GORDON WATSON

His Life and Writings

EPUB ISBN: 978-0-908329-31-1

PDF ISBN: 978-0-908332-27-4

The original publication details are as follows:

Title: Gordon Watson, New Zealander, 1912-45 : his life and writings

Author: Watson, C. G. (Clement Gordon)

Published: N.Z. Communist Party, Auckland, N.Z., 1949

Frank Collin
April 1950
Wellington

GORDON WATSON

His Life and Writings

FORWARD PRESS, 159 HOBSON STREET, AUCKLAND

C. G. Watson

GORDON WATSON

NEW ZEALANDER: 1912-45

His Life and Writings

EDITED BY ELSIE LOCKE

AUCKLAND: 1949

THE NEW ZEALAND COMMUNIST PARTY

DEDICATION

THESE were our authors—
The broken night and the dawn patrol,
The fellowship of the tent,
The limping feet and the pounding heart,
Fever and punishment,
Mud-slobbered trucks and green-painted men,
Jesting and salty speech,
Letters from home and the grinding barge
And the dead on the beach.

These were our artists—
The electric storm splitting the skies,
The bomber's too lovely moon,
Niaouli flat and mangrove swamp
And quiet, unrippled lagoon,
Phosphorus wake on the black sea,
The flitting spark of the firefly,
The searchlight's slim fingers, the pattern
The tracers tear in the sky.

May you be our publishers—
All the brave people of the happier years,
Children of the after-time,
In the untroubled homes of the new land,
Where the steady hills climb,
Living amidst the lights, and the calm,
And looking with level eyes
On clean, straight cities and rich fields
And kind New Zealand skies.

Certainly, you will publish us.

—GORDON WATSON in the magazine of the 36th Battalion, New Zealand Army, Pacific Theatre of War, 1944.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has been made possible by the co-operation of many people. Equally to those who were friends of Gordon Watson without sharing his opinions, and to those who were his comrades in the working-class movement, the publishers express their appreciation.

Thanks are due to all who searched or supplied periodicals, personal letters and other sources of material, and all who assisted with technical work.

Through the generosity of some three hundred persons and the activity of voluntary collectors, a total of £207/5/- was contributed to the cost of publication, thus assuring a wider circulation of this book through the lowering of price below cost.

In preparing the Memoir, the editor is indebted to Gordon Watson's relatives and to his fiancee, Miss Mollie Render; and further for information, reminiscences, and tributes received from the following: Mesdames Shirley Fortune, Flora Gould, K. M. Luckens, E. McGowan; Miss L. M. Puckeridge; Messrs. Willis Airey, A. J. Birchfield, Len Clapham, Noel Counihan (Melbourne), B. A. Fortune, D. G. Edwards, C. Geere-Watson, C. J. Gould, J. Hurman, A.H.K. (New York), A. H. Scotney, S. W. Scott, R. C. Wells, Vic Wilcox; Dr. Harold Silverstone and Dr. W. B. Sutch; and the Company Commander of the 27th Battalion of the New Zealand Army in Italy.

Throughout this book, introductory and supplementary notes supplied by the Editor are printed in small type, or enclosed between square brackets.

CONTENTS

In Commemoration

Verse

At the University

CONTENTS—*Continued*

A Friend of the Soviet Union

The Fight for Peace

Against the Tide

On Active Service

Letters

IN COMMEMORATION

SON OF FREEDOM

"Were he truly dead all things had died."
I heard a mother say. In frantic agony,
Blind, she clutched and held a deathless past
And rocked her memories.

Another son I knew, ardent, wise,
Whose battle-broken body lies today
In torn Italian earth. And when he died
Death played Reveille; Freedom sang
And mourned the future, hailed the fight now past;
Lamented acts unborn of hands and brain
Once virile in her cause, yet greeted most
The work he did which cannot die, the deeds
Undone he shows us how to do,
The path he helped us hew, the route he guides.
Is he dead? Why, were he truly dead
All things had died. But no, he lives.

—P.H.

FOR GORDON WATSON

O MANY-VISAGED hills of Wellington,
Could you but yield the words, the footfall pressed
Upon your sunburnt grass and beechwood crest!
He loved to walk these ways, and he is gone.
Tell us, proud hills, death lays no hand upon
The past we cherish as our present guest,
Cleanly as ridges in the sunrise dressed,
Marshalled in one enduring echelon:

Raise up his voice, raise up his voice again!
And shall his power in distant soil be spent?
On the long march his step its echo gives,
Freedom and fullness mounting to attain:
O with his city raise a monument—
Though men may die, yet man eternal lives.

—E.I.

AN APPRECIATION

IT IS AN honour I do not deserve to be asked to write a few words about Gordon Watson in this book. He made every sort of sacrifice and had every kind of courage. No man of my acquaintance asked less for himself and no man more arduously sought and more unflinchingly upheld the truth.

I was on two or three platforms with him, mounting them not because I wanted to, but because I considered that he had a right to ask me to do so. As an "agitator" he was, like quite a few others, quiet and self-contained. At one meeting on behalf of Spanish Aid, where an organised attempt was made to create disorder, he continued to reason persuasively and in level tones and induced most of his hearers to share his respect for logic and facts.

He turned his back on the sort of achievement that as a rule means most to a literary mind. There was a gain in this. What he gave as a man in his contacts with friends and associates was of more value than any attribute of the merely written word. A born democrat, he was unassuming in intercourse with people of all classes and ages. From his great talent as a thinker, speaker and writer he made his contribution to a talk or discussion in a spirit of fellowship.

Single-minded, high-minded and fearless, he attained a higher intellectual and moral standard than any other man it has been my privilege to know. He deliberately espoused a cause that meant the foregoing of what most would have regarded as a career, and accepted as all in the day's work the heavy material and social penalties of so doing. More, the rougher the going the more steadfastly did he adhere to what he believed was the truth. And he was a very good judge of the truth.

H. W. Nevinson writes of a type of public man whose *soul* lies

mouldering in the grave but whose *body* goes marching on. It is the soul of the dead Gordon Watson that marches on in people inspired by his unselfishness and rare courage.

> Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go;
> Be our joys three parts pain,
> Strive and hold cheap the strain,
> Learn, not account the pang; dare never grudge the throe.

With whatever inward misgiving one quotes these words of a brave man and truthful poet one has no misgiving in quoting them in connection with the dead Gordon Watson.

F. L. COMBS,
Wellington.

3 August, 1947.

A MEMOIR

WITHIN SIGHT of the end of the Second World War — when reports of the New Zealanders' last battle in Italy brought fresh assurance of an armistice soon to come — an item appeared in the casualty lists: Killed in Action—Private Clement Gordon Watson, of Wellington.

To those who knew Gordon Watson it was a moment of surpassing grief. Even the keenest awareness of the hazards of a soldier's life could not have prepared them against the chance of his death, so completely did he represent for them the fight for life in its grandest sense.

This book is presented to the New Zealand he loved, in reverent tribute to the character of a great friend and comrade, and in the belief that his work, while performed in the past, belongs equally to the future.

Gordon Watson was born in Taihape on April 5, 1912, the son of a farmer who, after successful ventures in the Waikato and Matamata, became in later years a businessman in Fiji. Three sisters were born before the little family was left motherless by the death of Mrs Watson in the influenza epidemic of 1918, and Gordon was reared in Wellington, at the home of his grandparents, and under the care of his aunt, Miss Evelyn Watson. It was a home with no trivial day-to-day existence, but honouring knowledge and literature, and in which a boy must come early to realise the wonder and richness of life. Gordon's grandfather, Clement Watson, for many years the much-loved headmaster of Te Aro School, was a leading figure among educationists. One of the founders of the New Zealand Edu-

cational Institute, he was also among the first graduates of Victoria University College, on whose Council he served for thirty years. Miss Evelyn Watson was also a graduate and at one time lectured in English at Victoria. These two were a lasting influence on Gordon Watson's life; and within all the family there was a strong bond of loyalty and affection and mutual respect.

To a boyhood friend we owe the following impressions of Gordon Watson's childhood—"a very happy time for him":

> My friendship with Gordon began from when he was about five years old, and continued through kindergarten, primary school and college. We were neighbours, and I spent most of my time after school hours with him during those years.
>
> Apart from swimming and a little tennis neither of us indulged in sport; and we regarded all "hearties" in somewhat the same manner as did that amazing trio in *Stalky and Co.*
>
> It is odd that within two paragraphs I have mentioned a book. I say "odd" because I find it difficult to write of Gordon without associating him with books. For he was an omnivorous reader, and as children our games and discussions — our very jargon — were coloured by what he, and therefore I, happened to be reading. We went through the R. L. Stevenson stage, followed by Fenimore Cooper, and during our first years at College we read anything of Dumas, Scott, Conan Doyle and Kipling that we could get hold of. Plays also came in for a great deal of attention—Shaw, Maugham, Ibsen, O'Flaherty, were all read aloud, and the one that we did most was *Journey's End.*
>
> In the light of Gordon's subsequent interests it may seem something of a paradox that Kipling was his favourite for so long. Any prizes won by him at College were expended in the purchase of expensive editions of Kipling's works, and he literally revelled in the deeds of Stalky, Mulvany and Mr. Pyecroft. Indeed, I believe he mentally identified himself at College with "Beetle" in *Stalky and Co.*
>
> He thoroughly enjoyed writing, and his essays all through his school career obtained top marks. His first "play" was performed at a "break-up" when at Primary School, I think Standard 3 or 4. The motive was inspired by *A Christmas Carol* for there was very definitely a ghost involved, also pirates, treasure and lots and lots of blood. We also put on plays for the edification of his family and whilst I could occasionally think of an odd line or so, it was Gordon who wrote the stuff, got it "tied up," stage-managed and produced it all.
>
> When at College the magic of verse quickly claimed him, and I have a vivid recollection of going to his place one day after school and

being met by him wildly waving a book at me and exclaiming, "Listen to this! It's marvellous stuff — just listen!" Then followed much declamation — Shelley I think it was — while I stood gaping at the door, and eventually reacted and told him, forcibly, to desist. When reading verse he couldn't keep still but would hop from one foot to another, his arms would wave wildly and his voice (hideous when it cracked) could be heard all over the house.

Gordon very definitely "lived" the book he was reading and the trees and gardens of his home witnessed the deeds of the Indian braves of Fenimore Cooper or echoed to the shouts of the King's Musketeers locked in sanguinary combat with the Cardinal's Guards. These games were played with terrific intensity and we endeavoured to dress for, as well as act, our various roles. I well remember the strains *The Last Days of Pompeii* placed on our inventive genius, whilst *Ivanhoe* and *The White Company* inspired Gordon to undertake a superficial study of heraldry in order that the shields could be suitably emblazoned.

To everything he undertook he brought to bear the same intensity. If a certain subject encountered by chance in his reading aroused his interest he could not rest until that interest was satisfied.

He was courageous, too. Comparatively small in stature, he was sometimes singled out by bullies; but he would face up to them resolutely, and though thrashed many a time, would not give in.

At "sport" he had no aptitude, but at tennis he would rush madly about the courts, mis-timing badly but thoroughly enjoying himself, and would treat his mistakes as enormous jokes. Whenever he scored against his opponents he would give vent to his pleasure in decided terms, and the whole game was good entertainment if nothing else.

Appearances never bothered him, and I can vividly recall his striding along to college, cap on the back of his neck, shoe laces untied, tie askew, his school-bag slung over one shoulder and his hands constantly gesticulating as he argued with his form-mates.

I for one owe Gordon a great deal for all that he taught me during those years of childhood and youth together. We saw less of each other after he went to 'Varsity, for we soon found our views becoming more and more of a battleground, and without any formal breaking of our friendship (for that would have been impossible) we just discontinued to see each other. Whilst no friend of the cause to which he subsequently devoted his life, I was a friend of the Man and as such I am proud to pay my tribute.

Any detailed account of Gordon Watson's career at Wellington College would read like a catalogue of prizes and scholarships, especially for literary work, languages and history; but these academic honours he accepted quite casually, and would never mention unless

directly questioned. He loved to write, and was encouraged by his masters. Into debating and amateur dramatics he entered enthusiastically; and at this time he would discuss, with his aunt and his grandfather, Shakespearean characters and the work of famous poets, showing a surprisingly mature insight and understanding. Thus, while avoiding sports, he lived his school years very fully.

Already he was trying to work out his own beliefs. Any conventional position or respect for authority as such was soon ruled out, and he became known as something of a rebel. His supporters looked to him for trenchant and witty criticism of "old school ties" and "stuffed shirts," and they were seldom disappointed. This was no mere iconoclasm. He was clearing the ground in the search for a philosophy on which he could build.

In 1930 Gordon Watson, holding a Junior University Scholarship, entered Victoria College. He specialised in the study of languages and literature, and his Master of Arts Degree, with Honours in English and Latin, was conferred four years later.

Had it been his nature to choose the easy road in life, a comfortable future would have been assured him. With his connections, his education and his ability the way was open to the professions or to an academic and literary career. But that could never be his way.

The inescapable question during his 'Varsity years was—*why the slump?* The relatively smooth-flowing life of New Zealand during the 1920's had given place to turmoil, which swept in like a southerly storm through the traditionally detached and cloistered atmosphere of the colleges. Thousands of unemployed were organising and demonstrating; half of the farmers were bankrupt; overseas, food was destroyed while millions hungered; liberty and progress were everywhere attacked; and fascist legions plotted for tyranny and war. Only in the U.S.S.R., "the land without unemployment," was humanity advancing.

Many a student asked himself: Where do *I* stand?

Gordon Watson *had* to find an answer, as he had from childhood probed any unsatisfied question, impelled by the suffering he witnessed and the futility of orthodox efforts to alleviate it. A fellow student tells how they walked along Manners Street in bitter southerly weather and saw a pair of poorly-dressed, coatless unemployed workers go past. "It makes you ashamed to have decent clothes when you see them," Gordon said.

He read avidly of modern and classical authors, of political and economic as well as literary works. Radical writers like H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw helped to open the way for unconventional and critical thinking. In 1931, Mrs. H. J. Scott addressed Wellington audiences after a year spent in the U.S.S.R. This was a landmark. The Friends of the Soviet Union, who sponsored her tour, was then a growing and vigorous organisation, which provided news of the building of socialism. Gordon Watson joined it. Later he discovered R. Palme Dutt's famous British journal—*The Labour Monthly*, and other Marxist writings. Their logic convinced him. By 1932 he could give an address to the Free Discussions Club of the College on "Revolution—an American tradition" and write for *Spike* on the meaning of Communism.

Marxism helped to increase his understanding and his love for literature, especially poetry and drama. He talked of writing a book on the nineteenth-century romantics, which would show how modern writers were increasingly alienated by their society and driven to individualism, and could only find themselves through joining the people's struggles.

With his burning, direct concern with the way New Zealanders were living, the struggles overseas and the threat of a second world war; from his growing knowledge and his conviction of the Communist solution as the only one possible, Gordon Watson drew around himself many other students who were radically-minded. He became the unquestioned leader of socialist thought, at the same time winning the respect of those who could not agree with him. His friendliness, his stimulating conversation, his lively wit and humour, made him a wonderful companion. In the midst of his

serious studies and activities he wrote a very funny satire on Wellington city and church affairs, *Dry Rot,* which was produced as a capping extravaganza.

Actively as well as in his opinions, he had already lined himself up with the working class. He was greatly excited by their strikes and demonstrations, and in the Common Room of the College he fought and argued against students becoming "scabs" in the seamen's strikes, and "specials" in the unemployed struggles. The students' place, he said, was with the workers. He was scornful of timid liberals who proclaimed high principles and would run to cover as soon as the fight developed. Content with no half-measures, he "stuck to his guns." Many were won over by his passionate and reasoned arguments. With great pride he pointed to the solidarity of New Zealand workers with those overseas, as when waterside workers refused to handle black cargo during an American shipping strike.

The controversy over "academic freedom of speech" saw him upholding members of the staff who were threatened with victimisation. The left-wing students expressed themselves very freely. When reproached by a Professor for "talking propaganda" in a speech on Karl Liebknecht, Gordon Watson coined the epigram, "Propaganda is what the other fellow teaches."

Nor did he confine himself to the precincts of the College. He soon made the acquaintance of workers who had taken part in militant struggles for unionism, and against conscription during the first World War. It was pure delight for him to mix with them and to gain acquaintance with working-class mettle. Leftward student opinion, influenced by the Labour Clubs of British Universities with their outspoken declarations against war and the capitalist system, gravitated towards the Free Discussions Club. In 1933 a cyclostyled paper appeared under its auspices, with Gordon Watson as Editor: it was called *The Student.*

"The Club is embarking on a new basis this session," it announced, asking for "active members so that periodicals can be circulated, and that there can be instituted a student club that can

pursue an active policy in the less academic interests of its members."

The position taken by this courageous little paper is illustrated by two short articles reprinted in this book.

The storm broke. The appearance of *The Student* was the occasion for hysterical attacks. "New Zealand Universities Hotbeds of Revolution!" announced *Truth* in headlines to which the artist had literally added the flames. Shocked, the Victoria University College Students' Association Executive banned *The Student* as not being authorised under rules of which the Free Discussions Club was unaware. Newspapers filled columns with the controversy. The Club defended itself effectively and brought out a third issue of *The Student* as a protest—and proved the strength of its position. for no other action was taken against it.

An incident the following year shows how keenly these students were alive to world events. Citizens of Wellington were surprised one day to see the swastika flag disappear from the building which housed the German consulate, and a red flag with hammer and sickle take its place. It was a "stunt" to inform the public as dramatically as possible that an informal deputation (led by Gordon Watson) was inside urging upon the Consul its demand for the release of the German Communists, Thaelmann and Torgler, held prisoner by Hitler's Gestapo.

I who assemble this Memoir first met Gordon Watson in September, 1933, when arrangements had been made for students associated with efforts to form Labour Clubs at Auckland University College and Otago University to meet these militants of Victoria who were in the van. "Ah, Watson—that's the man," I had been told at Auckland. I can see him yet as he came through the doorway into the home of some friends, with that keen look of interest and inquiry on his genial face, assured, unconcerned with himself, more in a hurry to learn from others than to lay down his own point of view. There was nothing "impressive" in the way he halted, with shy informality, until he was introduced to the newcomers. Plainly, every one present looked to him with unforced devotion and confidence.

To him in particular is due the fact that left-wing student opinion did not remain vague and formless, but was led into active channels. The Socialist Club of Victoria College, which has been in the news (1947) with its support for freedom in Indonesia, and for the ancient British right of demonstrating its opinion by a street procession, is a lineal descendant of that band of militants which aligned itself with the working class during the depression and threw down the challenge of *The Student*.

During the 1930's many young people were attracted by the Friends of the Soviet Union, as a movement where they could busy themselves alongside other workers with spreading information about the one country which had no slumps, and which, despite incredible difficulties and hardships, was building a new civilisation. The F.S.U. at its peak had a large membership, published its own journal, maintained several meeting halls and organised nation-wide tours of well-informed and travelled public speakers.

A number of students took a leading part in these activities, with equal willingness be it publicity, administration or the dullest hack work. Gordon Watson helped to draw them together, and, having already served on the executive, became in 1934 National Secretary and Editor of *Soviet News*. This was a full-time position —meaning in those days that the organisation's small funds could rise to a meagre allowance for sustenance. On this he insisted upon completely supporting himself, for he would not permit his burdens to be shared by anyone who could not endorse his activities.

The main responsibility now rested on his shoulders, and the effective work of the F.S.U. owed much, not only to his gifts as writer and speaker, but also to his ability to attract voluntary helpers. The F.S.U. office was a busy and exciting place, where vigorous discussion went on with the wrapping of vast numbers of pamphlets and periodicals. By organising others, Gordon Watson took part in all important activities without cramping his time for studying, writing and preparing his speeches.

This work he continued until 1936, when he resigned to take up work which he now felt was more important.

Toward the end of 1933 Gordon Watson had joined the Communist Party, and a year later he was elected to its National Committee, which was centred in Wellington.

The Party was at that time small and in a rather confused state, largely due to the habit of the Law, under the Coalition Government, of prosecuting and imprisoning on political charges those who took a leading part in the struggles of the unemployed. With keen internal controversy the Party was wrestling with giant problems. Gordon Watson knew himself to be limited by inexperience, especially in industrial matters, and he set himself to learn. He made a point of attending discussions and meetings of workers and listening carefully to gain their viewpoint. It was not long before he could so enter into their outlook that his own comments, diffidently given, were welcomed as valuable advice.

The disputed problems of Party policy, pivoting on the united front of workers against the threat of fascism and war, troubled him profoundly. I was also a young and inexperienced member of the National Committee; and many times I remember him leaning across a table or walking along the street, his hands restless and a frown tightening his forehead, saying "But it doesn't seem right; it isn't right!" Any clue he found in his reading or in his discussions at meetings or with workers, he would go over again and again, trying to fit the pieces together. The reports of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International brought intense joy and excitement, for there was the policy of unity for peace and progress set out in all its clarity, and sectarian narrowness attacked and condemned. A broad policy of unity between the working class and all progressive people could now be fully and confidently developed by New Zealand Communists.

Gordon Watson was relentless with himself. A few years later I heard him criticise himself for having taken a wrong position on certain questions during those early times. To my remark

that it was excusable, because we had lacked experience for proper judgment, he replied heatedly: "No, it wasn't excusable! It held us back, and we can't avoid responsibility for our actions."

So did he steel himself. "Whenever you met Gordon," writes a former student, "you had a sense that he was visibly growing before your eyes, in understanding, knowledge and ability."

In 1936, with the more thorny problems clarified, the Communist Party appointed Gordon Watson as Editor of the *Workers' Weekly*. This work he performed admirably. Next year, relinquishing the editorship to Sid Scott, he went abroad to Britain and the U.S.S.R., where he studied conditions at first hand and took part in discussions with leaders of the Communist movement. On his return he worked on the National Executive, moving to Auckland with the central office at the end of 1938, and from April, 1939, again took over the *Workers' Weekly*, succeeded soon afterwards by the *People's Voice*. Before his entry into the Army in 1942 he was Secretary to the National Committee.

For these six years his life was bound up with that of the Communist Party, of which he was an outstanding leader. He shouldered these responsibilities without hesitation, but he would not accept any exaggeration of his own role. When it was suggested that he might be appointed "General Secretary," a position which would make him public spokesman for the Party, he pointed to his youth and his lack of industrial experience, and insisted that he did not possess the high qualifications needed.

A University Professor once commented that the Communist Party had done a disservice to the people of New Zealand by taking a man of such promise from the academic world. Gordon Watson must have been amused at any such suggestion. Rather he felt that he had found the only possible means of giving his service to his country and people, and many, including some born too late to have themselves participated, look back upon the fight against fascism and war in which he figured so prominently, as a most memorable part of our history—even though the Left campaign did not win the majority, even though the decision had to be taken at last on the fields of battle.

Though single-minded and quite unswerving on essentials, Gordon Watson was the last person to be called fanatical, nor did his prodigious work narrow down his interests. He was a thoroughgoing New Zealander, and a living refutation of the canard that Marxism is a foreign doctrine with no roots in our own soil. How he found time for so much is astonishing even to those who were with him constantly. Perhaps because he could read rapidly and draw out the essence from an essay or a book, he was always informed not only on immediate and pressing matters, but on literature and philosophy, and the new knowledge and thought current in non-Marxist circles.

He was always ready for a day at the beach or for a long tramp. Some of the most unforgettable conversations are mingled with the background of bush tracks, windswept hills, sparkling or turbulent sea; or with the domestic firesides where Gordon, himself undomesticated, would settle down for the evening as though he had always belonged there. Sometimes he would spring a surprise by calling on a comrade at the last minute to go to a film or a play. At summer camps he would never lack ideas for a party or an off-work afternoon. Literature was in his blood—especially poetry, which he would read or recite at any opportunity, without any trained artistry, but with such depths of emotion that those to whom verse was least familiar could not but share in the excitement of the experience.

"A little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men," and Gordon Watson was one who confirmed the truth of this saying. Often he would greet a friend with a broad grin and some absurd limerick or quip—"What is it that goes 96, 97, 98, 99, plonk?" (A centipede with a wooden leg!) When he was "off the chain" he could "act the goat" with the best of us, cavorting round the room imitating our simian ancestor, or staging some "dignified" ceremony.

The people he knew and worked with interested him intensely. He once said to me, after the united front issue had been straightened out: "It isn't enough to be broad in your approach to pro-

blems. You have to be broad in regard to people, too. You have to *know* them." And so if there was any point to be discussed, his office was a magnet. He would push aside his papers or his typewriter, swing his chair about, cross his knees and sit listening as soon as he had greeted his visitor. Offering his tobacco, he would "roll his own" in an amateurish way. As in his school days, appearances did not trouble him. There he would sit, looking into his visitor's face as he listened—the outward sign of an endeavour to get inside another's mind; or he would let his gaze wander to the ceiling, as he silently worked things out; then his slow, illuminating smile, his simple yet profound comments, at once seemed to lift the weight of the problem at issue.

An Aucklander who was his typiste and who describes herself as "a political ignoramus" when she met Gordon Watson, has written gratefully of how he set her feet on a firm path. "He was always sympathetic and understanding of the problems which beset Communist and non-Communist alike. I never knew him to do or say an unkind thing. His faith in the working class was boundless."

"I always enjoyed opportunities to talk things over with him," writes one who shared the platform with him in meetings of friendship to the U.S.S.R. "He was a wise person, patient, modest and gentle."

One great friendship ripened with time into an engagement—to Mollie Render. In long afternoons on sunny Wellington hillsides she learned from him more and more of the movement in which she was already interested, shared his love of poetry, and enjoyed his "quiet gaiety, a sort of inner happiness." The more they knew one another, the more necessary did their companionship become to them both. But in the midst of her visit to England, where she worked as a pharmacist, came the world crisis which prevented her return.

In September, 1939, after the failure of all successive efforts to stop Nazi aggression by a front of peace-loving nations, came war with Germany.

Without entering into details, it should be said that Communists do not regard "my country right or wrong" as patriotism in its deepest sense, and have always examined politics carried out by war in the same critical way as the politics of peace time, to determine what action was just or progressive. After much debate the Communist Party declined to accept the "phoney war" of the Chamberlain Government as a genuine attempt to uproot Hitlerism, and denounced it as the outcome of rivalry between two groups of capitalist powers, further confused by intrigues likely to end in "switching the war" against the outcast from the capitalist world, the U.S.S.R.

This position had to be maintained in a highly-charged atmosphere, for the first hysteria and intolerance which confronted any who questioned the Government's policy were soon followed by attacks on civil liberties and the standard of living. The firmness of the *People's Voice* is reflected in the articles grouped in this book under the heading, *Against the Tide*.

The Auckland West by-election, following the death of the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. M. J. Savage, gave an opportunity to put the Communist case to the people. "End war and poverty" was the slogan under which Gordon Watson went forward as Communist candidate.

The campaign was no easy one. The acting-editor and others connected with the *People's Voice* had been charged with subversion; the Press boycotted reports, halls could rarely be hired, printers would undertake no leaflets, and all opponents joined in cries of "disloyalty"—but still the workers of Ponsonby never failed to give a fair hearing.

Gordon Watson said:

"Peace is in the interests of the New Zealand people. No conscription is in the interests of the New Zealand people. Holidays with pay and full security—better housing and adequate workers' compensation—an end to war profiteering and nationalisation of the Bank of New Zealand are part of a New Zealand policy. . . ."

To those who asked what the Communists could "promise" with

a single candidate, he replied: "We Communists have never promised the people that they can win their emancipation simply by electing certain people to Parliament. The working people will win their demands only by organisation and struggle. The task of an election campaign is to help forward the organisation of this struggle and the task of a Communist M.P., if elected, would be to see that the Parliamentary position was so used as to forward a definite movement to compel the granting of these issues. . . . "

The electors returned the Labour candidate, the late Mr. Peter Carr, and gave Gordon Watson 368 votes—a small but significant anti-war protest.

Within a fortnight the *People's Voice* had been suppressed, many homes were raided and arrests were made; some of the supporting speakers of the election campaign were imprisoned.

Now greatly handicapped, the Communist Party continued its work. Articles for newspapers in duplicated form and book reviews (which are more than reviews) for the *Industrial Worker,* Gordon Watson still wrote, and his work as a secretary and organiser was more intensive than ever. In May, 1941, he was one of three Communist candidates for the Auckland City Council, on a programme for a better, healthier and happier city, and for freedom of speech and assembly. Meanwhile, the engines of history gathered speed.

Political changes in Europe and the shift in international relations which, after the Soviet Union's entry into the war, culminated in an alliance of anti-fascist nations—the very united front which had long been campaigned for—brought about a sharp change in the direction of the struggle against Germany. The total defeat of the Nazis became the main issue. The Communists could now throw in their energies toward that victory, and the sincerity and strength of their effort is vividly illustrated in this book.

On the wave of public enthusiasm that followed the discovery that the U.S.S.R. was something different from the common misconception encouraged by daily newspapers in the preceding quarter of a century, and the splendid perspectives opened up by the new

alliance, the Society for Closer Relations with Russia came into being. Naturally Gordon Watson, so closely identified with the old Friends of the Soviet Union and well informed by his studies and his travels, took a leading part in its work, until he was needed for a more direct service to Allied unity.

In 1942 he entered the army.

He was a private by choice. In Italy he is said to have rejected opportunities of becoming an interpreter, preferring to remain with his mates. His qualities of leadership would never have suited the parade ground, but were more pervasive, as testified by his comrades and officers. From those of his letters which have been preserved, his attitude to the army is plain. The company of other men he loved; the cramping discipline he detested, the necessity of killing revolted him, and his humanity was outraged by the very fact of war; but the military heart of fascism had to be smashed, and to this end he was prepared to bend everything he possessed. He aimed to be an efficient soldier. His old dislike of compulsory sports and violent exercise notwithstanding, he proved his physical stamina. "The epitome of quiet, dogged fortitude, he never failed to complete a march, nor even dropped behind. He was on the job when hardened athletes were done in." Especially he was concerned with morale. His chief aim and duty was to raise the understanding of his fellows of the issues at stake in the war. For this he felt he should continue to be "one of the men."

After the usual training in camp, Gordon Watson served in the Pacific with the 36th Battalion, in Fiji, Norfolk Island and New Caledonia, and saw battle in the Solomon and Treasury Islands. He edited a wall newspaper at Norfolk Island and later the souvenir magazine of his battalion.

Life in the islands gave him a measure of something he had not known before—leisure to write—not hurried, day-to-day articles for a newspaper or political studies around some urgent problem—but prose and verse which expressed finely his feelings and his outlook. He was now advancing, with the restraint and the responsi-

bility typical of him, toward the maturing of his gifts as a writer. Certainly he would have written more poetry, and probably drama; and he had spoken of an idea for a novel. His early death has robbed us of the literary work which he would surely have given to the world. As it is, his legacy is small in volume, but strong in quality.

After Pacific service came a long furlough in New Zealand, during which he took part in a meeting of the Communist Party National Committee and in various activities, including the publicity for the Victory Loan. He missed no opportunity to be with his friends and his relatives. Fearing that travel difficulties might keep him from his aunt and sisters before leaving again, "I'm going to Wellington if I have to ride on top of a carriage," he declared. He did go, although not in such an extreme manner.

I will always remember the last evening we spent with Gordon Watson at my brother's home in Auckland. He came in company with an orchardist friend, both of them swinging branches of a new outsize variety of grapefruit, beautifully round and golden. He was as delighted with the grower's success as if it had been his own! Lounging inelegantly in the kitchen easy chair, he talked far into the night, of his Island experiences, of his reading, of his belief in victory within twelve months, of old times and associations and mutual friends and places known, of his confidence in the future that we, individually and collectively, were facing.

It was now time to embark for Italy. This was a busy voyage. He had long before learned the German language to make the acquaintance of great authors like Goethe and Schiller, and while in Norfolk Island he had improved his mastery through friendship with a German school master. Before leaving New Zealand he studied Italian—he improved himself further on board ship, at the same time as he officially conducted classes in German and gave lectures on his visit to the U.S.S.R. He played bridge and chess, of which he was very fond.

Italy was reached after a brief stay in Egypt. His part there

was far wider than in following military commands, and with amazing facility he came to know the Italian people, and especially the anti-fascists, with whom he often spent evenings in earnest discussion. An old friend and fellow Communist has given this illuminating picture:

"I found Gordon at the village of Esanatoglia. We went to the cookshop, got some dinner and ate sitting on the side of an old well. Everybody seemed to have a cheery hello for Gordon. Three chaps came across to us and asked him how and when he could come with them to purchase some vino. 'We need Gordon,' they explained to me, 'because he is our foreign minister. Most Iti's knock us back, thinking we want to rob them or something, but when we have Gordon, well they just fall head over heels for him and give us the world and ask us to come back, you know—Returna dopo amigo, ancora vino!'

"As we sat talking on the remains of a wall an old peasant woman with a young child came by us and halting, asked us to buy a holy picture of the Virgin. We both gave her five lira and Gordon talked to her, explaining how the people must do more than pray, they must wipe out all the fascists, even from the church. The old woman kept nodding and occasionally exclaimed, 'Yes, yes; good.'

"We talked about many things, of the various comrades of different nationalities one runs across in Italy, and of New Zealand, and our friends there. He spoke reverently of Mollie in England and of his letters from her.

"He walked through the village with me. We stood in the square and gazed at the bullet-marked wall against which the Germans had shot in cold blood seven of the young anti-fascist villagers as a reprisal.

"As we shook hands at the end of the village, I said, 'I'll see you on the boat.' He replied, 'I don't think so. If I get home, I will be ahead of you with the earlier reinforcements.' I told him I didn't like the 'if' he used. . . ."

Then came the Po Valley campaign. Eight days of heavy

fighting included a struggle with a company of paratroopers where his platoon excelled itself, killing many and taking over sixty prisoners. Gordon Watson himself tackled an officer armed with a Schmeisser automatic and shot him with the rifle from the hip. In his last fight, on April 17, 1945, he took over a Bren gun after the two previous gunners had been wounded—knowing well that the Germans had the Bren neatly located—and was killed almost immediately by Spandau fire.

There was a letter awaiting him which he was never to claim. It was from Mollie Render, telling him she had been granted priority, as a soldier's fiancee, for a passage to New Zealand. Now she had to make the journey alone.

"Under my command," writes his Company Commander, "Gordon Watson conducted himself in a fashion worthy of the best of New Zealanders, acquitted himself well in action, and was killed in hand-to-hand combat. . . . His personality automatically made him a leader among his actual platoon mates, and the willing spirit and discipline that existed in his platoon was undoubtedly due in part to his presence.

"Possibly a greater tribute than any of his officers could write was accorded by the shock and deep regret registered by his death on all his acquaintances, not only in our own unit, but everywhere that he was known, and that among men who were unnaturally accustomed to death. I felt at the time that a great New Zealander had been lost, and I wished too late that I could have known him even better."

With the same shock of grief the news reached Gordon's friends. "With all the respect in the world to my close cobbers who died before him, nothing ever hit me so hard as this terrible news"—these words of a fellow soldier may speak for many another. It seemed impossible that such a rock of friendship—not only to persons, but to the great objective of a free, happy and peaceful world—could be swept away.

He was mourned far beyond his country. When the news was brought to the Italian partisans who had expected to see him again, "they listened in silence and were genuinely moved. Then Guiseppe's remark, made very softly in his own tongue—'Ma suo lavoro continua' (But his work goes on)."

The partisan wall newspaper of Milan, *Il Unita* of Rome, *Il Lavorare* of Trieste, the *Daily Worker* of London and its namesake in New York, and the *Tribune* of Sydney published notices. Typical is the message of R. Palme Dutt, editor of the British *Labour Monthly*, the journal in which Gordon Watson first came to know Marxism:

"The sympathies of all Communists and fighters for freedom in Britain go out to the New Zealand Communist Party and the working class movement in their heavy loss through the death in action of Gordon Watson. He gave his life for those ideals and aspirations for whose victory he had already done so much in his intense, all-too-short years of activity."

And readers who had shared with him the labour and the success of building up *The People's Voice* read with deep emotion the tribute of his close friend and comrade, Sid Scott:

"He had a rare combination of qualities of heart and mind which fitted him to render service in the noblest of all tasks—the liberation of mankind. He was representative of that alliance which has always existed between the finest minds of the professional and middle classes and students on the one hand, and the organised working class movement on the other. . . .

"His death will bring home to many of us more closely than ever before the terrible nature of war with its waste of human personality. We cannot pay a better tribute to our fallen comrade than by re-dedicating our lives to that struggle for peace and social liberation for which he lived and died."

Was his work now finished? Read his beautiful poem *Dedication* —read the letter he wrote a fortnight before his death, to Mollie Render, on immortality—and it is plain that Gordon Watson did

not foresee the end of his life as the end of all he had lived for. Had it not been for the war, the length of his fifteen adult years should have been repeated twice over. That is the tragedy. Yet the impact of his life upon his world sends out its ripples ever-widening, and the surface afterwards can never be the same. That is the triumph.

—ELSIE LOCKE.

Christchurch, November 7, 1947.

Gordon Watson's grave at Faenza, Italy.

VERSE

The first seven poems printed here appeared in *Spike,* the magazine of Victoria University College, between 1930 and 1933; the others, together with *Dedication* on page three, were written during war service, 1942-1944. None of the verse written during the intervening ten years has been traced.

The two groups of poems speak for the stage at which they were written. Those of student days range widely, and in some passages reveal Gordon Watson's inward striving toward satisfying beliefs. The anti-fascist poems are the fervent and resolute expression of a man who is sure of the way he has chosen.

RONDEAU

[Translated from the French of Charles d'Orleans.]

THE SEASON hath its mantle shed
Of wind, of cold and fretting rain,
And now itself hath clad again,
With sunlight's broidery o'erspread.
Now every beast or bird hath said
In his own tongue that winter's slain.
The season hath its mantle shed
Of wind, of cold and fretting rain.

Now springs and streams and rivers thread
Their winding ways, and liveries gain
Of silver drops, a dress obtain
Once more of gold and jewels red.
The season hath its mantle shed.

[*Spike*, June, 1930]

A LOVERS' DIALOGUE

[A translation of "Colloque Sentimental" from *Fêtes Galantes*, by Paul Verlaine.]

DARK AND LONELY lies the park beneath its robe of snow,
And sees two lovers' figures pass with paces slow.
Death fills the eyes and rottenness the lips once dear,
And their whispered words fall soft upon the frozen air.
Dark and lonely lies the park beneath its robe of snow,
And hears two lovers' voices speak of long ago.
"Dost thou remember all our love of happier days?"
"Why should I love recall—I lost in Death's cold ways?
"Know'st thou the sweet, slow sound my name was long ago?
"In dreams dost thou behold my soul?"—"It is not so."
"Ah! how swiftly, madly, those our days of rapture fled,
When lips touched lips in burning kiss."—"So it is said."
"How blue the heavens then; our lovers' hopes how high!"
"Long since hath hope ta'en . . . flight toward a frozen sky."
And so they walked amidst wild oats of long ago
And night alone gave ear to all their whispered woe.

[*Spike*, October, 1930.]

THE CITY OF THE DEAD

THE MYRIAD crosses, and stone cherubs rise
Above the unkempt, grass-bedraggled graves—
A drunken tombstone flaunts to passing eyes
Its lying legend, where the thistle waves.
The strong sun beats on grave and crucifix,
As striving yet to meet with warming rays
The city's burghers lying chill. One picks
A bunch of flowers and thinks of other days—
"O God! that these were sentient bodies then,
Knew love and laughter and the ways of men,
Beheld clear-eyed the forms of friends in mirth,
And felt this pulsing life, this day-long thrill
Of being; passed too soon from their loved earth
To what cold heaven, life desirous still."

[*Spike*, October, 1930.]

THE GHOST

A SOUL STANDS shuddering in the lone mid-spaces,
It sees as through a veil the lights below
And sick for speech and love and human faces,
Turns from the void where houseless spirits go.
With outstretched hands it gropes again for home,
Like moth flame-lured, it beats at lighted panes,
Then turns through long-loved garden haunts to roam,
Or wander weeping through the darkling lanes.
Poor lonely wanderer of the twilight mist!
Whom once the lips of human lovers kissed,
That knoweth not the warmth of home or fire,
Change or mortality or sweet perishings,
Day's birth or death, awakening, sleep, desire,
But only space and chill immortal things.

[*Spike*, 1931.]

YOU SUFFERED

"Christianity has not failed — it has never been tried."
G. B. Shaw *et alia.*

THEY MIGHT have crucified you,
Lord Jesus.
It would have been more merciful,
But God only knoweth the wickedness of men.
They dressed you in spats and top hat
Instead.
And sent you to church on Sundays,
Dirtied your soul with business,
And struck you with the last curse of men,
Respectability.

What did you do in the Great War, Nazarene?
The men awaited your aid in the trenches,
But you were a general behind the lines,
Smug and directing the regiments,
From safety.
"Christ sends you forth to battle,"
"Christ is your captain to-day,"
And the men grew to hate their commander,
Jesus Christ.

But they reserved you a last agony,
Christ Jesus
(My God, why hast thou forsaken me?)
The horror of the Last Peace.
In strike and revolt you were there
Insufferably.
Always you were on the side of the masters,
The God of the Counter-revolution,
Until the mercy of death blessed you,
Lord Jesus.

[*Spike*, 1932.]

SHADOW

ONCE WHILE at ease we talked of this and that,
A shadow fell across the half-meant words.
Most suddenly we turned from happiness,
And saw between the tea cups and the tea
Intolerable barriers of reserve.

Things understood in part and part misjudged,
Half-lights, half-comprehensions, all the host
Of life-old shrinkings, seemed unbearable;
And tired of all the twisted wanderings sane men hate,
I saw the splendour of another fate,
The clean straight beauty of normality,
Young as a god and eager as a soldier.
Desired more bitterly than words can tell
The comradeship of understanding, love,
Scarce dreamt-of dawns and unimagined days,
If I were really I, and you were you.

[*Spike*, 1932.]

TO A LIBERAL

You were a gallant speaker
For freedom and for right.
You were no common coward—
Until you saw the fight.

[*Spike*, June, 1933]

1812

[The following lines are a translation of part of a poem by Victor Hugo, "L'Expiation" or "Atonement," contained in a volume of poetical satires directed against Napoleon III. The translation was no doubt inspired by the parallel between Napoleon I's retreat from Moscow and the retreat of the Nazi armies in 1943. The words printed in italics are inserted to complete the lines, which were found in rough manuscript form.]

THE SNOWS are falling. Crushed by conquest they fled.
Eagle invincible, lower sinks your proud head.
These are dark days. Slowly the Emperor turns;
Smouldering behind him, sullenly Moscow burns.
And still it snows. Winter's fiercest floods break.
Endlessly white, the steppes stretch, and make
Nothing of famous flags and commanders, lost now,
Once the Great Army, rabble now in the snow.
Always it snows. The wounded crawl below
Dead horses; by camps deserted on the way
Frozen buglers, silent in their saddles, stay
At their posts, pressing cold copper to lips that are dead.
The skies rain bullets and snow, sleet and hard lead.
Brave grenadiers, who never trembled with fright
Tremble with cold, grey moustaches frozen white;
Gloomily they march. And always it snows—and snows.
The cold wind whistles; bare footed they tread
The unknown wastes, and there is no more bread.
No longer warm-hearted warriors, only a dream
Lost in the mists, ghosts in parade they seem.
Dumb retribution, terrible, universal,
Stalked them in the wilderness and took toll.
Silently weaving with snow's thickest cloud,
The heavens were making the army's great shroud.
Death stood by each man, and each was alone.
Will this fatal Empire never be done? . . .

SINGING TROOPSHIP

Before our blackened ship slides north again
Toward the battle and the sun, this ridge
Of time is ours. Our songs shall be the bridge
Over these listless stars, down to the high
Clean hills of home. Listen. The shadowed pain
Slits through the borrowed words, that yet can bless
Home-aching hearts, and hush with tenderness
The voices singing to an alien sky.

So shall the Yellow Rose of Texas bloom
Across Waikato farms, Old Faithful run
On home-shod hoofs, and Taupo shall find room
To hide the lovers' Island of Capri—
This little while before the urgent sun
And hungry beach that is our enemy.

[1943.]

IN CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

After long waiting, all the emptied days
Discarded in these islands that we hate,
And stale routine, and all the dreary ways
That lead from home, at last our proud estate
Is found. The cord draws taut. And soon across
The arcs the spark will leap. The engines wait,
Ignition ripe. This is the verb, the loss
Of which would ever leave the whole frustrate.

That these weapons were not sharpened to no end,
This sweat expended in no useless task.
Now we are thankful. Tension throbs between
The terminals. Percussion. Now we ask
No favour from our foe, nor other friend
Than swift solution, climax to this scene.

[1943.]

FOR THE WOUNDED

Now ALL the skilful work of hand and brain
And eye is quite disjoint, and snapped the strand
That ties up thought and deed and all we know
Is nerve-encrusted flesh that crawls with pain,
The shattered shoulder blown with flies, the slow,
Long, cruel drag along the beach on hand
And knees, discord, the grind against the grain,
The slipping cogs, the hostile current's flow.

Let us not envy now those happier dead
We left to the beach. This is our Stalingrad.
Hold now. Teeth clenched, hold in life's bloody rags,
Grip with still slipping fingers. All we had
Is still to hold. Hold now this latest shred,
Nor strike our yet unviolated flags.

[1943.]

IN THE FOXHOLES

THERE ARE no armies in the night, no clear
Decisions, swift or sure co-ordinates,
But only pools of watchfulness, and rear
And front alike are lonely man who waits
And, silent, wars with darkness and with sleep,
The stale sweat stench, the mud, the knees that bend
And crumple with fatigue, the sounds that creep
Uncertain footed to no certain end.

Forgetting not the laughter and the lights,
That were our yesterdays, now we must match
This endless series of unending nights
With all our fortitude, lest fear should catch
Us by the throat, and break our line, and bring
On Auckland all the horrors of Nanking.

[1943.]

INTERIM

PARDON the eating days, and bear no grudge
Against the sultry dawn. Forgive the skies
That are too pressing, and refuse to judge
The sea's warm weariness. The stubborn dead
Endure, and do not blame the sun, and wise
Is he who, like the dead, endures and serves
The silent future. Never now be said
Surrender to the wrenched and ripping nerves.

The casual bomb, the random loss, the search
For exits in the muffling dark, the grope,
Mud-fettered feet, the stumble and the lurch,
The little sores, rain's repetition—see,
Beyond this present blank, the wider scope
Of our Takrouma in the days to be.

[1944.]

RETURNED TO THE JAPANESE POST OFFICE

Post me a letter; address it with care
To Death Valley, Guadalcanar;
Send it by way of Iron Bottom Bay,
Where the dead destroyers are.

Sign it with kisses and seal it with love,
Forget me not now, I beseech,
Under the skies where the dead Zeroes fall,
And we bivvy by Maggot Beach.

How does the rice grow, green-tasselled silk?
How are the cherries at home?
Tell me the details, remember the name,
And send it to Bomb Crater 'Drome.

Date it the Seventh December, and sign
The name of the Chinese child
I had for my pleasure that night at Nanking
In the street of the Little Defiled.

Sharks will deliver your letter to me,
And the deep-drowned sailors will
Pass it along to the burned airmen's hands
Till it reach me on Massacre Hill.

Hurry, my darling, and post it at once,
Before all the mails close down,
And the flames eat up and the ashes drift
On the streets of Calamity Town.

[1944.]

FOR THE FALLEN

Now SINGING DAYS are over; scattered, song
And singer lie
Silent, as silent as the crosses are
At Falamai.

Pohutukawa sprinkles blood to some
North Auckland beach,
Too distant now for these our homeless dead
Ever to reach.

No little thing is life, and brave the breath
That parts the lips.
Can more be given to the scales before
The balance tips?

Weigh this; the greater loss and death of all,
Should Queen Street see
The Bloody Sun displayed, and horror fall
On Lambton Quay.

Our stream of battle joins the sea of war.
Each silent lad
Is kin to those who held El Alamein
And Stalingrad.

The stranger palms shall shed no tenderness,
Nor softer sky
Be theirs; the more must we stand guard for those
At Falamai.

[1944.]

AT THE UNIVERSITY

Being prose which appeared in *Smad,* the Victoria College students' newspaper, and *Spike,* the College magazine; *The Student* and the daily press.

Silver Linings was written in 1930; *But There Will Be Day* eight years later, not long before the Munich crisis. It is included in this grouping because it was written for a University publication —Gordon Watson having retained his links with University life after graduation.

The other articles and the letter to the Press republished here are concerned with the struggles which took place in the University and the community during the depression of the 1930's, as described in the Memoir.

SILVER LININGS

A Dramatic Adaption—Dedicated to those who demand war literature which shall represent the "real thing" as apart from mere sordid realism.

[From *Spike,* June, 1930. The parody is on *Journey's End.*]

SCENE: A dugout, tidily swept and spotlessly clean, except for a small pile of dust, near which leans a broom. The sweeper has obviously gone in search of a dustpan. (Our boys at the front had to rough it—there were no vacuum cleaners there, you know—but war is war.) A table set neatly and brightly for dinner and bearing in the centre a vase of flowers, occupies a large part of the dugout. On the left a stretcher with a gaudy eiderdown (possibly showing Humpty-Dumpty and all the old nursery tales). On the wall there hangs a large photograph of a kind, grey-haired old lady, with an inscription beneath it, "My Mother." The mugs on the table are probably inscribed, "A present from Clapham-on-Sea," but these cannot be read by the audience. A tall soldierly man is sipping cocoa and looking at a map spread out on the table—it is the Stanhope, in fact. There is a knock at the door (all the best dugouts had doors).

Stanhope: Come in, dear fellow!

(Enter a slight good-looking young officer.)

Raleigh: Er-excuse me—my name's Raleigh.

Stanhope: Ah! Come in and sit down. Will you have some cocoa? Or if you prefer it, there's lemonade on the side there. We don't encourage the men to drink coffee or tea—we find it has a bad effect on them. A man who excites himself with excessive coffee drinking is never as good a soldier as one who doesn't.

Raleigh (accepts a cup of cocoa): Thank you. (He drinks for a minute and chokes over the mixture, which is unusually strong.)

Stanhope: By the way—I was engaged to your sister once, wasn't I?

Raleigh: By Jove! I believe you were. But then, of course, you were rather a lad at home. (He titters.)

Stanhope (his face hardens): Now, Jimmy, old boy, I want you to get those ideas right out of your head. I used to do a lot of things at home I wouldn't do out here.

Raleigh: I say, Dennis, do you remember the night you got screwed at the village pub?

Stanhope (slowly and seriously): I shall never, never forget it. I had gone very far wrong when I came out here. The memory of that night and of the awful afternoon when I played toss penny with the village postman will always, I hope, act as a correcting influence. When I came out here and met all these fine, brave, great-hearted fellows, I felt I couldn't pursue my wicked ways any longer. (He breaks down and sobs.) And now, Jimmy, a straighter man couldn't be found in the army.

Raleigh: I see. I suppose I had better drop smoking, then?

Stanhope: It would be as well. (Another knock at the door.) Come in!

(Enter a robust, humorous young fellow who smiles at Raleigh.)

Ah! Hibbert—one of the best. This is Mr. Raleigh, Algernon.

Hibbert: Very pleased to see you. I must show you my album of views of Paris buildings some time.

Stanhope: Well, I shall leave you to entertain Mr. Raleigh while I tell Mason to serve dinner. I have a complaint to make about the way the fish was served last night. I think parsley was a mistake, don't you?

Hibbert: Yes; I prefer fish plain, and I'd like my fish a little browner, too. Ask him if he could give us that lemon jelly again.

Stanhope: All right. Dinner in five minutes. (Exit.)

Raleigh picks a bit of fluff off his uniform, while Hibbert brushes his hair in front of a cracked mirror. Enter Trotter and Osborne. Introductions and greetings. Re-enter Stanhope.

Stanhope: Oh! here you are. Did you ask the sergeant-major to step down? (Noticing the look of astonishment on Raleigh's face.) We always have the S.M. to meals here. He lacks culture, but is quite a good fellow. I believe in the spirit of camaraderie and so we invite him down for meals.

Trotter: 'Ere 'e comes. (Enter the sergeant-major.)

Stanhope: How do you do, Sergeant-Major? I felt a few drops of rain in the trenches to-day, but I think we shall have fine weather to-morrow. It so disheartens the troops if it's raining. Sit down, everybody. Mason!

(Enter Mason with the fish. He wears a chef's cap and a white apron.)

Mason: 'Ere you are, sir! The brown bit for Mr. 'Ibbert, and I've boiled a piece for Mr. Osborne.

Osborne: Ah! Thank you.

(Exit.)

They fall to, and the remarks for the next few minutes are merely, "Delicious," "Good old Mason," "First-rate," etc.

(Re-enter Mason.)

Stanhope: Congratulations, Mason. Most excellently prepared. A little more pepper next time.

Mason: I do my best to give satisfaction, sir. We're short of pepper, I'm afraid.

Trotter (it is his opportunity): Well, war's bad enough with pepper, but war *without* pepper—it's bl-bl-blooming awful.

Stanhope (with piercing glance): Herbert, I've forbidden you to make that remark. There's no need to be vulgar, even if you are in the war. Thank you, Mason; get some more pepper as soon as possible.

Mason: Very good, sir. (Exit.)

(Trotter leans forward and smells the flowers with a sigh of satisfaction.)

Trotter: I halways did like Lady Pilmington roses.

Stanhope: Excuse me, I believe these are George MacArthur.

(Raleigh, in bending forward to examine the roses, knocks his cup of cocoa off the table.)

Raleigh: Damn!

Stanhope, Trotter, Osborne, Hibbert, Sergeant-Major (simultaneously): Jimmy! Hush! Hush! I say! Really! Sir!

Raleigh (blushing): I'm sorry—it kind of slipped out.

Stanhope (stiffly reseating himself): Very well. But I'd rather it didn't happen again. Please remember we are not under peace conditions out here. One officer using bad language and the morale of the whole regiment is shaken.

Raleigh: I can only apologise most sincerely.

Stanhope: Enough—you have disgraced the British Army! Mason, the cocoa, please.

(Curtain.)

BUT THERE WILL BE DAY

[Awarded first prize in the 1938 *Spike* competition for serious prose, the judge being Alan Mulgan.]

THERE WAS A TIME when men liked their horrors crude, raw meat and bloody bones. There is even a tradition of laughing at them. Grimm's youth who travelled to learn to shiver never once shivered, though he slept with a corpse and headless bodies came tumbling down the chimney, until his wife taught him with a bucket of ice-cold water. Ours is a more sophisticated, or a more decadent, age. And so Sawney Bean, the cannibal of Scotland, must make way for Danny of *Night Must Fall*.

Night Must Fall was a successful play and a successful film, and will be forgotten within a few years. It gave Robert Montgomery in the film version the opportunity to prove he was a superb actor, chained to the part of playboy by producers with an eye to box office appeal. It presented a completely convincing and frightful picture of homicidal mania. It had its physical horrors, but they were concealed. Danny kept the head of his murdered woman in a hatbox, though Judith brandished the head of Holofernes the tyrant for all the world to see. But the real terror of *Night Must Fall* was psychological, the attraction of beauty to corruption and to madness, for night must fall, and in that night there will be neither beauty nor kindness nor laughter, but only fear, the fear of those who are weak and who want power and who can use power only for destruction and defilement. This atmosphere was created in *Night Must Fall* with consummate success. But it will be forgotten, and we can be thankful.

For *Night Must Fall* could not have such an effect on any of us, if it did not contain something that corresponded to the real experience of us all. It is, in a manner of speaking, an allegory, completely unconscious as far as its authors and actors are concerned, but nevertheless a reflex of the world around us. In the minds of men the fantastic reflection of reality takes on the most monstrous

forms. Even the literature of escape is an escape from something real. In times when the world was less sick, men told allegories knowing the real meaning that they wrapped in their fancies to make it more attractive, and making it clear for the world to see. Giant Despair was despair made flesh. To-day it is less easy for men to give conscious artistic expression to the world around them unless their vision is clear enough to seek a new art and a new class which is its banner bearer.

In fact during the decade in which *Night Must Fall* was written and produced, night has already fallen over a great part of Europe and the world. Danny is installed with his hatbox and his butcher's knife in the Chancelleries of Europe, and has been engaged as personal adviser to the Mikado.

Our eyes are becoming accustomed to the darkness. We are even getting used to Danny's jokes, and are forgetting our repulsion when he first moved in. That is part of the horror of it.

Let us see what is happening in the night.

In Berlin old men are spat upon and turned out from their homes to starve because they belong to a different race from Danny, who wears a swastika on his armband. In Bucharest there are girl students, belonging to the same race, who are beaten mercilessly in the cloak rooms by their fellow students, and dare not speak, because there is no justice for them in Rumania.

In Barcelona during the air raids of this March the fire hoses were brought out because there was no other way of cleaning the streets.

There is in Spain a village called Granollers, a village with one street and a market place where the peasants brought their produce. Women and children were waiting in a food queue, until death swooped on them from the air. There were no military objectives in Granollers, but Danny was in the air and it was necessary to test his new bombs.

In the play Danny had to conceal his crime, while the fear of discovery hung over him. But in Rome to-day he may write books

and enjoy the fullest measure of his gratification. "I got only mediocre effects, perhaps because I was expecting enormous explosions like in American films, whereas the little Abyssinian homes, made of withies and rushes, give no satisfaction; at any rate one sees fire and smoke. We conscientiously burned the whole of the zone. But there were no inhabitants left." This is from a book by Vittoria Mussolini, describing his experiences in Abyssinia. It is recommended for use in Italian schools.

Often, though, the real Danny lies. When he sends wave after wave of his bombers over Canton and Hankow, destroying the hospitals and schools, it is for the purpose of teaching the Chinese "co-operation" and defending them against the Red menace.

In Danny's Spain or Danny's China there is one death warrant that you can carry with you. It is the callouses on your hands that show you are a worker, as in the days when the soldiery of M. Thiers entered Paris of the Commune.

Yes, we have travelled very far on the journey to the end of the night.

But we should remember this. Danny is weak and at heart a coward. He is eternally play-acting and posturing, whooping himself up as a hell of a fellow, because within himself he is horribly afraid. He faints with terror when he thinks he may be arrested. At the end the police draw near the house, he fears the thousands of eyes around him. This is a true allegory, too. He does not like to be reminded of Guadalajara and Taierchwang.

Then there is the old lady who thinks he is such a nice boy, and laughs at his jokes and scouts all suspicion, even while Danny, rocking her to sleep, is planning to murder her in the night. Mrs. Bramson exists also in our world. She presides over non-intervention committees, and writes letters to the daily press urging favourable consideration for Hitler's colonial claims, and pleads with passion the "wrongs" of Sudeten Germans. Such a stupid and selfish old woman! She was murdered because she had money, and because

Danny grew to like killing and wanted the power that money could buy.

What of the most tragic figure of the play, Olivia, who knew that Danny was a murderer, but kept silent, because he spoke of adventure and love, and against herself she was attracted to him and loved him? She also belongs to our world. She is the prototype of all those who know and keep silent, of those who could save life but run the risk of meeting death in the night because their nerve fails them. She even teaches in the universities that silence is the best policy, and, moreover, in accordance with all the most sacred academic traditions. But unless you fight against corruption you will yourself become corrupted. Bukharin fancied himself as Goebbels before the end.

It is a good allegory, if you choose to look at it in a way that the authors did not intend, but it will be forgotten. For the night will not last.

Night must fall. Yes, but there will be dawn. Already over one-sixth part of the world there is broad daylight. In the dimmest twilight of the dawn elsewhere, the infantrymen of democracy are rallying now even against tanks, because they know that the day will break soon.

WOULD YOU BE A SPECIAL? — C.G.W. SAYS NO

[The following article was paired with another, "A. McG. says YES," in *The Student,* No. 3, June 21, 1933.]

THIS QUESTION is one of the most burning importance for all students at the present time. New Zealand has entered a winter in which the working section of the population are facing poverty, unemployment and actual hunger on a scale hitherto unknown. And so the cry is set up by those in power, "We must baton those we cannot feed. God save the King and the British Empire." Already six weeks ago a circular was sent round to last year's specials calling them up in preparation for winter. It is ominous that this coincided with the decision to force the married men into camps by means of the weapon of starvation.

Victoria College has already had her experience of this call for specials. To their everlasting disgrace, scores of students signed up as specials last May and paraded the streets with batons and tin helmets, soldiers against their own countrymen, and more shameful, against their own class.

About the position of the specials I have only this to say. The special who signs up in ignorance of what he is doing, of what is required of him—and of what are the issues involved—he may be despised or pitied. The special who is forced to sign up by his boss under stress of the sack—as happened in many cases last year—may be excused, provided he remembers when the time comes to use his baton, that he himself is a worker. But for the special who signs up in full consciousness of what his action implies, no words can be too strong—the lowest cur alive, dirty and rotten to the core.

Full consciousness of the implications of this action can be attained through going to see the homes and conditions of the unemployed. No, Mr. Editor, I would NOT be a special.

OURSELVES AND THE STUDENTS' EXECUTIVE

[Statement appearing in the "banned" issue of *The Student*, No. 3, June 21, 1933.]

WE APPEAR in no cheap spirit of defiance. After all, the issues before us are simple enough. In response to student request, to fill a long-standing need at the University, the Committee of the Free Discussions Club decided to bring out a magazine, entirely student-produced, which would broach serious problems in a controversial manner. Because we believed that in this day and age, issues are so clear that a man must take sides, that the old style of agnostic liberalism leads only to defeat, we embarked definitely on an editorial policy. That policy is well to the left. Editorially, *Student* has taken up its stand in sympathy with the New Zealand working class; it considers working class problems and fights working class battles as they find reflection at the College. We do not deny that *Student* has committed itself to this policy; but by no means and in no respect whatever does this mean that opposing opinion will not be published. Let those who charge this read the magazine carefully. They will see that not only are opposition views represented, but that they are fully encouraged. We want nothing so much as full discussion of the momentous issues about us; but we maintain our right to draw conclusions for ourselves.

How then does the Executive receive all this? Their answer is the method of repression, glossed over in the weak and flimsy excuses contained in their letter. Disregarding the extremely retrograde nature of such a step, as coming from the students' own representatives, we see that on examination the straw men the Executive has erected fall to the ground.

In the first place, another periodical besides *Smad* is "superfluous." . . . We are not impressed; *Smad* has been dead fish these many months and everyone knows it; besides, it appears too infrequently. Nor do we see any valid reason why there should not be any number of periodicals. *Student* was established by the members as a magazine for the Free Discussions Club; if its appearance has

affected the sales of *Smad*, the obvious remedy is to make that paper more attractive.

Secondly, we deny "a definite tendency . . . to publish only articles which state the opinion of which you are in favour." Up to the present time no single contribution that has been received has met with rejection. Had the Executive troubled to read the paper and to inquire, this would have been made clear to them. If one section of student opinion has been represented more completely than others, that is because the holders of those opinions have been more interested and energetic in setting them down; that is all. The Executive are chasing mares' nests; *Student* is and will continue to be open to all serious contributors.

Lastly we are charged with making no effort to avoid libel and mis-statement, and the possibility that we will bring opprobrium upon the whole college. Here the Executive have us puzzled. To what do they refer? The material in our first two issues contained one mis-statement of fact for which we apologised; we are aware of no libel. We can disregard the Executive's nebulous statements. At no time can the vigorous expression of independent opinion injure the college as a whole, except, possibly, for those of the mental calibre of the editor of *Truth*. We believe that suppression, not expression, makes for opprobrium in the eyes of thinking persons.

Lest the Executive imagine that their actions meet the approval of the students as a whole, let them consider these facts. From all sides we have received verbal and written protests against their high-handed gesture. We are forced to the conclusion that our own representatives have become a bureaucratic body, divorced from student opinion. Immediately after the letter was received, at one of the usual weekly meetings, twenty-four members of the Free Discussions Club voted for, and four members against, a motion condemning the Students' Association action. We have sent out protest sheets which already have been signed by more than a hundred students, who, while not necessarily associating themselves with the sentiments expressed in *Student*, recognise its right to continue publication. Students! Are you with us? Force the Executive to reverse its decision! Sign the protest sheets!

"BOLSHEVISM IN THE COLLEGES!" — THE *STUDENT'S* DEFENCE

[This letter appeared in the *Evening Post,* Wellington, on July 14, 1933.]

The Editor.

Sir—Following on the suppression of the *Student* by the Victoria College Students' Association, there has arisen an amount of controversy and discussion, which would certainly never have occurred in the event of its continued publication. That is the worst of suppression—people begin to talk—and to think. It was only to be expected that the New Zealand Welfare League should unmask another "Red Plot," and await the plaudits of a grateful citizenry for its efforts. This anonymous body, which has never once, to my knowledge, had the ordinary decency to sign its letters in the proper way, has flung out its usual wild accusations. Surely it is time that the League was told, once and for all, that unless it comes out into the open and states what it is, what its membership is, what its aims and constitution are, and who its secretary is, it should for ever hold its peace.

However, this particular "Red Scare" is very easily explained. In the second number of the *Student* we were able to state that we had established contact with radical student clubs in England, Australia and the U.S.A., and also with "a directive in Moscow, which would forward correspondence." In other words, though we were not yet in touch with students in the U.S.S.R., we had written to an organisation which would direct our letters to their proper source. This fearful and mysterious body is known as Rabkor (Workers' Correspondence), and receives letters from all over the world. The Welfare League is welcome to have the address any time should it wish to receive first-hand news of conditions in the Soviet Union from English-speaking workers.

To say that the *Student* was anti-British is contemptibly untrue. During its three issues the *Student* took up a stand for the

New Zealand working class, inasmuch as its struggles found reflection in the University; it endeavoured to create student opinion against a repetition of such a world slaughter as that of 1914-1918; it attacked Imperialism—not only British, but all Imperialism—for its bloody subjection of the native races; and it stood uncompromisingly for freedom of speech and expression for all parties, creeds and beliefs. Are these aims and objects disloyal? Are they "headed to the disruption of the Empire"? Are they a "conspiracy against the Constitution"? And, finally, are they "anti-British"? It is palpably obvious that the Welfare League reserves the title of "British" exclusively for those who blackguard the word by their support of every policy of reaction and suppression. Is it "British" to bomb defenceless native villages from the air? Is it "British" to increase expenditure on armaments while cutting down to a bare minimum the money spent on education and health services? Is it "British" to baton down men who are only asking for bread and a job?

If the League believes that it is anti-British to oppose these actions it should be told by all decent people what an insult it is casting against the race to which we belong. I am, etc.—

C. G. WATSON,
Editor, *The Student.*

COMMUNISM OR MURRYISM

[In reply to I.D.C., who had written under the title "Communism as a Religion." From *Spike*, 1932.]

MANY PEOPLE to-day have had the experience of engaging in a heated controversy, only to discover at the end that the only matter at stake between them and their adversaries was one of definition. This is largely due to the recent device of widening your definitions of things originally restricted in sense to such an extent as to make them include almost anything you want them to. If you define Christianity as the ideals of Love, Truth and Justice you are obviously quite free from the danger of an attack. The advantages of this attitude are obvious. You can debate on the broadest definition and continue to act on the narrowest. It is a peculiarly successful trick and a peculiarly dishonest one.

And so there is to-day a tremendous need for narrowing our definitions, even at the cost of multiplying terms. Especially is this true with regard to the two words which are the storm centres of controversy to-day, "Christian" and "Communist." The majority of "Christians" within our own Student Christian Movement, for instance, are simply illogical humanitarians, who would have been disowned by any reasonably honest church a generation ago. Similarly the word "Communist" is used to mean anything from a political opponent to a socialist idealist with vaguely defined principles.

Primarily, of course, a Communist means a member of the Communist Party and nothing more. But we can allow ourselves a slightly wider definition than that, since the Communist Party is itself a body based on definite principles and pledged to a definite plan of action. Professor Harold Laski defines Communism as "at once an ideal and a method. As an ideal it aims at a society in which classes have been abolished as the result of the common ownership of the means of production and distribution. As a means, it believes that its ideal can be obtained only by the method of a social revolution in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is the effective instrument of change." People like I.D.C. would accept

the idea without the method. But if they do not approve of the method, i.e., social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, they are certainly not "Communists" or even "supporters of Communism." They may be "Labourites" or "collectivists" or "socialistically inclined"—but they have nothing to do with Communism, which is both an ideal and a method.

In other words, if the Communist Party is to be an effective instrument in the achievement of socialism, it must be bound by certain broad principles, or what I.D.C. would prefer to call dogmas. They are in no sense akin to religious dogmas, since they are built up on a rational basis which is capable of argument and proof. You may tell their upholders that you are not convinced by them, but it is unfair to suggest that they are not arrived at rationally, but are held by blind faith alone.

The most general principles of Communism are certainly fixed and must of necessity remain so, because they are the things by which we define Communism. But in the minutiae of its economic theory and the details of its practical policy, the Communist movement is in a constant state of flux, continually adapting itself to the state of the society in which it is working. I.D.C. badly misunderstands the position if he thinks, as he says, that "doubt or dissent is a sin, and criticism an unpardonable error." The matter was clearly put in a letter to Middleton Murry's paper, the *Adelphi*. F. leGros Clerk wrote as follows: "Referring to the various comments on the Communist Party of Great Britain that have appeared in the *Adelphi*, it may be laid down that no criticism 'from the outside' is likely to be half as incisive and strongly worded as the criticisms hurled internally at the Communists by one another. If you want to criticise, come inside and criticise. . . . By internal self-criticism the Communist Party is making itself, is becoming."

The case of Mr. Middleton Murry appears to worry I.D.C. excessively. Murry's Communism appears to be a recent growth of a rather peculiar kind. He disapproves of the Labour Party who are trying to achieve socialism by constitutional means, and he is a constant critic of the Communist Party, which believes that an

unconstitutional upheaval is necessary. He distinguishes a mysterious entity called Marxism from a still more mysterious something called Leninism, and comments adversely on the latter. Surely he realises the necessity of some political action beyond the publication of books with sales-catching titles like *The Necessity of Communism*. Unless he intends forming a third party, a kind of disembodied intellectualist party, his place is inside the Communist movement, experiencing some of the discomforts and danger of its routine work. Until he does that, his claim to be a Communist is quite literally what the *Daily Worker* called it, "an insult to the heroic workers of the Soviet Union and a mockery of the Communist fighters throughout the world." Though the Communist Party is open to criticism and adaptation from outside as well as inside, the claims of a man who does not believe in the first principles of Communism to be called a Communist can hardly be recognised. Why not try "Neo-Communist" or even "Murryist"?

[This article was written before Gordon Watson joined the Communist Party; and he already knew his subject well.

The phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" has a clear meaning to Marxist scholars, but to few others. It means that in a socialist state, in the first stage of transition to a classless society, the real instruments of power (which formerly were controlled by landed and property-owning classes) are held by the working classes as a whole — not by any exclusive governing sect. Gordon Watson refers to the Communist movement as "in a constant state of flux, continually adapting itself to the society in which it is working." Post-war history has confirmed that while the essence of "The dictatorship of the proletariat" remains the same, the forms of the transition to Socialism must vary considerably from country to country and from time to time.—Ed.]

A FRIEND OF THE SOVIET UNION

Being selections from the articles written when Gordon Watson was National Secretary of the Friends of the Soviet Union, 1934-36.

KIROV WAS A WORKERS' LEADER

[Abridged from *Soviet News*, February, 1935.]

NOT SINCE the trial of the British Metro-Vickers engineers on charges of spying and sabotage has the anti-Soviet press conducted such a bitterly hostile campaign as that which arose following the assassination of the Bolshevik leader Kirov. From Warsaw and Berlin, from Helsingfors and Riga, there came a flood of stories of "Red Terror" in the U.S.S.R. which were faithfully copied and taken as gospel by the New Zealand capitalist dailies. What was the basis for this new anti-Soviet campaign and what were the facts concerning the assassination of Kirov?

The fact that Kirov was known to millions of workers in the Soviet Union as one of their beloved and trusted leaders was not of particular importance to the dailies.

Sergei Kirov was one of the Old Bolsheviks, one of that small group of tireless and courageous fighters for the working class to whom the Soviet State owes its existence. His whole life reflects the development of the great Russian Revolution. Whether it was organising an illegal party press in Tomsk, leading a railwaymen's strike, taking part in the armed uprising in 1905, serving long sentences of solitary confinement in the Tsar's prisons, leading the October Revolution in the Caucasus, or defending the young Soviet Republic against the interventionist forces, Kirov was always a model of heroism and devotion. Following 1926 Kirov was leader of the Communist Party organisation in Leningrad, a highly responsible position, and a member of the Soviet Government.

A striking tribute is paid to the work of Kirov by his fellow party workers—Stalin, Ordjonikidze, Molotov, Kalinin, Voroshilov and Kaganovitch, all old Bolsheviks and fellow workers of Kirov. It says: "At the hands of the enemy perished a man who gave all his bright life to the cause of the working class, to the cause of Communism, to the cause of the liberation of humanity. . . . You were near to us all, Comrade Kirov, as a true friend and beloved

comrade, and as a reliable fighter in arms. We shall remember you, dear friend, till the last days of our life and struggle, and we shall feel bitterness at our loss. You were always with us in the years of hard battles for the triumph of socialism in our country, you were always with us in the years of wavering and difficulties, and we have lost you at the moment when our country has gained great victories. In all this struggle, in all our achievements, there is much that is your share, much of your strength, energy and fiery love for Communism. Good-bye, our dear friend and comrade Sergei!"

It was natural that the death of such a man as this should cause a great wave of anger and sorrow among the working class of the Soviet Union. The same night that the news of Kirov's assassination was announced, the workers on night shift in the great factories of Moscow and Leningrad met and passed motions demanding swift justice against all those connected with the assassination. "He was our best comrade, friend and teacher to the end," said the manifesto of the workers of the famous Red Putilov tractor works in Leningrad. "Under him the Red Putilov factory produced its first tractor, under him it gave tens of thousands of tractors to the country and mastered a new complicated industry. . . . We bare our heads and swear that the cause for which Kirov fought and died will be carried to its victorious conclusion."

These were only the forerunners of thousands of similar resolutions that poured into the Soviet Government from factory and collective farm, from every corner of the vast Union. The crowning display of how close were the ties of love and loyalty that bound the working class of the Soviet Union to their leader were the impressive scenes of mourning in Leningrad and Moscow—the towns draped in black, the massed thousands who followed the body of Kirov to the station at Leningrad and the tens of thousands who filed in solemn procession through the Trade Union Hall in Moscow, where the body lay in state.

This, then, is the first fact of importance in understanding the story of Kirov's death. Kirov was a worker, he was a workers' leader, and his death was a personal sorrow to millions of workers throughout the Soviet Union.

The murderer of Kirov was a man Nikolayev, an ex-employee of the Leningrad branch of the now-dissolved Commissariat of Workers and Peasants' Inspection. But from the beginning it was obvious that Nikolayev did not act as an individual, that he had support and backing from somewhere. The preliminary investigation into Kirov's death revealed that Nikolayev was a member of an illegal anti-Soviet terrorist group which grew up in Leningrad after the defeat of Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition, and of their theory that it was impossible to build up socialism in one country. Defeated in open discussion and isolated from the masses of the party and non-party workers in the Soviet Union, with the daily successes of socialist construction proving the correctness of the line of Stalin and the party, these degenerates of the Zinoviev group turned to methods of sabotage and terrorism. "All that remained for these dregs to do was: Concealing themselves with the party ticket, to shoot at leaders of the party and the Soviet regime. Terrorism was the result of the hopelessness and doom of this group. They could not gain that aim which they wanted—to disorganise the Soviet regime by terrorist acts," says *Izvestia.*

The forces that these men stood for are opposed to the peaceful building of a new socialist world, and wish to bring the U.S.S.R. under the system of capitalism and in doing so plunge the world into a new war. It was against these forces that the Soviet Government, the Government of the workers and working farmers, took prompt and decisive action.

In a special memorial issue dated December 7th, the *Izvestia,* organ of the Soviet Government, commented:

"For the fascist counter-revolution to admit that the system which created Kirovs has finally conquered, means to admit that their entire power, built upon the hundreds of millions of trustified capital, is built on sand. To recognise that they cannot any longer destroy the work of the Soviets means for the fascists to recognise they were born too late. In their hands are billions in money, arms, gaols, gallows. Therefore they do not want to recognise their inevitable doom; therefore they are preparing for battle. And one of the

tactics of this battle is the creation of centres of disorder in the Soviet Union, the country of the Socialist order."

These were the forces, then, which the assassination of Kirov revealed in all their unmistakable clarity. On the one side, the forces of the workers and working farmers, of their Government of the Soviets, of the struggle for international peace and a new socialist life. On the other side, the forces of the exploiting few, the White Guardist degenerates, the supporters of Tsarism, the renegades and deserters from the ranks of the Bolsheviks, the forces making for war and political reaction. In the days following the death of Kirov the Soviet masses gave a clear answer to the question: On Which Side?

The New Zealand capitalist newspapers, acting under the guidance of the British press magnates, have given their answer, too. A responsible leader of the Soviet Government is shot by an assassin's bullet. Is there a word of sympathy or of horror at this filthy crime? The same paper which filled pages with praise of the assassinated Dolfuss and Alexander of Yugoslavia, both butchers of the working class, could find no word for the dead workers' leader, Sergei Kirov. The papers which justified the lynching of the Marseilles assassin were horrified that the Soviet judicial authorities should order the execution of a group of sentenced terrorists. Baseless and lying stories from Warsaw, such as "OGPU fights OGPU," complete the press version of this historic event.

The line-up of the forces is all too apparent. Which side do we working men and women of New Zealand intend to take? We must give a clear answer to the murderers of Kirov and the fascist warmongers.

MOSCOW — NEW CENTRE OF WORLD CULTURE

[Abridged from *Tomorrow*, independent fortnightly, March 6th, 1935.]

WHEN KIROV was shot by an unknown terrorist, millions of Soviet workers and peasants sought their own ways of expressing their grief at the loss of a great leader. Eight hundred thousand filed past as he lay in state in Leningrad; on the way to burial in Moscow at every little station deputations of workers and collective farmers came out to meet the train; in Moscow, the Red Capital, one million two hundred thousand, together with Stalin and Voroshilov, followed Kirov to his last resting place beneath the Kremlin wall. From every corner of the vast Union, from factory meeting and collective farm, from the Arctic and the Far East, from scientists and school children, came the messages of sorrow and the determination to continue the fight for Kirov's cause, the cause of Socialism.

This was no more than was natural. It was natural that the masses of the working people should pay this tribute to the memory of Kirov, a worker and a workers' leader. It was a tribute to the political greatness of the party which made possible the first working class revolution in the world, which preserved the power of the working class intact over one-sixth of the globe against the assaults of civil war and intervention, which showed the way to the present victories of socialist planning and to the building of a classless society. But there was one man who paid his tribute to Sergei Kirov who was not by birth a worker or a citizen of the workers' republic. That was Albert Coates, premier British conductor, who led the massed orchestras of Leningrad in the playing of the Dead March from "Saul," and the other funeral music that accompanied the solemn procession of the workers through the Uritsky Trade Union Hall where Kirov lay.

The presence of Albert Coates at the mourning for Kirov was profoundly symbolical of a new, vital change in the world of culture to-day, of the beginning of new cultural loyalties. It is the purpose of this article to draw attention to this important process.

For some time Coates has been in the Soviet Union, bringing the best of classical and modern music to the Soviet workers. We read that on April 15th he conducted the Philharmonic Orchestra of eighty-three performers at a specially arranged concert in the turbine department of a big Leningrad machine plant. Several thousand workers were present to hear the great English conductor direct the playing of such works as Beethoven's "Egmont." Here are his own comments, contained in a letter to the workers of the plant:

"It was a wonderful experience. The enormous Philharmonic Orchestra was surrounded on all sides by thousands of workers sitting on machines, benches and cranes, all listening attentively to the great classical pieces. Steeled in work, beautiful and stern, excited and satisfied. All this together created an unforgettable morning of one of the best days of my life."

To-day Albert Coates means to repay the hospitality he received in the Soviet Union by introducing some of the best productions of Soviet music to the British public. On January 22 two new Soviet symphonies under his direction were broadcasted over the B.B.C. network. Describing one of them, the work of a new composer called Shaporin, Coates writes:

"Shaporin is a mature talent, the Soviet Union's young Mussorgski. This first symphony of his is ten in one. What is it all about? The beginning of a new life—a new era. There are four movements the first 'Legendo,' then the dance, very wild—and wild for the conductor, too. The third is a 'lullaby,' the finale, the 'pokhod'—is a triumphant on-march of the people, the people shouting—the beginning of a new age."

The Shaporins and the Sholokhovs—whose *Quiet Flows the Don* continues to sell at the rate of five hundred a week in Great Britain—one can understand them. These are the new worker artists, the new people which socialism was bound to produce, the new artistic expression of fundamental historical changes. That *Chapeyev*, motion picture epic of the Civil War, should play to three-quarters of a million Moscow workers within ten days, that a one-time homeless waif, now a Magnitogorsk steel worker, should write the best seller *I Love*—this is the natural development of a new

socialist culture. But how is one to explain why a great English conductor, who earned his fame before Soviet art was ever heard of, should become such an enthusiastic supporter of the "new life" in the Soviet Union, taking part in the mourning for a Soviet leader, on whose death the British Government did not even deign to send a message of condolence?

Nor is the case of Albert Coates an isolated example. The greatest masters of modern French literature—world honoured names, Romain Rolland and André Gide—have for a number of years been whole-hearted supporters of the Soviet Union. Last year André Gide addressed a special appeal to the young Soviet citizens.

"Young Soviet citizens of to-day, do you understand what the U.S.S.R. means for us of the old world? The realisation of a dream hitherto vague, of desires as yet unformulated. The answer to years of impatience. The living proof that that which seemed utopia could become reality. Young people of the U.S.S.R., the eyes of the world are upon you."

And Gide, one time representative of the Protestant individualist tradition in art, has repeated Gorky's challenge that if the necessity should arise he would fight as a common soldier in the workers' Red Army. Rolland and Gide find their counterparts in the writers of other modern capitalistic countries—in Martin Anderson Nexo in Denmark, Bernard Shaw in Great Britain, Theodore Dreiser in the U.S.A., Ernst Toller in Germany.

In the world of the theatre we have the case of Gordon Craig, unable to find expression for his artistic genius in any capitalist country, visiting Moscow at the invitation of the Maly Theatre to work on the production of a Shakespeare comedy, probably *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In an interview, S. I. Amaglobeli, director of the Maly Theatre, gives Craig's reasons for coming to the Soviet Union. He claims:

"This giant of the theatre, this genius of innovation no longer works in the theatre because the contemporary Western stage does not have that poesy for which he strives. . . . Craig lives near Genoa, working out production plans in the hope that someone after his death will be able to use them. Such artists as he can to-day

realise their dreams, their creative conceptions in the Soviet theatre only, the theatre of bold experiments. Craig himself realises this and greeted the reports of the Soviet delegates at International Theatre Congress in Rome, with the utmost enthusiasm."

Gordon Craig himself has expressed his opinion of the Soviet theatre in an article in the London *Times* recently. After commenting on the sick condition of the European theatre, he says:

"The Soviet has prescribed a lasting tonic of fifteen million roubles a year—and there are already some 560 theatres where once there were 250, and 20,500 actors, where once there were 7000 employed. As you see, the Soviet not only prescribed well, but diagnosed correctly—not only cured an eye or a hand, but the whole body of the Russian theatre from Archangel to Yalta. Looking round the rest of Europe, though I am ignorant of the exact conditions of the inside of the money chests of States, I should imagine from the expression of those who keep guard over them so apologetically that there are not too many kronen, shillings or francs inside these coffers to pour out on the theatre. While European theatres have rejected those reforms suggested during the last thirty years which were not immediate money makers, Russia accepted the reforms, added to them, and to-day leads the European theatre. The Russian theatres seem to be years in advance of all the other theatres."

Finally and most recently comes the visit of Paul Robeson, famous negro singer of the U.S.A., to Moscow. His comments at a reception at which Eisenstein, the Soviet film director, and other notables were present, are revealing.

"I was not prepared for the happiness I see on every face in Moscow. I was aware that there was no starvation here, but I was not prepared for the bounding life, the feeling of safety and abundance and freedom that I find here wherever I turn. I was not prepared for the endless friendliness, which surrounded me from the moment I crossed the border. . . . And this joy and happiness and friendliness, this utter absence of any embarrassment over a 'race question' is all the more keenly felt by me because of the day I

spent in Berlin on the way here, and that was a day of horror—in an atmosphere of hatred, fear and suspicion."

At the reception Robeson was asked his opinion of the recent executions of a group of convicted anti-Soviet terrorists. His remarks are an interesting commentary on the attitude taken up by certain supposedly advanced English politicians at the time.

"From what I have already seen of the workings of the Soviet Government, I can only say that anybody who lifts his hand against it ought to be shot! It is the Government's duty to put down any opposition to this really free society with a firm hand, and I hope they will always do so, for I already regard myself as at home here. *This is home to me.* I feel more kinship to the Russian people under their new society than I ever felt anywhere else. It is obvious that there is no terror here, that all the masses of every race are contented and support their Government. . . ."

These men are typical of the process that is at work to-day—the moving of the very best elements of capitalist culture to the side of Socialism, to the side of the Soviet Union. The tormented individualism of André Gide finds hope and the living fulfilment of dreams in the young people of the Soviet Union. Albert Coates finds the rapt attention and musical appreciation among the workers of a Leningrad factory that he never experienced among all the stiff shirts and sleek furs of London. Gordon Craig goes to the Soviet Union to bring to life his unfinished theatrical projects, doomed to extinction under capitalism. Paul Robeson, whose greatness has forced condescending recognition in the land of Jim-Crowism and lynching, finds among the free peoples of the Soviet Union the possibility of new artistic development. They are symbolic—no more—of the deep forces that are at work among artists in the capitalist world to-day, just as the presence of Albert Coates at the funeral of Sergei Kirov was symbolic.

For what is the alternative before the artist to-day—the alternative to the side of the Soviet Union, of the working class, of Socialism? Capitalism in decay—the system which once produced great art—is driving headlong toward Fascism, the negation of art. Be-

cause Fascism, the final stage of decadent capitalism, cannot bear a rational examination into its own being, it is the self-confessed foe to culture. On the one side the ever multiplying libraries and publishing houses of the Soviet Union—on the other, the burning of the books at Leipzig. Ilya Ehrenburg, noted Soviet author, addressing a German tourist, says:

"Our books do not look very nice; the paper is grey, the ink poor, the bindings ugly, a far cry from those beautiful books that come from the presses of Leipzig. But our books improve every day, and every day sees an increased call for them. And in Leipzig, just as in other cities of highly cultured Germany, there people also waited for hours, but it was not in order to obtain books; it was for the purpose of witnessing a rare spectacle, of seeing with their own eyes how books were destroyed—by fire."

Is it any wonder that the best representatives of capitalist culture are to-day taking the road that leads to the Soviet Union, to Moscow? It is an irony of history that the very country which was most vehemently accused by its opponents of having destroyed culture, should to-day be not only creating its own living and vigorous Socialist age, but should be becoming increasingly regarded as the custodian of world cultural values.

Various great cities in the past have played the role of focussing point for the culture of the generation. Athens was one, the Paris of medieval Europe was another; there was a time when music found its centre in Germany. To-day the picture is changed. The new centre of world culture is shifting to the once barbaric and illiterate east, to the city where the Tsars once held sway, and where now the revolutionary working class is blazing the way to a new life—to Moscow.

[Of the prominent writers, musicians, and artists mentioned in this article, André Gide, and to our knowledge he alone, has publicly retracted his friendship to the U.S.S.R.

Events since 1935 have cut across and weakened the cultural links between Moscow and Western Europe; but the high cultural achievements of Soviet Russians, especially in ballet, music and the theatre, are fully acknowledged abroad.—Ed.]

IN THE NEWS

[Excerpts from the monthly commentary appearing in *Soviet News*, from May, 1935, to January, 1936.]

[These notes, together with many of the articles in the next section of this book, typify the campaign for peace fought by the Left during the 1930's.

It is nowadays often made to appear that the peoples of British countries almost unanimously turned the blind eye towards Hitler and his allies; but despite the very different picture given at the time by the conservative press and official Empire spokesmen, a continuous and growing opposition pointed with inexorable facts and logic to the war plans of the fascist Axis. The accuracy of these Notes is proven today, and their interpretation of events accepted by many students of history.—Ed.]

May—

NAZI GERMANY and Japan want war against the first Workers' Socialist Republic. Let there be no mistake about that. "We are putting a stop to the eternal movement of Germans to the south and west of Europe and are turning our eyes to the lands in the east," says Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf*. "We are abandoning, finally, the colonial and trading policy of pre-war times and are passing to the policy of the future—to the policy of territorial conquest. But when we at the present time speak of new lands in Europe, then we can, in the first place, have in mind only Russia and the border states subordinate to her." Baron Tanaka in 1927 outlined a programme of military conquest for Japan, involving the seizure of Manchuria and Mongolia as bases for an attack on Soviet Siberia. General Araki, leader of the Japanese military clique, is due to visit Hitler in Berlin to consolidate the already existing secret pact.

Powerful sections of British capitalism are agitating for open British support of the interventionist front, from Oswald Mosley to the Young Conservatives. To drive a wedge between the German-Japanese united front and its powerful imperialist backers, is a solemn duty which the Soviet Government is splendidly carrying out in the interests of the building of Socialism, and of international peace.

June—

German rearmament has become the central feature of world politics to-day. On the outcome of Hitler's war preparations hinges every question of major importance to the workers and farmers, to honest intellectuals, to lovers of peace. For Nazi militarism is not simply a question of the armed preparations which every capitalist state carries through, it is not a problem of ordinary imperialist politics or international rivalries—it is the planned purposeful preparation for armed intervention against the Soviet Union that is in question. It is the War of the Worlds that is being prepared—the coming clash between the world of capitalism in its most extreme form of decay and the world of a new socialist life. Hitler's tanks and bombing planes, his poison gas and submarines, the decision to reintroduce conscription in open defiance of the Versailles Treaty, the frenzied nationalist and race propaganda of the Nazis, all these constitute a direct menace to the socialist soil of the Soviet Union, that is to say, to the hopes of millions throughout the world. The real aim of German rearmament was expressed in the Hugenburg Memorandum to the World Economic Conference, in Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, in the writings and speeches of Alfred Rosenberg, White Russian and foreign adviser to Hitler, in the daily anti-Soviet incitements of the Nazi press—the aim of territorial expansion at the expense of the hated working-class republic.

An important task lies before the Friends of the Soviet Union in British-speaking countries. Mr. Forbes, at Ottawa, has declared that New Zealand is tied, hand and foot, to the imperialist war policies of Great Britain. New Zealanders must show, in no uncertain voice, that they will not be dragged into another European war on the joint decision of Downing Street, Threadneedle Street and Fleet Street. Least of all will they support a war of intervention against the Soviet Union.

July—

Border incidents have a greater significance than the casual words imply. Frequently they are "incidents" in a general cam-

paign of aggression, planned provocations to furnish an excuse for attack, the ominous forerunners of war.

The shooting of a Red Army guard on the Far Eastern territory of the Soviet Union by a Japanese Manchurian detachment coincides ominously with the new advance of Japanese troops into North China. Border disputes are bound to arise where the frontiers of two great powers adjoin, But where the will to peace exists, the question of war will not be raised. But where one power is deliberately and openly planning armed attack against the other, the smallest incident may serve as the signal and the excuse for an outbreak of hostilities. All the more is this true when one of the powers is the world's first Union of Socialist Republics, the U.S.S.R., and the other the champion of the feudalist-capitalist ruling circles of the East, Japanese Imperialism.

It is certain that Soviet diplomacy will approach the question of this incident with the strongest desire for peaceful understanding and settlement. But the Soviet Union cannot close its eyes to the avowed intentions of Japanese imperialism, to the Tanaka memorandum of 1927, with its programme for the seizure of Manchuria, Mongolia and the Soviet Far East (a programme already partly completed), to the building of military and strategic railroads in Manchuria to the borders of the Soviet Union, to the warlike statements of General Araki and the Japanese press, to the ever-growing relationship between Japan and the chief interventionist power in the West, fascist Germany.

August—

Twenty-one years after the outbreak of the most murderous and destructive war in human history, the world is once again faced with the problems of war or peace, the danger of the outbreak of a Second World War, the urgent and vital task of mobilisation of all forces opposed to war.

A glance at the headlines of the daily press, at the new armament races, new war plots and military alliances, reveals with unmistakable clarity that we have already passed out of the post-war

period; to-day we stand in a new pre-war period. Any day may see the repetition of 1914—on a scale even the most frenzied militarists of that day could not imagine.

In one important particular 1935 does differ vitally from 1914. For the first time in modern history one great state Power has lined itself up whole-heartedly on the side of the forces making for peace, staking the whole of its energies and resources on preventing the new world slaughter, unceasingly and untiringly bearing the banner of international peace and friendship. That State is the Soviet Union, the first group of socialist republics in the world, the first great portion of the earth's surface to free itself from the predatory war policies of capitalism, and take up the work of the peaceful reconstruction of human society. If the peace policy of the Soviet Union can receive effective support from the organised anti-war forces of other lands, 1914 may yet not be repeated.

October—

Abyssinia continues to hold the centre of the world's stage. Italian Fascism has loudly proclaimed its intention to launch a war of conquest against this independent African state, and to leave the League of Nations unless the League will endorse its military policy. Troops are being massed in East Africa, preparations being made for a surprise attack on the capital of Abyssinia, and it is possible that before these lines see print the war in Africa will already have commenced. But war in Africa is widely recognised to be only the forerunner to a far more disastrous conflict in Europe. It would mean the unleashing of the war forces throughout the world for the redistribution of the world and for a common war against the land of socialism. Speaker after speaker at the League Assembly echoed Litvinov's famous thesis, "Peace is indivisible," that at the present stage of world development war cannot be isolated, that a conflict in Africa may be the beginning of a new world war. From this arises the necessity for the concentration of every available force for the prevention of Italian aggression in Abyssinia.

The Nazi press is openly jubilant over an expected breakdown of the League in connection with the Abyssinian dispute. Under the Anglo-German Naval Agreement the Hitler Government is constructing shallow draft naval vessels suitable for use in the Gulf of Finland against Leningrad. In Finland itself large air bases are being constructed, obviously directed against the Soviet Union.

Most ominous of all is the recent news of a growing rapprochement between Germany and Italy, formerly at daggers drawn over the question of Austria. The basis for such a rapprochement is obvious. In return for a free hand against Abyssinia, Italy is prepared to grant Germany concessions in Austria, and a free hand in its war plans against the Soviet Union. Italy is rapidly moving away from its friendship for France to an alliance with Europe's chief warmonger, Fascist Germany. Just as the Soviet Union is more and more clearly displaying itself as the leader of all forces making for peace, so Fascist Germany is placing itself at the head of all the advocates of war.

The recent protests of a number of governments, particularly of the American Government, against the holding of a Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, is a repetition of the familiar policy of attempting to discredit the peace policy of the Soviet Union by saddling it with the responsibility for industrial and political unrest in capitalist countries. It cannot be too often emphasised that the Soviet Government and the Communist International are two entirely separate bodies, the Communist International being composed of the representatives of the various Communist Parties throughout the world. The Soviet Government, which gives permission to the Communist International to have its headquarters and hold its congresses in Moscow, can no more be expected to accept responsibility for the utterances of the delegates to those congresses than the American Government could be held responsible for the statements of delegates to a Rotary Conference held, say, in New York. The Soviet Government has frequently repeated, and proved in practice, that it desires friendly relations with every country in the world. It stands unreservedly for the right of every nation to deter-

mine its own form of Government and social organisation. If conditions in other countries breed sharp critics of those governments, the responsibility can hardly be laid at the door of the Soviet Government.

November—

War has begun! In defiance of the Kellogg Pact, in defiance of the League of Nations Covenant, in defiance of the concerted efforts of all friends of peace, the Italian attack on Abyssinia has been launched. Italian Fascism has thrown a lighted torch into the powder magazine of European and imperialist rivalries. The question of peace or war occupies the central point in world affairs to-day. To-day it is of supreme importance that the forces of peace should recapture the position they have lost, check the Fascist seizure of Abyssinia, prevent the further development of the war, place concrete obstacles in the way of the most aggressive war-mongers.

At Geneva Soviet representatives are whole-heartedly co-operating in all efforts for the support of the existing system of collective security. For the Soviet Union this problem is no easy one. Italy is a country with which the Soviet Union has maintained friendly relations and close trade ties for a number of years, proving conclusively that it is possible for countries of the most diverse economic and social systems to collaborate. Yet, in the eyes of the Soviet Union, the question of the maintenance of peace overrides all other considerations. On September 13th Litvinov stated decisively: "If the council's efforts fail and the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia comes before us, Russia will pass its judgment with impartiality and courage which will not be shaken by intimidation or abuse."

The Soviet Union approaches the question of the Abyssinian war from a fundamentally different point of view from those powers who have themselves African interests to protect, and who are alarmed by the expansion of Italian imperialism. Stalin's statement: "We do not want one inch of foreign territory," still stands. Numer-

ous incidents have shown sharply the anti-imperialist basis of the Soviet foreign policy. On September 7th the London *Times* wrote: "It is now known that M. Litvinov refused yesterday to accept membership of the Committee of Five, as at first proposed, because he regarded it as a facade behind which the council would escape from its responsibilities and make further concessions to Italy. M. Litvinov afterwards made his strong speech at the public meeting of yesterday in order to counteract this tendency." Again, on September 13th, Litvinov is reported to have said: "The Soviet is opposed to the system of colonies, spheres of influence or imperialism. For us there is only one question, the defence of the Covenant as an instrument of peace for use in all cases of aggression."

The further existence of the League and of the whole organisation of collective security against aggression is in fact involved in the present crisis. Failure to check Italy would involve the breakdown of the whole system of world peace, and the inevitability of an outbreak of European war, involving an attack on the Soviet Union itself.

January, 1936—

The recent Hoare-Laval plan to legalise Italian aggression by presenting Mussolini with a vast stretch of Abyssinian territory has been greeted by a storm of protest throughout the world. The extreme danger presented to world peace if the plan is successful must be grasped. Should such a plan be agreed to, permission would be given to every warmongering group to embark on a war of conquest, with the knowledge that its robbery would afterwards be endorsed and rewarded by leading League States "in the interests of peace." The League Covenant would collapse as a mockery and a delusion, and no barrier would remain against the unleashing of war forces.

The whole situation is fraught with menace. Behind the scenes Hitler is ceaselessly intriguing for his anti-Soviet bloc, and for the support of Britain and France. A danger signal for all friends of the Soviet Union was shown on November 2nd, when rumours

came from Geneva of a tentative British plan to reform the League, by bringing Germany back and "establishing a new security system based upon co-operation between France, Germany and Britain. Supporters of this proposal, including Dr. Schacht, German Minister of Economic Affairs, emphasise that it is essential for France not to ratify her agreement with the Soviet, as it envisages the ultimate recognition of Germany's right to expand eastward." Every weakening of the system of collective security on the part of representatives of the British Government lends support to these rumours. Laval's reluctance to conclude the Franco-Soviet Pact is well known; the sympathy of the British National Government for Hitler's Nazi regime is also notorious. If Abyssinia is abandoned to Italian Fascism, the way will be prepared for the desertion of the Soviet Union in the face of Nazi attack. This is the objective of Hitler's manoeuvres. This is the menace which all friends of peace must unite to defeat.

New Zealand's Labour Government faces a difficult period in its international relations. New Zealand is a League State, with a voice in its decisions, at a time when the whole future of peace in the world is at stake. The leaders of the Labour Party have frequently stated their devotion to the League and to the cause of international peace. It is inconceivable that the Government can lend its support to the robbery proposed by Sir Samuel Hoare. By adding its voice and its vote to that of the Soviet Union at Geneva, it can assist in the cause of peace, and lay the basis for a fruitful period of co-operation between the Soviet Union and our country. Prior to the elections, Mr. Thorn, National Secretary of the Labour Party, wrote: "The return of a Labour Government in New Zealand would be the best possible guarantee that this country at least would not be a party to anything which would detrimentally affect the U.S.S.R." It is not only the interests of the U.S.S.R. which are at stake at the present moment, but the future of peace in the world. We hope that the Labour Government will justify the high hopes placed in it by the mass of the people of New Zealand.

THE FIGHT FOR PEACE

Being articles appearing in the *Workers' Weekly* and its successor *The People's Voice,* Communist Party newspapers, 1936-39; when the primary concern of Communists was the defeat of the war plans of the Fascist Powers, together with the welfare and freedom of the New Zealand people. During much of this time Gordon Watson was editor of these papers.

LOVELOCK'S COUNTRY

[From *Workers' Weekly*, August 15, 1936.]

LOVELOCK! Every New Zealand worker is proud of the name of the man who broke the world's record for 1500 metres run in one of the finest performances ever seen at an Olympiad. Even the presence of a Hitler, champion of race and national hatred, impudently exploiting the Olympic's tradition for Fascist ends, could not detract from the splendour of his achievement.

We are proud of J. E. Lovelock because he shows us that ours is a great country, with a great future, not only in the realm of sport, but in every other field of life. His name brings honour to our country; just the same as the names of men like Coates and Forbes inflicted on it humiliation and disgrace.

Communists are sometimes accused of being friends of every country but their own. It is not true. We love our country. We want to see it honoured and respected, and take a worthy place among the community of nations. We pay tribute to Lovelock because he has made the name of New Zealand greater. And it is precisely because we love our country that we lead the attack against the small group of monopolists and bondholders who are imposing misery and degradation on our people.

Let us not forget in our pleasure at the achievement of Lovelock that the present system thwarts and stifles and destroys thousands of our people, men and women, who would be great sportsmen, great artists, great scientists, given the opportunity. We do not know how many Lovelocks there are, deprived of sports grounds and training facilities, sent to sell papers on the streets when still children, condemned in early youth to unhealthy factories or mortgage-ridden farms, prisoners of the sweat-shop or the milking shed. Capitalism daily destroys both the bodies and the minds of our people, the workers and the working farmers of our country.

Lovelock's victory is a fine thing. But the finest struggle and the greatest victory lie ahead: the victory of Lovelock's country in its struggle against the rule of the monopolists, for a free, strong and happy New Zealand.

A GOOD START AT GENEVA

[From *Workers' Weekly*, October 2, 1936.]

MR. JORDAN, representative of the New Zealand Labour Government at Geneva, has made a splendid start. His defence of the rights of Abyssinia, victim of Fascist aggression, to take its legitimate place as a member of the League of Nations, has brought credit to the Labour Government and honour to the people of New Zealand in the eyes of the world's peace forces.

In face of the blackmail of Italian Fascism, which refused to be present at the League unless its victim was excluded, Mr. Jordan stood firm. Together with Litvinov, representative of the Workers' and Farmers' Government of the Soviet Union, he played the leading part in the essential preliminary discussions of the Credentials Committee. We hope that co-operation with the Soviet Union, thus initiated, will be continued by the Labour Government through the whole future field of the struggle for peace.

Contrast this with the ignominous position New Zealand held at Geneva under the Coates-Forbes Government. It was taken for granted that what the British Government said, New Zealand would say also. If Britain went to war, New Zealand would go to war, stated George Forbes. Mr. Jordan has said "good-bye to all that." No wonder Mr. Anthony Eden is reported to have remained "glumly silent."

Admirable as was Mr. Jordan's stand against Italian aggression in Abyssinia, he will have more severe trials to face in this present turbulent period of world history. It was a splendid start; but still only a start. We are confident that with the backing and active co-operation of all peace forces in New Zealand he will continue along the road of undeviating support for collective security he has already undertaken.

Two important testing points stand out in the near future. The first is the infamous proposal for League "reform," which is so popular among sections of the British ruling class; the proposal to bring Germany back to the League by making the League safe for

aggressors; leaving the way open for a Nazi war of aggression in Europe, more fearful than the Abyssinian war, by drawing the fangs from the League Covenant. The memorandum of the New Zealand Labour Government on League reform disowns this treacherous scheme; we have no doubt Mr. Jordan will continue an active fight for the principles of the Government's memorandum, in face of the opposition of Britain's Tory Government.

The second is the question of Spain. A legal government, a member of the League, is fighting for its life against the forces of Fascist rebellion. On the initiative of the Governments of France and Britain, virtual "sanctions" have been applied against the democratic Spanish Government, blocking it from the supplies of arms to which it is legitimately entitled. "Neutrality," however well-intentioned, has proved a farce, in view of the continued support of German and Italian Fascism for the rebels, and their consistent violation of their promises of neutrality. In the cause of peace and democracy the embargo against the Spanish Government must be lifted. Mr. Jordan should use his undoubted influence in League circles to see that this is done.

SOME PROBLEMS OF THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

[This article, which appeared in the *Workers' Weekly*, November 6, 1936, was a contribution to the discussion preceding the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party held the following month.]

ONE OF THE illusions at which our next Party Congress must deal a sharp blow, an illusion which exists even in the ranks of our party membership, is the idea that New Zealand stands in no danger of an aggressive attack in the present ever more menacing war situation. We must say frankly, both to our party membership and to the whole working class, that New Zealand does stand under the shadow of an armed attack by imperialism, and that we Communists are very much concerned to ensure that the people of our country shall be adequately defended against such aggression.

We must take to heart the words of Comrade Dimitrov in his article on "The United Front of the Struggle for Peace": "Japan has already occupied Manchuria, and is now occupying one province of China after another. Japanese imperialism is striving by this means to subject all the peoples of Asia, including India, and to seize the Philippines and Australia." There can be no doubt that New Zealand must also be included with Australia.

Lieutenant-Commander Tota Ishimaru expresses the ambitions of the Japanese military Fascist caste, when he writes in his book *Japan Must Fight Britain* (1935): "Australia and New Zealand would be the first aims of Japanese conquest." Such statements could easily be paralleled in the writings and speeches of the extreme militarist clique which rules Japan.

We Communists would not be doing our job as the defenders of the real interests of the New Zealand people did we not sound the warning signal at this coming Party Congress, and map out a concrete programme of struggle against this threat to the independence and security of our country.

This does not mean that we have the slightest intention of revising our general attitude towards expenditure on armaments, and the drawing of New Zealand into a new armaments race side by side with British Imperialism. In our view, this course leads back to

the blood-stained path of 1914; the defence of our country must be secured by other more effective means, designed to prevent the outbreak of a bloody imperialist war, to which our country would fall a victim.

In the first place, New Zealand must take an active part in a concrete programme of peace and collective security against aggression, particularly as regards the Pacific. In the centre of our agitation we must place the demand for a Pacific Ocean Peace Pact, similar to the Franco-Soviet Pact, and open to all countries bordering on the Pacific. Such a pact must contain concrete guarantees of mutual assistance, and be open to all countries, including Japan.

It goes without saying that such a pact must include the Soviet Union, the great bulwark of peace and the guarantor of the independence of small nations. In the Far East the Soviet Union stands as an unbreakable barrier to the expansionist aims of Japanese imperialism. We must brand those reactionary forces in New Zealand who are opposed to such a pact with the Soviet Union as traitors to their country, who would rather see New Zealand a Japanese colony than a free, democratic country.

Such a policy will necessitate a sharp struggle against British Imperialism and the line pursued by the present Baldwin Government, which is sacrificing the security and independence of the Dominions by its policy of veiled support for German Fascism and Japanese militarism. This stands out sharply in the present crisis in Spain, where British Imperialism through its support of Fascism is surrendering the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal to the most bitter enemies of peace and freedom.

This does not mean that we would be justified in adopting a completely negative and isolationist attitude towards Great Britain. The Labour and democratic forces of Great Britain are fighting for the replacement of the pro-Fascist Baldwin Government by a third Labour Government pledged to the defence of peace and collective security. We do not want a breaking of the ties of blood and common interest which bind us to the people of Great Britain. But

we say that those ties are being endangered by the treacherous policy of Baldwin and Anthony Eden.

We say that we are willing to enter into a pact of mutual assistance even with the present reactionary Government of Great Britain, as part of the general system of collective security. But certain conditions must be attached to such a pact.

(1) It must include the Soviet Union. We will absolutely oppose any pact with Nazi Germany, which has as its aim the giving of a free hand to Hitler in Eastern Europe by excluding the Soviet Union.

(2) It must be an open agreement to be invoked only in case of aggression against either of the partners and concluded within the Covenant of the League of Nations. We remain opposed as always to the present secret war commitments and military alliance which exist between New Zealand and Great Britain.

(3) It must be based on the participation of New Zealand as a free and equal partner, in accordance with the Statute of Westminster.

Such a foreign policy enforced by united action of the working class and of all peace lovers in New Zealand would be capable of saving our country from the horrors of war and of maintaining its independence and right to conduct its own affairs in its own way. Such a policy must be endorsed by the coming Party Congress.

THEY SHALL NOT LAND!

[From *Workers' Weekly*, June 7, 1938.]

AN INFERNO of murder and destruction has been loosed over China by Japanese military-Fascism. Chinese mothers and Chinese wives mourn their lost ones, while the capitals of ancient civilisation burn to ruins at the hands of modern barbarians, who order their pilots to fire on foreign vessels and machine gun the survivors. The response in New Zealand to the Far Eastern Relief Fund shows how the conscience of a freedom-loving people has been stirred by the wanton aggression of the Japanese Fascists against a peaceful nation.

Nor is this all. The fate of Shanghai has been mapped out in the blueprints of the Japanese militarists for the people of Sydney and of Auckland. They make no secret of it. With the mineral resources of China they boast that they will be able to carry forward their war of conquest to desolate Australia and New Zealand. "Australia and New Zealand will be the first fruits of Japanese conquest," writes Lieutenant Tota Ishimaru.

As part of this plan Japan is sending its agents to New Zealand. The Japanese consulates and trade agencies in China were used as spying centres in preparation for the military offensive. How then are we to regard the proposal to establish a Japanese Consulate-General in Wellington this year, recently announced in the *Straits Times* (Singapore)? From Singapore, where the Japanese agents have carried on spying and intrigue for years past, the Consul-General, Kiichi Gunji, will be sent to New Zealand's capital. There can be no other reason for this appointment in the present situation than a widening of the network of espionage.

At the present time four so-called "trade representatives" of Japan are in New Zealand. The New Zealand people do not want trade with Japan, as is shown by the widening boycott movement. Their presence in this country is an insult to the traditions of freedom for which our fathers fought.

By supporting the attitude of the Sydney Labour Council, which

recently called on the Australian Government "to eject from Australia the official representatives of Japan," the New Zealand Labour movement, and in particular the trade unions, could strike a powerful blow not only in aid of suffering China, but in defence of the freedom and independence of our country. The hand of the Labour Government, which has shown its sympathy for China at Geneva, would be enormously strengthened if the trade unions and all democratic organisations with one voice demanded that the shores of New Zealand be barred to the representatives of Japanese Fascism, and in the first place to the new Consul-General..

ZERO HOUR IN WORLD POLITICS

[From the *Workers' Weekly*, August 5, 1938.]

WHEN the *Workers' Weekly* claimed that Britain, the "Mother of Parliaments," under Neville Chamberlain was moving toward an alliance with Hitler Germany, the bloodiest enemy of peace and democracy in the whole world, there were many who believed that this was mere propagandist exaggeration. The events of the past week have confirmed the simple and terrible truth of our analysis and warnings.

On July 26, at the very time when yet another British ship was being bombed and machine gunned in Spanish waters by the planes of the German and Italian intervention, when great fires were raging in the Chinese city of Kiukiang, caused by the murderous campaign of the Japanese militarists, Neville Chamberlain announced Britain's foreign policy.

"We have already demonstrated the possibility of complete agreement between the democratic and totalitarian states, and I do not see myself why the experiment cannot be repeated."

Then, after a reference to the Anglo-German Treaty of 1935 the treaty which gave the official stamp of British approval to Hitler's repudiation of all treaties and to his illegal armaments (the very armaments which are allegedly the cause of Britain's gigantic armaments programme which is crushing the life out of the British people), he continued:

"But there the treaty stands as a demonstration that it is possible for Germany and ourselves to agree upon matters which are vital to both of us. We ought not to find it impossible to continue our efforts toward an understanding which would do so much to bring back confidence to Europe." (Press report, July 28.)

Chamberlain's speech has only one meaning. It means that the pro-Fascist Chamberlain Government is determined to ratify the Anglo-Italian Pact in face of the rising democratic opposition in Great Britain and in spite of Mussolini's continued and intensified inter-

vention against Spain. It means further that Chamberlain intends to supplement this infamous pact by a similar one with Hitler, thus bringing Britain fully into the Rome-Berlin Axis.

This has nothing to do with peace. Did the Anglo-Italian agreement call a halt to Mussolini's intervention in Spain? On the contrary, it increased it. Has Chamberlain's policy even stopped the bombing of British ships and the murder of British seamen by Italian Caproni and Fiat bombers?

The conclusion of the pact with Nazi Germany and the ratification of the Anglo-Italian agreement would not mean that Britain has successfully brought about "appeasement" between the democratic and the fascist countries, as Chamberlain lyingly claims. It would mean only that Britain had openly and finally passed over from the camp of peace to the camp of war.

In every field this policy is being pushed forward.

Following the visit of Hitler's personal aide-de-camp to Lord Halifax, Lord Runciman, millionaire shipping magnate, has been sent as "arbitrator" to Czechoslovakia. Arbitrator between whom? Between the legal, democratic Government of the independent Czechoslovakian State, which has just received a powerful mandate in the recent municipal elections, and the Henlein Party, the paid spies, thugs and bandits of Hitler in Czechoslovakia, the animals who teach children to carry "death lists" of prominent Labour and democratic leaders for the day "when Hitler comes"! Already Chamberlain in his speech of the 26th refers to the legal Government and the bandit Henlein Party as the "two parties" in a dispute. The same policy is to be applied to Czechoslovakia as was applied to Spain, where the legal Government and the baby killer Franco were given equal status under the non-intervention agreement — with similar results.

On the other side of the world the British Ambassador to Japan and the Japanese Minister of War are in conference. "The British authorities have intimated to Tokio their readiness to begin conversations with a view to a pact of friendship similar to that between Britain and Italy." (Australian Associated Press, July 27.) While

Chinese cities blaze and the old civilisation of China is being looted and blown to bits by Hitler's allies in the East, all that Britain asks from Japan as the price of her friendship is "a token payment" for damage done to British property in Shanghai. Judas sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Chamberlain is ready to sell the lives of millions of Chinese people and their homes and their families, and the honour of his own country, for "a token payment" on the thirty pieces. Meanwhile, the British Government has refused to guarantee a loan to China to assist it to resist aggression.

This is the terrible reality of the present situation. Chamberlain is on the eve of an agreement with Nazi Germany and with Japan, directed against the Soviet Union, the French People's Front, Spain and China, and democracy everywhere. Unless he can be stopped world war will be brought immeasurably closer.

But he can be stopped. All over the world the forces of opposition to Fascism and to Chamberlain, Lord Halifax, Lord Runciman and its other titled backers, is growing. The Anglo-Italian agreement was based on the assumption that the Spanish Republican forces would be defeated in a few weeks during the black days of March. To-day the Spanish people, in the greatest epic of history, have not only stopped the Fascist advance, but have carried out a successful three-day offensive on the Ebro front, recapturing 250 square miles of territory. In Britain itself the forces of the peace alliance are growing every day, and are only held back from finally smashing Chamberlain and his policy by the reactionary, anti-unity policy of men like Citrine and Bevin, leaders of the British Trade Union Congress.

Chamberlain is moving toward open alliance at such breakneck speed precisely because he is afraid, desperately afraid of the advance of the democratic forces, and wants to forestall them with an accomplished fact.

The forces of peace and war are in the balance. The forces of war have advanced, but so have the forces of peace and democracy. In such a situation the role of New Zealand democracy may well be decisive. Ours is the only Dominion with a progres-

sive Labour Government pledged to the defence of peace and the principles of the League of Nations. Its stand against aggression through Mr. Jordan has already acted as a powerful incentive to the anti-Chamberlain forces of Great Britain. But the situation is more menacing and more urgent than it was six months ago, or even three months ago. New Zealand must make its voice heard still more firmly and decisively.

There is no reader of the *Workers' Weekly* who cannot play his part in the fight for a real New Zealand policy and against the policy of treachery represented by Chamberlain. And it may be just your effort that will turn the scales, so closely balanced are the issues of war and peace.

If you are a member of a trade union, of the Labour Party, of the Communist Party, of the League of Nations' Union, of any women's organisation or youth organisation, if you are a member of the National Party even, there is something you can do. You can get your organisation to call a public meeting of protest, either by itself or in conjunction with other organisations. You can speed up one of the many forms of help to Spain and China that are being developed. You can send a letter or a resolution from your organisation to the Prime Minister or to your M.P. urging the New Zealand Government to use all its influence to stop this disastrous policy which is leaving New Zealand wide open to Japanese aggression in the Pacific. If you really set about it, you can think of a hundred different ways of helping, so many that they would take more than a page of this paper.

But you must *act* if you want to save peace.

To-day there is still time. To-morrow may be too late!

THE HERALD AND MR. CHAMBERLAIN

[This letter, which was addressed to the *New Zealand Herald,* Auckland, was neither published nor acknowledged, and was later printed in the *Workers' Weekly.* It refers to a poster demonstration outside the Auckland Town Hall when the Mayor was leading a mass meeting tendering thanks to the British Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, for "saving peace" at Munich.

The Nazis had long been intriguing, agitating and threatening for the cession to Germany of the Sudetenland, an integral part of Czechoslovakia whose population included many people of German descent. Hitler declared this to be his "last territorial claim in Europe." A crisis developed; there was war hysteria and trenches were dug in London. Three times Neville Chamberlain flew personally to make terms with Hitler and on the third occasion, at Munich, he signed a pact with Hitler, Mussolini, and the French Premier, M. Daladier, granting the Nazi claims, in defiance of all treaties. Neither Czechoslovakia nor the Soviet Union, which had re-emphasised its willingness to stand by her, was admitted to the Conference.

Only a few people resisted the hysteria about the "saving of peace" and insisted that the defences of peace had in fact been sacrificed. Six months later Hitler marched into Prague and all Czechoslovakia fell to him; six months later again, he invaded Poland and precipitated war with Britain and France.

"Munich" is now an infamous byword.]

Dear Sir—

As one of those who took part in yesterday's demonstration outside the Town Hall against the resolution of congratulations to Mr. Neville Chamberlain, proposed by the Mayor, I wish to protest against your editorial of to-day entitled "Pernicious Anaemia."

You state: "The assertion that Mr. Chamberlain's action is a surrender to Fascism is completely disproved by all the evidence, documentary and other." I would be interested to see one single shred of evidence, documentary or otherwise, that disproves it in the slightest measure. Surely the entry of German troops, closely followed by the troops of Germany's ally, Poland, into some of the richest areas of Central Europe's one remaining democracy, is sufficiently tangible evidence to the contrary. Such intangible concessions as British prestige, which appear to carry no weight with Mr. Cham-

berlain since Italian aviators engaged in bombing British seamen in Spanish waters were rewarded for their trouble by the Anglo-Italian agreement, are in this case supplemented by the very material concessions of £50 million of fortifications, which alone stood between Czechoslovakia and destruction, the richest coal mines of Czechoslovakia and the other wealth of the Sudeten areas.

The plain fact is that, under the direct threat of war, Hitler Germany has won from the democracies a further base for its openly proclaimed programme of European domination. I hope I may be excused if I fail to understand how this assists the cause of peace in any way, any more than I can understand why Sir Ernest Davis, himself a member of a persecuted race, should applaud the handing over of two hundred thousand Sudeten Jews to Hitlerism.

Your empty jibe against those who "are urging others to fight at the first provocation" can hardly be taken seriously. Those of us who oppose Mr. Chamberlain's policy do so precisely because it leads recklessly and inevitably toward war. Every concession to Fascism in the past has simply whetted its appetite for further conquest and sharpened the whole war crisis. Concurrence in Hitler's seizure of the Rhineland led to his occupation of Austria in March. From the occupation of Austria, Fascist aggression has gone on to the seizure of Czech territory. Where next?

In conclusion, I would like to recall the words of your own editorial of the 15th September. "To concede self-determination to the Sudetens would leave Czechoslovakia naked and defenceless . . . the Czechs will go down fighting, unless their friends among the Great Powers should prevail on them to self-betrayal for peace. It is extremely doubtful whether such counsels would prevail or whether they would even be offered. She stands as the last outpost of democracy in the dictatorial flood covering Central and Eastern Europe, and as the last barrier to the German drive down the Danube to the Black Sea and Mediterranean."

Have you forgotten them so soon?

—C. G. WATSON.

Auckland, October 3, 1938.

EUROPE WILL NOT BE FASCIST

[From the *Workers' Weekly*, March 24, 1939.]

GERMAN TROOPS have entered Prague.

Think for a moment what that means.

Five months ago Czechoslovakia stood intact, with its democratic institutions, with its modern and efficient army and air force, with its Maginot Line defending its frontiers, with its alliances with France and the Soviet Union. Democracy still possessed a fortress in Central Europe.

Then came Munich when the statesmen of France and Britain conspired with Hitler and Mussolini to hand over their ally, its hands bound for the slaughter, to the Nazi war machine.

Following Munich there has come in relentless succession blow after blow against the democracies; the fall of Canton, the Italian capture of Barcelona, and now—Prague.

After Munich, Chamberlain, the main architect of Britain's humiliation, announced that Britain and France had guaranteed Czechoslovakia's new frontiers as they existed after the occupation of the Sudeten areas. It was alleged that the new frontiers would be more stable than the old.

Where is that guarantee to-day? Asked by Major Attlee, leader of the British Labour Party, what had happened to the British guarantee, Chamberlain replied that no unprovoked aggression had taken place. French Foreign Office spokesmen made the same statement.

Within four hours the German troops were in Prague. Czechoslovakia is no more. The jackals of Fascism have smelt easy blood and plunder.

We were told once that "an Englishman's word is as good as his bond." Chamberlain has made the name of England stink as a synonym for duplicity and treachery.

What truth is there in the argument that the Slovak "uprising" is an internal question which does not concern Britain and France?

The Slovak rebellion, organised by Nazi agents and armed from Germany, was no more than the spearhead for German occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Previously Hitler gave his plans of aggression a certain mask, claiming that his objective was simply to unite all Germans under one Reich (Rule). There were even innocents in the democratic camp who echoed: "Why shouldn't all Germans be in the one State?" Now Fascism is extending its rule directly to the Slav peoples.

Who are these Slovaks of whom the man in the street has suddenly become aware under the pressure of events? Like the Czechs they are a Slav people, held before the war of 1914 in the prison house of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

When Bohemia lost its independence in 1520, the Czechs passed under the heels of the Austrian Hapsburgs. For a thousand years the Slovaks had been under the domination of Hungary. Czechs and Slovaks alike were united in their resistance to Austro-Hungarian tyranny.

During the war of 1914-18, after four hundred years, the opportunity for freedom came. Czechs and Slovaks worked together to throw off the yoke of Austrian and Hungarian rule, and to win national independence. The Czechs, as a people, further advanced in political and cultural development, held out a helping hand to the Slovaks in their struggles. Masaryk, the leader of the struggle for Czech independence. was himself by descent a Slovak, born in Moravia.

In her book, *Europe and the Czechs,* Miss S. Grant Duff writes:

"The Austro-Hungarian Empire crumbled before the will to freedom of the Czechs and Slovaks, and their daring refusal to fight for a cause not their own. At first the expression of Czech national feeling was muzzled by censorship, imprisonment and death. As the war progressed and constant reverses at the front made concessions to the subject nations imperative, national aspirations were more and more openly expressed." (Pps. 52-53.)

On October 28th-29th, 1918, a national assembly of the Slovak people declared:

"The Slovak nation is part of the Czechoslovak nation—one with it in language and in the history of its civilisation. In all the struggles in which the Czech people has engaged, which have made it famous throughout the world, the Slovak branch has also taken part. We also claim for this, the Czechoslovak nation, the absolute right of self-determination on a basis of complete independence."

So the Slovaks of their own will came voluntarily together with the Czechs to form the new State of Czechoslovakia. The picture painted by Fascist apologists of Czechoslovakia as an artificial post-war creation of the Allies is a lying invention.

To-day the Czech capital, Prague, is directly occupied by German troops, while the Slovak puppets of Hitler have declared an "independent" Slovakia which is nothing but the pawn of Hilter. Possibly their Nazi paymasters will not even allow them the privilege of playing at governments for very long.

The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia is complete. After twenty brief years of freedom the Czechoslovakian people have returned to a tryranny darker and bloodier than that of the Hapsburgs, against which they fought during the centuries.

Germany and the jackal State, Hungary, which assisted it in tearing up the living body of Czechoslovakia, have cleared a road to Poland and the Ukraine, aiming at the complete domination of Eastern Europe and the eventual attack on the Soviet Union.

The Auckland *Star*, which a few months ago was hysterically thanking Chamberlain for Munich, comments in an editorial called "Hitler Over All":

"Concerning all these happenings there need be no surprise. They were made possible by the Munich agreement which saved the world's peace, at a price which was not paid then, and has not been fully paid yet. They support the apprehensions of those who contended, long before September: 'Once let the Czech fortress fall,

and the tide of totalitarian State doctrine will flood across the Danubian and Balkan area.' "

It is easy to be wise after the event. Didn't the *Star* grovel before a second Munich when it supported the British-French recognition of Franco? Won't it grovel again when Chamberlain cracks the whip?

Hitler's troops may occupy Prague, but they cannot subdue the Czech people. They will not have to wait four hundred years this time to regain their independence. The brave people who gave the clenched fist salute and hissed the German troops as they entered the city will never be crushed.

In Eastern Europe the forces of the people are uniting for resistance to Fascism. In Poland, which may easily become the next centre of mass anti-Fascist resistance, the people are on the move. In Britain and France millions are awakening to the meaning of Munich.

Europe will not be Fascist.

PRETTY WORDS AND UGLY FACTS

[Editorial from the *Workers' Weekly*, April 28, 1939.]

WHO IS IT who thinks of all those pretty phrases which are becoming so popular as a means of cloaking ugly facts?

They talk of "appeasement" when they mean alliance with Fascism.

They talk of "non-intervention" when they mean intervention against a legal government and the strangling of democracy.

The latest of these phrases to reach New Zealand is "national service," words which are being heard more and more. For "national service," in the mouths of those who are using it at the present time, is nothing more than the cellophane wrapping for conscription.

The Defence League and the Legion of Frontiersmen have been particularly active in the last few weeks in bringing forward resolutions demanding compulsory military service, a national register and other measures directed toward the universal conscription of every man, woman and child into a militarist machine.

No paper has more consistently exposed the menace of Fascist aggression to New Zealand than has the *Workers' Weekly*. It might be recalled that at a time when the Mayor of Auckland (now leading a recruiting campaign) was thanking God for having restored peace at Munich through the intervention of Mr. Chamberlain, the *Weekly* exposed the full meaning of Munich as opening the flood gates of war in the world. We have, time after time, laid bare the plans of Japanese Imperialism for southward expansion, and urged the fullest measure of support for the great Chinese people.

There is no question that the defence of New Zealand must be organised, and the last conference of the Communist Party devoted considerable time to working out concrete defence measures. But defence must be organised on a democratic basis; it is impossible to create adequate defence against Fascist aggression through the restriction of democratic rights in New Zealand.

All kinds of people are fishing in the troubled waters of defence. Under cover of their concern for "defence" they want to carry through an attack on democracy in New Zealand. Let us judge of their sincerity by putting the following questions:—

When did the gentlemen of the Defence League, the Legion of Frontiersmen or the Chambers of Commerce raise their voices against the betrayal of Spain by Chamberlain, which meant the surrender of New Zealand's trade routes and communications with Britain to Hitler and Mussolini?

When did they advocate an embargo of exports to Japan and the boycott of Japanese goods, thereby depriving Japan of the means of carrying on its war in China?

When did they advocate democratic reorganisation of the New Zealand armed forces, thereby strengthening them and making them more attractive to recruits?

When did they demand that New Zealand urge on Great Britain the need for a pact with the mighty Soviet Union, the strongest armed support of democracy?

By their silence on all these issues their sincerity may be judged. Their present campaign is not one for the defence of New Zealand against Fascist aggression, but for the defence of vested interests and militarism against democracy.

It is of the greatest importance that the recent conference of the Labour Party reaffirmed its traditional opposition to compulsory military training. But something more positive is needed at the present time.

For the demand for conscription does not come only from a few extreme Jingoes of the Defence League-Legion of Frontiersmen school. There is no doubt that tremendous pressure will be put on the Labour Government from the Chamberlain Government at the present Defence Conference in Wellington to introduce at least a "national register" as the first step toward conscription.

It is necessary to take up the campaign actively against the con-

scriptionists; to bring such bodies as the Legion of Frontiersmen (if they are to exist at all) under the control of the Government and the Defence Department; to carry through a radical reorganisation of the defence forces on the basis of democracy; to provide the people with adequate means of defence against air raids; to throw the whole weight of the Government behind a democratic foreign policy, such as it is committed to in its election programme. By such means, and such means only, will the conscriptionists be defeated, and the genuine democratic defence of New Zealand be organised.

A PARTY THAT BELONGS TO YOU

[From the *Workers' Weekly*, March 17, 1939.]

IN THE COURSE of a visit to many centres in the North Island, addressing meetings and holding discussions with the militants of the Labour movement, of the trade unions and Labour Party, I have been greatly impressed with the width and depth of the support existing for the Communist Party. Many of the "red baiters" of the present time would receive a healthy shock if they knew just how many of the best functionaries of the Labour Party and the trade unions are looking to the Communist Party and the *Workers' Weekly* for their lead on the problems of Labour policy and progress. For they would then realise that when they set out to fight Communism they have pitted themselves against a force which is living and growing in spite of all the obstacles placed in its way, and cannot be destroyed.

At the same time the Communist Party is growing in membership only slowly. The gap between sympathisers and members is far too great. We are in a situation at present when even a comparatively small numerical increase in the membership would mean a doubling and redoubling of all our activity. Every campaign we undertake comes up against the obstacle of our small membership. My discussions with a great number of supporters have convinced me that among the reasons holding back the growth of the party are a number of dangerous misconceptions about the role of the Communists and the future of the Labour movement.

Here is a common argument: "Yes, I am in favour of the Communist Party, but it wants to go too fast. Let's take one step at a time; first the Labour Party and then Communism."

How many workers, even sympathetic to the party, have this idea, that the Communist Party is a "party in a hurry," a party that wants to "introduce" Socialism overnight? A great many, I am afraid. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Marxism-Leninism, on which the Communist Party is based, teaches that every step in the policies of the working class must be determined realistically in line with the actual relation of class forces in the

country. Socialism cannot be an immediate issue in New Zealand at the present time, when a great majority of the people are still opposed to Socialism (it would be wrong to interpret the 1938 elections as a "vote for socialism"; it was a vote for the Labour Government and for social reform and progress), when there is no firm alliance between the workers and the farmers, when the Labour movement is itself split, with the most consistent Socialists, the Communists, excluded from the Labour Party.

The immediate issue is the fight against Fascism and the reactionary forces of Big Money behind the Nationalist Party, the fight for peace, the fight for the 1938 election programme of the Labour Party. On all these issues the Communist Party is prepared to collaborate loyally with the Labour Party and the Labour Government.

The Communist Party is not, and never has been, opposed to reforms, bettering the position of the workers and the toiling people. What it fights is the illusion that such reforms can be secured without struggle of the people against the enemies of progress; the policy of class collaboration which is still, unfortunately, dominant in the Labour Party, a policy which not only does not lead to socialism, but is unable even to maintain social reforms. The German Social-Democratic Party, which collapsed before Hitler, was not only unable to lead the workers to Socialism; it was unable even to defend capitalist democracy against the Fascists.

Building the Communist Party does not mean chasing Utopian butterflies; it means a collaboration in a hard-headed practical policy of improving the living standards of the people and beating back the forces of Fascism and reaction on the basis of the forces which can already be mobilised in this country at the present time.

A far worse misconception is the one heard, generally from old-timers in the Labour movement, dissatisfied with the weakness of Labour policy: "First it was the Liberals under Dick Seddon; now it is the Labour Party. When the Labour Party fails, it will be the turn of the Communist Party."

Let it be said without qualification that the Communist Party in its policy refuses to gamble on a failure of the Labour Government. Our policy is directed toward ensuring that the Labour

Government shall not fail; that it shall be strengthened and purged of all tendencies toward class collaboration until it becomes a fighting anti-Fascist Government.

For experience has shown that the failure of a Labour Government is not followed by a mass turnover of the workers toward Communism. In such an event the Communist Party might gain thousands of members, but tens and hundreds of thousands, disillusioned and disgusted, drop out of active political work altogether, while others swing over into the camp of reaction. The net result is a blow to the Labour movement, of which the Communist Party is a part.

That is the point. The Communist Party is not a narrow sectarian body which looks only to the results for itself. It is the property of the Labour movement, the property of the people, and regards itself as responsible to them. A defeat for the Labour movement is a defeat for the Communist Party. A victory for the Labour movement, which can only be secured by a strengthening of the Government and the unity of the Labour movement and the people in action behind it, would be a victory for the Communist Party also.

And, finally, there is the man or woman who says: "I can do better work outside the Communist Party." Have they ever thought over the absurdity of that statement? What would you think of the trade unionist who told you: "I can do better work for trade unionism outside my trade union"? You would not be very polite about it.

The Communist Party is a party that is in the making. It does not conceal or minimise its many weaknesses. But it can only be built into the steel core of New Zealand Labour, it can only overcome its weaknesses and flaws, through active collaboration of the best unionists, the best militant farmers, the best of the intellectuals, inside its ranks. Everything that it has of understanding and of experience is in the service of the people, in *your* service, whether you are inside the party or outside; but you must help by giving your understanding and experience to the party in active work, bearing the proud title of Communist.

THE FUTURE OF THE GUARANTEED PRICE

[From the *Workers' Weekly*, April 28, 1939. This article, one of many written on current problems of New Zealand welfare, is illustrative of a broad approach which remains valid irrespective of the effect of time on its topical interest.]

WHAT WILL BE the guaranteed price for dairy produce for next season? How will it be determined? What is the future of the whole guaranteed price system? These questions are being warmly debated by the "dairy farmers' Parliament," the Dairy Conference now meeting in Wellington. On the answer given to them a great deal depends, not only for farmers, but for the city workers. For the success of the trade unionists' struggles for a higher standard of living, particularly under the present difficult circumstances, depends to a great deal on the extent to which they can achieve a common understanding and common action with the exploited section of the farmers.

Mr. Nash, Minister of Marketing, in addressing the conference, spoke of "the necessity for securing an element of stability in New Zealand economy for the next year or eighteen months," and urged that the guaranteed price should be retained at the same figure as for the present season. This was in line with his recent address to the Federation of Labour Conference, indicating that there was little prospect of wage increases for the workers in the near future.

Whereas previously Labour propaganda laid its main emphasis on "poverty in the midst of plenty" and "raising the purchasing power of the people," it is now being switched on to the slogans of "more production" and "stability."

On the face of it, Mr. Nash has a reasonable case against an increase in the guaranteed price. It is probable that this year's trading operations will result in a deficit of over £1,000,000 in the Primary Produce Marketing Account. Even when last year's surplus is deducted from this, a deficit of £500,000 still remains to be met by the Government.

Moreover, it should be remembered that in the main the guaranteed price should be conceived as a stabilising price, eliminating the farmer's uncertainty as to his income, with deficits of bad years balancing the surpluses of good years.

Suppose that there was no guaranteed price in existence for this year. There would have been £1,000,000 less purchasing power distributed among dairy farmers, with all its resultant effects on workers of all kinds, storekeepers, etc. This is one factor which has to some extent cushioned New Zealand from the developing economic crisis.

The sheep farmers, faced by a £6,000,000 drop in their income this year, are now discussing the possibility of the extension of some form of guaranteed price to them.

But there are obvious limits beyond which the guaranteed price cannot be raised, if the deficit of one year is to be balanced by the surplus of the next. The £500,000 deficit, of which Mr. Nash spoke, must be replaced, either by an anticipated surplus of a future season, by the profit made by the Government on some other of its activities or by increased taxation on the wealthy.

There is another argument against further raising of the guaranteed price. Where it operates as a subsidy, as during this season, it operates indiscriminately, assisting both the rich farmers who need no assistance, and failing to solve the problems of those small farmers who most need help. Calculated on conditions of "average production," it cannot solve the problem of the small man, still struggling under extreme poverty.

Rather than a further raising of the guaranteed price, it would be better to introduce a discriminative principle, whereby the smaller farmer receives a higher guarantee than the well-off man. And it is precisely this which would result in increased farm production, since it is above all the small man who is handicapped by lack of machinery, of good herds and all kinds of farm requisites. From special assistance to the small farmer would come the greatest measure of increased production.

At the same time, although Mr. Nash spoke of the need of increasing farm production, this can hardly be regarded as the main problem. For what do the facts show?

Between the years 1928-29 and 1937-38 the *volume* of dairy production rose from 100 to 142, an increase of 42 per cent.

During the same period the gross farming *income* for those engaged in dairying rose from 100 to 113, an increase of 13 per cent.

(These figures are taken from the Government *Abstract of Statistics*. While the heading "dairying, etc.," also includes poultry and bee farmers, they can be taken as approximately correct for the dairy farmers by themselves.)

So while the physical volume of what the dairy farmers produce has increased in the last nine years by 42 per cent., their gross income has risen by only 13 per cent. (And, of course, "gross income" means the income of *all* the dairy farmers, telling us nothing of how it is distributed between poor and well-to-do farmers, or of how much more or less of this gross income has to be paid out in interest and other charges.)

No wonder the farmer feels sore when he is told to produce more as a means of increasing his income.

What has happened to this difference between production and income? There are many people in the countryside (and the Nationalist agitators breed this belief) who think that the greedy workers of the city have secured it.

But the figures for factory production tell the same tale, of a far greater increase in production than of real wages. Both workers and farmers are producing more, and getting a proportionately smaller share of their production in the form of increased income.

More production, by itself, will not solve the problems of the farmer any more than it will those of the workers, unless it is accompanied by measures to see that a larger share of the income realised by increased production goes to the producers.

This should be the answer to the question about the future of the guaranteed price. If the guaranteed price is to remain at this year's level (and it seems as if there is no other alternative) then it should be made effective by differential payments to those small farmers especially in need of assistance; by drastic action toward the profiteering which goes on in farm requisites, machinery, etc.; by extension of Governmental control over banking in order to make cheap credit available to the farmers; by resolutely rejecting the ship owners' demand for a further increase in freight; by further mortgage reduction if necessary.

There can be no stability in New Zealand farming unless the wealthy exploiters of the farmer are curbed.

INTEREST, PROFITS AND WAGES

[Editorial from the *Workers' Weekly*, May 19, 1939.]

MANY PEOPLE in the Labour Party, including a number of prominent M.P.'s, are disturbed about the possibility of a rise in the rate of interest in the near future, in connection with the Government's proposed internal loan. In order to attract the money which it requires, they believe the Government will be obliged to consent to this rise, which they regard as a contradiction of the party's expressed election policy.

This point of view cannot be simply brushed aside by calling its advocates "money magicians," a phrase which is becoming popular as a term of abuse with certain people in the Labour movement, who a few years ago were themselves the supporters of most fantastic theories regarding money and credit. It warrants more serious examination.

Interest does not grow out of money in a bank, as if money was giving birth to money. Where does it come from? The only sensible answer that has ever been given is the one that Marx made, that it comes from the unpaid labour of the workers.

But interest is only one part of this unpaid labour. The worker does not sell his labour power to a bank; he sells it to an employer who turns it into profits. What happens is this. All the values that the worker creates, over and above what he gets in the form of wages, pass into the hands of the capitalist class, who divide it up among themselves in the different forms of rent, interest and profits. His employer takes his share in the form of profits; the bank who lends the employer money receives it as interest; another share probably goes to the landlord as rent for the factory. Lower interest rates simply mean that the capitalist who lends money gets a less share of the total spoil.

But this does not exhaust the argument. It does not mean that we can say therefore that the question does not concern the working class movement. Take two examples. There are many small

middle class people, farmers and shopkeepers who need cheap money in order to carry on. These people are the allies of the working class and it is necessary to help them. Again, it is necessary, as the Labour Government realises, to expand secondary industry, in order to make New Zealand less open to the attacks of British finance capital, and dear money will slow up this process.

What is wanted is not a cheap money policy for all. The Wilson and Hortons can quite well borrow at whatever terms they can get. What is needed is a credit policy that will assist the struggling middle class people, who are the allies of the workers, and those manufacturers who need assistance and are prepared in return to maintain the best possible wages and conditions. Such a policy could quite well be operated by the Government by extending the scope of the State Advances Department or by nationalising the Bank of New Zealand.

There is another point to be considered. The growth of the credit system has been one of the main factors in making more violent and destructive the periodic crises of capitalism. By speeding up the development of the means of production (machinery, factories, etc.), it has widened more rapidly the gap between increased production and the limited purchasing power of the masses, that is the root of every crisis. Would not a cheap money policy on the part of the Labour Government simply lead to a more disastrous crisis?

To some extent this would be offset by the differential policy of cheap money only for the small man, proposed above. But the main means of fighting the development of crisis should be sought in raising the purchasing power of the masses, on the one hand, and taxation of the rich on the other. This would counteract the inflationary tendencies that would otherwise exist.

In spite of the undoubted advance in real wages since the advent of the Labour Government, they still remain in many cases terribly low. Many labourers do not average more than £2/15/- a week. A wage of £4 to £5 is little enough on which to live and bring up a family. Spokesmen of the Government, like Mr. Sullivan recently,

have spoken of stabilising wages. But wages will not even be stabilised unless they are brought into line with the increases in the cost of living that have already taken place.

This is the central feature of the situation. While we believe that the advocates of financial reform within the Labour Party have a case, particularly insofar as their proposals are directed against the sabotage of the banks and might afford relief to the struggling middle classes, it would be wrong to concentrate too much attention on them. They must be supplemented by measures to raise purchasing power, at least to the extent to which it has been outstripped by the cost of living, and by increased taxation on those who can afford to bear it.

THE FARMERS ARE OUR ALLIES

[Editorial from the *Workers Weekly*, June 9, 1939.]

LABOUR'S LOSS of eight farming seats in last year's elections should have been followed by intensified action to win over the farmers to the side of Labour and progress. Nothing is more disturbing in the present situation than the fact that this elementary task is being neglected.

In fact, some people in the Labour movement (not always belonging to the Right Wing, let it be said) seem to have made up their minds to make it as difficult as possible for the progressive farmers to link up their forces with the Labour movement. The *Standard's* columnist on farming recently assured his readers that "if you have no equity in your farm then you are better out of it" and that "money is not everything." A writer in the usually progressive Christchurch paper, *To-morrow*, repeats the old gag: "Other classes are being driven to the conclusion that, no matter how much they are helped, farmers are always discontented."

Such irresponsible statements are only playing the game of Nationalist reaction, widening the breach between working people of town and country on which it has always thrived. Nor are they isolated cases. They are symptomatic of a frame of mind for which the leadership of the Labour Party must bear the responsibility.

It is not possible to attribute the discontent existing among wide sections of the country population solely to Nationalist propaganda. (That it arises from the natural "greed" and "selfishness" of the farmer is a slander too baseless even to merit discussion.) Nationalist propaganda has played a part, and a big part, in accentuating the position. But it must be recognised that the farmers have real grievances and real needs which demand action from the Government and the Labour movement.

Most of these have been dealt with by the *Weekly* on other occasions. That the guaranteed price, based on an average, affords inadequate help to the small farmer, who most needs it; the inadequacy of mortgage reduction owing to the presence of anti-Labour

people on the Adjustment Commissions; exploitation of the farmers through the high prices charged by monopoly concerns; inequitable rating; in many cases, lack of facilities enjoyed by those who live in the towns, and which could be provided (schools, telephones, better roading, lighting, etc.); all these factors provide the Nationalist reactionaries with a basis for their agitation.

The history of all countries shows that the workers can advance only in alliance with the working people of the countryside, but the history of New Zealand throws it into sharper relief than most. There is a lesson in it which New Zealand Labour can forget only at its own peril. In the years from 1906-12 New Zealand trade unionism swept forward and reached a peak not equalled again until the Labour Government came to power in 1935. Under the leadership of the Federation of Labour, improved wages and conditions were won all along the line and the workers became increasingly conscious of their strength. That magnificent movement met defeat in 1913. Why? One of the major reasons was that the working class had no alliance with the farmers and that Massey was able to use the farmers as the bludgeon against Labour. In the outcome both farmers and workers suffered, with reaction in the saddle for a quarter of a century.

It is not simply a question of the Labour movement carrying on electioneering propaganda in the country areas, though of course this is a vital part of its activity. What is most important is for the trade unions and the organisations of the working class to take up the most important questions affecting the farmers and fight for them as their own. It is necessary to draw together the fight of workers and farmers against their common enemy, Big Money.

Such a fight cannot proceed along strictly party lines. Labour and Communist farmers must, of course, be at the centre of the fight in the country areas. But in the last elections more than 400,000 people voted Nationalist. These people cannot be put in the same class as their leaders. The great majority of them are farmers, small shopkeepers, white-collar workers who have been misled against their real interests. Even before they give up their Nationalist positions,

a common basis of action can be found with them in defence of the interests which they share with the supporters of the Labour Government. Labour Party worker and Nationalist farmer have a common enemy in the Kelly Gang and the Meat Trust.

Many progressives in the country areas have left the Farmers' Union, disgusted by the anti-Labour ramp of its leaders. Nothing could be more mistaken. By leaving the Farmers' Union they are making a present of it to the reactionaries who exploit it for political ends. The place of every progressive in the countryside is in the Farmers' Union, working to make it a real voice for the farmers, and to bring it to the side of the Labour movement. We know that such a task is not an easy one. But it can be done.

The farmers are our allies. Workers and farmers together, in united action, constitute a force than can smash all the enemies of the people, safeguard New Zealand democracy and clear the way for a bright and happy future.

["The Kelly Gang" was a phrase often used at the time to denote the exclusive group of Auckland's most powerful business men, and the "Meat Trust" refers to the monopolies controlling the frozen meat trade.—Ed.]

THE FAR EASTERN CRISIS

[Editorial from the *Workers' Weekly,* June 30, 1939.]

CANTON, Hainan, Spratley Islands, Swatow. Four steps in the southward drive of Japanese aggression. Four milestones in the disastrous road from Munich. Four stages in the establishment of the basis from which Japan intends to menace all the countries of the South Pacific, including New Zealand, and to establish its undivided domination of the South Pacific.

British and American warships have been calmly ordered out of Chinese waters. British subjects have been stripped naked and insulted at Tientsin. British and French subjects are being blockaded and starved at Tientsin and Kulangsu. Tinkler was bayoneted and allowed to bleed to death with the approbation of the Japanese consular officials in China. Japan is waging war against Britain in China, as Germany and Italy waged a war against her in Spain.

Yet this is the moment that Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, chooses to make a speech in which he plays the part of advocate for Japan. Events at Tientsin are "not deliberate" and "had developed out of a misunderstanding," he stated. "It is no part of Britain's intention to allow the concession at Tientsin to be used as a base for activities prejudicial to the local Japanese military interests."

This is the policy of "appeasement," which brought Hitler into Prague, applied in the Fast East. The plan for an economic boycott, which could bring Japan to its knees without war, had been shelved by the Chamberlain Government. Fascist aggression in the East is to be encouraged as it was in Spain and Czechoslovakia. If "appeasement" is not checked, Australia and New Zealand will be the ultimate victims.

At the same time the negotiations with the Soviet Union, which, by creating security in the West, would have a salutary effect on Japan in the East, are still being sabotaged by the Chamberlain Government.

What can New Zealand do?

Through its Government it can express its support for a policy of economic boycott of Japan (the majority of Japan's trade in war materials is done with the democratic countries against whom it is conducting war in China).

Through its Government it can express its support for an immediate conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance between Britain and the Soviet Union, on a basis of complete equality for the Soviet Union.

Through its democratic organisations, its unions, its Labour Party and Communist Party branches, its farmers' organisations, it can see that the strongest demand goes forward for such a policy.

The defence of New Zealand starts in Chinese waters. Do not let us forget it.

WANTED — A NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN POLICY

[From the *People's Voice*, July 7, 1939]

TWICE IN ITS history New Zealand has stood proudly before the world as a country of advanced social legislation. Both in 1890 and in 1935 progressive Governments came into office, which carried through a bold programme of reform, winning world-wide attention. But unfortunately on neither occasion has New Zealand been able to develop an independent line in foreign affairs, fully corresponding to its internal advances.

It has often been stressed that social security and national security are intimately linked together. But the Labour Government, in spite of the early promise of something better from Mr. Jordan's speeches at Geneva, has not been able to measure up to what is required from it in the fight for world peace.

This was illustrated at the time of the Melvin ban in January, when Mr. Savage quoted "information from headquarters," presumably London, as justification for taking the anti-Fascist "History Behind the Headlines" off the air. It was again illustrated the other day, when, in connection with the indignities to which the New Zealand Government representative in China has been subjected by the Japanese Fascists, Mr. Savage said that the New Zealand Government would not protest since "such matters were handled by the (British) Foreign Office on behalf of every unit of the British Commonwealth."

If there was a Labour Government in office in London, Mr. Savage's position would still be difficult to understand. But there is not even a Labour Government there. The Government of Great Britain, and its Foreign Office, is the Government of Neville Chamberlain, an arch-reactionary and friend of Fascism, worse than a dozen Adam Hamiltons. It is to this Foreign Office that Mr. Savage is willing to leave the handling of questions which directly concern New Zealand.

It is worth looking for a moment at the history of New Zea-

land's foreign policy in order to understand how absolutely necessary it is for us to break with the traditions of reaction, and develop an independent New Zealand policy for peace and the unity of the democratic States against Fascism.

For it was the reactionary Governments of Massey, Coates and Forbes, which expressed in its purest form the idea that New Zealand must do nothing and say nothing that was not previously approved in London.

Massey was notoriously hostile to the League of Nations, as a form of collective organisation outside the British Empire. He indignantly refuted any suggestion that New Zealand's signature to the Treaty of Versailles meant that it was an independent nation. At the time in 1922 when the British Government was trying to strangle the Turkish struggle for national liberation, New Zealand, through Massey, was the only Dominion to respond to Lloyd George's call for troops.

One of the clearest expressions of this policy of making New Zealand the obedient echo for London was given by that arch-Conservative, Sir Francis Bell, who had represented New Zealand in the League of Nations. Speaking to the Legislative Council in 1923, he claimed proudly:

"I never asserted that New Zealand was entitled to a voice in foreign affairs other than as a very, very small fraction of the great Empire, of which we are proud to form a part. . . . There is one Government of the Empire in its relations to foreign affairs, and that is the Government of England. . . . I cannot remember any instance . . . where the answer has not been in stereotyped form: 'New Zealand is content to be bound by the determination of His Majesty's Government in London.' "

Indeed in 1929 the New Zealand Government actually telegraphed its approval of British policy three weeks before it received the letter setting out the British Government's proposals!

This was the policy of New Zealand reaction. New Zealand was a gramophone record for Downing Street.

But the Labour Government in its social legislation has broken sharply with the policies of Massey, Coates and Forbes. Why should it continue to repeat with them: "Such matters are handled by the Foreign Office on behalf of every unit of the British Commonwealth"? A clean break in foreign policy is required also.

Our responsibility is heavy. Alone in the British Empire we possess a progressive Labour Government, at a time when we are faced with our last chance, before war, of stopping the Chamberlain policy of connivance at Fascist aggression and with it checking the Fascist war drive.

We must—all of us—whatever our party ties, religious or political beliefs—all of us who love peace—demand that New Zealand's voice be heard now in favour of a British-Soviet-French Peace Bloc which alone can stay aggression, and an Empire boycott on trade with Japan, which would do more to safeguard our security than a dozen recruiting campaigns.

NEW ZEALAND AT THE CROSSROADS

[Abridged from the Newsletter in the *Communist Review*, Australia, September, 1939.]

EVEN THE CONSERVATIVE financial press describes as "onerous" the terms imposed on New Zealand by the Bank of England and the Chamberlain Government in connection with the £17,000,000 loan repayment which has been the subject of Mr. Nash's negotiations in London. In the words of Professor Belshaw, leading New Zealand economist:

"Although market conditions at the present time were unfavourable for a conversion operation, he did not regard it as necessary or desirable in the interests of the British investors, that the terms should be made so severe. As the guarantor, the British Government could have modified the terms, and the fact that it had not done so suggested a desire to influence policy in New Zealand. There will be justifiable resentment in New Zealand over the hardness of the terms."

When it is a question of "appeasing" Hitler Germany and financing its aggression, the Chamberlain Government thinks in tens of millions. For democratic New Zealand under a Labour Government the whole of its £17,000,000 loan conversion must be repaid over a period of five years. In addition the British Government has granted New Zealand an export credit of £9,000,000, of which £5,000,000 is earmarked for defence expenditure. The remaining £4,000,000 will solve few problems and hardly do more than save New Zealand from commercial default, as an outcome of the depletion of its overseas funds through the wrecking activities of Money Power.

Why has the City, with the direct assistance of the Chamberlain Government, deliberately imposed such unprecedently harsh terms on a British Dominion? The willingness of the New Zealand Government to pay was never in question. Professor Belshaw suggests the answer when he speaks of the desire of the British Gov-

ernment to influence policy in New Zealand. That is true and is expressed perfectly openly in the British Press.

In a leading article of July 26 the pro-Fascist *Times* states quite frankly: "The Dominion must prove its worthiness if future assistance is to be more easily forthcoming. There is no desire to interfere with the principles of New Zealand, but the Dominion must recognise that it cannot again saddle Britain with the burdens of its own extravagances and *must order its affairs accordingly*."

In even blunter terms, the *Investors' Chronicle* describes the terms of the loan as "an ingenious compromise making it necessary for the Dominion to economise. . . . Britain is entitled to suggest the curtailment of expenditure, especially where Britain's own business interests are affected."

The City and the Chamberlain Government intend to pursue the same tactic as they did toward the Blum Government in France. They will provide insufficient financial accommodation to allow New Zealand to overcome any of its difficulties, at the same time holding out the bait of "future assistance" (cf. the *Times*), but sufficient to prevent the New Zealand Government seeking a more far-reaching solution of its difficulties at the expense of the wealthy. Behind cover of the assistance already granted, they hope to intervene to an increasing extent in the Dominion's internal affairs, with the assistance of the compromises in the Labour Cabinet, and by these means bring about the destruction of social legislation and the downfall of the Labour Government. That New Zealand reaction understands well the role it is required to play is shown by the latest programme of the Chambers of Commerce, containing the most outrageous demands for the abrogation of Labour legislation, including a reduction in Public Works wages to a level far below that of farm workers, the lowest paid workers in New Zealand. . . .

Reaction in redoubling its efforts to precipitate the farmers against the workers, as the Massey Government did in 1913. Mr. Mulholland, president of the Farmers' Union, at the conference of the union last month, delivered a demagogic speech full of incitement against "the towns," and threatened the formation of a Farm-

ers' Party. Probably this was political blackmail, since the leadership of the Farmers' Union is closely connected with the National Party, but it reflects an all too common sentiment in the countryside where the farmers feel—with some justice—that they have been outstripped by the advances made by the working class. At the same time agitators from the Dominion Executive of the Farmers' Union are touring the countryside collecting secret funds for some fantastic form of "farmers' strike," the details of which they will not divulge even to their own membership.

The blindness and obstinacy of certain Labour leaders toward the problems of the farmers is all the more regrettable when it is realised that the farmers *can* be won to the side of Labour, given correct leadership and a proper attention to their needs. This was shown in the 1935 and 1938 elections and again, more remarkably, last month, as an outcome of Mr. Savage's "bombshell" over the guaranteed price. On the 14th July the Prime Minister, in reply to a question from a Labour member, stated that "it would be quite impossible for any government to disregard the statements made against the guaranteed price inside and outside the House," and suggested the possibility of a plebiscite among farmers on the question. The Dominion leadership of the Farmers' Union blundered into a statement giving the impression that it favoured abolition of the guaranteed price system. Immediately from one end of the country to the other, dairy factory suppliers and their organisations expressed their support for the system of the guaranteed price and strong condemnation of the tactics of the Farmers' Union leadership. Nor is this remarkable when one considers that this year's guaranteed price has resulted in the dairy farmers receiving nearly £2,000,000 more than they would have done under the old system of free marketing.

The other dramatic incident of a rather uneventful Parliamentary session was the Minister of Labour's precipitate introduction of an amendment to the Arbitration Act, giving him power to de-register unions, abrogate awards covering de-registered unions and abolish compulsory unionism in such cases. The Bill was rushed

through both Houses in a few hours without any division or more than the most formal verbal opposition from the Nationalists. This measure has aroused grave concern in the trade union movement, particularly in view of the speeches made by two Cabinet Ministers, who made it quite clear that their hostility was directed against the militant unions and not against the employers, who have been doing their best to bring about a breakdown in all constitutional methods of settling disputes.

It is true that the Federation of Labour's policy is for direct, collective bargaining with the employers, involving the eventual deregistration of all unions from the Arbitration Court, but this process must be undertaken in a planned way at the will of the unions themselves, and not according to a whim of a Minister of Labour whose primary concern is to stop strikes, and who assures the employers that they will be able to employ "free" labour as an outcome of this amendment. Therefore this Bill appears as another of those concessions to reaction which have done the Government so much harm in its second term of office. . . .

New Zealand Labour is at the crossroads. One road leads to retreat and in the outcome to the defeat of the Labour Government; the other to a mobilisation of the forces of the people for a united effort to overcome New Zealand's difficulties, bringing with it further advance and the strengthening of the Labour Government.

It was therefore at an exceedingly appropriate moment that the National Committee of the Communist Party met at the end of July. In a manifesto entitled "Unite the People," the National Committee drew attention to the fact that New Zealand is facing a crisis in its national life, brought about by the wrecking activities of reaction which have "passed beyond the stage of ordinary conservative opposition to the government of the day," and "constitute a menace to the people of New Zealand as a whole." Giving the lie to the defeatists and the defamers of New Zealand, the Communist Party outlines the resources at the disposal of the people and points out that these are fully sufficient, together with the assistance of the New Zealand people's allies in the international field, to pro-

vide a solution of these difficulties. . . . The National Committee issued a strong call for unity of the people and a rapid strengthening of all the organisations of the people, in order to preserve the achievements of the Labour Government, to break the sit-down strike of capital, to overcome the financial difficulties of the country, to operate a correct defence policy, to bring assistance to the farmers and to preserve New Zealand democratic institutions.

All decisions were taken unanimously, showing that the leadership of the party is thoroughly united, as befits a party which champions the unity of the New Zealand people.

AGAINST THE TIDE

BEING ARTICLES written during the first period of the war (1939-41), when Communists opposed the imperialist aims of the then British Government, and the inroads on civil liberties and living standards associated with New Zealand's dependence on that policy.

Apart from the background briefly described in the Memoir of Gordon Watson's life, no comment is offered on these writings from a much-debated time—they are left to speak for themselves.

NEW ZEALAND LABOUR MUST MEET!

[This editorial from the *People's Voice,* September 1, 1939, was written a few days before the declaration of war.]

UNDER PRESSURE of the war crisis, amidst the jingo chorus of official "patriotism" and war-censored "news," certain Labour leaders are preparing to repeat the historic treachery of 1914 and to pass from the camp of the workers into the camp of the imperialists.

The British Labour leaders, who have supported Chamberlain at every critical turn of the situation in the past few years from "non-intervention" in Spain to "Good luck, Chamberlain" at Munich, who have disrupted and fought against working class unity at every step, now support emergency powers ten times more dictatorial than those of 1914, and announce their "unity" with Chamberlain.

In their message to the German workers these leaders denounced Hitler. But they had another duty. Would it not be a hundred times better if they had been able to tell the German working class: "We call on you to fight against Hitler and for peace, as we for our part are fighting against the British imperialists who, by their policy of 'appeasement,' have strengthened Hitler and brought us to the brink of war"? That they could not say this is the measure of their desertion.

The same tendencies are visible in New Zealand. Those Labour leaders who are most bitterly opposed to working class unity and to the Soviet Union are preparing to take the same path. Bitter as the truth may be, in this hour it must be spoken. When Mr. Fraser welcomes the offered co-operation of the Nationalists, enemies of the people in the event of war, when he tries to silence the critics of Chamberlain when it is more than ever necessary that the criminal responsibility of British imperialism is laid bare, then the danger signal is there for all to see.

Repeatedly in the past few years, as the second imperialist war developed from stage to stage, the Communists have appealed for unity in the Labour movement, unity on the basis of a common

struggle against the enemies of the people. To-day, when the Imperialist war threatens to become transformed into a world war, Labour cannot stand divided and leaderless. In the existing confusion and lack of a common policy only the enemies of Labour can profit.

That is why the Communist Party has called for the immediate summoning of an emergency Labour Conference, representing the Labour Party, the Federation of Labour and the Communist Party.

Ten million men stand under arms in Europe as this editorial has been written. From the leadership of the Labour Party and the Labour movement there has come no clear, decisive lead to the working class and the people. Only the Communist Party has stated its position and responded to the needs of the workers.

New Zealand Labour must meet! The demand must come from every organisation for an immediate Labour Conference to determine a common line of action against Fascism, against the reactionary imperialists, for peace and democracy.

THE FIRST CASUALTY

[From *People's Voice*, September 8, 1939.]

IN WAR the first casualty is truth, it has often been said. Truth is certainly being butchered to-day, with the assistance of the official war censorships.

The first and greatest war lie which has yet been produced is that the Soviet Union has "double-crossed" Britain and France. "Russia has sold out to Germany," writes the *Herald*, and the *Standard* obediently echoes: "Stalin Sells Socialism to the Swastika." The *Standard* is distinguished from the *Herald* only by its more vituperative tone

Hitler's policy of the "bigger lie" has been out-Hitlered by the propagandists who spread this poison.

What are the facts?

Immediately after Hitler's march into Prague in March the Soviet Union made proposals for an all-in conference to plan common action against further aggression. They were rejected by the British Government.

On April 15, after the guarantee to Poland had been given without any consultation with the Soviet Union, the British Government opened diplomatic conversations with the Soviet Union, through a very minor official of the Foreign Office. The British Government obsinately refused to send any responsible Cabinet Minister to Moscow. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union agreed to undertake these conversations, in the hopes of creating a genuine peace front.

In May Molotov again announced the Soviet Union's readiness to participate in a genuine pact of mutual assistance against Fascist aggression. The Soviet Union's proposals were again rejected, through a policy of delays, equivocations and downright sabotage on the part of those with whom it had entered into negotiations. The Soviet Union was required to give full guarantees to the States already guaranteed by Britain, as well as Holland and Switzerland, while none were to be given by Britain to the Baltic States, essential for the Soviet Union's security.

The propagandist picture of Britain and France battling for a peace front against Soviet opposition is false, as only war propaganda can be false. The true picture is that the Soviet Union alone fought for the peace front against the unremitting opposition of the responsible leaders of Britain and France.

Last month British and French military missions were sent to Moscow. But again there was no intention on the part of the British Government to conclude a genuine pact with the Soviet Union. The missions had permission only to "negotiate"—to talk—and actually refused to allow Soviet troops to cross Poland, the only conditions under which a pact would have been possible.

That war had broken loose upon the world is not the responsibility of the Soviet Union, which fought till the last possible moment for the peace front that could have restrained Hitler. History will record the names of the real criminals—those who rejected the alliance that the Soviet Union was ready to offer them out of their blind class hatred for the land of Socialism.

WHO GAVE HIM THE U-BOATS?

[From the editorial in the *People's Voice*, October 20, 1939.]

SEVEN HUNDRED British seamen have lost their lives in the torpedoing of the Royal Oak, according to first reports. Hitler's submarine fleet boasts that it has to date sunk 86,000 tons of British naval armaments.

But who gave Hitler his submarines?

On June 18, 1935, the British Conservative Government signed the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, which allowed Germany to build a submarine fleet up to 100 per cent. of the British submarine forces. This treaty was signed in London by Sir Samuel Hoare and Von Ribbentrop.

The British pro-Fascists signed this treaty with full knowledge that it was a violation of the Versailles Treaty which disarmed Germany and sunk its fleet at Scapa Flow, without consultation with their French ally. Indignant protests by the French Government were brushed aside. Lord Beaverbrook's jingo *Daily Express* frankly wrote: "The Anglo-German agreement breaks the Versailles Treaty wide open. . . . The French do not like the new agreement. They must take their own line over it."

Hitler was given his submarines by the British Conservatives, who assumed that they would be used only in the Baltic against the Socialist Soviet Union. It was an open demonstration of their consistent policy of strengthening Hitler in the belief that his aggressive designs would be limited to the Soviet Union. The First Lord of the British Admiralty at the time actually said: "We regard this agreement . . . essentially as a contribution to world peace and international appeasement. . . ."

The torpedo which sunk the Royal Oak might well have been marked "Made in Birmingham."

WHAT IS IMPERIALISM?

[Editorial from the *People's Voice*, November 24, 1939.]

IN HIS RECENT statement on the British Labour Party's "peace aims," Mr. C. R. Attlee included "the abandonment of imperialism."

What is imperialism?

The only scientific study of modern imperialism was made by Lenin in 1916, during the first imperialist world war. In his book Lenin showed that imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism; that it was "the monopoly stage of capitalism," with the domination of monopoly in banking and industry, merged into finance-capital and the division of the world between a few great powers, representing the dominant groups of monopoly capital.

This division of the world between different groups of monopolised capital, masquerading under the national flags of "Britain," "Germany," "Italy," "Japan," etc., leads inevitably to periodical imperialist war for the re-division of the world.

From 1914-18, at the cost of twelve million dead, British and German Imperialism fought out the issue as to which group of trusts and combines was to dominate the larger number of colonial slaves. To-day the same issue is being fought out again, with British imperialism preparing for a three years' war and its German rival boasting a five years' war.

In order to achieve a victory over German imperialism under the changed conditions of 1939, Britain will be obliged to pay heavy bribes to Japan and Italy, thereby strengthening their position, and making future conflicts inevitable, even in the event of a Franco-British victory over Germany. Behind these bloody struggles there looms the deepest world antagonism between British and American capital, and the perspective of a combined imperialist onslaught against the Soviet Union, the land of Socialism. Imperialism and war are inseparable. "Dog eat dog" is the highest logic and ideal of modern imperialism.

But because imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, it

cannot be destroyed or "abandoned" without destroying capitalism. To call on the capitalists to abandon imperialism is to call on the leopard to shed its spots. Only if capitalism is destroyed through the Socialist revolution will imperialism and imperialist war become an evil memory of the past.

To talk of the "abandonment of imperialism," while pursuing a policy of abject subservience to imperialism, as do the British and New Zealand Labour leaders, is only to coin smooth empty phrases for the purpose of deceiving the workers.

THE FIGHT FOR FREE SPEECH

[Editorial from the *People's Voice*, February 9, 1940.]

THE REACTIONARY offensive which is aimed at the crushing of free speech for all working class and anti-war organisations met its first definite check in Auckland last week.

Following the banning of street meetings in Wellington and Christchurch in the first weeks of the war, the stage was set to extend the blackout on free speech to Auckland.

The organised hoodlum attacks on Communist meetings the preceding Sunday were intended to serve as the pretext for banning disorderly meetings.

The offensive broke down in the face of the organised determination of the Auckland people to uphold working class rights and liberties.

The acquittal on the major charge of "obstructing the police" of the two Communist speakers arrested the previous Sunday, with the accompanying admission of the magistrate that the responsibility for disorder did not rest on the Communists; the decision of the Auckland Council upholding the right of free speech, in spite of the savage campaign of the reactionaries; and finally the great mass rally on the waterfront; these represented the first breach in the powerful campaign against civil liberties.

The determining factor in bringing about this first check to the dark schemes of the enemies of democracy in New Zealand was not the "liberalism" of a group of councillors or of the magistrate who heard the case against the Communist speakers (this was contradicted by the savage sentence on the pacifist O. E. Burton)—but exclusively the mass movement which is developing in defence of working class rights.

It would be a grave mistake to exaggerate the extent of the victory achieved. The reactionary attack will be carried forward, not only in the old forms, but in new and still more vicious ones.

Already the statute books are being searched for new laws under which speakers may be framed, should the now familiar charges of "obstructing the police" and "obstructing the traffic" become too notorious. The enemies of free speech on the Auckland Council openly call on the Government to initiate sedition charges—a course to which it is by no means averse, as is shown by the Attorney-General's recent statement.

If the fight for free speech is to be won there can be no comfortable illusions about capitalist "democracy," which is more and more showing its true face as the war develops. Only the strength of the mass movement will prevent the crushing of all working class rights and civil liberties in New Zealand.

Capitalist reaction and its Labour lieutenants do not dare to allow the truth about this war to be spoken in New Zealand. Therefore they will return again and again to the attack on those who tell the people the truth.

Unite your ranks now in a common fight to defend working class rights and to defeat the reactionary onslaught on freedom of speech!

THE "FOREIGN AGENTS" SWINDLE

[From the *People's Voice*, March 29, 1940.]

THROUGHOUT the history of the working class movement there is one slander which has been ceaselessly employed by the representatives and agents of the ruling class, the "foreign agents" catch-cry. Although by now this venerable slander has grown a long, white beard which must reach far below its rickety knees, it is apparently not too hoary for Messrs. Semple and Fraser in their campaign against the Communist Party and all opponents of the imperialist war.

Indeed, this particular slander has a history that reaches back even beyond the emergence of the modern working class movement. To take but one instance. The American revolutionaries who were fighting for the independence of their country from British rule at the end of the 18th century were frequently branded as "French agents" by the upholders of the autocratic colonial system.

Men like Thomas Jefferson, who to-day stand as the founders of the modern United States, were denounced by a chief justice of the time as "French system-mongers—apostles of atheism and anarchy, bloodshed and plunder." Familiar language to-day!

It was as natural that the American patriots of that day should look to the Great French Revolution of 1789 which had swept aside the feudal rubbish which hampered the future development of society, as it is to-day that working class parties should find their inspiration in the greater Russian Revolution of 1917 which shattered the bonds of capitalism and cleared the path to the first classless Socialist society in history.

But the full frenzy of the "foreign agents" campaign was developed only during the first imperialist war of 1914-18 and is being revived again to-day.

Since Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 issued their famous fighting slogan, "Workers of All Lands, Unite!" the advanced sections of the modern working class movement have

based their activities on the principles of working class internationalism, the unity of the workers of all lands against the exploiting classes of all lands, regardless of what national flag they hide their crimes under.

During the imperialist wars the whole capitalist propaganda machine is brought into operation in the opposite direction, by all means to create hatred and antagonism between the workers of the different countries, in order to send them into the trenches to slaughter one another.

It is no wonder that in such a period those who uphold working class internationalism are subjected to a savage campaign to blacken them as the "agents" of a foreign state. In 1914-18 French and English Socialists who upheld the principles of Socialism were blackguarded as "German agents"; the German Socialists equally were defamed as "British" or "Russian agents."

Particularly venomous in spreading these slanders were the Labour lackeys of imperialism who had sold themselves to the capitalist war governments.

When Lenin returned to Russia from exile in April, 1917, to take part in the preparations for the Socialist Revolution, it was the Mensheviks (the Russian equivalent of our Semples and Frasers) who raised the filthy slander that he was a "German spy." A mob of officers and hooligans were thus incited to wreck the printing offices of the Bolshevik paper *Pravda* in July, 1917.

The name of Karl Liebknecht, the one man in the German Parliament of 1914 to vote against war credits and to remain true to his Socialist principles, is known to every worker. But the circumstances of his murder are not so well known.

In December, 1918, when the German revolution was at its height, the German Social Democratic Party, headed by the "Labour" traitors who had supported the Kaiser's war government, issued a poster headed: *"Liebknecht, Russia's Agent!"*

On January 15th, after the bloody suppression of the workers'

revolutionary movement in Berlin, the *Vorwarts* (the *Standard* of those days) published a poem which read:

"Five hundred corpses in a row—Liebknecht, Rosa, Radek and Co., are they not there also?"

The following day Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were kidnapped by army officers and brutally murdered. The direct signal for their murder came from the German "Labour" traitors' press.

But the experience of New Zealand itself provides plenty of illustrations of how this slander is used. When the "Red" Federation of 1908-1913 was at the height of its power, leading the workers successfully in the struggle to improve their conditions, the title of "Australian agitator" was exceedingly popular in the anti-working class press.

During the last imperialist war Mr. Semple himself was compelled to reply in a pamphlet to the slanderous charge that he was a "German agent" because at that time he was defending the interests of the workers.

To-day the most active, the most vicious and the most unscrupulous peddlers of these lies are to be found in the ranks of the top leadership of the Labour Party.

So we see the same campaign developed against the Communists to-day. "Orders from abroad" is a favourite charge. Because the Communist Party of New Zealand (a party of New Zealand workers defending the interests of the New Zealand people) is allied with the Communist Parties of all other countries through the Communist International, it is accused of "orders from Moscow."

This particular fantasy was refuted by Marx many years ago. It must be assumed that Mr. Fraser, who once read Marx, has long forgotten this passage which dates from 1871 (*The Civil War in France*):

"The police-tinged bourgeois mind naturally figures to itself the International Working Men's Association as acting in the manner of a secret conspiracy, its central body ordering, from time to time, explosions in different countries.

"Our Association is, in fact, nothing but the international bond between the most advanced working men in the various countries of the civilised world.

"Wherever, in whatever shape, and under whatever conditions the class struggle obtains any consistency, it is but natural that members of our Association should stand in the foreground.

"The soil out of which it grows is modern society itself. It cannot be stamped out by any amount of carnage.

"To stamp it out the governments would have to stamp out the despotism of capital over labour—the condition of their own parasitical existence."

M. J. SAVAGE

[Editorial in the *People's Voice*, April 5, 1940, after the death of Mr. Savage.]

To TENS of thousands of New Zealanders the name of M. J. Savage represented humanitarian and democratic ideals, sympathy for the exploited and oppressed and a positive record of social reforms achieved between 1935 and 1939.

It was, therefore, but natural that his death should have been the occasion for a demonstration of popular sorrow and an impressive tribute to his memory.

As a resolution adopted by a meeting of Auckland Communists pointed out, Mr. Savage stood in the tradition of Seddon and Ballance, a tradition which is closely connected with the democratic strivings and aspirations of the New Zealand people.

It was no accident that in his first speech after the Labour Party's victory in 1935 Mr. Savage expressed the intention of the new Government "to go on from where Seddon left off."

It was a programme of social reforms—the 40-hour week, the Social Security legislation, the housing programme—which was carried out by the Savage Government; it was in no sense a programme of Socialism.

As such it met with the savage hostility and organised sabotage of the combined forces of capitalist reaction. The same people who are to-day the most maudlin in their "tributes" to Mr. Savage's memory, considered, in his lifetime, no slander too dirty and no tactics too mean, when he, during at least a period, stood at the head of a new grouping of the progressive forces.

But the times were not kind to Mr. Savage's programme of social reforms. The Seddon programme was carried through in a period of expanding and developing capitalism in New Zealand, on the eve of the epoch of imperialism. The Savage programme was initiated when capitalism had entered its stage of degeneration and decay, when it had already been shaken by one imperialist war and

was on the eve of another. Social reforms could no longer be initiated or maintained without fierce class struggle.

Therefore there arose the profound crisis of 1939-40, the crisis which is still in progress, in which the whole structure of the Savage reforms was challenged first by the economic and financial crisis, and then by the new crisis of imperialist war.

A section of the leadership of the Labour Party, which has harnessed itself to the war chariot, set its feet on the path which leads to a destruction of the programme of social reforms. They have placed the living standards and democratic rights of the people in serious danger. They tried to invoke the authority of an already mortally sick man to win popular support for their own ambitions and their own policies of betrayal. That was the tragic anti-climax of Mr. Savage's life.

With Mr. Savage there died also an epoch in the history of the New Zealand Labour movement, the epoch of Liberalism and reformism. The new period which is opening already will be more bitter, the conflicts will be sharper, the struggles more direct and open between the hostile classes; but this time the objective of the struggle will be clearly defined not as the reform of capitalist society, but its destruction and the achievement of Socialism.

YOU CAN KILL COMMUNISM

[Editorial from the *People's Voice*, April 12, 1940.]

Do THE RULERS of France think that they can guillotine Communism?

The Tsar tried to do it. Mannerheim tried to do it in Finland in 1918. Hitler tried to do it. But none of them succeeded.

The introduction of the death penalty in France for the preparation or distribution of Communist literature will be no more successful than the similar decrees of the Tsar in old Russia.

For you can't kill Communism.

Communism arises wherever there is a working class oppressed by the rule of Big Capital. The capitalist Governments cannot destroy Communism without destroying the conditions of their own existence—the domination of capital over labour.

They can persecute, jail and kill Communists. But they can't do the impossible. They can't kill Communism.

The Government of France, which is the agent of France's two hundred wealthiest families whom war profits will bloat still more, has shown its true face. It is just as ugly as Hitler's.

For the war "against Communism" in France is a war against the working class. It is not only the Communist Party which has been dissolved. Six hundred trade unions have been closed down by the police. Trade union committees in the factories have been abolished. The sixty and seventy-hour week is in force, as in Germany. But the war profits mount—as in Germany.

This is the war "for democracy."

Let there be no illusions. The attack on the Communist Party is always the first step in the onslaught against the whole working class.

In Germany Hitler started by attacking the Communist Party. In France Daladier started the same way.

Now Mr. Fraser in New Zealand has discovered somebody he calls a "semi-Communist."

What is a "semi-Communist"? Are *you* a "semi-Communist"?

Reaction always pursues the same course. First it tells all and sundry that it is "only" out to suppress the Communists. Then it discovers that all who oppose its policies, in an ever-widening circle, are "semi-Communists" or some such fancy name. That is what happened in Germany, until the whip of oppression cracked over even the mildest Liberals and the most timid reformers.

We must fight *now*—at the very beginning—for the defence of the fullest democratic rights. Don't say: "It can't happen here." It can, and we must block the road at once.

WHO ARE THE FIFTH COLUMN?

[Editorial from the *People's Voice*, May 24, 1940.]

THE NAZIS came to power in Germany in 1933 under the slogan of "crushing Communism." They offered their services to the lords of German heavy industry, by whom they were subsidised, in order to smash the working-class movement in Germany.

As their champion against the independent working-class movement, the Hitler regime roused sympathy and support not only from German Big Business interests, but also among the ruling circles of capitalist reaction in all countries.

German Fascism was the hired gangster for world reaction. It found its friends and allies among the propertied classes in all countries. It never made any friends in the working-class movement anywhere.

To-day there is a great deal of talk about Hitler's "Fifth Column," the allies and supporters of Hitler Fascism within other countries. But those who are raising the loudest hullabaloo are not concerned with looking in the right place for this "fifth column."

When Von Ribbentrop was German Ambassador in London, it was with the "best people" that he wined and dined, when he assured them that Fascist Germany had no intention of making war against Britain and that it would without fail make war against the Socialist Soviet Union.

When German money was paid out in France to the Hooded Men, the Cagoulards, in order to prepare for civil war against the people of France, it was to wealthy business men, to army officers, to highly-paid State officials that the conspiracy was traced.

When the Czech Maginot Line and the Skoda arms works, the guns from which are now pounding against British and French troops, were handed over, the names of those who signed the title deeds for Hitler at Munich were Chamberlain and Daladier.

When there was treachery in Norway it came from high officers in the Norwegian Army, not from working men.

If you want to look for traitors, look in the ranks of those who have always placed their profits and their privileges above the interests of their country.

The hullabaloo which is being raised in reactionary circles in New Zealand regarding a "Fifth Column" has a different purpose. They want to use it to strike a blow at the militant working-class movement, at the best patriots, at those who have in the past exposed their crimes and will continue to expose them.

New Zealand's "Fifth Column" is to be found in the ranks of the enemies of the working-class movement.

HELPING GOEBBELS

[Book Review from the *Industrial Worker*, May 28, 1941, of *Black Record*, by Sir Robert Vansittart, P.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.Litt.]

IN HIS BROADCAST to Germany on the outbreak of war, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, Neville Chamberlain, declared that the war was directed not against the German people but only against Hitlerism. Sir Robert Vansittart, Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the British Government, has a different idea. His war is against the German people—"Germans in the Plural"—whom he regarded as a race of homicidal maniacs, even in the 1890's and whose perfidy he traces as far back as two thousand years ago in the writings of the Roman author Tacitus!

This pamphlet is the text of seven notorious B.B.C. broadcasts which roused a storm of protest in Britain at the time. Sir Robert was unrepentant and has now put his opinions in print. This hardened diplomat had no reason to be afraid of the reproaches of Liberals and Labourites whose endless capacity for self-delusion regarding the real intentions of the ruling class and subsequent cries that "We have been betrayed," he regards with legitimate contempt.

Chauvinism—the incitement of national and race hatreds—is an easy game. The history of class society over the past two thousand years is so full of brutality, perfidy and corruption in all countries that it is childishly simple to compile a list of such infamies (correct enough in fact) and present it as typical of "the Germans," "the English," "the Italians," "the French," and so on. The people of the country are made responsible for the crimes of their rulers; there is no end to this dangerous and noxious propaganda.

Here is an example of Sir Robert's method. He tells the ancient, barbaric saga of Siegfried as "an important window of the German mind." But supposing some German propagandist were to tell the story of the Saxon hero Beowulf, who liked to bring the blood of his enemies out of their skulls, as an example of the "innate brutality" of the English? Proud of his public school erudition, this titled diplomat quotes Tacitus on the barbarity of the Germans in the days

of the Roman Empire. But we cannot recollect that Latin writers were particularly flattering in their references to the then inhabitants of Britain. Sir Robert quotes the medieval torture of the Jews in Germany as proof of this thesis: "One of the first 'sights' I saw as a boy in Germany was the relics of the medieval torture chamber at Nuremberg." Has Sir Robert never been to the Tower of London?

One shudders to think what some German Sir Robert might make of a cross-section of our history. Perhaps he could start with the bloody rites of the Druids, give some account of the murder and torture of the reigns of Stephen and Matilda, deal at length with the treachery of the Wars of the Roses, get satirical over Henry VIII.'s six wives and their fate, describe the public burnings of the Protestant heretics under Bloody Mary, tell how Cromwell's dead bones were dug up and insulted, give the life stories of such heroes of Empire as Clive and Warren Hastings, then skip to modern history with some account of India, of the Black and Tans in Ireland and the opium wars forced on China, and conclude that therefore the British people were barbarous, treacherous and brutal.

And this is no mere "might." It is the method of Goebbels. Sir Robert Vansittart, with all his erudition and all his talk about Christianity, is a British edition of Goebbels, preaching a savage chauvinism no less irrational and no less dangerous to any hope of peace in the world. Such propaganda, moreover, is an invaluable aid to Goebbels, giving him a wealth of quotations to use in Germany to win support for the war.

The crimes of the German ruling class, of the big bankers and industrialists and their sordid puppets of the Nazi Party are plain enough for all the world to see. But to this typical representative of the British ruling class—who similarly equates "Britain" with the interest and aims of his own class—the German ruling class *is* the German people. One of the stories Sir Robert tells to illustrate his argument is that of the brutal duelling, bullying Prussian officer easte who took the right to cut down with their swords civilians whom they considered had insulted them. This, says the chief diplomatic adviser to the British Government, is proof of the innate

vileness of "Germans." It never seems to occur to Sir Robert that besides those who cut down there are those who are cut down, besides the exploiters there are the exploited, besides the oppressors there are also the oppressed.

Another interesting point. Sir Robert Vansittart has been Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the British Government for a number of years. He was there when the British Government refused the democratic Spanish Government the anti-aircraft guns to save the lives of Spanish women and children from German bombers over Barcelona and Madrid; he was there when Lord Halifax conferred with Hitler in Berlin, preceding the Nazi occupation of Austria; he was there when at Munich the British Government helped the German Government carve up Czechoslovakia. Was a protest ever heard from this man who, on his own account, has considered Germany a "butcher bird," not to be trusted and preying on innocent neighbours, ever since the 1890's? Perhaps one might also say something about Sir Robert's "honour" and "straightforwardness" and "decency" that would not be complimentary.

The working-class movement can have no truck with this kind of poisonous nonsense. Our movement is built on the great principles of working-class internationalism, the principles laid down in the great slogan of 1848: "Workers of all lands, unite!" Against the filthy growth of Nazi-ism we can see the great German working class, who gave birth to the founders of modern scientific socialism; who built up the first and best-organised Labour Party and great trade unions; who brought the last war to an end by the revolution of 1918; who produced such a great leader as Karl Liebknecht with his slogan, "Your main enemy is in your own land"; who prevented the putsch of the generals in 1923 with their general strike action; who fought heroically against Hitler's rise to power, and who to-day still carry on the fight in spite of concentration camps, in spite of the Gestapo, in spite of the unparalleled terror and persecution. This is the class which will finally put an end to Hitlerism; not the class for whom Sir Robert Vansittart speaks so eloquently.

WHOSE FREEDOM?

[Book review from the *Industrial Worker,* July 2, 1941, of *Forever Freedom,* an anthology edited by Josiah C. Wedgwood and Allan Nevins.—Pelican Books.]

THIS COLLECTION of writings in prose and verse from English and American literature is dedicated to the struggle for freedom, and one of its editors modestly hopes that it might "be used extensively in schools and colleges throughout the world." Nobody would wish to challenge the deep and *revolutionary* traditions of struggle for freedom that are embodied in English literature, but the principles on which this anthology is constructed are so peculiar that it includes revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, rebellion and conciliation, side by side.

Such confusion is inevitable for any editors who do not first ask the questions: Whose freedom? Freedom from what? Freedom for what? The great struggles for freedom have always been class struggles. The French Revolution was made under the slogans of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," but the "liberty" was the liberty of the bourgeoisie to trade and manufacture, free from feudal shackles. In the American Civil war, to the South "freedom" meant freedom to own slaves; to the North (the *real* tradition of freedom, since it was associated with the revolutionary, progressive class) it meant, in the final analysis, freedom for the capitalist class to develop capitalism to the full.

To the bourgeoisie the struggle for freedom is represented by the series of actions through which they shattered feudal property relations and established their own class power, from Magna Carta to the culminating point of the struggle in the Civil War of 1642, from the "revolution" of 1688 to the Reform Bill of 1832. All these events, with the extracts from the official documents, are mirrored in this anthology. Its editors, as petit-bourgeois democrats, are blind to any other struggle for freedom than this.

As long as the capitalist class played an historically progressive role its battle cry of "freedom" had a revolutionary significance. But when its power was established, when it in its turn was challenged

by a new contestant for power, when further development of the productive forces within the bonds of capitalist property relations became impossible—then this slogan became reactionary in its turn, became the demand for "freedom" to maintain oppression and exploitation. The banner of freedom passed into the firm hands of the working class, from which it shall not fall, for the victory of the working class will mark mankind's leap from the Kingdom of Necessity to the Kingdom of Freedom.

This whole anthology does not contain a single voice of the working class struggle for freedom, apart from a few of the Chartist poems of the 1940's and two poems by Francis Adams and Edith Nesbitt, which are patronisingly dismissed in the footnote as "good examples of the rise of socialism in the 1890's, before insurance, minimum wage laws and inspection had removed the worst horrors of compulsory poverty." Instead the editors choose to find in Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt their representative leaders of modern "freedom."

Still it is not without value to have some of the revolutionary traditions of freedom embodied in a Pelican Book, falsified though they are in general. For to-day the bourgeoisie, horrified by the revolutionary prospects of the future, is attempting to falsify its revolutionary past. To the exponents of Emergency Regulations and "subversion" laws it might be disturbing to read this: "It is wicked to break laws, we are told; it is very wrong to disobey the authorities. Why? What drivelling impertinence is this? Your very House of Commons was born in sedition." The words of Jefferson in the United States: "I hold that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical"; and his comment that rebellion "is a medicine necessary for the sound health of governments" would to-day be classed as "sedition." And those who consider that it is necessary to put our liberties in pawn "for the duration of the war" might be disturbed by Benjamin Franklin's blunt: "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

This re-writing of the past, so as to expunge everything revolu-

tionary from the record of the bourgeoisie (illustrated to-day by such a picture as *Gone With the Wind*) is expressed also in this anthology. Its first seeds can be seen in the writings of Macaulay, who is quoted here frequently—Macaulay the Whig champion of compromise: "It is because we had a preserving revolution in the seventeenth century that we have not had a destroying revolution in the nineteenth," wrote Macaulay. The burgeoisie did not push its own revolution to its full conclusion, as in France, but arrived at a compromise with the landowners, the revolution of 1688, the "preserving revolution," an alliance which was retained in Macaulay's day (though the Reform Bill of 1832 definitely placed the capitalist class as the senior partner) as a bulwark against the "destroying revolution" of the socialist workers.

Still afraid, the ruling class is turning the clock back, repudiating its own revolutionary ancestors. This book contains a poem in praise of the counter-revolutionary General Stonewall Jackson of the American South, side by side with the speeches of Lincoln and the writings of the Abolitionists. Its American editor, Nevins, in his preface, makes the most impudent attempt to exalt the reactionary Alexander Hamilton side by side with the revolutionary Thomas Jefferson, and to argue that the former was "equally devoted to the essence of liberty"; as also to defend Jefferson Davis, President of the Slave South. Such are the degenerate descendants of the bourgeois revolutionary fighters for freedom.

One minor point of interest. Do you remember this poem?

We will speak out, we will be heard,
Though all earth's system crack;
We will not bate a single word,
Nor take a letter back.
Let liars fear, let cowards shrink,
Let traitors turn away;
Whatever we have dared to think
That dare we also say.

It was written by the American poet Lowell, but it is best known to New Zealanders by the fact that it was quoted from the dock by one Robert Semple when he was tried for sedition in 1916.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

BEING MISCELLANEOUS PROSE written during Gordon Watson's service in the army in New Zealand, the Pacific and the Middle East; reflecting the vigour of his participation in the People's War which developed through the combination of many nations against the Fascist Axis, and his keen concern with other problems of importance to New Zealand.

THIS IS NO TIME FOR RECRIMINATIONS

[From *In Print* newspaper, November 7th, 1941.]

IT IS REGRETTABLE that the recent manifesto of the National Executives of the New Zealand Labour Party and the New Zealand Federation of Labour on aid to the Soviet Union, published in the *Standard* for October 23rd, should be marred by an ill-considered and misinformed attack on the Communist Party.

The leaders of the New Zealand Labour Party, as Mr. Fraser's recent statement on the postponement of the elections made plain, consider the war situation so grave that they are prepared to lay aside for the time being even their differences with the National Party of Messrs. Holland, Doidge and Hamilton. Is it too much to expect at least a similar generosity with regard to the Communist Party, a working-class party whose hostility to Fascism cannot be questioned by anybody?

This is no time for recriminations. Where Fascism is victorious it drives into the same concentration camp Labourite and Communist, Left Winger and honest Conservative, Catholic and Freethinker.

The black clouds which hang over the people of New Zealand to-day threaten all alike.

It is useless and dangerous to go on repeating the old controversies and the old catch cries which have been outstripped by history.

In the last two years dozens of Communists have suffered long prison sentences under the notorious Emergency Regulations. The Communist press was closed down and its machinery wrecked. Men were thrown out of their jobs and deprived of their livelihood on the mere suspicion of being Communists. If the Communist Party to-day has sufficient far-sightedness and patriotism to realise that national unity for the defeat of Hitlerism is the first consideration, cannot we hope that the leaders of the Labour Party will rise superior to a few harsh words and sharp controversies of the past?

The main charge of the Joint Labour Manifesto is that Com-

munist Party policy toward the war has been "irresponsible and unstable," that it has undergone a number of changes.

But what is there surprising in the fact that the policy of a working-class party should change in a rapidly changing situation? Has not the policy of the New Zealand Government changed? Only last year it sent £5000 to the Finnish Government which was engaged in war with the Soviet Union. This year it has sent £5000 to the Soviet Government which is again at war with Germany's ally Finland. If the New Zealand Government has made a change in its policy for the better, who but a fool would want to accuse it of "somersaults"?

In the earlier phases of the present war, when it was in essence a struggle for mastery between two great capitalist empires, the Communist Parties of the world had no alternative but to take up the traditional standpoint of the Labour movement to strive by the joint efforts of the workers of all the warring countries for an end to the war and a People's Peace. To present this as a policy in any way sympathetic to Hitlerism—as was done at the time—is to place oneself on a par with the gutter sheets who in 1914-18 accused Mr. Robert Semple of being an agent of Kaiserism.

With the entry of the Soviet Union into the war on June 22 the whole character of the war changed. The possibility of a genuine anti-Fascist people's war emerged for the first time, and of a just peace on the basis of a British-Soviet victory.

Changes in Communist policy have been made on the basis of big, fundamental changes in the world situation. Nobody but an "irresponsible" doctrinaire would refuse to make such changes.

Do the leaders of the Labour Party and the Federation oppose the present policy of the Communist Party? It is not expected of them that they should endorse its past policy, any more than that they should endorse the policy of the Nationalists in 1932. Isn't it a matter of elementary common-sense to sink the differences of the past to meet the burning needs of the present?

The Communists believe that the common-sense and desire for

unity of the Labour movement will prevail. There is no place now and no time for logic-splitting and post-mortems on the past. The fine instinct of the Auckland Trades Council for unity of the Labour movement will not go unheard. With patience, refusal to respond to provocation, sincerity and determined organisation the movement for unity must conquer in spite of every temporary obstacle.

[With the clearer perspective of time and more adequate knowledge of events and developments in Europe and elsewhere, discussions a little later in which Gordon Watson took part arrived at a wider estimate than the above—that "with the entry of the Soviet Union . . . the possibility of a genuine anti-Fascist people's war emerged for the first time." The anti-Fascist upsurge of the resistance of Europe's peoples—the British included—was exerting an increasing influence on the course and the aims of the war, when the British-Soviet understanding made the smashing of Fascism the central issue without doubt or confusion. When this article was written the United States of America was not yet a belligerent.—Ed.]

NEW ZEALAND AND THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

[From *In Print*, a magazine of Marxism, February, 1944.]

THE PRIME MINISTER'S recent statement on the immediate future disposition of New Zealand military forces has met with general approval. It finally settles a controversy which has existed and been artificially stimulated over the whole of the last two years, and which at one time threatened to become the major source of dissension within the country.

In order to understand the recent decision it is necessary to know something of the history of New Zealand's military commitments in the Pacific.

Pearl Harbour and Japan's entry into the war faced New Zealand with a major crisis. The best part of New Zealand's armed forces, the famous Second Division under General Freyberg, was stationed in the Middle East. It had taken part in the battles of Greece and Crete, and the Second Libyan Campaign; it was an essential part of the British Army, which was then carrying on the only effective land fighting against the Axis, and which stood between Rommel and Suez.

The New Zealand Government recognised that Fiji, where a small number of New Zealand troops were already performing garrison duty, was the focal point for New Zealand's front-line defences, and a vital communications centre for Allied power in the Pacific. It took the bold decision of sending every man available for overseas service to reinforce the garrison in Fiji, and within two months augmented New Zealand forces were digging-in and wiring front line positions in the steamy heat of a tropical January.

So desperate was the position that, according to a subsequent statement by Mr. Fraser, the only two anti-aircraft guns then in New Zealand were shipped over to Fiji.

Between the New Zealanders in Fiji and the Japanese in their newly-acquired positions in the Gilbert Islands—later the scene of the bitter Tarawa struggle—there stood only the undefended Ellice

Islands, already visited by Japanese patrols. The gravity of the situation was reflected with humorous exaggeration in the ironical song, *That Army in Fiji.*

Oh, that Army in Fiji
Was as brave as brave could be;
Though the Air Force had no Spitfires,
And their rounds were mostly misfires,
They were out to show the world what they could do.

With the Battle of the Coral Sea the immediate menace passed and the New Zealanders were withdrawn, handing over to a larger and far better equipped American force. The last New Zealand infantry were leaving Fiji as the news was received of the landing of American marines on Guadalcanar. It was behind the screen provided in part by the New Zealand forces in Fiji that this first offensive move in the Pacific was prepared.

In the middle of 1942, when the New Zealanders returned from Fiji, the situation was far from favourable to the Allies. The Germans were pressing forward to Stalingrad. The battle of El Alamein had not yet been fought. Singapore and the Dutch East Indies had fallen, and the issue on Guadalcanar still hung in the balance. Let those who would now attack the Government for the decisions it took please recall that situation and consider whether their present courage is not a rather belated phenomenon.

The Government decided that, as well as maintaining the Division in the Middle East, it would maintain and build up the forces which had seen service in Fiji as a Pacific Division. Whether this decision was influenced by a belief that it might be possible, at a later date, to secure the return of the Middle East Division, as had been done by Australia; whether it was considered that even with the existence of two Divisions overseas, New Zealand would still not have sent away as many men in proportion to population as in 1914-18, with its far heavier casualties—such factors are not yet known. It is known that among the strongest advocates of the Pacific Division was the late J. G. Coates, the outstanding per-

sonality in the National Party to put the interests of New Zealand ahead of class and sectional interests.

It would be interesting to know what would have been his attitude had he lived toward the unscrupulous agitation carried on around the question of the Pacific Division by Mr. S. G. Holland and his echoes in the misnamed Democratic Soldier-Labour Party.

After a fairly lengthy period of intensive training in New Caledonia (during which the New Zealanders also served as an essential second-line force while the decisive and long-drawn battle of Guadalcanar was being fought to its bloody finish), the Pacific forces at length went forward in August, 1943, to take up new forward bases in the Solomons and prepare for action. They took part in three actions—the clearing of Vella Lavella in the Central Solomons from the Japanese; the capture of Mono Island, immediately south of Bougainville, in preparation for the American landing on Bougainville which came a few days later; and the capture of Green Island, in the Bismarck Archipelago group.

None of these actions involved heavy fighting—though those who were killed are none the less dead because of that—and in that they have been characteristic of a great part of the war in the Pacific (outside the outstanding heavy battles on Guadalcanar, New Georgia and later on Saipan). The ratio of killed to wounded—1 to 2, higher than that for Italy or Normandy—is testimony to the deadly character of close-range jungle warfare.

But it should never be forgotten by critics of the Pacific Division that without these actions in the Solomons and the powerful bases which were subsequently established as a result of them, the destruction of Rabaul—that is to say, the most forward Japanese base menacing Australia and New Zealand—would not have been possible.

And this was accomplished not only in face of the resistance offered by the enemy, of the menace of disease and of the almost intolerable conditions, but equally against the disintegrating propaganda of the Holland Nationalists and the John A. Lee-ites, for

which the Pacific Division was the main target. It would be hard to imagine anything more destructive of morale than the type of propaganda which accompanied the "over-commitment" campaign, which was the main weapon against the Labour Government in the election campaign of 1943.

It is a tremendous tribute to the political good sense of the troops and their distaste for anything that savours of demagogy that they replied to this campaign by turning in a two-to-one vote for the Government on the eve of their actions in the Solomons.

Meanwhile, two further developments arose. With the growing number of American forces deployed in the Pacific and the needs of Britain and liberated Europe for food supplies, New Zealand stood in grave need of arresting the decline in farm production, and, in fact, of increasing its production. Secondly, added Air Force commitments in the Pacific further complicated the problem of maintaining the Pacific ground forces.

It was this situation which the Government met, first by withdrawing a considerable number of the Pacific forces for return to essential industry, and now by its latest statement. According to Mr. Fraser's announcement, New Zealand will maintain the Second Division in Europe, at least until the end of the Italian campaign, and the men from the Pacific Division, as well as other reinforcements becoming available, will be used to replace Second Division men with a long term of service overseas, so that they can return to New Zealand to take up positions in essential industry.

This decision solves the immediate difficulties and should be generally acceptable, though the Government might well consider the suggestion made in the *New Zealand Herald* that the men returning after long service in the Middle East should be allowed to choose their own jobs, rather than be placed under compulsory manpower direction. Compulsory direction should be adopted only if absolutely necessary; without it, it is reasonable to assume that at least fifty per cent. of the men returning will find their way into essential industry.

However, Mr. Fraser's statement does not, and cannot, throw any light on New Zealand's ultimate part in future military operations against Japan. It is reasonable to assume that not only the Italian campaign, but the whole war against Hitler Germany will finish in the not so distant future. With it the immediate tasks of the Second Division will come to an end. What then?

We do not wish to enter into fruitless speculation, the more so as the results of the recent Quebec Conference, which dealt with the future disposition of Allied forces against Japan, are not known; but certain general principles should be considered.

It may be—as is sometimes suggested—that the British and American Governments may consider that, in view of New Zealand's importance as a food-growing country, and its already considerable contribution to the war in Europe, it should not be required to contribute troops for the war against Japan. The point is, however, what should be *our* attitude—the attitude of the New Zealand Government, the attitude of the New Zealand working class, of the New Zealand people?

New Zealand, in common with Australia, has a definite interest in the future of the Pacific, and this was quite clearly and admirably expressed in the Canberra Pact. Our future peace and prosperity are very intimately bound up in the outcome of the war in the Pacific. Is it unreasonable to assume that our voice will be heard in the peace settlement for the Pacific in proportion as we are able to point to a direct military contribution on our part?

Canada is sending troops into the Pacific, according to recent statements. Mr. Curtin has referred to new and bigger tasks ahead of the Australian Imperial Force. As Communists, we urge all the peoples enslaved by Japan to take part in the struggle for their own liberation, as has been done by the peoples of Europe. Can we then regard it as a matter of indifference whether New Zealand makes an armed contribution to the struggle or not?

The idea of winning the war by growing food alone is a thoroughly petit-bourgeois idea, not a radical one, as some people mis-

takenly imagine. We Communists are fully conscious of the importance of production for the war effort, and have stressed it more than any other group; but we are not foolish enough to imagine that wars can be won without men under arms. Raising food crops to be sold for a profit would be a far "better" way of winning a war than fighting in Burma or Borneo—but unfortunately there is no such choice for the Allies as a whole; the only argument is as to whether *New Zealand* should assume a share of responsibility for *both* forms of the war effort.

Communists have never distinguished between word and deed; for they are part of the working class which has never hesitated to shoulder its share of the sacrifices in any cause in which it believed. It is from this basis that we should proceed in estimating what should be New Zealand's future contribution in the war against Japan.

[Gordon Watson's impressions of a soldier's part in the Pacific War are reflected in his letters, in his poems and in the essay "In the Foxholes."]

PACIFIC PROBLEMS

[From *In Print, a Magazine of Marxism,* March, 1944.]

THE PRESENT PATTERN in the South and Central Pacific is the expression of the expansionist drive of world imperialism which began in the 1890's, and of the imperialist redivision of the world which followed the war of 1914-18.

Hence the administrative divisions are purely arbitrary, depending on the accident of which major power was first on the spot with its claim for annexation.

Even such limited forms of unity as would have been possible, provided tribal barriers had been overcome, were made impossible. Single units were bisected, as in the case of Samoa (Germany and the U.S.A.), New Guinea (Holland and Germany), the Solomons (Germany and Britain) and Timor (Portugal and Holland).

The redivision of 1919 did not alter this, but brought yet another competitor into the Pacific—Japan.

Monopolist-imperialist enterprise was superimposed on the old, free capitalist enterprise which had already disintegrated and decimated the native communities.

The big shipping companies, the island trading firms, Burns Philp and Morris Hedstrom, Lever Bros., Colonial Sugar Co., the European Nickel Trust (in the case of New Caledonia), were the characteristic forms of the new period.

The difficulty of obtaining cheap wage labour, in face of the preference of the local, native communities for their own tribal forms of economy, and the inefficiency of the old methods of "blackbirding" (from which the natives of the New Hebrides suffered particularly), led to the introduction of thousands of "indentured" labourers—the Indians of Fiji, the Chinese of Tahiti, the Javanese and Annamese of New Caledonia.

It should not be forgotten in any discussion of the future of the Pacific, that many of these colonies have a national minority

question of their own. (In the case of Fiji, the Indian population is now almost equal to the Fijian, and is growing more rapidly.)

Provision for health and education of the native peoples is extremely slight. What has been done is the work of the missions, philanthropic institutions such as the Rockefeller Foundation, and a certain small proportion by the respective administrations, belatedly and against the will of the local white trading and planting population.

Those who are inclined to have an over-simplified view of the class relations in the colonies would do well to remember that the characteristic opposition of the white bourgeoisie to the administration in the South Pacific Islands is usually backed by complaints that the administration has done too much to educate the natives, is too "expensive," and that it has restricted their freedom to deal with native labour in their own way. It would be a grave mistake to regard every anti-administration movement in the islands as progressive.

The present war has knit the islands of the Pacific more closely together than a whole century of previous development.

It is no secret that the Solomons, for example, not so very long ago the real "Cannibal Isles" of song and story, are now a main traffic artery, with their roads, air strips, harbour facilities, etc. This is typical of the whole, and these facilities will still exist after the conclusion of the war, opening up great perspectives.

The present discussion on post-war commercial aviation, necessarily overriding existing divisions and spheres of influence, and calling for international organisation, throws into sharp relief the necessity of overcoming the existing arbitrary and artificial boundaries.

Mr. Nash performed a valuable service by raising the question of closer unity in the Pacific, though it would have been strengthened had he defined more clearly what he had in mind by "federation." What groups of islands and people, for example, would form such a federation? What would be its system of administration?

Certainly all strivings and all practical steps toward co-operation between neighbouring communities should be encouraged and supported.

Marxism does not deny the difference between advanced and backward peoples which exists at the present stage. It denies that this difference is inevitable or rooted in national and racial characteristics; it affirms that it arises historically and is accentuated by imperialism, and that it is possible to raise the most backward to the level of the most advanced.

Even among the communities of the Pacific, peoples like the Hawaiians, Samoans, Tongans and Fijians are more advanced than the Melanesians of New Caledonia and the Solomons, or the natives of the Central Pacific. These more advanced communities must contribute a large part of the leadership for the advancement of the more backward, in the same way as a Maori leader like Maui Pomare did for peoples other than the Maori.

The Teheran Conference, with its perspectives for continued post-war Allied co-operation, and the supplementary Cairo Conference, extending unity to the Pacific Power of China, provides a basis for future developments in the Pacific also.

Mr. Nash's conception of joint "trusteeship" of the leading Allied Powers in the post-war Pacific is not necessarily synonymous with the imperialist "mandates" policy of 1919, any more than the apparatus of U.N.R.R.A. (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) is a consortium for the exploitation of Europe. Given that we are able to establish and maintain genuine, democratic, progressive governments, allied with the U.S.S.R., in the leading Pacific powers, backed by the Labour movement—and the final defeat of the Axis raises just such possibilities—such Governments could act as a united council, laying down a uniform code of labour laws, providing a central budget based on the contributions of the individual governments (as in the case of U.N.R.R.A.) for native health and education, and regulating international shipping and commercial aviation in the Pacific. The recent Australia-New Zealand Treaty is a very valuable first step in this direction.

It is primarily in alliance with the labour and progressive movement of the more advanced countries, that the peoples of the South Seas will protect themselves against exploitation and advance toward self-government.

By itself, even the strongest federation would avail little against the powerful monopolist interests, backed by reactionary governments. The responsibility is with the labour movement, now, to establish strong connections with the neighbouring island communities and to take up the issues which most closely affect them—labour conditions, health, education, a just price for their products, etc. For New Zealand this means primarily the peoples of Rarotonga and Western Samoa, with a closer connection with those of Fiji and Tonga.

The soldiers of the Second N.Z.E.F. in the Pacific, many of them themselves unionists, have pursued a democratic policy in their relations with the native peoples, and have laid a good foundation for future co-operation.

WORLD FORCES AFTER THE WAR

[From *In Print, a Magazine of Marxism,* June, 1944.]

THE ENTIRE post-war scene will be dominated by two great facts:

(1) The Socialist Soviet Union, in spite of its terrible losses in the war against Germany, will emerge as the strongest power both in Europe and in Eastern Asia, its inner unity indestructibly strengthened and its ties with the peoples of the world, particularly of Europe and England, stronger than ever before.

(2) The United States of America will emerge as by far the strongest capitalist power, industrially, financially and in its navy and air force. This is already reflected in the recent international exchange stabilisation agreement, which gives the U.S.A. 33 per cent. of the votes, as compared with Britain's 15 per cent.

It is certain that the Soviet Union's added strength and influence will be thrown into the scales in favour of a policy of international peace, orderly reconstruction of devastated areas, and the right of all peoples to govern themselves in their own way. Hence the decisive question for the whole future period will be: What course will be taken by the ruling circles in the U.S.A., a unilateral bid for world domination, leading inevitably to a clash with Britain and with the U.S.S.R., or a continuation of the policies of Teheran? . . .

All American political discussion at the present time, without exception, is concerned with this fundamental question. The exponents of the "American century" are by no means without influence.

The straight-out annexationist demands of the *Chicago Tribune* are no more than the exaggerated form of the policy implicit in the reported statement of a high official of the war production controls, that the United States must continue its mobilisation after the conclusion of this war, which would be no more than a prelude to the next.

So-called "isolationism" is only the reverse face of the most extreme plans for world domination.

The more sober and responsible sections of the American ruling class have repudiated these grandiose schemes, which they rightly estimate as headed only for disaster, and in their turn occupy themselves with the problem of increasing American weight in world politics in accordance with its increased strength. The most important of these sections, associated with Roosevelt, is in favour of strengthening the Anglo-American alliance, maintaining friendly relations with the Soviet Union, but at the same time creating an independent Anglo-American bloc capable of applying pressure to the Soviet Union.

[In the succeeding issue of *In Print* Gordon Watson corrects this passage, "lest it give rise to misunderstandings." "While it was true, up to the time of Teheran, that Roosevelt's policy (as was Churchill's) was that of an independent Anglo-American bloc collaborating with the Soviet Union, but capable of bringing pressure to bear on it, Teheran has ended that position, and Roosevelt must now be regarded as the outstanding exponent and upholder of Teheran in the U.S.A. to-day. It is interesting to note that Dewey, the Republican candidate for the Presidency against Roosevelt, did in fact some months ago advocate an exclusive Anglo-American Alliance.]

This is the typical Roosevelt "middle of the road" policy, reflected in domestic as well as in international affairs.

In connection with these discussions which are taking place in America's leading circles, an examination of Wendell Willkie's book *One World* is of the greatest interest.

In its plea for friendship with the Soviet Union and China and self-government for the colonial peoples, Willkie's book deserves the praise which has been given it and will be a step in the education of millions of Americans. But a more fundamental examination should be given to it.

Willkie is no more a Socialist than is Roosevelt. He is an important big business executive, and an aspirant for leadership of the Republican Party.

It is important to note that the edge of Willkie's criticisms is

directed toward the British Empire. In spite of some excellent comments on the Negro question and anti-Semitism, he denies the existence or possibility of United States imperialism.

His attacks on the colonial system in the Middle East, India and Malaya are specifically directed at the ruling circles of Great Britain, and Churchill's famous statement that he "did not become His Majesty's first Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire" was directly in reply to Willkie.

It is equally significant that Roosevelt refused to allow Willkie to visit India, keystone of the British imperialist system, in the course of his world tour.

It is obvious that Willkie's policy, while in some respects it coincides with the Socialist policy, is not by any means identical with it.

For an analogy, one may recall the American "Open Door" policy in relation to China. While Britain, France and Japan relied on direct territorial occupation, the existence of treaty ports and special rights to maintain their positions in China, America advanced the policy of the "Open Door," relying on its superior economic strength to secure its place in the Chinese market, once the special privilege of its trade rivals should have been abolished.

It is not fanciful to imagine that a section, at least, of American opinion may look forward to a situation where the United States will occupy a position analogous to Great Britain's in the pre-imperialist nineteenth century, dominating the world markets by its own overwhelming industrial and financial strength.

In view of the situation outlined above, it is not surprising that responsible British opinion is exceedingly concerned with the problems of Britain's post-war position.

This is most sharply expressed in the recent speech of Field-Marshal Smuts, Premier of South Africa, and the subsequent debates in the British Parliament on the future of the Empire.

In the opinion of Smuts, the Franco-British alliance, the foundation of British former influence in Europe, could not be built again

to the same strength, and the decisive influence in Europe would therefore be that of the Soviet Union. He proposed the strengthening and consolidation of a British Empire bloc as a counter-weight both to the U.S.S.R. and to the U.S.A.

However much Smuts may have underestimated the power of France, under a new leadership, to again play a great and glorious part in the new Europe, it is certain that it will not be such a France as would be amenable to a "balance-of-power" alliance as envisaged by Smuts.

Smuts has long been recognised as probably the most responsible and far-seeing spokesman of British imperialism, and his speech found a ready echo in Britain in circles reaching out to include Shinwell, "Left" Labour M.P.

Obviously Smuts' statement is, in its outcome, destructive of Anglo-American unity and of Anglo-Soviet unity; it is the British counterpart of those American leaders who look to post-war relations mainly as a means of juggling for positions of influence and power. At the same time it poses for us a fundamental question: the future of Britain, and of those countries traditionally associated with Britain, of which New Zealand is one.

A weak Britain would not be in the interests of world peace and implementation of the Teheran Conference. It would reduce the value of the Anglo-Soviet twenty years' treaty of alliance; it would impair Anglo-American relations by encouraging the more reactionary and imperialist sections of the American ruling class. The strongest Britain would be, of course, a Socialist Britain, bringing with it a strong, planned national economy and an internal, national unity impossible under capitalism.

But even short of this, a great deal can be achieved, and is already envisaged in the programme of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Firm alliance with the Soviet Union; full encouragement of the democratic revolution in Europe; self-government for the colonies, and in the first place India, laying the basis for future friendly

alliances; radical reconstruction of British industry and agriculture to meet the new situation; these are the essentials of a programme for a strong Britain, able to uphold worthily its proud traditions and place in the world.

New Zealand, in spite of its distance and its small population, can play a very important part in this. With the ratification of the Statute of Westminster, its treaty with Australia, and the appointment of its own ambassadors to Washington, Moscow and Canberra, its full independence is established, and there are no questions at issue between it and Britain, with the possible exception of a debt adjustment. Traditionally the closest of the Dominions to Britain, with strong trade ties, a considerable contribution to the war effort and a progressive Government in power, it is in a position to speak in London with some influence, and to exercise that influence on the side of the progressive forces there.

Besides establishing and developing new links with the Soviet Union, the U.S.A. and China, we should, therefore, also strengthen, not weaken, our traditional ties with Great Britain. Under the new conditions this will not contradict—as it has often tended to in the past—but accelerate our own national development and our ability to play a worthy part in world affairs.

[The reference in this article to the Statute of Westminster is to its proposed, not actual, ratification. The Statute was not ratified until 1947.—Ed.]

TOWARD A MASS WORKERS' PARTY

[From *In Print, a Magazine of Marxism,* August and September, 1944.]

THE RESULTS of the recent municipal elections presented us with two very sharp contradictions, which we must solve rapidly and clear-sightedly. Failure to do so would be fraught with the most dangerous consequences for the future of New Zealand.

The first is the contradiction between the rising influence of the Communists, many times greater than anything previously known, and the dangerous drift in the position of the Labour Party, reflected in the most serious setback to Labour in many years.

The second is the contradiction between the mass influence of the Communist Party and its own still small membership, growing much more slowly than the spread of its influence.

If we could regard the Labour Party and the Communist Party as two basically hostile parties (as, indeed, a few right-wing Labour leaders still do), founded on basically hostile classes, then indeed we would have nothing to worry about in the decline of the Labour Party and the advance of the Communist Party.

But in fact the Labour Party is the traditional workers' party in New Zealand—although increasingly subjected to capitalist influences and theories of adaptation to capitalism from 1920 on, which made the emergence of a separate Communist Party, founded on the principles of scientific Socialism, an historical necessity. The Labour Party maintains in its platform the objective of Socialism, and is in its immediate programme (expressed in the election policies of 1935 and 1938) progressive, expressing the immediate needs of the New Zealand working class and the New Zealand people.

Even from the narrowest point of view, it is not true that the Communist Party profits from the decline of the Labour Party. The majority of our recruits come from new people just entering political life. The majority of those who are lost to the Labour Party organisation fall out of political life altogether or become the prey of adventurism and disruption, represented by such figures as John A. Lee and John Hogan.

The serious people in the Labour Party and the trade unions, who can see further than old feuds and narrow party advantages, have long been concerned about the division in the ranks of the workers in New Zealand. Many of them feel that the Communist Party has something to provide which is at present lacking in the political life of the Labour Party, and that one united workers' party in New Zealand is essential before the Labour movement can again act as the powerful nucleus which will sweep all sections of the people, including the farmers, into a powerful forward movement for the progressive development of New Zealand.

Historically, in all countries, the question of one united workers' party must be solved as a condition for the advance to Socialism. In Russia it was solved by the fact that all parties which arose out of the working class and had influence with the workers, with the exception of the Bolsheviks, passed over to the side of the counter-revolution and were suppressed together with the White Guards and the foreign interventionists.

Yet this is not to say that this is the path which will be taken in every country. Just as each country will seek out its own path to Socialism, so the Labour movement of each country must find its own way to the formation of a united workers' party.

In some countries of the post-war world it appears that the influence of the Communist Party is so far outstripping that of the Socialist or Labour Party that the Communist Party itself will become the mass workers' party. This is particularly so in those European countries where sections of the Socialists had become so deeply corrupted with capitalist influences that they assisted in the debacle of Hitlerism, with some of their leaders even passing over into the ranks of the Quislings. Many such instances can be found in Europe (although even in these countries groups of honest Socialists still exist as loyal collaborators in the resistance movement).

What are the main obstacles in the way of the formation of one workers' party in New Zealand? We may neglect the issues of old prejudices and misconceptions on both sides, for, although these are serious and harmful enough, there is no reason to believe

that with an honest effort and goodwill they could not be rapidly cleared away, as indeed many such prejudices have already been dispelled. Very few Labour Party people now picture a Communist as a fanatical "agent of Moscow," concerned in breaking up the unions and fomenting disorder. Very few, if any, Communists now have a picture of the average Labour Party member or union secretary as an agent of the employers and traitor to the workers.

There are more serious obstacles in the way of immediate unity. The Communist Party is solidly based on the great body of teachings on working class theory and practice, grouped around the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, which, however, it regards as in no way a dogma, but a guide to the solution of the new problems and tasks of the Labour movement. The Labour Party, on the other hand, has never possessed such a theory, and in fact many of its leading people have prided themselves on being exclusively "practical" men, without any need for theory. In practice such an outlook leads to many mistakes, a narrowness of approach, and even positive penetration of harmful influences into the Labour movement.

The Communists believe that to throw over such a theory, whose correctness has been proved by the whole course of world history, would result not in a stronger workers' party, but in the further disintegration of the Labour movement.

The time is long overdue for a serious study of the main teachings of Marxism-Leninism in all Labour organisations, and for Labour men and women to make up their minds whether they can any longer afford to reject the most powerful weapon for our whole movement—the Science of Socialism.

A great intensification, not only among the Communists, but in all sections of the Labour movement, of the teaching and study of the principles of scientific Socialism, would help to clear the way for a party thoroughly united in its organisation, because thoroughly united in its ideas, its objective and its conception of how to get there.

This would assist in the solution of other outstanding obstacles

to the formation of a single workers' party; in the main, organisational questions. No workers' party can be successful in the tasks which face it if it allows members, and particularly leading members, to carry out policies in opposition to the policies of the party. While every member must take part in formulating the policies of the party, every member, from the leadership to the rank and file, must be equally responsible for carrying them out.

It is obvious that a democratic workers' party is impossible unless it has full control over its representatives in Parliament and local bodies and over its press. It is impossible for the party and its M.P.'s or its newspaper to follow different policies.

The leaders of the Labour Party have long argued that once a member of the Labour Party is elected to Parliament, and particularly if he becomes a Minister in the Government of the country, that he is no longer responsible to the party, but to the people of the country. Hence they will not admit that the party has any control over their actions as members of the Government or members of Parliament.

But while the party obviously cannot remove from office or from Parliament those who have been elected there by a democratic vote, they certainly have the right and the duty to ensure that if those who are elected wish to speak and act as members of the party, it shall be the policy of the party they carry out. If they wish no longer to carry out the policy of the party, then they should no longer be considered members of the party.

We raise this question, not in the sense of demanding frequent "caning" of M.P.'s by the party organisations (this has often been attempted in the Labour Party), but as a matter of principle, which should be recognised and regarded as mutually binding by all concerned. The recognition of this principle would result in a closer confidence and unity all round.

From the above it will be seen that the differences between the Communist Party and the Labour Party are still important enough to put an immediate merger out of the question. It may be that Union, but capable of bringing pressure to bear on it, Teheran has

this will not be the historical course taken for the formation of a united workers' party in New Zealand. But it is certain that the more sharply these questions are discussed, both within the Labour Party and the Communist Party, and in the trade unions, the more rapidly will a solution be found.

In the meantime there is no need to stand still. Closer, immediate forms of united action can be found. In the general elections last year and the municipal elections this year, Communists and Labour Party members worked more closely and harmoniously than ever before. But we need something more enduring than temporary aid in election campaigns. (Even here, only in Auckland was a true United Front on the basis of mutual aid formed.)

The Communist Party has persistently proposed as an intermediate step that it should be accepted as an affiliation of the Labour Party, on the same basis as are trade unions. This has been rejected, and arguments brought forward that the constitution of the Labour Party does not permit the affiliation of another party. We do not claim that this is the only form for unity; we are prepared to consider any others which may be brought forward from whatever quarter.

The removal of all bans on Communists taking part in the work of L.R.C.'s and attending Labour Party conferences as trade union delegates is an obvious first step. Permanent joint contact committees between the two organisations would carry on the good relations established during election and other campaigns and help pave the way for closer unity.

While it is true that we must strive for the formation of one united workers' party in New Zealand, this by no means releases us from the responsibility of securing the most rapid building up of the Communist Party of New Zealand. Indeed, the stronger the Communist Party, the stronger will be the drive for working class unity and a united workers' party.

The disparity between the present influence of the Communist Party in New Zealand and the size of its membership, greatly

though this has increased in the past few years, is still so large as to constitute a major problem.

What are the main factors which account for this failure to build up the party numerically to a position corresponding to its influence?

Firstly, the party has not yet succeeded in persuading the thousands of workers and farmers who support its campaigns that their active and organised participation in the political life of the country is necessary. They have confidence in the party to the extent that they are prepared to vote for it in elections; they still do not have enough confidence in themselves to realise that without their participation, the party cannot successfully carry out its tasks.

One of the main enemies that we have to fight in the New Zealand situation is the quite widespread feeling of apathy and cynicism toward political activity, the feeling that "politics" is a dirty game, that no Government is to be trusted, and that, like it or not, the outcome of the present war must be unfavourable to the people. Thousands of people in New Zealand are still living in the shadows of 1920-40, and cannot see that history can have any other cycle than war, post-war slump, renewed slump and war.

It must be admitted that our party has not yet succeeded in combating these dismal perspectives. We are living in the midst of the greatest victories for world progress since 1917, yet the internal political atmosphere in New Zealand in no way reflects this gigantic fact.

It is a central task for party propaganda now to drive home to the people the new, tremendous prospects. Without in any way minimising the difficulties or the necessity for organised struggle on a wider scale than ever before, we can tell the people that, if we seize the opportunity, then history affords us the possibility of a long period of peace and progress, a development of our national resources, a full and happy life for all and a progressive education of our people toward the goal of Socialism.

We should not hesitate to set ourselves against the moaners and the croakers, the prophets of disaster, who cannot see any other

prospects for an advance to Socialism than through misery and catastrophe. The more boldly we come forward with our own perspectives, the more rapidly will we draw members into our ranks to help us fight for them.

One major defect in our party work which leads to a failure to recruit is that we are still insufficiently active on the every-day, immediate New Zealand issues, particularly those of a local character.

The majority of our supporters still look on us as the party which was right on the issues of the Soviet Union, right about Munich, right in opposing the shipment of scrap metal to Japan, right on the issues of supporting the Labour Government against Nationalist reaction, rather than as the party which got the children's playground established for the crowded city area, which fought for better bus facilities for factory workers going to and coming from their job, or which helped the farmers to get better roading for their district.

In the municipal election campaign the majority of party organisations worked out good, concrete programmes. Yet since the elections how many campaigns have been conducted to give effect to these programmes? We are not vote-hunters on the basis of empty promises; our election programmes are, or should be, programmes for continued activity and organisation after the elections are concluded.

In every case where party organisations have taken part in these local campaigns around immediate issues, the result has been a much wider connection for the party and a deeper confidence in it on the part of the ordinary citizen.

A third reason for the slowness in building the party is the unsatisfactory way in which many of our party recruiting campaigns are conducted.

In an ordinary campaign (say for support for a United Nations Week or in the party's campaign for the present Victory Loan) extensive planning takes place. There is a programme of meet-

ings, leaflets and pamphlets are issued, widespread advertising employed, bright and stimulating methods of propaganda thought out.

But how many recruiting campaigns have been disposed of simply by issuing quotas for new members for the branches to obtain, issuing a few leaflets with a general appeal to join the party, and leaving it at that? Quite a few.

A "Build the Party" campaign should be planned and carried through in the same public way as is any other campaign of the party.

Recruiting leaflets should not confine themselves to a general appeal to join the party, but should embody some solid information about the party, its objectives and organisation, if they are to achieve any results.

A well-organised "Build the Party" campaign, using a variety of propaganda forms, is in itself a powerful advertisement and an incentive to join the party; a slovenly campaign will repel possible recruits.

But, in the last resort, the one indispensable means for attracting recruits and then—equally important—holding them, is to have well-organised and interesting party branch meetings.

Nobody likes joining an organisation about whose workings, however sympathetic they may be to its objectives, they know very little, especially an organisation which has been subjected to so much misrepresentation as has the Communist Party. Hence the main medium for bringing recruits into our ranks is the cottage meeting or open branch meeting attended by sympathisers.

Without a flourishing branch life it will be quite impossible to attract or to hold new members. How many of our branches are at present so organised, with a lively and interesting programme of regular activities, that members both look forward to their meetings and want to ask their non-party friends to attend them in order to see our party at work?

On the other hand, how many branch members feel that attendance at a branch meeting is an obligation that they, as politically

conscious workers, are prepared to shoulder, but which they do not feel non-party workers would appreciate?

A pre-requisite to any successful recruiting campaign must be a thorough overhaul by all district and branch leaderships of methods of branch work, a thorough study of the problems of the individual branches, and assistance to overcome all those weaknesses which are holding back branches from recruiting. Without healthy branches there can be no healthy party.

A final factor impeding the development of the party is a too rigid approach to the question of who may become a party member.

There are still quite a number of cases of reluctance to recruit to the party honest workers and farmers who are considered "backward," either because of lack of education in questions of theory, or because they are not prepared to devote so much of their spare time to party activities as members who are more politically developed (or who have fewer obligations).

One may quite often hear the reply from a prospective recruit: "I would like to join the party, but I feel that I couldn't be active enough to be of any use."

Lenin's definition of party membership is given in the *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, pages 41-42: "According to Lenin's formulation, one could be a member of the party who accepted its programme, supported it financially and belonged to one of its organisations. . . . Lenin regarded the party as an organised detachment, whose members cannot just enrol themselves into the party, and hence must submit to party discipline."

This famous definition, which was the basis for the sharpest division between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at the 1903 Congress of the Russian Labour Party, was intended to exclude from the party all opportunist elements, who refused to submit themselves to the common programme and common discipline of the party. It was not intended to exclude workers in agreement with the policy of the party and prepared to work in an organised way under its direction,

but who, for one reason or another, could not participate in regular meetings of a basic organisation of the party.

Now compare this with Clause 3B of the Constitution of the Communist Party of New Zealand, which says: "A party member is one who accepts the party programme, attends the regular meetings of the branch of which he or she is a member, and engages in some form of party activity."

It seems to me that this formulation, if it is rigidly interpreted, leads to a limitation of our perspectives for recruiting, and should be redrafted as soon as there is the opportunity for amendment of the Constitution.

In practice, this definition, with its emphasis on regular attendance at branch meetings, leads to a rather curious division between "active" and "inactive" members. Often one finds a comrade whose only activity is attendance at a fortnightly or weekly meeting classed as an "active" member, while another comrade, who is exceedingly active in a mass organisation or on the job, but who is precluded by the nature of his work or domestic responsibilities from regular attendance at a meeting, is classed as "inactive."

To recruit on the scale which is necessary at the present time we want within the ranks of our party *all*—absolutely all—who are in agreement with our programme and who are ready to work under the direction of the party—to the limit of their ability, however restricted—in order to give effect to the programme.

A mother with a young family, a young worker who wants to attend night technical classes, a farmer in an isolated district—we want to make it possible for all these people to join our party and take part in our work, without having them classed as "inactive" because they cannot attend many meetings.

This does not mean that we do not want full attendance at party branch meetings. It simply means that it should not be the only criterion for judging the activity of party members or of the recruits we want to draw into the party. If by this means we recruit to the party workers who are not simply unable, but unwill-

ing, to contribute fully to the work of the branch, then the responsibility rests fairly with district and branch leaderships to see that they are drawn in. It should be made quite impossible for branch leaderships to "solve" the problem by simply declaring a member "lapsed" and crossing him or her off the rolls.

These are some of the means by which the Communist Party's membership may be rapidly expanded to meet its growing responsibilities.

[While there has been no amendment to the Communist Party's Constitution along the lines suggested in this article, Gordon Watson's warnings against rigidity have been accepted as correct.—Ed.]

WHAT KIND OF NEW WRITING?

[From *In Print, a Magazine of Marxism,* December, 1944. The series of books referred to were published by the Progressive Publishing Society during 1943 and 1944. There were four issues, comprising verse, short stories and critical essays by New Zealand writers.]

THE SHARP CONTROVERSY aroused by the publication of the third issue of *New Zealand New Writing,* under the editorship of Professor I. A. Gordon, brings to the fore a whole series of problems for the future of New Zealand culture and, in particular, of New Zealand writing.

The crisis in modern culture is extraordinarily deep, reflecting all the agonies of the death of an old society and the birth of a new, and New Zealand artists—using the word in the broadest sense, whether the medium be painting, writing, sculpture or music—are faced with the double problem of making a positive contribution to the solution of this crisis, while at the same time laying the basis for a specifically New Zealand culture.

For this reason we should be extremely patient, and beware of all artificial or arbitrary standards in judging the work of those men and women in New Zealand who are trying to grapple with this outstandingly difficult problem.

Ever since the break-up of primitive communism, which produced its own tribal art in songs and carving, there has been a deep gulf between art and the masses. The artist, in the majority of cases, came directly from the ruling class, or those sections most closely associated with it, and in any event he had to produce works which would only be circulated among the comparatively narrow strata whom he was able to reach. This did not prevent the greatest artists from making achievements of lasting value, but the gap between popular art, which lingered on in folk songs and ballads, and cultured art, remained profound.

Indeed, it is one of the greatest results of the Socialist revolution that it, for the first time, allows the masses full access to the masterpieces of the past; Shakespeare reaches wider audiences in the Soviet Union to-day than ever in history.

The breakdown of the system of patronage of artists (Doctor Johnson's famous letter to the Earl of Chesterfield repudiating his patronage marks the transition in England), and the emergence of capitalism broadened the audience, but thereby sharpened all the contradictions. Capitalism converted art into a commodity, as it did with everything else; the artist had to sell his books, his paintings, his music, in order to live. At the same time, the wider standard of elementary education made necessary by the demands of modern industry for skilled operatives, gave him a potentially wider market. The rise of the novel, previously a scarcely developed and secondary art form, as the most universally accepted variety of literature, parallels the growth of capitalism.

In the modern world the artist sees his old privileged position threatened by the rise of forms which are genuinely popular among the masses—the film, the popular novel, swing music, commercial art —but which he knows to be highly commercialised, under the control of powerful capitalist monopolies, and, in many cases, debased and debasing.

He may deliberately commercialise his art, as did a writer like Arnold Bennett, at the cost of falsifying it; or he may retreat from the problem by forsaking all attempts to reach a popular audience and express himself in some kind of language intelligible only to the smallest circle of his intimates.

Few remain who, honestly and courageously, face the problem of bridging the gulf between art and the masses.

But if the artist no longer provides for the cultural needs of a progressive class, and if at the same time he can find no popular audience among the masses, he is condemned to isolation, deprived of all social function, and must perish.

In the 1930's, under the impact of the world economic crisis, this problem came very sharply to the fore, and many artists, particularly in the United States, came under the influence of Marxism and tried to create a "proletarian" literature. But, with a few notable exceptions, this literature was scarcely more popular than the old, and

it was discovered that the mere choice of a strike as a theme did not ensure automatic success. Many gave up the attempt, others became enemies of the very principles which they themselves had so vigorously championed. Reactionary influences welcomed the alleged failure of "proletarian" literature.

All this is very clearly reflected in the English publication *New Writing,* edited by John Lehmann, which, in its Penguin edition, has had quite a wide influence. Presumably it affected the choice of a title for the *New Zealand New Writing,* and probably has influenced its contributors.

Yet the English *New Writing* is far from being a good model for young writers, and an examination of recent issues (16, 17 and 18 are now available in New Zealand) shows that it is becoming positively reactionary in its outlook.

The majority of the contributions increasingly reflect a neurotic subjectiveness, a blank pessimism and a wilful obscurity, balanced by a little bit of rather dull and photographic reportage under the title "The Way We Live." It is interesting as a symptom, but valueless, and positively harmful as a guide.

In the latest issue of *New Writing* John Lehmann welcomes Ernest Hemingway's travesty of the Spanish War, *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* and Arthur Koestler's defence of Trotskyism, *Darkness at Noon,* as the most significant works of the decade, and on this basis proclaims that "we" are getting near to the heart of the modern crisis. Under such direction, how can *New Writing* be a progressive influence for young artists, in spite of its occasional publication of revolutionary and honest material?

New Writing has its own peculiar attitude to the literary heritage of the past. It is systematically dredging England's great literature to find writers who will support their own peculiar position, writers who were in some way warped or defeated by life. For them a John Donne is more important than a John Milton, the Catholic priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins, more significant than a Shelley.

In a recent issue the reactionary writer of pathological "thrillers,"

Graham Greene, is hailed as the outstanding writer of modern times, precisely because he believes in the predominance of evil over good in the world! This attitude repudiates even Christian morality, and comes perilously close to Fascism.

It is time for modern writers to turn their backs on all those signposts labelled "Eliot" and "Auden" and "Kafka." For whatever the personal achievements of this group of writers, they represent, not new directions, but blind alleys. Many of them have recognised this themselves, and have surrendered to mysticism, seeking refuge from the complexities of the modern world in "contemplation" on the lines practised by mediaeval monks and Indian fakirs.

The first indispensable prerequisite for the revolutionary artist (and, ultimately, no other can weather the storm of our times) is a firm and abiding faith in man and his future. "Man! how proud it sounds," declared Maxim Gorky at the first Soviet Writers' Congress. "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty!" writes Shakespeare in the heart of his greatest tragedy, the tragedy of Hamlet who could not rise to his full obligations as a man.

The greatest artists were all full of the love for suffering, struggling mankind which Soviet critics call "humanism," and which they praise as the most important part of the world's cultural heritage.

No modern artist can possess that faith to-day without strong ties with the working class and an appreciation of its role as the grave digger of the old society and the leaders in the emancipation of man from the horrors of class society. It is in this that the close connection between Marxism and art is to be found rather than in any mechanical attempt to create a specifically "proletarian" art.

Maxim Gorky wrote a great novel about a strike; he wrote also an outstanding series of plays about a Russian bourgeois family. It is not the choice of theme that is most immediately important (though, more than anything, we require a living picture of a modern worker in our literature); that cannot be forced. But whatever the

theme, it must be approached in a spirit that strengthens rather than weakens, that is in accordance with the dignity and social responsibility of the true artist.

Art has a positive function. No less than the philosophers, the artists must help to change the world—not directly as a propagandist does—but by their powerful influence on the emotional and moral development of men and women. Aristotle summed this up for all time in his famous definition of tragedy as a "purging" through pity and terror. In this lies the answer to the old question: "What use is art?" The girl who says she "enjoyed" a picture because she "had a good cry" should not be laughed at; she has hit on a profound truth, even if sometimes she cries for things that are not worth crying about.

Art cannot confine itself to a photographic representation of the world (in any case such a representation is quite impossible, since it is far too many-sided, complex and changing); it helps in the moulding of the men and women who will change the world and with it the relations between human things.

New Zealand "new writing," if it is to be really new, if it is to grapple successfully with the many very difficult problems with which it is faced, must be infused with a love for New Zealand and the New Zealand people, a profound confidence in its future, and a standard of craftsmanship that is honest and conscious of its responsibilities. Whether the present venture of Professor Gordon's will succeed in encouraging this tendency, or whether it will encourage artists to wander in the sick little circles of the English *New Writing*, will be demonstrated in time. It is, in any case, a problem that New Zealand artists, in common with their fellows in all capitalist countries, must assuredly solve.

[Further remarks on literature are contained in a letter on page 233 of this book.—Ed.]

THE VICTORY LOAN

[The text of a broadcast prepared by Gordon Watson in August, 1944, and delivered over Station 2YA by a fellow-Communist after his return to his military camp.]

THAT HISTORIC CONFERENCE held at Teheran, modern capital of ancient Persia, in December of last year between the three great representative leaders of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union—Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin—not only laid the foundations for speedy victory in the present war, but also for a post-war world of peace, prosperity and forward social development.

"We recognise fully the supreme responsibility resting upon us and all the nations to make a peace which will command goodwill from the overwhelming masses of the people of the world and banish the scourge and terror of war for many generations." These were the splendid words of the Teheran Declaration.

That unity against Hitlerism and its allies finally cemented at Teheran was the indispensable condition for the present great military blows "from the east, west and south" which are now shaking Germany to its foundations. In the words of General Montgomery "the end of the war is in sight" for Europe, and there is every reason to believe that the final blows against Japan will follow much more quickly than was once believed.

But that victory will not be bought cheaply. Still to-day soldiers, sailors and airmen must die in battle for the final victory; still to-day the underground of Europe must face torture and terror for the final victory; still to-day workers and farmers must fight in the army of production so that this final victory may not be bought too dearly with too many lives.

That is the immediate message of this Victory Loan. By contributing to it to the limit of your ability you will be speeding the day of victory and peace, and shortening the time of sacrifice and bloodshed which lies between.

It has sometimes been argued—fortunately only by a few mistaken people—that the Government should finance this war not by means of loans such as this, but by means of what is known as "costless credit." From the standpoint of scientific economics there is no truth in this argument whatever. No Government, whether it be the Socialist Government of Russia or the Conservative Government of Britain or the Labour Government of New Zealand, can conduct its war effort on any other basis than by an appeal to the consuming public to forego some of their immediate needs, either by means of taxation or of loans. The Soviet Government, for instance, could, if it so desired, issue limitless credits through its State banking structure. But it does not do this. Instead, it has raised three war loans from the people, all of which, incidentally, were oversubscribed within the first few days. The method of the loan has the advantage that when with victory the many goods needed by consumers again become available, those who have supported the loan with their savings will then be able to reap the benefit, while the issuing of credits would inevitably increase the money demand for goods which do not exist during the war and skyrocket their prices once they do come on the market after the war.

Then again there may be a few who will say: "If the money is needed, let the rich provide it." To be sure those who have more money are expected to provide more toward this loan. But that does not for one moment absolve the workers from any responsibility. This is not a rich man's war—it is a people's war, and the workers have plenty at stake in this war. To say "Make the rich pay" and to leave it at that is just "passing the buck" and disclaiming any responsibility for the war. There could not be any policy more harmful to the interests of the workers.

This Victory Loan, besides its immediate aim of hastening the successful conclusion of the war, has this further importance; it will be an impressive demonstration of the national unity we have already achieved in this war and which will be necessary for the fulfilment of the kind of post-war New Zealand we all want—a New Zealand assuring homes and jobs, security and prosperity for all its people.

The Communist Party is a section of the working class, which at the same time strives, within the limits of its present strength and resources, to build up a wider unity of the people for victory in the war and a lasting peace.

The working class has a particularly deep and urgent interest in this war. For it was on the backs of the trade unions and the Labour organisations that the whips of German Fascism and Japanese militarism struck most savagely and insistently; free trade union and labour organisation is impossible anywhere in the world without the total defeat of Fascism.

But obviously this is no issue for the workers alone. Farmers, business men, shop keepers, professional people, all must realise that all their prospects for the future are bound up with victory. This is no time for sectional or partisan strife; neither now nor in the period following the war.

Therefore—

In order to achieve a speedy and decisive victory,

In order to guarantee a lasting and secure peace,

In order to pave the way for a happy and prosperous New Zealand—

The Communist Party of New Zealand, its National Committee, its District Committees and its branches ask you to support to the utmost this present Victory Loan, making it successful beyond anything previously achieved in this country.

NEW ZEALAND BOYS WON'T FIGHT GREEKS

[From *The People's Voice,* December 20, 1944; after British forces under Major-General Scobie had been in action, on the pretext of quelling a "plot" against the E.L.A.S., the combined movement of Left and Liberal Greeks which had led the chief resistance against the Germans. This was the beginning of prolonged Anglo-American intervention in Greek post-war politics. The article was written from Egypt, the last to reach *The People's Voice* from Gordon Watson.]

WIDESPREAD RELIEF has been caused by Mr. Fraser's forthright statement that there is "no likelihood of New Zealand troops being sent to Greece." It would be tragedy piled on tragedy if our forces, who are so deeply in debt to the Greek people, had been thrown into the present intervention in Athens, which is destroying British influence among the liberated peoples and weakening its international relations. But the New Zealand Government cannot stop there—it must use the right it has undoubtedly earned to speak on Greek affairs, to urge on the British Government the need for ending the present conflict. New Zealand soldiers in Italy, who have just added to their laurels the capture of Faenza, and those who, like the author of this article, have been released from service against the Japanese in the Pacific in order that they may join their comrades in the Second Division, will undoubtedly welcome any move which will end intervention and restore democratic government in Greece.

I wish Mr. Fraser could have heard the conversations on Greece among New Zealand reinforcements in any one of the mobilisation camps of New Zealand last week. It would have inspired him with a resolve—despite any amount of criticism from the Nationalist benches and the Nationalist press—to impress on the British Government by any means the necessity for a change in its Greek policy.

Disquiet, uneasiness, deep concern—these were the mildest forms of a sentiment which rose to biting criticism and opposition and a determination that never would New Zealand soldiers lend themselves to such an end.

This feeling was strengthened by the realisation that, even from a purely military point of view, the operations in Athens are bring-

ing no credit to British arms. All recent reports indicate that Major-General Scobie and his staff, who started off so grandiloquently issuing their regular war communiques against the Greek people, are now little more than a beleaguered force in Athens, holding no more than one-sixth of the city, with the E.L.A.S. forces mortaring their headquarters and raiding into the heart of their barracks.

This fact in itself exposes all the cheap propaganda that the E.L.A.S. is only a "lawless minority." Every report indicates that the E.L.A.S. is the overwhelming majority of the Greek people, and that the only supporters of General Scobie in Athens are the quislings and the looters, who, we are told, wrap a Union Jack around themselves, and the police, who beat up any man who once even voted Labour in Greece.

The ending of intervention in Greece, the conclusion of a firm alliance with the fighting people of Greece headed by the E.L.A.S., the resumption of joint operations against the Germans, the real enemy of Greek and Englishman and New Zealander alike—these would be the first measures which would be approved by every New Zealand soldier, whether already in the field or soon to be engaged in battle against the Nazi enemy.

IN THE FOXHOLES

[From *Kiwi News*, February 1st, 1944. This essay was awarded First Prize in the competition conducted among New Zealand forces serving in the Pacific.]

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, the foxhole is a shallow burrow scooped out of the earth or sand in which one may lie flat for temporary cover before he moves again. For us, the foxhole was any hole in the ground, whether as primitive as this or the more elaborate structures roofed with ten-inch coconut logs we built later on against the air raids.

For the foxhole dominated our lives during those days and nights in the perimeter that followed the landing. Let us not now discuss the theory of the thing. One must first describe what was. Above all, the beachhead must be defended and maintained and to extend the perimeter only meant thinning out the line for the sake of a few extra yards of jungle. The discussion on night patrols and mobile tactics is still open, but for this occasion the foxholes were our masters.

Of course it rains. Tropical rain which runs straight through your clothes, splashing on your skin, but brings little or no refreshment. With the rain comes the mud, mud up to your ankles, and, where you go down to get the water, up to your calves. Even this sun cannot penetrate through the thickness of the jungle—fortunately, perhaps—and the mud remains, trampled by the boots around the foxholes. Tree fern fronds you have spread on the bottom for sleeping sink beneath the mud where you sleep.

If you were not wet with the rain you would still be wet with the sweat. For the most part it is the two combined. The thick jungle uniform coated with green paint and further proofed against the air with its new coating of mud, is a very different affair from the white ducks and silk shirts of traditional tropical wear. Your clothes are continuously soaked in sweat, and when you lie down at night, huddled together in your little hole in the ground, you sweat again.

Everybody knows how bad stale sweat smells, and each new day brings no improvement. The mud around the foxhole smells of sweat and excrement and death. Even if nobody has died nearby, that smell seems still to be there, a third element in the total stench which can be described in no other way. After you have come down out of the perimeter, you will wash and boil and rinse the clothes you wore up there, but the smell still clings defiantly to them.

This is very noisy jungle at night, much more so than our New Zealand bush. As night falls the hitherto silent jungle finds a multitude of voices. Then there is every kind of bird or insect or reptile that clicks or scuffles, whistles or hiccups, mockingly or threateningly; none of them is musical; all are unfamiliar and unfriendly. Probably you have heard them before, but they will sound different this time.

So, before night, you will prepare yourself against the noises. Perhaps there is a creaking tree or a stream that rustles the bushes. You will have them positioned during the daylight, for it is bad to make mistakes. You will observe the darkening outline of trees and shrubs and hummocks of mud around the foxhole, noting where a tree trunk might block the flight of a grenade and send it falling back into your own trench. For in the night that is coming there will be no outlines; only more solid lumps of blackness at best to guide you.

The last smoke and the last words of conversation. It will be eleven hours before the next. It may be decided to let one man watch and two sleep, one hour on and two off. Perhaps last night a grenade was thrown at your hole, so it will be two men on and one off, one hour's sleep in every three. So the silent, night-long watch begins, unbroken by a word, a movement or a cough. The weary knees crumple under you with sleep; the impending collapse of the body brings you up with a savage jerk that momentarily restores consciousness. Again and again this happens. You check up needlessly for the hundredth time. The L.M.G. is pointing down that gully you were suspicious about; it is cocked, the action on

automatic. The grenade is by your hand and its pin is unsplayed. You loosen your knife in its sheath. Everything is arranged as if it were the night before. So you wait.

Our artillery has opened up and the shells are whining over your head. The first explosion jars through your body; then it is relief, good to think of the Japs getting hell outside the perimeter, something to break the monotony and the waiting. It is not the same with the mortars, though. You hate our mortars—even if not as much as the Japs do. You cannot hear a bomb coming. Perhaps it will fall short. You wish they would stop. After a while they do, and the silence is bad too.

After an hour which spans eternity, it is your turn to sleep. You pull at the foot of your relief and he takes over without a word, taking care to make no noise. Lying down at the bottom of the hole, the heat is oppressive; there is no position of comfort and it is difficult to sleep, even though a few minutes before you had struggled desperately against sleep. Just as your cramped body is beginning to relax, there is a burst of machine gun fire not very far away. You listen. Then a grenade exploding. Then furious firing and several grenades. Are the Japs attacking or is somebody just "trigger happy"? Firing at night is infectious; it will spread like wild fire along the lines.

Somebody is kicking your foot and it is time to go on again. So the night passes, or stands still, until the unexpected dawn, long since posted as missing, and the first cigarette and the first words with friends who watched through the same night. The officer comes round and inquires for ammunition expended and casualties. So and so is dead; such and such a company had trouble with the Japs trying to infiltrate; no, he doesn't know whether we will shift out of the perimeter to-day or not. So the pattern of the night is pieced together, in the greater freedom of the day.

This is an average. It you had dysentery it was worse. If your nerves slipped the leash and ran away with you it was unendurable. If you were wounded and had to lie all night in the foxhole without

the slightest attention, it was only to be endured as death is endured.

Ours was only a small action. a tiny link in the chain of the foxholes of Bougainville, of New Britain and of China. We were only apprentices in the school of the foxholes, but we will assuredly master them and the night. For the struggle against Fascism is the struggle against the night; it is fitting that we should start here—in the foxholes.

LETTERS

Comprising all available personal letters, written to friends and relatives during his service overseas, 1942-45.

TO HIS FRIENDS — FROM THE PACIFIC

Fiji, April 11, 1942.

THANKS VERY MUCH for your letter. A letter from you in this cesspool of the Pacific is like a ray of sunshine to prisoners in deepest dungeons pent, or a clear spring at the end of a long route march, or a billet without mosquitoes, or any other similes you care to add.

I know it's a selfish outlook, and you're all undoubtedly working your heads off, but a letter here means a great deal.

The insect world is extremely active here. We have been fighting what I fear is a losing war with bed bugs in recent weeks, hosing everything down with disinfectant until it is hard to breathe the air. Reinforcements arrived recently in the form of a Sanitation Squad (popularly known as De-Buggers), but even they seem to have retired exhausted from the fray, and the indomitable little insects still crawl out on raiding expeditions from bare pieces of wood that would hardly seem capable of concealing a speck of dust.

Then there are the mosquitoes. It is a popular fallacy to believe these are all of the one type. There are young and slightly timid mosquitoes who zoom around and make a great deal of noise, but seldom alight on you. There are the hardened, greedy sort who can be lured to their destruction by exposing a bare arm, waiting till they settle, and then annihilating them while they are still sluggish with countless soldiers' blood. Then there are the wild, desperate creatures of the back country whom no words can describe. They took us out on night manoeuvres recently where the mosquitoes have had nothing to feed on for years but emaciated Indians. You can scarcely imagine the shambles. The mossies came over in their thousands, flying in mass formation, and horrible scenes ensued.

I could also describe the flies, who appear immediately the last mosquito beds down for the day, but doubtless you have had enough of this.

I keep meeting new friends all the time. Sometimes I'll be sitting in one of the huts and some stranger will come up and introduce

himself, and it will turn out he's heard me speak somewhere or other.

I had a letter from Sid Scott in Auckland and was upset to hear that his health is no better. Please tell me anything you know.

Fiji, June 6, 1942.

In a recent letter to Doug, I asked him to let you know that the papers and Wintringham turned up o.k., though goodness knows where they are now. All my books and magazines form a sort of travelling library. Also, from Auckland I got several copies of Harold's little pamphlet, which I also passed on. [*We Can Beat the Japs*, a penny pamphlet on a people's defence of New Zealand, by Dr. Harold Silverstone.] Mind you, I think Wintringham should be treated with some reserve. [*New Ways of War*, Penguin book, by Tom Wintringham.] He is excellent on many points—particularly critical—but his general theory of warfare (quite apart from his phoney politics) is all to hell. He has yet to live down his support of the "defensive" theories of Liddell Hart, which in attacking the mistakes of 1914, contributed in no small measure to the mistakes of 1940. Even the parts of Wintringham used by Harold should be carefully considered. His idea of a "web defence" is all right, as opposed to fixed lines, but even here, the strong points in the "web" need to be considered only as starting points for mobile operations, even in defence. The "web"—in itself—is not a sufficient defence against infiltration—it is only the framework of such a defence. Get others to chew these ideas over and see what they think of them. In any case, the pamphlet will serve admirably for the basis of a popular discussion on such questions.

I'm sorry if my letter conveyed an extra melancholy impression—it wasn't intended. Actually the life here now is not unpleasant. Training is more interesting and varied, there is somewhat more recreation and leisure (though I preserve my old antagonism to compulsory sports), and the weather is quite good now, rather like a warm New Zealand summer. I'm afraid I'll never like the army

though, and few do; I resent having my life ordered for me down to the last detail. That may be "petit bourgeois individualism," as I have been told, but I think not. I feel that one of the consolations of being in a socialist army would be the thought that you were fighting to put an end to a state of things which produced armies of any kind. And, of course, this is not a socialist army.

But, don't think from that that my life is one long misery. We get a fair bit of fun out of it and you make some excellent friends. Actually I would far sooner be here—apart from separation from old friends and associations—than in mobilisation camp in New Zealand. There is at least somewhat less pin pricking and mucking about, you are seeing a new part of the world, and learning a great deal. I am quite sure my army life is, and has been, a very valuable education in all kinds of ways, and I will be a lot better for it.

I intended to give you a description of a trip I made to Levuka, the old capital of Fiji, on Ovalau Island, the other day, but this letter is already stringing out and there is a lot to say yet. It was a splendid trip, about forty miles by truck, thirty miles by launch and twenty-four hours at a Levuka pub (the kind of place Maugham might have written *Rain* about), a trip by taxi round the island to a feed at a most magnificent road house on the way back. The trip was organised by the army, and I might say they made a jolly good job of it—and all for 23/6. We balloted for two men from the company to go on it, and I was one of the lucky ones.

I saw my Dad's old island home, Wakaya, in the distance, but didn't have the time to get across there. He is buried right out on the headland there. Later on, if and when things calm down, I intend to go for special leave to visit the island. I met several old friends of his in Levuka, who made me very welcome. In fact, I am now an honorary life member of the Ovalau Club, the oldest club in Fiji, a distinction which I shared with the officers in the party! However, in defence I can say that it is the last and only club to which I am ever likely to be admitted, and as the girl said when accused of having an illegitimate baby, "it was only a very little one."

Fiji, June 7, 1942.

[To an Auckland Trade Unionist.]

YOUR LETTER was particularly welcome because it gave me just the kind of news I want, and which it is difficult to obtain here.

This is a very important period for the trade union movement —the job is much bigger than ever before. You now have to give leadership to the whole people in a most critical period. Questions of wages and conditions are, of course, the essential work of the movement, but all manner of other questions arise and are being tackled, I know—E.P.S., defence, relations with other sections of the working people, etc. The working class cannot exercise its rightful role as leader of the whole people in the fight against Fascism— and nobody else can give the necessary leadership, as recent events have all too clearly shown—unless the trade unions have a broad and flexible policy themselves.

I have, by the way, shown your letter to several of my friends here, and they were very interested. It is difficult for me to keep in touch with as many of my old cobbers as I would like. We are very split up, often miles apart, and leave very often doesn't fit in with one another. Still, we have a good old yarn when our paths do cross.

I generally manage to see the *Union Record*, which seems to reach your members in the army here pretty well. We have a "chippy" corporal in the company I can get it from. It has improved greatly as an interesting, well-got-up paper, though the old "left liberal" attitude that has haunted it from its inception still seems to crop up. (Plus a certain amount of sectarianism—the two always seem to go together.)

We are rather happier at present—the weather is cooler (in fact, very pleasant, like a good New Zealand summer), our training is rather more sensible and our conditions a bit better, especially since there is more time for recreation and leisure. Sports have been got going, a battalion concert held and there is even talk of a battalion picnic. All of which is very welcome to the majority of the chaps.

The monotony is the worst thing. Most soldiers wait to go into action; we wait for it to come to us.

I had a very interesting two-day trip recently to Levuka, the old capital of Fiji. It took us a three-hour launch trip to reach it from the mainland. Getting through the reef was quite an intricate feat of navigation—it doesn't run continuously with a few passages, but is all chopped up, and crops up in the most unexpected places. One time the launch had to come back in almost a full circle to find the opening. We saw a pineapple canning factory, but, alas, too early for the pineapple season.

It is interesting how closely the history of Fiji resembles that of the Maoris—the same long sea voyage of the natives who first came here, the first unorganised exploitation by scoundrelly traders, the destructive effect of the sale of firearms to the Fijians on inter-tribal wars, the same magnanimous stepping-in of the Empire to accept Fiji as a gift from the hands of King Cakobau (pronounced Thakombau), who seems to have been a thorough old rogue, ready to turn his kingdom over to the first foreigner who would save him from the Tongans. Subsequently King Sugar took charge of Fiji in the shape of the Colonial Sugar Company, and *this year* made a net profit of close on £1,000,000 (after allowing for depreciation, etc.)!

Fiji, June 7, 1942.

[To Sid Scott, Editor of the *People's Voice*.]

THANKS VERY MUCH for your letter of May 5, with greetings from the National Committee. I value this more than anything, as you know, and hope you will be able to let me have the summary of proceedings you promise. I thoroughly agree that you have hit the main point in the present situation—the leading role, responsibility and initiative of the working class. This is not yet fully appreciated, and only our people can drive it home.

Will you please thank the Point Chev. people for a very mag-

nificent cake, with everything except a file and rope ladder to get out of the army with!

Also the Auckland West people have been sending me papers and pamphlets, of which I have received two or three lots. Would you please thank them? The *John A. Lee's Weeklies* are always interesting, and a lot of the material is quite good.

You will see from the above catalogue of acknowledgments that I have nothing to complain of in the way of neglect.

I feel guilty that I have not yet posted a parcel of curios for Reg's Lorna, that he asked me to send. I have them ready, but have to get the parcel censored, and will send a few things for Ann at the same time. They are nothing much—some sea shells and trinkets—but there is not a great deal that I can see here except the ordinary kind of curios. The Fijians do not seem to have excelled in decorative art—their craftsmanship, while excellent, was mainly utilitarian—well-thatched huts equivalent to the Maori whare, huge kava bowls and cooking pots. The prettiest fans, shell necklaces, etc., in the museum here seem to be from the Gilberts and the Solomons.

I don't know what your picture of Fiji is like—I had very little before I came here, in spite of the fact that my Dad lived here so many years. This part of Viti Levu is very mountainous (and in the high country it is very cold, and you need log fires to keep warm) and covered with dense vegetation, real jungle, very rough to get through and where you could easily get lost. This is typical of the wet belt, where mountains and trade winds together produce record rainfall and lush vegetation. In the drier parts there is more open country, reedland, etc. In the north it is hotter and drier (the worst part of the heat here is its extreme humidity). In Ovalau, for instance, the coconut palms are far more prominent. I saw the stone which marks the place where King Cakobau (Thakambou) ceded Fiji to the British as a handy means of extricating his worthless self from inter-island wars, in which he was being pressed hard by the Tongans.

I follow the international news with the greatest interest, the

great battle for Kharkov, the British raid on Cologne, and now the American naval successes around Midway Island. Everything seems to indicate that the tides of war have begun to flow against the Axis. This does not exclude, of course, temporary and limited new successes on their part. American war production potential is an enormous factor, which will play a very big part, even allowing for all ballyhooing. Paradoxically enough, the more successful the Russians are on the Eastern Front the more likelihood there is of a Western Front being created.

The new war situation is indicated by a marked increase in confidence among our own lads. The general feeling—always hard to judge—would now seem to be a desire to "get into it" and get the business cleaned up once and for all, and get home. What I believe is known as the "offensive spirit."

We are, I think, in the main a somewhat happier body than perhaps we were a few months back—conditions are better, training more intelligent—though the monotony of this sort of semi-garrison duty is always notoriously trying.

Norfolk Island, January 4, 1943.

I AM SURE you would both love this island. Maybe some day we will make it into a rest home for Old Bolsheviks (at present it is more like a place of exile for younger ones). I have never found a more perfect climate—North Auckland at its best, let's say—with most picturesque scenery, rugged cliffs 200-300 feet high, falling straight into the open sea with its half-mile long breakers, rolling grasslands with thousands of Norfolk pines studding them. The only weed is lantana, which in New Zealand, I understand, is sold as an ornamental shrub.

There is some pretty bird life too—a light red and blue parakeet and a large brown and green pigeon are most noticeable. The cliffs are alive with mutton birds, and while on guard duties we have ample time to observe their habits. They arrive just after dusk

and bed down in the holes they burrow for themselves in the soft earth; at dawn they push off for the open sea; they use the track close to the sentry as a sort of runway. On land they are terribly clumsy and slow to get into the air, but they are powerful fliers. All night they make the most eerie whimpering noise—I understand they are sometimes called "ghost birds" for that reason.

There are few mosquitoes here, a pleasant relief from Fiji. Only last night we were recalling some of the mosquito stories from Fiji, for example, of the chap who woke up in the night to hear one mosquito say to the other: "Shall we eat him here or take him down to the swamp?" and the other reply: "Let's get him here, because the big fellows will take him off us in the swamp!"

There is plenty of history here, both of the old convict days and of course of the Bounty mutineers. Most of the local families are descended from either members of the Bounty crew or early settlers on Pitcairn. It is a strange, romantic story, but I doubt if it has much significance; in fact, I must confess that I feel a lot of the honours must rest with Bligh for his open-boat voyage. Undoubtedly a harsh disciplinarian, I doubt if he was one of the worst by the standards of those days, and without the long, demoralising stay in Tahiti I doubt if the mutiny would have taken place. The *real* story is the naval mutinies of 1797. This was real organisation and leadership, from which the reforms in the British Navy date, though, thanks to Charles Laughton, the majority now believe it was due to the Bounty, a minor affair.

Anyhow to the present day Norfolk Islanders, their modern Captain Bligh is a combination between the Administrator, Burns Philp and Turners and Growers, to judge by their conversation!

This New Year gives far greater promise of a happy future than any we have known for some time. I doubt if the German Army can stage a comeback (on any really effective scale) this year, particularly if our pressure is maintained and extended. There is plenty to do yet, and even the possibility of further grave moments, but the general tendency seems clear now.

Norfolk Island, April 1, 1943.

I TOLD YOU in my last letter about the island mainly because I knew it would interest you and because any comments from me on the New Zealand or international situation would really be superfluous, if not a bit impertinent. I am thoroughly in agreement with what is being said and done by the party, and don't feel I could add anything to it (dearly though I would like to be back on my old job).

Mosquitoes don't worry us here, fortunately. Our biggest insect enemy is the common or bed flea, and hunting through one's blankets is a daily job. Some tremendous records have been established—my own best is two dozen in one search, and that is well behind championship standards. They seem to breed on the earth floor of the tents, and all attempts to put them down have so far been fruitless. Also we seem now to be threatened by a plague of rats, who thrive and multiply in spite of carefully-aimed boots.

To my catalogue of bird life given in my previous letter please add genuine English robin redbreasts. What they are doing here heaven only knows, but they are here and very pretty too.

My newspaper is flourishing—eight issues now and I have just completed a souvenir issue in duplicated form, with quite a generous foreword by our O.C., commending its views and recommending its editorials. . . .

I spent an interesting time here a few afternoons ago poking round the old cemeteries. Here is one of the inscriptions exactly as I copied it:

In Memory of
WALTER BURKE
Native of the
County Tipperary
who was Executed
for the Mutiny on
This Island Sept.
1834. Aged 28 years.
Lord have mercy on his soul.

He is the only convict honoured with a tombstone. I knew nothing of him or the mutiny, but I think the chances must be 100 to 1 he was one of the Fenians deported to Australia and thence to here.

Here is another interesting one.

Sacred to the Memory
of
Stephen Smith
Age 40
Native of Dublin
free overseer at Norfolk
Island who was barbarously
murdered by a body of prisoners
on the 1st July, 1846, whilst in
the execution of his duty at
the Settlement Cookhouse
leaving a wife and 10 children
to lament his loss.

Also outside the cemetery I saw the mound that marks the mass grave where the 16 convicts were shot who murdered a warder and cemented his body into Bloody Bridge.

The island folk are only slightly dark, speak English with a peculiar twang of their own, or a strange half-pie English-French-Tahitian lingo, are easygoing, pleasant and hospitable people. There are few "mainlanders"—Australians and New Zealanders who had settled on this island—left. Many went broke when the short-lived banana boom burst; others left when it started.

For this island has been a real grave of lost hopes and ambitions.

The Solomon Islands, November 10, 1943.

[This letter was printed in the *People's Voice*.]

IN SPITE of our heavy numerical superiority which never left the issue in doubt at any stage, I feel the venture in which we took

part was quite a daring one. The island was held by Japanese marines, good troops, with machine gun nests on the beach, mortars, and two mountain guns. Their personal equipment, such as I saw, was pretty new and well kept (though most of the small arms were inferior to ours).

We landed soon after dawn, after destroyers had shelled Japanese positions. The first wave went ashore in small landing craft. We landed half an hour after from big landing barges on which we had travelled. We came right in to the beach and were soon off.

After landing we pushed forward through the bush, steaming where the sun struck the early morning rain. We entrenched about 700 yards inland. Our beachhead was protected by a semi-circle of closely-linked positions held by infantry, while artillery and 3-inch mortars shelled outside the perimeter to prevent Japanese penetration. We held those positions for four or five days, but the Japanese were really routed on the first day and lost their main positions.

Life in the foxholes was a most nerve-racking experience for all of us. From dusk to dawn it was impossible to stir out of them, not only because of the enemy, but because of our own fire. Anything that moved outside the foxholes at night was fired on. We were lucky if we had an hour or two's sleep in the night. We lived, ate and slept (when possible) in the same stinking clothes and the same stinking mudholes.

The second night the Japanese tried to infiltrate our lines, though not, I believe, in very great numbers. Some had grenades thrown at the foxholes, others were fired on, and at least one was cleaned up by a knife. But the Japanese could do no more than annoy us with their tactics and the perimeter was always intact.

The Japanese fought stubbornly and few surrendered; some even committed suicide. Still, wounded Japanese were taken prisoner and a few gave themselves up. All, as soon as they found that they were not to be killed or tortured, blabbed plenty. Their morale is bad, as it must be in an army based on such principles.

We captured their main ration dump the first day, so that the

handful of Japanese who are left are faced with starvation or surrender.

Immediately after we came out of our positions we were sent on a patrol of the island, straight across from north to south. It was originally intended as a two-day trip, but it took us four very tough days to get through. It is incredibly difficult country. Every square inch is densely wooded and even from the highest point from where we had hoped to get our bearings it was impossible to see for more than ten yards. There are long razor-back ridges and gullies that drop away sheer for hundreds of feet.

At night we slept in a huge circle, practically head to head, in view of the possibility of attack. One of my most unpleasant memories is of waking in the night to hear wild dogs howling—an unpleasant sound when you are only half-conscious and not sure what is what!

This island hasn't been dry since the dawn of time. It rains a bit, often torrentially, every day and night. On the patrol we were wet to the skin all the time.

On the last day of the patrol we ran into a small pocket of Japanese. They had been building a raft to try to escape to nearby Japanese-held islands. The raft was smashed up and we chased them to their retreat in a number of small caves down a steep cliff side.

While we had heavy odds in our favour, it was a risky business for the men who had to go down the cliff to blast them out with grenades and automatic fire. All the Japanese were killed, except one wounded, whom we had to lower to a boat with rope under his armpits.

After that the job was over and we went back by barge to our side of the island. For nearly a fortnight we had worn the same clothes, never shaved, washed seldom, and averaged only two or three hours' sleep a night—so we were pretty ready for a rest.

It was only a little engagement—but they all go to make up the big world battle on which everything hangs.

If only we could read: "Allied troops have landed in Western Europe." I think that every New Zealand soldier is looking for that announcement before anything else.

The Solomon Islands, November 24, 1943.

I'M GLAD YOU liked the piece of verse. I felt rather diffident about it as a matter of fact. The discipline and compression of the sonnet form appeal to me, but I would like to be able to do something wider in scope and more generous.

I get the *People's Voice* regularly and pretty promptly, and it is a real inspiration. At a distance one appreciates this far better than ever before.

We took the islands where we are now established off the Japs a few weeks ago. I do not intend to say much about it in this letter, both because the accounts which have appeared in the New Zealand press are fairly accurate, if a bit too highly coloured—we had overwhelming odds on our side—and because I have written Sid Scott a fairly detailed account. On this small bit of action one's conclusions are still rather patchy and inconclusive. Now we are well settled into the old routine of camp life, apart from nightly but always small-scale air raids, which disturb our sleep, but cause little damage. You can take my word for it that the Jap air force in these islands is utterly licked, and that accounts of American air victories are by no means exaggerated. When you consider that we are only eight minutes' flying time from what were once important Jap air bases and that things are sufficiently settled to allow us to have our first movie show last night, you will realise how complete Allied air mastery is.

This is the first scrap we have been in, as our units were not involved in the first one you mention in your letter.

I'm afraid I can't tell you anything about the performance of the equipment. Two primary factors for these islands must be (1) weight, and (2) imperviousness to wet. In this climate each ounce

of extra weight is of decisive importance. You cannot carry heavy weights long when each step bathes you in sweat, and heat exhaustion is always one of the greatest dangers. We doctor ourselves with salt tablets and vitamin tablets, but you still don't feel like carrying too much. For patrols, we abandoned our web and took only rifle, a few rounds in the pocket, and rations and grenades in the haversack. (The grenade, by the way, proved one of the most invaluable weapons of the lot—our grenade is better than the American and infinitely superior to the Japanese.)

With regard to the second point, it is as well to get a picture of the wetness of these islands—not as bad as New Guinea, certainly, but bad enough. It rains somewhat every day or night, often torrentially. I have seen a forty-gallon drum filled with water in less than half an hour by the rain running off the tent fly. The bush, too thick for the sun to penetrate, hasn't been dry since the dawn of time. All weapons rust in record time, and are the devil's own job to keep in working order (the Tommy, such an excellent weapon in other respects, is one of the worst from this point of view). According to our sigs., most radio equipment is liable to play tricks under these conditions. So whether you can solve the problems of lightweight equipment completely unaffected by rain you will have plenty to do.

Our present camp is in quite a pleasant spot—in fact, if one could see it in peace time as a tourist one would think it really beautiful. There are little islands covered with palms studded round in the clearest blue water I have ever seen. These islands, unlike others in the group I have been on, which are volcanic, are coral, and the coral, though hard, keeps the place clean and saves us from mud, the worst curse of other camps I have been on in these islands. Quite a few old friends are here.

The Jap pilots show little of their alleged fanaticism when our New Zealand and American ack-ack opens up. Few of the Japanese here—they were marines and good troops—surrendered, and most were killed. On the other hand their initial beach defence was not outstandingly stubborn, and those that were captured

blabbed all they knew, even drawing little maps of their comrades' positions. Suicidal tendencies should not be confused with courage. We captured quite a few diaries—you will remember how the Russians commented on the Jap diaries taken at Lake Hassan. One man commented on how they had tried to guide the aircraft in by firing tracer bullets, and commented bitterly: "But there were so few aircraft."

As far as we were concerned, in spite of the assertions of S. G. Holland and J. A. Lee, the elections were very well and fairly conducted. Everybody got a chance to vote and was *encouraged to vote*. The majority of our chaps were definitely pro-Labour, though critically so, and even many of those who voted Nationalist by tradition were quite content to let the Government carry on.

The Solomon Islands, January 4, 1944.

THANK YOU for the parcel of books which arrived safely. You could hardly have made a better selection, and as I get very short of reading matter I pounced on them.

The Steinbeck [*The Moon Is Down*] I liked, although I remember it was criticised adversely in the party press. On what grounds I am not quite sure. I think one of them was that Steinbeck had side-stepped the issue by not naming the Nazis. If so, this is not legitimate; giving the characters English names throws the whole thing into sharper relief, and says more subtly what Sinclair Lewis said clumsily in *It Can't Happen Here!* The only serious criticism I can see is that, while it is an anti-Nazi story, there is no single portrait of a Nazi in it. Still I have no doubt officers like the Colonel *do* exist in the German army—it has been proved by the formation of the committee of German officers in Moscow, after Stalingrad. So I would like to know what the grounds of the criticism were.

I was disappointed in the Australian *New Writing* as in its New Zealand counterpart (of which by the way I have seen only the first copy). I think the weakness is expressed in the title, imita-

tive of the English *New Writing*, which, for the most part, is *not* a model. The Auden-Spender school expressed the revolt and despair of the middle classes against decaying imperialism, and, as despair, expressed itself in the violent disruption of technique and often pointless experimentation. Anything "new" was good. A really beautiful passage or line in Spender is deliberately disrupted with a discordant phrase or far-fetched image. Moreover, a great deal of this writing is purely sketches or fragments—the (generally) flat description of a day in a worker's life, etc. Certainly, new writers must start somewhere, but too often this represents not a beginning but an end, a lack of confidence and lack of consciousness of powers. Lenin's remark about the assimilation of the old culture as the foundation of the new seems to be still largely a formula. I think we would make a mistake to encourage too greatly this kind of thing, rather than good, straight writing (e.g., the only exception in the Australian *New Writing*—the story of the bushman who felled his trees on the line of the new school fence), though, of course, recognising that the solution of these problems is the most enormously difficult thing in the world.

We brought out a wall newspaper for Christmas here—it can claim the distinction of being the first New Zealand one in a forward Pacific area (at least for the mob up here). It was a lively affair, much better than the Norfolk one, and there was quite a lot of talent discovered in the company. The material was mainly humorous, of course, but the war, an *In Memoriam* for those killed in the company, etc., found their place. We are planning a second issue for the near future, and there is a company concert at the end of the week, for which I have done a skit. I find that old student extravaganza and *Smad* experience, which I tended to despise and had forgotten, is very useful for this kind of thing.

I think a good thing we could do would be a collection for the establishment of medical and educational services for the natives here, as has already been done elsewhere.

The Solomon Islands, April 16, 1944.

WE HAVE BEEN in the "forward area" now for some seven months, and five and a half of them we have spent in the little group of islands we took off the Japs at the end of last October. Naturally we are pretty tired of them and will be quite glad of a change when it is possible. While the life is fairly easy going now and we have made ourselves as comfortable as possible, it is no picnic. The heat is constant, with little variation between day and night, and slight seasonal variation, which is not surprising, as we are only seven degrees below the equator. While the rainy season—twenty inches a month—is now over, there is pretty frequent heavy tropical rain—tins placed so as to catch the water off the tent flies give us enough to do our personal washing, washing of clothes, etc. We don't go sea bathing as often as you might think, because while you can stay in the water for hours with impunity, it is so warm as to be quite unrefreshing. The "jungle" you hear about is nothing terrific—it is dense and visibility very limited, which is the peculiar characteristic of warfare here—but it is by no means so overgrown with vines as you might expect, and much New Zealand bush is a great deal more difficult. It is rather uninteresting bush, with little in the way of bird life, though the wild mahogany trees with their brown, angular and gnarled roots are picturesque. Land crabs are very common, and it is not infrequent to see somebody pursuing a monster specimen round the tent with a bayonet in the middle of the night. Snakes and crocodiles both exist here, but are seldom seen.

[Furlough in New Zealand followed before the next group of letters were written.]

TO HIS FRIENDS AND RELATIVES FROM EGYPT AND ITALY

On Board Troopship, January 22, 1945.

I AM WRITING this at sea, and once again am sweltering in the heat. I had very little time indeed back in camp after I said good-bye to you; we travelled all night in the train and went straight on to the boat, so I had no chance to see you at all, as I expected.

It has been an uneventful voyage; so far we have called at only one port, and as we were only there for a few hours there was no shore leave. This is by far the best troopship I have been on; it is certainly not luxurious, but one can manage all right. There is a fair bit of deck space; three meals a day (unlike most of the Yankee ships), and a big mess room where at nights we can play cards and read.

The social life is pretty well organised, as it needs to be in a trip as long as this. There are classes in German and Italian; debates and discussions of all kinds, and various competitions. I am running a class in German, and put in most of my spare time trying to acquire some Italian, so I haven't really had time yet to fret.

The biggest difficulty is shortage of fresh water; we have to wash our clothes and ourselves in salt water most of the time, which isn't very satisfactory.

Most evenings I spend playing contract bridge—army style, a rather different game from the one you play! The bidding tends to be a bit reckless of the necessary honours, tricks, etc. Doubles and redoubles are very popular, which has a great boosting effect on the score on both sides!

We are allowed to sleep on the decks in the hot weather, but so far I have not bothered and preferred to swelter in my compartment. While it is pretty warm below, it is much better ventilated than the Yankee boats, and we are not quite so cramped—only three tiers of bunks instead of six.

I am with quite a few of the friends I made in the Islands, and will try to stay with them when I get to the other side.

In the mornings we have an hour at our boat stations, the only drill we do in the boat, and while the inspection is made of our quarters we fill in time with lectures and debates. I have been going the rounds at these periods giving talks on my trip to Russia. In the afternoons there is P.T. (physical jerks), pictures, lectures or language classes.

Maadi, February 1, 1945.

AFTER I said good-bye to you I had only a very short time in New Zealand—no repeat performance farewells this time. We had a speedy but uneventful sea voyage—only two ports of call and at neither of these were we allowed ashore. After we disembarked we had a long and pretty uncomfortable train journey—it was interesting, but twelve hours in a third class Egyptian railway carriage is rather too much. It was four o'clock in the morning when we arrived in camp and by the time we had had a meal and turned in it was five o'clock.

This is a very big straggling base camp in the desert—not a blade of grass anywhere in sight. Curiously enough, it is bitterly cold, not only at night, but even in the day there is a wind which cuts like a knife and stirs up the sand over everything. Oh, to be back in the sunny Solomons! The Pyramids are clearly visible from here on a calm day, but so far I have had no opportunity to get into Cairo or see any of the numerous places of interest. On the train journey we had an opportunity to see something of the appalling poverty of Egypt—hordes of beggars and hucksters besieged the train at every stop, and children dressed in filthy rags (and adults too) scrambled for the stale crusts and broken army biscuits the soldiers threw out of the window. All garbage cans are searched by the Egyptians for any edible scraps, which are then crammed straight into their mouths. However, in one township we passed through I saw the imposing edifice of Barclay's Bank, so beneficent civilisation is not far away!

Most of our time since we arrived here has been spent in listening to numerous lectures of what *not* to do in the Middle East—understandable enough in these conditions where disease and crime flourish so luxuriantly. I saw quite extensive irrigation areas on the trip here, but the means of cultivation was still the old wooden plough. Here and there I saw camels treading an endless circle, with a yoke around their necks, pumping water. I doubt whether I will get a great deal of leave while I am here, but intend to see all I can. It is infinitely more interesting than anything in the Islands.

The war news is magnificent, and everybody is counting the miles to Berlin and rushing the war maps.

Maadi, February 14, 1945.

I HAVE BEEN to Cairo twice—I find it a fascinating place, and there is a great deal to see there. It is a larger city than I imagined—a million and a third people—with many magnificent buildings. About two-thirds of it seem to be "out of bounds"—poverty and crime breed side by side, and the poverty beggars description. Here in Egypt a quarter-million children under five die every year. Yet at Maadi, which is the millionaires' suburb of Cairo, and on Gezira Island on the Nile in the heart of Cairo, you will see the most luxurious residences, not only European, but also Egyptian. Expensive cars that you wouldn't see in New Zealand are driven along streets where the homeless lie stretched out in the doorways—whether sleeping or dead is not evident, nor does anybody care in any case. The New Zealander, who resents dirt as a personal insult, treats all this with good-natured (usually) contempt, greeting every Egyptian impartially as "George." Every form of thieving and roguery flourishes, of course, and the man in uniform is always the first mark.

Naturally I am fed up with mucking round these training camps and hope it won't be long before I'm again with a unit in the field. Believe me, there's no comparison in the life between the two.

Italy, March 17, 1945.

I FIND THIS country very attractive; I think I will be quite happy here. We are billeted in a small Italian village in the hills at present, just like the ones you read about—narrow, winding, cobbled streets, three or four-storeyed stone "casas" and a fountain in the village square where the women fill their earthenware pitchers. I find an immense difference between North and South Italy. Just before I left Advance Base I visited one small township, and it was a really pitiful sight—nothing to sell in the few shops, ragged children with match-stick legs touting for the black market (which seems to run the country)—and piles of garbage lying in the streets. Up here, the people are much better clothed and fed and altogether more pleasant. This village seems to be genuinely anti-Fascist and the New Zealanders are made much of. In the village square there is a memorial tablet to some anti-Fascists who were shot there by the Germans only last year. Several of the villagers have described it to me—how all the men were forced to attend the execution in the square, and the women were locked in their homes while the Germans—itedeschi—patrolled the streets wjth tommy guns. I find the local branch of the Italian Communist Party seems to be the only organised political force in the village.

In another place I passed through I met some Italian Socialists, and had a most interesting evening with them. It is hard work with my very limited Italian, but I am improving it every day with constant opportunities of talking it. I got a pleasant surprise to find how well I could make myself understood—it is a good deal easier than French to speak, I am convinced.

The weather has been very kind to us. It is really spring up here and the days are warm and sunny, though the nights are still pretty cold. We are sleeping in a "casa" though—all the Italian houses are built of very solid stone. There is still snow on the high hills around us. But it is not nearly so cold as it was in the South, where we had a fall of snow only the night before we left.

This is very pleasant, orderly, well-farmed country. Between

every row of vines oats and wheat are planted, and the alternating strips of crops run up even the steepest slopes. Most of the peasants are "contadini," peasant tenant farmers, working on a share basis with the "padrone," who owns the land. Bullocks are greatly used for working the land and the majority are fine, well-cared-for animals. The children are very attractive, good-looking youngsters, and some of the girls are very pretty. Don't worry, though, I won't bring back an Italian wife!

Italy, April 4, 1945.

AT PRESENT we are camped out "in the paddock," which isn't bad, as the weather is still beautifully fine, and we are in among fruit trees and vineyards, all putting on blossom and new leaf. We have two-men "bivvies" to sleep in, and hot meals, which is really luxury compared with the Islands. When we left our little village the people all turned out to wave us good-bye, and many of them even wept. They were a most hospitable crowd, and, I am convinced, genuinely liked the New Zealanders. I had my Easter Sunday dinner with an Italian peasant family with whom I had made friends. Although they were very poor they contrived to turn on a wonderful meal for us—six courses, washed down with plentiful draughts of "vino blanco." We started with a plateful of some kind of highly-seasoned pork sausage; then a huge plate of chicken soup; then a leg of chicken; then a great helping (of course) of macaroni; then calves' sweetbreads; then hard-boiled eggs; and finally cheese-bread and cake—all of which we were expected to consume! Their hospitality is of the Chinese variety—each course is prefaced by your hosts saying, "poco buono" (not much good), or "you don't like it" or "it is not very well cooked." To which you are expected to reply "very good" or "excellent" or "I like it very much." If you are eating you are politely but firmly urged to drink more; if drinking, you are asked why you are not eating. It is a real feat of endurance to get through a meal of such dimensions. These people love children, so I showed them my photos

of Ruth's and Joyce's youngsters, and they went into ecstasies, and told me they were "bellissimi." I have seen only one township of any size—and it wasn't very big—since I have been in Italy. It was a very old North Italian township—I have a hazy memory of once having read that it was a home of medieval sculpture, so I made straightway for the churches. The exterior was very unprepossessing, but inside they were really lovely. A Benedictine monk showed me round—he insisted on showing me the bones of the Saint who founded the church, in which I wasn't a bit interested, but I got some interesting information from him about the art work. The cupola of one was a small-scale replica of St. Peter's in Rome—I think he said the artist was Maletesta, but I didn't recognise the names of any of the other artists. But there were some lovely paintings and sculpture. This township had suffered quite a lot of bomb damage—one bomb had destroyed the houses around the church, but fortunately had missed the church. Other townships I have passed through, including one or two with famous names, showed a terrible amount of damage, hardly a building left standing anywhere in sight. But this was the only one I have so far had a chance to look around.

While there is a certain underground Fascist influence still in Italy—largely as a result of the widespread poverty and distress—I am convinced that there is real hatred of the Germans, particularly among the peasants and workers. One family told me how the Germans—quite sober—came into their house and deliberately smashed their crockery piece by piece. I told you before how in the village where we were billeted the Germans had shot Italians suspected of partisan activity in the square. Not content with this they blew up their houses. And the Italians were "allies"! It gives you some idea of how they must have behaved to Poles and Russians and Belgians. It is quite common to see at a crossroads or in a paddock a rough wooden notice bearing the names of Italian anti-Fascists shot there by the Germans.

Italy, April 12, 1945.

My luck is still holding; the weather remains uniformly beautiful, though the nights are fairly cool. Even when one is sleeping out, it is very pleasant; you can drag a pile of hay down from an Italian's haystack, to make yourself perfectly comfortable under the grapevines with a couple of blankets and a ground sheet.

I think the Germans are on their last legs in this theatre, as everywhere else. Many of the chaps who have been here a considerable time, have never even seen a single German plane—it's a far cry from the days when they bombed London! Our conditions are infinitely better than they ever were in the Islands. It is rare to miss a hot meal, and everything is done to keep you supplied with cigarettes, chocolate and any of the little extras that mean so much for a soldier. While the country round here is fairly flat, it is all criss-crossed with rivers (mostly quite small), countless irrigation ditches, grapevines, etc., which is one reason why progress has been so slow hitherto. However poor the people are they always have plenty of the sour "vino blanco" (white wine), and when you go into a new place the Italians are always ready with jugfuls to press it on you. It is quite a pleasant drink and thirst quenching on a hot day. The New Zealander is a great man for his cup of tea, though, and invariably every small group of men has its "Benghazi burner," an ingenious, home-made contraption for heating water over a petrol fire in a short time. Wherever there is a halt for a few minutes you cadge a drop of petrol off some transport driver, get out the Benghazi and in a short time there is a cup of tea all round.

I can speak Italian fairly easily now. The Italians have had a lot of experience with soldiers and they make it pretty easy for you—it's a sort of soldiers' pidgin they use for you with infinitives instead of the correct parts of verbs, but they are very flattered if you can come back at them with a grammatical sentence. So far I haven't struck any very bad differences in dialect—some say their "c's" like "g's" and their "ci's" like "sh's," but there is nothing difficult enough to hold you up. The women seem to do the greatest part

of the work—from daylight to dusk you see them out working in the fields alongside the men. Every inch of land is cultivated; nothing is wasted. As soon as the front line shifts forward, the peasants come out of their shattered houses to carry on the essential work of agriculture. You can't help admiring the way they carry on. Of course, I suppose it pays them to ingratiate themselves with the troops on the winning side, but I've heard so much the same from so many different mouths that I am convinced the Germans made themselves thoroughly hated while they were here. They stripped everything off the people, down to the children's shoes; practically all the live stock they drove off and killed. . . .

A COMMUNIST'S FAITH IN LIFE AND MAN

[As written to Gordon Watson's fiancee, Mollie Render.]

Italy, April 5, 1945.

YOUR LETTER set me on a train of thought which I should put down on paper.

The tenet of Christianity against which I first and most strongly rebelled, was the doctrine of personal immortality. It seemed to me that "I" was so inseparably connected with the people I loved or hated, the sights and sounds and ideas round me, that any teaching that "I" should survive separate from those things was not only ridiculous but repulsive.

My ideas at that stage I find reflected in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*—a belief that everything human and live was in some way good. Obviously it is not a complete belief and may even have dangerous implications leading to an idealisation of primitivism. But the good side of it is signalised in Marx's fondness for that line by a Latin poet: "Nihil humanum alienum a me puto" (I consider nothing human alien to me).

In spite of quite recurrent fits of depression in my early twenties, I still clung to that belief—that even dark spots in human life were good because they were part of living. In one of his books Wintringham speaks of a subconscious "death wish" which drives men, obsessed by the complexities of modern civilisation, to seek death in battle. He may be right, but I certainly have no such wish, nor like Swinburne, do I pray to be released from "too much love of living." Few men, surely, have so much to live for as I have at the present moment. But there are obviously terms on which one cannot purchase one's life. The term "conscience" is a religious expression for a very real thing—a complex of social pressures and necessities emerging to a point in a single individual. Cowardice, desertion of mates, betrayal of principles—life as a consequence of any of those things would obviously not be the life with which I am so much in love.

There is a sense in which Marxists *do* believe in personal immortality. We know that the complex of the actions and personality of even the most insignificant individual live on in the stream of history. I am more fortunate than most, that, if I were to die, more of me would live on than of most people—I think of the hundreds I have directly influenced and thousands indirectly, in speeches and articles, but also of the friends I have had. And when you write that if I were killed you would consider your life broken (I have forgotten the exact words), I am happy that you love me so much, but I know that you are not right. For a part of me would live on with you and a part that few others have seen and no one so intimately, and in its turn that part of me in you would help to make other people.

I hope you don't think this letter too morbid; actually I feel far from it; but it is as well to have these things clear. The first principle in life is always to try to look at things as they are, and without fear.

THE LAST LETTER

Italy, April 15, 1945.

Dearest Mollie—

As you will probably have gathered from the papers I am kept pretty busy at present, and it is not always easy to answer you on the dot, but I will write as often as is possible. Things are much better than you might think; so far I haven't had a day without one hot meal at least. Above all, the weather remains beautiful—my experience in the tropics taught me how great a difference to your outlook constant heavy rain can make.

This is open, flat country—not a hillock within sight for miles—criss-crossed by vine rows and dozens of irrigation canals, ditches and small rivers. The casas are the most properous looking I have yet seen in Italy. I haven't seen many villages yet, and those I have seen are wrecked. It is amazing to see Italians come out of their homes in front line areas, having survived bombardments too tough for the seasoned German soldier, and calmly set about the work of tilling their fields while the shells are still dropping. They may not have fought as courageously as soldiers for Mussolini, but, by God, they've got guts enough to do what I guarantee no New Zealand farmer would tackle.

Everywhere we go we are received with copious flagons of "vino blanco" and gifts of eggs and even fowls if there are still any left. Of course, as the cynical claim, this is in part a form of self-insurance, but I doubt if even the most hypocritical Italian could come out to cheer the troops who have wrecked his home and perhaps killed his child, unless he really hated the Germans. It is always the same story—the Germans have stripped them of everything—"my husband's boots and my cousin's radio," one Italian woman told me. Of course, the Kiwi is by no means averse to picking up any little scraps of neglected property (even if they are quite useless to him and he has to resell them in the next village), but there are not many of them who would order an Italian to take off his boots and hand them over. The Italians dislike the German stiffness, the fact

that they always went about armed, even in rest areas, etc.' Not always is our reception so warm; sometimes (usually in an area where there have been few Germans or the farms are prosperous) there is an attitude of suspicion or reserve which has to be broken down.

I meant to tell you much that your mother has told you about housing in New Zealand. The houses are good and already on a pretty big scale. In one block alone at Lower Hutt a thousand new homes were going up when I was last in New Zealand. Furniture is, however, I believe pretty shoddy stuff. . . .

All my love, darling— GORDON.

[This is the last letter written by Gordon Watson. It was found on his body after he was killed two days later.]

GORDON
WATSON

His Life
and
Writings