

# The Labour Party Conference

## LABOUR REVIEW

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Gerry Healy

## Scarborough 1960

THE Scarborough 1960 conference of the Labour Party promises to be the most important in the party's history. The problems of British Social-Democracy which have been accumulating since the end of the war are condensed into two major items of debate: defence and nationalization. No matter what the conference managers may arrange, they cannot overcome the conflict on these issues. The Right-wing leaders of the Labour Party are tied hand and foot to Conservative foreign policy. Since the speech of Herbert Morrison at the 1948 conference, also in Scarborough, they have been running away from nationalization. Now the time has come when the block vote of the big unions joins with the majority vote of the constituency parties in rejecting Tory foreign policy by renouncing the manufacture of the H-bomb and the use of nuclear weapons. Hugh Gaitskell stands defeated in his attempt to remove Clause Four which for him was a desperate bid to rid Labour's programme of nationalization.

There is deep anxiety in Conservative Party circles and Fleet Street generally over the future of the Labour Party. The policy of British imperialism for the past 50 years at least has been based upon the skilful use of the Fabian-educated Right-wing Labour leaders. Class collaboration has performed the role of a built-in stabilizer for the ruling class. The tradition of the House of Commons, which Lord Morrison of Lambeth glorifies in his autobiography, has in reality been the tradition of class collaboration. So long as the British capitalists could maintain this relationship, then there were a thousand different ways whereby issues affecting the ranks inside the trade unions and the Labour Party could be conveniently pushed aside or forgotten. Anxiety in ruling-class circles arises not because of their fear of Mr. Cousins and other trade-union personalities who are opposing the bomb, but because they feel that the consolidation of their traditional relations with the bureaucracy of the Labour Party is something that cannot be decided by just patching up differences that have

arisen with individual Labour and trade union leaders.

The background of the crisis in the Labour Party and the trade unions can only be understood from an examination of the class forces in Britain.

In 1956 the employers began an offensive on the industrial front. With the recession in the autumn of 1958, there were indications that they were prepared to press home their advantage in a labour market where unemployment was growing. The stubborn resistance of the working class, particularly in the motor car and building industries, however, acted as a sharp warning against the dangers of the employers overplaying their hand. Early in 1959 the Tories realized that if this situation was to continue it might seriously jeopardize the possibility of their remaining in office after the general election. Credit facilities were relaxed and unemployment slowly but steadily declined. This represented a retreat on the part of the Tories. Nor did the retreat come to a halt when they won the general election. Early this year they were forced to retreat before the threat of national strike action by the railwaymen. The 42-hour week was conceded to the engineers and a small increase in wages was granted to building workers. Other sections of the working class, such as the dockers, pressed demands for more wages with similar results. In the motor industry, some specialized groups of workers have succeeded in obtaining substantial increases because they were able to take advantage of the overseas competitive markets.

With the retreat of the employers and the Tory government, the working class have gone over to offensive action. The highpoint of this is the seamen's persistent demand for a 44-hour week and £4 a month increase. The Tories won the general election, but paid a price. They were forced to make a partial retreat in their offensive against the working class.

All this has added greatly to the crisis of the Right-wing bureaucracy in the Labour movement which is indirectly forced to reflect the class struggle. Gaitskell and his allies, with few exceptions, are new men in the leadership of the Labour Party. They

have taken office under entirely different conditions from their predecessors Morrison, Attlee, Dalton, Bevin, etc. The general strike of 1926 and the slump of 1931 had inflicted a major defeat upon the working class. Under such conditions the bureaucracy in the Labour Party was consolidated and predominated over all other tendencies for almost two decades. The class struggle has now turned decisively in favour of the working class at a most dangerous time for the leaders of the Labour Party. New men with little or no experience, apart from university debating circles and government departments, have come to the fore in the Labour Party. They have scanty knowledge of what is involved in this turbulent political situation. The clumsiness of Gaitskell represents the confusion of the bureaucracy at a time when the working class are pressing home their offensive.

The leadership of Gaitskell could only be stabilized if the ruling class was strong enough to inflict a shattering and definitive defeat upon the working class. Since they are unable at this stage to embark upon such a venture, the crisis for the Right wing must get worse.

The possibility of a split in the British Labour Party is posed under conditions which are distinctly unfavourable for the Right wing. They have to decide what is to be done at a time when the Labour movement is adopting more Left-wing and socialist policies. The Right wing are in effect isolated. Their use as a weapon of class collaboration for the Tories has dwindled considerably. Small wonder there is a mood of despondency in their ranks.

Moreover, important sections of the Tory Party are now coming to the conclusion that Mr. Gaitskell is no longer able to lead the Labour Party. An editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* of September 8, commenting on the anti-H-bomb vote at the Trades Union Congress remarked:

'The real meaning of yesterday's vote is thus plain. If Mr. Gaitskell can survive as leader of the Labour Party as at present constituted it can only be by a species of chicanery. Even if it works this year, there can be no assurance that the trick can be repeated next year and the year after. This being so, the party would be better dead; and the quicker it can get through its agony the sooner some more reasonably constituted successor can be set on its feet.'

What the *Daily Telegraph* is really saying is that Mr. Gaitskell should go ahead and split the party so that a 'more reasonably constituted successor (a Right-wing Labour splinter party?) can emerge.' Whilst it is true that this may not represent the opinion of the majority of the ruling class, nevertheless it shows the direction in which the wind is blowing. Worse still, the decision of the Trades Union Congress calling for more nationalization, although vague, is nevertheless an indication that on

domestic policy the plight of the Right wing is almost as bad as it is on foreign affairs. It will be very difficult even for Mr. Carron of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and Mr. Lowthian of the building workers' union to 'look both ways', since their unions are heavily committed to the nationalization of the industries with which they deal. The chickens have come home to roost. Forgotten now are the ideas outlined in the share-buying proposals of the Brighton conference document 'Industry and Society'. One can hardly expect Mr. Douglas Jay and his Right-wing colleagues to feel happy over this turn of events. Yet what can they do? They will have to decide their future—and very soon.

These new developments are a source of encouragement for the Left wing of the Labour Party and the trade unions. After the long years of waiting since 1945, the stage is now being set for a new advance by Labour. The question that is posed is: shall we be able to take advantage of these events by seeing that a socialist Britain becomes a reality in our time? The election of a majority Labour government in 1945 raised the hopes of millions of people that they would live to see a socialist Britain. We know only too well what happened. The Right-wing Attlee leadership, once elected to Parliament, retreated until they completely lost power to the Tories.

Mr. Bevan, and other Lefts like him, made Right-wing speeches and Left-wing speeches during these difficult years. Looking both ways is not the prerogative of Mr. Carron. There are many Lefts in the Labour Party who still look both ways. Indeed, this is one of the great difficulties which faces Mr. Cousins. The entire Labour movement records its gratitude for the determined struggle which he has put up against the H-bomb and the watering down of Clause Four. If Arthur Deakin had lived to remain the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, this could never have taken place. The Tories and the Right wing lost a powerful ally on the day that Deakin died. Whatever may be the limitations of Frank Cousins (and we are sure that he himself doesn't claim to be the greatest socialist of all time), it is safe to say that he has made a major contribution in changing the policy of the TGWU. The difficulty which Mr. Cousins has not yet overcome is that he is also affected by this 'looking-both-ways' technique. At the TUC he found himself voting with the most extreme Right wing on a resolution to curb the powers of shop stewards. His own union is still staffed by many Deakinite stalwarts. These men are constantly operating policies which dampen down the militancy of the rank and file of the union. Sooner or later Mr. Cousins will have to decide what he is going to do in relation to this situation. He cannot

continue indefinitely playing a centre role. The experiences of the late Aneurin Bevan should be most instructive for him in this respect.

Bevan compromised with the Right wing from 1945-51. Then he was forced to break from the Cabinet under the most confused circumstances. The high point of his opposition was reached at the Morecambe conference of 1952. Mr. Bevan still continued to 'look both ways' until Attlee resigned the leadership in 1955. Then he moved over to the Gaitskell camp and openly joined it at Brighton in 1957. What did he accomplish? Absolutely nothing. Such is the role of centrist politicians and trade union leaders in this present period. Instead of wasting time sneering over the two faces of Mr. Carron, it would be more profitable for the Left wing of the movement to realize the blind alley into which centrist politics in general leads. There is a warning here for the leaders of Victory for Socialism.

The TUC decisions against the H-bomb and for more nationalization are bound to encourage a tendency towards more political discussion. This was true of the TUC. The speeches were in general better than in previous years. The differences between those who wanted socialism and those who didn't were much clearer. Here is a foretaste of what will be experienced in the movement as a whole in the months ahead. The despondency in the ranks of Labour, which reached its high point after the general election of October, 1959, was in no small measure due to the betrayal of the Left at Brighton in 1957 by Aneurin Bevan. A frustrated Labour rank and file cannot produce many enthusiastic fighters for socialism. Scarborough, 1960, promises to be the venue of one of the most enthusiastic conferences since the party was founded. The rank and file feel they are getting somewhere at last. The fights against the H-bomb and for more nationalization are class questions. Great possibilities open up for the development of a Marxist programme and policies. The important thing to realize about the next stage of the struggle against the Right wing is that the rank and file of the Labour and trade union movement must be encouraged to exercise their tremendous strength in all future conflicts in the struggle between capital and labour. That is what is so dangerous about the problem which Mr. Cousins faces in relation to his own union.

The witch-hunt against shop stewards was initiated by the ruling class and its Fleet Street propaganda machine. The TUC enquiry did not arise because of demands from the factories but from demands from the employers. But these shop stewards, maligned by the employers, are the men who are in the forefront of the campaign for more nationalization and against the H-bomb. It is their militancy which must be encouraged. This does not

mean, however, that the rank and file should be encouraged to embark on adventures. It does mean that the political level of understanding of the ranks will only be heightened as a result of firm leadership in the fight against the Right wing and the employers. Mr. Cousins cannot continue to compromise with the Right-wing trade union bureaucracy against shop stewards and at the same time call for a struggle for nationalization and against the H-bomb. He, too, will have to make his decision before long.

The issues confronting the Left wing of the Labour Party and the trade unions cannot be decided by new illusions in this or that personality. This was the source of the great confusion which arose from Bevan's desertion to Gaitskell in 1957. Active Labour Party members and trade unionists must begin to think for themselves along the lines of the class struggle now taking place against the employers and the Tory government.

The Right wing have operated a strict policy of bans and proscriptions. Some of those responsible for the anti-H-bomb resolution at the 1957 conference have been expelled in the 1959 proscription of the Socialist Labour League. The great difficulty before the rank and file is that they have not been drawn actively into policy-making. They are asked to endorse this or that official handout from the top, but the Right-wing leaders are not concerned about any opinions that the ranks might hold. When Marxists come forward with policies which have now been proved to be completely correct, they are witch-hunted out of the party. At the time when the discussion is about to begin it is bludgeoned to an end by the witch-hunters. The fight to end bans and proscriptions is not a mere organizational question. The whole future of the Labour Party and the trade unions requires this step to be taken if the rank and file are to be involved in policy decisions which give them an opportunity to govern the party. Even if the Scarborough conference decides against the bomb and for more nationalization, such a decision will come to nothing if it is referred for action to the policy committees of the party. Since these committees are influenced more by the pressure from the Tory Party and the press rather than their own rank and file, the decisions of Scarborough, important as they may well be, will amount to nothing.

The 1960 annual conference of the Labour Party must mark the beginning of a great change inside the Labour Party. The acid test for such a change would be the readmission of Marxists who have been expelled from the Labour Party into membership and the lifting of all bans and proscriptions. In the struggle to accomplish this, great steps forward in the struggle for a socialist Britain are possible.

# 1921 and All That

Brian Pearce

'The storming of Kronstadt was indeed symbolic. Kronstadt . . . was about to pass into the hands of French and British imperialism. Two or three days more and the Baltic Sea would have been ice-free and the warships of the foreign imperialists could have entered the ports of Kronstadt and Petrograd. Had we then been compelled to surrender Petrograd, it would have opened the road to Moscow, for there are virtually no defensive points between Petrograd and Moscow. Such was the situation. To whom did we turn? Kronstadt is surrounded by sea on all sides, and the sea was blanketed with ice and snow. Nakedly exposed, one had to move over ice and snow against the fortress amply equipped with artillery and machine-guns. We turned to our youth, to those workers and peasants who were receiving military education in our military schools. And to our call they staunchly answered "Present!" And they marched in the open and without any cover against the artillery and machine-guns of Kronstadt. And, as before, beyond Petrograd, so now on the Baltic ice there were many corpses to be seen of young Russian workers and peasants. They fought for the revolution, they fought so that the present Congress might meet.

—L. D. Trotsky, speech at the Second Congress of the Young Communist International, July 14, 1921.

Every so often—approximately once in a decade—groups in the Marxist movement 'discover' that Soviet Russia is a capitalist country and not a workers' state, however much degenerated. This 'discovery' coincides with some crisis which renders urgent and practical the question of defending Soviet Russia against threatened attack by imperialist forces. So it was at the end of the 1920s, when a clash occurred on the Manchurian frontier between the Red Army and a Chinese warlord backed by America and Britain, in connection with the affairs of the Chinese Eastern Railway; and Trotsky had to write his article on 'The Defence of the USSR and the Opposition', against the Leninbund group in Germany who broke away from the Left Opposition over the line to be followed in this critical situation. So it was again at the end of the 1930s when, in America, Burnham and Shachtman broke with Trotsky at the time of the Red Army's move into the Baltic States, Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine, and against Finland. So it was once

more in 1950 with the showdown imposed by the Korean war and the resultant emergence of the *Socialist Review* group here and similar groups in other countries. And so it is now, when the sharpening of tension between the USSR and the capitalist world in connection with the failure of the Summit conference has been swiftly followed by the departure of certain members from the Socialist Labour League, carrying the familiar banner.

Reference is made by those who have broken with us to events so far back as the year 1921 which, they say, show that already at that time the capitalist character of the Soviet state revealed itself, and Trotsky, being either unable or unwilling to face this fact, began providing that 'Left cover for Stalinism' which he and his followers have—God save us—continued to provide from that day to this. Specifically, the questions are posed: 'Why did he help to suppress the Kronstadt mutiny?' and 'Why did he help to defeat the Workers' Opposition?' Had Trotsky supported Kronstadt and the Workers' Opposition, we are to understand, the whole of subsequent history might well have been very different and very much better.

Now, what strikes anyone who knows just a little about Russia in 1921, on hearing these questions, is that Trotsky could hardly have been with Kronstadt and with the Workers' Opposition, since these represented mutually antagonistic programmes. At the time, only a severely muddled person like Sylvia Pankhurst could perform this feat—and she had the excuse of knowing a lot less about what was involved than we know today. (Incidentally, a perusal of the file of Sylvia's paper *The Workers' Dreadnought*, between 1921 and its miserable end in 1924, is to be recommended as an awful warning to the ultra-Lefts of 1960.) One suspects that the bringing-up today of Kronstadt and the Workers' Opposition does not arise from any even superficial study of the actual events.

What was the setting in which the garrison of Kronstadt, the fortress-island which guards the seaward approach to Leningrad (then called Petrograd), mutinied against the Soviet power, and in which an opposition faction claiming to represent the interests of the Soviet working class, against

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the line of Lenin and Trotsky, appeared within the Russian Communist Party?

Three years of intervention and civil war had ruined both agriculture and industry in Russia. While the towns were receiving only one-third of their pre-war food supplies, the countryside was receiving no more than a fifth of its pre-war supply of manufactured goods. During the fighting, the one industry that had been kept up to the mark was the munitions industry, which provides no consumer goods or agricultural implements. Apart from the devastation inflicted by advancing and retreating armies, the effect of the agrarian revolution had inevitably been to reduce the supply of raw material for industry: break-up of the big estates meant less production of flax, oil-seed plants, and other technical crops, the new peasant smallholders concentrating on subsistence farming. So long as the White armies were actually in the field, with their visible threat to bring back the landlords, the peasants had submitted passively enough to State requisitioning of all their surplus, as the only means to feed the Red Army and the towns. But with the departure of Wrangel's beaten horde from the Crimea at the end of 1920 the peasants began to question why they should continue to hand over their corn 'for nothing' to the procurement squads of 'the lazy townfolk'—and all the more sharply because the 1920 harvest was a failure.

The very success of the Red Army in driving out the landlords' men thus created a situation of extreme difficulty in relations between the Soviet Government and the peasantry. And the political method formerly employed, of stirring up the poor peasants against the better-off ones in order to find a reliable ally in the countryside, had similarly become unusable. Christ said the poor are always with us, but the policy of dividing up the landlords' land sponsored by the Soviet Government had for the time being eliminated the poor peasant—a countryside overwhelmingly occupied by middle peasants now faced the city, and in a more than sceptical spirit. Peasants were often heard to say that they were 'for the Bolsheviks, but against the Communists'; meaning that they, of course, approved of the decree surrendering the use of the *land* to their disposition, issued when the ruling party was still called the Bolshevik Party, but disapproved of the requisitioning of their *produce* which was characteristic of the Communist Party now in power (the change in the party's official name had been made in 1918).

The towns and the urban working class certainly presented the peasants with no very impressive picture at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921. The small industrial proletariat which had made the October Revolution had been decimated and dis-

persed through its efforts in the civil war period— heavy casualties at the fronts, on the one hand, and on the other, drawing-off of the most advanced and devoted elements to take on responsible tasks in the army and the administration. The Russian working class of 1921 were only to a very limited extent the same people, or even the same sort of people, who had 'shaken the world' in 1917. The survivors were exhausted and considerably demoralized. Difficulty in getting enough to eat produced the rate of 40 per cent. absenteeism in the factories and the notorious vogue of the 'cigarette lighters'—generic name for the little knick-knacks made in the factory's time and from the factory's materials with which workers tried, on illegal visits to the countryside, to barter with the peasants for extra food. Numerous workers took up petty speculation and fiddling as a full-time occupation.

In the Ukraine a substantial partisan army of peasants, gathered around the Anarchist adventurer Nestor Makhno, which had co-operated with the Red Army against Wrangel, was now in revolt against the Soviet power. When Makhno occupied an industrial area the miners, metal-workers and railwaymen found themselves reduced to starvation, for it was against his principles to force the peasants to feed the townsmen. (Makhno's general attitude to the workers is exemplified in the story told of his reply to some railwaymen who asked him for their wages: he advised them to fix fares and sell tickets themselves and share out the proceeds; a singularly cynical proposal when the bulk of the traffic was military!) Makhno did not withdraw across the Dniester into Rumania until August, 1921. And in Tambov province, which had been a byword for 'agrarian disorders' in late Tsarist times, the opening of 1921 saw a peasant revolt, led by one Antonov, directed against the Soviet power.

So far back as February, 1920, Trotsky, who, as political head of the armed forces, had perhaps better opportunities to know the mood of the peasantry than any other Soviet leader, had proposed to the Party's Central Committee that the policy of requisitioning be abandoned. To continue it would be politically dangerous, he foresaw, and it would, in face of peasant resistance, yield less and less in terms of actual supplies for the towns. In its place a limited tax in kind should be introduced, which would relieve the pressure on the peasant and give him an incentive to increase production. Whatever the obvious difficulties, this was the only possible method of getting *anything* out of the peasantry in the long run. But Trot-

<sup>1</sup> For a revealing account of Makhno and his regime, by a sympathiser and admirer, see Max Nomad, *Apostles of Revolution* (1939).

sky's proposal had been rejected at that time. A year later, however, in February, 1921, the Political Bureau began considering the idea in a new spirit. Lenin submitted to the Central Committee on February 24 a resolution in favour of going over to the tax in kind, and an article in *Pravda* discussed it on February 26—dates which are important in relation to the common idea that 'Kronstadt forced the New Economic Policy'.<sup>2</sup>

### THE INTERNATIONAL SETTING

Another date of importance is February 11, the date of a telegram from Helsinki which appeared in the Paris newspaper *Le Matin* of February 13, forecasting that there would shortly be a mutiny by the sailors stationed at Kronstadt.<sup>3</sup> It must be realised that this was a period when an extremely delicate internal situation in Soviet Russia coincided with an extremely delicate external situation. The French imperialists had not given up hope of returning Wrangel's army to Russian soil, to renew the civil war. The remnants of that army were being reorganized in camps near Constantinople, and wireless signals exchanged between the French fleet operating in the Black Sea and the Menshevik Government of Georgia, intercepted by the Soviet forces, suggested that Wrangel's men might soon be landed in Georgia in order to attack Soviet Russia from there. This had stimulated the Red Army command to move troops into Georgia in support of a revolt by Georgian Communists, and the situation in the Caucasus was still far from settled. Peace had still to be signed with the Poles and the Turks. British and Indian troops stationed on the Caspian coast of Persia, under the command of General Ironside, of Archangel notoriety, might attempt a landing at Baku, repeating 'Stalky' Dunsterville's adventure of 1918. True, the British Government of Lloyd George was in the process of signing a trade agreement with Soviet Russia, but it was known that military and other elements enjoying the support of the Right-wing Tories were keen to put a spoke in *that* wheel. This was the moment when the scandal of the forged copies of *Pravda* broke—the smuggling into Petrograd via Helsinki of an alleged issue of the Russian Communist Party's paper containing provocative news-

<sup>2</sup> Trotsky's letter of February, 1920, advocating the tax in kind is reproduced in his book *The New Course*. For the whole story of the genesis of N.E.P., see E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Volume II, pages 272 and 280-281.

<sup>3</sup> Mentioned in the Soviet Government's communiqué of March 2, 1921: in Trotsky, *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsia*, Volume III, Part 1.

items; a stunt by the British secret service which was exposed when the *Daily Herald* obtained and published a photograph of one copy of the false *Pravda* from which the British printer's imprint had not been guillotined!

On March 2, 1921, the sailors of Kronstadt arrested the local representatives of the Soviet power and declared themselves to be in revolt against it. They put forward, in an initial statement of aims, and subsequently in the daily newspaper which they published during the course of their mutiny, a comprehensive political programme. Central in this was the demand that the peasant be allowed to do what he liked with 'his' land and the produce thereof. The fact that some (very little) of the land taken from the landlords had not been divided up but had been turned into State farms was treated as a grievance. The Soviet power was referred to as 'the new lord of the manor'. The hegemony of the Communist Party must be ended; the 'political departments' in the armed forces and all public and social institutions must be abolished, 'because no party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas'. Fresh elections must be held throughout the Soviet hierarchy, with secret ballot and complete freedom for all trends. Though they do not appear to have used the actual phrase themselves, the slogan: 'Soviets, but without Communists!' which was invented for them by Milyukov, the exiled leader of the Constitutional-Democratic (Cadet) Party, expressed very well one of the mutineers' main ideas.

Who were the Kronstadt mutineers? We have the advantage of possessing now the impressions, in book form, of Alfred Rosmer, respected veteran of the revolutionary socialist movement in France (*Moscou sous Lénine*, 1953), who was in Russia in those days. Like Trotsky and all other honest observers, he stresses the point that 'the Kronstadt of 1921 was no longer the Kronstadt of 1917'. In the October Revolution the Kronstadt sailors had been shock-troops of Bolshevism. *Those* sailors, insofar as they were still alive, were now dispersed over Russia, in positions of command. Kronstadt was full of peasant lads, many of them conscripted in the Ukraine, Makhno's region, and few of these had even been to sea, owing to the British blockade of the Baltic. The traditions of the October Revolution meant little to them, but they were acutely responsive to peasant discontents.

Rosmer recalls that it was not until March 7 that military operations against Kronstadt were begun, after attempts at conciliation had failed. All the enemies of the Soviet power, from monarchists to anarchists, had hastened to acclaim the mutineers and urge them on to 'the last, decisive fight'. Chernov, leader of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, warned the sailors: 'Don't let yourselves be deceived

by getting involved in parleying with the Communists, who only want to gain time.' This was the same Chernov, Rosmer reminds us, whom Trotsky had rescued from a lynching by the Kronstadt sailors in July, 1917. Anarchist agitators, who were active among the sailors, worked upon them to inflame their feelings and prevent any peaceful settlement: the atmosphere they created is epitomized in the nickname they fastened on Trotsky in the mutineers' newspaper which they largely wrote—'Malyuta Skuratov', the name of the leader of Ivan the Terrible's bodyguard, a figure with the same characteristics in Russian folk-memory as those of our own Judge Jeffreys.

Once it was clear that the Kronstadt men would submit only to force, it was essential to apply that force without delay. Soon the ice in the Gulf of Finland would crack up; Kronstadt would then be isolated from the mainland—and accessible to the navies of Britain and France. There must be an attack across the ice. And who was to make this attack? The ordinary Red Army soldiers, mostly peasants and not very advanced politically, could not be used for this task. So it was done by the cadets of the Petrograd military schools and the special troops of the Cheka, reinforced by 300 of the delegates to the Tenth Party Congress, then meeting in Moscow. These were the heroes who marched across the ice with no cover but the white sheets they wrapped round themselves for camouflage, sheets which served as shrouds for the many who fell through the holes opened at their feet by the gunfire from the fortress. These were the Communists who saved the Soviet Republic in its hour of 'mortal danger'.<sup>4</sup>

The operation against Kronstadt was all the harder to carry out for the sadness and regret that was mingled with the determination of the attackers to conquer.<sup>5</sup> No pretence was made that the Kronstadt mutineers were 'White Guards'. Lenin spoke of the revolt while it was still in progress as 'an outburst of the petty-bourgeois, anarchist element', and described the participants as people 'who seem to be only a little to the Right of the Bolsheviks and perhaps even to the "Left" of the Bolsheviks'.<sup>6</sup> In his pamphlet 'On the Food Tax', he showed how the mutineers were mainly dupes rather than agents of Milyukov and Co., whose far-sighted attitude could be expressed like this: 'Let us support anybody, even the Anarchists, let us support any kind of Soviet power, *if only* the Bolsheviks are over-

thrown. . . . The rest "we", the Milyukovs, "we", the capitalists and landlords, will do "ourselves". As for the Anarchists . . . we will chase them away with a few smacks. . . . Provided the power is shifted from the Bolsheviks, no matter whether it goes slightly to the Right or slightly to the Left, the rest will adjust itself. In this Milyukov is perfectly right. . . .'<sup>7</sup>

### THE WORKERS' OPPOSITION

Where in all this were the Workers' Opposition? Their delegates to the Party Congress were in the front ranks of the attack across the ice. Their spokesman Lutovinov, who was in Berlin when the mutiny occurred, made a point of issuing a statement condemning it. The Workers' Oppositionists would have had a *very* quizzical smile for those who today claim that a good Communist in 1921 should have been both for them *and* for the Kronstadters.

To understand the real relationship it may be best to begin by looking at what happened in Petrograd when the Kronstadt mutiny began. All through February there had been a wave of strikes in the Petrograd factories and a very ugly situation had developed. Some say that the unrest in Petrograd gave the signal for the Kronstadt mutiny. Be that as it may, the moment the mutiny began the troubles in Petrograd *ceased*, and that city presented no security risk during the operation. Whatever the Petrograd workers' grievances, they realized perfectly well that the Kronstadt programme was not only not a workers' programme, but that the working class would be the first victim of a victory for Kronstadt.<sup>8</sup> On that, at least, there was, and rightly, no difference of view between any group of workers and the leadership of the Communist Party!

What, then, was the Workers' Opposition and why did its agitation lead to the expulsion of some of its leaders from the Party early in 1922? Why did the antagonism between this group and the Soviet power become especially sharp *after* the adoption of the New Economic Policy in March, 1921, which appeased the peasantry and removed for the time being the danger of further Kronstadts?

The strain which the conditions of civil war imposed on the Russian workers has already been mentioned. As the Communist cream of the work-

<sup>4</sup> Trotsky, "'Trotskyism" and the P.S.O.P.', in *The New International*, October, 1939.

<sup>5</sup> This mood is reflected in the contemporary account given by a Frenchman who visited Soviet Russia in that period, Morizet, *Chez Lénine et Trotski* (1922).

<sup>6</sup> 'Report to the Tenth Party Congress', in *Selected Works*, 12-volume edition, Volume IX.

<sup>7</sup> *Selected Works*, Volume IX.

<sup>8</sup> It was the contrast between the Petrograd workers' attitude in 1921 and the Budapest workers' active participation in the Hungarian revolt of 1956 that made so patently dishonest the attempt by the Stalinists to represent the latter as 'another Kronstadt'.



ing class was skimmed off to provide cadres for the Army and the State, the truth that this class is not 'instinctively' Marxist became all too plain, and was underscored by the consequences of the extreme rawness of many of the workers. To some extent, the very characteristics of these workers which had enabled the Bolsheviks to lead them into the October insurrection held problems for the post-October period.<sup>9</sup> For many workers the revolution inevitably meant an opportunity to loaf, to repudiate all discipline, and to exploit. 'Workers' control' covered a multitude of sins. 'Another proprietor came who was equally as individualist and anti-social as the former one, and the name of the new proprietor is the control committee. In the Donets area the metal works and mines refused to supply each other with coal and iron on credit, selling the iron to the peasants without regard for the needs of the State' (*Izvestia*, April 27, 1918, quoted in M. H. Dobb, *Russian Economic Development Since The Revolution* [1928]). Lenin's pamphlet 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government', written in May, 1918,<sup>10</sup> gives expression to some of the preoccupations which were troubling him so early as the first months of the Revolution and which were to become acute in 1921-22.

'The Russian worker', wrote Lenin, 'is a bad worker compared with the advanced peoples. Nor could it be otherwise under the Tsarist regime and in view of the tenacity of the remnants of serfdom. The task that the Soviet Government must set the people in all its scope is—learn to work. The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of very great scientific achievements in the field of analysing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable

<sup>9</sup> The Russian proletariat 'was thrown into the factory cauldron, snatched directly from the plough. Hence the absence of conservative tradition, absence of caste in the proletariat itself, revolutionary freshness: hence—along with other causes—October, the first workers' government in the world. But hence also illiteracy, backwardness, absence of organizational habits, absence of system in labour, of cultural and technical education. All these minuses in our cultural economic structure we are feeling at every step'. (Trotsky, 'Reply to Pokrovsky' [1922], Appendix 1 to Volume I of *History of the Russian Revolution*.)

<sup>10</sup> In *Selected Works*, Volume VII. This little work of Lenin's deserves to be as well-known as *The State and Revolution*.

in the achievements of science and technology in this field. The possibility of building socialism is conditioned precisely upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organization of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism. We must organize in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system and systematically try it out and adapt it to our purposes. At the same time, in working to raise the productivity of labour, we must take into account the specific features of the transition period from capitalism to socialism, which, on the one hand, require that the foundations be laid of the socialist organization of competition, and on the other hand the use of compulsion, so that the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat shall not be desecrated by the practice of a jellyfish proletarian government. . . .

'It must be said that large-scale machine industry—which is precisely the material source, the productive source, the foundation of socialism—calls for absolute and strict *unity of will*, which directs the joint labours of hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of people. The technical, economic and historical necessity of this is obvious, and all those who have thought about socialism have always regarded it as one of the conditions of socialism. But how can strict unity of will be ensured? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one. Given ideal class consciousness and discipline on the part of those taking part in the common work, this subordination would rather remind one of the mild leadership of a conductor of an orchestra. It may assume the sharp forms of a dictatorship if ideal discipline and class consciousness are lacking. Be that as it may, *unquestioning subordination* to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of processes organized on the pattern of large-scale machine industry.'<sup>11</sup>

At the Ninth Party Congress, in 1920, Lenin had to fight hard to get acceptance of the principle of one-man management in industry, against people who considered, on grounds of alleged principle, that *every* decision must be taken by a committee. 'Comrades', he cried, 'such theoretical confusion cannot be tolerated. Had we permitted a tenth part of this theoretical confusion in the fundamental question of our military activities and the

<sup>11</sup> Lenin did not, of course, fail to add: 'The more resolutely we now have to stand for a ruthlessly firm government, for the dictatorship of individuals in **definite processes of work**, in definite aspects of **purely executive functions**, the more varied must be the form and methods of control from below in order to counteract every shadow of possibility of distorting the principles of Soviet Government, in order repeatedly and tirelessly to weed out bureaucracy'.

civil war, we would have been beaten, and would have deserved to be beaten.<sup>12</sup>

As soon as they realized that the Soviet Government had come to stay, or rather that to get rid of it would be a bigger task than they had originally supposed, the Mensheviks set themselves to play upon all the most backward sentiments of the workers in order to set them against the Soviet power. These former pillars of class-collaboration became keen fomenters of strikes for higher wages, shorter hours, etc., etc. They became indistinguishable from syndicalists in their practical attitude. It was only natural that when an anarcho-syndicalist trend appeared in the Communist Party during 1920, the so-called Workers' Opposition, there should emerge as its leading 'personality' the egregious Alexandra Kollontai, a Menshevik right down to 1916. (Perhaps best-known for her activity as a propagandist for 'free love', Kollontai developed after her ultra-Left phase of 1918-1922 into a reliable supporter of the powers that were, and served as Stalin's ambassadress in Norway and in Mexico.) Kollontai wrote a pamphlet on *The Workers' Opposition in Russia* and this was published in an English translation by Sylvia Pankhurst, the British 'dissident Communist', with whom she had much in common. It is one of the most revealing sources for an understanding of the ideology of the Workers' Opposition.

Kollontai and her friends objected strongly to the employment of technical experts from the old intelligentsia to develop Soviet industry. Here they echoed the resentment of the 'Military Opposition' in the Red Army to Trotsky's use of Tsarist officers.<sup>13</sup> And they argued that, even if there was a place for non-proletarian specialists in the army, there was none for such people in production. Militarism had no future, it was natural that bourgeois specialists should have a role to play in that sphere, but production was the workers' own sphere, and there they knew better on all questions than anybody else. Trotsky's notions about planning industrial progress were unacceptable because they were incompatible with a regime whereby each industry, and each enterprise within each industry, was to be run by its own workers—with 'practical self-activity of the masses' and no 'restrictions on initiative'. Lenin's conception of the trade unions as 'schools of communism', through which the workers would be *prepared* to

take into their own hands the entire management of industry was radically false—the workers were already equipped to do all that was needed. The idea that the trade unions and other mass organizations were 'transmission belts', with the Party as the 'power-house', was most pernicious, for it implied that the Party possessed some quality that the workers as a class did not possess.<sup>14</sup>

### COMMUNISM AND SYNDICALISM

All appointments in the economic sphere, at every level, the Workers' Opposition demanded, must be subject to approval by the trade unions; nay, they must have the power of 'compulsory nomination' to all such posts. And industry must be governed by a so-called 'Congress of Producers' freely elected by the rank and file. (Agriculture and the peasantry found no place in this scheme of theirs.) On this aspect of the Workers' Opposition programme Trotsky commented that they 'place the workers' right to choose their representatives above the Party, as it were, as if the Party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy'.<sup>15</sup> Lenin thus contrasted the Communist and syndicalist conceptions as brought into focus by the dispute with the Workers' Opposition:

'Communism says: The vanguard of the proletariat, the Communist Party, leads the non-Party masses of the workers, educates, prepares, teaches and trains the masses (the "school" of Communism), first the workers and then the peasants, in order that they may eventually concentrate in their hands the entire management of the whole of the national economy.

<sup>14</sup> Revived in the Workers' Opposition were the ideas of the Polish anarcho-syndicalist Waclaw Machajski, who was in Siberia with Trotsky in 1902. Machajski (of whom Trotsky writes in *Lenin, My Life and The Soviet Union and the Fourth International*) perceived in Marxian Socialism a plot for the 'exploitation of the proletariat by the intelligentsia' (or, as the incredible 'authorized English translation' of Trotsky's *Lenin* has it, 'profit-sharing of the proletariat through the intelligence'). He even accused Marx of fiddling the figures in his analyses of national income in *Capital* so as to mask the exorbitant share taken by 'mental workers'. Parallel with the Workers' Opposition in 1920-1922 there ran the 'Proletcult' (proletarian culture) movement, also with echoes of Machajski, in which the leading role was played by Bogdanov, on whose activity as an ultra-Left in 1909-1910 see the article 'Building the Bolshevik Party' in *Labour Review*, February-March, 1960. (Trotsky discusses 'Proletcult' in *Literature and Revolution*.)

<sup>15</sup> Speech at Tenth Party Congress (1921), quoted in Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions* (1950).

<sup>12</sup> In *Selected Works*, Volume VIII. See also Trotsky, *The Defence of Terrorism* (1921), especially quotation from his speech of March 28, 1918, entitled, 'Labour, Discipline and Order will Save the Socialist Soviet Republic'.

<sup>13</sup> See Trotsky's 1919 article 'Scientifically — or "Somehow"?' in *Labour Review*, July-August, 1959.

'Syndicalism transfers to the masses of non-Party workers, who are divided according to industry, the management of branches of industry (the "Chief Committees and Central Boards"), thus destroying the need for the Party, and without carrying on prolonged work either in training the masses or in *actually* concentrating in *their* hands the management of the whole of the national economy.'<sup>16</sup>

The Workers' Opposition's 'Congress of Producers' was to be a sort of conference of plenipotentiaries of the various industries and enterprises. They were not interested in the problems of socialist planning and the need arising therefrom for centralized, authoritative direction of the economy as a whole. Preobrazhensky, later the chief economist of the Left Opposition, remarked about the whole school of thought: 'The boundless ignorance of the Anarchists where the most important and most difficult problems are concerned is so great that they do not even conceive of the entire complexity of the question raised and have never interested themselves in solving it'. They were essentially in favour of a 'headless' economy.<sup>17</sup> Justifying themselves, the Workers' Opposition made great play with the idea that the state's function after the revolution was limited to withering away: to which Trotsky replied that while, under socialism, the state would of course 'have melted away entirely into a producing and consuming commune, none the less, the road to socialism lies through a period of the highest possible intensification of the principle of the state'.<sup>18</sup>

The true inwardness of the Workers' Opposition outlook showed itself most crudely in their proposals for raising the standard of living of the workers. The basic food ration, travelling facilities and a number of other amenities were to be made available to the workers gratis. There was, of course, no attempt to show how this could be done in the ruined conditions of Russian economy in 1920-1921: somehow, the workers were to enjoy plenty in the midst of poverty. And wages should be equalised. On this point Preobrazhensky, in the pamphlet already quoted, explained that the Donbas coal-miners had to be paid more than other workers 'because every pood of bread given to the miners in this period of building up the economy, when our entire progress depends on coal, gives a bigger result than five poods given to other branches of industry. . . . We are too poor to afford the luxury of equality'. Trotsky insisted that 'wages . . . must be brought into the closest possible touch with the productivity of in-

dividual labour. . . . Under socialist production, piecework, bonuses, etc., have as their task to increase the volume of the social product, and consequently to raise the general well-being. Those workers who do more for the general interest than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless and the disorganizers'.<sup>19</sup>

The method of the Workers' Opposition propagandists when discussing these matters was systematically to *mix up* the two phases of socialism defined by Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

Insofar as Workers' Opposition spokesmen interested themselves at all in the vital problems of agriculture, they had a short answer to these problems. Maximum freedom for the workers must be matched by a renewal of serfdom for the peasants. The requisitioning of surplus production against which the peasants were rebelling in 1920-1921 was not enough, one must go further in that direction. The peasants must be legally obliged to cultivate certain tracts of land and to grow certain crops thereon. The peasants must, in fact, be squeezed harder in order to provide the needs of the workers, who were the only people worthy to be considered. The Soviet power should 'free' itself of any sort of concern for the well-being of the peasantry. This anti-peasant outlook coincided with the traditional political approach of the Mensheviks. (Mr. Leonard Schapiro comments in his book *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* [1955], discussing the authorship of the inaugural resolution of the Kronstadt mutineers: 'The stress on the rights of the peasants is sufficient to dispose of any suggestion that the resolution was Menshevik-inspired'.)

For this reason, the adoption by the Tenth Party Congress of the New Economic Policy, with its replacement of requisitioning by the tax in kind (or food tax) intensified the bitterness of the Workers' Opposition. As Schapiro puts it in his recent book *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 'the followers of the Workers' Opposition regarded NEP as a betrayal of the workers in the interests of the inferior peasants'. That the path to a real, as against an illusory, improvement in the workers' conditions lay through concessions to the peasantry was too complicated an idea for them. Lenin explained: 'The political situation in the spring of 1921 was such that immediate, resolute and very

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. On the question of the rates of payment of technical and other specialists, Lenin observed in his 1919 article 'On the Party Programme' (*Selected Works*, Volume VIII): 'Of course we are now overpaying experts, but to pay them a little more for science is not only worth while, but necessary and theoretically essential'.

<sup>16</sup> 'The Party Crisis', January, 1921, in *Selected Works*, Volume VIII.

<sup>17</sup> Preobrazhensky, *Anarkhizm i Kommunizm* (1921).

<sup>18</sup> In *The Defence of Terrorism*.

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urgent measures had to be taken to improve the conditions of the peasantry and to increase its productive forces. Why the peasantry and not the workers? Because in order to improve the conditions of the workers, grain and fuel are required.<sup>20</sup> In future the workers would, however, get only *part* of their food supply through coercion (the tax in kind); the rest must be got through exchange of goods, and *that* thrust forward the whole complex problem of developing industrial production, which the Workers' Opposition in practice opposed (as well as that of increasing trade contracts with the capitalist world, which they found 'theoretically' objectionable).

## TWO CLASSES

Hence, the agitation of the Workers' Opposition during 1921-1922 challenged the very foundations of the Soviet power. Among the more important (but least often remembered) phrases in the document known as 'Lenin's Testament' (Letter to the Twelfth Party Congress), written in December, 1922, is this: 'Our Party relies on two classes, and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable if there were no agreement between those two classes'. The safeguarding of the alliance with the peasantry was vital to the continued existence of the Soviet power. Talk of the peasantry being obliged by its class position willy-nilly to follow either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie too often failed to take into account that *which* class the peasantry chose to follow could prove decisive for the revolution. In the last analysis, it was the vacillations of the middle peasantry that had determined the to-ings and fro-ings in the civil war. To those bold proletarian spirits who asked whether the peasants weren't more trouble than their alliance was worth, and, after all, hadn't the Paris Commune got on without them, Trotsky replied: 'It is quite true that the Commune was "spared" peasant support. But in return the Commune was not spared annihilation by the peasant armies of Thiers!'<sup>21</sup>

But did not the adoption of the New Economic Policy ('new exploitation of the proletariat', as the Workers' Opposition nicknamed it) imply a retreat, and the danger of capitalist restoration? It did indeed. True, 'War Communism', with its regime of requisitioning, had been forced on the Soviet

Government by the intervention and civil war and bore no relation to Lenin's original plans of early 1918; but, once in being, could it not have served as the starting-point for a development in the direction of true, non-'war' communism? In Trotsky's words, 'our War Communism could have developed, without a retreat, into complete socialism and communism on one condition, namely, that the proletariat of Europe seized power in 1920 and 1921. Had that happened, not only would hostile pressure from the outside have ceased, but we should have obtained inexhaustible resources for technical, organizational and cultural assistance'.<sup>22</sup> Lenin had warned, already in 1919, of how the future of relations with the peasantry would depend in the first instance on the success or failure of the revolution in the West: 'If we could tomorrow give 100,000 first-class tractors, supply them with petrol, supply them with mechanics . . . the middle peasant would say: "I am for the commune. . . ." But in order to do this it is first necessary to conquer the international bourgeoisie to compel it to give us these tractors. . . .'<sup>23</sup> With the failure of the post-war upsurge to break through in successful proletarian revolutions in Western Europe, the moment of truth had come and had to be faced in the spring of 1921: 'We know that only agreement with the peasantry can save the socialist revolution in Russia until the revolution in other countries takes place'.<sup>24</sup>

But did not the 'surrender' to the peasantry in 1921 lead inevitably to the triumph of the Thermidorean bureaucracy, ask some (in the same breath with their protest against the suppression of Kronstadt)? Not inevitably. All that 'inevitably' followed from the adoption of the New Economic Policy was that the Soviet power was able to *survive* in Russia, something for which the ultra-Lefts presumably do not wish to reproach Lenin or Trotsky, though one sometimes wonders. Bureaucratic tendencies had certainly begun to appear in the Soviet regime long before the adoption of NEP, and were warned against on many occasions by Lenin, Trotsky and other leading Communists. The strengthening of capitalist forces inside Russia which followed the adoption of NEP certainly brought new nourishment to these tendencies. But those working consciously within the Party for policies which would counter and overcome both bureaucracy and capitalism, on a

<sup>20</sup> 'The Food Tax' (April 21, 1921), in **Selected Works**, Volume IX. In the same volume is Lenin's report to the Third Congress of the Communist International, in which, speaking in July, 1921, he mentioned that rank-and-file workers resented the concessions made to the peasantry.

<sup>21</sup> In **The Defence of Terrorism**.

<sup>22</sup> Speech on the Fifth Anniversary of the October Revolution, October 20, 1922 (in **The First Five Years of the Communist International**, Volume II).

<sup>23</sup> 'Work in the Rural Districts', report to the Eighth Party Congress, March, 1919: in **Selected Works**, Volume VIII.

<sup>24</sup> Lenin, 'The Tax in Kind' (March 15, 1921): in **Selected Works**, Volume IX.

realistic basis, had excellent grounds to hope for success. In 1923 the bureaucracy was quite shaken up ('The New Course'), and a victorious workers' revolution in Germany would certainly have put everything in a new and more favourable setting. But that revolution failed, and its failure, fostering discouragement and apathy, gave instead a fresh fillip to the Thermidorean degeneration. Even then the process was far from rapidly completed. In 1926 the breakaway of Zinoviev and Kamenev brought new allies to Trotsky's Left Opposition and put the bureaucracy in a very awkward plight. Only the defeat of the British General Strike and of the revolution in China saved the bureaucracy's bacon.

Critics of Trotsky's conduct in 1923-1928 often seem oblivious of the real danger of capitalist restoration, through the kulaks and the 'Nepmen', allied with outside capitalist forces, which existed during that period. The practical possibilities were by no means confined to either a strengthening of bureaucracy or a victory of the Left Opposition. In his methods and tactics Trotsky *had*, as a Communist, to take this real situation into account. The danger of capitalist restoration existed right down to Stalin's 'Left Turn' in 1928-1929, with the subsequent collectivization of agriculture and the series of Five-Year Plans for industry. (Indeed, that it had been fully eliminated could not be certain until such tests as, first, the Second World War, and second, the death of Stalin, had been undergone.) And there was nothing 'inevitable' about Stalin's 'Left Turn'—those who see Trotsky's struggle within the Party in 1923-1928 as so much waste of time fail to appreciate that it was the propaganda and pressure of the 'Left Opposition' that tipped the scale at the crucial time against Bukharin and the Right-wingers whose policy *would* have opened the door to capitalist restoration.

It was the struggle led by Trotsky that ensured for Soviet Russia the line of economic development which, at whatever cost and with whatever distortions imposed by the bureaucratic parasites, preserved and strengthened this first workers' state. If the Soviet state stands there today with its great

factories and its great armed forces, that is due to Trotsky and the policy he followed, not only in the civil war period but all through the 1920s and after. That is, in fact, precisely Trotsky's historic crime in the eyes of the bourgeoisie and their hangers-on.

When Trotsky died in 1940 it was still impossible to see how long the bureaucracy would be able to continue to keep its seat on the neck of the Soviet working class, and it was easier than it is now to speculate about the USSR being a type of society where the bureaucracy could rule secure for ever. Trotsky continued to the end, however, to point to the internal backwardness and external isolation of the USSR as the two conditions on which the bureaucracy depended. 'In the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state it is not the general laws of modern society from capitalism to socialism which find expression but a special, exceptional and temporary refraction of these laws under the conditions of a backward revolutionary country in a capitalist environment'.<sup>25</sup> With the growth in the numbers, consolidation and consciousness of the Soviet working class, on the basis of their country's economic progress, and with the spread of the revolution to Eastern Europe and China we have seen the bureaucratic regime in the USSR enter into a period of acute crisis (beginning in 1948 with the intensified police terror, stepped-up jingoism, more and more Byzantine cult of Stalin, and passing after the dictator's death in 1953 into a phase in which panicky reforms alternate with equally panicky repressions, and fresh 'revisions' of Leninist doctrine alternate with cries of 'Back to Lenin!') The prerequisites for the political revolution in the USSR are being assembled through the dialectical interaction of processes going on inside the country and outside. As in 1921, decisive responsibility rests upon the working class of the imperialist countries, and above all on their political leaders, to create the world environment in which the Soviet working class can rise to its full stature.

<sup>25</sup> Trotsky, 'The USSR in War' (1939) in *In Defence of Marxism*.

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**The Winter number of Labour Review will be published mid-December. Amongst the articles will be one by W. Hunter dealing with the recent developments in the trade-union movement on the docks. J.B.S. will review volumes 1 and 2 of Theodore Draper's 'Early Years of American Communism'.**

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# What is Revolutionary Leadership?

*Cliff Slaughter*

**'An important element in the strength of a party or a class is the conception which the party or the class has of the relationship of forces in the country.'**

Leon Trotsky, 1931.

**'But it is absurd to think of a purely "objective" foresight. The person who has foresight in reality has a "programme" that he wants to see triumph, and foresight is precisely an element of this triumph.'**

Antonio Gramsci.

**'... every shortcoming in historical duty increases the necessary disorder and prepares more serious catastrophes.'**

Antonio Gramsci.

**'The decisive element in every situation is the force, permanently organized and pre-ordered over a long period, which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favourable (and it is favourable only to the extent to which such a force exists and is full of fighting ardour); therefore, the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing this force, rendering it ever more homogeneous, compact, conscious of itself.'**

Antonio Gramsci.

(In this article I have drawn heavily upon Gramsci, *The Modern Prince* and to a lesser extent on Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*.)

GRAMSCI, brilliant intellectual and founder of the Italian Communist Party, and Trotsky, towering example of revolutionary leadership in theory and in practice, had good reason to write the words cited above. Trotsky, exiled by the Stalinist bureaucracy, was urging a policy of United Front on the Communist Party of Germany as the only defence against the danger of Nazism. Gramsci, after the defeat of the Workers' Councils movement in Italy, in which he himself was so prominent, found himself in Mussolini's jail. Eventually Trotsky met his death, 20 years ago, at the hands of Stalin's agents; Gramsci's health was destroyed in prison

and he died a young man, a few days after his release in 1937.

Neither of these two men, the most original Marxist thinkers since Lenin, is regarded with favour by the official 'Communist' movement. Despite Khrushchev's admission that the trials of the 1930s were based on confessions extracted by torture, the slanders about Trotsky's plot against the USSR, his alliance with Hitler, and so on, are allowed to remain as part of the total censorship on his work that exists in the Communist Parties. In 1957 a small selection of Gramsci's writings was published by Lawrence and Wishart. However, *The Modern Prince*, longest essay in this selection, was quite heavily cut, and precious little space was devoted to Gramsci's major contribution on Workers' Councils. One appreciates the great effort made by Dr. Louis Marks, the translator, to bring even this much of Gramsci to English readers; at the same time it must be said that the cuts in *The Modern Prince* are unacknowledged, and that several of the omitted sections (dealing with Rosa Luxemburg, with 'Caesarism', etc.) would have posed awkward questions for Stalinists.

## STALINISM AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

It is characteristic that these two men should have laid great stress on the role of human consciousness, and of political leadership. Stalinism can no more entertain such an emphasis than can Social-Democracy. Reformism and opportunism are tied to the existing structure of power: a confused mixture of notions of fair play and expediency is the nearest they ever get to theory. Their political actions are based on an adjustment of the partial and temporary interests of sections of the working class to the existing economy and state power. This is why opportunists abhor theory, for theory insists on an understanding of each problem in terms of the all-round development of society, focused in our epoch on the working-class struggle

for state power. Nor are the Stalinists in any better position; in the 'Communist' movement Marxist doctrine has hardened into an ideology: that is to say, particular phrases are taken from Marx and Lenin and used to justify the particular course taken by the Soviet bureaucracy. The authority naturally accruing to the Russian Communists after the October Revolution facilitated the spread of the degeneration of the Russian to the other Parties in the Communist International. These parties were 'shaken up', their leaderships changed, their structure arbitrarily fixed (under the name of 'Bolshevisation' of course!) until they were transmission belts for the international policies of Stalin's bureaucracy, rather than revolutionary parties of the working class.\* In latter years, despite the 'exposure' of Stalin by Khrushchev, the political consequences of this relationship have even deepened, though of course they will inevitably produce a reaction inside the foreign parties, and eventually in the Soviet Party. Peaceful competition between the Soviet and the U.S. economies is now clearly stated to be the major form of the conflict between imperialism and socialism. For this to go on, peaceful relations in the rest of the world must be preserved. And so the 'Communist' parties 'take the lead in the fight for peace'.

As a part of this process, certain theoretical distortions of Marxism play an important part. Above all, Marxism is twisted into an economic determinism. The dialectic is abstracted from history and reimposed on social development as a series of fixed stages. Instead of the rich variety and conflict of human history we have the natural series of slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism through which all societies pass. The USSR's present structure is thus sanctified as an 'inevitable' successor of capitalism and any 'criticisms' of its social and political structure must be regarded as 'secondary'. An apparent touch of flexibility is given to this schematic picture by the doctrine that different countries will find their 'own' roads to Socialism, learning from the USSR but adapting to their particular national characteristics. This is of course a mechanical caricature of historical materialism. The connection between the struggles of the working class for Socialism in, say, Britain, Russia and Vietnam, is not at all in the greater or lesser degree of similarity of social structure of those countries, but in *the organic interdependence of their struggles*. Capital-

\* For the process by which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union fell under the control of Stalin's faction, representing the class pressures of the petty-bourgeoisie in Russia on the basis of the international defeats of the working class, see L. D. Trotsky, *Third International After Lenin*, pages 147-163, and *The Revolution Betrayed*, and I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*.

ism is an international phenomenon, and the working class is an international force; the USSR is the result of the first break-through of the world revolution, a result distorted by Russia's particular economic development before and after the October Revolution, and by the impact of imperialism and the fate of the working-class movement since then. Trotsky laid a firm basis for the study of the relation between the Soviet workers' state and the world working class in his writings between 1924, when 'Socialism in One Country' was first theoretically presented, and his death in 1940.

There are many Socialists who are naturally repelled by the bureaucratic distortion of Soviet society and of the Stalinist parties, as well as by the shameful record of Social-Democracy, and yet fail to escape from the distorted theory and method of Stalinism. Retaining that fundamental characteristic of Stalinism, loss of confidence in the ability of the working class of the advanced capitalist countries to conquer power, they dress up this loss of nerve with 'theoretical' ideas which have been current in the anti-Bolshevik sections of the Left since the October Revolution and even before. Elsewhere in this issue Brian Pearce takes up certain historical questions bound up with the periodical 'discovery' that the USSR is a capitalist state, a discovery which of course leads away from certain uncomfortable political duties, such as the defence of the USSR against imperialism. In this article I want to take up another argument closely bound up with these same ideas, viz., that the root of the trouble lies in the Leninist concept of leadership of the working class by a centralized party—Lenin's 'party of a new type'.

### THE ROLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN HISTORY

Although this argument takes various forms (Lenin's type of party was suited to autocratic Russia but not to democratic Britain; leadership will emerge naturally from the working class; all organizations develop bureaucracy; the success of 1917 was a 'historical accident' taken advantage of by a brilliant Bolshevik élite; Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky predicted the degeneration of the party, etc., etc.), it is always underpinned by a false conception of the role of theory and consciousness in history, a tendency towards economic determinism, a notion that the laws of social development are something 'natural', standing above men and deciding their destinies. Political events and tendencies are seen as the 'natural' and inescapable reflection of economic interest; Marx's concept of the political and ideological superstructure on the economic basis becomes a 'mere superstructure' of the economic struggle, as one of the founders of the

new 'Workers' Party' recently put it. This implies that politics is only the froth of history, whereas Marx was quite clear that it is in the sphere of politics that men become more or less conscious of the economic contradictions and fight out the issues. Precisely in politics, in the struggle for state power, is the decisive conflict fought out. Trade union and industrial struggle is a school of politics for the working class, in the older capitalist countries decades of trade union struggle were a necessary prelude to real *class conflict*; but the overthrow of political power and the institution of proletarian dictatorship is a qualitatively different question. For this, organization of a more advanced character, and therefore theory of a much wider and deeper character, is required. This means a political party which subordinates all partial struggles to the construction of a leadership firmly welded to the working class and completely devoted to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Such a task requires the ability to learn from all past class struggles in society, particularly the failures and successes of the working-class movement, and an understanding of this history in relation to the total existing structure of society, not only in relation to the daily experience of the working class. The consciousness and organization required to achieve the greatest social overturn in history, these are the basic reasons for what has come to be known as democratic centralism, the bogey of so many 'Left-wingers'.

The revolutionary party must incorporate as far as possible the understanding of capitalist society derived from all past theoretical advances and their testing-out by the working-class movement in history. In this tradition and theory there resides a more scientific truth than the working class can derive from its experience of exploitation and day-to-day struggle. Rather than humbly bowing before the experience of the class at 'the point of production', rather than assuming that the workers' own experience will give rise to revolutionary consciousness, Marxists must on the contrary subordinate their political and theoretical work to the revolutionary party. This is the meaning of revolutionary discipline: that the consciousness represented by the Marxist party constitutes a higher consciousness of the historical tasks of the working class than does the immediate consciousness of the class itself. Only by accepting the discipline of the party, then, does the individual Marxist achieve the prospect of playing an independent historical role. This has nothing in common with the bourgeois notion of 'free' individuals imposing their reason upon the world. Rather, an objective analysis of capitalist production demonstrates that the working class is its gravedigger; the working class is consequently the only independent and decisive force in the

modern epoch. But classes and social movements have to be welded together as *forces* by consciously grasping their situation and organizing to overthrow the classes which stand in their way. The relation between party and class is an aspect of this process; it is not enough for the workers to constitute a class 'objectively', by reason of their all being wage-labourers: from being 'a class *in* itself' the proletariat must become 'a class *for* itself'.

Now Lenin's primary concern was to find the form of organization and strategy which would express this *political independence* of the working class. It is true that in Russia his opponents, the Mensheviks, were victims of the mechanical idea that the bourgeoisie was destined to come to power after the defeat of Tsarism; they therefore disagreed with Lenin's notion of the proletariat *leading* the struggle against Tsarism, and so the political independence of the class did not arise for them until after the bourgeois revolution. However, Lenin's conviction that the working class was the leading independent force in the modern era was part of his general view of 'imperialism' as the final stage of capitalism. The fundamentals of organization required for a politically independent working class are not in anyway specific to Russian conditions. Indeed, the essence of Lenin's position against the Mensheviks should be much easier to grasp in a country which is highly mechanized, where a large proletariat confronts a bourgeoisie firmly established in power.

#### IMPERIALISM AND LENIN'S CONCEPTION OF THE PARTY

It is important to stress the connection between Lenin's characterization of our epoch and his ideas on organization. Imperialism, with its rapid expansion of capital investment, the organization of production on a very large scale, more and more domination by finance-capital, and the concentration of standing armies and repressive forces equipped with weapons based on the highest levels of technique of mass production, has given rise to social forces and ideas which restrict and hold back the working class. In the imperialist countries themselves, a considerable stratum of the working class identifies its interests with the expansion of capitalism itself. The new bureaucratic state provides a larger number of administrative jobs for the upper layers of the working class and absorbs most of the disappearing old middle class. A new social group of functionaries, officials, managers, teachers, has grown up, and on the basis of this group, together with the skilled working class, a strong opportunist tendency developed in the Labour Movement. In Britain, the early defeat of Chartism and the subse-



quent prolonged economic expansion led to the development of craft unionism at the expense of political organization. When the new general unions had come on the scene, and the need for independent political representation was recognized, it was not revolutionists who presented themselves as the leaders, but men with a very different standpoint. Fabianism started not from the conception of the working class as a revolutionary force, with the struggle for reforms as part of the building of that force, but from the idea that the state should intervene to alleviate the insecurity and poverty caused by the unrestricted operation of the capitalist market. The more extreme reformists thought that state ownership of certain industries might be necessary to achieve this. In Germany, although the Marxist phrases of the Erfurt programme continued to dominate the statements of the Social-Democratic leaders, a similar development was taking place. The SPD (German Social Democratic Party) became a church of the working class rather than a revolutionary party. When the war of 1914-18 broke out, not only did the SPD deputies vote war credits to their 'national' governments, like almost every other reformist party in Europe, but they boasted of the service they had given the nation by helping create a disciplined, organized and cultured working class. This conduct of the SPD at the outbreak of war closed a chapter in the history of Marxism. In the epoch of imperialist wars there must be parties of men steeled to resist all jingoism and patriotism, to proclaim the slogan 'Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!' The working class of each country had the duty of 'revolutionary defeatism' since the main question was one of cracking the front of imperialism.

To many 'orthodox' Marxists this turn by Lenin was a leap in the dark, adventurism, folly, typical of the 'Blanquist', 'voluntarist' tendencies for which he had been so often criticised. But Lenin's 'fantastic' slogan was deeper and nearer to the needs of the masses than all the 'realism' of the old Social-Democracy. The German Social-Democratic leaders ended up, at the height of the Revolution in 1918, failing to support the demand for the Kaiser's abdication; and they gave 'Marxist' reasons for doing it — 'For the Social Democracy, the external form of the State is unimportant!' And when pressure from below forced their hands they issued a public statement to the effect that 'in insisting upon abdication, they had been motivated solely by the thought that only abdication could preserve order and prevent the spread of anarchy'. Without a doubt, a big factor in the fright of the Social Democratic leaders was the fact that the Russian Bolsheviks were already in power, and there was no telling where the process might stop in Germany. But again a 'Marxist' rationalization was offered: Scheidemann

said afterwards, 'Political actions can, essentially, only confirm an economic development'. It was just this kind of 'Marxism' that Lenin had to defeat in the course of building a revolutionary party in Russia. His whole effort was to assert the *dominance* of the role of the proletariat in determining the course of history in the 20th century, a dominance flowing not from any 'voluntarism' but from the nature of the crisis of capitalism, the character of imperialism as the highest form of capitalist contradictions.

Kautsky and others in the old Social-Democracy fell down on just this point. They were great exponents of Marxism as an explanatory theory of past history, but Marx's conclusion about the necessity of proletarian dictatorship on the basis of modern socialized production was not fully grasped. To do this meant seeing the working class, its consciousness and its organization, as themselves decisive forces in history, not just as the *results* of history. That is the meaning of Gramsci's remarks at the head of this article. It is the direct opposite of Scheidemann's 'Political action can only confirm an economic development' and of all nonsense about politics being 'only the superstructure of the class struggle'. An interesting example of Lenin's method in these questions may be found in his writings during the period of reaction following the 1905 revolution. A certain Levitsky, somewhat in the strain of our own 'proletarian' Left-wingers, objected to the Bolshevik strategy of the working class leading the struggle for liberty against Tsarism. This he saw as a watering down of principle and advanced the slogan 'No! hegemony in the national struggle for political liberty, but a class party!' Lenin roundly condemned this sectarian nonsense, which amounted in effect to an abandonment of the political field to bourgeois leadership.\*

#### SPONTANEITY AND SECTARIANISM

In the Socialist Labour League recently, a small minority developed the idea that as the Labour Party was drifting rapidly to the Right, the only way for the Marxists to preserve their integrity was to set up a party quite independent in every way from the Labour Party. The Labour Party had ceased to be a working-class party in any sense, and a party must be formed which concentrated on the 'real' class struggle at 'the base', 'the point of pro-

\* Incidentally, Lenin's insistence on the leading role of the working class even during the period of defeat makes nonsense of those of his critics who claim that only during the revolutionary upsurge did Lenin stress this role of the proletariat (e.g., H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*).

## Autumn Books

### *Fabians*

Anne Fremantle, **This Little Band of Prophets**. Allen & Unwin. 28s.

Just about a hundred years ago a book was published in Chicago with the title **Free Love: or Socialism Exposed**. Americans who tend to equate Socialism with marital infidelity will have their prejudices reinforced by Mrs. Fremantle's work, which was first published, I believe, as a paperback in the United States. Indications of the book's intended primary audience are provided by its scrupulous translation of references to British money into American terms (at the artificial rate, for all periods of history, of four dollars to the pound) and by the description of William Morris as 'the British Walt Whitman'.

Such a book would hardly be worth noticing in this country if it had not, for some unaccountable reason, been taken up by Messrs Allen and Unwin, the publishers of the present edition of **Fabian Essays**, who describe Mrs. Fremantle's book as a 'political history' which 'no student of the origins of Left-wing thought in this country can ignore'.

It is true that there is a need for a scholarly study of Fabianism to supplement the history of the Society written 45 years ago by its secretary, Edward Pease. A careful analysis of the Fabian contribution to political and economic theory and to the evolution of politics and government is long overdue: in some respects, clearly, it would substantially reduce the claims made by its highly articulate protagonists such as the Webbs and Bernard Shaw.

Mrs. Fremantle's book unfortunately does not satisfy this need in the slightest. Since she is interested only

in gossip, she is not concerned about accuracy, and she is prepared to rely upon any source on information, whether it be the boastful exaggerations of an early member of the society or the sweeping generalizations of a hostile observer such as Sister Patricia McCarran, the daughter of the late Senator McCarran, whose thesis on the Fabians was published by the Catholic University of America.

It must be admitted, however, that when Mrs. Fremantle is quoting from some source the errors do not come quite as thick and fast as when she is constructing her own narrative. She has no clear idea of who were Fabians and who were not—among those whom she claims for the Society in its early years being Belfort Bax, the well-known Marxist authority, and H. H. Champion, who was always a critic of the Society which he described as 'the Micawber Club'. Later on in the book, Mrs. Fremantle's description of the Left Book Club as 'a very Fabian venture' would raise a chuckle from Harry Pollitt, if not from Victor Gollancz.

One of the main problems of Fabian history is to try and determine how much the Society and its members influenced the early development of the Labour Party. Here Mrs. Fremantle can give no help whatsoever, as she does not understand the components of the Labour movement at the time. She refers to the TUC throughout as the 'Trades Union Council'; she mixes up Congress meetings with Labour Party conferences; and at one point she tells us that the trade union leaders were all Marxian Socialists until they were 'saved' by (of all things) the Taff Vale Case.

The early Fabians, and particularly

the Webbs and Graham Wallas, made important contributions not only to political theory and practice, but also to historical studies. It is an unmerited misfortune that has befallen them to have their 'story' told by Mrs. Fremantle.

HENRY PELLING.

### *Empire and Labour*

Bernard Semmel, **Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914** Allen and Unwin, 28s.

The title of this book is of obvious interest to the student of modern British political history, and it at once raises a number of interesting questions. How far was the Socialist movement diverted from its true aims at the beginning of the century, or weakened in its strength, by the existence of the Empire and by the attractions of Imperialism? Did Tory Imperialists deliberately use social reform policies as a bait to win working-class support for their policies? And what, in any case, were the main purposes of Imperialism at the time?

For many years the best narrative of British history in the period with which Mr. Semmel is concerned has been Elie Halévy's **History of the English People: Epilogue**, in two volumes, one of which is subtitled **Imperialism and the Rise of Labour**. It is a pity that Mr. Semmel does not in fact succeed in taking us very much further than Halévy. His book, which really consists of a series of essays on particular imperialist thinkers (including Robert Blatchford and the Fabians as well as Joseph Chamberlain, Milner, Mackinder, etc.), might be regarded as

an appendix to Halévy rather than a more penetrating examination of the problems that are mentioned above.

This is not to deny that the book has its merits. There is a useful study of the Tariff Reform League, in which some suggestions are made as to the particular industrial interests which provided its main support. Unfortunately, the suggestions are vague in character and it is clear that Mr. Semmel has not got down to detailed enquiry based on original sources.

In treating the Socialist writers of the period Mr. Semmel also shows serious weaknesses. He has quite an interesting account of the 'Co-efficients', the group collected at the beginning of the century by the Webbs to discuss problems of national and imperial organization; but he has not taken the trouble to find what light is thrown on their activities by the Webb papers or other unpublished documents now available. He is also inclined to push his arguments too far, maintaining without reasonable evidence given that the Fabians were more interested in imperialism than in social reform.

It is also extraordinary that Mr. Semmel should not bother to discuss such leading protagonists of Socialism as Hyndman and Champion, whose interest in imperialism was especially strong and—in Hyndman's case at least—especially important for the development of British Marxism. In fact, neither of these men get more than a mention in the book, Champion being incorrectly described as a union leader.

The study of modern British history is not pursued so intensively in this country that we should be other than grateful for the fact that American scholars take an interest in it, and much of the work recently published by Americans has been of high quality. But although Mr. Semmel's work is readable (and will probably be well reviewed in this country on that account) one is bound to feel that it could have been very much better than it is. Few sources are used other than those which were available to Halévy; and although the preface of the book is written from 'London, November, 1959', no mention of works relevant to the subject which have appeared in the last half-dozen years is to be found either in the body of the book or in the bibliography. A somewhat unexpected

discussion of Fascism in the concluding chapter makes the error of supposing that Oswald Mosley was a Cabinet Minister; and it requires more than a moment's thought to realise what organization the author is referring to under the guise of 'Union of Democratic Action'. Columbia University, where Mr. Semmel has been studying, has done better for us in the past.

HENRY PELLING.

## Sire Unknown

**Out of Apathy.** E. P. Thompson, editor. New Left Books, Stevens and Sons. 15s.

Let's face it; so far as politics are concerned, the New Left is old hat. Did you know that Unilever's advertising budget equals twice the amount spent by the government on colonial development and welfare, and that ICI's advertising costs half as much as Britain's total education programme? If you did, think at least twice before you buy this book, and then order it from the library if you must read it, for there is not much else in it that you will profitably remember. Edward Thompson has been reading Orwell, and finding him nasty; Ken Alexander has found that even workers' power can be built up 'in the here and now', inside capitalism; Stuart Hall is more disgusted than ever at the decadence of our 'materialist' culture; Ralph Samuel continues to collect interesting examples of the increasing power of big business despite appearances of its retreat, and this is useful, though like the other contributors to this book, he seems incapable of starting from the working class, its struggles and its historic role. For our epoch, this is essential for an objective view, and is the only way 'out of apathy'. Peter Worsley's subject, 'Imperial Retreat', should have turned in this direction: the whole point of the Marxist definition of imperialism is that it is capitalism's final stage, and that therefore the equipment of the working class for its overthrow is the outstanding historical task. Sentiments about solidarity and common culture of the peoples of the world are fine, but what is required is an analysis of the real links between the colonial revolution

and the socialist revolution in Britain.

Alasdair MacIntyre contributes an essay on the theme that reason can rule the world, provided man turns in the direction pointed by Hegel and Marx rather than in the direction of mechanical materialism, with its notion of a determined history standing over against man himself. The criticism of leading philosophical and sociological schools from this viewpoint is useful, and MacIntyre claims that the outstanding intellectuals in philosophy and psychology (Wittgenstein and Freud) are in effect pointing in the same direction as Marx. This seems to betray a tendency to slip into the conception that the 'leap from necessity to freedom' is essentially an effort of the individual will and reason rather than the creation of a social movement to lead the class struggle.

Before quoting the last thesis on Feuerbach in conclusion, MacIntyre says, '... Keynes with his peerage, Trotsky with an icepick in his skull. They are the twin lives between which intellectual choice in our society lies'. That is all right as far as it goes, and no doubt readers of this journal will watch with some interest the choices made by MacIntyre himself. It is perhaps a vain hope that he and the others who wrote this book are not too much under the spell of Edward Thompson's blinkered pontifications, which are well exemplified in this rhetorical question: 'Is it not possible that British intellectuals work in one of the only well-equipped and peaceable laboratories that are left?'

CLIFF SLAUGHTER.

## Pseudo-Liberal Tsar

**Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia.** By W. E. Mosse. 'Teach Yourself History' Library, English Universities' Press. 8s. 6d.

Mr. Mosse, senior lecturer in East European history at Glasgow University, has made a valuable contribution to the well-known, rather uneven 'Teach Yourself History' series. His subject is the period of reforms from above which opened in Russia as a result of the humiliating defeat of the Tsardom in the Crimean War—the so-called emanci-

pation of the serfs, a new system of law courts and local self-government and so on. This period ended with the assassination of the 'Tsar Liberator' in 1881.

As the author puts it, 'a pseudo-liberal autocrat is an unhappy hybrid unlikely to achieve political success. . . . As soon as Alexander lifted the tight lid of repression, the compressed steam began to escape with powerful effect. Conditions developed enough to frighten even a ruler less naturally insecure than Alexander. Not for nothing did the great Tocqueville observe that the most dangerous moment for a bad government usually comes when it begins to reform itself.'

Here is a little book that can be thoroughly recommended to those who wish to begin studying the background to present-day Russia.

B. P.

## Volunteers

**Engels as Military Critic.** Edited by W. H. Chaloner and W. O. Henderson. Manchester University Press. 25s.

In spite of the title, this book contains only a part of Engels' studies on the art of war. In particular it does not include the important series of articles which he contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* during the Franco-German war of 1870-1871. What it presents is a number of articles written for the *Volunteer Journal for Lancashire and Cheshire* and the *Manchester Guardian* dealing with the problems of the Volunteers (immortalized in many a public house sign) who came together to prepare against possible invasion by Napoleon III in the 1850s and 1860s; with military aspects of the American Civil War, the Schleswig-Holstein war of 1864 and the Austro-Prussian war of 1866; with the special characteristics of the French Army; and with the history of the rifle.

Engels' insistence on the dependence of the Volunteers on training and supervision by regular soldiers and his refusal to pander to the self-deceiving ambitions of the Volunteer officers anticipate Trotsky's attitude towards the building of the Red Army.

B. P.

## Russia's World Policy

**The Great Contest:** Isaac Deutscher. Oxford University Press. 10s. 6d.  
**Soviet Conduct in World Affairs:** Compiled by Alexander Dallin, Columbia University Press (London: Oxford University Press), 36s.  
**From Stalin to Khrushchev:** Goronwy J. Jones. Linden Press. 12s. 6d.

'The Great Contest' consists of the texts of lectures given by Isaac Deutscher in Canada in 1959, in which he examined internal developments in the Soviet Union with particular reference to their probable bearing on foreign policy and the prospects of co-existence between 'East' and 'West'. Deutscher emphasises something which his trans-Atlantic audiences doubtless badly needed to be shown, namely, that the reaction against Stalinism in the Soviet Union is in no sense a reaction against Marxism, and that the increasing desire among the Soviet masses, as their standard of living and (especially) of education rises, for more contact with people in the capitalist countries, does not at all mean sympathy with capitalism. 'On the whole, the last few years have enhanced and deepened what may be described as the socialist consciousness of the masses.'

Khrushchev's policy of subordinating the world Communist movement to the need he sees for maintaining the *status quo* is described, and the Middle East sector of this policy characterized as 'almost a replica of Stalin's policy in China in 1925-27'. According to Deutscher, the Soviet leaders are anxious to avoid any major upheavals in the outside world before they have reached in Russia a point in economic development where their superiority will enable them to dominate any crisis situation. He does not discuss how far this policy may be harmful to Soviet security by its effect in discouraging and setting back revolutionary forces in the capitalist world; and along with this omission goes his failure to consider to what extent the Western imperialisms are likely to sit and wait for Russia to get too strong for them, without moving to crush her in good time.

One hopes that the Soviet workers, as they increase their 'socialist consciousness', may rediscover the

foreign policy of the October Revolution, and strive to bring the Soviet Union back to Lenin's path in this field as well. In the not-so-long run, all progress inside the country depends on the fate of the world struggle against capitalism.

\* \* \*

Alexander Dallin has compiled, for the students of the Russian Institute at Columbia University, a selection of articles and lectures, originally published between 1949 and 1959, mostly by American specialists, on problems of Soviet foreign policy. The purpose uniting all the contributors is: how better to understand the Soviet Union in order to combat it. Included are the two important articles by State Department officials which appeared pseudonymously in the journal *Foreign Affairs*: 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', by 'X' (George F. Kennan), 1947, and 'Stalin on Revolution', by 'Historicus' (George A. Morgan), 1949. Professor Daniel Bell's 'Ten Theories in Search of Reality' contains some deadpan mickey-taking at the expense of the more owlish of the Kremlinologists.

\* \* \*

Already joint author of 'United Nations for the Classroom', Mr. Goronwy Jones presents in 'From Stalin to Khrushchev' a somewhat pedestrian survey of Soviet foreign relations since the 1930s. The rearmament of West Germany was a Good Thing, and Mr. Jones is shocked by the repeated failure of 'Left-wing dissidents' (Michael Foot is specified) to understand the military needs of capitalism. He wants a Permanent U.N. Guard Force set up to control 'threatened borders'.

B. P.

## Minilab

**The Ministry of Labour and National Service.** Sir Godfrey Ince. George Allen and Unwin. 25s.

The importance of this book lies not in its scholarship or depth of analysis, but in the lack of any other text covering the field. The purpose of the New Whitehall Series, in which the volume is published, is to provide 'authoritative descriptions of the present work of the major Departments of Central Government' and Sir Godfrey Ince is largely con-

tent to detail the development, the organization, and the functions of the Ministry of Labour, to which he was formerly Permanent Secretary.

Under the general headings: Manpower, Industrial Relations, International Labour and Statistics, the work of the various branches of the Ministry, at national, regional and local levels, is reviewed. The welter of detail presented in these chapters derives from the author's first-hand experience in the Department: so, presumably, does the lack of objectivity and theoretical perspective which becomes so apparent whenever the text proceeds beyond the purely factual.

Thus, on the few occasions when any aspect of Departmental policy is discussed, this is presented in total isolation from the political and economic pressures which inevitably determine such policy. The relationship between the Department and the government of the day is dealt with solely in the terms of the personality of the Minister. The more tenuous but equally important relationship between the Ministry and organized capital is completely ignored. The British Employers' Confederation is mentioned in the text only in respect of its representation on minor advisory bodies.

In the absence of any other single volume detailing the number and the nature of the industries regulated by Wages Councils, the composition of Military Hardship Tribunals, and the provisions of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act, this work is of some value. As an account of the role of the state in industrial relations the book could not, without being factually erroneous, be more misleading.

JOHN PEEL.

### *Shopfloor Opposition*

*A New Approach to Industrial Democracy*, by H. A. Clegg. Basil Blackwell. 18s. 6d.

Before the First World War, the U.S.A. Congress passed the Clayton Act. A sentence in this Act says: 'The labour of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce'.

This is the myth that employers all over the world use, in order to protect their privilege and confuse the

worker about his status in society. Mr. Clegg carries the myth a stage further. On page 21 of his book he says 'ownership of industry is irrelevant to good industrial relations.'

Marxists say that a theory must be tested in practice. The motor car workers of Coventry and elsewhere in Britain know from their everyday living experience that Mr. Clegg is wrong. Even in present-day nationalized industry, like the mines, the workers there, facing redundancy and possible decentralization, also know he is wrong.

Here in Britain, with a population of some 50 million, a small minority own and control the means of production. This minority have the power to decide in which direction industry will develop. They can plan industry. They can plan redundancy. They can plan the closing of factories, they can plan investment and the transferring of factories and industries. And the workers? Well, they can have the democratic right to oppose. Because, says Mr. Clegg, 'if the essence of democracy is opposition, then changes in industrial MANAGEMENT cannot be of prime importance to industrial democracy' (page 29).

But the truth of the matter is very different. There cannot be industrial democracy under private ownership. Mr. Clegg very competently outlines all the various developments in industrial relations that were reported to the Vienna Congress in 1958.

Britain, France, Germany, Yugoslavia, Israel and the under-developed countries are all included in this survey. The various types of industrial democracy are outlined: Joint Consultation, Collective, Bargaining, co-determination and consultation and, of course, Workers' Councils. But as presented in this book they are all based on the acceptance of the present division of society between rulers and ruled, between those who own the enterprises and those who are permitted to oppose. Even this opposition is of course only on condition that you have been able to so organize and grow in strength, that you can enforce consultation.

All the types of industrial democracy outlined in this book are really attempts by the rulers of our society to gloss over the fact that the relations of production are obsolete. The passing of every day brings further

evidence of this. Every strike that occurs is a result of these out-of-date relations. It is fashionable nowadays to attack trade unions for causing strikes, for restrictive practices, for ca'canny, boycotts, etc. The real cause is to be found in the economic and social position of the working class in relation to other classes. They are the inferiors in society, they have less freedom, they are dependent on employers for many freedoms. If there are bad social conditions then it is the workers who have them, fatigue, frustration, impositions on the freedom of workers by employers or absence of freedoms.

We should never forget why and how trade unions were formed. They arose because of the dictatorship of the employers. They not only oppose the bad aspects of our limited democracy, they stand for much more as anyone can see who cares to read the speeches in Trade Unions on the debates around Clause Four.

The right to be consulted on industrial decisions, or even to share in them is, I think, very valuable, but even more important for workers today is the right to take the decisions that will transform industry for the benefit of society as a whole. Today when the economy seems to be balanced so finely that every day brings its different crisis—fuel crisis, transport crisis, inflation crisis, export crisis, and so on, right throughout the economy—the question of who takes the decisions is already on the agenda.

Workers' Control has not received the attention that it should from theoreticians in the Labour movement. There is a great deal more thinking and writing to be done about this, before we can say that we know how to harmonize the interests of the worker as a producer, a consumer and a citizen. Outside of Yugoslavia, no other country in the world has introduced the method of workers' control of management. Mr. Clegg, on page 84 of his book, says 'there is, however, no logical connection between democracy and efficiency'. Yet in April this year, President Tito was able to say that since 1953 Yugoslavia has more than doubled its production and the average annual increase in industrial production was 12.5 per cent. This certainly suggests that direct management of production by the producers

can get better results than other methods.

But this is not the whole of workers' control. In the same speech Tito said: 'To draw every individual into management, to give him the maximum of possibilities of seeing the results of his work, to judge and value them, means to turn him into an economically and socially free and independent man who lives on his work, and who is freed from all the vestiges of hired labour relations!'

JIM ROCHE.

### *Background to Carron*

**Trade Unions and the Labour Party Since 1945**, by Martin Harrison. Allen & Unwin. 32s.

There is some promise, here and there, that the author is getting close to one of the problems of the Labour Party—the interconnection between the Labour Party leadership and the trade union bureaucracy. But alas, the author's obvious inexperience of the living movement, his opposition to Left-wing ideas and his contempt for the 'militant' constituency party delegate, for the 'communist' and 'Trotskyist', ensures that the essence of the problem escapes him just when he appears to grasp it.

Almost a third of the book is taken up with a statistical survey. But are 100 pages and 50,000 words necessary to inform us that the trade unions pay considerable amounts of money to the Labour Party? Or that a number of trade union branches do not send delegates to the constituency parties and that even in those that do, only a minority of members participate?

It is the remaining two-thirds of the book which are of interest. The formulae the National Union of General and Municipal Workers' Right wing use for example: 'Really important questions are usually debated under Executive Committee Special Motions. Clad in impeccable sentiments they seem to the casual observer to do no more than extol the unexceptional virtues of, say, "Peace". In fact they help the Executive outwit the opposition. Tucked away in these long motions are phrases like "effective and permanent inspection", "securing international agreement on atomic

weapons" (rejecting unilateralism by implication). The 'opposition'—mainly Left-centre and Stalinist in this union—is not analyzed, otherwise the reasons why these trick resolutions get carried, usually without a fight, could be given (which would be of considerable value to the student of the Labour movement).

Harrison goes on to show how in this same union 'proposals to adopt "progressive" (the author puts quotation marks round this word, which underlines his attitude) resolutions on nationalization, colonial affairs, wages and defence are invariably defeated'. (The 1959 congress decision on the H-bomb the author attributes to abstentionalists and missing, tea-drinking delegates. With such explanations, we see how simple complex phenomena are!)

Then there are the unions which have no conferences at all, like BISAKTA and the National Society of Metal Mechanics; and the selection of Labour Party and TUC delegations in most unions. And when the delegation is Left-wing, the author shows us how the executive committee (e.g., of the AEU) flouts their viewpoint. Thus the AEU's elected delegation to the TUC was prevented from voting **against** Deakin for the General Council of the TUC and its Labour Party delegation prevented from voting **against** Gaitskell and **for** Bevan as treasurer in 1955. And these bureaucratic actions Mr. Harrison justifies.

Having been a delegate to Labour Party conferences myself, I was more than amused to read how the constituency party delegates dominate the debates. 'Up to the rostrum come the constituency militants demanding red-blooded socialism, joined by speakers from the handful of extreme Left unions. . . . Poor Mr. Phillips. He handles the rota of speakers so carefully, helping the chairman so altruistically (and I thought so successfully). First the NEC, then MPs and parliamentary candidates or trade union officials and finally the constituency delegate—if the latter has put up a hell of a fight in the compositing conference and manages to be a mover, seconder (or occasionally supporting speaker)—but Mr. Harrison's slide-rule shows that too many reds are getting through.

The author's bias is expressed in his support for proscription and the 'moderates' in the Labour Party.

Dealing with the 1954 Conference he justifies the ASW delegation's breaking their own conference mandate on German rearmament; he shows his satisfaction at the endorsement of SEATO and justifies the proscription of the Socialist Outlook, saying; 'a majority of constituencies had enough acquaintance with the RCP to give the NEC their support'. (Incidentally the Revolutionary Communist Party was dissolved in 1949—to be revived in 1954 by the Labour Party NEC! And the ex-members of the RCP were in no more than 40 Labour Party constituencies out of 630, a peculiar 'majority'.)

Although the reasons for the difficulties the Gaitskell-Williamson wing have in smashing the party constitution and selling the bomb and imperialism to the ranks are not dealt with, the book does implicitly expose the growing division between Right and Left in the Labour Party and the unions and in consequence how the Right wing will defy party conferences should they carry Left-wing decisions.

The growing schism is rooted in the continuously narrowing basis for British imperialism and therefore for reformism. The logic of the situation guarantees that a large section of the Right wing must eventually break completely with the working-class movement. The direction the Left wing takes—to the Cousins-Foot section, to the Stalinists or to the Marxists—will depend in large part on the intervention in the party and the unions that the Marxists undertake in the next period.

D. FINCH.

### *Loyal Outsider*

**The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha**, by R. J. Minney. Collins. 30s.

In 1937 Hore-Belisha stepped out of his seat at the Ministry of Transport, where he had achieved much fame for initiating pedestrian crossings, to a much more serious post: that of Secretary of State for War.

Mr. Minney, Belisha's biographer, seeks to restore Belisha's name to the public. In particular, Minney sets out to show that Belisha played a great part in improving the Armed Forces from 1937 to 1940 so that Britain could be prepared for war.

Belisha's diary reveals quite clearly that in spite of all the manoeuvres of Chamberlain with Hitler, 'the Munich appeasement policy', etc., the ruling class of this country—and Belisha representing them—were consciously preparing for a second world war.

Belisha took to his new post enthusiastically. He really felt he was the man destined to prepare the country for war. He looked at the Army and saw (in his own words) the necessity for 'the elimination of the 1914-18 mentality which consists in regarding the whole role for which the army is being prepared as a repetition of its task in the last war. . . .'

Belisha set about improving the conditions of both soldiers and officers. Pay of regulars was increased, barracks were improved, food was made more edible, higher pensions were offered to long-serving soldiers and officers: all the reforms which have since been called by the Fleet Street scribes 'the democratization of the army'.

That this was all done with the sole aim of defending British imperialist possessions escapes Mr. Minney, who seeks to put Belisha in the light of a great British patriot—'defending Democracy and Good against the evils of Hitler'.

Belisha also set about the vital task of increased mechanization of the armed forces. Right from the beginning he met opposition from the Army Brass. They did not like his changes. They felt that his measures for improving conditions were 'mollycoddling the soldiers'.

Belisha got Chamberlain, the premier, to agree to the sacking of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Deverell, and the Adjutant-General, Knox, by forcing their resignations. Lord Gort, a younger man, was made the new CIGS. The Army Council—the heads of the Imperialist Army—chafed under this blatant interference by the Cabinet in their personnel and never forgot the man primarily responsible.

In April, 1939, Belisha forced through peace-time conscription. The war clouds were gathering.

This measure was only half-heartedly opposed by the Labour Party. It pleased the big capitalists very much. Lord Nuffield, the motor magnate, met Belisha on the 26th May, 1939, and Belisha records:

'We walked round the garden and Nuffield told me how tremendously impressed he was by the fine spirit of the nation in the way it had accepted conscription and he wanted to make a contribution as a recognition. In the most modest and casual way he said he was prepared to give £1,500,000. He might have been giving away a sixpence. . . .'

And so Minney takes us via Belisha's diary to the outbreak of war and to the final forcing of resignation on Belisha in the same way as in 1937 he had forced Deverell's resignation.

Ostensibly, it was over a dispute between Belisha and certain army high-ups concerning the strength of pill-box defences in France—or rather a misunderstanding about the defences.

But Belisha suffered from an enormous egotism: his belief in his own destiny made him blind to the rumblings occurring under his very nose. Even Minney, who is a great hero-worshipper of Belisha, is obliged to say: 'It is surprising that the hostile atmosphere at GHQ to which the Prime Minister referred and of which men like Westrop and others were fully aware, should not have been sensed by Hore-Belisha during either of his two visits to France, for he made no note of it in his diary'.

On January 5, 1940, Belisha resigned after being told by Chamberlain that the army leaders did not want him and that he thought Belisha's resignation was in the 'best interests of the nation'. Belisha refused an alternative post at the Board of Trade. Loyal to the capitalist class, his speech in the Commons did not reveal the real reasons for the resignation. However, the Evening Standard cartoon by Low, depicted a party of Colonel Blimps throwing swords at Belisha's picture and saying: 'Gad, Sir—our greatest victory of the war'.

H. FINCH.

### *For the Charter*

**Chartist Studies.** Edited by Asa Briggs. Macmillan. 42s. **Public Order in the Age of the Chartists.** F. C. Mather. Manchester University Press. 32s. 6d.

Asa Briggs has edited a collection of studies of various aspects of the

Chartist movement. The main part of the book is a series of articles about the development of Chartism during the 30s and 40s of the last century in different areas of the country, under differing conditions.

In Manchester, for instance, where the textile industry was organized on capitalist lines, there was a sharp division between the mill-workers and the employers. From the beginning the Chartists in Lancashire were fundamentally opposed to the Anti-Corn Law League of the employers, suspecting them of wishing to reduce wages. Many threads were drawn together in the Chartist movement—the disillusionment of those workers who had helped the middle class to political power with the 1832 Reform Bill; the movement for the 10-hour day; the agitation against the Poor Law of 1834.

This same general pattern followed in the main industrial areas, particularly the Midlands, and the industrial town of Wales, such as Llanelli and Merthyr Tydfil. The developing industrial town of Leeds, however, was an exception. Here the movement was in the hands of craftsmen and small traders, who had a long tradition of co-operation in political action with the middle-class radicals. As a result of this, Chartism never grew to be a mass working-class movement in Leeds.

It is made clear that Chartism never attracted agricultural labourers in great numbers, although there was chronic insecurity in agricultural employment. Perhaps the deadening effects of the brutal repression of the Last Labourers' Revolt of 1830 were still powerful. Where there was developing industry, such as that in agricultural implements in Suffolk, centres of Chartism grew up.

In some areas of declining industry—such as the declining cloth industry, run on a domestic basis, in south-west England, Chartism also flourished for a time, but it took on an almost reactionary colour, with agitation against the introduction of machinery and technical developments. O'Connor, the famous 'physical force man' of the Chartists, appealed to such backward elements with his Utopian land plan, by which subscribers drew lots for pieces of land in proportion to the number of shares they held. The whole plan rested on very insecure economic and legal foundations, and O'Connor was

always careful to point out that the scheme had nothing to do with Socialism.

Summing up, Asa Briggs quotes Lenin's description of the Chartist movement: 'the first broad and politically-organized proletarian-revolutionary movement of the masses', and emphasises the growing consciousness among the Chartists of the need for independent working-class organizations.

In the first issue of Harney's Red Republican the Chartists were said to 'have progressed from the idea of a simple political reform to the idea of social revolution'.

An increased international consciousness was shown—the interests of working men in all countries of the world are identified'.

The leading statesmen of the day saw the demand for universal suffrage as revolutionary—incompatible with the very existence of civilization which rested on the security of property'.

The middle class sought to prevent the working class from creating its own independent political organizations, by seeking for collaboration with the more prosperous workers. But in this sense the Chartist movement did not fail, in that it laid the tradition for such independent organizations in the future.

F. C. Mather sees the Chartist movement merely as a menace to public order. He criticizes the lack of severity of local magistrates in putting down the Chartists, and points out that the central government saved the day by intervening with troops.

This is an excellent eulogy of the embryo police force of the period—the serious student of Labour history, however, must see this book as a clumsy attempt to convey the feeling of the ruling class of the period against the Chartists.

PAT BICKERS.

## Spain

**The Fell of Dark.** James Norman. Michael Joseph. 18s.

Spain continues the most evocative noun in politics: still, yet and in spite of the soiled all, monumentally reminiscent of the gallantry, élan and finality of revolutionary assault. So,

naturally enough, one approaches a novel 'about the Spanish Civil War' with caution, suspicion and irony, expecting always either that historian's formal novel which proves to be all playacting atop the formless, uncomprehended and faceless movements of the masses, or, alternatively, that formal popular novelist's charade of goodies versus badies in a period setting, and loathing in both that wordy treachery which so inevitably comes down firmly on both sides of the matter. And, **Pues!**—before page 13 is out we are seeing Don Luis, the eminent philosopher, through the worshipping eyes of his bootblack, and the whole novel teeters on the shifty verge of that Steinbeckian whimsicality which is literature's homage to the order books of booksellers. One begins to agree with the blurb, that it is going to be, much as usual, 'exciting, thoughtful and, above all, compassionate', and much too thensome to be digestible. 'It is', suggests one's closing left hand, 'just another novel about some Civil War or other. . . .'

But, just as one begins to think that reading this particular novel is culturally and historically neither here nor there, the characters emerge at a gallop from their stockbox, and the race promises to be interesting. There is Don Luis, of course, and Captain Bernal, and, necessarily, an **Inglés**, Suckling, and of course all the others in their battles and brothels, and it becomes a potentially good read, when one has lots of spare time, that is.

But at this point a very strange thing happens: out of the interweavings of the stockboxers, out of the battles and brothels, emerge, also, a host of circumjacent characters, some personally described, others merely implied in their social activity, but all living and dying the crucial decisions of their lives. They are a trace peripheral, true, but they actively inhabit the novel, and later, strangely, haunt the memory. They actually make one **worry** about Spain, just as 'Potemkin' forces one to worry about the Russian Revolution. In fact, one has at times the impression that one is watching a Unity Theatre concoction played against a filmic background of 'Potemkin' episodes—'Potemkin' plus foreknowledge of Stalinism.

There are comments, very hurtful ones, which will bring the red pen-

cils to the outraged fingers of clerics of minor republics and railway book-stalls, and which might startle the wordworn habitual reader into the belief that truth is to be the next gimmick. Political parties and tendencies are given flicks or pats in passing, so to speak. But, increasingly, poignantly, that sense of a people **participating**—it is so seldom done, particularly into English.

Sadly, the pressure descends again towards the end. The plot tightens—goodies become goodier, baddies deader or deadlier—and the Fascists arrive to end the suspense of all concerned, living, dead, or, surviving, merely auditory. Loves end or mend, but the moral, sadly, slurs into a sort of opportunist's mysticism: the heroes trot away to have, as it were, an altogether sanitary think about it all. There is a crushing sense of insufficiency—as though, during a discussion on the future of **socialism**, someone mentioned The Rt. Hon. Gaitskell. History is thrown, by a sort of weary default, to the lower middle classes—with the effect of leaving Franco ten feet tall. But—but—oddly and strangely, the two millions of Spanish dead and the millions remaining without benefit of literary resolution, remain in the memory, neither pointless nor featureless. James Norman did not, after all, bring out our dead merely to bury them. His—and our—dead will, on the contrary, march through the next half hundred novels, becoming part of his reader's memory and recognition. There is a wry 'Salud!' in at least two hundred of these very skilfully written pages.

GRHE.

## Evolvee

**Drawn in Colour: African Contrasts.** Noni Jabavu. John Murray, 18s.

Noni Jabavu is an African aristocrat. The Jabavus are one of those numbered African families in South Africa who, as products of the missionary-liberal tradition, have for three generations had access to education, the professions and property. Her father, Professor Jabavu, most mild of moderate men, was the favourite, and frequently the only, exhibit at the inter-racial gatherings of the Institute of Race Relations and the Joint Council of Africans



and Europeans. Designated by the liberals as a responsible leader, he was more widely known as a **collaborator of the administration.**

Miss Jabavu's book has the stamp of this inheritance, which is complicated, or perhaps complemented, by her marriage to an English gentleman, Michael Cadbury Crosfield, and her assimilation to his milieu. A propitious background?

This book, which records her reactions on returning to South Africa, after an absence of many years, and her stay in Uganda, is a mixture of occasionally accurate descriptions, superficial judgments, women's-journal philosophy, whimsy and astonishing anti-black racial prejudice. The result is distressing, and the style, never literary and often tasteless, conforms with the ultimate triviality of her outlook. Only when she translates direct from Xhosa are there touches of poetry in the writing; but the tones of this tongue have not permeated and enriched her own prose.

Her responses to East Africa would not disgrace the most pukka memsahib. She finds the colour of East Africans (black as sin), their smells, and their customs in food and sex, repulsive. Apparently they actually do prefer squalor and filth. And really, one must assume that the educated African dons the garb of Western culture' with as little grace as would an orang-utang the robes of a medieval monarch. Indeed these East Africans must be an infinitely inferior breed.

About South Africa, she is equally irritating. While she does well to puncture the myth of the tolerant, humane Englishman, she blows a new bubble, that of the rough, crude but warm Afrikaner (Boer), sincerely paternalistic towards the Africans. Her comments on the coloured people (of so-called 'mixed' descent) are distasteful: she speaks of a coloured man as being '... like many of them ... unbelievably silly. ...' Such an attitude is not accidental, for Miss Jabavu quaintly remains an African tribalist. Her inordinate pride in her clan is narrow and ludicrously anachronistic. Only the ruling class and a few very backward Africans foster tribal divisions and prejudices. Her preoccupation with the history of tribal migrations and conquests could, if ap-

proached in a more systematized manner, be valuable. In her hands it remains the vacuous pastime of a little woman, rather like tating or embroidery.

Miss Jabavu spent most of her time in the ancestral home at Middeldrift, in the Eastern Cape Province, and the picture she paints of tranquillity and plenty is manifestly unrepresentative. How can she write thus when the same area has seen bitter peasant struggles, in which the participants have suffered banishment and even death?

For a work which has pretensions to new insight into the complex problem of South Africa, it is singularly shoddy. No, more, it is reprehensible. The falsifications which spring from narrow, shallow observations, will satisfy only that ever-growing school of 'Africa's friends', who would blur the liberation struggle in veils of sentiment, because they so fear its nakedness. To the altar of their lost cause a small offering has been brought, whose meagreness is in no way enriched because borne by a black hand.

BENITA TEPER.

## Strong Men

*Giants Cast Long Shadows.* By Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart. Putnam. 21s.

A book can be interesting as much for what it omits as for what it includes. This is so particularly in personal memoirs, where the essence of a life history is distilled and revealing insights may be gained not only into the personality but also into the social role of the individual, his relationship to the class struggles and political movements of his age.

This set of reminiscent essays is peopled with journalists, diplomats, writers and socialites (one of whom 'fell for Hitler, went to at least one Nazi rally, and was treated by the Nazis as if she were royalty'). Lockhart reveres brilliance, determination and expertise, and he singles out individuals who embody these attributes—such as Vansittart, George Kennan, John Wheeler-Bennett, to name a few—who thus qualify for his characterization as 'giants'. A typical illustration of his model man is Richard Crossman, who worked

with him on Political Warfare during World War Two. He recollects how Crossman, enthused by his 18,000 majority at Coventry, burst in on him in August, 1945: '... he was full of charm, benevolence and, of course, energy'. Lockhart adds: 'He was even good enough to ask me what line he ought to take when he took his seat in the House. ...'

No one can deny the talent and energy of many of the intellectuals who serve the capitalist State and its press, who organize, advise and write, nor ignore the influence that they may have in politics. But what Lockhart does is to pose their virtues in abstraction, as if their environment—the gigantic clash of class forces in the 20th century—was only accidental to their individuality. The tacit assumption beneath his benign abstraction, however, is ideological and active commitment to capitalism and its far from abstract class structure.

In the essay 'Lenin as a Sportsman' Lockhart describes the Bolshevik leader in a little-known aspect of his life—as a lover of the outdoors—skating, climbing, hunting and walking. Lenin embodied just the strength of character which Lockhart admires. What escapes him is that Lenin was a 'giant' precisely because he clearly comprehended the needs of the Russian workers and peasants. For Lenin sport was a means to joy in life but also a way to toughen the revolutionary in exile for the rigours of political activity. Lockhart emphasises the period of exile to Shushenskoe in Siberia, in 1897, where Lenin had comparative freedom of movement, and hunted in the marshy scrub. It was here that Lenin not only engaged in intensive study and discussion but, moreover, planned the foundation of 'Iskra' and the substance of 'What is to be Done?', the beginning of the organization of revolutionary Marxism that was to lead to the October Revolution.

In the final essay 'Today and Tomorrow' Lockhart gives his advice to youth: '... nobody knows anything for certain. Indeed, the only knowledge is the awareness that we know nothing. ...' Such is the nihilism of a faithful servant of a decayed class.

R. A.

duction'. Not only did Behan and the others show by this trend their utter misunderstanding of the Marxist theory of society and politics, but their conduct gave a valuable lesson in the political importance of theoretical weakness of this kind, showing that with an incorrect theoretical approach and a wrong method, first-class historical blunders can be made. Just when the crisis in the British working-class movement approaches precisely its political peak, just when the contradiction between Social-Democracy and the historical needs of the working class is most sharply expressed in the issues of public ownership, defence and the relation between the organized working class and the Labour Party—at this point the cry goes up: abandon ship! It is the industrial struggle that matters above all! 'Reformism is best exposed at the point of production'—once again those who fail to grasp the nettle of political action explain their failure with the most resounding of 'Marxist' phrases. Precisely by clinging to such abstract generalities do men get left behind by historical development. The essence of dialectics is not the ability to stand by and pronounce what is base and what is superstructure, but to know when, where and how to *act*. Behan insists on the need to go back to the programme of the Industrial Rank-and-File Conference of November, 1958, as if nothing has happened in the trade union movement and the Labour Party since then. To confine the demands and activity of the working class at this point to the factory level would amount to betrayal; this is what was meant by the reply given to Behan's group at the Socialist Labour League Conference. Our resistance to sectarianism is not a doctrinal one only, but part of the lessons learned from the beheading of the German working-class movement, among others, when the Communist Party failed to follow the policy of the United Front of the working class from 1929 onwards.

One of the interesting features of sectarians is their ability to take up very opportunist positions on certain questions, and particularly on questions of organization. Again the basic theoretical weakness here is lack of understanding of the role of consciousness. To criticise Brian Behan's 'Workers' Voice' would amount to the mistake of taking on not the strongest but the weakest statement of one's opponents' case, and so I take certain points in the first issue of that journal only as an aside, and in order to introduce some more general points. In line with his idea that the class itself must lead the revolution, Behan writes that any workers' organization, shop stewards' committee, etc., may submit amendments to the Constitution of the Workers' Party. This gives an appearance, of course, of a party open to the working class, not dictating to it but responding to it, and so on. But it is clearly only another example of the old 'economism'.

Certainly no workers' party will be successful which is not responsive to changes in the moods of the working class, but that is a matter of *tactics*, of timing, of the form of propaganda, etc., and certainly *not* a question of programme, policy, constitution, which are determined on a basis of *theory*. The correctness of the policy of a Marxist party is not the extent to which it corresponds to the immediate consciousness of the workers. It is a matter rather of correct theoretical appraisal of all the social forces at work in a given period, including the role of the class and the party itself.

This raises the old question of the working class 'throwing up its own leadership' in times of struggle. It is a fact that in every section of the working class there spring up first-class militants with great organizing power and ability to advance the consciousness of their fellow-workers. Without such spontaneous rank-and-file leadership there could be no talk of revolution. But a revolutionary leadership is not just the sum of all these rank-and-file leaders, not just the 'linking-together of rank-and-file committees'. There must be beyond that, *above* that level, a *political* leadership. It is not just a matter of daily struggle between employers and workers, which might even culminate in 'one big strike', but of the conquest of state power, of asserting the revolutionary role of the working class in the transformation of every aspect of capitalist society. The place of the workers in capitalist production is the basis of their revolutionary historical role, but to assert that role they have to be organized politically and theoretically as well as industrially, and the theory required to do this represents a higher form of consciousness than that which flows from the experience of the proletariat. If Lenin was right to condemn the 'Economists' for bringing no theory to the Russian workers other than the news that their industrial struggles were vital, how much more necessary it is to insist on advancing the theory required by the British working-class movement, with its scores of years of industrial organization, its opportunist leadership, and the complex international problems of leadership that have developed since Lenin's day?

This brings out another fundamental weakness of sectarianism: its tendency towards idealism. All the talk about 'no compromises' and keeping clear of the rottenness of reformism amounts to a fear of rubbing up against reality, and is accompanied by the search for some section of workers which remains unaffected and pure despite the economic boom, as a jumping-off ground to defeat reformism. No doubt it is a healthy reaction against bureaucratic reformism to insist on the roots of militancy in the working class itself, but there is no substitute for fighting the political battle. It is not enough to know that reformism is rotten, to condemn it

roundly, and to insist on one's separateness from it; the point is, to take it seriously as a force in the British working class and defeat it on the arena of struggle. At this point, the political mistake of sectarianism ties in with the theoretical mistake of economic determinism or 'economism'. Somehow, it is assumed, the working class will develop revolutionary consciousness because it is exploited. But the ideological struggle within the working class is *real*, it has to be bitterly fought and won before the class can be fully mobilized for battle. When we say that the long-drawn-out crisis of British imperialism rots away the social basis of reformist politics, that is *not* to say that the reformists simply leave the scene and leave a vacant place for a naturally radicalized working class desiring a new form of party. Such a party has to be built in the course of struggle with the reformists, and *it has to be built by those who grasp the historical process theoretically; it does not grow 'naturally' or 'organically' out of the economic base.*

### THEORY AND IDEOLOGY IN THE WORKING CLASS

When we say that political ideas and movements reflect the economic base we should remember that such reflection is a series of conscious acts. Men's consciousness is formed in an environment of social institutions controlled by the ruling class, institutions of repression and institutions for educational conditioning, staffed by people trained to operate these institutions as though they were part of a naturally or divinely ordained system. The majority of labour's own organizations have become tied to this structure of established institutions, and are staffed by the 'labour lieutenants of capitalism'. The proletariat's consciousness of its role has to be achieved in struggle against all these institutional forms and their ideological results. Without the highest degree of centralized organization, these ideological battles cannot be won. The crisis of imperialism, which is expressed in the colonial struggle, the arms race and atomic war as well as in the tendency towards slump, constantly produces cultural decay and breakdown. Movements of the extreme Right, like Fascism, are able to call upon depraved elements of the intelligentsia to mobilize petty bourgeois, lumpen proletarians and even numbers of industrial workers behind the most foul and hideous social programmes. The alternative of socialism or barbarism did not pose itself only after Hiroshima, but was clearly before the eyes of the Bolsheviks and Rosa Luxemburg during the First World War. We are in an epoch which has been correctly characterized as one of a crisis of leader-

ship. What is needed *above all* is a strongly disciplined leadership able to develop the theory of Imperialism, the Permanent Revolution, the relation between the Workers' States and the world revolution, and to establish its leadership of the working class. Unless this crisis of leadership is solved, there will be no 'natural' growth towards Socialism, but there will be all the danger of war and barbarism. In this vital sense those who protest against 'vanguardism', against 'too much centralization', represent a reactionary tendency in the working-class movement.

The opponents of democratic centralism like to talk about the inevitable crisis of capitalism as the source of revolutionary action in the working class: this is counterposed to the so-called 'voluntarism' of the Leninists, who are supposed to think they can suck revolutionary situations out of their thumbs. But preparation of the class and of the party is the decisive question in social crises. It is true that periodically capitalism has undergone the most profound crises. We need only mention the Great Crash of 1929 and the consequent depression, and the post-war situation (1945) in Europe, when there returned, particularly in France and Italy, capitalists discredited by their war record and faced with the armed working class. In neither of these cases was revolution the outcome. Instead, helped by the Social-Democratic and Stalinist betrayals of the working class, the capitalists were able to ride the storm and in the earlier case to establish regimes which destroyed the possibility of revolution for many years. The elementary mistake of supposing that in the Marxist view consciousness and organization directly reflect economic need is one that must be conquered if there is to be a victorious revolution. The ideological reflection of changes in the economy lags behind, the machinery of this 'lag' is the structure of ruling-class power and education. There is necessary a theoretical *leap* in the working-class movement, the development of leadership which can grasp the significance of the underlying crisis in society and inform the activity of the class with that consciousness. What is important for the revolutionary class is that it must *not* remain determined in its thinking by the existing economy and institutions. As Gramsci puts it: 'An appropriate political initiative is always necessary to *free* the economic drive from the tethers of traditional policies'. (My emphasis—C.S.)

Important here is the difference between the working class and other revolutionary classes in history. When Lenin says that the only weapon of the working class is organization, he means that whereas the rising bourgeoisie, for instance, developed its own economy, its art, its religion, its schools, its philosophy, and so on, as the expression and organization of its social consciousness, *before*

the political overthrow of the feudal political system, the proletariat does not construct the institutions of the new society within capitalism (despite the Fabians and the New Left). Capitalism is the only system of production in history whose inner dynamism has pushed it to develop the productive forces incessantly and to drive out all other forms of production. In order to mobilize for the overthrow of feudalism, it was sufficient for the bourgeoisie and its allies to recognize and feel the political restrictions upon their growing economic and cultural strength. Their own organic development within feudalism drove their 'own' institutions into conflict with the political regime which prevented their natural expansion. But bourgeois power is total social power: capital dominates all relationships like an elemental natural force. In order to seize in consciousness the nature of this power and to organize for its overthrow, there is necessary a *scientific* consciousness of the whole system of social relationships, and not just a sense of the degradation and exploitation suffered in the process of production, or the abstract knowledge that planned production for use would be more reasonable. There is no repository of this consciousness, and no guarantee of its necessary constant development in theory and practice, other than the proletarian party. To talk about the working class 'itself' as an undifferentiated, potentially revolutionary whole is to substitute myth for reality.

Because it is exploited in an inhuman system, commandeered and degraded in the service of capital, the working class is unevenly developed, apathetic under most circumstances, split into different sections, often backward in its view of most cultural and social problems, unless there is a conscious leadership differentiated from the class itself, not at the daily service of capital, determined to explode the *false* consciousness in which men grasp reality under capitalism. Abdication from the responsibility of constructing such a leadership, under the guise of 'faith in the workers themselves' is capitulation to the forces that numb the consciousness of the working class—the institutions of capitalist society itself. The centralized party is needed by the working class, then, for the purpose of 'breaking up the unity based on traditional ideology, without which the new force (the working class) would be unable to gain awareness of its own independent personality'. (Gramsci). The working class cannot make do, like the bourgeoisie in its revolutionary period, with a crude empiricism or idealism. Because the whole of the capitalist structure must be grasped in consciousness and because this whole and its laws of development are different from the immediate consciousness and experience of the proletariat, *dialectical* theory, advanced theory based on the notion of developing

contradictions in the material world, is the basic element of revolutionary theory. Marx's achievement was to show the working class a mode of action based on this dialectical approach to history. Bourgeois thought had ceased to develop just at this point, and it took the the highest synthesis of philosophical and scientific thought to make the leap forward. It is in this sense that one should understand Lenin's insistence that the programme and strategy of the revolutionary party are based on *theory*, and that this theory is brought to the working class *from outside*, from bourgeois intellectuals. The development of theory among the revolutionary workers themselves, once that leap has been made is, of course, a necessity for any revolutionary party. So long as the working class is not mobilized by a party based on such a theory, its consciousness remains determined by bourgeois culture, a culture which leads man to see society as a set of separate things, not open to his own control and overthrow, but naturally fixed and with independent reality. Marxist theory explains, on the other hand, that the world of men is a man-made world, that the powers standing over men are products of labour, and that if the whole system of labour-exploitation is abolished, man will become free, will dominate social reality instead of being at its mercy. A revolutionary party is one whose strategy and tactics flow from this total conception. Without it, the working class struggles only against partial features of bourgeois domination and, unable to see their connection, tends to fall back after partial victories and defeats.

#### REVOLUTIONARY CRISES AND THE VANGUARD PARTY

Of course, the building of a leadership capable of theoretical firmness and of combating those tendencies in the Labour movement which reflect other classes, is not the whole of the task by a long way. The actual organization in a revolutionary crisis, the rapid changes of tactics necessary, the planning of insurrection and military operations, all this quite clearly requires centralized authority and discipline of the highest order, and only a leadership developed over a long period will be capable of the task. While this phase of the development of the working-class leadership is not our immediate subject, a few general points should be made here. Certain 'anti-vanguardist' groupings, such as that represented by the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, put forward the idea that the nearer the revolution approaches, and the more the working class itself fills the historical stage, so the leadership 'must prepare its own dissolution'. It is difficult to see exactly what this can mean, but at best it probably

means that as the class itself approaches revolutionary consciousness, the leadership can safely quit the scene. Of course, the outstanding characteristic of revolutions is the entry of the broadest masses into political action, but that is a very different notion from supposing that consciousness of the historical process is clearly fixed in the minds of the people. The possibility of victory in such crises depends above all on the preparation of a leadership, and is inextricably bound up with the earlier phases discussed in this article. Those masses intervening in revolutionary actions are what Lenin called the untrained, undisciplined, undirected forces. The depth of the crisis arouses tremendous force, but the great task of the party, the 'disciplined, trained units' is to give this force its maximum results, to make sure that it is not broken against a wall, dissipated in useless channels, and so on. Rosa Luxemburg, whose shabby 'friends' emphasize her weakest point, and are incapable of learning from her strength, encountered this dilemma in January, 1919. The working class of Berlin was led by rioters and provocateurs to expose itself to bloody repression by the Social-Democratic government; the young Communist Party had had no time to organize the insurrection or to knit together its followers in the rest of Germany. Such a situation could confront the most mature leadership; and the correct lead to the workers would be to sound a tactical retreat, as the Bolsheviks did in the 'July Days' of 1917. But the German Communists lacked the authority and the confidence for such a lead, and the suppression of the Berlin riots was only the beginning of the terrible carnage of 1919, as workers in city after city took up arms against the government, only to be crushed and murdered in thousands.

Rosa Luxemburg had criticized Lenin's centralism and 'overstress on organization' and she had trusted a little too much to the 'organic' growth of the struggle of the working class. Even though she had realized before Lenin the reactionary tendency of Kautsky and the German Social-Democratic leadership, she lacked Lenin's political sense and initiative in seeing the need for organizational expression of the opposition tendency in European socialism. It was not a question only of the Right wing having fallen into conservative habits of distorting Marxism, but of the victory of an alien class tendency in the movement. And since the world had entered the final stage of capitalism, the construction of a leadership devoted unswervingly to the political independence of the proletariat was vital. Because this conclusion was not drawn earlier, because Rosa clung to the view that an ideological (not organizational) struggle within the movement would be sufficient to win the working class, the Left turn of the masses in November, 1918, in Germany did not result in automatic support for Rosa's Spartacists,

the future Communists, but for the 'Independent' Socialists, who appeared to the masses as the Left of Social Democracy. In other words, the shift in the masses was not automatically reflected in revolutionary politics, but was 'mediated' through the existing organisations and forms of consciousness.

One of the favourite references for opponents of the centralized 'vanguard' party conception is the Paris Commune of 1871. It was as a result of the brief experience of workers' rule in that city that Marx sharpened his views on the state and revolution. It was now clear, he said, that the bourgeois state must be smashed, not 'taken over', and that the new state, the proletarian dictatorship, must be the rule of the workers themselves. Latter-day critics of Leninism hold up this picture as a contrast to the centralized 'dictatorship' of Stalin's state and Lenin's party, but in the process they make a mistake which Marx himself could never have made. The conclusions drawn from the Commune about the form of the proletarian dictatorship are not in any way the same thing as the requirements of a revolutionary party to conquer power! *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and similar tendencies argue directly from the form of the future proletarian state to the character of the workers' party under capitalism. But such a party must above all be capable of action and leadership, and it is not identical with the class. We have mentioned the argument that in revolutionary situations, 'the class itself' comes to the fore, and makes the leadership more and more superfluous. Perhaps the best antidote to that argument comes from Marx himself. In a letter to Kugelmann, he made a criticism of the political leadership of the Commune which sets him quite apart from those who invoke him against the Leninists. He criticized the Central Committee of the National Guard for holding democratic elections at a time when it should have exerted its authority, prolonged its 'dictatorship', in order to crush the enemy. For this, the best proletarian elements would have to go to the front, and so a more stringent regime would have been necessary to retain revolutionary authority in Paris itself. But in the absence of a firm revolutionary leadership, it was decided that democracy must have its day; the Commune was defeated. This was only part of the consequences of lack of preparation and revolutionary organization before the Commune (Trotsky —*The Defence of Terrorism*).

#### LENIN AND INNER-PARTY STRUGGLE

Lenin's firmness and sharpness in defending his political line and organizational discipline was derived precisely from this necessity for training a contingent which will not be 'over-run' by the ir-

## WHAT IS REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP?

regular troops' of the revolution, and not at all to any personal ambition or dictatorial habits, as his opponents unceasingly declared. Bolsheviks are determined to base their party only on the firmest theoretical principles, and to subordinate all party work to these principles. A movement of this kind examines scrupulously all political ideas in the light of the needs of the working class and the party, and ruthlessly fights against all tendencies which divert the movement from its revolutionary path. The method of analysis is always to test these ideas against the needs of the classes in society, both in theoretical argument and in the work of the party.

In the course of the 1903 conference of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, scene of the famous dispute between Lenin and Martov over the conditions of party membership, Trotsky and others of the *Iskra* group originally supported Lenin's political line, but found themselves driven towards the opportunists by what they considered to be Lenin's organizational rigidity. Trotsky later gave his verdict on this episode, and it is worth quoting as an antidote to those who are fond of using Trotsky's early writings about dictatorship over the party. 'It was not for nothing', says Trotsky in *My Life*, 'that the words "irreconcilable" and "unsparing" occurred so frequently in Lenin's vocabulary. Only the highest concentration on the goal of revolution, free from everything petty personal, can justify this kind of personal ruthlessness. . . . His behaviour seemed to me inadmissible, terrible, shocking. Yet at the same time it was politically correct and therefore indispensable from the point of view of organization'. It is in this very important sense that the lessons of building the Bolshevik Party are lessons for all revolutionaries. The whole *method* of building the party politically is involved. Lenin, who had agreement with Martov on political questions at the beginning of the Congress, quite agreed that his difference over the rules was a small one. It became important in the course of the Congress, as it became clear that from this one opportunist formulation Martov was to fall into the hands of the opportunists. In order to preserve the narrow circle atmosphere at the head of the émigré Marxists, he was prepared to line up with the opportunists in opposition to Lenin. Lenin was not only insisting on organizational points when he hammered home the authority of the Congress and the leading role of the majority. The *Iskra*-ites, including Martov, had not gone to the Congress with a factional mandate—that would deny the supreme authority of the Congress, always so dearly cherished by Lenin—but what they did agree, on Lenin's insistence, was to accept all the decisions of the Congress.

This seemed 'innocent enough' at the time, as Lenin wrote, but once 'unfavourable' decisions

(e.g., on the composition of *Iskra's* Editorial Board) were arrived at, the discipline was broken. Lenin, convinced that without a proletarian party of iron discipline there could be no revolution, was prepared to subordinate everything to insistence on this task. Martov's indiscipline and veering towards the opportunists was a capitulation to the bourgeois tendency in the party, the tendency which shrank from independent mobilization of the working class for leadership against Tsarism; hence a split was necessary.

Political and organizational questions therefore cannot be separated. In an epoch where the construction of a leadership of the working class is the most vital historical problem, it is exactly on the questions of concrete planning and discipline for revolutionary work that political differences became explicit. Some Marxists seem to conceive of the party as simply a contractual discipline to stop individuals from going off the rails as they react to class pressure. But it is more than that: it must become the vanguard of revolutionary action, the representative of the general interest of the working class.

In the construction of a revolutionary party, there is a constant need to strive to maintain a correct relationship between democracy and centralism. The balance of this relationship tends to change with the objective situation. During times when the revolutionary movement operates under legal conditions, as in Britain today, it is essential to have full democratic discussion on all questions concerning the working class and the party. This does not, however, mean that democracy is a free-for-all, with nothing being decided. To the Marxist, democracy is a weapon in the struggle against capitalism. Discussion is necessary to arrive at decisions upon which the activity of the party can be based.

The constant training of new leaders in the revolutionary party requires the greatest patience by the leadership. Local autonomy and initiative, allowing the leaders and the rank and file to learn from their mistakes, is essential for the branches of the revolutionary party. The more experienced the revolutionary leadership the more flexible it will be in assisting the ranks by theory and practice to understand the need for a democratic centralist party.

In such an atmosphere differences of opinion can flourish provided such differences do not set out to overthrow the programme and policy of the Marxist movement. Fundamental differences along these lines in an unfavourable objective situation generally lead to a split. Splits of this kind cannot be avoided, and a mature leadership will see to it that the experiences of such a struggle are utilized to educate a membership in the superiority of the

democratic centralist method. Any premature attempt to resolve the internal crisis, based upon excessive centralism and factionalism, will have serious consequences for the revolutionary party. That is why a revolutionary leadership must be the most vigilant custodian of party democracy and the firmest defender of the discipline and rights of the party as a whole. It is the interrelationship between democracy and centralism that constantly confuses the idealist opponents of Leninist organization. In their effort to run away from centralism they embrace a theory of spontaneity and proceed to liquidate the party into the class. The Marxist's interpretation of democratic centralism is part of the fact that he derives his political conclusions from an objective historical study of the political situation, and not only from the existing consciousness of the class. The relation between democracy and centralism to him is based upon the constant requirements of the class struggle. The great problem in Britain today is to obtain a Marxist conception of the party. Capitalist propaganda constantly seeks to equate Marxist discipline with Stalinism. When 'Socialist' opponents of revolutionary discipline make the same equation, they are reflecting capitalist public opinion, regardless of their good intentions in this sense they play a definite part in obstructing the solution by the working class of its most pressing need.

#### THEORETICAL DIFFERENCES—PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

One aim of this article is to make a little clearer the reasons why Marxists concentrate so much attention on theoretical discussion, even on questions which appear at times to be obscure and remote from the struggle. There are always critics who say: the important thing is to get on with the struggle and get away from this arid and doctrinaire wrangling.

A good example is the 'Russian question'. The nature of Soviet society is a vital question for Marxists and it can only be studied historically. After the Khrushchev exposures of 1956 certain prominent 'New Left' ex-Communists said quite explicitly that Russia had dominated the Left for too long and that in future we should concentrate on contemporary British problems. There were only jeers for those who wanted to know 'what Trotsky said in 1924', and yet without a study of the *social roots* of Stalinism, rather than the horrified turning of one's back on it, there could be no renewal of Marxism. Even if the 1920s in Russia seemed irrelevant to British problems in 1956, it was an essential clue to the balance of forces in the class struggle and the play of tendencies in the

Labour movement of the world. Not only that, but the very existence of the USSR, its bureaucracy's domination over great parties all over the world, and its relationship with imperialism, all the time create situations where one's evaluation of the Soviet social system takes on immediate importance, and for the movement to leave the question open is inadmissible.

One tendency which attracts a certain number of 'Marxists' is that which considers the USSR's economy to be 'state capitalism'. Now the actual consideration of 'State capitalism' as a theory cannot be undertaken here, but some of its adherents illustrate very well the connection between organizational and political questions. The claim that the USSR is 'state capitalist' is usually accompanied by the view that American, British and all advanced capitalisms are tending in the same direction as the USSR—towards a bureaucratic, state-controlled if not state-owned industry, with the workers exploited in ever larger productive units. As in Burnham's *Managerial Revolution* (the product of a similar breakaway from revolutionary Marxism in 1940), the tendency of such theories is to assume that this bureaucratic centralization ('statification', 'managerialism') actually corresponds to the needs of science and technique at their present level of development, that it represents a naturally higher stage than imperialism. And so one is tempted to conclude *either* that all talk of the working class as a revolutionary force is nonsense (Burnham) *or* at least that the age of imperialism, with all the political conclusions drawn from it by Lenin, lie in the past. In the latter case what is required is a completely new analysis to tell us what sort of contradictions dominate the new society and in what sense a revolutionary class might overthrow it, whether that class is the working class, etc. What is usually done (and it is very unsatisfactory) is to cling to the idea of the working class as revolutionary while rejecting: (a) the economic basis (capitalism and imperialism) for this; and (b) the organizational consequences drawn by the Marxists.

As a result, we get among the 'state capitalists' a very abstract, general protest against tyranny and oppression, in many cases a strong leaning towards 'anti-totalitarianism' in the style of the cold war or State Department Socialists. Lenin's organizational conceptions are seen as disastrous, for they paved the way for Stalin's dictatorship, a dictatorship not *of* the working class, but *over* the working class. Bureaucracy 'in itself' is seen as reactionary since it offends against the idea of self-government by the working class.

Currently circulating in translation is a programmatic statement of the group around the French journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. This document entitled 'Socialism Reaffirmed' arrives at the fol-

lowing conclusions:

'Moreover, the objective existence of the bureaucracy, as an exploiting stratum, makes it obvious that the vanguard can only organize itself on the basis of an anti-bureaucratic ideology. . . .

'The main features of a political organization that has become aware of the need to abolish the distinction in society between people who decide and people who merely execute is that such an organization should from the onset seek to abolish such a distinction within its own ranks.'

In place of the concrete development of organizational forms from the specific development of stages of the class struggle and of the type of social crisis arising under capitalism, indeed reacting in a quite topsy-turvy way to the growing concentration of bourgeois state power, we have the abstract argument from general principles. Thus, the aim is workers' rule; therefore the means, the movement, must do away with authority. But how can the working class combat alien tendencies, how can it consolidate its victories and learn from its defeats, how can it organize to crush the powerful enemy, how can it conduct the political struggle from hour to hour, without a leadership, a leadership with authority? All the concentration and centralization of bourgeois power, its ideological weapons and its control of leading political elements in the labour movement, all of these make more vital the need for centralized and authoritative revolutionary

leadership. Somehow we are asked to accept that authority in itself is a bad thing, indeed the main enemy.

This is really a retreat from Marxism. It is not bureaucratic or authority-wielding individuals who rule the lives of men under capitalism, but the force of capital, produced by men, yet alienated from them in a structure with its own law of motion, its own imperious demands in terms of human life and effort. Our aim is not the abstract one of 'abolishing the distinction between order-givers and order-takers' but the political overthrow of the class whose interests lie in the perpetuation of the domination of capital, in order that the forces produced by man shall be at his service. For that task we need, not an abandonment of discipline and centralized authority, but its heightening to an unprecedented degree. It is nonsense to suppose that as the working class itself comes on to the political scene, its consciousness developing to new heights, the need for organization and discipline will decline. On the contrary, a more active and politically conscious labour movement will demand it all the more insistently. Just because the rise of the working class is the most universal and world-shaking of all historical transformations, against the strongest ruling class in history, so it requires a higher level of consciousness and a higher degree of organization than any previous class in history.

## Nehru's India in the Plan Era

Tom Kemp

THE drawing to a close of India's Second Five-Year Plan and the discussion going on around the Third Plan provide an appropriate moment for an interim assessment of the historical significance of the development of Nehru's India since Independence. There is scarcely need to underline the fact that fateful issues are at stake in India. If public opinion generally, and the Labour Movement in particular, displays ignorance and unconcern, there is no doubt that the informed spokesmen of capitalism anxiously watch the economic performance and political stability of the sub-continent. While some people on the Left have been under the illusion that the Indian government is seeking, and perhaps finding, a 'third way', between Western capitalism and Russian-style planning, realistic defenders of the

former stress unambiguously that, if Nehru's way fails, a serious and perhaps fatal blow will have been struck at the system which they support. This anxiety stems from the fact that India is a test case for economic development in a backward country without the elimination of private ownership of the means of production and what are euphemistically talked of as democratic rights and liberties. If the test fails—and it is universally recognized that the most difficult problems lie ahead—then throughout the 'Third World' of the underdeveloped countries Western influence will decline. At the same time, it is assumed, the prestige and direct influence, or even control, of the USSR will grow. India is thus a great prize in the unremitting world contest between two incompatible social systems. But while



there is a great deal of truth in this assumption it does not therefore follow that the choice for India lies only between remaining part of the capitalist world and joining up with the Soviet bloc under the aegis of the Communist Party of India. Other possibilities are open, and indeed preferable; but they exist because of the constellation of world forces created by Soviet economic growth and the rapid upbuilding of the new China.

Before Independence, India was the advanced point of the colonial liberation movement under the mature leadership of the national bourgeoisie organized politically in the Congress Party. It was to this class and its political organ, then, that the British Raj transferred power in 1947, not out of generosity but because it had no choice; a full-scale repressive war in India would not have been tolerated by the British people. As it was, all authorities admit that the transfer of power was carried out with admirable smoothness: without an open struggle or even great animosity, and without the stormy eruption of the masses into political life as an independent force.<sup>1</sup> Partly owing to the mistakes of the Communist Party of India—especially its support of the war from 1941 onward—the great hopes and energies of India's downtrodden millions were canalized into the Congress Party behind the messianic figures of Gandhi and Nehru. Consequently there was no social revolution, even in the Indian princely States. Existing property relations remained intact, and with them the existing distribution of prestige and power below the level occupied by the British. At this level, in the administration at any rate, the comparatively small number of top expatriate British Civil Servants was replaced by Indians, mostly from a lower echelon. In political life the Congress, which had already acquired political experience in the provincial assemblies as well as in the national struggle, took over, creating in the process, and with the blessing of the British, replicas of those institutions which educated Indians had so frequently admired at work in Britain. The whole apparatus of the state, as built up under British rule, thus passed into the custody of the bourgeoisie. Though, as we shall see, this bourgeoisie had special characteristics which derived from India's long subjection to British imperialism, there can be no doubt that the dominant class in the new Indian State was strictly comparable to that of the ruling class in a capitalist country. Nothing which has happened since then has dislodged it; that is basic to any analysis of subsequent Indian history.

<sup>1</sup> Though not, of course, without a frightful communal blood-letting, which was a by-product of 'divide and rule'.

Inevitably there was carried over into the new era an incredible weight of traditional backwardness: an archaic and distorted land system, economic stagnation, dire mass poverty, sloth, superstition and filth—everything associated with a technically backward and socially retarded country. One, however, which had experienced two centuries of alien rule by a more advanced economy which had clamped on the suckers and contributed thereby its own part to the state of Indian society but, at the same time, had implanted there, albeit in distorted form, many of the attributes of an advanced society. Railways, factories, banks; a proletariat; a bourgeoisie; these were part of the legacy. India combined in a specific, historically-determined way the archaic with the ultra-modern, sacred cows with a sophisticated intelligentsia; paradoxes and contradictions abounded in society, in classes, in individuals. While in the economy a certain amount of capitalist development of a one-sided kind had taken place in the century before Independence, it had been confined to certain areas or activities. The land system remained tied to the forms which English administrators had given it in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Landlordism, sub-division of land and usury bore down on a teeming peasantry, a large part of which was on or below the subsistence level. And Indian capitalism co-existed with this backward agrarian structure; some sections were even drawn into alliance with it. As for the stake of British imperialism, that had been dwindling relatively between the wars and shrank absolutely after 1939; what remained after Independence was appreciable, but India had already ceased to play the role which had been hers before 1914. Nevertheless, the sub-continent remained firmly within the sphere of the world capitalist market, attached by many golden chains: not the least the credits which had been built up in Britain during the war.

This, in short, is the background to Nehru's India, which entered in 1951 on the first of a series of Five-Year Plans intended to break the stranglehold of backwardness on the economy. A web of myth and legend has been woven around subsequent developments, to which reference has already been made. This article seeks to assess in brief what has really been happening in India in the social and economic sphere, not by a technical examination of the plans, or by a quantitative picture of the extent of change, but rather by asking a few pertinent questions. For example, what are the dominant class forces? Is India moving towards a form of socialism? Have the basic problems been tackled and can they be tackled within the present social structure? At the same time some views will be offered about the relations between India and world capitalism and the challenge of China.

*Who Rules India?*

As the advanced character of the pre-war Independence movement showed, the Indian bourgeoisie was able to develop and attain greater political self-consciousness under British rule than was possible at that time for most similar classes in the colonies. Actually the bourgeoisie was not a homogeneous force but was structured in a particularly complex way as a result of caste and religious differences as well as the forces of attraction and repulsion which played upon it from the dominant alien imperialism. Moreover, while some sections sprang directly from trade, money-lending and later industry, recruits to the bourgeoisie also came from the ranks of landowners and the privileged higher castes. That is to say, there was a strictly capitalist or business class, buying and selling, hiring wage labour and undertaking activities which were generally not favoured by traditional codes; this was a new, emerging class, subordinate to imperialism or in conflict with it according to circumstances. This section of the bourgeoisie was generally in the background as far as the national struggle was concerned; it provided funds, and perhaps some of its idealistic young people; its main concern was to garner the harvest. The other main section of the bourgeoisie was recruited, through the educational channels offered by the British, largely from the traditional ruling class and high-caste sections of Hindu society. In time a more or less distinct educated professional stratum was formed, around which flowed a multiplicity of ideological forces to which it, and especially the younger generations, were by the 20th century particularly susceptible. The influences of British liberalism, Fabianism, Marxism and so on merged in various proportions with the traditional outlook of high-caste Hinduism, or of people in this social position regardless of tradition. On the whole, however, members of this stratum were likely to be drawn to oppose imperialism. From it came the chief spokesmen and cadres of the national movement which, when it gathered force and became politically important, did so because it represented a real need of nascent Indian capitalism and won its backing.

In the nature of things, then, the Indian bourgeoisie was a kind of synthetic formation merging different elements with different social starting points and disparate intellectual baggage. The national struggle brought them together, gave added coherence and additional ties of common interest in the political machine and, later, the offices at its disposal. But all contradictions were not thereby resolved and they persist to this day. Their nature will be more apparent when we take a closer look at the Indian businessmen and consider the social

position of the educated or professional elements.

The bourgeoisie in India differs from that in advanced countries owing to the relative weakness of its economic base and its sense of precariousness in society as a whole, as displayed in the way it undertakes its business. Under British rule Indian traders first participated in the collection of commodities for export and distributed imported manufactures in the home market. They existed on the fringes of Hindu society and tended to be looked down upon, as traders always are in societies bound by tradition and prestige. Recruitment to business activity was mainly restricted to such non-Hindu groups as the Parsis or certain Hindu or Jain sub-castes from particular areas, notably Gujarat and Merwar. Indian business was thus mainly in the hands of small, close-knit communities and was carried on on a family basis.

As these business communities grew in wealth they found certain avenues of investment blocked by the policy of the British Raj. Before 1914, and even later, orders for railway material, for example, were placed in Britain. Most capital equipment came from the same source. Little scope, therefore, existed for investment in industries producing means of production (lack of such industries is the great obstacle to growth at the present day). On the other hand India was not suitable for much European immigration on anything like a permanent basis: this left internal trade and then, by express policy, the lower echelons of the bureaucracy, open to Indians. Even business firms with branches in India or regular transactions there preferred to operate them through the comparatively few British permanent residents or through local capitalists. Hence there grew up the 'managing agency' system not only for trading, but also for the operation of factories.<sup>2</sup> Indian capitalists, with their knowledge of local conditions, were able to get a toe-hold through this method of doing business. Others, favoured by the spread of money economy, the improvement of transport and the extension of the market which followed British penetration, were able to build up their wealth and win a place in such expanding industries in the 19th century as cotton and jute. Indian capital expanded still further between the wars and increasingly sought

<sup>2</sup> A 'managing agency' was a firm established in India which undertook business for British firms on a commission basis. Later, such agencies floated and controlled companies and became a means for a high degree of financial concentration and of influence over the modern industrialized sector of the economy by British and Indian big business.

outlets in other fields. It found itself frequently at odds with the British administration or with the entrenched interests of British capital: hence its interest in a policy of wringing concessions from the British or getting rid of their domination altogether.

By the Second World War a quite highly concentrated capitalist class existed which was able to take advantage of the conditions created by the war. Foreign imports were restricted, while direct contracts or spending emanating from the British forces greatly expanded demand. Assisted by the general political uncertainty Indian capital was able to buy out British factory owners or secure a stake in British-managed business houses. At the same time, sizeable Indian balances were accumulated in London in payment for goods and services supplied during the war.

However, Indian capital did not take over all British enterprises in India, and even if it had done the economy still reflected the consequences of the type of development associated with imperialism. There was little heavy industry, most industrial equipment had to be imported, while power, transport and similar facilities were small in relation to needs and constructed to suit the ruling power.

When that power was handed over, Independent India had a business bourgeoisie of a rather special type. It still had much of the outlook of the trader living on sufferance; it sought quick returns; it had an unenviable reputation for narrowness and avidity; it exploited its workers with considerable concern. At the same time it did not have the means, as a class, to lead the economy forward on a path of rapid growth; but its far-sighted elements had long seen that such growth was necessary for its own survival. In this Indian capitalists shared common ground with what we have called the intellectual or professional bourgeoisie, just as it had done in the national struggle and in the building of the new state itself. In all this there was a division of labour, combined with plenty of scope for disagreement and discord. But there was a steady pressure from below; the mass of the Indian people were beginning to look for some improvement in their standard of life. What they actually received in the years after Independence consisted mainly of promises and formulas; but the bourgeoisie did retain control of the situation and begin to rectify some of the deficiencies in the economy of which it was most conscious.

The political framework of present-day India consists of a parliamentary regime with the customary bourgeois liberties based on the British model. This appears somewhat incongruous in a backward country with an impressive illiteracy rate,<sup>3</sup> but it

<sup>3</sup> One of the highest in the world at the time of

clearly makes sense to the Indian bourgeoisie, who were not innovators in discovering that a wide franchise could be a conservative force in a predominantly rural and traditional society. Ostensibly democratic and liberal, political life is dominated by the Congress Party. At the local level Congress is run by notables from the rural gentry, the richer peasantry and professional and business circles. Idealism has given way to machine politics and Congress runs the gauntlet of the ballot box nationally without serious risk of defeat. And events have shown that the liberal mask is removed whenever it is necessary to preserve class rule.

That is the simple picture. In practice it is obviously more complex. The most important complications arise from the structuring of the bourgeoisie itself. For simplicity's sake we may note the two extremes: on the one hand the business groups, on the other those who staff the state apparatus. The former can be narrow-mindedly concerned with short-term gains or up-to-the-minute emulators of American techniques and forms of organization;<sup>4</sup> they distrust state action at times but cannot dispense with it. In the bureaucracy, and the intelligentsia at large, there linger the idealistic aspirations of the national struggle; there is greater openness towards ideas, as is to be expected, and an appreciation that only a planned economy can make possible economic growth in Indian conditions. Despite a willingness to learn from the USSR or China and to use a socialist phraseology in public documents, the bureaucracy itself is unable to go outside the limits imposed by the prevailing social relations. It is not an independent force. Nor is the state which it mans a direct emanation or simply a passive instrument of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. The two are bound together by mutual ties of interest which override seeming divisions of outlook and policy. The practical outcome of this is displayed most fully in the relations between the State and the economy.

Independence and still exceptionally high. If the British, plus the nature of Indian society, gave rise to a highly educated but narrow stratum, neither favoured mass education. There has still been no mass literacy drive on the scale of that of Russia and China.

<sup>4</sup> 'The Economist', March 26, 1960, notes the emergence of what it calls 'The growing managerial class' . . . 'who talk the new language of the growth economy', and adds, significantly, that 'Their opposite number in government, while maintaining firmly that there must be public control over the big concentrations of capital, now admit the large part to be played by private enterprise. . . . Undoubtedly both American 'efficiency' and Russian 'planning' are attractive to such people—in each case placed in an 'elitist' conception in conformity with the outlook of the ruling class.

### State and Plan

The declared aim of the economic policies of the Indian Government is the establishment of a 'socialist pattern of society', an expression used in the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956. Seeing that there is an impressive state sector and economic planning many observers have taken this statement at its face value—some socialists with approval, extreme free enterprisers with dismay. Americans wishing to win support for India have explained that really India is not socialist at all in the 'bad' sense. After all, the Indian Government defined its 'socialism' in ostensibly undoctinaire terms as 'the raising of living standards, the enlargement of opportunities for all, the promotion of enterprise among the disadvantaged classes and the creation of a sense of partnership among all sections of the community'. These may be laudable aims and they have certainly been accepted as genuine by many well-meaning people, both in India and outside, but verbal assent could be given to them by practically any enlightened businessman. Everything depends upon how such pious hopes are translated into practice, upon the policies which prevail and the context in which they arise.

As far as industry is concerned the State sector has not involved expropriation of former capitalist owners. The State has established enterprises which the private capitalists could not or would not undertake because the capital outlay was too great and the returns too doubtful or likely to be spread over too long a period. On the other hand these projects—steel mills, engineering works, power stations, irrigation works, etc.—were necessary to correct the one-sidedness of the Indian economy and provide it with a basis for further growth.

'Chemically-pure capitalism' is never found; a greater or smaller admixture of State enterprise is inevitable. In a backward country it is bound to be greater rather than smaller because if things are left to the forces of the market and the spontaneous response of private business there is little or no certainty that growth will take place and there will be no future for capitalism. Debate is more likely to arise about the extent of State ownership and economic planning than about whether it should take on such tasks at all. In the light of the actual role of the State in the economy, what we have already seen about the nature of the ruling class, corroborated in the form of reassuring statements made by Indian leaders to the bourgeoisie abroad,<sup>5</sup> there is no doubt that the Indian economy

<sup>5</sup> Such as the well-known statement of the Governor of the Reserve Bank to a conference of industrialists in the USA in October, 1957. The relevant phrases were that socialism in India is 'a system under which

is not a form of socialism and is not heading for socialism.

What the official documents do is to express in the most conscious way the inescapable necessity for State initiative in mobilizing resources in order to raise a backward economy to a higher productive and technical level. The phraseology used evidently serves a useful purpose, and may even be sincere: it wins wider support and raises the policy above class differences in a supposedly national cause. Where it is sincere it is merely an aspiration—actual conditions, as we shall note later, are very distant from the word.

Commenting on the policy statements a United Nations report puts the matter thus:

'In operational terms . . . the extension of social ownership and social control of the means of production visualised in the plan (i.e., the Second Plan—T.K.) is not very great. In the sphere of organized industry (industry organized as factory enterprises), only about 3.5 per cent. of the total capital in the country is at present owned by the state. . . . In a mixed economy of the Indian type, there seems to be ample scope for free enterprise and private capital, and it is not clear that the course of industrial development will necessarily differ in a fundamental way from that of the industrialized economies of the West.'

The authors added that the ratio of government expenditure to gross domestic product was, in 1954, actually lower, at 12 per cent., in India than in the United States, at 19 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, not despite but because of the two Five-Year Plans, *private* business has done very well over the past decade. Even with a growing state sector the effect is to open up more favourable prospects to private business by expanding the market—e.g., in contracting, supplies of materials, demand for 'wage goods' (i.e., very cheap consumer goods) and so on. As the state plants come into operation so they offer better supplies, without the need for foreign exchange, and induce private investment in using industries.

competitive private enterprise has and will continue to have a vital role to play; it is a system which respects private property, and provides for compensation if such property is acquired by the state. . . . The most important schemes which have been reserved for the public sector are those for which the private sector is unable to find resources . . . the result of the setting up of plants by the government will necessarily be to create conditions in which the private sector can operate to advantage. . . .'

<sup>6</sup> Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East, 1957, pages 69-70. 'In the sphere of small scale industrial enterprises and agriculture, almost the entire stock of capital is privately owned.'

Even the investment undertaken in the public sector was not financed entirely through taxation or external loans and grants. Something like half represents voluntary private savings, presumably in large part from the business classes, giving them a capital claim and the right to interest payments and representing their confidence in the mixed economy of the plan era.<sup>7</sup> Despite private industry's complaints about high taxation, which are sometimes echoed in the press in Britain, new enterprises have been granted considerable concessions and overall levels have not been high.<sup>8</sup>

It is part of the socio-political balance of Nehru's India that, despite socialist and liberal phraseology, the rights of private capital are sacrosanct even where they impede the attainment of rates of growth thought to be desirable. The necessary incentives have to be offered to private investors and businessmen, including foreigners, to fill gaps in the plan. Indeed joint private state concerns, often involving the financial participation of foreign firms, have

<sup>7</sup> 'Savings in India are still essentially private. Government surpluses on current account were not expected to be significant over the second plan period. The public investment programme has essentially depended upon borrowing domestically and abroad'. Mandelbaum, W., in 'American Economic Review', June, 1959.

<sup>8</sup> 'Some people have the impression that tax rates are high in India. This is wrong. Only corporation tax and direct personal tax on the very rich are high, and the latter is not effective. Other rates of tax are mostly low.' Little, I. M. D., 'Economic Review', May, 1960.

been set going in a number of industries.<sup>9</sup> The logic of the mixed economy is not to break the hold of private capital but to delimit its sphere of unfettered operation under conditions where profitable outputs actually expand faster, and under more stable conditions, than would otherwise have been the case.

While this has been the situation in India in the 1950s, the other side of the mixed economy has been shown in the failure of economic achievement to match expectations and the cloud of uncertainty which hangs over the Third Plan. For all the fine words of the statesmen the problems at the end of the Second Plan are as immense as those at the beginning of the First. The Plans have not broken out of the circle of quasi-permanent backwardness and stagnation. In income per head little or no gain has been recorded. Chronic malnutrition bears down upon the masses of the people. Massive unemployment and underemployment continues in town and country. Only small inroads have been made into the prevailing illiteracy, ignorance and superstition. Overcrowding and a low expectation of life are still the lot of the vast majority. Famine may strike from one year to the next. This remains the social reality of India behind the statistical record of the Plans. Of course, without the Plans things would have been worse; the question is why they have not been better.

<sup>9</sup> 'Almost every one of the Indian Government's new industries has been set up and started in close co-operation with some foreign firms.' 'Public Enterprise in Indian Industry'. Baldwin, G. B., 'Pacific Affairs', 1957, page 7.

### Barriers to Advance

It is not the intention of this article to give a technical appraisal of the Plans.<sup>10</sup> Within the social and political structures summarized here it is unlikely that any re-arrangement of the same total of investment would have given greatly different results; or that a greatly larger total was feasible.<sup>11</sup> The planners have been essentially right to place priority emphasis on heavy industry; it is not the emphasis itself which is at fault. It is true that some unforeseen circumstances cut into the Plan in 1957-8, namely, unfavourable monsoons, which reduced the foodgrain harvest, drained away foreign exchange and distorted the economy through the effect on prices and market demand, and the world

<sup>10</sup> An excellent recent one is in the article by I. M. D. Little, note 8.

<sup>11</sup> Of course, as most economists agree, it—and the total envisaged for the Third Plan—is entirely inadequate for India's needs.

recession. Foreign aid, about which more will be said later, plugged the gaps and averted disaster.

For many the major problem of India is the Malthusian bogey of too rapid population growth which, on a per capita basis, eats up practically all the increase in production attained by the plans. There is no wish to underestimate this problem, but it is a little too easy to shift the burden on to the Indian women who think that by moving along the beads given them to calculate the safe period they can avoid pregnancy.<sup>12</sup> If a more concerted attack had been possible upon other aspects of backwardness the population problem might not have loomed so large, both because incomes might have increased faster and resistance to birth control would have been weaker.

The crucial fact which hangs over the entire dis-

<sup>12</sup> As seemed to be the implication of a recent 'Times' editorial on the subject.

discussion is that in the same decade the economic growth of China was vastly more impressive. Not only has investment been greater but consumption levels, while still low, have been rising at a steady rate.<sup>13</sup> If the issue is to be decided on economic grounds it can be confidently asserted that India has already lost and is losing further ground each year.<sup>14</sup> But before China's economic expansion could take place there had to be a decisive break out of the barriers imposed by the old social and political structures. Such a social revolution has not taken place in India. In fact the Indian bourgeoisie has not been able to perform the role which was played by its counterparts in the advanced countries; it has not been able to carry out even the historical

<sup>13</sup> The careful comparison of Indian and Chinese development by W. Mandelbaum, one of the best informed American economists on Indian matters, already cited, is striking and authoritative. Thus, in the fifties Indian growth was at a rate of 3.5 per cent. per annum; China's was threefold (300 per cent. for the decade). As for the supposed restriction of consumption in China he writes 'despite China's larger allocations to investment and to other government uses, and despite its more rapid rate of population growth, the per capita levels of household consumption began to forge ahead of the levels prevailing in India'. On the basis of greater reliance on domestic investment, China's potential for economic growth has increased faster; the gap will widen to India's 'disadvantage'.

<sup>14</sup> A French agricultural economist has written that 'The agricultural competition China-India has already been clearly won by China'. R. Dumont, 'France-Observateur', May 29, 1959.

tasks of a bourgeois revolution. It has not been able to carry out an agrarian reform because it is linked in Congress and Parliament with the landlords and usurers who batten on the peasantry and keep it in tow. It has not dared to lay its hands on the caste system and the uneconomic religious practices of Hinduism because it profits from the former and is afraid of the demands which the common people would make once they were freed from the consolation of starving alongside their sacred cows. Yes, it is capable of brave words, progressive-sounding declarations and even technical achievements of no mean order—but it is no more ready than any other ruling class to risk its social existence or to abdicate its power. A strong bourgeoisie, based on an advanced industrial and commercial structure is in a different position. So was the ascendant bourgeoisie of Europe in the period of capitalism's youthful vigour, when it was still a buoyant and expansive system; such a bourgeoisie was self-confident, ready, when occasion demanded, to take on king or priest. The bourgeoisie of a backward country in the mid-twentieth century is in a considerably weaker position than either of these cases. Backwardness makes it weak; because it is weak it cannot make a frontal attack on the main sources of backwardness. It makes a brave show of advancing in one sector—as the Plans show—while in others it prefers to let things take their course. In the event that means inevitable dependence upon the rest of the world bourgeoisie to whom it looks for help in solving problems which, from its standpoint, are otherwise insoluble.

### The Agrarian Question

The inability of the bourgeoisie to tackle the agrarian problems of India is the most glaring reflection of its impotence. The nature of these problems is no mystery and lip-service is repeatedly paid to the need for a change in the land system and in the methods of agriculture. What has been accomplished by the government through land reform, community development, extension work and the provision of irrigation and fertilisers has made only a minor contribution to the problem. Reforms such as the abolition of the zamindari system have been half-hearted or have not changed the basic structures in the village. There have been resolutions by Congress on the limitation of land holdings and the need to encourage agricultural co-operation but there is little doubt that even if efforts were made to implement them centrally opposition at the local level would be sufficient to block real change.

One-seventh of India's peasants are landless, but

the holdings of the great majority are too small or the rents and crop shares exacted by the landlords too great to give an adequate diet.<sup>15</sup> Something like a third of the gross product of the land goes in rent (in money or in kind) and interest payments to the rural gentry and bourgeoisie. To meet their payments the peasants have to sell a large part of the harvest as soon as it is brought in at low prices and are in the market to buy grain—if they have the money—as prices rise before the next harvest.<sup>16</sup> Such is the typical peasants' lot in a backward economy with a commercial sector and a parasitic rural ruling class. As yet there has not been a pro-

<sup>15</sup> 'Dietary statistics suggest that the majority of Indians are slowly dying of malnutrition: the expectation of life is still under forty years.' I. M. D. Little, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> This, of course, is the main reason for the resort to the usurer.

found and widespread awakening of the peasantry; peasant movements against landlordism have been partial and limited. There seems little doubt that by and large the rural gentry has retained its leadership in the village and that the mass of the peasants have acquiesced, or, after brief and unsuccessful struggles lapsed into apathy.<sup>17</sup> At the same time this class has 'effectively delayed or (through influence on local administration) effectively negated legislation creating ceilings on land ownership'. A sentimental and platonic kind of populism expressed by urban politicians tends to obscure the real balance of forces, for Congress is based, in the villages, upon the landlord and usurer elements and obviously cannot promote rural reform which would destroy their power. Thus, when 'The Economist' laments the low level of rural taxation,<sup>18</sup> it is not the peasantry which is getting away with it but a substantial section of the Indian ruling class. There is virtually no more prospect of the government being able to raise taxation as a means of providing means for investment in, say, new fertiliser plants

<sup>17</sup> These power relations are described by Dumont and in, detail for a particular area, in 'Changing Patterns of Political Leadership In West Bengal', 'Pacific Affairs', September, 1959, by M. Weiner, from which the quotation in the next sentence comes.

<sup>18</sup> In special section devoted to India, March 26, 1960. This may be a good point to note that the view was there expressed that 'India does not need to emulate China's extreme and agonised processes of accumulation. But a sound (?) and steady (!) degree of progress (!?) in India there must be if under-developed countries generally are to feel (?) that the economic benefits of development and the political benefits of the open society can be combined in the modern world'. Can it be said that India—or at any rate the bulk of India's 480 million enjoy either of these?

than there is of it carrying through even the kind of agrarian change associated with bourgeois revolutions in the past.

It is easy to suggest what should be done. Economists and agronomists have given detailed advice, but for such precepts to be carried out an effective social force is required which can break the power of the ruling class in the village; that is what they often overlook or wish aside.<sup>19</sup> Everybody can see, for example, that India has a great reservoir of labour in the countryside, that the food situation is acutely serious and deteriorating and that if this labour could be put to work, the level of agriculture raised and a will to improvement induced, the prospects would improve. It can be said quite plainly, however, that there will be no transformation of the rural economy as long as the bourgeoisie rules. The problem is not one of technique or education; it is one of social forces. That tension exists in the village is clear enough. The spell of tradition will not last for ever. The example of China, however distasteful it may be to Western observers who have never had an empty belly or seen their children starve, cannot fail to grow in potency. A peaceful agrarian revolution by consent is out of the question; nor is it conceivable that a spontaneous, purely peasant movement can do the trick. The great unfinished task of the bourgeois revolution devolves inevitably upon the organized working class of India.

<sup>19</sup> Dumont poses the question: 'Is a real non-totalitarian reform possible? The whole future of our civilization depends upon the reply which will be given to this question by the backward countries'. 'Cahiers de la République', May-June, 1960. The question is not one of totalitarianism or 'our civilization' but is more like that which is put in the text.

### Foreign Aid

Discussion of Indian economic problems inevitably reverts to the question of external aid. The drawing down of accumulated balances overseas and external loans, private or public, or grants from foreign governments have furnished an important part of the funds for the Second Five-Year Plan. At least £1,700 million is expected to come from this source for the next plan. Indeed, the Second Plan required a bigger drain on foreign exchange than had been expected—largely owing to the food crisis of 1957-58—and emergency foreign aid warded off disaster and enabled the major cuts in investments to be restored. Since then, in view of the overall deficit in foodgrain production, the grain supplies from the United States under Public Law

480 have been a vital part of the country's link with world capitalism. These supplies, when sold by the Indian government, give rise to counterpart funds which, while initially under the control of the American ambassador, are then secured for use in financing certain internal projects.

Generally speaking it is India's urgent dependence upon foreign assistance that her 'well-wishers' in the 'free world' see as a means of preventing a revolution which might tip the scales against capitalism throughout the world. 'Foreign assistance', writes one of the more liberal observers, 'is a major tool of foreign policy. Its aim is to achieve certain objectives of the supplying country which involve decisions by the recipient country—decisions

bearing on the form and content of that nation's own internal and foreign policies'.<sup>20</sup> The language is recondite, but the meaning is unambiguous. Some writers point to the fact that the stake of 'the West' is economic as well as political: thus India contributes raw materials to the world market and 'with the foreign exchange earned from the sale of these products, the underdeveloped countries purchase manufactured commodities from Western countries and thus stimulate employment in the export industries of the latter'.<sup>21</sup> India, for example, is an important market for British industry, if no longer a source of tribute on the old scale. But private investment is still important. Thus, as a business editor puts it: 'For the lending governments of the West it (foreign help) represents an investment in the political stability of the uncommitted Afro-Asian world. For the foreign investor it offers an opportunity according to his judgment, to secure a footing in an economy which is manifestly expanding, despite errors on the part of the planning authority and the political hazards to come'.<sup>22</sup>

It is true that there are some discordant voices in 'the West' on this question, mainly among those who take Nehru's spurious 'socialism' for good coin. According to them, before aid is accorded guarantees should be obtained that it is not going to be used to the detriment of Western capitalism. It is argued by a leading exponent of this view that foreign aid 'would be much more likely to retard the rise of general living standards in India than to accelerate it, and to obstruct rather than promote the emergence of a solid resistance to totalitarian appeal'.<sup>23</sup> Such a view is probably to be regarded as eccentric, at any rate in the circles nearest to the governments of the United States and Britain. The views expressed by 'The Economist', which seems positively to want to encourage the Indian government to ask for more aid, are more typical. Certainly, assuming that Indian economic growth is a sure safeguard against so-called totalitarianism, provided of course, that it is not preceded or accompanied by a social revolution, then this view is correct. As yet growth in India has still to outstrip population increase; even more ambitious plans are clearly required to do this. Present plans, and even more bigger ones, inevitably involve a yawning balance of payments deficit and thus dependence upon loans and grants

<sup>20</sup> Mandelbaum, W. 'East and West In India's Development', page 52.

<sup>21</sup> Berliner, J. S. 'Soviet Economic Aid' (abridged version), page 9.

<sup>22</sup> Tyson, G. (former editor of the Indian business journal 'Capital'), in Lloyd's Bank Review, April, 1960.

<sup>23</sup> Bauer, P. A. 'United States Aid and Indian Economic Development'.

from the advanced countries. More aid rather than less is thus indicated; and, if the aid is not forthcoming from 'the West' then it is clear that more offers will come from Russia and her allies. The great fear of the 60s is an India 'going totalitarian'.

However, there is no certainty that more aid will prevent this. It is not a simple case of so much aid equals so much investment equals so much increase in output. It is also a qualitative question involving the relation between social forces working themselves out in an involved and, let it be said, unpredictable combination.

The issues raised by the Western advocates of more aid provoke two additional comments. The first of these concerns the fear that economic pressures may lead Nehru or his successors to resort to totalitarian or authoritarian methods in presumed emulation of the Russians or Chinese. It is true, as impartial observers have pointed out, that parliamentary democracy in India exists on the sufferance of the 'educated elite', i.e., the bourgeoisie. But it is also true that observers with no taint of Marxism have made another comparison which will only startle the starry-eyed. 'After a decade of power', writes one, 'the Congress is in decline. For many it appears to have alarming similarities with the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-Shek after the Second World War'.<sup>24</sup> If further decay should set in, for example, after Nehru's demise, a slide into military-bureaucratic dictatorship seems the most likely possibility, as has happened in Pakistan and Indonesia.<sup>25</sup> Such a regime, bonapartist in character, is unlikely to be unkind to business interests, whether national or foreign. Many of those who now praise Indian parliamentarism and 'democracy' would be able to accommodate themselves to such a change, notwithstanding any totalitarian implications it might have. After all, Congress has itself used such methods as preventive detention, restrictions on press freedom, interference with State government (Kerala) and open repression (Calcutta food riots, Jamshedpur strike). A move to the right would undoubtedly be welcome by some of its supporters and would correspond to a mood which is quite widespread

<sup>24</sup> From a review of a biography of Nehru, by Brecher in 'Far Eastern Survey', September, 1959.

<sup>25</sup> Tanya Zinkin's view that because India has a large middle class (which she says, is also the ruling class), which is also Hindu, and that this 'makes a military dictatorship impossible', can only be regarded as an act of faith. So can her assertion that India has discovered 'the poor man's alternative to Communism' and 'with each day is moving more and more towards Socialism'. See 'Pacific Affairs', March, 1959, page 90. As the Guardian correspondent she is an important source of information on Indian affairs for British 'public opinion' (i.e., of the liberal middle class!)



among the bourgeoisie, both in business and in the bureaucracy—a mood of élitism and contempt of the masses from which could issue a form of fascism. In such an event property rights would be respected. It is difficult to envisage an Indian government based on the bourgeoisie using the methods of Stalinism as appears in the nightmare visions of some commentators in the West.

The second point is that the remarks made about foreign aid do not imply that it is believed that such aid can be dispensed with. For a bourgeois India it is obviously indispensable for political as well as economic reasons; it is a lifeline in time of stress as well as a vital component of the plans. It is foreign aid, more than any other single factor, which has enabled the ruling class to retain command of the situation. Even a popular socialist government could not dispense with outside assistance. It is true that foreign trade is a small part of the gross national income; but this small participation in the international division of labour is in part a reflection of low living standards. Certainly 'socialism in one country' is even more illusory in India than in Russia. Taking the view that India needs more investment—which is common to all

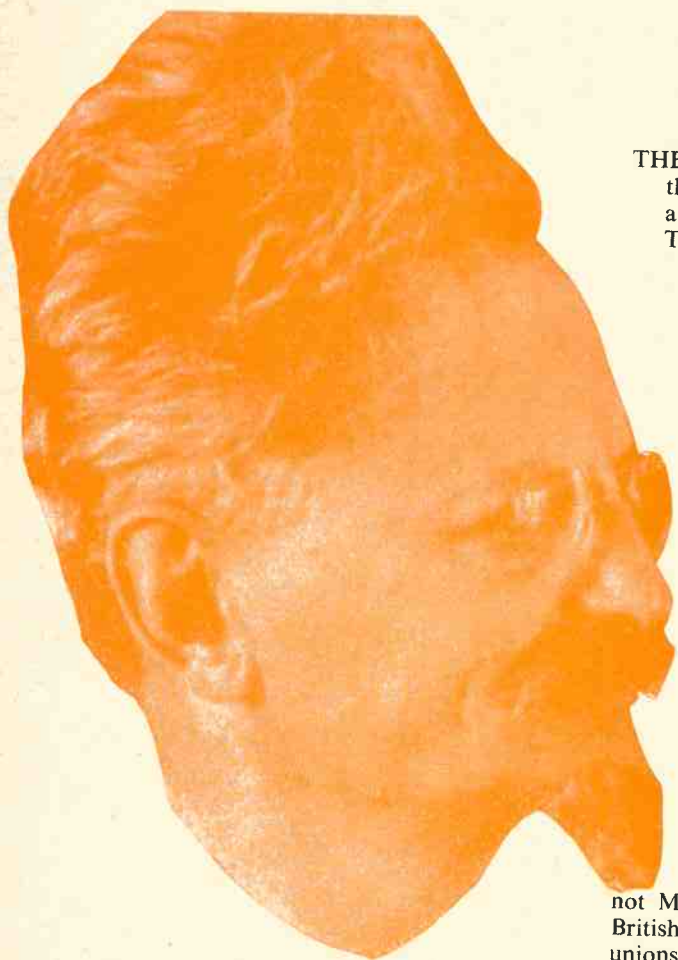
schools of thought—a socialist planned economy would concentrate on building up the industries producing means of production; and here again this emphasis is also seen in the Plans of the 50s. The reason for this is that the possibility of raising consumption level in the longer period, say 15 years, will be greater than if major emphasis was placed on investment which would raise consumption more in the short term. Such an emphasis may, in the longer run, reduce Indian dependence on external sources of supply and more particularly of aid. Its immediate effect is to require large imports of machinery and equipment, which can only come from the more advanced countries. The existing governments of capitalist countries could be expected to display hostility to the kind of Indian government we have envisaged: the task of rendering assistance to the successful revolution in India would thus devolve upon the working class in other countries. It is true that such a government could, and would, turn to the Sino-Soviet bloc for economic and technical aid; but it is not certain that what would be available from this source would be adequate or that the conditions attached to such aid would be acceptable.

### Prospects

In any case, the crucial factor would be that such a government could only come into being as the result of a full and direct participation of large masses of the people under the leadership of the working class. In the course of such a movement enthusiasm and energies would be released, leaders found and new organizations formed which would make possible an unprecedented mobilization of India's human resources and a more or less rapid breaking down of the barriers to growth which the bourgeoisie has been unable to remove. Clearly the major task of capital formation, in the sense of an increase in the stock of productive equipment of all kinds, must come from domestic sources. There is no reason why such a task should involve the distortions and authoritarianism which have accompanied the upsurge of the New China; but there are clearly lessons to be learned from the Chinese experience from which, in the nature of things, a bourgeois regime cannot profit at all. Everybody talks about the need for labour-intensive projects (i.e., undertakings in which there is a low ratio of capital to labour) and about the need to stir the peasantry into improving the output from the land. But to

mobilize millions and organize such schemes on a nation-wide scale to evoke the willing participation of the peasants in all the desirable steps indicated for them by the agronomists can only become practicable when they are given a lead and can see that they are working in unison for their own future. They cannot be mobilized by the caste-conscious or the lily-handed, but only by people from their own ranks or who are close to them and understand their problems, after the style of the vitally important local cadres in China. There must be discipline to co-ordinate effort and to deal with resistance and obstruction; that is understood. But this does not mean inevitable totalitarianism and bureaucratic degeneration. What it does offer is the only prospect for India's teeming millions to lift themselves out of their present poverty and apathy and to win a new dignity as well as material improvement. To make this hope reality is the practical task of the socialist movement in India in the coming years; a task which can only be realised if the working class of the other countries play their part by breaking the power of capitalism at home.

# LEON TROTSKY writes on the British labour movement



THE LIBRARY of no student or active member of the working-class movement can be considered anywhere near complete if it lacks a copy of Trotsky's classic work.

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