

WAR COMMENTARY

"A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias."
OSCAR WILDE.

"Only if man masters society and subordinates the economic machine to the purposes of human happiness, and only if he actively participates in the social process, can he overcome what now drives him into despair—his aloneness and his feeling of powerlessness. Man does not suffer from poverty to-day as he suffers from the fact that he has become a cog in a large machine, an automaton, that his life has become empty and lost its meaning."
ERICH FROMM.

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VOTE-WHAT FOR?



At last, after a decade during which a parliament elected to maintain peace has fought the bloodiest war in history against the principal imperialist rival of the British ruling class, and a hardly less ruthless war against the liberties of the British workers, we are told that the revered constitution of Britain will once more be taken out of the cupboard; the people will again have the pleasure of electing whichever gang of politicians is to filch away their freedom and prepare by power politics for the next world conflict in which they or their sons will die.

Before we go on to discuss the particular issues of this forthcoming election, it is perhaps desirable to enquire why it is being held at this time. The ostensible reason for the election is the decision of the Labour Party conference to end the coalition immediately and to withdraw the Labour Ministers from the National Government. This decision was made because Churchill had sent an "ultimatum" to the Labour Party putting forward the alternatives of either continuing the Coalition to the end of the Japanese war or ending it immediately. It is interesting to note that neither side is willing to accept the responsibility for the decision. The Conservative leaders and their press blame the Labour Party for not accepting the offer to continue the Coalition to the end of the Japanese war. The Labour leaders and their press blame the Conservatives for putting the Labour Party on the spot by making the alternative between an immediate election and an indefinitely long Coalition which the Labour rank-and-file would not be willing to support. These earnest attempts to pass the buck imply a recognition of the distrust which the politicians expect will be awakened in the average elector as a result of this sudden precipitation of the country into an election at a time when the maximum disorganisation still exists and when a very high proportion of the electorate will not be able to vote.

break up the Coalition immediately instead of carrying it on indefinitely was a foregone conclusion, and it seems probable that the Labour Party Conference was quite deliberately chosen as the Trojan horse by which the idea of an election could be brought to the people. Obviously, the workers are less likely to be suspicious of an election if it is demanded by a body claiming to represent the working class in general, than if it is dictated by the fist of a largely discredited government.

Given the probability that the election decision was "managed" by an agreement between the leaders of all parties, we have still to discover their reason for such a precipitate election. The principal function of the election seems to be that of diverting the attention of the workers from the immediate problems and issues of their daily life, about which they are already showing a great deal of discontent, and to provide a safety valve which will prevent them from resorting to really effective methods for changing their conditions and bringing about their liberation from the state of military and industrial slavery in which they live. In the background move the sinister developments of European power politics, from which the politicians are no doubt very anxious to divert the immediate attentions of the people under their control.

It is obvious that, after the neurotic outbursts of relief on VE-day, the people of Britain are rapidly coming to realise just how phoney the peace is. Already, on the morrow of so-called victory, food rations have been cut once again, and we are informed that fewer clothes will be available, while cigarettes have gone into short supply. "Peace", for the time being at any rate, seems to be a leaner condition than war, and, in the meantime, the process of release from military and industrial

conscription appears to be scheduled to last for a good many years before it is finally ended. Meanwhile, the housing shortage becomes steadily more acute, and the tensions within industry, which were largely suppressed by such collaborationist institutions as the joint production committees, are steadily coming to a head.

After six years of war the workers expect something concrete. They are not likely to be put off for very long with such sops as the ending of the blackout, the abolition of the regulation against leaving oars in boats, or the granting of small quantities of petrol to middle-class car-owners. Already the incidence of strikes in industry has risen, and sympathy for the strikers seems much greater than it was during the war itself. A wide movement of direct action, which might well assume other forms than strikes, is what the leaders of all parties fear most of all, because it is the only kind of movement which can directly menace their own power and interests. Therefore they are prepared at all costs to divert the people from such actions, and an election, which gives the illusion of making a change in the existing set-up, and gives the ordinary man the feeling that he is actually doing something positive towards improving his conditions, is an obvious manoeuvre of this kind. It is a fair certainty that the pretence of party struggle which an election arouses will provide a compensation for direct action which will stave off trouble for at least some months after the election.

Fear Of Responsibility

The fact that many of the people nominally entitled to vote will in fact not be able to do so is probably an added reason for holding the election at the present juncture. The
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THE ELECTION RUSH

The Trojan Horse

In fact, there is reason to believe that the leaders of both parties were equally to blame for the springing of the election at this time, and that the apparent causes were largely manufactured. It is reasonable to suppose that Churchill's Labour colleagues were fully aware that Churchill was about to produce his so-called "ultimatum," and that they had given at least tacit agreement. Certainly, given the mood of discontent among the rank-and-file of the Labour Party, the decision to

STRIKES IN EUROPE

This month has seen an increase in strikes practically everywhere on the Continent obviously due to the terrible economic conditions under which the population is forced to live.

In Greece strikes are spreading because prices have increased in some cases 100 per cent. while wages remain unchanged.

Strikes have taken place in the coalfields in Belgium and M. Van Acker, Belgium Premier declared that a general strike threatened Belgium. He tried to put the blame for the strikes on agent provocateurs and fifth columnists while it is obvious that the terrible food and housing conditions are the primary cause of the strikes. This discontent will only be fostered by the fascist methods used by the Belgian Government to crush opposition. The Government has declared that for three months all strikes would be prohibited and the newspaper *Pouvoir aux Travailleurs* which called for a general strike and attacked the Allies has been suspended. Promoters of strikes will be arrested and some have already been detained.

In France strikes have broken out all over the country. On the 16th April a general strike broke out in Lyons, the third largest town in

France, and throughout the industrial Rhone department. The strike was caused by a dispute over wages. Strikes have also taken place in the industries of the North and the Centre. The policy of the Minister of Labour, M. Pleven, to fight against inflation by keeping salaries down is meeting with great hostility among the workers who see their wages remain stationary while the prices go up at a terrific rate.

Liberation far from bringing food and freedom to the people of Europe has brought misery and oppression. While ex-collaborators and the new pro-Allied aristocracy live in luxury on the black market the workers are faced with unemployment and starvation. The recent movement of strikes is a proof that discontent is growing and that the workers realise that "liberation" can only be achieved by their own efforts, in the struggle in the factories and in the fields.

JOHN CONNOR RELEASED

The Soviet Embassy in London has issued a statement on the case of John Connor, the Scots merchant seaman, who was sentenced in Murmansk to a year's imprisonment for alleged disorderly conduct and striking militiamen.

After Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, British Ambassador, had approached the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on the matter, the Supreme Court examined the case and came to the conclusion that the sentence imposed was correct.

However, taking into account the fact that this was his first offence, that he had helped in bringing war supplies to the Soviet Union, and that he had a good record, the Court found it possible to commute the sentence, considering as sufficient the time already spent by him under detention and imposing on him a suspended sentence.

INSIDE GERMANY

BRITISH SOLDIERS' IMPRESSIONS

(This article is compiled as a result of an interview with three soldiers on leave from the B.L.A., taken in shorthand during a conversation, and which they checked and agreed was correct. Two of them were in the same unit, the other travelled in a different part of Germany. Their experiences generally speaking tally. While any impressions gained in the manner described may generally give only a part of the picture, we feel it to be at any rate as accurate as those given by war correspondents whose perspective is much more limited.)

Not much remains of the Nazi structure in Germany. It probably collapsed long ago, control being exercised by the Army, and of course the civilian burgomasters, etc. who were members of the Party, but not necessarily leaders. The S.S. are generally hated, even by the patriots who regard them as war-dodgers. The Party is seldom referred to openly, except as "they". We heard a P.O.W. say, "We've had ten years of war, not four like the Yanks. They couldn't let us alone till the world crashed down on top of us. They don't care, they're all right." It is a common belief the Nazi leaders are in safety. No-one we spoke to believes in Hitler's death; some think he is in hiding, we even met some who think he is in safety in England. However, all the reports indicate Hitler is dead. It is doubtful if he could survive one minute anywhere in Germany, let alone outside. The Press reports that "Germans feel little sense of guilt" is perfectly true, as except for a few, none identify themselves with the Party.

ATROCITIES

It is fairly definite that the German soldiers behaved "correctly" in occupied countries. That is not to say that the atrocity stories are untrue. With exceptions mentioned below, all atrocities that were committed were done in accordance with the Geneva Convention. That may sound cynical but is quite verifiable. The victims of the Gestapo were members of the underground movement who as *franc-tireurs* and *saboteurs*

were unprotected by international law, and we believe even the shooting of hostages is permissible under the "rules of war". All this was done under command; there is no doubt at all that the soldiers obeyed the orders, just as they obey orders to go to battle. (This is not to whitewash them for obeying orders but they are not the only ones). In the main the atrocities committed in occupied countries, against the resisters, were done by Quislings, directed by the Gestapo, and the Army was seldom involved. The Resistance movements so far from following the nationalistic line laid down by the emigre governments, often took part in movements to spread sedition among the German soldiers.

The notable exception to this "correct" procedure was of course as regards the Jews. In Belgium and Holland few Jews are alive except those who were hidden by the local populace, and it is encouraging to know there was a lot of this solidarity. In Germany practically none remain, except those who had escaped from concentration camps, etc. We questioned several Germans on their attitude to the Jews. Most soldiers disclaimed any responsibility for the fate of the Jews in the occupied countries. The statement was always made, "Their own people deported them." On reference to Dutch friends we elicited that what was meant was that when the round-up of the Jews was made, it was not done by the Army or even directly by the S.S. but by the regular police of the occupied countries. Even the rationalistic French Resistance papers bitterly complained of the attitude of the French police at lending themselves to such work. Their victims often committed suicide before being arrested, particularly those refugees who had already experienced concentration camps. The victims were sent by sealed train through Germany to Poland. They were not seen by the majority of the people, and it may be doubted whether the majority of Germans believed Hitler meant business when he said he would exterminate the Jews and Poles any more than our people realise our gauleiters mean business when they talk of ex-

termination.

Of course this does not exculpate the German people, who knew that the Jews were persecuted even if they did not realise they were being exterminated. Unfortunately we cannot find any signs of the concentration camps revelations being untrue. They were designed mainly for Jewish people, but had also a number of German political prisoners and prisoners from other nationalities being "broken in". The camps at Buchenwald, Belsen, etc. are the culmination of the campaign which began in 1933 and ended with the mass extermination camps in Poland. In 1933 the Nazis did not dare to introduce mass extermination. There were individual beatings-up, degradation and the boycott. The concentration camps were filled largely with "politicals". (Few "politicals" remain in the camps since most were taken out and sent to the front line; those now in being mostly well-known leaders of the pre-Hitler era and not the rank-and-file of the underground movement). Until the introduction of the racial laws in 1938 Jews could still live in Germany, however much discrimination was practiced against them. The campaign against them was to blacken them as much as possible and degrade them so as to work up such a hysteria against them as would make it possible for the wholesale concentration to take place. Most Germans believe that the Jews are guilty of thousands of offences, and the Nazi poison will take long to eradicate in this respect, but they have been subjected to so much propaganda that they take little impression from it. For instance, one soldier said, "Of course, the Jews made plenty of money out of us when they were in power, but seeing the state the Aryans brought us to when they barged into the country I think I'd prefer the Jews", an interesting mixture of having swallowed Nazi poison and anti-serum too! A civilian to whom we spoke thought the Nazi Party was controlled by the Jews! However, few people we spoke to had any real bias against the Jews when it came down to it, and none at all believed the

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Miners Sacked

On the 27th May, on instructions from the Fuel Ministry, the management of Sleekburn Colliery, Northumberland sacked all its 1,200 miners for deliberately cutting down output. On April 21st, the men struck work over a wages dispute. During the negotiations, the owners say, the miners adopted a go slow policy with a resulting fall in output.

Another shut-down order has been issued by the Durham Coal Controller and is being challenged by 1,600 miners at Whitburn Colliery. Ninety-two veteran miners, some of them who are over 70, have been declared redundant and have received their notices.

It will be seen that mine-owners are not losing time in celebrating Victory Day, in their own fashion. Miners who dare to resist them or who are too old to exploit are summarily sacked.

William Godwin ON LAW

though much is done, everything cannot be thus done. The abuse would sometimes be too palpable. Not to say that the very education that enables the lawyer, when he is employed for the prosecutor, to find out offences the lawgiver never meant enables him, when he is employed for the defendant, to find out subtleties that reduce the law to a nullity. It is therefore perpetually necessary to make new laws. These laws, in order to escape evasion, are frequently tedious, minute and circumlocutory. The volume in which justice records her prescriptions is forever increasing, and the world would not contain the books that might be written.

of mankind and to dictate decisions respecting them. The language of such a procedure is, "We are so wise that we can draw no additional knowledge from circumstances as they occur; and we pledge ourselves that, if it be otherwise, the additional knowledge we acquire shall produce no effect upon our conduct." Law tends no less than creeds, catechisms and tests to fix the human mind in a stagnant condition, and to substitute a principle of permanence in the room of that unceasing perfectibility which is the only salubrious element of mind.

THE UNIFORMITY OF LAW

The fable of Procrustes presents us with a faint shadow of the perpetual effect of law. In defiance of the great principle of natural philosophy that there are not so much as two atoms of matter of the same form through the whole universe, it endeavours to reduce the actions of men, which are composed of a thousand evanescent elements, to one standard. It was in the contemplation of this system of jurisprudence that the strange maxim was invented that "strict justice would often prove the highest injustice". There is no more real justice in endeavouring to reduce the actions of men into classes than there was in the scheme to which we have just alluded of reducing all men to the same stature. If on the contrary justice be a result flowing from the contemplation of all the circumstances of each individual case, if the only criterion of justice be general utility, the inevitable consequence is that the more we have of justice, the more we shall have of truth, virtue and happiness.

From all these considerations we cannot hesitate to conclude universally that law is an institution of the most pernicious tendency.

The subject will receive some additional elucidation if we consider the perniciousness of law in its immediate relation to those who practise it. If there ought to be no such thing as law, the profession of a lawyer is no doubt entitled to our disapprobation. A lawyer can scarcely fail to be a dishonest man. This is less a subject for censure than for regret. Men are the creatures of the necessities under which they are placed. He that is habitually goaded by the incentives of vice will not fail to be vicious. He that is perpetually conversant in quibbles, false colours and sophistry cannot equally cultivate the generous emotions of the soul and the nice discernment of rectitude.

Let us however suppose a circumstance which is perhaps altogether impossible, that a man shall be a perfectly honest lawyer. He is determined to plead no cause that he does not believe to be just and to employ no argument that he does not apprehend to be solid. He designs, as far as his sphere extends, to strip law of its ambiguities and to speak the manly language of reason. This man is no doubt highly respectable so far as of reason. This man is no doubt highly respectable so far as of reason. This man is no doubt highly respectable so far as of reason. This man is no doubt highly respectable so far as of reason.

The second part of this article will be published in the next issue of "War Commentary".

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VOTE - what for?

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majority of the people who will be disabled from voting will be working class people who would be more likely to vote Labour than Conservative. This fact will give Labour a fair chance of winning and a certainty, at the worst, of being in a large minority. It will also satisfy the disinclination of the Labour leaders to take power on their own responsibility. If Labour win the election, it is probable that their majority will be so slight that they can only hold power with the help of some centre group, and already the idea of a LibLab coalition is being canvassed. This would be a very pleasant solution for the Labour leaders, because they would be able to enjoy the fruits of power, while they could always blame circumstances or the Liberals for their failure to bring about any positive improvements in the conditions of the working class. Indeed, such a solution would probably help the Tories as well, for they in turn could make a powerless Socialist government the scapegoat for any oppressive measures the ruling class found necessary in a situation of post-war turmoil, just as the German Social-Democrats were made to take the responsibility for the crushing of the genuine working-class movements of post-1918 Germany.

What, in fact, is the choice offered in the election to the workers of this country? The Tories speak with a number of voices, to suit every taste. Beaverbrook and his followers talk loudly of the elimination of all controls, by which, of course, they mean the elimination of the controls which wartime managerialism has imposed on individual capitalism. They do not, however, advocate the elimination of that most evil control of individual liberty, military conscription. The "Left" Conservatives, led by such figures as Quintin Hogg, talk of limited controls, which really means that they favour the monopoly capitalist against the individual capitalist. Meanwhile, Churchill's "caretaker" cabinet, with its array of big industrial nabobs and young scions of the peerage, is a forerunner of the kind of class cabal which a Tory victory at the polls would foist upon the people.

Labour Imperialists

The programme of the Labour Party, except for the talk of nationalising public utilities and the Bank of England, reads very like a pre-war Conservative election platform, with its demands for continued conscription and for a system of tariffs with imperial preference. Even the nationalisations advocated by the Labour Party are nothing like so drastic as those put into practice by the Nazis in Germany, and it looks as though the Labour Party are really anxious to save private capitalism from the results of its own weaknesses. We have always contended that the Labour Party is as imperialist in its fundamental interests as the Tories. We did not, however, foresee that they would admit it quite so naively.

There is nothing much to be read between the lines of the political speeches and programmes. The intentions of the leaders of both parties are obvious. They intend to maintain a war-time economy and a war-time society, in peace time as well as in war, and for this purpose to suppress individual freedom as far as possible. You will find that both sides demand conscription and tariffs, which mean militarism and imperialism, which in their turn mean another war in a measurable space of time.

There is really no choice so far as the worker is concerned between good and bad in this election. The fundamental identity of the interests of politicians was never so clearly shown as at the present time. And, whichever party comes into power, the pursuit of these interests will ensure that neither peace nor freedom will be the result of their rule.

Already, in Europe, the activities of politicians are sowing the seeds of imperialist conflicts. Trieste, Piedmont, the Dodecanese, Syria, Austria, are added to the existing centres of conflict in Greece, in Poland and in Germany. The pre-war disputes over colonies are returning in the feverish atmosphere of San Francisco. And within every country, including England, the war against the common people goes on relentlessly.

Boycott The Election

The function of the election is not to give the common man the chance of deciding how this chaos shall be solved or even of how he himself shall be governed. That will be decided for him by whomever is elected, regardless of election promises or programmes. The true function of the election is to deceive him, and, by giving him a false impression of his power to change things by making a cross on a piece of paper, to divert his attention from those events in the world which would mould his life and may bring his death.

The workers should ignore the elections and keep away from the voting booths. Their liberation from want, war and oppression will not come through the phantom battles of the ballot, but through their own direct action, their own refusal to co-operate any longer in a system that sacrifices their lives to the double evils of authority and property. They can begin by boycotting the means by which their enemies try to trick them into accepting their chains; they should end only when they have destroyed the institutions in whose interests such deceptions are employed.

[We reproduce below the chapter on Law from William Godwin's "Enquiry Concerning Political Justice". Although this analysis of the effects of law was published more than a hundred and fifty years ago, it still retains its value as an indictment of this pernicious institution, and the points which Godwin made have become more rather than less relevant through the growth of legal institutions during the intervening period. The chapter has been slightly abridged, in particular to eliminate references to other parts of the book which would only confuse the reader of a single chapter, but nothing of importance has been left out.]

Law is without doubt one of the most important topics upon which human intellect can be employed. It is law which has hitherto been regarded in countries calling themselves civilised as the standard by which to measure all offences and irregularities that fall under public animadversion. Let us fairly investigate the merits of this choice.

The comparison which has presented itself to those by whom the topic has been investigated has hitherto been between law on one side and the arbitrary will of a despot on the other. But if we would fairly estimate the merits of law, we should first consider it as it is in itself, and then, if necessary, search for the most eligible principle that may be substituted in its place.

It has been recommended as 'affording information to the different members of the community respecting the principles which will be adopted in deciding upon their actions'. It has been represented as the highest degree of inquiry 'to try men by an *ex post facto* law, or indeed in any other manner than by the letter of a law formally made and sufficiently promulgated'.

How far it will be safe altogether to annihilate this principle we shall presently have occasion to enquire. It is obvious at first sight to remark that it is of most importance to a country where the system of jurisprudence is most capricious and absurd. If it be deemed criminal in any society to wear clothes of a particular texture or buttons of a particular composition, it is natural to exclaim that it is high time the jurisprudence of that society should inform its members, what are the fantastic rules by which they mean to proceed. But if a society be contented with the rules of justice and do not assume to itself the right of distorting or adding to those rules, there law is evidently a less necessary institution. The rules of justice would be more clearly and effectually taught by an actual intercourse with human society unrestrained by the fetters of prepossession than they can be by catechisms and creeds.

THE MULTIPLICITY OF LAWS

One result of the institution of law is that the institution once begun can never be brought to a close. Edict is heaped upon edict, and volume upon volume. This will be most the case where the government is most popular and its proceedings have most in them of the nature of deliberation. Surely this is no slight indication that the principle is wrong, and that of consequence the farther we proceed in the path it marks out to us, the more shall we be bewildered. No task can be more hopeless than that of effecting a coalition between a right principle and a wrong. He that seriously and sincerely attempts it will perhaps expose himself to more palpable ridicule than he who instead of professing two opposite systems should adhere to the worst.

There is no maxim more clear than this, Every case is a rule to itself. No action of any man was ever the same as any other action, had ever the same degree of utility or injury. It should seem to be the business of justice to distinguish the qualities of men and not, which has hitherto been the practice, to confound them. But what has been the result of an attempt to do this in relation to law? As new cases occur, the law is perpetually found deficient. How should it be otherwise? Lawgivers have not the faculty of unlimited prescience and cannot define that which is infinite. The alternative that remains is either to wrest the law to include a case which was never in the contemplation of the author or to make a new law to provide for this particular case. Much has been done in the first of these modes. The quibbles of lawyers and the arts by which they refine and distort the sense of the law are proverbial. But

THE 'LIBERATION' OF BURMA

The British government has celebrated the "liberation" of Burma from the Japanese by a declaration that even the limited amount of self-government allowed to the Burmese before the war will not be returned to them for some years. In the meantime, the country will be administered by the Governor, acting as the representative of Whitehall.

This decision is of interest not only in its own merits, but also as a pointer of the way in which the territories and peoples "liberated" from the Japanese in the Far East will be administered, and as an indication that other colonial peoples will find a determined opposition on the part of the British ruling class to granting them any form of freedom from outside interference.

The Burmese incident can be seen in its proper perspective if we consider the history of Burmese "freedom". Burma, before 1937, was governed as a province of India. The people of Burma were in general different in race and religion from the Indians, but economically the two countries were closely bound together by the fact that Burma was the great rice granary which provided most of the rice imported into India. The failure of the Burmese rice exports, it will be remembered, was a contributory cause of the great Bengal famine. Moreover, the interests of the peoples of Burma and India are fundamentally the same, the liberation of the peasants and workers from the rule of the British sahibs.

During the 1920's a movement for the liberation of Burma arose among the Burmese. It was for the most part reformist and nationalist, like the Indian Congress, but it was divided from the latter by the differences in culture and tradition between the two races. Nevertheless, originally the people of Burma and the people of India worked together without animosity in their efforts to gain independence.

"Divide And Rule"

The British authorities, however, soon realised that the cultural differences could be exploited to good effect, and by giving apparent encouragement to Burmese nationalism they managed to drive a wedge between the Burmese and the Indians, just as they contrived to accentuate the divisions between the Hindus and the Moslems. In pursuance of this policy they divided Burma from India in 1937 and set up a separate administration with the simulacrum of independence. Anti-Indian feeling was whipped up against the million Indian immigrants in Burma, and the sahibs were rewarded in 1938 by a series of riots against Indians. Since that time this racial prejudice has been sedulously fostered not only by the British, but also by their Burmese quislings, the Burmese trading class and the Buddhist priests. During the Japanese occupation, of course, the same racial feeling was canalised against the British.

The "independence" which rewarded the Burmese for being divided off from their Indian fellow-subjects, in order to make India a more easy problem to handle, was strictly circumscribed. A Burmese Cabinet and a Burmese legislature came into existence, and administered certain provinces of Burmese affairs. But the Governor still retained control over Defence, Foreign Affairs and monetary policy, while within Burma itself the policy of "divide-and-

rule" was carried further by the Shan and other non-Burmese tribes being administered directly by the British, so that racial differences were again accentuated. Moreover, British officials still retained key positions in the Civil Service and the Police.

"Self Government"

The Burmese governments elected under this act represented the native propertied classes. A few reforms were carried out, and some nationalistic gestures were made, but very little improvement was made in the conditions of life of the Burmese peasants or coolies, and the native civil servants and magistrates tended to be as repressive and even more corrupt than the British. It was the old story of a ruling class handing over power to a native ruling class whose interests are near enough to their own to preserve as much as possible of the *status quo* while giving the pretence of freedom. Even these nationalistic politicians sometimes went too far for the British, and then the whole pretence of Burmese freedom was exposed in such scandalous incidents as the internment of U Saw, the Burmese Premier who seems to have had some genuine desire to break away from the British.

The present move of superseding the Burmese constitution in such an arbitrary manner obviously springs from a desire to make sure that British economic interests in Burma are secured

before the Burmese of any class have a chance to interfere, or perhaps, before the trading interests of some rival imperialist power make their appearance. The British government obviously intend to make sure that any Burmese government which appears will be fully subservient, in fact if not in appearance. It may be that they will not even find it necessary to return the pretence of independence.

An Example For India

If the British government use the war as an excuse to take away from the Burmese even that pretence of freedom which they had, what chance is there that they will implement their promises of Indian freedom? The Burmese are free from many of the circumstances which are held up as reasons for keeping the Indians under British rule. In religion they are united, there is no caste system, and thanks to the Buddhist monks the standard of literacy is high. If they return to the old system of direct rule, what chance is there for the Indians, who present so many excuses for the casuists of the Indian Office?

This incident is sinister because of the intentions of further colonial exploitation which it reveals, and not from any value which is to be attached to Burmese nationalism. Nationalistic movements divide the peoples of the world, and hide from them their true interests, which are the same in all lands. Nationalistic self-govern-

THE POLICE—Seen by a Policeman

AN old controversy is brought to mind with the recent death of Ex-Inspector John Syme at the age of 73. Syme was an Inspector in the Metropolitan Police Force, and in 1909 got into trouble with his superiors because he incautiously ventured to defend two police constables whom the latter were wishing to censure. Syme thought himself unjustly treated and appealed to the high-ups in the police force, and exposed the grumbling which the tyrannous discipline caused. Asked by the Discipline Board to substantiate the allegation that dissatisfaction existed, he produced 147 witnesses. After hearing only 22 of these the Board informed him that they were satisfied that the dissatisfaction existed. To his astonishment, however, they closed the enquiry and found Syme guilty of having made defamatory allegations against his superiors which he was unable to substantiate! The Discipline Board moreover had to admit that Syme's superiors completely failed to prove their own case against him, and they were admitted to have intimidated lower rank policemen who would have been witnesses for Syme. The upshot was that he was demoted and then suspended for insubordinate behaviour.

Syme attempted to bring his grievance to the notice of the House of Commons. For this he was hailed again before the Discipline Board and this time dismissed. He then managed to get in touch with Winston Churchill at that time Home Secretary, but he declined to interfere. Later on Churchill sent for him, and offered to re-instate him at the lower grade of Station

Sergeant. Syme pointed out that this was a virtual admission of the justice of his case. He refused Churchill's offer on the grounds that he wasn't going to accept unmerited punishment in order to save the faces of the officials who had wronged him.

He continued to make every effort to give publicity to his case. He had been dismissed, he claimed, because to have admitted his case against his superior officers would have condemned police discipline. Several Labour M.P.s strongly advised him to accept re-instatement at a lower rank, saying that his former rank would soon be restored to him. Syme refused on the grounds that such a course would clear the Commissioners from blame, but would leave his witnesses open to reprisals from superiors.

The Labour Party took a feeble position from the start. Barnes, the then leader of the party, wrote to him that "officialdom was strongly entrenched" but that, though the Labour Party would support an enquiry into conditions in the police force, it could not initiate one. Lansbury, however, did ask questions in Parliament. Syme wrote in a pamphlet: "Two London M.P.s., Mr. George Lansbury (Labour) and Mr. George Touche (Conservative) pressed Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons with questions. Mr. Churchill gave the usual official misleading replies, evading the truth; and knowing the worthlessness of the Commissioner's judgment in my case, published it for information of Members and the public. He refused Mr. Touche's request for publication of the Disciplinary Board's

judgment; his excuse for refusing was the plea of economy; but the reason was because the latter document would have exposed the misrepresentations of the Commissioner's judgment. I challenge the Home Secretary to publish both documents and the evidence of two witnesses and let the public decide. Mr. Churchill employed against me all the legal influence and power of the State, and I was compelled technically to break the law. I was imprisoned for six months as a result of trying to obtain publicity and an enquiry."

Syme made numerous demonstrations—in Downing Street for instance—and broke windows of public buildings in order to attract attention to his case. He went to prison 43 times, and frequently went on hunger strike. After more than twenty years of campaigning, he was at last granted a House of Commons enquiry, and in 1931 was granted £1,200 arrears of pension, and a yearly pension of £72. But no compensation. Syme was not satisfied with this. He wrote, "To uphold discipline," he wrote, "is apparently more important than to uphold justice, and I am a victim at present. I maintain that discipline cannot be maintained by tyranny, and that the present system, instead of fostering truth and honesty in the Police Force, where men are expected to be truthful, breeds untruthfulness, dishonesty and corruption, to the detriment of the public service."

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

Anarchist Commentary

HOW TO WORK YOUR TICKET

If one sets out to look for scandals it is usually quite easy to unearth them, but some things are so flagrant that one would never suspect they were being worked, until an odd paragraph in the papers reveals something that has been going on for years.

We refer at the moment to M.P.'s working their ticket out of the Forces. M.P.'s liable for the Forces can be divided into three categories: (1) those who remain in the Forces and give full time to Service demands, thus getting a Parliamentary salary (plus its social and business standing) for entirely nothing; (2) those who take advantage of their privilege to leave the Services altogether, as it is held that an M.P.'s first duty is to his constituents; and (3) those who dodge about between one and the other, spending a night with the boys in the officer's mess and the next night with the boys at Westminster, and never doing anything substantial either in the Forces or in the Commons.

Now all this is a racket, but what we never suspected in our innocence was that an M.P. having got his release from the Forces because his Parliamentary duties came first, could right away go and take up business duties. A paragraph in *The Star*, 14/5/45 referring to the announcement of the marriage of William Waldorf Astor, M.P. for East Fulham, son of Lord Astor of the Times and Lady Astor, the anti-booze queen, mentioned that Mr. Astor and his intended "celebrated VE-Day together going down to see Mr. Astor's constituents. On Wednesday, Mr. Astor, deputising for his father, Lord Astor, led in Court Martial, winner of the Two Thousand Guineas at Newmarket. The next day he became engaged. . . . Mr. Astor became an underwriting member of Lloyd's at the beginning of the year. He was a lieutenant in the R.N.V.R., and was released to continue his Parliamentary duties."

He was a lieutenant in the R.N.V.R. but was released to continue his Parliamentary duties—he then became an underwriting member of Lloyd's. Why wasn't he grabbed back into the R.N.V.R., then? No—Parliamentary privilege. He sits in Parliament and can do as he chooses. No National Service Officer determines that he carries out the conditions of his deferment—on the contrary, he can pop off to Newmarket and lead in his old man's winner!

ANARCHISM IN GREECE?

All reports indicate that the Stalinists' intriguing of control of the Resistance movement in Greece is resented by the rank-and-file. E.A.M., a political party, has always been dominated by Stalinists as a pawn in the hands of Russian power-politics, and they manoeuvre the controls of the mass movement, E.L.A.S., which is non-party. The awakening in Greece will not permit the establishment of a new tyranny so speedily but, it is to be hoped, will abolish monarchist reaction, Hitlerism and Stalinism. Those taking this course would naturally turn to the non-governmental solution so that it is interesting to note that those Greek militants who are acting against not only the Quislings of Germany but also those of Britain and those of Russia, who will soon appear in their true colours, are attacked as anarchists by the Stalinists. We quote from the *New York Why*, March/April 1945:

WHO ARE OUR FRIENDS?

The following quotations from a N.Y. Times AP dispatch from Athens, dated February 12, reveal unambiguously the real nature of the EAM leadership & also what our comrades are facing in Russia, Bulgaria, Hungary,

Poland, Yugoslavia & other "liberated" countries as well as in Greece:

'The E.A.M. said through its secretary general, Dimitrios Partalides, that the agreement [between the EAM & the Plastiras government] would 'contribute to the pacification of the country because it will enable the economic rehabilitation necessary to Greece in its present plight.'

'Concerning the executions of certain prominent persons not identified with collaboration,' Mr. Partalides asserted that "nobody can justify these crimes, but as soon as we can get back we shall investigate the matter, as we feel sure they were committed by anarchists and reactionaries." [emphasis ours]

'George Siantos, secretary general of the Communist Party and spokesman for the EAM,' said that he was pleased with the agreement.'

THE TWO NATIONS

It was Disraeli, the father of modern Toryism, who invented the idea of the Two Nations, the Rich and the Poor. That was in his radical days, when he pretended to support the Poor, but when he went over to the other side, he still worked according to the same hypothesis, only this time he took out naturalisation papers as one of the Rich.

Tory politicians, in spite of their pleas for national unity, have worked on this basis ever since. However, they are too shrewd to admit it nowadays, and it is only in more obscure places that we get an admission of this dual nationality. For instance, a Hampstead headmaster, advocating the continuance of expensive private schools, remarked the other day:

"So long as we in this country are allowed freedom of choice, freedom to choose between spending our money on cars and furs or on schools, there will always be some ready to forego their Daimlers and silver foxes in order to pay for schools which, if they are to be efficient, must be fairly expensive."

Hampstead & Highgate Express, 18/5/45. Now, whom can he mean by 'We in this country'? Dustmen and gardeners and assistant schoolmasters are in this country, but surely even a private school headmaster cannot imagine that any of these have the chance to ride about in Daimlers in their hours off. Therefore such people are obviously not *we* in this country, but they in this country, *we* being strictly limited to the people who have the chance of riding in a Daimler or wearing a silver fox fur, unless this country is in some mysterious way another country so far as the dustmen, gardeners and assistant schoolmasters are concerned. It's a nice problem, and the only solution seems to be that offered by the Primrose Peer a hundred years ago.

FRATERNISATION

The following note from the *New York Monthly Politics* is of particular interest because it concerns an Associated Press interview with an American sergeant who was among the first units to enter Cologne, and whose words show that the official ban on fraternisation is as unworkable as it is reprehensible.

"It has often been observed," says *Politics*, "how much more brutal and bloodthirsty civilians are than those who do the actual fighting. Sergeant Mitchell's remarks bear this out. He tells how the Germans crawled out of their cellars and brought out beer, bread, jam and pretzels for the American troops. 'They were mostly children and old people—just sort of helpless and glad they were not being killed.

It's hard to keep that icy front when people act friendly; also we Americans used to have some respect for old folks.' The order against fraternization with German civilians, added the Sergeant, works only when the M.P.'s are around. 'We are supposed to hate people—to be very tough customers. But as soon as the fighting is over, it works just the other way—we begin to feel sorry for them. Non-fraternization works if somebody is there with a club, but right at the front where a soldier is risking death, you cannot scare him with a \$65 fine.'

REPORT FROM SOUTHERN FRANCE

A correspondent who has just returned from Provence gives certain details of economic conditions in the South of France which confirm the general impressions conveyed by the report published in *War Commentary* last week on the French situation.

There is plenty of food in Provence, and all the farmers live at a comparatively high standard, but it is still impossible to buy food for any reasonable sum of money. A meal in a restaurant in Avignon or Arles will cost anything up to two thousand francs. A pound of coffee costs 1,700 francs, a bottle of olive oil 1,500 francs. Only wine, which is very abundant, is still reasonably cheap. It costs from 40 to 60 francs a bottle.

Because of this inflation the monetary system in Provence has very largely lapsed, and the farmers and tradesmen have returned to barter. Goods and services are exchanged for goods and services, and a barter transaction is always preferred to a money transaction because the value of money is small and unreliable. American or British soldiers found it difficult to buy meals with currency, but discovered that a handful of tea or a little coffee would purchase a first-class meal. Prominent members of the resistance movement receive adequate presents of food and drink.

The consequence of this state of affairs is that the man who has a sufficient supply of exchangeable goods can live well in the South of France, as can the man who is able to render some kind of direct service, political or otherwise, to a farmer or a shopkeeper. But the man who relies on his wages or salary lives on the very verge of starvation. In the industrial districts, like Marseilles and Lyons, this condition becomes much worse, so that while in the country districts most people manage to get enough food, in the cities almost all the workers are half-starved.

S.P.G.B. JOINS ELECTION RUSH

A Press Announcement which has reached us from the Socialist Party of Great Britain tells us that C. C. Groves, General Secretary of the party, is to contest the North Paddington constituency in the general election.

"Mr. Groves," we are informed, "will contest the election on the basic principles upon which the Socialist Party has taken its stand since its formation in 1904," regardless, of course, of the fact that the policy of the S.P.G.B. was still-born even in 1904, and, in spite of the careful technique of embalming practiced by its high priests, is as little alive to-day as it was then. The S.P.G.B.'s announcement goes on to speak in terms of great contempt of the 'reformist' policies of other Leftist parties. While we agree with this outlook, we do not think it sounds very convincing when it comes from a party whose idea of revolutionary policy is contesting Paddington North in the next election!

Glasgow Workers Discuss Industrial Action

In the 10th March issue of *War Commentary* we published a resolution from a group of Clydeside workers and shop stewards putting forward concrete proposals for industrial organisation. The two letters below discuss these proposals, we regret not having been able to publish them before but lack of space has prevented us doing so.

DEAR COMRADE,

I read with interest—and I must say with some concern—the proposal by a "Group of Glasgow Workers" that in the vital task of the organisation of all workers at the point of production, the Shop Steward movement should be used for this purpose.

The reference to degeneracy within this movement is accurate and irrefutable.

The workers on the Clydeside have long ago discovered that these political lackeys of Trade Unionism were simply masquerading as their friends, whilst at the same time operating as Trade Union Gestapo.

The whole history of the Shop Steward movement in factories and workshops since the War has been one of gross betrayal; and their collaboration with the bosses has been evident to even the blindest. Not only have these people been responsible for the incarceration of many workers in prison, but they have also played an ignominious role in sabotaging every spontaneous effort the workers have made to take strike action.

Therefore it seems to me that any attempt to reform this much discredited movement is a waste of time and energy. On the contrary, it is the duty of every class-conscious worker to denounce this reactionary movement at every possible opportunity.

The formation of a real, genuine, fighting workers' organisation inside the workshops can only be attained by constantly attacking the Trade Union movement and all its associated hirelings. It is useless to attempt the regeneration of any movement which has demonstrated its antagonism to revolutionary struggle.

Shop Stewards are in the main staunch trade unionists; that is to say, they are of the artisan class, and have frittered away a good part of their youth in learning a trade. In this process they have been—more or less—at the mercy of Union officials who have used every subtle device in order to install in their minds the idea that, having completed their apprenticeship, they now blossom forth as fully-fledged technicians, lordling it over the unskilled in a manner which is sometimes pathetic to behold.

This dangerous attempt at class division, which can be observed in factories and shipyards all over the country, is encouraged by Union leaders and bosses alike. The continuation of this state of affairs is the job of Union officials and subordinate foremen. Thus, it is of the utmost importance to remedy this situation which has prevailed for so long.

As the war draws to its close, we see the whole structure of capitalism disintegrating; if its total collapse is to be hastened it is necessary that the greatest vigilance should be exercised upon every reactionary movement in this country.

The Shop Steward movement—in my opinion—comes under this category. Therefore I contend that to attempt to reform, bolster up or in any way revitalise this movement would only assist in the perpetuation of a system which is already crumbling to its doom.

Yours fraternally,
J. McD. (Glasgow).

DEAR SIR,
There are some points in the Resolution of a "Group of Glasgow Workers" which I would like to criticise. It seems to me that the authors of the Resolution have mistaken their enemy. What we are up against to-day is not the free-for-all capitalism which the Resolution rightly condemns. Our enemy is State-controlled national-socialism; and it is important to notice that the capitalists, though they will sincerely oppose the movement towards such a totalitarian society, will inevitably be driven to it by the impetus of their class interests and the policies which this war has compelled them to adopt. I don't like to say that things are "inevitable" but I am convinced that the capitalists (and the Trade Unionists and Labourites) are on the road towards a State-dominated economy in which the ruling class, which to-day gains its wealth by free-for-all; among the resources of the world, will become bureaucrats—the High Priests of the Church of Mammon.

Consequently, problems like unemployment and redundancy must be viewed in a different light. I agree with the anarchists that organisations of workers should be at the place of work. But does the matter end there? I believe that the struggle to defeat totalitarianism will be largely, though not wholly, a political one. And I would like to see Groups like that of the Glasgow Workers clearing out their political stables.

May I, as a member of the Scottish Socialist Party, contribute a few points? My conception of the part which nationalism should play in a new human society will naturally be closely criticised by anarchists. And rightly so. I think that democratic socialism can best function in small units. I believe that such small units are now technically and industrially possible. I do not think that political ideas are the automatic consequences of economic activity alone but depend on the size of the unit involved, national tradition and so on. The situation in Russia has shown that the Soviet system (the splitting up of a huge country into small administrative units) is incompatible with a centralised economy. I suggest that democratic socialism functioning in small units is the best answer to the totalitarian impulses in modern society.

Yours fraternally,
A. CLARK SMITH (Glasgow).

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

For the past six months we have been unable to send out renewal notices due to shortage of staff and the fact that the necessary files were in the hands of Scotland Yard. Many subscriptions are badly in arrears but readers are asked to take into consideration the difficulties under which we have been working and we hope they will assist us by completing renewal forms as quickly as possible.

BREATH OF COMMON SENSE

The annual conference of the British Federation of Young Co-operators at Nottingham yesterday condemned by 35 votes to three "the Government's policy of non-fraternisation in Germany as one which will accentuate nationalistic feelings, and urges the Socialist and Co-operative movements to use all their influence to countermand this order."

Daily Express, 21/5/45.

BLACK-AND-TANS AGAIN

The Government of Northern Ireland are making arrangements for the release of a number of specially selected members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary for service in Greece.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary are the only police force in the British Isles who are armed, carrying side-arms. Those on special patrols have rifles. They receive training on military lines as well as ordinary police duties.

Evening Standard, 15/5/45.

SLAVERY

A man of 62, obviously ill, who said he had "just driven himself to try to carry on," was summoned yesterday by the Ministry of Supply for being persistently late at work.

The man, who was allowed to sit during the hearing, was described as "an essential worker" in the Ministry's inspection department at Regis House, King William-street, E.C.

One of his alleged offences, put before the court with all solemnity was that he was one minute late.

The magistrate (Alderman Sir Charles Davis) said he thought Brentnall had been guilty of a technical offence, but a nominal fine of 20s. would meet the case.

Daily Mail, 18/5/45.

Not everyone can be the Duke of Windsor.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY

A shabbily dressed, unkempt and thirsty man went into a Paris café yesterday and asked for a drink.

He was told that his appearance was not respectable enough for the establishment. He wept. He was a repatriated prisoner just back from Germany.

Customers in the café included Allied soldiers. They were so incensed at the "welcome" that they smashed every window in the place.

Meanwhile returned French prisoners and deportees, shouting: "Purge, clothes, shoes!" demonstrated all day in front of the Ministry of Prisoners, Deportees, and Refugees in Paris to-day.

Daily Mail, 18/5/45.

NAZISM

French occupation troops have threatened to burn down any parts of Constance in which their proclamations are torn down.

Daily Express, 19/5/45.

Not by Germans or in Germany.

THE DIRTIEST PROFESSION

Jack Utal, 31, salesman, of Tachbrook-street, Westminster, and a 16-year-old boy were at Bow Street to-day committed for trial accused of being concerned in stealing £1000 from Mr. Arnold Green, of Denbigh-street, Westminster. Bail was allowed for both.

In cross-examination by Mr. Harry Myers, defending, Mr. Green said he was at the court on Saturday charged with inciting a man to acquire clothing coupons. The charge was withdrawn. For two years he had been a police informer with his partner, Utal.

Mr. Myers.—Do you get paid for your work? —I get paid by the officer I work with. I have had payment on perhaps seven occasions.

Evening Standard, 7/5/45.

GOD'S ON THEIR SIDE!

CAPTION TO A PHOTOGRAPH IN THE TIMES:

STOCK EXCHANGE THANKSGIVING.

A photograph taken at the Stock Exchange during the service of thanksgiving for the victory in Europe. Prebendary G. F. Saywell, Chaplain to the Stock Exchange, is conducting the service, and the band of the Grenadier Guards is in the foreground.

Times, 16/5/45.

We do not doubt for a moment that the Stock Exchange has plenty to be thankful for. War has meant bigger and better business.

Through the Press

FASCIST CONTROL IS BEST

Three days after the formal surrender of the German garrison there are still only a handful of British troops here in Crete, and the administration of the capital city of Crete is still being carried out by German troops.

This situation is naturally somewhat puzzling to the inhabitants, who had expected the surrender to be followed by the immediate entry of British troops "with a band marching at their head," to quote the Archbishop of Crete. The fact that a few members of the National Guard who managed to slip in without permission or passes were arrested and disarmed by German patrols is also causing adverse comment, but these precautions are necessary. Not only racial but political passions are running high, and any loosening of control, even if that control has to be carried out by a beaten enemy, may easily result in grave danger.

Times, 17/5/45.

This is yet another example showing how authority prefers fascist "control" at all times to popular uprisings.

FOLLOW RUSSIAN EXAMPLE SAY CAPITALISTS

An industrial "Magna Carta" abolishing all controls except those to prevent black markets and a vicious spiral of rising prices was advocated by Sir Miles Thomas, vice-chairman of the Nuffield Organisation, to the Manchester Publicity Association yesterday.

When the Forces got back to "Civvy Street" they would want to find some of the comforts and privileges for which they had been fighting. First they would want substantially-built homes, not tin tabernacles. In Russia they were laying 800 to 1,000 bricks per man per day, and he did not see why British bricklayers could not do the same.

Daily Dispatch, 17/5/45.

DODGING THE COLUMN

All serving M.P.'s in the Army who are abroad, and all properly accredited candidates at the coming General Election, have been ordered to return to home bases.

Daily Express, 19/5/45.

NO WAY OUT OF PARADISE

A British sergeant, separated from his Russian wife and child, who are in Moscow, has told a remarkable story in a letter to Mr. R. C. Morrison, M.P., for North Tottenham. It is to be raised in the House of Commons by Mr. Morrison in a question to Mr. Eden.

Sergeant S. V. Smith, of the Royal Signals, staying at Downhills Park Road, Tottenham, put his case to the Foreign Office, which in reply to him says:

I am directed by Mr. Winston Churchill to inform you that this department is not aware of any arrangements for bringing Russian wives . . . to this country. As you are aware, every effort has been made to induce the Soviet authorities to release from their Soviet citizenship wives of British subjects, but, unfortunately, it has not been possible to persuade the Soviet authorities to give these cases their early consideration.

Manchester Guardian, 19/5/45.

SCANDALOUS SITUATION

Although there are 700 sick people awaiting admission, Essex County Hospital, Colchester—one of the biggest hospitals in East Anglia—has had to close a ward of 36 beds because it has not enough nurses.

News Chronicle, 22/5/45.

If nurses were paid decent wages problems of this kind would not arise.

ON ESSENTIAL WORK?

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor arrived here yesterday from Palm Beach and Miami, where they stayed with friends for several weeks. They expect to remain a month, and they may then go to the Duke's Canadian ranch.

Times, 16/5/45.

IS YOUR FUNCTION REALLY NECESSARY

Hercules performed ten giant labours, but the activities of some Members of Parliament make the feat seem trivial. There is Sir Stanley Holmes, who graces the boardrooms of 34 companies as well as his seat in the House of Commons. Mr. Rupert de la Bere holds 26 directorships, Sir Arnold Gridley 16, Sir Patrick Hannon and Mr. Hely-Hutchinson 12 apiece, and many others a modest cluster to be counted on the fingers of two hands.

One-third of the Conservative representation in Parliament are engaged, as company directors, in an occupation followed by only one in every thousand of the electorate.

Evening Standard, 17/5/45.

Some people think you can't do without the capitalists—but who can possibly imagine that there is any socially necessary function served by a man who directs thirty-four companies and sits in Parliament as well? A worker can only do one job, or a few at the most, at a time, because his presence is necessary. The directors, shareholders, etc., simply live on the workers' backs, merely determining the commands given to the workers who produce everything. The M.P. is in the same position as the company director, even if he belongs to the lawyer section of the House.

GERMAN ANTI-FASCISTS FIRST VICTIMS

The journalists and writers of Buchenwald have formed a committee whose aim is to maintain contact between all the former inmates of the Concentration Camps and to disseminate information about Nazi deeds. They want to assist in the building of a free and democratic international order and to prevent a recurrence of Nazism. They have started by stencilling a sheet called "Souvenir" addressed to the American soldier. There he is asked to remember—"remember all the places which you have seen, where thousands and thousands of men were tortured to death and shot. But also: 'remember that German anti-Fascists were the first victims of Nazi Concentration Camps, that they collaborated with all the international anti-Fascists in the liberation of the Camp, and so laid the foundation stone of a democratic Germany, free of Nazis."

New Statesman & Nation, 5/5/45.

FRISCO'S ATROCITY

"One of the tragedies of San Francisco was that no one could buy any silk stockings."—Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Home Security, on her return to London from the World Security Conference.

Daily Mail, 18/5/45.

STALIN'S 'LEFT' TURN Another Political Trick

It seems clear to-day, with the defeat of the German army and the unconditional surrender of the Reich, that none of the major problems of European politics has been solved by the victorious powers. The inevitable contradictions which have been foreseen during the war by a revolutionary minority cannot remain hidden any longer from the public by official and unanimous declarations or promises of a wonderful peaceful world.

Only a few days after the final act of the European war, when the VE-Day celebrations were still going on, when the flags of the United Nations were still displayed in all the public places of Great Britain, France and the U.S.A., the reactionary press of America started to call a war with Soviet Russia inevitable, pointing out that Europe cannot be reconstructed so long as it is dominated by the evil power of Russian Imperialism. At the same time the Soviet papers started a campaign, which still continues, to prove that the Western Allies are collaborating with the big shots of the Nazi régime and to point out that the liquidation of the German Army must be parallel with the extermination of the last survivors of the Nazi régime.

Behind these accusations by the Soviet press and radio lies something quite different. Stalin has once more surprised the world with one of those somersaults of policy which are possible only if you have absolutely no public opinion to reckon with, if all liberty of thought and of expression have been carefully suppressed beforehand.

The trend of the Soviet foreign policy appears now to be concentrating on one major objective: the neutralisation of Continental Europe. It has always been clear to the Russians that to dominate Europe they must dominate Germany, exactly as it is necessary for Germany to dominate Russia in order to keep its position in Europe and the world.

In other words, Stalin would like a friendly Germany, while the western powers are not interested for the time being in the friendship of the German people, and seem to have in mind to exploit themselves the industrial power of the Reich rather than to build up a new German economy.

The British, Americans and French have decided to bring "order" into defeated Germany, even by means of "collaboration" with the most

reactionary German elements. The Russians are able to establish order by themselves, for the G.P.U. can take care of any internal opposition. There need not be collaboration. Indeed, the fear of Russia still prevailing among many Germans, particularly the bourgeoisie, makes collaboration with reactionary elements difficult for the present. Stalin knows this, and that is why he decided to enter Germany as a "liberator", while Churchill and Roosevelt spoke of "conquering". It is true that the Russian policy during the war was ostensibly one of conquest and of domination. But, now the war is over, Stalin starts to try to win over the German people, to convince them of the necessity of co-operation with "mighty Russia". This is the scheme.

First, conditions of life must be improved. The food rations in Russian-occupied Germany are increased (at least temporarily). The reconstruction work is done with the greatest possible speed. The Berlin underground is running. The shops are opening. Cinemas are featuring Russian pictures. The orchestras are playing once more—Tchaikovsky has replaced Wagner. At the same time the radio stations are again on the air. The propaganda from the Berlin stations starts to "prove" that the Russians have only the best intentions towards the German people, and announcers with German accents ask the listeners to thank the Red Army for liberation from the Nazi yoke. Here is a typical item:

"One Miss Ursel Friedman says: 'Now we know what lies the Goebbels propaganda told about the Red Army. Not only shall we not starve, but the working man gets more than under the Nazis. All this is a revelation to us. We are simply amazed. We shall want to work in any case. It is now up to us to organize the distribution of work swiftly and efficiently. We all see rolling past us the Red Army lorries carrying food to the German population. Altogether a new life is beginning. We have started on the way towards a better world. Even theatres have reopened. Things are looking brighter and they will look brighter still.'" (Berlin Radio, 18/5/45).

At the same time the new German municipal administration of Berlin takes over. General Barjanin, Soviet Commander of Berlin, pointed out during the opening session of the council that "Marshal Stalin has long ago ordered the

preparation of food for German civilians." It seems that Stalin took this measure at the same time as his spokesman Ehrenburg spoke of the awful "Fritz", the Hun who will have to pay for the Nazi crimes.

So far everything seems clear. The Russian government wants a "friendly" Germany. So it shows the "humanitarian" and "liberal" aspect of the Soviet régime. M. Mikoyan, Deputy-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R., i.e. Deputy to Stalin himself, recently made a tour to study the food situation in occupied Germany, especially in Berlin and Dresden. On his return to Moscow he gave an interview to *Pravda*. Here is what the "communist" Mikoyan had to say:

"The seriousness of the German food situation is mainly due to the German Government's mistaken policy in agricultural production and distribution. According to the German law the peasants had to deliver all their produce to the State except for a certain quantity they could keep for their own use. They could not sell any grain, fats, meat or potatoes on the free market or through trade organisations. This naturally weakened the stimulus towards increasing production. To enable Germany to feed her own towns, the peasants must be allowed to sell in the free market after fulfilling the compulsory deliveries to administrative organs. Trade in any articles of mass consumption was previously forbidden in Germany and the population had to be content with the very few wares they were given on ration cards. To improve the population's supplies the Soviet Command has allowed free trade in Berlin. This will be another way to raise the standard of living of the urban population." It will also be another way to return to the most classic system of capitalism. A few years ago M. Mikoyan would have been shot as a traitor to the "progressive" Soviet régime of trade control and of suppression of the "Kulak" or enriched peasant.

The Russian policy in Germany, the policy of "friendship" with the German people is only one of the features of the scheme set up by Stalin to form the European bloc to protect the

Soviet Union. What Stalin is doing now is a "cordon sanitaire in reverse." This cordon sanitaire must of course include countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Yugoslavia, not to mention Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania. It is in connection with the formation of this bloc of Central and East European countries, that there appears the "new" formula of Soviet policy. In fact it is not new at all, as we shall see in a moment.

In his order of the day, announcing the capitulation of the German armies, Stalin spoke of the "historic struggle of the Slav peoples". A few days later, 19/5/45, one of the Stalinist agents, M. Zdenek Nejedly, Education Minister of Czechoslovakia, emphasised the meaning of this historic sentence. He said in his first speech upon his return to Prague: "I return from Moscow as Minister of Education, firmly convinced that the destiny of the nation, liberty and civilisation have been defended by the Red Army. . . . The most important fact for us is that, in the future Europe, the leading role will belong to the Slav nations. The Slav idea, vague in times of Kolzar, has to-day become a reality. The Slav nations, centred around the great Russian nation, represent a force which no European coalition can oppose."

As I said, the idea is not new. Replace, for instance, the word "Slav" by the word "Germanic" and see if it does not remind you of something. . . .

So to-day, in the month of the "most crushing victory in human history", power blocs are already forming. I have attempted to analyse the trend of the Soviet foreign policy as it appears now. Of course, the British and the Americans are preparing to counter these moves. They have their own interests and their own plans. It is perhaps too early to speak of the results which the logical development of the situation may bring. There is not always much logic in traditional politics. But the movements which can overthrow régimes, can also upset foreign policies.

DIMITRI TVERDOV

POLICE ACTIVITIES

Dear Comrades,

Until recently, I had not come across the activities of our political police, but in the last few weeks I have learned a lot, quite apart from the War Commentary trial!

This is a small place, with a few thousand population, and before the war it had a high proportion of "gentle-folk", and an almost feudal atmosphere—part of a safe Conservative constituency. Yet the political activities of the police do not leave it untouched. A few weeks ago, someone asked me if I was aware that the police had been asking questions about a friend of mine. I inquired further and found that one Detective Tucker, of Gloucester, had been to the Police Station to get details of this chap's character and occupation, and failing to get what he wanted, approached private individuals. Well, he has only been out of the Army a few months, and one leg is a couple of inches short, from a bullet wound in Burma. His father is a highly-respected schoolmaster, and he himself is a Cambridge B.A., and not likely to be driven to crime by poverty. But he is a member of the C.P.

I was talking about this to a local Councillor and he told me that the police had been to him at the beginning of the war, and warned him to keep his views to himself. He is a member of the Labour Party!

A war-worker with whom I discussed the same subject told me that the police had been after him years ago because someone had remarked casually that "he was a bit of a Communist".

So I'm beginning to think that these activities are of very wide importance indeed. Anyone with even mild Socialist views, parliamentary or otherwise, may be spied on. Myself, a registered C.O., a subscriber to War Commentary and other peculiar periodicals, I must be on their books. I wonder what will happen if the Labour Party gets a clear majority at the next election? Will they work for their new masters, or will they work for a Conservative comeback? Please tell us in War Commentary as much as you can about this sort of police action. I am sure many workers are still as ignorant about this danger as I was till recently.

Yours fraternally,
Stonehouse, Glos. A. F.

Inside Germany

(continued from p. 1.)
wilder allegations of Streicher, etc. Their attitude may be summed up by one who said, "Supposing Churchill or Stalin ordered pogroms, what would you do?"

We repudiate the idea, as suggested by Montgomery, that any of them put on an act for our benefit, since most of them think British soldiers idolise Churchill and the King, but these we spoke to were quite prepared to run them down.

POLITICAL TRENDS

We met no Communists, and think stories that there is a Communist movement can be discounted. It is generally accepted that "Communist" means pro-Russian and no-one we met believes in the Communist Party as a revolutionary force, as some in "liberated countries" still do. The Nazi propagandists built up a picture of Bolshevism as imperialistic, which, being true as well as propagandist, is generally believed. We never went near the Russian Front, but it is generally believed in the West that gigantic atrocities took place on both sides there.

As regards Germany itself, it is finished. The cities we did not see, because all we passed was rubble, where cities once stood. It is impossible to imagine what it looks like from air raid experience in England. One has to picture the devastated square mile of the City of London as representing a whole town and one is near the mark. The people in the country districts often look well fed, both farmers and labourers; in the town districts all look starved. In some of the little towns one sees the real small-bourgeois type, the equivalent of the Cheltenham and Torquay retired business-man, who has not done so badly.

The slave-labourers in the towns were treated abominably, and looked ill and worn. Not all of those in the country do. To our amazement a German farmer told us to leave his Russian labourers alone, as they were better off where they were, and they agreed. This is an exceptional case, and could not have happened except in an isolated district out of reach of the Nazi octopus, but that there can exist people working for nothing who do not want to go home indicates something pretty terrible where they come from.

There was a general opinion that the Allies would come as liberators, excluding the Russians who it is thought want to annex the country (no-one in Germany we spoke to talks as do some of our people in terms of "making it a Communist state"). The air-raids altered this opinion to an extent, but the effect of the B.B.C. propaganda has been to give rise to an impression that the Allies would be less harsh than the Nazis. It is hard to have to say this, because it looks as if one wants to whitewash the evil thing of Nazism, but this is frankly not the general case. The Allies have stopped for the instance the concentration camps, etc., and the extermination campaign which Hitler introduced under cover of the war. That is a good thing, but hopes of outside salvation have been dashed to the ground by the inhuman administration of the country.

DEVASTATION

The picture of woe and devastation that is Germany cannot be believed. It is undoubtedly the case that those who pretend that there is a "campaign for a soft peace" either have never seen the condition of the country or want to hush it up by saying we are being too tolerant. The cities are smashed beyond hope. Sanitation does not exist. Famine is very near, possibly a couple of months ahead. Not a family is left intact—all have suffered some bereavement, none remain together. Many are anti-war—desertion has always been very high, in proportion to the small rate of conscientious objection, largely

restricted to the Jehovah's Witnesses. (At a hospital a soldier told us, "If the Fuehrer weren't a homosexual himself he would realise that the reason so many men get V.D. is in order to dodge the Eastern Front." Incidentally, stories about the corruption of Nazi leaders are rife, but unfortunately evade the issue of Nazism itself, as against the particular leaders).

The picture of devastation has been completed by the policy of loot and destruction by the occupying troops, as well as ex-labourers. This falls particularly harshly on the working-classes. While shops, etc. are ransacked, most of these are usually bomb-damaged already. On the larger houses, mansions, etc., Allied guards are often placed, ostensibly to prevent the Nazis from escaping! The working-class places are robbed wholesale while the women stand by weeping, and in one case Russian ex-labourers even took the clothes off the children of one working-class woman. In this instance they were made to give them back by British soldiers, but the soldiers' action was a definite breach of the non-fraternisation orders, and it is usually the reverse, when looters even search the gardens with mine-detectors to see if anything is buried away. Clothes, dresses, watches, etc., all are taken from the people while they stand by; usually what is not taken is smashed in the process. It is doubtful if any prisoner-of-war ever gets to the base with any personal object remaining—watch, cigarette-case, etc.—and what is infuriating is that contrariwise the admirals, generals, etc. are treated with "traditional courtesy," no doubt a form of mutual insurance. When a few big bugs' houses are looted, the Command may take action, and enforce the laws against looting by harsh sentences on soldiers, but that is how they will dodge the issue, for in fact the looting is a direct result of orders, the non-fraternisation order in particular. When the Allied soldiers went into Germany they were prepared to be 'correct', but they got orders to the contrary. The officers would not let us ask for a cup of tea or some boiling water to make some. "What do we do, then?" "If you want anything, take it." That is how it started. It is fantastic to pretend, as the Press at home pretends, that soldiers have not the intelligence or the honour to refrain from mixing with war-criminals. They had sufficient discernment to know who was who, and those who shake hands with Goering are not the people to refuse to trust them. The position now is that one cannot speak to any German, not even answer a greeting and the looting campaign is only a facet of this artificially organised campaign of hatred. Few men will do as we did, mix and talk in defiance of the order, and perhaps one cannot expect them to take the risk when demobilisation is (we all hope) so near.

NON-FRATERNISATION

Take one aspect, the requisitioning of houses by the military. The non-fraternisation order refuses to allow the Germans to be under the same roof as the Allied soldiers. A woman, her mother, and her child, were turned out of their house and asked where they could sleep. "In the pig-sty," they were told by our officer. That is a typical instance. When we admitted once a woman soaked to the skin through sleeping in the rain, to dry herself at her own fireplace, we were told "not to be soft" and severely cautioned. We could not help realising that the officers running this campaign belong to the same stock as those who evicted our forebears from the crofts and commons. It is farcical to reflect that after all this had happened they gave out the order to blanco up, and keep all brasses bright, as "the Germans respect a smart soldier". They can only visualise respect in terms of bullsh!

"I loathe what you say, but I would defend to the death your right to say it." These impassioned words of Voltaire were quoted by Ernest Silverman at a large meeting organised by the Bristol Freedom Press Defence Committee at the Kingsley Hall, Bristol, on Sunday, May 27th. Ernest Silverman, in a stirring speech, outlined the recent trial at the Old Bailey which resulted in the conviction and imprisonment of three anarchists. Because of his personal connection with the legal side of the defence, Ernest Silverman was able to give some detailed instances of sheer ignorance on the part of the prosecution and expose some humorous paradoxes in legal interpretation. "The anarchists," he said, "were charged with issuing seditious matter, that at the most could have only been read by a couple of thousand people, but the Attorney-General, now the Home Secretary, was himself guilty of the dissemination of this same material to not only all in the court, but to the majority of the newspaper-reading public of this country. Perhaps close on 20,000,000 people have now read this so-called seditious." Finally he warned the audience of the danger that . . . "this case may be the precedent of a practice which carried to an extreme could make any respectable citizen liable to a charge of sedition for possessing a bible."

In a clear, forceful manner, Will Parkin, speaking on behalf of the Bristol P.P.U. went directly to the Achilles Heel of the so-called sedition. He suggested that the activities of the anarchists and others threatened, not those of the common people, but those of the ruling and possessing class. In a plea for individual freedom of speech and expression he denounced the imprisonment of the three anarchists, as an attack upon the fundamental right of the people of this country to consider

We would give one further instance, when some of our men gave food to an old woman. On an officer threatening us with a court-martial for fraternisation with Germans we told him she claimed to be a Jewess; the officer then made an anti-semitic remark to the effect that the Jews were as bad as the Germans, this despite the presence in hearing distance of at least two British soldiers of Jewish descent. It is difficult to find any difference between such persons sheltering under Grigg and Churchill, and their Nazi counterparts.

At the moment there appears to be no likelihood of any renaissance in Germany: the important lesson is to know that our gaudier can behave in the same way when required, just as they evicted our ancestors, burnt their cottages and deported them to penal settlements; as they did in Ireland up to a generation ago, do in India to-day; and are now behaving in Germany. It may be argued by those who have been assimilating war propaganda that the German leaders ordered such things in Russia and elsewhere first; that is true, but it is no use pretending the people on top are motivated by revenge; it is just the way they have behaved elsewhere, and will always behave when given unbridled power. We shall only stop them doing it at home by a determined movement of resistance such as the French—and Irish—had, otherwise we shall finish up being the home coolies, just as the German workers did when their rulers lost their empire. Meantime we must show the German workers whether or not it is possible to stop actions of the bosses which conflict with our conceptions of humanity.

all points of view whatever they may be.

The audience gave an enthusiastic welcome to the next speaker, which was Marie Louise Berneri, who was one of the four accused tried at the Old Bailey and acquitted. The reason for her acquittal she explained, was merely because it was held by English Law that a woman could not conspire with her husband, whereas, she pointed out, because of her long association with the other three comrades in the work of Freedom Press, if they were guilty then she was equally guilty.

Ethel Mannin, from the chair, stressed the urgent need to defend the principles of free speech and free expression against all attacks, by the State and other vested interests. She gave an account of the way that publishers often act as censors of the written word by refusing to publish books that they don't entirely approve of. Ethel Mannin went on to appeal for increased support for the Freedom Press Defence Committee both locally and nationally.

Alf Atherden (I.L.P.) dealing with the Defence Regulations, in particular Regulation 39A, considered that the use of these powers by the authorities constituted a grave threat to Socialist and progressive individuals and organisations, and called for their entire abolition.

In a vigorous speech, Frederick Lohr declared that the attack on Freedom of Speech

Fraternisation on High Level

Field-Marshal Blaskowitz, who was German commander-in-chief in Holland, borrowed 10 rifles and 100 rounds of ammunition from the I Canadian Corps to execute 10 German soldiers who tried to escape in civilian clothes. They were given a summary trial and found guilty of desertion.

German discipline in Holland has remained consistently high, and Canadian headquarters are generally satisfied with co-operation from Blaskowitz. About 98,000 Germans are now under guard, but 1,000 Germans, all of them headquarters or security men, are still walking the streets of Holland fully armed.

Times, 18/5/45.
If a Canadian were to borrow a razor blade from a German soldier he might be court-martialled, but a German Field-Marshal gets the co-operation of the Allies to shoot deserters, that is to say, men who did not wish to fight against Allied soldiers!

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