

WAR COMMENTARY

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Workers must Take the Lead

ONE of the most pernicious effects of war is that it seems to imbue the great majority of people—even idealists and intellectuals — with the belief that armed force alone provides the means of fighting for their aims. This tendency was never clearer than in the struggle against fascism. "The Nazis must be answered with the only weapon they understand—force." But fascism has extended its rule in this war over all Europe. The antifascist mystics of force can conceive of the struggle being now carried on only from England, America and China. From their own reasoning, the military triumph of fascism would secure its complete victory, because the vanquished would be deprived of "the only effective weapon—force." Such a belief is discouraging indeed for those countries which have succumbed to Germany's armed might. It presents a hopeless prospect to the workers in this country too in the event of a victory for fascist arms. They could then only put their trust in the still further diminished armed forces of democracy, for two years of war against Germany has taught the British workers to fight fascism only with tanks and Tommy guns. If a fascist victory deprives them of these weapons they will have learned no other means of maintaining the anti-fascist struggle.

Equally harmful are those who, while they do not think that the war will overcome fascism, yet believe that it will automatically produce revolutions because of the worsening material conditions of the workers. When starvation and sufferings are suffi-

ciently widespread the revolution will "inevitably" follow. Aerial bombing however indicates that mere conditions are insufficient to produce even a revolt, much less a revolution. And even if chaos does supervene, and existing rulers are overthrown by popular fury, the revolution is by no means secured even then.

These people have no faith in the power of ideas, although they sometimes pay lip-service to them. They place their faith either in mechanical instruments of force or in the march of worsening conditions. The propaganda of ideas, for them, can play only a subordinate part. There is, of course, a large section on the left which advocates the declaration of peace aims as a means of improving morale at home ("we shall then know what we are fighting for") and of undermining it in enemy countries. These peace aims partisans at least recognise that ideas are a powerful force, independent of arms to back them up. But they imply that the present rulers have peace aims that socialists could fight for. Actually, of course, they are asking the government to wash its dirty linen in public, and are being hopelessly unrealistic. The same left wing section advocates propaganda for revolution abroad—but never at home. For them the revolution in Germany would be simply a fifth column; it would facilitate the success of British arms by weakening the enemy at home. For the same reasons they refuse to contemplate revolution in this country. Under no circumstances do they regard social revolution as the only effective means of strengthening the anti-fascist struggle.

All these sections, whether they elevate armed, force or economic circumstances, as the principal determinant of human progress, all disregard the power of the human initiative of individuals in the mass, who compose the vast bulk of society everywhere. For them there is no distinction between the men who fight, and the tanks, guns, and aeroplanes they fight with. They are all instruments of force wielded not by the initiative of the whole of society, but from above by the very small fraction comprising the government and the class it represents. For the economic determinists, men are so much clay for external conditions to mould, and for them, equally, individual initiative in the mass does not exist. Even those advocates of peace aims declarations who do place some faith in the power of ideas, can only conceive of such power being wielded by a government department of propaganda.

Anarchists have always taught that by placing responsibility and initiative in the hands of the workers themselves instead of entrusting all initiative to a few leaders, a huge incalculable reservoir of power can be released which will sweep away all existing conditions which make for human misery and enslavement. The socialist movement has neglected to prepare the workers to defend themselves, and instead has taught them to rely on the strength of their national armaments and on the size and material resources of their trade-union organizations. But the short history of the rise of fascism has already shown that such faith is misplaced; it has always led instead to the defeat and enslavement of the workers. The German trade-union movement was the largest and the wealthiest in the world. It fell without a blow before Hitler. So did the French. Having relied on their large organizations, their wealth, and armed force, they have now been deprived of all these weapons. Knowing no other means of struggle they are defenceless.

It should be unnecessary to reiterate the contrast provided by the Spanish syndicates. There the workers, under the powerful influence of the anarchists, had learned that the revolution would only come from their own initiative and endeavour, and not from inevitable economic progress or their "leaders" in the Popular front government.

As a result, they knew what to do in the face of the threat of fascism when Franco and the generals revolted. They took power and initiative into their own hands, and it was only after three years, and because they had been gulled into surrendering that initiative once more into the hands of a government, that the overwhelming armed force of German and Italian intervention, and French, British and American "non-intervention" was able to establish fascism. But what is more important, they are carrying on the struggle against fascist dictatorship even now, while the German and French workers are helpless.

Our policy of urging the workers to organize themselves and learn to carry on the class struggle as individuals and in small groups is a long term policy. And it is the most realistic one, for society all over the world and certainly in industrial countries is moving towards more and more complete state control whether called fascism, state socialism or what you will. Under such conditions large organizations operating legally for the workers will clearly not be tolerated by the state.

Unable to build up large legal organizations (leaving aside the criticism to which such trade unions are open: they have been dealt with in a series of articles in "War Commentary" by Tom Brown on "Trade Unionism or Syndicalism" since published as a pamphlet), or to obtain arms, the workers must find in propaganda by word and deed, in small groups organized at their places of work, the means of preventing any dictatorial regime from establishing itself on a firm basis. It is they, the workers, who produce the arms which the governments use against them; it is they who are the creators of all the wealth on which the government lives; they who compose the army. The exploiting class maintains its power by economic domination, by securing to itself all wealth; but the labour power of the workers is the sole means for the production of that wealth. In reality the workers wield economic power already. When they awake to the realization of that power, and act in solidarity with full consciousness of their strength, they will no longer need to rely on the dubious leadership of the capitalist class and the Trade Union bosses to fight fascism. Instead they will build a new world

HUMANITY—AND ALL THAT

By Fredrick Lohr

THE dreary monotony of the wartime press was this month enlivened by a flash of fantastic melodrama. Unheralded and unsung, Rudolf Hess, the deputy Führer of the German Reich, floated down to earth from the clouds above Scotland, literally, from a newspaperman's point of view, a gift from the gods. Imagination and conjecture for many days ran riot. Was he a fugitive from Nazi vengeance, a knight-errant in search of Peace, a decoy bird of diabolical cunning, an example of pure idealistic humanitarianism? What vistas of fascinating speculation opened up in the minds of delighted columnists. Friend or foe, saint or sinner, craven or hero, gosh what a story. Ward Price in the "Daily Mail" led the pack with a spell-binder. Hess was a religious convert, a pilgrim seeking salvation. He had seen the Light and wished to make atonement for the sinfulness of his wicked past...Casting off his evil companions, in the full flush of spiritual regeneration, he hastened to throw himself upon the mercy of the righteous, to cast in his lot with that happy band of crusaders marching behind the banners of Democracy and Freedom. Hurrah for St George and merrie England, death to the dragon of the continent. Ward Price compared Hess with the Lord Buddha who left Yasodhara and the Abode of Love that men might know the Truth, and also with St. Francis of Assisi who renounced his profligate Florentine life to embrace the vocation of Holy Poverty. I was disappointed that his article contained no quotations from 'Hymns Ancient and Modern.' "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds . . ."

No other journalist that I read equalled this effort, but the American columnists battled manfully in the attempt. One maintained that this extraordinary event was of even greater importance than a military victory, and nullified all the German advances. Another, who had just returned to the States from Berlin, and was therefore an authority on the matter, contended that the Nazi party was riddled with intrigue and double-dealing, that insurrection and disloyalty in the German Army was with difficulty suppressed, that famine and disillusionment was rife among the civil population, and that any moment now revolution would sweep away the Hitler regime. Yet another saw behind it all the sinister figure of the red butcher of Moscow, spinning the web of world revolution from the Kremlin. One and all hailed the nocturnal invader as a messenger of glad tidings of inevitable British victory. O Justice and Retribution, how inscrutable are thy ways. . . Tone and dignity were lent the occasion by the late unlamented Foreign Secretary, now Ambassador at the Arsenal of Democracy, and spiritual head of the World Uplift Society, who before a gathering of distinguished rotarians, expressed his opinion that this was further evidence of the righteousness of our noble cause. Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war . . . But one thing was lacking to complete the incredible comedy, and I trust that before War Commentary goes to print it will have been rectified, for I await with ill-concealed impatience the pronouncement of the divine literatus herself. . . Speak, O amazon of Freedom's cause,

Lighten our darkness, O oracle of political wisdom. Give tongue Dorothy Thompson, give tongue.

Readers will forgive my slight aberration from the path of sober comment, but rarely am I so moved by the penny press. I have no intention of adding my theory to the confusion of speculation....Space in War Commentary is far too valuable, and so far as it goes the German communique is as feasible as any other version to date. I am interested in this Hess affair chiefly because of the tremendous flip it is bound to give the nascent movement for Peace by Negotiation, evident in the propaganda of pacifist organisations and left wing parties as a result of which the anarchist is likely to be accused of inhumanity and inconsistency because he is unable to support such an agitation. In order to avoid misunderstanding and possible recrimination, therefore, I will try to state the Anarchist position, as I see it, with regard to 'Peace by Negotiation.'

The anarchist attitude is neither inhumane nor inconsistent. It is extremely irritating at times to be accused of inhumanity because our stand against the war is taken up on the findings of an objective analysis of capitalist society, instead of on a mawkish sentiment masquerading as humanitarianism. The anarchist is as anxious as anybody else for the war to cease. He abhors the wicked waste of life and the senseless destruction of material which is going on at the present time. He is as conscious as any prating pacifist of the horror and bestiality of mechanised warfare, its brutalising effect upon the individual, its callous indifference to sufferings of both innocent and guilty. More, because of his recognition of the class nature of the conflict, the sordid issues of the war are not for him mitigated by the illusions of freedom, justice or morality. He sees the war quite simply as an expression of class-rule, in which the noblest sentiments of men are exploited in the bastard names of Nationalism and Patriotism, for the conquest of Power and the defence of private privilege.

Far from being inconsistent, it is precisely because he is consistent that he cannot line up with the 'peace-negotiators,' for he does not believe pleadings to a capitalist Government to negotiate a cessation of hostilities can mean, in effect, a stopping of the war. The recognition of a hopeless military position, might induce the government to negotiate a truce, but this would be a surrender to conditions and in no way the result of the pressure of public opinion. It is time the myth is exploded, that at this stage of capitalist decline, public opinion can influence our ruling class against their interests. The day of petitions and supplications is over. Unless our peace-negotiators are prepared to carry through their agitation to its logical conclusion (which I doubt) they are merely confusing the issue which the anarchist maintains is of paramount importance to reveal, that is, the necessity for the workers to stop the war

by direct action. I am well aware that, in the face of desolated cities and impending starvation, there appears a superficial justification for the accusation that allegiance to the ideological-economic concept of the class-struggle is unrealistic and inhumane. I was fire-watching in the streets of central London during the night of 10th May, and can readily sympathise with the view that the class nature of the war does not console bereaved people nor restore shattered homes, but neither will sticking our heads in the sands of sentimental squeamishness resolve the problem. The fact of the matter is that peace demands the change over from armament production to consumer-goods production, from war economy to peace economy, and this can be effected only by a resolution of the class conflict.

So much emphasis has been placed by leftist writers upon the 'rival imperialist' character of this war, that the true nature of the struggle has remained hidden. This is not merely a war of rival imperialisms for overseas markets, it is also a fight to determine which Powers shall survive as Imperial Powers. The British ruling class most definitely did not want this war. Munich demonstrated that just as Germany threatened their interests abroad, war threatened their class position at home.

Now provided the expansionist demands of German industry were confined to the continent of Europe, they were even prepared to make sacrifice of continental markets to accommodate this expansion but the Russo-German non-aggression pact indicated that the latent hostility between Germany and Russia would not provide the continental balance of power necessary to protect British interests in the East. German expansion could not be confined to the continent and therefore Great Britain was forced to declare war. How was it possible for her to do otherwise, when it is understood that the existence of the capitalist class in England, as a ruling class is dependent upon Great Britain's existence as a major imperial power. Thus the war develops, as all wars do, according to its purpose, and the war develops to total war, because nothing less than total war can obscure the real issue of the war—the defence of class position. Here the great paradox of war takes shape. A sharp and decisive victory by either side would be the quickest way to a break-down of the present social order and the collapse of the governments of both Germany and Britain, for only war can maintain this class position. The war proceeds therefore, on a cautious, strategic level. Obviously the implication is that somehow it must be steered into collaboration, but again obviously the interests of the present ruling class in Britain are absolutely irreconcilable to those of the German, since the war itself is proof that efforts in this direction were exhausted. Thus if a war of attrition is to be avoided, with its boomerang effect, there must be a shift of power, either in England or Germany, to pave the way to some sort of veiled collaboration between Europe's governments for the common exploitation of the populations of the continents of this hemisphere. Thus, unless the 'peace-negotiators' are altogether bemused by wishful thinking, they must harness their negotiation propaganda to the public with a 'down with the present government' slogan. The People's Convention showed them the way, and I must say the Communist Party

is far shrewder in its tactics than many people seem to think. The move for a People's Peace implied that a negotiated peace was possible and collaboration with a totalitarian Europe desirable; but the removal of the present government (and its substitution by a 'People's' Government) was a necessary preliminary. It was for this latter reason that the 'Daily Worker' was suppressed, and not because of any ruling class fear of the spread of class-consciousness. Similarly, despite newspaper propaganda, the U.S.A. shows no eagerness to enter the fray to save Democracy in Britain unless permanence of control by the financial institutions is assured. She is busy girding up her loins for a much bigger tussle in the bye and bye and can have no desire to aid a potential enemy, should private capitalism collapse and with it the reason for fighting State Capitalism. Thus it is clear the present government can never negotiate a peace. Any truce it made with the enemy would be a recognition of defeat and would entail its fall as a class.

Thus in justification of the anarchist position, I would say that despite whatever proposals Hess might or might not have in his head or in his pocket, and notwithstanding that we share the tender and human feelings of the pacifists towards suffering mankind, we just don't believe our dear capitalist class is prepared yet awhile to give up the ghost, and although we recognise the fortunes of war may induce them to consider a truce, for a while, the gigantic momentum of total war cannot be stopped and peace ushered in by delicate requests for negotiation. The harsh facts are these, that we move towards an era of progressive though perhaps intermittent warfare, and perpetual war preparation, and this condition cannot be arrested except by a sharpening of the class-struggle through the learning of lessons of bitter experience. It would be a hard thing to say of genuine idealists and honest pacifists, that their agitation for negotiation is, in effect, an acceptance of the consolidation of a totalitarian European despotism. I will not make the charge, though it could be substantiated. It is clear, however, that from the point of view of abolishing war and creating peace, appeals to Governments are wasted effort. What little strength and energy such an agitation may generate would be better devoted to an attack on the cause of war, an action in line with what historical evidence indicates as existent and not illusory. We know there appears little prospect of success in this direction; we know people are dying every day from aerial bombardment, and that famine, pestilence and bloody insurrection are not the materials we would choose for social reconstruction. Must we therefore, like the capitalist class, for the sake of immediate gain little reck the desolation of the morrow, sacrifice future generations to slaughter to give a few lives now? Who shall judge humanity's cause in the infinite arrangement of act and consequence? No comrades, the path to Peace is clear, though ignorance and timidity bar the way. The war must be stopped, and the sooner the better for us all, but it cannot be stopped by class-collaboration. Only the workers can stop the war by refusing to fight it, and this they will do when events make clear to them the reality of class-rule and exploitation. Our job is to try and prevent them being fogged again by compromise and parley. Let us go to it then, and stick at it, and leave the peace-negotiators to their inevitable disillusionment.

MILITARY POLICY

THE world has entered into an age of war, one in which final reckonings may come to be decided. Imperialism rampant has reached its highest stage of competition—armed conflict—and the clash between opposing schools of thought has become more apparent. It is natural that in an age of war every practical school of thought should try to establish its own military policy, and what has been shown, both in theory and practise, is that a military policy cannot be decided by mere expressions of desire and new requirements of political manœuvring. It is decided by economic and political factors that cannot be circumvented for strategical motives, and by the class and political nature of the backing that it has. In short, *every political school of thought gets the military policy it deserves*, in consonance with its economic programme. For instance, an imperialist cannot suddenly turn round and adopt a revolutionary method of warfare; a revolutionary cannot adopt the imperialist method of warfare.

THE PLANNED NATIONAL DOG-FIGHT

IT was hoped by the out-moded and senile leaders of British and French military policy that the war of 1939 would follow precisely the same course as the war of 1914. No doubt they had on their tables all their old relief-maps and orders-of-the-day that they had used at Mons and Ypres. All their leaders were men who had served in the last war and many who had served in previous wars. All were bound to the old tradition of the "national dog-fight," and changes of policy, history and so on left them quite unmoved. Germany will attack France; therefore France must have her Maginot Line; Britain will come to help France when France is attacked through the Low Countries; then we will march to Berlin and the war will be over—and this time there will be no pity for "the Boche"!

In spite of concessions made to Liberal sentiment in England nothing was done to alter the character of the war or of the armies. Hore-Belisha, was made Minister of War to carry out changes in the capitalist army: as is known, the "brass hats" disliked interference—they would not be dictated to, and Hore-Belisha went. No appreciable army reforms were made. The same standards of barrack-square discipline prevailed. Young men from the 'Varsities bought their commissions and became officers because they were gentlemen. In France a more democratic method of conscription was traditional—French militarism being based on the *bourgeoisie*, rather than (as in England) on the decadent aristocracy. But this was offset by French politicians making no concessions to democratic and liberal opinion even verbally as did the more astute British politicians. M. Daladier was in full charge of the

dictatorial regime, and that was all. As for the workers—they had their own men in association with the State, and if they still complained—so much the worse for them; Mr. Chamberlain could not muster the strength to act in this manner even towards the less militant British workers. This is explained largely by recent history: the French *bourgeoisie* were frightened of the workers, who had a revolutionary tradition and were only three years older than when they occupied all the places of work in the great General stay-in-Strike, which could have been (had the French workers retained sufficient militancy) the prelude to social revolutionary expropriation, whereas the British leaders knew full well that the trade-union bosses had the labour movement completely under their control, and that they themselves would not do anything calculated to upset the sacred national unity (even in time of peace) in any serious direction. The Labour Party had shown time and time again it *preferred* to make sacrifices: it had insisted that Chamberlain carry out all sorts of decrees restricting unionism for the sake of unity which he himself had been frightened to do.

Through lack of any effective opposition, Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier were able to enter the war of 1939 with 1914 mentalities. France had been regimented against herself, her Parliamentary leaders assuming the role of dictators; Britain had been regimented by "free agreement" between national and labour leaders. Some idealists spoke of all sorts of changes effected or to be effected ("this was not to be a war like the last"), but the worthlessness of their claims was shown by the fact that the armies that went to war went as to a national dog-fight. The British and French armies were ready to fight against Germany as in times gone by they had gone to fight each other.

Since the collapse much blame has been laid on the French generals. This should not be minimised, but it must be remembered that British and French generals shared equal responsibility. As for the course of the war, British and French politicians announced identical aims and policies—and this was not pure humbug. The disciplined armies went to battle. After waiting and waiting, during which time many boasts were heard, the battle came. Alas for the politicians of Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay! Herr Hitler had not been to a British public school, nor had he studied the military technique of Napoleon in the lycée of Paris! He had devised a new way of war—the blitzkrieg—and each country he attacked fell before the blitzkrieg—Norway, the Low Countries, and finally France itself. The British armies evacuated Dunkirk, the Chamberlain Government had fallen, and with it had fallen the myth of the national dog-fight. Face to face with a real foe, such a military policy had failed. It had failed because the other side did not adhere to the rules of the game. It did not fail because of the guiltiness of the men who had controlled France and England. What else could they have done? They were conditioned by their past, they stood for past privileges and past methods of war-fare. The new German Imperialism had a new method of warfare. The old British and French Imperialisms had the old methods of warfare. The new method won, just as the old method had won in the days of its novelty

THE BLITZKRIEG

THE common "theory" in Western Europe that Herr Hitler is a madman (it is obvious that he is a fanatic) is disproved by the plain facts that he fooled the wise-acres of the West—the learned statesmen and their diplomatic cohorts. The rise to power of Fascism in Germany has been marked by diabolically clever plans, which, even if assisted by the failure of others and the economic trend towards totalitarianism, have succeeded by their originality and use of *realpolitik*. The blitzkrieg has been one such use of a knowledge of *realpolitik*: the intention was to use the power of the coup d'état but to avoid revolution. By a blitzkrieg—a lightning war—to avoid dissatisfaction at home such as a prolonged war brings, and instead give a fillip to patriotism such as quick victories may produce.

Moreover, full use of propaganda was made. The plain fact was seen that there was in every country a section of the ruling class that preferred to see the victory of a foreign power with its own position secured than see a victory of its own working-class by means of a social revolution. Apart from this section, which was not always very large, there was a larger section of the ruling class that was frightened of losing its property. Action can only be taken by the unencumbered: Nazi Germany, with nothing to lose, took action where large Empires that could have crushed her in a few weeks stood still for fear of losing their possessions, until Germany was as strong as (in some cases, stronger than) they.

The first section were the "Quislings" who actively supported the fifth-column Nazi activities: the second section were the patriots who supported constitutional government where it existed, and the military (Nazi) government when it took its place. Policemen and State officials were predominant in this class; e.g. when the Germans reached Paris (without opposition) they found the French police already on duty controlling people for them—all they had to do was to walk round and see the sights. The police are servants of whatever government is in power: they had served many French governments and would equally well serve a German government, (Nor does this only apply to France).

All the British and French politicians could do was to scream about "traitors" and the like, still secure in their 19th century haven of "the national dog-fight" theory. A Belgian, a Briton, a Frenchman to fight against his country—monstrous! They had never approved of the apparent lack of patriotism in so many Germans in escaping from their own country and in many cases fighting against it—but what could you expect of Germans? Even a German must get fed up with Germany, they thought. And now for their own countrymen to do likewise. One can imagine "our praying General" Lord Gort throwing up his hands and thanking God that the old Queen wasn't alive to see it.

Driven out of the Continent with the failure of their plans for a conventional national dog-fight, the Allied forces returned to Britain. A new government included Labour and Liberal leaders. Invasion was daily expected. What could resist German Imperialism?

THEORY OF SPONTANEOUS DEFENCE

THE left-wing had for some time been talking of making this war into a different sort of war, of *changing the war by changing the nature of its leadership*. There had been various schemes, ranging from orthodox Labour to new-fangled and other schemes, for replacing the National Government with a new government with a stirring declaration of peace aims. This scheme, under different disguises, represented the whole policy of the British Left. Some said "Federal Union," but more said alter the British government and its policy, some saying by putting in Lib-Lab. leaders, others (e.g. the I.L.P.) by a "Workers Government" (in effect, a Labour government, since they did not expect to have an I.L.P. government), others (e.g. the Stalinist fellow-travellers) a "People's Government, etc.

The fanciful schemes for changing the course of the war were naturally acceptable to the ruling-class as propaganda. Even today there is a conviction in some quarters that this *will* be a "different war," that *after* (always after) the war there *will* be a new sort of democratic order. The "consciences" of all the "nations" are stirred, until after the war, when there will no longer be any need to answer enemy propaganda about conditions at home.

The theory of spontaneous defence, is in effect a scheme evolved from the minds of those who believe in changing the war by changing the nature of its leadership. The cry that first went up in the days of June-July-August 1940 was for "arming the people." Look, they pointed out, a few parachutists on motor-cycles walked through French towns and took them unresisted. All because the people were not armed. Now look at Spain. There the people were armed. There fascism took its reverses, and was nearly defeated.

(They did not mention that Fascism *was* defeated, and, so far from German and Italian intervention being successful, it was the British and French stab-in-the-back that allowed the enemies of the workers, the forces of Franco to triumph). Nor did they mention that the government of Spain did not at any time arm the people. In July 1936 the revolutionary workers *took arms for themselves*, the legal government then acquiescing, having no option in the matter. As soon as it found its feet (aided and abetted by the counter-revolutionary Stalinists) it disarmed the workers, and allowed Franco to triumph.

Nor did they mention that the Spanish workers were *not* fighting for capitalist democracy, but for social revolution and workers control, the only genuine form of freedom.

The feat of the armed people of Spain could not, therefore, be compared with anything in this country. Certain political fakers did so, nevertheless. Chief amongst the new military theorists we see the ingenious Mr. Tom Wintringham, who was, in Spain, a Stalinist "International Brigade" leader. He saw for himself how the Spanish Anarchists fought (the militia system of an armed people, the Asturian dynamiters, and the other methods of the despised pistoleros): he himself, as a Stalinist, being opposed

to their methods and in favour of a Regular Army like the British, French and German. Back in England, and expelled for personal reasons from the Communist Party, he cashed in on his knowledge. In "Picture Post" he told how the generals turned down his schemes contemptuously: "we do not wish to introduce the methods of the Spanish Anarchists into European warfare" they told him. In the heroic days of summer, 1940, they wished to do so. The Local Defence Volunteers were formed—a triumph for the Left. It was based on guerilla fighting and armed workers patrols—in theory. The naive Left thought it was the revolution come at last!

After a few months the whole scheme fizzled out. The generals recovered from their panic, and Mr. Churchill realised that his Labour colleagues were more anxious than he to preserve the *status quo*. (e.g. the "Socialist" "Daily Herald" was the first paper to deride any possible arming of the people). The Local Defence Volunteers became the Home Guard. This was looked upon by the wishy-washy reformists as merely a change of name, instead of an expression of a change of policy. The Home Guard was a regular unit of the Armed Forces, but composed of civilians doing spare-time duties—nothing more. Mr. Wintringham may still teach circus tricks in Osterley Park under the impression that he is copying the methods of the Spanish workers, but the whole theory of spontaneous defence is dead. If invasion does come now it will be met with a regular Army, assisted by a semi-regular Veterans' Corps called the Home Guard. The policy of irregularism and spontaneous defence is not and could not be the policy of the British Empire because it is the British Empire. Imperialists cannot adopt revolutionary tactics. The Reformist's military policy failed because their political policy never succeeded.

This present time, and unquestionably the future, demands consideration of what should be a military policy for revolutionaries. This is, after all, an age of war: revolutions must meet armed resistance. Previous revolutions have been crushed by (amongst other things) force of arms: previous revolutionary strategy demands revision. We have seen, I think, the weakness of the planned national dog-fight together with the theory of spontaneous defence (under capitalism); nor has the German blitzkrieg succeeded when it could not succeed immediately, as in Britain, and showed up its faults—a clumsy bureaucratic State machine behind the slick facade.

REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY AND MILITARY POLICY

(a) Marxist

THERE are today only two theories worthy of consideration as revolutionary: Anarchist and Marxist.

Most of the allegedly Marxist movements can, from the point of view of military policy, immediately be classified with the spontaneous defence people, changing the course of the war by changing the government. This is at the moment true of the British Communists, whose military policy is, however, consistently summed up with the words, "Defence of the Soviet Union." The maintenance of the

Russian dictatorship is their main concern. The one most deserving of consideration is the Trotskyist.

The Trotskyists have a planned method of altering the war and a definite military policy. Their aim may be briefly summed up as follows: *Conscription yes. But under Trade Union Control.* The workers must go into the armed forces and press for control by their unions and not by the officer-caste. Therefore the Trotskyists do not say "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war" as in 1914-18 but "Fight Hitlerism, yes. But under worker's control."

It can therefore be seen that the scientific anti-war policy of the Trotskyists becomes in effect pro-war and pro-imperialist. The imperialists have no objection to the Trotskyists' telling the workers to support conscription! Do they object to trade union control? Emphatically no: the trade unions are so tied to capitalist policy that trade union control would merely relieve the capitalists of some responsibility. In effect, the Trotskyists are through a mistaken policy, bound hand-in-glove to the Wintringham policy.

(b) Anarchist

Anarchist military policy has a long history. Originally the Anarchists supported individual action and the use of conspiracy. This, in the nineteenth century was the only available method of fighting feudalism and despotism. The attempts on the lives of crowned monarchs (Russia, Spain etc.) undoubtedly hastened the break-up of the feudal-despotic countries. But in the main these were individual acts, unrelated to a general struggle.

With the Russian Revolution there came the first planned anarchist policy. In the Ukraine the armies of Nestor Makhno sprang up spontaneously as the result of the revolution. The armed peasant force drove the Whites out of Ukraine and later drove out the Red Army of Trotsky. It was Makhno's aim to seize a piece of territory where the anarchist social and economic policy could be tried out: a free autonomous commune. The army had one aim: to "clear the way" for anarchism: not to impose anarchism by military force but to keep the territory clear of the dictatorial hordes of Denikin and Trotsky. They were noted for exceptionally brilliant guerilla strategy such as all the Wavells and Wintringhams in the world could never hope to attain, e.g. the peasants would attend a village in their holiday attire, suddenly whip out their guns and take the village.

Ukraine was, of course, (like social-democratic Georgia) too small to stand out against the whole of the Russian Empire under Tsar Lenin. It fell.

The next attempt was in Spain, 1936. We have dealt at length with the guerilla tactics of Spanish anarchism, especially its arming of a workers' militia, which has been vainly attempted to export to "European warfare." Anarchism is based on the masses: Marxism, Capitalism and Fascism based on a mistrust of the masses. Anarchy means liberty for the masses; government means authority over the

*They do not say unionism against the officer-caste but, in effect with it, for they say union control not strike action.

masses. That is why one implies arming the people and the other cannot.

Spain fell against the treachery of the democracies and the open warfare of the dictatorships.

Both in Ukraina and Spain the fall came when the warfare developed into trench and open warfare. There the capitalists were able to use their regular armies, planned for national dog-fights.

The policy of the General Strike was widely adopted by the French workers—successfully. They lost because of their own failings—i.e. they handed power over to the Popular Front government. In Italy the anarchists had led a General Strike before and against Fascism. The social-democrats had backed out of the strike, and Fascism had conquered.

It seems, then, that Anarchist revolutionary strategy cannot be based on national tactics, any more than national warfare can be based on guerilla tactics. Armed insurrection without industrial action must fail. But industrial action without armed force to back it up has also failed.

The answer is clear, then. Anarchism must rely on the policy of the General stay in Strike, and the taking-over of the places of work by the workers, backed up by a militia system, an arming of the workers in their places of work. Only thus can the State machine be met: by tying it economically by industrial action and opposing its strength by military action. The policy to be adopted is one of liquidation of the barricades: revolutions cannot be fought side against side like nations fight against nations. They can only be fought by industrial action backed up by military action—that is to say, without trenches, without planned boundary-lines, certainly not national ones. This avoids war, a disaster to the revolution, because war begets militarism, and militarism begets authority; but does not leave us without means of defence.

There is no immediate policy for a revolutionary military programme, for there is no immediate revolution. If a revolutionary situation comes it will not be of our creation—rather will it be forced upon us. Anarchists do not "create" revolutions any more than individual capitalists "choose" wars. Wars come out of the economic soil, and capitalists must have the war fought or perish. Revolutionary situations come, and we must be ready to take advantage of them, by showing the workers (a) the way to win and (b) a life worth winning. The first must be our military, the second our planned and ready economic theory—workers' control and freedom.

A.M.

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MAY DAY, 1941

MAY DAY celebrations of international working class solidarity are in many parts of the world either curtailed by the State or rendered meaningless by the actual tactics of the "official" Labour movements. Anarchists, however, attach significance, today more than ever, to this day, which, in fact, originated in the tide of sympathy extended by the international labour movement to the Chicago martyrs—those anarchist comrades who held the first May Day demonstration in Union Square.

LONDON. Under the black and red banner of the Anarcho-Syndicalists comrades in London rallied to Hyde Park on the afternoon of Thursday May 1st., where a large crowd listened attentively to the speakers, who drove the significance of May Day well home. The meeting continued until well on into the evening. On Saturday, meetings were held in the Park both in the afternoon and evening, and on Sunday a huge crowd listened to Ken Hawkes, Fredrick Lohr, and Tom Brown. Much to the indignation of the crowd, the police arrested comrade Hawkes charging him with "insulting words." He spent the remainder of the evening in a cell, but is now once more at liberty.

In the evening 600 people attended a meeting at the Conway Hall organized by "War Commentary," and gave an enthusiastic reception to the speakers. In addition to Fredrick Lohr, Ethel Mannin (who spoke about Emma Goldman), F. A. Ridley, Reg Reynolds, and Tom Brown the platform welcomed Chris Jones, who turned up at the last minute to convey a message of solidarity from the coloured workers all over the globe, he told the audience just what "democracy" means for the 400 odd million coloured colonial wage-slaves of the British Empire. Numerous comrades who were unable to attend sent fraternal greetings, and a large amount of anarchist literature was sold.

GLASGOW. Since the reactionary elements in the socialist movement used May Day to proclaim their support for the Imperialist War, the Glasgow comrades boycotted the official procession, which was the poorest attended for many years, and held their own demonstration in Brunswick Street. The meeting lasted for nearly ten hours and an enthusiastic and sympathetic crowd listened to Eddie Shaw and Frank Leech with James Dick in the chair. This demonstration has effected a marked increase in the attendance at the weekly meetings at Brunswick Street on Sunday afternoons.

KINGSTON. On the following Saturday afternoon Tom Brown spoke in the market place at Kingston and secured a good hearing from about 200-250 people.

WELWYN. On Sunday evening (May 11th.) a considerable number of women subscribers to the local Boot's Library were evidently disappointed to find that Ethel Mannin meant business when she spoke on Women and Conscription. She fully endorsed the exposition of anarchist ideas on State compulsion which Reg Reynolds the previous speaker, had given. Nevertheless, the greater part of the audience remained—in spite of one very vigorous and articulate Labour Party protester—to hear Tom Brown's analysis of Trade Unionism and Syndicalism.

Pacifism at the

Reg. Reynolds

BEFORE me lies a pamphlet entitled "The Irrelevance of Pure Pacifism."

It is by a pacifist named Alexander Miller, one of a small group such as one comes across today in the P.P.U.—for there are many such groups—of people who have viewed with growing dissatisfaction the opportunist tactics officially pursued by the Union and its lack of any positive basis on which to build a social programme.

To be fair to the P.P.U. I do not think it is correct to connect its growth with the forces displayed in the "Peace Ballot," when 11,000,000 votes were registered in this country for what professed to be a peace policy. In linking up Dick Sheppard's "movement" with the Peace Ballot, Mr. Miller ignores the fact that the Ballot was organised by the L.N.U. and other organisations primarily concerned with boosting "Collective Security" and the policy of "Sanctions," an essentially military and (on analysis) imperialist policy. Most of the Balloters fell for this policy, declaring thereby for the collective military defence of the *status quo*. It is not among the blunders of the pacifist "movement" that any considerable section of it was deceived by that Ballot. Its faults, from the time when Sheppard organised his 120,000 signatories into a Union based upon a purely negative pledge, have been mostly negative faults arising more from absence of policy than from a positive policy misdirected.

It was to be expected that no real "movement" could arise from a conglomeration of people united by a negative pledge. There was nothing to which they could "move," for the terms of unity were that they were pledged merely as to what they would not do.

The recently published Annual Report of the P.P.U. shows its "active membership" to be about 8,500, or roughly 16 per cent. of the nominal total. Its record for the past year, read dispassionately in this Report, is mainly one of retreat from public prosecution, so far as headquarters has been concerned, and of quietism in its local groups. It is uninspiring and, indeed, positively depressing to any-

Crossroads

one who may have hoped for spirited war resistance in this seemingly large and influential organisation. Even its finances reflect on the expenditure side, the lush ways of a middle-class organisation leaning heavily upon a handful of "patrons;" and though the war has told heavily upon such resources there is still no evidence of realism even in this department. By way of example I need only mention that last year 2/6 out of every pound collected by the P.P.U. was spent on accountancy!

Had the pacifist "movement" which preceded the war been anything but a bubble, one would expect to see a much greater resistance to conscription than existed in the last war, preceeded by no comparable "movement." Instead, the figures, so far as they can be compared with those of 1916-19, tell a very different story. Of the total number of men who, by February 1st had been relegated at the local tribunals to classes B, C and D (Conditional Exemption, Non-combatant Service or removed from the C.O. Register) only 29 per cent. even took the trouble to appeal. There is a strong case for not registering and ignoring the tribunals; but one would expect that those who decide to avail themselves of the tribunals would not, if their objections had any real roots, be content merely to "accept" relegation to any one of these categories. The Appeal Tribunal, as the latest statistics show, has tended on the average to improve the position of the C.O. rather than to make it worse—indeed, the balance of "improvement" is very substantial. And those who have utilised the local tribunals can hardly make a logical objection to using the Appellate Tribunal for the same purpose.

Even more significant is the small proportion of arrests and courts martial. By February there were over 15,000 men who had been given non-combatant service or removed from the C.O. Register, excluding those who had appealed, and whose cases

were still under notice of appeal, but including those placed in Classes C and D by the Appellate. Of these men only about 500 had been summoned for failing to present themselves for medical examination. As to courts martial, the Central Board of C.O.s estimated that up till February there had been about 75.

Comparing these figures as well as we can with those of the last war, and bearing in mind the fact that the treatment of objectors is now more "tolerant," we find that 6261 men suffered imprisonment between 1916-19 as C.O.s of whom, 5739 were court-martialled, some of them as many as five or six times. The shorter period of time and better discrimination of tribunals can hardly account entirely for the difference between these comparative figures.

To avoid any risk of overstatement, we may say that there is no evidence of greater war resistance and distinct indications to the contrary. The wise policy of the Government is without doubt partly responsible for this. By careful grading and "tolerant" handling of the objectors it has split them up very neatly. But this should not conceal from us the fact that clearer policies and more enterprising leadership in the opposing forces would have made it more possible to resist the insidious methods of the government, designed to divide and conquer. The rapid advance of industrial conscription now finds the war resister in a more difficult position than he (or she) has ever faced in this country: and the P.P.U., which was to have been the very spear-head of resistance, is blunted by compromise and rusty with inaction.

In such circumstances one looks with interest and with hope to groups within the P.P.U. which have shown themselves aware of its inadequacy. Mr. Miller's pamphlet interested me immediately because of its title and because there was evidence in the opening pages that the author had diagnosed some of the worst basic errors of the Union. I wish I could feel that he had given a lead likely to be helpful to thousands of young pacifists now groping for something better than reformism tinged with mysticism, which serves the P.P.U. in place of a policy. Instead I find only a one-eyed man offering to lead the blind.

To Mr. Miller this is a "war against tyranny and for freedom." He does not propose to support it as such; any more than he explains what this freedom is for which we are fighting. To my amazement Mr. Amery announced in the House of Commons (22.4.41) that 100,000,000 people in four provinces of India "had for four years enjoyed the advantages of democratic self-government." The people of those provinces will certainly have been surprised to read it; but if Mr. Miller accepts such statements I can well understand his feeling that we are fighting for freedom. However, in that case so is Hitler; for the word has lost all meaning.

Of the origin of this war Mr. Miller tells us that the hand of the government was forced by "the simple impulse of indignation of the common man." How a government representing fairly well-defined class interests could be jockeyed into a war by public opinion, in defiance of those interests, Mr. Miller does not explain. Before such a thing could happen one would at least expect to find the country on the verge of civil war; and even then I know of no historical case in which a government preferred to yield on such a momentous issue rather than fight to the last ditch for its own class interests or (at the very least) resign and leave a distasteful task to others. Chamberlain, it is true, did resign—but not until he had himself taken the fatal step of making and conducting war for some months. Looking individually at the firm which has taken his place, it is difficult to think of them as representatives of "the simple moral impulse that took this nation into war." It is at least odd that their "moral impulses" never seem to have been stirred until the balance of power in Europe was so upset that British imperialism was severely menaced. Odd too that "appeasement" was pursued until, and only until, the combined Air Forces of France and Great Britain were within a measurable distance of overtaking in size the Air Force of the Reich.

According to Mr. Miller's new pacifism, such an analysis is "cynical." He is not content to say that many who are fighting in this war are sincere idealists who believe they are fighting for freedom. I suppose he would be even more distressed at my cynicism if I pointed out that public indignation

here against Hitlerism would ring more true if it had reacted similarly to our own treatment of Negroes, Indians and Arabs. I have stressed that point too frequently to make it necessary for me to elaborate a comparison; though I cannot repeat too often that I am prepared to show a British parallel for every crime of Nazism (and that without delving far into history). But suppose that we grant the genuine character of British "revulsion against tyranny, political terror and race hate," suppose that we assume British idealists (including, presumably, Mr. Miller) to be unaware that these things flourish in the British Empire, it is still absurd to assume this moral indignation to be the "cause" of a war which was begun by a Conservative Government in circumstances very similar to those which led us into conflict with Louis XIV, Napoleon and Kaiser Wilhelm. One does not need to be "cynical" to be a realist and notice the coincidence of moral indignation with historic interests.

Miller's pamphlet may not be of any importance, in the sense that it may have no influence in pacifist circles. I am concerned with it because it actually emanates from what is supposed to be a "left" group in the P.P.U. and in an organisation so devoid of ideas or leadership almost any *positive* proposals are liable to attract attention, however half-baked. The P.P.U. fell hook, line and sinker for "appeasement," because (as Mr. Miller quite correctly points out) it failed to realise that "the only alternative to appeasement or war was to broaden the front and find the basis for a truly revolutionary struggle in Europe against property and privilege." That revolt against P.P.U. acceptance of "the dubious coin of Munich" was widely felt by thinking pacifists. But the Miller policy offered as the correct alternative is ten times worse than the P.P.U. evasions and negations I refer not to those brave words about revolutionary struggle, but to the passages in which his "revolutionary" philosophy is amplified.

To Mr. Miller there appears to be a "tense struggle" already in progress for the direction of the war effort. The Government itself includes "both reactionary and progressive elements." Nobody, of course, would deny the existence of different group interests and personal opinions represented in the Government; but one would have thought it obvious that in fundamentals they were united—on the basis of responsibilities which all accept in common. The government is a capitalist-imperialist government, maintaining and protecting the institutions of banking, private ownership in land and the means of production, arbitrary rule over a vast colonial empire and all minor forms of oppression and robbery that accompany these institutions. One is either in favour of such institutions or one is not, and acceptance of office in a Government means acceptance of its general basis and purpose, if it means anything at all. When a Labour Party Boss accepts office in the Government, he shares responsibility for every Indian or African flung into jail (with or without trial) for the crime of "agitating" to free his country. You can't throw a man into prison for something and at the same time be on his "side"—indeed, the chief object of having Labour Members in the Government would appear to be that it shuts their mouths, makes them accomplices of all that is done (very willing accomplices I admit) and ties up their official organs

of opinion in the same noose. I have learnt not to expect much from the *Daily Herald*, but during two Labour Governments and the present coalition it has been obvious that not a word of serious criticism could show in its columns, not even by way of the usual demagoguery to keep up a "left" appearance. True, petty issues are made much of, but how can the "left" make any really serious criticisms when every word would reflect on its own leaders and its own party policies?

So much for "progressive elements." But not content with this boost for the bogus left, Mr. Miller would raise our hopes of Saul being among the prophets. "Can anyone say with confidence, for example, how far Churchill would go towards nationalisation and socialism if he saw it to be essential for winning the war?" Such is his query.

No one can say "with confidence" what anyone else will do. I can't say "with confidence" that Hitler won't turn Roman Catholic tomorrow, quit the war and retire to a monastery. But I can and shall base my calculations of the future upon my experience of the past. A wise man trusts nobody with any more power than he can help for any longer than he can avoid. That is why I am an anarchist. The slightest responsibility should be considered from two points of view—what do you know against this man and what do you know in his favour? Viewing Mr. Churchill's history as imperialist statesman, anti-socialist and anti-working-class politician, strike breaker and Jingo and booster of Mussolini, I can see a great many reasons against trusting him an inch and not one single thing in his favour. Even intelligence in such a man is a menace. But if the New Pacifists are hoping for "Nationalisation and Socialism" from that quarter what in God's name is the matter with Hitler? Co-ordination from the top (with limited but secure, dividends for the *rentier*), isn't that the very essence of Hitler's programme and the very reason why his "National Socialism" is such a menace to the real goods—worker's ownership and worker's control? And why should anyone "with confidence" assume that Churchill "socialism" would be any better?

It is, indeed, on this very point that Mr. Miller slips up finally and plunges for the prevalent and growing "totalitarianism"—as the white hope of the new order, to which pacifists must drop their opposition. What matters, according to him, is not that "totalitarian control" is rapidly on the increase, but who is going to pull the wires when we marionettes dance on the end of them. One would have thought that no class or group which once laid hold of the right end of those wires was going to let go without being slung out in a revolution—that idea does not seem to have bothered Mr. Miller. Still less does it concern him that, under any control whatsoever, totalitarianism means the enslavement of man to a bureaucracy, of the individual to a machine. This New Pacifism accepts The State in all its newest and most ghastly implications.

It is not surprising to find that Mr. Miller completely tolerates the idea of industrial conscription as a "Socialist feature" which would have been necessary in any controlled economy (Instance the pre-war unemployed—what could we do with 2,000,000 of them without "state control of labour?"). It is

(Continued on page 15)

East and West of Suez

WITH the outbreak of the "Battles" of Africa and the Balkans the Imperialist war entered upon a new phase. The present writer, being neither able to deduce the Future empirically by spiritist second-sight, nor, alternatively, to reduce it to a "dialectical" formula, proposes at this juncture merely to indicate the historical mise-en-scène of this historic battleground: we propose merely to give the historic background to the present military struggle for the command of the Eastern sea-routes.

In general, it may be stated with substantial accuracy that the building up of British supremacy over the Eastern sea-routes has been virtually equivalent to the rise of the British world-empire: to be sure, there was also a Western expansion, via the Atlantic, towards the Americas, but this has been, in general, subsidiary and subordinate to the main British drive towards the East. **There is the real British Empire; the Empire, not "the commonwealth" of "free nations": the Empire of Kipling, where unlimited surplus value is extracted from "the lesser breeds without the Law," not the Beaverbrook Empire of Amalgamated White "Democracies."** The greatest of English imperialist statesmen—Disraeli—once stated that "the keys of India were in London." Today, the large perspective, is, first and foremost, an Indian Ocean, an Oriental Empire.

Below, we trace the main stages in its century-long political and strategical evolution of "the expansion of England," from its original humble status as an obscure island in the North Sea, to its present world-role as master of the Eastern sea-canals: in defence of which there is being fought today what may well be a decisive battle in world-history.

Above, we have used the phrase, "the expansion of England." In this connection we recall the well-known aphorism of that early Philosopher of British Imperialism, Sir Charles Seely, in his well-known book with the above title (1881), viz. that England acquired her Empire in a fit of 'absence of mind.' This famous phrase is, indeed, absolutely indicative of the cunningly-contrived mythology which passes muster to-

day as the authentic record of British history. For never has there been a more deliberately calculated lie than the above-quoted one of the first apologist of British Imperialism. Never, in all history, was there more deliberation, more cunning, and less "accident" than in the sequential ex-

— **By** —

F. A. RIDLEY

Author of "Mussolini over Africa,"
"Fascism—What is it?" etc.

pansion of the British Empire: if "trade follows the flag," equally and by the same logic, Empire, and in time, Imperialism of the most modern type, has followed upon the rise of the British bourgeoisie and of British capital to political power, and to economic maturity.

Assuming, then, that the evolution of Britain's Eastern sea-routes is the central drama of the conversion of the obscure mediaeval North Sea Island into the greatest world-power of the modern epoch, I propose to trace, firstly, the successive stages in the Eastern expansion of British power, secondly, her position today in face of her present challengers.

British sea-power, like the British Empire in general, arose in the mid-17th century as a result of the rise of British (merchant) capital to supreme political power over the British state: its original founder was Oliver Cromwell, the first British dictator in the capitalist interest, who incidentally, gave his class a useful example as to how to solve subsequent colonial problems: we refer, of course, to his conquest of Ireland, England's oldest colony. In 1656-7 Cromwell sent Admiral Blake into the Mediterranean, hitherto a mare incognita to the Atlantic seamen of Northern Europe. This initial occupation did not prove permanent, but, none the less, it served its primary purpose: henceforth, the English bourgeoisie were "Mediterranean-conscious."

In 1688-9, "the Glorious Revolution" put Cromwell's Whig disciples in permanent

power as trustees of the dictatorship of British (Merchant) Capital. In 1704 Britain seized Gibraltar, the Western sea-gate of the Mediterranean, the "Dover" of Spain. From 1704-1941 Britain has "stayed put" in this strategic jumping-off ground for further Oriental expansion, everyone, of course, knows that an act of aggression ceases to be such after a certain time has elapsed!—cp. the standing orders of the League of Nations! (N.B.—We have already reminded readers of "War Commentary" that the capture of Gibraltar by the sailors of Admiral Rooke set at nought the solemn precepts of the "Lord's Day Observance Society." The British rushed the fortress whilst the Spanish garrison was at Mass! Heaven has ratified their sacrilege!)

The wars of the 18th century have made Britain a world-power: in particular, the "Seven Year's War"—1756-63. Concurrently the East India Company set to work on the conquest of India, a task that they presently achieved under the leadership of Clive, that perfect type of a bold bare-faced imperialist brigand. (The concurrent process of Indian and world expansion had its mutual interactions: the Pitt dynasty, which led England to world-power in the 18th century, owed its rise to the famous East Indian "interloper"—a polite synonym for "pirate"—Thomas Pitt, whose theft of the Indian "Pitt Diamond" laid the foundations of the family fortunes. By the end of the 18th century England was supreme in India, and the Eastern sub-continent had become supreme in the British Government's political calculations: "the brightest jewel in the royal diadem" as it has remained ever since.

In 1798 General Buonaparte—the future Emperor Napoleon—forcefully reminded the British oligarchy of the paramount strategic importance of the Eastern sea-routes, for the Egyptian expedition of the great general was, in his own estimation, merely a first move against India, a modern version of the strategy of Alexander the Great. British sea-power narrowly frustrated the greatest of modern strategists. It was no accident that Nelson, immediately after the Battle of the Nile, which dispersed the French Fleet, sent a message overland to India to remove the impression that Buonaparte was coming. The British occupation of Egypt, subsequent to the French withdrawal, proved, it is true, only temporary, none the

less, Malta, that Central Mediterranean stepping-stone to the East already taken by Buonaparte from the Knights of St. John, was retaken by the British, and has been kept—for a century-and-a-half—in trust for the Knights of St. John! "Honesty is the best policy." The present Master of the Order of the Knights of St. John is a pensioner of Mussolini.

Throughout the 19th century British power in the East waxed steadily. China, the East Indies, the East African littoral, felt in turn the weight of the (British) "mailed fist." Providence, which had winked at sacrilege in Gibraltar and Malta, evidently had more "White Man's Burdens" in store for the British power.

From 1869 on, when De Lesseps opened up the Suez Canal, the acquisition of Egypt became a primary necessity for British Imperialist expansion. This major strategic necessity was accomplished in three successive moves: Disraeli acquired the Suez Canal shares—1875; the same astute political strategist simultaneously saved Turkey from Russian expansion to the Mediterranean, and took Cyprus as an openly avowed stepping-stone to Egypt; both at the Congress of—1878. Finally, Disraeli having died in 1881, the succeeding Liberal government of Gladstone conquered Egypt—at Tel-el-Kebir in 1883 (September). Never was the doctrine of "continuity in foreign policy" better illustrated. Not much "accident" about the British conquest of Egypt and the Suez route!

To bring us up to 1941, it merely remains to add that the British conquered the Sudan in 1898. A few years before they took Aden—"Bab-el-Mandeb"—"the Gate of the South"—and the Indian Ocean—significantly, Aden is under the jurisdiction of the Indian government: it links up with Colombo, Singapore, Hong-Kong, in a continuous strategic chain. (The Island of Socotra—opposite Aden—was taken by an amusing trick: a French gunboat was sent to "annex" the unoccupied island of France. The officers dined with the Governor of Aden. When they awoke from their orgy and arrived at their destination, the British flag flew over the island!)

Finally, the 1914-18 war "for the rights of small nations" added vast territories in the Near East—Palestine, Trans-Jordania, Iraq,

to the British territory and/or "protection." And on the very eve of the present war 100,000 square miles in S. Arabia, opposite "Italian East Africa" were annexed by a stroke of the pen as a "democratic" counterpoise to Mussolini's East African aggression in Ethiopia.

Such, in brief outline, was the successive acquisition of the Eastern sea-routes, the life-line of the British World-Empire. Today, the great Island-Colossus is fighting a defensive war against its land-hungry Imperialist rivals, Fascist Germany and Italy (to be sure, at the time of writing Italy seems more or less out of it). Germany, however, is a horse of a different colour: in the present drive towards East by the Third Reich we note the present fusion of two trends of thought, respectively: the military conception of Buonaparte and the political conception of the (former) Second Reich, when Hitler's predecessor, the Hohenzollern Empire, aimed consciously at a Great Eastern Empire via the creation of the "Berlin to Baghdad" line. (As Islam—"Jewish Catholicism," as I have elsewhere styled the creed of the Arabian prophet, is still a major force in these lands. We may expect Hitler to find that the Moslem peoples, despite their physical resemblance to the Jews, are "honorary Aryans" for the duration of the conflict: his predecessor, the ex-Kaiser had already, prior to 1914, promised to defend Mohammed as jealously as Christ in return for the political support of Islam!)

As for the military strategy of the German High Command, we must always remember that Buonaparte is the "spiritual" master of the modern German Army, through the agency of his Prussian disciple General Clausewitz, the classic theoretician of "Prussian Militarism." Subsequent history has strengthened the dictum of Buonaparte that Egypt is Britain's "Achilles' Heel."

We have mentioned General Von Clausewitz. In the present connection, we may relevantly recall his famous aphorism, couched in the very spirit of Buonaparte: "War is the continuation of politics by other means." The leaders and theorists of the Third Reich have fully assimilated this line of politico-strategic thought. In particular, the German geopolitic school, with powerful connections in both military and political circles, has always

realized the vital importance of the Mediterranean in the event of a war against the Western Powers. (In the course of the Spanish War, Charles Duff frequently drew attention to the teachings of this Nazi school of thought in connection with German "intervention"—or was it "non-intervention?"—in the Iberian Peninsula, cp. "The War in Spain").

Finally, Hitler's man-on-the-spot, the German explorer Max Grühl, has indicated the Red Sea littoral as the spot where the death-blow could best be dealt to the British World-Empire. (cp. "The Citadel of Ethiopia" p.1, cited in my book "Mussolini Over Africa"). There is little doubt that the political and military leaders of the Third Reich have taken to heart the suggestion. The Balkans were only a preliminary: it is in Africa that the German disciples of Buonaparte plan their knock-out blow to the elderly colossus which blocks their road, not only to "living-space," but to World-Empire.

Can the successors of Pitt and of Nelson stop the new Buonaparte?—for the Führer of the Third Reich is, beyond question, the most dangerous rival that the British Empire has known since the Imperial Corsican. Not being a prophet, I cannot say. This much, however, can be stated with certainty:

The British Empire in the East was no accident, but, contrarily, was a strategic and economic necessity to rising British Imperialism. The Gibraltar-Suez-Aden sea-route is the jugular vein of the British world-power, whose spectacular rise has been largely due to its brilliant sense for key strategic positions. Once that is cut, the unwieldy Leviathan will infallibly bleed to death. If we consider, as historical justice demands that we should, the evolution of British Imperialism as the major political fact of modern history, then this conclusion necessarily confronts us: the German invasion of Egypt is no mere affair of outposts, it is the life-or-death of the greatest modern empire that is at stake: the culmination of an historic process that dates back to Cromwell and the dawn of British Capitalism. We are on the eve of a decisive battle in world history.

On account of urgent current events, F. A. Ridley is postponing indefinitely the articles on socialist ethics etc., mentioned in his previous article in "War Commentary". In next month's issue he writes on: "Stalin—Red Tsar."

Pacifism at the Crossroads

(Continued from page 11)

bad enough to think of such conscription of workers under State Socialism, and illustrates the bankruptcy of that system compared with anarcho-syndicalism. But conscription of labour under capitalism is simply a reversion to chattel slavery—forced labour not for real or alleged public service, purely and simply, but for the private profit of the capitalists. Once more one wonders what Mr. Miller objects to about Hitler.

They have all those 'blessings' in Germany today, together with the "restrictions now governing property and finance" which (though far less rigid here than those of Hitler) Mr. Miller finds so admirable when applied by the Churchill Government and the Labour Leaders, whom "we may credit . . . with good faith and social awareness."

Some years ago I remember twitting the Editor of the *New Statesman* (who is a pleasant mixture of Fabianism and Gladstonian Liberalism, scented with lavender) with the remark that there was not much difference between the policy that he was advocating and that of Hitler's "National Socialism." To my surprise he said: "No, there isn't much. It's all we can do in the circumstances. The difference will be that it will be done by decent people without the brutality and the anti-semitism." On another occasion F. A. Ridley remarked to me: "Fascism is Fabianism with jack-boots on." I recalled these two observations as I read the last page of Mr. Miller's pamphlet. "Pacifists," he says, "who take any positive line at all will find themselves taking their economics from the *New Statesman* . . ."

Why not Adam Smith? Why not Leviticus? Why not the Tablets of Sinai? What did Mr. Gladstone say in 1888?

Press Fund

MAY, 1941.

WE thank those comrades who have contributed to our Press Fund last month, and in particular the three American groups who saved an otherwise poor month as far as the Press Fund was concerned. Will readers please note that during the coming months our Press Fund will be merged with the special "Freedom Press Reconstruction Fund" and that all contributions to War Commentary Press Fund (and this should be clearly indicated in your letters), though they will be included in the special appeal lists, will be earmarked for War Commentary. If you have not already done so, please turn to page 16 NOW!

London: J.M.	2/6	St. Leonards: J. W.	1/0
Los Angeles: "Man's"		Greenford: H. W.	2/0
Group, L.A.	\$5	Belfast: S.W.	1/3
J.S.	\$5	San Francisco: W. \$5, P.	
	£2/9/5	\$1, P. \$1, P. \$1, Pro-	
Bishops Stortford: M.J.		ceeds Social	\$5—£3/3/0
	1/7	London: J.H.	3/6
Detroit: I Refrattari		London: M.L.B. and	
Group (per I'A)	£4/14/0	V.R.	10/0

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Letter from a C.O.

Dear Comrades,

You suggested some time ago that I might let you know of my experiences "on the land" as a c.o. so having a little spare time I thought I would send you a report.

I have been employed by a War Agricultural Executive Committee since January 20th. As is usual, my pay for the first eight weeks was 38s. per week, and after that 48s. per week. Until March 1 we worked a 48-hour week, now it is a 51-hour one. I might add we do not get paid until the following week, now usually a Thursday.

We are housed in caravans, shortly to be changed to army huts, for which 3s. per week rent is deducted. We have to do all our own housekeeping and cooking. We have many grievances, chief of which, are:—

1. Condensation in the confined space of the caravan is terrible. Books, cloths and blankets get very damp, and this becomes intolerable.
2. Through lack of space, fumes from the oil cooking stoves, produce sore throats, catarrh is prevalent. These stoves blacken everything around.
3. Threats are used to those who are not considered to be working enough. One other c.o. and I, have twice been threatened with a transfer to a worse job unless we worked harder. According to our foreman, once on the instigation of a head foreman, and once on the instigation of a direct representative of the committee. Strangely enough, both of us were the only political objectors in the camp!
4. C.o.'s from other parts of the country are not allowed to transfer to committee's nearer home. In winter, cases of blankets actually freezing during the night have been reported.

At present I am working on one of the many derelict farms in the area.

One thing is certain, unless the scandalous conditions are improved before long, trouble can be expected in these camps.

Yours fraternally,

A.McC.

WAR COMMENTARY

and other

FREEDOM PRESS

publications

are obtainable at

LAHR'S BOOKSHOP

12 Little Newport Street, W.C.1.

(by Leicester Square Underground Station)

Owing to pressure of space we are regretably compelled to hold over till next month Dinah Stock's article on Gandhi's work and the editorial comment mentioned in a previous issue.

Freedom Press Reconstruction

IN London in 1886, a group of Anarchists, which included Peter Kropotkin, founded a monthly paper entitled "FREEDOM," and with it FREEDOM PRESS came into being. Since that date hundreds of thousands of books and pamphlets have borne the imprint of FREEDOM PRESS.

On May 10th 1941, the fruits of that work were destroyed in a night by fire-bombs. It is perhaps incorrect to say that everything has been destroyed, because since 1886 thousands of FREEDOM PRESS PUBLICATIONS have been distributed throughout the world, and have actively assisted in the spreading of the ideals of Anarchism. But the position at the present time is that our stock of pamphlets and books published during the past five years, apart from a few hundred copies, has been destroyed, besides many thousand copies of the well known pamphlets published by FREEDOM PRESS in the '20s. In addition, our complete stock of books by other publishers have been lost.

As readers will readily appreciate, this has come as a great blow to us and is a loss to the movement as a whole. It has also imposed a tremendous financial responsibility on the comrades connected with Freedom Press.

AT an emergency meeting of FREEDOM PRESS it was decided that, though we could never hope to reprint all the publications destroyed, we were confident that there would be sufficient encouragement and assistance forthcoming to warrant our reprinting some of the more important and topical FREEDOM PRESS publications. We are beginning with Herbert Read's **PHILOSOPHY OF ANARCHISM** and F. A. Ridley's

NOTE: ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE "FREEDOM PRESS RECONSTRUCTION FUND" SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO FREEDOM PRESS AND ADDRESSED TO US AT 9, NEWBURY ST., LONDON, E.C.1

FASCISM—WHAT IS IT? both of which are still in great demand (2,000 copies of Ridley's pamphlet were sold in the first month of publication). We propose to follow with a series of pamphlets on Anarchism and other subjects. **BUT**, and here we come to the

most important factor, **WE NEED YOUR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE FINANCIALLY, AND LATER, YOUR HELP IN THE WORK OF DISTRIBUTING OUR PUBLICATIONS.**

FREEDOM PRESS is run by a group of voluntary workers so that not one penny is used for administrative charges. We stress this fact in order to convince our comrades and sympathisers of our complete disinterestedness in appealing for financial support. We will do the work willingly and enthusiastically if you will supply us with the money to buy paper and pay for printing charges!

Our loss in hard cash cannot be easily estimated owing to the present scarcity of paper and its prohibitive cost. But it runs into hundreds of pounds sterling. And to make matters more difficult, our deficit on **WAR COMMENTARY** now totals £70.

Yet we felt that if only those comrades and friends

amongst our readers would show their solidarity with the work done by FREEDOM PRESS during all these difficult years, then not only would our finances be stabilised, but also our conviction strengthened that the work done by FREEDOM PRESS is a useful contribution to the new society we all long to see.

We need £500 in the course of the next six months for FREEDOM PRESS to stand once more on its feet. It may seem a lot to expect these days, but we are sure it can be done, more so as we have many readers in all parts of the world. Let it be an International effort for the cause of Internationalism!

FREEDOM PRESS Group.

They have already Responded!

Within a few days of the news of the destruction of Freedom Bookshop and of our stock of Freedom Press publications a number of comrades and friends responded magnificently. Below we publish the first list, a short one due to the fact that the majority of our friends will only know of the destruction of our stock on reading the present issue of **WAR COMMENTARY**.

FREEDOM PRESS RECONSTRUCTION FUND

1st LIST

1. London Group of workers (per T.B.) £1.0.0
2. London: T.B. 10/-
3. Stroud: L.G.W. £5.0.0
4. Crawley: J.C.W.C. £5.0.0