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CHRISTMAS JOURNEY

THE FIGHT FOR FRANCE

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WITH the United Nations General Assembly meeting in Paris the eyes of the world are on France. What irony that, as the representatives of the democratic nations strive to find a basis for international peace and unity, France should be torn apart by warring political and industrial interests.

The recent wave of strikes in the north of France brought cold and misery into the homes of all the workers of France. The women and children will have to endure this misery for long months yet. In France we have a very difficult struggle to reorganise our whole economy. It is tragic that at such a time men, blinded by a wrong passion, are destroying in a few weeks all that makes up a country's wealth.

Many feel that the recent strikes were justified—a lot of people could not live on

what they earned. But I call to mind how serious the situation became last year when the forces of destruction tried to start a civil war in France. In Marseilles 15,000 men and women armed with machine guns, rifles and clubs fought for six hours. Experiences like these, and the suffering I saw everywhere among the women and children made me determined to give my whole life to the workers of France. I have been deeply grieved to see the workers of France taking this road of hate. But during these past months I have found an immense hope that better days are at hand.

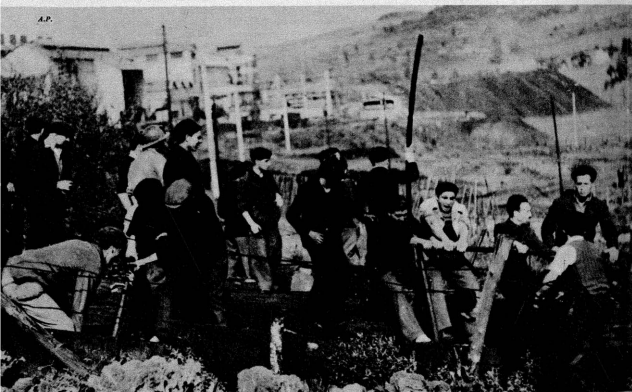
In the factories of the industrial north, in little groups within sight of the motionless pithead wheels, in the union offices and board rooms and civic buildings, the word goes from man to man of a new force which is changing relationships in

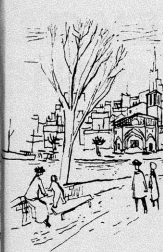
families, reconciling the toughest opponents in labour and management, and uniting all classes on a common front. "Have you heard," they say. "Have you heard what has happened at Le Touquet?"

Noted for the golf-course, baccarat-rooms and bathing beaches, where the well-to-do have passed the summer, Le Touquet is achieving a new kind of fame. Arriving over the period of a fortnight 2,000 delegates packed the narrow streets hurrying to and from the hall of the Casino for a remarkable conference—the second French Assembly for Moral Re-Armament. It was, perhaps, the most varied group the citizens of Le Touquet have known. They saw the crumpled blue berets of miners and mill-workers, and the black homburgs of industrialists and bankers and state officials; farmers in country suits; hatless priests in black

Throwing up barricades. Strikers in the St. Etienne area tear up rails to build barricades

A.P.





Breaking down barriers. Madame Laure, facing camera, talks with labour and management leaders at Le Touquet



cassocks; the khaki uniforms of army officers. There were laughing children in sweaters and baggy breeches, and a great crowd of the ordinary men and women who are the life of France—engineers and lawyers, clerks, teachers, newspapermen. "This is something quite new. It will have tremendous repercussions," wrote the *Voix du Nord*.

To my great joy I have seen brought together management, workers, trade unionists (C.G.T., F.O., C.F.T.C., and independent unions), all denominations, all professions above the level of party divisions. I have seen whole families coming to speak of the hope and new life that the ideology of Moral Re-Armament has brought them.

None put this more vividly than Roger Braquier, the young trade-union fighter, with his blue suit and grey woollen sweater, his hollow cheeks and deep-sunk shining eyes. "You have before you a proletarian. To some people maybe that stands for a strange beast. When I was young I almost died of hunger. I slept under bridges and lived on scraps of food that I picked out of dustbins. I wanted to fight, to destroy, to destroy..." The Assembly sat motionless as the slight

figure at the microphone paused. "I became a Marxist, a revolutionary. Marxism for me was an ideology to which I gave my whole life. But while I fought to bring happiness to others I had not found happiness for myself or my family. I tell you all—Moral Re-Armament is a greater ideology than Marxism—for one simple reason. While I fight as hard as ever for others, MRA has meant that my wife and family are united, and despite our poverty we know real happiness. We have scraped together our last coppers to get here. We are convinced that through this ideology you and we can save France and the world."

Four workers from a factory extracting by-products from coal in the heart of the mining area of the North who had come to the first week-end of the Assembly returned convinced that there was a force hitherto unknown to them in this ideology; and by the radiance of their faces and the conviction in their voices, they persuaded thirty-eight of their comrades to come to the second week-end at Le Touquet. A great number of them spoke, telling us that they were determined to fight for teamwork in industry. For none of them had ever seen a conference like this bringing a new hope

of brotherhood among all the workers. Among them were delegates representing all the Trade Union groups and they found a new basis of unity in the family of Moral Re-Armament.

For my part I am convinced that in the present state of France no other solution is possible. I have seen many new ideas before, but none has brought me the deep joy that I feel at this moment, for I can see the coming dawn of the French renaissance. The ideology of Moral Re-Armament brings the answer to all domestic, national and international problems.

Strikes lead only to hate and sorrow. We must find another way. The heart of the workers is beginning to change. The heart of French management is beginning to change. The French have a vigour, a force, when they are convinced, which makes them win through all their revolutions. Le Touquet means hope for France. If France goes under, centuries of civilisation will go under with her. But France will not go under because we are determined she shall not. Just as we did in the Resistance, we are going to fight this battle with our whole heart, with all our faith. By saving France we shall save the world.