

Part Three: The Second World War

Introduction

IN THE INTRODUCTION to the previous section, on the APCF and the civil war in Spain, we saw how the APCF, perhaps because of its anarchist orientation at that time, fell into the trap of supporting one faction of the ruling class – the ‘democratic’ capitalists of the Republican Government – against another – the ‘fascist’ capitalists who sought to overthrow the government. Although for the bourgeoisie the civil war in Spain was a success as a forerunner to the much greater conflict which soon followed it, the APCF itself, as the articles in this section show, managed not to be taken in by the mystification of ‘anti-fascism’ a second time around.

In ‘Resist War!’, the first article in this section, the APCF set out the position which it adhered to throughout 1939–45: the cause of war is capitalism, therefore the only way war can be ended for good is by the overthrow of the capitalist system; this must be a world-wide revolution, since *all* the capitalist states are aggressors from the working class’s point of view, and the workers can gain nothing from identifying their own interests with those of their own or any other ruling class.

The APCF’s ‘revolutionary defeatist’ stance – stated succinctly again in the short article on *India* – marked it out as virtually unique among the political groupings of the time in Britain, and was another one of the many aspects of its politics which clearly separated it from the so-called ‘socialists’ of the Communist Party and the Trotskyist sects.

The Communist Party’s first instinct, in September 1939, had been to support the war as ‘anti-fascist’, but within a month, on orders from the Communist International in Russia, they had overturned this position and now opposed the war as ‘imperialist’. Later still, in June 1941, after Russia itself had entered the war, the CP reversed its position again and once more took to supporting the war as ‘anti-fascist’. The CP’s line from June 1941 onwards, and its role in helping the war effort, are described and criticised in this section in ‘The Second Front’ and ‘Freedom Of The Press’.

As for the Trotskyists, they simply tail-ended every twist and turn of CP policy; whatever disagreements they may have had with the ruling Stalinist gang, in the final analysis they regarded Russia as a ‘workers’ state’ worth defending, and were therefore bound to the interests of Russian state capitalism every bit as much as the CP was.

The APCF’s analysis of Russia is worth mentioning briefly at this point. In 1935 the APCF had published a

pamphlet called *The Bourgeois Role Of Bolshevism*, which was a translation of the *Theses on Bolshevism* written by the Group of International Communists (GIC) in Holland. In this text the GIC argued that the 1917 Russian revolution had been a capitalist revolution in which the Bolshevik party had played the ‘bourgeois role’ which the indigenous Russian bourgeoisie had been too weak to fulfil itself. However, despite publishing the Dutch group’s *Theses*, the APCF did not share the GIC’s views on this issue. The APCF’s own position on 1917 was the same as that set out by James Kennedy in the article, ‘Dictatorship’, reprinted in the first section. In contrast to the GIC, which had proceeded from a localist, country-by-country point of view, Kennedy analysed the failure of the Russian revolution from a world-historical perspective. The revolution in Russia, Kennedy argued, had been a proletarian revolution, but, against the expectations of the Bolsheviks, it had not spread beyond Russia. It was the isolation of the revolutionary workers in Russia which within a few years led to the establishment of capitalism there, under state control.

Whatever its precise origins, anyway, from around 1925 onwards the APCF had begun to argue that it was state capitalism which existed in Russia, and not any form of communism or ‘workers’ state’, so in 1939 the APCF was able to see clearly that from the point of view of the working class the Russian system was essentially no different from Britain, the USA, Germany, Japan, or wherever.

The APCF’s opposition to *all* existing capitalist states therefore included not supporting Russia in any way.

In the APCF’s view, the existing nation-states were not only all equally *capitalist*, but also all equally *totalitarian*, or at least *tending to become so*, in the sense that the state was now bringing under its control ever-wider aspects of economic, social and political life.

This view was *in part* a rejection of bourgeois propaganda which portrayed the Second World War as a struggle between democracy and fascism. The APCF argued that the war was a struggle between ‘democratic’ and ‘fascist’ *capitalists*, and that ‘democracy’ and ‘fascism’ were nothing more than forms of domination which the ruling class could adopt or discard according to the needs of capital at any given time.

However, the APCF was *also* making a wider observation: that totalitarian state control was the political form which capitalism was universally tending to adopt, and

that the war was speeding up this process. This is essentially the point of view on which Icarus's article on 'Events and Trends' is based.

The APCF's view was linked to a theory of capitalist 'decadence', some aspects and implications of which are discussed elsewhere in this pamphlet in the sections on 'Principles and Tactics' and 'Party and Class'. The political features of decadence are touched on in the first section, in the articles 'To Anti-parliamentarians' and 'The People's Convention'. Briefly, it is argued in these articles that democracy was the political form appropriate to capitalism in its ascendant era of free competition, while totalitarian state control was the political form appropriate to the decadent era of monopoly capitalism.

Indeed, believing that parliamentary democracy was increasingly obsolescent, and that the issue of parliamentary activity was therefore of rapidly decreasing importance, the APCF proceeded to argue that to continue to call itself 'anti-parliamentarian' was now anachronistic. Consequently, in October 1941 the APCF changed its old name and called itself instead the Workers' Revolutionary League.

If the inevitable tendency towards state capitalism was developing as a general response to the needs of capital in its period of 'decadence' and 'permanent crisis', it was also being greatly accelerated by the specific needs of capital during wartime; as the articles 'War and Fascism' and F. A. Ridley's 'The Historic Consequences of the War' argue, 'democratic' capitalism could only fight 'fascist' capitalism by becoming 'fascist' itself.

The APCF was certainly not short of evidence to sustain this argument, since a whole battery of legislation was passed in Britain during the war designed to give the state control over practically every aspect of economic, social and political life.

Military conscription was introduced immediately, with all men aged 18–41 liable to be called-up under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act. One of the APCF's members, Willie McDougall, was for a while during the war chairman of the Glasgow and West of Scotland branch of the No-Conscription League, an organisation which arranged legal advice and mock tribunals for war-resisters preparing to appear before the Conscientious Objectors Tribunals. Many revolutionaries were imprisoned, some repeatedly, for refusing to comply with the conscription acts.

In November 1939, Regulation 18B was introduced, giving the Home Secretary the power to intern at his discretion, without trial, any persons of 'hostile origins or associations' or anybody believed 'to have been recently concerned in acts prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the realm or in the preparation or instigation of such acts'. In May 1940 the powers were broadened to allow for the internment of any members of organisations which might be used 'for purposes prejudicial to the public safety, the defence of the realm, the maintenance of public order, the efficient prosecution of any war in which His Majesty may be engaged (!), or the maintenance of supplies or services essential to the life of the community'.

Also in May 1940, the Emergency Powers Act (EPA) was extended to empower the Minister of Labour to direct workers and set wages, hours and conditions of work in 'key' establishments. Around the same time, the Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order (known as 'Order 1305') was introduced, which made strikes illegal unless a dispute had first exhausted, without reaching any settlement, a stipulated procedure of negotiation involving the Ministry of Labour and a National Arbitration Tribunal.

The Essential Works Order (EWO), 1941, introduced further state control over labour power. Under this legislation a worker was obliged to give seven days' notice of resignation to his or her boss and to the National Service Officer, whose permission had to be obtained before the worker involved could leave his or her job. So rarely was this permission granted that virtually the only way workers could leave workplaces controlled by the EWO was through getting the sack. The EWO also legislated for the prosecution of workers for absenteeism and for failure to carry out any 'reasonable order' issued by the boss.

By the late summer of 1941 the 'reserve army of unemployed' had been virtually completely reintegrated into production (or military service). Consequently, in December 1941 measures were introduced allowing for the conscription of women aged 20–30: 'mobile' women (i.e. those without family ties or responsibilities) could be directed to any area of the country where there was a labour shortage, while immobile women were directed to employment nearer home. Women entered the labour force in increasing numbers from this point on, when the possibilities of increasing output through sheer 'weight of numbers' had begun to be exhausted, thus necessitating changes in the actual techniques and organisation of production (e.g. dilution of skilled work).

One effect of legislation of the sort outlined here was that by the end of August 1943, 14072 men and 3067 women in England and Wales had been prosecuted for offences which would not have been punishable before the war; of these totals, 1255 men and 199 women had been imprisoned.

At the beginning of 1944 the 'Bevin Boys' scheme was announced, involving the conscription of one in ten young men into coalmining rather than into the armed forces. This provoked the apprentices strikes of March–April 1944, which were in turn followed by the introduction of yet tougher legislation in the form of Regulation 1AA, allowing for sentences of five years penal servitude and/or a £500 fine to be imposed on 'any person who declared, instigated, made anyone take part in, or otherwise acted in furtherance of a strike amongst workers engaged in essential services'.

Oppressive measures such as these, and their consequences for the working conditions of the working class in Britain during the war, are mentioned in several of the articles in this section, particularly 'War and Fascism'. The striking similarity between the position of workers in 'democratic' Britain and 'fascist' Germany can be seen by

comparing the legislation described above with the measures applying in Germany which Icarus mentions in ‘Axis Workers Show Way’. All things considered, it becomes immediately apparent why the APCF should have thought the following remark about war made by James Connolly in October 1915 so pertinent as to reprint it in *Solidarity* 27 years later: ‘In the name of freedom from militarism it establishes military rule; battling for progress it abolishes trial by jury; and waging war for enlightened rule it tramples the freedom of the press under the heel of a military despot’. (*Solidarity*, June–July 1942).

Despite all this, workers in Britain were not completely cowed by the onslaught of bourgeois coercion and propaganda (see table for figures).

However it is important that these figures are interpreted realistically. Most workers in Britain *did* support the war, in the belief that they were ‘fighting fascism’.

What many of them were *not* prepared to tolerate was the resort to ‘fascist’ methods ‘at home’ in order to prosecute the war. Workers would readily resist their bosses and the state in order to protect their rights, wages and conditions – but they did so within an overall *political* framework bounded by the bourgeois mystification of antifascism.

All the same, even this ‘economistic’ struggle had certain aspects which revolutionaries found encouraging, since workers who were prepared to defend their basic working and living conditions found their struggles opposed not only by the bosses and the state, but also by organisations widely considered to be on the side of the workers, such as the Labour and Communist Parties and the trade unions. The lesson of this, that workers had to organise their own struggles themselves, *outside* and *against* capitalist party and trade union organisations, is elaborated by Icarus in ‘The Turning Tide’.

STOPPAGES OF WORK DUE TO INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

Y E A R	N U M B E R O F S T O P P A G E S	N U M B E R O F W O R K E R S I N V O L V E D
1939	940	337,000
1940	922	299,000
1941	1251	360,000
1942	1303	456,000
1943	1785	557,000
1944	2194	821,000
1945	2293	531,000

Resist War

Workers! The Capitalist system – production for profit instead of for use – is the cause of war! In the struggle for markets in which to realise their profits, the Capitalists of the world clash, and then expect their ‘hands’ to become ‘cannon-fodder’!

ALL of the Capitalists are aggressors from the workers’ point of view. They rob you until you are industrial ‘scrap’, and will sacrifice you ‘to the last man’ to defend their imperial interest!

The British ruling class, who dictate by fascist methods to the colonial workers and peasants, have got themselves in a fix. Their infamous Versailles Treaty has rebounded like a boomerang – as Socialists and Pacifists foretold at the time – and now they expect the British workers to take the rap. Even so, they have not got the decency to abolish the means test and other oppressive measures that make life for the unemployed hell! Millions for war and death, but everything for life is grudged or withheld!

Workers! Capitalism is a system of industrial compulsion – the workers are forced to part with the right to proper food, clothing and shelter. Their wages buy a mere subsistence. Now they want to conscript us completely, industrially and militarily. They may even feed us a little better, but it is only for the ‘kill’.

Treat them with the contempt they deserve. Let them defend their profits, their treaties with their own blood, not yours!

They were indifferent when Abyssinian natives were being massacred. China and Austria were disowned. Czecho-Slovakia was betrayed. The Spanish Republic, with its glorious working class militants, was refused all rights of defence – even of anti-aircraft guns. And now, these allies defeated, they introduce conscription to fill the gaps – and to menace the workers industrially!

WORKERS! THE IRISH REPUBLICANS AND SOCIALISTS PREVENTED CONSCRIPTION IN IRELAND during the last war BY A ONE DAY GENERAL STRIKE! Why not follow their example? Demand that your spokesmen call a general strike!

Demand that the British ruling class, who have helped to cause the present crisis as much as the others, abdicate to the workers. We can solve the mess they cannot clear up! The Italian and German workers are restless. Don’t drive them into the arms of their rulers by supporting British Imperialism. Help them to rebel!

DOWN WITH WORLD CAPITALISM, THE CAUSE OF WAR!

DOWN WITH WAGE SLAVERY AND MILITARISM!

WORKERS, UNITE AND FACE THE COMMON ENEMY!

THOUGH WE MARCH IN DIFFERENT BATTALIONS, LET US STRIKE TOGETHER!

CLASS BEFORE PARTY!

HAIL THE DEMOCRACY OF THE WORKERS – THE WORKERS’ ALL-IN COUNCILS OF ACTION!

HAIL ANARCHISM – FREE SOCIALISM – THE ONLY HOPE OF THE WORLD!

(May 1939)

John McGovern and War (Extracts)

On Sunday evening, 15th October, a very enthusiastic and successful anti-war meeting was held in St Andrews (Grand) Hall, Glasgow, under the auspices of the No-Conscription League, and despite lack of time for adequate advertising, there was a large attendance.

... John McGovern, on rising to speak, got a magnificent reception. He said It was a great encouragement to see such a large and enthusiastic audience. They were unfortunately in the midst of one of the greatest tragedies since 1918. A war that no one knows the length of or the end of. The policy so much urged of ‘standing up to Hitler’ had ensured war instead of averting it, and this policy had been sponsored by, above all, those who had deserted their old working-class positions. Those who had opposed this policy had been called traitors to the working class..

‘But’, said McGovern, ‘I have been told since I was 18 years old that war had an economic cause – the clash of interest of capitalists and financiers. I have always been told that this clash of interest led to war, during which the ruling classes were prepared to throw their working class into bloody conflict to determine their share of the colonies, trade routes, etc., of the world, and I have always believed that to be true. I have not only been convinced, I have been 100 per cent certain that modern wars are never for the defence of the common people but for the advantage of the gangsters of each country. I therefore cannot support war unless I violate my mental powers and become untrue to the things I know and believe’. He resisted the last war when he was of age to serve, and now that he was over that age, he refused to hound the youth of this country on to the bloody battlefields of Europe. They were told this was a war for ‘Freedom and Democracy’. Was the ruling class which shot down the workers at Tony Pandy in Wales concerned about freedom? Or those who intervened on the side of the coal-owners against the miners in 1926? They were prepared to see the streets red with blood because the miners demanded a living wage. They have burned down cottages in Ireland, in India, in Egypt and in South Africa. In Trinidad, 750,000 live on 2½d a day. Boys and girls of nine years have worked in the mines in India, where for demanding the right of freedom 375 men, women and children were shot at Amritsar. That is the same soulless, hypocritical ruling class that are going to fight for freedom for the people of this country.

These people did not object to Hitlerism when the German workers were beaten in the streets and sent into concentration camps, and when lysol was poured into their eyes. But when they see the rise of a militaristic power threatening their colonial interests, their loot, then the youth of the workers have to be trained and thrown into bloody struggle in order to protect those interests.

The last time the victim was poor little Belgium, and the Kaiser was the mad dog of Europe. Now it is poor

little Poland, with Hitler as the mad dog of Europe.

He would have them take a plebiscite for war and everyman who voted for war would go on to the battlefield to fight it (Loud cheers).

The trade union officials, in return for recognition, were assisting in the speed-up of the workers of the munitions factories, and, like the Labour Party, were also demanding places. He cited the case of Tom Johnston as one of the worst sell-outs of the war. This was the man who made his name by his anti-war paragraphs in *Forward*. He had virtually disenfranchised his area by having too many jobs and was seldom in Parliament. How could Joe Westwood and Johnston give service to the National Government and be members of the Opposition against Chamberlain at the same time.

Greenwood and others wanted them to march against Hitler, but the Army was going to march against the German working class. They were going to murder them and allow them to murder our boys.

McGovern said he met a man who was attached to the French tank corps, and he gave him a harrowing eyewitness account of the horrors of that type of warfare now going on in the Saar region. He saw men who were wounded, trying to get out of the way of the screaming monsters of wheels that were to crunch their bones and bodies into pulp. He would never forget the horror of it. Yet we were told this sort of thing must go on and on. If mothers and fathers could only see and hear the groans and shrieks of the dying they would realise that there is no glory in it and that no war justifies that slaughter.

In Madrid he had seen the terrible effects of even one bomb, where 57 bodies had been dismembered, with blood on the walls, and heads, arms and legs intermingled with the debris.

These wars were for the selfish interests of the ruling class; a sordid, soulless, material struggle for human gain. No boy would ever march into battle through any fault of his.

If you believe in an Empire containing black and yellow slaves, you could not deny Hitler's right to desire an empire also. If it was right for us to have slave territories, Japan, Italy and Germany were equally entitled to subdue and bribe native chiefs, and so build up an empire. Hitler says: 'If you don't agree, I have nine million men ready to back me up'. The French and British retort that they have unlimited resources to defend their colonial possessions. For this the workers are expected to murder one another. They are taken from their slums to do the job and when it was finished they were sent back to the slums, back to the Means Test, until they were required again!

Until recently the CP were for this war 'for democracy', but after three weeks their policy had again changed. Russia had done a double somersault (laughter) and the CP turn when 'Holy Joe' says so (more laughter). It was a crazy world. France imprisons her communists; Russia shoots them, and Germany liberates them (Loud laughter).

Talking of 'smashing Hitler' provoked him to say 'We

must pay attention to our own Hitlers and let the German workers deal with theirs. We must conduct the class struggle on the home front. We must watch the profiteers, the landlords and so on'

McGovern 'brought the house down' with his peroration – when it was said 'we must fight to the last man' he retorted: 'I will fight to the last MP, to the last banker, to the last landlord; I will fight to the last capitalist, the last war-mongering bishop, the last editor of the last capitalist newspaper; the last member of the House of Lords and the last member of the royal family. If only these were left on the battlefield the world would be a much better place for all time.'

(Mid-October 1939)

The Second Front

by T. Nicolson

The advanced workers must elucidate the numerous questions which are now arising with increasing sharpness, because the more the workers understand and organise for the revolution, the less the violence.

Let us concentrate then on the relationship between the Russian situation and the situation of the workers here in Britain.

Since Russia is being attacked it does not follow automatically that we support the present regime here. That is a fallacious argument having its origin in the subservient, docile position of the CP. An alliance with Churchill and Co. means the preservation of exploitation; for without this alliance Churchill would never have encroached upon wages and the freedom of the workers without serious repercussions. The Communist Party has cleared the way for Capitalism's next stage, Fascism.

What is the CP programme? In short it is this. Russia is being attacked, therefore let us get in line with capitalism, support it, forget the class struggle, we must have a second front to alleviate the pressure on our Russian comrades. It sounds alright but where will it lead us? Is it not a fact that the miners are dissatisfied, that strike action is going on up and down the country, that the workers' wages are being lowered by income tax and purchase tax. Workers, working long hours, suffering ill-health from lack of decent food, are being sent to prison for what is known as absenteeism. Yet the boss is allowed to keep good coal seams till after the war for further exploitation of the worker. Not one boss has been sent to prison for retarding the so-called war effort; but the Glass House is full, the Military Detention Barracks are full, civil prisons are full, young women are being thrown into jail for refusing war work. It is only a fool, or those who don't understand, or who don't wish to understand the class

struggle who would deny this fertile soil for revolutionary propaganda.

The question arises: would the capitalist regime refuse to help Russia if the CP didn't advocate it? It is obvious that British Imperialism is disintegrating, it will do anything to save the sinking ship, why not give arms to Russia to use against her greatest enemy Germany, and so help to weaken her. The CP can shout from the rooftops for more production, but Russia will only get what Britain thinks is necessary. Russia is quite right in advocating a second front (with Stalin visualising Britain as Imperialist Britain) but no revolutionary in this country should act likewise. If Russia gives certain guarantees to capitalist regimes, for instance, no revolutionary propaganda, without also giving some guarantee to the international workers, she has no right to even expect our participation in a second front. If she gave the workers some stimulus such as the complete smashing of the Hitlerite machine and the inauguration of workers' control over industry, she might get some support. Personally I think Russia, if she defeats Germany, must demand that the workers set up their Soviets inside the German factories. She will then have tremendous opposition from Britain and America. Will the workers be able to switch over to the new tactics after being schooled in the support Churchill Campaign? Does the CP really think a second Confessional by Harry Pollitt will be all that's necessary?.

The majority of the workers will fight the inevitable everyday struggle for better conditions. They should be encouraged in this struggle, but all the while we should be pointing out the historical mission of the workers – THE ABOLITION OF THE WAGES SYSTEM!

(June–July) 1942

20–Year Pact

With a blaze of capitalist trumpets a 20–year treaty between Imperialist Britain and the USSR has been announced, the main terms of which contain the following major blunders.

Germany and her allies are branded as the ONLY aggressors – a repetition in advance of the 'war guilt' clause in the Versailles Treaty.

The continual harping on the necessity for COMPLETE VICTORY, thus ruling out the possibility at any stage of reasonable negotiations.

(A revolutionary government arising in Germany or any part of Europe would not be allowed – if the Treaty could prevent it – to make a separate peace).

Instead of the lesson having been learnt from the blunders of Versailles, a SUPER VERSAILLES is visualised at the conclusion of the present bloodbath.

Stalin accepts the capitalist view of what constitutes 'aggression'. The patent fact the British Empire is founded on and lives by internal aggression against the British WORKERS and external aggression and ruthless exploitation of the colonial workers is ignored as if it did not exist. Instead of so-called revolutionary Russia drawing forcible attention to the present-day crimes of ALL imperialisms, Molotov publicly commits himself to add the entire economic, political and armed forces of Russia to PROP UP THE DYING CAPITALIST SYSTEM FOR TWENTY YEARS!

As symptomatic of the whole business Molotov travelled about London in a closed car. Armed police accompanied him. Word went round to sentries and other officials that 'no questions were to be asked' about the identity of the man who hurried in and out of 10 Downing Street or the Foreign Office'. No attempt here to contact any of the WORKERS, much less the REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS by this erstwhile revolutionist from the workers' fatherland!

(June–July 1942)

Freedom of the Press And the Daily Worker

by The Laird

The Ban on the *Daily Worker* ought to be removed: there is no doubt about that. The Freedom of the Press is maintainable only by fighting for it, even although it may seem that from a short view point such freedom causes wrong roads to be taken, wrong paths to be trod. However, wrong paths taken freely can be retraced freely. It is when the wrong route is travelled because of some vested or peculiar interest forcing the way, that it leads to disaster and a procession of incorrect policies.

We must have an international as well as a national outlook on this though, and, when we survey Willie Gallagher's fatherland we find that the Anarchist and Workers' Opposition press was suppressed many years ago. The CPGB too would attempt to do likewise here if it had the opportunity.

Therefore it is not on the grounds of freedom that the CP stake their claim for the lifting of the ban. They want the ban lifted to help the war effort. To be quite concise, they wish to advocate more effectively for – longer hours,

more production, greater effort by the workers, the opening up of a second front: and all this to take place under capitalism. Whom do the CP think Churchill is? Whom do they think rule and control this country? To shout for greater exploitation of the workers is to shout for a more efficient form of capitalism and the next more efficient form in the catalogue is Fascism.

Let us quote from the *Western Front Special* issued by the Scottish Committees of the CP(GB).

‘The Editorial Board of the *Daily Worker* in a recent letter to Divisional Labour Parties, has made it clear that it would lend all its effort to the policy of winning the war, would aim to consolidate the unity of the democratic alliance against Hitler and his satellites and would give every support in the drive for increased production for the fighting fronts. Furthermore the Editorial Board has declared that in the event of the ban being lifted, and in the interests of national unity, they would have no desire to revert to past controversies’.

What a study in belly-crawling! ‘Please sir, let us publish our paper, and we’ll allow the Labour Fakirs to lead the worker up the garden and we won’t say a thing; as long as we can publish our paper, we will only attack the ILP, the Trotskyists, and the Left Wing Communists’.

Sure, let them publish the *Daily Worker*. It will be the first thing to make the workers realise how far the CP has gone – TO THE RIGHT THERE IS NO LIMIT!

(June–July 1942)

Socialists and the War

How often has it been said that it is the duty of all young Socialists to go into the Army, that there is no alternative – one must go with the workers into uniform and help to prepare for the day when the holocaust is ended by the action of the masses?

The value of military training is indisputable, if we take as our standpoint that Socialism will be achieved, not by a peaceful evolution from Capitalism, but as a result of an elemental struggle. The success of such a struggle, however, depends on the participation of the vast masses of workers in the Army who have had military training – those who at first entered the Army under the influence chiefly of the bosses’ propaganda. Whether or not a handful of revolutionary Socialists receive military training will make little difference one way or the other.

The real question is: should revolutionists enter imperialist armies to influence the soldiers? Those saying they should, hold that where-ever the workers go (to church? to Hell? Why not to prison also, then?) the

Socialist should follow; young Socialists should go with their generation . . . to the grave, and, if they think they can help to keep it from the grave, they must, nevertheless, shut up and obey orders. That is the traditional view. The object of such a course is plain enough; that correct leadership must be given when mass opposition to the war develops, and in the meanwhile carry on Socialist propaganda in the army.

How is that to be done. Cases have occurred in which soldiers have been discharged for the mere possession of Communist literature, let alone for openly advocating a Socialist struggle. And it must be clear that military authorities will not regard with detached benevolence the consistent spreading of revolutionary thoughts and literature. It follows that, in general, work under such conditions must entail the watering down of these ideas to such an extent as will present no danger to the authorities. That leads one to ask whether entry into imperialist armies for this purpose is worth while at all.

To come now to the assertion that it is necessary to have revolutionaries in the army in order to give correct leadership when the crisis comes. Only if an army is entirely insulated from civilian life is that true. (And then nothing can be done, since a mere handful of revolutionists would be powerless). But there are few instances in history when an army was hemmed off entirely – apart from professional or foreign troops. In the French and Russian revolutions it was not possible to prevent civilian politics penetrating the army. Thus, when the time arrived, the efforts of the more forward spirits among the troops were exerted in the right direction. Ordered to fire on ‘the mob’, some refused, thus serving as ‘the crystals in a saturate solution’ as Trotsky put it. In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky refers to these nameless heroes who came out against their officers’ orders. They were almost certainly not members of the Bolshevik party, and if they had been they might have been engaged, as ‘efficient soldiers’ in obeying orders. (Trotsky says that the Bolshevik strives to be the best soldier. First duty of a soldier is obedience.) It is thus untrue to say that initiative cannot arise from the ranks. On the other hand, one must admit that the presence of authentic revolutionaries at such a time could not but better the position slightly (in proportion to their numbers). The point I wish to make here is that their presence is not vitally necessary for the army to come over to the side of the revolution.

If it is a hard-and-fast rule that Socialists should go wherever the workers go, then we must presume that this applies equally to the bourgeois-controlled army, bourgeois-controlled political parties, or any other political parties, not excluding the Fascist parties, whose mass basis in Germany, especially, was formed largely out of the workers.

It is well known that Fascism (as also militarism) is characterised by an ‘intolerance’ towards opposition. In what manner, therefore, would revolutionary Socialists enter Fascist parties? Certainly not for the purpose of peaceful education! They would enter them, if they entered them at all, as a Fifth column on behalf of the

revolution. Can we not draw a parallel in the case of imperialist armies?

Those advocating the traditional military policy seek justification by the formulation of various seemingly progressive demands. For instance, the Fourth International calls for military training of the workers under trade union control, financed by the Capitalist state. This is advanced as a slogan for rallying the workers, notwithstanding the fact that it is unrealisable without first achieving the Socialist revolution, whilst after the revolution such a course would depend upon circumstances. Such slogans are unsuited to present-day realities. Again, quite a fetish is made around the demand that workers should learn 'military arts', and be trained as officers. Surely, if bourgeois governments have steeped their peoples in this training, they have done so in their own interests, and for the purpose of using the worker-soldiers as their pawns?

It is foolish to take the ostrich-like attitude that this process of large-scale militarisation is really a blessing in disguise simply because it seems likely to facilitate a forceful overthrow. It should not provide subject matter for rejoicing, but should, rather, arouse the wrath and detestation of sincere revolutionists. For militarism crystallises the worst feature of Capitalist inequality, oppression and rampant violence.

Though it is right to point out that humanitarian laments are of no avail, it is fatal to overlook the fact that the policy behind this militarisation is the policy of the ruling classes, and that militarisation is intended to accustom the masses to submissiveness and ready obedience. This, in turn, leads to a psychology which would be, to say the very least, unfavourable for a flowering of real workers' democracy. Rather would it encourage the growth of the stifling fungi of bureaucracy and despotism all over again. On this triple count, therefore, militarism should be resisted in every possible way.

So much is the military aspect stressed by some revolutionaries, that one is led to wonder whether they are not more intent on being good soldiers than Socialists. As if to reassure us, in the same breath as they declaim against inefficiency, desertion or conscientious objection, they call aloud for fraternisation! Yet does not this (the greatest danger to the ruling classes, and doubtless condemned in every army manual) amount to the most wicked indiscipline? One cannot have it both ways: either one is against fraternisation and desertion, or for both. And when Lenin referred to the Russian army 'voting for peace with its feet', this was a bad thing? In this war Italians are said to desert *en masse*, because they do not see the point in fighting. Our 'Socialist militarists' would presumably be foremost in shooting down these unfortunates. Otherwise they would not be the 'best soldiers'...

To draw a parallel between factory and army and to say that the worker has no choice but to accept the discipline of both, is unsound. Whereas economic pressure forces the worker into the factory and makes him 'accept' its discipline, the direct class violence of the bourgeoisie herds workers into the army, and trains them to kill their brothers. That is the distinction. There is a choice, even if

legally it is limited: army or prison. And if that is so, it is better that the individual Socialist decide for himself since the whole matter is reduced to one of personal conditions.

There seems to be a tendency for many erstwhile revolutionaries who have passed military age to 'see why' they were quite wrong in their youth. Palme Dutt, calling for mass slaughter on a second front, was, in the last war sent down from his University for Socialist peace propaganda. Morrison's former speeches and writings would now be subjected to 2D, and their author to 18B for the duration. Their revolutionary 'opponents' of the Left agree with them on the need for 'obeying the historical process' by advocating that workers obey the bosses' orders to go and slaughter other workers. (Is that, incidentally, the 'only true' Marxist policy? Were not Leo Jogiches, co-founder of the Polish Social Democracy, Rosa Luxemburg, or James Connolly, true marxists? Is it opposed to Marxism to leave such matters to the individual – without of course taking up a pacifist attitude?)

But it is time such arguments were refuted.. It has gone on, for too long, this tragedy of young and virile Socialists, the hope of the future, dying without having struck a blow for their cause, in the false belief that they were serving it. It is time to stop juggling with what are, whether we like the word or not, vital principles.

(August – September 1942)

While Workers Die

At the recent Churchill-Stalin guzzle in Moscow the press has described the atmosphere as 'full of fun, a very jocular party with Stalin giving a number of toasts, speaking with humour and thoroughly enjoying his own jokes. There were at least 25 toasts. Twenty-six courses were served and pyramids of vegetables and fruits crowded the tables.'

Discreetly enough, no mention is here made of the amount of liquor paraded, but if we know our Churchill, there must have been plenty! The speeches, doubtless, were of the same high level of insincerity as was the case in the Molotov-Ribbentrop banquets of recent date! And for every drop of champagne or wine wasted at this unseemly spectacle, hundreds of gallons of Russian and German blood were at that very moment being spilled on the various battlefronts. And because of the criminal failure of these alleged statesmen to assuage the reasonable fears of the German people, thousands of gallons more – not excluding British – will be needlessly shed before the workers cry halt to this bestial madness of war!

(August–September 1942)

The Historic Consequences of the War (extracts)

by F.A. Ridley

(...) IN SO FAR AS this war is a war of ideology – and it is that to a very considerable extent – it evidently represents a conflict between two social principles, the totalitarian state and economy (represented completely by Russia, and, in a process of evolution, by Germany), whereas the ‘Allies’ – the British Empire, formerly France and America – stand for a regime which approximates in phraseology, and to a certain extent, still, in fact, the classical Liberal capitalism of the 19th century. Democratic individualism versus totalitarian étatisme [‘state-ism’], such, in theory, and with certain modifications in practice, is the ideological content of the present war. (In so far as the war is a war not of ideas but of interests, it is simply an imperial quarrel of the old type. Such wars are but too painfully familiar and, as such, do not call for any special comment. Despite patriotic mythologies, the ideological difference between one empire and another is not great; certainly by no means an adequate cause for a war of planetary dimensions. In any case, evidence is now accumulating to mountainous heights to demonstrate that the age of coercive imperialism belongs irrevocably to a bygone phase in human annals, and that, consequently, such conflicts are purely atavistic in character). (N.B. Russia is, of course an ‘ally’ from necessity, not choice).

Observing the present war then solely from the standpoint of its conflicting ideologies we are, perforce, driven to this rather melancholy conclusion: whoever wins this war in the technical military sense, in so far as this war is a war of ideas and systems, the democratic powers are already defeated. In the present phase of historic development democratic capitalism cannot conceivably stand, at any rate permanently, against state capitalism of the totalitarian type, and it cannot do so for the simple but sufficient reason that modern war itself is pre-eminently a totalitarian regime, and that, consequently, the democratic powers, when faced with the necessity to wage on their own behalf a war that is necessarily conducted in the manner that is natural to their totalitarian opponents, must become, in fact, totalitarian themselves in order to carry it on at all effectively. Hence, in the ideological sense, the victory of the anti-democratic bloc – whatever the actual fortunes of war – is assured by, and at the very moment of, the declaration of war. The very fact of war itself constitutes the victory of totalitarianism, for modern war, irrespective of its military results, is in itself pre-eminently *the* totalitarian thing; for the totalitarian state is, after all, the perfect war machine.

And all this, be it remembered, is at the very beginning of what promises to be a war of great length and unequalled severity, involving everyone and every aspect of life, down to the most minute details. It is not even

questionable that long before the end of the struggle state control will embrace every aspect of life, and that freedom and democracy will find their last refuge in the post-prandial perorations of hortatory politicians. Indeed, if the primary aim of the Nazis is to evangelise the world with the gospel of the Totalitarian State, they have gone about their task in a business-like way; whether they win or lose the war in an immediate technical sense, by the very fact of its existence they have dealt the deathblow to (what they style) ‘the degenerate democracies’.

From that point of view with which we are here concerned, the world-historical role of the present war, it is scarcely open to question that it inaugurates an era of European, indeed, probably of world totalitarianism, be it short or long in its duration.

It is manifestly demonstrable that all the vital forces at work in the world today are themselves of a kind that is either directly totalitarian in essence, or is, at least, highly amenable to this kind of society. Not only is this the case with regard to the Fascist States such as Germany, Italy and Spain, which now and for some years past have been making the ideological pace in and for the western world; but even more significant is it that the opponents of Fascism also advocate societies of an all-inclusive nature. Thus, the Third Reich has known but two real internal enemies: the Roman Catholic Church – a totalitarian theocracy by definition – and Stalinism, that secular theocracy which subjugates the individual, in any and every manifestation of his activity, to a yoke more despotic than any known to mankind since the regimes of the Old Man of the Mountains – the Sheikh of the Assassins – and the Inca Sun-kings of mediaeval Peru. For that matter, all the forms of socialism existent today – with the solitary exception of anarchism now bloodily liquidated in its last stronghold, Spain – aim avowedly at an all-powerful bureaucratic state, unchecked by any restraints exercised by private property rights, at a social state, in fact, which, whatever the conscious aims and however loud the disclaimers of its advocates, could, in fact, be nothing other than the most despotic of absolutist authoritarian regimes. In point of fact, it seems extremely probable that the chief cause of the present slump in socialism is to be found in the entire failure common to all its 20th century manifestations to free its libertarian and humanistic ends from its bureaucratic and dictatorial means. A generation ago Georges Sorel issued an impressive warning, one unheeded by the socialists alike of his day and of ours, as to what would happen to socialism if it failed to make its revolution before the decadence of capitalist Europe set in (c.f. *Reflections on Violence*).

When viewed in the widest historical perspective the present war can, then, only be construed as the gateway to a totalitarian era. ‘Modern’ civilisation, like ancient civilisation before it, ends in a phase of étatisme, in the removal of all brakes and checks upon the god-state, the omnipotent and omnipresent Leviathan, ‘over all persons and causes supreme’ (...)

(August–September 1942)

India

We gladly accede to the request of our Indian comrades to publish the following resolutions passed at their meeting on 11/8/42:

‘That this mass meeting of the Indians in Glasgow held under The Hindustani Majlis, have resolved unanimously that the present policy of the British Government and that of the Government of India is suicidal to the success of the cause of freedom in the world and also to the eventual victory of the Allied Nations.’

‘That the present world situation demands a settlement of India’s crisis. This meeting therefore urges the British Government to alter its present policy, and in order to win over the support of India’s millions as an effective Ally negotiations should immediately be re-opened for the setting up of a Provisional National Government in India.’

Abdul Ghafoor, Secretary.

In view of the shootings, floggings and even machine gunning from the air, we fail to see any reason for our comrades’ support of the Allied aim: victory – and retaliation.

We are with them in their fight for liberation from British Imperialism, but we repudiate the capitulation to the slogan of ‘victory for the Allied Nations (read Imperialists)’. We stand for the victory over Hitlerism and Mikadoism – by the German and Japanese workers, and the simultaneous overthrow of all the Allied Imperialists by the workers in Britain and America. We also wish to see the reinstitution of the Workers’ Soviets in Russia and the demolition of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In a word, we fight for the destruction of All Imperialism by the Proletarian World Revolution!

(October–November 1942)

Looting at Luton

A Luton firm complained to the local National Service officer of ‘widespread absenteeism’ among its women workers. An investigation revealed the fact that children were working for over 60 hours a week!

This firm, the Davis Gas Stove Company, was fined £94, on 38 summonses in connection with the employment of boys and girls under sixteen. Some of the girls involved were only 14 years of age!

Why were these people not jailed, the same as some of the workers were for absenteeism? Is this the equality of sacrifice we hear so much about?

(October–November 1942)

The Royal Sacrifice

Every bath in Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle has to be painted with a black and red (sorry) black or red line at the five inch level.

So reports *Reynolds* (20–9–42) and goes on to say that in certain parts of the castle the boilers will be shut off and anyone requiring hot water will have to carry it from the kitchen. Does that not show we are fighting for Democracy? Our Royal Comrade will have to carry a kettle of water to fill his ankle-deep bath?

(October–November 1942)

Ghandi’s Pacifism Debunked

Spontaneous no rent movements by the peasants; rising strikes, mass demonstrations . . . such was the situation in India when the soldiers were brought out to restore ‘order’. At Peshawar the Garhwali soldiers refused to fire on the people. Hindu troops broke ranks and fraternised with the crowds.

The Govt. of India subsequently refused all demands for an enquiry into the incident, court-martialled and imposed savage sentences on the Garhwali soldiers who had refused to shoot in cold blood their fellow countrymen.

Here is what Gandhi had to say on the matter:

‘A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks the oath which he has taken and renders himself guilty of criminal disobedience I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey; for when I am in power, I SHALL IN ALL LIKELIHOOD MAKE USE OF THOSE SAME OFFICIALS AND THOSE SAME SOLDIERS (our emphasis). If I taught them to disobey I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power.’

(Ghandi, reply to the French Journalist, Petrasch, on the question of the Garhwali soldiers, ‘*Monde*’, 20 February, 1932)

(*Solidarity* 55–56, December 1942–January 1943),

Axis Workers Show Way

By 'ICARUS'

CONTRARY TO THE NATIONALIST-REFORMIST MOVEMENT, THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAT IN GERMANY HAS FOUGHT, AND IS STILL FIGHTING, CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM AND THEREFORE NAZIISM FROM ITS APPEARANCE IN THE ARENA OF CLASS CONFLICT UP TO THE PRESENT DAY.

If deeds mean anything, a reference to the real historical events in Germany during the last decades will be sufficient. Moreover, the prisons and concentration camps still filled with oppositional workers, the thousands of executed, and thousands fallen in open street fighting, bear a witness that cannot be ignored. As a matter of fact, the true political opposition in Nazi Germany is entirely a workers' revolutionary movement. That which in Allied propaganda is styled the 'anti-Nazi opposition of the Catholic Church', is more or less imaginary.

The revolutionary workers' opposition with its equipment of an empirically organised underground network, using continually changing methods, is trying to inform the masses as to just what is going on, so that they will more readily understand the true situation. These workers cannot be fooled with Goebbels', or any other nationalistic propaganda.

In spite of all oppression, there has been during the war, not only successful strikes, as for example, the mass action of the German seamen in Italy, but also revolts, bloodily crushed, of the toiling and soldiering masses in Germany itself.

There always has been, and still is, obstruction, absenteeism and organised idleness in the German war industry. It speaks for the effectiveness and the wide sphere of the anti-Nazi resistance, when even the Nazi Press is forced to complain that:

'Many factories and other undertakings are undermining discipline by offering money premiums to workers who do not come regularly late to work, who do not pretend to be ill, and who work during working time instead of idling.'

It is significant that at the same time, Hitler's Commissioner for Manpower has fixed heavier penalties for workers refusing to accept employment, staying away from work without justification or anyone found guilty of breaches of discipline.

According to a decree of August 22, 1942, the working hours in all occupied countries are fixed at 54 a week. The following are extracts from the decree:—

'With a view to mobilising the workers in the occupied territories under the new manpower system for Europe, the workers must be subjected to a strict and uniform direction . . . It is necessary to ensure both the

appropriate and purposeful distribution of these workers, with a view to satisfying the manpower needs of the Reich and the occupied territories, and the highest possible output.

'In the occupied territories the highest possible output is also to be ensured by introducing piece-work and bonus systems. In so far as piece-time rates already exist in the factories, they shall be revised with a view to releasing as far as possible any unused output capacity . . . In cases where no piece-work or bonus systems are practicable, consideration shall be given as to whether it is not possible further to increase output by introducing output premiums. This, however, may not be done in such a manner as to endanger the stability of the wages position.

'This decree shall also apply, mutatis mutandis, to prisoners of war.'

Meanwhile millions of workers from the various European countries become united with their German fellow workers in the industrial plants. Here, the process goes on. A new, real class movement is developing. History does not 'jump', but a certain leap will not only take the class traitors and the 'patriots' by surprise, but also the new so-called administrators when, as the war gathers momentum, the inevitable acute revolutionary situation arrives.

Hail the Proletarian Revolution!

The following are but a few of the latest news items which factually corroborate our comrade's contentions:

'BEHIND THE NEWS — The mutiny of the German submarine crews in Kiel was no isolated incident.' (*Sunday Mail*, 11/7/43)

'Mutiny aboard an Italian cruiser at Brindisi on the heel of Italy followed an order to sail south on a "special assignment"' (*Glasgow Evening News*, 3/7/43)

(June–July 1943)

Events & Trends

by Icarus

According to a Swedish source, mutiny broke out among German troops at Copenhagen. Some officers who were caught trying to escape were shot immediately. There has been a whole series of German workers', sailors' and soldiers' revolts during the present war, even in Germany itself.

These revolts, however, still remain 'secrets' of the

Allied authorities. The reason why cannot be in question – for capitalist ‘law and order’ is the core of Allied imperialism.

The ‘people’s revolts’ in occupied countries which ‘the Gestapo is unable to crush’, the ‘plots against the Big Three’ which the OGPU ‘discover’, and the epics of the Stalinist superman ‘Tito’ who annihilates one German army after another before breakfast – all this is propaganda of agents (so-called patriots) hired by the capitalist imperialist governments.

Oliver Lyttleton, Minister of Production, declared at Oxford that the ‘Beveridge approach to Social Security insists on the worker’s contribution as a condition of benefit, and on the obligation to accept work if it was available’.

Who said ‘Rats!’ The workers are not only to have to pay for their own misery, but are also going to be liable to forced labour!

Herbert Morrison’s keynote in his speech in Dundee was:

‘If we are to avoid social and economic catastrophe after the war, we shall have to continue war-time control, while both taxes and savings will have to remain well above the pre-war normal.’

‘Great Britain in the last few years under a system of public control has shown itself the best governed country in the world.’ (*News Chronicle*).

This is precisely what J. Stalin claims for his dictatorship in Russia. The term ‘public control’ is experienced in Nazi State control. ‘Nationalisation’ is on the way, with or without Hitler, because there is no other outlook for capitalist imperialism. The inevitable form of organised capitalism is Nazism (Fascism). What has happened in Italy, Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria, and so on, is developing in Britain and everywhere else.

To postpone the necessity of workers’ action now involves the loss of maybe a century. Revolution or Totalitarian Slavery! Once again the working class is forced to make its choice before it is too late.

Mr Fred Marshall, MP, Chairman of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, quarrels in the Union’s *Journal* over the works-committees, which he blames for unofficial strikes. He, the union controller, is naturally wholeheartedly against the self-acting workers, and describes how efficiently he has cornered the bullies.

‘It is inevitable, in the nature of things, that sooner or later they (the works-committees) begin to exceed the purpose for which they were set up. They tend to become an organisation within trade unionism possessing power without responsibility.’

The honourable MP is of course terrified of any real progressive change, which would deprive him of his job. Though works-committees tied to Trade Unions with their conservative ideologies, will not spoil the wage-peddlers’ game. Independent, class-conscious works-committees however, might land the reactionary trade

union leaders in the cart!

‘Dutch oil experts are being sent from the Middle East to Australia where they will hold themselves in readiness to assist in re-opening oil fields captured from the Japanese’ (*News Chronicle*, 26 Jan., 1944).

The ‘Refugee Governments’ have got their ‘New Order’. They want to ‘hold’ what they have exploited before. It is not only oil that worries these liberators, it is the possession of further resources in raw materials and efficient control of slave labour.

Profit is the soul of their whole make-up; the greater as well as the smaller nations.

Bert Wyler reports in the *Daily Herald*, 6 January, 1944, about a ‘secret patriotic army’ in France which receives pay by parachute from British aeroplanes:

‘The army is organised on strictly military lines. Officer ranks are Group Chief, Camp Chief and Regional Chief. Courses are held regularly to train men in partisan fighting. Without exception the instructors are members of the old regular army. In each camp there is a political commissar, establishing liaison between the fighting body and the central headquarters.’

‘These commissars write death sentences against collaborationists and traitors. Special squads are ordered to carry out the sentences. Numerous girlfriends of German soldiers have recently been executed. It is hoped that this organisation will be the foundation of the regular French Army when the country is liberated.’

In fact the capitalist rulers are not able to rule by the old means. Capitalist class needs can only be fulfilled by full-scale Nazism. The patriots, the Allied Imperialist SS troops – the so-called ‘special squads’ – are preparing to succeed Hitler’s ‘Waffen SS’. Just as the latter were used before, so will the former be used in the future to crush uprising workers in any country.

With regard to the proposals recently adopted by the Russian dictatorial regime, we may quote the *News Chronicle* for 3 February 1944:

‘The sixteen republics which make up the Soviet Union will have their own Defence Ministers, but these will be subordinate to the Defence Ministry of the Union. They will have their own armies – national units with distinctive characteristics – but all the army formations no doubt will be directed from the centre’.

These changes, however, provide nothing new, for Hitler’s ‘Gauleiterism’ has proved more effective than the union for hemispheric control. Russia is thoroughly militarised. The war as it progresses, has accelerated this development, and has brought about shifts and rearrangements in the relationships of all existing interests. Further changes of even greater importance, including the objectives for which this war is fought, are bound to follow rapidly. Moreover, the revival of traditional Russian nationalism has inevitably resuscitated the old policy of Pan-Slavism, now used as an instrument of

'Soviet' imperialism. The idea is primarily to bring the Slav-populated lands under the supreme rule of Moscow. Events have their own logic; they cannot be outwitted.

This new reform – which has been praised by the Allied press – in no way implies a retreat from the strongly centralised political structure and totalitarian methods in the USSR, for the basic elements of state-capitalistic 'National Socialism' ('Socialism-in-One-Country') remain unaltered.

The following item from BUP was published – without comment – in *Reynolds News* for 13 Feb., 1944:

'A remarkable speech in which it was stated that Anglo-American co-operation could be carried on after the war only if British and American monopolists were controlled was made by an Assistant U.S. Attorney General, Mr Berge, in Washington yesterday. Britain's support in the American Government's war against International cartels was necessary'

Since the mass-murder machinery is running smoothly, the capitalist rulers are planning for the war after the present war on Bolshevik-Nazi lines. New vested interests abroad are going to be created by the annexation of foreign territory and its enforced submission to the national monopolies of the dominating 'mother' country. Subsequently national monopolies in place of international cartels are emphasised.

The trend is towards the formation of a state capitalist empire through the annexation of other countries by all and any means. Rival powers are to be wiped out entirely, because it is quite hopeless for capitalist-imperialist rulers to come to any permanent understanding in regard to their conflicting interests.

(May 1944)

living. Labour is directed from 'non-essential' to 'essential' work, young women are transferred from factory to factory to suit the needs of capitalism. And now, the youth of the country is being forced, willy nilly, down the mines.

This conscription of labour, this reducing of the workers into absolute slavery, is being carried out by a British Capitalist Imperialist Government. A government whose record of oppression in India is ghastly, whose Prime Minister denounces communism and openly associates with Italian fascists. A government of coal-owners and financial magnates, whose one aim is profit, profit, profit, at the expense of the workers, and it is introducing these measures under the guise of fighting fascism.

In order to defeat German Nazism and Italian Fascism, British National Socialism is being built up here. That means every gun made, every plane assembled, every ship built and *handed over to capitalist control* is aiding this British Capitalist government, is strengthening it in its transfer from democratic to fascist capitalism and ensuring an almost omnipotent boss class. Democratic capitalism can only fight fascist capitalism by itself becoming fascist.

The only answer to fascism is the workers' social revolution, by workers' control, by immediately fighting conscription in all its phases, by building up workers' committees in opposition to the Boss and the Trade Unions; by building Workers' Open Forums, where the workers themselves can discuss and decide. By that method can we stop fascism and open up the road to Workers' Power.

Build the Workers' Committees! Build the Workers' Open Forums!

(May 1944)

War and Fascism

We are now in our fifth year of this business, which requires that the workers of the world butcher and maim one another, in which the inventive genius of man, and the industry of mankind, is wasted in the building of engines for destruction.

Let us try to discover, then, in which direction, to what goal, we are headed in this country.

There has been introduced military and industrial conscription on boys, girls, men and women.

Industrial conscription has been introduced in the form of the EWO. Workers are forced to stay in poorly paid monotonous jobs, which require them to work overtime to have a wage in keeping with the increasing cost of

The Turning Tide

by *Icarus*

The current strike wave indicates changes amongst the workers from within. The tendency is to make a direct stand against the Capitalist controllers.

The flood of misery, official lies and betrayals during the course of the war has awakened greater and ever greater masses. Their instinct grows and class comradeship becomes broader and deeper. This brings consciousness to the mass and changes – though slowly – its ideologies.

The gap between leader and mass widens continuously and the spirit of servility is fading away. More and more workers recognise the true situation. Thus, their fighting activities grows. The brilliant examples in Wales, Not-

tinghamshire, Yorkshire, etc., spring to mind.

The urgent needs of the working class demanded that they take matters in their own hands. Cutting free from the influence of political quacks, the workers became aware, that what is done or not done now determines what will be possible later on. In Nottingham the miners at 14 pits struck spontaneously, with the effect that their imprisoned fellow-worker was freed immediately. They did not care a fig about the 'warnings' of our class-enemies, but boldly defied the Capitalist authorities. Here, the attainment of the ultimate strategic objective is visible. Moreover, here by example of deed, solidarity is shown – how the workers must act in order to put an end to slavery and war.

Solidarity must be first fostered 'at home', at the workplaces, pits, factories, on board the ships, etc., before world-wide working class solidarity can arise. An example of workers solidarity in the class struggle is of greater importance than a thousand lectures.

It matters little, therefore, whether the 'strike in Notts broke before the strike in Midlothian was settled'. What really matters is the fact that the solidarity action of Notts miners became rapidly more solidarity. Cordorvan struck and was followed by other 'unofficial' strikes in different parts of the country. True, these fellow-workers returned – but unbroken – to the pits and factories again. Clarity of class ideology, however, cannot be achieved by one 'lightning stroke'. Needless to say, the notorious back-stabbers, the politically-minded professionals and their would-be successors in working class betrayal were ready to hand. They and their press, losing ground, howled at the miners.

Even the miners' own paper, *The Militant Scottish Miner*, October 1943, has been doing its bit to confuse the miners politically. Under the editorial heading 'The Need for Political Action', we read:

'The working class cannot achieve a solution to its problems by industrial action alone, necessary as that action is.

'The political party representing the organised working class is the Labour Party . . .

'We must demand a General Election and campaign for the return of a third labour Government.'

Nothing learnt and nothing forgotten. The editorial writer misrepresents the workers completely by holding out hope for a 'success' under Capitalism by distracting their attention from acute problems of the present and directing their attention to reactionary perspectives. Instead of explaining the situation and encouraging the readers, the same writer is playing – despite the historical lessons of a century – the old gramophone record, which runs that mass action of the workers must be 'advised' and controlled by party politicians. This nonsensical talk about 'industrial action' is utterly confusing because every mass-action in the industrial sphere is, in its effect, political. The radical phrases used, however, serve as a cloak for his reformist swindle.

To ask the leaders of the Labour Party and TU movement 'to break with their class-collaborationist policy' has precisely the same effect as an appeal to lions to become vegetarians.

The same scribe wishes to make a deal with the same parties in order to sustain and save it. This is the 'education' which the party 'educated' editorial writer of *The Militant Scottish Miner* offers its readers. Needless to say, this kind of education, as well as its breeding ground, must be stamped out entirely. Class solidarity and class actions can arise not with, but only against, groups and party interests. The workers themselves – freed from the ties of the Capitalistic labour movement – must control their own actions and organisations.

Since parties and Trade Unions can serve only Capitalistic functions, an entirely new working class movement is imperative. The action of Notts miners is a step along this track, though, the first step only. We can learn the possibilities of the future, if we grasp the potentialities of today. The 'unofficial' strike is a weapon of the working class. All that hinders the revolutionary re-organisation of the working class, must be thrown aside. This must be done now, because time does not wait.

The struggle against the Capitalistic labour leader ideology, the struggle against the treacherous party practices, must be waged vigorously if the victory of the working class shall arise.

(May 1944)

- I Icarus: pseudonym of Ernst Schneider, a merchant seaman active in the naval mutinies at the start of the 1918 German Revolution. A member of the German left communist movement, he came to Britain in the 1930s after the Nazi take-over.

