

"Join the Army--"

By Sam Darcy

WHEN Russian czarism was at its worst, when the black monarchy spread its mantle of terror and engulfed an unhappy people, there came from out of the ranks of the imperial army stories of terror that made the world gasp. The warning of 1905 sent a shiver of fear thru the ruling class, and the reaction to it, came in an intensified oppression not only of the civilian population, but also of the military forces.

Today in the United States the ruling class is drunk with power and success in crushing so large a part of the world under its iron heel. But it too has had warnings; the warning of the Russian revolution, the warning of the increasing number of strikes in this country and their increasing militant and often constructive revolutionary character; the warning of a Communist movement fast growing in Bolshevik consciousness. But American capitalism hasn't all the intelligence that we sometimes credit it with, despite its cunning in contriving class collaborationist schemes. Such methods they have not learned to successfully apply in the military form and thus there is today a growing discontent among the soldiery, especially among those being used for imperialistic purposes. It has been difficult to get the facts. But even the highest and thickest wall will sometimes spring a leak. . . .

Senator Watson's Disclosures.

The first leak was sprung in 1921. On November 1, of that year the cry of protest reached the smug Senate, the "tribune of the people," in the form of a speech by a senator from the most backward section of this country, the state of Georgia. There Watson spoke as follows:

"How many Senators know that a private soldier was frequently shot by his officers because of some complaint against officers' insolence; that they had gallows upon which men were hanged, day after day, without court-martial or any other form of trial? How many senators know that? I had and have the photograph of one of those gallows upon which twenty-one white boys had already been executed at sunrise when the photograph was taken; and there were others waiting in the camp jails to be hanged morning after morning."

The Senate body was aghast! The next day Wadsworth of New York made an attempt to kill the charges by referring them to the Committee on Military Affairs. But even Watson,

who is probably the most reactionary senator in Congress, could not stomach this. He again answered:

"I meant every word I said; I can prove every word I said; and I did not half say it, meaning that I did not half paint the picture. I have the photograph of the gallows upon which I say the soldiers were hanged in violation of all law; and I can produce the witnesses WERE IT SAFE FOR THEM TO APPEAR (in "free" America!—S. A. D.) I will not expose them to danger, but I will expose myself to it, and I say it is true.

". . . I can produce that Kodak picture, hastily taken, of at least one of the gallows upon which white men, volunteering, as it was said, to save civilization and make the world safe for democracy, were hanged like dogs. . . . and that they were shot by their officers without any kind of a trial.

"I can prove that they were made to go on useless hikes, and unnecessarily exposed and sacrificed and left on the road to die. . . . They were not allowed to write home and tell what they were enduring; their letters were censored; their letters were stereotyped; they had to conform to the regulations and say, 'We are having a good time and being treated nicely,' or they themselves were subject to barbarous punishment."

There is too much of this to give it all verbatim. Just a few more lines from here and there out of the speeches will give us a further idea of how much Uncle Sam cares for the sons of the working class who are recruited into the army:

"In their hospitals they were neglected. The officers made courtesans of too many nurses. In the hospitals on the roadside, wounded, suffering and dying, these men were treated inhumanely, and I was told so by the men themselves.

"I have had fathers tell me, with tears streaming down their eyes, tell me when I knew that their hearts were broken about the mistreatment of their sons. . . . There was the case of David Brown. . . . who had only one son inclined to be tubercular. Any doctor competent to practice should have known he was unfit for service; but he was sent to one of our camps in Georgia; he was brutally mistreated and left to die.

"One of the leading doctors in the State Sanitarium of Georgia told me. . . . that in

one night 65 of these young men died of pneumonia because they were not sufficiently covered with blankets, and did not have sufficient blankets."

The evidence went on to show of a certain Captain Harding of Ohio, who gave every soldier who was brought before him, twenty years confinement at hard labor whether, to use the witnesses' expression, "he stole some grapes or deserted"; of soldiers who sickening of the slaughter refused to carry guns and were bayoneted by the officers for it; of Negroes being hung on charges of suspicion that they raped children—charges which were never proven in court, etc., etc.

The Officer and the Private.

The officers of the American army are very carefully drawn from the bourgeoisie thru such institutions as West Point, etc. They are in a separate stratum of society, have their own special clubs and do not eat at the same tables as ordinary soldiers do. Evidence given at one time in the senate showed that officers committed unspeakable crimes and were never arraigned for it. One officer was virtually accused by the Secretary of State of having squandered \$600,000,000, and yet was never brought to trial; while privates were hung because they incurred the dislike of these very officers. In the Congressional Record of November 5, 1921, there are dozens of letters from ex-service men and their organizations which tell a terrible story of the brutalities committed in the army.

These facts were read into the record on the Senate floor. The Senate breathed hard—not because of the horror that was exposed but because the facts could not be suppressed. But they worked harder and the facts finally were suppressed—no investigation was ever held, and none of the guilty were ever brought to trial. Can even the blackest acts of the czar compare with these brutalities? And all this in democratic and "free" America.

But the exposures of 1921 were a warning to our government. Since 1921 any suggestion of possible exposure of conditions in the army were met with the severest reprisals.

In February, 1925, two soldiers stationed in Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, unable to bear any longer the conditions imposed upon them after they had signed up "to see the world," organized a section of the Communist movement, the Hawaiian Communist League, with about seventy-five members. This was done quite openly due to the inexperience of the organizers, Paul Crouch and Walter Trumbull, who were later arrested and given 40 years and 26 years respectively. Thus the government sentences two soldiers who were fooled into joining the army to 40 years' imprisonment for crying out against the injustice being done to them and their fellows, and protects officers who commit crimes

of real proportions in the very same army. Why? Because the private comes from the working class and the officer from the bourgeoisie.

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In the April 17 issue of the Young Worker, Walter Trumbull openly accuses the Hawaiian officers of framing soldiers, accuses the U. S. government of arresting native labor organizers without cause except that they are labor organizers. Yet there has thus far been no answer to these charges. How can the government answer charges such as these—except to admit their truth. But they are still issuing the same lies in their advertising matter and consider it wiser to keep silence so that the many hundreds of thousands of young workers whom we cannot yet reach will continue to be fooled and will sign to join military bodies and be tortured for their fool-hardiness.

Recent Exposures of Military Brutality.

Readers will say that the facts quoted above are dated in previous years. Since then perhaps there has been considerable improvement. But this is not so. In the Congressional Record of March 22, new exposures of the maltreatment of soldiers come to light.

Commissioner Fenning's "Wards."

In Washington there is an institution called St. Elizabeth's Hospital. It is an institution that cares for mental defectives. Commissioner Frederick A. Fenning, a very influential member of government political circles, has had himself appointed guardian for many of the soldiers who are supposed to be mentally defective. But what did the evidence show?

First, that many of the soldiers were not defective at all, but were confined for other reasons, which we will go into later.

Second, that many of the soldiers had parents who had applied to have their sons released but had been refused this because Commissioner Fenning didn't want to give up his guardianship.

Third, that the coroner of Washington, Dr. Ramsey Nevitt, is a brother-in-law of Commissioner Fenning so that when patients die in St. Elizabeth's Hospital no reports are made which show the facts of the death in such a way as not to reflect upon Fenning.

Guardians of such soldiers are entitled to ten per cent of the income of the soldiers' estate. Here we come to the core of Fenning's desire to be appointed guardian. He is today guardian for 103 wards in one hospital alone. The exact number of soldiers involved has as yet not been discovered, but when there are in one hospital 103 wards, there are undoubtedly many hundreds more, for at least a few other hospitals are known to contain his wards. Whenever it had developed that a "new arrival" has an estate or is to receive monthly compensation from the government, the information is tipped

off to Frederick A. Fenning and steps are immediately taken to have him appointed guardian and he accordingly receives ten per cent of the principal of the estate and ten per cent of the income. And when one is guardian for at least one hundred and three wards, this adds up to a neat sum.

Congressman Blanton of Texas, in speaking about these conditions on the floor of the house, gives the suggestion that our government harbors a wide circle of grafters, among whom there is very efficient co-operation:

"Yesterday there were 4,417 patients in St. Elizabeth's. Many die there annually. New ones are taken in each month by squads. The turnover is enormous. Until a short time ago the firm of John Gawler's Sons enjoyed an exclusive monopoly on all undertaking business at St. Elizabeth's. . . . Commissioner Fenning is alleged to be Gawler's attorney. I have some very interesting statements from Washington citizens familiar with affairs at St. Elizabeth's concerning White, Fenning and Gawler."

St. Elizabeth's is only one example out of a multitude. In Pittsburgh, at the Aspinwall Hospital, the veterans have petitioned for an investigation noting in their petition that the conditions have become unbearable. There isn't any room here to list and go into every such case.

The Military Graft Ring.

There is a ring of blood-suckers who drain the veins of the soldier from the time he enlists or is drafted until the time that he dies. Not the least prominent of this ring are the profiteers who sell rotten material to the government endangering the lives of the soldiers in this way. In the March issue of the Workers' Monthly evidence has already been given of defective submarines and battle ships which sunk because of rotten mechanism and caused the death of the entire crew. Now we have new evidence.

Eight thousand automobiles sold to the government for war service were found to be defective. Lest the profiteers be exposed, they were placed at the fork of two rivers at Lyons in France just before the annual flood. When the flood came—the cars were reported damaged beyond use. The facts were given the Senate several times, but that august body is yet silent. Miles and miles of vehicles were stretched out along the road and soldiers were put to the job of destroying them. They could not be used because of factory defects and the profiteers had to be protected.

Again we must say that these are but examples out of the multitude. The Graft Ring around the army is very complete, and this necessitates the extremest severity on the part of the U. S. government against any soldier who complains, for the Ring and the government

officials are very closely tied up. When the soldier first joins there is graft in connection with his equipment; then graft in connection with his ammunition; then the Y. M. C. A. preys upon him on the battle field by charging and overcharging for comforts for which they have collected at home under the pretense of distributing them free; then grafted upon as he lies wounded in the hospitals; and finally grafted upon by the undertaker when he is buried.

These are not wild statements; they are supported by evidence carefully culled from the Congressional Record and government reports of investigations.

Who Profits Thru War?

What forces are there at work in whose interest it is that big armies and big navies should be built and wars be engaged in? Statistics conclusively show that the standards of living for the masses of the workers is considerably lower now than before the last war. The workers therefore can expect nothing from war. From the above facts it can be seen that the soldiers have little to gain from war. When we take large industrial corporations, however, we come nearer to the solution. It will be very enlightening to examine the following facts—comparing the profits of certain large corporations as they were affected by the war:

Bethlehem Steel Corporation, Schwab's plant, "earned" for the period 1911, 1912, 1913, the years before the war, an average of \$3,075,108 per year. In 1915 the profits jumped to \$17,762,813. In 1916, it jumped again to \$43,503,968. For 1918 this increased to a profit of \$57,188,769. This is after improvements and extensions of the plant had eaten up some fifty-five million dollars. In other words the Bethlehem increased its profits from approximately three million dollars before the war to about sixty million dollars after the war.

Let us take the next example of a large corporation which supplies material for war purposes, the DuPont Powder Corporation. Quoting directly from their financial report of 1918:

"The stock of the E. I. du Pont de Nemours Powder Company, the predecessor of the E. I. du Pont de Nemours Company, sold during the early months of the war at \$125 per share. The share of debenture stock and two shares of common stock of E. I. du Pont de Nemours Company, which were exchanged for the former security, are worth in today's market (Dec. 31, 1918) \$593, or an increase in value of 374 per cent. In the meantime (1915-18) the total dividends on the common stock of the E. I. du Pont de Nemours Powder Company and on the exchanged securities of E. I. du Pont de Nemours Company have amounted to 458 per cent on the par value of the original stock. It is difficult to imagine a more satisfactory financial result."

True it is difficult to imagine a "more satisfactory" result for du Pont, but it is easy to see the trail of misery that this "satisfactory" result has carried along with it for the workers.

Let us again take another large corporation from whom the government buys, The Anaconda Copper Mining Company. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company paid \$65,275,000 in cash dividends during the years 1915 to 1918. It also paid off a funded debt of \$15,000,000 in the same period, and invested, besides, \$54,466,703 in improvements. After this outlay, it had, on January 1, 1919, a net quick surplus of \$39,926,000 as compared with \$4,688,204 in 1914.

The United States Steel, with a total capital invested of \$750,000,000, made a profit in 1916 and 1917 of \$888,931,511.

This is the story of all the large corporations. While the battlefields were fertilized with the rotting blood and flesh of the soldiers, the millionaires at home reaped a harvest of gold.

Is the Soldier a Man?

And in the army the soldier is spied upon, watched, driven, and preyed upon by all sorts of schemes to make him a more efficient murder machine. The propaganda for enlistments screams louder than ever the lies that make a soldier enlist. When Walter Trumbull was released from jail he said that hardly a soldier would remain in Hawaii if it wasn't that they were unable to get off the island.

The intense and almost frantic denial by the government that the soldier has the most ordinary rights will become more intense and more frantic as the class struggle at home becomes sharper.

We Must Win the Army!

For us, our task is to win the soldier to us. He is born out of the working class and joined the army either because of economic pressure or because he was carried away by the lying lure of adventure and travel. In America we have many instances of soldiers refusing to attack striking workers when ordered to do so by their officers. This tradition must be strengthened. We must learn to act as a force which will help the soldier fight for better conditions for himself. The need for such a struggle will increase with still greater bureaucratization of the government as a result of the onward march of imperialism. The soldier is a powerful ally of the worker during a period of crisis. The winning of the army was one of the great achievements of our Russian comrades which made possible a successful revolution. The leaders of the struggle of the workers must not overlook this very important ally to the proletariat. Not only the origin of the soldier but also the conditions of his life make possible our close approach to him. We cannot be sentimental pacifists against war, but must realistically face the fact of a great army which we must win.

In Sweden, Comrade Brettling, the secretary of the Young Communist International section there, said during the course of an anti-militarist address that, "The capitalist class is teaching the soldiers to shoot, it is our task to point out the direction." He was given six months at hard labor for this. But that is the discomfort which revolutionary workers accept as a matter of course.

