

WAR COMMENTARY

For Anarchism

"ALL WE CAN DO IS TO GIVE ADVICE. AND AGAIN WHILE GIVING IT WE SAY: 'THIS ADVICE WILL BE VALUELESS IF YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION DO NOT LEAD YOU TO RECOGNISE THAT IT IS WORTH FOLLOWING.'"

Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchist Morality.*

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FRATERNIZATION MEANS "Workers of the World Unite"

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to justify modern war with its indiscriminate destruction of combatants and non-combatants, of women as well as men, of the old as well as the young. But fighting itself can be justified; for to be inert in the face of injustice and cruelty and oppression is simply base. One must struggle against it, just as the unarmed Spanish people did against Franco's attempted coup d'état in July 1936, just as the anti-Nazis and anti-Fascists of the underground movements of revolt have done for years. Workers everywhere realize the justice of such a struggle and instinctively support it—it is also their struggle—it is only rulers who are indifferent to it, and concern themselves solely with preserving their own power.

Yet our rulers recognised the hatred of workers in this country for Nazism, and have used this feeling for their own ends in the present war—"the fight against Nazi oppression." Anarchists do not forget however that the first victims of Nazi oppression were the German workers. If the war has any meaning for the working class, it must secure the liberation of the German workers who

have suffered under Hitler's rule for twelve years.

Ideology Wearing Thin
But the excuses of the former friends of Nazism are wearing thin indeed. It becomes clearer and clearer that the war of nation against nation covers the war of rulers against the ruled. The latter are only just beginning to realize this, and they may yet be duped. The rulers on the other hand have realized it all along, and have sought many ways to cover it. But their deeds betray their aims. Faced with concrete situations—for instance in Italy and Greece—our rulers have not hesitated to side with reaction, have not scrupled to shoot down workers and protect native fascists.

Now the same thing is happening in Germany. Stanley Baron describes in the *News Chronicle* (21/3/45) how well-to-do Germans have escaped the privation which war has inflicted on the German workers. He describes how they have been able to seek relative safety in such places as Bad Godesburg. "To come into Bad Godesburg after spending hours among the bomb-shattered people of Cologne, or even from the plain where



German men and boys in droves are shovelling stones and earth, working side by side with American soldiers to widen the roads, is to realize profoundly the falsity of the myth that for all social classes in Germany the war has been total."

These privileged social classes in Germany, like their counterparts among the Allied countries are chiefly afraid of the working class in their own country. "What will be their fate?" asks Stanley Baron. "They look to the Allies in the hope that it will be a not too uncomfortable one. They hope that in the struggle which they know must come within the German social classes our presence will throw the weight to the Right, not to the Left." Experience in Italy

and Greece shows that their hopes are probably well founded. But if the Allies do in fact "throw the weight to the Right," the Right which supported Hitler; if they act against the German working class (and, of course we know this is exactly what they will do) then what becomes of the justification for the war with all its ghastliness and accumulation of suffering?

German Workers Against Hitler

"There is no doubt" declares the commentator Howard K. Smith, "that the vast majority of the German people are deathly sick of war, and, if the present slice of Germany we

hold is an index, there is little doubt that most of them are pretty sick too of Nazism." The *Stockholm correspondent of the Manchester Guardian* reports increasing numbers of desertions from the German Army, such that the Nazi press has to issue instructions openly for their apprehension. Clearly, therefore, anti-Nazi forces entering Germany would receive help and support from these anti-Nazi forces inside the country. But the Allied forces entering Germany—at least, as far as their commanders go—are not anti-Nazi. They are concerned with the war of nation against nation, that is to say, the war of one imperialist interest against another. They are concerned to see that the fundamental war, the war of rulers and ruled, does not come out into the open. And that is what would happen if rank-and-file allied anti-Nazis linked up with German anti-Nazis, for our rulers for years supported and subsidized Hitler, and at this moment are supporting Franco and Plastiras.

Such is the background for the most important issue of the war in Europe at the moment: the question of Fraternization. For months now the Allied High Command has been issuing orders against fraternization, fining and even imprisoning soldiers who even play with German children or smoke with German girls. Now Montgomery has issued yet another order to try and impress on British soldiers with the unacceptability of their German fellows. For twelve years the German workers have been held down by the Nazi Party; now they are kicked by the British ruling class as well. Monty's order is evidently needed, for according to S. L. Solon, the *News Chronicle's* (continued on page 2 col. 1)

LANARKS SEAMAN GAOLED IN RUSSIA

One Year's Imprisonment for being drunk!

[Considerable publicity is being given in the Scottish newspapers to the case of John Connor, 24-year-old merchant seaman who has been sentenced to a year's imprisonment in Russia on a charge of being drunk. Our Glasgow comrades are taking a most active part in publicising the case by public meetings. The *Glasgow Herald*, 3/4/45 reports that "a public petition calling for the abrogation of the sentence is being prepared by the Anarchist Federation. Meetings will be held in all parts of Central Scotland at the weekend." The *Daily Recorder* of the same date publishes a photograph of our comrade Eddie Shaw and an interview with him. Our comrade is addressing a meeting of protest on Sunday afternoon at Cambuslang Cross—Eds.]

To the Editors, "War Commentary": I have just returned from Russia where one of my shipmates got into trouble with the Authorities, but in view of the extreme penalty imposed on him I wish to bring it to the notice of the general public. We went ashore the first night after arrival at Murmansk and as is a common occurrence bought vodka. My shipmate got drunk and fell foul of the police, who came to arrest him. As the police were taking him into custody he struggled, and the ground being ice covered a policeman fell and broke the butt of his rifle. He was taken to prison and about six weeks later brought to trial. None of us were present, but his rations were called for that the minimum was three years, according to Russian Law. When we sailed he hadn't put in an appearance and his clothes were sent ashore. We were informed by the captain that he had been sentenced to three years in the Siberia salt mines. Since we came home all hands on the ship signed a petition, and handed it to the West Harbours Seamen's Union. His name was John Connor and he lived in Cambuslang, outside Glasgow. I would like this published in the hope that it may help this vicious sentence to be enquired into. JACK CROOK, Glasgow.

"Aid to Russia", his family having been very active in collecting many contributions for this purpose, his uncle being particularly active. In a conversation with the latter he made it clear to me that his nephew did not take intoxicants until he joined the merchant navy. The C.P. however are attempting to make this fellow worker into a "Son of Satan" in order to justify the "Paradise" they have held before you so long.

The incarceration of this seaman has placed his wife in a very difficult position since she now gets no pay from any source.

IF any further proof were needed for workers in this country that the picture painted of the U.S.S.R. was a lie, and that the Communist Party are liars, surely the case of John Connor is that proof.

For twenty-four years now the Anarchists have exposed the fallacy that conditions of workers were any better in Russia, than in any other capitalist country. But the Communist Party have cashed in on this belief, and now sit astride the workers in Britain, having wormed their way to positions of power, in the workers unions and with the same treachery as the Bolsheviks used so well to enslave the Russian Workers, they carry out their underhand activities as stool pigeons for the Ruling Class. Their method is one of the oldest known to man, namely, accusing others of actions for which they themselves are guilty. Tearing the moral character of genuine revolutionaries, and sincere working class fighters. The same process is now being used against Merchant Seaman Connor. Whilst no one is trying to make the latter an angel the following facts are worth knowing. Seaman Connor had made four trips to Russia with various cargoes. He could have chosen a ship to U.S.A. instead. His outlook was

A letter was sent to the Russian Ambassador six weeks ago, but he has not even considered it worthy of a reply. This is only to be expected, as workers are treated like dirt by the bureaucrats of Moscow.

Is it any wonder that the mine workers are being sold to the boss when such servants of Moscow as Abe Moffat and Will Pearson are strangling them in their struggles. Throughout Britain every seaman, miner and factory worker must demand the release of Seaman Connor. Don't let the C.P. liars get away with it. Let the weight and might of the workers open the doors of the prison which holds our fellow-worker.

He risked death with his fellow seamen to take food and stores to Russia. Send him food, for it has been made known by men who sailed with him, that, during the six weeks he was held before trial, he was being starved. His rations had to be taken into the prison from the ship. There is no ship now. He is alone in a strange land not understanding the language, while his loved ones wait and wonder.

DEMAND THE RELEASE OF SEAMAN CONNOR.

EDDIE SHAW.

Alternative to Political Parties "Equity"

WE have before us at this moment a copy of *War Commentary* for March 10th. This contains a number of resolutions put forward by a group of Glasgow workers, which they hope will form the basis for a real workers' union. This is a question of the utmost importance, and it is especially timely at this moment when, under an appearance of apathy, the whole working class movement is in a ferment.

Distrust Of Political Parties

The working class appear, at long last, to have come to the realization that the old game of political parties cannot get them anywhere. Various reasons and indications support this statement, of which the most recent was the attitude of the Leith dockers during the recent strike. When their Trade Union Officials called a meeting to advise the men to return to work, they carried out a 100 per cent. boycott of the meeting. We also have the attitude of the miners and the cynical attitude of the workers generally towards the Labour and Communist Parties. Moreover, such political parties as the I.L.P. and Commonwealth have been unable to make much ground. The workers' attitude is shown by the small percentage of votes registered at recent elections.

The employing class are showing real concern at this. The growing misery of the workers and the accumulated distress caused by the decay of capitalism and by war conditions might have led one to expect that opposition political parties like the I.L.P. and Commonwealth would have increased greatly in membership. Such has not been the case however. Although the parties attempt to make political capital out of the prevailing misery they have not gained appreciably in numbers.

Stalinists and Trotskyists

It is unnecessary to recapitulate the antics of the Communist Party. In its vile role as "drum beater" for Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, it has placed him beyond the pale as a working class force. We next have the comedy of the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party. In all but support for the war, this party emulates its big brother, Stalinism. They are attempting to fish in the troubled waters of modern politics. Their policy is merely adventurist, and their party paper, *Socialist Appeal*, is simply a collection of caricatures and travesties of the truth. A recent article appeared in this paper headed "1600 workers strike to protect Trade Unionism". It then went on to give a completely falsified version of the real facts of the case.

The hacks of this so-called workers' party seem to be interested in using the "big stick" against the workers in order to satisfy the party's orientation in support of the reactionary Trade Unions. But the workers are not deluded by these tactics. They justifiably suspect that the Trotskyist demagogues merely want to maintain such organizations as the Trade Unions in order to be able to climb on to the backs of the workers, should they be lucky enough to gain control of them. Power is the lure which goads them on. Like all other political parties, they want to rule men's destinies. Needless to say they are receiving little support from the workers who draw their logic from experience, and dismiss them for the charlatans they are.

Trade Unions

So also with the Trade Unions. It is apparent that these organizations, despite their seeming strength, are moving towards their eclipse. The simple fact that the capitalist class can no longer give reforms forces the Trade Union leaders to become organizers on behalf of capitalism. They can only call for controls, and the spreading of industry to the more dere-

lict areas. In other words, the function of Trade Unionism now is to organize poverty on behalf of capitalism.

For this purpose they must have a thoroughly inert and "disciplined" working class. They must develop the mass slave psychology and bludgeon all initiative. For the same reason they must try and vitiate the Shop Stewards' movement and make it devoid of all independent thought. Industrial action by the workers cannot be tolerated by the Unions because such action makes the position of the leaders insecure in capitalist society. Trade Unionism has become an integral part of that society, and as such it can only act to the detriment of the working class. The workers understand all this with increasing clarity.

Search For New Ideas

The fact is that the working class is searching for new ideas. In industry the Trade Unions are being more and more ignored. The workers are beginning to take the law into their own hands and act for themselves. Therefore, despite Trade Unionism's appearance of strength, its foundations are of sand. (continued on p. 4)

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What is Anarchism?—2

In the last issue of *War Commentary* under this heading we published an article by George Woodcock. The present article is by Alexander Berkman and comes from his book *A.B.C. of Anarchism* (Freedom Press, 1/-). We recommend this book to all new readers who really want to know something about Anarchism. It is written in simple language and answers the objections generally levelled at the Anarchist philosophy by its critics. Stocks of this book are now very low and owing to the paper shortage, it may not be possible to have a reprint until paper rationing comes to an end, and no one knows when that will be!

"Can you tell us briefly," your friend asks, "what Anarchism really is?"

I shall try. In the fewest words, Anarchism teaches that we can live in a society where there is no compulsion of any kind.

A life without compulsion naturally means liberty; it means freedom from being forced or coerced, a chance to lead the life that suits you best.

You cannot lead such a life unless you do away with the institutions that curtail your liberty and interfere with your life, the condition that compels you to act differently from the way you really would like to.

What are those institutions and conditions? Let us see what we have to do away with in order to secure a free and harmonious life. Once we know what has to be abolished and what must take its place, we shall also find the way to do it.

What must be abolished, then, to secure liberty?

First of all, of course, the thing that invades you most, that handicaps or prevents your free activity; the thing that interferes with your liberty and compels you to live differently from what would be your own choice.

That thing is government.

Take a good look at it and you will see that government is the greatest invader; more than that, the worst criminal man has ever known of. It fills the world with violence, with fraud and deceit, with oppression and misery. As a great thinker once said, "its breath is poison." It corrupts everything it touches.

"Yes, government means violence and it is evil," you admit; "but can we do without it?"

That is just what we want to talk over. Now, if I should ask you whether you need government, I'm sure you would answer that you don't, but that it is for the others that it is needed.

But if you should ask any one of those "others," he would reply as you do: he would say that he does not need it, but that it is necessary "for the others."

Why does every one think that he can be decent enough without the policeman, but that the club is needed for "the others?"

"People would rob and murder each other if there were no government and no law," you say.

If they really would, why would they? Would they do it just for the pleasure of it or because of certain reasons? Maybe if we examine their reasons, we'd discover the cure for them.

Suppose you and I and a score of others had suffered shipwreck and found ourselves on an island rich with fruit of every kind. Of course, we'd get to work to gather the food. But suppose one of our number should declare that it all belongs to him, and that no one shall have a single morsel unless he first pays him tribute for it. We would be indignant, wouldn't we? We'd laugh at his pretensions. If he'd try to make trouble about it, we might throw him into the sea, and it would serve him right, would it not?

Suppose, further, that we ourselves and our forefathers had cultivated the island and stocked it with everything needed for life and comfort, and that some one should arrive and claim it all as his. What would we say? We'd ignore him, wouldn't we? We might tell him that he could share with us and join us in our work. But suppose that he insists on his ownership and that he produces a slip of paper and says that it proves that everything belongs to him? We'd tell him he's crazy and we'd go about

our business. But if he should have a government back of him, he would appeal to it for the protection of "his rights," and the government would send police and soldiers who would evict us and put the "lawful owner in possession."

That is the function of government; that is what government exists for and what it is doing all the time.

Now, do you still think that without this thing called government we should rob and murder each other?

Is it not rather true that with government we rob and murder? Because government does not secure us in our rightful possessions, but on the contrary takes them away for the benefit of those who have no right to them, as we have seen in previous chapters.

If you should wake up to-morrow morning and learn that there is no government any more, would your first thought be to rush into the street and kill some one? No, you know that is nonsense. We speak of sane, normal men. The insane man belongs to the care of physicians and alienists; they should be placed in hospitals to be treated for their malady.

The chances are that if you or Johnson should awaken to find that there is no government, you would get busy arranging your life under the new conditions.

It is very likely, of course, that if you should then see people gorge themselves while you go hungry, you would demand a chance to eat, and you would be perfectly right in that. And so would every one else, which means that people would not stand for any one hogging all the good things of life: they would want to share in them. It means further that the poor would refuse to stay poor while others wallow in luxury. It means that the worker will decline to give up his product to the boss who claims to "own" the factory and everything that is made there. It means that the farmer will not permit thousands of acres to lie idle while he has not enough soil to support himself and family. It means that no one will be permitted to monopolise the land or the machinery of production. It means that the private ownership of the sources of life will not be tolerated any more. It will be considered the greatest crime for some to own more than they can use in a dozen lifetimes, while their neighbours have not enough bread for their children. It means that all men will share in the social wealth, and that all will help to produce that wealth.

It means, in short, that for the first time in history right, justice and equality would triumph instead of law.

You see therefore that doing away with government also signifies the abolition of monopoly and of personal ownership of the means of production and distribution.

It follows that when government is abolished, wage slavery and capitalism must also go with it, because they cannot exist without the support and protection of government. Just as the man who would claim a monopoly of the island, of which I spoke before, could not put through his crazy claim without the help of government.

Such condition of things where there would be liberty instead of government would be Anarchy. And where equality of use would take the place of private ownership, would be Communism.

It would be Communist Anarchism.

"Oh, Communism," your friend exclaims, "but you said you were not a Bolshevik!"

No, I am not a Bolshevik, because the Bolsheviks want a powerful government or state, while Anarchism means doing away with the State or government altogether.

"But are not the Bolsheviks Communists?" you demand.

Yes, the Bolsheviks are Communists, but they want their dictatorship, their government, to compel people to live in Communism. Anarchist Communism, on the contrary, means voluntary Communism, Communism from free choice.

"I see the difference. It would be fine, of course," your friend admits. "But do you really think it possible?"

i.e. in Part I of Berkman's original book:

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Fraternization

Continued from p. 1

reporter (16/3/45), "the issue of fraternization is rapidly becoming the most urgent disciplinary problem on the Western front."

Soldiers Chafe

Solon describes how uncomfortable the soldiers feel under the No Fraternization order. Further, they are not slow to notice that the Allied appoint upper class German officials to run the occupied towns, sometimes appointing Nazis for the job; while, on the other hand, German workers are made to do the hard manual labour. One soldier said: "It seems to me that we pick on the same Germans the Nazis kicked around to do the dirty work." They see the contrast. "Local officials appointed by the Allies are treated with official respect and courtesy. In order to make the Germans respect them we must treat these officials correctly, one Military Governor told me. At the same time this creates certain problems in the mind of those Germans who now see men they knew as Nazis playing a role under Allied control in the new administration." Thus "No Fraternization" is the order for the rank and file, while the high-ups fraternize with one-time Nazi officials.

The rulers fear of fraternization is even more clearly shown in the case of the Russians. There the memories of 1917 and 1918 may recur. For fraternization between the German and Russian soldiers was a decisive factor in the February revolution, and again in frustrating the full force of the German Army's counter-revolutionary attacks on the Russian Revolution. The Russian rulers of to-day can certainly not afford to see a repetition of that working class solidarity on which their revolution originally founded itself.

So the Russian Press pours out hysterical filth about the "obsequiousness," the "servility" and so on of the Germans. Their women are all cruel, their girls all treacherous. *Soviet War News* describes the men as "bloodstained clowns". Yet this repulsive abuse—directed, be it noted, against German workers—emanates from the same government which contracted a pact with the Nazi leaders. Compare this ultra-Vansittartist stuff with Molotov's declaration on 31st October 1939 that it was "not only senseless but criminal to wage such a war as a war for the 'destruction of Hitlerism' camouflaged as a fight for 'democracy' . . . We have always held that a strong Germany is an indispensable condition for durable peace in Europe. It would be ridiculous to think that Germany could be 'simply put out of commission' and struck off the books." Once again fraternization between high-ups like Molotov and Ribbentrop was all in order; but for a Russian soldier to extend a courtesy to a German would be a serious crime.

Difficulties

The enforcing of the order nevertheless presents certain difficulties. An Allied soldier, if he has any feeling for the war, has a conception of anti-Fascism, of liberating oppressed populations. Inside Germany he comes in contact with men and women who have been oppressed by Hitler longer than any other people—the German workers. Now he sees them continue to be oppressed by Allies-sponsored quislings as well, and it is natural—and proper—that his sympathies should lie with the German workers. But the No Fraternization order demands that he should not respond when a German does him a small courtesy, when a German girl smiles at him when a child waves. It is not in human nature to adopt the frigid attitude demanded by authority. "If the regulations insist that they are to be punished for behaving like human beings, then the regulations had better be revised." (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 23/3/45).

The very absurdity of the No Fraternization order exposes the nature of the Allied Rulers' war. The continued attempt to enforce it will merely bring them the well merited contempt of the common soldier.

An Incident in the Mine

"AND THE CAGE FAILED TO STOP"

"THE most important lessons in life are taught at the school of hard experience". These words, spoken by a miner who had stopped to ease his tortured lungs by the man-hole wherein I sat, prompted me to reflect upon one or two events in the past year. It was my first year in what is termed in all sincerity "the most modern pit in Somerset." Mining conditions are generally bad; the newcomer at the outset experiences a shock, which he dare not show. After a time, the ever-present struggle to contend with the normal conditions of work and its dangers, recedes before the perception of yet sharper aspects of the black hell. Periodically, incidents such as those described below bring all the suppressed fears to the top, and miners react as humans, momentarily shedding the role of profit-producing automatons.

THE ACCIDENT

One million, six hundred and two thousand, four hundred and ninety-seven (1,602,497) men or boys killed, injured or disabled by accident or disease in ten years of British mining. It is hard to translate figures into terms of flesh and blood, to realise that these numbers represent husbands, sweethearts, sons, brothers. I confess that in spite of being fully conversant with all the vital statistics on this subject, it was not until the sight of eight of my buddies being brought out of the pit on stretchers, their faces grey with pain from broken limbs, almost unrecognisable, that these hitherto meaningless figures assumed some real significance.

It was the first cage of the morning shift going down which had failed to stop in the usual manner and the men were violently thrown about as the cage slammed into the shaft bottom. "It's quite alright now," said the manager, after the removal of the injured miners and the hasty rectifying of the broken cage gate. "It will be quite alright for you all to go down. You are going down, aren't you?" he added anxiously.

A chorus of unprintable but appropriate words was the response of the majority of the miners who had already made up their minds that they were not working that day. The custom throughout the mining industry, in varying forms, has been that, if a serious accident occurs in the pit, the men cease work for the remainder of the shift. The two foremost reasons being, the removal of the men from the source of danger in the case of a bad fall of roof, etc., and as a tribute or gesture of solidarity to their perhaps dead or seriously injured comrades, sacrificing a day's pay in the long "two minute's silence" of the pit. This practice has in many cases, been set aside during the war on the excuse that it would decrease production. These Somerset miners hung on to this instinctive common humanity, and in spite of the added pressure of the T.U. representative on the men to work, they "played" the day. The men naturally reacted, and are shown to have done the right thing, for if less than an hour after the mishap it was "alright" for the men to descend, then, they rightly ask, what went wrong in the first place? A statement on the cause of the accident to the men at that juncture, would have done much to allay their fears and suspicions. An opinion was later expressed by many of the miners that things are not done like that, ("ours is not to reason why") and it might complicate matters when it came to paying out "compo". And there is justification for these bitter comments.

"COMPO"

The sequel to the above affair and other similar happenings, is the iniquity known as "Compo", or disability compensation. This to an injured miner means the system whereby he is penalized financially at a time when his income has to cover not only normal living expenses, but all those extras necessary for the sick or injured. The handsome sum of thirty-five shillings is paid to a single man after three days pay has been dropped. A married man gets an allowance for his wife and increases for children, but the total must not exceed two-thirds of his normal earnings per week. A truly magnificent reward for their blood and toil. The payments, incidentally, have a nasty habit of lingering on the way, and in most cases there are a few humiliating experiences before it is

finally paid. Every man on "compo" is suspected of being a potential malingeringer, and often, before being really cured, is deemed fit to report for work. I believe I am right in saying that, so far, six months after the accident, only one of my injured mates has returned to work. Six months, at present cost of living, on thirty-five bob a week! Insult is added to injury, and persecution is added to that, for now I hear that another of these miners, having been certified "fit for light work", has been fined for failing to report for work.

It is significant that the same company official who gave evidence against this miner was the individual who refused a light job to a pit lad who was certified for this kind of work as a result of illness. He said that there were no light jobs in a colliery. Could it be that the payment of compensation in one case and not in the other had something to do with this difference in attitude?

A SCANDAL

A scandalous incident has more recently happened. A workmate was badly crushed by a "drum of coal" which over-ran the stop-blocks, carrying him along for a short distance and finally pinned him to the ground. In great agony, he was released by his comrades, who sweated like Trojans in lifting the heavy truck without causing him unnecessary pain. This done, four men were detailed to carry the stretcher out of the pit, which meant carrying their burden over a quarter of a mile up a very steep incline, bending double where the roof was low, and labouring up to the first-aid room to await the ambulance. After this, there was barely an hour of working time left on the shift, so of course the stretcher bearers naturally thought they might take it easy until knocking-off time. But no! The lords of production decreed that they must return to their workplaces! "Their's not to reason why"—so back they went, hindering the haulage workers, (thus holding up production) exposing themselves to running haulage, and reaching their work-places

just before work ceased and they had to make the return journey to the pit head.

Because of this mishap, consternation reigned in the pit. Officials conferred on the spot; men were dispatched all over the place; relays of workers, electricians, repairers, etc., were kept busy throughout the next twenty-four hours covering up all traces of neglect. Overnight, safety devices appeared where they never were before and manholes signals were installed post-haste, for a mines inspector was bound to appear on the scene. He did—fully a week after the accident—ample time for things to be made presentable. And this genial gent was no Inquisitor. He went through the farce of an investigation with the notorious "Butcher" as a dummy victim.

Not a voice was raised in protest against these antics; nobody came forward to expose the recent innovations, for men brave in physical danger, fearless in giving aid to a trapped comrade without thought for their own safety, will, it seems, tremble in the presence of authority. The least that should have been done, surely, was the inclusion in this inspection of the men's representative. We all, equally, share the blame for failing to act on this occasion. A demand for the men to have a say in the hearing of this case should have been made by each and every one of us. A demand, I say, because nothing is ever given us freely from above; all concessions and rights have to be fought for, wrested from those who, even now, look wistfully on the well-disciplined days of peace.

Perhaps I am over-harsh with my fellow-workers, for in other matters the Somerset miners are showing themselves aware of certain dangers and are making their collective strength felt. With their fellow-workers in other coal-fields and other industries they are coming out of their war-time apathy, with its lack of militancy, and once again staking their claim to our American comrades descriptions—"Guys with the guts to demand what their minds tell them is theirs by right!"

TOM CARLISLE.

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17 St. George's Street (2nd floor)
 Hanover Square, London, W.1.

Chairman: HERBERT READ
 Vice Chairman: FENNER BROCKWAY & PATRICK FIGGIS
 Secretary: ETHEL MANNIN
 Treasurer: S. WATSON TAYLOR

This Committee has been formed with the following main objectives:

1. To defend the four anarchists arrested and charged under Defence Regulation 39A.
2. To protest against any attacks upon the freedom of speech and publication.
3. To organize a Defence Fund to cover the legal expenses of the accused and the Committee's own expenses.

We appeal to all comrades and readers of "War Commentary" as well as to all who believe in the freedom of speech and publication to lend their financial support so that the work of the Committee may go forward. During these difficult years the four accused comrades have given all their energies to the cause of Freedom. The least we can do is to rally to their defence now that Authority has attacked them.

Send your contributions to the Treasurer and make all Cheques and P.O.'s payable to:

"FREEDOM PRESS DEFENCE COMMITTEE"

Little Known English Anarchists—4

The Anarchist movement has always been rich in exceptional personalities. In England, apart from foreign elements, the movement has always been small. Nevertheless, they have always exerted a considerable influence on the thought of their day. One of the most outstanding figures was Sam Mainwaring. Big in body and mind, a Celt with all the fire and enthusiasm of his race, he was yet a quiet, persuasive speaker and a tireless worker. Anarchism was not a spare-time hobby with him, it was his life's work, and his zest never

Morris always consulted him on any new or important move. When the split came he saw clearly that he must part from Morris, and so with the Anarchist wings. He knew that the struggle must become more intense, but truth must come first. Many of the so-called historians of to-day regard Morris and the League as one and the same thing. The fact is, however, that there was a body of remarkable men and women in the League and Sam Mainwaring was by no means the least of them. He toured South Wales speaking at pit-heads

Sam Mainwaring

diminished. When he was too old and ill to do much open-air speaking, he took care that at his old favourite pitch, Hoxton Church, there was a speaker, a platform and literature for sale. He had worked the pitch well with the result that there was always a crowd waiting for a speaker.

An engineer by trade, he served for years on the London Trades Council as delegate from his union. He would never accept an official position, though it was offered on several occasions, contending—and rightly so—that a man's actions were handicapped if he became part of the machine. He had seen so many of his mates go astray, and knew it was the corrupt official method—"give a man a job and close his mouth." That could never be done with Sam Mainwaring. The workers both in the London Trades Council and in his union always looked to him to make the lead.

An illustration of this fact is that years ago Tom Mann, at a meeting in the Club and Institute Hall in Clerkenwell Road, introduced Mainwaring as his old foreman where they were both employed who had brought the message of socialism to him. It is lamentable that Tom Mann long afterwards became the chief speaker for a party that would put a Russian Mainwaring against the wall and shoot him!

He was one of the foundation members of the "Socialist League" and was closely associated with and respected by William Morris.

and outside the engineering shops. On his first tour he was accompanied by Frank Katz, Mainwaring speaking in Welsh, which he maintained was the finest speaking language in the world. On a second tour in Wales his companion was Parriada del Marmol. Together they started a short-lived weekly, the Social General Strike, the first Anarchist Syndicalist paper in England, making the industrial struggle its main note. That it did not live long was no fault of the group. They were before their time. Nevertheless, they blazed the trail and made later efforts possible. It was not long afterwards that Tom Mann started the Syndicalist, which was later to be prosecuted for anti-militarist propaganda and ceased publication also.

Mainwaring's paper undoubtedly started the wave of syndicalist activity which swept the country, and culminated in the strike in Liverpool, which was a local general strike. Strikes became the order of the day, until the war of 1914 came as the saviour of the boss-class. The war made an effective appeal to that stolidity known as patriotism, and imperialist stupidity triumphed over class war. To the faint-hearted and short-sighted it would appear that he had made an error in the nature of the matter. But it is not so; his toil was of the nature that will last as long as the struggle goes, and finds its culmination in the Social General Strike.

MAT KAVANAGH.

POSITION OF C.O.s IN AMERICA

THE U.S.A. has always been the scene of bitter discrimination against war resisters. During the Civil War, numbers of men who refused to fight in the Northern Armies were shot. During the 1914-1918 war many anti-war speakers and writers (anarchists among them) were assaulted and, in some cases, even lynched. Conscientious objectors received heavy prison sentences and were often man-handled.

During the present war this discrimination has continued, though perhaps in less spectacular forms. The position of the conscientious objector, for instance, is even worse than in England. According to the American Selective Service Act, a conscientious objector must prove "religious training or belief" before he can be exempted from army service, and it was not until April, 1944, that a ruling of the Appeal Court extended this to include a humanitarian objection.

There is no such thing in America as unconditional exemption. The conscientious objector must go either into the army as a non-combatant, or into a Civilian Public Service camp or hospital. The alternative to these is imprisonment, and the sentences are very high. Among the 3,700 objectors who had been sentenced up to the summer of 1944, the average sentence was 3 1/2 years. For a similar offence in England the sentence would be a year or less. That these sentences are made so heavy because of the opinions of the objectors is shown by the fact that ordinary "draft dodgers" who sought to evade the army by disappearing or giving wrong information were given much lighter sentences than C.O.s. In one prison the average sentence

of the objectors was nine months higher than that of "draft dodgers".

Even if the objector gains exemption and agrees to do alternative service, his position is not easy. He has to work eight hours a day in a public works camp miles away from a town, doing heavy lumbering or clearing work, or else as a hospital orderly. The law provides that for this work he shall receive no more than a serving soldier. The executive departments interpret this by giving him exactly nothing. The C.O. works a full day at heavy and boring toil, and receives no pay, no allowance for his dependents, no compensation for accidents, to which many are particularly liable because of their inexperience of heavy work.

The class bias behind this kind of arrangement is obvious. For the working class objector, with no money and possibly a wife and children, it is made much more difficult to stand out than for the middle-class objector with enough resources to carry him through the war years.

G. W.

Vansittartists please note

It is odd when you come to think of it how when the patrioters quote the "black record" of the Germans, they never bring up perhaps the blackest spot on that misguided country, the fact that it seems to have gone in for the mass production of "royal" families, or eligible consorts.

Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, for instance, son-in-law of Queen Wilhelmina, is not only a German but was in fact a member of Hitler's N.S.K.K., and he is now organising a "Royal Shock Troops" and by Wilhelmina's command heads the "Dutch Forces of the Interior", which is attempting to bring the Resistance movements under its militarised control.

It is reported to be somewhat amusing to listen to the violent anti-all-German tirades on Radio Orange, followed by commands in a strong German accent. The joke is made sharper but less amusing by Bernhard's political record.

Germany produced a Consort for a former Queen of England, of the Gulph family, and founded the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, which changed its name in the last war to the name of Windsor, which is now accepted as "traditional". However, Victoria's own family, the House of Hanover, was another gift from the Germans, who, while accepting the Stuarts from us in return, didn't enthroned them. The Hohenzollern dynasty which they inflicted upon themselves made up for any shortcomings however. The Hapsburgs they showered all over the world, from Greece to Mexico. So far as we can hazard off-hand only the Japanese dynasty seems to have escaped mixing with the German princelings, the Emperor being descended direct from the Sun-God-himself, who is not known to have got mixed up with any of the Teutonic small fry in that line.

We suggest, therefore, that before some of these patrioters start spouting about "punishing the Germans" they decide whether or not they are in favour of the influence of the German aristocracy which has pervaded institutions much nearer home.

No E.W.O. for them!

Some people seem to think it's only the fly boys who can get out of war-work. That is not true. The Duke of Windsor, for instance, has decided he does not wish to stay in the Bahamas, as the climate doesn't suit the Duchess. He has therefore resigned his post as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Bahamas. His "household staff and personal effects" (as the report put it, in a somewhat feudal manner) are off to New York, for eventual shipment to Paris. When people grumble that they can't leave their war-jobs, resign from the Forces, or move from one town to another, they should realise that there is possibly an exceptional case.

The Daily Express (16/3/45) with its usual hypocrisy congratulates the Duke for his services to the Empire, and referred to his "personal popularity with the people of America" which apparently made him "an extra British Ambassador to the Western Hemisphere," without, naturally, referring to the circumstances that made him somewhat popular amongst the snubbed American bourgeoisie.

In the same issue its pet columnist "William Hickey", refers to a man who is supposed to "claim the war's quickest promotion." He rose from private to major in 21 months and 9 days. "Any Advances?" Well, one young lady got exemption for a year as from her eighteenth birthday, and all of a sudden we heard the King had granted her a commission and she was posted to train as an officer before we even knew she'd joined the A.T.S. The apprentice Mr. Hickey won't quote this.

GUILTY PEOPLE?

When millions are deported to Russia for forced labour the moment and the possibility of their conversion, and for the moral conquest of Germany, will have come.

The desirable change can be achieved if the Allies treat them as masters would—coldly and justly.

The quiet of a cemetery will reign in Germany; the loneliness of a people forsaken and dishonoured will fill towns that once—long before Hitler—were full of active commotion and hope.

Material restrictions will also have moral results. The same reduced standards of living that Germany inflicted on the English for five years will not starve the Germans, but it will make them meditate.

Millions of children will learn why their fathers have to do forced labour in Russia; they will see their factory chimneys without smoke, their dynamos rusting.

They will be able to produce only as much as they need for bare living, and will perhaps return to habits of a better past, when they were poorer, but found more satisfaction in intellectual pursuits.

Only because 70 millions applauded or looked on silently could such crimes endure as are now being unveiled to the world.

That is why I regard the catastrophe of any native country as a purge of the nation—a catharsis of Greek tragedy.

Emil Ludwig in the Sunday Graphic, 11/3/45. These sickening Vansittartist declarations are past comment, but let us merely remind our readers that capitalists who have helped the Nazis with their money are not punished but are, on the contrary, still reaping profits as shown by the following cutting:

More than £7,500,000 is to be distributed among thousands of British and American firms as profits from German operation of their Paris branches during the occupation of France. Cheques totalling £2,000,000 have already been posted. Sums vary from £100,000 for the Dupont de Nemours Company at Wilmington, Delaware, and £125,000 for a London firm, to less than 2s. 6d. for a Glasgow firm. Daily Herald, 23/2/45.

"JUSTICE"

Six days after the Judge had said that no doubt immediate attention would be given to the jury's strong recommendation to mercy, the Home Secretary has recommended a reprieve for William Robinson Umpleby (38), R.A.M.C., nursing orderly, who was sentenced to death at Leeds Assizes last Monday for killing his 42-year-old invalid wife, Lily.

Umpleby, described at the trial as a devoted husband, came home on compassionate leave last December. It was stated that his wife would not have lived more than a year.

Manchester Guardian, 26/3/45.

A man is condemned to death, commuted to prison for life, which is hardly better, for what amounts to an act of mercy. Could the law be more stupid and cruel?

TASTY BAIT

The Germans must choose now between unconditional surrender and pulverisation, said Mr. Robert Murphy, political adviser on German affairs to Shaeff, in a broadcast from Washington to-night.

"I do not think we should be too optimistic about an early discovery of many democratic Germans," he said, "but we are trying."

There may be a movement inside Germany to divide the country. The Allies would approve of such a movement and would encourage it, when pulverisation is offered as an alternative is it surprising if many Germans keep fighting? The Observer, 25/3/45.

SUCCESSFUL MANŒUVRE

Soviet delegates to the San Francisco Conference will propose a separate membership for White Russia and the Ukraine as well as for Russia itself in the new world security organisation. They will be accompanied by representatives of these member States of the U.S.S.R. Present proposals are that each State attending the conference should have one vote. News Chronicle, 24/3/45.

When Russian states were granted autonomy we refused to see in it a proof of Stalin's love for liberty and independence. As we foresaw at the time it was a manoeuvre to get more votes at the peace conference. It looks as if it has been successful.

ANTI-ALLIED QUISLING DEMONSTRATION

Prince Umberto, Lieutenant of the Realm, faced a hostile crowd of protesting relatives when attending Mass at the royal church of Santa Maria degli Angeli yesterday.

The occasion was a service in commemoration of the first anniversary of the murder of 150 Italians by the Germans outside Rome.

Wearing heavy black, the widows and other relatives of the dead men and women were given a place of honour in the church, but when one of them saw the Prince, who entered by a side door, she shouted:

"Your presence here is an insult. Go away!" Others joined in.

Then, as the prince showed no sign of leaving, the monastics left the church as a protest, only returning when the service had ended and the prince, together with the Cabinet and British and Allied representatives, had gone.

They asked the parish priest to celebrate another Mass, which he did. The crowd then went home. News Chronicle, 26/3/45.

What better indication that Prince Umberto would be ousted not only from the Church but from any official post if the Italian people had their say.

Forces Solidarity with Our Struggle for Real Freedom

Dear Comrades,

The major at ——— has perused a policy of getting rid of any possible subversive element and all people who had left-wing literature on them when the GREAT SEARCH" took place been weeded out of the camp.

I am sorry to leave the workshop but I have lost no time in making contacts here and as I write the last issue of War Commentary is pinned up in the Corporals Mess for all to read. It has already been round the Sergeants' mess.

Its too early for me to say whether or

not it will result in new subscriptions but if everybody reads it it's something.

I am eagerly awaiting the next issue to see how Comrades Hewetson, Richards, Berneri and Sansom fared at the hands of British "justice." I cannot expect a true report in the capitalist Press.

The very best of luck to them and to you all in your courageous fight for the freedom of the Masses from the yoke of Churchill and all that he stands for and all who stand behind him.

Pte. H. (R.E.M.E.)

I think it important that the police action against you should be as widely publicised as possible. This sort of thing is deplorable but has the advantages of (a) evoking sympathy (b) demonstrating that nobody may break the "law" with impunity except those who make it and (c) showing, by the action of a ruling class against what they perceive to be their real opposition, where that opposition is centred. The thoughtful man will note, if it is brought to his attention, that the Daily Worker is tolerated, and cynically snubbed over sending a war correspondent to France; while War Commentary is no longer tolerated at all, and he will wonder why.

L.A.C. M. (R.A.F.)

In spite of my difference of attitude I always looked forward with great pleasure to the arrival of War Commentary and now having been inconspicuously involved in the bringing to Justice (?) of four pillars of the Freedom Press, my heart warms to the organisation. I was greatly impressed at Marylebone, not only by the friendliness and camaraderie of you anarchists, but by the dignity and apparent integrity of the accused. Now I understand that Herbert Read has been elected chairman of a Freedom Press Defence Committee, so in company with all the other lovers of freedom I fervently hope that this and other efforts will successfully frustrate the machinations of the law.

In the hope that War Commentary will survive the present unfortunate situation, I enclose a postal order . . . should my hope prove misplaced, then I am sure you will know how best to use the money.

Pte. D.

I have been moved from ——— as you can notice and have only received one publication of War Commentary and extend my sympathies at the diabolical raid on your premises at London by the C.I.D. but I know you will make every endeavour to carry on the good work. Wishing you every success in the near future. Yours solidly,

L.A.C. R. (R.A.F.)

I have read with anger and regret of the unfortunate happenings referred to in the last issue of War Commentary.

I cannot but express my admiration that War Commentary is still being published under the most difficult conditions which goes to show the keenness and indomitable spirit of the Anarchists.

I am convinced that we will win through

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WHY USE THEM?

"I think that when the facts are known you will find that the Germans killed a lot more of their own people in launching robot bombs than most people believe," said Charles F. Kettering, engineer, scientist and vice-president of U.S. General Motors, to-day.

"Robot bombing is the most expensive way I know of delivering a ton of explosives," declared Kettering, who is playing a major role in American robot construction—Associated Press. Evening Standard, 15/3/45.

SHOCKING CONDITIONS IN FRANCE

Five thousand housewives demonstrated in front of the town hall to-day, calling for the resignation of M. Ramadier, Food Minister, and shouting: "We want milk; we want butter; we want meat."

One woman told me that her family had been without meat for three weeks. Another, with five children, said she had a pint of milk every two days, and no butter since January. "It was better under German occupation." News Chronicle, 20/3/45.

GOD IS ON OUR SIDE

And having crossed the Rhine we will crack about in the plains of Northern Germany, chasing the enemy from pillar to post. The swifter and the more energetic our action, the sooner the war will be over, and that is what we all desire—to get on with the job and finish off the German war as soon as possible. Over the Rhine, then, let us go, and good hunting to you all on the other side.

May the Lord, mighty in battle, give us the victory in this our latest undertaking, as He has done in all our battles since we landed in Normandy on D-Day. B. L. MONTGOMERY.

Through the Press

THE "FREE" PRESS

Mr. Shawell is to ask the Prime Minister why a "Guidance Notice" was issued to the Press on how to deal with the Duke of Windsor's resignation from the Governorship of the Bahamas.

This subject, Mr. Shawell points out, has no relation to the war, for which the censorship and guidance system was set up. Who, he asks, gave instructions for this particular Guidance Notice?

It was stressed in London to the newspapers at the time that nothing should be published to give the impression of surprise at the Duke's resignation.

It was also suggested that readers might be reminded of increased prosperity in the Bahamas during the Duke's stay.

Many newspapers adopted this approach, although less than three years ago eight workers were killed in riots in the Bahamas over wages. The "prosperity" may be measured by the proposal of a 2s. a week old-age pension—at the age of 75.

Reynolds News, 18/3/45.

WHILE EUROPE STARVES

It was such a party! Chicken, turkey, sucking pig, trout, bear's head—a hundred dishes and as much as we wanted of any.

Ten different kinds of salad, fresh fruits, confections like gold and silver, and cakes in thick real cream.

Yet if hundreds of guests had decided to concentrate on the egg dishes alone, the table—as big as a skating rink—would have met all demands.

Not forgetting vodka, knock-out Serbian rakia, wines that made the French present close their eyes and lips after all hours of the paint box.

Before food inspectors seize their bowlers and rush to investigate let me explain.

It was Marshal Tito's private party in his headquarters—where I cannot reveal.

But nobody is going short because we ate. With the Germans driven out, chicken, eggs, etc., stacked high in freed cities here, price control and rationing became unnecessary.

Maurice Fagene (War Reporter), Daily Herald, 16/3/45.

It would perhaps have been a little wiser of Mr. Fagene to have gone slightly farther than "Marshal Tito's private party in his headquarters" before deciding there was no famine in Yugoslavia.

CAPITALISM AT WORK

Four million women's hats costing a guinea and one million at 25s. 6d., with a system of marking by stars, so that the customer cannot be overcharged, are to be released from May 1.

The scheme, just approved by the Central Price Regulation Committee, is designed by the hat manufacturers to counter the prevailing fashion of kerchief wearing.

No standard designs are intended. Manufacturers know well enough that women's hats must be "different." The only uniformity will be the prices.

Inside the lining will be one star to denote the cheaper hat or two stars for the dearer. The manufacturers will pay a penny a time for the stars, and the proceeds will go to a central publicity pool to popularise hat wearing by women.

News Chronicle, 23/3/45.

At a time when millions of people lack the most elementary articles to clothe themselves, hat manufacturers are able to use a vast amount of labour to encourage hat wearing which can hardly be described as a primary necessity.

ARREST of FOUR LONDON ANARCHISTS is taken as a threat to Freedom of the Press

The C.I.D. raid on Freedom Press offices and the arrest of the four London Anarchists has been widely reported in the National Press in the usual garbled way the Press has of dealing with those cases. Those who read the full report of the magistrate's court hearings which was published in the last issue of *War Commentary* should compare it with what appeared in their Daily. The omissions are even more interesting than the inaccuracies. First prize should however go to the *Daily Worker* which even though the sub title "Workers of the World Unite" was removed from its heading still boasts that it is the newspaper of the working class. This paper headed its report "THE BEARDED MEN GROWLED AND GRUMBLED" obviously trying to perpetuate the frightening image of bearded, black cloaked anarchists hiding a bomb under their arm. The *Daily Worker* report, though about five inches long contained at least three inaccuracies all of the sensational type which appeared in the previous evening's papers. Yet these inaccuracies were not to be found in the *Times* report of the 10/3/45! So much for the paper which is loud in its demands for a free Press (only when it concerns the *Daily Worker* or its requests for a War Correspondent!).

PRESS COMMENTS

But we are more concerned with the reactions of the Left Wing Press and we have not been disappointed. The protest letter signed by Herbert Read and nine other writers has been widely reproduced, and a further letter dealing with the arrest of our four comrades has been printed so far in the *Manchester Guardian* and the *New Statesman* and *Nation*, whilst *Peace News* and the *New Leader* have given wide publicity to

the case and have urged their readers to give financial support to the Defence Committee. Letters of protest have been published in *Tribune* and *Peace News* and sympathetic references to the case published in the *Birmingham Times* and *Edinburgh Socialist*.

Owing to legal difficulties involved it has not been possible for newspapers to comment on the motives, etc., behind this attack on Freedom Press and the Anarchists but the *New Leader* (March 3rd) makes the I.L.P. position clear "It would be prejudicial for us to make any comment on the case at this point. We reiterate, however, our opposition to all attacks upon civil liberties and all attempts at political persecution by the Capitalist State. In any struggle of that nature we pledge our unqualified solidarity with our anarchist comrades".

The *Trotskyist Socialist Appeal* sums up the position very ably in the mid-March issue: "Whatever the verdict in the case, an important general principle affecting the freedom of the press, in particular of the revolutionary press, is involved. If these four anarchists are convicted, and the Government is allowed to get away with it, any publication referring to the experiences of the Russian Revolution, the German, Chinese or Spanish revolution, or even the General Strike can be prosecuted under the infamous Defence Regulation 19a. It is the elementary duty of all working class organisations to rally to the defence of the four Anarchists. Their victory will be a victory for freedom of press and opinion." The Glasgow paper *Solidarity* devotes its front page to an appeal for support for the Defence Committee as well as a pointed reference to the principles involved in the case:

"The charging of these comrades, we regard as an attempt to limit the freedom of the press and freedom of expression in this country. It is an acknowledgment by the Government that conditions are now ripening to that point where the worker, in and out of khaki, are having demonstrated before their eyes that a continuous and more war. That therefore any rallying point of opposition must be crushed.

The fight for Free Speech, for Freedom of the Press is not a bourgeois myth. In a declining capitalist country where the liberties of the worker have been flched from him under the guise of fighting Nazism to fight for Freedom of Speech, Freedom of the Press, is a stage on the road to the Social Revolution.

Defend the four Anarchist Comrades! Support the Freedom Defence Committee."

A Real Test of Solidarity

We are publishing below the Press Fund list for January, February and March and thank all comrades and friends who have contributed to it in spite of the fact that we have not made appeals for funds as in the past. They have understood without appeals that Freedom Press needs money to carry on its work, and during the past three months, what with police raids, removals, and the general upsetting of our routine, things have not been any easier with Freedom Press, least of all finances. We appreciate the need for concentrating our efforts on the Defence Fund which is undertaking the financial commitments in the defence of our four London comrades, but we feel that at the present time more than the usual effort should be made by comrades so that both the Defence Fund and the Press Fund shall have the means to carry on their respective tasks, the former to defend the rights of free expression, the latter to put those rights into effect. So, comrades and friends we look to you during these coming months to show that you are concerned that Freedom Press should carry on and that the fate of the four arrested comrades affects you and your liberty indirectly almost as much as it affects them. That is real solidarity! Please remember that contributions to the FREEDOM PRESS DEFENCE COMMITTEE should be made out to that Committee and sent to the Treasurer at 17, St. Georges Street, (2nd floor), Hanover Square, London, W.1, and contributions to the Press Fund as usual to Freedom Press.

PRESS FUND

JAN. — MARCH 1945

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TOTAL AT END OF MARCH ... £75/7/6

Alternative to Political Parties

(Continued from p. 2)

What then are the Anarchist Syndicalists doing under these circumstances? It is clearly their duty to place their ideas squarely before the workers. In these days of ferment and changing values this task is an absolute necessity. Anarchism is not a political party, but a political ideal. It has its foundations on the age-old striving of humanity for freedom. It has sound scientific theories regarding wealth production and distribution. It poses the opposite idea to the prevailing adulation of the "great man", and the theory of the divinely inspired party. It brings forward the conception of free men living in a free society. It therefore cannot be sectarian. It can demonstrate from history, both old and recent, where the dogmas of great men and great parties have led workers. In our own lifetimes, we see the culmination of the leadership principle in Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini, in Roosevelt and Churchill; in fact, in all the tyrants who strut about the world's stage. The Trotskyists are no better. They merely desire to impose a new tyranny under the aegis of the divinely inspired Trotsky. It is simply a new tyranny to be perpetrated by a new caste.

Anarchism and Syndicalism

Anarchism is the antithesis of all this. It contains the hope of humanity insofar as it stands for the freedom of the individual in a free and equal society. The State must go because it is the expression of man's oppression by man. Anarchism does not aim at the capture of the State; it aims to smash it and all it stands for. Anarchism, therefore, has no attractions for the opportunist. There is no hope of any individual or group of individuals rising to power within it. There is no place within its ranks for the would-be Trade Union bureaucrat, nor for the Parliamentary politician. It has no party line, no inspired dogmas. It demands complete freedom for the individual. Syndicalism is the Anarchist conception of industrial organization. It puts forward the notion of the worker being organized in the factories, mines, railways, docks, etc., at the place of work, on the job, and on their own behalf. It warns against the delegation of authority, pointing out that where this has happened, it has inevitably led to the individuals concerned climbing on to the backs of the

workers, and the removal of initiative from the hands of the workers. Syndicalism condemns craft unionism and all that it stands for. It believes in smashing all the artificial barriers between workers created by Trade Unionism.

It can be everywhere observed that Trade Unionism promotes sectarianism and class divisions within the ranks of the workers in the name of organization. But Trade Unionism does not promote unity, but, by the creation of sects, merely produces confusion. It is time that it was placed in the museum along with the old guild craft organizations.

Syndicalism, on the other hand, aims at creating the essential solidarity of the working class. The time is therefore ripe for placing the ideas of syndicalism concretely before the workers. There has been a tendency for Anarchist literature too deal in too abstract a fashion with present day problems. The Glasgow workers have undoubtedly performed a great service to the movement by publishing the basis for a programme of a parallel Anarchist organization in industry. Here, at last, we have something concrete to work on. It should now be discussed freely in the columns of *War Commentary*. Let all the points be examined in the light of the development of workers' organization in industry to-day. We should have comments from all areas up and down the country, for surely this question is of the utmost interest to workers. The programme of these Clyde workers appears to be fundamentally sound. Here follows the programme under discussion, and it will be your job, comrades, to analyse it and find out just how far you agree with it.

Resolutions of a Group of Glasgow Workers.

(1) This group believes fundamentally in the organization of all workers, irrespective of craft or creed, on a common basis at the point of production. (2) Trade Unionism has become outworn, and can only be used by the capitalist class as a weapon to further enslave the workers. Trade Unionism had a reformist role to play during the rise of Capitalism. Now, in the decline of capitalism, when reforms can no longer be granted, Trade Unionism can only become more and more integrated with the Capitalist State Machine. It can now only organise the workers on behalf of Capitalism. This group therefore rejects the official Trade Union Movement as a medium of Working Class struggle.

The April issue of *Common Wealth Review* contains an article on Political Candidature in which the principles at stake in the Anarchists' trial are dealt with in a masterly fashion. We hope to reproduce this article in full in the next issue of *War Commentary*.

GLASGOW ACTIVE

Glasgow workers have not lost time in giving publicity to the case. The "Freedom Defence Committee" was formed a few days after the announcement of the arrest of the four London comrades and includes the following organisations and Groups: I.L.P., Clyde Workers Committee, Glasgow Workers Open Forum, R.C.P., Anarchist Federation, U.P.A., W.R.L., N.C.L., Scottish Socialist Party, Scottish Secretariat. Secretary of the Committee is James Rossie and the Committee Room is at 23, Wilson Street, Glasgow, C.1. Already a large number of meetings have been held. Ten thousand handbills calling on the Glasgow workers to support the arrested Anarchists (which was reproduced in a recent issue of *War Commentary*) have been distributed.

A meeting has been organized to take place at the Central Halls on Sunday, April 8th at 7 p.m. and a Mass Meeting (advertised elsewhere) is being held on April 22nd at the Cosmo Cinema which has a seating capacity of well over 1,000. All Trade Union branches and factory committees in Glasgow have been circled for a conference to be held in Central Halls on April 7th, the purpose of this conference being "to demonstrate the workers' position to these repressive acts and secure the widest possible basis for this Committee campaign".

BIRMINGHAM MEETINGS

Two well attended meetings were held at the Bull Ring on Sunday and Monday, 23rd and 24th March, which were addressed by I.L.P., Trotskyist and Anarchist speakers. Literature sales were good and new contacts made. *War Commentary* readers in the Birmingham area who are anxious to help should get in touch with our comrade, B. C. Lewis.

BRISTOL

A Freedom Press Defence Committee has been formed in Bristol and persons willing to help should get in touch with Chris Lewis, Freedom Bookshop, 132, Cheltenham Road, Bristol.

PRESS CUTTINGS WANTED

May we ask all our readers to contribute reports on activities on behalf of the four arrested comrades and local papers containing reports of the proceedings during the trial.

DATE OF TRIAL

We have received many enquiries from readers as to the date of the trial at the Old Bailey. We are unfortunately unable to give a precise date at present, it will be during the sessions which start on the 17th April.

FREEDOM PRESS LECTURES

SUNDAY MEETINGS

Commencing at 6.45 p.m. to be held at the HOLBORN HALL (Second floor, Room 4) Gray's Inn Road, London (Buses 38, 19; Trolley 555, 581, 613, 621, Tube: Holborn, Chancery Lane)

8th APRIL Ethel Hall
Fear—Its Social and Political Consequences
15th APRIL Meeting in Large Hall (see Advert page 1)

GRAND DANCE IN AID OF FREEDOM PRESS

IN BRIDGETON PUBLIC HALL (Londressy Street) GEORGE MOULD and his SWINGSTERS BAND On Friday 13th April, from 7.30 to 10.30 p.m. Tickets 2/- from ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP, 127, George Street, Glasgow.

GLASGOW FREEDOM DEFENCE COMMITTEE

DEMONSTRATION FOR FREEDOM OF OPINION

TO BE HELD IN THE COSMO CINEMA Sunday, 22nd April, at 6.30 p.m. PROMINENT SPEAKERS

(3) In contradistinction to the official Trade Union Movement this group believes that the Shop Stewards movement is a movement of the working class; and despite signs of degeneracy within it, caused by various political power groups attempting to seize control of it, it can, and will become a major factor in the days of struggle ahead. That the Shop Stewards movement was, in fact, a revolt against the official elements of the Trade Union movement, and is accordingly feared by them. That the Shop Stewards movement is based in the factories at the point of production, and can most clearly reflect the moods of the workers. That the duty of this group is to point out to the workers the need to strengthen the Shop Stewards movement, and to fight to free it from the influence of the official Trade Union machine. (4) This group advocates action on syndicalist lines inside the factories, and wherever the workers congregate to enforce their demands. (5) This group advocates the strongest possible bonds between all Shop Stewards, Workshop Delegates and Workers' Committees, locally, in areas, nationally, and internationally, for the complete defence and advancement of working class interests. (6) This group recognises that all this cannot be brought about by ideas from any clique or power-group at the top, but only by the workers actively participating and directing their own organisation.

Books MONEY MUST GO!

MONEY MUST GO! by "Philomena", 2/6d., obtainable from Freedom Press.

I think it can be taken as axiomatic that the essence of a good teaching method lies in the lowering of interest in the pupils towards the subject matter of instruction. That, also, is necessary for adult pupils may not be so evident, since, as a rule adults attend classes or lectures voluntarily, but for propaganda purposes where every contact can be made, "in pub and in club" the need for considering the mode of approach may be of paramount importance. The apathetic and the unconcerned, as is well known, require careful handling.

It was, therefore, with great interest that I read *Money Must Go!* by Philomena who it does suggest a new method in propaganda technique, even though anarchists may quarrel with his suggestion of parliamentary action as the *modus operandi* towards what he calls a Moneyless World Commonwealth.

Apart from this defect, and his overindulgence in capitals, the book makes excellent reading, since he has tackled a difficult medium, the dialogue, with great fluency. In my opinion, there have been few books on this or analogous subjects so completely readable by ordinary people.

The importance of this book to the Anarchist movement lies in its emphasis on the "moneyless, and tradeless" nature of the world organisation the author has in mind. Since it is that characteristic which sharply distinguishes the Anarchist conception of "Voluntary Socialism" from all other brands, the book should be read and studied by all anarchists.

An interesting feature is the absence of technical economic jargon common to most socialist literatures, and the audacity of the author in avoiding reference to any "ism"—even Capitalism! This latter point may be considered a very serious defect by some schools of thought—but is it? I wonder.

RETA.

'SEED OF CHAOS', by Vera Brittain. (New Vision, 3/6).

The purpose of this book is to enquire how far the British people understand and approve of the policy of 'obliteration bombing' now being inflicted upon the civilians of enemy and enemy-occupied countries (including numbers of young children born since the outbreak of war) by ourselves and the United States.

So says Vera Brittain in the introduction to her book *Seed of Chaos*, but in fact, as the book stands now, it may well be taken as a warning to governments that if they continue in their present policy of indiscriminate bombing, Anarchy will follow. For this chaos, the seed of which is being sown by Allied bombers in Europe, is, believe it or not, our old friend "Anarchy-and-Chaos"!

I would like to suggest to Vera Brittain that she is a little out in her seasons. The seed of chaos was sown many years ago. It was well harrowed in by a competitive system, fertilized by World War I, watered by Lord Londonderry's successful efforts at Geneva in 1933 to maintain the bomber as a legitimate weapon, and has come to fruition now. Now is the chaos—the fruit, not the seed!

But that seed of Anarchy is perhaps being sown now, I would not deny. Where I disagree with Vera Brittain is in her conception of Anarchy. On p. 91 she states "... the fragile structure of European civilisation is being threatened by many other factors besides the loss of human life. These include the breakdown of transport, food distribution and the essential services; epidemics due to dirt and disorder and the existence of millions of dispossessed people with 'nothing to lose' who are leading sub-human lives and whose gradual barbarisation (as in the Thirty Years War) contains the seeds of anarchy and chaos".

We are used to hearing the ruling-class refer to "anarchy-and-chaos". We have no doubt that Sir Archibald Sinclair himself, the planner and protagonist of obliteration bombing, thinks of Anarchy that way. Obviously, to a man who sees order in the flash of 5 1/2 ton bombs dropping from thousands of bombers on to cities thickly populated with workers, Anarchy must seem the height of disorder. But that one in opposition to this policy should hold Anarchy to be a product of sub-human living, a descent into barbarism, is eloquent of an ignorance which is most distressing.

Vera Brittain is apparently worried by the thought that the civilisation (sic) which has produced the present holocaust might not survive its own product. She is, I feel, distressed by the possibilities that the faith of the peoples of Europe in those institutions which, through the power-lust of their leaders, have created this terrible progression of misery may be so shaken that they will destroy those institutions, creating out of the wreckage of the old systems a new, free way of living. Her attitude is typical of many pacifists who uphold the concept of law and order in a governmental system (ignoring the fact that all ruling is done by force of one kind or another) and are terrified by the thought of a revolution in which blood may flow but which is nevertheless the most likely way to put an end to the succession of ever-bloodier wars which will otherwise put an end to us.

Nevertheless, credit must be given where due. The book presents a sound case against obliteration bombing from a practical point of view, and it contains a valuable collection of quotations from various sources (British, German and neutral) on the effects of Allied air-raids on civilian populations. One may have seen many of these reports separately as they appeared, but when they are collected they give a concentrated picture of horror and cruelty which makes one's flesh creep. Of particular interest is the report

from a Swiss correspondent *Bundes Nachrichten* in 20/2/43, on what happened in Hamburg. It is long to quote here, but it gives a full description of how the colossal fires which the shattering bombs surrounding it so that the shattering population is either suffocated or burnt to death if they are not starved by high explosive.

Repetitive, writing in to the German Social Democratic Executive in London "expressed their anti-Fascist attitude, but added that now, after the destruction of 'Red Hamburg', the 'City without Name', it was very difficult to point to the Western Powers as a hope for a better future."

Well, I could have told them that. There is no hope through any "Power", Western, Eastern, or Heavens! There is only hope through the international action of the people who are at present doing the bombing, including the bombing, but don't you realise why.

"INDEPENDENT PEOPLE"

Haldor Laxness. (Gos. Allen & Unwin, 12s. 6d.)

Ignacio Silone said Fontana, his "novel" which gave such a vivid impression of Italian peasants, was banned in Warsaw and Zagreb because the Polish and Yugoslavian authorities respectively thought the author must have been a local agrarian writing under the guise of an Italian background—the same would have gone for the authorities in Egypt and India, so universal is the struggle of the peasants, "the green international". This universality of the peasants' struggle is borne out by a novel written by the Icelandic writer Haldor Laxness, called *Independent People*.

His characters face the same problems and the same struggles. They never handle money, being content on the books of the local merchant, selling him their produce and getting goods back in return. If they have no income with the local merchant, they are economically ostracised, and are always bound to him. The novel, powerfully written, portrays one of the "independent people" of Iceland, a craftsman who sacrifices his life and kin to the myth of the independence of the peasant, whose imaginary independence is in reality enslavement.

God in his mercy finally sends the "blessed war" in 1914 when all the great nations began cutting each other's throats and so causing a demand at last for Icelandic freedom. The period of prosperity is short-lived and the landowners return to their poverty. The co-operative societies come on the scene. The Scandinavian co-operative movement has been much boosted abroad. This shows how the co-operative societies benefited only the rich farmers, and made a career for the radical type of politician.

Those who can get a copy should undoubtedly get hold of the earlier book by Haldor Laxness to be translated into English, namely *Salka Valka*. This (published by the same firm) carries the chronicle on, and shows how in a little fishing village first of all the Salvation Army, then the Communist Party, tried their hands and how they fared. *Independent People* ends with the coming of the socialist movement, but *Salka Valka* takes the chronicle up to modern times. It would be interesting to have the story taken on till the present, when Iceland is occupied by the Allies, and perhaps the present "blessed war" is causing another short spell of prosperity, unless prices are regulated by the occupation authorities.

Both these books, *Salka Valka* and *Independent People* are well written, and the characters are brightly depicted, and it would appear Haldor Laxness is a writer of distinctly libertarian tendencies like Silone, who is the only other writer one could compare him with despite many obvious differences.

K. A. B.

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