Bevin declared that he had the right to expect that "the conscientious objector himself will loyally accept the verdict arrived at by the tribunal . . . but there are those who refuse to accept." Thus a C.O. declares his conscientious objection to the tribunal, who then decide whether he has a "conscience" or not. It goes without saying that no conscientious objector who is not a fake can accept the measures laid down for him by the tribunal if his conscience is exactly what Bevin says he should do, and exactly what Bevin says he should do, and proceeds to lay down Draconian measures to coerce him. Only those of feeble conscience can accept such a principle: but recollection of the records of the chief proponents of the Bill in the last war makes it easier to understand how these supposed defenders of liberty can enforce the "new" principle.

When Mr. McGovern pointed out that a large proportion of those associated with the Bill had refused to accept the tribunals' decision in 1914, Mr. Bevin pontifically declared that "the administration of the law in 1914 and its administration during this war are entirely different things!" Mr. Bevin went on to outline the penalties. For refusing to submit to medical examination, 2 years imprisonment or a fine of £100 maximum can be imposed. Hitherto the magistrates' courts have been able to deal with such cases only by imposing a small fine together with a few weeks imprisonment. "But" says Mr. Bevin, "there is no power in the present law to let them out of prison." (a genial way of inverting the position!) However they do come out, so the new law aims at keeping him in prison for the duration. Presumably it is also intended as a deterrent. It provides another instance of the old saying "the ruling-class always plays the game according to the rules; only, when they are beginning to lose, they change the rules!"

There is another point which is a real tribute to the minister's delicacy of feeling. C.O's. given non-combatant service have hitherto had their names transferred to the military register. In order to avoid their feeling that they had compromised with their convictions, non-combatant service C.O's. will now remain on the C.O's. register—but will still serve in the Forces! (No provision is made, however, for C.O's. placed on the Combatant register! There will not, therefore, be Grenadier Guards registered as C.O's!)

EX-C.O's PROMOTERS OF THE BILL.

Curiously enough, none of the three promoters of the Bill took part in the last war. Mr. McGovern, in the course of a sensational attack in the House of Commons drew attention to their 1914 records. Tom Johnston (Now Regional Commissioner for Scotland) for example, conducted anti-war propaganda. "As a matter of fact" McGovern said "I should declare on reflection that some of the propaganda carried on by the Rt. Hon. gentleman came perilously near being pro-German propaganda rather than anti-war propaganda. Nevertheless, that excess might have been attributed to the excess of a war hater." As for the minister of Home Security (Herbert Morrison), "he conducted his struggle in an orchard" as an exempted C.O. "I can imagine," Mr. McGovern went on. "the Prime Minister and his private secretary, with his shaggy red head, sitting back over a glass of whisky and a cigar, enjoying themselves immensely at the position of these three Labour defenders of freedom sponsoring a bill of this kind against C.O's"

Mr. Morrison kept quiet about his past and did not venture one word of explanation, apology or defence. Instead he declared, with reference to C.O's "If a man fails to observe the law with regard to medical examination he will be fined or imprisoned or both. In due course he comes out of prison and is still required to register or submit to medical examination, and if he does not, he commits a new offence." In fact the old cat-and-mouse business. It is tactless of ex-C.O. Morrison to put it like that, for the Tories were at such pains to deny the cat-

and-mouse character of the original bill, and only recently, Mr. Churchill declared in answer to some impertinent questioner, and amid the cheers of the House that "anything in the nature of persecution, victimisation or man-hunting is odious to the British people." One feels now that an assurance that they were also odious to the British government would have been more suitable!

These sidelights on the Bevin, Morrison, Johnston and Co., the C.O.'s of the last war now risen to power and the further demonstration of Labour Leaders willingness to do the dirty work for the Right, are not very important, however because they were clear enough before. It is more significant perhaps (though equally well demonstrated in the past) that they show up the democratic screen of the conscience clauses as a mere shift to sugar the naked compulsion of conscription and its developments

THE FARCE OF C.O.'s TRIBUNALS

Military conscription was brought in in May, 1939. To preserve the illusion that under "democracy" minority opinion is not crushed, the conscientious objector was "recognized" and tribunals set up to determine his conscience (women by the way, haven't got one: "the question of conscientious objectors does not arise"). This is the basis on which Bevin claims that a C.O. must "loyally accept the verdict arrived at." No mention is made of those who not only object to serving in the armed forces but also reject the whole principle of conscription, of dictating to a man what he shall do. Of course the whole business of a body of men sitting in judgment on another man's conscience is farcical, yet Bevin's "claim" that the C.O. must "loyally accept the verdict" presupposes not only that the tribunals can fulfil their function, but that they actually do dispense "justice" in fact. He could bank on the fact that most of his hearers and almost none of the general public had ever attended one of those ridiculous and repulsive sessions. The Tribunals hardly bother to maintain appearances: they are (and always have been) merely accessory labour exchanges for those of tender conscience. For objectors with determined convictions they have a short way—the military register.

Truly the Tribunals perform an important and essential function: they provide a screen

behind which the government can suppress any opposition—even though the screen has worn rather thin. It will be observed that the new Bill aims at those C.O.'s who claim—but do not get—total exemption. (Not everyone can be in the army, so there is useful war work for C.O.'s in the other categories). The tribunals only rarely give exemption. The new bill completes the stranglehold on the political objector.

Democrats used to pity the German people on account of Hitler's remarks in "Mein Kampf" to the effect that any lie will be believed if only it is big enough. A visit to a session of a C.O. Tribunal; Morrison's declaration quoted above, coming from a conscientious objector of the last war; the ferocity of the penalties; Chamberlain's promise never to introduce conscription in peace time, made in April 1939, only a month before the bill was brought in It will be believed if only it is big enough.

(continued from page 6)

vival, and others of them realise that what they admired in Hitler before the war was precisely the measures being adopted by the government today. The capitalists may have to sacrifice something, but German and Italian experience shows them it is worth their while.

It seems likely, then, that the totalitarian state will be the next step in British politics. The liberals, foreseeing it, seek for declarations and promises that the individual's rights will be respected, and that there will be some form of popular franchise. That apart there is no real difference on war aims: those who want to go back to 1939 capitalism realising that there must be some stabilising factor, those who want "socialism" really having identical views on the co-operation of capital and labour. Internally, then, there will be no disagreement, externally, there may be considerable differences on European policy.

ALBERT MELTZER

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Review by Fredrick Lohr.

The serious-minded political analyst works today under a grievous handicap. His province is invaded by a host of wordy theoreticians, 'scoop' news-reporters, political emigrés, and unscrupulous politicians, who contrive, one and all, to spoil his market and neutralize the value of his efforts. Take the subject of Fascism for example. The book-

temporary affairs would rush into print about Fascism without the most painstaking and exhaustive investigation into history as a whole. Quite contrary to the commonly accepted idea, the explanation of Fascism is not to be found in a cursory examination of the last twenty years. Fascism is a politico-social organisation demonstrating a peculiar method of government which has come into being, or rather is in process of

A Study of Fascism

shops and libraries are loaded with works on Fascism, written by all sorts of strange and incompetent people. It is almost as though everyone who has any political axe to grind, and can put pen to paper with any degree of proficiency, has written a study of Fascism, and yet I doubt if there is another subject so much before the public eye, about which the majority of people, intelligent or simple, are so profoundly ignorant. As one who has attempted to read practically everything that has been written about Fascism, I am not surprised that as well as being completely unaware of the true historical significance of this strange and terrifying 'New Order,' most people are fed-up with the very word Fascism. For, of the spate of literature published on the matter, there is little I can call to mind which is free from false assumptions, personal prejudices, ideological bigotry, and even deliberate misrepresentation of historical fact.

Now whilst these faults may not be serious in an historian, (most history is mythology anyway) they are absolutely fatal to an historical analysis undertaken to promote understanding of contemporary affairs. Analysis requires the application of the critical faculty to known facts, and the employment of reason to discover the relationship between origin and purpose. Therefore the method of analysis must be scientific, and not speculative. If the product of the analysis,—the concept,—is coloured by prejudice or distorted by false assumption, the course of events will always contradict the findings of the analysis. That is why so many of the books written about Fascism are valueless. History has proved them nonsense.

For this reason no earnest student of con-

coming into being, as the result of a combination of many seemingly contradictory causes. The task of the analyst of Fascism is to discover the point of reconciliation between these contradictions, to assess the correct value of each contributing factor, to separate the superficial influences from the real impulses, and to build up a concept of the whole which will reveal the general nature of Fascism in the particular form of its expression.

In his latest work on the subject, "Fascism—What is it?" F. A. Ridley has gone a long way towards accomplishing this task. He has, moreover, without loss of continuity, succeeded in compressing his analysis within the covers of a 32 page pamphlet. Political pamphlets are often, for some obscure reason, poorly produced and even carelessly printed, as though it doesn't matter what the thing looks like, so long as the matter is there. This pamphlet is published by the Freedom Press, and apparently they don't take this line, for their productions are noted for their attractive, almost artistic, presentation. This little book is no exception, and deserves to secure a wide public, for it is one of the best things I have read on a little understood but vitally important subject.

Ridley argues that Fascism is the twentieth century manifestation of the science of counter-revolution which has throughout history frustrated the realisation of the revolutionary efforts of oppressed classes. But in postulating Fascism as Capitalism's counter-revolutionary answer to Socialism's revolutionary challenge, he does not endorse the widely accepted definition of counter-revolution as re-action, pure and simple. On the

contrary, he makes the important distinction between re-action, which is almost entirely negative, and counter-revolution, which has positive qualities; which "only defends defensible positions," which "concedes part in order to preserve the remainder," which defeats the revolution by borrowing heavily from it." Also, he vehemently repudiates the limited perspective of the Dutt, Strachey, Guérin school to whom Fascism is the "Dictatorship of Big Business," and the authoritarian State merely the tool of the capitalist class. This school portrays very clearly how the Fascists came to power, but fails to perceive the logical inference of its own arguments. Since the direction of capitalist economy is monopolistic, and monopoly extension cannot fail to sharpen the class struggle, Ridley maintains the State can ease the tension, in defence of Capital, only by suppressing both classes within the structure of a Super-Monopoly—a National Trust, of which the State becomes the controller and administrator, or in Ridley's own words "the jealous guardian of Capital from both the revolts of Labour and the excesses of privately owned capital." What the left-wing theoreticians fail to appreciate, or refuse to acknowledge, is that their "Dictatorship of

Big Business" slogan does not explain the inevitable shift of power which takes place when the capitalist class calls upon the State to **organise Business**. A little understanding of the opportunist character of Fascist State politics, should indicate to them that instead of the Fascist State being the tool of the Capitalist, the evident fact is that the capitalist class itself is cuckold in the Fascist drive for Power. Fascist control over national economy once established, the State thereafter is compelled in its own interest, to subordinate both private capital and labour. Far from the Fascist State existing to serve the capitalist class, the capitalist class is permitted to exist to serve the State. Thus Fascism, as State Capitalism ceases to be the instrument of capitalist class-rule, and has come of age to rule in its own right. Its *raison d'être* is to keep going. As Mussolini said "Our programme—it is to rule Italy."

In any case, Ridley understands Capitalism to mean, in the final analysis, something more than the organisation of production by capitalists for their own private gain. He sees the function of the State to be to protect Capital, not capitalists, which is a distinction with a difference. Now if the State is to maintain itself above class interests, obviously it must iron out the contradictions of the capitalist method of production, else the class antagonism inherent in the profit motive will continue to undermine the State power. For such a regime to endure, and such would appear to be its determination, it cannot just control the capitalist class; it **must eliminate it**, either directly by expropriation, or indirectly by itself organising economy. When it does this, adopting a collectivist economy aiming at production and not surplus, it approximates very closely the system of State Socialism as in Russia; a sort of socialist economy planned and controlled by a 'governing caste' appointed from above but recruited from below. Indeed, as Ridley points out in his remarks re Germany and Russia, this looks like coming about, and here is perhaps the only really confusing thought in his pamphlet. He indicates the affinity between 'National Socialism' and 'National Bolshevism,' and he warns us not to identify the two. After a very able comparison of 'frustrated Imperialism' (National Socialism) and 'frustrated Revolution' (National Bolshevism) which argues his own original contention that a 'frustrated revolution' is in effect 'counter-revolution,' he inadequately says 'their appearances are virtually identical, but . . . appearances are deceptive.' But he does not reveal the deception, which leaves us where he took us first, at the conclusion that there was actually very little difference between

FASCISM—What is it?

by F. A. Ridley

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the ultimate position Fascism will have to take up (in order to maintain its rule) and the position at which Stalinism has already arrived. It is, presumably, a case of State Capitalism as against State Socialism, and Communist-fascism as against Fascist-communism, but you can play around all day splitting hairs over words, the devil a difference it makes to the worker under either, who is driven like a nigger under both.

In the last chapters, Ridley brings out very clearly the true nature of the Fascist menace. How in its insensate lust after Power, it is prepared to override the claims of any class, any individual, and any ideology. How, in its advance towards Power, 'it steals the thunder of socialism' but once in the seat of the mighty, ruthlessly stamps out any vestige of freedom and liberty which might question its authority. Neither moral order nor international law exists for the Fascist State 'which considers itself an end in itself.' Fascism spells the end of culture as we have glimpsed it, and for our time, for culture cannot flourish without freedom, and 'Fascism is the death of freedom.' No species of the counter-revolution could co-exist with freedom for long—Freedom would soon damage the system and bring it to an abrupt end."

Thus, if I can summarise this excellent little work in a few words, I would say this: Fascism is counter-revolution, and Fascism is the death of freedom. Therefore freedom is Revolution and only Revolution can be the Death of Fascism. Fascism is the counter-revolutionary instrument of Capitalism, and seeks to defend what is defensible in Capitalism. But the Capitalist economic system contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and even Dictators cannot defend what is indefensible. Capitalist economy is a contradiction, and therefore cannot endure beyond its historic role. Fascism "concedes part in order to preserve the remainder." So Fascism must concede the capitalist economic method if it is to preserve the "remainder." What is this remainder once the economic system is abandoned? We find the answer in the last paragraph of Ridley's pamphlet, added as "a final, point" though in truth it is THE most important point.—"The struggle for human emancipation—the Social Revolution in the widest sense—is henceforth, inseparably bound up with the substitution of Freedom for Authority." Not "henceforth" Mr. Ridley, for so it has always been, but this is perhaps unfair to Ridley. However, he has uncovered the great truth, so obvious throughout history, so difficult for people to learn. I must try to hammer it home once again.

The State is compelled by the inexorable pressure of events, to concede step by step the very positions it was raised up to defend. At the last concession, armed for battle against the people, it stands for the preservation of that capitalist "remainder" which is also the remainder of all other devilish systems of human exploitation—the principle and practice of *AUTHORITY*. In these days 'revolutionary Governments' strut the earth in jack boots, grinding the faces of the people in poverty and war, and rending the air distraught with their pretentious programmes for new Social Orders. All through history it has been the same: they all demand Authority, and by that claim we know them to be not Revolutionary but counter-revolution.

News from Europe and America

FINLAND. Finnish social-democracy is moving to the right. It has abandoned the idea of socialist class war, and more intimate co-operation with the bourgeoisie is urged. Purely totalitarian principles are now proclaimed by the leading circles of Finnish social-democracy. One of the leaders of the party (Kullersvo Kulman), for instance, wrote in the central labour organ, the "Suomen Sosialdemokraatti":

"Even in our country the state should take the direction of the economic life in its hands. Soviet Russia, Italy and Germany have already entered on the line of state administration of economic life, and the present war has caused the rest of the European countries to adopt this system one after the other. New economic principles have conquered the world, and we cannot remain outside."

This is a clear declaration giving striking evidence of the reactionary development of the social-democrats in Finland.—(I.W.M.A. Press Service.)

FRANCE. Information has been received via Geneva of life in the largest camp of refugees in Southern France, viz. the camp of Gurs near the town of Pau.

At Gurs there are more than 20,000 interned, Germans, Belgians, Dutchmen, Luxembourgiens, and other refugees from Northern France who left their homes in May, 1940. There are orphans, whose nationality is unknown. There are invalids—old men and women who cannot even pronounce their names. None of them have any money worth mentioning. They live in barracks, which give no real shelter against the winds. The French people, which has to fight with difficulties of its own, cannot give them food other than a piece of bread and a plate of soup every day and a cup of coffee in the morning.

At St. Cyprian, another camp with some 6,000 refugees, the situation is the same.

No doubt there are many comrades of ours amongst these unhappy victims of the capitalist system.—(I.W.M.A. Press Service.)

SWEDEN. Reactionary legislation has been passed, ostensibly against sabotage of national defence. A clause stipulating that strikes were not to be considered as sabotage, was *rejected* by the Swedish parliament.

The anarcho-syndicalist movement of Sweden (the S.A.C.) continues to fight against the endeavours of the government and the reformist labour movement to introduce a totalitarian regime through these measures.

Some time ago the S.A.C. published a pamphlet on this question: "Is the right of self-determination of the workers to be annihilated?" The pamphlet was distributed in a mass edition free of cost, and dealt with the problem: Reformist dictatorship or Syndicalist federalism in the economic organisations of the workers? A new pamphlet, "Trade Union movement in danger" proclaims: "Without the attention of the working masses and their activity against fascism—it may come from outside or within—we are all lost and doomed to slavery and oppression. Only a working class morally and intellectually well armed against fascism has any chance whatever of carrying out a successful fight against the enemies of socialism."—(I.W.M.A. Press Service.)

CHILE. In the February issue of "War Commentary" we printed a manifesto of the anarcho-syndicalist C.G.T. Since then we have received newspapers and manifestoes from our Chile correspondent setting out the war-situation there in more detail. In particular, the Bulletin issued for the Congress of the Anarchist Federation of Chile (brother-organisation of the C.G.T.) analyses the situation created by the Havana Pan-American Conference, briefly summarised as follows:—

The Havana Conference has brought all the American nations (with the exception of Canada) together. It follows on the Pan-American Conferences of Panama and Lima with the same objective: that of establishing United States domination of the Continent. There is no doubt whatsoever that

Yankee Imperialism wants to take under its control the whole of the New World.

The financiers of Wall Street are gradually establishing a trade monopoly, which is being followed by the military control of geographical points of importance for commercial and strategical reasons—by permanent occupation (Panama), by establishing bases (Cuba) or by absolute control of so-called "independent" countries (Venezuela). The Monroe doctrine of no European interference in the Continent suits U.S. Imperialism marvellously.

Factories are established in S. America, and all her natural riches are exploited for the benefit of Wall Street. (Oil, for instance, is already mostly controlled by the Standard Oil Company.) Not only does she possess natural wealth, but South America also possesses a proletariat working for very low wages, and a not inconsiderable number of potential customers. Moreover, the organised Continent will be of much greater importance to American defence than will any system of separate national defence. Altogether the conquest of America is of major importance to U. S. Imperialism.

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