

# Lieutenants of the Empire

The distinguished Communist MP, William Gallacher, probes the role of Messrs. Laski and Bevin. "For them history has no lesson." Social Democrats and bourbon politicians.

London.

**W**ARMEST birthday greetings to NEW MASSES with a hearty handshake for all the valiant people who, through its thirty years' battle, have made it such a powerful force in progressive politics. May its power increase with every day that passes so that in the twilight of decaying capitalism its penetrating light will show forth the road to the new world—the world of socialism, peace, and international brotherhood.

Over here we are feeling the full blast of war. The imperialists in the desperate dilemma into which their anti-Soviet conspiracy has landed them hurl defiance at the monopoly capitalists of Germany and cringingly beseech the dollar imperialists to take Britain into pawn. This means for the workers, not only the "blood and tears" promised by Churchill, but perpetual slavery both to their own financial over-lords and to the still mightier financial over-lords of America.

Yet with all this staring them in the face the Social Democrats (Labor Party and trade union leaders) run true to type. For them history has no lessons. As their colleagues in other lands groveled, so they grovel. For the imperialists it is necessary that all independent expression or action on the part of the working class be suppressed. Hitler they would gladly see strung up by the neck because they consider that he "double-crossed" them. He refused to make war on the Soviet Union. So they have no time for Hitler, but "Hitlerism"—well, that's a different matter. That means the destruction of working-class organizations, which above all things is what the imperialists desire. And it is to this job the Social Democrats have set their hand. The most outrageous slanders are made against the Communists. They are painted blacker than a devil out of hell. Where a strike or the threat of a strike takes place, where a movement against the war or against the capitalist class manifests itself, the cry goes up: "The Communists are responsible; they are the sinister influence behind it."

Along with this campaign against the Communists there is the promise of happy days to come (pie in the sky) if only the workers will submit, body and soul, to the demands of their imperialist masters, with dire threats of what will happen if they become troublesome.

Harold Laski, one of labor's "left" intellectuals, has outdone most of the others in his cheap, unprincipled demagogy. He stands forth as the champion of revolution. Yes, sir, he wants revolution and he wants it to start now. Well, at any rate, he wants a little bit of it to start now. It is to be a revolution with the "consent" of the ruling class, and Mr. Churchill is the man who has to lead it. It is almost incredible that men who make

a claim to being "socialists" could put across such stuff. Yet it is exactly what their Social-Democratic colleagues did in Germany and what the Mensheviks labored to do in Russia. As a matter of fact, if you take up the first volume of *The Civil War in the Soviet Union*, you get the feeling that you're not reading history, but that you're actually reading about current events. Take this, for instance, from page 266:

In May, when reelections to the district Dumas were in full swing and the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks were carrying on vociferous agitation, promising the proletariat food and houses, Lenin wrote an article entitled "Forgetting the Main Thing," in which he reviewed the struggle for a proletarian militia and said:

"Once we forget the crude and cruel conditions of capitalist domination, all such platforms, all such lists of high-sounding reforms, are nothing but empty words which, in practice, turn out to be either the most 'pious wishes' or simple deception of the masses by ten-a-penny bourgeois politicians."

These "ten-a-penny" Laskis have consciously "forgotten the main thing" and deliberately try to deceive the masses. But a more dangerous demagogue than Laski is Ernest Bevin, MP, Minister of Labor and member of the war cabinet. He also promotes "lists of high-sounding reforms" to be realized in the distant future. But with all the coercive power of the capitalist state behind him, he threatens to introduce "Nazi methods" if the workers don't "voluntarily" agree to whatever conditions he, on behalf of the tory imperialist government, may care to impose upon them.

Mr. Bevin during the last war was a "bit of a Left" and was not averse, on occasions, to talk about and advocate revolution. He actually participated in the Workers and Soldiers Convention which was held in 1917, and shocked the petty-bourgeois soul of the

late Ramsay MacDonald by the violence of his language.

But at that time he wasn't a very important trade union official. Since 1918, however, there has been an extraordinary development of road transport, and the more important road transport became, the more important became Mr. Bevin. Road transport made Mr. Bevin, but to hear him talk you would think Mr. Bevin had made road transport. He became the "Big Boss" of the trade union movement and, as such, was invaluable to the capitalist class. Now they have brought him into the government as one of their last reserves. He is doing his best to give them service. But he is having difficulty with the shop stewards. While the trade union executives are prepared to agree to anything that may be put before them, the shop stewards are determined to protect the wages and working conditions in the factories. This has led to quite a number of strikes in different parts of the country, despite the fact that one of Bevin's first acts as Minister of Labor was to pass a regulation prohibiting strikes.

Just recently Mr. Bevin visited Scotland and addressed large delegate meetings of trade unionists in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In Edinburgh he got a very cold reception and was frequently interrupted during his speech. But in Glasgow he had to stop a few minutes after he had begun. The police were brought in and a number of delegates were thrown out before he could continue. His speech was a mixture of promises and threats—promises for the future, threats for the present.

On page 376 of the *Civil War* we read how the Socialist-Revolutionary, Yakhtamyshev, Minister of Transport in the Kerensky government, was sent on July 16 to the First Railway Congress, in order to stop the workers' organizations from interfering in the affairs of the railways. This is what he had to say:

"What happiness the British worker must experience. I visited workers' homes; they have three rooms, a kitchen, a piano. . . . The time is not far off when the Russian worker, like the British worker, will come home to a bright and tastefully furnished apartment of three or four rooms and will hear an excellent dramatic concert; his daughter will play the piano, his son the fiddle."

That for the future, but for the present this: "The administration and executive authority on the railways belongs to the organs of government. No interference with the orders of those organs can be tolerated."

But S. G. Yakhtamyshev failed to subdue the railwaymen. Bevin will also fail to subdue the shop stewards and the British working class.



Self-Portrait

Kaethe Kollwitz

WILLIAM GALLACHER.