

Class War on the Home Front

**Comprising articles from the pages of Solidarity, the paper of the
Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, and commentaries by Wildcat.**

Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation

Contents

A Brief History of the APCF	5
Part One: Principles and Tactics	7
Introduction	8
APCF Aims	13
Principles and Tactics of the A.P.C.F.	14
Anarcho-Marxism	14
(I) The Problem: Decadent Capitalism	14
(II) Fascism	14
(III) Imperialist War	15
Conscription	15
(I) The Solution: Libertarian Socialism	15
(II) The Class State (Government)	16
(III) Nationalism	16
(IV) Religion and Superstition	16
Tactics Towards the Socialist Goal	17
(I) Co-operation	17
(II) Trade Unionism	17
(III) Industrial Unionism	17
(IV) Socialist Industrial Unionism	17
(V) DIRECT ACTION	18
(VI) INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD	18
Parliamentarism	18
(I) Anti-Parliamentarism	18
(II) Parliament as a “Shield”	19
(III) As a “Sounding Board”	19
Towards Workers’ Soviets: <i>What We Advocate</i>	19
(I) The “Day to Day Struggle”	19
(II) The Transition Stage	20
(III) Our Revolutionary Bigots	20
(IV) The Revolutionary Vanguard	21
(V) Workers’ Revolutionary Alliance	21
Dictatorship	22

To Anti-Parliamentarians	24
The People’s Convention	26
Workers v the State	29
Part Two: The Civil War in Spain	32
Introduction	33
An Armistice?	36
“The Friends of Durruti Accuse”	38
Two Chances Lost	38
The People Responsible	39
The Lessons	40
Part Three: The Second World War	41
<i>Introduction</i>	42
Resist War	46
John McGovern and War (extracts)	47
The Second Front	49
20 Year Pact	51
Freedom of the Press and the Daily Worker	52
Socialists and the War	53
While Workers Die	56
The Historic Consequences of the War.	57
India	59
Looting at Luton.	60
The Royal Sacrifice	61
Gandhi’s Pacifism Debunked	62
Axis Workers Show Way	63

Events & Trends	65
War and Fascism	68
The Turning Tide	69
Part Four: Party and Class	71
Introduction	72
Leadership	75
The Party and the Working Class	77
<i>Comment by the APCF</i>	80
The Party and the Working Class	81
Our Reply	84
The Party and the Working Class	86
Do the Workers Need a Party?	90
For Workers' Councils.	94
Minimum Agreed	94
Act Now	95
Where We Stand.	96
Afterword	97

A Brief History of the APCF

When the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF) was formed in 1921 it was hardly the most auspicious moment to launch a new revolutionary organisation. The defeat of the Italian factory occupation movement in September 1920, the introduction of the New Economic Policy in Russia, and the failure of the 1921 March Action in Germany, were all regarded at the time as signs that the post-war revolutionary wave had begun to ebb. In Britain, unemployment leapt from 1.5% in the autumn of 1920 to 18% by the end of 1921, providing ideal conditions for an “employers offensive”: militant shopfloor activists were sacked, and there was a general attack on wages, hours, and working conditions. The miners, in 1921, and the engineers, in 1922, both fought three-months-long struggles to resist attacks on their living standards, but both of these previously most-combative sections of the working class were defeated. At the same time, the state arrested and imprisoned over 100 revolutionaries of one persuasion or another (including Sylvia Pankhurst, Guy Aldred and John MacLean) on various charges of sedition.

Despite this, the APCF was not a stillborn organisation. Formed at the end of one World War, it enjoyed a vigorous if turbulent existence until the end of the next) and deserves to be regarded as just as important a part of our communist heritage as many better-known parties or individuals. Some of the theoretical influences which helped to shape the APCF’s ideas, and the activities and politics of the group during the period of the civil war in Spain and the Second World War, are discussed in detail in the Introductions which precede each of the four sections of this pamphlet. In this part we will concentrate on giving a brief outline of the APCF’s history in the period prior to that covered by the rest of the pamphlet.

The main strength of the APCF was always on Clydeside, where it united two previously distinct revolutionary currents: the Glasgow Anarchist Group, which had emerged following the break-up of the Socialist League in the mid-1890s, and the Glasgow Communist Group, which had been formed at the beginning of 1913 after Guy Aldred’s first visit to the city on a speaking tour. These two groups joined forces under the Anarchist label at the end of 1916. In May 1920 they renamed themselves the Glasgow Communist Group to express their affinity with the Bolshevik revolution and their desire for unity between communists in Britain. The Glasgow Communist Group in turn became the Central Group of the APCF when it was formed the following year.

From 1923–1929 the APCF published the monthly journal, *Commune*, supplemented on occasions (such as the 1926 General Strike) by a *Special Anti-Parliamentary Communist Gazette*. These journals expressed opposition to parliamentary social democracy (that is, in Britain, the Labour Party) and reformist trade unionism, and stressed the need for self-organised working-class activity, direct action, and the formation of workers councils or soviets at moments of revolutionary crisis.

In 1927 the APCF made renewed contact with the remnants of the Leftor Council communists in Germany and Holland, but the British group, as well as being federalist in its outlook, was never keen to precipitate events by developing these links in any serious, organised form.

In the early 1930s there was a split in the APCF when Guy Aldred and his followers broke away. Aldred had been strongly impressed by the 'Free Speech' struggle on Glasgow Green in the early thirties, when the APCF, Independent Labour Party, Scottish Workers' Republican Party and others had joined in a successful fight for the right to hold open-air public meetings on the Green without permits from the authorities. From the Free Speech Committee there emerged the Glasgow workers Council of Action, which sought to unite, for revolutionary action, the entire working class through the medium of its various organisations (trade unions, political parties, unemployed group etc.). Aldred promoted the Council of Action idea in his paper, the Council (1931–1933). Other APCF members, such as William McGurn of the Paisley groups were sceptical about it, arguing that in the absence of a revolutionary situation the Council of Action would either end – as a purely propagandist group or else be sucked into agitation for partial reformist demands.

Aldred, however, fired with enthusiasm for socialist unity (which his mind was made even more urgent by the rise of fascism on the continent of Europe), continued to advocate the Council of Action. In his Socialist May Special (1934) he announced a departure from the anti-parliamentarian position: not all anti-parliamentarians were socialists (since the fascists were also opposed to parliamentary democracy) and not all socialists were anti-parliamentarians (the ranks of the parliamentary social democrats might well contain genuine socialists). After a short spell in the Independent Labour Party Aldred and his supporters formed the United Socialist Movement in 1934 which, publishing the Word from 1938 onwards, survived into the 1960s.

Although Guy Aldred claimed, somewhat egotistically, that the APCF had "ceased to be a virile organisation" after he had left it, this is not true. For example, in 1935 the group published two pamphlets: *The Bourgeois Role of Bolshevism* (originally written by the Group International Communists in Holland), and two texts by Rosa Luxemburg which the APCF titled *Leninism or Marxism*. Both of these were reprinted from the council communist journal *International Council Correspondence*, which was edited in Chicago by Paul Mattick. This marked the start of several years of intermittent debate between the APCF and the United States group, some of the fruits of which are included in the final section of this pamphlet, on *PARTY AND CLASS*. In 1938 the APCF began publication of the paper *Solidarity*, which continued to appear throughout the war. With one exception, all the texts in this collection are taken from *Solidarity*, and thus date from the years after Aldred had left the APCF. As readers will be able to judge for themselves, the immense contribution which these texts made to the communist movement in Britain is a further refutation of Aldred's claim concerning the APCF's lack of "virility".

Part One: Principles and Tactics

Introduction

The first text in this section, APCF Aims, was published in 1935, and thus predates the first issue of the journal *Solidarity* by 3 years¹. Nevertheless it is a good summary of the political outlook of the APCF throughout World War II. The main points in APCF Aims are that the APCF opposes both parliamentarism and trade unionism, and that it does so within the framework of an analysis of the “permanent crisis of capitalism”. This in itself is enough to place the APCF firmly within the tradition of council communism

The ideas of council communism were developed by the left wing of the Dutch and German communist movements, before, during and after the First World War². Their most well known exponent was Anton Pannekoek (1873–1960). The impetus for council communism came from the need to explain the betrayal of the working class by its parliamentary and trade union leaders, during the First World War and the post-war revolutionary wave, as well as the defeat of the revolutionary wave itself. According to council communism³, the parliamentary party and the trade unions were forms of organisation which could only be used by the working class during the period of capitalist ascendancy in the second half of the 19th century. They were the natural forms of working class organisation during this period, when the stability of capitalism made revolution impossible, but workers could win many improvements in their living and working conditions by struggling within capitalism. The outbreak of the First World War showed that this period was over, and capitalism had entered into its decadent phase. Henceforth workers could gain nothing by struggling within capitalism. On the contrary, so long as capitalism survived, workers only prospect was increasing poverty, unemployment, and death in inter-imperialist war. Revolution was on the historical agenda, and with it a return to the earlier working class tradition of insurrectionary struggle. This was proved by the Russian revolution, during which the working class also developed the new form of organisation by which it seizes power and transforms society: the workers councils, or soviets.

According to the council communists, it is futile to expect parliamentary and trade union leaders to ever be won over to the cause of revolution. They have a vested interest in defending their own organisations which are now part of the capitalist state. These organisations, parliamentary parties and trade unions, as well as their reactionary leaders, will have to be destroyed during

¹ The APCF Aims appeared in *The Bourgeois Role Of Bolshevism and Leninism Or Marxism*, two pamphlets published by the APCF in 1935.

² Apart from the APCF, in Britain left or council communism was also represented by Sylvia Pankhurst’s *Workers Socialist Federation*, which evolved in a similar direction to Dutch and German left communism before disappearing in 1924. See *Communism And Its Tactics*, by Sylvia Pankhurst, available from Wildcat.

³ The APCF’s ideas were closest to those of Pannekoek in his earlier works. See for example *World Revolution and Communist Tactics* (1920) in Pannekoek and Gorter’s *Marxism*, ed. DA Smart, Pluto Press, London, 1978–ages 93–148. This text is also in *Pannekoek and the Workers Councils*, by Serge Bricianer, Telos Press, Saint Louis, 1978, pages 175–210. However there was never an orthodox council communism. Pannekoek’s ideas, and those of other council communists, notably Paul Mattick, developed and changed over the years. See for example *Bricianer, op cit and Anti-Bolshevik Communism* by Paul Mattick, Merlin Press, London, 1978.

the revolution along with the rest of the state apparatus. The failure of the revolutionary wave was explained by the failure of the working class to free itself from these outmoded traditions of parliamentarism and trade unionism. The primary task of revolutionaries is to combat influence of these traditions within the working class. Hence council communists reject any form of participation either in parliament or trade unions.

Council communism developed the ideas of pre-war left-wing marxists notably Rosa Luxemburg. Council communists always consider themselves to be marxists. Thus the introduction to the longest article in this section, the Principles And Tactics of The APCF, which presents the ideas of the APCF as “Anarcho-Marxism”, is rather misleading.

As noted in our BRIEF HISTORY OF THE APCF, the organisation arose of a fusion of the Glasgow Anarchist and Communist Groups during First World War. At the time of the Russian revolution, many people considered that the Bolsheviks represented a fusion of Anarchism Marxism. After all, hadn't Lenin's State and Revolution adopted anarchist slogan of smashing the state in opposition to marxist orthodoxy at the time? In fact, this slogan has its origins in Marx just as much as in Anarchism. The vacillating attitude of the marxist movement towards the state is briefly discussed in two articles in t section: “The Peoples Convention” and “Workers Vs the State”. But any case, anarchists were among the most enthusiastic supporters of Bolsheviks during the first months of the revolution. It was express solidarity with the Bolsheviks that the Glasgow Anarchist Group renamed itself the Glasgow Communist Group in 1920.

Anarchists were soon disillusioned by the development of events in Russia. The left communists in Europe, from whom the council communists were to emerge⁴, also confidently expected support from Lenin and the Bolsheviks in their struggle against the treacherous social-democratic leadership, and of course also against social democratic ideas and traditions. They too were quickly disappointed Lenin's “Left Wing” Communism, An Infantile Disorder, Published in 1920, rejected the arguments of the left communists in favour collaboration with the social democrats in order to “keep in touch with the masses”

The largest left communist organisation, the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD), was expelled from the Communist International in 1921. Although the Glasgow Communist Group was not part of the mainstream of European left communism, they went through the same process of disillusionment with Bolshevism. In 1921 they formed the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation as a direct challenge to the Communist Party of Great Britain, which had been set up in 1920 along the lines advocated by Lenin (participation in elections and Parliament and affiliation to the Labour Party).

However, in their struggle against Bolshevism, the council communists also set themselves apart from anarchism. Anarchists saw the failure of the revolution as being the logical result of the authoritarianism and statism inherent to Marxism. The council communists, on the other hand, blamed the failure of the marxist movement and the working class as a whole to adapt to the new conditions of decadent capitalism — while seeing themselves as the true inheritors of the best, revolutionary traditions of Marxism. All council communists, including the APCF,

⁴ It might be helpful to explain at this point that, historically, council communism developed out of left communism. The left communists had originally supported the Bolsheviks, but argued that the methods of the Russian revolution would be inappropriate in Western Europe. The disagreements between the left communists and the Bolsheviks were thus seen initially as tactical ones, as the term left communist suggests. Later, when they no longer regarded the Bolsheviks as communists, the left communists ceased to so readily define their politics as a tactical variant of Bolshevism. and became known instead as council communists.

accepted the need for some kind of transitional workers state immediately after the revolution, although in a very different sense from that understood by the Bolsheviks. Above all, council communists distinguished themselves from anarchists by basing their analysis on marxist historical materialism, which sees economic development as the motive force behind social change, and class struggle as the means by which these changes are brought about.

In the text, *Principles And Tactics Of The APCF*, written after the withdrawal of most of the anarchists from the organisation (see the Introduction to the section on *THE CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN*), the line of argument is essentially a marxist one. This text is the APCF's distinctive restatement of the basic ideas of council communism. It was first published in *Solidarity* number 12/13 in June-July 1939⁵, and reprinted in one of the very last issues of the paper to appear, in 1944. This is a testimony to the theoretical consistency maintained by the core of the APCF during this period, despite the wide range of political views held by the various contributors to the paper.

One of the best features of this text is the very clear and simple way the arguments are presented. This is particularly the case in the final sections, from *Towards Workers Soviets* to the end. The APCF envisages communism growing out of the defensive struggles of the working class. A 'defensive workers state' will be necessary during the "transition stage" after the revolution.

The "revolutionary vanguard" will inevitably consist of a number of different parties, who should co-operate with each other, while aiming ultimately at their "complete liquidation into workers soviets".

In the earlier sections of the text, the APCF is much less clear than the German and Dutch council communists in tracing the obsolescence of parliament and the trade unions back to its origins in the conditions of class struggle under 'decadent capitalism'. The reason for this can be found in the history of British Socialism. Due to the prosperity of 19th century British capitalism, there was no strong marxist social democratic movement of the type exemplified by the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) — i.e. based on parliament and the trade unions, while claiming to be revolutionary. The only such organisation in Britain, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) never grew beyond a few thousand members. In Britain, therefore, the vast majority of working class representatives in the trade unions and parliament were openly opposed to revolution. There arose, therefore, at a much earlier stage, a small marxist movement rejecting both parliament and the trade unions whose best known spokesman was William Morris. British anti-parliamentarians did not have to justify their break with the entire pre-war marxist tradition, as did the German and Dutch council communists. On the contrary, they could see themselves as a continuation of the pre-war anti-parliamentary tradition. This is explained in the first paragraph of the article *To Anti-parliamentarians*, which goes on to argue why in "the present period of capitalist decline" the name council communist is more appropriate. Despite this, the APCF continued to draw most of its anti-parliament arguments from the pre-war movement. Indeed, the dual influence of European council communism and British anti-parliamentarism largely accounts for the distinctive character of the group.

While the APCF were opposed on principle to "the trickery, insincerity and futility of the bourgeois anti-democratic parliament", the council communists such as Pannekoek argued that parliamentary struggles were necessary part of the working class movement under "ascend capitalism", when the working class "is not yet capable of create organs which would enable it to

⁵ Issues of *Solidarity* were numbered as if they appeared every month. Double issues covered two months.

control and order society... may change when the struggle of the proletariat enters a revolution phase... As soon as the masses start to intervene, act and t decisions on their own behalf, the disadvantages of parliament struggle become overwhelming⁶.

The difference between these two approaches accounts for one of most important weaknesses of the British anti-parliamentary tradition. In Britain anti-parliamentarism has generally associated with a withdrawal from current political life altogether this has taken a number of forms. Syndicalists concluded that problem with parliament is that politics itself is reactionary. ~ simply advocated an escalation of the existing purely economic struggles waged by workers in the trade unions, failing to see that unions themselves should be the object of the same kind of radical critique they had made of parliament. Other tendencies, known collectively as Impossibilists more logically withdrew participation in any day-to-day activity, in favour of educational propaganda work.

Socialist Industrial Unionism, mildly criticised in the Principles And Tactics text, was the movement of followers of the Amen socialist, Daniel DeLeon, organised in the Socialist Labour Parties of Britain and America. The SLP advocated seizure of power by the won class organised in revolutionary industrial unions, which were come into being as a result of the propaganda work of the SLP. Until then they opposed not only the existing trade unions but also all to-day class struggle. In the September 1944 issue of Solidarity, example, there is a debate with a Scottish supporter of DeLeon argues that all strikes are... reactionary.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain belongs to the Impossibilist tradition. Then as now, they advocated the election of socialist MPs, who will however abstain from parliamentary action until the time when socialism is brought about by the election of socialist majority, as a result of SPGB propaganda. The SPGB rejects day-to-day class struggle along with the trade unions as being irrelevant to the struggle for socialism. Paradoxically this allows the SPGB to adopt a quite uncritical attitude towards unions, which it considers make a good job of defending workers immediate interests, until such time as a majority of them convinced of the need for socialism.

What all these tendencies had in common was an inability to understand the links between economic and political struggles, and between workers struggles today and the future struggle for socialism.

The council communists saw socialism coming through the culmination of a process in which the existing day-to-day economic struggles are transformed into a political, revolutionary struggle. They were therefore much more aware of the active counter-revolutionary role played by parliament and the unions — this role being precisely to maintain the artificial separation between political and economic issues, and thereby prevent this process of transformation from taking place.

British Impossibilists dismissed parliament and the trade unions as irrelevant — since in the end everything was irrelevant except their own propaganda. The council communists, with their ideas firmly rooted in working class experience, were able to see that parliament and the trade unions were anything but irrelevant. It was the duty of revolutionaries to attack and expose them.

On this question, the APCF, basing its ideas on council communism, was far in advance of other British organisations which attempted to oppose the Labour Party and Communist Party

⁶ From: World Revolution and Communist Tactics.

from a revolutionary standpoint (with the exception of Sylvia Pankhurst's short-lived Workers Socialist Federation).

The APCF advocated independent working class action, organised by the workers themselves, in opposition to the trade unions. However their enthusiastic support for workers struggles sometimes led them to take an uncritical attitude towards radical trade unionism, especially towards the end of the war. In 1943 Solidarity supported the attempted revival of the Clyde Workers Committee, on the basis of a programme which amounted to a call to radicalise the existing trade unions.

Criticism of the CWC was limited to the comment that "We hope, however, that unlike its predecessor in the last war, it will not only fight a rearguard action against capitalism and war but will ultimately pass to the attack and participate in the final victory of the working class" (Solidarity number 61/62, June-July 1943).

In 1944, members of the Workers Revolutionary League, as the APCF was by then called (see the Introduction to the section on THE SECOND WORLD WAR), participated at the first conference of the Scottish Workers Congress Movement, a radical trade union movement which put forward a programme for the revitalisation of Scottish industry under "democratic workers control".

These examples reflect the more diverse political views which began to appear in Solidarity as a result of the WRL's participation in the Workers Open Forum⁷.

⁷ The Workers Open Forum was established in Glasgow in October 1942 to organise regular exchange of views between all bona fide revolutionary organisations. The WOF's slogans were: A Workers Council for eliminating error. All parties invited. Let the Truth prevail! Towards the end of the Second World War the activity which the APCF/WRL carried out independently in its own name was steadily reduced in favour of increasing participation in the Open Forum. The WRL and Solidarity thus both seem to have disappeared at the end of the war; the Workers Open Forum continued to be held in Glasgow well into the 1950s.

APCF Aims

The Capitalistic complex of the working class movement with its multifarious Social-democratic prejudices hindering rather than developing the initiative of the masses in the struggle for Communism exposes the need for a working class party free from self-seeking and desire for office under Capitalism. Parliamentarism leads to revisionism and betrayal, and must be expunged from the programme of the revolutionary working class movement. To this end the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation describes the function of a sincere and intelligent revolutionary organisation in that it:-

1. Stands for the revolutionary overthrow of the Capitalist system of exploitation, and privilege, and advocates in its stead the Workers' Industrial Republic.
2. Preaches the class war, recognising that the present struggle between the classes can only be solved permanently in the triumph of the working class.
3. Advocates the overthrow of the present parliamentary system of government and urges the boycotting of the ballot box as the initial challenge of the workers in the fight for economic power.
4. Declares that the permanent crisis of Capitalism has rendered obsolete the official trade union and industrial union movements but recognising the inevitability of struggle, urges the General Strike as the only effective method of industrial action.
5. Holds that unemployment is a chronic and expanding feature of Capitalist conditions and constitutes a real menace to Capitalism; therefore urges collaboration of employed and unemployed in the fight for emancipation, and supports all demands that further the class struggle.

(1935)

Principles and Tactics of the A.P.C.F.

Anarcho-Marxism

The Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation is an Anarcho-Marxian organisation holding none of the prejudices which orthodox “Anarchists” and “Marxists” harbour towards each other. In its mission — to aid the workers to overthrow Capitalism and its watchdog the State — it draws its inspiration from Anarchists and Marxists alike. It admires and would emulate the ardour, courage and initiative suggested by names like Bakunin, Malatesta, Durutti — the brilliance and perseverance associated with Marx. On the other hand, it equally condemns irresponsibility — common to many “Anarchists’ — and arrogance and intolerance common to so many “Marxists”. Without prejudice but also without hero worship, we would synthesise from the best in the way of analysis, precept and practice, to which so many worthy pioneers and martyrs — Marxist and Anarchist included — have contributed their all. Our final aim is “the Abolition of the Wages System”; the end of all exploitative and authoritative society. With the inauguration of the Socialist Commonwealth with universal peace and plenty, there will ensue practically a Utopia on Earth, and the absence of all government of man by man.

(I) The Problem: Decadent Capitalism

Capitalism, whether Private, Industrial, Financial, or State (or any combination of these) is the cause of poverty, disease, and pre-mature death for millions, with riches, indolence, extravagance and debauchery on the part of the privileged few. Divorced from the means of production, the workers are compelled to accept wage slavery. They must yield the entire product of their labour and accept in return a pittance corresponding, not to its value, but to an average subsistence wage.

The workers therefore have nothing in common with their exploiters. The class struggle — forced upon them — must continue until by the act of Social Revolution the workers make an end of all class society by abolishing the wages system once and for all.

(II) Fascism

Fascism is but the last resource of degenerate Capitalism, wherein the outright violence, previously reserved mainly for the natives in colonies, “protectorates”, etc, is practised on the home proletariat.

It receives a mass basis by recruiting the middle strata into anti-working class armies.

The so-called democratic countries, like Britain, France and the USA, all use fascist measures in their empire outposts. And now, under cover of the war danger, are perfecting a technique which, at the first real crisis, can parallel in its repression anything done in the Fascist countries. During the last war, the “treat-em-rough” measures used against the ~ pacifists and socialists,

were fascist in all but name. Fascism must be opposed and exposed, but its parent, Capitalism, is the real enemy to be destroyed

(III) Imperialist War

War is an atrocious evil, but like Fascism, is a consequence of Capitalism the murder, disease and horror of war are paralleled. On the industrial battlefield where the unnecessary diseases of industry, high accident rate and premature death is the corollary of the scramble for profits Improvements have taken place, it is true, but only because of mass pressure, or because it was found to be “bad business to kill the geese that lay the golden eggs — the workers

War has its roots in Capitalism, and the difference between aggression and defence is the difference between the burglar with the swag (Empire, etc) and the thief or “hijacker” out to relieve him of some of the booty. The Versailles Treaty was equal in its vindictive and brutal extortion of the helpless German people, to any action of their vile militarists. And the callous blockade of Austria and Germany, etc, carried out for months during the “armistice” period illustrates the mentality of the Capitalist “Statesmen” when they are drunk with power. Assisted by the vacillations of the “socialists”, they thus paved the way for Hitler and helped to create the Frankenstein monster of Fascism. Though a potential danger to themselves, they have subsidised and fed it — to keep the workers of Europe from successfully raising the standard of revolt. Now, in order to defend the last remnants of their iniquitous “peace”, they expect their docile “hands” to become even more obedient “cannon fodder”. The Pygmalion retort is the only fitting rejoinder to this insolent demand.

Conscription

Our rulers in their hatred and fear of Russia (which, though not a Socialist Republic, is still too anti-capitalist to suit high finance) deliberately betrayed their Czech allies. Fearful of a Socialist Italy or Germany, they have repeatedly propped up Hitler and Mussolini.

Finally, they callously abetted the assassination of Republican Spain to prevent its development along Revolutionary Socialist lines. Now, their Axis rivals immeasurably stronger as a result of their own policy, they Conscript the men of 20–21 to fill the gaps in their balance of forces. And the labour movement took this last insult lying down.’ The young men should have been encouraged to boycott the register. The entire labour movement should have backed them up with a general protest strike — however short — to indicate the taking up of the insolent challenge to the workers. The crisis is theirs and they should have been left to face it. The business of a real labour movement is to destroy Capitalism and Imperialism: not to fight for it — or to make others do the fighting.

(I) The Solution: Libertarian Socialism

Since “all else is Illusion”, a Workers’ Socialist Industrial Republic is the only hope of the proletariat. The means of wealth production and exchange, once under the control of the workers, we can have virtually a millennium on Earth. Just consider the immense untapped reservoirs for the production of almost unlimited supplies of every imaginable form of useful wealth. Think

of the scores of millions of unemployed, not forgetting the useless drones at the top of the social ladder. Estimate also the millions of officials, attendants, whose potentially valuable time is wasted under this system. Consider the wealth that could be created by the huge army of needless advertising agents, commercial travellers, club-men, shop-walkers, etc, not to mention the colossal army of police, lawyers, judges, clerks, who are ONLY “NECESSARY” UNDER CAPITALISM: Add now the scandalous waste of labour involved in the military machine: soldiers, airmen, navymen, officers, generals, admirals, etc. Add, also, the terrific consumption of energy in the manufacture of armaments of all kinds that is weighing down the productive machine. Properly used, these boundless supplies of potential wealth-creating energy could ensure ample for all — not excluding “luxuries” — together with a ridiculously short working day. Likewise, there would be pleasant conditions of labour, and recreation and holidays on a scale now only enjoyed by the rich.’

(II) The Class State (Government)

The State — engine of class rule — is used by the Capitalist Class to keep the workers in subjection. The Chattel System and Feudalism also required the oppressive State. But Socialism, being a classless form of society wherein no one is exploited, requires no government of man by man, and the State can disappear for ever into the limbo of the dead past.

(III) Nationalism

With the reorganisation of society on the basis of useful production, and the disappearance of the State, National and Colour fears, prejudices and hatreds will quickly disappear, many of them having been wiped out prior to the Revolution. The ever-increasing annihilation of Space, by means of radio, television, ‘plane, and the all round quickening and extension of means of inter-communication will spread the healing balm of education, sport, science, and culture to every corner of the globe. International collaboration and co-ordination will destroy the remaining legacies consequent on decades of capitalist competition and war. Industrial “parliaments of the world” will wipe out all such evils quite naturally without the aid of any special pleading such as is indulged in today by religious and other quacks.

(IV) Religion and Superstition

(IV) Fast on the heels of racial and national prejudices and fears, will follow the religious and other superstitions that have hitherto cursed and beclouded the mind of man. Economic and social justice obtaining here on earth, there will no longer be any excuse for the illusory substitute, “pie in the sky”. Not in all the realms of fantasy, but on the bedrock of economic interest and mutual aid and usefulness, will be based the new social order to which have aspired however limited their vision — all the most far-seeing, courageous and “inspired” men of every age and clime. The ideal “do to others as you would have them do to you” — the basic moral appeal of all religions — will at last be realisable, not because mankind will suddenly become saints, but because they are no longer compelled by economic circumstance, to be “sinners”. At last will be possible — because practicable — the precept “from each according to his ability; to each according to his need”, and “Each for all and all for each”:

Tactics Towards the Socialist Goal

Before outlining our view of the tactics to be used to achieve the goal of Socialism, let us first examine several of the alternatives propounded by others, to expose their basic weaknesses.

(I) Co-operation

The fundamental flaw in all Co-operative schemes is that the CONSUMER — who is often but a parasite — and not the PRODUCER, is catered for. This can be seen at a glance by referring to Co-operative advertising. Products are eulogised that few workers can afford to buy — like the magnificent electric appliances displayed in the Municipal show-windows. Again, Co-operative institutions all pay tribute to the Capitalist State, the landlords and the financial sharks. They operate on the wages system and their workers, like the rest of the proletariat, are exploited at the point of production. The Co-op bureaucrats are often as ruthless and exacting as private employers, hence the apparently contradictory fact that workers are compelled to go on strike to enforce even reformist demands against the same economic overlordship that typifies Capitalism in general

(II) Trade Unionism

Labour-power being a commodity under Capitalism, the worker must try to get the best price (wages) he can. He cannot fight the boss alone, hence the formation of Trade Unions in a feeble attempt to parry the blows of Capitalism. But the unions were formed on a craft basis and only around the commodity — not the Class — struggle. With the development of trustified Capitalism, Trade Unionism is now lacking Sensing their inability to successfully challenge Capitalism — except by risking their all — the leaders have one over to class-collaboration and have “dug themselves in” for the duration of the system. They are now only concerned with maintaining their own status and are not interested in the class struggle. To them the word Socialism is only a platitude.

(III) Industrial Unionism

Many workers, sickened and in disgust at their trade union mis-leaders, are seeking in Industrial Unionism, a new weapon of struggle. It must be stressed, however, that Industrial Unionism can also be purely reformist — like the NUR here and the much-boosted CIO in America. These accept in practice — though they may qualify this acceptance in their dead letter preambles — the system of Capitalism. Noisy John L. Lewis goes out of his way to accept the system of production for a “fair” profit. Again, how can Industrial Unionism grapple with the armament or the luxury industries from a class struggle standpoint?

(IV) Socialist Industrial Unionism

Realising the force of the above criticisms we now have the advocacy of SOCIALIST Industrial Unionism. But the power of the Capitalist propaganda press, pulpit, etc makes the growth of such unions on a practicable scale impossible until we arrive at a period of deep economic crisis such as 1926, when the workers become drawn into the struggle in spite of themselves. While

the advocacy of Socialist Industrial Unionism does no harm, the practical realisation of even an approximation of this laudable objective will not take place until the eve of Revolution. Even then, the form will probably be the Workers' Councils of Action or Strike Committees embracing also the Unemployed workers.

(V) DIRECT ACTION

Much has been advocated from time to time in the way of Direct Action, but like Industrial Unionism, it is usually — though a step in the right direction — mainly reformist. Direct Action is useful practice for the proletariat, and tests the calibre of delegates, etc. But we must make it clear that revolutionary Direct Action is the ultimate objective, if we are to cease chasing the tail of Reformism.

(VI) INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

We have also much in common with our comrades of the Industrial Workers of the World. They often meet gangster Capitalism with its own weapons. This is understandable and justifiable. But the real object should not be mere reforms by destructive methods. When the commodity struggle is superseded by the class struggle for the destruction, not of wealth, but the power of the rulers, then "ca' canny1", sabotage, etc, will no longer be necessary. Under Socialism we must produce as much, not as little, as possible, for the product will return to the workers.

The danger, in attempting to set up large organisations this side of the Revolution, is that Reform replaces Socialist objectives, the quantitative supplants the qualitative.

Parliamentarism

(I) Anti-Parliamentarism

We are anti-Parliamentarian, because parliamentarism is anti-working class and anti-Socialist. The worker, who sees beyond economic reformism, should likewise dismiss the trickery, insincerity and futility of the bourgeois antidemocratic parliament.

It should be noted in passing, that all parliamentary measures that have ever conceded anything to the workers, were the result of outside pressure, demonstrational, insurrectional or industrial. Our rulers concede when they are compelled to. Sops are thrown to quieten the awakening giant of Labour — to lull him back to sleep.

The SPGB claim that Parliament is not a gas house, but a Power House.

This is a half-truth that results in a delusion. Even for Capitalist purposes, Parliament is more and more being "consulted" after the event; when irretraceable steps have been taken by our own particular type of Fuhrer in conjunction, of course, with the financial powers behind the scenes. But the main point to recognise is that the State draws its sustenance from taxation, that is, from the ruling class. Is it conceivable, then, that these people — as an entire class — would finance a genuinely revolutionary parliament, elected expressly to dispossess them? Surely Franco supplies the answer to such a childish notion?

Out of the profits wrung from the workers, the ruling class finances the Army, Navy, Air Force, Civil Service, etc. If a revolutionary electorate after overcoming the handicap of a corrupt press,

controlled wireless, pulpit propaganda, plural voting, etc, elected a Socialist (not a reformist) majority, our Winston Churchills, supported by our British Noskes and Kerenskys, would find a method to declare such a majority “unconstitutional”. Behind a suitable puppet, there would be instituted a Plutocratic dictatorship operating via Orders in Council, EPA, etc.

We do not say they would succeed in their plan to smash the workers; they would fail. But they will only fail in proportion as the workers learn in time that they can rely only on their own industrial and social strength outside of parliament — in the street, factory, workshop, mine, railway, etc. And when the workers send out the call as a class and not as a section — they will be supported in every barrack and every military establishment.

(II) Parliament as a “Shield”

Many socialists agree that Socialism can never be achieved via parliament, but argue, like the SLP, that the Political weapon can be used as a shield to protect the rising industrial organisation necessary for the inauguration of Socialism. This seems strange logic. How can the non-substantial “weapon” protect the real — the only powerful weapon of direct industrial, etc, action? And are the Capitalists so easily hoodwinked? If our final weapon is extra-parliamentary, let us use ALL our resources of propaganda developing it, and not fritter time and substance on shadows.

(III) As a “Sounding Board”

It is also alleged that parliament can be used as a revolutionary sounding board. Leaving aside the fact that parliament tends to act as a lightning arrester, and that few genuine revolutionaries could stomach the necessary preliminaries (such as oath-taking, kow-towing procedure, etc) if the speeches ARE revolutionary, who is going to report them? The Capitalist Press? Surely this is expecting too much. If you reply, the Socialist Press, then obviously that press can print propaganda and report speeches made in a better place — the street corner or the workshop gate. Instead of appealing to the “Executive committee” of the Capitalist class, our revolutionaries — they are all too few — are urgently needed at the points of contact with the workers, there to help generate the only force that will finally be of any use.

Towards Workers’ Soviets: *What We Advocate*

(I) The “Day to Day Struggle”

Although against mere reforms and excluding them from our own programme, we are willing to give the workers every assistance we can when they are in combat with the capitalist. Whatever their demands are, they are of necessity less than justice; in that sense the workers are always more than right, and should be supported without question.

Workers’ all-in Soviets or Councils of Action are the only democratic organs capable of facing up to the problems ahead. There the right of recall can operate and will prepare the way for the workers themselves to bring about their emancipation.

As the T.U bureaucrats more and more refuse to countenance even reformist strikes the workers are compelled to act unofficially. For aid in their need, they can turn only to such allies as

workers in the same plant or industry. Hence the weapons likely to be used are: (a) The industrial direct action strike; (b) The supporting Sympathetic Strike, fought, not for a long period on funds, but for a shorter period and on a bigger scale on SOLIDARITY; (c) The Stay-in Strike, as widespread and general as possible.

Even if repeatedly defeated, the permanent crisis of capitalism leaves the workers with no alternative. Sooner or later, by such training, they must pass to the ATTACK and destroy the coercive power of the ruling class. In another 1926, the issue must become a challenge for power. The workers, united as a class, can defeat Capitalism once and for all and form a Workers' Socialist Industrial Republic. Though our masters try to use sections (whether in uniform or not) against the mass, they can be defeated by universal solidarity. Those who attempt to force us back into submission will have to be met with the same argument, plus intensive anti-militarist anti-capitalist propaganda.

Once Capitalism is overthrown, these soviets, Councils, Syndicates, or Industrial Unions — the label does not matter much — allow the workers to control production on the job — the only real democracy. They will adapt themselves to the new requirements and must be thoroughly co-ordinated to prevent waste.

(II) The Transition Stage

Around the factories and workshops there must be set up Workers' Militias to defend the conquests of the people, until it is certain that no counter-revolution is possible. These Workers' Red Guards should be organised like the famous Durutti Columns, not on a militarist, but on a basis of strict voluntary discipline. In co-ordination, these will form, not a repressive ruling class state for oppression, but a purely defensive weapon to guarantee freedom from sabotage or pro-capitalist restorations. When the erstwhile rulers¹ now turned useful citizens, have definitely thrown up the sponge, then this defensive workers' State — if our Anarchist friends will excuse the term — will have no further function. It will WITHER AWAY as it ceases to be necessary', and its members return to useful employment Classless, Stateless, human society will have replaced all robbery, all government, all oppression. Mankind will be free.

(III) Our Revolutionary Bigots

Many good comrades, who believe essentially in the foregoing, are divided into competing, uncoordinated parties this is to be deplored. It comes partly out of the material interests that arise because we are subject to capitalist limitation, geographical, language, etc. It is also due to differences in principle. These differences, however, are often more imaginary than real; more of terminology and angle, rather than substance. Unconscious egotism also operates and leads to the obsession that unless they lead, the proletariat must of necessity go wrong! Just as there are hundreds of "religions" and several interpretations of Christianity, so do we have innumerable brands of Marxism and Anarchism. It would be amusing, if it were not tragic.' Consider, for instance, the numerous groups in America who believe they are the only genuine forerunners of the new Fourth International — the only true vanguard!

(IV) The Revolutionary Vanguard

We also believe we have the most correct position, but we are dialectical enough to salute other groups. Though in error on this point or that, we recognise that they are, on the whole, doing as much – or even more for Socialism as we are. Again, who is the infallible judge as to who is the most correct? What party can honestly say it has always and on ALL questions been right; that can guarantee in the future to be like-wise correct?

It is sheer Utopianism to imagine that any one party, however “correct”, will ever have in its ranks ALL the BEST elements in the working class. Apart from that Capitalism will not allow the time for even an approximation of that state of affairs.

(V) Workers’ Revolutionary Alliance

Instead of numerous competing bodies all playacting at being THE vanguard, let us realise we must pool our experience, abilities, and our resources in a Revolutionary Alliance. We can thus develop a greater POTENTIAL Vanguard that will be able to make the best use of the crisis when it comes.

We oppose the conception of a single party “leading” or dictating to the workers this way lies bureaucracy and dictatorship. Instead of struggling for supremacy, revolutionary parties should aim as far as possible at complete liquidation into the workers’ soviets, where they can advance their policies by courage, initiative and example. Practical, instead of abstract problems, will be on the order of the day, and the best solutions, irrespective of who advocates them, should be adopted without prejudice. We will find, in practice, that the Vanguard interpenetrates and overlaps all existing parties; and that workers, previously of no party at all, are able to contribute in a surprising degree and to overshadow many who were previously considered as indispensable and of the elite:

(June-July 1939)

Dictatorship

By James Kennedy

“Between capitalist society and communist society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding with this will be a period of political transition during which the State can be nothing other than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”

– Critique of the Gotha Programme

Marx made this declaration when he criticised the reactionary policy of the German Social Democratic Party, in 1875. To understand its significance it is necessary to take into consideration the economic and historical conditions prevailing in Germany at that time.

First of all, in Germany among ‘the working people’ there are more peasants than proletarians.

Bismarck, whose policy was to unify the separate German States (without proletarian revolution) made overtures to the SPD which could only lead to confusion and the consequent disruption of the movement. To escape this situation, it was necessary that the proletariat should overthrow its ruling class, and owing to the backwardness of the country concessions would require to be granted to the peasants inside and the capitalists outside; through the medium of proletarian dictatorship.

In Russia, Lenin did nothing more than call for the dictatorship of the proletariat where the peasants comprised the vast majority of the workers and the real force of the revolution. In the front line of the Revolution was “the proletariat grown upon the soil of great industry”, and struggling for the control of the means of production, whereas the demands of the peasants did not exceed land distribution. To yield concessions could only be of momentary significance, as “the class struggle is national not in respect of substance but in respect of form.” The tocsin for World Revolution, sounded by the Russian proletariat, failed to echo in Western Europe. The defeat of the proletariat in Germany in 1919 and 1923 was instrumental in abandoning the idea of World Revolution, and the Russian Dictatorship of the proletariat was supplanted by the Dictatorship of the Communist Party Bureaucracy.

The CPSU being the strongest section of the Communist International it was natural that the headquarters of the CI should be Moscow. The policy of the CI was concentrated in developing the internal and external interests of Russia, and parties were set up throughout the capitalist world for that purpose. Reactionary policies e.g. reformist and religious expedencies were instituted to win the masses in opposition to the Second International, and the slogan “all power to the Soviet Union, the Socialist Fatherland” came to the fore. The triumph of the Bolshevik Party in October 1917, seemed a safe pretext for all counter-revolutionary activities.

The CPSU played for time so as to maintain its bureaucratic hierarchy. With the collapse of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, financial, commercial and military pacts with foreign powers, peace in order to perfect its military machine, State exploitation of the workers, the execution

of the old Bolsheviks, have all been done in the name of the “Socialist Fatherland”. The policy of the CI in making national and international concessions to the capitalist class in defence of the USSR has brought about a reversion calculated to make Russia “the last stronghold of capitalist reaction” chiefly directed against the international Proletariat.

Lenin’s utopian idea of a “Workers’ State” is in essence State Capitalism. The NEP is capitalist economics, through and through. Wage labour is the basis of capitalism. Russian society is no exception — high or low wages have no bearing on the question. The productivity of labour increases out of all proportion to wages which means a relative decline in the value of labour-power and the abject pauperisation of the working class as a whole. To say that unemployment in Russia is non-existent is to reveal that industrial development has not reached that stage where the agrarian population has been completely absorbed in wage labour.

Wage labour gives rise to commodity production and capitalist relations, therefore, the control of the means of production and exchange in the hands of the state and not the proletariat. State Capitalism presupposes wage slavery, and a slavery that becomes more brutal in character as the productive forces of labour develops. The Russian proletariat is learning why failure followed the initial success of the Bolshevik Party. The CI in exploiting Bolshevik traditions to divert the proletariat from the International character of the revolution cannot always succeed. The impetus once set in motion will raise the Marxian slogan: Abolition of the wages system!

(March-April 1939)

To Anti-Parliamentarians

For many years the left communist groups have been spoken of as Anti-Parliamentarians due to their opposition to parliamentary activity. We, as a matter of fact, have the title A.P.C.F. During the reformist era of capitalism this title although long-winded was quite correct. It differentiated us from the parliamentary socialists in the labour movement.

During the upswing period of capitalism, when it was developing and expanding, it was possible to grant concessions to the working class because of the increase in productivity and the resultant increase in profits. These reforms however, were seldom granted without much struggle. There were victories and defeats in both wings of the movement.

The present period of capitalist decline is one in which no concessions are possible for the working class. Further, we have definitely left the era of democracy, the era of free competition. This democracy which served the conflicting interests of small capitalists during the developing stage, is now no longer compatible. Monopoly capitalism in a period of permanent crisis and war finds dictatorship and terror the only means to ensure it a tranquil proletariat. The abolition of the right to strike and its “fifth column” activity — despite the fact that it has completely captured the official Trade Union and Labour Party organisation — demonstrates this excellently.

Democracy, Parliamentarism and the Parliamentary organisation become obsolete and cannot be tolerated. Britain follows Germany in putting forward only one candidate for election. Fascism is being introduced with the aid of the Labour Party which is completely incapable of taking an independent working class position.

This development renders the controversy of the parliamentarians in the movement with the left communist groups obsolete. The name anti-parliamentary therefore is historically outdated and should be discarded. In its place the better title council communism should be used as it designates as a name the major principle difference between the old and new labour movement. This difference on the role that organisation plays in the class struggle and in the revolution is of increasing importance, while the question of parliamentary activity is of very much decreasing importance.

In contradistinction to the old form of party organisation, universally common to the parliamentary politicians in the old labour movement, the new labour movement holds that the workers’ committees, the soviets, the workers’ councils of action, are the real fighting organisations of the working class.

Therefore let us pass the name A.P.C.F. into the keeping of history.

Let all similar groups likewise discard their sectarian labels and unite under a common banner. Co-ordination is becoming a vital necessity to make the best use of our combined resources. Meantime, with group autonomy, let us all adopt, say, the name The Council Communists, so that under this banner the scattered revolutionary groups can gather together as groups of council communists capable of aiding the workers in the struggle. When a lead is necessary, giving a lead; where criticism is necessary, giving criticism. But all the time remembering that this is a class struggle and the class needs of the workers transcend all.

The banner of revolutionary non-compromise is the banner of the successful social revolution. This banner we recall the old Anti-Parliamentarians, whose experience of the past and whose comradeship is now so necessary. this banner we call the youth who suffer the effects of capitalist war.

Now is the time to build the shock troops of the coming socialist revolution.

Pending the final showdown with capitalism there will arise many issues on which all revolutionaries, irrespective of section, SHOULD agree. For such objects we ought to put our party loyalty second to class loyalty which all profess, in order to attain the maximum possible striking power. To do otherwise, as is all too common, is a dereliction of class duty.

(September-October 1940)

The People's Convention

"Against the proletariat class rule is no longer able to disguise itself",

Marx

Never before in the history of the working class movement has there been a greater need for political clarity and understanding of the situation which confronts us. Yet in the face of the most acute crisis we find instead of clarity nothing but political bankruptcy and confusion.

Socialist theory and ideology have been successfully "blacked out" and in their place has been substituted the most blatant opportunism and reaction. An opportunism which finds its highest expression in the latest brainstorm of the C.P. "The People's Convention for a People's Government."

Quite apart from the Marxian conception of the state and its function one would have thought that the collapse of German social democracy, the experience of the French popular front, and the Fascist uprising in Spain would have been sufficient to kill, for all time, the belief in parliamentary action as the road to working class power.

Apparently however, the C.P. are reluctant to shed their illusions and profit by past experience. So, in the face of the most ruthless manifestations of class rule the proletariat are urged to participate in a convention to achieve that historical impossibility, a People's Government.

Why do I say a People's Government is a historical impossibility? Marx, in his analysis of Capitalism, defined the state as an instrument of class rule. He perceived that the state machine was not an entity existing ~ itself, free from the conflicting interests of both Capital and Labour and so amenable to the interests of both that it could be taken over and used by either class according to majority rule. He realised that the state machine despite the democratic trappings was essentially an integral part of the capitalist system, a weapon of capitalist domination and oppression serving solely the interests of capital and never those of the workers.

Moreover, once it had outlived its usefulness, it would be immediately scrapped and superseded by something more ruthless and more suited to the job of bludgeoning the Proletariat.

A nation at war has no time for playacting. Capitalism in crisis cannot afford to indulge in democracy. The insoluble contradictions of the system are so manifest that it is no longer possible for the ruling class to find even a breathing space within the framework of the old parliamentary regime. In order to stave off for a time at least the inevitable collapse it renounces its so-called democratic rule and resorts to the most flagrant and unabashed methods of class domination, otherwise fascism.

The proof was only too regrettably evidenced by the recent Spanish tragedy. There the people, weighed down by poverty and oppression, endeavoured by purely constitutional means to obtain some slight amelioration. To achieve this they returned to parliament not a Red but only a reformist Government. Yet the incensed ruling class repudiated even their own bourgeois legality and unleashed the most bloody butchery of the proletariat the world has ever witnessed.

In the face of such savagery the Spanish people were compelled to go beyond their initial demands and engage in a life and death struggle in open class conflict. Here indeed, "against the Proletariat class rule was no longer able to disguise itself". For over three years the heroic workers of Spain, isolated and betrayed by the workers of the world, fought on, until battered and exhausted they went down to defeat before the onslaught of international capitalism. Despite their differences the capitalists are ever ready to unite against the rebellious Proletariat.

The tragedy of Spain is that of the world proletariat. The increased tempo of the class struggle brings with it increased measures of repression. Yet so great is the political myopia of the "organised" labour movement that this intensification of the class struggle passed unnoticed by all but a few. Even those who are aware of the need to prepare resistance to the capitalist onslaught are so hidebound in political orthodoxy that they are incapable of seeking a way out beyond the orbit of conventional political activity. To them, parliament is the supreme arbitrator. The theatre of struggle is the ministerial benches and not the workshop.

Even assuming that it was possible to bring about the defeat of the National Government, and vote a government prepared to accede to the workers' demands, can we believe for one moment that the British Ruling Class would continue to respect their own institution and jeopardise the war effort upon which their very existence depends? Certainly not! At the first threat of resistance to their will, they would immediately establish a military dictatorship and by sheer force of arms smash any attempt at progressive legislation.

To the Bourgeoisie the class struggle is very real. The spectre of communism forever haunts them, and to exorcise that spectre they will resort to any measures which will protect their interests and ensure the continuation of their hellish system. Against such despotism the workers' resistance must take a form more revolutionary in character than ordinary parliamentary action, and anyone who advocates this limited type of struggle is nothing short of a traitor to communism.

As Lenin said when answering Kautsky on this point — "Kautsky has stated that 'the aim of our political struggle is the conquest of power within the state by the gaining of a majority in parliament, and the conversion of parliament into the master of the government.'

This is nothing but the most vulgar opportunism, a repudiation of revolution in deeds while upholding it in words. Kautsky's imagination goes no further than a government willing to meet the proletariat half way. Kautsky will have to realise his beloved unity with the reactionaries of the social democratic movement. All that lot will agree to fight for a government 'meeting the proletariat halfway'

But we shall go forward to a break with these traitors to socialism. We are working for the complete destruction of the old machinery of government in such a way that the armed workers themselves shall be the government.

The opportunists can work for a rearrangement of forces within the state, the gaining of a majority in parliament and the supremacy of parliament over the government.

This is a most worthy object to the opportunists in which everything remains within the framework of a middle class parliamentary republic.

We however shall go forward to a complete break with the opportunists, and the whole class-conscious proletariat shall be with us — not for a rearrangement of forces but 'for the overthrow of the capitalist class and the destruction of bourgeois parliamentarism. Our aim is the building up of a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, of soviets of workers and soldiers deputies. in short the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.'

What is required is not a People's Front for a capitalist 'peace' but a Workers' Revolutionary Alliance to destroy Fascism and War by overthrowing the cause — World Capitalism.
M.G (November 1940 — January 1941)

Workers v the State

Side by side with the imperialist bloodbath the industrial struggle between the exploiters and the workers is intensifying

In spite of ideological chloroform administered by pulpit, press, labour “leaders’ and the so-called “communist” party, the resurgent workers refuse to be quelled so far, at any rate, as the wage struggle is concerned

Strikers have been fined and gaoled wholesale, yet no sooner is one dispute “settled” than another breaks out.

In America the coal miners are on the eve of a first-class trial of strength and the 250,000 Appalachian miners now out may swell to half a million men in a matter of hours.

This struggle is being featured as a clash between Lewis and Roosevelt, but we should know from experience that Lewis will only go as far as he is pushed by the workers! He is not without an eye on the White House, and is on record as supporting a “reasonable” rate of interest to the capitalist.

This strike will be hailed as ‘sabotage’ by the social-patriots; but in point of fact the strike will prove an incalculable stimulus to the German and Italian workers to do likewise! And, consider again, what repercussions there could be if this huge walk out had been for a political object as well; say for a declaration of Workers’ Peace Terms!

Like Churchill in this country Roosevelt asserts that the country being at war, any strike is an attack on the government — the State.

COAL MINERS ON THE DEFENSIVE

Actually the miners are not on the offensive at all. They are only resisting the attempt to “freeze” wages; whilst living costs are steadily rising.

But the State is not a workers’ State.

As Peter Kropotkin says, *“There are some who like to confuse the State with Society. This confusion is to be met with even among the best thinkers, who cannot conceive society without State concentration; and thence arises the habitual reproach cast on Anarchists of wanting to ‘destroy society’.*

Yet to reason thus is to ignore entirely the progress made in the domain of history during the last thirty years; it is to ignore that men have lived in societies during thousands of years before having known the State; it is to forget that for European nations the State is of recent origin, that it hardly dates from the sixteenth century; it is to fail to recognise that the most glorious epochs in humanity were those in which the liberties and local life were not yet destroyed by the State and when masses of men lived in communes and free federations.”

So we see, then, that the State is a power placed over society for the domination of the poor in the interests of the exploiters.

A well-worn argument of certain Marxists is that the State controls the army, navy, air force, etc, so we must get control of the State. In normal times the Labour Exchange can direct us to a

particular job, but they can't decide what we'll do in a revolutionary crisis! The same applies to the forces.

The Trotskyists advocate getting into the Army, etc, when possible, to get the members on the side of the workers. Why not join the police force for the same reason? The majority of the members of the forces are members of the working class, and their outlook is just as progressive as the outlook of the best of the workers. Our job is not to get shackled with the discipline imposed on the forces. Nor should we encourage the capitulation of principle involved in joining the oppressive apparatus of Capitalist Imperialism, but from the outside by means of our propaganda – showing all sections of the working class the need for Socialism.

Anyway, the members of the forces, having strong working class connections, will in a period of crisis – develop a revolutionary outlook. This can also be encouraged from the outside by the mass solidarity of the rest of the working class. A few would-be leaders surreptitiously whispering in the barrack-roan corners will cut little ice. In army life propaganda is “verboden”, and soldiers have to do what they are told. Revolutionary conditions, however, will make the soldiers as well as the workers think fast and to the point.

After the Paris Commune, Karl Marx and Engels admitted that sane parts of the Communist Manifesto had become antiquated. They said: *“the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machine and wield it for its own purpose.”* (Quoted by Lenin in State and Revolution).

What are the working class to do then? Smash the Capitalist State? Yes. But are they to set up another government which may also become tyrannical?

Marx in a letter dated 12th April 1871 to Kugelmann said, *“If you look at the last chapter of my Eighteenth Brumaire, you will find that I say that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer as before; to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it; and this is essential for every real people's revolution on the Continent.”*

On page 73 of State and Revolution, Lenin says, *“while the state exists there is no freedom. When freedom exists there will be no state.”*

On page 87 Lenin explaining the difference between Marxists and Anarchists, says that the Marxists want to conquer the state then abolish whereas the Anarchists want to smash it right away. Lenin goes on to say, *“In this controversy it is Pannekoek and not Kautsky who represents ~ for it was Marx who taught that it was not enough for the proletariat simply to conquer state power in the sense that the old state apparatus passes into new hands, but that the proletariat must smash, break this apparatus and substitute a new one for it.”*

So both sides agree to the smashing of the state, but Lenin covers up his position, his power complex, by saying the workers will “substitute a new one”. The workers are going to overthrow one state ~ then allow themselves to be ‘bossed’ by another power?

Lenin criticising Kautsky, when he quoted as saying that as we will still have bureaucrats under Socialism we will still have bureaucracy replies by saying, *“...they will cease to be such (bureaucrats) in proportion as, in addition to the election of officials, the principle of recall at any time is introduced, and as the salaries are reduced to the level of the wages of the average worker, and as the parliamentary institutions are superseded by working bodies, executive and legislative at the same time.”* On this basis therefore, it is clear that we have not yet got Socialism in Russia. Trotskyists and Leninists of course, attack Stalinism as a departure from Bolshevism, but the workers of Russia were “bossed around” as far back as 1921.

Trotsky in his book Dictatorship Versus Democracy, states on page 142, "*The Labour State considers itself empowered to send every worker to the place where his work is necessary.*"

They do this in Britain today; but do not pretend it is in the name of Socialism.

The "withering away" state has failed to wither and on the contrary has become more and more unrepresentative and tyrannical.

True, of course, the failure of the European revolution to materialise is partly responsible for this and we bear a large portion of that responsibility.

But "party" Marxism, however, is a contributory cause giving, as it does, a psychological cover for the dictatorship complex, latent in most politicians.

The Workers' Revolutionary League accepts the probability of a "transition period" but insists that the workers control their own destiny by an administration with an Industrial base, subject to recall from below.

Forward to WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL REPUBLIC: Classless, Stateless Society.

(February-May 1943)

Part Two: The Civil War in Spain

Introduction

In the May 1936 issue of the APCF paper, *Advance*, R. Bunton wrote that “Today, an atmosphere of despair envelops the working class”. There were good reasons for making this observation. The working class in Britain was weakened and demoralised after the Great Depression. At its peak in January 1933, unemployment had reached nearly 3 million, or over 20% of all insured workers. The numbers employed in the core industries of the traditional (blue-collar, manual) working class – mining, engineering, shipbuilding – had been declining steadily, and, simultaneously, subject to higher than average rates of unemployment.

In the geographical areas where these industries were concentrated, this had a devastating effect. Meanwhile, with Nazism’s rise to power in Germany, and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (1935/36), the outbreak of a Second World War was increasingly being discussed in terms of probability rather than possibility.

Only when seen against this depressing background can the APCF’s response to the war in Spain be understood. When a Popular Front government took power in Spain in February 1936 – even though it had been elected on what the APCF admitted was a “liberalistic and reformist” programme – the APCF stated that “The recent events in Spain have given the international proletariat the first welcome news for some time” (*Advance* May 1936). In similar vein, when large numbers of Spanish workers resisted the fascist generals attempted coup against the government on 19 July 1936, Guy Aldred of the United Socialist Movement wrote: “The Spanish struggle... is the mighty proletarian movement that Europe needed” (*Regeneracion* 2 August 1936).

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the Spanish civil war was almost as much of an inspiration to the anti-parliamentarians in Britain as the Russian revolution had been 20 years before. The atmosphere of despair which R Bunton had spoken of appeared to have been dispelled; the anti-parliamentarians flung themselves enthusiastically into support for the Spanish struggle: “I was never so active in speaking at street corners as in 1936 to 1939 during the Spanish crisis” noted Willie McDougall of the APCF, while John Caldwell, a survivor of the USM, has also recalled that public meetings then “drew bigger crowds than at any time since the general strike”.

Since its origins, within the APCF there had been some members who considered themselves primarily as marxist communists, and others who regarded themselves first and foremost as anarchists. The relatively sizeable support for anarchism among the Spanish workers, and the strong anarchist admixture in many of the events surrounding the civil war, had the effect of rejuvenating many British anarchists, and the APCF was one of the organisations in which these anarchist elements came to the fore. In fact, it is said that such was the domination the anarchists established within the APCF at this time that the marxist members were at one stage banned from speaking for the group on its public platform. The result of this was that as far as the APCF was concerned, the sudden burst of activity sparked off by the events in Spain made a negligible contribution to the cause of communism.

On the positive side, the APCF interpreted the attempted fascist coup as a confirmation of their view on the futility of parliamentary action; as one of the APCF's members, AS Knox warned "wherever the ruling class decides that parliament fails to administer to their express desires, parliament will be abolished!" (Workers Free Press Sept 1937). The same lesson is also drawn in Section I on Parliamentarism in the APCF's Principles And Tactics, and M.G.'s article on The People's Convention, both of which are included in the first section of this pamphlet.

When it came to a practical response, however, the APCF did not take to heart this lesson which it itself had drawn, that "Constitutionalism and Parliamentarism has surely now proved a failure" (Advance Sept.1936). The APCF's appeals largely remained confined to the terrain of bourgeois legalism: they spoke of the fascists "breaches of international law" in trying to overthrow "an orthodox democratic government" (Advance Aug-Sept 1936), and criticised the British government for refusing to supply arms to the Republicans even though "The Spanish Government satisfies the legal requirements according to orthodox international legal standards" (Fighting Call 1st Feb 1937).

They urged protest strikes and demonstrations, not to help the Spanish workers directly, but to pressurise the government into lifting its arms embargo and changing its neutralist policy of 'non-intervention'.

Another feature of the APCF's response to the events in Spain was its completely uncritical support for the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT-FAI. From October 1936 to February 1937 the APCF co-operated with the anarchists of the Freedom group in London to publish four issues of the Fighting Call, the contents of which were compiled almost entirely from issues of the CNT-FAI's Boletin de Informacion, with no critical comment or analysis added. Along the same lines, in February 1937 the APCF published the text of a speech made by the anarchist Minister of Public Health, Frederica Montseny, as a pamphlet titled Militant Anarchism and the Reality in Spain, in which statements such as the following were allowed to pass without comment or criticism: "in these tragic times, we must put aside our point of view, our ideological conditions, in order to realise the unity of all anti-fascists from the Republicans to the Anarchists

In short, the APCF at this stage seemed capable neither of seeing beyond the false, diversionary issue of democracy versus fascism, nor of posing the real issue of communism versus capitalism, in all its forms.

By calling on the British state to drop its policy of non-intervention and take sides in a war between fascist and democratic factions of the same capitalist class, the APCF had in fact taken up an objectively anti-working class position, and it was this which enabled it to publish, without comment or criticism, the statements of bourgeois politicians such as Montseny. When an analysis which was opposed to capitalism in all its forms, fascist or democratic, did appear in the APCF's press, it came not from any member of the APCF but from Ethel MacDonald of the USM, who wrote that "Fascism is not something new, some new force of evil opposed to society, but is only the old enemy, Capitalism, under a new and fearful sounding name...

Anti-Fascism is the new slogan by which the working class is being betrayed" (Workers Free Press Oct 1937).

Interestingly, Ethel MacDonald had actually gone to Spain in October 1936 to work for the propaganda section of the CNT-FAI. She was accompanied by Jane Patrick, whose involvement in the revolutionary movement dated back to the time of the original Glasgow Anarchist Group. When Patrick went to Spain she was disowned by the APCF and she joined the USM soon after returning to Britain. The reports which Patrick and MacDonald sent back from Spain were pub-

lished in the single-issue papers *News From Spain* (a USM publication) and *Barcelona Bulletin* (a joint APCF-USM effort), both of which came out in May 1937.

Patrick fiercely attacked the counter-revolutionary actions of the Stalinist PSUC, but also criticised the reformist orientation of the CNT-FAI leadership and its naive attachment to anti-fascist unity, stressed the importance of working class self-activity, and rejected the idea that democratic capitalism was preferable to fascist capitalism. Patrick's ideas, like Ethel Macdonald's, but unlike the APCF's, thus expressed revolutionary opposition to a capitalist war.

Very few other groups took up a similar stance at the time, notable exceptions being the International Council Correspondence group in the United States and the Bilan group in France.

The two articles on Spain from *Solidarity* which follow show some signs of an approach which was more critical than that adopted by the APCF itself. *An Armistice?* at least characterises the Popular Front as a "capitalist government"; in the same issue in which this appeared, the APCF criticised the British ruling classes "damnable treachery to Loyalist Spain" — Loyalists being supporters of... the capitalist government! The second article, by the Spanish anarchist group *The Friends of Durruti*, titled *The Friends of Durruti Accuse*, represents a great advance on the APCF's position, with its criticisms of the CNT-FAI and of the dissociation of the war from the revolution, and its statement that "Democracy defeated the Spanish people, not Fascism".

Before the war in Spain ended, the anarchists in the APCF broke away from the group, forming the Glasgow Anarchist-Communist Federation in 1937. The precise reasons for this split are obscure. At the beginning of the Second World War the Glasgow group of the Anarchist Federation Of Britain was formed on the basis of an alliance between the Anarchist-Communist Federation and the Glasgow Marxian Study Group. One of those prominent in the Marxian Study Group was Jimmy Kennedy, two of whose articles, originally published in *Solidarity*, appear elsewhere in this pamphlet.

An Armistice?

Barcelona, 25th June — Rumours are circulating on the eventuality of a crisis in the government. To our view, if a new government was to be created, it would be one led by Martinez Barrio or Portela Valladares, professed friends of Franco. The Popular Front Government are doing their utmost to effect an armistice, to effect a reconciliation with Franco, and the main object of their policy has been to try and hand government power into the hands of Franco supporters.

If this government came to be, it would mean a return to the state of affairs prevailing before the 19th July 1936. Even then when Franco made his bloody attack, the government refused to give the workers arms, and even appealed to Franco to stop (not to stop killing the workers) but to prevent the revolution from developing. In the first days of the revolution the government feared more the mighty power of the workers than that of Franco, and the same is true today, even more so.

Thus, today, the murderers of the Asturian miners, the bloody persecutors of the workers' organisations, are to be given the power of the "Popular Front Government" of Spain. This will involve mass sabotage, mass executions, mass murder of those who fight against Franco. These men will send to their death the flower of the Red Armies of Spain.

As for the C.P. reformists, when their work of handing back the power to the Spanish capitalist class is complete, they will be dispensed with, for the Government will then be capable of defending itself against the working class, and perhaps Franco will return to the fold as supreme commander of the republican forces against the workers, their common enemy.

All this could have been avoided (2 million dead) if the workers had taken control and eliminated the government, thus killing at one stroke a great force that has been working with Franco all along the line. The proletariat of Spain was lulled into political unconsciousness by the government which was supposed to be leading it.

It has taken the government two years to cripple the proletariat and its organisations. The FOUN and the Friends of Durutti are gone. The revolutionary sections of the CNT-FAL are persecuted and the whole of the effective organisations of the workers compromised to such a degree as to allow the anti-working class government of Spain to proceed without fear of opposition. And thus today the capitalist government of the "Popular Front" is slowly ending its task of liquidating the war and the Revolution.

The attack of the republican government and C.P. against the POUM is recognised by everyone. But the accusations are one thing and the facts another. The facts are that up to the present all the "evidences" have been proven false, got up to deliberately incriminate the POUM and thus justify the process of legal murder desired by the government and C.P.

There is absolutely nothing to incriminate the POUM, but the same cannot be said of their accusers. In the C.P., the labour party or the Socialist youth dozens of traitors have been found, and many had wormed their way into very responsible positions in the High Command of the republican army. For instance we have seen the entire Karl Marx Division, men and officers, passing over into the Franco lines. Yet the government still gives these posts to similar men.

(August 1938)

“The Friends of Durruti Accuse”

by the Franco-Spanish Group of The Friends of Durruti

It is necessary that the militants, the revolutionaries of the workers' organisations, who have suffered the cruel experience of military defeat and refugee humiliation, give serious and concentrated attention to the lessons of the Spanish war and revolution, for which they have paid so dearly with their blood, the blood of their best comrades.

Breaking the silence which was imposed on us by the tyranny of the Stalinists and counter-revolutionaries, we shall speak here with the same clarity as was expected in the organ of our group “The Friend Of The People”. Our group, which is under the symbol of Durruti, has occupied an important place in the Spanish Revolution. This was so in the bloody days of May, 1937, when we raised the standard of revolt against the counter-revolutionaries (the C.P., Republican Government, etc) as also against the reformism of the directors of the CNT-FAI.

We had predicted that the line pursued after July, of dissociating the war from the revolution, must inevitably lead to disaster. Our thesis has been confirmed by the facts. The Revolution was lost in May, 1937, AND WITH IT THE WAR. Gradually the zones of economic importance were lost, and the culmination was the fall of Aragon, a great defeat of the Levant, finishing with the rout of Catalonia and by the surrender of Madrid and the rest of the other zones without conditions.

The causes of the defeat were evident. From the moment that the revolutionary spirit of the militias was undermined by replacing them with an army lacking in the previous enthusiasm and dynamism, there was forged the first link in the chain which has now bound them to defeat.

The multiple attacks and disfigurations of the Revolutionary work of July, 1936, were the seeds of the tragic harvest which has led us to bloody exile, an exile which cannot be understood except when we comprehend the first moves of treason, incapacity, stabbing in the back and immorality which took place.

Two Chances Lost

Two eminent periods presented themselves in the Spanish revolution: July, 1936, and May, 1937. On these two occasions, the same error was committed. The leaders of the CNT-FAI did not impose the power of our organisations, which were supported by the masses in the street, factory, field and workshop. These leaders were thus most responsible for the disaster which has taken place – the loss of the revolution, the military defeat in the war and the bloody retreat into France. They were afraid of foreign intervention. They did not want to take over the country and direct it economically and politically for fear of angering the “dictators”.

But in not leading the revolution, they did not leave it alone; they began to defeat it. Their fear was responsible for the counter-revolution, for the Stalinists took over the land from the peasants and workers, and this was the greatest factor in breaking the revolutionary unity of the masses.

The CNT-FAI leaders did not desire to impose a dictatorship on anti-working class parties, yet they became the assistants of the bourgeois liberals, of the petty bourgeoisie of international Capitalism, which, under the mask of democracy, served fascism, thus defeating the Spanish revolution.

The end of the war has been catastrophic Everything was lost, nothing gained. Much could have been saved and used to stave off the terrible defeat Negrin and all his lackies had placed all money and gold in foreign banks. They certainly made a job of the massacre of the Spanish people.

The army of the workers did not know what they were fighting for. The soldiers at the 11/20nt were not disposed to fight because they knew that whilst they were fighting and being massacred on the Ebro, in the rear, the bureaucrats of the Republic were playing about with beautiful women and having a grand debauch.

The people were working and dying of hunger. In the bread queues the women and population generally were full of hate for Negrin and his crowd of adulators. The workers and their families had no bread, whilst in the homes and residences of the government and C.P. officials etc white bread was eaten. The whole world has some idea of the morale of the people of Barcelona. It was the workers of Barcelona who suffered the aerial bombardments. There was no refuge for them. The high functionaries and bureaucrats were always well sheltered and their families were always hidden away in distant villages.

The People Responsible

The government did not represent the people (workers) and defended interests decidedly opposed to them. Those who should have heard the demands of the Spanish working class, who were called upon to defend They, were the leaders of the CNT-FAI, who betrayed them. This we have affirmed, clearly and without subtlety, and we will always continue to repeat our indictments.

“The Friends Of Durruti” were called Fascists and provocateurs. Twice attempts were made to expel us from the ONT-FAI. But the workers rejected this order of exclusion, which came from the reformist section.

We have left Spain with our heads held high; we have entered foreign countries without a halfpenny. We have suffered hunger and cold in the concentration camps. But several of the reformists who demanded our expulsion are well cared for. We do not speak of Negrin and his communist murderers, who persecuted and imprisoned us. These people possess scandalous sums of money, but one day they will be made to pay for their treachery.

Events have proved us right. The same problems which we posed in our secret newspaper can be posed today, as also tomorrow. We are not beaten, and although this is a tragedy, we must stick to our principles and our criticisms. The reformism of the ONT-FAI has led us to defeat.

The leadership had an influential part in the giving up of Madrid, without any conditions, to Franco. The Stalinists, by their protests against the giving up of Madrid, have been able to pose as revolutionaries. But they did not deceive the workers, for they have always hated them, long before the initiative of Casado against them. They have hated them from the very early times of the revolution, particularly in the Nay days of 1937.

The lesson has been hard; and the immense importance and power of the Spanish revolution can be judged by the revolutionary effect it had on European affairs.

If the Spanish revolution had succeeded, Fascism would have been defeated, with the important consequence of the beginning of an international proletarian offensive. There is no doubt, the proletariat and capitalism have showed themselves to be permanently involved in a life and death struggle. Capitalism has triumphed, but we know the reasons.

Democracy defeated the Spanish people, not Fascism, Franco would never have won without the Communist Party and Negrin. But the international proletariat are also responsible; or rather, the leaders, who have become bulwarks for the capitalist class. But, if, instead of speaking in jargon and confused language, we had been frank and definite, who knows, perhaps we would have reached the workers of the entire world.

The Lessons

From the catastrophe we must extract precious lessons. As anarchists we must rectify a series of tactical points and positions which prevent the success of revolutionary action. A revolution necessitates force to be used against the opposition. It is also clear that when one possesses such a proletarian fighting force, it is necessary to know how to use it and how to preserve it.

We are enemies of class collaboration with the capitalist class and with the middle class. Workers' administration necessitates workers' control. A revolution requires the absolute domination of the workers' organisations as was the case in July, 1936, when the CNT-FAI were masters. There are many aspects of the situation and it would be necessary to study them in detail, but what must not be forgotten is that the workers' movement must be reconstructed on a new basis, on a new morale, and with the banishment of the leaders responsible for the disaster.

We incline to the view that it is necessary to form a Revolutionary Alliance; a Workers' Front; where no one would be allowed to enter and take their place except on a revolutionary basis, completely prohibiting reformists, communist party, republican democrats, and also those militants in the Spanish affair who had a hand in the disaster.

At the beginning of this emigration from our country, which began after 30 months of fighting, the "Friends Of Durruti" continue to defend the interests of the proletariat with the same energy and honesty as during the course of the Spanish revolution.

(June-July 1939)

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 FA 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 between 18 and 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 7 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 (e.g. 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 5 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, as the following figures illustrate:

YEAR	NUMBER OF STOPPAGES	NUMBER OF WORKERS INVOLVED
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

STOPPAGES OF WORK DUE TO INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

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 economic 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*.

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. “, 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 in”. 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 2~d 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 Bel9ium, 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 3 weeks their policy had again changed. Russia had done a double somer (laughter) and the C.P. 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 C.P. 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 C.P. 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 Baxracks 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 C.P. 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 C.P. can shout from the house-tops 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 C.P. 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 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 TREATY 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 sane 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 C.P. 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 C.P. 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 C.P. (G.B.). "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 C.P. has gone — TO THE RIGHT THERE IS 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 e-ed, 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 5th 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?) 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 gal Ions 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 etatism (‘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 etatisme, 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 5 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 reinstatement 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)

Gandhi'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 Garwhali soldiers, "Monde", February, 20th 1932)

(Solidarity 55-56, December 1942-January 1943),

Axis Workers Show Way

By "ICARUS"

(‘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.)

CONTRARY TO THE NATIONALIST-REFORM MOVEMENT, THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAT IN GERMANY HAS FOUGHT, AND IS STILL FIGHTING, CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM AND THEREFORE NAZISM 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 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 Brindisi1 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 where they will hold themselves in readiness oil fields captured from the Japanese" (News Middle East to Australia, to assist in re-opening 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, January 6th, 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 girl friends 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 55 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 3rd 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 13th 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 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)

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 E.W.O. 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 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)

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, Nottinghamshire, 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. True¹ 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 potent of to-day. 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)

Part Four: Party and Class

Introduction

By the end of the 1920s all the political parties which were supposed to bring about the emancipation of the working class had become instruments of workers' oppression.

Before the First World War, the Social Democratic parties had been pledged to oppose the coming war in the name of working class internationalism. When the war came, in virtually every country, without hesitation, they broke this pledge and lined up behind the imperialist war aims of their own ruling class. In the post-war revolutionary wave, the social democrats were in the front ranks of the counter-revolutionary forces. Finally in Russia, where the revolution at first seemed to have succeeded, the Bolshevik Party gradually consolidated its bloody dictatorship over the working class.

Nowadays, when a cynical distrust of politicians is taken for granted, perhaps it is hard to appreciate the shock that these betrayals caused.

The small left communist organisations, struggling to rebuild the communist movement, were forced to ask themselves how far were these betrayals the inevitable fate of all political parties. In other words, was the revolutionary party now obsolete, as useless to the working class in the new revolutionary period as parliament and the trade unions were already recognised to be? If the revolutionary party was obsolete, what was to replace it?

These questions were the subject of a fascinating debate which took place in the pages of *Solidarity* during the Second World War. The various texts from this debate make up the bulk of the fourth and last section of this pamphlet.

The first text, *Leadership*, was written some years earlier and outlines the basic council communist approach to the question. The time when workers could get by by relying on leaders is gone. The period of "normal capitalist development is at an end. Now, capitalism is disintegrating, and the time has come for the working class to make the revolution. Revolution will be made by the masses themselves or not at all. It depends on workers learning to organise themselves and lead themselves, throwing off the "traditional bourgeois mentality" which allows them to be subservient to the leadership of a minority.

These ideas can be found developed in more detail in such texts as Pannekoek's *World Revolution and Communist Tactics*¹. The essence of his argument is as follows. The old mass parties were necessary at the time. But being based on the passive rather than active support' of the masses at a time when revolution was objectively impossible, the temptation for the leadership to sacrifice principles for the sake of short term gain was overwhelming. The growing conservatism of the leaders was inevitable; as was the subsequent conflict between the leadership and the rank and file. The example of Russia shows what happens when revolutionary leadership passes into the hands of a political party. However, if workers in Europe, where the ruling class is immeasurably stronger than in Russia, continue to rely on their leaders, the revolution is defeated before it has even begun. A new kind of party is required which, with no thought of

¹ In Bricianer, Pannekoek and the Workers Councils (Telos Press, Saint Louis, 1978) pages~175-210.

taking power for itself, will never need to compromise its principles, nor develop a bureaucratic hierarchy. The task of the party is “advance propagation of clear knowledge”. Its main objective should be “to raise the masses to the highest level of activity, to stimulate their spirit of initiative, to increase their self-confidence, enabling them to decide for themselves the task they must fulfil and the means to do this”²

This was written when Pannekoek was a leading theoretician of the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD), a party which, though small by 19th century standards, still numbered tens of thousands of members.

By the 1930s, as the scale of the defeat of the working class became more apparent, he had grown much more pessimistic. The article which provoked the debate in *Solidarity*³ (mistakenly attributed to Paul Mattick) presents the same basic argument, but now talks not about a party, but of “small groups of revolutionaries”.

This article also omits much of the historical element of his analysis.

This allows Frank Maitland, in the second article in the series, to make the valid point that Pannekoek dismisses the old parties too easily. Maitland, a Trotskyist member of the Independent Labour Party, and a regular contributor to *Solidarity*, defends a more or less traditional Leninist view of the party. The revolutionary party, he says, is a historic creation of the struggles of the working class. It is needed, now as in the past, to do what the class struggle in itself cannot do, that is educate and organise the masses. Just because previous parties have failed is no reason for ducking the question. On the contrary it makes it even more urgent to discover how to “use the party in the correct manner Mattick himself now enters the debate in order to defend Pannekoek. But in doing so he takes up an anti-party position far more extreme than in Pannekoek’s original article. The working class, he says, can learn the necessity for revolution directly from experience. In fact the whole question is quite simple, but workers are blinded by bourgeois ideology and above all by their trust in parties. All political groupings, by claiming to be specialists, reinforce this trust in parties. They are therefore not only unnecessary but reactionary.

The final contribution is from Abraham Zeigler on behalf of the DeLeonist SLP. He agrees with Maitland that revolutionary consciousness does not arise directly from the experience of struggle. The party is essential, but has only an educational role. How exactly this process of education is to lead to revolution is left obscure.

The APCF’s own comments, interspersed between the different articles generally attempt to bring the debate down to earth. They reject the extremist anti-party position. Whether one likes it or not parties of one sort or another exist, and many of them are obvious: doing good work for the cause of revolution. “We extend the comradeship to the rebel workers of all parties or none”. On the other hand to advocate a single all-powerful party to direct the revolution is not only dangerous, it is simply utopian.

The APCF’s position is elaborated in two further articles: *Where We Stand* and *For Workers Councils* (the latter by Maitland, whose views appear to have changed somewhat in the 18 months since his article on the party appeared). *Where We Stand* quite simply disposes of the false alternative of either the party or experience of class struggle being the source of revolutionary consciousness. The working class learns to be revolutionary through its experience but revolutionary political organisations are an essential part of this process.

² Bricianer, op cit, page 186.

³ A different translation of this article appears in Bricianer, op cit, pages 261–267

In general the APCF's comments exemplify their admirably straightforward approach towards theoretical questions.

Leadership

by James Kennedy

Capitalist economic development and its corresponding political changes, are moving with a velocity that far outstrips the labour Party policy and this party can no longer give adequate expression to the Working-class struggle. The Working-class has reached an indecisive stage in its development, which always precedes its search for new forms, mirroring its struggle, and making the class polarisation more distinct.

Leadership is a product of tradition — the past. The Chartist Party (1838~4~8) was the first form of leadership claiming to solve the economic needs of the workers, and following this there arose the Trade Unions. In Germany, a similar political party — the Social Democratic Party (1860) — came into being, led by Lasselle, and in accordance with the degree of Capitalist development on the continent and America, political organisations of like character sprang up.

Wage-labour, the basis of Capitalism, supplanted feudal-tenure, the basis of Feudalism. There arose the need, with the new Capitalist economy, to grant to the proletariat political privileges denied the workers under the preceding order... Parliamentaryism, the new political edifice, was an ideal mechanism for administering the class needs of the bourgeoisie, and at the same time SPREADING THE DECEPTIVE DOCTRINE OF “FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND JUSTICE”.

The co-ordination of the proletariat as a political factor, with the bourgeois State, enabled the proletariat to adjust itself to the dynamics of bourgeois economy by organising into Trade Unions. As long as skilled labour still held monopoly, the Trade Unions could “bargain” around increased wages, and in the early stages of large scale industry the workers could resist encroachments made on their standard of living by the employers, while the national rivalry between individual capitalists was still predominant. Party politics, therefore, became a game, primarily suited to cope with bourgeois interests, and the proletariat took part in the game because of the apparent amelioration’s that could be procured within bourgeois boundaries. parties of the proletariat assumed bourgeois forms, and became limited associations trading in “bread and butter”, and shifting about for political positions. leadership came before class, and when the mass was thrown into struggle, t~ leaders resigned themselves to their status as “bargainers”, and kept the struggle inside Capitalist barriers. Managers, Superintendents and Foremen in the factories, were counterposed by Presidents, Organisers and Secretaries in the Labour movement; Boards of directors were counterposed by Executive Committees.

The wage slaves in the Labour movement left their affairs in the hands of leaders, as they left their industrial activities in the hands of bosses in the factories. The execution of proletarian initiative developed simultaneously with the economic activity of Capital, until the World War changed the normal and orderly expansion of Capital into chaos and disorder. The initiative of leaders, as a consequence, was transformed into mass initiative with the revolutionary upsurge in Russia, Hungary and Germany. This mass initiative was restricted in its historic mission by the economic backwardness of Eastern Europe a the political backwardness of the West. The

revolutionary upsurge put the economic clock forward in the East and the political clock back in the West.

Leadership is a pre-war principle presupposing Capitalism in the process of normal development. It becomes functionless and obsolete a resurgence of “lass action and initiative. In a revolutionary situation, **ONLY THE WIDEST AND FULLEST ACTION OF THE MASSES CAN SOLVE THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALISM** — which reveal the real nature of the class struggle itself. With the retrogression of bourgeois economy, the ensuing revolutionary upsurge, the leaders surrender to the force of reaction, and are smitten with progressive paralysis. Real action is compelled from outside the traditional organisations. The powerful trend towards mass consolidation and mass action entails organisation of offence urging the principle of independent mass movement. Clarity precedes unity, and the transformation from the principle of leaders to the principle of independent mass action poses the question of re-organisation from a political basis to a social basis of society. The first fundamental principle is the abolition of wage labour, and the social ownership of the means of production and exchange will follow as a matter of course. This presupposes the rejection of “State Socialism”.

(December 1938)

The Party and the Working Class

by 'Paul Mattick'

(This article, mistakenly attributed to Mattick, was actually written by Anton Pannekoek.)

The first traces of a new labour movement are just becoming visible. The old movement is organised in parties. The belief in parties is the main reason for the impotence of the working class; therefore we avoid forming a new party — not because we are too few, but because a party is an organisation that aims to lead and control the working class.

In opposition to this, we maintain the working class can rise to victory only when it independently attacks its problems and decides its own fate. The workers should not unquestioningly accept the slogans of others, nor of our own groups, but must think, act and decide for them

themselves. This conception is in sharp contradiction to the tradition of the party as the most important means of educating the working class. Therefore many, though repudiating the Socialist and Communist parties, resist and oppose us. This is partly due to their traditional concepts; after viewing the class struggle as a struggle of parties, it becomes difficult to consider it as purely the struggle of the working class, as a class struggle. But partly this concept is based on the idea that the party nevertheless plays an essential and important part in the struggle of the proletariat. Let us investigate this latter idea more closely.

Essentially, the party is a grouping according to views, conceptions; the classes are groupings according to economic interests. Class membership is determined by one's part in the process of production; party membership is the joining of persons who agree in their conceptions of the social problems. Formerly it was thought this contradiction would disappear in the class party, the "workers' party". During the rise of the Social-Democracy, it seemed that it would gradually embrace the whole working class, partly as members, partly as supporters. Because Marxian theory declared that similar interests beget similar viewpoints and aims, the contradiction between party and class was expected gradually to disappear. History proved otherwise. The Social Democracy remained a minority, other working class groups organised against it, sections split away from it, and its own character changed. Its own programme was revised or reinterpreted. The evolution of society does not proceed along a smooth even line, but in conflicts and contradictions.

With the intensification of the workers' struggle, the might of the enemy also increases and besets the workers with renewed doubts and fears as to which road is the best. And every doubt brings on splits, contradictions, and fractional battles within the labour movement. It is futile to bewail these conflicts and splits as harmful in dividing and weakening the working class. The working class is not weak because it is split up — it is split up because it is weak. Because the enemy is powerful and the old methods of warfare prove unavailing, the working class must seek new methods. Its task will not become clear as the result of enlightenment from above, it must discover it through hard work, through thought and conflict of opinions. It must find its own way; therefore the internal struggle. It must relinquish old ideas and illusions and adopt new ones, and because this is difficult, therefore the magnitude and severity of the splits.

Nor can we delude ourselves into believing that this period of party and ideological strife is only temporary and will make way to renewed harmony. True, in the course of the class struggle there are occasions when all forces unite on a great achievable objective and the revolution is carried on with the might of a united working class. But after that, as after every victory, comes the differences on the question: what next? And even if the working class is victorious, it is always confronted by the most difficult task of subduing the enemy further, reorganising production, creating new order. It is impossible that all workers, all strata and groups, with their oft-times still diverse interests should, at this stage, agree on all matters and be ready for united rapid and decisive further action. They will find the true course only after the sharpest controversies and conflicts and only thus will achieve clarity.

If, in this situation, persons with the same fundamental conceptions unite for the discussion of practical steps and seek clarification through discussions, and propagandise their conclusions, such groups might be called parties, but they would be parties in an entirely different sense from those of today. Action, the actual struggle, is the task of the working masses themselves, in their entirety, in their natural groupings as factory and millhands, or other natural productive groups, because history and economy have placed them in the position where they must and they only can fight the working class struggle. It would be insane if the supporters of one party were to go on strike while those of another continue to work. But both tendencies will defend their positions on strike or no strike in the factory meetings, thus affording an opportunity to arrive at a well-founded decision. The struggle is so great, the enemy so powerful that only the masses as a whole can achieve a victory — the result of the material and moral power of action, unity and enthusiasm, but also the result of the mental force of thought, of clarity. In this lies the great importance of such parties or groups based on opinions, that they bring clarity in their conflicts, discussions and propaganda. They are the organs of the self-enlightenment of the working class by means of which the workers find their way to freedom.

Naturally such parties are not static and unchangeable. Every new situation, every new problem will find minds diverging and uniting in new groups with new programmes. They have a fluctuating character and constantly readjust themselves to new situations.

Compared to such groups, the present workers' parties have an entirely different character, for they have a different objective; they want to seize power for themselves. They aim not at being an aid to the working class in its struggle for emancipation, but to rule it themselves and proclaim that constitutes the emancipation of the proletariat. The Social-Democracy which rose in the era of parliamentarism conceives of this rule as a parliamentary government. The Communist Party carries the idea of party rule through to its furthest extreme in the party dictatorship.

Such parties, in distinction to the groups described above, must be rigid structures with clear lines of demarcation through membership card, statutes, party discipline and admission and expulsion procedure. For they are instruments of power, fight for power, bridle their members by force and constantly seek to extend the scope of their power. It is not their task to develop the initiative of the workers; rather do they aim at training loyal and unquestioning members of their faith. While the working class in its struggle for power and victory needs unlimited intellectual freedom, the party rule must suppress all opinions except its own. In "democratic" parties, the suppression is veiled; in the dictatorship parties, it is open, brutal suppression.

Many workers already realise that the rule of the Socialist or Communist party will be but the concealed form of the rule of a bourgeois class in which the exploitation and suppression of the working class remains. Instead of these parties, they urge the formation of a "revolutionary

party” that will really aim at the rule of the workers and the realisation of communism. Not a party in the new sense of those described above, but a party as those of today, that fights for power as the vanguard of the class, as the organisation of conscious, revolutionary minority that seizes power in order to use it for the emancipation of the class.

We claim there is an internal contradiction in the term “revolutionary party”. Such a party cannot be revolutionary. It is no more revolutionary than the creators of the Third Reich. When we speak of revolution, we naturally speak of the proletarian revolution, the seizure of power by the working class itself.

The “revolutionary party” is based on the idea that the working class needs a group of leaders who vanquish the bourgeoisie for the workers and to construct a new government — (note that the working class is not yet considered fit to reorganise and regulate production). But is not this as it should be? As the working class does not yet seem capable of revolution, is it not necessary that the revolutionary vanguard, the party, make the revolution for it? And is this not true as long as the masses willingly endure capitalism?

Against this, we raise the question: what forces can such a party raise for the revolution? How is it able to defeat the capitalist class? Only if the masses stand behind it. Only if the masses rise and through mass attacks, mass struggle, and mass strikes, overthrow the old regime. Without the action of the masses, there can be no revolution.

Two things can follow. The masses remain in action, they do not go home and leave the government to the new party. They organise their power in factory and workshop, prepare for the further conflict to the complete defeat of capital; through the workers’ councils they establish a firm union to take over the complete direction of all society — in other words, they prove they are not as incapable of revolution as it seemed. Of necessity, then, conflicts will arise with the party which itself wants to take over power and which sees only disorder and anarchy in the self-action of the working class. Possibly the workers will develop their movement and sweep out the party. Or; the party, with the help of bourgeois elements defeats the workers. In either case, the party is an obstacle to the revolution, because it wants to be more than a means of propaganda and enlightenment; because it feels itself called upon to lead and rule as a party.

On the other hand the masses may follow the party faith, and leave to it the further direction of affairs. They follow the slogans from above, have confidence in the new government (as in Germany in 1918) that is to realise communism and go back home and to work. Immediately the bourgeoisie exerts its whole class power the roots of which are unbroken; its financial forces, its great intellectual resources, and its economic power in factories and great enterprises. Against this the government party is too weak. Only through moderation, concessions and yielding can it maintain itself. The excuse is given then. that more can not be secured at the moment, that it is insanity for the workers try to force impossible demands. Thus the party deprived of class power becomes the instrument for maintaining bourgeois power.

We stated before that the term “revolutionary party” was contradictory in the proletarian sense. We can state it otherwise: in the term “revolutionary party”, “revolutionary” always means a bourgeois revolution. Always, when the masses overthrow a government and then allow a new party to take power we have a bourgeois revolution — the substitution of a ruling caste by a new ruling caste. It was so in Paris in 183 when the financial bourgeoisie supplanted the landed proprietors, in 1 when the industrial bourgeoisie supplanted the financiers, and in 1870 the combined petty and large bourgeoisie took over the reins.

In the Russian revolution the party bureaucracy came to power as the ruling caste. But in Western Europe and America' the bourgeoisie is much more powerfully entrenched in plants and banks, so that a party bureaucracy cannot push them aside. The bourgeoisie in these countries can be vanquished only by repeated and united action of the masses in which they seize the mills and factories and build up their councils.

Those who speak of "revolutionary parties" draw incomplete, limited conclusions from history. When the Socialist and Communist parties became organs of bourgeois rule for the perpetuation of exploitation, these well meaning people merely concluded that they would have to do better. They cannot realise that the failure of these parties is due to the fundamental conflict between the self emancipation of the working class through its own power and the pacifying of the revolution through] a new sympathetic ruling clique. They think they are the revolutionary vanguard because they see the masses indifferent and inactive. But the masses are inactive only because they cannot yet' comprehend the course of the struggle and the unity of class interests, although they instinctively sense the great power of the enemy and the enormity of their task. Once conditions force them into action they will attack the task of self organisation and the conquest of the economic power of capital.

Comment by the APCF

The A.P.C.F., like the Council Communists, repudiates the orthodox party conception. We see in the internecine struggle to "capture the leadership" of the working class, one of the most potent forces of disruption and disintegration. Under cover of promoting ideological clarity — legitimate and necessary in itself — a bitter struggle for careers leadership, and power, sows confusion, dissension and hatred. Loyalty to party — or self — takes the place of loyalty to the working class, a distinction with a tremendous difference.

We of the A.P.C.F., whilst warning the workers against the above dangers, nevertheless welcome every leavening influence among the workers every piece of revolutionary education and propaganda. We extend the hand of comradeship to the rebel workers of all parties or none, urging the ultimate absorption of every section in the all-in councils of the workers, and other organs of proletarian struggle. It is our mission to educate, agitate, and enthuse; perhaps even to inspire. We will gladly give service as propagandists, as advisers or as delegates. But we do NOT seek to boss or control. We would impel not compel, seeking the maximum self-initiative and direct action of the workers themselves.

(November 1940-January 1941)

The Party and the Working Class

by Frank Maitland

The historic role of the working class is the organisation of a new system of society, socialism, which will replace capitalism with a world of free, thinking men and women who command the organisation of the material means of life, a command over things which will free both society and the individual. The goal of the anarchist and the marxist is undoubtedly the same — the freeing of the individual from external authority. And this will become possible only when the individual regards his social tasks as a natural human function like sleeping or breathing and freely and generously gives his energies to increase the social means of existence.

But in working for that goal, the marxists and anarchists differ. The marxists say that the anarchists are utopian, unpractical, unscientific, sentimental, too much given to individualistic philosophy.

The anarchists say that the marxists reproduce in new forms the evils of capitalist politics, particularly the party and the state — and worse, reproduce these authoritarian institutions under the revolution

ary banner and in the name of freedom. The truth is that both sides come to exaggerate what they consider to be the defect in the other's position, and, inversely, to exaggerate in themselves the defect criticised, which inclines to become the rock upon which all may strain but none may move. While it would be stupid for us to minimise the wide divergence of opinion, it would be no less stupid for us not to see that the anarchists have something to learn from marxist science and the marxists have something to learn from anarchist individualism.

In his article whose heading we adopt, comrade Mattick [i.e. Pannekoek] writes on a question vital for the working class, the question of the party, and Solidarity does a service in raising this for discussion at this time.

Comrade Mattick opposes the party to the class, and is opposed to the party. He considers that the "belief in parties" is the main reason for the impotence of the working class. He argues that we can choose — party or no party. But this is not the case. Parties do not arise by accident or by whim, but as the political expression of a class or section of a class; that is, as the conscious, written-down, propagated expression of the economic interests of a social class.

He is right when he says that the party and factional strife cannot be the cause of dividing and weakening the working class. "The working class is not weak because it is split up — it is split up because it is weak". The existence of great parties like the Social-Democratic Party and Communist Party, the existence of scores of small groups, the emergence of a Fourth International — these are the products of the historic struggles of the proletariat for the conscious expression of its needs — the attempts, the failures, the new beginnings.

It is not permissible even for an anarchist to separate the economic and political struggles, which are indissolubly combined in real life.

It is true that the masses are unaware of this combination and act politically without understanding. We must acknowledge the facts — that the great mass of proletarians live and engage

in the class struggle, without being conscious of the struggle, without understanding it; and that a minority of proletarians — the most intelligent, active, honest, courageous — achieve consciousness of the struggle.

‘The task becomes, how to integrate the conscious minority and unconscious mass? The conscious minority must come together to form an organisation for propaganda, education and organisation — a party. According to comrade Mattick’s argument, even his “groups which might be called parties, but would be parties in an entirely different sense from those of today” would be in opposition to the working class. No matter how they are organised or how named, these propaganda groups or “organs of self-enlightenment” would constitute a party, which would not incorporate the whole mass of the people until society had progressed far on the road to complete socialism and only incorporate a majority at moments of crisis, in a great revolution, and for every day purposes remain confined to the most active and courageous proletarians. On this side of the revolution, the party can be nothing more than the conscious minority, for the conditions of capitalism stand in the way of educating the masses. The whole educational, propagandist and organisational means are in the hands of the enemy.

The revolution will be well under way before the working class is able to seize these means and use them for the real education of the masses. The class struggle by itself will not educate and organise the masses. If it did there would be no need for comrade Mattick or us to busy ourselves with the question of the political party. It still remains for the conscious minority to enlighten the masses. The masses must learn to think before they act, in action, and after action. The revolution must be a conscious process. The idea that a group of actives, the vanguard, can accomplish a revolution without the assistance of the masses, or even with their momentary aid, is Blanquism, but not Marxism. How make the working class conscious of itself? How can tens of millions of people think and act? Only by means of meetings, newspapers, books, cinemas, radio, etc — the material organs of thought and action, which the anarchists themselves cannot do without. And this material organisation requires men to speak, write, study, work — these men must be organised — and you have the political party. A party is necessary as the brain of the class, the sensory, thinking and directing apparatus of the class, of tens and hundreds of millions of people. And it must represent millions who are unable individually to voice their needs, unable to think clearly, degraded and stupefied by capitalist exploitation.

If our problem is not one of — party or no party, it certainly is one of — what kind of party? The social-democratic conception of a parliamentary party and the communist idea of a party dictatorship stand opposed to our conception of the party, as well as to those of Marx and Lenin. Here we reach common ground with comrade Mattick, in spite of his fundamental error in flinging the conception of a revolutionary party against the revolution. What kind of party does the working class need? A party which represents the interests of the working class as a whole, and its future, historic interests before its immediate petty interests; a party which does not set itself up above and over against the class, but places itself at the service of the class; a party which puts its loyalty to the class before its loyalty to itself; a party whose policy in every situation represents the real, fundamental interests of the working class as a whole; a party composed of men and women, the most intelligent, active and honest of their class, absolutely devoted to the interests of the revolution. It was such a party that Lenin strove to create. The present debacle of the Comintern does not show that his conception is incorrect, it shows us the enormous difficulties which we must overcome in educating and organising the workers as a class. Marxism does not say that the party can replace the class, or do without it, or defy — and in this comrade Mattick

agrees with marxism. The Communist Party is not the application of the marxist theory, but the application of a distortion of marxist theory. We are not justified in attacking this distortion and calling that a refutation of marxism.

The party is the material apparatus for integrating the conscious minority and unconscious mass. The relation between party and class varies with the ups and downs of the struggle, but it is the aim of the party to maintain its correct relation with the class, that relation being the fullest, most all-sided, thought-out-to-the-end expression of the developing needs of the class in its struggle. Further articles would be needed to explain in the necessary detail our opinions on the relations between party and class the structure of the party, the question of discipline, etc Here it must suffice to say that the party and class must always be as closely integrated as is humanly devisable; that the structure of the party must be democratic, flexible, allowing for the inclusion in its ranks of many shades of revolutionary opinion, and at the same time sufficiently centralised and disciplined to obtain swift action on a mass and continental scale; that the discipline cannot be dictated from a central committee, for militarisation of the party is not in keeping with the conception of socialist organisation, and that the well-spring of discipline is the self-discipline of the party member, who is convinced that this is the best possible expression of his class, that this is his party in whose activity he fully agrees and fully participates.

It is useless for comrade Mattick to wait until "conditions force the working class into action". This means that the battle is lost before it is begun. Against the intellectual resources and material organisation of the bourgeoisie we must erect an organisation which cannot spring up overnight, because of the nature of things, but which must be created by the struggle of years and decades. We must bring consciousness to the class struggle. We must build the party, the only means of bringing that consciousness.

No marxist will deny that a conflict exists between party and class, the conscious minority and the unconscious mass. This is what comrade Mattick wants us to jump over by washing out the "belief in parties But these two parts of the same thing cannot be reconciled by refusing to recognise one of them. The misogynist "solves" the love problem by putting women out of his life. The bourgeois professor "solves" the social problem by ignoring the class struggle. The pacifist "solves" the war problem by saying, why fight? But marriage, the class struggle and war goes on. The party is a historic creation, which cannot be thrown aside. It has to be recognised as a part of the revolutionary struggle. The task is to use it in the correct manner, to really solve the opposition between party and class by finding the correct methods of integrating them, of obtaining a fruitful conflict instead of a devastating suicidal strife. And in this, the working class remains the deciding factor. It is the workers, by their free acceptance, and not the party, by its dictation, which will decide, which party? No, the task is not to get rid of the party, but to struggle for the control of the party by the working class, in opposition to the control of the working class by the party.

(February-April 1941)

Our Reply

by the APCF

We find it very difficult to maintain regular contact with the U.S.A. and we know that our readers — and comrade Frank Maitland — will bear with us until such time as we get a reply from the pen of Paul Mattick himself.

In the meantime, however, without committing comrade Mattick in any way, we append a rejoinder in the name of the A.P.C.F.

First, anti-parliamentarians are not necessarily obliged to accept the label anarchist, and second, if so, they do not on that account deny one jot of their socialism.

Further, in so far as our Bolshevik friends reject and defy capitalist and orthodox labourist conceptions, they also are as much “individualistic” as the anarchist. Is it not boasted, for example, that on many occasions Marx, Lenin and Trotsky were prepared to be in a minority of one — if they thought they were more correct than all others on the question at issue? In this, like Galileo, they were quite in order. Where they and their followers, obsessed by the importance of their own judgement, go wrong, is in their tendency to refuse this inalienable right to other protagonists and fighters for the working class. The historical example of this is Russia — long before Stalin turned the tables on the Old Bolsheviks.

In Kronstadt 20,000 of the cream of the working class were needlessly slaughtered in 1921. Yet one of the main slogans of the heroic Kronstadt sailors — in conjunction with thousands of workers in Petrograd was “All Power to the Workers”.

We agree with Comrade Maitland that every revolutionary individual should have due regard to his social duties. Anarchists like Durruti and Alex Berkman give the practical and theoretical confirmation that this was likewise their posture.

Just as Comrade Maitland disagrees with non-revolutionary Marxists, so do we repudiate non-revolutionary Anarchists.

We are told we cannot ‘c~ party or no party, but it appears to be as big a difficulty which party to choose’. However, we ask the workers to choose the principles and methods in harmony with their fundamental class interests. They will find much that is helpful — and, alas, much that is not — in many parties, however satisfied they may be with their — exclusive — correctness.

Comrade Maitland must note that there are intelligent, active, courageous workers in several revolutionary groupings. He must, also, never forget no party can fail to have a proportion who are prone to develop a bureaucratic or power complex, and the larger the party grows, the greater the proportion of such potential renegades or dictators. The ideology of these people is easily changed by changing economic needs. They soon use their influence for the party rather than for the class and finally exert it for themselves rather than for even the party. This is an historic phenomenon.

The analogy of the party being the brain of the working class is unsound. The first difficulty is the number of sections claiming to fill this post, each giving different yet more or less pontifical directives. To the extent that our opponent believes that any single party could direct millions of

workers on a continental scale he appears to us strangely utopian for a Marxist. Centralisation of such a character — even if possible or desirable — would be a simplified target for the ruling classes.

We have consistently advocated — and participated in — a revolutionary alliance for common objectives. This seems to us to afford the maximum possibility of using as many brains as possible and the highest degree of courage and class loyalty. The fruits of the best in the propaganda of all sections tends to fructify, the crisis rendering obsolete or clarifying many of the errors previously held.

Not that we discourage internationalism. Our campaigning for the Spanish workers, including the P.O.U.M., made that clear. But precisely because we are not utopian we know, in advance, the magnitude of the problem. The task is so great that the brains of all revolutionary socialists will be required. Whether we like it or not, and all attempts at clarification notwithstanding, these most genuine elements will be in many different parties.

In the final crisis however, as Maitland agrees, the workers will be the deciding factor — though he here negates his previous assumption that the' party (and not the class) is the brain.

And as in 1926 — and Spain in 1936 — workers through their own committees will show a surprising degree of brain, ingenuity, courage, etc. And many of the political pretenders may be found wanting, if not in brain, then in guts!

Like Comrade Maitland, we desire the maximum extension of solidarity in any crisis. It is utopian, however, to expect this to result from either a Ukase or an appeal from any one section. Solidaric action is more likely to result from a joint appeal by all revolutionary sections. It is still more likely to succeed — in fact only likely to succeed — when similar economic conditions throw up workers' committees simultaneously and reciprocal action taken in the name of the working class roused to action, not alone by propaganda, but by economic necessity.

The only guarantee of final success is that we sow as much socialist propaganda as possible, together with a minimum of party sectarianism. To impregnate the workers so that they will be as immune as possible to the danger of the various types of Fuehrers, who, on the promise of solving the problems they must ultimately solve themselves, will but change the form of slavery.

All useful factors are more than necessary for such a stupendous task as the emancipation of mankind. To aim at being the most important factor — or a cog in it — is understandable and to be praised. But let us beware lest a false sense of our own or our party's importance causes us to spurn others equally necessary, thereby hindering the realisation of our mutual ideal — the conquest by the workers of economic and social equality.

(February-April 1941)

The Party and the Working Class

by Paul Mattick

Our custom of omitting names has led to a misunderstanding. The article, "The Party and the Working Class", which, after it had appeared in Council Correspondence, was reprinted by the APCF and discussed in Solidarity (Nos. 34–36) by Frank Maitland, was written by Anton Pannekoek. The latter is at present in no position to answer Maitland's critique. Being in some way responsible for the contents of Council Correspondence, I will try to answer some of Maitland's questions.

The problems raised cannot be approached in an abstract manner and in general terms, but only specifically in regard to concrete historical situations. When Pannekoek said that the "belief in parties" is the main reason for the impotence of the working class, he spoke of parties as they have actually existed. It is obvious that they have not served the working class, nor have they been a tool for ending class rule. In Russia the party became a new ruling and exploiting institution. In Western Europe, parties have been abolished by fascism and have thus proved themselves incapable either of emancipating the workers or of raising themselves into power positions. (The fascist parties cannot be regarded as instruments designed to end the exploitation of labour). In America parties serve not the workers but the capitalists. Parties have fulfilled all sorts of functions, but none connected with the real needs of the workers.

Maitland does not question these facts. Like the Christians who reject criticism with the argument that Christianity has never been tried in earnest, Maitland argues that "the problem is not one of party or no party, but of what kind of party". Even if it is true that hitherto all parties have failed, he thinks that that does not prove that a new party, his "conception of the party", will also fail. It is clear that a "conception of a party" cannot fail merely because real parties have failed. But then "conceptions" do not matter. The party of which he speaks does not exist. His arguments have to be proven in practice; but there is no such practice. All parties that have thus far functioned started out with Maitland's conception of what a party ought to be. This did not hinder them from violating this conception throughout their history.

The party "Lenin strove to create", for instance, and the party he actually created were two different things because Lenin and his party were only parts of history; they could not force history into their own conceptions". There are other forces in society besides conceptions that shape events. Maitland may be right in saying that the "present debacle of the Comintern does not show that Lenin's conception of the party was incorrect", but the debacle certainly shows that, independent of his conception, the party was indeed "incorrect" if measured by Maitland's ideas and the needs of the international working class.

The party, Maitland maintains, "is a historic creation, which cannot be thrown aside". Unfortunately that was true in the past History has also shown, however, that parties were not what they were supposed to be. They are the historic creation of liberal capitalism and within this particular setting they served — for a time — the needs of the workers, but only incidentally. They were chiefly involved in building up the group interest and social influence of the party. They be-

came capitalistic institutions, participating in the exploitation of labour and fighting with other capitalistic groups for the control of power positions. Because of general crisis conditions, the concentration of capital, and the centralisation of political power, the state apparatus became the most important social power centre. A party that got control over the state — either legally or illegally — could transform itself into a new ruling class. This is what parties did or tried to do. Wherever the party succeeded, it did not serve the workers. Just the opposite occurred: the workers served the party. Capitalism, too, is a “historic creation”. If the “party cannot be thrown aside because it is a historic creation¹¹, how is Maitland going to abolish capitalism now that it is identical with the one-party state? In reality both must be “thrown aside”; to end capitalism today implies the ending of the party.

For Maitland “the party should be the material apparatus for integrating the conscious minority and the unconscious mass”. The mass is “unconscious”, however, for the same reason that it is powerless. The “conscious” minority could not alter the one situation without changing the other. It cannot bring “consciousness” to the masses unless it brings them power. If the consciousness and the power depend on the party, the whole class struggle question takes on a religious character. If the people that constitute the party are “good” people, they will give the masses power and consciousness; if they are “bad” people they will withhold both. There is no question of “integration” involved here, but only a question of “ethics”. Thus we may trust not only in abstract conceptions as to what a party ought to be but also in the good will of men. In brief, we must trust our leaders. What parties can give, however, they can also take away. Under conditions as they are, the “consciousness” of the minority is either meaningless, or it is connected with a power position in society. To increase “consciousness is thus to increase the power of the group that incorporates it. There arises no “integration” between “leaders” and “led”; instead, the existing gap between them widens continuously. The conscious group defends its position as a conscious group; it can defend this position only against the “unconscious” mass. The “integration” of the conscious minority and the unconscious mass is only a pleasanter-sounding description of the exploitation of the many by the few.

The fact that Maitland sees the party as the “material instrument” that co-ordinates thought and action reveals that his mind is still in the past. That is why he advocates the party of the future. The material apparatus (meetings, newspapers, books, cinema, radio, etc) of which he speaks has meanwhile ceased to be at the disposal of such parties as Maitland has in mind. The stage of capitalistic development in which parties could grow up like any other business concern and utilise the instruments of propaganda to their own advantage has ended. In present-day society, the development of labour organisations can no longer follow traditional paths. A party that “develops class consciousness in the masses” can no longer arise. The propaganda means are centralised and at the exclusive service of the ruling class or party. They cannot be used to unseat them. If the workers are not able to develop methods of struggle beyond the control of the ruling groups, they will not be able to emancipate themselves. A party is no weapon against the ruling classes; they do not even exist in fascist societies. Against the present power of the state-party-capital combination only the “conscious action of the whole mass of people” will help. As long as that mass remains “unconscious”, as long as it needs the “brain” of a party, this mass will remain powerless, for that “brain” will not develop.

Yet, there is no reason for despair. We can raise another question: what is this “consciousness” that parties supposedly have to bring to the workers? And what is that “unconsciousness” which demands the support of the masses by a separate “brain” — by the party? Is that kind of

consciousness that we find in parties really necessary in order to change society? What has been really dangerous hitherto for the masses and their needs is precisely that “consciousness” that prevails in party organisations. The “consciousness” of which Maitland speaks, as it was experienced in practice, has nothing whatever to do with a “consciousness” needed to rebel against the present, and to organise a new society. The lack of that sort of consciousness that is nourished by parties is no lack at all as regards the practical needs of the working class.

The workers’ job is essentially a simple one. It consists in recognising that all previously-existing ruling groups have hindered the development of a truly social production and distribution; in recognising the necessity for doing away with production and distribution as determined by the profit and power needs of special groups in society who control the means of production and the other social power sources. Production has to be shifted so that it can serve the real needs of the people; it has to become a production for consumption. When these things are recognised, the workers have to act upon them to realise their needs and desires. Little philosophy, sociology, economics and political science are needed to recognise those simple things and to act upon the recognition. The actual class struggle is here decisive and determining. But in the practical field of revolutionary and social activities the “conscious11 minority is no better informed than the 11unconscious11 majority. Rather the opposite is true. This has been proven in all actual revolutionary struggles. Any factory organisation, furthermore, will be better able than an outside party to organise its production. There is enough non-party intelligence in the world to co-ordinate social production and distribution without the help or interference of parties specialised in ideological fields. The party is a foreign element in social production just as the capitalist class was an unnecessary third factor to the two needed for the carrying on of the social life: the means of production and labour. The fact that parties participate in class struggles indicates that those class struggles do not tend towards a socialistic goal. Socialism finally means nothing more than the elimination of that third factor that stands between the means of production and labour. The “consciousness” developed by parties is the “consciousness” of an exploiting group struggling for the possession of social power. If it would propagate a 11socialist consciousness11 it must first of all do away with the party concept and with the parties themselves.

The “consciousness” to rebel against and to change society is not developed by the “propaganda” of conscious minorities, but by the real and direct propaganda of events. The increasing social chaos endangers the habitual life of greater and ever greater masses of people and changes their ideologies. So long as minorities operate as separate groups within the mass, the mass is not revolutionary, but neither is the minority. Its “revolutionary conceptions11 can still serve only capitalistic functions. If the masses become revolutionary, the distinction between conscious minority and unconscious majority disappears, and also the capitalistic function of the apparently “revolutionary consciousness” of the minority. The division between a conscious minority and an unconscious majority is itself historical. It is of the same order of the division between workers and bosses.

Just as the difference between workers and bosses tends to disappear in the wake of unsolvable crisis conditions and in the social levelling process connected therewith, so the distinction between conscious minority and unconscious mass will also disappear. Where it does not disappear we will have a fascist society.

“Integration” can only mean helping to do away with the distinction between conscious minority and unconscious mass. Within classes and within society differences will remain between

people. Some will be more energetic than others, some cleverer than others, etc. There will remain a division of labour. That these real differences froze into 'differences between capital and labour, into differences between party and mass, is due merely to historically conditioned specific production relations, to the capitalist mode of production. This distinction as regards social activity must be ended in order that capitalism may be ended. If one sees the need for "integration" he has to approach the problem in quite a different manner from Maitland. The "integration" has to go on not from the top down — where the party brings consciousness to the mass — but from the bottom up, where the class keeps all 'its intelligence and energy to itself, and does not isolate and thus capitalise it in separate organisations.

Production is social. All people, whatever they are or whatever they do, are, in a socially determined society, equally important. Their actual integration, not the "ideological integration" through the traditional party-mass relationship, is required. But this real integration, the human solidarity that is necessary in order to put an end to the misery of the world, must be fostered now. It can be developed only by destroying the forces which operate against it. Class solidarity and class actions can arise not with, but only against, groups and party interests.

(August- September 1941)

Do the Workers Need a Party?

by Abraham Ziegler

Pannekoek, Mattick and Maitland, despite their polar differences, all proceed from the same erroneous premise of traditional Marxism, i.e., the inevitability of Socialism. However, while Maitland continues to follow the “orthodox” application of the theory of inevitability, Pannekoek and Mattick have diverged. Maitland espouses the Marx-Engels thesis that the inevitable victory of Socialism is not an automatic product of the class struggle, but demands the intervention of a party with the will to power. Specifically, Maitland defends the Leninist “leadership” whose function it is to stimulate the movement of the workers along the revolutionary path and guide them to victory. Pannekoek-Mattick, on the other hand, conceive of Socialist consciousness arising out of the class struggle itself. For them revolutionary consciousness is not merely inevitable, it is spontaneous, and comes into being when the social temperature reaches 212 degrees — like water turning into steam.

Starting from this premise, Pannekoek and Mattick reject the party as a necessary element for proletarian victory. Mattick holds that parties PA&E 76 can only play a bourgeois role and are essentially anti-working class in character. To Pannekoek, the existence of parties and the workers’ belief in them is the main reason for working class impotence. Indeed, Pannekoek’s concession of a certain useful function to “ideological groupings” serves only to undermine his confusion on this score.

We find ourselves in basic disagreement with both the “orthodox” position of Maitland and the Pannekoek-Mattick deviation. It is true that parties have played a not inconsiderable role in reducing the proletariat to its present sorry plight. But Pannekoek confuses cause and effect when he attributes to the party per se the primary responsibility for the debacle of the proletariat. Belief in, or reliance upon, parties is an effect of the acceptance of capitalist ideology by the working class. As Pannekoek himself points out, “they (the workers) cannot yet comprehend the course of the struggle and the unity of class interests,” which is but another way of saying that the workers lack an independent class ideology. Under such circumstances it follows that today, parties with any sort of following will necessarily reflect the confusion of the working class. However it is not the parties that are responsible for the confusion; quite the contrary, only a party, based upon correct principles, is capable of providing the light necessary for dispelling confusion. Pannekoek glimpses this truth when he demonstrates that the party need not be a power vanguard organisation, that it can also function as a non-power, non-leadership, ideological grouping in the interests of working class enlightenment. His failure to grasp the vital role to be played by such a party stems from his erroneous concept of the nature of Socialist consciousness.

Basically, Mattick and Pannekoek confuse trade-union consciousness with Socialist consciousness. Trade-union consciousness is to the proletariat what class consciousness was to the bourgeoisie. Just as it was clear to the rising bourgeoisie that they were being “unjustly” hemmed in by feudal restrictions, and that they ought to have political representation commensurate with

their growing economic power, so it is equally apparent to the working class that they need unions to defend themselves against ruthless capitalist exploitation. But there they stop; unlike the revolutionary bourgeoisie of old, the workers regard the system which enslaves them as the best of all possible systems, the system of “free” enterprise, individual liberty and democracy. In short, the working class has not developed an independent class ideology but continues, in that sphere, an appendage of the bourgeoisie. As Lenin has pointed out in his *What Is To Be Done?*

“The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. it may itself realise the necessity for combining in unions, to fight against the employer and to strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.

“The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. The founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia.”

Before Lenin, Kautsky made the same distinction:

“In this connection Socialist consciousness is represented as a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, Socialism, as a theory, has its roots in a modern economic relationship in the same way as the latter emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But Socialism arises side by side with the class struggle and not out of the other; each arises out of different premises. Modern Socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of a profound scientific knowledge. Indeed modern economic science is as much a condition of production as, say, modern technology and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicles of science are not the proletariat but the bourgeois intelligentsia. It was out of the heads of the members of this stratum that Modern Socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who in their turn introduce it to the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arises from within it spontaneously.”

The limitations of trade union consciousness and the inability of Pannekoek’s “conditions” and Mattick’s “real and direct propaganda of events” to spontaneously transform the class instinct of the proletariat into Socialist understanding and consciousness is underlined by the failure of the “revolutionary situations” which have developed from time to time, to materialise. We need only mention the 1920 seizure of the factories in Northern Italy, the 1926 British General Strike, the 1936 French “Lock Out” movement, etc. Here we had spontaneously developed social crises which overnight transformed the placid social-economic atmosphere into one charged with revolutionary dynamite. The social barometer rose to an alarming degree. The very foundations of capitalist society heretofore considered impregnable, were threatened. But the storm blew over. “Order” and social calm were restored. Wherein lay the reason for the overwhelming defeats suffered by the workers on these historic occasions? We are told that the proletariat was betrayed

by the treachery of the Labour Leaders acting in conjunction with the party. True, the Labour Leaders and the party played a Judas role.

BUT IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE THE WORKING CLASS LACKED AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BOURGEOIS CHARACTER OF THE PARTY AND THE LABOUR LEADERS THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE, IN THE FIRST PLACE, TO BETRAY IT.

This is not to deprecate the importance of the role of “conditions” and of the social pressure, which the “real and direct propaganda of events” generate. These forces play an important part in developing Socialist consciousness in that they help to bring forth the latent class instinct of the proletariat. But class instinct is purely a negative factor, it cannot of itself (sans education and organisation) develop into Socialist consciousness by means of the warmth and pressure of the increasing temperature. To borrow an analogy from the field of electricity’ - To complete the revolutionary circuit it is necessary to link up the negative pole of class instinct with the positive pole of Socialist understanding and consciousness.

In opposing the Pannekoek-Mattick thesis, we by no means accept Maitland’s defence of the traditional “power-vanguard” party. However, Maitland is on solid ground in taking issue with Pannekoek and insisting that the class struggle by itself will not educate and organise the workers: that the “conscious minority must bring consciousness to the class struggle. But Maitland’s consciousness consists of blind faith and obedience to a sacrosanct Party. He conceives the masses as incapable of independent action and bluntly denies that they can be educated this side of the revolution and even after the revolution “is well under way.” Hence, according to Maitland, there is the need for the party to act as the “protector” of millions of workers “who are unable to think clearly, degraded and stupefied by capitalist exploitation.”

Paradoxically, Maitland and Mattick have a common bond. Both reject education — as distinct from experience obtained in the course of the class struggle — as a primary factor in the development of Socialist consciousness. Maitland considers the proletariat incapable of education, while Mattick dismisses education as of little or no importance. He reasons that the experience of the class struggle will supply the proletariat with what “little philosophy, sociology, economics and political science” they lack. Maitland and Mattick constitute the obverse and converse of the same medal. The former stresses the “ideological” character of the party, obscuring the real nature of his Leninist ideal in a cloud of democratic phraseology. Mattick, on the other hand, pictures the party as exclusively an anti-working class, power instrumentality. He, for his part, obscures and ignores the role of the party as an ideological grouping.

In contrast to the Pannekoek-Mattick concept of “automatic’ Socialist consciousness, and Maitland’s power vanguard party, we submit the DeLeonist concept of the role of the party.

DeLeon conceived the party as a teacher, not as a leader over the working class. Long before the bankruptcy of the traditional party, at a time when it was in the heyday of its popularity, DeLeon as a Socialist pathfinder discarded the power-vanguard concept. To DeLeon the party was an educational-propaganda organisation for the distilling of Socialist ideology. He violently disputed the Maitland-Leninist concept that the working class was incapable of carrying out its own revolution, and its corollary, that the workers were in need of a power party to “guide” and “protect” them. DeLeon never tired of pointing out that the revolution must be the conscious act of the workers themselves, functioning through their own economic organs. “No bunch of office holders can emancipate the workers”, was one of his favourite texts. To DeLeon, the party was transitory in nature, its role limited to the period prior to the revolution. After the revolution it was the Industrial Union composed of the entire working class, which was to function as the

government. He never tired of repeating that any attempt upon the part of the party to perpetuate itself after the revolution would constitute a usurpation.

Mattick states an inescapable truth when he points out that the proletariat's organisational opportunities are rapidly contracting. The party-intoxicated Maitland speaks of the party of the future being the product of decades of struggle. This is the sheerest nonsense; the working class hasn't got decades at its disposal to perfect its organisation. Mattick scores a telling point in pointing this out, but the shortness of time available does not defeat our contention that the class struggle of itself does not create Socialist consciousness. If anything the short time remaining in which the working class may act decisively, is only added reason for Mattick, Pannekoek et al., to abandon the traditional Marxist inevitability complex — the basic premise for all the bankrupt tactics which have led the working class from one defeat to another, until today we face the absolute victory of Fascism and the burial of the proletarian revolution for this historical period.

(February-April 1942)

For Workers' Councils.

by Frank Maitland

Socialism has established that the working class cannot organise a new social system by means of the political and economic organisations of capitalism. The working class must create new forms of organisation, socialist forms, bodies new in form and content and method.

The joint stock company, the trust system, these triumphs of the organisation of capital, must be replaced by the workers' organisations works councils and industrial unions. Municipal councils, parliament, churches, university system, charitable, scientific and educational bodies and all the political and semi-political organisations of capitalism must be replaced by the organs of the proletarian revolution. The state machine itself must be replaced. First it is necessary to destroy the old in a revolutionary fashion, breaking it to pieces under every form of attack, reducing it to its component parts, rescuing those which are useful to a socialist society and cleaning them of the capitalist dirt still clinging to them, destroying the useless with implacable thoroughness.

The institutions of capitalism must be abolished and the institutions of socialism created.

The groups in the revolutionary movement argue fiercely the question of the organisation of socialism. There is no need for confusion or dismay at this conflict. It is good. Indeed, there is not enough of it, and it is not sufficiently based on a study of the examples already produced by proletarian revolutions and of the experiences, rich in lessons, of the working class in the period from 1917 to 1939. It is not sufficiently worked out and there is not enough drive to put it into practice. Discussions of every problem arising on socialist organisation must be encouraged.

Minimum Agreed

In spite of disagreements, we are able to lay down a number of basic propositions in regard to the new socialist organisations.

1. They will be universal — they will organise all workers, of whatever race, sex, religion, age or opinion.
2. They will be industrial — they will be organised in units of factory, workshop, store, yard, mine or other enterprise.
3. They will be proletarian — they will be the workers' own organisations, representing only the working class.
4. They will be democratic — they will be organised in the simplest possible way, with the participation of all workers and with all offices held on the basis of democracy, that is, no special privileges whatsoever for office holders.
5. They will be revolutionary — they will struggle for the overthrow of capitalist authority.

6. They will be educational — one of the main tasks of the councils is to educate the workers in the job of “ruling” i.e. of running the country ourselves.

The basis of the revival of the struggle for a revolutionary party on a national and world scale is the recommencing of the struggle for working class organisation in industry.

It is the duty of all revolutionary groups, while they continue to argue out among themselves the details and to struggle around the party question, to carry out the widest propaganda for workers' councils, to explain over and over again to the workers the historical basis, the organisational need and revolutionary role of workers' councils, to encourage and help the workers in every way to organise and develop the workers' council system.

All groups can co-operate in this general class propaganda and commence a really effective campaign. Anarchists, ILPers, 4th Internationalists and revolutionary socialists of all groupings can agree on the basic points outlined. Here let us emphasise point 3, which stresses the independence of the workers' councils, and this is meant, not only in the sense that they must be independent of capitalist control and must inoculate themselves against bourgeois opinion, oppose themselves to capitalism, but also in the sense that they must be class organisations, that is, not councils initiated or controlled by a particular party or subscribing to a particular programme or financed by a particular union — they must represent the workers as workers. The universality of the councils, their class character, is the foundation of their strength. If the emancipation of the proletariat is the work of the proletariat itself, it must have class organisations to accomplish that emancipation. These are the Councils.

Act Now

Let a general campaign be started now. A million leaflets, a series of pamphlets dealing thoroughly with the theory of workers' councils and their practical organisation, a chain of meetings, the maintenance of constant propaganda in industry, the nation-wide popularisation of the idea of workers' councils, the creation of a discussion organ for the exchange of theoretical opinion — these are some of the tasks which can be undertaken immediately and in which all tendencies can participate without violating their independent attitudes. If every group or party produced a leaflet — a small group may duplicate 1000, a factory cell may produce 200 for that enterprise alone, a large branch may print 10,000, a party like the ILP, 100,000. If every group produced the maximum it could effectively distribute, we would be able to add up to a million in a short time. The benefit of such a campaign to the groups themselves — increased interest, membership, support — are obvious.

Let the campaign for Workers' Councils be launched.
(October-November 1942)

Where We Stand.

by the APCF/WRL

We repudiate party politics and the popular conception of parties. We claim that party politics and sectarianism have betrayed the fundamental principles of socialism, and have brought about a state of confusion and political bankruptcy in the ranks of the working class movement.

To the professional politician and party theoretician the proletariat exists merely as objective phenomena, to be used merely as pawns in a game to prove their particular sociological theories, and to be manipulated manually in the making of history. We denounce this attitude as opportunism and adventurism of the worst possible kind, and declare that we, the workers, have a much higher conception of the destiny we shall fulfil.

We assert in the light of the materialist conception of history that it is the historic mission of the proletariat to emancipate society and the forces of production from the thralldom of class domination and exploitation by the act of social revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We claim that this is not the work of any one party or parties, who consider themselves distinct and apart from the masses of the workers.

However, we realise that political clarity and understanding do not develop simultaneously with awakening class-consciousness; that spontaneity of action and revolutionary fervour do not always embody the necessary knowledge of proletarian strategy and tactics.

We claim therefore, that it is the duty of those already class conscious and politically advanced workers to come together in common unity; not as another party, but as the vanguard of the workers themselves, for the purpose of organising propaganda to offset the reactionary tendencies of the professional and party politics.

Utilising their knowledge of the past history of the movement and trained in the correct method of organisation to give a clear cut and directive lead to the social aspirations of their less politically advanced fellow workers.

Towards this end the Workers Revolutionary League has come into being to express the need for workers unity in the face of the present political debacle.

(October-November 1942)

Afterword

Why has Wildcat reprinted these articles from Solidarity?

For as long as capitalism has existed, there have been groups of men and women who have reached the conclusion that the problems confronting the working class under capitalism can only be solved by the establishment of a communist society. The APCF was one such group, but there have been others before and since, emerging at different periods in history, in various parts of the world and often without being aware of each others existence. Communist ideas are a constantly recurring response to capitalism on the part of ordinary wage-labourers. But for the most part such revolutionary groups and individuals have formed only a tiny minority of the working class as a whole. This has made it easy for the capitalist class, with enormous propaganda resources at its disposal, to obscure the fact that they have ever existed, while the historians of the so-called socialist and “communist” parties have been far more interested in the history of their own (actually capitalist) organisations than they have been in the history of the groups and individuals that have steadfastly opposed capitalism in all its forms. Thus this pamphlet is part of a continuing effort to reclaim the hidden history of rebellion against capitalism.

It is only to be expected that after more than 40 years, many detailed points of the APCF’s analysis have been disproved or qualified by¹ subsequent experience. The purpose of this Afterword is to indicate briefly to what extent this is the case. By so doing we hope to strengthen the case for the APCF’s — and our own — basic principles.

Recognising the war to be an imperialist one, the APCF’s position of revolutionary opposition to it was, primarily, a matter of principle. With hindsight, it was doomed from the start to be no more than a symbolic gesture. When Lenin and a handful of fellow revolutionaries had called on workers during World War I to turn the imperialist war into a civil war they also seemed impossibly isolated from the mass of European workers who had rallied to the call of patriotism. Yet within four years Europe was engulfed by revolution. Superficially the APCF’s position in World War II might have seemed similar. With hindsight the crushing defeat of the working class between the wars meant that a revolutionary response to World War II was never on. Events such as the bloody suppression of the IWW (the revolutionary syndicalist movement in America), the defeat of the British General Strike, the defeat of the German revolution and the rise of fascism, the massacre of Spanish workers in the civil war there, and above all the defeat from within of the Russian Revolution — none of these had any parallel in the years before World War I.

Despite this, the APCF’s growing optimism as the class struggle intensified towards the end of the war was mirrored by the growing fears within the ruling class for the survival of their system. A capitalist economist stated in 1945 that it was “not open to doubt that the decay of capitalist society is very advanced”¹. The APCF hoped for revolution. More pessimistic members of the ruling class regarded it as a distinct possibility.

¹ This quote, and the following information on post-war class struggle, comes from *Capitalism Since World War II*.

In 1946–47 there was a wave of strikes. In America these years saw the climax of a strike wave which had been building up since 1943. In Japan there were widespread strikes and demonstrations against redundancies, and calls for peoples control over the distribution of rationed food, wage rises and redundancies. In Germany strikes spread through the Ruhr in 1947. Referenda were held around the question of large-scale nationalisation without compensation, recording massive majorities in favour. In France a strike by 30,000 Renault workers triggered off a widespread strike wave between April and July 1947.

The nature of the demands raised – a confused mixture of state capitalism and self-managed capitalism – reflects the dominant influence of the traditional Socialist and Communist parties. It was the influence of these parties which allowed the ruling class to suppress the post-war strike wave largely without resorting to violence thus setting the pattern for the whole post-war era. Wherever workers committees were in control of workplaces they were dissolved either by or with the support of the Socialist and Communist Parties, who denounced them as “fascist fronts”. In Italy the CP called for hard work and labour discipline and used its influence to quell the strikes which had continued on and off since 1943. In Germany a British official report noted that SP and CP union officials had “exerted a restraining influence on the workers, and had both preached and practised a policy of cooperation”. In Japan the CP supported “responsible” strikes while denouncing the “trend in the labour movement towards direct action and a frontal attack on the rights of the Capitalist owners of the means of production”. In France the CP more bluntly denounced strikers at Renault as “Hitlerite-Trotskyist provocateurs in the pay of de Gaulle” (!).

Workers in struggle after the war confronted a capitalism which was in essence as totalitarian as the APCF had predicted. But in the West at least it was a very different form of totalitarianism from Nazism – opposition forces were not eliminated. They were integrated into the state. The left formed a solid block with the right against any workers struggles which seriously threatened capitalism. The fake alternative provided by the left, given credibility as such by the state-controlled media and education systems, gave an illusion of democratic choice.

This did not mean that the ruling class had renounced dictatorial methods. When the US ruling class decided that democratic rights should not extend to the Communist party, despite the latter’s loyalty to American imperialism during the war, the McCarthyite purges did the job quite simply in a way that Stalin himself would have been proud of.

In Britain, the post-war Labour Government used troops against striking dockers and other workers. In Japan, US armoured cars were used to quell demonstrations, and strikes were threatened with “action of most drastic nature”. The American governor of occupied Germany warned strikers that “under the law of the military [you] can be punished with the death sentence. I have the power to cut the rations of anyone involved in work unrest... this would be drastic and extend for an indefinite period of time”. In other words, go back to work or we’ll starve you to death!

But in general the ruling class in America and Western Europe did not have to resort to fascistic methods, because of the massive, sustained post-war economic boom which had been foreseen by almost nobody – certainly not by the APCF. Increased consumption, naturally, defused workers discontent. Indeed the consumer society was a central pillar of the whole structure of democratic totalitarianism.

In the light of the history of post-war capitalism, the concept of decadence which was the cornerstone of the ideas of the APCF and the left/council communist movement in general needs to be re-evaluated. In the thirties it was not hard to believe that capitalism had entered into a

period of permanent economic decline. The post-war boom showed that this was not the case. Whether or not decadence is still a useful concept for the analysis of the development of the world economy remains to be seen. Attempts to reconcile the concept of decadence with the reality of the post-war economy have not been very successful².

Paradoxically, the political “side effects” associated with decadence have proved more permanent than the economic decline which is supposed to have caused them. Throughout the boom years the state continued to consolidate its dominance over all areas of social and economic life. The consolidation of global imperialism continued towards its ultimate stage: the division of the world into two great camps, armed to the teeth and engaged in permanent warfare with each other in SE Asia, the Middle East, Latin America etc.. The unions and workers parties confirmed their process of integration into the capitalist state. Although the 50s and 60s resembled the 19th century economically, there was no equivalent growth of a working class reformist movement. Workers aspirations and discontent were channelled into the welcoming arms of the official opposition parties and the trade unions and thus neutralised.

In short it seems that while a more or less temporary respite from the economic features of decadence is possible, the political effects are irreversible.

However the present crisis confirms the single most important economic thesis drawn from the concept of decadence. That is, in decadence, once an economic crisis sets in, no recovery is possible. The crisis leads remorselessly towards world war. At the same time the effects of the economic crisis force workers — often despite their beliefs, to struggle outside of and against the official left parties and the unions. Faced with this threat the ruling class, without any fuss, drops its democratic mask and resorts to naked violence to defend its rotting system. Police violence during the miners strike in Britain showed workers throughout the industrialised world what to expect in the future. Workers in the non-industrial world are already accustomed to such treatment. Compromise is no longer an option. The choice which lies at the heart of the concept of decadence remains: war or revolution, socialism or barbarism.

The APCF’s principled stand against war is thus of the utmost practical relevance today. Revolution is a necessity, and unlike in 1939, it is also a possibility. The working class has suffered nothing comparable to the bloody defeats of the 20s and 30s. On the other hand, the threat of the complete destruction of human life in a nuclear war makes the need for revolution more urgent than ever.

Those who also understand the urgency of revolution, naturally want to organise to help speed things along. But how? The debate on the party question in Solidarity failed to arrive at any definite conclusion. This was inevitable since virtually the only historical examples revolutionaries could base their ideas on were of parties and political organisations which had failed in the past. Unfortunately this is still the case today. But it is impossible to resist taking this opportunity to make our own contribution to the debate.

So, where does Wildcat stand on the Party Question?

Like the APCF we reject out of hand the idea of a revolutionary party which aims to seize power. But again like the APCF we also reject the extreme position argued by Mattick that all specialist political organisations are reactionary. Mattick claims that class struggle spontaneously gives rise to widespread revolutionary consciousness. This is wrong on two counts.

² See especially *The Decadence of Capitalism*, by the International Communist Current. See also *The Economic Foundations of Capitalist Decadence*, by the Communist Workers Organisation.

Firstly in all class struggle, both in action and in politics, there is always a radical minority which takes the lead. In the miners strike it was a clearly defined minority which called for, and took part in, radical action. Only a minority of this minority drew more or less revolutionary conclusions from their experience. Of course our aim is that the vast majority of workers should become actively involved in revolutionary struggle and revolutionary politics. A future revolution will fail unless it abolishes the rigid division between leaders and led which is the hallmark of class society. But we won't get any further towards this goal by shutting our eyes to the reality that this division reappears — spontaneously — in every new episode of class struggle.

Revolutionary ideas do not arise spontaneously. This is the second error of Mattick's argument. Of course revolutionary ideas will only become widespread in conditions of mass class struggle. But conscious effort is equally necessary. Each new generation of revolutionaries has to re-learn revolutionary theory. This theory has to be tested, refined, and — where necessary — revised in the light of detailed analyses of history and current events. A ceaseless effort is required to produce and distribute revolutionary propaganda. Finally, those who are convinced of the need for revolution should put forward their case not only by argument but also by example, by active involvement in struggles wherever they occur.

This work, undertaken — inevitably — by a minority) is revolutionary political organisation. Mattick's claim that none of this would be necessary if it were not for the reactionary influence of political parties, without which revolutionary ideas would develop spontaneously, is irrelevant and impossible to judge. We have to deal with the world as it is, not as we would like it to be. Opposition to revolutionary political organisation means, in practice, refusing to allow the working class the means to effectively oppose the reactionary influences of the capitalist media, the Labour Party and its leftist hangers-on. Although Wildcat agrees with the basic conclusions of the APCF on the party question we have some criticisms of the way the APCF itself was organised. Solidarity was a forum for people who opposed the war for all sorts of different reasons. It is easy to understand how in the desperate circumstances of the war all those who opposed it would be drawn together. But the APCF was too tolerant in allowing views fundamentally opposed to their own to appear unchallenged in the paper. These included at various times, pacifism, trade unionism, and critical support for Russia. The problem for revolutionary organisations is how to exclude reactionary views such as these without stifling debate. The solution is that membership of the organisation should be based on agreement with a clearly defined set of basic principles. Within the framework of this basic agreement different views are freely expressed.

The APCF also seemed to suffer from a lack of proper organisation. It appeared to be content to remain a locally based group, with no interest in trying to form a national or international organisation. It is sometimes argued that revolutionaries should only organise informally in local groups, to avoid the dangers associated with larger organisations. This argument is at least implied in Pannekoek's *The Party and the Working Class*. Certainly these dangers are real, and many. They include bureaucracy, routinism, hierarchy, and above all the danger that the organisation will become an elite, openly or secretly seeking power not for the working class as a whole, but for itself.

These dangers have to be faced up to, not run away from. Besides, even the smallest organisations, which claim to be simply groups of friends, are not immune from them. Anyone familiar with radical literature will have encountered the intellectual elitism of the small group of self-styled experts, who obscure their often banal ideas behind a veil of jargon. This is just as contrary

to the spirit of communism as the Leninist Party which admits it wants to take power for the working class

Capitalism is interational. Class struggle is international. The revolution will have to be international if it is to succeed. It is absurd to argue that it is adequate for revolutionaries to be organised in small local groups. The fragmentation of today's tiny revolutionary movement is to be deplored. We set our sights on a centralised, international revolutionary organisation.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation
Class War on the Home Front
Comprising articles from the pages of Solidarity, the paper of the Anti-Parliamentary
Communist Federation, and commentaries by Wildcat.
1986

Retrieved on October 27, 2009 from web.archive.org

usa.anarchistlibraries.net