

# WAR

# For Anarchism

# COMMENTARY

VOL. 3 No. 16

MID-JULY 1942

TWOPENCE.

## Vigilance in Factories

### *Shop Stewards must organise to Defend Workers' Interests*

**W**E SYNDICALISTS are often asked "*what your attitude to the trade unions now, do you wish to destroy them or transform them?*"

Let us give up illusions; the trade unions cannot be "captured" or "transformed". At the beginning of the war, the government, returning the support given it by the labour leaders, formed certain laws to safeguard these leaders against the rank-and-file. After consultation between the Registrar of Friendly Societies and the General Council of the T.U.C., the Societies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1940 became law. Under this Act the trade union leaders may, if they feel they are in danger from any rank-and-file movement, cease to hold meetings, conferences or election of officers. To carry out these dictatorial measures they have only to receive the consent of the Registrar. To "capture" the trade unions is more difficult than storming the Bastille.

This matters little to Syndicalists who do not desire the jobs and salaries of the trade union officials as do the Communists. Nor do we Syndicalists desire the millions of capital in the trade union funds. Our aspirations are not of that world. But there is one part of the trade union movement which is not yet entirely lost to the class struggle of the workers, the shop steward movement.

It is true that the Communist Party by its factory activities has brought this name into deep disrepute. In many factories the name is even more hated than that of the worst labour leader, but in other factories there remain thousands of stewards who are faithful to the workers and are honoured by their workmates. Why then, have the Communists been able to drive out or outvote the decent stewards

on so many occasions?

First; the Communists act as a fraction, the other stewards usually act as lone rangers. Since the first days of the Communist International, the Bolsheviks have acted thus.

Lozovsky (now Soviet Minister of Information) says in "Marx and the Trade Unions" "When the Unitary Confederation of Labour of France made it a condition of its affiliation to the Red International of Labour Unions that, the mutual representation between the Executive of the Comintern and the R.I.L.U. be abolished, we, on the advice of Lenin, made this concession."

"Experience has shown that it is better to carry out a correct policy through a Communist fraction, than through the mutual representation." Since then the Communists have always worked as a fraction, with all the jerry-wangling that goes with such. When they could not get their own way, they have attempted to break up the organisation by use of these fractions, as in the well known cases of the Scottish Mineworkers, the London Garment Workers and the London Trades Council.

Secondly; the Communists have carried out a regular whispering campaign against loyal shop stewards, insinuating and suggesting, but never openly accusing.

Thirdly; the Communists have packed shop-stewards meetings with party members who have not been elected as stewards and even introduced persons who were not employed in the factory (at a meeting of a North London Aircraft factory, they smuggled in the local window cleaner). They

**Comment on the Spanish Revolution**  
**Rally to Holborn Hall, Sunday, 19th July, 7.30 p.m.**



have also created fake shop steward organisations, such as the Aircraft Shop Steward National Council, now called the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council. This high sounding body has nothing whatever to do with the Trade Union movement and was for many years run by an ex-furrier Zinkin, (that is how his name is pronounced, we never saw him sign it), who never saw the inside of an engineering factory.

Fourthly; the Communists have created disgust and apathy at first among the decent shop stewards who have too often slipped away one by one, and then among the mass of the workers who have become indifferent and disappointed and so allowed the Communists to have their will.

Now signs of revolt against the Stalinist rot are appearing it is necessary for loyal shop stewards and other militant workers to gather together their forces. To combat the fraction they too must organise, though not to create another fraction. Before the development of the Communist Party it was possible for stewards of widely different views to trust one another, and work together; Syndicalists, S.L.Pers, I.L.Pers, Labour Party men, and a host of men without labels. It is still possible for such, while disagreeing politically, to stand together in a fight for the protection of wages and working conditions and against the betrayals of the Stalinists.

Against their whispering campaigns of "character assassination" it is only possible to be successful

by coming out before ones fellow-workers and forcing the Communists to make their accusations in daylight. Challenge them to open debate!—

### THEY ALWAYS REFUSE.

But the strongest card of the true shop steward is the rousing of the workers in the factories in defence of their livelihood. To arouse them to resist wage cuts and the intensified exploitation of the "production" merchants; to arouse them to resist workshop tyranny and the slave system of transferring labour, this is our task. But it is also our safeguard against Bolshevik intrigue. Where the workers are alert and on the move, the Stalinists will find it most difficult to intrigue and "sacrifice" them. Where the workers are apathetic, the Stalinists may safely plot and carry out their puppet shows.

We ask those ex-stewards who feel too disgusted to carry on, to consider a possible future with Bolshevism triumphant. It is true that the Communist Party here can never gain power of itself, but by becoming, as it is, the jackal of the Conservative Party, it could introduce all the tyrannies of Bolshevism. The factory spy, the police spy, the O.G.P.U. (on which is modelled the Gestapo) political assassination, intensified labour, compulsory state trade unions, the suppression of free speech and the dread of ones neighbour. Are we to watch in dull indifference, while this sordid tyranny grows fat with the subsidies of the ruling class? Better be dead than be a slave.

## HELP FREEDOM PRESS TO CARRY ON

*From all parts of the country we receive letters from readers encouraging us to carry on with our work, which they consider valuable to the workers struggle. But a tremendous number of our readers fail to realise that to produce WAR COMMENTARY (which we think can safely say is the best twopenny worth amongst the 'Left' publications) and turn out 120 page booklets like the A.B.C. of Anarchism at one shilling, and well produced pamphlets like G. Woodcock's New Life to the Land, costs a considerable amount of money, which we must somehow raise amongst our sympathisers if we are to continue at the present rate of production.*

*Other Left publications have reduced their papers by a half and charge the same price. WAR COMMENTARY now carries nearly twice as much material, as it did in the early numbers. This has been achieved by using smaller type, by making the columns a little wider and slightly lengthening the columns. The costs have increased, but the paper is still 2d. If you think WAR COMMENTARY worth while, and our ideas worthy of your solidarity, then*

*send as much as you can afford to our Press Fund. We asked for £500 by the end of the year. At the end of six months we have not yet reached the halfway mark. Will you help us to catch up?*

### PRESS FUND, JUNE 1942.

East Sheen: J.E.R.	2	6	Sheffield: H.B.	5	0
Gloucester: T.C.	2	0	Oxford: P.E.		6
Oxford: F.E.	1	0	London: G.S.	5	0
London: V.P.	10	0	Kidderminster:		
Manchester: J.E.B.	2	0	D.M.B.	7	6
Ilford: F.S.	2	1	Glasgow: J. McM.		6
London: G.G.	10	0	Northwood: E.H.	1	4
Reading: I.B.	1	0	London: V.R.	5	0
Oxford: F.E.	2	6	Goodmayes: A.W.		6
Penzance: R.A.	10	0	London: per J.H.	5	0
Anon.	5	0	Stroud: L.S.W.	1	0
Leicester: H.C.		6	London: Sympathiser		
Acton: E.W.P.	1	0	per C.L.	1	0
Dublin: S.R.K.	15	0	Stroud: P.P.	2	6
London Hyde Park				£	s. d.
Sympathisers	5	7	TOTAL for Month:		
London: J.H.	5	0		23	18 6
London: W.J.P.	2	6	TOTAL to Date		
London E.1: F.P.	5	0		193	6 10



# This Reconstruction Business by Ethel MANNIN

THE BRITISH are a very curious people. Once, you may remember, they were going to hang out their washing on the Siegfried Line; nothing much may be said to have come of that except a short-lived popular song success. Now the popular theme-song would appear to be,

The more we are defeated

The more sanguine we will be ! ! '

Every fresh defeat is followed by a fresh wave of optimism, and renewed reconstruction and retribution talk. Once it was the U.S.S.R. that was going to save us; now it is the U.S.A. Once it was air supremacy, now, it seems, it is the long-talked-of and long-agitated-for Second Front. The ejection of the British from Norway and France is now old history; since then there has been Greece, Crete, Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Libya. Said the *News Chronicle* after the fall of Tobruk, 'Whenever we have come up against Hitler's forces, or against the Japanese, there has been the same monotonous record of defeat.' Back in February last a writer in *The Observer*, (London) was pointing out that there was 'no Divinely appointed ruling to the effect that the British shall never lose a war.' That was after the fall of Singapore. The 'dismal record', as the *News Chronicle* called it, goes on, and still the British babble o' green fields—the green fields of post war reconstruction, that land fit for heroes of which we heard so much in the last world-war (the one that was to end war, if you remember) With Rommel gathering his forces for what must almost certainly be the decisive battle of Egypt, with Alexandria and Suez threatened (no sooner had Rommel swept on into Egypt after the fall of Tobruk than the *Daily Telegraph* hastened to assure its readers that if Alexandria fell it would not close the Mediterranean to the Allies—there were other ports available) we find the *Daily Telegraph* for July 11th detailing plans of 'six-track highways linking London with every other great city, running through a series of green belts' as 'the foundation of post-war replanning'. Ministers and M.P.'s are always telling us, at austerity banquets, how, after the war, public schools are going to be made really public, so that every errand-boy may have an old-school tie and, 'tis to be hoped, a Varsity accent; how country houses, the stately homes of England, are to be handed over to the nation, and a good time, generally, to be had by all. Suggestions on the design, planning and equipment of houses and flats, after the war, were invited by a special sub-committee set-up by the Ministry of

Health's Central Housing Advisory Committee quite early this year.

During the last war there was the same confident talk, the same fine promises; and when it was all over, we had what was called a 'Reconstruction Government'. We had two million unemployed, a trade slump, and all over the country mushroom growths of jerry-built houses, and a nightmare of ribbon development along the new by-passes, desecrating the English countryside. Men wearing Mons ribbons hawked matches in the gutter, ex-officers turned the handles of barrel-organs and tried to sell vacuum cleaners from door to door . . . . But the masses have no memory. Or have they? Not even politicians can fool all the people all the time, and pie in the sky is all very well, but when the bread gets worse, and the eggs disappear finally in the Great Egg-Muddling Scheme (eggs, we are told, are going to be scarce 'during the next two years of war' Surely this is a misprint for wars will be scarce during the next two years of eggs?—in that visionary era of prosperity ahead of us?) the pie-in-the-sky may become less palatable. It is not, after all, very nourishing fare.

Reconstruction promises, and retribution threats—conferences of the United Nations to be called to settle war-guilt, and punish with the utmost rigidity of the law', to use Mr. Brendon Bracken's words, those responsible for atrocities, such conferences and tribunals will be presided over, no doubt, by Dr. Temple and Cardinal Hinsley—all made in the assumption that in the face of evidence to the contrary the United Nations will win this war between rival Fascisms. . . . When the last out-post of Empire totters there will still be British ministers to babble o'green belts, and how many hens per head the backyard poultry-keeper (having been previously advised to keep hens and help the nation's egg supply) is to be allowed to keep. . . .

But by then, perhaps, the masses will come out of their press and radio hypnotised coma and realise that it is not the hens' necks that are in need of wringing, but the politicians'; that, to parody John Ball, thing will never go well in England (or anywhere else) so long as there be politicians and governments. So long as there exists the monstrous machine called the State to grind the masses into submission by which it is kept alive—like some hideous monster that thrives on human beings.

We need reconstruction, all right, but a reconstruction not dreamed of in the politicians' philo-



sophy. We need reconstruction from the bottom, from the common people, not from the top. It is not what sort of government we are to have after the war, but how to get rid of all centralised government. The need is for a people's reconstruction program—which can only be effected through workers' control of industry through their own syndicates, and to hell with trade-union bosses, along with the politicians. In short, the reconstruction represented by complete social revolution. All else is mere reformism. 'A socialist Britain now! 'cries the I.L.P., and, as Damon Runyon would say, it means nothing, it does not mean anything. The Labour Party have been talking loosely of 'socialism' for years, and increasingly since the war. The I.L.P. wants 'a workers' government' . . . as though Russia was not enough. It clamours in Marxist language for 'a dictatorship of the proletariat' and dictatorship is an ugly word, and one which can never have anything to do with freedom. No need to go to Stalinist Russia for example; the T.U.C. is a pretty good example of the dictatorship of the proletariat—a dictatorship that refuses to support strikes in war-time so as not to hinder the capitalist—imperialist war-effort.

Whether or not this country after the war is in the position to carry out its reconstruction program for which so many blueprints are now being made, is of no importance whatsoever; if it is in a position—which would seem highly doubtful—the whole thing can amount to no more than so much reformism, whatever government may sponsor it. The basic evils will remain untouched, the many still exploited by the few. The only reconstruction of any real lasting value to the masses is *reconstruction of the whole social system into a stateless society*—that is to say an anarchist society in which men are not governed but govern themselves in the natural discipline of a true communism, whose creed is not competition but co-operation, not Marxism but mutual aid. Such a reconstruction flourished in Catalonia for a short time during the Civil War, until its superb, exciting promise was smashed by the Republican Government and the Stalinists in unholy alliance. Such a reconstruction could flourish in this country if the people had the will to emancipate themselves from the T.U. bosses on the one hand and politicians on the other . . . . .

#### APC)LOGY TO OUR READERS

We apologise to our readers (and also to the authors of the articles) for the great number of misprints in the July issue of War Commentary. This was due to some technical trouble at our printers, and we hope it will not occur in the future.

#### CHILD LABOUR ON THE LAND

"The Central Executive of the W.E.A., has passed the following resolution at its meeting on Saturday, May 29:

"The Central Executive of the Workers' Educational Association deplores the Government's decision to allow children of 12 years and over to be exempted from school attendance for seasonal work in agriculture. In particular it protests against the provisions by which (a) persons other than parents of a child may arrange for its employment, thus depriving evacuated children of a safeguard given to those living at home; (b) the period of exemption may be extended beyond 20 half-days; and (c) prior medical inspection of the children has not been enforced. It urges the Board of Education to insist strictly on the provision that children should not be released from school so long as any other source of labour is available, and to press for the early withdrawal of the Defence Regulation."

#### CABBAGES WASTED!

"Devon farmers who have grown cabbages for which they can find no buyers, except at the ridiculous and uneconomic price of 5s. cwt., will find no consolation in the explanation of Mr. G. C. Hayter-Hames, chairman of the County War Agricultural Committee, that re-organization of the market has not reached the stage to be able to cope with increased production.

They are the more indignant because of the fact that while they are offered about 3d. per cabbage, the retail price has been as high as 7d. Something must be radically wrong somewhere.

No new problem is involved, although difficulties may have been accentuated by war conditions. Several years ago, it will be remembered, there was a cry for more home-produced vegetables, and when supplies were increased, a considerable surplus which could not be marketed was fed to cattle and pigs."

*The Western Morning News 6/7/42*

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# CHURCHILL FORGETS

## by TOM BROWN

This article by Tom Brown was published in *REVOLT!* (June 3rd 1939). It is extremely topical at the present moment as it foresaw the Alliance between Communists and Tories which we see realized to day, when Communists urge people to vote for conservative candidates and call anybody who dares to criticize Churchill, fifth columnists and Nazi agents! The C.P. is just as anxious to forget the past as Mr. Churchill himself. But it is for the workers to remember his long record as an enemy of the revolution and the working class, and to realize that such a man cannot lead them to the crushing of fascism, but can only bring reaction both at home and abroad.

**A**NARCHISTS have always pointed out that reformists who begin by supporting mildly reactionary politicians against more open reactionaries end by supporting the most bitter enemies of the workers. It is the inevitable course of parliamentarism. The Communist Party which began by shouting "Vote for MacDonald" passing through support of the Labour Party to support of the Liberals, now demands a government inclusive of (and that would really mean led by) the worst Conservative politicians and counter-revolutionaries, the bitter, unforgetting class enemies of the workers.

At meetings, in the "Daily Worker" and in 250,000 handbills, the C.P. through its Secretary, Harry Pollitt, calls "Let Attlee, Sinclair and Churchill get together without another minute's delay and express their readiness to form a new Government of the People". We must defend our country" cries the disciple of Marx and Lenin.

Churchill has been for a long while the especial darling of the Communist Party. Before he becomes the C.P. nominated Prime Minister let us consider his long record of attacks on liberty and labour, that we may know the blows to be delivered on our backs.

We are at once faced by an embarrassment of riches. It is like reading the life of some celebrated pirate. To what blood-stained page shall we turn?

We might consider the arming of the South Wales police against the miners and the shooting of the Featherstone miners. We might choose his Dardanelles gamble, an adventure without any military value, one bound to fail, which, while leaving Mr. Churchill safe, cost 40,000 lives. Was it incompetence or ambition gone mad? We might pick out his attacks on the workers in the General Strike of 1926 or prefer a short account of his part in organising the Black and Tan terror in Ireland, a terror worse than that of Hitler's Storm Troops. Or shall we be tempted to a remembrance of his slanderous attacks on the Spanish people during their heroic fight against Fascism? Let us put aside these tempting offers, the most sanguinary pages of the Churchill story are those which tell of his attacks on the Russian Revolution.

In the early days of the Russian Revolution, while Germany was still at war with the Western Allies and Russia, the French and British "democratic" governments sent armed forces to overthrow the Russian Revolution, so the Russians faced British as well as German forces. The government made war without declaring war and continued to do so years after the war officially "ceased". It was exactly similar to the "non-intervention" of the Fascist powers in Spain.

Of all the organisers of intervention in Russia from 1918 to 1922 Churchill stands out as the greatest and

most bitter counter-revolutionary. On July 27th, 1920, he wrote an article for the "Evening News" entitled "The Poison Peril from the East" in which he advocated an alliance of France, Britain and Germany against Russia. Now, he calls for an alliance of France, Britain and Russia against Germany and dines at the Russian Embassy sipping his soup with fear of the "poison from the east".

Of course, they did not make war against Russia, they just "non-intervened". Says Mr. Churchill "Were they (the Allies) at war with Soviet Russia? Certainly not; but they shot Soviet Russians at sight. They stood as invaders on Russian soil. They armed the enemies of the Soviet Government. They blockaded its ports, and sunk its battleships. But war-shocking! Interference — shame! It was, they repeated, a matter of indifference to them how Russians settled their own internal affairs" (*The World Crisis: The Aftermath*, by Winston S. Churchill, p.235).

During the greater period of intervention, Churchill was Secretary of State for War. Not only were the British troops sacrificed in Russia, but he also presented arms and supplies to the Czarist generals who were fighting against the revolution. From statements made by Churchill in the House of Commons those supplies must have cost the British taxpayers over £100,000,000. Just one item: "British ships with stores continued to arrive at Vladivostok up till October 1919, and during that year the total amount supplied or carried in British vessels to the Siberian armies amounted to nearly a hundred thousand tons of arms, ammunition, equipment and clothing" (*The World Crisis* W. Churchill p. 247).

The leading Czarist generals were Koltchak and his lieutenant Denikin, but Koltchak had another lieutenant, the British Secretary of State for War, General Golvin a Czarist officer reports an interview with that official on May 1st, 1919:

"He, (Churchill) declared 'I am myself carrying out Admiral Koltchak's orders'" (*Daily News, Daily Herald, and Manchester Guardian*, July 3rd. 1920).

Four hundred pages of information like this may be found in W. P. Coates book "Armed Intervention in Russia" published by Victor Gollancz Ltd., but that was before Mr. Gollancz became the profit of the Left Book Club:

Now, while Jewish workers are being urged into war against Germany under the leadership of Churchill, let them remember how Koltchak and Denikin and the other generals supplied with British arms, used them not only against Russian Revolutionaries, workers and peasants, but against the Jewish people in the greatest pogroms of (continued on page 12)



## GIVE YOUTH A CHANCE!

"Grand Old Man of Scottish politics the Rev. James Barr, M.P., for Coatbridge, was congratulated in the Commons yesterday on his approaching 80th birthday.

Mr. Barr, reputed to be the most popular of platform speakers among Scots boilermakers—who are mostly hard of hearing—said last night:

"I'm the oldest Scottish M.P., and I've been in the House since 1924. I hope to make a record by staying there a lot longer —because I'm not going to get out of politics until I can't even crawl to the House"

*News Chronicle* 9/7/42.

## 64,000 C.O.'s.

"Mr. Bevin Minister of Labour, was asked in the Commons how many men and women had registered as conscientious objectors in the present war compared with the number of men in the last war.

He said he had only approximate figures for 1914-18, when about 16,000 men claimed to be conscientious objectors, and about 6,000 were refused exemption from military service.

During this war between 63,000 and 64,000 had applied to be registered as conscientious objectors. Up to June 6 tribunals had registered 26,123 as conscientious objectors either unconditionally or on condition that they undertook specific civil work and 13,221 others as liable for non-combatant service.

Of the women in the age groups being called up under the National Service Acts, 1714 had applied to be registered as conscientious objectors, and up to June 6 last 83 had been registered, either conditionally or unconditionally." *Evening Times* 9/7/42.

## TOWARDS INFLATION

"A further increase of £5,564,549 in the note circulation, bringing the total for the first time over £800,000,000, was recorded in the Bank return this week.

No doubt half-yearly adjustments had something to do with this latest increase, but the total is becoming ominous. If the normal July increase is experienced—last year it was £23,658,743—we shall be near exhaustion of the Fiduciary Issue of £830,000,000, and a further expansion will become necessary.

Inflation has so far been held at bay. But the danger is obvious. Huge Government expenditure, rising wages, and excessive spending despite restrictions, all combine with the growing volume of money in circulation as warning signals."

*Observer* 5/7/42

## TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK!

"The industrial resources of the Ruhr, together with some of the neighbour countries, should be worked by an international syndicate after the war, the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested when he spoke on post-war reconstruction to the Foreign Press Association in London.

"There ought to be, by whatever judicial procedure can be devised, the certainty of bringing to just punishment those who are really guilty of the atrocities in the occupied countries.

"Otherwise we shall go into the future without having that necessarily stern expression of justice which effects such as these cry aloud for.

"The responsibility that will be laid by victory in this war on the victorious nations will be immense."

*Daily Mirror* 8/7/42.

## N.A.A.F.I. CAN AFFORD TO WASTE!

"At a meeting of a South-West Council yesterday, the sanitary inspector reported that during the past month he had condemned 72 slabs of cake, weighing over 5 cwt. In reply to a member, he stated that the cake had been collected from a N.A.A.F.I., canteen in the district."

*Western Morning News* 8/7/42.

*Soldiers who can't afford N.A.A.F.I. canteens at the end of the week, please note.*

## FIRE-WATCH OBJECTOR GETS TWO MONTHS

"Horace Arthur Watson, school teacher, of Holme-wood, Horsham, Sussex, who claimed a conscientious objection against doing fire-watching, was sentenced to two months' imprisonment at Horsham to-day for refusing to do firewatching.

He objected to conscription, and said: "I intend to resist the attempts of the State to override everything for that is not freedom: it is not democracy; it is totalitarianism." *Evening Standard* 10/7/42.

# Through

## RUSSIANS LEARN ABOUT US.

"The process of getting information to the Russian public about Great Britain is making some headway. Moscow radio has recently devoted special transmissions to Russian translations of English poetry. Books on British history appear in great numbers on the shelves of Russian booksellers. A new "Hamlet" translation by the brilliant Soviet poet Boris Pasternak is in preparation. Special publications are also announced devoted to the "celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the Cromwellian Revolution."

*Observer* 5/7/42

## EQUALITY IN THE ARMY

Under the heading of "Caste in Army denied", the *Daily Telegraph* of July 10th reported the following item of news raised in Parliament.

A corporal who had escaped Dunkirk, had admitted taking two gallons of petrol for his motor-cycle when he went to see his wife. After 31 days under arrest, he was courtmartialled and sentenced to six months detention, besides having 3/7 deducted from his pay and being reduced to the ranks. All this was confirmed by the G.O.C. and his sentence reduced to three months.

An officer in the same unit, guilty of the same offence was sentenced by court-martial to be dismissed the Service. This sentence was confirmed by the G.O.C., and immediately reduced to a severe reprimand.

Sir James Grigg, Minister of War, said in reply to the query of the M.P., who raised the matter, "This officer was over 50 and dismissal would have fallen on him with great severity at his age, and he would have had the greatest difficulty in living down his disgrace and finding any means of livelihood."

Of course, the corporal, now reduced to a private, and serving a long prison sentence will find everything in the garden lovely, when he is released!



## HALIFAX KEEPS OLD SCHOOL TIE FLYING

"A letter from Washington brings news of how the Old Etonians there celebrated the Fourth of June. Lord Halifax, it appears, was determined that the day should be kept with all its O.E. glory. From the highways and byways, 24 Old Etonians were invited to the Embassy for a celebration dinner. The Embassy chief, I am told, excelled himself for the occasion, and when dinner was over Lord Halifax and his guests sang the Eton Boating Song."

*Evening Standard 2/7/42.*

## GOVERNMENT INEFFICIENCY—20,000 TONS OF POTATOES ROTTING !

"John Barnes, of King's Lynn, writes to the 'Farmers' Weekly.'—Next week approximately 1,000 tons of early potatoes will be loaded in this King's Lynn-Wisbech District.

Normally, the bulk of this crop is sent to the London markets. This season the Ministry of Food Potato Section have ordered all new potatoes grown in this district to the Midland and Northern markets. They can only be forwarded by the Ministry's collecting dealers at this end,

# the Press

who will arrange for salesmen in the district specified to find bags, and dispose of the crop.

The Ministry accepts no responsibility as to prices or payment to growers. While a maximum controlled price is imposed for each week of loading, no minimum price is fixed to be paid to the grower.

Consequently, the grower will receive whatever price these unknown potato salesmen care to send him. If one particular market happens to be overloaded with consignments, the grower may be brought to debt for rail and commission as has been the case of spring cabbage.

*Since the war began, no industry has had such chaotic conditions imposed upon it as the potato producers have experienced.*

*In this King's Lynn-Wisbech area no less than 20,000 tons of last year's crop of best siltland potatoes are rotting in the clamps on the farms."*

*The Cornishman 8/7/42*

## "DEMOCRACY" IN THE A.T.S.

"A fine old house in a London square has been taken over by the military authorities for one of the women's services.

The authorities, however, see to it that its residential atmosphere is not debased. The front entrance must only be used by the little lady officers. The girls in the ranks must climb up the iron stairs at the rear of the premises.

The Women's Services are even less democratic than the Army itself; and this silly snob attitude of mind with its distorted values is being consciously cultivated by the women in control. I have even heard of A.T.S. girls whose duties amount to nothing more or less than acting as personal maids to A.T.S. officers.

Still, if Army officers can employ men in the ranks as kennel boys I suppose A.T.S., officers can have personal maids at public expense."

*Tribune 3/7/42.*

## FROM THE HEADLINES.

*The men who are "the salt of the earth" are trained to be tough—*

### PRIVATE RAPPES

*("a most quiet, inoffensive boy")*

### STRANGLED A JAP

*Daily Express.*

## SOLDIERS' RIGHTS

"Crech Jones asked a question of some importance to members of the Forces. According to correspondence received by many Members, men in the Army seem to be under the impression that they are debarred from their civil right of writing to the newspapers on political or social matters. Indeed, some Commanding Officers have told the men serving under them that they are not allowed to do so. Crech Jones's question should clear the matter up for good. He asked the Secretary of State for War, "Whether Commanding Officers have any authority to prevent or discourage a member of the Armed Forces from having letters or articles published in the Press under his own name, on other, than Army matters." Sir James Grigg answered, definitely, No."

*Tribune 3/7/42.*

## WAGES IN THE COTTON INDUSTRY

"An application from the cotton spinners and card-room workers for an advance of 16½ per cent, or 3s. 4d. in the £, came before the National Arbitration Tribunal on April 29th, and the claim was rejected.

Latest figures of average earnings in the industry, at July 1941 were;

Men, 78/5; Women, 44/7; Boys, 38/3; Girls, 29/2; All workers, 52/4.

The average rise in wage rates since the war (to April, 1942) was 35 per cent.

Profits of some leading concerns in the industry published over the last few months give some idea of the benefits war conditions have brought to the owners. The eight companies whose results are shown below increased their total profits (in the majority of cases after tax) from £941,000 to £2,616,000, or almost three times over.

*Total Profit (where available) in £000s, and Ordinary Dividend.*

	1938-39	1941-42
Fine Cotton Spinners	Nil.	635 (3 p.c.)
Engl. Sewing Cotton	-135 (7½ p.c.)	*211 (7½ p.c.)
British Cotton & Wool Dyers	‡149 (3½ p.c.)	205 (5 p.c.)
Barlow & Jones	‡45 (5 p.c.)	52 (17½ p.c.)
Lacs. Cotton Corp.	‡308 (nil)	‡713 (7½ p.c.)
Horrockses Crewdson	‡95 (nil)	‡131 (nil)
Amalgamated Cotton Mills Trust	186 (11.5 p.c.)	615 (16.66 p.c.)
Hollins Mill	*23 (nil)	*54 (5 p.c.)
*Net ‡ After E.P.T.	‡ After tax	

*Labour Research July 1942.*

## "MILITARY MANNEQUINS"

"I found that the A.T.S., the W.A.A.F., and the W.R.N.S., all have (1) regular church parades, generally followed by a march past the local commandants, with salute-taking ceremonial; (2) special parades on the arrival of new O.C.'s and the departure of old ones; (3) one or two weekly routine parades; (4) special parades whenever the women chiefs of the Services visit stations, as they do regularly.

In addition, the W.R.N.S. claims to be unique in having daily "Divisions" (morning prayers parade), at its reception and training centres."

*Star 30/6/42.*



# 19th July 1936

SIX YEARS have passed since the Spanish workers rushed to the barricades, and inaugurated the Spanish Revolution. Pretences and hypocrisies by governments and political parties; lies and distortions by the kept Press; slander and abuse by the supporters of privilege and authority; all have helped to obscure the great light for the world in the most momentous event in social history since, on July 14th 1789 the citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille.

The sudden revolt by monarchist and clerical supporters of the old regime in Spain, against the weak and feeble Republican Government, looked like being the usual switch over of power. But the supporters of General Franco found themselves against an unexpected obstacle; the workers and peasants of Spain. They rushed to meet the onslaught of the Army and the Church, with Scythes and kitchen-knives, antique muskets and hatchets. They stormed the barricades in Barcelona and Madrid, and took the arms from the opposing soldiers. Many of the Army deserted; attacked its officers, and declared itself with the people. In the ships, the sailors followed suit. General Franco met a serious military defeat. The common people had taken control.

The Republican Government could not face the situation. Its cabinets changed and re-changed before the pressure of events. It had to acknowledge that the people were in control. Spain, stronghold of anarchism, was in revolt. The workers seized control of the industries; the peasants took the land from the landowners. The industries and the land were run by the people working on them. The militias were the armed workers themselves. The force that ruled free Spain—in particular, Catalonia—was the force of the people themselves.

International capitalism saw its enemy, but the international working-class did not see its friend. World fascism rushed troops to aid General Franco. The British, American and French capitalists, though many of their spokesmen foresaw the inevitable clash between rival imperialisms, in effect aided and abetted the fascist interventionists. Better destroy the revolution than safeguard imperial interests, since the revolution will in its turn destroy imperialism.

The workers of the world did not respond to the revolutionary lead of the Spanish workers. In particular, the fault for this lies with the Communist Parties, and their allies, in their world drive for a "People's Front", with the bourgeoisie and the worst political riff-raff, in the name of "Spain" admitted-

ly, but in effect not to help Spain, but to help Russian interests by offsetting Germany's anti-Comintern pact. They used the name of Spain for the glamour which the heroic resistance of the Spanish workers and peasants had given it; and behind their every word lay, not the interests of Spain, but the interests of Stalin.

In Spain itself the Communist Party pressed forward its Popular Front policy; not in order to win the war, but to destroy the revolution. It suited Russia to have a friendly France; therefore France's wish must be respected: there must be no revolutionary Spain on the frontier; Through the work of reaction by the Communist Party and its "Socialist" satellites and through the compromises which one by one the revolutionary workers accepted in order not to cause an internal struggle, the reactionaries won; the Communist Party, after the May Days of 1937, was in control. The bourgeoisie were re-established (although the work of revolutionary reconstruction could not be completely destroyed) and finally lost the struggle. Fascism, was established, and Hitler and Mussolini built a vassal state with the aid of British "non-intervention".

The Spanish revolution was destroyed by reactionaries of all shades; but its memory must not be destroyed. While it lasted, the Press completely boycotted (after the first few months) any news of the anarcho-syndicalist workers, their achievements and their ideas. Except where it was considered that "anarchist" had a certain "scary" value, the Press ignored and boycotted the plain facts of anarchist revolution in Spain. Nevertheless, the Spanish revolution is still a beacon for the revolutionary workers to-day.

In Spain, in France, in Britain, in "occupied" and "colonised" territories, throughout the whole world, the Spanish Revolution stands as a precursor to the next social revolution, the upheaval of the class-conscious masses through the world: the World Revolution.

The principles of the World Revolution must be the same as those that animated the Spanish Revolution:

The belief in freedom; in social organisation; in the workers of each industry controlling the industry in which they work; in common ownership; in voluntary co-operation.

And there must be two more principles, whose absence alone was fatal to the Spanish Revolution: International solidarity, and No Compromise with the forces of reformism or reaction.

**The Spanish Workers rose in arms  
to crush Fascism**



# Social Revolution in Spain

**A**FTER the 19th of July industrial socialization was the first undertaking. In Barcelona, the Sanitary Syndicate, the Urban Transport, the Water and Gas Syndicates as well as the Public Amusements Syndicate directed work themselves. The first named and the last were created after the Revolution. They nevertheless accomplished great work.

The railways in Catalonia are an eloquent example of what the workers would have done had they not been paralysed by the concessions made to the bourgeoisie. The three main lines which belonged to three foreign countries constantly competing with one another, were amalgamated to form one company and recently were directed by a central committee of the U.G.T. (General Workers' Union, Socialist) and C.N.T. (National Confederation of Labour, anarcho-syndicalist) made up of twelve comrades. There were very few engineers, for most of them were foreigners and had returned to their respective countries. Nevertheless wonderful results were achieved.

## GRANOLLERS

Apart from Barcelona, one can give noteworthy cases of organization. Take the small town of Granollers for instance. Everything was Socialized by the Syndicates and the Municipality. And everything worked perfectly. The small workshops disappeared—this took place in hundreds of localities where the workers took over production—and redistribution was rapidly assured by the Municipal co-operatives; small business concerns were at first controlled, then eliminated, and the tradespeople given an occupation, either in the co-operatives or in other trades.

## ALCOY

If we take Alcoy in the Province of Alicante, we have an even more typical example. The workers have long been well organized and no mobilization decree was necessary for the militants. They quickly took over the factories and workshops and organized production in a new way.

Each industry is centralized in the Syndical Administrative Committee. This committee is divided into as many sections as there are principle industries. When an order is received by the Sales Section it is passed on

to the production section whose task it is to decide which workshops are best equipped to produce the required articles. Whilst settling this question they order the required raw materials from the corresponding section. The latter gives instructions to the shops to supply the materials and finally, the Buying Section receives details of the transaction so that it can replace the material used.

This summary, which, given space, could endlessly be amplified, makes one appreciate the fact that the Spanish Libertarian workers co-ordinate and rationalize production in a much more satisfactory way than Capitalism has done. And I lay special stress on the disappearance of small unhealthy and costly workshops and factories, besides the correct use of machinery for the work most suited to it. Administrative centralization is one of the most outstanding features. One can thus state that wherever collaboration with political parties has not paralysed the workers, the latter were able, even where their syndicates were of only recent formation, to organize production and public services in a highly satisfactory way. There remains to be described the role played by the workers themselves in the administration and industrial management.

The industrial administrative committee is neither an autonomous nor infallible organization. The syndicate still exists, and its central commission controls the ensemble of activities. It is nominated by the general assembly of syndicated workers and has delegates direct from the factories and workshops so as never to lose contact with the workers. In the workshops and factories, exist committees elected by an assembly of workers gathered together on the spot. These committees are responsible for the application of instructions received as regards the conduct of work. In their turn they communicate their observations to the central syndical commission. And at assemblies resolutions are passed concerning both the daily work in the factories and work of the administrative committee.

We are not therefore facing an administrative dictatorship, but rather a functional democracy, in which all specialized works play their roles which have been settled after general examination by the assembly.

GASTON LEVAL

(SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION IN SPAIN)

## SPANISH REVOLUTION ANNIVERSARY

Public Meetings. Speaker: Tom Brown

EDINBURGH, The Mound, Sunday, July 19th, 7 p.m.

GLASGOW, Brunswick Street, Sunday, July 26th, 6.30 p.m.

**Struggle, Culture and Work**

**went hand in hand**



# Great Achievements of the

by John Hewetson

THE LAST issue of *War Commentary* contained an article on *The Red Army and the Russian revolution*, German Anarcho-Syndicalist. The subsequent history of written on the spot in 1922 by Augustin Souchy the Red Army, and the course the revolution has taken, have borne out the truth of Souchy's analysis of its character in 1921.

How tragic then that in the building of the "People's Army" in Spain history should have repeated itself! How ironical too that Souchy himself should once more be the historian of the climax and triumph of the counter-revolution in his pamphlet, "The Tragic Week in May" which recounts the grim events of the May days of 1937 in Barcelona!

Let us therefore take heed of the lessons on military organisation that the Russian and Spanish revolutions have to teach us, and so avoid in some measure the rivers of blood that have been shed on the altar of a military tradition so alien to revolutionary thought and ideals. Let us attempt a brief review of the results in Spain of the setting up of a highly centralised military organisation.

On July 19th, 1936 in Spain, just as in Russia nineteen years earlier, the armed forces of reaction were hurled back, not by an organised "people's army" but by the spontaneous uprising of the workers acting in class solidarity. In Barcelona, where revolutionary feeling, and anarchist tradition were more deeply implanted than anywhere else in Spain, the workers were not content merely to foil the military *putsch* of General Godeo and the military garrison. They carried the revolution on into the countryside of Catalonia and Aragon. As the militia, which was simply the "workers in arms", advanced and drove the fascist forces back, the peasants expropriated the land and placed it under voluntary collective control. The workers and peasants behind the lines everywhere, seized the land and the factories and administered them directly through their committees. For the first time in modern history the Spanish workers and peasants had something to defend. The militias therefore had the social revolution as their basis and background.

## WORKERS' INITIATIVE AND GOVERNMENT IMPOTENCE.

The organisation of the militias had been a spontaneous act on the part of the working class as a direct means of overthrowing the fascists onslaught. In spite of the subsequent propaganda extolling the anti-fascist actions of the "freely elected Spanish Government" it should be remembered that the Popular Front administration had done nothing, absolutely nothing, to prevent or forestall the rising. Instead of cutting short Franco's career, Azana had made him military governor of the Canaries. The warnings provided by the murder of Lieutenant José Castillo, and its reprisal, the assassination on July 13th of Calvo Sotelo, the monarchist leader who had been Primo de Rivera's Finance Minister, were wholly neglected by the government. When the revolt broke out at Melilla, in Morocco, on July 17th, they suppressed all news of it. Finally, when the revolt was in full swing on the 18th, the Cabinets of Casares Quiroga and of Martínez Barrio (the latter lasted less than half-a-day) refused the repeated requests of the Unions to distribute arms to the

people. It was the workers of Madrid themselves who seized arms from the arsenals and the gun shops in order to storm the Montana Barracks and so save Madrid from falling into the hands of the rebel garrison. Only when the workers had already seized arms, had already saved the capital, did the Giral cabinet (the third to be formed in a single day) issue a decree for the arming of the people—a feeble attempt to gain for themselves some of the credit for the workers' defence of Madrid.

Later on, in November, the defence of the capital was again abandoned to the initiative and courage of the workers, this time by the Caballero government when it fled to Valencia.

In the light of subsequent developments it is of the highest importance to recall how the revolutionary initiative of the Spanish workers and peasants checked the fascist revolt at its outset; to stress the impotence and obstructionism of the centralised governmental administration. Revolutionists should always keep before them this contrast, (already seen in Russia, between the revolutionary workers and peasants and the feeble and hesitant Provisional Government of Kerensky): on the one hand the paralyzed, pitiful government of Azana, and on the other the triumphant initiative and self-sacrificing heroism of the working class.

## STALINISTS DEMAND A "PEOPLE'S ARMY"

Even before the government's abandonment of Madrid had exhibited once again how the workers with their slogan "Evviva Madrid sin Gobierno!" (Long live Madrid without a Government) could astonish the world with the heroic defence of November, when Franco's forces, backed up by German and Italian war material and troops were thrown back from the very suburbs of the city; even before then the communists had raised the demand for the abolition of the militia and the formation of a regular army, just as Trotsky had built up the disciplined centralised Red Army to supplant, as Souchy described, the revolutionary peasant guerrillas. As in Russia the demand for a centralised army was successful, and with it the counter-revolution triumphed. Let us look at the achievements of the militias on the one hand and the bourgeois-type army on the other.

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MILITIAS.

The militias were spontaneously formed by the rank and file workers both of the revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalist Unions (C.N.T.) and the reformist socialist trade unions (U.G.T.). The demands of the revolutionary situation naturally made the latter abandon their reformism and their dependence on their obviously bankrupt political leaders, and instead take direct action themselves. Leaders were elected by the militiamen themselves, and were on a basis of equality with themselves; no privileges being claimed by such "officers". Discipline was maintained without any kind of coercion because all were voluntarily co-operating towards the same aim—the overthrow of the Fascist revolt. The arming and supplying of the militia columns was undertaken and carried out by the workers' syndicates which had taken over industry and agriculture.

The militias were a spontaneous revolutionary formation, and were part of the Revolution itself which placed the land and the factories,—in Catalonia and Aragon most



# Revolutionary Militia in Spain

of all, but also to varying degrees throughout the rest of "Loyalist" Spain—in the hand of the working class. Their record was a glorious one. They frustrated the immediate success of Franco's attempted coup d'état by the almost barehanded storming of the garrisons in Barcelona and Madrid and in many less important strongholds. Their columns drove back the fascist forces through Catalonia and Aragon, and from Madrid to the ridges of the Guadarrama. These positions they held in spite of an almost incredible lack of arms and supplies, displaying unparalleled revolutionary devotion and heroism. Finally they were the backbone, together with the International Brigades—themselves at the beginning of voluntary organisation—of the defence of Madrid in November 1936. Their's is a record of success in the field despite tremendous handicaps. Their zeal and heroism was the natural

result of their being free men—free from the semi-feudal slavery of Republican Spain, and free also to use their own initiative as responsible individuals in the defence of the revolution which they themselves had made.

## RECORD OF THE "PEOPLE'S ARMY".

The demand for a "People's Army" came, as we have seen, from the Communists, the right wing of the "Loyalist" forces, who were to show themselves the chief architects of the counter-revolution. They declared that the militias were indisciplined, unreliable, inefficient, although their revolutionary achievements were a triumphant denial of these charges. Nevertheless the Communist leaders did not hesitate to use the most diabolical and treacherous means to lend colour to their insinuations.

Before the industries of Catalonia had been fully converted for the production of arms, the chief source of supply was from the Soviet Union. The distribution of such arms as were sent\*, was in the hands of the Communist Party, and they deliberately withheld arms from the Aragon front, which was held chiefly by the anarchist columns of the C.N.T., in order to be able to attribute the consequent lack of further successes to the militia's "Anarchist-inefficiency". They did not hesitate to jeopardise the anti-fascist struggle for the sake of gaining political ground for themselves.

It is not possible here to trace the causes which led to the recapture of effective power from the workers by the government under Caballero. It is sufficient to remark that it was achieved bit by bit and always under the pretext of "necessities of the struggle against Fascism", "the defence of the revolutionary gains" etc. The fact remains that by January 1937, the central government was able to decree that the revolutionary militias should be superseded by the highly disciplined, highly centralised "People's Army". This army embodied all the features of a bourgeois army; general conscription; a barrack-room discipline which demanded not initiative and individual responsibility from the soldiers, but only blind obedience; higher pay and special privileges for the officers; supplies and political direction under the control of a bureaucratic centralised war office. The process begun under Caballero, was completed under Negrin, whose administration was designated by the communist "Pasionaria" and the "Government of Victory". After the May Days the revolutionary initiative of the workers was completely stifled under governmental centralism, and the authoritarianism of a police régime. It was part of the counter-revolutionary process which began with the re-institution of private trading and culminated in the violent destruction of the revolution behind the lines with the breaking up of the Aragon peasant collectives by a brigade commanded by the communist Enrico Lister.

The militias had to their credit the major, one might almost say, the only, successes which were achieved against Franco. What was the record of the "People's Army"? The abandonment and loss of Malaga; the defeats in the north with the loss of the mines of the Basque country; the series of heartbreaking defeats which led to Franco's drive through to the Mediterranean and the collapse of Catalonia. A record of defeats.

Let us leave aside the destruction of the revolutionary economy which disorganised supplies and led to the

\*Stalin insisted on payment in gold, cash down, for every shipment.



MILITANT WORKERS SEIZED ARMS  
DENIED BY POPULAR FRONT  
GOVERNMENT.



## POEM FOR GARCIA LORCA, 1942

Count on dead fingers of time the years that pass  
 Since Lorca sang his last of Spain  
 And fell beneath the hard inhuman paw,  
 Gasping between white walls in Granada.

Lorca, the song of men whose emptying hearts  
 Sang out the seconds of their death in blood,  
 The song of women whose bloodless futures lay  
 Twisted under the roof of tyranny.

Remember Lorca as Spain's noblest bull,  
 Not in the sunlight of Mithraic rings  
 Spiriting his life to matadors and crowds,  
 But in numb secrecy to the knacker's laugh.

Remember Lorca as the earth of Spain,  
 Lined with valleys as an old man's hand,  
 In each valley the lurking gun, and the dead waiting  
 For the dawn that will not break their empty sleep.

Remember Lorca as the poor of Spain,  
 Rising from their alleys of quiet death  
 To wash with blood the roots of barren trees  
 That do not bloom this year, but one year will bloom for ever.

Remember Lorca, who died only for being Lorca.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

starvation of the winter of 1938-1939; the treacheries of Negrin, Prieto and others in the government. It still remains true that the centralised, hierarchical conscript army, whose barrack-room discipline and high degree of orthodox organisation were dear to the bourgeois military mid, possessed nothing of the morale of the militias. Indeed, how could it have had, when the men, instead of being free to act on their own revolutionary initiative in co-operation with their comrades, were reduced to being mere cogs in the soulless military machine under the direction of political sharpers who were feathering their own nests behind the lines?

Once again, as in Russia, so in Spain, it was shown what the revolutionary initiative of the workers can achieve. But it was also tragically demonstrated that the spirit of militarism expressed through conscription, formal discipline and with the rank-and-file excluded from all responsibility in the direction of military affairs, can never be an agent of revolution. It can only ensure the triumph of the counter-revolution. Let us not, by neglecting the experiences of Spain and Russia, have to learn this lesson also through the bitter experience of defeat in our revolution..



FLASHBACK 1939-1941

### CHURCHILL FORGETS

(continued from page 5)

history. Those of Denikin were particularly horrifying.

"Three million Jews of the Ukraine were handed over helpless and hopeless to murder and dishonour... 'The massacres of the Jews in the Ukraine can find, for thoroughness and extent, no parallel except in the massacres of the Armenians.' 'Wholesale slaughter and violation, drownings and burnings and burials alive, became not merely commonplace, but the order of the day. There were programs that lasted a week; in several towns for a month—the dread total will be very near half-a-million human beings.' 'There were no less than 150 pogroms carried out by the Denikin army.' (A Decade of Woe and Hope, 1923 by Dr. J. H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi in Britain).

Now that Churchill becomes the nominee of that other celebrated counter-revolutionary Joseph Stalin, he would leave behind his attacks on once revolutionary Russia. Mr. Churchill forgets. LET US REMEMBER!

TOM BROWN.

### WHAT INDIAN WORKERS MUST FIGHT FOR.

Headline in the Evening Standard (4/7/42)

1s. 6d. A DAY MEN MUST SAVE INDIA.

"Indian workers point out that the cost of living index has risen by 50 per cent. and wages by only 30.

They quote official figures showing jute companies dividends for last year averaged 20 per cent. and cotton millowners over 15 per cent.

And the textile operatives earns about 1s. 6d. a day—less than the price of one whisky and soda which the millowner enjoys at the Taj Hotel."



# POWER & INGLORY

**A**NARCHISTS have always held that power, the domination of man by man, leads inevitably to the corruption of the wielder of power. However sincere a man may be in his desire to better the conditions of his fellows, if he attempts to do this by authority, by forcing reforms on the world, he will be turned by the very necessities of that authority, against those he hoped to benefit. Thus we find that men who have worked well for the oppressed classes become, once they are in power, tyrants even worse than the old governing class, because their inexperience makes them even more brutal.

These ideas are not peculiar to anarchists, for they were held by many ancient teachers, from Lao Tze onward. They have even passed into popular tradition in the proverb 'Put a beggar on horseback and he will ride to the devil.'

The last thirty years in the history of the labour movement have been remarkable for the number of leaders who have ridden with alacrity down the primrose path of power. Since the ratting of the reformists in the Great War, the assumption of power by labour leaders, whether in England, Russia or any other country, has meant a betrayal of working class interests. Labour Governments in England brought a strengthening of oppression, Clynes, for example, being one of the most brutal Home Secretaries of the present century. And in the present war it is the labour representatives, Morrison and Bevin, who have carried out the most oppressive measures and have lowered the standard of personal liberty and working conditions to a level below anything for the past hundred years. Almost without exception, labour leaders in power have turned into enemies of the people.

Of all the melancholy histories of Socialists who have betrayed their faith, none is more strange or more significant than that of Ramsay Macdonald. His life reads like a fantasy symbolising in extreme forms the rake's progress of the politician. For his career, unlike that of many other rascally politicians, ended in the depth of dishonour he had deserved. He, who had tasted the full fruits of power and who betrayed even his own confederates to retain his position with the support of his enemies, died deserted and condemned by every class in the country. No man ate more bitterly of the dusty Dead Sea fruit.

Macdonald was admirably gifted for the role of politician. Almost from the beginning of his career, he showed himself completely opportunist in his attitude. He struggled for power within the Labour

Party by methods of Machiavellian deception which defeated his less astute rivals. He had the happy ability to be all things to all men, and contrived for a long time to retain as no other leader could have done the loyalty of the most heterogeneous sections of the movement. Even after the great treason of the General Strike, when Macdonald and Thomas sold out to the Tories above the heads of the workers, he still managed to keep this loyalty among his hood-

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**by George Woodcock**

---

winked followers. He was a born intriguer, with a natural secretiveness and cunning worthy of Ulysses. He was one of the best orators of his day, according to the debased standards of political speaking. He was a master of vagueness and ambiguity, and could make a speech which gave the impression of agreement with a policy whereas in fact he had not uttered a single sentence that might be quoted against him on his next somersault. He could sway an audience with more ease than any politician of his time, with the possible exception of Lloyd George. With these gifts he had no difficulty in attaining the position he desired.

The main outline of Macdonald's career are well known to anyone with the slightest interest in political events. But the inner history of his rise to power and the details of the intrigues by which he attained and sought to retain that eminence are less well known. Yet Macdonald's is a case history which should be read by any student of the nature of political power. It is for this reason that I am paying a belated tribute to Macneill Weir's 'The Tragedy of Ramsay Macdonald', published by Secker & Warburg in 1938.

This book is an excellent clinical study, written from the point of view of a socialist who was sincerely concerned with the problem of the corruption of left wing leaders by their reception of authority. The intrigues against Weir, revealed in his preface, by which influential interests sought to force him to abandon his work and later to intimidate his publishers, and the outcry raised in the gutter press on the appearance of the book, are sufficient evidence of the extent to which politicians fear a revelation of the true nature of their machinations.

In his introduction, Weir writes:

'When a worker becomes a leader and renounces his former occupation, he generally has no desire to return



to it, and is inclined to cling to his new post for economic reasons. He has attained a higher social status, which he does not wish to lose. Place a man in a position of power among his fellows and he will always seek to extend that power, to consolidate it, to defend it, and to put himself beyond the control of any who might threaten to destroy it. It was Bakunin who said that the possession of power transformed the most devoted friend of liberty into a tyrant. The socialist leader is tempted to envy the security of the leaders of the other Parties. His practice tends to be represented by the slogan "Safety-First". He becomes opportunist. To such a one, the self-denying altruism of the Socialist faith becomes more and more anathema, and the metamorphosis of the leader becomes complete. The revolutionary becomes a reformist, no longer inspired by a lofty idealism, but guiding his action by self-regarding intrigue.

These statements correspond with the attitude of the anarchist. In accordance with them, Weir has written an outspoken, honest and accurate study of Macdonald as a politician.

But, although as a study of Macdonald, of an isolated labour politician, this book is excellent, it fails to draw the obvious conclusions, for Weir has been unable to bring himself to regard the Labour leaders who did not take part in Macdonald's last great betrayal as subject to the same law of society. Yet the actions of the Labour Party Front Bench, during the present war have proved beyond a doubt that no man who assumes authority can further the interests of those over whom he holds that authority. Never, since the days of Melbourne, have English politicians dealt more ruthlessly with the workers than these men whom Weir shielded from the accusations he levelled against Macdonald. Macdonald was no worse than they. His rise and fall were merely more sensational.

### OPEN AIR SELLERS WANTED !

*We need to increase our number of WAR COMMENTARY sellers in London, especially on Saturdays and Sundays. We appeal particularly to young people who read War Commentary and think it deserves wider circulation. Let them come forward and sell the paper a few hours a week. Get in touch with us at 27, Belsize Road., and we will provide you with literature and tell you about the best pitches.*

When in Glasgow, visit the  
**ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP**

127, George Street,

War Commentary and all  
Freedom Press and Anarchist  
Federation pamphlets in stock.

## FOR DEMOCRACY

Excuse me, Comrade :

I am about to disembowel you—

It's for Democracy, you know.

I have to hate you, Comrade :

I could not do this frightful thing

If I had not learned to hate you.

You see, Comrade,

Your boss is a Fascist :

But mine, Comrade,

Mine is a Democrat.

That is why, Comrade—

That is why I am about

To plunge my bayonet into your belly

And scatter your guts upon the earth.

This is a good war, Comrade :

The Comintern say so.

My boss says so, too.

Everybody says it's a good war.

Democracy must be saved, you know,

Of course, the workers can't strike any more;

Men are being conscripted for the war;

And those who don't like it

Can't shoot off their mouths;

But that isn't Fascism!

Oh my, no!

That's Democracy in an emergency,

You keep your damn' mouth shut

When Democracy faces a crisis.

So when the hot iron sears your guts

And I twist it, so,

Excuse me, Comrade :

That's for Democracy!

CHARLES M. SANDWICK

From the "*Bucks Labour News*"

### COAL SITUATION LOOKING FINE

"Major Lloyd George, Minister of Fuel and Power, announced in the Commons to-day that under the regional organisation the country would be divided into eight coal producing regions and four non-coal producing regions.

For each region he was appointing a regional controller who would be his representative in his region.

Mr. Aneurin Bevan (Labour)—Will the salaries of the regional controllers fall upon the Exchequer and not upon the industry?

Major Lloyd George—Yes.

The salaries of regional controllers would be £2,000 a year" *Evening Standard* 9/7/42

*What with the salaries of the 15,000 clerks who are needed for the Beveridge plan and Major Lloyd George's £5,000 a year, regional controllers and bureaucrats must feel optimistic about the coal situation.*



# Peter Kropotkin

## *the Scientific approach to Anarchism*

PETER KROPOTKIN'S earliest interests were scientific, and as a young man he carried out sociological surveys in Tzarist Russia. The disregard with which his exposure of peasant conditions was treated by the government first brought to his notice the inefficiency of bureaucratic administrative methods, and earned for them his lifelong contempt. He was also, like Elisée Reclus, a geographer, and continued throughout his life to contribute to the scientific journals. Hence, when he came to devote himself to Anarchism and the Social Revolution, he brought to the task not only the knowledge with which his scientific studies had equipped him, but also the scientific method of enquiry. It was his constant endeavour to show that Anarchism is not simply an "ideal" which all socialists could cherish for the distant future, but was the most *practical* of all social theories, capable of *immediate* realization.

Born in 1842, Kropotkin was a keenly interested witness of the early fortunes of the First International—the International Working Men's Association (I.W.M.A.), as it was then called. Discussion within the International had soon crystallized itself into the great struggle between the "authoritarian socialists" who followed Marx, and the "libertarian socialists" led by Bakunin. In spite of the profound slogan of the Communist Manifesto that "the emancipation of the workers must be the work of the working class itself" the Marxian socialists believed, and still believe, that the working class, the mass of the people, are too ignorant, too steeped in capitalist illusions, to overthrow class society and build up a socialist society by their own unaided efforts. From this fundamental premise, it inevitably followed that the "class-conscious vanguard" must seize State power and wield it to lead the rest of the workers to socialism. Only after a period, more or less prolonged, of post-revolutionary socialist education had come to fruition, would the necessity for a State disappear. With the recognition of the now advanced socialist understanding of the masses, the vanguard who hold state power would, according to the authoritarian socialists, gradually abdicate their power, and the State, would wither away. This theory was the basis of the authoritarian faction, and provided the justification for the newly formed "labour parties" to take in parliamentary and other forms of political action, which have ultimately led them to their present reformist and anti-labour position.

Bakunin and the libertarian socialists from the very first opposed this theory as utopian and misleading. They held that the fundamental factor which determined the life of existing society was the class struggle—the existence of a ruling group which oppressed and held down the workers thereby destroying all creative initiative on the part of the working class. For them the object of the social revolution was the overthrow of all forces of oppression (of which the State is the principle focus) and the consequent liberation of the creative initiative of the workers. Instead of being frustrated and held down, they would then be free to express themselves directly and immediately, and would order the social and economic life of the community on the basis of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need".

This latter view of the revolution and the workers' struggle implies the belief that men, *when acting in freedom*, are good, and are perfectly capable of building up a society of freedom and justice by themselves without the intervention of a hypothetically "benevolent" government of the "vanguard" elements. It was the view which Kropotkin and the Anarchist Movements which grew out of the libertarian socialist fraction of the International enthusiastically espoused.

But for Kropotkin, with his scientific training and attitude, it was not enough merely to hold and expound *beliefs*. One must look for evidence and to seek to exhibit proofs. This desire to place Anarchism on a scientific footing became the dominating interest in his life.

His pamphlets and the articles he contributed to Anarchist journals are agitational in character, in which he is often at his best setting out the ideals of Anarchism. But in his books—and it is these for which he is best known to the general public—he was able to give expression to his scientific approach to working-class problems. The problem is not, however, an easy one, and it demands continuous imaginative effort not only on the investigator's part, but also on the reader's. Under governmental authority, especially when this is highly centralized, men's initiative is crushed; Anarchism, on the other hand, teaches that *given freedom*, men are naturally good, and are well able to build a social life of free communism. But since class domination of one sort or another, whether slave-holding, feudal, capitalist or totalitarian, has been the general rule during recorded history, periods of freedom from external authority are correspondingly rare, and examples of men's creativeness can be drawn, in the main, only from partial examples. Kropotkin therefore devoted his attention, on the one hand, to those brief revolutionary periods of freedom for the masses, before the counter-revolution had triumphed in a return to centralized authority and the consequent stifling of working class initiative as a whole; and on the other, to those institutions, like the Russian *mir*, which even under governmental authority, allowed of some degree of initiative and responsibility to the working class in the ordering of its social affairs.

As a result of his intensive studies in these fields, Kropotkin was able to show that social equality and harmony are as natural to men, as they are opposed to governments; that, given freedom, the workers can indeed achieve that harmony and prosperity; and therefore that the true aim of the revolution must be the freeing of the workers from all authority, so as to give their creative initiative free play.

Since men have always, during the historical period, suffered under governments, the problem Kropotkin set himself to unravel, is one of tremendous difficulty; and it is not surprising that he was sometimes led into error.

But as to the main issue Kropotkin's method has been fully justified, and he was brilliantly successful in demonstrating the central truth of Anarchism, that *freedom is the essential pre-requisite of progress*.



# A Red and Black Notebook

Bureaucracy is now the largest single industry in this country. The numbers of civil servants now employed as compared with pre-war numbers in figures recently supplied by the Lord Chancellor; April 1939, 665,077; 1940, 814,725; 1941, 1,067,428; 1942, 1,332,836.

This does not take account of the large number of local government servants engaged on purely central government work. And still the number grows! Yet the greater the bureaucracy, the less the production—except of red tape—More to the Ministry of Fuel and less coal; more to the Ministry of Food and less food; more to the Ministry of Home Security, and less security.

## CANTEENS AND THE WORKERS

The bad quality of the food served in hundreds of factory canteens is an even greater cause of discontent than low wages. The food is often prepared from the cheapest materials, the poorest cuts of meat or bacon, and tea dust usually forms the basis of the menu. But even where the food is moderately good, in its raw state, it is often spoilt by slovenly cooking which is carried out by poorly paid labour under factory mass production methods.

Mass production nowhere displays its shoddy character so well as in cooking. One cannot make good tea in an urn the size of a marine boiler. Lyon's, the biggest tea servers in the world, built their business on a recognition of this fact, and even when supplying thousands of customers, use teapots. The large number of persons to be served is no good excuse for factory methods applied to cooking. Some of the food I have seen served in canteens was badly cooked, slopped up not served, and even appeared dirty. It would have been better served raw!

A favourite story in such factories is of the managing director of a large multiple firm which carries out much of this canteen business. On returning home one evening, he noticed a strong smell. "*What is that horrible smell? What on earth are you cooking?*" he called to his wife. "*I'm not cooking anything*" she replied. "*You brought that smell in with you.*"

## WORKERS CONTROL IN THE KITCHEN

Complaints are of little avail to the canteen contractors who always have promises and alibis ready. The only remedy is for the workers to insist on having complete control of the canteens and running them as non-profit-making concerns. This has already been done in a few places. The excuse is often made that the industrial workers have no ability or experience to run such concerns, but this excuse ignores the great co-operative movement the most successful societies of which are run by manual workers such as the miners. Remember, the British Co-ops. are the largest food dealers in Britain, treating food from seed to harvest, from factory to counter or restaurant.

Where workers have control of their canteens, the experiment is usually successful. Years ago I dined regularly at a C.W.S. factory canteen, controlled by the workers in that factory. The food was ample, well-cooked, of the best quality and low priced. Perhaps most important, the canteen cooks and waitresses were paid a higher wage than in the private firms. You should not expect good food from a discontented cook.

## CO-OPS. AND RUSSIA

I was surprised to read in a recent number of the "London Co-operative Magazine" an admission that co-ops (as we understand them in Britain, that is the consumers co-operatives of the urban workers) had, been suppressed in Russia a few years ago.

I am not surprised at the news of the suppression, that was well known but only at the London Co-operative Society admitting the fact. The L.C.S. has collected many thousands of pounds for Bolsheviki Russia and lends itself to the programme of the Russian ruling caste. Yet if the Bolsheviki triumphed here the co-ops. would suffer the same fate of confiscation by the State—the only trader under Bolshevism.

## PRODUCTION COMMITTEES

At the birth of the production committee stunt, we declared that such committees would soon relapse into futility. The Communist Party found it quite easy to form such committees for increasing production without increasing wages, but having the committees what were they to do? That was much more difficult for most of the Stalinists had no knowledge of production theory and usually showed no inclination to produce anything but speeches about the Soviet Union.

Unable to make any suggestion of value, they fall back on claiming any increase in output as a fruit of their "production committees."

A lady of my acquaintance always carries an umbrella in uncertain weather "to keep off the rain". Curiously enough the rain often does keep off. What the lady does not understand is that the two things have no connection.

However, we often have a little frankness from these committees. At the last meeting of the Handley Page (Aircraft) shop stewards, the convener, a Stalinist, admitted that the "Production Committee" did little else at its meetings, but sip tea and nibble biscuits.

Later, several stewards complained of the lack of ventilation in the main shop and said that workers could not produce their maximum in such a poisonous atmosphere. The leader of the Communist Party faction intervened, saying, that the ventilation of the factory had nothing to do with production and could not be discussed by the production committee.

Uproar immediately broke out, even some Stalinists, forgetting their Party discipline, joined in. An end to such futile nonsense! Leave them to their tea and biscuits.

SYNDICALIST

## War Commentary

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