

# READERS' FORUM

## *That question about the traditions of the Confederate South—Ambulance work in Spain*

"Why not a Jeff Davis Battalion in Spain?" asks Edward Callahan (NEW MASSES, July 6). When the 1st American battalion in Spain took the name of Abraham Lincoln, it acted with the deepest historical justification. In 1861, the slavocracy, swept from its accustomed dominance in national affairs by the concerted action of all progressive groups and masses, trained its guns upon the Union and inaugurated armed counter-revolution. Lincoln was the chosen leader of that alliance of forces which saved democracy for America.

Jefferson Davis was, on the contrary, the leader of the counter-revolutionary class, the slave-owners. This view is "old-line sectarianism," then Karl Marx was without doubt a hopeless sectarian, for he was the first called secession by its proper name of counter-revolution.

Today the southern ruling class tries to hallow the memory of the Confederacy. In this, it acts with liberate intent; it sanctifies the old oppression, to justify the new. Shall we assist our oppressors by honoring their counter-revolutionary past? Shall we ask the southern fighters for Spanish democracy—there are many of them in Spain, and there will soon be more—to enlist under the banner of that arch anti-democrat, Jefferson Davis?

Mr. Callahan assumes a unanimity of pro-Confederate sentiment among the southern masses in 1861; the assumption is far from justified. He mentions especially "the lean white men from the hungry mountains" as "the rank-and-file" of the Confederate army. Mr. Callahan had better look to his history. He thinks he can persuade men from the southern highlands to join a battalion which bears the name of Jefferson Davis, he doesn't know his mountains! Throughout the Civil War, pro-Union sentiment was overwhelming in all mountain territories. The mountain-dwellers wrested western Virginia from the Confederacy, and created the new state of West Virginia. The East Tennessee hill people, despite a fierce Confederate reign of terror, called for a pro-Union convention. In the highlands of every southern state, men defied the draft, and peppered Confederate draft officers with shot; "it's a rich man's war," they said, "and a poor man's fight." Although pro-Union sentiment was less strong in the lowlands, there, too, the more militant defied the slavery government; often they escaped to the north and joined the Union army. Anti-war societies sprang up throughout the South as secret organizations. Secession was brought about by terror and intrigue, against the people's will; it was, as Marx wrote to Engels, "all usurpation."

As for the "faithful black teamsters" who, according to Mr. Callahan, gave enthusiastic support to the Confederacy—here we have a bit of old and very tenacious chauvinism. Many a slave was forced to assist the Confederates; but countless numbers ran away to the Union lines, and with the advance of the Federal forces the desertion of slaves became a mass movement. The First South Carolina volunteers, recruited from the Sea Islands, was only one of the many Union regiments composed of newly-liberated black men.

This is the heritage of which southern Communists can be proud. A Jefferson Davis Battalion? Evolutionists do not draw their inspiration from counter-revolutionists, nor do fighters for democracy fill up the names of enemies of the people.

ELIZABETH LAWSON.

### *Another Reaction*

May I, as a native southerner, comment on Edward Callahan's plea for a Jeff Davis Battalion or Robert E. Lee Brigade in Spain?

It's hard to believe that any southerner who wants to support loyalist Spain can draw inspiration from the memory of feudal, fascist-minded land-

owners who directed a war to perpetuate slavery. True, there were "lean white men" and "faithful black teamsters" in Lee's army. There were, also, an unestimated number of real rebels in the South who refused to fight in the Confederate ranks. For example, Winn Parish, La., seceded from the Confederacy. The older generation of southern bourgeois still speak of these "renegades" with intense bitterness; and they are not particularly grateful to the rank-and-file who did fight.

Did any of our ancestors really think that the Civil War "might somehow free us from the idiocy of the pre-bellum South"? Should we, therefore, send a Pershing Brigade to Spain because our rank-and-file in the World War was deluded into the belief that they were fighting for democracy?

The South has its revolutionary traditions. But Lee and Davis are as out of place in those traditions as mint juleps and camellias would be in *Tobacco Road*.

If Mr. Callahan must name a brigade in Spain after some southern gentleman, why not Thomas Jefferson?

FRANCES OLIVIER.

### *And Still Another*

● Mr. Callahan, it seems to me, barter revolutionary logic for a chocolate bar of sentiment and a licorice-stick of local chauvinism. The Lees and Davises and Jacksons of the world may be a fine lot, whether in courage, in ability, in loyalties, etc., but to the progressive-minded one thing stands out above all else—and that is, did these men fight for a greater or lesser democracy for the majority of the people of the world? It matters not if a man is lovable personally, or whether he comes from our own town or family; what counts is what this man has contributed to the long struggle for freedom made by men whose minds and bodies have been and are tied by needless oppression. A Jeff Davis Battalion fighting reaction on Spanish soil would certainly make a strange picture. The patron saint of southern slavery called upon to inspire battle against Spanish feudalism!

G. WILFER.

### *From an Ambulance Driver*

● I'm on the southern Spanish front near Poyoblanco, and we're practically living in the ambulances.

This orchard which covers a large field is crisscrossed with trenches and full of bullets, shells, and unexploded bombs—and the dead. Everywhere we go we find the dead—hastily buried where they fell. Yesterday we reburied five who were half exposed. One of them was an American. This field a week ago was the scene of a battle, and as I lie here in my ambulance writing this to you, I look out at the trees cut to pieces by the shells and at the shell-holes which, truth to tell, are not very big. I can almost see men running for their lives from tree to tree and our men following. Yesterday I picked up a clip of Italian cartridges—dum-dums—and I am saving one for you. We all have been given pistols and we practice daily.

It's queer how I'm changing. I've lost weight, I'm quieter, and I eat a lot less. Incidentally I see that the *Daily Worker* (April 9 issue) has started a drive for candy, cigarettes, etc., for the battalion. Well, it's about time. The English and French get

a great deal more support than we do—I have one pack of Chesterfields which I'm saving for the day when France stops coming through. That's how rare they are! I think that a pack of Chesterfields, a few sticks of chewing gum, some candy, and some warm socks per man would do more to win this war quickly than all the talk put together. Which is exaggerated of course—but still we certainly need them. And free. None of us has any money left at all. None of us meaning practically every battalion member in Spain.

The weather has been miserable. We're up in the mountains and it rains practically every day. Our food is wet—and since the sanitary arrangements are the same as when you go camping, it's not so hot. Somehow you get through very quickly when it's raining cats and dogs.

Which should not give you the idea that I'm not happy. I most certainly am, and I'm genuinely glad that I'm working here. I've seen some pretty marvelous things here—most of which I can't write about yet—but not the least marvelous is the kind of people you find here. They come from all over the world to fight.

What we crave here most besides cigarettes, candy, crackers, etc., is reading material. Send us everything you have. Buy the *Communist International* and the *Communist* and *Inprecorr* for me. Let all the friends pay for it. Do you know that each *Daily Worker* we get here is read by over two hundred people? Sometimes three times that number. Get them to me via the mail, but well wrapped and plainly addressed.

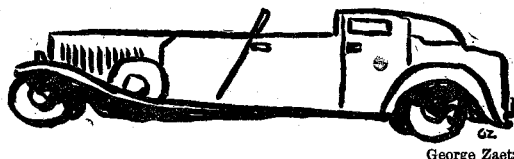
How is Central Park? It's a long way from here! Perhaps things will be different when I get back—if I do. That American boy I buried this morning is on my mind. He had half written a letter home. "Help carry the fight forward," he said, "and when I come back, I too will take up the fight again."

Tomorrow we move up to a more or less permanent field hospital at the front. I shall be picking up the wounded at the trenches and bringing them back to the field hospital. I've been to the front both at Jarama, near Madrid, and here on the Cordoba front. But I have also been doing relay work, picking up the wounded at the field hospital and taking them to the base. It's been dangerous work—but comparatively less so than at the front. Now I shall be up at the front line, and I'm proud of the assignment because of my ability to maneuver my ambulance. You see, there are no roads. You dash across goat trails—from tree to tree—and you've got to go fast and avoid the holes for the sake of the wounded. They give them a shot of dope, but it isn't enough to prevent serious damage from bumping if the wound is bad.

Possibly I am not making myself clear—since really, in a sense, all this work has been front-line work. Roughly then, this is how the system works. A man gets wounded in the front line. He is carried back along the connecting trench to the emergency dressing station. There a doctor examines him. If the wound is light, it is dressed, and he returns to the trench. If it is more serious, I pick him up and rush him to a field hospital a couple of kilometers behind the lines. There all operations are performed, and the patient is immediately evacuated to the base hospital. There he is treated until he is ready for convalescence—when he goes to a convalescence hospital and then back to the trenches. I have done some emergency dressing-station work, but mostly my work has been from the base hospital or the field hospital.

I'm not writing very much about what I see. I'm keeping a diary though—and maybe some day I'll tell you all of these things—crazy—ugly—and yet inspiring—that are happening to all of us here.

V. H.



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# REVIEW AND COMMENT

*The mind and face of German fascism—Labor and western Europe—Radio and electricity*

FOR a student new to the study of fascism, two current works plus Hitler's *My Battle* and a basic political text like Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution* would provide an excellent introduction. The Führer's book, written "for the instruction and guidance of those already committed to his movement," can be made the text of doctrine for which Professor Brady's study<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Ashton's work<sup>2</sup> provide the exegesis. To be sure, the version of *My Battle* available in English is a discreetly abridged text, and dull and tough reading even in its shorter form, but it contains the basic precepts of the Nazi movement as stated by its leader.

Mr. Ashton's treatment of the movement for which *My Battle* is the bible is a purely subjective one. Since he believes that political thought and beliefs are "entirely a question of irrational personal preference," and that even the physical sciences have only a subjective standard of truth, Ashton never attempts to study any data or facts which may be pertinent to an objective analysis of fascism. Thus collectivism is the political and social form which may provide the framework for either a socialist or capitalist society, the distinction between these being the insignificant factor of property relationships. And fascism is a fusion of the important elements of socialism and capitalism brought about not by an objective situation prevailing in a country, but by the innate spiritual character of a people.

Out of irrational personal preference Mr. Ashton is an anti-fascist, and he endeavors to persuade us to dislike fascism by presenting its ideological system as a logical and rigorous structure. In order, however, not to seem biased, he excludes as inessential to its structure those characteristics which the working class has come to know as fascist: brutality, lower standards of living, and war mongering. And he explains what to him is the unnecessary and gratuitous fascist attack upon communism in this fashion: fascists persecute the Communists and communism because fascism and communism "spring from the same collectivist stem" and "the two points which keep them apart—the fascists' choice of a national instead of a class basis, and their refusal to have the state, on principle, take care of the productive needs itself—constitute a feeble barrier indeed." And since the fascists want to retain power, they fear lest the people realize how feeble the barriers are, and turn Communist! And here we have the one value the book possesses. For it reveals clearly the line of reasoning of genuine liberals who say that

communism and fascism are the same, and by their statement provide propaganda weapons for the fascists.

But if Mr. Ashton's subjective approach can yield no clear analysis of the purpose and reason of fascism, Professor Grady, on the basis of objective data, presents us with a lucid statement of the rationale of fascism. Analyzing German fascism as the "fascism . . . of business enterprise organized on a monopoly basis, and in full command of all the military, police, legal, and propaganda power of the state," the book proceeds to demonstrate in detail just how every institution and social agency in Germany has been harnessed to fulfill the purposes of monopoly capitalism.

*The Structure and Spirit of German Fascism* is divided into two parts of about equal length. The first, called "The Coördination of Spirit," takes us through the mechanics which the Nazis have devised for the control and shaping of the spirit of the German people. Here the sciences, arts, and education are presented to us as the organized tools of the dictatorship of monopoly capitalism, and their operation in this role is carefully described. Then the more elaborate techniques and doctrines of spiritual regimentation as applied to the youth, the worker, and the mother and child are detailed, and their functional relationship to the fundamental purposes of the Nazi dictatorship made clear.

In part two, "The Coördination of Structures," the actual organizational set-up of agriculture, economics, and business are presented in such a fashion as to prove the author's definition of fascism as "the dictatorship of monopoly capitalism." In answer to those who present fascism as a revolt of the middle class, or as the unaccountable rule of a group of madmen, or as a movement which was originally supported by big business against whom it has since turned, Professor Brady shows clearly that now as never before the big businessmen of the country are their own masters, and even more, the masters of the entire German economy.

Summarizing the argument of the book and carrying it further in the last chapter, "The Looming Shadow of Fascism Over the World," Professor Brady warns us that fas-

cism is a phenomenon from which no country having businessmen is immune. For the very structure of a business enterprise is undemocratic in precisely the same way as fascism is undemocratic; and in fact each business provides a miniature of fascist coördination. Not a miniature, however, but the actual skeleton of a potential fascist economic organization is ready to hand right now in every capitalist country in the forms of chambers of commerce, trade associations, and other businessmen's organizations. And to buttress his thesis, Professor Brady lists a series of fascist doctrines and attaches long quotations from American businessmen's literature which present the arguments for the doctrines. Thus we find that arguing for the doctrine of unity (of capital and labor) are the National Association of Manufacturers, Dr. Buchman of the Oxford Group, and a writer for the Goodyear Rubber Co. factory paper. And the predisposition to fascism of American business leaders can be substantiated by the actions and speeches of this group during the recent and present struggles of the C.I.O. The *New York Times* recently, side by side with a report of the steel strike, ran a story without a dateline in which the peace and harmony between capital and labor in fascist Italy were described. No incident which might be called "news fit to print" was reported in the course of the account.

This reviewer hesitates to criticize adversely Professor Brady's excellent study, but it does seem regrettable that in the long analysis of the N.R.A., for instance, there was no treatment in political terms at all of this conglomerate plan. However, Mr. Laski's statement that there is no book of comparable value as "a survey of the mechanisms through which the purpose of Herr Hitler's dictatorship is fulfilled," will certainly be concurred with by every reader. In England the Left Book Club has already shown its agreement by choosing the book for its members.

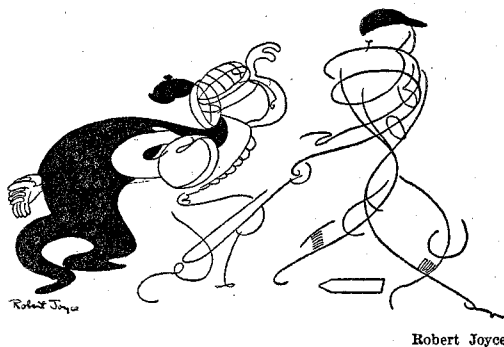
WILLIAM DEAN.

## European Workers

LABOR CONDITIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE,  
by J. Kucynski. International Publishers.  
\$1.50.

THIS book is written for the specialist in what Lancelot Hogben so aptly calls the "mathematics of human welfare," namely statistics. It should without question be on the "must" list of anyone who calls himself a statistician, economist, or social historian.

The book is divided into two sections. The first and most extensive is a pioneer effort in the determination of a comprehensive method of measuring labor conditions over a long period. After a review of the accepted method, i.e., the measuring of real wages as an indica-



<sup>1</sup> THE SPIRIT AND STRUCTURE OF GERMAN FASCISM, by Robert A. Brady; foreword by Harold J. Laski. Viking Press. \$3.

<sup>2</sup> THE FASCIST: HIS STATE AND HIS MIND, by E. B. Ashton. William Morrow. \$2.50.