WORLD WAR TWO

WHO WILL COME OUT ON TOP?

THE RAVEN ANARCHIST QUARTERLY 29

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Introduction

Since the War to Make War Impossible ended fifty years ago, the world has been plagued with at least 150 wars, a number of which – in Africa and 'former Yugoslavia' – have all the characteristics of World War Two in so far as the real objectives, and not the rhetoric, are concerned. And as in World War Two, 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide' figure prominently, as well as 'freedom from tyranny and injustice' as the objectives on both sides. And certainly in Europe in 1939 there were millions of anti-Fascist, anti-Nazi, anti-Franco refugees who were convinced that declaring war on Germany was ideological. Our good old friend Arthur Moyse spells it out in his inimitable prose elsewhere in this issue of *The Raven*.

But to those of us who were anarchists at the time of the Franco military coup in Spain in July 1936, and who observed the haste with which a 'Socialist' Blum for France and the Tory British government imposed a ban on the sale of arms to the Spanish Republican government at the same time as Mussolini and Hitler were pouring in men and armaments to secure victory for Franco, it was obvious that the Western powers were more concerned with the threat of 'Communism' than of Nazism. This is understandable for though the Communist Party in Britain was active and influential in some unions, it was numerically small compared with the French Communist Party which controlled the largest of the workers' unions, the CGT, as was the case in Germany and Italy before the Fascist-Nazi takeovers. For Halifax, Chamberlain and Churchill, as the historians are late in the day discovering, their only concern with Hitler had nothing to do with his anti-semitism (we had our fair share in this country in the 1930s) but with his demands for *lebensraum* – and the obvious direction was towards the East where millions of Germans had been swallowed up in the artificial division of Central Europe as a result of the Versailles Treaty after World War One.

That Churchill was obsessed by the threat of 'Communism' in 1917 with the Russian Revolution and by Soviet expansionism following the Russian military victory over the German army, can be illustrated by facts unknown or long forgotten.

According to the Labour MP and editor of an excellent Scottish socialist weekly *Forward* of the distant past:

Had Hitler been concerned only with preaching a holy war against Russia,

Churchill would not logically have quarrelled with him. For he was as anti-Bolshevik as Hitler or Goebbels ... Winston had been a pioneer and a distinguished master of this propaganda from the beginning, long before ... Europe had heard of Goebbels. *Indeed in his memorandum to Lloyd George, written in March 1920, he had developed a theory of building up Germany as a bulwark against Bolshevism*[1] (our italics)

And at the end of World War Two the victors declared that Germany should not be allowed to re-arm for fifty years. But thanks to the so-called 'Cold War' with Russia within a few years the Western powers were pleading with Germany to re-arm!

Unlike authoritarians of Left and Right, anarchists cannot impose a political line. But *pace* Kropotkin and a few other anarchist francophiles who fortunately for them were too old to shoulder arms in World War One; *pace* those Spanish anarchists who in their determination to defeat the 'enemy' accepted to become Ministers in the Caballero government (and all learned the habits, even in exile, of ex-Ministers!); *pace* the Herbert Reads and Orwells and a whole number of intellectuals (including Arthur Moyse!) who had over the years protested and demonstrated against local Fascists led by Sir Oswald Mosley (1896-1980), the Labour Party's renegade-possible-future-Prime-Minister became infatuated with another renegade revolutionary socialist: Mussolini! The disease is power. And no politician escapes once bitten. But when will the sincere protesters realise that no government goes to war except for material benefits: territorial (colonialism) or economic (oil, markets).

Even the historians at long last have concluded that World War Two was, after all, not an anti-Nazi crusade, was not an attempt to prevent the holocaust (indeed in another fifty years it may be concluded that the war precipitated the 'Final Solution' against the Jews who had not the means, nor a welcome from Britain, to get out when it was possible to do so).

The editorial in the first issue of our monthly *War Commentary*[2] in December 1939 had to face all these problems of individual concerns as to the 'war aims' of the 'allies'. This was what we wrote:

That many sincere anti-fascists believe in the 'righteousness' of this war, quite independently of the propaganda served up by the Conservative and so-called radical press, is not surprising. They say: 'We, who have always shouted that Fascism must be crushed should, now that an opportunity presents itself, act in accordance with our principles'. Their actions are, therefore, governed not by reason but their desire to prove to themselves and to others that they are

consistent both in speech and in action.

There are others calling themselves revolutionaries who believe that war creates a revolution. The tragic consequences of the last war have apparently not taught them anything. Today the 'strategists' are in good company with the British government which had been doing its utmost to convince the British people that there will be a revolution in Germany before long. They omit to add that in the event of a revolution in Germany they will crush it with the same ruthlessness that they propose to crush Nazism. Mr Churchill, with his past experience, will see to that.

Finally, there is that vast mass of people with no opinions; who are fed exclusively by the poisoned pens of the capitalist press, and the noble words uttered by their political leaders through that most effective channel of propaganda, the BBC.

All these categories of 'anti-fascists' referred to above are either mistaken or misguided, for in no circumstances can this war be justified; in no circumstances can it bring peace.

This issue of *The Raven* consists of four sections. We have called the first **Documents**, a word we have used without any pretensions. They are the expressions of the Freedom Press comrades when they were publishing the fortnightly *Spain and the World* (1936-39)[3] but were also concerned with the world political situation and the inevitable war to come. Section 2 for **Recollections** by those who lived through those years either in the Forces or against. One has to recognise that the treatment of conscientious objectors in World War Two was much less violent and harrowing than in that of 1914-18. It is interesting too that the authorities arrested the editors of *War Commentary* at the *end of the war and not at the beginning*. Rebellion by the conscripts is especially feared at the end of a conflict, when presumably the survivors are expecting a 'brave new world'?

Section 3 deals with **The Horrors of War** and in spite of the fact that one *Freedom* reader who wishes 'to declare that I am an anarchist and that I am a Jew. Though I am an atheist in belief and do not practise Jewish rituals' and maintains that this writer's article in *Freedom* (11th March 1995) 'The Anarchist Response to the Official VE 50th Anniversary "Victory" Celebrations' was:

> without any question a piece of vile anti- semitic trash that is in the tradition of the Jew-loathing racism of Bakunin and Proudhon. It is also very wrong in its overall historical presumptions.[4]

I was saying that in spite of being accused of being a 'vile anti-semite' I am reprinting the offending passages for the benefit of *Raven* readers:

However that *Raven 29* will essentially aim to expose the hypocrisy of those who argued that the 1939-45 war was a crusade against fascism and nazism and Hitler in particular, if not the German people as a whole. This, in our opinion, *myth* has been sustained over the past fifty years largely as a result of the sustained propaganda (and we use the word in its worst sense) by the Jewish-Israeli lobby worldwide, that the holocaust was the ultimate in human brutality – implying thereby that it provoked the declaration of war by the British and French governments.

(Jewish lobby please note: Roosevelt can be seen on the television screen at the time declaring that not a single American would be sacrificed in the European war, and it was only the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbour that suddenly galvanised the Americans into military action. Before that all they were interested in was selling arms to the belligerents for gold and for long-established British interests in South America.)

Nothing could be further from the truth. The holocaust was a consequence of the outbreak of war. In the '30s there was nothing to prevent Germans, whether they were Jewish or not, from leaving Germany. The only barrier was whether you were rich or poor – just as it is today fifty years later *throughout the world.* The Jews who could afford to get out of Germany in the '30s left, and many came here. The ones who were herded into the cattle trucks in the '40s with the gypsies, the old and the sick, were the usual victims of war which in the situation of a Germany humiliated by the Versailles Treaty had to find scapegoats, and it was the poor Jews. The wealthy have no problems other than the 'problem' of being rich!

I don't withdraw a word. All I will add is that in the third section we include the innocent victims of the genocide on Dresden, on Tokyo and hundreds of other cities in the 'enemies' territories, all civilians 'roasted' or 'boiled' alive (to quote the press reports) by the 'democratic' allies. Volumes, ceremonies and monuments remind us daily of the holocaust. Britain has recently erected a more than life-size monument to Bomber Harris who bombed and fired the daylights out of the civilian population of Dresden! And what have the Americans and the French to say about the mass murder of a million German prisoners of war?

It would appear that the Russians are still counting their dead in that holocaust that is WAR. The latest figure is 27 million.

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Footnotes

1. Emrys Hughes MP, *Winston Churchill: British Bulldog* (Exposition Press, New York, 1955). As far as we know this hard- hitting attack on the Churchill myth has never been published in this country. Equally significant is that the book exposing the treatment of German prisoners of war by the Americans and French – more than a million were

made to starve to death – is published only in Canada, and is reviewed in Section 3.

2. The first issue of *War Commentary* consisted of sixteen duplicated pages reflecting, one imagines, the four editors' pessimism as to the reception it would receive. There was justification for this pessimism since earlier that year with the final collapse of the revolutionary struggle in Spain the journal which had supported our Spanish comrades for more than two years, *Spain and the World*, folded and though a successor in *Revolt!* followed, it quietly faded out in June 1939 after six issues, and with it most of the editorial group. However the pessimism was ill-founded, for the second issue had to printed and appeared as a monthly until 1941 when six supplements were issued, and from 1942 *War Commentary* appeared twice a month, increasing its format in 1944 and changing its title to *Freedom* the following year.

3. A volume of selections from *Spain and the World* with the title *Spain 1936-39: Social Revolution and Counter Revolution* (Freedom Press, 1990, 270 pages, £5.00).

4. Part of a letter to *Freedom* from Howard Marks, Manchester, not published because of its length and also because it dealt with anti-semitism worldwide and not the points made in the *Freedom* editorial.

Britain 'Barred Jewish Orphans'

One thousand Jewish orphans were denied sanctuary in Britain in 1942 and were later sent to Auschwitz, a gathering to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the death camp was told last night.

More than 1,500 people, many survivors of the camp, heard that Britain had been offered permission to take 1,000 children, aged between four and fourteen, by the Vichy government in France. Their parents had been deported from France and in September 1942 the Americans persuaded Marshal Petain's government to release the children.

Mr Fred Barschak, convenor of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said the 50th anniversary of liberation might be the last time to raise the question of the children.

After being told of the Vichy offer, the British government continued to discuss it for several months, he added. 'All they had to do was send a ship under Seal of Safe Conduct and we would have had them. There then began a series of meetings and in the end it was decided not to admit even one of those children. The law could not be changed. The children were sent to Auschwitz during the winter because of the delay and intransigence of the British government', said Mr Barschak.

The Home Secretary at the time was Herbert Morrison, whose wife was Jewish, who fought civil servants arguing there was no evidence to prove the children were orphans. Morrison's reply was: 'Do you expect the Germans to supply death certificates?'

Finlay Marshall
in *The East Anglian Daily Times*, 30th January 1995

Charles M. Sandwick

For Democracy

Excuse me, Comrade:
I am about to disembowel you –
It's for Democracy, you know.
I have to hate you, Comrade:
I could not do this frightful thing
If I had not learned to hate you.
You see, Comrade,
Your boss is a Fascist:
But mine, Comrade,
Mine is a Democrat.
That is why, Comrade –
That is why I am about
To plunge my bayonet into your belly
And scatter your guts upon the earth.
This is a good war, Comrade:
The Comintern say so.
My boss says so, too.
Everybody says it's a good war.
Democracy must be saved, you know.
Of course the workers can't strike any more;
Men are being conscripted for the war;
And those who don't like it
Can't shoot off their mouths;
But that isn't Fascism!
Oh my, no!
That's Democracy in an emergency.
You keep your damn' mouth shut
When Democracy faces a crisis.
So when the hot iron sears your guts
And I twist it, so,
Excuse me, Comrade:
It's for Democracy!

from the *Bucks Labour News*

Reprinted in the Anti-War Supplement to *Spain and the World*, May 1938, which included contributions from Ethel Mannin, Emma Goldman, John Cowper Powys, Herbert Read. Some 10,000 copies were sold or distributed. An interesting sidelight is that when the editors of *War Commentary* (successor to *Spain and the World* and *Revolt*) were arrested at the end of 1944, one of the charges was 'possession' of a propaganda leaflet against the 'war effort'. The leaflet was, believe it or not, *For Democracy* which we had reprinted in 1938 and during the war as a leaflet!

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DOCUMENTS

Editorial*

CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Workers will not fight to defend capitalist interests and prestige

War clouds are once more paralysing Europe. The fate of Europe this week depended on the context of Hitler's Nuremberg speech. The speech has been delivered; a speech which emphasises Hitler's sudden apparent preoccupation for the Sudeten Germans.

Meanwhile, the national press in this country is working up pro-war feeling, and is succeeding to such an extent that normally sane people are being convinced that the next war will be fought in defence of 'Czechoslovakian democracy'. It has suddenly received much publicity and is being ardently defended even by those conservatives who until a short time ago were writing enthusiastic articles on the advantages of Fascism and quoting at length from its achievements in Germany and Italy. But with Jawahalal Nehru, we ask 'how will this government, with its patent sympathies for the Fascist and Nazi states, advance the cause of democracy and freedom?' (from a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, 12th September 1938).

As we have not been paralysed by recent political events, we can still think, and a brief review of the events and British policy during these last few years will suffice to show that the next war will be no more a war for Czechoslovakian democracy than the last war was one for Belgian independence.

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* Editorial in *Spain and the World*, 16th September 1938

'Democracy's' responsibilities

At the end of the last war a democratic government was in power in Germany. The democracies (for they called themselves 'democracies' at that time as well) did everything in their power to humiliate the German people. Germany was totally disarmed, yet did the other countries realise their beliefs that it had been a 'war to end wars' by actively seeking to bring about disarmament throughout the world? There can be no doubt that this state of affairs greatly assisted Hitler in his rise to power.

But let us look at more recent times, and we discover that the policy of the present government has in every respect been one of active support for Fascism. From the half-hearted economic measures taken against Italy when she invaded Abyssinia, the complete indifference to Fascist intervention in Spain (which will have its significance when the next war for 'democracy' is fought).

There is another feature about this 'democracy' ramp which deserves to be remembered. The raw materials required for the manufacture of arms as well as petrol, without which no modern army can carry on an armed aggression, are in the hands of the 'democracies'.

A large proportion of Germany's iron comes from France. Recently the syndicates of the Eastern region of France even petitioned the French Ambassador in Berlin to use his influence to increase the exports of iron to Germany. The reason given was that in this way more men would be given work!

It should further be known that Germany possesses no oilfields to supply her with her wartime needs. But Hitler does not worry himself unduly. He obtains the greater part of his petrol supplies from the USA, Dutch East Indies (British companies) and from the USSR ... all upholders of democracy, to such an extent that they are prepared to hurl millions of men on the battlefield to defend Czechoslovakian democracy! Even more interesting is the fact that the Soviet Union has a contract to supply Germany with petrol until 1939!

In other words, the governments want to make you, the workers of the world, believe that the next war will be for the defence of democracy in spite of the fact that when Mussolini and Hitler aided by Franco attempted to strangle a true democracy in Spain not once was it suggested that we should go to defend Spanish democracy.

The war of tomorrow will again be a war between capitalist interests. On the one side a German capitalism anxious to extend its influence

in the Balkans and the East (and to do so will use as cannon fodder those three million Sudeten Germans about whose health and safety Hitler is now so preoccupied). And on the other side British, French, Soviet and American capitalism will use those ten million Czechs (about whose liberty they are so concerned at the moment) to defend their economic interests.

The TUC and war

And from this country and from France, Russia, etc., millions of workers will be sent to their doom.

The recent TUC Congress has clearly shown what can be done once power is in the hands of bureaucrats, whether they be from the 'upper' or 'lower' classes.

Two years ago when the Spanish workers were fighting against all forces of reaction, and had succeeded in spite of the deplorable lack of arms, to establish Free Socialism in all parts of Spain under their control the TUC opposed all direct action in their favour for fear of 'starting a world war'. This year at Blackpool the TUC again categorically refused all direct action (even a general strike) in favour of the Spanish workers, yet at the same congress they gave their complete support to armed intervention in Czechoslovakia. This is in no uncertain manner a definite betrayal of the Spanish workers and the workers' cause.

It is also a betrayal of British workers whom the trade union leaders are prepared to have butchered in the name of a false democracy.

Workers of England, workers of the world, do not be misled by your leaders and by the capitalist press! The workers of Germany have no desire to be slaughtered in the name of capitalism. They are being misled by Fascism in the same way as your leaders and the National Government are trying to mislead you!

Let the workers of this country, of France, of Russia (if they are still free to do so), of America, make it clear to the German workers *that they will not fight to defend capitalist interests.*

This message can reach the German workers before it is too late – before the world is plunged into a fratricidal conflict from which it will never recover!

*Havelock Ellis**

We need our pacifists

I who am an old man with one foot in the grave have most of my life looked forward to the United States of the World. With that union of mankind wars would cease and a true civilisation at last become possible. I would like once more to repeat that message which has never seemed so urgent as at this time of crisis.

The United States of Europe is the necessary step towards a wider Union. The historical phase of nationality is over. To speak any longer in terms of nationalities is to court inevitable disaster. So is also a direct fight against Fascism in defence of other principles of nationality.

When carrying on their negotiations it is time our diplomats ceased to harp upon the rights of nationalities. Czechoslovakia, an artificial state created by a few powerful and arrogant nations out of the chaos of the last war, is deemed to have such an individual national sanctity as to justify a worldwide war over the question of its defence or dismemberment. Germany has no more right to rule over all German-speaking people than we have to rule over all English-speaking people.

Bones of contention, Alsatian, Sudeten or other, will always exist so long as men go on thinking nationalistically. Such a country as Switzerland might well be torn to pieces between three powerful nations on account of its three different languages. Nations are among the most artificial creation of man, totally arbitrary for the most part, for the old racial notions are now scientifically exploded.

That Europe is in a sore plight as the aftermath of nations having mistakenly jumped at each other's throat 24 years ago is no reason to continue piling catastrophe upon catastrophe in the name of a murderous gospel long out of date in the light of science and common sense. Neither is it anything but madness to blame Germans for behaving like hogs in a Europe where they have been treated like hogs after a war for which cooler judgement has long since led most thinking people to find wrongs fairly equal on both sides. Nor are

* Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), physician and writer on sex. Author of the seven-volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex.*

hoggish dispositions so peculiar a phenomenon in Europe. He who sees the mote in his brother's eye does not see the beam in his own.

Some of us would die happier should we see the group of fellow men to whom we belong ready to stand, even at this time of crisis, for an immediate proposal of total disarmament and an invitation to all other nations in the world to meet through their representatives, in view of promoting parallel total disarmament and of creating the United States of Europe.

No more patched up maps of intensified nationalities, but the first draft of a new map, and the possibility of world control of production, transport, and so on.

England seems well placed to take such a step with hope of success if its uncompromising pacifists are called forth to replace the type of worn-out old fashioned diplomats.

from *Spain and the World*, 15th October 1938

Trade Unions and Britain's War Responsibilities

At the Southport Labour Conference this year [1939] Mr Ernest Bevin, Secretary of the General Transport Workers' Union – one of the big bosses of the unions – said that: 'We must ascertain what are the contributory factors to the present world situation, and it will be found that *possibly the biggest contributors is this country and not Germany, for one of the most potent causes of world disorder has been our dominant financial policy*'.

This statement compares strangely with the present attitude of the trade unions towards the war. Workers' rights have been handed over to the government, and will be won back with difficulty later on. Again, the workers are made to fight for a cause which is not theirs.

from *War Commentary*, November 1939

Petrol embargo by the workers can end wars

Can we stop a war already begun, and prevent the coming war, the Great War, polite and civilised, conforming to all the rules of diplomatic civility? Yes! For all the raw materials needed to carry on a modern war, all those 'materials' of the technique of collective murder, are practically all in the hands of the *'democratic' bloc*, completely devoted to *'collective security'*. So much so that the countries which pose as being 'democratic' and 'friends of peace' have it in their power to force their fascist adversaries to their knees and to force them to peace, when they will decide to stop supplying war materials to those countries they denounce every day as being the 'enemies of peace'!

Petrol is just one detail in the problem of raw materials needed for modern war, but it is a particularly interesting case. Without petrol and heavy oil war is impossible. Without petrol and heavy oil, tanks, motorised columns, warships and aeroplanes would stop dead. Now, we note that the Fascist states, like all large industrial nations other than the USA, use much more petrol than the amount they produce. Japan's petrol deficit, for instance, was 1,260,000 tons in 1930; in 1936 it was 3,400,000! Italy's was 1,724,000 in 1933 and in 1935 had reached 2,200,000! Let us note that the wars in Abyssinia and Spain for Italy, and China for Japan, must have certainly considerably increased this deficit.

The world's petrol producing countries

Who then produces and sells to the fascist powers that petrol which they use to massacre the peoples who resist them? The producing countries are, in the first place, the United States, Russia and Rumania, state which supply their own needs and export a large proportion of the production (the USA, which imports about as much as it exports, furnishes to the Fascist power alone more than half the world's production), then Venezuela, Persia, Dutch Indies, Mexico, Columbia, Iraq, Argentine, Peru and India, which export almost all they produce.

Who exploits these petrol wells? Excluding the USA, four trusts share amongst themselves 86% of the world's needs. They are, in

order of importance (from the 1934 figures): the Soviet petrol Naphta Syndicate, The American Standard Oil, and two English companies Royal Dutch Shell (of Dutch origin) and The Anglo-Persian (or Anglo-Iranian).

Petrol transport

Finally, who *transports* this petrol? Transport is guaranteed by tankers belonging, in some cases to private individuals (in a small proportion), in others to the above mentioned trusts, and in other cases to governments. The Scandinavian countries in particular are fairly well specialised in petrol transport. Japan, Italy and Germany have only a small tonnage in petrol tankers. A few figures for 1934: Norway alone possessed 213 tankers for petrol transport, with a total tonnage of 1,507,000 tons; the three large Anglo-American trusts possessed together a fleet of 563 ships totalling 5,288,000 tons; against this, Italy, the most supplied of the three Fascist states, had only 65 ships of a total tonnage of 315,000 tons; the three powers together possessed a total of 116 ships totalling 582,000 tons.

Who supplies the Fascist states?

Who are now the suppliers for the Fascist states? For Japan they are, in order of importance, the USA with 63%, Dutch Indies 27%, USSR 10%; nine-tenths of petrol of Russian origin comes from the concessions of Sakhaline, granted in 1925 by a contract renewed for five years in December 1936. The heavy oil imported from Sakhaline is *exclusively for war use*. During the first quarter of 1937, the USSR supplied 50,000 tons of petrol to Japan, whilst during the whole of 1936 she had supplied Japan with only 22,000 tons. Finally, Japan buys considerable quantities from British Borneo where a concession was granted in 1930 to Borneo Oil, allied to the Royal Dutch, which would thus be its largest suppliers.

The suppliers to Italy are Rumania, the USA (Standard Oil), the USSR and Iraq. In 1936, during the Abyssinian war, Iraq, thanks perhaps to the participation of Italian capital in the Iraq Petroleum Company, obtained 120 million tons for Italy; but after the conquest the Italian group renounced its participation in Iraq Petroleum, a quarter of whose shares belong to the Anglo-Persian, another quarter to Royal Shell and a quarter each to Compagnie Française des Petroles and the allied Standard Oil Company.

Finally, Germany replenishes her supply through the USA, Dutch East Indies, Persia, Venezuela and the USSR! A commercial agreement dated 1st January 1935 does not expire until 1939, and contracts for Russia to supply petrol to Hitlerian Germany, whose desire for war the Soviet Government is denouncing every day in heated terms and against which (provisionally?) Russia is directing all her diplomacy.

It will suffice to note three facts:

1. All petrol supplies are in the hands of those powers who profess to be friends of peace.

2. Without petrol, fascisms cannot continue the wars in which they are engaged, nor undertake new ones, even in the form of reprisals.

3. The 'pacific' powers have therefore the possibility of preventing war by refusing to supply the aggressors with the means for aggression.

We should like to answer a certain number of technical and political objections which are usually brought up in the campaign for the embargo on petrol.

We begin with the technical objections. We shall ignore, to begin with, all arguments depending on the existence, in the greater part of those 'great democracies', who all nevertheless have the right of mobilisation on their simple citizens, of a legal machinery permitting a government to forbid its agreement with two or three other 'great democracies' by reason of its national and international trusts, the petrol industry and certain clients more particularly undesirable from the quadruple point of view of peace (which is also ours) and the 'defence of democracies' and of international right (which is theirs in one sense, and ours in another) and of national defence (which is completely theirs). If the necessary legality does not exist then we shall insist that it be created. It is quite true that a government always lifts its hands to the sky as soon as one asks it to act against trusts. But undoubtedly this same government would readily discover, and very quickly too, an unsuspected course of action as soon as its public opinion would tire of seeing rearmament imposed in the name of national defence accompanied by a touching regularity (before war ... and after) of a rearmament not less intense on the part of the eventual enemy all engineered by the same eclectic national industries, and would let him know that there would be no mobilisation whatsoever of lives as long as the mobilisation of benefits of trusts had not preceded it.

Let us remember that most of the trusts are already entirely or partly state trusts (as an example of the Syndicate of Russian Naphta, and the Compagnie Française des Petroles in which the French government possessed 48% of the shares of Anglo-Persian and in which the British Admiralty has 56%.

Lastly, let us remember that from now onwards, and apart from all new laws, governments are not without means of pressure on trusts to whom they can refuse the right of export, the authority of emission, financial support without which capitalism, already starved in the present crisis, would be unable to exist, since it only does so thanks to the clientele which constitutes the state, especially for the products of war.

In the same way we will set aside all objections of juristic quality, for example that of commercial contracts which bind governments, producers of petrol, with their fascist clients. Public opinion would not tolerate for one single moment that international legal considerations should take precedence over the categoric command: 'Stop the massacre!' There is no contract with murderers ...

A more serious objection is the necessity of bringing 'compensations' to the states, in the case of Rumania and Venezuela who exist almost entirely on the export of petrol and in whom a petrol embargo would result in the loss of their usual clients as well as the risk of a grave economic crisis. To which we answer that if peace must be bought, we have the right to expect that one pays for it as dearly, if needs be dearer, than what is being spent by governments at the present moment in war preparations and for the buying of military alliances, armaments and foreign armies. And to begin with, France might have bought the refusal of Rumanian petrol to Italy (who used it to murder the Spanish people) with the sums (unknown to the people who pay) which she has consecrated to the buying of fresh Rumanian wheat for the next 'last war'.

The objections raised concerning the real effectiveness of an embargo on petrol must be examined more attentively. There are two: that of the stocks of petrol possessed by those states threatened by the embargo, and that of the industries of replacement. The first argument does not appear at all dangerous, if one just considers that to make stocks of petrol requires enormous tanks of a special kind, which would require years, perhaps, to construct in sufficient numbers, especially so if one considers the enormous quantity of petrol a country would have to stock in order to successfully wage a war, or even to take revenge on those imposing the embargo by

carrying out reprisals against the sanctioning countries. It has been calculated, in fact, that in time of war a nation disposing of an air fleet of 1,000 chasers, 250 bi-motor and 250 tri-motor aeroplanes, which are in action during two hours only each day, would use 630,000 litres of petrol daily. It should be noted that there are, besides the aviation, the navy, tanks, motorised columns, transport of troops and material also to be taken into account, without even considering the undiminished needs of the rearguard.

The existence of synthetic carburants, on the other hand, does constitute a serious objection. Meanwhile, these carburants are extracted either from the crude oil or from lignite by hydrogenisation of the carbon, and since Italy and Japan are very poor or completely lacking in one or the other, the danger is to be expected as yet from these countries. To import these raw materials is very costly indeed, in view of the poor results obtained with large quantities: the synthetic petrol industry costs five times as much as the extraction from natural petroleum. Italy and Japan have attacked this problem with all the ardour of warlike powers who have understood that *without petrol war is impossible*! But their industries for replacement are still in their infancy, in spite of Mussolini's bluff in announcing his autonomy petrolic for 1939. Meanwhile it is essential to act quickly. In Germany, on the contrary, the danger is not deniable, for she possesses much coal and sufficient lignite for 400 years.

In 1937 she was thus able to produce 300,000 tons of synthetic petrol. However the 'technicians' of collective murder estimate that to carry on a war on two fronts would require 5,500,000 tons, and further, one cannot imagine that Germany will engage in a war alone, without the participation of her allies for which she would not be in a position to supply the petrol demand, if the 'democracies' friends of peace' ceased to supply them with the means for warfare!

There remains to be considered a number of objections of a political order, which bear upon the danger which this theoretically peaceful means of struggle against war can present for peace itself. The first danger: will there not be the risk of the 'economic sanctions' strengthening round one dictator the unity of a people which will be the first and only victim, and which, exasperated in its national pride and in its economic life, will be further instilled with the fierce desire of victory in spite of everything? This argument, quite correct as far as economic sanctions are concerned, will not apply to an embargo on petrol, a raw material almost exclusively used for war purposes, and the privation of which will not condemn the population of the

country to conditions of famine but only, and rapidly, will end conscription and allow them to return to their firesides. That is why we regret that that Communist Party, in answer to the question on petrol put to the popular gathering by the Socialist Party, should have avoided the issue in place of the Pact of the League of Nations and also that the Executive of the International should have avoided the same issue by comprising it with the boycott of products exported by Japan, and other 'economic sanctions' likely to ruin and starve a people, with the result that the prestige of its military caste is strengthened.

It is in the popular embargo that we pin our faith, on the direct action of the working masses! And when they will have, by their own means, halted the bellicose forces of fascism which menace them at close quarters, they will soon understand that one must go farther afield and that it is their own 'democratic and pacific' states, their own armies, their own military men that they must disarm and render harmless by the same purely proletarian methods of action. Thus conceived, the campaign for the embargo of raw materials for warfare can become one of the strongest levers for a revolution which will not be born in, by and – alas!– for war but, for the first time, would destroy, along with capitalism, war and militarism as well.

We thus bring a double technique for economic struggle, negative by refusing governments the means to kill, positive by offering all peoples means to live. This dual method will demand the suppression of all the large profits of our own capitalisms.

Our pacific 'realism' will have utilised the very notions imposed on the workers in free countries by the neo-nationalist brain cramming (collective security, defence of democracies, etc.) and will have led them, through their own experience, to understand the trickery of a national defence against an 'enemy' armed by them themselves. And once they will have understood this, the revolution, the true one, the one which abolishes war, will no longer be 'for tomorrow'.

Helene (translated from *Essais et Combats*)
for the anti-war supplement *Spain and the World*, May 1938

Editorial*

Workers! Oppose the massacre of fellow workers Fight capitalism and not the German workers

By the time these words appear in print, the fate of Europe will have been probably decided. The possibilities are that war will ravage the face of the earth. Science will destroy that which science and man have built. The uncontrollable and lowest passions in man will be let loose in blind fury; fury against an enemy towards whom he bears no malice, for a 'cause' which is not his.

War feeling is being worked up every day to an ever-increasing degree by the yellow capitalist controlled press, whether of the right or the 'left', while the state, through its ARP, creates a war psychology among the women and innocent children. Children who will not be used as cannon fodder today will be evacuated to safety areas so that they will not perish. They are the cannon fodder of tomorrow. The women, the mothers, are prepared to be separated from their children or, where they are of age, to have them butchered in the front line trenches in the name of a 'democracy' whose benefits they have never experienced. These women, who have brought the youth of today into the world, will be those who during the long period of war hysteria will distribute the white feathers to those who refuse to kill or be killed.

And the very people and organisations which have for two long years refused even the means of defence to the Spanish people; who have never ordered work to be stopped for one day, for one hour, in favour of the Spanish workers in their struggle to destroy the greatest evil facing mankind today – capitalism – are prepared to sacrifice tens of millions of lives in the name of a 'democracy' which they know to be fascism in a disguised form.

The war of tomorrow will not only be the responsibility of the Hitlers, the Chamberlains, the Mussolinis and the capitalists. It will be the responsibility of the TUC, the Labour Party, the Church and the Communist Party leaders in England and the corresponding bodies in other 'democratic' countries!

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* In *Spain and the World*, 30th September 1938 as an anti-war manifesto.

We will oppose this 'war to end wars' in spite of the fact that Harry Pollitt* and the majority of the bourgeoisie have already labelled us as 'agents of Hitler'!

We will oppose this war because it is a war not between capitalism and the working class, but a war between two capitalisms, fought out not by the capitalists themselves but by their dupes, the working class.

We will oppose this war because we believe that the working class will not benefit by their sacrifice. The last war has shown us that. It produced the Treaty of Versailles, and two openly totalitarian states. It has brought death to hundreds of thousands of homes and widespread misery throughout the world. Even in England, the nerve centre of the mighty British Empire from which British imperialism has sucked every drop of blood, 40% of the population is underfed!

Workers, act now before it is too late!

Will you be misled into sacrificing yourselves and your brother workers the world over for the sake of capitalist interests and fascist prestige?

Do you think it worthwhile sacrificing thirty million (or more) of your flesh and blood who toil day in and day out, as you do yourselves, so that the idle rich may continue to live in comfort and at your expense?

The Spanish workers in July 1936 gave you the example. They rose against fascism in Spain, not in the name of 'democracy' but in the name of revolution. The landlords and the factory owners fled. The workers took over industry and cultivated the land for the common good. They had something to fight for, something to die for!

They were defending the liberty which they had won on 19th July. The factories belonged to them; in village and town private property has been abolished.

They had achieved something, something worth defending – liberty. And had delivered a death-blow to capitalism.

When the workers of Spain were attacked from outside, they called to you, the workers of the world, to lend your active support. They needed arms, not men, for in Spain there were millions of men to defend the revolution.

You, the workers of the world, did not respond! You were bullied into silence by your Citrines and your Bevins. The fight in Spain still goes on, and we know from reliable sources in Spain that in spite of

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* The general secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain at this time.

Negrin and the Stalinists, the masses are revolutionary and refuse to give up that which they have obtained by untold sacrifice.

Still the proletariat does nothing. Yet that same proletariat is being coerced by its leaders and by its 'democratic' government to take up arms to defend Czech democracy!

Comrade workers, we repeat: do not be misled! Bethink you before you lay down your lives for a cause which is not yours.

Your battlefield is not along the Maginot line but at home, against your government which you know is composed of politicians – diplomats, who by their very education have been taught the ABC of intrigue and diplomatic bargaining, who have learnt the art of repression the moment you workers rebel against the present order of things. They are the same the world over, British or German, left or right!

Wars will only be abolished, as our martyr Vanzetti said, when we will be sufficiently heroic for a world which does not need war.

Therein lies the secret. We cannot stop at half measures, at subtle distinctions between our present day 'democracies' and fascism.

Socialism – Free Socialism – must be our immediate goal!

WHY SHOULD THEY FIGHT?

A MANIFESTO BY COLOURED WORKERS

To Africans, people of African descent and colonial peoples all over the world:

You, the most oppressed and exploited, will soon be called upon to take part in a war which threatens to slaughter millions of men, women and children and bring ruin, misery and devastation on a scale unheard of before.

Our rulers will have us believe that this war is to be fought to save Czechoslovakia, a small country about which most of you have never heard, from Hitler. *This is a lie.* if Britain and France go to the aid of Czechoslovakia it is not to defend international law and order, as they say, but to prevent Hitler from over-running Europe and stealing their colonies. Czechoslovakia in 1938 is being used as a pawn by the imperialists in the same way as Belgium was in 1914 – to win our sympathy and pity. *This is the truth* which they dare not tell us. If these democratic countries are so interested in saving small nations and preserving law and order, why did they stand aside and allow Mussolini to attack our defenceless black brothers in Abyssinia and murder men, women and children with poison gas? It is to mislead you that our imperialist masters and their black agents are trying to deceive you by asking you to join up and fight for democracy against fascism.

DEMOCRACY! Black brothers, what do we know of democracy? This is just a bait to catch us. In 1914 they also talked to us about fighting for democracy and self-determination. Millions of us died on Flanders Field, in Palestine, in East, West and South Africa. But what did we get? More slavery, more oppression, more exploitation.

Brothers of Africa and African descent, what democracy, what liberties, what rights have we got in this 'glorious' British Empire that calls upon us to shed our blood in its defence? Our greedy and merciless oppressors have robbed you of your land, broken up your civilisation and substituted instead a regime worse than slavery. They segregate you in your own country, pen you in reserves and locations

like cattle, make you carry passes like common criminals, and then pay you starvation wages of 4d a day.

You in the West Indies, after a hundred years of so-called emancipation, are still denied the most elementary rights of human beings. When you ask for bread they give you hot lead! The conditions under which you live are those of colonial fascism.

We denounce the whole gang of European robbers and enslavers of the colonial peoples. German Nazis, Italian Fascists, British, French, Belgian democracies – all are the same, IMPERIALIST EXPLOITERS.

While we deplore a war and the ruin it will cause, Europe's difficulty is Africa's opportunity. The blacks everywhere, under whatever flag, in war as in peace, know but one goal: INDEPENDENCE, and we summon our brothers everywhere not to be caught by the lying promises the imperialists will make. We call upon you to organise yourselves and be ready to seize the opportunity when it comes.

To the Indians, Ceylonese, Burmese, Arabs and all colonial peoples who fight for the same end, we offer a firm alliance and we brand as traitors all colonials who try to drag us into this bloody butchery. Be vigilant, comrades. Watch the traitors in your ranks.

from *Spain and the World*, 30th September 1938

MORE REACTIONS TO WAR

FRENCH WORKERS FACE FACTS

(The article which we have translated from *Le Reveil Syndicaliste* is the opinion of that section of the French working class movement which can still think independently of the Jouhaux* and other reformists. *Le Reveil Syndicaliste* is a workers' newspaper in every way, from the public which reads it and distributes it to the editorial and administrative staff which produces it. Though we reproduce the article we do not endorse all the opinions expressed, especially those concerning Spain – Editors.)

How does peace progress?

During the last month many things have occurred in the international situation. If these events have not already produced the catastrophe which has been threatening since the spring, if they still leave us the hope that we may escape this year, they have not really checked the causes which have produced the danger and the fear that the worst may happen at any time in the coming weeks.

In Central Europe the hungry wolves, 'the fascists', and the fat wolves, 'the democracies', are playing a double game through the medium of the Sudeten Germans and the Prague government. Germany, France and Russia are all watching each other, finger on trigger, and while waiting for someone to make the first move, continue the use of the 'pacific' aims of diplomatic battle, intimidation, the display of military force, appeals to allies, economic manoeuvres and financial propaganda.

In Spain the great imperialist powers who are struggling in the name of fascism and democracy fight by means of intermediaries. By the blood of Spanish workers and peasants, constrained by terror, Franco and Negrin and their backers Italy, Germany and France continue their economic and strategic rivalry and fight out their own battle on the territory of Spain. At the same time Russia is tightening her hold on Barcelona (as witness the dismissal of Ayguade and Irujo) so as to be certain of torpedoing the Western compromise arranged by Great Britain which would leave Germany a free hand in the East.

In the extreme East, the incident of Chank-Ku-Feng provoked by Russia at an opportune moment, when Japan had her hands full with

* Leon Jouhaux, the reformist leader of the French trades unions.

the Chinese war, has allowed Russia to recover some of the military credit which has been so tarnished by the 'purges', 'treacheries' and 'desertions' of the last years.

Upon reflection, Nipponese imperialism, which rests on a relatively weak economic basis, decided that it was unable to conduct two wars at the same time. For the first time in many years the Japanese retreated before the Russians and this retreat has caused a rapprochement between the Stalinist state and American imperialism (Lindbergh in Moscow) and even the English 'City', both these powers being happy to have the aid of their so-called 'red' ally against their Japanese rival in China.

No matter how important the Spanish war is for the capitalist powers, its prolongation is earnestly desired by France and Russia, as this comprises even more the Anglo-Italian agreement, and in consequence all the fantasies of the Four Power Pact, the point of the most extreme tension at the moment, is the situation in Czechoslovakia. Our readers know what to understand in this country by the grand words 'democracy', 'national independence', etc., as well as those of 'fascism' and 'national rights', so we will not enlarge on these points. The only thing we need to remark is the extraordinary confirmation which Lord Runciman's mission at Prague has given to our thesis. That an English Lord should attempt to settle a quarrel between a 'sovereign' state and a fraction of its citizens explains a great deal on the artificial character and on the independence of that for whose honour our labour leaders call on the workers to risk their skins! Under the cover of the Czechoslovak problem is really the problem of the dominance of French capital in Central Europe!

If in conformity with Benes' memorandum of 1919 the centralist state of Prague should transform itself into a federal state the Franco-Czech-Russian military alliance would collapse, thereby leaving a clean field for German expansion not only in the Danubian countries but towards the Ukraine, Rumania and the Near East. French imperialist and the Stalinist state prefer war to this eventuality.

As to England, she baulks at the idea of an immediate war, and would regard calmly German expansion in Central Europe, where she herself has no capitalist interests, and in Russia, since Russia is always more or less of a menace to the Indian Empire, through Central Asia, but she would fight to the death to prevent access to Rumania and the Near East from which England draws the greater part of her petrol supply and which is also the gateway to the Indies.

Will England, exasperated by Russia, arrange with Prague on a

compromise which will permit German expansion at the expense of Russia without imperilling her own preserves in Rumania or Iraq? Or paralysed by the opposition of Franco, will she at least gain enough time at Prague to postpone the war for another year, or will Hitler and the capitalists who lead him lose patience and, gambling on rushing everything for a great stake, push on to the war before which they recoiled last May?

That is still the secret of the coming weeks.

At such a moment, when the collapse of the balance of power between the victors and the vanquished of 1918 makes the question of an imperialist war an immediate problem, when the visit of the English King and Queen to Paris has swept away the last remains of the League of Nations and consecrated the return of the bloody politics of alliances, how can we fail to denounce the characteristic policies of our trade union leaders, whether national or international?

When leaving for America on 18th August Jouhaux declared in his own inimitable manner: 'We must put greater understanding between the peaceful democracies in the place of most importance'.

When these pacific democracies, or rather when the bankers and industrialists who control them, are preparing to keep by war the profits which they have gained by the exploitation of the vast mass of people; when the 'popular front' government of Daladier strikes at the legitimate conquests of the workers before throwing them into the massacre, we say, we the syndicalists: 'It is because we understand only too well the true nature of our democracy; it is because we remember the ten million dead of 1914-18 that we lump all these great capitalist states – whether they be fascist or democratic – and refuse the sacrifice of our suffering and our lives to these sordid fatherlands.'

Jean Bernier
from *Spain and the World*, 16th September 1938

'God is with us' — 'Gott mit uns!'

'That is the history of all religions; that is the effect of all divine inspirations and legislations. In history the name of God is the terrible club with which all divinely inspired men, the great 'virtuous geniuses', have beaten down the liberty, dignity, reason and prosperity of man' — *Mikhail Bakunin*

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

'Now may God defend you all and may God be with the right' — *Chamberlain (3rd September 1939)*

'... and we reverently commit our cause to God' — *King George (3rd September 1939)*

HIS MAJESTY'S OPPOSITION

'May God be with you' — *Greenwood (for the Labour 'Opposition')*

'... with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence — *Sir Archibald Sinclair (for the Liberal 'Opposition')*

THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT

'We only wish that God Almighty, who has blessed our arms, may enlighten other nations ...' — *Hitler (Danzig speech)*

THE POLISH GOVERNMENT

'... the blessing of the Almighty rests on our fight' – *President Moscicki*

THE CHURCH

'May God help us in the great ordeal which now awaits us' — *Archbishop of Canterbury and other dignitarioes of the Church*

'When you come to think of it, it is a great honour to be chosen by God to be his ally in so great a contest' – *Canon C. Morgan Smith*

'We thank God that He gave us a speedy victory to our arms ... We thank Him that injustice, centuries old, has been broken down through his grace ...' — *the German Evangelical 'Opposition' in the Spiritual Councils Proclamation on the capture of Poland*

Editorial*

A WAR FOR DEMOCRACY?
An answer to our critics

An immediate world conflict seems to have been averted, but 'peace in our time' seems as remote today as it was a fortnight ago.

In spite of the Munich non-aggression pact between Hitler and Chamberlain, both England and Germany are continuing their arms race; England intensifying her rearmament programme and organising all the services and man (and woman) power in the rearguard, whilst Hitler is continuing his programme of fortification.

Nevertheless there is breathing space, and it should be used by the workers not as a period when they can sigh with relief and inwardly thank somebody (Italy says Mussolini, Germany Hitler, England Chamberlain and the Archbishop of Canterbury thanks God!), but as a lease of life so that their opposition to war can find expression amongst all their fellow workers. The greatest menace to progress and civilisation today is the national press. It has the power to think for and to control the very actions of the workers. Only a few critics oppose them and as a rule they are either ignored or forgotten.

A month ago we suggested that the last war would be 'no more a war for Czechoslovakia democracy than the last war was for Belgian independence'. These reflections were lost in the praise of pro-war literature which paralysed most people. Yet last week the pugnacious First Lord of the Admiralty in his speech to the House said quite plainly that 'It was not for Czechoslovakia that we should have been fighting if we had gone to war last week. It was not for Serbia or Belgium that we fought in 1914 though it suited some people to say so ...' Meanwhile Pollitt in his pamphlet on Czechoslovakia was talking of uniting with France and Russia in 'defence of her [Czechoslovakia] independence and the democracy of the world'. How well informed is the leader of the Communist Party! We also suggested a month ago that a message should reach the German workers in which the British proletariat clearly stated that it would

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* Editorial in *Spain and the World*, 15th October 1938

not fight to defend capitalist interests. Some time later the press published the text of a message which the Labour Party had sent to the German workers through underground channels. It was to the effect that the British workers did not have any grievance with the German workers. This was followed by an appeal by the organisation Voluntary Industrial Aid for Spain asking for funds so that rather than drop bombs on Berlin they could drop pamphlets instead.

We have mentioned the above by the way of showing that our suggestions are not impracticable as so many around us would have us believe.

We have also been criticised for an apparent change of position. Whereas, we are told, our position has been all along opposed to fascism, today we remain impotent when an opportunity presents itself to effectively oppose fascism!

This apparent 'impotency' is owing to the fact that we have our ideas on the meaning of the terms 'fascism', 'anti-fascism' and 'democracy'.

Spain and a world war

For this reason we cannot compare, for instance, the struggle in Spain and the war which was to have come. Nor could we see Spain helped in any way by a world war. Many people, in good faith we are sure, imagined that a war in which Italy and Germany were involved on the one hand and the three 'democracies' on the other would mean immediate help for the Spanish workers in the form of arms and perhaps men and the consequent crushing of the fascist forces in Spain. These people ignored that Italy and Germany would have done likewise, arming and strengthening the Spanish fascists and intensifying their aerial attacks on the civilian population in Spain from their heavily fortified base in Majorca. The result: Spain would become the battlefield for two wars, the one between the representatives of the working class and the capitalist system, the other between rival imperialists. An effective answer is given to those who hope for a 'world war in order to save Spain'. The official organ of the CNT in Paris publishes a very strong article in which it is stated that: 'even before President Negrin made his statement before the Assembly of the League, we, on our own initiative, affirmed that it had never been in the mind of the humblest Spaniard to hope for a world war in order to seek a solution to the Spanish drama, or in order to increase the possibility of a victory of the Loyalists, or a definite and sensational victory. No. We have stated it and we repeat it. The

Spanish people know of all the horrors of war. The Spanish people do not wish to see, for anything in the world, blood being shed all over Europe for them.'

The remainder of the article merely strengthens the ideas expressed above. This attitude precludes those left parties and organisations from giving as an excuse for their pro-war propaganda the defence of Spain!

Refugee problem

Nor can they show their attitude was governed by their sympathies for the refugees that would flee before Hitler's advance into Czechoslovakia, for if it was so there should have already been revolutions in every 'democracy' in Europe as well as on the other side of the Atlantic where refugees are treated with the same 'respect' as shown by Hitler (e.g. political refugees in France sent back to Italy and Germany, German refugees in England sentenced to terms of imprisonment and then deported to Germany. And how many examples could be given of the ill treatment of refugees in America, the stronghold of democracy?)

Then if the possible refugees were not considered, was it Czechoslovakian democracy, as an institution, that was to be defended.

Czechoslovak democracy

What is the record of this democratic institution which has received so much publicity, so much praise by the capitalist-radical press? So strongly has public sympathy been worked up by their press that the romantic figure of a general is front page news, and Dr Benes is the man of the day, offered a chair in American universities and nationalist candidature for the Glasgow rectorial elections, whilst readers write to their papers putting forward that Benes should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize!

Yet these people are unaware that Czechoslovakia is in the hands of its 12 families in the same war as France is in the hands of its 200 families, the USA its 60 families and England its bankers and industrialists. Must we therefore sacrifice millions of lives to safeguard these 12 families? Would Harry Pollitt and the Communist Party tell the British workers to fight and defend those whom they call the 'Cliveden Gang'? No! Then why expect those very same workers to

defend Czechoslovakia's 'Cliveden Gang'?

We are told that Czechoslovakia has treated her minorities well. Is that a justification for them to remain under Czechoslovakian domination? Is that any more justification than to suggest that the Irish should remain under British domination?

Further discussion should be unnecessary. The First Lord of the Admiralty in his few words has said all that should be said. He should have exposed, in the eyes of the workers at least, on what is based the system of which he is one of the aggressive exponents.

The warmongers are not only in Germany and Italy. They exist in every country, no matter whether they label themselves democrats or fascists. In point of fact, only a few days after the crisis Chamblerlain restored the export licences to the armament manufacturers so that they might help every country in the world (except Spain of course) to arm themselves to the teeth, irrespective of whether they are democrats or fascists! The Skoda armaments factory of democratic Czechoslovakia (the largest in the world) also actively helped to arm the world with fearful machines of destruction – but that is apparently forgotten now!

Let those who, during the recent weeks, have blindly accepted what their daily press has poured forth, put to one side those capitalist-controlled sheets and try and think rapidly and independently.

And as they think of recent events which have dominated their existence, they may find reason and agree with one of the rare truisms uttered by G.B. Shaw: that the Englishman does not know what liberty really means. He thinks he does because politicians and the press tell him he does. But if he weighs up the evidence, his conception of 'democracy' must necessarily be modified!

There is a breathing space ... the workers by their actions, by their responsibility towards themselves and their fellow workers, can make it *peace for all time*!

National Service

The government plans to introduce conscription. The workers must make no mistake. This would place a tremendous weapon in the hands of reaction – a weapon which the ruling class would not be hesitant to use.

Already the signs begin to appear. 'Defence of Factories' is only a cover for attacks against the freedom of workers. Speed-up is increasing everywhere. Under the cover of National Service, the government hopes to manoeuvre the dupes and hired bullies of privilege into disorganising and intimidating the working class.

War is being used as a method of blackmail. It is not the fascist blackmail of the 'democracies' but the co-ordinated blackmail of Hitler, Chamberlain, Mussolini and Daladier, using the people's natural horror of warfare to intimidate them into accepting tyranny under the cover of defence.

While Communists, Liberals and Labourites stand ready to betray the workers into a new imperialist slaughter, anarchism upholds the true tradition of their class – the tradition based on the fact that the workers have no country, for they are the wage-slaves of capitalist exploitation and the enemies of their exploiters.

On 11th November millions of sincere British 'subjects' remain in silence to respect the dead. Those are not the feelings of the organisers of the ceremony – for according to their ruling class beliefs, have they not betrayed the cause for which those people died? Have they not, by their own standards, assured us that those people died in vain?

For the ruling classes it is nothing more than an excuse for using the frailty of human sentiment to cultivate the psychology of mass hysteria and servitude.

Do not accept the usual pro-militarist ballyhoo. They will tell you about the so-called peace they have gained, and will urge the need for preparing for war.

Don't be fooled by politicians, bosses, warmongers or state officials. Use the opportunity to build a movement for workers' direct action, workers' direct control, and freedom, while there is still time.

Issued by the Anarchist Federation of Britain, printed in *Spain and the World*, 30th November 1938

Refuse to support the coming war

The war-clouds loom over Europe. Hitler's march into Prague has threatened the democratic powers, and the beat of the drums can be heard in the distance. War-fever is being lashed up by the capitalist press and the social-democratic and popular-frontist traitors. All the stage is set for a repetition of 1914-1918. The war is coming.

Very few voices can be heard to protest against the jingo-cries of the professional patriots. Even the pacifists, against war though they may be, place *all* their activities for 'peace' and, in consequence, are even driven into the arms of Chamberlain's 'appeasement', which also means war.

What is going to be the use of a war for 'defence of democracy' – a war to save the decaying empire? Why should the workers fight for the capitalist government that exploits them in time of peace and in time of war?

It is useless, and worse than useless, to imagine that in fighting the fascist countries the workers will be fighting fascism, any more than the defeat of the Kaiser meant the defeat of 'German militarism'. The only way to defeat fascism is to defeat the system that breeds fascism, the system that is just as rampant here as abroad.

The workers must resist the war, must resist the steps leading to war: 'national service' (compulsory and otherwise), conscription, the ARP and such measures. The advice of anarchists and revolutionaries generally given during the last war was: 'the enemy is in your own country!' That still holds good. The enemy of the workers is not only the foreign dictators, but the oppressors at home.

The way to resist war and war measures is to build a revolutionary movement to press for its own aims of anti-militarism and workers' action. Refuse to serve 'your' country! Refuse to assist the state in its manoeuvres for murder! Forward to the social revolution, through workers' action on the economic field and *against* the forces of the governing class!

DOWN WITH THE CAPITALIST WAR!

from *Revolt!*, 23rd March 1939

CONSCRIPTION:

Cannon Fodder to Safeguard Capitalist Interests and British Imperialism

Those who have followed the policy of the government during the last few months cannot be surprised at the calling up of all able-bodied men between the ages of 20-21. Behind the scenes, in the various departments responsible for the organisation of ARP and recruiting, chaos and inefficiency reign supreme; in the country at large, complete indifference.

Conscription is not the result of 'public opinion' in this country, as the *Evening Standard* would have us believe, but it is a fact that the government knew quite well that no effective opposition would come from the workers. The workers were 'tried out' over National Service. They offered no resistance. In fact only the pacifists, the ILP and the anarchists, representing but a minority of the workers, opposed National Service. The Labour Party, the trades unions and the Communist Party just refused to support National Service under Chamberlain's government. None of the organisations pointed to the peril of conscription as the next step in the government's war programme.

Furthermore, by their very pro-war attitude ('democracy' versus fascism attitude) the Communist and Labour Parties can offer very little resistance to Chamberlain's measures. Only those of Britain's youth who will be required to join up will be able to do this.

Our position in face of the new situation should not be far to seek. We are opposed to conscription in peace time for exactly the same reasons as we are opposed to 'war to safeguard our national independence and the freedom of the Empire' and other such justifications for war. Wars between capitalist nations are fought to safeguard illegal conquests from being conquered by other marauders. The next war, we repeat, and will repeat until our voice is stifled by the forces of law and order, will not be a war for 'democracy against fascism' for democracy does not exist under capitalism. We have 'democracy' so long as the workers' movement, as in this country, is impotent to use that tremendous force, both moral and economic, which in essence is theirs.

Fascism springs to life when the working class movement begins to show that it is conscious of its strength but, as in Germany, is not strong enough to wrest political and economic control from the grip of the capitalists (the former 'democrats'). True democracy – free socialism – can only exist when the workers are strong enough (and we speak internationally) to control their own economic and social lives.

These definitions were essential if only to show that in practice there exists very little difference between 'capitalist democracy' and fascism, and this is more especially true as far as the colonial workers are concerned. Yet war fever is being worked up by every means possible, and the slogan this time will be 'save democracy', because the champions of democracy are to be found amongst the working class.

But in case you, comrade worker, are tempted to fight for 'democracy' because your bosses tell you that the next war will be fought out on this issue, just pause to think of the fate of Spain where the only real resistance to fascism in Europe was offered. Then your 'save democracy' propagandists denied the victory of the workers over international fascism. Why? The answer lies in the clear distinction between *capitalist democracy* and *true democracy* (free socialism).

If we are to defeat fascism we must crush the *system* and its exponents, and not the working masses who happen to be unwilling but important tools for the system. Exactly the same applies in our struggle against the capitalist system in general. We must destroy the *system* and its exponents and not the rank and file.

Editorial in *Revolt!* incorporating *Spain and the World*, 1st May 1939

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RECOLLECTIONS

Peter Cadogan

On Being There in World War Two

This is a worm's eye view. To see the picture in the round we need a lot of worms. What did World War Two *feel* like to people at the time?

To me, as to any number of others, the war was a great relief. I was stuck in an office, bored stiff, itching to get away – and lo! Deliverance! I was eighteen years old in September 1939 when I heard Chamberlain utter the fateful words: "We are now at war with Germany". But of course nothing happened! It was the Phoney War, until Dunkirk the following summer – then everything happened. I promptly volunteered for the Navy and was not accepted, so learning something that had not appeared in the news, viz. that the Navy had taken a fair hammering at Dunkirk and any number of ships were in dry-dock under repair. No recruits for the time being.

I had heard about the Air-Sea Rescue Service of the RAF, little ships, so I volunteered for that. Even they kept me waiting for about eight months.

Ideologically, at the time, I was deep into Wells and Shaw – the *Outline of World History* and the two-volume *Everywoman's Guide to Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, etc.* and, of course, the plays and prefaces, so I had the glimmerings of political sophistication. In 1940 I also read Edward J. Thompson's (father of E.P. Thompson) book on the cause of Indian independence, Clarence Streit's *Union Now* and W.B. Curry's *The Case for Federal Union* – then joined the Federal Union itself, thus declaring myself an Anglo-European (which I have remained to the present day). I did my first two meetings, on India and Federal Union, for the Youth Group of my local C of E in Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The experience was not unfulfilling. India got its independence in 1947 and the Treaty of Rome followed a decade later!

How did I feel about the war in those early days? There was nothing in the least complicated about it. Hitler was clearly a bad guy. Nazism was thoroughly evil and understood only the language of force. He had tried to invade this country. One of my school friends was killed in his Blenheim attacking the German barges massed along the French coast in preparation for the invasion. If the Battle of Britain in the air had been lost and the Germans, in command of the Channel, had crossed it ...? Churchill was the man of the hour and was plainly right. We had to fight.

On the nature of the war

A year before the war I had had a disturbing experience. My father was in the export trade and had to meet and entertain people from the continent. On this occasion it was a young German in his twenties. I was asked to join them for dinner at the Turk's Head in Grey Street. The young German seemed a charming and affable person until the subject of Hitler came up. He changed abruptly, it was a Jekyll and Hyde situation, he became another person as he launched into a Nazi rant about the master race, the thousand-year Reich and his great Führer. I was in the presence of the demonic. Communication was out of the question (and the absence of communication is what violence means).

In this particular case we managed to change the subject and muddle through somehow, but I had seen and heard something that was wholly without my experience to date. I got an ominous feeling about the future – and read the omens correctly.

I was not, and have never been, a pacifist. I thought then, as I think now, that war is the central curse of civilisation, the method of empire. But people at the receiving end of an aggressive imperial war are wholly right to defend themselves – thus just wars. Every situation has to be examined on its merits.

World War One was an unjust imperial war that solved nothing, redistributed imperial loot and prepared the way for World War Two. World War Two was a just war because there was no way we could submit to Nazi tyranny. We had to beat the bastard. I later found out about the plans that Hitler had for a conquered Britain. The British officer responsible for taking charge of German archives after the end of the war was called Burghley, who later taught Classics at the University of Durham. We set up a meeting for him at Kings College, Newcastle, (now the University of Newcastle) where he told us what he had found. Britain was to be turned into a farm and a holiday resort

for Germany. All males between the ages of 16 and 60 were to be exported to Germany as slave labour. The women were to be fertilised by German troops and a new British-German breed produced. Our civilisation was to be wiped out. Given the holocaust, that figured.

To the best of my knowledge no one has yet done a thorough *political* study of World War Two, or an equally thorough study of the mistakes made by our own side. There are many studies of particular situations, but not of the picture overall. So to this day it is very difficult to make a proper evaluation. Martin Gilbert's study of Churchill does not pretend to be a critical evaluation. It is a chronicle, a narrative, and brilliant at that, but not enough.

A typical mistake

Just to take one example of my own experience. In the summer of 1943 Churchill (presumably) decided to occupy the Faroe Islands as a Coastal Command base in the North Atlantic. There was no fighting. The Faroese, descended from ninth century Vikings, gave their consent. The advance party, of which I was one, landed on the island of Vaagar and started to build the base using Lake Vaagar for flying boats, Sunderlands and Catalinas. The Royal Engineers and the Pioneer Corps were there in strength. A brand new road was blasted out of the mountain-side between the villages of Sorvaag and Sandyvaag, while on the other side of the Lake the Engineers laboured to blow away enough of another mountain-side to make a landing strip possible.

The weather was appalling – high winds and only five days sunshine a year. The place was a meteorological disaster area. On the grapevine we had it that the Germans had recced the place and written it off! And they were right ... I was there for a whole year and learnt later that the High Command had eventually recognised that the Faroes were a dead loss, blown up the runway and evacuated the place. Millions of pounds, millions of man-hours, all down the drain. But no one was killed, it was not news. But how many other Faroes stories are there?

To counter the boredom and put my spare time to some use I took a correspondence course on political theory! It was all laid on by the Education Corps of the RAF. It took the usual form – working through a textbook and writing essays sent back to the tutor. The textbook, now long and well forgotten, was Harold Laski's *Grammar of Politics*. But on one fatal page there was a footnote calling attention to Lenin's *State and Revolution*. I now know, all too late, that *State*

and Revolution is one of the great con jobs of political history. Lenin, a hunted man, was living rough outside St Petersburg in mid-1917. He had issued his famous call, *For Peace, Bread, Land and All Power to the Soviets* (which was a pack of lies since what he meant was All Power to the Party) and now had to put together a body of ideas to help to make it all possible. He raked through the works of Marx and Engels and found to his horror that *they had never written a political theory*. An economic theory, yes! So he parcelled up all the little bits and pieces he could find, presented them in a wholly idealistic context of his own making and gave the world *State and Revolution*. Devious to the end, it made gullible me a Marxist. It took me seventeen years, until 1960, to get myself untangled.

The great debate

But this experience was quite important for another reason. It concerned the political discussion, often very intensive, that went on among all ranks during the war. From 1940-41 we were preoccupied with mere survival, but when the Russians came in in the summer of 1941 the climate changed. Then Pearl Harbour. After that there was no way we could lose. It was right and proper to discuss what we were fighting for and what kind of world we wanted to follow the war. There was to be no repetition of 1918.

Enter ABCA (the Army Bureau of Current Affairs), the education officers, the chaplains, the discussion groups, the forces newspapers and parliaments – and, behind the scenes, the Communist Party. The barrack rooms, the mess decks, the Nissen huts, the tents of the forces everywhere, those are the places where the result of the general election of 1945 was decided in the years 1941-45. The move to the left was massive and took the Labour Party by surprise – after all, they had not organised it! Even the leaders of the Communist Party were taken unawares and actually called for a coalition government in 1945!

ABCA, operating officially at the highest level, was substantially in the hands of the Communist Party. Its endless stream of publications designed to lead the discussion in the forces was clearly left-of-centre. One needs to remember the climate at the time – that of the Popular Front, the Left Book Club, the International Brigade in Spain and Gollancz. And the poor record of the Tories – appeasement, the Depression, pro-Hitler sympathies.

The political leaderships were effectively switched off since there was only one, agreed, political goal – to win the war. This meant that

the rank-and-file activists, officers and other ranks alike, were on their own and had to use their own discretion. Perhaps for the only time in history, Marxists worked as anarchists – and very effectively too! I came up against this personally. After my session in the Faroes, when on leave in London, I went to the Communist Party's centre in King Street, Covent Garden, and tried to join! A well known party leader, who was also a lawyer, explained to me that the party line was that no serving member of the forces should carry a party card, that I should read *The Daily Worker* and other party publications like *Labour Monthly*, locate others like myself, promote the party line in discussions everywhere and formally join the party after demobilisation. So we were all free agents! And that was the key to our success.

Seeing the empire

I was in the Channel for D-Day and in the North Sea for Arnhem (and had next to nothing to do on either occasion – since the Germans had been blasted out of the sky and off the surface of the sea, there was no one to rescue). And then God help me, I was posted to Training Command in the Bahamas! The Duke of Windsor, so the story goes, asked his friend Churchill to send him some war. Two airfields were opened up, Windsor Field and Oakes Field, so that pilots trained to fly single-engined aircraft (in Canada and Rhodesia) could learn to fly twins. It all worked well. As a coxswain, with the exalted rank of Corporal, I had my own command, a motor-boat with a crew of four, out in the Caribbean. Under lease-lend we ate very well, so I wasn't having a bad war!

But the politics! I wrote for the local forces newspaper and took and active part in discussions, formal and informal, and got slowly fed up with Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, where I was stationed. The political scene was pretty close to fascism. The place was a tax haven for the international rich – American, Canadian, European. There was no income tax but there was a purchase tax on food – so, incredibly, the poor paid the taxes to run the place on behalf of the rich, and I mean the *very* rich. The rich lived along Bay Street that flanked the waterfront for two to three miles, and the poor, blacks, lived 'over the hill' and out of bounds to the RAF. The blacks, or many of them, had thriven on the sponge industry that had just been rendered illegal on grounds of alleged disease. The real reason, it seemed, was to ensure cheap submissive domestic servants.

The war had taken over the place. Even the casino had closed down

and been converted to a forces club for us lot. Its president was the Duchess of Windsor and there I met her, but that it another story!

But to cut a long story short and come to the heart of the matter, I got so fed up with the regime and all its horrors that I decided on some action. There was a black paper called *The Voice*. It was not brilliant – it was about 90% adverts and edited by a black doctor, a physician – but I had the feeling that it 'belonged'. So in broad daylight, and wearing my uniform, I went over the hill to the house of the good doctor and his wife. They made me very welcome, served a very English tea and we talked. I said, I would like to write an article for *The Voice* called 'The Coming Bahamian Revolution'. Do you think you might publish it? The answer was yes.

The article was duly written and published verbatim. There must have been a bit of a tizzy in high places because they somehow found out that although the authorship was anonymous they knew it was mine. But nothing serious happened. A certain sergeant was deputed to 'watch me' (he was the first to tell me!) and I was ordered to change my room and thus my most immediate associates. Shortly afterwards the general election of 1945 took place. I had just found a huge red flag – what it was for I had no idea – but the day after the election I put to sea with this blaze of red at the masthead. No problem!

Of course we were nearly all amateur warriors as much concerned about civvy street as we were about the war. We assumed a freedom, asserted it, and got away with it. The war had an authenticity that has, as I see it, stood the test of time. We practised a good deal of the freedom we thought we were fighting for. And we were right.

Deeper political misdirections

There were some deep underlying mistakes and disasters. The worst, morally and politically, was the Unconditional Surrender policy endorsed by Roosevelt and Churchill at Casablanca. This meant rejecting any recognition of the anti-Nazi underground in Germany. We shall never now know, but with our help one of the plots to put an end to Hitler might have succeeded – enough good Germans died in the attempts. Not to recognise the integrity of people like Bonhoeffer was just ignorant idiocy, militarily and politically disastrous.

The Bomber Harris story has been well worked over – another quite unnecessary horror. It should never have happened. War does bad things to the mind. I was in Bomber Command at the time of the thousand-bomber raids and from the middle of the North Sea watched

them go and come back. Many crashed into the sea. A film made at the time put it over that our slogan in the Air Sea Rescue Service was 'The sea shall not have them'. That was mostly Hollywood. The sea mostly got them. I have to say in fairness to the truth that throughout the whole war I never heard anyone, in or out of the services, condemn what Bomber Harris was doing and thousands of us with him. I learnt after the war that the Peace Pledge Union had been on to it. More credit to them, but they didn't come through to those of us at the sharp end. We have our share of blame.

Then the fact that Churchill let Rommel into North Africa. The British Army had defeated the Italians; there wasn't a single German in North Africa, the way was clear along the shore to Tunis, Algeria and Morocco. Churchill stopped the advance and ordered the Army across the Mediterranean into Greece where it was shatteringly defeated by the German Army – there and in Crete. At the same time, who knows? Mussolini had made the fatal mistake of attacking Greece without telling Hitler, who was at that moment preparing his huge assault on the Soviet Union. Hitler had to send an army down into Yugoslavia and Greece and hold up his attack on the Eastern Front. He lost up to three months and was devastatingly unprepared for the Russian winter in consequence. So who can tell? All I know is that senior army men are bitter about Churchill to this day.

Then there was the Churchill-Stalin carve-up when Churchill went to Moscow late in 1944. They took a map of Europe and divided it down the middle – this for you, this for me. When they had finished Churchill, a little appalled about what they had just done, suggested that they destroy the map. Stalin said airily 'No, you keep it'. Today, it is somewhere in the Public Records Office. Churchill, who was later to complain so bitterly about the Cold War, was one of its principal architects.

Conclusion

One could go on ... the Norwegian campaign with which the war began, the fall of Singapore, the fate of the Fleet in the Far East, Dieppe, the tactics in Italy, Stalin's betrayal of Warsaw, Arnhem – and how many more? It was a fallible war, but of its eventual and ultimate nature and outcome there is, as I see it, no doubt – it was an essential exercise, a just war. We did what we had to do and a lot of us didn't come back, but they died to some purpose and *that purpose is not yet fully discharged.* In that sense the war is not yet over.

Arthur Moyse

'A splendid little war'

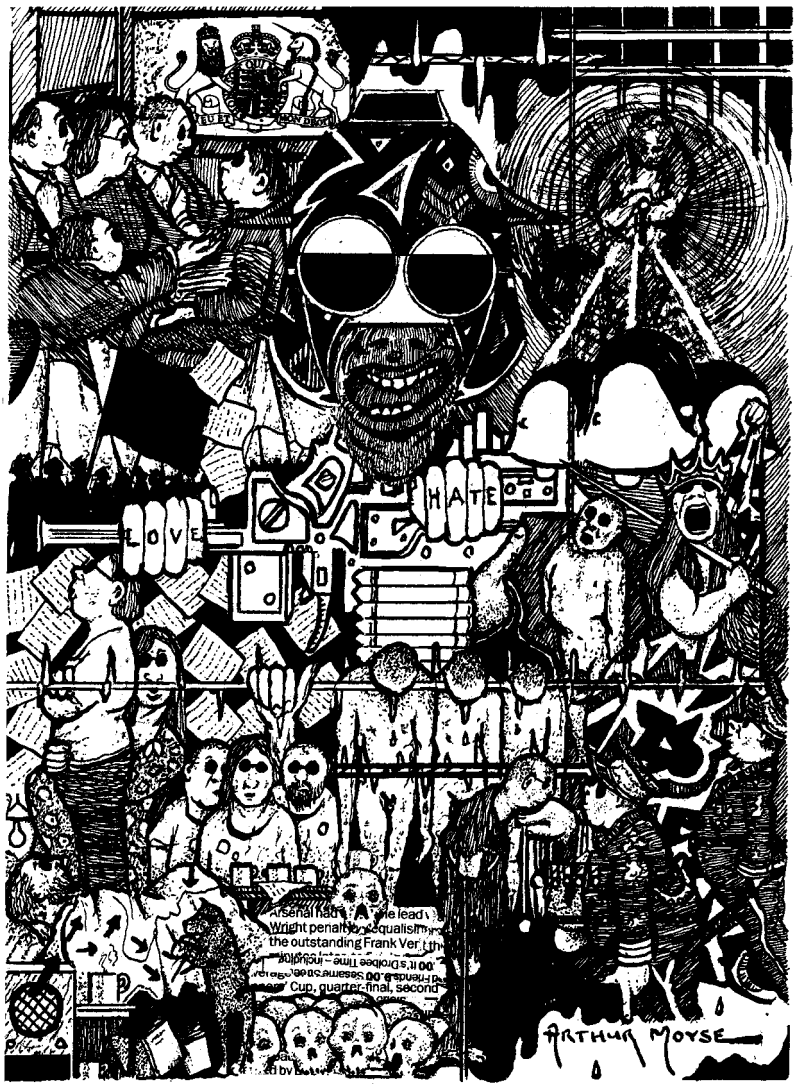
In 1895 Spain sent in 200,000 troops to quell the revolt of the Cuban people and in 1898 the McKinley American government sent in an American armed force to aid the Cuban people. After three months the Spanish army went back to Spain leaving the American flag and the dollar as a permanent absentee landlord, for the American army moved on to take Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines and any odd souvenirs that tourists and soldiers also accumulate. It was left to John Hay, the American ambassador in London, to write to 'Teddy' Roosevelt that 'it has been a splendid little war' and, allowing for the temper of the time and that the only access to information about the 'war' was through a biased media, it was an understandable but flawed reaction to sanctioned mass killings.

War is a blanket term that covers an unmapped history of mass human conflict and to ask what is the 'anarchist interpretation' of World War Two has the fey lunacy of the asylum, for it is the logic of asking what is the anarchist interpretation of malaria: 'on deep consideration we're against mosquitoes with an abstaining disagreement by our Buddhist comrades'. War has taken many fashions and many forms and there are those who choose that their own particular bias will rubber-stamp all mass human conflict with the same value added cost price. It is argued that historians falsify and distort history by adding or omitting 'facts' and creating a conduit for the final and definitive particular history that they favour, but the fault is not theirs but ours if we choose to be selective in our readings, for given a choice of historians we can make our own selective choice to suit our own particular bias and beating the bare breast cry out that here at last is the truth. I read and enjoy every 'authority' but believe no one, not even A.J.P. Taylor when he tells me that the German Army beat the French (and the British) in World War Two because the German High Command used the railway timetables to move the German frontline troops. I read and enjoy the historians' true history with the same pleasure that I read the truth of who killed Kennedy; who wrote *Hamlet*; which is worse for the heart, butter or margarine; the lost city of Atlantis, Clause 4 or the political manifestos.

War has taken many forms and many fashions and has been fought for many reasons and I would state, with complete authority, that the First World War was the last of the great classic wars that was to be fought in the fashion of the Battle of Waterloo with bands and banners, mounted troops and lances and the kiss of the fingertips to the enemy as one died among the scarlet flowers that bedewed the field of battle, but the machine-gun altered the face of war and turned it into carnage. If Britain had stayed out of World War One the German Army would have defeated the French Army, there would have been the triumphant parade through Paris, the takeover of French colonies, indemnities, the frantic writing of history according to one's side and the Frenchmen weeping in the boulevard cafés, but the political balance of power had to be maintained and two generations dined off a meal of carnage.

The answer, comrades, is that we should all sit round a table working these things out in a comradely sensible fashion, but tell it not to the starving mob hammering on the doors of the empty food stores, for human despair breeds its own politicians. It is foolish to deny that war has its own romance providing that it is aged in the barrel and on a distant shore for we are of that aged generation who still dine on the printed romance of the Spanish Civil War and still re-quote Kronstadt and the mass death of those sailors to show our hands are clean. Without Shakespeare no Agincourt when Henry VII's 5,000 archers and 750 men at arms defeated 22,000 French knights and 3,000 crossbow-men under Charles d'Albret.

Is it important? A British officer stood on the invasion beach in World War Two calling our Shakespeare's 'Once more into the breach dear friends, once more ...' And talk of propaganda and how often was the brutal bombing of the small town of Guernica used for passing round the hat in all those 'support the Spanish people' meetings, and how could Hollywood have survived without the Crusades, and I know, comrades, that what started out as a holy war became a hypermarket for loot. We can toss around statistics and I will give you a death list of World War Two with 55,000,000 dead, 15,000,000 Chinese, 3,000,000 Poles and to top the glass 70,000 Chinese civilians slaughtered in Nanking when the young Japanese Officer Corps had their demand for an invasion of China rubber-stamped by the Emperor and the government of the hour. But what I choose to remember is the shelling by artillery of the workers' tenements in Vienna under the Dollfuss government as Europe came under the domination of their home-spawned Nazi military forces.


LOVE
HATE
Wright penalty equalism
the outstanding Frank Ver
Cup, quarter-final, second
ARTHUR MOYSE

Dollfuss was murdered in 1934 and Vienna, Austria's land of the Valse, cheered the German troops as they marched in in 1938 to take over, and the trucks to the concentration camps became part of the European railway schedules.

I have no use for war but there comes that moment when one has to stand up and be counted, when the alternative is bureaucratically organised technically first-class genocide. Of the war in Northern Ireland – and Sinn Féin, the IRA and the Loyalists claim it is a 'war' – I would not walk across the road to unite one square foot of peat with another for the sake of politicians and their gunmen, yet how many among us have not nodded their heads in approval or marched in safe towns chanting 'troops our, troops out' and let war rage in the streets of Northern Ireland?

I hold that World War Two was a thing of grim inevitability for there was an acceptance that as the Nazi movement took over European governments and legalised the mass murder of its opponents, then *Mein Kampf* and what the Nazi rule-book printed was but a matter of time, not years but months. On the Sunday of the declaration of war there was no cheering in the streets but a grim silence and acceptance of an inevitable confrontation with an evil as inevitable as a plague. Quote me the statistics of the dead and quote me an alternative that does not include the words 'fuck you Jack, I'm alright'.

There are those who mark their cards, and I can quote by declaiming, though in abstention, that they support the Kronstadt sailors, the Basques in the Spanish Civil War but not the defence of Madrid, World War One or World War Two as ideological non-starters and it is to their, if not credit at least excuse, that in one of the most traumatic periods in history they overslept. I have a feeling that this issue of *The Raven* will be a *De Profundis* for a few. Of myself it can be rightly asked what are my credentials for sounding off (Glenn Miller) and comrades, they are slight. In World War One as a puling infant I was being pram'd through dark streets amid running people during my first air raid, in 1929 at the age of 15 I marched on my first demonstration 'For Winter Relief'. I threw bricks at the uniformed police-protected fascists when the people of the East End halted them at Cable Street, E1. I was in the small squads dragging bodies, beaten and bloodstained, out of the huge Olympia fascist meeting and faced and ran from the police horse charges. Always to march against the police in protest! Forgotten wars such as the 'Green Hell of the Grand Chaco' or Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia when the clown was collecting sand dunes for an empire, and we marched to

Knightsbridge to cheer Haile Selassie the Lion of Judah as he waved to us from his balcony. We marched in support in 1934 when the Dollfuss Austrian government used heavy artillery to shell the Ottakring workers' hostel on 14th February 1934 before Dollfuss himself was murdered, before the Nazi pre-war 1938 take-over of gay Vienna, city of song and shellings. By God, we marched and protested and the liturgy of murder still went on. We protested when the Japanese Army invaded China and 70,000 men, women and children were deliberately slaughtered in Nanking.

To run up the French beach in World War Two leaving behind any guilty consciences for others and with a small group of others to have to stand and be interviewed by Military Intelligence as to how an unfortunate sergeant got shot and in a battle zone have to hold up a Bible and swear on it. In pre-invasion England to be with a weeping fellow-soldier in a makeshift guard-room facing a charge for which over 300 British soldiers were executed by firing squad in World War One and in 1995 still feel sick at the thought of it and the small miracle that freed us. To mount guards in Bolton with no rifles but just a length of gas piping with a bayonet rammed in the end and to stand on the coast in the freezing dark night for an invasion alert stand-to. To get paralytic drunk in Armentières, when the wartime convoy had moved on, and carried shoulder-high drunk and incapable to the cheers of the population shouting 'Cognac no bon'. In a huge German tank barracks just outside Hamburg in a Beckett landscape as the war dribbled to its close, where British soldiers shared their mess-tin meals with German soldiers as they drifted to their unknown destinations. To have led a small mutiny in the north of England and to have seen a large *political* meeting of ambulance drivers before the crossing of the Rhine when they refused to carry armed military in their ambulances, and to cross the Rhine and see bulldozers shovelling the dead into mass graves, heigh ho if you survive, comrades, it is Grand Theatre and if you are among the honoured kaput then it is Grand Guignol. In battle zones, comrades, there are no newspapers, no magazines, no radio chat shows and no propaganda, for that is for civilian consumption and it is on that that opinions are based and made and regurgitated with the voice and the air of informed authority.

War, like common assault, is a stupid and a mindless evil thing, but when Ghengis Khan and Attila the Hun come riding over the brow of the hill, then fax me an answer, comrade. In 1933 the German Nazi Party came into power, but before 1933 *Mein Kampf*, the manifesto of genocide and the destruction of human liberty, was already in print

and on sale in every country in the western world. And in 1933 the first concentration camps in Germany became official government policy and the first to be thrown into them were Germans of all faiths, political, social or religious, and as it spread to each country in Europe the evil therein collaborated in that death of human liberty be it the body politic or physical.

I know that there are those who have never entered a major or minor art gallery except to use the lavatory, but protest the 'destruction of works of art' and of their canting and sanctimonious hypocrisy never remember Guernica, Warsaw or Rotterdam, and one can assume, comrades, that it was the same pilots, same 'planes and the same surplus bombs.

One arrives at anarchism not by sitting in the green shade on the green lawn with the river lapping by and crumpets for tea, for in that brainwashing one becomes a decent kindly liberal for one cannot conceive of altering the basics of one's society. One can only be forced into a position and a desire to alter one's society when one is forced to confront its very evils, and 1939 and 1946 forced one to make that choice. Human conflict in the mass comes in many forms, be it war, revolution, jihad, civil war, mass demonstration and the barricades, and there are those who hold that one can pick and choose like unto waiting for a particular bus or choosing a barricade by absentee postal vote. Not as in the Charge of the Light Brigade, comrade, one does not charge to the sound of guns but to the battle and pray that one finds solidarity with those next to you in the line of fire.

Old soldiers, 'old fools', will march on aching feet and wear their medals and bands will play and politicians will make speeches and the television will be a bore over that period, but spare a little charity for those who stood their ground. They could in another fashion have obeyed the state, pleaded with their adviser to miss the roll call, served the mandatory sentence and, one assumes, led not unpleasant war years. Each one of us has to make their own choice. 20,000 anti-militarists were executed by the Nazis. I respect them and the lumpen-proletariat, 'neither hammer or anvil of the revolution', who neither protested to the state nor came to terms with the state but survived among the ruins and the rubble, for if we have any salvation it will be because of them and not in the 'messages' to the academic few. I did not have their courage or amoral attitude to life, so I failed and picked up a rifle for a cause I believe just.

Derrick A. Pike

Conscientious Objectors in World War Two

Obviously, if enough people refused to kill one another, there would be no more wars. No so obvious is that there would be no more governments. Governments can fulfil their purpose only by using the violence of their armed forces, which they need for a police back-up to enforce their laws and for making war. Governments need wars to survive and without them they would collapse. This means that governments have to destroy conscientious objectors and their message. In many countries they are shot or killed as they are forced to clear minefields by walking over them.

Prior to World War Two, the thought of the number of innocent people who would be killed in another war horrified me. I read many books and pamphlets and studied many subjects from fascism to anarchism. During October 1938, I signed the pledge promising not to take part in or support another war. When the governments started their war, I resigned as a designer of communications receivers. With the thought of how the government treated conscientious objectors in World War One, I was frightened and imagined that I would be shot. This time, however, the British Government were much more cunning. They knew how to neutralise the message of the conscientious objectors while using them to help fight their war. This is what happened to me.

I went before a tribunal where a judge faced me across a table with two men on each side of him. The Judge said he had my statement saying why I did not want to fight. He asked me if I expected him to read it since it was so long, and he threw it down. They asked me several questions and I had an answer for all of them. The Judge said I was genuine because I had been in a reserved occupation and need not have come before the tribunal, but a man who represented the trade unions would not agree. Because they disagreed, I was told to come back. Governments cannot accept that a man will not fight because war is against the interests of the people; they must pretend the man will not fight because he feels it to be wrong or because it is against his religion and conscience.

Next time I appeared before the tribunal, the judge said they were not interested in my views about war; they were interested only in my religious beliefs. I had read books on comparative religion and could explain how I thought that God was an 'impersonal ground' that pervades everything and that all life is sacred.

The Judge then said: 'Clearly you are a Buddhist and must have complete exemption'.

The other members of the tribunal still would not agree, so the Judge said that I must do work of National Importance.

'That I will never do', I replied.

The Judge then said: 'You do what you think is important'. And he winked at me.

The government allowed few people to register as conscientious objectors without any condition, and those they did were called Absolutists. The Judge knew I was genuine and got his way by saying I was a Buddhist and allowing me to behave like an Absolutist, although he did not register me as one. Most conscientious objectors were given what they called conditional exemption. They were allowed to remain out of the armed forces provided they helped the war effort by such means as working on the land. That was how the British government used the conscientious objectors instead of persecuting them. The few who refused to accept the condition were imprisoned. Most of the conscientious objectors were absorbed into society. Any anti-war propaganda that would have been generated by their suffering never existed.

Although not registered as an Absolutist, I was effectively one. And although I tried to leave the war alone, it would not leave me alone. I was mistaken for a German pilot, questioned by the secret police, nearly killed in an air raid, and almost suffocated by petrol fumes as I tried to pull Air Force officers from a wrecked aeroplane. There was no ill will from the public, rather the reverse as most people treated me with kindness. I spent the war making enough money to live by selling children's books from door to door. In my spare time I studied, made notes, collected cuttings and started building a library. Unlike most pacifists, I was also an anarchist and knew that my rejection of war would help produce the anarchist society.

*John Hewetson**

The Pacifist Movement

Very heterogeneous elements compose the pacifist movement. They are united, not from identity of political conviction or class interests, but solely in their opposition to war. And this opposition may be religious or agnostic, political or non-political, humanitarian or utilitarian. Pacifist policy, having such a varied background, is difficult to define; but one may attempt to distinguish general trends, and the following remarks are made as a general criticism of the movement – they may not necessarily apply to all individual pacifists.

Pacifists regard war as the prime evil; they are not necessarily concerned with other social ills. Their main endeavour, in the years preceding the present conflict, was to mobilise public opinion against war, and so to influence national policy by mass appeals to governments. Seeing world problems mainly in terms of war, and more or less disregarding the other manifestations of capitalist imperialism, their viewpoint has tended to be narrow, so that the course of events over the last decade has frequently placed them in equivocal positions.

Pacifists and Spain

Opposing the war in Abyssinia, Aldous Huxley, in a leaflet published by the Peace Pledge Union (PPU), also opposed sanctions as being not only morally indefensible but also inefficacious since they were likely to extend the war; but the Union did not offer any adequate analysis of Italy's aggression, and hence no positive suggestions of a practical nature. Regarding Spain, Huxley, again in a PPU leaflet, *Pacifism and Civil War*, voices the liberal-reformist tendencies of the movement:

... it was, to say the least, unfortunate that the Popular Front should have allowed so much power to pass into the hands of the Communists and

* John Hewetson (1912-1990) in 1940 was a GP and, with other pacifists dissatisfied with the PPU's weak stand, had formed a breakaway group, The Forward Movement, and later with other members had come over to the anarchists. For the next eleven years, to 1951, he was one of the editors of *War Commentary* and its successor, *Freedom*. He went to prison as a CO and also for obstruction at demonstrations. He was also one of the three *Freedom* editors jailed for nine months in April 1945.

anarcho-syndicalists composing its left wing. It was unfortunate that it permitted the ordinary machinery of administration to be supplemented by unofficial committees appointed by the parties of the extreme left.

Believing that the employment of violence precluded the realisation of any desirable aims, pacifists opposed the appeals for arms for Spain; they held that further bloodshed was futile in any event, and urged the earliest possible cessation of the war. Their activities were therefore limited to purely humanitarian work in medical aid and shelter for refugees. Conviction of the futility of the Spanish struggle prevented many pacifists from examining its true nature, and hence from learning any political lessons from it. The non-intervention policy was uneasily supported, in spite of its obvious injustice and farcical application, the excuse of the British government that it would prevent extension of the war being accepted almost without question.

Fear of war also governed the attitude towards appeasement. Recognising the broken faith and 'injustices' of Versailles, the German claim to share in the advantages enjoyed by the British and French empires was regarded sympathetically, since failure to remedy those 'injustices' would lead to further war. But, although certain writers in *Peace News* – Reginald Reynolds and Wilfred Wellock, for example – urge the complete liquidation of imperialism, the main body of pacifists have been content to advocate a more 'equitable' imperialist share-out without attacking imperialism itself. Native interests were guilelessly confided to the care of Mandates Commissions under a reconstituted League of Nations. (More recently, the Federal Union idea had been widely embraced – for instance by Dr Joad, Professor Catlin, Gerald Bailey and others.)

Not recognising the true motives of the government, the appeasement policy was generally supported by the movement. When it broke down in March 1939, with Hitler's entry into Prague, the National Peace Council organised a petition to the government to institute immediately an international conference 'directed towards remedying the economic and social conditions likely to lead to war'. Over a million signatures were collected. Mr Chamberlain, replying to the deputation of distinguished men who presented the petition, 'expressed his general agreement with the aims which had been put before him ... he agreed, also, with the general line of approach suggested, and declared his intention to watch for any opportunity of following it up'. This touching faith in the good intentions of our rulers occurs frequently in pacifist writings: it was expressed even as late as 12th January 1940, by Dr Herbert

Gray, who wrote for the front page article in *Peace News* without any trace of cynicism: 'I believe our present Prime Minister has gone as far in the pursuit of peace as was possible for any man with the followers he has behind him'.

Pacifists have been content to decry war as an isolated phenomenon without making any fundamental analysis of its causes; they have consequently failed to recognise that it is a symptom, like unemployment and poverty, of an underlying disease – the contemporary social and economic order. They attack the effect, but neglect the cause.

Pacifist defections

The present war has underlined these confusions of thought. Still endeavouring to organise a mass opposition to the war, the PPU instituted in the autumn of 1939 a 'Stop the war' campaign. With the rejection of the mediation offers of Leopold of the Belgians and Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, the slogan was changed to 'Negotiate Now'. But at no point in the propaganda for an immediate negotiated peace was any mention made of the economic and industrial disorganisation which would inevitably follow a transfer from a war to a peace economy. The whole problem was treated as though it were merely a question of goodwill. Meanwhile the invasion of the Low Countries caused the defection of some of the one-time leaders of pacifist thought – Joad, Bertrand Russell and Philip Mumford. With the collapse of France several pacifists – Vera Brittain, Professor George Catlin and Storm Jameson – signed an appeal addressed by the PEN club 'to the conscience of the world', which in effect endorsed the familiar war-aims of the official propagandists: '... we with our allies are not fighting only for ourselves but the belief we share with every man of any race or religion, who holds that men should respect each other and minds should be free. We are fighting for our lives ...' and so on. Much pacifist thought about this war appears to have been founded on the unconscious assumption of a British victory; serious military reverses caused a radical modification of outlook.

The leading article in *Peace News* for 21st June welcomed the capitulation of the French government without qualification and without expressing any fears regarding the intentions of such notorious reactionaries as Petain and Laval, to whom on the contrary it incongruously attributed humanitarian motives: 'a slender hope that the war might yet be ended before the nations involved became utterly exhausted appeared this week. It grew even as the French

government prepared to spare its citizens the agonies involved in a continuation of the war, and as Mr Churchill repeated the British government's determination to fight on.' (Mr Churchill, at least, is presumably not a humanitarian!)

Meanwhile some of those who grasp the political realities of the situation, Middleton Murry and Wilfred Wellock for example, reject revolution, holding that violence would inevitably stultify its aims, but they lack any alternative, and so resign themselves to an indefinite period of totalitarianism. A minority in the PPU, however, the Forward Movement together with the Activists in Manchester, from their analysis of the causes of war (in their pamphlet *Why We Are at War*) do recognise the necessity for revolution; but they failed, at the PPU's Annual General Meeting in April, to affect the Union's policy.

On the whole it is fair to say that pacifists' outlook and attitude has been characterised hitherto by a lack of political realism, of understanding of the class struggle and the motives animating governments. The obvious horrors of war, and the continual fear of it which hung over Europe in the years preceding September 1939, gained for them considerable numerical support. Gerald Bailey, in the report on the petition referred to above, remarks that 'the obtaining of over a million signatures in a little over three months of effective campaigning constitutes a record for a petition of this kind. Moreover, since reports from canvassers indicate an overwhelming response from those invited to sign, it is permissible to claim that the petition represents the authentic voice of the British people.' It is true; everyone detests war. But pacifist propaganda has almost invariably neglected to point out (there are laudable exceptions) that war is the most glaring demonstration of the failure of capitalist social and economic organisation. No emphasis is laid on the necessity of destroying capitalism as a pre-requisite of the abolition of war – the necessity is even, on occasion, denied. Everyone hates war, but almost no one understands it. The results are now apparent; the workers of Europe are plunged into suffering, but appear powerless to escape from it. By redirecting their appeals to the deaf ears of governments, the leaders of pacifist thought have deflected the energies of their followers into unproductive, and occasionally downright reactionary channels. Given a more realistic analysis, the pacifist movement would doubtless have been smaller, but its energies might have been usefully directed towards a radical attack on the causes of war and social misery.

from *War Commentary*, October 1940

Colin Ward

The Awkward Question

Tell them as much of the truth as they need to know; never prevaricate, never deceive. Drilled in such terms by the high priests of child rearing, the conscientious adult is no longer at a loss when faced by the disconcerting questions children ask. Nor are these questions any longer the occasion for heavy humour among their elders. Don't bat an eyelid when asked 'How did the baby get inside Mummy?' or 'What is sodomy?' Just remember the words of the manual and let sweetness and light prevail.

So what should I have said yesterday morning when Alan, aged seven, demanded 'What is war?'

Never prevaricate, never deceive. But the truth was too untellable and the half-truth too contemptible. Would it not be pure deception to draw analogies from Cowboys and Indians, from the assortment of toy guns, bows and arrows that lie about the house, or the occasional domestic battles? What have these to do with the extermination campaigns that we know as war?

Should we consult the dictionary together? 'Learning can be fun', says the manual. But the dictionary, though post-war, is hopelessly archaic: '*War* (from Old High German *Werra*: confusion): Hostile contention by means of armed forces carried on between nations, states or rulers'. Out of date for a child of the 1950s. To make this clear I should perhaps explain to him the role of the child in modern war ('Make him feel he has a place in the world', says the manual). Should I take him on my knee and tell him of the note left by a child at Auschwitz: '*Nun heisst es abshied nehem. Morgen kommt mutter in die gaskammer und ich werde in den brunnen geworfen.*' ('Now I must say goodbye. Tomorrow my mother goes into the gas chamber, and I will be thrown into the well'.) Or tell him about the children of Hiroshima: 'When picked up by the hand the skin slid off like a glove.' Napoleon said that troops are made to let themselves be killed. Should I explain that in our day this privilege is not confined to the army, he shares it too? Shall I tell him of the 99 ways of killing children devised in the last war, from napalm to starvation, from chopping them in half

individually (SS at Yanov, Nuremberg Trial, 59th day), to roasting them *en masse* (RAF at Hamburg, no trial, several medals)?

But perhaps this would be merely sentimental. He might think that war had become 'child-centred' like education. Whereas in fact we are all equals in the eyes of the war. Gone are the days when it was a formal contest between professionals and mercenaries. Gone are the days of our fathers, when it was a kind of ritual slaughter of healthy young men at the behest of their elders. That resulted in an ecological imbalance – too many women and an ageing population. But now as the ultimate triumph of democracy, we're all in it, and like a Gallup poll it takes in a representative cross-section of the population. Yes, No, Don't Know and Don't Care, they all have their place in the struggle for non-existence. And our new knowledge of fall-out will enable the unborn to fall in too.

Tell him as much of the truth as he needs to know. Well my dear boy, one of the things you need to know about war is contained in those two anarchistic aphorisms: 'War is the trade of governments' and 'War is the health of the state'. But I can't say this to him, not because he must not be exposed to propaganda (except that of the government, the church and the ad-men), but because, poor innocent, he doesn't know what the state is. And what *is* the state? 'The state', said the poor twisted boy who defined war as its health:

> The state is the organisation of the herd to act offensively or defensively against another herd similarly organised. The more terrifying the occasion for defence, the close will become the organisation and the more coercive the influence upon each member of the herd. War sends the current of purpose and activity flowing down to the lowest level of the herd, and to its most remote branches. All the activities of society are linked together as fast as possible to this central purpose of making a military offensive or a military defence, and the state becomes what in peacetime it has vainly struggled to become – the inexorable arbiter and determinant of men's businesses and attitudes and opinions. The slack is taken up, the cross-currents fade out and the nation moves lumberingly and slowly, but with ever accelerated speed and integration towards the great end, towards that *peacefulness of being at war...**

For what is peace? Peace is war carried on by other means, peace is the interval between the acts, peace is war in a minor key, peace is the social contract – and a bad bargain too. For the state has inoculated Alan, it teaches him to read and write and gives him one-third of a

* Randolph Bourne, *The State* (1917).

pint of milk a day, all in return for his future subservience: a kind of indenture or mortgage which he has later to redeem.

War is not, as the dictionary says, 'hostile contention ... between nations, states or rulers', it is the hostile contention of nations, states or rulers against their populations. The great error of nearly all studies of war, wrote Simone Weil, 'has been to consider war as an episode in foreign politics, when it is especially an act of interior politics ...' For just as competitive industry, 'knowing no other weapon than the exploitation of the workers, is transformed into a struggle of each employer against his own workmen, and hence, of the entire class of employers against their employees', so the struggle between states becomes in the end a war of states against their own peoples. There is a tacit agreement between states that this should be so. (Who can deny that the current London talks between powers, with their ridiculous proposals and counter-proposals about 'zones of inspection' in each other's territory, are an example of this unspoken accord. None of the proposals are meant to be accepted; they are the scenes of a comedy put on for our benefit to maintain that 'latent external crisis' which, as Buber says, gives the state its unifying power and enables it to get the upper hand in internal crises.) The permanent war of *1984* is carried on, not to lead to the victory of any of the three superstates, but because war conditions make the subjugation of their populations simpler. War is to the state what news is to the journalist. When none exists it has to be invented.

Never prevaricate, never deceive. War, my boy, is a device for keeping you under, and it ends by putting you underground.

How did I answer Alan? I said nothing. I was too ashamed.

from *Freedom*, the anarchist weekly, 17th August 1957

Colin Ward

Witness for the Prosecution

At the end of the war Colin Ward was a young soldier beginning to be interested in anarchist ideas. Here he describes how he was called to give evidence against the group he later joined.

The revival of interest in anarchism at the time of the Spanish Revolution in 1936 led to the publication of *Spain and the World*, a fortnightly Freedom Press journal which changed to *Revolt!* in the months between the end of the war in Spain and the beginning of the Second World War. Then *War Commentary* was started, its name reverting to the traditional *Freedom* in August 1945.

As one of the very few journals which were totally opposed to the war aims of *both* sides, *War Commentary* was an obvious candidate for the attentions of the Special Branch, but it was not until the last year of the war that serious persecution began.

In November 1944 John Olday, the paper's cartoonist, was arrested and after a protracted trial was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for 'stealing by finding an identity card'. Two months earlier T.W. Brown of Kingston had been jailed for fifteen months for distributing 'seditious' leaflets. The prosecution at the Old Bailey had drawn the attention of the court to the fact that the penalty could have been fourteen years.

On 12th December 1944, officers of the Special Branch raided the Freedom Press office and the homes of four of the editors and sympathisers. Search warrants had been issued under Defence Regulation 39b which declared that no person should seduce members of the armed forces from their duty, and Regulation 88a which enabled articles to be seized if they were evidence of the commission of such an offence. At the end of December, Special Branch officers led by Detective Inspector Whitehead, searched the belongings of soldiers in various parts of the country. I was in a Military Detention Camp at the time and was escorted back to my own unit at Stromness, Orkney, where the commanding officer searched my belongings and my mail and retained various books and papers. Shortly afterwards I was released from detention and applied for the return of my property. The officer said he had no authority to return them, and a day or two

later I was sent for to be interviewed by Inspector Whitehead. I wrote to Lilian Wolfe telling her about these events, but (as I learned later) the military censor obliterated the greater part of my letter. I wrote a further letter and got it posted by a civilian on the mainland of Scotland. This was subsequently passed back to me at the trial. After much searching I have found this letter, and I see that I wrote:

Whitehead drew my attention to the article 'All Power to the Soviets' in the November *War Commentary*, and to the duplicated Freedom Press Forces Letter of about the same date, and asked if I had read them. I said Yes. He pointed to one paragraph in the article, referring to the revolutionary effect of Soldiers Councils in Russia in 1917, and to a paragraph in the letter, which asked its readers in general terms about the existence and use of Soldiers Councils. He asked what conclusion I drew from these two articles in conjunction, and whether I considered them an incitement to mutiny. I gave a non-committal reply.

He said, looking at some of the newspaper cuttings: 'I see you're interested in the case of T.W. Brown'. He then made some observations about the case, and I said: 'I don't think that was said at the trial'. Whitehead replied: 'I ought to know. I'm the man that put him inside.'

Meanwhile in January Philip Sansom was jailed for two months 'for being in possession of an army waterproof coat and for failing to notify a change of address' – crimes uncovered when he was raided.

On 22nd February 1945 Marie Louise Berneri, Vernon Richards and John Hewetson were arrested at 7.30 in the morning and charged with offences under Defence Regulation 39a. At the court they were joined by Philip Sansom who had been brought from Brixton Prison. They appeared four times at Marylebone Magistrates Court and their trial took four days at the Old Bailey. On 26 April Richards, Hewetson and Sansom were found guilty and each was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. Marie Louise Berneri was found not guilty and discharged on a technicality which infuriated her. Marie Louise was married to Vernon Richards, and her defence counsel had simply to point out that, since husband and wife are legally as one, a wife cannot be accused of conspiracy with her husband! Although Marie Louise was furious about this, she was not as furious as Inspector Whitehead, who realised he had dropped a clanger.

The judge was Norman Birkett and the prosecution was conducted by the Attorney General, Sir Donald Somerville. But the whole prosecution case was simply that laid down by Inspector Whitehead: to connect the circular letter sent to the hundred or so members of the forces who were subscribers to *War Commentary* with various

articles on the history of soldiers' councils in Germany and Russia in 1917 and 1918, and on the situation in European resistance movements which, as the Allied armies advanced in 1944, were being urged to hand over their arms to the governments then being set up under military auspices. One of the headlines in *War Commentary*, for example, demanded 'Hang on to Your Arms!' and this was used by the prosecution to show that the paper was telling British soldiers to keep their rifles for possible revolutionary action. The article was in fact – and the context made it clear – addressed to the Belgian underground after the Germans had withdrawn, but before a new government had been imposed upon them. Much of the prosecution's 'evidence' was as flimsy as this.

The defence solicitor was a man named Rutledge, who was overshadowed by his clerk, the genial and flamboyant Ernest Silverman, a tragic character most of whose life was spent in prison for innumerable cases of petty embezzlement (he later died in Parkhurst serving a long sentence of preventive detention). The Freedom Press trial was probably his finest hour. He was certainly a good and honest friend to the defendants, and they in later years made great efforts to alleviate his lot. Ernest briefed some very eminent barristers: John Maude (later a Tory MP and a judge) to defend Hewetson and Richards, Derek Curtis Bennett for Marie Louise, and James Burge for Philip Sansom. Here, of course, were the tactical dilemmas for anarchists. Having engaged an expensive defence you put yourselves in their hands, and the defence line was that here were four upright citizens (Richards was working as a civil engineer at the time and Hewetson was casualty officer at Paddington Hospital) putting forward their idealistic point of view with no intention of causing disaffection. The four soldiers called by the prosecution (including me) to establish that the offending material had been received by them, testified for the defence that they had not been disaffected.

None of the accused liked the way their case was presented. Marie Louise in particular wanted to defend herself and did not want to rely on the technicalities of the law for an acquittal. On the other hand, if the object of the whole proceedings was to silence the Freedom Press it would have been foolish to strike instransigent attitudes and get, in consequence, far longer sentences. In the event, she and George Woodcock were able to carry on the work of the paper during the period when their comrades were in jail.

A Freedom Press Defence Committee was organised to raise funds for the defence (energetically collected by Simon Watson Taylor –

who was also raided by the police, who, discovering his fascinating library, declared their anxiety to join the surrealist movement!) and this won the support of many public figures – George Orwell, Herbert Read, Harold Laski, Kingsley Martin, Benjamin Britten, Augustus John, Bertrand Russell and many others. It subsequently became the Freedom Defence Committee, which was involved in many other civil liberties issues. I ought to explain that at that time the National Council for Civil Liberties was dominated by the Communist Party and was totally uninterested in the defence of anti-patriotic people because of the alliance with Stalin. Its principal activity at that time was demanding that Sir Oswald Mosley should be put back in prison – and hanged.

The particular regulation under which the Freedom Press trial was conducted was rescinded very shortly after the editors were jailed, though its provisions were substantially the same as those of the Incitement to Disaffection Act.

After all these years, two questions remain. Were the defence tactics correct? And why was the prosecution brought in the first place? On the first question, I think that there is a world of difference between the individual prepared to face martyrdom for a cause, or for its propaganda effect, and a group of people who have a functional task to perform: the production of a newspaper. (And in spite of Herbert Read's rhetoric at the time about the 'hundreds who were willing to step into their place', the truth was that there were pitifully few.) There was every reason to suppose that if the defendants (who incidentally were not the authors of the alleged subversion) had not adopted the usual rigmarole of defence, they would have got very long sentences. As it was, they were given shorter sentences than T.W. Brown or John Olday, whose 'crimes' were much more trivial. They emerged to make *Freedom* the outstanding journal that it was in the late 1940s.

The second question is very hard to answer. Actually the state and the armed forces had very little to fear from the anarchists. There was not the slightest threat of the kind of mutiny that was so savagely repressed in, say, the French army in 1917. The government obviously took the trial seriously since the Attorney General himself prosecuted. Who ordered the trial? Was it the War Department under Sir Edward Grigg? Or the Home Secretary, the vindictive Herbert Morrison? Or was it just our old friends of the Special Branch intent on proving what diligent fellows they are?

My own marginal part in the proceedings brought me a rich reward. The defendants became my closest and dearest friends.

Philip Sansom

Revived 45: Anarchists Against the Army

Philip Sansom – one of the editors of War Commentary *found guilty of incitement to disaffection – describes the background to the trial and two other offences, for which he was jailed three times in 1945.*

Soldiers are not supposed to think and it is a criminal offence to encourage them to do so. The laws on disaffection of the forces prescribe heavy penalties against civilians approaching soldiers and asking them to question their blind obedience to authority. 'Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die', as Tennyson put it, is the army's attitude to its own first victims: the men it pulls into its ranks and bends to its will.

Whereas today, Britain has an army of 'professionals', in the last two major wars she has relied upon conscripts – young men and women with, normally, no interest in going into the forces but who accept conscription because they see no alternative. In the second, incidentally, Britain conscripted women for the armed forces while Germany did not. The Nazis had this male chauvinistic pig thing about a woman's place being in the home, breeding pure Aryans for the master race. The British government, more pragmatic, put single women in the forces or on the land and set up nursery schools for children whose mothers were directed into factories.

Undoubtedly many of these individuals believed in doing their bit for their country and would have joined up voluntarily anyway. Many did so in the first two years of the First World War, but by 1916 the High Command demanded more cannon fodder and Lloyd George brought in conscription for the first time in Britain. Neville Chamberlain introduced it again in June 1939 – three months before the Second World War actually began.

Many of these conscripts came from families which had lost fathers or uncles in the First World war, had known nothing but depression since, or were influenced by the anti-war and socialist feelings still prevalent even in the Labour Party right into the late 1930s. They tended to be unwilling soldiers, but equally unwilling, in the mass, to

resist. Hitler's lunatic nationalism, playing upon Germany's economic and psychological suffering after the 1918 defeat, which stirred up the Germans to war fever, had no equivalent here. The prevalent attitude was simply that of having to 'stop Hitler', get 'the job done' and get back home. After all, Britain had 'won' the First World War – and a fat lot of good that had done the working man.

Churchill's gross rhetoric no doubt whipped up enthusiasm among Tory ladies to knit balaclava helmets and collect more saucepans 'for Britain' (and even, such were the weird bedfellows they had to embrace, eventually to organise 'Aid for Russia') but for the workers bombed in their shelters by night and sweating in their factories by day, there were few illusions about Churchill. Nor about their own positions. They were caught like rats in a trap and knew no alternative but to sweat it out. The voices of revolution – the only alternative to sweating it out – were few and weak.

The only thing we had going for us was the truth, notoriously the first casualty of war. Britain during the war was very near to being a neo-fascist state itself. Everyone had to carry an identity card; food, clothing and goods of all kinds were strictly rationed (for the general population anyway) and everyone was subject to conscription or the direction of labour. There are, however, important qualifications which it would be unfair to ignore. First, there was provision for conscientious objection, which the fascist states (and some of the other 'democratic' ones like France and Russia) did not allow. This was, of course, circumscribed by the law and conscientious objectors had to convince tribunals of magistrate-type individuals that they were sincere and not just 'dodging the column'. Most had to accept alternative service – on the land, in civil defence, the ambulance service, the fire service and so on. Very few were given unconditional exemption, but on the other hand many were able to survive in a kind of underground which would have been much more difficult in a fully fascist state.

And – the great advantage for those of us who were prepared to make open propaganda – a relatively large degree of 'free' speech and 'free' publication was 'permitted'; my quotes indicate that the usual laws of sedition, *lèse majesté*, libel, etc., *plus* the wartime regulations, governed all this.

The reasons for this were complex but clear. Britain was a 'democracy' fighting totalitarian states. After America was dragged into the war, Roosevelt and Churchill discovered that 'freedom' was a war aim. In both America and Britain there was a tradition of press

freedom jealously guarded by the capitalist press for their own interests and voluntarily limited by them in the national state's interest. It was understood by the authorities that there was a vocal minority opposed to the war and prepared to make a nuisance of itself saying so. British experience in the First World War taught the government that to try to crush these people was more trouble than it was worth. Even inside Parliament there was an opposition within the coalition which did not want all anti-conservative or socialist opinion suppressed – it had its eyes on the eventual post-war election! Above all, since the revolutionary forces were so small, it suited the state far more to keep us sweet, legal and out in the open where it could keep its eyes upon us, rather than drive us underground into illegal channels. Finally, it accorded well with the propaganda about democracy and freedom and all that.

What, after all, did the anti-war movement amount to? There were the pacifists, mainly Christian – Quakers, some Methodists, etc., mainly organised, if at all, in the Peace Pledge Union, with its paper *Peace News* – with a smaller, militant, secularist wing originally called 'The Ginger Group' that spilled over somewhat into the anarchist movement. (A completely separate, insular, Christian sect were the Jehovah's Witnesses, who were completely intransigent about war service and many of whom went to prison.) There was the anarchist movement, small but quite clear and united, with the exception of some of the Spanish exiles recently (i.e. 1939) fled from Spain who held that the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini would inevitably lead to the downfall of Franco. These comrades, experienced in the anti-fascist struggle in Spain, had much to tell us about the Spanish Revolution but were sadly naive about world politics. We knew the 'democracies' would much rather see a fascist state in Spain than another revolution, and we have been proved right.

There were also various socialist parties opposed to the war. Most fundamentalist (we compared them to the Jehovah's Witnesses in the Christian field) was the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB). Comparable with the anarchists in influence and numbers, they nevertheless maintained a careful and constitutional position which posed no threat to the authorities, but practically every one of their members who appeared before a conscientious objector's tribunal got off military service on the strength of the party's fundamental opposition to war. There was the Independent Labour Party, the rump of the traditional Labour movement's anti-war battalions.

There were the Trotskyists, maintaining a slightly uneasy position

NEWS CHRONICLE, Tuesday, April 24, 1945

'FIGHT, FOR WHAT?' POEM READ AT OLD BAILEY

Four on charge of disaffection

Dr. J. C. HEWETSON

MARIE LOUISE RICHARDS

EXTRACTS from a paper which was said to have advocated anarchy, and verses of a poem which asked that landlords should do the fighting, were read at the Old Bailey yesterday.

Three men and a woman pleaded not guilty to having conspired to seduce from duty persons in the Forces and to cause disaffection. They are :

Vernon Richards (29), civil engineer, and Marie Louise Richards (28), secretary, both of Elon Place, Hampstead; John Christopher Hewetson (32), medical practitioner, Willow Road, Hampstead; and Philip Richard Sansom (28), commercial artist, Camden Street, N.W.

They also pleaded not guilty to endeavouring to cause disaffection by disseminating copies of a paper called "War Commentary."

The two Richards were further charged with having a leaflet headed : "Fight ? What for ? "

"Class-divided"

The Attorney General (Sir Donald Somervell) said that "War Commentary" was a paper which was headed "For anarchism."

Among the objects of the anarchist movement was opposition to "all means of maintaining a class-divided society—Parliament, the legal system, the police, armed Forces and the Church."

"The principle these people advocated," said Sir Donald, "is an armed revolution."

"Hold on to your arms,' is an expression repeated in two successive numbers of the paper."

Sir Donald read a circular letter, which was headed Freedom Press, 27, Belsize Road, October 25, 1944, and began "Dear Comrades." One extract read :

Soldiers' councils

"These discussions bring sympathy and unity of feeling to barrack rooms which authority is always trying to split. . . Solidarity frightens authority. You should, therefore, do everything possible to establish closer contacts. . . .

"One of the most important questions, in our opinion, is that of the action of soldiers' councils in a revolutionary situation."

When Mr. Justice Birkett asked the meaning of "C.P." in the letter and Sir Donald replied "Communist Party," there was a burst of laughter from the public benches.

The charge against Richards and his wife related to a poem in the leaflet "Fight! What for?" Two verses read :

Your country, who says you've a share in it,
You live in another man's flat.
You haven't even a backyard,
So why should you murder for that?

You haven't a hut or a building,
No flower, no garden, it's true ;
The landlords have grabbed all the country—
Let them do the fighting—not you.

Denials by soldiers

A [illegible] of Wood Green [illegible] possession copies of "War Commentary," or the circular letter, have been found gave evidence, and said they had not been disaffected.

The Attorney-General said he would not press against Sansom the charge referring to the dissemination of "War Commentary."

Mr. John Maude, K.C., for the defence, maintained that none of the accused had had the slightest intention of disaffecting any man in the Army.

The hearing was adjourned until to-day, and the accused were released on bail.

VERNON RICHARDS (right) and (below) PHILIP R. SANSOM

From the *News Chronicle*, 24th April 1945

(as ever) in view of an anti-fascist position linked with a traditional pre-Stalin, Trotsky-Leninist-Bolshevik opposition to capitalist war, bolstered by their hatred of Stalin (murderer of their own leader) and rejection of the Soviet Union as a decadent bureaucratic corruption of a workers' state ... which was still ... nevertheless ... the nearest thing they had to a Marxist-Leninist proletarian dictatorship ... etc ... etc. The Trotskyists concentrated on the working-class struggle at home; a valid enough activity which eventually brought them under attack from the government, after years of slander and vicious attack (both verbal and physical) from the Communists.

The Communist Party (Stalinist, as we would now identify it) changed its line three times during the war. For the first ten days, in September 1939, the Communist Party supported the war, seeing it as a continuation of the anti-fascist struggle and being just a wee bit slow in understanding the implications of the Hitler-Stalin pact 'for Peace and Socialism' which had been concluded in August. After ten days of vocal devotion to the anti-fascist struggle, however, the British Communist Party got its orders from Moscow and promptly switched its line to opposition to the war, now using class arguments common to the Left: that it was a capitalist-imperialist war in which the working class had no interest.

It is an interesting sidelight on the fundamental nature of democratic freedoms that, following the fall of France in 1940 with the subsequent possibility of invasion, the Communist *Daily Worker* was banned. It was the only daily paper in the country to suffer that fate; it was of course the only *daily* paper to oppose the war at any time. But the opposition did not last long, for as soon as Hitler invaded Russia, in June 1941, the Communist Party reversed its line to support for the war once again. Immediately, the ban on the *Daily Worker* was lifted – Stalin was now an ally of democracy.

From that moment on, the Churchill government had no more loyal patriotic allies than the Communist Party, who happily joined with the Tory ladies in all their war efforts, and campaigned behind huge portraits of Churchill, Roosevelt, Chiang Kai-Shek (the anti-Communist Chinese nationalist leader), Tito, de Gaulle (leader of the 'Free French') and many others now lost in the mists of cold war and revisionism. Having been told to change their line themselves they now declared that anyone opposed to the war was a fascist traitor and 'Agent of Hitler', and, although it was clearly impossible, they screamed incessantly 'Second Front Now!'

The minority papers – *War Commentary* (Anarchist), *Peace News*

(PPU), *Socialist Standard* (SPGB), *Socialist Leader* (ILP), etc. – had no resources to affect the security of the state and in any case had no interest in helping the enemy. We were revolutionaries, not traitors. Because we would not fight for Churchill and the British Empire (remember Britain still ruled in India, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia ...) did not mean that we wanted Hitler to win. What we wanted – and what anarchists in Germany, Italy, France, America, Japan and, as far as we could guess, in Russia too, wanted – was for the people of their own countries to make a social revolution against their own warring rulers, to establish a social order in which capitalism, with all the internal and external violence upon which it depends (crystallised for the anarchists in 'the state') was swept away and replaced by the truly free society.

It was, after all, only a very few years since we had had the Spanish Revolution of 1936 to inspire us, and it was not difficult to see the war as the death-throes of capitalism. Looking back a mere 25 years to the end of the First World war, we saw a history of revolutionary upheavals, not only in Russia but also in Germany and Italy, while in Britain the 1920s had seen bitter class war and the General Strike, and the 1930s saw the same in France and the beginnings of the Chinese Revolution. Even Hitler's coming to power was a bastard form of revolution against the old order. Change and collapse were in the air.

We were not alone in seeing this, of course. Our rulers saw it all quite clearly and, as usual, were able to act upon their knowledge better than the working class. Just as Churchill had his plans to do a deal with the Germans if the Russians 'went too far' at the end of the war, so he also had his plans for dealing with any potentially revolutionary situation in this country.

The end of a war, win or lose, is always a dangerous time for government. The losers are disillusioned and looking for revenge; the winners are confident and looking for rewards. Millions of people with no love for their rulers have been trained in armed combat. Men who have done desperate deeds, seen fearful sights, on the field of battle, are not likely to be too fussy about methods in dealing with their class enemies. It is very difficult to control the flow of arms between countries and within countries when armies are coming home laden with their trophies. A returning army, even of victors, is a potential threat to a ruling class.

It is thus quite a logical move for a government to do its best to weaken any vocal revolutionary groups in its midst – to silence voices which might encourage soldiers to fight for themselves after years of

fighting for their masters. No government can tolerate a people in arms, and the Second World War gave us two classic examples of how warring governments use each other to subdue revolutionary uprisings.

In 1943 the Italian people rose up and destroyed the Mussolini regime, only to be bombed into submission by the British Royal Air Force, who rained high explosives on the working class areas of Turin, Milan and Genoa. While the Italians were still picking up the pieces and counting their dead, the Germans swept into Italy and took over, trying – albeit contemptuously – to rally the demoralised Italian army, restoring 'law and order' and dealing with those revolutionaries who had come out into the open after twenty years of Fascist repression.

Later the Russians played a similar game in Poland, halting their hitherto rapid advance on Warsaw when the resistance fighters in the capital emerged from their cellars to attack the retreating Germans. Admittedly here the émigré Polish 'government' in London had played a part, hoping to get some Polish forces in control in Warsaw before the Russians had arrives, and sending instructions to the Polish underground to make its move. But seeing the Russians halted, the Nazis halted too – and returned to raze Warsaw to the ground and crush the armed resistance workers. Only then did the Russian tanks roll forward again to take control of a dazed and decimated population.

There is some evidence that, of the Allied war leaders, Roosevelt felt some shame about this – but none that any such feeling was betrayed by either Churchill or Stalin. Churchill, let it never be forgotten, was not merely a war leader. He was an astute and experienced right-wing politician, famous before the war for his ready use of troops in the Siege of Sidney Street and the Welsh valleys during a miners' strike and his alacrity in diverting troops from the German war in 1917 to send them to the rescue of the Romanovs in Russia. He was an alert counter-revolutionary, ready at all times to use the full force of the British state against his own class enemies.

Towards the end of the war there were signs that the British working class was beginning to give up its uncomplaining class-collaboration. In the autumn of 1944 the miners at the Betteshanger Colliery in Kent, after five years of unremitting toil for the war effort, staged the first – and only – wartime strike in Britain's coalfields. Nor was this the only sign that the British workers, sensing the end of the war, were determined that there should be no return to the terrible conditions of unemployment and poverty that had been their lot in the 1930s.

Indeed, six months before the Special Branch raided the anarchists, they had launched a successful attack upon the Trotskyists, four of whose leaders were jailed for inciting a strike – something which was not to be tolerated in wartime!

The attacks upon Trotskyists and anarchists, then, should be seen in a certain context. When Colin Ward asks 'Why was the prosecution brought in the first place?', I feel that he is not using the advantage of hindsight. We certainly did not know it at the time, but there was already a great deal of disaffection among the British forces. Just as the working class in industry was asking what was going to follow the war, so the working class in uniform was asking the same question. Once D-Day had been successful, it was obvious that Germany was losing the war. Hitler had made stupid mistakes in attacking Russia (not even 'necessary' since Stalin was honouring his part of the 1939 bargain by supplying Germany with oil and grain!) and then declaring war on America after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (though the US was still isolationist, as far as Europe was concerned). This new situation by the end of 1941 created an alliance of industrial and military power the Third Reich could not possibly withstand. Although the Allies between them had neither the troops nor the commanders of the *calibre* the crack Nazi divisions had at the beginning of the war, they had the *weight* of men, metal and materials – and, of course, the Russian winter.

Germany was finished by the time the Russians reached Warsaw and the Americans reached Paris; it was only Churchill's stubborn demand for 'unconditional surrender' that kept the Germans fighting. How much the ordinary squaddie knew this, I don't know, but it seems obvious now that fewer and fewer soldiers were prepared to add their names to the lists of late casualties in a war they hated anyway.

Ironically, this was not something we found out until we were actually in prison. Once we got inside, we found the nicks full to overflowing, not with criminals from the home front but with soldiers sentenced by military courts in France, Italy, Germany, for desertion and subsequent offences. When a soldier deserts in a foreign country in wartime, how is he to survive? He has been trained to use a gun, so he survives by armed robbery, by hold-ups, by black-marketeering, by selling government property and by gun-running. We heard hair-raising stories of the sale of fleets of lorries and masses of material, food, petrol and oil – all of which was in short supply in the countries our boys were 'liberating'. In the process our boys were liberating

themselves – until they were caught by the military police. They got enormous sentences of 10, 15, 25, 30 years' imprisonment – and shipped back to England to serve them. Returning soldiers' tales elaborated this story of mass desertions. One ex-8th Army man told us that by the time his unit had travelled from toe to top of Italy, eighty per cent had deserted – and the remainder fell in behind a victory march of Tito's partisans in Trieste to show where their political sympathies lay.

These men were mainly soldiers, but there was a fair sprinkling from the Royal Navee and the RAF, and they were being delivered to the main London 'reception' prisons in batches of twenty or thirty, two or three times a week. Pentonville, closed in the 1930s, had to be re-opened to deal with the rush. I myself was part of a working party sent over from the Scrubs to clean and redecorate the dirty old dump. In the event, of course, these men served only small periods of their long sentences. They were distributed to local prisons around the country – presumably to the prisons nearest their home towns – and after a few months quietly given a 'special release' and, of course, a dishonourable discharge. The prisons could not possibly have held them all, but back at their units the sentences were supposed to have a deterrent effect upon their fellows.

Now, none of this was known to the people at home – except relatives of the men shipped back in disgrace, and they kept quiet. Even we, who had contacts in the army in this country, had great difficulty in finding out what was going on abroad. The censorship saw to that. No word reached this country about the feelings of our soldiers when they made contact with the civilians of either occupied or enemy countries. But when we spoke to them in prison (and I can honestly say that there was no antagonism between those fighting men and us 'conchies' – except perhaps on the part of a few ex-officers in for fiddling the mess accounts and such-like gentlemanly offences) they told us how they felt about the suffering and the destruction they had seen. The truth had dawned upon them – that the Italians were not all fascist beasts; that the German workers, struggling just to survive in their factories and their homes, were not all Nazi monsters, but were victims of their lunatic regimes, caught in a whole series of crazy, complicated traps, just as they were themselves. So they quit. They walked away from the war, just as later so many Americans in Vietnam were to do and, even, a few of our 'professionals' in Northern Ireland did later.

The point I am making, then, is that the anti-war groups in Britain,

whilst making propaganda against the war, did not know the extent of the disaffection in the actual theatres of the war. And it was happening without having anything to do with us (compare Lenin in Switzerland in 1917!); it was simply the war-weariness and revulsion common to the end of every war.

But the government knew it! So, for these reasons, plus the fact that we provided a scapegoat for an unpleasant fact, it set out to crush our small revolutionary voice before the soldiers came home. This is the main answer to why we were prosecuted at that time. There is a supplementary answer too, that may explain the timing of the attack by the Special Branch. That is, that in the autumn of 1944 a serious split occurred in the ranks of the Anarchist Federation between a syndicalist faction (who later formed the Syndicalist Workers' Federation) in co-operation with the Spanish exiles already referred to, against the 'pure' anarchists. It could be that the Special Branch,like the jackals they are, thought that a time of dissension and apparent weakness was a good time to do for the anarchists. A lesson for today!

In the event, the undoubted rebellious spirit among the returning warriors was safely defused by the General Election of 1945 when the electorate showed its gratitude to Churchill by booting him out and returning the Labour party with an enormous majority on what Emmanuel Shinwell described as the revolutionary programme of nationalisation and the welfare state. So that was that! It had seemed to us, until the Special Branch made its move, that in fact we had very little success with our attempts at disaffection. As Colin indicates, the prosecution was unable to produce a single soldier ready to admit he had been disaffected. No doubt the Special Branch has learned more about the use of *agents provocateurs* since then!

We had a list of about 200 contacts in the forces, most of whom simply subscribed to *War Commentary* in the usual way and some of whom asked for pamphlets or booklets, or received our monthly circular letter. Until we were raided we had quietly maintained these contacts and occasionally one of these conscripts would visit us while on leave. We saved a few souls, I suppose. There was one tank driver who was whipped out of his job and transferred to the Pioneer Corps a week before his unit left for France. We had never met him, but he subscribed to *War Commentary* and had ordered a few pamphlets. He was of course delighted; he probably owes his life to our little organisation ... but it was hardly disaffection!

Well, there was one thin, pale, sensitive little soldier who visited us one weekend and went sadly back on Sunday night. At midnight on

Monday, there was this tap on the door – and there he was again, saying 'I can't stand another day of army life!' Without saying a word to us, he had simply gone back to pick up his belongings and walked out. He eventually became a poet. And of course there was Colin Ward. How were we to know then what a contribution he was to make to the anarchist movement? He is, as usual, over-modest in saying 'They emerged to make *Freedom* the outstanding journal it was in the 1940s', for he, too, was a member of the editorial board at that time – a very constructive period in the paper's history. Colin himself went on afterwards to make *Anarchy* (first series) the outstanding monthly journal it was in the 1960s, producing 118 issues under his sole editorship.

For my part, I achieved a little more notoriety after the main trial. On the day before my release from the Scrubs (for disaffection of the forces, remember) I was served with a call-up notice to present myself for medical examination – in order to be conscripted into the forces! This was clearly a move by the Special Branch to harass me further (they had been furious at the leniency of our sentences) and of course it worked since I refused to submit to a medical and was subsequently awarded another sentence of six months.

By this time, however, it was 1946. The war was well and truly over and the Freedom Defence Committee was able to mount a vigorous campaign on my behalf, in which even the *New Statesman* thundered about 'nonsense' and spiteful prosecution. I was let out on special release after six weeks, for which, I was assured, I should thank Herbert Morrison (erstwhile conchie of the First World War), then Home Secretary. Instead I thanked my comrades of the Defence Committee. It might be worth, some time, returning to a consideration of the anarchist movement in wartime. The issues were sharp, the enemy well defined and anarchist attitudes were clear and uncompromising. Organisation had, perforce, to be tight, but there was a high degree of solidarity and mutual aid not only within but between the anti-war groups in the sort of 'underground' that grew up. Those who went to prison had a sharp lesson in the nature of authority which democracy sometimes blurs, and the attack on the anarchists, far from weakening us, brought us added strength and support.

Another thing we learned was the truth of the saying attributed to Frederick the Great: 'If my soldiers began to think, not one of them would stay in the ranks'. It would seem that the greatest disaffecter of them all is war itself – especially, as Vietnam and Northern Ireland show, a war that cannot be won.

Vernon Richards

The Left in World War Two and After

According to the editor of *The History of the TUC 1868-1968*:

The actual outbreak of war caught the labour and trade union movements of Europe off balance. As late as 2nd August a mass meeting addressed by British labour leaders in Trafalgar Square had passed a resolution proclaiming that 'the government of Britain should rigidly decline to engage in war, but should confine itself to efforts to bring about peace as speedily as possible'.[1]

Two days later the German army invaded Belgium. Ramsay MacDonald, 'who had always insisted that if war broke out both sides would be to blame', resigned as leader of the Labour Party. He was succeeded by Arthur Henderson, 'who believed that now the war was on – the Labour movement must play its full part in helping to win it'. Of course we are talking about World War One, and the pragmatic approach of if you can't beat 'em – or in this instance *stop* them! – then join them.

Nineteen years later, in 1933, the idea of an international general strike to prevent governments going to war was advocated by the International Federation of Trade Unions:

Ernest Bevin thought this was nonsense, and told the Transport and General Workers Executive Council so. 'Who and what is there to strike? Trade unionism has been destroyed in Italy and Germany; practically speaking, it does not exist in France; it is extremely weak in the USA ... while there is no possibility of a general strike against the Russian government in the event of war.'

So, early in 1934, the General Council of the TUC met the National Executive and Parliamentary Committee of the Labour Party, and drafted a crucial statement which was called 'War and Peace'. The statement declared that it was the duty of the Labour Movement 'unflinchingly to support our government in all the risks and consequences of fulfilling its duty to take part in collective action against a peace-breaker'. And it warned forthrightly that there might be circumstances under which the government 'might have to use its military and naval forces in support of the League in restraining an aggressor nation'.

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* This article was first published in 1989 as the introduction to the small Freedom Press volume with the title *The Left and World War Two*.

The policy embodied in 'War and Peace' was overwhelmingly endorsed by the 1934 Trades Union Congress at Weymouth.[2]

And in 1935 Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the TUC since 1926, declared: 'There is only one way of dealing with a bully and that is by the use of force ... it may mean war but that is the thing we have to face'.[3]

The following year Citrine and the TUC had an opportunity to show their determination to deal with the military uprising in Spain led by General Franco and at their September Congress there were effusive messages of sympathy for the Spanish Republicans and expressions of 'detestation of fascism'. However, by three million votes to 90,000 they endorsed the policy of non-intervention which, incidentally, had been first put forward by the French Popular Front government led by the socialist Leon Blum. So much for the slogan with which the TUC's centenary volume ends: 'Working men of every country unite together to defend your rights'.

At the Labour conference at Southport in 1939, Ernest Bevin by then with Citrine 'the two dominant personalities in the new phase of TUC history',[4] was maintaining that possibly the biggest contributing factor to the world situation was 'this country and not Germany for one of the most potent causes of world disorder has been our dominant financial policy'.[5] But this didn't prevent our Ernie from accepting Churchill's invitation to become Minister of Labour in May 1940, and by October he entered the war cabinet and in the following year was responsible for introducing conscription of labour. As Marie Louise Berneri put it at the time: 'When people like Mr Bevin are allowed to join the government it is because they have abandoned all that made them the representatives of the working class (their actions in the government will prove it)'.[6]

Little wonder that the Labour and Trades Union 'Left' was again in disarray when in September 1939 Chamberlain declared that Britain was at war with Germany to defend gallant little fascist Poland!

But throughout the '30s most confusion was created by the Communist Party of Great Britain with its efficient and considerable propaganda machine (handsomely financed by Moscow, aided and abetted by the publisher Victor Gollancz and the very profitable Left Book Club) and a galaxy of crypto-communist intellectuals – scientists, musicians, writers, poets – blindly repeating the lying handouts from Moscow via King Street: denying that Moscow trials were a gigantic frame-up; maintaining that the Communists in Spain

were the only fighters against Franco and accusing the anarchists, the CNT and POUM, of being 'fascist agents'.

The utter subservience of the Communist Party to Moscow was shown when they were faced with having to switch from support for war against Germany (having assumed in the years leading up to World War Two that Russia, France and Britain would be on the same side) to opposing it when the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact was concluded.[7] The Communist Party's explanations for the switch are pathetic. But perhaps one should also remind readers that the British government's switch when Hitler decided to attack Russia was opportunistic as well as disgusting. The whitewashing of Stalin's dictatorship included a 'voluntary' censorship by most publishers (presumably 'inspired' by the Ministry of Information and by paper rationing blackmail?) of any criticisms of the Stalinist regime (Souvarine's monumental volume on *Stalin*, for instance).[8]

After all, Churchill was not fussy about ideology; his philosophy was expressed in the crudest terms: that all who were prepared to kill Germans were our allies. And in the final analysis had not Hitler launched his attack on Russia when he did, what could France and Britain have done (with the USA only interested in making money and keeping out of the European theatre of war)?[9]

The anarchists were not 'caught off balance'. In May 1938 they published a *No-War Supplement* to their fortnightly journal, and in September, with Munich on the horizon, a full-page manifesto calling on 'workers to oppose the massacre of fellow workers. Fight capitalism and not the German workers'.[10]

The fatalism of the majority of workers who responded to the call-up is saddening, but a fact.[11] But what can one say of those intellectuals who could not see any difference between the struggle against Franco in Spain and the declaration of war against Germany by Chamberlain in September 1939? Herbert Read, who had contributed to that *No-War Supplement* a thoughtful exposition on the 'Pre-Requisite of Peace', who had personal experience of the horrors of World War One, and the duplicity of the politicians, when war came in 1939 adopted a fatalistic approach – since we could not stop it our opposition was of no consequence.

And there was George Orwell, in January 1939, writing to Read:

> I believe it is vitally necessary for those of us who intend to oppose the coming war to start organising for illegal anti-war activities. It is perfectly obvious that any open and legal agitation will be impossible not only when war has started

but when it is imminent, and that if we do not make ready *now* for the issue of pamphlets, etc., we shall be quite unable to do so when the decisive moment comes.[12]

But when war came Orwell joined the 'if you can't beat them join them' brigade ... and the Home Guard. One can find no explanation in his collected writings for having proposed to go 'underground' with Herbert Read in January 1939 against the 'coming war' and supporting it nine months later. Was the Nazi regime any better and Chamberlain regime any worse in January than in September 1939? But a year later in an essay on *My Country Right or Left*, most of which is childhood memories of the First World War and his military experiences in the Spanish Civil War, only at the end does he offer some kind of explanation, though the opening sentence indicates that he doesn't feel that he should:

If I had to defend my reasons for supporting the war, I believe I could do so. There is no real alternative between resisting Hitler and surrendering to him, and from a socialist point of view I should say that it is better to resist; in any case I can see no argument for surrender that does not make nonsense of the Republican resistance in Spain ...[13]

The reference to Spain – by the author of *Homage to Catalonia* who apparently had understood what had been taking place during the first months of the struggle was a far reaching social revolution which the British and French governments had sought to stifle by refusing to sell arms to the anti-Franco forces – makes nonsense of his arguments. In fact what follows is, I suspect, nearer the truth:

... the long drilling in patriotism which the middle classes go through had done its work, and that once England was in a serious jam it would be impossible for me to sabotage.

He goes on to qualify this confession because he still wants to have a foot on both sides of the fence. For Orwell one could be 'loyal to Chamberlain's England and to the England of tomorrow'. And for him 'only revolution can save England, that has been obvious for years, but now the revolution has started, and it may precede quite quickly if only we can keep Hitler out'. Three articles in this volume of selections examine that piece of wishful thinking.

One cannot think of any example of intellectuals influencing government where their views conflicted with government policy. But there is no doubt that they did exert an influence with sections of the public. J.B. Priestley's radio talks, for instance. The 'betrayal',

therefore, of those on the Left should not be dismissed on the grounds that the Left opposition to the war couldn't do anything anyway to affect the situation.

Both Orwell and Stephen Spender were contributors to the American journal *Partisan Review*. Orwell was an enthusiastic supporter of the war (he obviously enjoyed playing at soldiers as the article referred to above will convince the reader). Stephen Spender was not so sanguine. 'With all humility', he wrote in his September 1939 journal, 'I am on the side of the Chamberlain system against fascism. The fundamental reason is that I hate the idea of being regimented and losing my personal freedom of action'.

Partisan Review responded in an editorial 'The Third Choice', which we reprinted in *War Commentary* (August 1940), and I cannot think of a better conclusion to this piece than to reprint it once more.

[Stephen Spender's] is the classic Liberal note on this war, struck whenever Liberals, English or American, feel compelled to justify their support of British imperialism in its struggle to crush its German counterpart. Most of them are not so honest as Mr Spender, who speaks quite frankly of losing *his own* freedom of action. Most of them prefer to talk of the slavery that would be visited upon the masses if Hitler should triumph.

It is true that Mr Spender would be much more 'regimented' under the Hitler system than he is now under the Chamberlain system – though the two may soon be less distinguishable, especially if the war continues to go against England. But would Mr Spender be so concerned about losing his freedom if he happened to be functioning in the Chamberlain system not as an upper class literary man but as a cook or a bus driver or a coal miner? He would probably then realise quite vividly that freedom is a luxury product under the Chamberlain system, and that he could afford only the cheaper commodity of regimentation ...

Several years ago, when he was a Stalinist fellow-trader, he wrote a book to expound his faith in the Popular Front and the Soviet Union. The book was called *Forward from Liberalism*. Having lost his faith, Mr Spender now finds himself retreating once more to his Liberal base ... As a Liberal, he sees only a choice between two kinds of *status quo* systems, and he chooses the Chamberlain system as the lesser evil.

It is true that he does pose a third possibility, namely pacifism, which he quite correctly dismisses as 'utopian' and unreal. But the alternative of revolutionary action against the warmakers – this is not even mentioned. It would appear that Mr Spender sees pacifism as at least a real enough alternative to be discussed, but that social revolution is excluded from his consciousness.

Yet it is this alternative which seems to us to offer the only way out of the nightmare into which our age is descending. The most hopeful thing about

this war is that the masses on both sides of the battle lines seem to have already reached the same state of apathy and sullen war weariness as came only after two or three years of the last war ... Today the masses are apathetic because they can accept neither of the two alternatives offered them in war – either Berlin-Rome-Moscow or Paris-London-Washington. Tomorrow they may find a common revolutionary destiny in that 'Third Camp' whose interests lie with neither of the two warring camps ... It is this direction and not in a lesser evil acceptance of the Chamberlain system that the most realistic hope for our civilisation lies.

After all, the Third Choice does not only apply to war – it applies to the present political impasse in this country. The Left can only think of getting rid of the Thatcher regime either by so doctoring Labour policy as to make it indistinguishable from Tory policy, or buy alliances which will lead to proportional representation, as advocated by a growing number of Labour Lefties as well as the armchair Communists of *Marxism Today* and academics like Eric Hobsbawn and Bernard Crick, and the hundreds of signatories to Charter 88, not forgetting *Samizdat* with its impressive 'steering group' and contributors, professors, historians and journalists not seeking the Third Choice but any way to replace Thatcher but not the system. And as to the 'revolutionaries' of the '60s, who better than 'that one-time scourge of the bourgeoisie, Tariq Ali', who in a half-page interview, portrait and all,[14] when asked about the way his politics have changed since he was 21, in the mid '60s, replied:

I'm sure they have. In the late '60s one was sure revolution was just around the corner somewhere or other in Europe. It would happen, and one behaved accordingly. In the year 1989, after 21 years of experience and the study of history, it is obviously not on the agenda today.

So what were his politics today, he was asked:

Free floating socialist
Who do you vote for?
Labour – not because I have any illusions they will implement any radical policies, but because there is an inch of difference between them and the Conservatives.

What is certain is that with that approach not only is revolution 'not on the agenda today', it will never be.

Footnotes

1. Lionel Birch, published by the General Council of the TUC, London, 1968, page 64.
2. *ibid.*, page 106.

3. *ibid.*, page 107.

4. That is to say the post-1926 General Strike new look 'Trade Union structure'.

5. 'Trades Unions and Britain's War Responsibilities', *ibid.*, page 13.

6. 'State Control or Workers' Control' in *Neither East Nor West* Freedom Press, 1952 and 1988, page 57.

7. It is often overlooked by the Right when they denounce the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact that before the war Stalin had proposed such a pact to France and Britain which had been turned down. Stalin must have been aware that Hitler's aim was to seek his *lebensraum* in the East but having liquidated most of his top military men was anxious to avoid war with Germany. A.J.P. Taylor in his *English History 1914-1945* (London, 1965) has some interesting facts and comments on the subject on pages 439-450.

8. Freedom Press was not part of the voluntary censorship. In the course of the war we published first *The Russian Myth*, followed by a much longer work by Marie Louise Berneri *Workers in Stalin's Russia* (1944) and Anton Ciliga's *The Kronstadt Revolt* (1942, reprinted in 1989 in *The Raven* no. 8), and of course innumerable critical articles in *War Commentary* (see *World War – Cold War*, Freedom Press, 1989).

9. 'New York exchange had a boom yesterday following von Ribbentrop's speech at Danzig. Wall Street interprets the speech as meaning a long war. Stocks rose almost to their highest levels of the year.' *Daily Sketch*, 26th October 1939.

10. *Spain and the World* (fortnightly anarchist journal, 1936-1939), May 1938 and 30th September 1988. Some of the articles from that issue are reprinted in the Documents section of this issue of *The Raven*.

11. Though there were many more conscientious objectors in World War Two, the 1,500 'absolutists' in World War One were subjected to terrible treatment at the hands of the military and prison authorities. A.J.P. Taylor gives the numbers in World War Two as 58,000 men and 2,000 women applying to be registered. 40,000 were given conditional and 2,900 unconditional exemption, 5,000 were prosecuted and imprisoned, *op. cit.*, page 457.

12. *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, volume 1, London, 1968, pages 377-378.

13. *ibid.*, pages 535-540.

14. *Sunday Telegraph*, 13th August 1989, interview by Martyn Harris.

3

THE HORRORS OF WAR

The Horror of Ravensburg

A 27 year old Parisienne, Mlle Colette Robin, who has been interned at Ravensburg camp since January 1943, today described the months of suffering endured by thousands of Frenchwomen. She said:

We wore only a striped dress and trousers, a blouse and a pair of clogs. They shaved the hair of the ones who worked in German industry, and if we talked we were savagely beaten and thrown into cells. We slept seven in three beds, each 29 inches wide, in tiers. We had one meal a day, comprising one and a quarter pints of turnip soup and lass than half a pound of black bread.

We were covered with fleas and suffered from scabies. We had to get up at three in the morning and stand in the cold for two hours. At midday there was another roll call. Women fell down, but we were not allowed to pick them up. The SS women used to beat us. If we raised our arms to ward off the blows, they put us in the cells.

The internees worked eleven hours a day in the Siemens factories. After work they made us drain the marshes, with water up to our waists. Other women had to load barges or railway trucks or make roads, guarded by dogs which drew blood when they bit. Our midday meal we took standing up like savages. On the least pretext they sentenced the women to 'rest', which meant standing for six hours, or they sent them to the punishment block, where they received 25 strokes with a stick.

The extermination camp was next to the work camp. All women who were weak, old or crippled went to the gas chamber. The German doctor marked on the arm those who were sick, and they were thrown into a gassing lorry, but as there was not enough gas the victims were not quite dead as they were put into the crematorium ovens.

Mlle Robin said the Germans used 7,000 young Polish girls for special vivisection, removing bones from their legs or marrow from their bones. At Ravensburg mortality was 60%. Mlle Robin concluded: 'We have all of us come back with tuberculosis, malaria or affected hearts, but we have faith in France in spite of all the Vichy men who are still in office'.

from *The Manchester Guardian*, 24th April 1945

The Horror of Auschwitz

About 1.5 million people died at Auschwitz, according to Franciszek Piper, chief historian at the Auschwitz State Museum. About 90% of the dead were Jews, including 438,000 from Hungary, 300,000 from Poland, 69,000 from France, 60,000 from the Netherlands, 55,000 from Greece, 46,000 from Czechoslovakia.

The remaining victims included about 75,000 Poles, more than 20,000 gypsies, 15,000 Soviet POWs, 25,000 people of other nationalities. About 200,000 people survived, most of them being sent to other camps.

from *The Independent*, 28th January 1995

Criminal Lunacy Exposed

We have just witnessed an act of criminal lunacy which must be without parallel in recorded history. A city of 300,000 people has been suddenly and deliberately obliterated and its inhabitants murdered by the English and American governments. It is difficult to express in coherent language the shame which we feel. That this thing should be done in our name makes us feel physically bespattered with the filth of it. Even a public slowly and deliberately accustomed by propaganda to acquiesce to irresponsible murder is stricken by it. We have dissented and protested in the past, but the time for dissent and protest are over. The men who did this are criminal lunatics. Unles this final strocity is irrevocably and unquestionably brought home to them by public opinion, we have no claim to be human beings, we have no right to condemn any excess of the past or the future, we do not deserve any vestige of freedom.

No alliance of nations fostering such pretensions has ever covered itself with such utter disgrace. The sickening cant about indescriminate bombardment, the lies about liberty and justice, have appeared for what they are – the restoration of moral order for what it is, a death's head. This action is not to be judged by men – men wil be judged by it, as they were judged by the atrocities of Dachau ...

Apart from the fantastic irresponsibility of scientists who are prepared to put such a weapons into the hands of our present rulers, the responsibility for seeing that no political or miliary figure associated with this action shall be permitted to remain rests upon us. It is high time that we tried our own war criminals, or history will rightly and justly try and condemn us to permanent hatred and contempt.

Alex Comfort's reaction to the atom bombing of Japanese towns
from *War Commentary*, 25th August 1945

The Horror of Dresden

'The sky was black with smoke. The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighbourhood was dead. So it goes.'

Thus Kurt Vonnegut, himself a survivor of the nightmare of the Dresden fire bombing, described the sight that greeted him as he emerged from the cellars of Slaughterhouse Five. Hiroshima apart, there had never been a raid like it. On a Tuesday evening, the old city – 'Florence on the Elbe' as it was known – stood almost unscathed. The next morning it was smoking rubble. And bodies – tens of thousands of bodies, roasted alive. There were too many to be buried, and not enough survivors to do the burying. In the days to come, thousands of bodies would be piled up and burnt in the marketplace.

Even now, the scale of the destruction is difficult to comprehend. In the most notorious German air raids on Britain, on Coventry in 1940 and 1941, 1,200 people died. In Dresden a minimum of 35,000 – probably more, the exact number will never be known – died in one night.

The air-raid sirens heralded the inferno at 9.50pm on 13th February 1945. For years afterwards, Erika Naumann could not talk about that night. 'You repress things. It's better that way', she says. 'Now every 13th February, I simply throw open the windows and listen to the church bells.'

When her house was bombed, there was nowhere to go. 'In the cellar, we were packed like sardines in oil. I couldn't see if my baby was alive or dead. Outside, we knew we had to get away – but it was impossible to know which way to go.'

First came the 'Christmas trees' – the flares to light up the sky. Then came the high-explosive bombs, and the incendiary bombs from the RAF Lancasters. First one wave, and then – just as people began to flee their burning houses – another, three hours later. Gertraude Hedler remembers her house exploding: 'It was like a giant had come under the cellar and picked it up. We had no idea of the scale of what had happened. There was a huge firestorm. The whole place was in flames. Women were lying there, all charred. Dead babies. When I found my father, he didn't recognise us.'

A whirlwind of flame engulfed the city, whose skyline Canaletto had immortalised, and which had inspired Schiller to write his *Ode to Joy*. The city centre suffered worst of all. 'Five of my classmates lived in the old centre', says Ms Hedler. 'All of them died.'

Steve Crawshaw reporting in *The Independent*, 13th February 1995

The Horror of Tokyo

The Independent's correspondent in Tokyo (10th March 1995) reminds reader that fifty years ago the US bombers dropped an early form of napalm which was responsible for 'burning or boiling alive up to 197,000 people in a six-hour raid'. He writes:

A retired US Air Force officer visiting Tokyo this week recalled the air raids which killed more than 80,000 Japanese civilians, and gutted the wooden heart of the Japanese capital, fifty years ago this morning.

Major General Earl Johnson was in one of the 334 B-29 super-fortresses which between them dropped 70,000 incendiary bombs in the worst single air raid of the war. Official figures put casualties at 83,793 dead and 40,918 wounded, but so many family registers and records were lost that the true death toll will never be known. Upper estimates speak of 197,000 dead, almost twice the number of immediate casualties in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima which took place five months later.

Victims were burned in their houses, overcome by fumes, or boiled alive as they leapt into seething canals. Returning crewmen reported smelling burning flesh as they flew back from the raids. A US strategic bombing survey concluded that 'probably more people lost their lives by fire in Tokyo in a six-hour period than at any time in the history of man'.

'That was the first low-altitude incendiary air raid in Tokyo', said General Johnson. 'That was the beginning of the end as far as World War Two was concerned.'

By March 1945 the inevitability of Japan's eventual defeat was not in question. What was uncertain was the cost in terms of time and human life of conclusively subduing the archipelago. A Japanese garrison had fought to the last man after an exceptionally vicious battle on the tiny Pacific Island of Iwo Jima the previous month. The 'special attack squadrons' – the infamous kamikaze bombers – were already harrying American warships. 'You're going to deliver the biggest firecracker the Japanese have ever seen', the planner of the Tokyo raids, Major General Curtis Le May, told his pilots. 'No matter how you slice it, you're going to kill an awful lot of civilians. But how many Americans will be killed in an invasion of Japan?'

The target was Tokyo's *shitamachi*, the 'Low City', a densely populated river district of wooden houses and narrow streets. The *shitamachi* has always borne the brunt of Tokyo's many disasters: 22 years before, America had supplied aid to the survivors of the Great Tokyo Earthquake, which claimed most of its victims from the same area.

The official rationale for the raid was that the *shitamachi* contained munitions factories. But there seems also to have been an element of experimentation in the air force's planning. In 1943 the military had built a mock wooden city in Utah for testing the new incendiary bombs, an early form of napalm. But they had never been used on a live city.

An aerial view of the industrial section of Tokyo, along the Sumida River. Saturation bombing left only modern steel and concrete structures intact.

© Hulton-Deutsch

The bombers took off from the Mariana Islands at intervals of less than a minute; their flying formation was so tight that B-29s collided in mid-air. A little after midnight on 10th March, the first wave of planes delivered oil bombs designed to start 'appliance fires' which would tie up the emergency services, and sow confusion. According to one account, officials hesitated to sound the alarm for fear of disturbing Emperor Hirohito.

Tokyo's air raid precautions were, in any case, pitifully inadequate. The city was paralysed by shortages of personnel and raw materials: many shelters consisted of no more than a hole in the earth covered by wood.

Some 1,539 tons of incendiaries fell during the three-hour bombardment, and it was hours more before the fires were extinguished. Around 270,000 buildings and 15.8 square miles was razed: about one quarter of the entire city, an area fifteen times greater than that devastated in the London Blitz.

A special exhibition at the Edo-Tokyo Museum contains a reconstruction of a corrugated iron tent, of the kind in which Tokyo's one million homeless lived for the next few months.

'My mother wandered around the burning neighbourhood, with me tied to her back, calling my sister's name', said Yoshio Okumura, who was seven at the time. 'I was going crazy with the heat. "Mum, it's hot! It's really hot!" I cried. I could feel my skin being grilled, so I struggled. But that only made my dress peel off and enabled the fire to burn my exposed skin. Then my mother said 'It's over', and collapsed on the ground. That was the last thing she ever said.'

'War is not a humane activity', said General Johnson. 'The United States was in the war to win.'

The Horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

On 6th August 1945, shortly after 8am, an American Super-Fortress flying at 30,000 feet dropped a single atomic bomb over the city of Hiroshima (population 240,000 at the time) and the bomb exploded over the city centre.

The result of the explosion was catastrophic and it was soon followed by the dropping of a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

The Hiroshima bomb exploded above a level expanse of more than ten square miles of wooden houses, destroying over one square mile by blast and then by fire. It is officially estimated that at least 80,000 persons were killed. The Nagasaki death toll was put at 24,000. 30,000 persons were injured and many of these died later. In Nagasaki an area of one and a half square miles of the city was destroyed.

Pregnant women who survived within 1,000 yards of the centre of damage had miscarriages; those who survived up to one and a quarter miles from the centre had miscarriages or premature infants who soon died. Even substantial buildings were penetrated by the gamma rays from the explosion and gave no protection. The ray had the effect of passing through the skin without seeming at first to affect it. It is thought that the gamma rays caused the death of nearly everyone who was fully exposed to them up to a distance of half a mile from the centre of danger. People who were directly under the explosion in the open had their exposed skin burnt so severely that it was immediately charred dark brown or black. These people died within minutes or at most hours. Both in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, burns on exposed skin were very severe up to about 1,500 yards from the centre of damage.

source: *Everymans Encyclopaedia*, third edition

Adrian Walker

Woe Unto the Defeated

This book,* as its comprehensive subtitle indicates, uncovers a large-scale war crime which was committed after the cessation of hostilities in Europe in May 1945. I use the term 'war crime' rather than the more colloquial 'atrocity' because they differ both in kind and degree. The former is an operation conducted as a matter of policy – the Holocaust falls into this category – while the latter consists of spontaneous acts by individuals or small groups during combat or its aftermath – the killing of men trying to surrender is an example of this. By this yardstick, *Other Losses* is a document dealing with a war crime.

The evidence put forward by James Bacque indicates that almost 4,000,000 German prisoners were held by the Americans for some months after VE Day in atrocious conditions. They were without shelter or adequate food, water and medical supplies. As a result at least three quarters of a million of them died. Furthermore, the author accuses the French of similar criminal acts. They were given, by the US Army, some 740,000 prisoners to help rebuild the war-shattered French economy and mistreated them to such an extent that approximately one-third were to perish in a matter of weeks. Almost all of these victims of American and French brutality were prisoners of war (that is to say, ex-servicemen), but it is thought that some scores of thousands of civilians, mostly women and children, also died as part of the same process.

Throughout the author writes with passion, as well he might given the nature of his subject matter, but this does not obscure the validity of his case, which is documented to the extent of including facsimiles of contemporary official forms showing the death rates in the prison camps.

The book was born when Bacque and his assistant (who wishes to remain anonymous) discovered official records that indicated that a

* James Bacque, *Other Losses: an investigation into the mass deaths of German prisoners at the hands of the French and Americans after World War Two* (London, Macdonald, 1990, £13.95, ISBN 0 356 19136 2).

large number of prisoners were effectively unaccounted for, simply being categorised under the heading of 'other losses'. At an early stage of the author's researches a senior American officer informed him that this included a considerable number of escapees, but it subsequently emerged that less than one tenth of one per cent, or one man in every thousand, had in fact escaped. Thus the vast majority of these 'other losses' were deaths due to starvation, disease and exposure, brought on by negligence or more probably deliberate neglect. As Bacque puts it, 'their deaths were knowingly caused by army officers, who had sufficient resources to keep the prisoners alive. Relief organisations that attempted to help the prisoners in the American camps were refused [permission to do so] by the army'. Presumably as part of the same policy, German civilians were not allowed to share their rations with their imprisoned compatriots.

That it would have been possible to keep these prisoners alive is made evident when one looks at prison camps elsewhere. German prisoners, numbering almost 300,000, held by General Mark Clark's forces in Italy, apparently did not suffer any untoward hardships and on their eventual repatriation none were found to be underweight. Similarly, in the camps within Germany itself, administered by the British and Canadians who were much less well equipped than their American allies, there were relatively few fatalities. The only instance of deaths by starvation in British-run camps occurred in Belgium, where about 400 prisoners died. As Bacque points out, conditions in British and Canadian camps in 1945-46 were far superior in every way to those in American ones, with 'shelter, space, clean water and better hospital care'.

But before we British begin to pat ourselves on the back, we would do well to remember that perhaps a million civilians died in Germany in the year following the signing of the Armistice in November 1918. This was a result of the blockade which continued to be maintained by the Royal Navy and its allies with the express purpose of forcing the German government to sign the Treaty of Versailles. This is worth mentioning to demonstrate that the punishment of a helpless enemy by the victors is nothing new, particularly in a century of total war.

The author makes a very valid point when he comments that the death rate among the *civilian* population of the British Zone of Occupation, who were at that time suffering considerable hardships in the aftermath of the war, was no more than five per cent as opposed to thirty per cent in the French and American camps. It should also be borne in mind that the prisoners would tend to be younger and

fitter than civilians and that the comparable mortality rate among American servicemen was only one-ninth that of the prisoners.

The central question posed by this book is not whether these deaths actually occurred and if so how many were there – there is ample documentary evidence of this, backed by eyewitness accounts – but why did it happen and who was responsible? There seems to be little doubt that the systematic neglect of men who were entitled to fair treatment under the terms of the Geneva Conventions was part of a deliberate policy rather than a result of maladministration. Of all the Allied powers the Americans were by far the richest, so simple shortages cannot have been a contributory factor.

Bacque alleges that each week during the period under review (summer '45 to autumn '46) no less than 23 American officers, including two generals, routinely received a report giving statistical details of 'other losses'. It is difficult to believe that this number of officers were involved in such a large scale operation without the knowledge of their Commander in Chief, General Eisenhower. Furthermore, it seems that he was himself directly embroiled inasmuch as he used his authority to determine the level of rations in the camps. By the same token, de Gaulle must have been aware of what was happening to prisoners transferred from American to French hands and could have prevented more deaths by 'ceasing to add new prisoners to those who were already starving'. In addition, he and Marshal Juin, the French military commander, made no attempt to stop prisoners' rations being sold on the black market, which was a well-publicised scandal at the time.

It is strange that it should have been the Americans, of all people, who were largely responsible for these tragic events so reminiscent of the starving to death of Russian prisoners of war by the Nazis. They had suffered far less from the war than the other combatants, were extremely well-resourced and on a personal level were noted for their generosity, as anyone who, like me, was a child during the war, can attest. According to Bacque, one reason for this apparently uncharacteristic behaviour was that the American authorities may have been attempting to implement a watered-down version of the Morgenthau Plan. This had been put forward in 1944 by Henry Morgenthau, the US Secretary of the Treasury, and proposed that German industry should be dismantled and the entire country reduced to the status of a gigantic farm so that never again would Germany be strong enough to wage war. This scheme was rejected not on humanitarian grounds but because Roosevelt considered that

the threat of this would cause the enemy to fight in the last ditch, which in the event they did.

This original work, a valuable addition to the hidden history of the Second World War, emphasises the dreadful nature of what has been termed industrialised warfare. The starving to death of the German prisoners is like Dresden, Hiroshima, Nanking, Lidice and countless other tragedies, an inevitable product of clashes between modern nation states. Also, if young men are enrolled as 'state registered assassins' one should not be surprised if their moral senses become blunted by exposure to carnage on a colossal scale and they then begin to kill the 'wrong' people.

Other Losses was published in 1990 and there has been a subsequent television documentary on the subject. Despite the publicity which this generated, the perpetrators of this war crime have still not been officially identified. In fact the author's allegations have been largely ignored by the American media and, because of the controversial nature of its subject matter, publishers in the USA have consistently refused to accept the book. This makes one incline to the cynic's view that the first requirement for being branded a war criminal is to have been on the losing side. But as Bacque says at the end of his book (speaking of de Gaulle and Juin): 'To whom belongs the glory, belongs the shame'.

The Cost of War
25,000,000 Dead

The following article is reproduced in a condensed form from the French newsletter Liberation, *which published it on VE Day. We have hesitated before publishing it as the figures seemed to us so high that we thought they were probably due to an overestimation.* After some of the figures had been confirmed by other sources we decided to publish the article nevertheless reminding our readers that these statistics do not pretend to be accurate but to give an idea of the tremendous losses suffered by all nations in the war in Europe. These do not represent the total sum of war dead; the war in the Far East will undoubtedly prove more costly still than the war in Europe.*

***Freedom*, 16th June 1945**

When we establish a record of the losses suffered during these five years of war, we shall see that they are all out of proportion to the wars of the past. Today this record is still incomplete because the counting of the dead, as always, takes place after fighting.

Up to now, we have only fragmentary figures. Put together they express this first fact, unfortunately incomplete, that the war in Europe has taken more than 25 million *dead.* To put it in a more human way than figures, it means that a population like that of Spain has been crossed off the map and history.

MILITARY LOSSES

France: 110,762 killed; 19,315 missing.

USSR: the figures vary according to the sources. *Soviet sources*: 5,300,000 dead. *American sources*: 21,000,000 killed, wounded, missing, prisoners (no distinction made between civilian and military). *German sources*: 13,400 dead.

Germany: according to Russian information 8,500,000 dead up to 1st October 1944.

United States: 200,000 dead; 97,000 missing; 490,000 wounded.

British Empire: 310,000 dead; 70,000 missing; 425,000 wounded.

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* In fact the official figures are nearer 50 million. Even now, 1995, the Russians believe that their estimated civilian and military losses of 25 million are on the low side – Editor.

Poland: 1939 campaign 900,000 dead, missing and prisoners.

Yugoslavia: 300,000 dead in Tito's troops.

Greece: 13,000 killed; 70,000 wounded, to which one must add 50,000 dead in the partisans' struggle.

Other countries at war: losses unknown up to date.

CIVILIAN LOSSES

France: 100,000 dead in prisons and concentration camps in France; 150,000 shot (70,000 in Paris); more than 150,000 dead through bombing.

Poland: 5 million slaughtered, or 14.7% of the Polish population.

Yugoslavia: 1,300,000 killed, most of them through reprisals.

USSR: the Russians talk of millions dead without giving precise figures.

Greece: 150,000 victims murdered by the Bulgarians, Germans and Italians; 450,000 dead through starvation.

Holland: 125,000 Jews and members of the resistance movement killed.

Britain: through bombing 60,000 civilians killed or missing; 100,000 wounded.

Germany: the total number of people killed through bombing is still unknown. At Hamburg 100,000 dead; Karlsruhe 46,000 dead; 250 towns have known a similar fate.

Jews: more than 4,000,000 (including 2,600,000 Poles) have been exterminated in Europe.

This is a first record of the European phase of the Second World War. According to the most pessimistic estimates Napoleon's wars, which lasted fifteen years, killed two million people. Between 1914 and 1918 the world lost eight and a half million people. Between 1939 and 1945, in Europe, there has been more than 25 million dead.

It is a tragic progression, full of anxiety for those who realise that a new conflict may destroy twenty centuries of civilisation.

Yves Hugonnet

4
SOME CONCLUSIONS

Milan Rai

The Myth of Benevolence

One of the most important components of state propaganda – in any country – is the notion that the state is benevolent and is motivated by moral motives. Even the Nazis justified their atrocities on the grounds that they were defending the true values of a superior civilization. Here in Britain, the role of the British in the Second World War is a matter of great pride; it has been absorbed as central part of the national self-image. The fight against the Nazis thus becomes one of the most potent sources of state propaganda. The struggle against, and the defeat of, ultimate evil is taken as proof of Britain's commitment to freedom, democracy and common decency. Now, as a matter of simple logic, the fact that you are in conflict with a totalitarian state does not by itself make you committed to spreading democracy. To take a recent example, the fact that in 1991 Kuwait, Syria and Saudi Arabia contributed forces to the fight against Iraq, an extremely repressive dictatorship, did not prove that these countries were fighting to spread democracy and human rights.

During the war, Roosevelt declared that the aim of the United States was to defeat fascism and establish the Four Freedoms: Freedom of speech, Freedom of worship, Freedom from want, and Freedom from fear. Later in 1941, Churchill joined Roosevelt in signing the 'Atlantic Charter', which promised among other things that all people would have the right to choose their own form of government after the war. I have no doubt that the overwhelming majority of people in Britain believe that, together with the aim of defeating fascism, these kinds of ideals were what the fighting was all about. The interesting thing is that no evidence is ever offered for this belief. It is unnecessary to

prove that the state is good; it is enough merely to repeat that 'the state is good'. As Noam Chomsky never tires of repeating in the context of the United States, we live in an extraordinarily conformist culture, where the doctrines of the state religion hold sway without any supporting evidence. It is of course conceivable that the British state was in 1941 devoted to the ideals of the Atlantic Charter; it seems unlikely for a variety of reasons – one being the fact that Churchill did not immediately announce the dissolution of the British Empire upon signing the Charter – but it is possible. The critical question is the evidence. What do declassified documents and the public record show about the motives of the British government?

The internal record seems quite unambiguous. Anthony Eden, then Foreign Secretary, sent a paper to the Cabinet in 1943:

> I assume that the aim of British policy must be, first that we should continue to exercise the functions and bear the responsibilities of a world Power; and, secondly, that we should seek not only to free Europe, but to preserve her freedom. Here in Europe, after all, is the cradle, and until recently the home, of the civilisation which has spread to almost every corner of the globe. Here, too we have to live, a few miles from the Continent. We cannot afford a Europe unfriendly to our interests or antagonistic to our way of life. We cannot afford a Europe which is dominated by Germany.[1]

There are a number of strands here. Top priority is given to maintaining Britain's status as a 'world Power'. What does this entail? Eden makes it clear: 'We have to maintain our position as an Empire and a Commonwealth. If we fail to do so we cannot exist as a world Power'. The second priority is 'freeing Europe'. Perhaps now we are approaching the noble ideals of the Atlantic Charter. But no, what is important apparently is that Europe is currently 'unfriendly' to British 'interests' and 'antagonistic' to Britain's 'way of life'. (The latter phrase should be taken as meaning much the same as 'interests', I suggest.) The problem in Europe is that it is 'dominated by Germany'. Germany is unfriendly to our interests, so German dominance cannot be permitted, and Europe must be 'freed' from this dominance.

Now there is nothing here about 'self-determination' or 'people choosing their own forms of government' or other lofty sentiments expressed in public. The war is very bluntly described in terms of power. Britain's aim is to retain power throughout the world. Germany is a danger to that power, therefore it must be prevented from attaining domination of the Continent. Note once again that Eden's first priority is to preserve the Empire. 'Freeing Europe' comes

second, and is in fact subordinated to this overriding objective.

It would be unwise to base such a far-reaching argument on a single document. But there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that this interpretation of Eden's paper is an accurate depiction of the motives behind the British war effort. In 1993, Michael Dockrill, a noted mainstream historian with impeccable credentials, wrote an important essay, 'Defending the Empire or defeating the enemy: British war aims 1938-47', which furnishes some relevant evidence.[2] Dockrill points out that Britain entered the war with very limited war aims: the withdrawal of German troops from Poland, the re-creation of an independent Bohemia and a general agreement on disarmament. There was no mention of overthrowing Hitler, or opposing fascism.

In fact, before the war, there had been considerable discussion in elite circles whether Nazi Germany could be permitted a certain amount of *lebensraum* in the east. Lord Chatfield, the First Sea Lord, was more concerned with Britain's predicament in the Mediterranean, threatened by growing Italian power. He suggested in 1937 that if Germany expanded to the south east, 'we must, in my opinion, accept it'. On the other hand, 'If we are convinced that by German success in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania and Danzig, she would eventually dominate Europe, and so threaten us at our front door *or in the Near East*, it would be conceivably better to fight her to prevent such an outcome...' (emphasis added). Lord Chatfield's prime concern is, again, the preservation of the Empire, and he judges that a certain amount of German expansionism can be consistent with this. So much for anti-fascism or the independence of small countries.

As Dockrill points out, there were different points of view in 1937 – some were quite complacent at the idea of German domination on the Continent, others were not. The crucial factor was the problem of Three Enemies. Dockrill comments:

> The Japanese threat, the rise of National Socialist Germany after 1933 and Britain's alienation of Fascist Italy during the Abyssinian Crisis of 1935-6, threatened Britain with a three front war in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Far East should these three powers manage to combine against her.' Hence the desire for a settlement with Germany, rather than confrontation: 'An Anglo-German agreement would deny Italy and Japan the opportunity of taking advantage of tension and conflict between the two countries to attack Britain's extra-European possessions.

Let us turn for a moment to a study of the 'Far Eastern Influences

upon British Strategy towards the Great Powers 1937-1939', by Robert John Pritchard. Pritchard notes that, 'Notwithstanding the popular misconception that imperial defence policy in the years before the European war turned exclusively upon European affairs, British policy-makers took their Far Eastern commitments and responsibilities as seriously as they took developments in European affairs'.[3] In 1933 and 1935, the Annual Reviews of Imperial Defence put the Far East as the top priority, followed by European commitments and then India. In 1937, the Annual Review placed East Asia first in significance, followed by the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Pritchard's detailed study concludes with the following words:

> War in Europe had to be side-stepped unless there seemed no unacceptable danger to Britain's position in the Far East. It followed that if conditions in the Far East grew particularly heated, Germany and Italy had to be contained by peaceful means; if war drew near in Europe, then Japan must be neutralized. The survival of the British Empire was at issue.[4]

So, the deepest roots of 'appeasement' lie not in the character faults of any individual politician or party, but in the needs of the British Empire.

In the early years of the war, there was in Dockrill's words, a 'frenzied debate' at the highest levels of the British government concerning the possibility of negotiating a peace settlement with Germany. 'While even Churchill wavered on one occasion and thought that Britain might examine a German offer, his general line was that any public revelation of peace negotiations would totally destroy British morale, that the United States would eventually join the war on the side of the Entente and that if Britain survived an initial German onslaught, she would then be in a position to obtain better terms from Germany.' This 'wait and see' policy prevailed. It is difficult to characterise this as very elevated thinking or devotion to any particular moral principles.

The point here is that as the overriding aim was to preserve the Empire, peace with a Greater Germany – a fascist empire – was a conceivable option for British policy-makers, if only the Empire could be safeguarded. It can be argued that the focus on the Empire affected the conduct of the war. Dockrill points out that many US military and civilian leaders thought that Churchill's insistence on a North African campaign in 1942, rather than a cross-Channel invasion, was a diversionary tactic designed to restore British power in the

Mediterranean. A much more important example is Greece.

Greece was one of the few countries in Europe not liberated by Allied armies. German troops began their evacuation in October 1944 before British soldiers entered the country, though there were a few harrying operations as the Nazis withdrew. There was, then, no need for extensive British operations in Greece, and troops committed to the liberation could have been kept with the invasion force ploughing through Italy. In fact, 10,000 British troops were sent to Greece immediately, building up to 75,000 by mid-January 1945. The country was to be liberated not from the Nazis, but from the Resistance. An SOE officer reporting from Greece in mid-1943 summed up the British dilemma:

> As I understand it, the aims of the British Government in Greece are two-fold: First, to obtain the greatest military effort in the fight against the Axis and, second, to have in post-war Greece a stable government friendly to Great Britain, if possible a Constitutional Monarchy. Unfortunately, the present state of affairs in Greece makes the prosecution of the two aims almost incompatible...

Colonel Stevens concluded that 'There is no question that the most efficient organization for fighting the Axis in Greece to-day is the EAM and that every effort should be made in the interests of military efficiency to combine in that organization all other patriotic organizations.' At the same time, Stevens commented, 'What is quite certain is that we do not want the EAM leaders in power after the war'.[6] Unfortunately for Britain, the EAM, or National Liberation Front, was a six-party coalition committed to republicanism and nationalism. A return to the pre-war system of British hegemony over Greece via a malleable king was not what the Resistance was fighting for. In order to prevent the EAM – which everyone accepted was the overwhelmingly the most popular force in Greece – from assuming power in the aftermath of the war, the War Cabinet in August 1944 authorised the diversion of a 10,000-strong invasion force for Greece. In October, as the German occupation was ending, the British Ambassador to Greece commented that if Greece was to be liberated from the EAM, there would probably have to be a much larger British expeditionary force.[7] Greece was to be liberated from its own people, liberated from democracy. The twists and turns of the so-called 'Civil War' cannot be traced here. Suffice it to say that despite being excluded from a public security role by the Caserta Agreement of 26 September 1944, British troops were used to maintain a succession

of puppet governments in Athens without any regard to the wishes of the Greek people. And this while the war continued! Tens of thousands of soldiers were diverted from the war against Italy and Germany to ensure British control of Greece after the war. So, of the two war aims of defeating the Axis and buttressing the Empire, the former gave way to the latter. It goes without saying that the British intervention in Greece – which lasted until 1947 – was a violation of virtually all the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter. Similar violations were implemented throughout the world, for example in South East Asia, where Britain helped to restore French imperialism in Indochina and Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, while reconstructing its own system of control, most notably in Malaya, also denied the opportunity to exercise national self-determination.

In fact, it is child's play to prove that British policy-makers were not really concerned with spreading freedom and democracy through the Second World War. The evidence is equally abundant that fascism itself was not the issue. In North Africa, General Eisenhower reached an agreement in 1942 with Admiral Jean Darlan, commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Vichy France. Darlan ordered the French forces in North Africa to lay down their arms and in return was made Governor General of all French North Africa by the Allies. Darlan was bitterly anti-British, author of Vichy's anti-Semitic laws, and had been a willing collaborator with the Germans. Stephen Ambrose, the noted US historian, comments:

> The result was that in its first major foreign-policy venture in World War II, the United States gave its support to a man who stood against everything Roosevelt and Churchill had spoken out against. As much as Göring or Goebbels, Darlan was the antithesis of the principles the Allies were defending.[8]

One might argue that this was a US initiative. The next instalment was however entirely a joint affair. In 1943, during the invasion of Italy, the Allies chose to maintain the government of Marshal Pietro Badoglio, and even allowed his administration to declare war on Germany and be classed as a co-belligerent, despite the fact that Badoglio had been selected to lead the country by the *Fascist Grand Council* as a replacement for Mussolini.

The true test of the Allies' anti-fascism comes in their behaviour in the core fascist countries themselves. Little attention is paid to the question of Italy, perhaps because no serious action was taken against the fascists by the occupation authorities (though the Resistance killed

perhaps 20,000 fascists and alleged collaborators). In Japan, Japanese politicians expressed gratitude for the leniency showed to the ruling class. The limited purges that were initiated immediately after the war were soon reversed. By 1949, 10,090 people previously purged had been cleared by review bodies. By 1951, 177,000 people had been de-purged. The bulk of those who remained purged – banned from influential occupations and posts – were now past retirement age in any case.[9] The 'reverse course' continued until in 1952 even members of Tojo's Cabinet were restored to full rights. In 1952 Ichiro Hatoyama, who had been purged in 1946 for praising Hitler and Mussolini before the war, among other things, became Prime Minister of Japan. Harry Emerson Wildes, who had worked in the US Occupation Government, summed up the situation in 1954:

> Little remained of the highly lauded innovations and reforms. Launched amid fanfares of publicity and promises, most of them had been repealed or, if remaining on the books, had been distorted or ignored. The Emperor was as popular as ever in the past, perhaps more so; except in mere lip service none seriously upheld the fumbling Diet [Parliament] as the highest organ of the state. The purge had been abandoned and forgotten, except by victims who resented its unfairness; police and bureaucrats regained their old control if, indeed, they ever really had loosed their hold. Zaibatsu firms revived under their once proscribed names; political and gang bosses flourished; decentralization of schools and local government reversed itself and old-line thought and methods reappeared in editorial offices, movie studios, and courts of law. Americans who had hailed Japan's constitutional renunciation of armed force were offering as gifts large fleets of warships, munitions in huge quantities, money to rebuild an army, and skilled instructors to teach Japan to fight. Army pride had been revived, crowds thrilled to the Navy March, and Japan's Wild Eagles were returning to the skies.[10]

Japanese war criminals were recruited by US intelligence, including experts in chemical and biological warfare, who had experimented on Chinese POWs and others. They were all given immunity from prosecution.

Turning to Germany, denazification in the Western zones was judged a failure by many of those involved, and this judgement has been confirmed by subsequent scholars. In the US zone, which implemented a much more rigorous purge than the French or British, the Chief of the Special and Denazification Branch of the Occupation Government wrote in 1950 that the programme had 'failed to achieve any objective, German or American, and in particular [failed to realize] the American effort to construct democratic foundations from

German society and thus to prevent a recrystallization of its traditional authoritarian social structure'.[11] Formerly a British member of the Allied Control Commission, Noel Annan described denazification as 'a process which failed to achieve its object, lost us friends and credibility and got us the worst of both worlds'.[12]

In an authoritative and popular history of Germany, Bark and Gress sum up the scholarly consensus. They suggest that the effect of the US programme was that 'proportionately far more of the "smaller fry", most of whom would not have been re-employed anyway, were fined, while categories I and II [serious offenders] escaped more lightly because OMGUS [the Office of Military Government United States] abandoned the whole enterprise before their cases could be processed.' 'What began as a grandiose plan to purge all Nazis from leading roles in public life and to punish severely persons who had held responsible positions in the Third Reich was, in practice, transformed into a procedure by which major offenders were slapped on the wrist and minor offenders exonerated.'[13] This is a description of the US programme. Note that the British were much less enthusiastic in denazification, in part because of their 'concern about the results of dismissing most of the country's trained personnel', according to the *Daily Telegraph*'s correspondent in postwar Germany.[14]

We come back to Eden's description of British war aims. The problem was not German – or Italian or Japanese – fascism, it was that Germany – and the other Axis powers – were 'unfriendly to our interests'. Friendly fascists were quite acceptable. If torturers and war criminals and genocidal racists were useful for some purpose, and were willing to obey orders, and were unable to threaten the Empire, they could remain in place. The Empire came first. Pious rhetoric about freedom and democracy was fine for wartime propaganda, but what counted was power.

When we examine the evidence, the myth of British benevolence in World War II cannot stand up. It is so far from the truth, it is astonishing that it is almost universally believed. It is a testimony to the extraordinary power of the British propaganda system. As we celebrate the end of the war, it might be as well to remember the judgement of a liberal capitalist Third World politician. As Juan José Arevalo, the democratically-elected president of Guatemala, left office in 1951, he recalled Roosevelt's noble wartime rhetoric and commented sadly, 'Roosevelt lost the war. The real winner was Hitler.'

Notes

1. Cited in David Dilks 'Introduction' to David Dilks, *Retreat from Power: Studies in Britain's Foreign Policy of the Twentieth Century*, volume II, *After 1939*, London, Macmillan, 1981, page 9.

2. Dockrill's essay appears in Peter Catterall and C.J. Morris (editors) *Britain and the Threat to Stability in Europe 1918-45*, London, Leicester University Press, 1993.

3. Robert John Pritchard, *Far Eastern Influences upon British Strategy towards the Great Powers 1937-1939*, New York, Garland Publishing Inc., 1987, page 205.

4. *ibid.*, page 206.

5. 'Report of Lt. Col. J.M. Stevens on Present Conditions in Central Greece: Secret' in Lars Bærentzen (editor) *British Reports on Greece 1943-44 by J.M. Stevens, C.M. Woodhouse and D.J. Wallace*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum Press, 1982, page 41.

6. *ibid.*, page 44.

7. Paraphrase of Leeper's comment made in G.M. Alexander, *Prelude to the Truman Doctrine: British Policy in Greece 1944-1947*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, page 59.

8. Stephen Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, London, Penguin, fourth revised edition 1986, page 24.

9. Robert Harvey, *The Undefeated: The Rise, Fall and Rise of Greater Japan*, London, Macmillan, 1994, page 301.

10. Harry Emerson Wildes, *Typhoon in Tokyo: The Occupation and its Aftermath*, New York, Macmillan, 1954, page 337.

11. Cited in William E. Griffith, 'Denazification Revisited' in Michael Ermarth (editor) *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945-55*, Oxford, Berg, 1993, page 164. Griffith did change his mind about this many years later though.

12. Cited in Richard Mayne, *Postwar: The Dawn of Today's Europe*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1983, page 56.

13. Dennis Bark and David Gress, *From Shadow to Substance 1945-1963*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2nd edition 1993, pages 76 and 79.

14. Anthony Mann, *Comeback: Germany 1945-1952*, London, Macmillan, 1980, page 65.

FURTHER READING

The 'Peace Soup' cartoon by John Olday reproduced below is one of sixteen included in the Freedom Press volume *Neither East Nor West: selected writings 1939-48* by Marie Louise Berneri (192 pages, ISBN 0 900384 42 5, £4.50).

John Olday (1905-1977) was born in Hamburg and came to this country in 1938. Apart from the cartoons in *War Commentary* and *Freedom*, Freedom Press published *The March to Death* in 1943, a volume of some forty anti-war drawings which is currently being reprinted, with a new introduction by Donald Rooum (84 pages, ISBN 0 900384 80 8, £3.00).

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