

“... Bombs in the Sky”

HAROLD WARD

SPEAKING in November, 1932, as Chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defense, Acting Premier Stanley Baldwin had this to tell the House of Commons about aerial warfare: “I think it is well for the man in the street to realize that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed, *whatever people tell him. The bomber will always get through.*” (Emphasis mine.) With admirable chivalry—and a weather eye cocked on the mounting profits of the airplane companies—the Premier went on to say that “the only defense is in offense, which means that you have got to *kill more women and children* more quickly than the enemy, if you want to save yourselves.” In July of this year the citizens of London were treated to an air-raid in which the bombers “got through” to the extent of “destroying” seven vital points and scoring 29 other “hits,” many of them in broad daylight, and in spite of the most vigilant defense. Simultaneously, the House of Lords approved the government’s four-year air defense program involving the expenditure of \$100,000,000—and Baldwin was smoothly declaring that “there is no cause at all for panic of any kind.” In this astonishing statement he was supported by no less an “authority” than J. B. S. Haldane, whose profound knowledge of genetics does not prevent him from shrugging learned shoulders at the so-called “air menace.” Another public-spirited scientist, Dr. F. A. Freeth, was telling a childish alarmed London audience in February that the very best retort to an air-raid was for the citizens to rush, one and all, into suitably prepared hot baths, there to smoke pipes or cigarettes, and laugh until it was all over. Oddly enough, Dr. Freeth is chief research chemist for the Imperial Chemical Industries—whose colossal building was one of the seven strategic points utterly “destroyed” by one of the squadrons provided with bombs containing, no doubt, generous loads of his own stuff.

So much, and such incredible, nonsense is being broadcast about the supposed “harmlessness” of aero-chemical warfare, and that by so-called “responsible” authorities (including General H. L. Gilchrist, U.S. Chemical Warfare Service; Captain Liddell Hart, Major-General H. G. Bishop, U.S. Field Artillery; Captain W. Volkart, Germany; Major Leon A. Fox, U.S. Medical Corps, etc.) that a few equally authoritative counterblasts are in order. Let us begin at home, with a statement published in Army Ordnance (official journal of the Army Ordnance Association) by J. E. Zanetti, a Colonel in the Chemical Warfare Reserve of the United States Army. It is entitled *Thermite Incendiary Bombs* and was a reply to certain misleading remarks in an article by Captain Liddell Hart. Pointing

out that the thermite bomb is “essentially an intimate mixture of aluminum powder and iodide of iron” the ignition of which will produce the appalling temperature of 5,400 degrees Fahrenheit (half that of the sun’s surface), sufficient to burn everything it touches, and even, in small droplets, instantly to penetrate steel helmets, Colonel Zanetti states that:

A fleet of some fifty bombers capable of carrying twenty one hundred-pound bombs each and allowing 10 percent effective hits, could start almost simultaneously 100 very serious fires and give the best organized fire department a Herculean task to cope with. *And wind, the enemy of the gas attack, would here be a most helpful ally.* (Emphasis mine: apologists of gas warfare are constantly using the wind as an argument against its dangers.)

Bear in mind that thermite bombs require no explosive bombs to initiate their reaction, and that they may be dropped by planes flying in dispersed formation over a city, with the double advantage of scattering the enemy attack and (still more vital) *scattering the fires*. Small wonder that a well-informed French military observer, quoted by Zanetti, said, “We are not afraid of a gas attack on Paris by airplanes . . . But the thermite bomb would be far more dangerous. A hundred fires started in a short time at widely separated points might have appalling consequences.”

Significantly enough, another Frenchman, General Pouderoux, former Chief of the Paris Fire Department, declared (in a criticism of the 20,000,000-franc appropriation for the defense of Paris against air-raids) that the one sure defense against such attacks would be *complete evacuation* of the bombed area. Masks—which have been shown to reduce physiological efficiency by about 25 percent—would be utterly useless against fire; and if the conditions were favorable to straight chemical attack (by gases of whose composition no one is yet aware), prolonged or repeated, no mask could be worn long enough at a stretch to *ensure physical survival*. As for “gas shelters,” some of the most virulent compositions are liquids which flow to the lowest point, and they are lethal in easily maintained concentrations. (*Lewisite*, one of the deadliest gases known, and an American discovery, will saturate a cubic foot of air in quantities ranging from 0.1 to 6 grains, according to temperature. For *mustard gas*—the German “Yellow Cross”—the proportions are less; and for *chlor-picrin*, a virulent lung-irritant, the “endurance concentration” is 15 parts in one million.)

Let us listen to another American authority, Fred H. Wagner, Colonel in the Ordnance Reserve, U.S. Army. Writing on *Gas Defense* in the latest issue of Army Ordnance Colonel Wagner bitterly scores all the so-

called “peace societies” for their sentimental and utterly futile minimizing of war dangers. Following a very detailed technical analysis of the nature of the best known poison gases, he comments briefly on the effects of some of them. *Chlorine* and its compounds destroy lung tissue, and recent improvements slow down the action, rendering its presence less quickly detectable. *Mustard gas*—and the “vesicants” generally—operates with a subtle delayed action; the presence of moisture intensifies the agony it causes: it “kills slowly, but surely, every substance which boasts of life.” *Hydrocyanic acid*, a recent discovery “causes immediate death when present in even minute quantities,” as do also bromides and iodides of cyanogen. *Cyanogen* and *chloride* compounds are equally lethal. Irritants in the form of fine powder and dust—German “Blue Cross” compounds—penetrate the finest masks, causing their removal, thus permitting “Green” and “Yellow” Cross vapors to do their deadly work. In addition to straight bombing and smoke attacks, Colonel Wagner has something to say of “liquid rain.” “Spraying, or rain” offers “a means for poisoning the terrain ahead of advancing troops, when towns, valleys, fields of growing grain, and the tops of trees may be saturated with mustard gas by planes during the night.” 650 grains per square yard of the gas would suffice, and a squadron of fifty planes, each with a 5,000 lb. load, could effectively desolate an area of one square mile. The addition of deodorizing chemicals will add to the horror of the attack—which, if directed to a congested section of London, Paris, Berlin, Lyons (Goering’s chief French objective) or New York, would swiftly expose the criminal folly of the scientists, technicians, soldiers and statesmen who now so blandly whitewash the dangers of aero-chemistry in the next war.

And what shall be said of bacteriological warfare, secret German plans for which have been disclosed by Wickham Steed, and whose possibilities were seriously appraised by “General X” in his *Berlin Diaries*? What of the rapid improvements in airplane performance and load-carrying capacity, of “bomb-propellers” and “silencers” to reduce the audibility of the machines? of new gases like cacodyl-isocyanide and that mysterious chemical discovered by Professor Leonce Bert “while working on a preparation of perfumes”? And what sort of “coincidence” is it that, at a time of unparalleled economic depression and war hysteria, the chemical industries in every “civilized” country in the world are working overtime?

To these questions Premier Stanley Baldwin has supplied two neatly contradictory answers. You have your choice. Death is on the wing. . .

Correspondence

Soviet Writers Congress

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The Congress of Soviet Writers opens definitely August 15, at 6 P.M. Gorky will open the Congress. They expect more than 500 writers to attend. Foreign writers are coming too. Willie Bredel is here. Plivier has been reading sections of a new book to the German comrades in preparation for the Congress. Gergel, Hungarian revolutionary writer, has come to the Congress from a collective somewhere in Mongolia. Tretyakov will be in Moscow soon. Sholokhov, author of *And Quiet Flows the Don* is coming, I hear.

Planned as part of a preparation for the Congress, an exhibition of more than 10,000 books arranged in 13 sections will open in the Park of Culture and Rest in a few days. One of these sections will be devoted to Gorky, books, photographs, portraits, etc. Another section will be devoted to Soviet literature of the "military Communism" period. About one-third of the exhibition will be taken up with the section devoted to the literature of the national republics.

Moscow.

BEN FIELD.

Preparing Mass Murders

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The drought, increasing unemployment, strikes and general unrest throughout the Middle West is reflected in the rapid motorization of the National Guards. On August 9, the Chicago Daily News reported of goings-on at Camp Grant near Rockford: "While staff officers of the 33rd division, Illinois National Guard, waited for word that might cause the dispatch of militiamen to the scene of strike troubles in Pekin, preparations were going on for the motorization of the 33rd division with the arrival of a consignment of sixty Chevrolet trucks today. . . . These are the first delivery of a National Guard order of 1,663 trucks that are expected to add to the mobility and speed of army divisions throughout the nation, according to Major-General Roy D. Keehn, commander of the 33rd division." Major-General Keehn's statement was borne out by the fact that only recently the Iowa National Guard, among others, was equipped with sixty of the latest special-built trucks which, according to the excuse of Adjutant-General Grah, were merely furnished by the National Guard Bureau of the United States army to replace antiquated equipment in use by the guard since the World War.

The Illinois National Guard is receiving particular attention, due to the belief prevalent in many quarters in and about Chicago that while Capital and Labor in the city, by a sort of tacit agreement, have foresworn all major hostilities until after the closing of the World's Fair, the effect is very much like screwing down the valves on a boiler already at the high pressure point. Some workers predict that the Chicago struggle, when it splits wide open, will be a repetition of the general strike in San Francisco.

That, in any event, the moguls of Chicago are worried over the situation is evident. For one thing, they are making excellent use of the World's Fair as a convenient "cover" for displaying the state's military strength, secretly hoping, no doubt, that the workers of the Windy City will be sufficiently impressed. The events leading up to what the Chicago newspapers hailed as the greatest military spectacle staged there since the days of the World War are significant. At Camp Grant, August 9, tons of TNT were exploded by the 108th Engineers in a demonstration of modern demolition warfare before a committee of officials representing the Commonwealth

Edison Company, the Illinois Central and the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, the Chicago Surface Lines and the People's Gas Company. The following Monday, speaking before a Governor's day audience of more than 50,000 visitors, Gov. Henry Horner characterized the citizen army as "a guard against communism and violence." The next day, after a fortnight of intensive maneuverings in sham warfare, the training of 10,000 militiamen was climaxed by breaking camp and marching in diverging columns to form a giant fan fifteen miles broad and thirty miles long, invading Chicago and nucleating at the pup-tent camp on Chicago's lake front. On Illinois day, August 17, the 10,000 National Guardsmen paraded in full regalia down Michigan boulevard through the Avenue of Flags on the grounds of a Century of Progress. Military planes flew overhead in various formations. In the evening sham battles were staged on the lake and in the city, followed by creating the illusion of a wartime city under an air raid.

While the exhibit undoubtedly impressed myriads of World's Fair visitors from all over the world, it should not discourage the workers and anti-war intellectuals of Chicago, for they have an opportunity *par excellence* to exert all their influence in helping to make the 2nd U. S. Congress Against War and Fascism to be held in Chicago, September 28-29-30, a mighty counter-demonstration.

FRED HAMMANN.

Pekin, Ill.

It Happened in Ambridge

TO THE NEW MASSES:

It happened in Ambridge, the semi-feudal town of the steel barons. Eleven men, constituting all those present at an I.L.D. membership meeting, were arrested for "unlawful assembly—next to riot" in the words of the chief of police. We came prepared to defend the men on the basis of constitutional guarantees for freedom of speech only to find a last-minute frame-up charge of disorderly conduct for ejecting some unknown and unproduced person from the meeting hall. One of the attorneys, a Negro sympathizer, was discriminated against by not being permitted to question witnesses until he had produced proof of his right to practice law in addition to his business cards—although I was not required to do so. After the police had put in their flimsy case on hearsay evidence, the burgess pondered, admitting openly that there was little evidence on which to convict. But he proceeded to question the defendants: "Who was chairman of the meeting? How many officers do you have? Who are they?" At this fascist attempt to gain information with which to terrorize these I.L.D. members, we protested that the names of officers have no connection with sustaining a charge of disorderly conduct and that such questions should not be answered. To this demand, came the lightning response of a sentence by the court: \$5 fine for each defendant.

The case having been disposed of, the burgess waxed oratorical and announced that the conviction was brought on the men themselves because they defied him and persisted in holding meetings which the burgess said could not be held. When questioned why not by the defense counsel he said viciously: "Because I say so!" It was then called to his attention that there was no borough ordinance prohibiting inside meetings—did this stop him? He blandly and unconcernedly said, unconscious of the humor: "We've got such a law somewhere in this town. Maybe it's lost or mislaid, but I'm sure we've got a law."

SYLVIA SCHLESINGER.

Pittsburgh.

Fascism at Cornell

[We have received a copy of a letter of protest, signed by more than one hundred persons who attended the lecture of Dr. Elfrieda E. Pope, newly appointed instructor in Hunter College, who spoke at Goldwin-Smith Hall, Cornell University, August 14, on her observations in East Prussia and the Polish Corridor. The protest was sent to Dr. R. H. Jordan, dean of the summer session. It follows in part.—THE EDITORS.]

The speaker, who has just been appointed an instructor in Hunter College, New York City, was introduced by the chairman, a member of the German Department of Cornell University, who stated that the lecture would be of a non-controversial nature.

That this description was far off the mark is clear from an examination of her treatment of the material:

1. Dr. Pope spoke in the most glowing terms of the titled proprietors of East Prussia, better known as the Junkers. She emphasized their sad plight and was awed before their aristocratic graciousness. Dr. Pope regretted that she was unable to visit "lovely" Neudeck, the estate of Field Marshal von Hindenburg, but neglected to mention that the late Reichspresident had been bribed with that estate by her genial hosts in order that they might continue their depredations on this fund.

Her expressed friendliness and admiration for the German Land League is particularly significant in view of the fact that this league is a Bund of the Junkers and is the agency through which they carried out their schemes.

2. Dr. Pope was fervent when she spoke of the Hitler Boys and, "as we call them," Hitler Girls. That these organizations are the embodiment of Nazi philosophy, that they were led to exult in the "Burning of the Books," that they have been inculcated with the perverse anthropology of Nordic and Aryan supremacy, that they are being prepared for war, these facts were conspicuously absent from her lecture.

3. The speaker rose to ebullience when she dealt with the Arbeitsdienst, the "voluntary" labor camps, which are notoriously forced labor camps and one of the means by which the Hitler regime doctors its unemployment figures. These camps are a means for the militarizing of the German unemployed.

4. Dr. Pope concluded with an appeal for tourist trade in Germany. Here she was openly the propagandist because world sentiment is boycotting German goods and German touring. Thus the lady used her opportunity to appeal for economic support for the Nazi regime.

This was one of a series of Tuesday evening lectures given for the enlightenment of the students at the summer session and held under University auspices at Goldwin-Smith Hall. Yet here we heard a lecture that was clearly designed to arouse sympathy for a discredited and brutal regime.

We saw a charming young lady used as the mouthpiece of corrupt Junkerdom and bestial Hitlerism.

We protest the misuse of University property and prestige to develop support for the Hitler government.

Notice

Will the people who paid for subscriptions at the Edward Dahlberg meeting at Camp Unity, August 10, please communicate with THE NEW MASSES business office. Some of the names taken by Phil Bard were lost.