

Re: "The War of Tyrants"

Terence Donaghue writes in from Staten Island, N. Y.: "In enumerating the names suggested to President Roosevelt to replace the colorless 'World War II', Niccolo Tucci unaccountably omits the entry of Eleanor Roosevelt, quondam editor of a monthly entitled *Babies, Just Babies*. Mrs. Roosevelt is rumored to have suggested: 'War, Just War'."

COMMONWEALTH—LONDON WRITES TO MICHIGAN

(The following letter from Richard Acland, leader of England's Common Wealth party, to Frank Marquart apropos Marquart's letter in the March *POLITICS* on the MCF Conference, is printed with the author's permission. It gives a lively picture of English leftwing politics from the inside.—ED.)

Dear Mr. Marquart:

I am very interested in your letter in *POLITICS* on the work of the policy committee of the Michigan Commonwealth Federation. You may like to know something of the political organization under the name "Common Wealth" in Britain. The similarity between this party, the CCF in Canada and what I know of the MCF is that all three arise out of the fact that there is a deep aspiration for a really fundamental change which is not satisfied by any of the existing parties.

In this country, we see the Conservative Party clearly representing the interests of big business; and on the other hand we see confusion and indecision in the Labour Party. There are great numbers of good democrats and socialists in the rank and file of the latter movement—perhaps an out-and-out majority. But at the moment all the signs go to show that the center of gravity of effective power in the party is not minded to make any serious or thoroughgoing attack on monopoly capitalism, but would actually prefer to try to reach some sort of compromise between the powers of big business and the powers of the biggest Trade Unions. Members of Common Wealth see this "solution" clearly, and large numbers of citizens see it less clearly, as neither socialism nor democracy but as the British form of gentlemanly fascism". [Or what is called over here "white fascism"—ED.]

After that, as far as I can see, our respective organizations develop a certain amount of dissimilarity. Yours seems to start in the right place—from the most alert representatives of the workers. Ours, by a curious accident, started first mainly among middleclass technicians, professional people, plus a certain number of Christians who couldn't turn a blind eye to the fact that "Thou shalt promote thine own self interest" is the dead opposite of "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." However, as time went on we began to win the support of workers as individuals, though not ever as representing organizations. . . . We have about 10,000 members, about 400 branches. We have won two by-elections on our own account. . . .

I would also like to put to you another thing which we have discovered in our work here. When we are attacked by our enemies for being too Left and too Revolutionary, it pays every single time to lam back at them by going more Left and more Revolutionary. We lose every time if we try to give them a tame answer, assuring them that "really we aren't quite so revolutionary as they might think."

A good example of this took place at Skipton by-election

(which we won). Just about that time I had been arguing our Compensation proposals in the House of Commons. . . . Unfortunately, when I said we'd give automatic 100% compensation for all socialised property holdings up to 1,000 pounds, this was reprinted in *Hansard* as 100 pounds. Therefore the Tory cry: "Common Wealth will strip you of all you've got over 100 pounds." Now if we'd turned tail on this and explained that what I really had said was 1,000 pounds, I'm sure we would have been sunk. So we decided to stick to our guns for the by-election and correct the matter at our conference which was then pending. We therefore advertised a meeting at which we undertook to answer "this 100 pounds business". Our answer was: "Now hands up all those who have more than 100 pounds of savings over and above their personal property such as house, clothes, furniture, books, etc." Naturally no hands. "Well, if that's a dirty way of asking the question, hands up those who have not as much as 100 pounds of savings." Naturally almost every hand in the whole meeting. "Very well then, will you please face the fact that Common Wealth is thinking for the overwhelming majority, and the Conservatives for the tiny minority." This I am sure was a positive election winner. . . .

Yours very sincerely,

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
LONDON, ENGLAND

RICHARD ACLAND

"THE END OF EUROPE"

I'm not at all in agreement with Macdonald about "The End of Europe". (See "Comment", March issue. ED.) I was, in fact, rather shocked to find in *POLITICS* so clear an expression of a point of view which generally reflects either the self-satisfaction of Americans or the despair of European refugees. Of course I realize that Macdonald was protesting against the anti-European policies of the Big Three rather than giving a theoretical analysis. Nevertheless. . . .

Consider the productive capacity of Europe, the quality and the numbers of its politically advanced masses, the importance of its intellectual centers (extinguished for the moment)—consider these relative to the same factors on other continents. Furthermore, I think we must free ourselves of the traditional psychology we have developed during a century of relatively wide-spread social peace. For thousands of years, man has flourished anew in the midst of natural and historical catastrophes. Neither hunger nor terror nor death on a large scale necessarily diminished the potential of human energy—sometimes, indeed, quite the contrary. After eight years of world war, civil war, famine, disease, terror and devastation, Russia recreated herself single-handed between 1922 and 1926, achieving at least a modicum of prosperity and a cultural renaissance of truly astonishing proportions considering the impasse she was in. Similarly, the European problem does not present itself simply in terms of devastation. The sufferings now being inflicted on the people of Europe may arouse reactions of an energy and intensity quite impossible to understand if we look at the matter through the eyes of peacetime middleclass psychology.

Certainly Europe has much greater resources than Russia had in 1917. All that I hear from abroad indicates that in France, for example, where political energies were at a low ebb between 1937 and 1941, an extraordinary revival is now taking place. (By "political energy" I mean the capacity for action of both individuals and masses.) This has not yet taken the form of any conscious political move-

ments, expressing itself simply in continual struggles against oppression, which might be termed "defensive reflexes". But it seems impossible that consciousness will not develop later on.

My own feeling is that Europe is now going through her "Civil War" period and that much as the Civil War in the United States marked the advent of industrial capitalism, so the present world war marks the advent in Europe of various kinds of planned economies—so varied, indeed, as to threaten in some respects, our own political hopes and aspirations.

MEXICO CITY

VICTOR SERGE

MORE COMMON SENSE, PLEASE!

Your Herzen quotation is irrelevant, incompetent and immaterial, as we lawyers say. Times change, and so do conditions. Today, a radical journal must be constructive as well as destructive. It must tell us, if it can, what it would *do* if it had the opportunity and power. You are against everything and everybody, except the Macdonald group. O.K., but what would you do if you were in the White House, or in Eisenhower's place? I see you object to "obliteration" bombing, but you do not say how you would fight the war. Criticism wholly negative is futile these days.

By the way, if you will re-read the Communist Manifesto, you will find, in addition to general ideas and philosophical theses, a perfectly clear and definite platform, proposals to meet *immediate* or *early* needs of the body politic. If Marx and Engels could afford to present a constructive and concrete program, you can afford to do it. It would require little space, it would show your readers just where you stand and what chances your program actually has in the foreseeable future. In short, your critics are right, and you have made no satisfactory answer to their perfectly proper and reasonable demand.

LA JOLLA, CALIF.

VICTOR S. YARROS

—I agree that the reply to the critics of *POLITICS'* alleged negativism was not adequate, and in the next issue I shall try to present a more thorough answer. Here we might clear one confusion out of the way. Mr. Yarros asks what I would do if I were in the White House, and how I would fight the war. If he means the present war and the present White House, without any basic social change, then I must answer that I wouldn't fight the war and wouldn't be in the White House. If he means a revolutionary war and a new society, then the first step that way is destructive criticism of the existing order. People will only listen to proposals for radical change if they are convinced they cannot somehow worry along with the old institutions.—ED.

ARE WE MEN OR MAMMALS?

The following communication is printed in the hope it will aid *POLITICS* readers to vote intelligently this fall. It effectively disposes of at least one vexing question: is Roosevelt serving God or Mammals?—ED.

The basic concern of government is rightfully the coordination of faculties of human life, not the coordination of people. The sum total of all men everywhere is in kind only the potentialities of any man anywhere. I am unworthy the gift of human existence if I endorse a regime in Washington not in line with the preservation of and development of the higher abilities of my life.

Removal of Sewell Avery from his Montgomery Ward position by federal government constituted an affront to those powers which differentiate a human from a mere mammal. In throwing Mr. Avery out of his house of business, the Roosevelt administration said in effect to each of us not included in the New Deal bureaucracy: "You may not presume to possess talents relevant to a man capable of interpreting the scene about him and finding for himself the advantages which pertain therein."

I can not serve God by voting for a candidate disdainful of the most God-like attributes of my composition.

SPARTA, ILL.

MARY ALLEN GRANT

Labor Action at the Shop Level

COMMENTING on Daniel Bell's "The Coming Tragedy of American labor" (*Politics*, March 1944), Ben Fischer warned labor party enthusiasts against the tendency to regard political action as a substitute for unionism. "... labor's direction is determined in the first place at the shop level... labor's real struggle concerns the daily relationships between Management and Employee." This view struck me as particularly pertinent to current labor developments in Detroit. Collective bargaining at the shop level seems to be progressively weakening. The shop steward system, often called the backbone of an industrial union, is losing its effectiveness. Once the unions relied on their internal organized bargaining strength for the settlement of major grievances. Today more and more important grievances are shunted from stage to stage and then finally forwarded to some outside party. Arbitration takes the place of genuine collective bargaining.

Workers are told that since labor must deal with the War Labor Board and other government agencies, their hope lies in political action. But there is a feeling among many union members that the growing emphasis on the political field *tends to replace rather than reinforce* labor's struggle in the industrial field. A story in the *Detroit News* of July 15 is suggestive in this connection: "Delegates to the Seventh Annual Convention of the Michigan CIO were warned by their leaders not to rescind the no-strike pledge. Political action, not strikes and industrial strife, was advocated as the weapon by which the CIO and all other organized labor can attain its economic demands. A threatened revolt against the no-strike pledge today brought George F. Addes, UAW-CIO Secretary-Treasurer, before the delegates to stamp out the rebellion, which was manifested Wednesday by a demonstration of disgruntled delegates... Political action has been emphasized as the theme of the convention by every speaker..."

The issue came up the other day when five irate committeemen of Ford Local 600 UAW-CIO threatened to give up their grievance duties. I asked one of them what was wrong.

"We don't want to let the union down," he said. "We'd like nothing better than to adjust grievances for the workers in our districts. But we're fed up. All we get is the old stall. The company supervisors don't bargain anymore. They think grievance procedure is something to thumb their noses at. Our contract grants us all the time off the job needed to settle legitimate grievances. What does the company care about the contract? When we leave our machines to investigate a grievance, we get docked. Sure, maybe in the end the Umpire will rule that the company must pay back the dockage, but in the meantime we get short-changed."