

June, 1937.

We, the undersigned wish to make a strong appeal to the Soviet Government that it should look into the case of A.J. BERDICHEVSKY, who has been in prison since April 1936. His wife, FREDA UTLEY, has been unable to obtain any satisfactory information as to what offence he is supposed to have committed, although she made continual efforts to do so while in Moscow in June and July 1936. Nor has she once been allowed to see him since his arrest, or even to receive letters from him; Since he has been at Ust Usya, transferred subsequently to another prison camp at: Vorkuta Rudnik, Severni Kron, Bopkyma Rignuk, Cebepkon Kpoi, where he was sent after being condemned, without trial, to five years imprisonment, she has received only two postcards and not a single letter.

Berdichevsky had never been a member of the Communist Party, but had belonged to the Bund before the Revolution. He was an old emigrant who had gone abroad before the war, but who in 1920 gave up lucrative employment in the U.S.A. in order to work for the Soviet Government. From 1920, when he joined Arcos in London, until his arrest, he had held responsible positions as a specialist in finance and commerce under the Commissariat for Foreign Trade. He is well known to one of our number, C.M. Lloyd, Foreign Editor of the "New Statesman and Nation" and lecturer at the London

School of Economics, who visited him and Freda Utley in Moscow several times and considered Berdichevsky the pattern of a loyal and devoted civil servant. He was completely aloof from faction or any kind of sedition or intrigue, wholly interested in his work for the Soviet State and a staunch supporter of its established government.

Freda Utley was obliged to leave the U.S.S.R. in July 1936, her husband was still under examination, on account of the publication in England of her last book, "Japan's Feet of Clay". She has been compelled to remain here to earn a living for herself and her small son. Although all this long time she has not written or said anything which could be objected to by the Soviet Government, she has not been able to avoid letting her friends know in confidence of her husband's imprisonment. It was not possible for her to start living and working in England again after an absence of seven years, without explaining why she was no longer living in Moscow with her husband. Her friends have naturally been disquieted by these events, especially since Freda Utley is well known in this country as a Left writer and speaker. It would be very regrettable if through personal and, we are convinced, unmerited misfortune, her great influence in the struggle against Fascism, especially in the Far East, were to be in any way impaired.

Freda Utley is the daughter of an old socialist, W.H.

Utley, who was a pioneer in the movement in the eighties of last century. He spoke several times from the same platform as Engels, was arrested as one of the speakers in the great dock strike of that period, and in general played a prominent part as a socialist propagandist. Freda Utley was brought up as a keen socialist and was a member of the I.L.P. from the time when she went to the University until she joined the Communist Party in 1928, after a visit to the U.S.S.R. as Vice-President of the University Labour Federation. She was for several years prior to her departure from England Chairman of the London University Labour Party, and as such, as well as through her writings, was well known to many of the most prominent Left Wing intellectuals in this country..

Her recent book, "Japan's Feet of Clay", has had a sensational success both in this country and in the U.S.A., and has already considerably influenced British opinion on the Far Eastern situation. The reviews which have appeared, and from which we append a few extracts, give proof of this. The only objection taken to the book by reviewers who have praised it highly is that it is "stamped by a tone of definite hostility to Japan and friendliness to Soviet Russia". The book has already been translated into Chinese, Polish and Swedish (also Freude Dec. 1937) and other translations are being arranged. Several Chinese papers have

said that the book will hearten China to resist Japan by allaying her exaggerated fears of that country, and large parts of it have been reproduced in serial form in Chinese newspapers.

Miss Utley's current writings on the Far Eastern situation should do much to prevent the threatened revival of some kind of Anglo-Japanese alliance.

All the undersigned are close friends of Freda Utley's and they find it hard to see anyone whose writings are so valuable in the present international situation, and so well known, suffering from the result of what we cannot but feel certain is a miscarriage of justice. Quite apart from our personal sympathy for Freda Utley, we should be much relieved in our minds if this affair, which if known, would be bound to create misgivings even amongst those most friendly to the U.S.S.R., were cleared up.

We are confident that if the matter is brought to the attention of the highest authorities, Berdichevsky will be set at liberty and re-united with his family.

Signed by : HAROLD J. LASKI.
KINGSLEY MARTIN.
C.M. LLOYD.
BERTRAND RUSSELL.

Separate appeals signed by :
SIDNEY & BEATRICE WEBB.
BERNARD SHAW.