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Roosevelt's Prisoners

Five workmen of Minneapolis have been found guilty of the crime of intimidation, four of them also guilty of the crime of conspiracy. A second trial of four more workmen has already opened, and a third trial, involving another twenty-five men on the same charge, opens on October 30.

The "criminals" are WPA workers. The prosecutor is Victor Anderson, U. S. attorney, conducting the case under the direct instructions of United States Attorney-General Frank Murphy, appointed not so long ago by President Roosevelt.

What were the crimes of the convicted workers and those awaiting trial?

They were thrown out of their jobs not because they would not work but because a bankrupt and crisis-stricken social order could no longer even provide them with the means of making a livelihood. First crime.

The government, fearing the consequences to the rotten system of the growing restlessness of the masses, put some of these unemployed workers on relief or gave them work on WPA at wages way below the scale to which they had been accustomed. Second crime.

The government, in order to have more and more of its funds allotted to war-and-murder preparations, cut one billion dollars off the unemployed relief budget at the last session of Congress, a budget already below the elementary requirements of the people. The government commanded the unemployed to accept a vicious wage slash without protest. The workers did protest. In Minneapolis, as elsewhere, they went out on strike against the employer-government. Third "crime."

"You can't strike against the government," says Hitler, says Mussolini.

"You can't strike against the government," said Roosevelt.

The government can insult the workers to its heart's content. It can devote more money to preparing for the slaughter of the workers than it does to keeping them alive. It can cut their already low wages to the bone, regardless of the effect on men, women and children. It can refuse to meet with the delegated representatives of the workers. It can act like the most reactionary, labor-hating boss.

But — you can't fight the government! You can't strike against the government! You can't defend yourself from attacks on your living conditions, which are attacks on your life and the life of your family.

And if you do, as the stout-hearted workers in Minneapolis did, Roosevelt tries to smash you. His Attorney-General sent stool-pigeons to Minneapolis. His Federal Bureau of Investigation sent agents to Minneapolis to pick out the fighters and railroad them to prison. His prosecutor dug up one of the most discredited anti-union, anti-labor weapons in our history—the "conspiracy" charge. And now Mr. Roosevelt can congratulate himself on his signal victory: he's got his prisoners, he's taking his revenge for their impudence in wanting a decent living, he's putting them away where they can't make any more trouble for our Great Democratic Government. Maybe their fate will be a lesson to others who have the crazy idea that they have almost as much right to live as Barbara Hutton, Brenda Frazier, Tommy Manville and their similars.

But Mr. Roosevelt is mistaken. He doesn't yet have labor in this country under his heel like Hitler in Germany. Labor can and will fight the jailor in the White House. It must fight him. It must force him to release his prisoners, who are flesh and blood of the working class.

So rally, all men and women of labor, to the defense of your brothers in Minneapolis! Do not let them rot in prison, as we have done so often in the past with labor's warriors. The united arms of labor are strong enough to tear down any prison wall.

Unite to free Roosevelt's Minneapolis prisoners!

"Liberation"!

Writing on Sept. 25 on the probable course of events in the territories occupied by the Soviet Union, Leon Trotsky said:

"... The Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large land owners and statify the means of production. This variant is most probable, not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist program but because it neither desires nor is able to share the power, and the privileges connected with it, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territory..."

"This measure, revolutionary in character—the 'expropriation of the expropriators'—is in this case realized in a military-bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories—and without this appeal, extremely cautious as it may be, it is impossible to constitute a new regime—will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures in order to assure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses."

A Moscow dispatch in the Oct. 19 issue of the New York Times reveals that already—so quickly!—the ruthless police measures have been instituted against the awakened masses.

"Spies and agents provocateurs" are being "found" by the GPU in the Red Militia of Lwow and other cities, and a purge of the Red Militias which arose to make the revolution, is already in full process. The claim of the Moscow authorities, that they are cleansing the Red Militias of "colonels and even generals," is manifestly absurd, for the Moscow press itself previously testified that the Red Militias were being formed by the most advanced workers. Any revolutionary body, of course, might find in its ranks some spies, but it is plain from the Moscow dispatch that the flood of stories in the Kremlin press about alleged spies and agents provocateurs indicates a mass purge of the Red Militias within a few short weeks of their formation.

It is characteristic that the Moscow press reports that it is being given information about these "spies" by "the former regular police." As in the Soviet Union proper, so in the occupied territories, the bureaucracy is taking into its service the former officials of the capitalist order.

This, then, is the "liberation" which Stalin has given to the occupied territories!

New York Elections

Our renowned democracy does not appear to be holding up very well in the New York election campaign.

The four Councilmanic candidates of the Socialist party have been ruled off the ballot on the most obviously flimsy grounds. There isn't a single serious person in the city who doubts that the Stalinists have more than enough signatures to comply with the legal requirements for placing candidates on the ballot.

At the same time, the two Councilmanic candidates of the Socialist Workers Party, Lyman Paine in Manhattan and Max Shachtman in the Bronx, have also been challenged and the Board of Elections has already ruled comrade Paine off the ballot. In this case too thousands of signatures, over and above the number legally required, were secured and properly filed with the authorities.

Contrary to Messrs. Louis Waldman, James Oneal and other attorneys for American "democracy," we have always contended that the closer the United States gets to participation in the World War the sooner it will shed all pretense at maintaining democratic rights. The action of the Board of Elections in New York is only another of the many demonstrations of this truth which may be seen in this and other countries by anyone who is willing to see.

There is no reason in the world for the Board of Elections ban against us other than the fact that we have an intransigent anti-war position. But that is precisely why the workers of Manhattan and the Bronx should cast their vote for the S.W.P. candidates. A vote for them is a vote of militant, uncompromising opposition to the war and the war-mongers who want to get us into it in the interests of their self and power.

Protest and fight against the decision of the Board of Elections!

Vote for the anti-war candidates of the anti-war party—the Socialist Workers Party!

British Social-Patriots Veil Imperialist War Aims With Anti-Hitler Battle Cries

By BRITANNICUS

Nothing is more demonstrative of the utter political and moral bankruptcy of British reformism, which twice in a generation has harnessed the British workers to the war-machine of their imperialist masters, than the sterile and hypocritical discussion which is now feverishly raging on the subject of war aims.

The war aims of British imperialism are clear. Strip away the persiflage of hollow and tattered slogans, which in themselves are a mocking echo of the lies of 1914-18, and naked and unadorned the truth emerges. This war is to ensure the continuance of British world domination, the preservation of British colonial plunder, and the destruction of a dangerous imperialist rival.

High pressure salesmanship can't sell this kind of war to the British masses under those price-tags. Something more attractive is needed. All accounts from abroad point to the complete apathy of the British workers towards the war. In less than two months of hostilities, an appreciable war-weariness has set in.

WORKERS FEEL

PINCH OF WAR

In these early stages war-weariness is expressed by intolerable boredom, irritation at the protracted blackouts, and growing dissatisfaction with the rising cost of living. Nearly 2,000,000 British workers are already feeling the pinch of war in their own homes. Miners, farm-laborers, cotton operatives, engineers, and railroad workers are all demanding wage increases to meet rising prices. (N. Y. Times, Oct. 16.)

This is the moment which British reformist leaders have chosen for a "clearer" exposition of war aims. The pathetic and tragicomic figure of Chamberlain is once more being taken to task for his inadequate slogan of "War to destroy Hitlerism!"

The Labor leaders feel that something more colorful is necessary to catch the imagination of their misguided followers. Chamberlain's slogan is too negative. Like a pack of advertising copywriters, each anxious to serve his master to the best of his ability, reformist publicists are busily scribbling streamlined sales copy for the War against Hitlerism.

DOUBLE TALK—AT EXPENSE OF MASSES

In a wordy letter to the New York Times of Oct. 3, Professor Harold J. Laski, member of the Labor Party Executive, justifies his support for the new imperialist war on the ground that Hitler and his Weltordnung are the principal enemy of the British working class. After the customary flagellation of Chamberlain, who has become a ritual whipping-boy for "socialists" with guilty consciences, Laski disclaims any sympathy for British imperialism; and declines to become its instrument. In a sudden regrettable indiscretion he even goes so far as to say that he and his companions of the "British Left" will seek the transformation of capitalism at the earliest possible opportunity. (My italics—B.)

"We say with emphasis," Laski expatiates, "that there is no room in the world for our principles and those of Hitlerism. The destruction of the one is the necessary prelude to the victory of the other."

It is of course possible that some reformist leaders may actually believe this kind of double-talk. Self-deception has its anaesthetic virtues.

"We must aid in the destruction of Hitlerism," cries Laski, "Our aims are clear. Peace for us is both possible and necessary."

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sary the moment there is a German Government with which rational negotiations can be undertaken. We shall fight against either annexations or punitive indemnities. We shall use all our power — and the power of the British Labor movement is no negligible thing — to prevent any effort to repeat the errors, especially in method, of Versailles. We shall hope to make the conclusion of hostilities the basis upon which, through the abrogation of the evil principle of State sovereignty, we can reorganize the life of Europe politically and economically."

WHILE LASKI WAITS FOR EARLY OPPORTUNITY

This high-falutin' balderdash is the sugar with which British reformism is again coating the bitter pill of war. Word for word Laski's thesis might have been spoken by one of his spiritual brethren the Labor traitors and social-patriots of the last imperialist war. This academic Bourbon, who claims to be a Marxist and spokesman for that strange chimera, the "British Left", which he sees in his own image, makes reservations to save his own conscience. He is, of course, "opposed" to imperialism, as he might be "opposed" to chutney.

Laski's platonic hostility to imperialism is not worth the paper it is written on, if at the same time he becomes a party to imperialism for the duration of war. This professor amiably believes that he and his fellow intellectual recruiting-sergeants will transform capitalism into socialism at the "earliest possible opportunity". To Laski, the earliest possible opportunity will be after another 10,000,000 of Europe's youth have been slaughtered for the greater glory of their tribal gods, when complete exhaustion and paralysis overtakes the working class, and reaction rides high over the ruins of a war-torn world.

The struggle against imperialism is the struggle against war. The two are inseparable. Laski deliberately conceals the Hitlerism of imperial Britain which enslaves millions at home and hundreds of millions

abroad. It is pleasant to chatter about the lovely world which we are to see when the carnage is ended. Laski & Co. will prevent a new Versailles, at least in method — what a preposterous qualification! Laski will abrogate the evil principle of state sovereignty.

These stale platitudes are an outrage on the intelligence. The loose and flabby talk about a "Federal Union" of Europe after hostilities have satisfactorily ended to the advantage of British and French imperialism, is of the same rehearsed character. The last war produced the League of Nations. The creature of this war is to be a United States of Europe. This abortion has nothing in common with socialist thought. Its father is Ernest Bevin and its mother the Archbishop of York. At the moment the idea is creating quite a furor among the disorientated intelligentsia of the British Isles who have been badly let down by Stalin. This new utopia is nothing more than a second attempt to perpetuate British hegemony over the European continent and the colonial world. Based on existing property relationships, a United States of Europe can have no other meaning.

AN END TO REFORMIST STRANGLEHOLD!

The British working class can have but one answer to the mental gymnastics of Harold Laski. Their Hitler is at home, in the factory, the workshop, the war profiteer and bureaucrat. The signs of incipient class struggle in Great Britain show that the illusion of national unity so studiously advocated by the reformists of the right and the left is wearing thin in the face of harsh economic realities.

The task of revolutionaries in Great Britain is to deepen and strengthen the class struggle on the home front. But this can only be done by a ceaseless fight against the war on all fronts. No quarter for Laski, Cripps, and the whole tribe of pious frauds who have paralyzed the left-wing of the British Labor movement for the past decade!

QUESTION BOX

By JOSEPH CARTER

QUESTION: What are the aims of President Roosevelt in the present war?

ANSWER: As the representative of the common interests of American big business, he seeks:

1. To establish monopoly control of the Latin American goods and investment market by replacing German and English trade in the countries to the south, at a time when the latter powers are unable to continue their normal business. In this way the economy and politics of the nations of South and Central America are to be made completely dependent upon Wall Street and Washington.

The recent Panama Conference (for which see *Socialist Appeal*, Oct. 10, 1939) was a big step in this direction.

2. To prepare for a military struggle against Japan in order to open up the markets of China to American capital and trade. That is why Roosevelt has concentrated the American Navy in the Pacific Ocean.

3. To give material and moral aid to Anglo-French imperialism against Germany so as to defeat Hitler and thereby reopen the markets of Poland and southeastern Europe (what was once Czechoslovakia, and the Balkans) for American big business.

That is the reason for Roosevelt's drive to lift the arms embargo; his protest to Russia—the ally of Germany—for its attitude towards Finland; his support of the recent conference of the Baltic countries and the clear cut general pro-Allied policy of the Administration.

4. To utilize the present war situation to achieve what six years of the New Deal failed to accomplish: a serious upturn in industry and business and a decrease in unemployment by supplying the Allies with arms, airplanes, and other goods.

This is another reason for Roosevelt's campaign to lift the embargo. (In addition he wants by this way to increase the productive capacity of American industry for war materials of all types.)

5. To dictate the terms of peace after the war so as to establish American big business domination over the world, for which purpose he is preparing to throw the military power of the U.S. directly into the war.

That is the most general aim of the Roosevelt program; the meaning of his tremendous armament expenditures, now to be increased; the significance of the campaign for a "two-ocean" navy which could fight Japan in the Pacific and Germany in the Atlantic.

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IN THIS CORNER

By Max Shachtman

Among the many other points in which the wars of old differed from modern imperialist wars is that our ancestors were not subjected to the influence of the vast and well-oiled propaganda machine for mobilizing the minds of the masses in order that their bodies might be all the more easily mobilized.

Nothing nowadays escapes the war-propaganda machine. If there are no incidents to magnify and distort, they are simply invented. The enemy camp is ruthless; our camp is merciful. The enemy wages war upon innocent women and children; our chivalrous camp spares them and is noble even towards opposing troops.

Take the case of the sinking of the *Athena*. For days it held the headlines of the American press. The barbaric Germans had sunk the ship in the dead of night, without warning, and without the slightest show of concern for the innocent passengers — men, women and children — who were sailing for home.

That the courtly Aryan warriors are quite capable of conducting themselves as charged—we do not doubt for a moment. What we are a little doubtful about is the veracity of the charge in this particular case. The Hitlerite war staff would have to be exceptionally stupid to sink a passenger ship like the *Athena*, an act which could have no other result than to arouse even greater antagonism to the Nazis in the United States than already exists.

That is just what happened. The war machine got into prompt action in the United States. The press opened up the same kind of campaign that was seen in this country when the *Lusitania* was sunk in 1916.

One Story That Was Not "Played Up"

A few days ago, however, a most important piece of news about the *Athena* appeared in the press! Yet it did not get a sensational display on the front pages of the newspapers. It was not headlined in big letters.

The news was the affidavit of one of the *Athena's* passengers, Gustav A. Anderson, of Evanston, Ill., which was filed with the State Department at Washington. According to Mr. Anderson, who was aboard the ship when she went down on Sept. 3, the hold carried a cargo of guns which was loaded on the ship at Liverpool. Seamen on board repelled affirmatively to his questions about the contents of the cargo. Later, Chief Officer Copeland told him that the arms were to be used for coastal defenses at Quebec and Halifax, in Canada, and that on her return trip to England, the *Athena* was to be fitted out as a raider. Further, said Anderson, there was a shipboard rumor that Germany knew of the presence of the guns.

If Anderson's story is true (and we shall see in a minute why we have no special reason to doubt it), then the first crime committed was by the British authorities who failed to warn innocent and non-belligerent passengers of the presence of guns in the cargo and the consequent risk run by anybody traveling aboard. If the Germans, through their spies, knew of the nature of the cargo secretly loaded aboard the *Athena*, they were just as criminal in failing to make their knowledge public and thereby warning all civilians who contemplated taking passage on the ship.

The imperialist press in the United States did not "play up" the Anderson story for a very obvious reason. It does not fit into — quite the contrary—their campaign of whipping up a chauvinistic spirit, of rallying the people behind the Roosevelt War Deal. It wouldn't do for a minute, you understand, to give too much publicity to the idea that our "democratic" British cousins are capable of endangering the lives of civilians by loading passenger ships with munitions of war from one belligerent, England, to another, Canada.

Such Things Have Happened Before

Why are we quite prepared to accept Anderson's story as worthy of credence? Because such things have happened before, and most notoriously in the case of the British transatlantic passenger ship, *Lusitania*. The *Lusitania* was sunk in 1916, and many passengers, including neutral Americans, lost their lives. To this day, it has never been clearly established that she was sunk by the Germans, although that is of course quite possible. For years it was argued by more than one person that the responsibility for the sinking of the *Lusitania* rested on the shoulders of the British Admiralty, which hoped to exploit the resulting sensation and indignation to bring the United States into direct and active support to the Allied gangsters.

Only recently, Walter L. Mills, in his "The Road to War," not only reiterates this theory, but makes out a powerful circumstantial case for it. The same pirate who was First Lord of the Admiralty at that time, Winston Churchill, occupies that post now.

What is important for the moment, however, is the fact that four days before the *Lusitania* sailed, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, according to the late Senator LaFollette, warned President Wilson that the hold of the ship carried a cargo of six million rounds of ammunition, and explosives to boot. He pleaded with Wilson to warn American citizens to keep off the ship, since, under the circumstances, she was a war risk, subject to German attack. Dudley Field Malone, then Collector of the Port of New York, later confirmed the story about the *Lusitania's* cargo. But Wilson, who was even then determined to swing the United States into the war, refused to utter a word of public warning, even though a federal statute declared it illegal for any passengers to travel aboard a railroad or a vessel carrying explosives.

Like the Anderson story, the truth about the *Lusitania's* cargo never made the headlines. The tragic sinking of the ship was used as a permanent source of reference to the need of a war to Make the World Safe for Democracy. In the Spanish-American War of 1898, it was "Remember the Maine!" In the war that almost broke out some two years ago between the United States and Japan, it was "Remember the Panay!" (especially in Stalinist leaflets). In the World War, it was "Remember the *Lusitania*!" And nowadays, probably with increasing volume, the war-mongers will cry, "Remember the *Athena*!"

It would be infinitely more intelligent to remember the criminal liars of the propaganda machine who exploit every noble sentiment of mankind for the ignoble interests of a cynical imperialist ruling class.