

LABOUR REVIEW

Vol. 2

MARCH-APRIL 1957

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Editorial

TOWARDS A DISCUSSION ON PRINCIPLES

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INSIDE SOVIET RUSSIA TODAY

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CORRESPONDENCE

In spite of the spectacular technical beauty of the first issue of *Labour Review*, a printer's (or was it an editorial?) devil seems to have got loose in my review of Jack Lindsay's book, *After the Thirties*. Various inverted commas would not, perhaps, be missed, but some of the misprints and omissions which stand over my name need correction. Firstly, Hugh MacDiarmid has an *r* in his name, which deserves to be spelt correctly. Secondly, I spoke of the canonisation of Sean O'Casey, not as a socialist saint (which he is already if socialists can make saints) but as a **socialist-realist** saint (which he is not, either objectively or in his own assessment). The name of **socialist-realism** has been so sullied by the bigotry which has so long borne it as a banner, that even if he wanted to (which I am sure he does not) an artist of the power of O'Casey could have no connection with it.

Ever since Radek's speech of 1935, the name of James Joyce has been exercised by "socialist-realists" the world over. Zhdanov and the Pope in a new Popular Front! Yet O'Casey without Joyce is an omelette without an egg.

Thirdly, and perhaps the most important, a cut in my text appears to leave the impression that I congratulate Mr. Lindsay on his treatment of Lewis Grassic Gibbon. Nothing could be further from my intention. What I actually said was:

"Quite rightly Mr. Lindsay devotes a fair amount of space to Grassic Gibbon, who was a novelist of the very highest stature, and is unjustly neglected by socialists today. What he neglects to tell us, though, and should surely remember, since the burden of his thesis is the necessity of membership of the Communist Party as the "open sesame" to literary perception, is that Grassic Gibbon was expelled from the Communist Party just before he died—for Trotskyism. (See Hugh MacDiarmid's well-known essay *Lewis Grassic Gibbon*). Is this another posthumous "rehabilitation"? If so, why can't we have all the facts?"

I should still like the answer.

KEN COATES.

Nottingham.

I think it important to point out a grave mistake in John Daniels' interesting "Letter to a Member of the Communist Party" (*Labour Review*, January, 1957).

He writes that the theory that Russia is state capitalist is a trap into which intellectuals fall in the early phases of unmasking Stalinism. As a matter of fact, the history of the theory is more respectable. Many Trotskyists of long standing have subscribed to it, as the following few cases will show:

Natalia Sedova Trotsky (Leon Trotsky's widow) came out in support of the theory more than eleven years ago. Alfred Rosmer, founding member of the French CP and one of its secretaries, probably the only surviving participator in the Zimmerwald Conference, founder of the Left Opposition in France, subscribes to it today. Of greater significance is the fact that this theory was supported as long ago as the early

'thirties by the whole of the imprisoned Left Opposition in Russia (Trotskyists) as can be seen in Anton Ciliga's *The Russian Enigma*. (Ciliga was a Yugoslav Trotskyist who spent many years as a Left Oppositionist in Stalin's prisons).

MICHAEL KIDRON.

London.

John Daniels writes:-

If Michael Kidron will re-read my article he will see that I did not describe the theory which holds that Russia today is a "State Capitalist" society as a "trap into which intellectuals fall in the early phases of unmasking Stalinism". The word "trap" implies malice aforethought, suggesting that I accused the architects of the "State Capitalist" theory of deliberately inventing it in order to capture, amongst others, ex-Communists, presumably to suborn them away from Socialism. What, in fact, I wrote was that "many intellectuals" of the Communist Party, in turning away from Stalinism "began to flirt with the theory of State Capitalism". Here I was merely recording a statistical fact I believe I observed. Perhaps my eyes deceived me. To "contradict" me, Michael Kidron should deny the validity of my statistics and show that no (or very few) ex-Communists have approached the position of "State Capitalism". He should know. Perhaps my word "many" was an exaggeration. I withdraw it—gladly. But Michael Kidron should not accuse me of doubting his own good intentions. He raises this point, not me—though, perhaps, as the French say, *qui s'excuse, s'accuse*.

Of course, I did not have space in my "open letter" to analyse the truth and error of every trend I mentioned. I specifically stated, however, that this needed doing. It was precisely for this reason that the editors asked Michael Kidron to write an article for *Labour Review* describing how the theory of State Capitalism had explained better than any alternative theory recent events in Russia, Poland and Hungary. Unfortunately, Michael Kidron replied that he believes discussing in the press such important theoretical questions as "Is Russia State Capitalist?", is, at the present time, "sectarian".

Perhaps this is sufficient answer to Michael Kidron's letter, but it is necessary also to point out that, in his eagerness to prove that the theory State Capitalism is "respectable", Michael Kidron **distorts** the facts. Incidentally, haven't we all, these days, abandoned the practice of trying to defend a theory by listing its eminent supporters? What does it **prove** if Trotsky's widow does subscribe to State Capitalism? Precisely nothing—except that Natalia Trotsky subscribes to this theory. However, even here, Michael Kidron is **distorting** the facts. There are a dozen different theories, all very different, which have been labelled by their authors "State Capitalism". Michael Kidron "forgot" to include Lenin in his list—for Lenin used the term "State Capitalism" to describe N.E.P. Russia, though at the same time, of course, he believed it to be a Workers' State. Every branch of science is plagued with this human practice of using the **same** word to name **different** concepts. Michael Kidron is another "victim" of this practice. The State Capitalist theory to which Natalia Trotsky is reported to have declared her support, viz. that of Bruno R., is a very different theory from that which, I believe, Michael Kidron holds.

As for Ciliga, his concept of the "class" of "State Capitalists" who rule Russia is also totally unlike the sort of class (whose "historical role"—Stalin having "chosen" to isolate Russia from the revolutionary proletariat in the industrially advanced countries—was to industrialise Russia) which again I believe is the variety of State Capitalism to which Michael Kidron subscribes. (See Ciliga *New Militant*, 18.4.36).

Finally, and "of greater significance", it is **just not true** that Ciliga, in "The Russian Enigma" states, as Michael Kidron alleges, that "the whole of the imprisoned Left Opposition in Russia (Trotskyists)" subscribed to the theory of State Capitalism. His chapter 8, "And Now?", is, in fact, mainly devoted to describing how a tiny minority (in all "about 10"—p. 271) of the "whole" of the imprisoned Left Opposition in the Verkhne-Uralsk prison camp (viz. 120 out of 140 communist prisoners—p. 209—and these were at this stage the only prisoners Ciliga could and did write about) split on this very issue of State Capitalism from the "Trotskyist majority" whose "preoccupations left me (Ciliga J. D.) indifferent"—p. 263. On page 124, Ciliga even refers to a certain Densov as "practically the only Trotskyist to consider Soviet economy as a form of State Capitalism". Again in the *Militant* (25.1.36), Ciliga wrote: "The views of the Bolshevik-Leninists in the penitentiary were oriented in the same direction as those of the Opposition abroad and those of L. D. Trotsky," who, as is well known, vigorously opposed State Capitalist theories right up to his death.

So much for Michael Kidron's exposure of "a grave mistake".

Bob Davies is preparing a reply to William Hunter's article in the last issue. It is hoped to publish this reply, which will be entitled "The Inadequacies of Russian Trotskyism", in the next number of *Labour Review*.

LABOUR REVIEW

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Editorial

Towards a Discussion on Principles

THE FIRST ISSUE of *Labour Review* naturally aroused a good deal of interest in the socialist movement. We have received many, many letters, the overwhelming majority of which whole-heartedly and unreservedly congratulated us. We think it sufficient to quote one which is typical of this sort of letter. It reads: "Let me congratulate you on *Labour Review*. It is, without doubt, the best Marxist journal in English I have ever seen, both from the point of view of form and content". That letter came from a man who, until four months ago, was a leading member of the Communist Party and who was formerly a full-time official of that Party. There have been many such letters and naturally, we welcomed them all.

In a sense, however, correspondents who wrote in this vein did not help the editors as much as those whose welcome to *Labour Review* was qualified and supplemented by constructive criticism. In this editorial, we would like to take up some of the more important criticisms made of *Labour Review No. 1* and to explain our editorial reaction to them. The criticisms fall into three main types. Firstly, some critics said that several of the articles were too difficult for ordinary workers. Secondly, some said that too many articles were directed towards members and ex-members of the Communist Party. Thirdly, several people complained that some articles were "sectarian".

Let us first of all, then, examine the criticism that some articles were too difficult for "ordinary workers".

If what is meant by this is that *Labour Review* is not a popular, agitational journal, dealing with workers' day-to-day problems and intended for sale in large numbers, say, at any trade-union branch meeting—we must agree. But then this is not the function of *Labour Review* as your editors see it.

We do not, however, subscribe to the view that workers are unable to study and understand political theory. On the contrary, as Lenin brilliantly showed in *What is to be Done?*, because they are nearer to the class-struggle, nearer to the "realities" of social life, *if properly trained*, workers can grasp socialist theory more profoundly than the intellectuals. "The sin we commit," wrote Lenin, "is that we do not sufficiently

stimulate the workers to take this path, common to them and to the intellectuals, of revolutionary training, and that we too frequently drag them back by our silly speeches about what 'can be understood' by the masses of the workers, by the 'average workers'."

This does not of course mean that we only intend to publish *high fallutin* articles bespattered by long words. We shall certainly encourage all our contributors to write simply and directly. A genius is not one who has the ability to say things we all know in words we ordinary mortals don't understand, but is often one who is able to put into simple language, complicated and difficult ideas. On the other hand, our contributors will be encouraged to avoid "talking down" to workers and we hope that they will not practice that sort of over-simplification of complex theoretical matters which reduces them to shallowness.

There is one grave fault which Socialist writers are often guilty of—*jargon*. Writing in jargon is not just a bad and lazy habit but is usually a symptom of some deep-seated deficiency. Yet there is a real difficulty here. Marxism is a social science—the science of social evolution. *Labour Review* is meant to be a scientific journal whose function it is to communicate to its readers accounts of recent advances in Marxist science. *Labour Review* seeks to do for serious socialists what, for example, the *British Medical Journal* does for British doctors. For example, Marxists believe that the philosophy of dialectical materialism is an essential aspect of political thinking. Necessarily, therefore, *Labour Review* must publish philosophical articles *developing* (not merely reiterating) dialectical materialism. But just as the *British Medical Journal*, in writing about the search for some new, orally-administered substitute for insulin, has to assume that its readers know something about the causes for the rise and fall of blood-sugar concentration, so those who write in *Labour Review* on Marxist philosophy will have to assume that our readers are acquainted with, at least, the elementary propositions of dialectical materialism. *Labour Review No. 1* contained an article defending the Marxist theory of value from John Strachey's attack on it. Naturally, the two contributors had to assume, in

preparing this defence, that our readers already knew something about the labour theory of value. Readers who find any of our articles too difficult in this sense are invited to write to *Labour Review* and ask for a list of background books. We will be only too pleased to help.

Another of the difficulties about reading articles on Marxist science is that Marxism, like all sciences, has its own stock of technical terms. Technical terms are a kind of shorthand—they symbolise concepts arrived at through a long process of experiment, observation, analysis and reasoning.

For example, the technical term “the dictatorship of the proletariat” means something precise to the Marxist—though to those unacquainted with socialist theory, the very word *dictatorship* is simply a terrifying reminder of brutal, personal dictatorships of such people as Hitler. Yet the *dictatorship* (i.e. rule) of (meaning by) *the proletariat* (i.e. workers) has nothing in common with personal, autocratic dictatorship; it is in fact the highest form of democracy yet known. The way in which this particular technical term has often been used is a good example of how technical terms easily degenerate into jargon—and indeed it is sometimes difficult to draw a firm line between them. Technical terms become jargon when, instead of making an argument more precise, they confuse it. Jargon is the language of those who, because they lack *understanding* of their subject, are reduced to “blinding with science” both their audience and themselves. If *Labour Review* is ever guilty of this sort of conspiracy against its readers please call our attention to it, firmly.

Now a few remarks on the second criticism, viz., that a majority of articles are directed towards members and ex-members of the Communist Party. We agree that this was true of our first issue and is still true though to a lesser degree of our second. We make no apologies for this—but do promise to remedy matters in the future. It has become a truism, today, to say that the Communist Party is in a state of *acute* crisis. What is not widely enough realised, however, is that, out of loyalty to the great Russian Revolution of 1917, a loyalty misused to their own petty advantage by the Communist leaders, in Britain alone, thousands of promising young Marxists have for years been desiccated in the arid desert of Stalinism. At this critical stage in the break-up of Stalinism, it seems to us very important, in the interests of the socialist movement as a whole, to try to help many communist and ex-communists to find the road towards creative Marxism, and to save them from the sterility of Fabianism or continued imprisonment in the King Street intellectual lock-up. This issue of *Labour Review* appears just before the special National Congress of the Communist Party—a congress which, for good or ill, will be a decisive one. We hope that *Labour Review* will play a positive role in helping all those involved in this Congress who want to build a really strong Marxist movement in Britain.

However, we hope that our critics on this second score will be somewhat appeased if we list some of the articles to appear in future issues of *Labour Review*. During the next few months we shall publish, amongst others, articles on the following subjects:

The left-wing and the Labour Party; Youth and

the Socialist Movement; the present state of British Economy; Automation and Socialism; Marxism and the fight for Peace; the National and Colonial question; Socialism and literature; Natural Science and Marxism; Rosa Luxembourg.

Finally, we want to say something about the criticism that *Labour Review No. 1* showed *sectarian* features. This question of sectarianism in the British Socialist movement raises some particularly deep-seated, complex problems. One major difficulty arises because the word has been misused so frequently as a standard “swear-word” by Communist Party leaders. It is, indeed, interesting that, as far as we can discover, every single person who criticised us for our “sectarianism” was either a member or an ex-member of the Communist Party. This word has in the past been applied to so many things that it has ceased to have, for most people, any precise meaning. A good, precise technical term of Marxist science has been deliberately debased into jargon. In the Communist Party, “sectarianism” can mean anything from the attitude of a member who is so wrapped up in “serious” music that he has no time for “jazz” (or vice versa) to the opinion of someone who opposes a bureaucratically sponsored resolution recommending workers on strike to return to work “to allow negotiations to proceed”. Those who still believe U.N.O. to be a “thieves kitchen”, those who in the past said it was silly and degrading to adulate Stalin as a demi-god, those who never learned how to forget to use naughty “old fashioned” words like “dictatorship of the proletariat”, “Soviet power”, “reformist illusions”—all these, in their time, have been called “sectarian”. “Sectarian” in fact is, to the Communist leaders, a term for admonishing those who, however superficially, disagree with them. Socialists who disagree with them more fundamentally are, as is well known, just plain “fascist counter-revolutionaries”, “petit-bourgeois deviationists” or “police spies”.

In fact, what the Communist Party leaders have tried to do is to hide their own deep-rooted sectarianism (a legacy carried over from their opportunist adulation of Stalin) by flinging the term around as an epithet of abuse against all types of critic in their own party. Unfortunately, this very practice (which so many people have copied) has prevented honest Communists, in this critical phase of unmasking Stalinism, from making a fundamental analysis of what sectarianism really is, what its roots in the socialist movement are and how it can be eradicated. For ex-communists and dissident Communist Party members there is no more important task for them to undertake than this analysis. The first step, so it seems to us, is to stop mis-using the word “sectarian”, to stop labelling everyone on the left with whom they disagree as “sectarian”.

There are, of course, serious left-sectarian tendencies in the British Labour movement. Left-sectarianism is largely an emotional reaction to the corruption of right-wing reformist labour leaders. It substitutes impressions of developments as we would like them to be for a Marxist estimation of things as they really are. Perceiving right wing corruption, the left-sectarian declares, in effect, his own incorruptibility and his own “purity”. This induces him to suggest that he alone knows the answers to the problems of the labour movement which is as good a way as any to arrive at the con-

clusion that he alone has nothing to learn. Naturally, from this point of view he is driven on to declaring, in his high sounding "manifestos" that only those who believe as he does are "saved"—and promptly cuts himself adrift from the real movement of the working people. In a future issue of *Labour Review* we hope to deal with this question of left sectarianism more fully.

We are sure, however, that most of the people who criticised us for our "sectarianism" had something specific about *Labour Review No. 1* in mind. We ask our correspondents in making any criticisms always to try to be specific. Then we shall all know exactly what we are discussing. Two of our correspondents were good enough to be explicit. They attributed our "sectarianism" to what they called our "Trotskyism". True, one did preface his remarks with "I know very little about Trotskyism but . . ."

There are a number of aspects of this dubbing of Trotskyism as "sectarian". Of greatest importance, there is a tendency amongst some ex-communists to regard as sectarian all those views which represent a *direct* challenge to the existing capitalist state authority. If these people dared (for many of them still retain a sort of irrational, *god-like* awe for Lenin) they would castigate Lenin's writings on Britain (e.g. parts of "Left-Wing Communism"), as "sectarian".

Any socialist in Britain today, after the recent exposure of Stalinism (but still in the era of Stalin's "British Road to Socialism") is likely to be regarded by some people as *sectarian* just because he expresses the opinion that, say, no-one has yet produced evidence to show that the general opinions of Lenin on the nature of the British State, which he expressed in 1917, are now out of date. What would our critics say about *Labour Review* if we wrote, without quotation marks, the following?

"Today, in England and in America too, the preliminary condition for 'every real peoples' revolution' is the *smashing, the destruction* of the ready-made state machinery . . ." (Lenin *State & Revolution*).

Was Lenin sectarian? Are those who believe these words still to be true sectarian? Of course, it is easy to understand why so many ex-communists feel somewhat repelled by those who repeat Lenin's words today, for after all, for a whole generation, precisely the same words tripped so easily off the lips of Stalinist communist leaders and were made to serve the dirtiest political crimes. Certainly it is sectarian and doctrinaire to try to prove a point by repeating, parrot-wise, Marx or Lenin or Trotsky or Stalin—but the misuse of quotations does not invalidate the opinions of the authors quoted.

We have noticed, however, the tendency amongst some ex-communists to label as sectarian the *essentials* of Leninist thought. For example some readers may allege that many of Lenin's views are out of date, but, if they are, your Editors want to see them proved outmoded by concrete evidence—not by phrase-mongering and counter-phrase-mongering. *Labour Review* will gladly print any article on Leninism, however critical, which examines, objectively and concretely, Lenin's theories.

We do believe, however, that some of those who call *Labour Review* sectarian are, in fact, only rational-

ising their own inclinations to make an easy transition from Marx and Lenin to G. D. H. Cole and John Strachey. Would it be sectarian to call this a reformist trend? Apparently it is not the reformist political programme of the Communist Party these people object to but the bureaucratic dictatorship of party life operated by the communist leaders. As your Editors see it, there is, amongst a few vociferous ex-communists, a definite movement (though the path taken is circuitous) which should properly be described as a reformist accommodation to the continued pressure of imperialism upon those in the Labour Movement who are beginning to move away from Stalinism. We feel that now is the time to examine closely all such trends before they have become hardened into dogma.

Your Editors also happen to believe that no-one has yet produced evidence to vindicate a reformist approach to socialism in Britain or elsewhere. But this does not mean that we (or most of our readers) have fixed ideas about all matters connected with socialism and are content to settle every new question by resorting to labels and quotations from the "classics"—Marx, Lenin or Trotsky. On the contrary, we want to encourage every socialist to write down his thoughts on how the problems of socialist advance in Britain will be solved; we want to publish these views so that we all can, together, examine them, sift them, integrate them and develop them. Those who disagree with any of the views expressed by any of the contributors to *Labour Review* should not dismiss our journal with the "swear-word" *sectarian*, but should seriously set down their disagreements, unequivocally and at sufficient length for them to develop their disagreements adequately. We shall be pleased to publish them.

To return to this matter of Trotskyism. We appreciate the point of view of many members and ex-members of the Communist Party that whether or not Trotsky gave the best possible scientific explanation of events in the socialist movement during the last thirty years is a matter for debate and discussion. Trotsky and his followers have offered a serious analysis of the recent history of the socialist movement. Their writings represent an attempt, in a period of revolutionary retreat, to continue, after Lenin's death, the Marxist tradition in social science. They have produced a rich body of literature and ideas worthy of serious study by any literate socialist today on the application of Marxist, scientific methods of analysis to the problems of the international socialist movement.

More than this, the importance of "Trotskyism" for the great debate following the Khrushchev speech, is that it represents the *only* attempt so far made *from the point of view of Marxism* to explain the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and at estimating the significance of the conflict between the progressive character of nationalized property in the U.S.S.R. and the reactionary bureaucracy which rules that country. Trotskyism is, to date, the only explanation of why the working class of the world needs to defend the U.S.S.R. from imperialist attacks, whilst also helping the Russian workers to get rid of the bureaucracy which autocratically rules them. It was Trotsky who insisted that the bureaucracy would not voluntarily give up its privileges or liberalise itself as a result of mass pressure. He maintained over and over again that it must be

overthrown by the revolutionary working class led by a Marxist leadership. Hungary showed how right Trotsky had been on this point. Nor, as far as we can see, have any recent events in the U.S.S.R. itself done anything but confirm the correctness of his analysis.

Likewise the present crisis in the Communist Parties outside the Soviet Union is further proof that the bureaucrats who control these parties, no matter what their difficulties may be as a result of Khrushchev's speech, are absolutely incapable of transforming them into genuine revolutionary parties. These parties, like the Soviet bureaucracy whom they represent, can never adopt revolutionary policies. That is why they are now split into a number of factions each engaged in a bitter struggle with the bureaucrats.

Trotsky's was the only Marxist theory, deriving its inspiration from Lenin, to expose and explain the facts that Khrushchev later revealed—at a time when Communists and false “friends” of the U.S.S.R. were selling their political souls to Stalin. For this reason, Trotsky's theoretical explanation of the phenomenon of Stalinism stands until someone produces a better explanation. For all Marxists today are asking for a more scientific explanation of Stalinism than Khrushchev's “devil cult” or Mao Tse-Tung's eclectic catalogue of “mistakes” and “achievements”.

Some people say that there is a danger of involving the British socialist movement in 1957 in a discussion on the relative merits of one side or another engaged in a sterile, obscure political controversy, between two sects of the Russian Communist Party conducted in far-away Russia, way back in the 1920's and so diverting our attention from the urgent problems of Britain today. Unfortunately for our native empiricists, the truth is that, one way or another, and whether we like it or not, the future of socialism in any part of the world today is bound up, inextricably, with the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its outcome. We cannot escape its presence however we may try. The “Russian question” remains the key for Marxists who wish to derive a correct theory for the socialist movement in Britain today.

Others have remarked that there is a danger of elevating Trotsky into a new “socialist god”. *Labour Review* will certainly have nothing to do with encouraging such an attitude to Trotsky or, for that matter, to any one else. Nor, we believe, would Trotsky him-

self have permitted this to happen. We are absolutely certain that Trotsky did not and could not dot the last ‘i’ or cross the last ‘t’ of Marxism. His achievements would not have been possible without mistakes. What *Labour Review* says (unlike the “would-be” Marxists of the Communist Party even in their present mood of public breast-beating over Stalin) is that Trotsky needs to be studied. *Labour Review*, Trotsky, the *Reasoner*, *Universities and Left Review*, Lenin, Tito, Gomulka, *World News*, or Marx himself, not one of these holds the magic key to unlock the future. That key can only be provided by the unity of theoretical study with concrete activity and accurate detailed observation of real life. Trotsky's are some of the more important works to study . . .

For these reasons, *Labour Review* publishes articles, which, amongst others, are written from the standpoint of Trotskyism. We would, however, welcome, *from any source*, that sort of criticism of Trotskyism which, in exposing what they consider to be Trotskyism's shortcomings, point the road to a better theory.

We do want, however, to emphasize that *Labour Review* is *not* a sectional, Trotskyist journal. We wish to make it the main journal for conducting the principled discussion of every aspect of revolutionary theory. But *Labour Review* is not a mere discussion forum for all those who are left of centre in the Labour Movement. We are not a “front” magazine patronised by “good friends”. *Labour Review* is intended to be a journal for the development and enrichment of Marxism, establishing and developing the scientific laws of the way in which the people of the world, each day, create their own living history.

Our columns are open to all who wish to put a point of view on how Marxist science is to be enriched. Editorially, therefore, we welcome, for example, Bob Davies on William Hunter as heartily as we welcome William Hunter on Bob Davies. What the Marxist movement in Britain needs above all else is a fundamental, many-sided, uncensored, principled discussion of the problems of the British and international labour movements, a discussion which will *educate* (not *indoc-trinate*) us all in the strategy and tactics of socialist revolution.

Labour Review's aim, in a word, is to *develop* Marxism, not to *revise* it—two different things, as Lenin showed to his generation.

The Manchester Guardian and the Suez Crisis

(A Study of "Liberal" Journalism in the Imperialist Epoch)

Gracchus

"In times of crisis people have to declare where they stand."

Editorial "*Manchester Guardian*", 10.11.56.*

THE Suez events revealed fundamental divergences of opinion between the American and British ruling classes, and between various sections of the British ruling class itself. These divergences illustrate in the clearest manner, and for all to see, the insoluble dilemma now confronting Imperialism. The capitalist class does not readily wash its dirty linen in public. That it has recently been compelled to do so is symptomatic of the profound crisis it has now entered.

These differences of opinion were dressed up and presented as questions of "principle", "morality" and "respect of law". They were in fact nothing of the kind. They reflected different and at times conflicting sectional interests and different appraisals of the forces to be contended with. Different assessments were made of the strength of the still developing colonial revolution, of the mood of the masses in the advanced capitalist countries, and of the severity of the internal crisis now confronting the Stalinist bureaucracy. Some judged this crisis severe enough to have rendered Stalinism incapable, for a while, of effective action in its own interests. From these varying estimates there arose different strategical and tactical conclusions as to what could be done, what could be "got away with", which risks were worth taking and which were too great, because they were liable to aggravate and accelerate the whole crisis of Imperialism and lead to uncontrollable revolutionary developments. These divergences and splits within the ruling class characterise all truly revolutionary epochs in history.

The British ruling class did not embark on the Suez adventure as a united force. Certain sections, more far-sighted than others, realised the immense dangers to capitalism as a whole inherent in the imperialist aggression and did everything in their power to alter the policy of the Eden administration, both before the outbreak of military operations and during the brief period of "armed conflict". It would be a gross over-simplification of the Marxist method to imagine that in periods of crisis the capitalist class acts homogeneously and with a fully thought-out programme. Under stress different sections of the ruling class achieve varying degrees of insight into the basic interests of the class as a whole. Some sections prefer to remain patiently in the frying-pan, others to leap boldly out into the fire!

Of the organs of "enlightened" capitalist opinion, none opposed the Suez adventure with more vigour and consistency (or with a better realisation of the ultimate class issues involved), than did the *Manchester*

Guardian, a liberal newspaper with an international reputation for accuracy, sober judgment, sophistication and a humanist, principled outlook on world affairs. For its highly critical attitude of the Government's actions throughout the crisis, the *Guardian* earned the implacable hatred of the jingoist Tory press and of large strata of the Tory party. The short-sighted, blinker-wearing, my - country - right - or - wrong (my-grandmother-drunk-or-sober) variety of Tory now becomes quite hysterical at the mere mention of this journal. After the fiasco, when scape-goats were being sought and recriminations were being bandied about, certain Tory blimps made heated complaints in Parliament because the B.B.C. in its press reports had had the audacity to broadcast regular excerpts from the *Manchester Guardian*. Yet all this wrath and fury was in fact quite unjustified. Journals such as the *Guardian*, by their agitation, contributed much to a solution of the crisis being found within the framework of capitalism, however unstable and temporary this compromise may prove to be. But it is no doubt too much to expect of certain sections of the capitalist class that they will ever understand how they were saved despite themselves.

It has recently been reported that the *Manchester Guardian* is being increasingly read by serious minded young people, many of whom are taking an intelligent interest in politics for the first time. The circulation of the paper has been steadily increasing in recent years. To many, the vigorous campaign conducted by the *Guardian* against Eden's war will have appeared commendable in every way, an echo to their longing for principled politics, an escape from the stench of jingoism and hypocrisy that emanated from other organs of the capitalist press, a reflection of their radical outlook on world events. It is all the more necessary to submit the policy of the *Manchester Guardian* over the crucial days, to ruthless scrutiny and analysis.

"In times of crisis people have to declare where they stand", proclaimed the *Guardian* on 10.11.56 (referring here, it is true, to the Hungarian and not to the Middle-Eastern events.) Marxists have long been aware of the truth of this statement. Let us examine, in its light, the role of the *Manchester Guardian* throughout the Suez events.

MILITANT MORALITY AND PRACTICAL POLITICS

To the liberal intellectual of today, with his lofty ideals and his ignorance of Marxism, the world around him must seem a very peculiar place indeed, in which major events, crises, wars and revolutions occur in bewildering variety and unpredictable sequence. Social forces (imperialism, the colonial revolution, the proletariat, the Stalinist bureaucracy) face one another on the world arena, each with its interests and historic-

* All quotations in this article are taken from the *Manchester Guardian*, except where some other source is specifically indicated.

ally determined objectives. To the bourgeois liberal the events resulting from the confrontation and struggle of these forces appear as so many unforeseen and regrettable occurrences, if not as so many acts of God!

The fantastic errors of judgment displayed by the *Manchester Guardian* during the earliest phase of the Suez events illustrate this quite clearly. On 30.10.56, after Israel had invaded Egypt—but before the Anglo-French ultimatum—the *Guardian* wrote: “From the tone of the statements by the Western Powers, it is evident that they are facing the possibility that they may have to act under the tripartite declaration.”* The particular Liberal responsible for this gem was so blissfully unaware of the facts of political life that he could honestly imagine British Imperialism intervening on the side of Egypt, in other words siding up with the Arab masses against its own child, Israel! On the following day we were treated to another gem. The ultimatum had been delivered. The *Manchester Guardian* wrote: “Israel will be wrong if it supposes that there could be any collusion between itself and Western forces which may be sent to occupy the canal, so that they would in practice (though in disguise) act together in holding down the Arabs.” (31.10.56.) This warning was given by the paper which a fortnight later achieved worldwide notoriety for its denunciation of the Anglo-French-Israeli collusion. Serious students of politics must try to find an answer. What are the origins of this monumental disorientation? Why are these conclusions so like boomerangs as to reveal their authors in all their ingenuous ineptitude? Why this utter failure to appreciate the nature of the world in which we live? It appears that in the field of political analysis militant morality is no substitute for Marxist method.

The *Manchester Guardian* is not an utter babe in the political wood, however, and its moralising is at times diluted with a certain amount of enlightened self-interest. The disastrous possibilities confronting imperialism soon became so obvious that they were realised even by the political luminaries of liberalism. Bulganin had threatened the dispatch of volunteers to Egypt. Quickly, a United Nations force behind which Imperialism might shelter! “There is no time to be lost,” the journal urged. “It (the Soviet Union) may be willing to let its men fight Britain and France, when in the eyes of the world these two countries are grossly in the wrong, but it may hesitate to let its men become embroiled against a United Nations force.” (8.11.56.)

The much vaunted morality of the *Manchester Guardian* wears a little thin when concrete problems are met. Having denounced the “abominable” aggression as “an act of folly” and “utterly immoral”, we might have expected that no steps likely to be prejudicial to its victim should be advocated. However, bourgeois morality has great elasticity. For instance: “Pressure equally will have to be put on Egypt and the Arab states to accept United Nations mediation” (5.11.56). To dispel any doubts as to the nature of such pressure: “The main burden must rest with the United States which has military forces in the Mediterranean available for backing up a United Nations demand” (5.11.56). And the military objectives of these

* i.e. the declaration of Britain, the U.S.A. and France that they guaranteed the demarcation lines between Israel and Egypt existing at the time of the 1948 Armistice.—(Editors).

High Priests of morality? “Possibly the solution might be to treat the whole territory between the Canal and the truce line as a demilitarised zone” (3.11.56). Thus the forces of Moral Law were not to patrol the air and seas of the Eastern Mediterranean, they were not mobilised to prevent the impending imperialist landings in Egypt, nor were they to be stationed in the territory of the aggressor! The military “solution” advocated by the moralisers was for the victim of imperialist aggression to “demilitarise” 100 miles of her territory. Is this really very different from the plans of those whose “abominable” aggression was “utterly immoral”? Does imperialism cease to be imperialism when it is advocated by a liberal?

In the field of economic theory the liberals have lauded “free trade” and denounced “imperial preference” for several decades. When the class realities of the Suez events caught up with them however, it was Imperialism they were found to have their money on!

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN AND U.N.O.

Mankind emerged from the Second World War longing for peace and freedom from all forms of oppression. The aspirations and hopes of the masses were however canalised away from the revolutionary socialist solution of their problems. In its stead was fostered a false utopia, the idea that peace depended on the creation of a really “representative” international body, some kind of “supra-national” authority, such as the United Nations. The myth was assiduously propagated that this organisation, dominated by the capitalist powers could, without altering capitalist property relations, by some kind of magic incantation, resolve the basic antagonisms of the imperialist epoch, ensure the independence of small nations and solve the fundamental problem of the national economies competing in a world market. In a word, U.N.O. could abolish the economic processes that inexorably drive modern capitalism to war.

On this common ground, in defence of this myth (and of the realities it serves to mask) they all met—the innocent and the cynic, the liberals and the labour leaders, the bishops and the bureaucrats, the pink “progressives” and the scribes of Stalinism!

One does not need to be a Marxist to see through this elaborate smokescreen. A mere study of the statutes of the U.N.O. should demonstrate its complete incapacity to act, except when all are agreed on the action to be taken. None of the Great Powers would have joined the body were it not for the “veto” provisions and for the “vital interests” escape clause. Lenin characterised the League of Nations, the predecessor of U.N.O., as a “thieves kitchen”. The young Soviet Republic would have nothing to do with it, denounced it as a monstrous hoax and boldly proclaimed that as long as capitalism remained, international disputes would be settled by force or the threat of force. Today the thieves are more numerous (the Stalinist bureaucracy has joined the club), the loot more abundant, but the same disreputable horse-dealing goes on.

The record of U.N.O. is impressive—impressive enough, one would have thought, to open the eyes of anyone really interested in seeing, of anyone without a vested interest in the propagation of the myth. A

long and bloody trail of imperialist interventions has marked the decade following the end of World War II: Madagascar, Indo-China, Malaya, Kenya, British Guiana, Algeria and Cyprus. U.N.O. does not and cannot intervene because it is the tool of the imperialist powers, the puppet-show of which they pull the strings, their own special creation, their personal contribution to the mystification of the masses. When the U.S.A. ruthlessly overthrew the democratically elected popular government of Guatemala, U.N.O. scarcely raised a protest. Its helplessness is, however, curiously selective. U.N.O. intervened (action at last!) to suppress the revolutionary movement of the Korean people seeking reunification. Then, to crown its achievements, U.N.O. intervened at Suez—to extricate and bail out two of its senior members who in their old age had gone on a spree (to show their virility) and had only succeeded in ending up in the dock! With such a record, *can there really be any doubt that U.N.O. is but the fig-leaf of Imperialism?*

The *Manchester Guardian* is well-known as one of the main disseminators of U.N.O. mythology. The journal attacked the Government vigorously for having flouted U.N.O. But it was not only outraged morality that lay behind its protests. Some of its comments reveal other preoccupations. For instance: “To much of the world they (the British and French Governments) will appear to have seized upon the shallowest excuse to reoccupy the canal zone, as they wanted to do weeks ago” (31.10.56). They wanted to reoccupy the Canal Zone! They did it, with only the shallowest of excuses, and they did not even have the decency to disguise the act with the usual dose of double-talk. This will never do! People might even start thinking that capitalist governments act in accordance with what they believe to be their economic interests—as old-fashioned Marxists used to claim. Ah! if only things had been managed a little more skilfully! “Our troops and aircraft might still have had to fight but they would have been fighting on behalf of the United Nations . . . The United States would have been at our side” (2.11.56). The myth had been rudely shattered. Quickly, the *Guardian* sought to repair it! “That Britain and France ought to withdraw when replaced by the United Nations force is evident. If they do not, the international force will not be regarded by either side as impartial. It will start with a soiled reputation” (8.11.56). But the truth will out. “The British and French Governments . . . have used war as an instrument of policy, in direct defiance of their promises in the United Nations Charter. In the process they may prove to have destroyed the United Nations . . . and to have left themselves with no moral basis for future policy” (2.11.56). In other words Eden’s crime was that he made the whole elaborate, legalistic and moral superstructure of U.N.O., built up over the years to obscure the real nature of capitalist Great Power politics, tumble down like a pack of cards. This was the unforgivable sin. The *Manchester Guardian* shrieked its outraged virtue. But the cry was not “Down with imperialism!” It was “Give me back my Fig Leaf!”

“OPPOSING” THE WAR

In the earliest phase of the military intervention in Egypt, one of the major objectives of the *Manchester*

Guardian was to mobilise, against the Eden government, the more far-sighted sections of liberal and conservative ruling class opinion. Of the various bourgeois journals that were lukewarm or frankly frigid to the Government’s policy, it alone attempted to initiate some kind of campaign of active protest on the issue. This it did in a whole series of censorious and moralising editorials. It also reported in considerable detail the opposition to the military intervention of various religious and academic bodies and did its utmost to foster the growth of minority opinion within the Tory party itself. When such minority opinion assumed significant proportions—after the conclusion of the cease-fire—the *Guardian* reported these developments in full.

A few quotations will illustrate their method. “The Government appears to hope that by shock tactics it will bring the Arab world to heel, scotching any further thoughts of nationalisation. Perhaps so; more probably not. The Arab League, including Iraq, has pledged support to Egypt. If Egypt is attacked, all our oil may be cut off. The Arab countries may not back down. The stopping of supplies, and hence of payment, will hurt them at first; but in the long run Russia and Eastern Europe and the new Asian countries can provide an alternative market, and in the short run Britain will be worse hit. War is not the way to make our oil secure; it is the way to open the whole Middle East to Russian domination. In short, what will the Government’s policy cost? A damaged American alliance, a broken Commonwealth, the waste of many British and Egyptian lives, economic isolation of Britain and France or the end of the United Nations, no oil, and an open door for Russia in the Middle East. Sir Anthony will have made Britain truly great” (31.8.56). One could hardly expect a clearer statement of the predicament of the capitalist class. Later, when the war faction of the Tory party had obtained the upper hand, the paper was no less explicit: “The Anglo-French ultimatum to Egypt is an act of folly, without justification in any terms but brief expediency” (31.10.56). “They (the British and French Governments) have acted in a rash and precipitate fashion” (31.10.56). “The immediate risk is that they may have let loose an unlimitable explosion” (2.11.56). “The Anglo-French action has set off — even sooner than was expected — the next in a chain of disasters. International anarchy spreads like the plague” (2.11.56). “At some time in the future there will be reparations to pay and atonement to be made” (2.11.56). “The cost will have to be paid for years to come and it will be heavy . . . in the eyes of free Asia and of uncommitted peoples throughout the world the worst things ever said about Western Imperialism have proved true” (6.11.56). Without actually calling a spade a spade, could the fear of the proletarian revolution and its main ally the anti-imperialist struggle of the colonial masses be expressed more clearly?

The campaign of “opposition” to the war was directed at a particular section of the community and the arguments used were undoubtedly the ones most likely to have appeal. It is not altogether surprising that this particular emphasis led to a rather grotesque presentation of certain aspects of the news, especially obvious in relation to the storm created by the Government’s policy. One is reminded of the effect of certain distorting mirrors where the part held up for ex-

amination assumes altogether disproportionate dimensions. In the *Guardian's* campaign, a perplexed professor appeared worth any number of protesting proletarians, and the bleatings of a disturbed bishop or two deemed to equal the voices of a few million colonial workers demonstrating against imperialism.

On 2.11.56 for instance the paper titles in large script the blood-curdling news that "Eighty Oxford Dons attack Government Actions." This is followed by a pathetic account of the "anguish of mind" of a Conservative treasurer in Manchester who found the Government's attitude "completely indefensible"! The article proceeds to report student demonstrations in various parts of the country, the outraged protests of the violated United Nations Association, the fact that the British Council of Churches was "disturbed" by the "moral weakness" of Britain's position, and concludes with brief reference to some protests from working class organisations. The same issue of the journal devoted several paragraphs to the heckling the Foreign Secretary was submitted to at a Conservative rally at Watford. More important: "There was no great cheering or gesture of support from the thousand Tories present."

On 3.11.56 the paper reported further widespread agitation in the Universities, resulting in scuffles in various places—and also the participation of various groups of Arab students. The Methodist Conference, it appears, "recognised the complexity of the situation" but "deplored the bombing of cities". There had been protests from Christian Action "and many other bodies including Trade Unions". It is true that in the same issue, in small print on page 7, are hidden a few lines to the effect that crowds in Ceylon, led by members of Parliament, had demonstrated outside the office of the British High Commission shouting "Stop this murder"—and that at Bahrein three thousand people had marched through the streets and that the crowds had set fire to Government premises.

By 5.11.56 the campaign led by the *Manchester Guardian* had reached its climax. The editorial proclaimed: "The present Prime Minister and his Cabinet must be removed... A complete change of Government is essential"—Sir Anthony's policy had "been hideously miscalculated". (This was of course unforgivable!) Readers were strongly urged to let their M.P.s know their views. A list of M.P.s for each constituency was thoughtfully provided. An appeal was made "for a concerted effort, within constitutional limits, for replacement of the Eden Government."

Of the tremendous reverberations the imperialist aggression had in the working class movement, one finds very little. It is true that on 2.11.56 the paper proclaimed "Labour rules out use of strikes" and went on to quote the full proclamation of the National Council of Labour calling on the "British people" to bring "effective" pressure to bear on the Government "through normal constitutional parliamentary methods" and to "refrain from taking industrial action". It also reported the statement of Sir Tom Williamson to a press conference, that the T.U.C. "will not countenance industrial action". These pronouncements are described editorially as "both political wisdom and hard-headed common sense". Lest there be any misunderstanding about what was meant

by "opposing" the war and "effective" pressure, the journal stated editorially: "Trade unionists, like soldiers, will accept lawfully constituted authority and do the work that is set them" (2.11.56).

The trade-union bureaucrats and the professional liberals rapidly saw eye to eye in this matter. The way they both stressed this point suggests, to those who can read between the lines, that a section of the working class was harbouring precisely such "dangerous" thoughts and was beginning to consider how *genuinely effective* action could be taken and to organise accordingly. The *Guardian* itself was compelled to admit this on 5.11.56. On a centre page, after being told that the cohorts of dissenting Oxford dons now numbered 350, and that according to the British Council of Churches there was "deep concern" in the country, we are finally informed that the South Wales area of the National Union of Mineworkers had called for a national conference of the Union "to consider what action the miners shall take to end the war on Egypt". The paper admitted that many of the lodges were pressing for strike action. On 6.11.56 it admitted that a call had gone to the T.U.C. from the Executive of the Fire Brigades Union calling for the organisation of a general strike. On 7.11.56 it carried a single paragraph reporting what was perhaps the most significant working class action in the whole period under discussion: "Labour was withdrawn from all Crawley New Town factories at 3 p.m.", a polite euphemism to describe a political strike. Twelve hundred workers, joined by others, marched through the town and gathered in the town square to attend a protest meeting organised by the Suez Council of Action. On 9.11.56, after the conclusion of the cease-fire, the *Guardian* reported the statement of the I.L.P. that "our job is to stop our own war" and its call to "all workers to be ready to take part in a general strike immediately".

These references to working class reaction were however swamped by columns of ecclesiastical expostulation. On November 9th, the paper titled over three columns: "Bishop calls for much more explanation". The Pope's appeal received due attention. All sides were being called in to lend a hand! We were even informed that on 9.11.56 the Northfield Council of Churches had passed a resolution "imploring the Government and the politicians of all parties to pursue in a spirit of mutual forbearance such policies as may help to restore general confidence in the moral basis of public action."

One gets the distinct impression from all this that the force of prayer and not the threatened action of the proletariat put an end to the adventure. Which, of course, to any bourgeois liberal, must be a most comforting thought!

THE ISSUE OF "CONSCIENCE"

Having, for a variety of reasons, opposed the military intervention in Egypt, the *Guardian* got carried away by its own enthusiasm. On 1.11.56 the journal came out with an editorial labelled "Conscience" which created a minor furore. This editorial, and the reactions it produced on the journal's readers, are worthy of study as they illustrate the extreme limits to which "liberal" journalism is prepared to go on certain issues which are familiar to revolutionary socialists but which

bourgeois journals seldom dare to mention.

"In 1939," the editorial in question stated, "the British went to war as a united people; they will not do so today. To thousands of those called upon to fight, the Government's Suez policy will appear not merely inexpedient but immoral... What are they to do? A soldier cannot choose his wars. His duty, even after Nuremberg, is to obey the lawful orders of his superiors... many sincere patriots will put on uniform with heavy hearts... for a number of young men the Suez crisis has suddenly converted the concept of the unjust war from an exercise in academic casuistry to a burning personal problem. Most, we must hope, will do their military duty as best they can. But for those whose feelings of conscience are too strong, there is a precedent for a way out. In current practice it involves court-martial, a sentence of imprisonment (3 months) long enough to entitle them to apply for registration on the roll of conscientious objectors, and finally a hearing before a tribunal. There are pitfalls along the whole course, and especially at the end, for tribunals are reluctant to recognise what they consider political objection. The farther an applicant stands from a conventional pacifist—preferably religious—position, the less likelihood he has of being accepted as a C.O.... Probably not many people will set out along the road to conscientious objection in the present crisis. We must hope, at any rate, that they may be few; but the problem exists and it is no use being blind to it..."

The issue of "conscience" was considered a purely personal one. The journal conceived of opposition to the war in only the most general terms. This is made quite clear in a further editorial published the same day: "It is greatly to be hoped that the fighting will be brief and *the occupation of the Canal* (our italics) as bloodless as possible" (1.11.56). The next day the editorial was even more explicit: "At present we can only hope that the military action will be as swift, bloodless and, now that it has been begun, *as successful as possible*" (2.11.56). Imperialism is on the march and however "heavy hearted" the "patriots", the military objectives must be achieved! No hint here of revolutionary defeatism! Verbal opposition? Possibly! Conscientious objection on a personal basis? Confined, it was hoped, to the "few"! Organised mass opposition, taking on active forms? Good heavens, no! On 2.11.56, the *Manchester Guardian's* London correspondent let the cat out of the bag when he mentioned that "a lunatic fringe had shown a desire to incite disaffection in the armed forces". It is always lunacy, of course, to the bourgeois liberal, when a personal decision having been reached, one ceases to wallow in verbiage and takes steps to translate the decision into *effective* action.

The mere mention of the issue of "conscience" raised a storm among the paper's readers. The editorial, however capitulatory its conclusions, was more than some could stomach. A reader in Stafford called it "an oblique flirtation with sedition", another in Bradford "a shocking piece of work, coming pretty near to being an incitement to mutiny". Others were more outspoken: "This scurrilous piece of writing is tantamount to an incitement to mutiny... a disgrace to British journalism." "I was appalled by the seditious incitement to mutiny in the leader..." "It comes almost to the brink of treachery" piped in a further reader, dreaming no

doubt of drumhead courts and executions at dawn. A further reader, doubtless on the verge of apoplexy, even accused the poor old *Guardian* of "inciting the British people to civil war".

The majority of those who wrote to the paper reacted to the editorial in quite a different way however. Many protested against the journal's half-hearted attitude. Special columns had to be devoted to the "Issue of Conscience". Of the published letters, some were quite outspoken and one reader proclaimed: "In no circumstances will I fight in this war or in any wider war which may develop from it." Another wrote: "I fervently hope that many will refuse to fight in support of the immoral action of this government..." Yet another expressed definite surprise at the paper's estimate and hope that the number of conscientious objectors would be small: "Why on earth do you hope this? I hope it will be very large, and will grow larger every day." Some readers went even further: "The civilian population as a whole should refuse to participate in any kind of war service and should support those who take such a stand." "Vast numbers should show disruptive civil disobedience to bring about a non-violent reversal of the Government's treacherous policy." The paper reported that at a meeting of Manchester University Labour Club "three young men from the hall got up to say that they would refuse to serve their country if recalled to the colours," and that it had been stated that "if young men were sent out to die, they had to believe in what they are dying for", and that the London School of Economics Student Union had passed by 243 votes to 59 a resolution stating that "in the present circumstances, this House refuses to fight for the Suez Canal."

This forthright response must have caught the *Guardian* by surprise. Opinions were being published which no capitalist journal has ever dared to voice before, in time of war—or even in time of "armed conflict"! Issues of real importance were beginning to be discussed. If the correspondence had continued for long in this vein who knows what "dangerous" conclusions people might possibly have reached. Might not the political "facts of life"—familiar to Marxists for decades—suddenly be revealed to a wider audience? Might not the readers of the *Guardian* have learned that when "opposition" to war goes beyond the stage of pious platitudes bourgeois democracy tends to discard its democratic fig-leaf and reveals its fraudulent character, as it always does in times of crisis? No wonder the apprentice sorcerers took fright! On 12.11.56 the Editor hastily closed the discussion stating that henceforth preference for publication would be given "to letters on the situation after the cease-fire or on future policy".

THE TRAFALGAR SQUARE DEMONSTRATION

During the early phase of the imperialist intervention, the conflict of political opinion in Britain took on an exceptionally sharp form. Scenes were witnessed in the House of Commons that had not been seen for two or three decades. But opposition to the Suez war was not confined to the parliamentary arena. Meetings were held all over the country and the struggle soon overflowed into the street.

On November 5th, the National Council of Labour called upon the workers of London to demonstrate. The

rally had been well publicised and organised and, according to Aneurin Bevan, it was the largest he had ever seen in Trafalgar Square. The attitude of the *Manchester Guardian* to extra-parliamentary events of this kind and to the clashes between the demonstrators and the organs of the bourgeois state, i.e. with the police, is worth noting. The general atmosphere of the meeting, its massive proportions and excellent organisation are well conveyed. Trafalgar Square was described (5.11.56) as "packed with people who had come marching in columns from many parts of London... Crowds also lined the pavements six or seven deep round the outer edges of the Square". The militant mood of the workers also found some recognition—in phrases such as "masses of people waved banners stating: 'Into the Canal with Eden', 'No War over Suez'..." and "sections roared in unison: 'Eden must go'."

One cannot of course expect a bourgeois journal, even a "liberal" one, to state unequivocally that this was the response of the working class to Eden's war and that here, in the heart of London, within a few hundred yards of Downing Street, the workers were making their presence felt, in their tens of thousands, not by letters, telegrams or pious resolutions, but in a gigantic demonstration, the like of which London had rarely seen before. Nevertheless the *Manchester Guardian* seems to have sensed that something important was afoot. As one of their correspondents put it: "Thousands felt that they must themselves take a hand in history." "It was a scene not to be forgotten easily." All really massive proletarian demonstrations tend to have this effect on honest observers.

Did the orators succeed in capturing the militant mood of the workers? In what direction was the people's anger channelled? What kind of lead was given? What parts of the speeches met with the most sustained and energetic applause? Alas, the *Guardian* is silent on these issues. It did not carry a single line of what was said at this mass meeting, at which "thousands were taking a hand in history". Editorially, the meeting might never have taken place. One cannot help feeling that in the eyes of the *Manchester Guardian* all this agitation in the street was not quite proper and respectable. The next day, the paper doubtless had more important things to report than the utterances of presumed demagogues to "an angry mob", led, as the police told the *Guardian* reporter, by "a few trouble-makers". There was for instance a report on the soul-searchings of a resigning Tory minister, and a statement by the West Asia and Egypt Church Missionary Society that "Christian love can transcend and conquer all tension". The liberal, one must remember, is intensely concerned with the individual! One cannot but feel that this preoccupation is a little overdrawn however when thousands "taking a hand in history" are considered "an angry mob". It is also very sad of course that the mounted police may not read the *Manchester Guardian* and have possibly never heard of the West Asia and Egypt Church Missionary Society and of the soothing influence of "Christian love".

The Trafalgar Square rally was notable for the massive display of mounted police. The *Guardian* describes their action in terms that leave one in little

doubt as to its character: "Parts of the crowd often fled before a charging police horse... A terrified woman was screaming 'Don't kill me'..." An apparently unconscious man was carried away "limp body, white face and closed eyes, fair hair dangling down" after "a quick charge by four mounted constables". "Loud bursts of uproar" continued as "the police horses gradually broke up the thick crowds". The paper is fairly explicit as to how this was done. The mounted police would "hit with open hands at the noisier parts of the crowd when they refused to go back". Many arrests were made. Scotland Yard admitted that eight policemen were injured and that—climax of indignity—one officer had been dragged from his horse. Clearly the rally had been no tea-party of liberal intellectuals discussing Free Trade!

One however looks in vain for any condemnation of the manner in which the police acted. All that one can find is an assurance that "most of them behaved calmly". One might have expected a liberal journal to denounce certain of the "excesses" of the apparatus of repression. This would not have transgressed good liberal doctrine. All liberal journals thrive on this sort of thing. They excel in particular in denouncing police repression in *other* countries. The *Manchester Guardian*, for instance, had found several columns in recent weeks to report and comment on the excesses of the French and South African police, or on the crimes of the Stalinist police apparatus. The class issues at the Trafalgar Square rally were raised in too acute a form, however, for such comment to have been considered safe. The liberals have obviously mastered a most difficult art; they can both live in a glass house and indulge in throwing stones.

CONCLUSION

It would of course be naive to expect a bourgeois journal, even an "honest" one like the *Manchester Guardian*, to adopt a Marxist outlook on world affairs or to advocate a revolutionary solution to the problems confronting mankind. But liberals should have the right to expect of a liberal journal a sustained and unequivocal defence of liberal principles. Intelligent people should also have the right to expect of a paper of this standing a rational and consistent interpretation of major events. Moreover, if "morality" and "principle" are to have any real meaning, if they are not to dissolve into hypocrisy, humbug, or mere verbiage, then the conclusions drawn *must* be pursued to their logical end. This end can be none other than *effective* action.

The contradictions in which contemporary capitalism enmeshes the liberal and the intellectual today were admirably illustrated by the columns of the *Manchester Guardian* in the crucial weeks. Of course Marxists can see that these contradictions cannot be resolved within the framework of capitalism. But the liberal journal "solves" them with "principles" that can be turned on and off like water from a tap—with "morality" adaptable to the requirements of world imperialism—with "liberalism", by kind permission of the organs of state security—and with "policies" it dares not carry to their logical conclusion. These are dim beacons for the serious radical youth of today.

Inside Russia Today

Significance of the novel, "Not by Bread Alone"

Leonard Hussey

(The Editors are pleased to publish this outline of the theme of a remarkable novel recently published in Russia. Many readers of **Labour Review** are just beginning to grasp the true nature of the bureaucracy which at present rules Russia. This outline will help them to realise, in real, live flesh and blood terms, how this bureaucracy exercises its rule. It is important to realise that what is meant by the term **bureaucracy** here is not the pettifogging red-tape methods which characterise so many state offices in Britain, Russia and elsewhere. What is meant rather is what the word bureaucracy **says** — the rule or dictatorship of a caste of officials — in this case Party bosses. "**Not by Bread Alone**" describes how this large and brutally cynical gang or caste of Party officials, who, under the leadership of Stalin, usurped the democratic powers of the Workers' Soviets, live their privileged and petty lives. Since 1929 these bureaucrats have ruled Russia with a bloody rod of iron. By distorting the planned economy of the nationalised industries, often in their own personal interests, they have prevented the workers and peasants reaping the fruits of the Soviet Revolution of 1917.

But this novel also shows the **instability** of the Russian bureaucracy, which has already been exposed in Hungary and Poland. It shows how they live in fear of the revival of genuine workers' democracy — for such a revival threatens their privileges and their power.

The fact that this novel was ever written (it must have been started soon after the death of Stalin) is itself significant of present day trends in Russia. That it has been published and publicly discussed is clear proof of the fact that the days of the Russian bureaucrats are numbered. Those who read and understand this outline will not be surprised when the tocsin sounds for the regeneration of the Russian Revolution, for the re-introduction of Soviets and workers' democracy and for ending of the domination of the world socialist movement by the Drozdovs and their lackeys in the capitalist world.—Editors).

DURING THE discussion of Dudintsev's novel which took place at the Central Writers' Club in Moscow (reported in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of 27 October, 1956) the writer Ovechkin mentioned that a number of persons in high places, who thought they recognised themselves in the "negative" characters in this story, had attempted to get it suppressed. A considerable period did indeed elapse after the novel's initial appearance in serial form (in the August, September and October, 1956, numbers of the magazine *Novy Mir*) when it was doubtful, in spite—or perhaps because—of the public's enthusiasm, before it was announced that *Not By Bread Alone* would come out in book form. And it has still not appeared in book form. . . .

The intense interest which the book has aroused generally, and the alarm it has at the same time provoked in certain quarters, are easily understood, for *Not By Bread Alone* is the sharpest exposure that has yet appeared of the social antagonisms within Soviet society. Dudintsev shows us a bureaucracy living in privileged conditions that contrast with the poverty of ordinary workers; he shows us, too, these people making hypocritical use of Party catchwords and phrases to cover their self-seeking activities, and their employment of ruthless methods to crush anybody who seems to threaten their established positions—without regard

either to justice or to the effect on the public welfare. Many and various aspects of the way of life and ideology of the bureaucratic stratum are sketched by the writer in the course of his story about Lopatkin, a struggling inventor whom we follow through his long, persistent campaign to get his machine taken up by the authorities and secure recognition for his work, in face of every kind of discouragement and victimisation by vested interests. This brief analysis of the novel's content is given here since it may be regarded as an important sociological document.

First, we are shown the material privileges enjoyed by the bureaucracy. At the very beginning, when we meet Drozdov, the manager of a great industrial plant in Siberia, our attention is drawn to the good housing of the "commanding personnel" of the plant, set apart from the miserable adobe cottages in which the ordinary workers are living. Drozdov's wife, Nadya, is a teacher, and when she visits the home of one of her pupils to discover what the other children mean when they tell that the reason why this girl gets bad marks is that her home conditions are so wretched, she is appalled by the poverty she finds. Nadya later befriends Lopatkin, who is a lodger in this cottage; he has been refused help in his work by her husband. (Even for drawing paper, which is scarce in Russia, he

is dependent on the good offices of one of Nadya's teacher colleagues). Nadya sells a fur coat of hers in order to give Lopatkin money to help him continue with his work. She becomes increasingly unhappy about the privileged standard of living she enjoys as her husband's wife. For example, when she goes to their country cottage in the summer she remains indoors because she feels ashamed to meet the eyes of the local collective farmers as they toil in the fields. Drozdov advises her not to invite her colleagues from school to a party he is holding at their home, as the other teachers will only envy her for all the things she possesses which they have to do without—"it's like Mozart and Salieri," he explains.

The guests who come are Drozdov's own associates—the chief engineer of the plant, the manager of the coal trust, the secretary of the district committee of the Party, the chairman of the district Soviet, the manager of a nearby state farm, the district procurator and the manager of the district trade organisation. It would be wrong to describe these men as Drozdov's friends since, as he tells his wife, a friend must be independent of you; the higher you go the more isolated you become. When we meet Captain Abrosimov, the examining magistrate who deals with the case of Lopatkin when he has been framed up by Drozdov and others, the author shows him to us as he emerges from the large new block of flats, inhabited exclusively by officers and their families, where he has his home. Throughout the book, emphasis is persistently laid on the comfort in which the bureaucracy live as compared with the general population. When Lopatkin visits a departmental office, on reaching the second floor he finds himself walking on a soft carpet and so, as Dudintsev puts it—"feels that he is drawing near the presence of the authorities".

Secondly, we are shown how the bureaucracy make use of their power to add to their privileges. Drozdov's second-in-command, Ganichev, the chief engineer of the plant, has a daughter at the school where Nadya teaches, and we glimpse the headmaster's anxiety that this particular child shall be given good marks in all subjects, regardless of her actual attainments. (Ganichev's daughter herself protests, however, when Nadya gives a mark better than she deserves to the poor worker's daughter already mentioned, in order to encourage her). When Nadya goes into hospital to have a baby she finds that all the other patients in her ward have been shifted into the corridor, and she hears a nurse remark: "The heads' wives are worse than the heads themselves". When she protests against what has been done, the patients are brought back; but her husband, when he calls to visit her, points out that Ganichev's wife will be coming into hospital the very next day, and the same thing will happen again, so that Nadya's "revolt" has been merely a personal gesture, without any general effect. Drozdov has a pram made for Nadya's baby in one of the workshops of the plant, and he arranges for a member of the staff to be sent on a fictitious official journey to Moscow so that he may accompany Nadya when she moves there, to help her with her luggage and so forth.

Thirdly, we observe the consummate hypocrisy that the bureaucracy employs to disguise or justify its selfish conduct. Drozdov is against Lopatkin's invention

because he is backing an inferior machine devised by an associate of his, Professor Avdiyev. The latter is a technologist who has "arrived", a man of doubtful scientific talents but well-developed capacity for monopolising appointments and opportunities in his own particular field. Given Avdiyev's established position, there is "a future before" anything that comes from him; which cannot be said of the inventions, however brilliant, of an unknown like Lopatkin. This is how Drozdov and his fellow-bureaucrats understand the matter among themselves. To Lopatkin, however, Drozdov gravely explains that good machines are the outcome of "collective thought", and that is why his "individualist" offering has little chance of success. There is something aristocratic, Drozdov complains, about this sort of individual initiative; he, Drozdov, is a plebeian, and has a hereditary dislike for such "indispensables" as Lopatkin. (We are shown on several occasions that Drozdov, in spite of his wealth and status, is a man of uncouth manners and little culture). When a committee packed with Avdiyev's hangers-on reject Lopatkin's invention, Drozdov answers Lopatkin's complaints with grave talk about "democratic decisions". When Nadya criticises her husband's brutal methods with his subordinates he has his answer ready. Everyone who appears before him, he explains, is in his eyes either a good or a bad builder of communism, a good worker or a bad one, that is all. Soviet society is engaged in creating the basis for communism, that is to say, material values; indeed, the most important spiritual value at the present time is the knowledge of how to work well. Nobody who is working, as he, Drozdov is, to lay the material basis for communism can properly be accused of "going to extremes". Drozdov is a great reader of Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*. Nadya suggests to him that the famous "basis" is a matter of relations between people, not of material objects; but he dismisses her ideas as "nineteenth-century".

When Nadya voices her indignation over the clearing of the hospital ward so that she could have it for herself, Drozdov explains that living-space is "one of those blessings which, at the present stage of social development, are distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of labour performed". "Equality-mongering," he observes, "is a most harmful thing."

Lopatkin figures on a number of occasions as a pricker of the balloons of hypocrisy sent up by Drozdov and his like. When Drozdov is developing his favourite idea that "the collective" is cleverer than any individual, that "we are worker-ants", Lopatkin points out that in the field he is concerned with, one of these "ants", Avdiyev to wit, has got himself into a position where it is he who decides what's good for everybody else and what isn't. When there is talk of the public money that would be risked if a machine such as Lopatkin's were to be put into production, he points to the losses that have been incurred, to no purpose, but without question, in connection with Avdiyev's machine. He is up against a bureaucratic fortress, he says; a group of "monopolists" operate a sort of collective security among themselves, guaranteeing each other against disturbance by any living ideas that may arise from the depths of the people. These monopolists seek only to "consolidate themselves in their office chairs, so as to

go on making more and more money" while, thanks to them, the Soviet country lags behind others in technical progress in many fields. (Lopatkin speaks of the bitterness he feels when he sees crowds gathering with envious admiration around foreign diplomats' cars when they stop in Moscow streets).

Finally, we see the bureaucracy using their power to intimidate and where necessary put out of harm's way anybody who seriously challenges their position. Drozdov gets a young engineer into his power, thereafter using him as a tool, through discovering that he, a married man, has been making love to one of the girls he works with; Drozdov obliges the young man to write out an "explanation" of what happened, which he then locks in his safe as a security for good behaviour in the future. Lopatkin's friend, Professor Busko, explains to Nadya the fear that subordinates have of allowing a complaint to reach their bosses, lest the latter become angry with them, for then, "farewell our country cottages . . ."

Lopatkin is eventually framed on a charge of allowing Nadya, an unauthorised person, access to secret technical information in his possession, thereby violating State security. The examining magistrate who deals with Lopatkin is an expert, we learn, at ensuring that the judge sees any case he prepares in just the light that the public prosecutor wants. We see him putting aside, as a document "having no direct bearing on the case", a memorandum by Lopatkin's enemies asserting that he is a crackpot. If that is so, the shrewd examining magistrate reflects, his work can hardly be a State secret; Lopatkin's persecutors are amateurs who think they can have it both ways, but fortunately he is there to streamline the case with his experienced skill. Lopatkin is questioned at length, and Nadya too, without either of them being informed what the charge against Lopatkin is, and in this way they are brought to contradict each other, to the examining magistrate's satisfaction. At his trial before a military tribunal Lopatkin is not allowed to explain that Nadya has been rendering essential help to him in his work, for "this would involve a further revelation of State secrets"; nor to show that those who are accusing him are all men who have been blocking his path for years—this is slanderous, they have only done their patriotic duty by showing "vigilance". He is sentenced to eight years in

a corrective labour camp.

The book is full of little touches which serve to associate the bureaucracy with various reactionary features of Soviet ideology of the post-war period. The examining magistrate who interrogates Nadya tries to establish that Lopatkin's claim that she is a co-author of his project is nothing but a cover for the sex relationship between them, and when he is chatting with the witness about her life as a teacher he observes that he is opposed to co-education: if you put boys and girls together, he cynically remarks, they start thinking too soon about co-authorship. The daughter of Ganichev, the chief engineer in Drozdov's plant, changes her name from Jeanne to Anna because the latter is "better—more Russian". Lopatkin remarks that when one of the big-shots in science or technology wants to refute his rivals he does not resort to experiment and discussion but "thinks up something like Weissmanism-Morganism". The one member of the tribunal who had doubts about Lopatkin's guilt, and the inventor's friends who work to get his case re-heard, have to put up with abuse to the effect that they have an "a-political, idealist" outlook.

Though Lopatkin is at last released and rehabilitated and given a chance to work on his machine, his enemies are not displaced or shaken. Drozdov is even promoted to the rank of Deputy Minister! And there is perhaps an ironic symbolism in Lopatkin's reflection on returning from Siberia to Moscow: "The same trolley-buses, the same houses, and the same wooden fence around the foundations of the Palace of Soviets." The stopping of work on the construction of the Palace of Soviets, which had been conceived as a home for the Soviet Parliament and a monument to Lenin, has long been recognised as one of the signs of the definite arrival of a new epoch in Soviet history—what is now commonly called "the Stalin epoch". While Lopatkin's release shows that there are forces working for truth, justice and progress and that they can win victories, nevertheless there has been no fundamental change, and the Drozdovs continue to flourish. Konstantin Paustovsky, one of the writers who took part in the discussion mentioned at the beginning of this article, even affirmed on that occasion that Drozdovism is not a matter of a few individual bureaucrats, but a mass phenomenon, an entire stratum of Soviet society. . . .

and this "official" reply to Not By Bread Alone speaks for itself-

The Truth of Life and the Artist's Palette

Part of a critique of *Not By Bread Alone* (*Lenin-gradskaya Pravda*, 18 December, 1956) by A. Dymshyts.

" . . . V. Dudintsev is unquestionably a talented man of letters. Undoubtedly some of his heroes are a success, and others possess subtly indicated and movingly depicted traits of character. Some episodes in his book are tense and dramatic. But, on the whole, the novel is a failure. The writer has sustained a signal creative defeat.

"Truthfulness to life, observance of truth in circumstance and character is the paramount demand we are compelled to put before any contemporary work. Regrettably, V. Dudintsev's novel is far from meeting this demand. Indeed, to a large extent, it goes against it . . .

"One would think, from reading the novel *Not By Bread Alone* that all the links of the State machinery that are shown are filled with prospering careerists, who direct the central administration, boss the world of science and lord it in the judiciary. In the mind's eye we see one single chain of scoundrels and careerists. Even episodic characters among the high-ranking officials in the book prove as a rule also to be villains. Take, for instance, the director of the Institute, a personage with the rank of General. At first he seems an exception to the rule. However, the author soon 'corrects himself' and shows this man as a cowardly, self-seeking egoist. Is there any need to prove how wrong this tendency of the author's is? Can we agree with the author that the Avdiyevs, Tepikins, Fundators and other red-tapists and tricksters of the same kind, each individually portrayed by an acute and talented hand, really do personify one of the sections of our engineering science? For in Dudintsev's novel, right up to the end, they are shown as holding undivided sway over an entire

scientific headquarters and encountering, in fact, no public resistance or rebuff.

"Our people have hatred for bureaucrats and bureaucracy in their blood. The Party ruthlessly and implacably fights against bureaucrats. But, of course, there is no point in exaggerating the danger of bureaucracy, in inflating it. This at once gives an essentially lop-sided angle to the picture the novel takes from life. It shows the bureaucrats as an attacking force and, moreover, as an unshakeable force. The scoundrels who libelled Lopatkin and hauled him before the Court for swift and speedy sentence, escape scot-free, with retribution going no further than unpleasantness of an intra-office nature. No one draws any serious social conclusions from the 'Lopatkin case'. As we see it, this is all because V. Dudintsev has failed to show in his novel our society's chief directing force, the Communist Party.

"Our life, with the powerful guiding hand of the Party seeming to be absent, looks queer in V. Dudintsev's novel . . .

"The subject of an inventor's struggle against conservatism and in-the-rut routine, against the time-servers of officialdom and bureaucrats who try to clamp down on scientific and technical developments is not a new one for our literature. Recall Mayakovsky's *The Upas Tree*, a feuilleton in verse, and again, his *Bath-house* . . . In D. Granin's novel, *Those Who Seek*, the principal hero, Andrei Lobanov, also wages an impassioned struggle for his invention—seeking, however, and finding, support from the Party in this struggle. In taking up a similar subject, V. Dudintsev expounds it in a way that runs counter to the truth of life, which has told also on the portrayal of the characters he wished to depict as 'good' heroes.

"V. Dudintsev's world of 'good' heroes is a queer place. It is populated by persons with damaged souls, hurt emotions and a

disturbed and not quite healthy psychic condition . . .

"We cannot agree with the reviewer D. Platonov, who holds that these personages accord with Gorky's formula: 'Let us sing glory to the madness of the brave!' As we know, it was with these words on their lips that revolutionary fighters went into battle to die and to win. Lopatkin has very little in common with them, and Busko even less.

"Any failure on the part of a writer, and especially, as in this case, failure in a big effort of writing, is to be regretted. But we should not attempt to conceal a failure. However bitter the truth, it must be faced. This should be noted in connection with V. Dudintsev's novel, especially as it is instructive.

"Dudintsev's wish was to write a work of social criticism. It goes without saying that criticism is called for. We ought not to hide the shortcomings in our life. We must pillory them in order to make the people's life better. But criticism in works of literature should not develop into disparagement of the gains of our society and system. Behind criticism of our shortcomings one must always sense staunch faith in the strength of the Party and patriotic pride in the achievements of our Fatherland. It is only from these positions that there can be fruitful criticism of every impediment to the further development and growth of our society.

"V. Dudintsev's novel is far removed from these positions. Thus, he has obviously retreated from socialist realism. He has lost his grip on the exact criteria of truth; under his pen the evil has been amplified to limitless proportions and the good has been spiritually impoverished. Anyone wishing to see what present-day Soviet life is like from the novel *Not By Bread Alone* will derive false conceptions and conclusions regarding our society and people."

The Communist Party and Democratic Centralism

John Daniels

ONE DIRECT result of the current crisis within the Communist Party is that many members are beginning to question the manner in which the system of democratic centralism has been applied during the period of ascendant Stalinism. Some—a great many we fear—even question the validity of democratic centralism as a basis for party organization. Democratic centralism, they maintain, contains within itself the germ of its own degeneration. As such, it not only fostered the growth of Stalinism but made its advent inevitable.

The mood of criticism and uneasiness reached such dimensions that the Communist Party leadership was forced to take notice. A Commission on Inner Party Democracy was set up by the Executive Committee. The Committee has now issued its Report which will come up for discussion at the Easter Conference of the C.P. A significant minority on the Commission has issued a Minority Report which differs in some fundamental matters from the majority.

Of significance is the fact that for the first time in many years something like a genuine discussion, with real differences of opinion, is developing within the Communist Party. The leadership will undoubtedly try to limit this development but the dykes have been opened and there will be no holding back the flood waters. The very composition of the Commission, which was overweighted with full-time party officials

with a vested interest in defending the privileges of the ruling bureaucracy, is evidence of this stultifying effort on the part of the Executive Committee. It says much for the honesty of purpose and tenacity of the minority that they did not allow themselves to be overcome by this wealth of bureaucrats but persisted in their constructive criticisms.

Before subjecting both the majority and minority reports to detailed analysis, it is necessary to say something about democratic centralism itself, to define what it is and to trace its historic origins.

THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

Democratic centralism was the organizational principle advocated by Lenin and applied in building the Bolshevik Party. The Bolshevik Party was a revolutionary Marxist party, based on a definite programme, whose aim was the organization of the working class in the struggle for power and the transformation of the existing social order. All the activities of the party, its methods and its internal regime were subordinated to this aim and designed to serve it.

It needed a self-active and critical-minded membership to forge and consolidate such a party and to solve its problems by collective thought, discussion and experience. From this followed the need of assuring the widest party democracy in the ranks of the organization.

But to accomplish its historic task, the party needed not only democracy but the firmest discipline in carrying out decisions once they were made. This was especially true in the conditions prevailing under Czarism, when the party was illegal. Under those conditions, centralized leadership and direction were indispensable prerequisites for any sustained and disciplined action.

To sum up, therefore, the Leninist conception of democratic centralism meant that party policy was arrived at after full and free discussion and it was put into operation under the direction of a centralized and responsible leadership, democratically elected. It was the right and duty of every party member to participate in arriving at a decision and it was equally their privilege and duty to carry out the direction of their chosen leadership in executing that policy.

The acceptance of the organizational principle of democratic centralism became one of the 21 conditions for affiliation to the Third Communist International.

But formal acceptance of the principle is not, in itself, a guarantee against degeneration. Under Lenin democracy within the Communist Party was effective and real. Although Lenin was the undisputed leader of the Party, other prominent Bolsheviks did not hesitate to disagree with him violently from time to time. On the issue of the attitude of the Bolsheviks toward the February Revolution, there were profound differences between Lenin on the one side and Stalin and Kamenev on the other. It took patient persuasion on Lenin's part to win over a majority to his position at the famous April Conference of the Party. Similarly, there were wide divergences within the Bolshevik ranks on such issues as Brest-Litovsk, the Polish campaign and later, the New Economic Policy.

These differences within the Bolshevik Party frequently led to the formation of "platforms" or factions, who fought bitterly for their positions. These factions were not static—that would have constituted a party within a party—but changed their personnel from issue to issue. Only at the Tenth Congress of the Party was a decision taken, on Lenin's initiative, to prohibit organized factions in the party. This decision was taken for definite historical reasons and there is an abundance of evidence that it was intended only as a temporary measure to tide the party and the Soviet régime over a desperate crisis, a crisis which threatened the very existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What was the position confronting the party at the 10th Congress? The party had just passed through an acrimonious and exhausting discussion of the trade union question. The country was smouldering with discontent. In Kronstadt the sailors had risen in open revolt on the very eve of the Congress and there were also outbreaks in Tambov and other places.

The growth of bureaucracy in revolutionary Russia had, as its inevitable counterpart, the development of factions within the party. At the 10th Congress, several "platforms" were represented. There was the "Workers' Opposition", led by Shlyapnikov and Kollontai and the "Democratic Centralists" under Assinsky, Maximovsky, Saprionov and other old Party militants. There was the platform of Bukharin, Larin, Sokolnikov and Yakoleva, and a fourth consisting of Trotsky, Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Rakovsky and others. Then

there was a faction supported by Lenin, Zinoviev, Tomsky, Rudzutak, Kalinin, Lozomovsky, Petrovsky and Stalin. These factions or platforms were in the best traditions of Bolshevism, whose history is replete with the appearance of groups standing on specific platforms within the broad framework of the fundamental party platform.

Although the Congress approved Lenin's resolution to ban factional platforms, it never intended this to mean a banning of discussion. Far from it! Point 4 of Lenin's resolution read:-

"It is necessary that every party organization take vigorous care that the absolutely necessary criticism of the shortcomings of the party, all analysis of the general party direction, all appraisals of its practical experience, every examination of the execution of the party decisions and of the means of correcting mistakes, etc., shall not be discussed in separate groups standing upon any 'platform', but rather in the meetings of all the party members. Toward this end, the Congress decides to publish a periodical DISCUSSION BULLETIN and special periodicals. Everyone who comes forward with a criticism must take into consideration the position of the party in the midst of its encircling enemies, and he must also strive in his direct activity in Soviet and party organs, to correct practically the mistakes of the party."

Lenin soon made it quite clear that this was intended as an extraordinary and temporary measure, a departure from the norm. When Riazanov, the famous Marxist historian who later fell victim to one of Stalin's purges, proposed an amendment to the effect that "The Congress condemns factionalism with the utmost energy and pronounces itself at the same time, with the same energy, against elections to the Congress on the basis of platforms," Lenin vigorously opposed it.

"I think that the desire of Comrade Riazanov is unfortunately not realizable. If fundamental disagreements exist on the question, we cannot deprive members of the Central Committee of the right to address themselves to the party. I cannot imagine how we can do this. The present Congress can in no way and in no form engage the elections to the next Congress. And if, for example, questions like the Brest-Litovsk peace arise? Can we guarantee that it will not arise? It cannot be guaranteed. It's possible that it will then be necessary to elect by platform. That is quite clear." (Minutes of the 10th Congress of the C.P.S.U., p. 292).

About the same period, Lenin wrote:

"But if deep, fundamental disagreements of principle exist, we may be told: 'Do they not justify the sharpest factional action?' Naturally they justify it, if the disagreements are really very deep, and if the rectification of the wrong policy of the party or of the working class cannot be otherwise obtained."

(Collected Works, Vol. XVIII, Pt. I, p.47, Russian Edition).

Despite these unmistakable indications of Lenin's real attitude, the bureaucracy seized on the decisions of the 10th Congress to fasten its grip still more firmly on the party, the Communist International and the Soviet State. From Russia, the bureaucratic fester spread and infected all the other Communist Parties. There is a direct line from the decisions of the 10th Congress of the C.P.S.U. to the present discussions within the C.P.G.B. With the hindsight vouchsafed us by history, we can smugly assert today that, even given the circumstances which compelled Lenin to introduce the ban on factions, this was one of the few major organizational blunders of his career. Even before he died he

foresaw the tragedy which lay ahead for the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Union and himself formed a faction, with Leon Trotsky, to combat Stalin and the growing bureaucratization of the party and the state.

Lenin's views on democratic centralism were flexible. Under certain conditions it may be necessary to curb public discussion and concentrate emergency powers in the hands of the leadership. But on the whole his emphasis was on the need for democracy, the *necessity* for democracy, if the party was to function effectively. Never once during Lenin's lifetime was a major policy decision taken without first summoning a Congress of the party. Even at the height of the civil war, both the C.P.S.U. and the Communist International met regularly in annual Congress. Compare this with the record under Stalin!

As far back as February 1905, Lenin wrote: "Really, I often think that nine-tenths of the Bolsheviks are really formalists. . . . One must recruit among the youth more magnanimously . . . and still more boldly, without fearing them. Forget all the old cumbersome ways, the respect for titles, etc. . . . Give every subordinate committee the right, without many conditions, to write leaflets and distribute them (it is no great misfortune if they make mistakes; we will correct them 'gently' in VPEROD) . . . The events themselves will teach *in our spirit* . . . Else you will perish with the honours of KOMITETHIKI (Committeeman), with the official seal imprinted upon you . . ."

At the Congress of the Bolsheviks, which met in London from April 25 to May 10, 1905, Lenin again took up the theme of inner party democracy:

"The Party does not exist for the Party Council, but the Party Council for the Party . . . In all constitutional lands the citizens have the right to express lack of confidence in this or that official or official body. This right cannot be taken from them . . . Who is the judge in the handling of a dispute between the Party Council and the Local Committees? . . . Under free political conditions our Party can and will build completely on the principle of election . . . Even under absolutism the application of the electoral system in much greater measure than at present would have been possible . . ."

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM IN BRITAIN

Having made at some length a historic survey of the origins of democratic centralism and the views of its main advocate, Lenin, we must now return to the two documents under discussion, the majority and minority reports on Inner Party Democracy in the British Communist Party.

The minority report is absolutely right in its contention that the Commission has failed to discharge the task given to it: "to examine and report upon problems of inner-Party democracy, including Congress procedure, and to make recommendations as a basis for discussion." No report on this subject could be complete or satisfactory without a thorough investigation of the way in which inner party democracy has actually functioned until now. How was a situation ever reached which made the appointment of this Commission necessary? Who was responsible? No attempt was made to investigate these questions. Why? One can only conclude that the answers would have put the finger on the

guilty men—the present leadership of the Communist Party, who docilely copied the methods of the Kremlin. The majority report is an attempt to whitewash the old party leaders and to safeguard their positions in the future.

The Majority Report defines Democratic Centralism as follows:

- (i) The right of all members to take part in the discussion and formation of policy and the duty of all members to fight for that policy when it has been decided.
- (ii) The right of all members to elect and to be elected to the collective leaderships of the Party at all levels, and to be represented at the National Congress, the highest authority of the Party. The duty of all members to fight for the decisions made by those leaderships, and the duty of the lower organizations to accept and fight for the decisions of the higher organizations.
- (iii) The right of all members to contribute to the democratic life of the Party and the duty of all members to safeguard the unity of the Party. While carrying out the policy and decisions of the Party, members who disagree with a decision have the right to reserve their opinions and to express their views through the proper channels open to them as laid down in the Party Rules.

At first sight there would seem to be little to quarrel with within this definition, but the bite comes in paragraph (iii) ". . . to reserve their opinions and to express their views through the proper channels open to them as laid down in the Party Rules." It is these rules which have to be carefully examined. We can do no better, at this stage, than to quote from the Minority Report:-

"Rule 12, in defining democratic centralism, provides that minorities shall **accept** the decisions of majorities, and lower Party organizations shall **accept** the decisions of higher Party organizations. These provisions are then rigidly interpreted by rule 13, which states:

"During the time the matter is being discussed it is the duty of all members of the Party organization to carry out to the full the policy of the Party until the final decision is reached. If the individual member does not receive support from his Party organization, it is his duty to accept the majority decision and carry out to the full the policy of the Party."

This means, as the Minority Report points out, that every member of the party is in duty bound to fight for the decisions, not only of Congress (taken after prolonged discussion), but also of every decision taken by the executive or district committees, even when the member is deeply and sincerely opposed to the decision on principle. "Moreover, the rule that minorities must accept majority decisions is interpreted on page 31 of the majority report to mean that a minority on the Executive Committee, or a district committee is obliged to fight for the majority opinion in the lower organizations of the Party, for the majority report only recognises the right to express differences to *higher* bodies."

Compare this rigid rule with Lenin's rejoinder to Riazanov as quoted above: ". . . If fundamental disagreements exist . . . we cannot deprive members of the Central Committee of the right to address themselves to the party. I cannot imagine how we can do this." Even Lenin's imagination could not conjure up a vision of the iron grip with which Stalinism would strangle democracy within the Communist Parties.

Congress, the rules lay down, is the highest authority of the Party and the branches, says the majority report, have the obligation to send "their best political

people” as delegates to Congress. But suppose a branch is sharply, though mathematically unevenly, divided on important issues which are to come before Congress? Are there any provisions in the rules for the proportional representation of minority opinions? Careful examination of the rules does not reveal any such provision. Yet without it, Congress cannot honestly reflect opinion within the Party. The provision of proportional representation of minority opinions need not negate the very sound principle that delegates to Congress are not mandated to vote in some predetermined way.

A very important section of the Majority Report and one which goes to the root of the matter, is that which deals with discussions in between Congresses.

Between Congresses, says the majority report, the Executive Committee is the responsible leadership of the Party. It will develop policy in accordance with Congress decisions but—and here is the bureaucratic rub, “events may make it necessary to take decisions without prior consultation with the membership.” It is this thoroughly undemocratic procedure which has resulted in Communist Party policy being turned upside-down from one day to the next and which has so often made rank-and-file communists the laughing stock of their work-mates. While it may not be possible, in an emergency, to summon a National Congress, in periods when the Party is wholly legal and above ground, there should be no obstacles in the way of hastily summoning divisional representatives for consultation. But clearly this method, too, will only be truly democratic if minorities are adequately represented at every level of the Party organization. If the change under consideration involves a *fundamental* departure from previously agreed policy, then an emergency Congress must be summoned at the earliest possible moment.

This question of minority representation on all the leading committees of the Party is one of fundamental importance. Discussion in the internal bulletins and party publications can only be a genuine reflection of the various viewpoints within the party if all shades of opinion are guaranteed an adequate share of the available space. Past experience has made it clear that no reliance can be placed on the good faith of the Party functionaries. Only the proportional representation of the minorities can provide the necessary safeguards.

THE PANEL SYSTEM

What enabled Stalinism to fasten its stranglehold on the Party? There can be little doubt that the way in which the panel system of electing the Executive Committee was misused from 1925-1943 helped in the transformation of the British Communist Party from a revolutionary party into a mere appendage of the ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. This should not be interpreted as a criticism of the panel system as such. Properly operated, with adequate democratic safeguards, the panel system is ideal for the dual task of ensuring a continuity of experienced leadership and of introducing new blood into the leadership.

But for the panel system to function democratically, two things are necessary; firstly, the panel must adequately represent minority as well as majority tendencies within the party; secondly, Congress delegates must have the right to vote separately for the elimina-

tion of any individual nominee on the panel and to substitute other names. As the majority report itself comments, in a masterpiece of understatement, the method as hitherto applied in the Communist Party “had the drawback that opposition to any individual name, or support for an alternative name, could in the last resort only be expressed by voting against the panel as a whole or by abstention.”

From 1925 onwards the Stalinist octopus spread its tentacles from the Kremlin to sieze hold of all the parties affiliated to the Communist International. Bureaucratic *manipulation* of the panel system was part of the process of the “Stalinization” of the British Communist Party. In this way, the present self-perpetuating leadership came into existence and established its authority *over* the party. The fact that after 1944 other methods of electing the executive National Committee (though not the District Committees) were adopted and that substantially the same people were elected is used by the Majority Report to assert “the falsity of the argument that comrades who have been repeatedly elected to the Executive since the early years owe their re-election to one particular method, since they have in fact retained their positions in spite of the changes in method. If such comrades have been repeatedly re-elected it is not due to a particular method but to the desire of Congress to have them on the Executive.” The fact is, of course, that during the period when the panel system was in operation, the Stalinist leadership consolidated its hold on the party. It eliminated all opposition within the party and crushed all free discussion. After that it felt secure enough to experiment with other methods of elections but returned to the “panel” (or rigging) system in 1954.

The old panel system is still in use to isolate and crush all independent leadership at the District level.

FACTIONS IN THE PARTY

On factional activity, the majority report really waxes indignant:-

“Some comrades argue that the right to reserve one’s views and to express them to the higher bodies are not sufficient. Some claim that comrades on higher committees should have the right to express disagreement downwards—that is, to the branches. But if that were done it would not be simply for information, it would become the first step in a campaign against the decision with which they disagree. Some comrades specifically claim the right to campaign in the Party and the press to get the decision changed and the right to form groups of like-minded comrades for this purpose. Some claim that such groupings should have the right to draw up their own political platform and to campaign for it and that either the Party should be obliged to publish their platform or they should have the independent right to publish it.”

All these claims put forward by “some” comrades, and which the majority rejects out of hand, was the normal practice of the Bolsheviks under Lenin until the 10th Congress—even in the period of revolution and civil war. These methods of work did not weaken the Party but strengthened it and prepared it for its tasks. Only after the advent of Stalinism and after the suppression of free discussion and criticism within the

party, did it degenerate to the stage where all policy emanated from a single "individual" and even the Central Committee and the Political Bureau became merely rubber stamps to endorse his policies.

In a healthy party, whenever a group of members have a point of view on a given issue, they will tend to co-ordinate their efforts to get that viewpoint accepted by the party. Once the issue is decided, the group will dissolve and on other issues may find themselves aligned against each other. That is the way factions functioned in the heroic period of Russian Bolshevism. Only when Stalinism came along with its methods of brutal suppression did factions harden into permanent alignments.

THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

The minority report goes to the heart of bureaucratic control of the party when it refers to the powers of the Political Committee. Although the powers of the Political Committee are nowhere defined (this committee is not even mentioned in the Party rules), every Communist Party member knows full well that this is the body which exercises the real power within the party. To quote the minority report: "It appears to exercise real control over the Party press, plays a major role in the selection of the recommended list for the new Executive Committee, controls the Party apparatus, and issues important political statements. It appears to be a policy-making body in between the two-monthly meetings of the Executive Committee."

Internal democracy under these conditions becomes a farce. As the minority report demands: "The functions and the powers of the Political Committee should be defined by rule, for the value of democratically electing the Executive Committee would be seriously reduced if, in fact, effective power was wielded by an inner committee of full-time political workers not directly responsible to Congress."

Despite its shortcomings, the proposals of the minority report, if adopted, would go a long way to curb the power of the bureaucrats and to restore democracy within the party. But to transform the Communist Party from the soulless bureaucratic machine which it has become into a genuine revolutionary

workers' party, much more is needed than a few changes in the rules of the party. What is necessary is an understanding of the reasons why the Stalinist degeneration took place.

POLITICS AND ORGANIZATION

While it is right to struggle for real democratic discussion in the Communist Party, it is also necessary to demand that the leadership makes available the full facts of the history of the Communist International, the C.P.S.U. and the C.P.G.B. from 1923 onwards. *It will then become clear to all that political degeneration preceded organizational degeneration.*

When the bureaucrats usurped power in the U.S.S.R. and abandoned the policy of international socialism for the narrow, nationalistic doctrine of "socialism in one country", they no longer required a Communist International acting as the General Staff of the world revolution. The Communist parties had to be transformed from vanguard revolutionary parties into frontier guards of the Soviet Union. It was in this process that the British Communist Party along with the other Communist Parties in Europe, Asia and America lost its political soul and abandoned inner party democracy. This process took place in a period when the world revolution was in retreat, when the Russian workers, weary and tired of waiting for help from the West, turned in on themselves and turned away from international socialism. Only small groups of oppositionists kept alive the fire of revolutionary Marxism.

Today, the tide has turned. In China, a great people have taken the first steps towards socialism though the Chinese Communist Party has not yet thrown off its Stalinism. The colonial peoples are marching determinedly toward freedom. These changed conditions are having their impact also on the Stalinist Communist Party. Even the most hardened bureaucracy cannot ignore the objective conditions under which it exists. Under these circumstances, the discussion in the British Communist Party on the working of inner party democracy may well be the harbinger of that fuller discussion on fundamental communist policy which our times demand.

UNIVERSITIES AND LEFT REVIEW

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The Law of Uneven and Combined Development.

William F. Warde

(This is the second of three sections of a complete article. The first part was published in the January 1957 issue of *Labour Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1. Part III will appear in issue No. 3, to be published in May.)

COMBINED DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

WE MUST now examine the second aspect of the law of uneven and combined development. This law bears in its name indications of the more general law of which it is a special expression—viz., the law of dialectical logic called the law of interpenetration of opposites. The two processes—unevenness and combination—which are united in this formulation, themselves represent two different and opposing, yet integrally connected and interpenetrating aspects or stages of reality.

The law of combined development starts from the recognition of unevenness of the rates of development of various phenomena of historical change. The disparities in technical and social development and the fortuitous combination of elements, tendencies and movements belonging to different stages of social organisation provide the basis for the emergence of something of a new and higher quality.

This law enables us to observe how the new qualities arise. If society did not develop in a *differential* way, that is, through the emergence of differences which are sometimes so acute as to be contradictory to each other, the possibility for combination and *integration* of contradictory phenomena would not present itself. Therefore, the first phase of the evolutionary process—i.e. unevenness—is the indispensable precondition for the second phase—the combination of features belonging to different stages of social life into distinctive social formations, deviating from abstractly deduced standards or “normal” types.

Since combination comes about as the necessary outcome of pre-existent unevenness, we can see why both are always found together and coupled in the single law of combined and uneven development. Starting with the fact of disparate levels of development which result from the uneven progression of the various aspects of society, we will now analyse the next stage and necessary consequence of this state of affairs—their coming together.

THE FUSION OF DIFFERENT HISTORICAL FACTORS

We must ask, first of all, what is combined? We can often see in the world how features which are appropriate to one stage of evolution become merged with those essentially belonging to another and higher stage. The Catholic Church, with its seat at the Vatican, is a characteristically feudal institution. Today the Pope uses radio and television—an invention of the 20th

century—to disseminate Church doctrines.

This leads to the second question: how are the different features combined? Here metal alloys provide a good example. Bronze, which played so great a part in the development of early tool-making that its name has been given to an entire stage of historical development—the Bronze Age—is composed of two elementary metals, copper and tin, mixed together in specific proportions. Their fusion produces an alloy with important properties different from either of its constituents.

Something similar happens in history when elements belonging to different stages of social evolution are fused. This fusion gives rise to new phenomena, a new formation, with its own special characteristics. The colonial period of American history, when European civilisation, changing over from feudalism to capitalism, met and merged with savagery and barbarism, provided a lush breeding ground for combined formations and furnishes a most productive field for their study. Almost every kind of social relationship then known to mankind, from savagery to the shareholding company, was to be found in the New World during colonial times. Several colonies, such as Virginia and North and South Carolina, were originally settled by capitalist shareholding enterprises who had been granted charters by the Crown. This highest form of capitalist undertaking, the shareholding firm, came into contact with Indians still living under primitive tribal conditions.

One of the prime peculiarities of American development was the fact that every one of the pre-capitalist forms of life which grew up there were combined to one degree or another with fundamental features of bourgeois civilisation. Indian tribes, for example, were annexed to the world market through the fur trade and it is true that the Indians thereby became somewhat civilised. On the other hand, the white European colonists, hunters, trappers and pioneer farmers, became partially barbarised by having to survive in the wilds of the plains and hills of the “virgin” lands. Yet the European woodsman who penetrated the wilds of America with his rifle and iron axe, and also with the outlook and habits of civilisation, was very different from the Red Indian tribesman, however many of the activities of barbaric society the woodsman had to indulge in.

In his pioneer work on *Social Forces in American History*, A. M. Simons, an early socialist historian, wrote: “The course of evolution pursued in each colony bears a striking resemblance to the line of development that the race has followed.” (pp. 30-31) In the beginning, he points out, there was primitive communism. Then came small individual production and so right through to capitalism.

However, the conception that the American colonies, or any one of them, substantially repeated the sequence of stages through which advanced societies had travelled before them, is entirely too schematic

and misses the main point about their development and structure. The most significant peculiarity in the evolution of the British colonies in America came from the fact that all the organisational forms and driving forces belonging to earlier stages of social development, from savagery to feudalism, were incorporated into, conditioned by, and in the case of chattel slavery, even produced by the expanding system of international capitalism.

THE DIALECTICS OF COMBINATION

There was no mechanical reproduction on American soil of outmoded historical stages. Instead, colonial life witnessed a dialectical admixture of all these varied elements, which resulted in the emergence of combined social formations of new and special types. The chattel slavery of the American colonies was very different from the chattel slavery of classical Greece and Rome. American slavery was a *bourgeoisified* slavery which was not only a subordinate branch of the capitalist world market but became impregnated with capitalist features. One of the most freakish offshoots of this fusion of slavery and capitalism was the appearance of commercial slaveholders among the Creek Indians in the South. Could anything be more anomalous and self-contradictory than communistic Indians, now slave-holders, selling their products in a bourgeois market?

What results from this coming together, this fusion of different stages or elements of the historical process, then, is a peculiar blend or alloy of things. In the joining of such different, and even opposing, elements, the dialectical nature of history asserts itself most forcefully and prominently. Here contradiction, flat, obvious, flagrant contradiction, holds sway. History plays pranks with all rigid forms and fixed routines. All kinds of paradoxical developments ensue which perplex and confuse those with narrow, formalised minds.

As a further important example of this let us consider the nature of Stalinism. In Russia today the most advanced form of property, nationalised property, and the most efficient mode of industrial organisation, planned economy, both brought about by the proletarian revolution of 1917, have been fused into a single mass with the most brutal type of tyranny, which was itself created by the political *counter*-revolution of the Soviet bureaucracy. The economic foundation of the Stalinist regime historically belongs to the socialist era of the future. Yet this economic foundation is yoked to a political superstructure showing the most malignant traits of the class dictatorships of the past. No wonder this exceptionally contradictory phenomenon has puzzled so many people and led them astray!

Uneven and combined development presents us with a peculiar mixture of backward elements with the most modern factors. Many pious Catholics affix to their motor cars medals of St. Christopher, the patron saint of travellers who is supposed to protect them against accidents. This custom combines the fetish of the credulous savage with the products of the motor industry, one of the most technically advanced and automated industries of the modern world.

These anomalies are, nowadays, especially pro-

nounced in the most backward countries. Such curiosities exist as air-conditioned harems!

Carlton S. Coone writes: "... There still are marginal regions where cultural diffusion has been uneven, where simple Stone Age hunters are suddenly confronted by strangers carrying rifles, where Neolithic garden-cultivators are trading their stone axes for steel ones and their pottery water jugs for discarded oil tins, and where proud citizens of ancient empires, accustomed to getting news some weeks later from camel caravans, find themselves listening to propaganda broadcasts over public radios. In the blue-and-white-tiled city square the clear call of the muezzin, bidding the faithful to prayer, is replaced one day by a tinny summons issuing not from the lips of a bearded man, but from a shiny metal cone hanging from the minaret. Out at the airport, pilgrims to the holy places climb directly from the backs of camels to seats in a DC-4. These changes in technology lead to the births of new institutions in these places as elsewhere, but what is born from such travail is often an unfamiliar child, resembling neither the laggard nor the advanced parent, and hard for both to cope with." *The Story of Man* (pp. 413-414).

"The development of historically backward nations leads necessarily to a peculiar combination of different stages in the historical process," wrote Trotsky in *History of the Russian Revolution* (p. 5).

In Africa today, among the Kikuyu in Kenya, as well as among the peoples of the Gold Coast, ancient tribal ties and customs lend strength to their solidarity in the struggles for social advance and national independence against the English imperialists. In Premier Nkrumah's movement a national parliamentary party is linked with trade unions and tribalism—all three of which belong to different stages of social history.

The blending of backward elements with the most modern factors can also be seen when we compare modern China and the United States of America. Today many Chinese peasants in tiny hamlets have pictures of Marx and Lenin on their walls and are inspired by their ideas. The average American worker, living in the most modern cities, has, by contrast, paintings of Christ or photographs of Eisenhower or the Pope on his prefabricated walls. However, the Chinese peasants have no running water, paved roads, cars, radios or television sets which the American workers have.

Thus, although the United States and its working class in its basic industrial development and its living and cultural standards has progressed far beyond China, in certain respects the Chinese peasant has outstripped the American worker. "The historical dialectic knows neither naked backwardness nor chemically pure progressiveness," as Trotsky put it in *Britain's Social Structure*.

If we analyse the social structure of contemporary Britain we can see how it has features belonging to three different social-historical periods, inextricably interwoven. On top of its political system is a monarchy and an established church, both inherited from feudalism. This is connected with and serves a capitalist-monopolist property structure belonging to the highest stage of capitalism. Alongside these capitalist-owned industries exist socialised industries, mighty trade

unions, and a Labour Party—all *precursors* of Socialism.

It is significant that this particular contradictory combination in Britain sorely perplexes the American. The liberal American cannot understand why the English retain a monarchy and an established church; the capitalist-minded American is puzzled by the British ruling class's toleration of the Labour Party.

At the same time, Britain is being shaken by the most formidable of all the combined movements of social forces, on a world scale, in our time, viz., the combination of the anti-capitalist movement of the working class with the anti-colonial revolution of the coloured peoples. These two very different movements, both of them flowing out of opposition to imperialist rule, reinforce one another.

These two movements, however, do not have the same effects in all imperialist countries. They are felt, for example, more directly and forcefully in Britain and France than in the United States. Even in the United States, however, the struggles of the colonial peoples for independence and of the Negro minority for equality reciprocally influence one another.

FORWARD LEAPS IN HISTORY

The most important outcome of the interaction of uneven and combined development is the occurrence of 'leaps' in the flow of history. The biggest leaps are rendered possible by the co-existence of peoples on different levels of social organisation. In today's world, these social organisations stretch all the way from savagery to the very threshold of socialism. In North America, while the Eskimos in the Arctic and the Seri Indians of Lower California are still in the stage of savagery, the bankers of New York and the workers of Detroit operate in the highest stage of monopoly capitalism. Historical 'leaps' become inevitable because retarded sections of society are brought face to face with tasks which can be solved only by the most up-to-date methods. Under the spur of external conditions, they are obliged to skip over, or rush through, stages of evolution which originally required an entire historical epoch to unfold their potentialities.

The wider the range of differences in development and the greater the number of stages present at any one time, the more dramatic are the possible combinations of conditions and forces and the more startling is the nature of the leaps. Some combinations produce extraordinary sudden eruptions and twists in history. Transportation has evolved, step by step, through the ages from human to animal locomotion, through wheeled vehicles on to railways, cars and aeroplanes. In recent years, however, peoples in South America and Siberia have passed directly and at one bound from the pack animal to the use of planes for transport.

Tribes, nations and classes are able to compress stages, or skip over them entirely, by assimilating the achievements of more advanced peoples. They use these, like a pole-jumper, to soar upward to clear intermediate stages, and to surmount obstacles in one mighty leap. They cannot do this until pioneer countries in the vanguard of mankind have previously paved the way for them by prefabricating the material conditions. Other peoples prepare the models which, when the

time is ripe, they then adapt to their own peculiar needs.

Soviet industry, for example, was able to make such rapid progress because, among other reasons, it could import techniques and machinery from the West. Now China can march ahead at an even faster pace in its industrialisation by relying not only upon the technical achievements of the advanced capitalist countries but also upon the planning methods of Soviet economy.

In their efforts to come abreast of Western Europe, the colonists of the North Atlantic coast quickly passed through "wilderness barbarism", virtually skipped over feudalism, implanted and then extirpated chattel slavery and built large towns and cities on a capitalist basis. They did all this at an accelerated rate. It took the European peoples 1,300 years to climb from the upper barbarism of Homeric Greece to the England of the triumphant bourgeois English revolution of 1649. North America covered this same transformation in 300 years. This was a speed-up of at least four hundred per cent in the rate of development. It was, however, only made possible by the fact that America was able to profit from the previous achievements of Europe combined with the impetuous expansion of the capitalist market to all quarters of the globe.

Alongside of this acceleration and compression of social development came an acceleration of the development of revolutionary force. The British people took eight centuries to progress from the beginnings of feudalism in the 9th century to their victorious bourgeois revolution in the 17th century. The North American colonists took only one and three-quarter centuries to pass from their first settlements in the 17th century to their victorious revolution in the last quarter of the 18th century.

In these historical leaps, stages of development are sometimes compressed and sometimes omitted altogether, depending upon the particular conditions and forces. In the North American colonies, for example, feudalism, which flowered in Europe and Asia over many centuries, hardly obtained a foothold. Feudalism's characteristic institutions: landed estates, serfs, the monarchy, the established church and the mediaeval guilds could find no suitable environment and were squeezed out between commercial chattel slavery on the one hand and the budding bourgeois society on the other. Paradoxically, at the very time that feudalism was being stunted and strangled in the North American colonies, it was undergoing vigorous expansion on the other side of the world in Russia.

On the other hand, slavery in the Southern colonies of North America sank deep roots, enjoyed such an extensive growth and proved so tough and enduring that it required a separate revolution to eradicate it. There are, indeed, still, to this day, significant anachronistic survivals in the South of chattel slavery.

HISTORICAL REVERSIONS

History has its reversion as well as its forward marches; its periods of reaction no less than its periods of revolution. Under conditions of reaction, infantile forms and obsolete features appropriate to bygone ages and periods of development can be fused with ad-

vanced structures to generate extremely retrogressive formations and hinder social advance. A prime example of such a regressive combination was chattel slavery in America, where an obsolete mode of property and form of production belonging to the infancy of class society sprang up in a bourgeois environment belonging to the maturity of class society.

Recent political history has made us familiar with the examples of Fascism and Stalinism, which are symmetrical, but by no means identical, historical phenomena of the 20th century. Both represented reversions from pre-existing democratic forms of government but which had entirely different social foundations. Fascism was the destroyer and supplanter of bourgeois democracy in the final period of imperialist domination and decay. Stalinism was the destroyer and supplanter of the workers' democracy of revolutionary Russia in the initial period of the international socialist revolution.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF COMBINATIONS

Thus far we have singled out two stages in the dialectical movement of society. First, some parts of mankind, and certain elements of society, move ahead faster and develop farther than others. Later, under the shock of external forces, laggards are prodded along, catching up with and even outstripping their forerunners on the path of progress by combining the latest innovations with their old modes of existence.

But history does not halt at this point. Each unique synthesis, which arises from uneven and combined development, itself undergoes further growth and change which can lead on to the eventual disintegration and destruction of the synthesis. A combined formation amalgamates elements derived from different levels of social development. Its inner structure is therefore highly contradictory. The opposition of its constituent poles not only imparts instability to the formation but directs its further development. More clearly than any other formation a struggle of opposites marks the life course of a combined formation.

There are two main types of combination. In one case, the product of an advanced culture may be absorbed into one framework of an archaic social organisation. In the other, aspects of a primitive order are incorporated into a more highly developed social organism.

What effects will follow from the assimilation of higher elements into a primitive structure depends upon many circumstances. For example, the Indians could replace the stone axe with the iron axe without fundamental dislocations of their social order because this change involved only slight dependence upon the white civilisation from which the iron axe was taken. The introduction of the horse considerably changed the lives of the Indians of the prairies by extending the range of their hunting grounds and of their war-making abilities, yet the horse did not transform their basic tribal relations. However, participation in the growing fur-trade and the penetration of money had revolutionary consequences upon the Indians by disrupting their tribal ways, setting up private interests against communal customs, pitting one tribe against another and subordinating the new Indian traders and trappers to

the world market.

Under certain historical conditions the introduction of new things can, for a time, even lengthen the life of the most archaic institutions. The entrance of the great capitalist oil concerns into the Middle East has temporarily strengthened the shiekdoms by showering wealth upon them. But in the long run the invasion of up-to-date techniques and ideas cannot help but undermine the old tribal regimes because they break up the conditions upon which the old regimes rest and create new forces to oppose and replace them.

A primitive power can fasten itself upon a higher one, gain renewed vitality, and even appear for a time superior to its host. But the less developed power leads an essentially parasitic existence and cannot indefinitely sustain itself at the expense of the higher. It lacks suitable soil and atmosphere for its growth while the more developed institutions are not only inherently superior but can count upon a favourable environment for expansion.

SLAVERY AND CAPITALISM

The development of chattel slavery in North America provides an excellent illustration of this dialectic. From the world-historical standpoint, slavery on this continent was an anachronism from its birth. As a mode of production, it belonged to the infancy of class society; it had already virtually vanished from Western Europe. Yet the very demands of Western Europe for staple raw materials, like sugar, indigo, and tobacco, combined with the scarcity of labour for carrying on large-scale agricultural operations, implanted slavery in North America. Colonial slavery grew up as a branch of commercial capitalism. Thus a mode of production and a form of property which had long passed away, emerged afresh out of the demands of a higher economic system and became part of it.

This contradiction became more accentuated when the rise of capitalist factory industry in England and the United States lifted the cotton-producing states of the deep South to top place in American economic and political life. For decades the two opposing systems functioned as a team. They then split apart at the time of the American Civil War. The capitalist system, which at one stage of its development fostered slavery's growth, at another stage created that combination of forces which overthrew it.

The combined formation of the old and the new, the lower and the higher, chattel slavery and capitalism turned out to be neither permanent nor indissoluble; it was conditional, temporary, relative. The enforced association of the two tended toward dissociation and growing conflict. If a society marches forward, the preponderant advantage, in the long run, goes to the superior structure which thrives at the expense of the inferior features, eventually outstripping and dislodging them.

THE SUBSTITUTION OF CLASSES

One of the most important and paradoxical consequences of uneven and combined development is the solution of the problems of one class through the agency of another. Each stage of social development inherits, poses, and solves its own specific complex of

historical tasks. Barbarism, for example, developed the productive techniques of plant cultivation and animal breeding and husbandry as branches of its economic activity. These activities were also prerequisites for the supplanting of barbarism by civilisation.

In the bourgeois epoch, the unification of separate provinces into centralised, national states and the industrialisation of these national states were historical tasks posed to the rising bourgeoisie. But, in a number of countries, the uneven underdevelopment of capitalist economy and the consequent weakness of the bourgeoisie made them unable to fulfil these historically bourgeois tasks. Right in the heart of Europe, for example, the unity of the German people was effected, from 1866 to 1869, not by the bourgeoisie and not by the working class, but by an outmoded social caste, the Prussian Junker landlords, headed by the Hohenzollern monarchy and directed by Bismarck. In this case, the historical task of a capitalist class was carried through by pre-capitalist forces.

In the present century, China presents another, reversed example—on a higher historical level. Under the double yoke of its old feudal relationships and of imperialist subordination, China could neither be unified nor industrialised. It required nothing less than a proletarian revolution (however deformed this proletarian revolution may have been from the start) backed up by a mighty peasant insurrection, to clear the way for the solution of these long-postponed bourgeois tasks. Today China has been unified for the first time and is rapidly becoming industrialised. However, these things are not being carried out by capitalist or pre-capitalist forces but by the working class and under the leadership of the working class. In this case, the unfinished tasks of the aborted capitalist era of development have been shouldered by a post-capitalist class.

The extremely uneven development of society makes necessary these exchanges of historical roles between classes; the telescoping of historical stakes makes the substitution possible. As Hegel pointed out, history often resorts to the most indirect and cunning mechanisms to achieve its ends.

One of the major problems left unsolved by the bourgeois democratic revolution in the United States was the abolition of the old stigmas of slavery, with the unrestricted integration of the Negroes into American life. This task was only partially solved by the industrial bourgeoisie of the North during the American Civil War. This failure of the industrial bourgeoisie has ever since been a great source of embarrassment and difficulty for its representatives. The question now posed is whether the present ultra-reactionary capitalist rulers of the U.S.A. can now carry through to fulfilment a national task which it failed to complete in its revolutionary heyday.

The spokesmen for the Democrats and Republicans find it necessary to say that they can in fact do this job; the reformists of all kinds claim that the bourgeois government can be made to do it. It is our opinion, however, that only the joint struggle of the Negro people and the working masses against the capitalist rulers will be able to carry through the struggle against the hangovers of slavery to its victorious conclusion. In this way, the socialist revolution will complete what the bourgeois-democratic revolution failed to finish.

THE PENALTIES OF PROGRESSIVENESS AND THE PRIVILEGES OF BACKWARDNESS

Those who make a cult of pure progress believe that high attainments in a number of fields presuppose equivalent perfection in other respects. Many Americans automatically assume that the United States surpasses the rest of the world in all spheres of human activity just because it does so in technology, material productivity and standard of living. Yet in politics and philosophy, to mention no others, the general development of the United States has not yet passed beyond the 19th century, whereas countries in Europe and Asia, far less favoured economically, are far ahead of the U.S.A. in these fields.

In the last few years of his rule, Stalin sought to impose the notion that only "rootless cosmopolitans" could maintain that the West had outdistanced the USSR in any branch of endeavour from mechanical invention to the science of genetics. This expression of Great Russian nationalism was no less stupid than the Westerners' conceit that nothing superior can come out of the alleged Asiatic barbarism of the Soviet Union.

The truth is that each stage of social development, each type of social organisation, each nationality, has its essential virtues and defects, advantages and disadvantages. Progress exacts its penalties; it has to be paid for. Advances in certain fields can institute relapses in others. For example, civilisation developed the powers of production and the wealth of mankind by sacrificing the equality and fraternity of the primitive societies it supplanted. On the other hand, under certain conditions, backwardness has its benefits. Moreover, what is progressive at one stage of development can become a pre-condition for the establishment of backwardness at a subsequent stage or in an affiliated field. And what is backward can become the basis for a forward leap.

It seems presumptuous to tell those peoples who are oppressed by backwardness and are yearning to cast it off, that their archaic state has any advantages. To them backwardness appears as an unmixed evil. But the consciousness of this "evil" emerges in the first place only after these peoples have come into contact with superior forms of social development. It is the contact of the two forms, backward and advanced, which exposes the deficiencies of the backward culture. So long as civilisation is unknown, the primitive savage remains content. It is only the juxtaposition of the two that introduces the vision of something better and feeds the yeast of dissatisfaction. In this way the presence and knowledge of a superior state becomes a motor force of progress.

The resulting criticism and condemnation of the old state of affairs generates the urge to overcome the disparity in development and drives laggards forward by arousing in them the desire to draw abreast of the more advanced. Every individual who has become involved in the learning process has felt this personally.

When new and imperative demands are made upon backward peoples, the absence of accumulated, intermediate institutions can be of positive value, because then fewer obstacles are present to obstruct the advance and the assimilation of what is new. If the social forces exist and exert themselves effectively, intelligently and in time, what had been a penalty can be turned to advantage.

THE TWISTED COURSE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The recent history of Russia provides the most striking example of this conversion of historical penalties into advantages. At the start of the 20th century, Russia was the most retarded Great Power in Europe. This backwardness embraced all strata from the peasantry at the bottom to the absolutist Romanov dynasty at the top. The Russian people and its oppressed nationalities suffered both from the heaped-up miseries of their decayed feudalism and from the backwardness of bourgeois development in Russia.

However, when the time came for a revolutionary settlement of these accumulated problems, this backwardness disclosed its advantages in many ways. Firstly, Czarism was *totally* alienated from the masses. Secondly, the bourgeoisie was too weak to take power in its own name and hold it. Thirdly, the peasantry, having received no satisfaction from the bourgeoisie, was compelled to rely upon the working class for leadership. Fourthly, the working class also did not have any petrified modes of activity or entrenched trade union and political bureaucracies to hold it back. It was easier for this energetic young class, which had so little to unlearn and so much to learn so quickly, to adopt the most advanced theory, the boldest and clearest programme of action and the highest type of party organisation. The peasant revolt against mediaevalism, a movement which in Western Europe had been characteristic of the dawn of the bourgeois democratic revolutions, intermeshed with the proletarian revolution against capitalism, which belonged to the 20th century. As Trotsky explained in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, it was the conjunction of these two different revolutions which gave an expansive power to the upheaval of the Russian people which accounted for the extraordinary sweep and momentum of its achievements.

But the privileges of backwardness are not inexhaustible; they are limited by historical and material conditions. Accordingly, in the next stage of its development, the backwardness inherited from the Russia of the Czars reasserted itself under new historical conditions and on an entirely new social basis. The previous privileges had to be paid for in the next decades by the bitter suffering, the economic privations and the loss of liberties which the Russian people have endured under the Stalinist dictatorship. The very backwardness which had previously strengthened the revolution and which had propelled the Russian masses far ahead of the rest of the world, now became the starting point of the political reaction and bureaucratic counter-revolution, a consequence of the fact that the international revolution failed to conquer in the industrially more advanced countries. The economic and cultural backwardness of Russia, combined with the retarded development of the international revolution, were the basic conditions which enabled the Stalinist clique to choke the Bolshevik Party and which permitted the bureaucracy to usurp political power.

For these reasons, the Stalinist regime became the most self-contradictory in modern history, a coagulation of the most advanced property forms and social conquests emanating from the revolution with a resur-

rection of the most repulsive features of class rule. Giant factories with the most up-to-date machinery were operated by workers who, serf-like, were not permitted to leave their places of employment; aeroplanes sped above impassable dirt tracks; planned economy functioned side by side with "slave labour" camps; tremendous industrial advances went hand in hand with political retrogression; the prodigious growth of Russia as a world power was accompanied by an inner decay of the regime.

However, the dialectical development of the Russian Revolution did not stop at this point. The extension of the revolution to Eastern Europe and Asia after the Second World War, the expansion of Soviet industry, and the rise in the numbers and cultural level of the Soviet workers, prepared conditions for a modified reversal of the old trends, the revival of the revolution on a higher stage, and the undermining and partial overcoming of the scourge of Stalinism. The first manifestations of this forward movement of the masses in Russia and in its satellites, with the working class in the lead, have already been announced to the world.

From the Khrushchev speech to the Hungarian revolution there has been a continuous series of events demonstrating the dialectics of revolutionary development. At every stage of the Russian Revolution since 1905, we can see the interaction of its backwardness and progressiveness with their conversion one into the other according to the concrete circumstances of national and international development. Only an understanding of the dialectics of these changes can provide an accurate picture of the extremely complex and contradictory development of the USSR throughout the forty years of its existence. The dozens of over-simplified characterisations of the nature of modern Russian society, which serve only to confuse the revolutionary movement, derive directly from a lack of understanding of the laws of dialectics and the use of metaphysical methods of analysing historical processes.

The law of uneven and combined development is an indispensable tool for analysing the Russian revolution and for charting its growth and decay through all its complex phases, its triumphs, its degeneration and its prospective regeneration.*

(To be concluded)

* (This article was written before the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution. Readers will, however, not be slow to note how helpful the law of uneven and combined development can be in helping them to unravel the complicated course of development of the Hungarian events. Metaphysical thinkers of all parties are baffled by the complex interplay of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces—only dialectical thinkers can rise above the unending search for over-simplified labels ("counter-revolutionary fascist putsch"—"fighters for freedom", etc.) and arrive at that sort of concrete analysis of the Hungarian revolution which will help to show the working class of every country how the cancer of Stalinism can be eliminated from the Socialist movement.—Editors).

The Chinese C. P. and Hungary

Michael Banda

(Some comments on the statement of the Chinese Communist Party entitled: "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.")

WHEN Khrushchev's speech was made public in all its terrifying detail, it exploded on the leaderships of the international Stalinist movement with the stunning suddenness of a stick of gelignite thrown among a shoal of fish. The most stunned and embarrassed amongst them were the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party. For almost thirty years they had regarded Stalin as their infallible guide, their impeccable teacher, their genius theoretician, their glorious leader. Stalin's every utterance was treated by them as an historic declaration, every act as an event of international significance, every book and pamphlet as a masterpiece of Marxist-Leninist literature and a permanent contribution to dialectical materialism. Even at the time of the Twentieth Congress a Chinese edition of the "Short History of the C.P.S.U. (B)" (which Khrushchev and Mikoyan criticized for its serious omissions and inaccuracies) was being printed in millions of copies for sale throughout China!

It may be said in parentheses that the Chinese Communist leaders, notwithstanding their fulsome praise of Stalin, had to throw overboard in fact (though *not* in theory), all the absurd, non-revolutionary and anti-Marxist "theories" of Stalin before they could lead the Third Chinese Revolution to complete victory. If Stalin's "theories" had persisted the Chinese CP would still be seeking a reconciliation with Chiang Kai Shek and the Kuo-Min-Tang in the form of a coalition government. But the tide of history, more powerful than the subjective desires of Stalin, forced the CCP leaders to break with the Kuo-Min-Tang, cross the Yangtse and launch the struggle for power. In this way, without ever realizing the far-reaching implications of their historic victory, the Chinese Communist leaders helped to undermine the ideological and material basis of Stalinism.

History, capricious and perverse as it may be, has never been on the side of idols and their worshippers. Through the medium of N. S. Khrushchev it revealed Stalin to all the world as an uncultured bureaucrat, a shrewd charlatan and a ruthless and unscrupulous tyrant.

The damning revelations of Khrushchev succeeded in eliciting from the Chinese leaders a cautious and ambiguously worded statement. It said nothing new but attempted to rehabilitate Stalin in the eyes of the Chinese people. That was in April 1956. For nine months an inscrutable and seemingly portentous silence followed. World labour waited in suspense for a supplementary explanation. But it waited in vain.

While the Chinese leaders by their silence were trying to gloss over the crimes of Stalin, History, shamed and saddened by the evil consequences of its

own villainy, was preparing to write a bloody and tragic epilogue to Khrushchev's speech. This was the glorious Hungarian Revolution.

SOVIETS AND WORKERS' COUNCILS

The national uprising of the Hungarian people against police oppression and bureaucratic tyranny—personified by the Rakosi-Gero clique—passed like an electric shock through the world labour movement. By their self-sacrifice, heroism and amazing tenacity the Hungarian people demonstrated their implacable hatred of Stalinism and their determination to consign it—cult and all—to the limbo of a barbarous past. By instinctively setting up self-governing workers' councils and by socializing the industrial enterprises the Hungarian workers furnished a dynamic and irrefutable proof of the socialist character of their revolution and of their inalienable right to govern Hungary for themselves.

It is no wonder that even the CP of Yugoslavia which supported the second Russian intervention was forced to make a volte face and support the workers' councils against the Kadar regime. In a speech made in the National Assembly, in December 1956, Foreign Minister Kardelj recalled the attitude of Lenin, who raised the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets" even though the Bolsheviks were a minority in them. Lenin recognized the Soviets not merely as a form of organization but as the spontaneous expression of workers' power, which, given a revolutionary leadership, could realize the dictatorship of the working class. Similarly, Kardelj stressed, the workers' councils in Hungary were the "only real Socialist force" and they were quite capable of curing themselves of anti-socialist influences once they took over complete responsibility for government. Kardelj considered a government based on workers' councils as "the only socialist outlet from the internal crisis of Hungarian society", and concluded that the Hungarian Revolution was "the first major instance of violent settlement with those obstacles to further socialist development which are the product of a bureaucratic system in transition from capitalism to socialism." (*Tanjug* 11/12/56). With these words Kardelj hit the Stalinist nail on its bureaucratic head with unerring accuracy.

The speech of Marshal Tito at Pula and the speech of Kardelj in the Assembly was too much of a canary for the Chinese leaders to swallow in one gulp. Their reaction to Tito and Kardelj took the form of a long and turgid document pompously entitled "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

That this document contains crude methodological errors and distorts the truth beyond recognition is not difficult to prove. But before that is done a few words should be said on the probable motive for the publication of the statement.

THE REASON WHY

The Chinese Communist leaders rule over a vast area populated by hundreds of millions of culturally and technically backward peasants. The working class which is growing rapidly still remains small in relation to the peasantry. The productivity of industry and agriculture ranks China amongst the most under-developed countries of the world. Yet in order to advance economically and to put an end to rural misery and backwardness China must industrialize.

Industrialization, however, is conditioned by two important factors:

a) the amount of surplus value which the regime can extract from the workers and peasantry—without jeopardizing its own social base—in order to provide the funds for investment;

b) the amount of economic, technical and financial help that the regime can get from outside.

The Chinese leaders, pursuing the Utopian theory of Socialism in One Country, are attempting to extract from the working people more than they can possibly give. The stubborn resistance of the peasantry to all attempts at forcible collectivization and the dissatisfaction of the working class to the bureaucratically-centralized management of state enterprises reflects itself in the periodic zig-zags of the regime in its economic policy and the frequent re-scaling of the five year plan.

In its external relations the Peking regime faces a far more difficult problem than it does at home. In order to make up for the serious shortage of capital and the primitive technique at home, China must avail herself of all the financial and economic resources of the West. But access to the money-markets of London and New York is barred by the presence of the Seventh Fleet and the import of valuable machinery and raw materials remains blocked by the Battle Act. Consequently China looks to the Soviet bureaucracy for its industrial equipment.

Nobody can blame the Chinese leaders for trading with Russia. It is entirely justifiable and progressive. But trading should be restricted to material things like commodities. When trading extends beyond its legitimate limits to include political principles then it ceases to be trading. The Chinese Communist leaders are guilty precisely of this crime. They have traded their right to criticise the Soviet leadership for roubles and tractors. And why do they do it? Because they believe, as the Soviet bureaucrats do, that given a period of "peaceful co-existence" they can build a self-sufficient Socialist economy in China through their own effort and with the help of the Kremlin. From this point of view the struggles of the international working class are of little importance and the Hungarian Revolution becomes, in their eyes, an impediment to the construction of Socialism in China, since it is aimed at the dominant partner of the Sino-Soviet Alliance.

This seems the only logical answer to the question.

It is of course not surprising or accidental that the British CP leaders and the *Daily Worker* should identify themselves publicly with the Chinese. Having abandoned the Soviet Road to Socialism in Britain it is therefore natural, if not necessary, that they attack the

Soviet Road to Socialism in Hungary. A more flagrant example of their total political bankruptcy could not be found.

WHAT IT SAYS

The Chinese statement attempts to establish—or rather re-establish—five major propositions:

1) that Socialism has been successfully and definitely established in the USSR;

2) that Stalin, despite the fact that he "displayed great nation chauvinism...lacked a spirit of equality...wronged many loyal communists...disrupted part of the Socialist legal system...impaired the principle of democratic centralism and...estranged himself from the masses to a serious extent..." nevertheless "...creatively applied Marxism-Leninism...defended the legacy of Leninism against its enemies...expressed the will and wishes of the people...won the support of the Soviet people...proved himself to be an outstanding Marxist-Leninist fighter...and...played an important role in history";

3) that Stalin's "mistakes" do not invalidate the present political system in Russia and that this system is "in the main suited to the needs of its economic basis";

4) that it is not necessary to "correct" the socialist system in order to correct these mistakes;

5) that Stalinism is not a system and that Tito "is going too far when he sets up so-called 'Stalinist elements' as objects of attack". That, furthermore, the Kadar regime is "entirely right" to dissolve the Budapest and other regional workers' councils and build up the "Socialist Workers' Party". That, finally, the Soviet intervention was a "righteous action".

As a qualified but deliberate defence of Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy this statement is unequalled. It is, therefore, necessary to deal with the five propositions separately and in some detail.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

The historic significance of the Russian Revolution of October 1917 lies in the fact that it snapped the world capitalist chain at its weakest link and gave a mighty impetus to the world revolution. But one link does not make a chain and the beleaguered Soviet state could not possibly, as Lenin explained time and again, build a complete socialist society on the basis of industrial backwardness and a low level of culture, so long as it remained isolated from the resources of world economy. Incidentally, Lenin did not mean by this that Russian workers should renounce the power until the Western European workers had taken power and begun to build Socialism, as the Mensheviks maintained in 1917 (and still do today). Lenin insisted that the Soviet state's strategy should be to integrate its industrialization programme and the collectivization of peasant farms with the struggles of the international working class and with the needs of its own workers and peasants. Stalin, it must be said, never understood and never applied such a strategy.

Socialism cannot be equated with the state ownership of the means of production or even with a planned economy. It is much more than this. Socialism presupposes an extremely high level of development in the

productivity of human labour — so high that labour ceases to be an obligation, and the necessity for the organs of compulsion (the army, police, judiciary—and even the State Control Commission) gradually disappear.

The situation in the USSR presents a very different picture from this. There, productivity remains below that of the advanced capitalist states and labour is not only obligatory but, as in the forced labour camps and settlements, compulsory. In the USSR, methods of payment have a capitalist form. State power, as an instrument of compulsion (the NKVD and MGB) far from withering away, has been greatly intensified.

Socialism—the prelude to Communism—signifies the progressive abolition of inequalities in the distribution of the comforts of life. The essential premise for such a development is an economy of abundance. Socialist society is very different from a regime which has failed to raise the living standards of the Russian workers to the level of the American or even the British people, and, certainly, it can never be reconciled with the existence of huge and growing disparities between the incomes of the workers, on the one side, and a swollen, parasitic bureaucracy on the other.

State ownership and centralized planning, particularly in a once backward country like Russia, can give a tremendous stimulus to the growth of production and productivity but, by and of themselves, they cannot make the property relations in the USSR socialist.

To speak of “Socialism” in the USSR today is to confuse a theoretical norm with an ugly and imperfect reality. Only the triumph of the Socialist revolution in the West, by strengthening the productive base of the USSR immensely, can—and will—harmonize the abstract norm with concrete reality. Until then the USSR will continue to be what it is now: a transitional society midway between capitalism and socialism.

STALIN: LEADER OF THE SOVIET DRONES

The attempt of Mao and his colleagues to rehabilitate Stalin is naive and somewhat ridiculous. How is it possible for a man to “estrangle himself to a serious extent from the masses” and yet express the will and wishes of the people? This proposition becomes credible only on the assumption that Stalin was a modern Mephistopheles or that the Russian people were a lot of indulgent fools. In either case it is nonsense. Stalin was none of the things which the Chinese are assuming him to have been.

If he was the chosen defender of Lenin’s legacy, why did Lenin in his “Testament” propose that Stalin be removed from his post of general Secretary? Lenin, before his death, viewed with alarm the rapid growth of bureaucracy not only in the state administration but also—and more serious—within the party apparatus. Lenin hated bureaucracy and fought every manifestation of it with all the energy and passion left in his stricken body. There was however not a trace of subjectivity in his hatred. He hated it because he realized that, just as a tree is very often killed by a parasite rooted on a minor branch, so too bureaucracy could strangle Bolshevism and the dictatorship of the proletariat (i.e., workers’ democracy exercised through the Soviets). The first condition for making bureaucracy the

servant of the Soviets and not their master was the purging and cleansing of the state apparatus, and—above all—the Party, of bureaucratic cynicism and functionary arrogance. It was precisely in this sphere that Lenin—first gradually and then violently—came into conflict with Stalin, the leader and defender of this usurping social caste.

It was for this reason, and no other, that Lenin was forced to break off all comradely relations with Stalin. There is no doubt that if he had lived, Lenin too could have suffered the fate of all the other “Old Bolsheviks”.

Stalin’s claim to be an outstanding Marxist-Leninist is as outrageous as are his pretensions to linguistic and military competence. He never defended the *real* Lenin. While embalming his body, Stalin revised Lenin’s teachings and distorted his views to suit the administrative requirements of the bureaucratic caste and to justify its reactionary role and privileges. He rewrote the history of the Party and the Revolution. He shot, purged and exiled Lenin’s closest collaborators, those who with Lenin had led the Revolution. He displaced proletarian democracy for a plebiscitary regime à la Hitler. He dissolved by administrative decree whole Republics and deported their inhabitants to Siberia, thus making a cruel mockery of Lenin’s policy toward the oppressed nationalities. He violated Lenin’s policy towards the peasants by forcibly collectivizing them, and thereby seriously retarded the progress of agriculture in general and animal husbandry in particular. By terror, intimidation, administrative pressure and the staging of frame-up trials he transformed the Bolshevik Party (Lenin’s greatest constructive achievement) from a fighting organization of the working class into a party of bureaucrats and functionaries. Byzantine flattery of the “Great Leader” and bureaucratic conformism replaced democratic centralism as the organizational principle of the Bolshevik Party. He decapitated the Red Army on the eve of World War II by executing nearly all its most brilliant and talented commanders and officers. Lastly, the revolutionary internationalism of Lenin embodied in the programme and policy of the Third International was abandoned in favour of a national-reformist policy of “Socialism-in-one-Country” and nowhere else. The Comintern which Lenin had seen as the general staff of the world revolution, was purged of all opposition and its programme emasculated. What was once the scourge of international capital and the greatest hope of the workers of the world, became under Stalin’s leadership, one of the main props of European Capital and a glorified border guard for the Soviet bureaucracy. Having betrayed and deserted every major revolution in Asia and Europe, Stalin finally sold the Comintern over the bargain counter for a military-diplomatic alliance with Anglo-American Imperialism. The murder of the Comintern was also the epitome of bureaucratic cynicism!

This is by no means a complete catalogue of Stalin’s crimes, but it is sufficient to show how Stalin “defended” Lenin “from his enemies”.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A “MISTAKE” ?

Stalin, we are informed by Peking, did not commit any grave crimes (and even if he did they were not deliberate); he only made a few massive “mistakes”. His

"mistakes", so we are informed, were purely individual characteristics. Stalin in other words is above sociology, and any attempt to lay a sociological construction on his "mistakes" is not only wrong but also "revisionist".

In their time, Cain, Caligula, Cesare Borgia, Genghis Khan, Torquemada, and Tsar Nicholas also made "mistakes". So did Cromwell, Lilburne, Robespierre, John Brown, Marx and Lenin. The "mistakes" of Torquemada and Tsar Nicholas consisted in the fact that they tried to cheat history. They tried, like King Canute, to thwart historical development. The "mistakes" of Robespierre and Lilburne, however, have a different source. They tried to push historical development beyond its objectively determined limits. The mistakes of the former were in fact crimes against humanity while the mistakes of the latter were genuine errors of judgment. There is a similar qualitative difference between the "mistakes" of Lenin and the "mistakes" of Stalin. Lenin, for instance, erred in his prognosis of the Russian Revolution when, in 1905, as was later acknowledged, he counterposed the slogan of the "Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat *and* the peasantry" to Trotsky's slogan of the "Dictatorship of the proletariat leaning upon the peasantry". The events of 1917 confirmed Trotsky as against Lenin, but this difference of opinion did not wreck the revolution because both Lenin and Trotsky had a fundamental agreement on the stages, international prospects, and class motive forces of the Revolution. Like any conscientious scientist, Lenin was not afraid to submit his theories to the most exacting, empirical tests in the laboratory of revolution, and, whenever they were proved wrong or inadequate, he did not hesitate to amend or reject them. That is why he was prepared in April 1917 to throw out the slogans of 1905, in order to prepare the party for the conquest of power. For Lenin the end always *determined* the means.

The "mistakes" of Stalin are of an entirely different character. He personified, not the revolutionary working class, but a smug self-satisfied caste whose interests were alien to Socialism. He came to power, not because of any intrinsic qualities of leadership, but because the cultural backwardness, the physical exhaustion, and the decimation of the Russian workers together with the apathy induced among them as a result of the successive defeats (such as those in Germany, China, Bulgaria and Hungary) suffered by the world revolution after the first World War, favoured the growth of bureaucracy. Lenin came to power on the crest of a revolutionary wave, Stalin came to power when the revolution's tide was ebbing. The dialectics of degeneration quickly turned the bureaucracy and Stalin from an *effect* of defeat and demoralization into its opposite—the *cause* of further defeat and demoralization.

The bureaucracy usurped the political power of the working class by driving workers' representatives from the Soviets, from the Trade Unions, from the youth organizations and from the Party. In order to consolidate his power and perpetuate the bureaucratic system, Stalin was forced to wage a bloody and unrelenting civil war not only against the remnants of the capitalist and landlord classes but also, *and mainly*, against the working class and peasantry. Elementary Marxism teaches that his "mistakes" which were the logical result of his reactionary policies, would never have been

permitted if they had not suited the interests of the bureaucracy. It is only *now* that the bureaucracy, faced with the wrath of a resurgent working class, attempts to lay sole responsibility for its crimes and excesses at the feet of Stalin.

THE "PROGRESSIVE" CHARACTER OF STALINISM

The Chinese leaders, in order to bestow a progressive, historical mission to Stalin's regime, point to the fact that the regime defended the property relations established by the revolution and developed the productive forces of the USSR. The rapid growth of Soviet industry and technology certainly shows the superiority of centralized planning and nationalization over capitalist anarchy and crises. The bureaucracy defends nationalized property relations and develops the forces of production and defends its state from external attack, with its own methods of course, only because in this way under the prevailing conditions (thanks to its control of state power) it is guaranteed a disproportionate share of the national income. "The bureaucracy," as Trotsky remarked, "... is concerned not so much with its function as with the tribute that this function brings in."

Contrary to the Chinese statement, the character and policies of the bureaucracy remain reactionary, as Hungary testifies, and can never be reconciled with a regime of socialist democracy. The political system instituted by the bureaucracy did not, at its inception, and does not now correspond with the development of Soviet economy. On the contrary, it is in flagrant contradiction to it. "Socialism," said Trotsky, "is impossible without the independent activity of the masses and the flourishing of the human personality. Stalin tramples on both. An open revolutionary conflict between the people and the new despotism is inevitable. Stalin's regime is doomed." These words were uttered twenty years before Hungary, in the middle of the Moscow Trials, at the height of Stalin's power. Despite the lapse of time, or rather, because of it, they have not lost their validity. Indeed, Stalin's regime *is* doomed! What is also true is that all the world is coming to see that. Only a regime of workers' democracy can put an end to bureaucratic rule, bring the bourgeois methods of distribution into line with the new property relations, and so ensure a dynamic expansion of Soviet economy.

BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE OF SOVIET SOCIETY

In a transitional society such as Russia, state ownership and control of the means of production provides unlimited scope for the conscious regulation and development of productive forces. In this society, the policy of the state-party leadership is of paramount importance. If the state leadership does not respond to changes in the base of society (by making corresponding adjustments in the political superstructure) and, conversely, if it does not take necessary measures for preserving the worker-peasant alliance (by maintaining properly proportioned development of the economy), in short, if it does not show sufficient *sensitivity* in perceiving problems, as they arise, flexibility in tackling them, imagination and foresight in planning and firm-

ness in executing its plans, then explosions are inevitable.

The Hungarian revolution is a reminder to those who deny that there is a contradiction between the base of Soviet society and its bureaucratic apex. This contradiction has become an antagonism and is very real and tense. The resolution of this contradiction demands basically a *political* overturn, the restoration of democracy to the Soviets and trade unions, a purging of the state apparatus, the abolition of all privileges and resolute measures to "limit inequality in the payment of labour to the life necessities of the economy and the state apparatus" (Trotsky). Such a revolution, it must be stressed, will leave the property relations intact but will make a clean sweep of the Stalinist political system.

STALINISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Presumption and conceit are not lacking in the Chinese statement. The fact that they have not yet rendered to their own membership an account for their failure to support Tito against Stalin does not prevent the Chinese Stalinists from criticizing Tito and Kardelj in an unjustified manner.

While calling upon all communists to treat experience critically and test it independently they continue, in the same breath, to give uncritical support and wholehearted approval to the Kadar regime and the Soviet intervention! Disregarding the sort of evidence provided by the Indian government, and conveniently ignoring the precedent of Poznan, they unashamedly declare that the Hungarian uprising was a "counter-revolution". Yet in this thirty-page document they have not been able to adduce one single fact to justify this lie. Assertion takes the place of evidence.

Marxism is a science, and science relies upon accurate data. Facts are the only verification of a scientific analysis of political events and social phenomena. All the assembled facts prove, conclusively, that social progress and historical justice are on the side of the Hungarian people and that the discredited Kadar regime has neither prestige, public support or any other validity. It has neither a past nor a future. Take away the Russian tanks and bayonets, remove the secret police, and the Kadar regime would collapse like the walls of Jericho.

It is interesting to recall that Stalin too made similar baseless allegations against the Georgian Communists and it would not be out of place to quote Khrushchev's testimony given at the secret session of the Twentieth Congress: "On the basis of falsified documents, it was proved that there existed in Georgia a supposedly nationalist organization whose objective was the liquidation of the Soviet power in that republic with the help of imperialist powers... The question arises: Could it be possible that... nationalist tendencies grew so much that there was a danger of Georgia leaving the Soviet Union and joining Turkey?"

"This is of course nonsense. Everyone knows how Georgia has developed economically and culturally under Soviet rule... *It is clear that as the economy and culture develop, and as the socialist consciousness of the working masses grows, the source from which bourgeois nationalism draws its strength evaporates.*

(My emphasis.—M.B.). As has since transpired there was no nationalist organization in Georgia. Thousands of innocent people fell victim to wilfulness and lawlessness."

LENINISM AND CHAUVINISM

The Chinese leaders devote most of their statement to a vague and abstract analysis of the national question in order to defend Russian intervention in Hungary. All this of course is done in the name of Leninist orthodoxy. But Lenin's attitude on the national question and the right of nations to self-determination is fundamentally different and irreconcilably opposed to the national chauvinism of the Soviet bureaucracy, whose attitude to the national question in Eastern Europe (and also within Russia itself) could be paraphrased from Orwell: "All nations are equal: but some nations are more equal than others"!

Bureaucratic rule and national oppression are inseparable in the USSR. Lenin, more than anyone else, was fully aware of these twin dangers to the Soviet state. In letters written in December 1922, before the Thirteenth Party Congress, Lenin severely castigated Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and Ordzonikidze for their Great-Russian nationalism and made the following prophetic warning: "It would be unforgivable opportunism if we, on the eve of this emergence of the East, and in the dawn of its awakening, would undermine in its eyes our authority even through the smallest tactlessness towards and injustice against our own members of other races. The necessity of solidarity against the imperialism of the West, which is defending the capitalist world, is a different matter. Here there is no doubt and I need not say that I praise these measures without any qualification. It is another thing, however, when we see that we ourselves generate an imperialistic outlook on relations with the oppressed nationalities, even if it concerns only insignificant points; *this undermines completely our whole principled sincerity and our whole principled defence of the fight against imperialism.* (My italics.—M.B.). And the day of tomorrow in the history of the world will be precisely that day when the people oppressed by imperialism will awaken and when the decisive long and hard fight for their liberation will begin." (Lenin, *Concerning the National Question or "Autonomisation"*, 31/12/22).

Alas! the warning has turned into a prediction. What Lenin feared and fought to prevent has become reality. On the very week that the oppressed masses of the Middle East began their "long and hard fight for liberation" from imperialism—in that very same week the banner of Socialism was sullied by the massive, brutal intervention in Hungary. Between the policy of Lenin and the policy of Khrushchev there lie today more than 20,000 Hungarian corpses. They are, and will remain forever, a mute and damning indictment of bureaucratic oppression.

China, in her hundred-year struggle against foreign domination, has made a historic contribution to the struggles of oppressed nations for the right of self-determination. It is, therefore, all the more reprehensible, to see the Chinese Communist leaders dissipating the painfully acquired prestige and moral authority of the New Chinese State by refusing to support the pro-

gressive and legitimate struggles of the Hungarian people for an independent Socialist Hungary.

By attacking Tito, by supporting the Kadar regime and by equating Stalinism with Communism the Chinese Communist leaders have proved that they cannot

teach the European working class movement anything.

This statement constitutes a remarkable monument to the theoretical backwardness and political illiteracy of Chinese Stalinism.



Fabian Essays

Fabian International Essays, ed. T. E. M. McKitterick and Kenneth Younger. Hogarth Press, 1957 (18/-).

Seven essays on various aspects of international politics by leading right wing politicians contain a certain amount of useful analysis of current problems (e.g. Thomas Balogh's **Political Economy of the Cold War**, T. E. M. McKitterick's **The Middle East**). But in general they strikingly illustrate the utter poverty of Fabian theory as a contribution to the socialist movement. The views expressed could, for the most part, be expected of a group of Liberals or even moderate Conservatives. The most radical of the group, Thomas Balogh, sharply and correctly criticising "liberalising" economic policies insisted on by the Americans, nevertheless hardly writes as a socialist economist. And the keynote article, 'Co-existence with Soviet Communism', is written by the Foreign Affairs Commentator of the Observer, Richard Lowenthal. Nobody could pretend that the newspaper for which this man is a spokesman stood, in any way, for socialist principles. And yet socialists are expected to treat seriously as a contributor to the thought of their movement one whose views, week after week, appear in the leading independent organ of British capitalism.

It would not be unfair to say of these essayists that they are hardly concerned with the furthering of the interests of socialism internationally. They are obsessed with the danger represented by the bloc of states dominated by the U.S.S.R. to the "western" world. Since most socialists who take their political convictions seriously are under the impression that the "western" is a capitalist world, the keynote author finds it necessary to explain (in a sort of shortened version of Strachey's **Modern Capitalism**) that the western capitalist states are all evolving, more or less rapidly, and under the guidance of the late Lord Keynes, towards socialism. At the same time, imperialism is being liquidated and there is no intensification of imperialist rivalries.

The Fabian socialist conscience is consequently troubled only by weaknesses in the anti-communist front. Mr. Dennis Healey, whose article is oddly entitled 'Beyond Power Politics', concerns himself mainly with the mechanics of co-operation between the capitalist powers. Like any other spokesman for British capitalism, he is naturally suspicious of supra-national authorities, but extols certain inter-governmental bodies. His favourite is NATO—"military co-operation... may sometimes be the surest means to creating an international community".

For him "real achievements" include the peacetime build-up of £700 million worth of bases and supply lines all over Western Europe, and an increase in the number of military airfields from 15 to 165.

No socialist, and not many communists these days, would want the foreign policy of the British Labour movement to be lined up with the interests of those descendants of the Great Russian chauvinists at present in occupation of the Kremlin. But this panic Fabian defence of the interests of the old colonial powers and their American protector (?) is equally remote from the real interests of the movement. Owing to the stupidity of Soviet policy in Poland and Hungary, and the gross over-playing of a potentially good hand in the Middle East, there is a revival of the cold war atmosphere of 1950.

Even so, this does not constitute the aggressive menace which justifies (for instance) Strachey's dream that Britain shall possess her own nuclear weapons. Isaac Deutscher has pointed out that the despotism of the Stalin and post-Stalin regimes are compatible with a non-aggressive (if noisy) foreign policy. The danger of world war still resides mainly in the economic and political instabilities of the capitalist world with its dreams of imperial restoration. These are the dangers which the Labour movement must watch, and bridle.

In any case, the supposedly monolithic Communist bloc is showing signs of development. The re-emergence of the creative forces of the revolution will derive no assistance from the supra-national or inter-governmental agencies of the western capitalists beloved of these Fabian essayists. NATO is not only Mr. Healey's friend but a prop for the heirs of Stalin.

Eye Witness in Hungary

Eye-witness in Hungary by C. Coutts (Daily Worker, 6d.); **What Really Happened in Hungary?** by Basil Davidson (UDC, 1/-).

Coutts worked as an official in a "youth-international" office in Budapest for three years, but there is no evidence in his pamphlet that he had learnt the language or mixed with the ordinary people. For example, he seems unaware when "watching workers holidaymaking in the former preserves of the bourgeoisie" at Lake Balaton (p. 29) that there were separate "special bathing beaches" for the Communist leaders, "shut off from the common people by barbed wire" (Peter Fryer, **Hungarian Tragedy**, p. 94; compare also Davidson, p. 8). Again he writes on p. 9: "I must admit I didn't at the time know the expression for shoot him, but that's what they were saying all right."

Moreover, as one may gather from Fryer's **Hungarian Tragedy** (pp. 47-9), the articles collected in this pamphlet do not represent unadulterated Coutts' original views.

But whether Coutts is honest and blind or a willing tool, the key to the publication by the **Daily Worker** of this selection from the articles of this second-rate observer is to be found in J. R. Campbell's tendentious foreword. Campbell is prepared to "face the question as to whether there were grave errors in its (the **Daily Worker's**) previous estimation of the People's

Democracy in Hungary", but he will never admit the possibility of Soviet action at the time of speaking being incorrect. He therefore has to scrape the bottom of the barrel for shreds of "evidence" to justify Soviet intervention in Hungary and "without agreeing with all Charlie's judgments" emphasizes those parts of Coutts' account favourable to his case but which when examined in the light of other accounts are revealed as not substantiated or not an argument, or neither.

Even judging Campbell's argument by its internal logic, it is a miserable piece of legerdemain in its progression from "organised groups" within the mass movement (shown to be counter-revolutionary by their knowing "where to get arms and transport" and "where to direct their attacks against Party and Soviet institutions") to a "situation" in which "a slide" to World War III was "inevitable", and the conclusion that "to encourage the Hungarian workers in any other course (than that of co-operating with the Kadar Government) is criminal folly". But no doubt such an argument is not only the only resort but also sufficiently convincing to one for whom the only reliable force for "peace" is the Soviet Government and its agencies, and opposition to any of their policies, "counter-revolution". Fortunately the "politically minded readers" to whom he appeals are showing a better political understanding than Campbell himself.

Two threads run through Coutts' account, together constituting the argument that the only alternative to Soviet intervention was the victory of counter-revolution: one, the strength of the counter-revolutionary elements; the other, the weakness of the Nagy government.

This is as if one had said in 1917 that Kornilov was bound to win because Kerensky was weak, when in the event the Soviets defeated both in turn.

In fact, Coutts is able to represent the "counter-revolutionary elements" as strong only by including in them some of the popular progressive forces. Of the revolutionary councils in the provinces Coutts saw and says nothing, and on p. 15 he calls the Hungarian Social Democrats "hardly a real political force".

Coutts accordingly counts as "counter-revolutionary" any manifestation of hostility to the Soviet Government or to the Communist Party (e.g. on p. 5, the destruction of "Red" stars; on p. 14, the National Guard and Maletér), when as a Marxist he should be judging the Soviet Government and its agents by their attitude to the working class. "Reaction had a tremendous area to work in, for there was no doubt that there was mass anti-Soviet feeling," he writes on p. 16.

The elements he actually represents as anti-working-class (pp. 6-10, Dudas, etc.; pp. 15-17, anti-Nagy) are (with the exception of pp. 12-14, the burning of TU newspapers) a surprisingly thin sample of the revolt's reactionary wing that undoubtedly existed.

The other thread is the discrediting of Nagy (pp. 15, 17, 19-21), as compared with Kadar (p. 20), and the argument that the leadership of the working class was so busy factionalizing against the Stalinists (is this a lesson intended for British Communists?) that the masses were left at any demagogue's mercy (p. 20).

Coutts' final analysis (pp. 20-21) of why the Hungarian Communists failed, puts the blame for mechanical application of Soviet methods on—the Hungarians; e.g., Mikoyan had merely "advised" that Gero should replace Rakosi, but "the story grew" that he had "insisted". It also denies that the split in the Workers' Party shows that "democratic centralism" is "outmoded", without of course mentioning the degeneration of "democratic centralism" under Stalinism. In other words, his "analysis" is an apologia for the whole line, not only on Hungary, of the Executive Committee of the British Communist Party.

His conclusion "that on the question of the position of the Communist Party and its relation to Government organs when the working class is in power, there is a lot of thinking to be done yet", while ignoring the thinking already done by Marxist opponents of Stalinism, does provide a ray of hope of honesty among even the most recalcitrant of Executive Committee supporters.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that, of the two mutually contradictory lines presented in one statement by the E.C. of the British Communist Party (*World News*, Christmas number),

viz., that the Hungarian working class was reactionary from its past history, and that the counter-revolutionary leaders had to use socialist slogans, all that can be salvaged in presenting this eye-witness report is (p. 15), "an extreme example", a case of coercion of an election meeting of 600 people by 40 young armed men and a priest, and (p. 18) the admission that "it would not be reaction alone that Soviet troops, and those units of the army who were with the (Kadar) Government, would have to fight but thousands of young Hungarians who would be honestly thinking that they fought in a just cause."

That this last is an understatement is shown by the words (no doubt of the pseudo-socialist slogans!) of Rajk Radio, November 8: "Comrades, let us preserve the fighting spirit of Marxism-Leninism, let us continue to fight within the framework of our betrayed and outraged Party for the independence of the Socialist Hungarian nation." (*The Revolt in Hungary*, p. 104).

Beside Coutts, Davidson's pamphlet is a model of objective description. However, it remains considerably inferior to Fryer's book, even allowing for length, and its conclusions are inadequate.

There is some tendency in Davidson to make not the Soviet Government but the Hungarian Rakosists the principal villains, e.g., p. 12: "The Soviet leaders... **out of touch with realities** in Hungary... ousted Rakosi; but... **allowed the Rakosi-ite Gero to take Rakosi's place**" (our emphasis). Coutts' villains, the counter-revolutionary "elements", inflated as they are, at least have a basis in the economic interests of foreign and the old Hungarian exploiting classes. The Rakosists and other Stalinists owe their existence as a bureaucracy capable of temporary power, to their complete subordination to the Soviet bureaucracy.

Davidson is quite right to oppose re-opening of the Cold War, to say "British-Soviet friendship is indeed more necessary than ever", and to advocate bilateral neutralization of Eastern Europe and Germany (pp. 23-4). But let us have no illusions: capitalist governments and the present Soviet bureaucracy, the partners in "peaceful co-existence", and even UNO constituted as it is, are not enough to bring the kind of peace required by the peoples of the world.

The Hungarian masses demand not only neutrality but socialism with workers' democracy. The real lesson both of Coutts' and of Davidson's material is the need for a real Marxist leadership of the working class, theoretically equipped to organize victoriously the working masses' struggle for both social and political liberation.

One of Stalin's Victims

The Collected Stories of Isaac Babel. Edited by W. Morison. Methuen, 1957 (18/-).

Isaac Babel, in one of his youthful reminiscences, has left us a vivid passage which is quite unintentionally prophetic. The curtain rises on a daily performance. We hear Uncle Simon's brazen voice cursing the young Babel and his erstwhile aunt promising them that they'd be unable to give one another "a decent burial" and that they "would be dragged by the hair to a mass grave".

Little did the author of these lines, writing in 1930, realise that he was describing the fate not only of himself, Isaac Babel, but also of a whole generation of revolutionaries, scientists, poets, writers, and artists, the generation of the revolution and of the civil war.

Some years later, in 1934, speaking at the Writers' Congress of the Soviet Union after he had made the obligatory obeisances before the literary cult of the Kremlin's negus, Babel passed on to make what was considered to be a strange speech. The discerning may grasp the implications. He said: "Comrades, let us not fool ourselves: this is a very important right [referring to the "right to write badly"] and to take it away from us is no small thing." He had previously declared that he was now practising a new literary genre—"the genre of silence". "I have so much respect for the reader that I am dumb." The implications of these words will be clear to anyone who has the slightest respect for the integrity of the

artist. The 1934 edition of his stories (**Razkazi**) had been censored of all references to Leon Trotsky.

But this silence, tantamount to a refusal to write to bureaucratic order, was more than the Thermidorian regime, then on the eve of the great purges, would tolerate. It was tantamount to harbouring secret thoughts of opposition, to being a "Trotskyite two-facer", to being "an enemy of the people". Babel was arrested in 1937 (apparently he let slip an "objectionable" political opinion) on a charge of Trotskyism. He died in a concentration camp either in 1939 or 1940.

It is now clear to all why it was necessary for the Soviet bureaucracy to crush every vestige of independent thought, even in the more abstract realms of the arts, and especially in literature, the traditional refuge of social criticism in Russia.

Babel does not fall into the same category as the fawning and somersaulting court jesters, the Alexei Tolstoys, and Ilya Ehrenburgs and other "external" and "internal" emigres who were only punctual when rallying to Thermidor in the Soviet Union. For the new bureaucracy, consisting as it did of the most conservative elements of Soviet society, the arts were doubly suspect by reason of the simple fact that the philistine mind fears and hates most what it understands least. We are all conversant with the essays of Stalin in the realms of linguistics, of the excursions of Zhdanov into the field of musicology, and we are, most of us, still laughing at this lighter side to the terror of the Stalinist regime.

Appropriately following on the revelations of the Twentieth Congress, there has been published for the first time, in one volume, the works of Babel. Fifty-seven short stories go to make the whole of this book, and they are very short stories indeed. But every one of them is a many faceted gem. Each one possesses not only the external lustre of a polished work, the hallmark of consummate craftsmanship, but also exhibits the rare and almost unfathomable depths of emotion, a sympathetic feeling for his subject that is born of an understanding and an ability to penetrate to the very essence of things, a very, very rare quality at any time, anywhere.

Babel's method is that of the seemingly detached observer. The form that this detached objectivity assumes is that of a gentle play of irony. This irony springs from the ability to penetrate to the contradictions of a situation and to an appreciation of all the subtle nuances of relations between humans, or for that matter of that between them and their beasts of burden.

Many of these stories have appeared in English before, the main bulk of them in **Red Cavalry** and **Benia Krik** and fragments in two symposiums of Russian short stories entitled **Short Stories out of Russia and Azure Cities**. **The Sin of Jesus** and **Guy de Maupassant** appeared in the journal **Partisan Review** and **First Love** in the periodical **Commentary**.

The present version whilst containing all these, reproduces a number of others, for the first time in English. The volume follows the text of the Russian edition of 1934, but with the contraband references, chiefly to Trotsky, restored. In addition there are a further five stories obtained from other sources.

Chronologically speaking, all these writings fall into the immediate post-revolutionary period, although many, especially the later ones hark back to pre-revolutionary times, to the pogroms of childhood memory, poignant in their expression of injured feelings; to the Jewish citizenry of the Odessa Ghetto, the "stout and jovial Jews" of the Moldavanka Quarter. Over all these latter there towers the magnificent and chivalrous Benia Krik, king of the Odessa underworld. Student days are represented by just one tale, **Guy de Maupassant**. The heart and core of the book is of course his civil war experiences in the cavalry army of Budyenny.

Special mention must here be made of one story — **Oil**. This is a brief but scandalizing skit on the rising Soviet bureaucracy and its methods. It takes the form of a letter written by the wife of a high Soviet Oil Trust official, to her friend. It describes therein, how lingerie might be obtained for those who could afford it, and how amongst other things, schedules of the Five Year Plans are altered in mid-plan and targets inflated beyond possibility, of how the young Party bureaucrats are sent down from the centre to brow-beat the technicians. It describes the social aspirations of the parvenu bureaucrats who get swollen-headed on promotion or who aspire to marriages into families of aristocratic lineage.

Babel, born in 1894 at Odessa, the Marseilles of the Black Sea, came of Jewish stock, traditionalist in outlook and ambitious for their son in whom they hoped to discover the genius of another Heifetz. Odessa's Ghetto was the hot bed of child prodigies, pale and "with an epileptic flush on their cheeks". They sprouted everywhere. But besides his nervous disorder, young Isaac's talent lay elsewhere. He could reel off Pushkin at the tender age of ten (earning highest possible marks in his examination) and Shakespear at thirteen. Playing truant from his music lessons, he chanced upon the friend of a lifetime, a proof reader, Yefim, who brought him face to face with nature, and who was the first to encourage him to write. Surviving all the discriminatory practices of the Czarist educational system (the quota system allotted only 5% of the total passes out of secondary schools to Jews) he steeped himself in the French masters, Flaubert and Maupassant. In 1914 he took his degree at Saratov.

Smuggling himself into Petrograd in 1916 the penurious writer had to live with false papers because the city was out of bounds to Jews. Before long however he was indicted for pornography and inciting class hatred—stock remedy of Czarist censors for headstrong talent. Came the revolution, and taking a cue from Gorky, he took time out to learn life at first hand. Gorky published his writings in his journal **Annals**. After a period in the Tsarist army, he went into the Cheka, later, on a grain collecting expedition, fought in the Northern Army and finally wound up in Budyenny's cavalry.

Babel, Jewish, puny, bespectacled, and with a nervous disability was by some strange quirk of destiny detailed to serve in the supply section of Cossack cavalry, notorious for its rough and ready manners and a streak of anti-semitism.

But how Babel envied these cossacks! His breast is filled with a childlike admiration for the barbaric splendour of these giants, for the "masterful indifference" of Tartar Khans, for their hour-long ability to literally trample the life out of their class enemies, and to obtain from such an act a supreme sense of release, release from an age-old grievance.

The Cossack cavalry was composed of perhaps the most backward of all the social strata attracted to the Revolution. Vestigial remains of their barbaric heritage, of their recent serfdom still linger on in many of Babel's characters. But one thing distinguishes them all; an unswerving loyalty to the "common cause" as it is called in these pages.

Their commander was Budyenny, the one-time N.C.O., even then a bosom companion of Stalin's. Budyenny's immediate superior was commander of the Southern Front, Voroshilov, another of Stalin's early cronies. "Budyenny, in silver-striped red trousers" . . . "his long crooked legs"; and Voroshilov in an obvious hurry, urging on the cavalry into an obviously ill-considered action at Chesniki (saved only through the enemy's stupidity), serve only to bring home the point of the inadequacy of these two commanders. It was about that time that they, between them, helped to expose the flank of the Red Army to the thrust of the Poles who turned the Red Army advance to the gates of Warsaw into a rout of the first order. No wonder then that Budyenny was amongst the first of Babel's "literary critics", when with a loud flourish of literary pretension he assailed **Red Cavalry** when it was first published in the Soviet Union.

Besides this aspect of the Red Cavalry stories, there are others which deal with the more mundane tasks of foraging, pre-civil war experiences narrated by one-time serfs, letters of soldiers, articles to **Red Trooper**, the army journal, written by men wrestling with the problems of literacy and self-expression. There is a charming tale of the malingering deacon, Ivan, and several fascinating interludes with the Jews of Polish Galicia. Here is the old world of Hasidism and the rites of orthodox Jewry.

There are many more themes dealt with in these stories.

Babel brings to his work all the finesse of the masters of French realism, lyricism and conciseness of expression. His imagery is vivid, brief and sometimes overpowering.

Here is a writer, a poet of the transition from the culture of the old world to that of Socialism. He has made an indelible contribution and today's artists of the Soviet Union will certainly have to take serious note of his work if they are truly to rehabilitate the literature of the Revolution and proceed therefrom to continue its development.

A.B.

The Power Elite

(Continued from Vol. 2, No. 1)

THE POWER ELITE by C. Wright Mills. (Oxford Univ. Press, 1956).

This can be easily seen in the case of such a popular Culture Hero and sycophant of the rich as Arthur Godfrey. But it is equally demonstrable in the career of such a capitalist politician as Henry Wallace. The prospective Presidential candidate of 1944 was pitched out of the Democratic Cabinet and humbled because he hesitated at that time to go along with the cold war policies projected by the post-war needs of imperialism. Even so powerful a general as MacArthur was brought to heel in 1951 when he tried to resist and divert the main line of monopoly capitalist foreign policy. Both the politicians and brass-hats function as executors of policies whose contents are essentially dictated by the national and international objectives of the ruling rich.

In the same spirit, Mills substitutes the term "power elite" for ruling class, because, he says, ruling class is a "badly loaded phrase." This substitution is somewhat more polite. But is it more accurate and scientific? "Ruling class" is a combined conception: class is an economic category, rule a political category. Mills says he prefers "power elite" because it is an exclusively political concept. This sounds eminently plain and simple, but the situation is not so simple as he makes out.

It is true that "ruling class" contains in a single concept references to both economic relations and political functions. Is this justified by the facts? Mills himself admits that in many cases, and even in this one, the economically predominant class is likewise politically predominant. In fact, this is the rule in the history of class society. But, he objects, there are exceptions to this rule. It has occasionally happened that the economically superior class is not politically sovereign, and vice versa. This is so. But in all such exceptional cases there remain two further questions to be answered: (1) which class is decisive in determining basic state policies? and (2) which class serves which?

The American monopolists are not only economically but, as he abundantly proves, also politically sovereign. They are not like the Japanese and German capitalists who were politically subordinated to feudal landowners and militarists. The American military and political leaders have only a relative autonomy and are strictly dependent upon the plutocracy. What, therefore, prevents Mills from designating the monopoly capitalists as the "ruling class"?

There appear to be two reasons. One is his reluctance to be too closely identified with Marxism. The other is inherent in his own theoretical method and outlook. He views the distribution of power as systematically disorganised, and the power elite as fundamentally "irresponsible." This is a one-sided interpretation. The superficial disorganisation of American politics is consciously contrived and used to assure the supremacy of the monopolists. It is true that the power elite has no responsibility toward the people, but this is only the other side of their loyalty and subservience to the real masters of America. The war-lords and the political leaders are fully responsible when it comes to safeguarding the welfare of the wealthy.

Thus by prying the political superstructure loose from its economic foundation, Mills leaves the door open for the possibility of a liberal-labour-capitalist regime to enforce policies contrary to the economic interests of the monopoly

capitalists. He laments the absence of an enlightened and independent Civil Service as though such a bureaucracy would not be as subordinate to the ruling rich as the other institutions of government. He explicitly says that the leaders of capitalist society need not be historically and socially determined in their actions.

Mills demonstrates that the sovereignty of the people is a mockery in the United States. How, then, is the promise of democracy to be made a reality? Reformists aim to make the power elite "responsible" to the people; the revolutionary forces seek to dislodge the plutocratic triumvirate and replace it by governmental power representing and responsible to the masses. This requires not only fundamental changes in the political set-up but also the socialisation of the means of production.

In this book Mills does not offer any political prescriptions although they are implicit in much of what he says. It will obviously take a very formidable counter power to discipline, let alone dislodge, the coalition of plutocrats, war-lords and professional politicians. In this country such a power can be found in only one place; in the ranks of the organised labour movement.

Organised labour is already objectively counterposed to Big Business on the industrial field. Mills points out: "The concentration of corporation power and the informal co-ordination of the business world—with and without interlocking directorships—has become such that the Department of Labour estimates that only some 147 employers really bargain out their wage terms with their labour forces. These bargains set the pattern of wage contracts; thousands of other employers may go through the motions of bargaining, but the odds are high that they will end up according to the pattern set by the few giant deals." (P. 384) Thus a small band of monopolist employers confront the tens of millions of wage workers in negotiations over wages and working conditions.

This economic opposition is bound to break through and assert itself on the political arena. Mills is aware of this. We know from other sources, such as the speech he delivered to a United Automobile Workers' Educational Conference in 1951, that Mills urges the formation of a Labour Party as the indicated next step in American politics. The political outlook of this professor is more advanced than that of the labour leaders. His advice is well worth listening to. In any event, he has indicated the way to begin the mass political processes which, through the establishment of a Workers and Farmers Government, can bring about the downfall of the plutocratic power elite, which, in his own words, are neither "representative, virtuous, meritorious nor able."

BOOKS RECEIVED.

(Books reviewed in this issue are not included in this list).

Automation and Social Progress

S. LILLEY (*Lawrence & Wishart, 1957*).

21/- 224 pp. (*To be reviewed in the next issue*)

Development for Free Asia

MAURICE ZINKIN (*Chatto & Windus, 1956*).

21/- 263 pp. (*To be reviewed in the next issue*)

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