

# **LABOUR REVIEW**

Vol. 4

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 1959

No. 3

## **SOCIALISTS AND THE SUMMIT**

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186 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4

Editors: Brian Pearce, Cliff Slaughter

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# (I) Socialists and the Summit

**W**HEN the leaders of all the great 'Socialist' parties of Europe in 1914 broke their pledge to have nothing to do with imperialist wars, Lenin led the split away to a new type of Party and a new, Third International. To finally differentiate these working-class organizations from the agents of the class enemy who controlled the Socialist Second International, the title 'Communist' was adopted. This was meant to imply a firm revolutionary working-class internationalism, with the logical conclusion that the workers of any country should not support their 'own' capitalists against another country in war but should 'turn the imperialist war into a civil war.' Meanwhile, British and French 'socialists' defended democracy from German militarism and dictatorship, and German 'socialists' defended their 'modern, advanced capitalism' from the 'decadent imperialism' of the west and the Tsarist autocracy in the East. Lenin insisted that since 'war is the continuation of politics by other means' the common interest of workers in separate countries must override any consideration of the 'national interest' in war as in peace.

**I**N the Socialist movement today, from the Right-wing Social Democracy to Khrushchev and the Communist Parties, these principles are ignored in the discussion of international politics. This is quite in character for Gaitskell and Mollet, with all their claims to represent 'the nation' rather than any particular class<sup>1</sup> but among the Stalinists also we find a complete reversal of all the very principles on which the Communist movement was founded. This is shown most clearly in the myths that are being built up around Khrushchev's visit to the United States and the prospect of Summit talks.

In the name of 'peaceful coexistence' and 'peaceful competition' all mention of the nature of imperialism and of international working-class action against war is dropped. The illusion is deliberately fostered that talks and agreements between statesmen can somehow decide

whether there shall be peace or war. Of course, in order for that to be acceptable to socialists it has to be bolstered with other arguments. So we are now told that it is the pressure of the peace movement that has 'forced' the capitalist politicians to the Summit, that if the pressure of public opinion is kept up, they will be forced to sign peace pacts, that only the removal of the danger of war creates a reasonable atmosphere in which socialists can work for their political ends.

**A**GAINST all this there must be squarely posed the basic principle that only the organized fight of the working class, in alliance with the colonial and oppressed peoples everywhere, can put an end to the danger of war. It was a great mistake to suppose that the leaders of the Second International were simply misguided and could be changed by pressure from within their own organizations. It is an even more drastic blunder to suppose that whole sections of the bourgeoisie can begin to act on behalf of the working class. The extent to which such an argument can go is shown by the line of the *Daily Worker* during the visit of Eisenhower to Europe. This was expressed under the headline 'Diehards Harry Ike'. Somehow the representative of the most powerful imperialist state in the world had become someone to support against the 'real' reactionaries, who range from the worst Republican backwoodsman in the USA to the rulers of Western Germany.

This superficial method of 'finding the main enemy' once removed from the framework of a class analysis can lead to some amazing conclusions. For instance, the American Communist Party recently opposed the nomination of independent Socialist candidates in the American elections, insisting that along with the American union leaders they must support the 'progressive' elements in the Democratic Party (against the main enemy, the Republicans). Now they presumably support the 'progressive' Republican Eisenhower when he appeals for courtesy to Khrushchev from the trade union leaders who plagued the Russian premier with questions about Hungary and dictatorship. Eisenhower agrees to talk to Khrushchev: AFL president Meany refuses. Now if willingness to talk to the Russians, peaceful coexistence, is the criterion of 'progressiveness',

<sup>1</sup> New Labour candidates for the election include: 41 barristers and solicitors; 9 doctors; 41 teachers; 24 journalists; and 9 company directors. As a matter of fact, one in every nine of the present Labour MPs is a company director. *Daily Express* Sept. 11, 1959.

perhaps the American CP will change its electoral policy to 'support for the progressive elements in the Republican party!'

**T**HE insistence on the especially reactionary character of the Adenauer government in Western Germany has, of course, a certain basis in fact. The German monopolists of the Krupp variety are as strongly established as ever, many ex-Nazis are in high places, and there are powerful elements who demand the preparation of a war to recover the East German territory which was returned to Poland in 1945. But Khrushchev in his article in the September issue of the American journal *Foreign Affairs*, and the *Daily Worker* in many articles, have attempted to paint a picture of Western Germany as an exception to the general rule of Western imperialism. Certainly some sections of the capitalist class are more consciously 'warmongers' than others, but surely Marxists must be repelled by the element of chauvinism that creeps into the Stalinist argument at this point. There is a deliberate cultivation of the image of a traditionally militaristic and aggressive German nation, whose instincts must be carefully guarded against by the peoples of the world. There are two reasons why Socialists can fall easily into this trap. The first is a failure to challenge the assumption behind all the 'Summit Talks' arguments, viz. that it is the intentions and statements of national leaders which decide whether we shall have war or peace. If this were true, of course, propaganda campaigns to impress changing public opinion on these leaders would be the most important factor in the fight for peace. But between Socialists it should not be necessary to say that while at definite points in history individual intentions and decisions are vital, great historical questions are settled by the struggle of classes on the basis of contradictions in the economic structure of society. Marxists have the duty to constantly explain this to the working class, affirming that U.S. imperialism is the core of world reaction in this epoch.

**I**N the second place, the supporters of 'peace' campaigns around the demands for Summit talks are caught in the trap of the theory of the 'two camps'. The U.S. represents world capitalism and the USSR world socialism, it is said. Unless these two camps decide to have peaceful relations, there is no prospect of progress, and all other tasks are subordinated to this one. This theory has now been supplemented by the theory of 'peaceful competition' between US capitalism and Russian 'socialism'. Khrushchev says in his *Foreign Affairs* article that he and his colleagues

challenge the rulers of the US to such a competition, in order to find out 'which economic system is the best.' Of course Khrushchev has his tongue in his cheek, he expects Russia to advance much faster and probably expects inevitable periodic breakdowns in American capitalism. But that is not enough. Let us assume that Russian economic expansion goes ahead perfectly smoothly and overtakes the US and that the US politicians keep their promise not to make war (and what assumptions these are!). Where do we go from there? From the objective historical point of view it has long been obvious that the capitalist system is economically unfit to develop science and industry to the full. Khrushchev's 'experiment' might provide another more or less convincing example of this fact. But the replacement of one social system by another is not at all a matter of the old simply becoming out-of-date! There has to appear on the historical scene a class capable of smashing the old state power and carrying through a revolution. In the history of the world, not a few social systems have stagnated and declined or been drowned in blood: their economic contradictions led to social breakdown, but there did not appear in time a class capable of giving birth to a new form of society. For socialism to replace capitalism, the working class has to undergo a long preparation in struggle, a training in strategy and tactics in which it sheds illusions about the enemy class and becomes conscious of its mission in history under the leadership of a Marxist party. The contradiction which must be faced, therefore, is this. If the independent revolutionary politics of the working class, the daily exposure of capitalism in all its forms, is completely neglected in the interests of putting pressure on the progressive capitalists to maintain peaceful relations with Khrushchev, what on earth will it matter how superior Socialism in Russia proves itself, since there will be no force in the capitalist countries capable of the conquest of power. The 'Parliamentary Road to Socialism' of the Communist Parties only confirms this contradiction between Stalinism and the historic interests of the working class.

**M**ANY of our 'new left' socialists, among them some who have broken from Stalinism, have broken away from the 'two camps theory' in words but not in fact. They stress against the Stalinist theory of the two camps the possibility of 'neutralism' and 'disengagement'. But they are caught in the same trap as the Stalinists, basing their calculations on the relation between governments and the signing of agreements, not upon the working class. These same people criticize the Marxists for stressing the need to construct revolutionary parties by participating in all the struggles

of the working class. They say that we might as well recognize that revolutions are not on the agenda, and meanwhile any steps towards relaxation of tension such as are brought about by Summit conferences are to be welcomed, providing calmer conditions for socialists to do their work. Therefore we should not be 'sectarian' and should remain tactfully silent about the class character of the politicians who go to the Summit. They thus end up by relying precisely on the leaders of the 'two camps' whose predominance they verbally challenge.

The only way out of these contradictions is to recognize that the working class of the world is the basic force in world politics, opposed by one main enemy, the bourgeoisie, led at this time by the American imperialists. In between these two main forces stand the bureaucratic organisms of Stalinism and Social Democracy. On a world scale the first of these is now enormously more significant than the second, because of its base in the nationalized economy and military strength of the USSR. These bureaucracies are not the representatives of the interests of the working class, even though they feed on the working-class movement and its achievements. Their specific character is the product of periods of defeat for the working class. Social Democracy represents the corruption of the Socialist movement by imperialism and the betrayal of Social Democracy in the 1914-1918 war. Stalinism represents the defeat of the international working class after 1921 in Germany, China and the British General Strike. Both of these tendencies have consolidated on the basis of these defeats and the consequent period of depression, war and post-war boom. Both have discovered a modus vivendi with modern capitalism. The Social Democracy, based on the new middle-classes and the Labour bureaucracy, and Stalinism, based on the Soviet bureaucracy, are interested in the 'pressurizing' of the capitalists to peaceful coexistence, at home and abroad, as opposed to the development of independent class politics.

Who then will meet at the Summit? The representatives of US imperialism, Republican or Democrat, the representatives of British imperialism, Tory or Social Democratic, and the Stalinist leaders of the Soviet bureaucracy. In point of fact the most important 'camp' in world politics will not be represented, and it will be a conference of leaders who fear the strength of the working class and will come to agreements based on the hopeful assumption, each in his own terms, that the struggle of the working class can be arrested. Thus the working class is the common enemy that must be 'contained'. This common front against the working class will not be the subject of precise written agreements; the Soviet bureaucracy defends nationalized property in the USSR by methods of its own, not relying

on the development of the revolutionary movement; the capitalists faced with the colonial revolution and the threat of economic crisis and by industrial struggles, will be grateful for Khrushchev's guarantee of the peaceful intentions of Stalinism which holds back the working-class movement wherever the Communist Parties have influence.

The post-war agreements in the classical Summit meetings at Yalta and Potsdam were surely sharp enough lessons. Paraded as conferences of wise men to decide the peace and prosperity of the world, they were in fact the scene for the decision to drop atomic bombs and to carve the world into 'spheres of influence'. Thus the Greek workers in 1945 were sacrificed to the deal made by Stalin; Greece was a Western sphere of influence, the Northern Balkans a Russian sphere. In France and Italy, Communist Parties in the leadership of the armed masses gave up their arms and joined the governments of the de Gaulles and the Catholics. In Britain the CP called for a 'National' Government of Communist, Labour and progressive Conservatives! These were the class consequences of Summit conferences.

**M**ARXISTS must take their stand firmly. Only the strengthening and growing revolutionary consciousness of the working class is a safeguard against war. Defeats for the working class are in the long run steps towards war, and such defeats are prepared by all those who spread illusions about forces other than the working class itself achieving peace. Macmillan is not a 'representative' whom we push to the Summit, he is a leader of the class enemy who must be defeated. He does not represent the working class in any shape or form. If he goes to the Summit and makes agreements, they will be in the interests of his class, not of the working class. The first thing Marxists must say to the working class about such people is: they have been on the Summit too long; our job is to get them off, not to keep them there.

When Socialists forget the elementary rule of judging all political questions first by the criterion of working-class struggle, they must be proceeding from a basic theoretical mistake. It is in the idea of 'the pressure of the peace movement' or 'the pressure of the masses' forcing the reactionary politicians to pursue progressive policies that this comes out most clearly. Eisenhower is not carrying out a 'more progressive' policy than Dulles, but is expressing the special tactical needs of American imperialism against the same enemy that Dulles fought, the working class. Eisenhower was asked at a Press conference on August 12 this year if his invitation to Khrushchev signified a reversal of US

policy. He replied with his usual degree of articulateness:

'This is far from a reversal. Mr Dulles and I used to discuss this thing with others of the State Department . . . . Now, finally, oh—I think in the later months of 1958 we began to feel that the methods that we were pursuing had to be reinforced by something a little different . . . . Now, he and I got around to a decision, but later . . . . So we began to work on this thing. And I gave the subject to two or three of my trusted associates in the State Department and said, 'Now let's try to total up the balance'. And so when it came into the beginning of July, this decision was made, and I invited him.'<sup>2</sup>

There is little doubt that the decision for a tactical shift in policy was influenced by the Republican defeat in the November elections and was meant to redress the balance for the presidential election of 1960. Here in Britain Macmillan and Gaitskell campaign in the election by each appealing that he is the most worthy Summit representative to meet Mr K. Thus the Communist Party had helped to decide the framework within which the 'men of the people' fight for votes by deceiving the people.

**H**ERE then the idealist notion that the ideas of statesmen make history finds its appropriate complement in the mechanical theory that some broad, generalized 'pressure from below' pushes the reactionary politicians bit by bit along the road to progress. Just how this 'reflection' of pressure takes place no-one ever bothers to explain. This is a complete falsification of Marxism, whose central concept is that of the revolutionary practice of the working class, a practice based on consciousness of its own position in society as against its enemies. In a sense it is true that

<sup>2</sup> *The Militant*. Aug. 24, 1959.

the coming together of the heads of states is a 'reflection' of mass pressure. That 'reflection' is not an automatic, mechanical process. The governments concerned represent definite class forces and they respond to the development of the class struggle—in the colonial revolution, in the capitalist countries, and in the Soviet orbit also—according to the class forces they represent. Under no circumstances can the interests of the masses be represented except by their own independent political parties, geared to the prosecution of the class struggle in all its forms and to the creation of an international revolutionary movement.

Far from responding to the pressure of the masses, and far from entering into 'peaceful competition' at the end of which they will presumably retire from the historical arena, recognizing that their function is completed, on the contrary 'the greater the danger, all the more does the class, like the individual, exert its vital forces in the struggle for self-preservation . . . . All (the) varied and rich experience which has entered into the blood and marrow of bourgeois ruling circles has now been mobilized by them in order to maintain themselves in power at any cost. And they act more resourcefully, cunningly, ruthlessly, all the more clearly their leaders take cognizance of the threatening danger.'<sup>3</sup>

Only those Socialists who consistently explain to the workers the nature of the class enemy and the realities of the struggle for power are worthy of the name. Those who fail to check the spreading of the illusion of Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence are only helping the preparation of great defeats for the working class and for the Soviet Union itself in the future.

<sup>3</sup> L. D. Trotsky 'The School of Revolutionary Strategy' in *The First Five Years of the Comintern*, vol. ii, p. 5.

## (II) After the General Election

**T**HE results of the General Election have plunged the Labour Party into its most serious crisis since the end of the war. This was to be expected.

As long ago as February 1950 when the swing towards the Tories threatened to restore their losses of 1945, the official leaders of the Labour Party, both Bevanite and Right-wing, have scrupulously avoided a serious political discussion on the problems before the British Labour movement. Instead we have had threats and counter-threats followed in the end by an unprincipled compromise between Bevan and Gaitskell.

This came to a head when both sides united on the eve of the election to proscribe the Socialist Labour League. Not one single charge was produced against the League which would go to show that its contribution was anything but in the interests of the Labour Party. An unscrupulous witch-hunt directed from

Fleet Street touched off a drive whose main aim was to prevent a discussion on the problems which face Labour.

As a result the Labour Party today consists of a large mass of people who are thoroughly confused and, in some cases, demoralized as a result of such misleadership. During the weeks preceding the general election they worked themselves to a standstill, hoping against hope that a Labour government might be elected. The majority of active Labour supporters had very few illusions in the policy of the party, but they were guided by a blind faith that somehow or other something would emerge from the election. The reality is a Tory victory of considerable proportions.

It will be little use Mr Bevan blaming Mr Gaitskell or Mr Gaitskell blaming Mr Cousins. They all must share the blame and responsibility. What is needed

now is an understanding of what the Tory victory means for the Labour movement during the next five years.

**S**INCE the end of the war political life in Britain has been dominated by the electoral contest between the Tories and Labour. The trade union leaders have continually urged upon their members a policy of restraint in return for a Labour government which would, they said, act in the interests of the rank and file. This policy has been of considerable assistance to the Tories because it held back conflict after conflict in industry.

During the vital years of the 1945-1950 Labour government it restrained trade unionists from pushing forward substantial wage demands at a time when profits were reaching an all-time peak.

During the period when Labour was out of office but still a force in Parliament, this policy was used to stave off strikes and to postpone any real struggle until the 1959 election was over.

The results of the election, therefore, resemble a gigantic damburst which will release new forces from all the forms of struggle suppressed since the end of the war. Mr Bevan with his characteristic instinct has declared, somewhat modestly, that the fight will shift from Parliament to the wage packet. It will do much more. The experiences of the working class under a Right-wing leadership will give the struggles that lie ahead a far greater political content than at any period in the history of the British Labour movement.

This is an entirely new situation. The game of 'ins and outs' between the two political parties has been wound up. The struggle has shifted to the arena of class action. In this arena the old parties of the Left and the Right will eventually meet their doom.

**W**E say this because it has been a combination of factors surrounding these parties which has been largely responsible for holding back this struggle since the end of the war. In the days that lie ahead the role of Parliament will steadily diminish in the minds of the working class and new forms of action will emerge.

What form will this action take, and what relation will it have to the developments inside the Labour Party? This is the central point around which a post mortem of the election must take place.

The working class have a long and bitter experience of strikes. They emerged exhausted from the defeat of the 1926 General Strike and only recovered after a long period. Their record of loyalty to the 1945 Labour government was a demonstration of their belief that a

political solution of their problems was necessary. They felt, and still feel, that the old type of strike could bring much hardship and misery and at the end the danger of defeat owing to a lack of leadership.

Once again they are left with no alternative but to resort to industrial action. Only this time such action will be tempered with a greater political interest. We say this because we do not believe that any large industrial struggle can be divorced from politics. Government intervention is inevitable. Therefore those trade unionists who proceed with a political understanding of the struggle against Toryism will find no difficulty in explaining the need for a political outlook in relation to strikes.

The character of strikes will change in yet another way. A strike by miners will raise the question of the future of capitalist nationalization, which leads directly to the problem of workers' control. This in fact applies to all the nationalized industries.

The struggle for the forty-hour week and a reduction of working hours will be seen as a measure against unemployment, which in turn will pose the nationalization of those industries which are affected. More and more the struggles of the future will thrust important policy demands into the Labour movement.

**I**F the policy makers of the Labour Party are to find a road out of the present crisis they must go to the industrial workers, who will now be in the vanguard of the fight against Toryism, and understand what type of programme they require.

No longer will the Labour Party lead the Labour movement, rather will it be those who lead the working class in the major industries. Nobody in his right senses expects the present trade union leadership to provide any type of leadership whatsoever. So the responsibility passes to the members. Because of this, rank-and-file organizations will become a powerful stimulus to a revival inside the Labour Party.

The new Left-wing which will emerge in the Labour Party must be allied to the Left-wing in the factories and workshops. The programme of Labour's left-wing must have the backing of the industrial workers. In other words, the class struggle must be seen as the only real force which can reverse the trend to Toryism.

This is the great advantage which the Socialist Labour League enjoys. The policy for its National Assembly of Labour is a policy which already has the support of a large number of people. It is a policy which combines industrial and political demands. The discussion at the conference around this policy will be the only serious inquest into Labour's defeat at the general election. For the first time in 30 years Marxism is emerging as a serious force in Britain.

# The 'New Left' Must Look to the Working Class

Gerry Healy

The summer number of the *New Reasoner* (No. 9) carries an article by one of its editors, E. P. Thompson, on the 'new left'. The author, as is his right, sharply criticizes a number of tendencies inside the Labour movement and in particular the Socialist Labour League. Let us say at the outset that we have no quarrel with the tone of this article. By all means let comrade Thompson be as sharp and as critical as he likes; such criticism is part of a method and it is this which we are concerned with, rather than its tone as such. We say this because we have become a little tired of the attacks levelled by such people as E. P. Thompson about the 'sharpness' and 'uncomradeliness' of the Marxists. We consider that such characterizations do not serve any useful purpose, and should be dispensed with in serious debate.

What strikes one immediately on reading E. P. Thompson's article is that he entirely omits the working class; consequently there is no attempt to analyse the actual relationship between the left of today and the working class. One would imagine that the 'new left' had just arrived and existed in a world of its own. The opposite, of course, is the case. The 'new left' is not just a grouping of people around a number of new ideas that they have developed independently. This new development on the left reflects a particular phase of the development of the crisis of capitalism, which for socialists is the crisis of the working-class movement. Like movements among intellectuals and students in the past, the recent emergence of the 'new left' is the advance warning of a resurgence of the working class as an active political force in Britain. The crisis which is the basis of such action finds its first reflection in the battle of ideas.

## THE LEGACY OF STALINISM

Thompson's omission is understandable. He obtained his political training in the school of Stalinism, and that is a bad school. Now E. P. Thompson is, of course, no longer a Stalinist. But the mere fact that he has broken politically from this school does not mean that he has abandoned all the things that he learnt there.

Stalinism is not just a system of mass brutality, such as we have seen in Hungary and during the long reign of Stalin himself. Stalin did not start off as a tyrant. His particular ideas, personality and political position fitted him to be the instrument of new social forces. Under the impact of the difficulties that developed internationally and in the Soviet Union following the First World War, there took place a rapid bureaucratic degeneration. Following Lenin's death in 1924 Stalin prepared the way for his dictatorship by developing a whole system of political ideas which revised Marxism and Bolshevism. In essence these ideas were reformist. In practice they defended the rule of the bureaucracy and not that of the working class. Bureaucracy became the all-powerful, infallible guide for the Soviet Union; the working class and peasantry were relegated to a position of unquestioning obedience and loyalty to this bureaucracy. Hence, instead of genuine workers'

control there developed a system based on bureaucratic commands. All the vices of capitalism and viciousness of capitalist dictatorial methods reflected themselves in this way inside the Soviet Union. Hence the mass purges, the trumped-up trials, the destruction of nationalities and the return of official anti-Semitism; all these were necessary to preserve the omnipotence of the bureaucracy and in the last instance of the chief bureaucrat, Stalin. In a nutshell the method of Stalinism boils down to the relegation of the Soviet and international working class to the background and the emergence of the power of the bureaucrat. That is the basic difference with Marxism, which fights for the establishment of working-class power. The struggle to establish this power is carried out by the development of a Marxist leadership striving to raise the level of the working class so that it will understand the necessity for conscious control of its own destiny.

The first task in this connection is to wrest power from the hands of the capitalists. Under the leadership of the Marxist Party in the struggle to conquer and consolidate this power, the working class achieves the status of the leading class in society, the preparation for the abolition of all classes.

Opponents of Marxism are constantly attacking the Marxists on the grounds that we stand for party dictatorship. This is a falsehood from beginning to end. In the struggle against capitalism the working class faces a highly organized, oppressive machine, guided by a conscious general staff of monopolists. In their hands is a state apparatus which plots and plans day in, day out to preserve the privileges of the men of wealth through the systematic exploitation and repression of the working class. To combat this reactionary force it is necessary to develop a leadership inside the working-class movement, a party based upon the widest possible democracy in the creation of its policy and the utmost discipline in action. Such a party was the Bolshevik party in the Soviet Union before Stalinist degeneration. Its heir in Britain is the Socialist Labour League.

After the conquest of power the role of this party will change: from being the leadership of the working class before the revolution, it will strive to educate and prepare the working class as a whole to supersede the party's leadership and become conscious planners and leaders in a communist society. Nobody doubts the difficulties of this transition and those who seek to confuse Stalinism with Marxism are at rock bottom serving the capitalists and deliberately falsifying history.

The social forces responsible for the degeneration in the young Soviet state must be constantly studied, so that the difficulties of bureaucratic deformation and growth can be combated by the Marxists in the future. An essential part of this, however, is to understand the historic role of the working class, and the fact that Thompson never even bothers to examine this role shows that he still essentially retains the method of Stalinism.

## LEFT BOOK CLUB LEGEND

In the course of his polemic, Thompson refers nostalgically to the days of the Left Book Club. In this he fosters a false legend which has been carefully preserved in the Stalinist mythology. It is perfectly true that the Left Book Club provided a considerable body of literature for the intellectuals who came to the Labour movement before the war, but it is also true, if one examines many of the books produced by Victor Gollancz, that this organization was the chief propaganda weapon whereby the Stalinists falsely indoctrinated these intellectuals against Bolshevism. Khrushchev's 20th Congress speech and subsequent revelations have begun to reveal the full extent of the systematic falsification which characterized this period; only a small number of Marxists fought against this with the barest material resources. It is a pity that E. P. Thompson does not speak a little more about how some of the main sponsors and main defendants of the Left Book Club, including its publisher Mr Gollancz and his lieutenant, Mr Strachey, emerged in their true colours as soon as the war began, and published 'The Betrayal of the Left', which was nothing more than their way of making peace with the capitalist enemy.

Those whose ideas were formed by the Left Book Club came into politics during a period of working-class defeat following the general strike of 1926. When Thompson speaks of the 'old left', he carefully avoids analysing this left. Once again we have this slipshod method of posing the old against the new, erecting Aunt Sallies and knocking them down. The old left emerged in an entirely different period from that which cradles the new left today. The fact that the working class was defeated in 1926 meant that a considerable period had of necessity to elapse before this class could renew its strength and again inspire the intellectuals towards the socialist goal. The period of the thirties was the period of demoralization and of unemployment for the miners, engineers and workers in basic industries. That is why the theory of the Popular Front drew such support from young intellectuals coming into politics for the first time. Many of these were looking, naturally enough, for a short cut to settle accounts with the capitalists; this prepared them for a tactic which was advocated by the Stalinist bureaucracy in order to strengthen its class collaboration on the international field. The idea was that it was possible, through a government composed of parties representing different classes, to achieve power and take the working class towards socialism. Such an idea was attractive because it appeared to offer a way out of the struggle through class collaboration and inter party manoeuvres. History, however, shows that this form of class collaboration, as all forms of class collaboration before it, could lead to nothing but defeat, and in fact that is what happened, with the Spanish revolution as the outstanding example. The working class in France today, which had for a period a Popular Front government, is once again padlocked in the strait-jacket of dictatorship. Yet Stalinism will repeat the mistakes of the thirties. Thorez reaffirms his 'Parliamentary Road to Socialism' and the party regards any slogan farther to the left than 'restore the democracy of the Fourth Republic' as a 'provocation'.

By ignoring all these facts when speaking of the old left, E. P. Thompson shows a certain contempt for the

youth of today: what this youth requires above all is an objective study of these events, and not a subjective counterposing of old against new, with snatches of Tommy Steele thrown in. This is the gimmick method of argument and teaches nobody anything.

## NO ESCAPE FROM HISTORY

There is, however, a more basic reason why E. P. Thompson does this. The significance of Khrushchev's speech was that it stopped at the point where it should have begun and that it failed to analyze the social causes of Stalinism. It refused to explain how Stalinism arose. One would imagine from Khrushchev's speech that its history began in the middle thirties and not in the important formative years of the young Soviet Republic after Lenin's death. The great struggle of the Left Opposition, its plans for the industrialization of the Soviet Union and the struggles with Stalinism which led to the physical and political annihilation of that Opposition, are completely ignored by Khrushchev. He mentions Lenin's Testament, but fails to explain why Lenin found it necessary to write it. E. P. Thompson follows a similar method in that we have yet to hear from him or his friends an explanation for the historical origins of Stalinism. We have had, of course, many articles from this quarter about the moral outrages of Stalinism and the human indignities which it inflicted on the Labour movement, but this is only a part of the truth. The course of those who support E. P. Thompson and the *New Reasoner* flows directly from the fact that they have been unable to give a historical explanation of the rise of Stalinism or of their own abandonment of it after Khrushchev's speech.

It is admirable to talk about the need for theory in the Labour movement as E. P. Thompson does, but the first requirement of a person who seriously believes in theory is to put himself right with the historical reasons for his own development. Emotional hostility to Stalinism can in fact in certain circumstances lead one right back along the path to Stalinism, or into the camp of capitalism. The new left of today cannot separate itself by an effort of will from the history of the working-class movement, and E. P. Thompson and others will continue to flounder until they outline their attitude towards this history and declare where they really stand.

There is a direct relationship between the new left of today and the old left. It is important also to realize that both these trends were cradled in an English Labour movement which has a traditional backwardness in matters of theory. The great difference between the left today and its predecessor lies in the fact that the working-class movement is no longer suffering from demoralization and unemployment and has fully recovered from the defeat of 1926. In Britain we have the most powerful Labour movement in Western Europe, and the effect of its strength is to constantly interrupt the plans of the British capitalists. The new left reflects this basic strength, and many of its members will be impelled to join the growing number of intellectuals who have made the leap to a historical analysis of Stalinism as the prerequisite of restoring true Marxism in Britain.

Those who do not take this course, and prefer to set themselves up as revisers of Marxism, find themselves gripped by pessimism. They are inflicted with British

'exceptionalism', Working by rule of thumb and on the basis of superficial impressions they conclude from the slowness of events in England that things will remain as they are and that the battle of words with the old gang of Tory and Labour leaders will go on in the same old way. Here and there they visualize some changes in the régime, and they work for the most paltry returns, all the time directing bitter criticism at the left, at the Marxists. This outlook derives from a failure to understand anything about the political history of the British working class.

The new wave of struggles in Britain provoked by the current employers' offensive against the Labour and trade union movement will inevitably, and in the very early stages, revive the heroic episodes of the General Strike, the miners' struggle in the 1920s and the powerful solidarity actions in defence of the young Soviet Republic. When the working class moves into action they have their history strapped across their backs and willy-nilly they will be unable to get away from this. This history, with its positive and negative aspects, remains the storehouse of knowledge which affects the working class first in an unconscious sense; the task of the Marxist movement is to transform politically this unconscious relationship into a conscious guide to action for the future.

Intellectuals are moving in a Marxist direction today because they are being affected by the same powerful combination of historical forces which affects the working class. If there is a new field for the development of Marxist theory it is precisely because the working class of this country is being forced to gather the resources of experience and strength in preparation for big actions

It is this historical fact which makes nonsense of Thompson's reference to the old and new lefts. The new left can only advance today if it understands why the old left failed; hence the importance of understanding Stalinism and its historical development. The old left did the dirty work for the Stalinists and for the reformists. The new left must thoroughly educate itself in the nature of the political forces which hold back the working class

### THE NEW GENERATION

The problem of youth today can likewise only be understood in its historical context. To flatter the youth of today by referring in sneering tones to the limitations of the older generation is a method of work which can only be described as shabby. Young workers today are in many ways much more confident than the unemployed youth of the 1930s. They have reason to be. The full employment of the war period and the post-war boom has provided them with a standard of life far above that of the pre-war generation. But this is only one side of the question. Just as the youth of today enjoy these standards so also will they fight more strenuously to maintain and improve them. They are determined, and rightly so, not to go back to the thirties. If the capitalist politicians were to come out and declare for a return to the standard of living of the youth of the thirties, can anyone doubt the revolutionary consequences? Yet here is precisely the policy of the capitalists. Youth unemployment is higher now than at any time since the thirties—a foretaste of things to come. We can expect

in consequence an enormous transformation in the outlook of young people. Their feelings of uncertainty and bitterness, which today give rise to all sorts of frustrations, will become transformed into a political powerhouse directed against the forces of the old society. To speak of the intellectual youth who marched to Aldermaston as something which is separate from these events is again to ignore the relationship between the old and the new. Far from making a completely fresh start, the youth must be part of a movement which understands scientifically the failure of the generation of the 1930s to defeat unemployment and war and the relationship between those struggles and the defeat of 1926, for the memory of these events is built into the working class, and cannot be ignored.

It is significant that in the forefront of all the strikes over the recent period, demonstrations against rent increases and against the manufacture of the H-bomb, it is the youth who predominate. But youth cannot by itself elaborate the strategy for victory: for this it needs the assistance of the older generation and its experience. Without this it will not be able to halt the capitalists in their offensive. Marxists today estimate the youth in the light of their relationship to the older generation. Whilst Marxism fights against conservatism in the older generation it nevertheless does not, as Thompson does, go to the other extreme and set up the youth as some self-contained social entity. Here he ignores the potentialities of today's youth which will be fulfilled only when they are blended with an understanding of youth's role in the social struggles of yesterday. The educational work to achieve this understanding is a formidable task, but there is no easy way around it. With all due respects to skiffle, Tommy Steele, the pops, and E. P. Thompson, we must start from fundamentals in finding a road to the youth, and an understanding of Britain's social crisis will prove a much more powerful factor than that of being tuned in to the saxophone.

An attitude to history is the basic difference between the Marxist movement and E. P. Thompson. Marxists will insist that an understanding of today proceeds from an understanding of yesterday. History cannot be bypassed; the development of the working class and of the youth within its midst remains first and foremost a product of the class struggle. Thompson's omission of any examination of the working class thus derives from a rejection of the Marxist theory of the class struggle as the dominant factor in society. On such a basis he can talk about problems of today as if they had no relationship with the problems of yesterday.

### E. P. THOMPSON AND FACTIONS

This characterizes also his attack on the Socialist Labour League, which he discusses in terms of factionalism. Now it was fundamental to Stalinism to abolish all factions, first in the Bolshevik Party and then in the international communist movement. The Communist Party in Britain to this very day carries the tradition forward; factions are prohibited inside the party by rule.

Similarly the Labour Party bureaucracy justifies its drive against the Socialist Labour League on the grounds that the League constitutes a faction in the Labour Party. Thus E. P. Thompson in his crusade

against factions finds himself with some strange bed-fellows. A footnote to his article (*New Reasoner*, Summer 1959, p. 14) states that he is sharply in disagreement with the 'administrative proscription' of the Socialist Labour League; but he avoids mentioning that the Socialist Labour League is proscribed exactly because according to Transport House it is a faction. Thompson arrives at his contradictory position because once again he tries to approach the question without any knowledge (at least there is no evidence of it) of the history of factions in the Marxist movement.

These have arisen, and will continue to arise, when a group or tendency sees the necessity to organize itself in a disciplined way, as a party within a party, because it thinks that the policy of the leadership or a section of it can lead to serious mistakes for the working class. A faction has its own political platform and arises when all other means of persuasion have failed. It is a tight political formation and from the moment it arises the danger of a split is always present.

Marxists have to work as an organized faction within Social Democracy and within Stalinism because there is an absolutely unbridgeable gulf between themselves and the leaderships of these movements. Those who attack the Marxist movement for fighting for political clarity within these movements have in effect accepted that the fate of the workers is to fall victim to the false policies of these leaders. When Marxists fight on behalf of these workers for political ideas, they are of course aware that the retaliation of the Right-wing may sometimes mean splits and expulsions.

#### FACTIONS, TENDENCIES AND CLIQUES

Generally speaking the formation of a faction is the last stage in the development of a struggle, although this stage can continue for a considerable period, depending upon the objective conditions in a given country. Oftentimes comrades get together in a movement without any factional ties, but with some political agreement on the problems of the movement and how they should be attended to. Groups of this description with no hard and fast organizational discipline can be described as tendencies. Yet at other times groups of people get together in the movement and resolve to remain together at all costs despite their political disagreements. They consider that the personal relationship between them should override their political differences. Inside such groups there is naturally contempt for Marxism, which seeks precisely to probe the differences and their relationship to the class struggle in society. This type of group is not a faction but a clique and is very common in the British Labour movement. Opportunist groupings are invariably cliques: their leaders subordinate discussions on policy to the objective of attaining certain positions in the movement. Occasionally the various cliques in the Labour Party and the trade unions go to war with one another.

One feature of the *New Reasoner* and the *Universities and Left Review* is that those of their spokesmen who howl loudest against Marxism have always carefully avoided politically clarifying the differences that exist within their own camp. Anyone who examines the pages of the *New Reasoner* can see these differences for himself. But those who agree to differ have unity in at least one thing, they hate the Marxist movement

and are determined to fight it at all costs. Thompson's denunciation of factions is an attempt to characterize principled politics as 'dirty' politics. All those who, like the Marxist, fight for a principled line are regarded as dogmatists and doctrinaires, while all those who avoid the fight for a political line behind the pages of some magazine or other are regarded as highly practical people.

Of course, objective circumstances at the moment help Thompson in his attack. The inertia and mis-education which hold back the working class are powerful barriers in the development of a movement. In the present period, the prelude to a real breakthrough of the class struggle, the Thompsons seem to find a ready audience in denouncing the Marxists movement as sectarian. In this, he only has the temporary advantage enjoyed by similar opportunists in the past. The Marxist movement remains small at this time not because of the failure of its ideas, but because only now is there maturing the favourable objective situation which will vindicate these ideas.

Marxist principles reflect the objective requirements of the working class. These objective requirements can only be translated into class consciousness in the course of class struggles. Consequently, Marxism, whilst it reflects the historic requirements of the working class, nevertheless in a period of slow tempo of development can appear to be temporarily isolated from the class. E. P. Thompson flourishes in the last years of this slow process, but his advantage will be short-lived.

The attack on factions is thus an attack on principled politics and an implied defence of clique politics; it is because such clique politics dominate relationships inside the *New Reasoner*, Transport House and King Street, that Mr Thompson finds himself in such strange company in attacking the Marxists of the Socialist Labour League. The Socialist Labour League has openly proclaimed in its founding Conference resolution the principles for which it fights. It has openly proclaimed that it is a disciplined organization following in the steps of the Bolshevik movement. Internal democracy is not a means of glossing over differences of principle, but is an instrument for understanding these differences, drawing conclusions from them and educating the movement for action. Common discipline and internal democracy are the necessary weapons of the working class in action.

While a number of people on the left show a tendency to retreat to Stalinism or reformism, the balance sheet remains positive. Intellectuals are learning to serve the working class and learn from the working class. The method of Marxism is not to foist ideas and impressions on to the working class, but to begin with that class, study it, understand it and draw practical conclusions from the course of its development.

#### THE FUTURE OF THE 'NEW LEFT'

It is when we come to the final part of Thompson's article that we see the real fallacies in his thinking. 'The new left,' he says, 'does not propose itself as an alternative organization.' Such a statement is understandable, but it is not true. The 'new left' is an organization by virtue of its own production of magazines, discussions on editorial policy and educational work. What E. P. Thompson wants to say is

that he does not want the new left to be a Marxist organization, but an organization of a 'centrist' variety which, while declaring itself against all organization, is at the same time itself the tightest form of organization. Thompson denounces Marxist factionalism and organization, but at the same time carefully ignores the fact that only very recently, after considerable pressure, was the normal method of elections by voting applied to such concerns as the *Universities and Left Review*. We have not heard of any elected editorial board for the *New Reasoner*, though no doubt an editorial board does exist. In point of fact Thompson's *New Reasoner* is very tightly and narrowly controlled.

The Socialist Labour League's conference on the other hand was open to visitors, it had a public session and people who were not members participated in the discussion. All its leading committees were elected. We haven't heard of this happening inside Thompson's new left as yet, although we have no doubt that some progress may be made in the next period.

Thompson's organizational outlook is again related to his lack of understanding of history. Political movements similar to the one proposed by Thompson have existed in the past. The whole history of the Independent Labour Party in its centrist forms throughout Western Europe before the war reveals that the all-inclusiveness of these movements served only to hide the machinations of 'leaders' who were undecided whether to go back to reformism or turn to Stalinism. That is why the ILP has been reduced to an insignificant hulk of aging people, the majority of its leaders having

either deserted to the camp of reformism or simply disappeared from the scene.

Thompson's new left is related to these experiences. It represents the mood of people who cannot make up their minds where to go. It is a sort of crossroads where various people are meeting, some downright opportunists, others inclined towards Stalinism, still others who want to find a road to revolutionary socialism. It is essentially a movement in which there is necessarily a permanent crisis of indecision. Such movements are normal in pre-revolutionary developments, as well as in periods of reaction and defeat. They are a halfway house for people who are pausing in the search for a revolutionary way forward, trying to decide whether to go forward or back.

The most dangerous trend in the new left will be to attack the Marxists in the hope of accommodating more easily to all sorts of pseudo-left-wingers thrown up by the oncoming crisis in the Labour movement. Thompson and his friends cannot remain at the crossroads indefinitely, but must soon make up their minds politically on the basis of the class struggle. The *Universities and Left Review* and the *New Reasoner* are transitional phenomena; the many sincere supporters of these journals have a primary duty to direct their attentions to the struggles of the working class. This does not mean only left speech-making by trade union leaders. What is important is the turn towards the basic movement which lies behind this speech-making. If this is done then the new left will steadily evolve in a Marxist direction.

## The Politics of South Bank

Bob Pennington

The South Bank lock-out was in many respects a touchstone of the attitude of socialists to the class struggle. Events in the year since the South Bank dispute have shown the correctness of the stand taken by militants there, and have confirmed the analysis made by the Marxists who supported them.

In September last year Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons decided to 'rephase' the entire civil engineering contract on the Shell Petroleum site at the South Bank, Waterloo. This set off an explosion which blew sky-high all the shibboleths about the harmony of management and labour, the capacity of the union officials to fight the employers' attacks, the impartiality of the police, and the militancy of the Communist Party.

Within two days of the announcement that the job was being 'rephased', 1250 men, including the whole of the shop stewards' committee, were sacked. Work on the giant steel and concrete skyscraper, claimed to be the highest in Europe, came to a stop on September 27, 1958. The shut-down came as a climax to a series of disputes. In February 1958, the men struck over the firm's refusal to negotiate with an elected site committee over welfare and conditions. A second dispute,<sup>1</sup> which lasted six weeks, was for the reinstatement of Hugh Cassidy, Federation steward at the time of the 'rephasing'. Following a fatal accident to Michael

Quigly, a foreman steel erector, which was the third death on the site in three months, a third strike took place for an independent safety officer. The consistent refusal of the stewards' committee to accept victimizations, inadequate welfare and dangerous conditions was a constant threat to profits.

'Rephasing' was simply a new term for an old practice. McAlpines were intent on smashing site organization, so as to free profit-making from the interference of a well-organized stewards' committee. The comment of the *Financial Times* on the 'rephasing' was that McAlpines planned to start work again with a slightly altered labour force 'from which the worst militants have been weeded out.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On April 10, 1958 L. C. Kemp, building group secretary of the TGWU, circularized all building trade branches and stewards in region No. 1 to the effect that the dispute 'over the victimization of a ticket steward' has now 'received official recognition by the general executive council'.

<sup>2</sup> *Financial Times* October 1, 1958.

The shop stewards and the men were presented with a simple choice: either meekly to accept the sackings and permit McAlpines to destroy site organization—or to fight back by declaring the job 'black' until all available labour was reinstated. Their decision was quick and to the point. In an interview with *The Newsletter* the day after the sackings were announced, Hugh Cassidy said: 'McAlpines think this is a golden opportunity to weed out trade unionists on the job. The lads know McAlpines are acting viciously. They know the true situation and they are prepared to fight.'<sup>3</sup>

For the scaffolders their chief steward, Mick Maguire, said: 'Our scaffolders took a decision on Friday evening to stay outside the gate as a body until such time as our jobs are given back to us'.<sup>4</sup>

### SOUTH BANK SPECIAL

The men's decision to fight set before every trade unionist and socialist the question: what practical assistance could they give to enable these workers to defeat McAlpines? First to reply was *The Newsletter*, which called on all trade unionists to 'rally to the support of the Shell Mex men.' Calling on the Transport and General Workers' Union to act in defence of its members, *The Newsletter* wrote: 'The Transport and General Workers' Union has the power to smash McAlpine tomorrow. TGWU men supply McAlpines' Dorchester Hotel with meat and vegetables. TGWU men carry Shell Mex petrol. If this great power is used and extended to McAlpines' other sites, a complete and speedy victory can be won by the men on the South Bank.'<sup>5</sup>

The Editorial Board of *The Newsletter* approached the stewards' committee offering them the use of half the paper to put their case in their own way. This offer was accepted, and a broadsheet, *The South Bank Special*, in newspaper format, appeared the following weekend containing articles by the stewards in which they presented their case and appealed for support. On Sunday, October 5, the stewards' committee was holding a meeting to which all trade unionists were invited. *The South Bank Special*<sup>6</sup> advertised this meeting. In union branches, on building jobs, in the docks, at factories and on the street corners both in London and the main provincial centres, sacked workers, building trade militants and groups of *Newsletter* supporters sold the *Special*. The fight and the message of the South Bank workers was taken to as wide an audience as possible. On the front page of the *Special*, Jim Rand, a Liverpool building trade worker, wrote: 'Merseyside building militants met last Sunday to set up a solidarity committee to support the locked-out McAlpine men.' Announcing the solidarity committee's next meeting Rand added: 'There we can arrange to get financial support and if necessary arrange mass meetings for the McAlpine men to address.'<sup>7</sup>

The stage was being set for a determined fight. Leaflets and propaganda had gone out to other sites explaining the men's case and what it would mean for the trade union movement if McAlpine succeeded in

his drive against the stewards' committee. Solidarity and support was being built up among the rank and file. The convening of the October 5 meeting ensured that the dispute would not remain isolated but that this important issue would become the property of the organized movement. The men's response had been excellent. The stewards had met the challenge. The Marxists around *The Newsletter* had reacted as people who took seriously what they wrote and talked about, and had unhesitatingly placed their resources at the disposal of a section of the working class engaged in struggle.

If McAlpines had encountered a resistance from the workers they certainly did not meet one from the trade union officials. On October 2 the Civil Engineering Construction Conciliation Board, a body consisting of employers and union officials, issued a statement on the dispute. This stated that the executives of the unions 'have never recognized the dispute that has taken place' and concluded by saying: 'There is therefore no official obstacle to orderly recruitment for the job in accordance with the normal custom in the industry.' Frank Cousins, general secretary of the TGWU, curtly told his members to return to work. The *Financial Times* was able to report that at a site meeting addressed by union officials on September 26 'all but one took a moderate line.'<sup>8</sup>

Despite the acceptance of the sackings by their officials, the men at a mass meeting at the Holborn Hall carried a resolution supporting the decision of the works committee in 'blacking' the site until all available labour, including the stewards, was reinstated. Besides the South Bank workers, building trade militants were also present from other London jobs, and the Liverpool solidarity committee sent a representative. An appeal was made by the platform for help on the picket line—McAlpines had announced their intention of reopening the job on Wednesday, October 8—and the meeting endorsed the appeal.

### A HUMAN BARRIER

Maguire summed up the feelings of the meeting when he said: 'The rank and file have made the dispute official even if the union leaders have not.'

That rank and file moved into action on October 8, shattering the prophecy of the *Financial Times* that although militant elements were not expected to accept the resumption without loud protests 'it is felt that they represent too small a minority to create a major obstacle to work today'.<sup>9</sup> By 7.30 a.m. pickets were gathering outside the gates. From the Abbey Wood site, where there was a four-hour token stoppage, 120 fraternal pickets manned the line. Workers were there from Belvedere Power Station, W. G. French's (*Daily Mirror* site), Harry Neil's at Stevenage, Beckton Gas Works, as well as from other jobs and union branches all over the London area. By 7.50 a.m. a solid human barrier ringed the site. Banners and posters were everywhere. It was a tremendous demonstration of working-class solidarity that shook the employers and the Press. Only a handful of scabs were able to crawl through the lines. A chastened *Financial Times* wrote: 'The planned resumption of work on the South Bank site of the new Shell headquarters building was seriously

<sup>3</sup> *The Newsletter*, Special South Bank Edition, Volume 2, No. 70, Page 245, September 27, 1958.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *South Bank Special*, October, 1958.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Financial Times*, September 27, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> *Financial Times*, October 8, 1958.

impeded yesterday by determined picketing.<sup>10</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* gloomily conceded: 'Only a small proportion of the expected recruits went through the picket lines.'<sup>11</sup>

Again the next day the pickets were out in force. More jobs and more branches reported at South Bank for duty on the picket line. The *Daily Telegraph's* industrial correspondent admitted that mass picketing had 'resulted in fewer men going in to work than yesterday.'<sup>12</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* wrote: 'Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons are rapidly losing ground.'<sup>13</sup>

Still no help came from the union officials. Only the Constructional Engineering Union had officially declared the job 'black'. The Electrical Trades' Union agreed that their members should not cross the picket line, but themselves took no official action—though each night the floodlights on the site were lit up, having been switched on by non-union labour.

### THE POLICE TAKE THE OFFENSIVE

On the Friday the employers and their government hit back. Each day the number of police on duty had been growing in size. On Friday morning the roads along the site swarmed with foot and mounted police. Under the archway of Waterloo Bridge lines of mounted police waited to swoop on the pickets. Black Marias arrived constantly with reinforcements. As the pickets tried to remonstrate with scabs the police moved in. A picket was hurled into a waiting police van with blood streaming down his face where police had hit him. Workers were kicked and punched. Horses were driven on to the pavements, scattering the pickets. Bob Rankin, a steel erector from Lysaght's at Dagenham, reported how he saw 'two coppers holding one man whilst another copper hit him.'<sup>14</sup>

By dinner-time ten pickets had been arrested. McAlpines' officials had begun to hope again. An odd trickle of new scabs had gone on the job and the police were looking smug and complacent. But the men were not defeated. Just after 1.30 p.m., 350 new pickets arrived at the job. As soon as the workers at Belvedere Power Station had heard of the arrests they had downed tools and rallied to the aid of the South Bank men. Their presence had a dramatic effect. The morale of the other pickets rose. The arrogance of the police was suddenly deflated. Faced with greater numbers, and with the anger and militancy of aroused workers, many of the police were heard to volunteer the information that 'we are only doing our job' or 'we don't like it any more than you do, lads.'

Still more police arrived next day. Three more arrests were made. But the number of scabs remained small. No work was being done on the site. Although the men had been subjected to police violence, although the government had demonstrated its determination to serve the employers, the official Labour movement could only demonstrate its impotence by maintaining a cowardly silence over what was taking place.

Not one union executive council protested. In their centrally-heated offices, trade union officials busied

themselves with their routine and consoled themselves with the dream that 'this business could not happen in an official strike.' Less than twelve months later, however, in the official print dispute, workers at Long Acre and Maidstone learned very quickly about police neutrality—that in fact the police manhandle and arrest pickets, 'official' and 'unofficial', with complete impartiality.

Not a solitary Labour MP visited South Bank or raised a protest in the House of Commons about the behaviour of the police. *Tribune* maintained an aloof if not very dignified silence. The *Daily Worker*, true enough, protested against the action of the police but neglected to explain how the South Bank incidents squared with the Communist Party's programme of the 'peaceful transition to Socialism.'

Co-operating with *The Newsletter*, the stewards' committee produced another *South Bank Special* on Saturday, October 18. An article by Mick Maguire explained that the action of the police was 'very much in order. The police exist to defend the private property of the McAlpines, which implies increasing profits at the expense of the working class.' He added: 'The great advantage of the McAlpine battle is that it clears away all the cobwebs of "class peace" preached so long by the pale pink trade union leaders.'<sup>15</sup> The *Special* contained an appeal for funds and for more support on the picket line, and a request for meetings to be organized on jobs at which representatives of the strikers could speak. Again a drive was made by the strikers, other militants and supporters of *The Newsletter*, to take the paper and its message to as many workers as possible.

### ROLE OF THE UNION LEADERS

As the struggle raged more fiercely, as the rank and file fought back more stubbornly and as victory came within sight, all the more actively did the trade union officials range themselves on the side of the employers. George Lowthian, general secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, issued a statement saying 'the position as far as this union is concerned, is that there is no dispute and the job is open to members of this union to apply for employment.'<sup>16</sup> This came as a particular blow to the strikers, as on October 11 the London divisional council of the AUBTW had 'blackened' the site and demanded all available labour be re-employed. A similar resolution had been carried by the south-east London district committee of the union. McAlpines had reprinted the statement of the Civil Engineering Construction Conciliation Board which declared the job to be open for recruitment, and pasted this up on the walls all around the site. Appended to the statement was the signature of the Board's chairman, H. E. Matthews, an official of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers.

On October 22 there was a special meeting of the AUBTW. Calling for 'the utmost loyalty' from members in resisting the unofficial action at Shell Mex, the executive expressed its determination 'to take disciplinary action with those members who have and are taking part in unofficial strikes.' *The Times* acclaimed this, warning that 'order' in industry could

<sup>10</sup> *Financial Times*, October 9, 1958.

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, October 9, 1958.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, October 10, 1958.

<sup>13</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, October 10, 1958.

<sup>14</sup> *South Bank Special*, No. 2, October 1958.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Financial Times*, October 14, 1958.

be achieved only when both employers and unions stood firm. 'In this case they have done so and before long work will no doubt return to normal'.<sup>17</sup> The AUBTW executive lost no time in moving against its members at South Bank. In less than a week it laid charges against twenty-six of its members. On October 29 it suspended from office seven members of its south-east London district committee; the *Daily Herald* reported: 'The unpaid committee men who do union work in their spare time broke rules by backing the unofficial strike on the Shell building site in London'.<sup>18</sup>

Next, Brian Behan, a leading figure in the dispute and a member of *The Newsletter's* Editorial Board, was expelled from the AUBTW, and soon the same decision was carried against Mick Maguire, Dennis Nolan and Patrick Power. A number of members were suspended. The executive council at the same time took the unprecedented step of proscribing the National Industrial Rank-and-file Conference called by *The Newsletter* at the Holborn Hall for November 16.

The employers and their Press were deeply grateful for the help the union leaders gave them in their job of strike-breaking. As the officials delivered one blow after another at the men, as scabs were given open encouragement by these so-called leaders, McAlpines slowly began to build up the labour force. On October 16 the *Daily Telegraph* was able to write: 'Happily, on the South Bank the firmness of the leaders is having its effect.' An official of McAlpines told *The Times*: 'Statements by trade union leaders have been most helpful'.<sup>19</sup> In a radio interview, Mr Robert Kean, director of the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors was asked if the attitude of the union officials had 'been extremely co-operative from your [the employers'] point of view?' Mr Kean replied: 'Oh I think I would more than agree with that'.<sup>20</sup>

### THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE STRIKERS

The treachery of the union leaders was not the only force that the strikers had to contend with at South Bank. From the outset the strike placed the Communist Party in a difficult position. The *Daily Worker* correctly condemned the sackings in its issue of September 26, but failed conspicuously to warn the men of the role the union leaders could be expected to play. On September 27 it carried a report of a site meeting addressed by union officials. Again no criticism was made of what even the *Financial Times* had described as the moderate line of the union officials. The day before the job was due to re-open, the *Worker* carried a report by Alan Brown which said: 'There is considerable anger among the men that so far union representatives had sided with McAlpine in his closing of the site'.<sup>21</sup> At this stage it was absolutely clear that the officials were doing everything in their power to break the strike; yet apart from this straight reporting of the men's opinions no criticism was being made of the officials by the *Daily Worker*.

On October 11 an article appeared under the heading

<sup>17</sup> *The Times*, October 25, 1958.

<sup>18</sup> *Daily Herald*, October 23, 1958.

<sup>19</sup> *The Times*, October 16, 1958.

<sup>20</sup> Transcript from a Telediphone Recording of B.B.C. programme, 'At Home and Abroad' October 28, 1958. See also Appendix to this article.

<sup>21</sup> *Daily Worker*, October 7, 1958.

'Crack in the Bosses' Wall'. Referring to the fact that the CEU members had been told not to cross the picket-line it went on to say: 'Electricians have agreed that they will not touch the site until there is a return on trade union terms. These moves are welcomed by the men, who are demanding that the machinery in all other unions involved should be working equally as quickly.' Actually the ETU, which is controlled by the Communist Party, never did 'black' the South Bank site, either at executive council or even area committee level. Hiding behind the fact that no electrician had been refused employment, the ETU officials always insisted that the union was not in dispute with McAlpine and that therefore the decision rested with the other unions.

On October 15, Jack Pascoe, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers and also of the Communist Party's executive committee, wrote a feature article in the *Daily Worker* giving support to the strike. Pascoe wrote: 'They [the men] welcome the attitude of the CEU and ETU that no member of their union will cross the picket-line, they expect at least the same attitude from the TGWU, the ASW and the AUBTW and for the unions to move rapidly towards a united front at McAlpines.'

Pascoe wound up his article by calling for the greatest 'moral, financial and physical backing behind the South Bank workers.'

This was the first time the *Daily Worker* had dealt with the sackings in an article by a prominent C.P. member in the building trade. In provincial centres the article came as something of a shock to Communist Party members. In Liverpool, although the solidarity committee had grown in numbers and representation from jobs, it had been virtually boycotted by the Communist Party. Assertions that the strike was 'sectarian', 'anti-trade-union', 'dominated by Trotskyists', and 'irresponsible', were being peddled freely around the sites by well-known Communist Party members in that area. Speakers from South Bank who toured the Midlands came back with reports that, at a number of factories where the Stalinists controlled the shop stewards' committees, their requests for meetings to be held where they could address the factory workers in order to make financial appeals were met with evasions or in some cases open hostility.

Pascoe's call was not taken up by the ETU or by his co-member of the Communist Party executive Frank Haxell, general secretary of the ETU. On October 17, unopposed by their officials, the site electricians returned to work. After discussions between themselves and the stewards' committee they agreed that if all the shop stewards previously employed on the site were still refused employment by Monday October 20, all ETU labour would again be withdrawn from the site. A telegram from the strike committee calling on the ETU executive council to withdraw all ETU labour from all McAlpines' sites as the job was being run by 'black juice' was ignored by the union's leaders.

On Sunday October 19 the strikers staged a march and rally from Waterloo to Hyde Park. It was an impressive demonstration, with workers from jobs and branches all over London represented. Liverpool sent a coach-load of miners, engineers, dockers and delegates from the local Trades and Labour Council. Workers were also present from Coventry. Communist Party

members however were noticeably absent from the out-of-town delegations. The equivocations and double-dealing of their leaders had ensured that the Communist Party had not brought into action any of its own members or supporters in the provinces.

On October 21 the *Daily Worker* reported: 'Shell site electricians walk out'. Their ultimatum had not been met. On October 22 it said: 'Steel men stay solid.' On October 23, without one word of comment or condemnation, it reported: 'The CEU yesterday advised its members at the South Bank McAlpine site to resume work immediately.' A union official justified this by saying 'the members could see that the site was building up its strength and that other trade unionists of the same grade were doing their work'.<sup>22</sup> On October 23 when the AUBTW executive warned their so-called dissidents, the *Daily Worker* headed its report 'Troublemakers Warned.'

When the executive council of the AUBTW took action against the south-east London district committee, the *Daily Worker* headed its report: 'Union men suspended—builders' EC acts'.<sup>23</sup> The president of the AUBTW, Harry Weaver, was quoted as saying that the executive council were most reluctant but had no alternative, since 'the present case was such a challenge to the authority of the union'.<sup>24</sup> Adding its little bit of spice to the stew the *Worker* remarked: 'Even if moves are afoot in some circles to weaken the position of the unions, they [the members] believe expulsions are not the way to strengthen union membership'.<sup>25</sup> Without comment the *Worker* gave a report that the site electricians were also returning to work following the withdrawal of the ban by the CEU.<sup>26</sup> Behan's expulsion was relegated to three paragraphs on the back page.<sup>27</sup> Again there was no comment, nor was there an appeal for a protest movement in the branches against the expulsion. 'Summoned by Union'<sup>28</sup> was how the *Worker* described the suspension of the chairman and secretary of the AUBTW's south-east London district committee. Again there was no comment.

On November 6, J. R. Campbell, then the paper's editor, attempted to befog the issue by alleging: 'There is a strange united front between the officials of the AUBTW' and 'the organ of the Trotskyist circus'<sup>29</sup> by which he meant *The Newsletter*. Campbell's aim was to discredit Behan and the leadership of the strike and thereby undermine support for it. This choice sophism of Campbell's was based on criticisms that *The Newsletter* had made of the Communist Party and the fact that the *Building Worker*, official organ of the AUBTW, had also attacked the Communist Party. Campbell failed to explain how Behan, expelled by the leaders of the AUBTW, could at the same time have a united front with people who have just led a witch-hunt against him. It would have been more pertinent if Campbell had explained how his fellow party member Joe Rootes, before becoming London divisional organizer of the AUBTW, had voted on the union's

London divisional council to end support of the South Bank strike and accept McAlpine's terms.

Campbell's spleen against *The Newsletter*; Rootes's vote against the men; the poker-faced reporting of the capitulation of the CEU and ETU; the presentation of the AUBTW disciplinary actions in such a way as to imply that after all there was some justification for them, were all the logical outcome of the politics and strategy of the Communist Party.

The strategy of the Stalinists is directed towards forcing or persuading the government into a summit conference so as to enable the Soviet bureaucracy to conclude a deal with British Imperialism. The consequences of such a political line for the Communist Party's trade union work are drastic. Above all else it becomes necessary to win friends and influence people in the leadership of the unions in support of 'friendship with the Soviet Union', 'summit conferences' and whatever other policies are in the interest of the Russian leaders at a given time. When, as was in the case of Shell Mex, a conflict of interests arises between workers and trade union bureaucrats, the Communist Party is always put in the position of having to play down the necessary criticisms of the trade union leaders. This inevitably prevents it from preparing and arming workers to meet the betrayals and sell-outs.

#### STALINIST BETRAYALS

Like all reformist theories, the theory of 'peaceful coexistence' between the Soviet Union and world imperialism flows from a complete lack of confidence in the ability of the working class to fight and defeat capitalism. The industrial policy of the Communist Party therefore becomes one of seeking to gain positions inside the trade union machine, not one of mobilizing the rank and file against the employers and their appendage in the Labour movement—the trade union bureaucracy. This imposes on the Communist Party a policy of seeking alliances with the Right-wing union leaders and leads them into concluding a series of unprincipled electoral pacts with the Right-wing inside the trade unions. The vote of Rootes against the strike is invariably justified by Stalinists on the grounds that it was necessary for him to vote that way in order to preserve his position in the AUBTW. The same reasons are given to explain why Claude Berridge, the Communist Party member on the executive council of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, performed the role of errand boy for the Right wing when in February 1959 at Universal Patterns, Crawley, and in March 1959 at Fords, Dagenham, he instructed reluctant strikers to terminate their dispute. On September 2, 1959 the strike of the Mini-motor workers at the Morris motor factory in Birmingham was brought to an end. The *Daily Mail* had asked in an article on the previous day, 'who is going to curb these tyrants of the shop floor?'<sup>30</sup> Next day came the answer: the *Daily Mail* reported that the strike was settled by a 'three-man peace team of veteran shop stewards—who were headed by Communist Dick Etheridge'.<sup>31</sup> Etheridge told the strikers 'to go back to work at once'. All attempts by Right-wing union officials to force a return to work had failed but Etheridge, by utilizing his

<sup>22</sup> *Daily Worker*, October, 30, 1958.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1958.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, November 4, 1958.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, November 6, 1958.

<sup>30</sup> *Daily Mail*, September 3, 1959.

<sup>31</sup> *Daily Mail*, September 4, 1959.

# Autumn Books

## Capitalist NEP?

**British Economic Policy since the War**, by Andrew Shonfield (Penguin Books, 3s. 6d.)

Confronted in the post-war years with full employment and 'excess' demand, the reflex of economic theory and policy in Britain, deeply influenced by Keynesianism, was to accept the necessity for holding investment in check. The recurrent pressures, expressed in balance of payments and inflationary crises, were met with deliberate cutbacks in capital outlays by both Labour and Conservative governments. Consequently, the level of investment, though sufficiently maintained to underpin a steady expansion, compared unfavourably with that attained in other countries. Since a high level of investment is a condition for rising production, productivity and incomes, Britain has been at a disadvantage. According to Shonfield the responsibility for this lies with the policy-makers who refused to recognize that Britain could no longer play the role in world politics which her wealth and power had at one time permitted. Economic growth was sacrificed to traditional and prestige objectives involving heavy arms expenditure, the maintenance of overseas bases, renewed export of capital and measures to hold together the Sterling Area and enable the pound to retain its place in international trade.

Shonfield is a prolific writer who, as a financial journalist, was in close touch with many of the developments which he describes. This can be judged from the pungent sayings attributed to businessmen, bankers, politicians, officials and chance acquaintances on his overseas journeyings. In fact, a good deal of light is cast upon the mentality of these people; in its way, unconsciously, this book is an indictment of British capitalism and the people who run it. There is, too, a tang of the real world (or rather that part of it represented by the City and Whitehall) so often missing in the austere academic treatise. Shonfield knows that something must be done, and that urgently, so he puts forward his New Economic Policy as a way of prosperity—or is it survival?—for British capitalism. The new way consists of stripping down of overseas commitments, a major reduction in defence spending and the encouragement of capital accumulation by incentives, cajoling, exhortation—as well as controls to check the anti-patriotic proclivities of the businessmen, whom he knows too well to trust to go it alone. One revealing remark made to him when he objected that a line of policy being put forward would infringe exchange restrictions was: 'Nobody but small fry takes any notice of exchange controls now'.

There are a number of major weaknesses in Shonfield's approach. In the first place his theoretical groundwork is over-simplified. Obsessed by the investment idea, he leaves out more than half the story. Under capitalism a high level of investment requires favourable conditions—namely, where the means of production are themselves being built up, new investment opportunities being opened out and markets expanding. Its continuance is threatened by the very forces which it calls into existence. Means of production have, eventually, to issue into an increased flow of goods; investment opportunities shrink as accumulation proceeds; rising costs eat into profits; markets cease to expand fast enough to enable the fruits of rising investment to be realized. Technological change, increasing the ratio of capital to labour, likewise tends to restrict demand in relation to capacity. The failure of the different branches of the economy to march in step, arising from the anarchy of the market, can itself impede the expansion or even bring it to an end.

The bourgeois advocates of more and more investment have caught on to the fact that investment is the dynamic element in the system. But, by reason of its instability, it is also the source of shocks. Periods of high investment are followed by slump, stagnation, even decline, and subject the whole social order to severe strains. In recent years, of course, world capitalism has been expansive, primarily because it has received shots in the arm from various sources. As the World Economic Survey put it in mid-1957: 'To date one expansionary force has been replaced by another, and deficiencies in one sector have been compensated by buoyancies in another.' The same document also pointed out the necessity for 'investment or other elements of effective demand' to be 'continually increased to match the growth in capacity' if excess capacity and unemployment were to be avoided. The turn from expansion to recession in the capitalist economies indicates the fallacy of the high investment utopia which has found favour with intelligent defenders of capitalism like Shonfield.

On the other hand, much in his analysis and policy suggestions deserves attention. He rightly criticizes the disproportionate amount of Britain's resources which has gone into armaments in accordance with a policy which 'is in the long run suicidal for Britain'. However, both in this case, and in that of overseas investment, he too readily assumes that everything else would remain the same were cuts to be made. A major political reorientation would be called for. In any event armaments were not purely negative: they were a vital component of the upsurge and are free from the disabilities under which productive investment suffers.

Even from the standpoint of British capitalism, Shonfield is one-sided. Capitalists seem to have done pretty well for themselves: they ought to be thankful anyway to have survived the world depression and the Second World War at all. And it must be said that if British capitalists had been able to get rid of the dead wood of obsolete equipment by destruction or in reparations, and had been presented with a floating labour reserve several millions strong, then they could have shown a rate of growth comparable with that of Western Germany. Conversely, with recession on the way, British capitalism may be in a better position to weather the storm than other countries simply because its own investment boom was not carried to such heights.

The carrying out of Shonfield's programme, as a whole, would require an impossible change of heart in one, or both, major parties and involve a revolution by consent in the strongholds of the system. He says he wants a New Economic Policy: indeed he invokes the Russian example. It is worth recalling, therefore, that Lenin understood NEP as a transitional stage leading on to the development of the material bases for socialist construction and that it had been preceded by the transfer of power. Shonfield is unable to understand either planning (which he identifies with Stalinist tyranny and Whitehall red tape) or socialism (which he assumes checks economic growth). His NEP is intended as an alternative; it is a salvage operation for British capitalism. What is needed is a NEP, consciously transitional in character, for the rapid expansion of Britain's industrial base with the support and participation of the working class on the road to socialism. Such a policy could not tolerate the holding back of the people's consumption in order that the capitalist would 'come out at the end with his capital wealth considerably increased'—which Shonfield admits would result from his measures. Indeed it would compromise the taking over of his wealth. The regeneration of British economy can only take place on the basis of social ownership.

FRANK GREEN

## Power and Profit

**The Falling Rate of Profit**, by Joseph M. Gillman (Dobson, 25s.)

**Britain and the Arabs**, by Glubb Pasha (Hodder and Stoughton, 30s.)

**The Great Powers**, by Max Beloff (George Allen and Unwin, 20s.)

Gillman has started an important discussion. What forces have prevented the rate of profit in U.S. economy from falling as much as might have been expected a century ago? Did Marx fully explore what he called the 'countervailing' forces? This study, which would gain from simpler language, suggests the vast growth of State spending as an important reason.

There are others which he has not explored, such as creeping inflation, the exploitation of 'internal colonies' in agriculture and the imperialist exploitation of colonial countries. The book's main drawback is that it does not raise at all the point that there is no crisis from which the bourgeoisie cannot extricate itself in the absence of a politically aware working-class revolutionary leadership.

Glubb Pasha's discursive account of the actual politics of Western Imperialism in the Arab world is an interesting eye-witness report of his lifetime's work to maintain the rate of profit. He calls it 'keeping order', but order is to be kept for the rival oil interests and the conflicting strategies of the Great Powers to work themselves out over the helpless Arab peoples. He gives much interesting historical information, seasoned with the clichés of a Victorian out of his time.

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Beloff's parade of scholarship puts forward with all the weight of *All Souls'* a succession of nonsensical propositions, as the 'principles' of twentieth-century political science for present-day British imperialism. For instance, he suggests that we can only understand a régime by studying primarily the theoretical principles which it professes. How then did the Christian West come to make and first use nuclear weapons? Consequently he can pronounce, in all seriousness, that the Soviet régime 'has never swerved from its original ideological commitment to the spread of world Communism'.

This muddle of ideas from the heart of the institutions for educating the élite points sharply to the fact that British imperialism really has no road forward, has no future.

J.A.E.

## Who Holds the Reins?

**Power at the Top**, by Clive Jenkins (McGibbon and Kee, 21s.)

This book, which is a critical survey of the nationalized industries, should be read by everyone, especially those who have been won over by the adverts on the hoardings which state that nationalization has failed. The sponsors of these adverts have no need to read the facts crammed into its 292 pages because they have been the people responsible for the seeming failure of nationalization.

This book shows exactly who holds the reins and Clive Jenkins should be given a big hand for bringing the facts into the light of day.

He shows why nationalization has not come up to expectations and where the Labour Party failed to press their advantage at the outset to make nationalization work for the benefit of the workers and the community as it should.

The failings of the Labour Party and trade union leaders are clearly shown when you read the compensation figures granted to the ex-owners and the make-up of the boards

formed to run these industries.

Jenkins condemns the Tory government for its policy towards the nationalized industries, points out that they only de-nationalized one completely (i.e., steel), and gives the reason.

Being a miner and especially interested in the NCB members, I found my own feelings confirmed that the NCB members or at least most of them have too many irons in the fire outside the industry. Take S. P. Chambers, part-time member of the NCB; his power outside coal is terrific. He sits on numerous boards of directors. Sir Alexander Fleck, who headed the independent inquiry into the NCB's organization is a key director of I.C.I. along with the same Mr Chambers. Remember the results of this inquiry and its recommendations?

Clive Jenkins reveals tie-ups and brings home to the reader the fact that the nationalized industries are run by the same people who run the rest of the big business interests in this country. He makes out a clear case for workers' control but leaves it to the reader to make up his own mind about it.

This book should make people sit up and take notice of how the Tories have completely taken over the nationalized industries by the back door.

J. SWAN

## Below Par

**Man in Employment**, the Fundamental Principles of Industrial Relations, by Alfred Badger (Arthur Barker, 25s.)

'Never,' says Sir Thomas Williamson, in a foreword to this book, 'have so much information, facts, opinion and comment been harnessed in one publication.' The factual material which Dr Badger has brought together is culled from a wide field of bibliographical and official sources and covers all formal aspects of management/worker relationships. The opinions and comments which are included in 'an attempt to provoke the reader to think about these facts and the principles that should govern them' are notable only for their consistent banality. The result is a book which the author hopes will be of value 'to employers, trade unionists and students in universities, schools and colleges, as well as to the general reader' and which reveals about the same degree of enlightenment as the Cohen Report.

An examination of the history and structure of employers' associations ('which have performed work of inestimable value and worth to Britain') and trade unions (which 'must be educated to their new responsibilities') precedes a description of the machinery of collective bargaining, voluntary and compulsory arbitration, methods of wage determination and wage-incentive schemes. The author is sceptical about the accuracy of the 'Cost of Living Index' but thinks it has 'proved its value in preventing strikes'.

On the subject of strikes and disputes, tables are introduced in order to show (no doubt for the benefit 'of those in schools and colleges') the magnitude of the problem in post-war years. No comparison is drawn between the incidence in Britain and that in other countries, nor does the author point out that in the years in question the average time lost through strikes has never amounted to more than one hour per year per employed worker. An attempt to elucidate the 'Root Causes of Strike Action' produces the interesting thesis that 'strikes occur where they can occur—that is where the working-class community is closely knit and the workers forceful; and not where the workers are dispersed and subdued,' which leads to the suggestion that 'the Churches might do a great deal in this regard by preaching the doctrine of one purpose, one ideal, one destiny, one kinship.'

With regard to Method Study, the main variants of which are described, the author offers some advice to management in respect of questions arising out of the distribution of the

savings thus brought about. 'It must,' he says, 'be explained that the problem is not so easy as it would at first appear.' Co-partnership, works' pension schemes, the Labour Party's proposed National Superannuation Scheme, accident prevention and absenteeism are all cursorily discussed. Though the author (surely unintentionally) describes profit-sharing as 'offering to the employee an opportunity for participation in the running of the business' he considers that the main disadvantage is that on the part of the employees 'there is no acute sense of gratitude as time passes'.

A chapter on 'Automation' is followed by advice on 'The Principles and Implementation of Redundancy'. 'The Maintenance of Full Employment' is no doubt intended to balance things up, but discussion on this, as on national wages policy, productivity and restrictive practices (considered only in relation to trade unions) is circumscribed by the pre-Keynesian economic outlook of the author who regards any prospect of higher real wages as constituting a threat to our position in overseas markets and an inevitable contribution to inflation. For this reason 'the State may wish at any time, in a period of crisis and emergency, to call for a restraint in wage claims in the national interest.' The author does less than justice to the intelligence of trade unionists when he suggests that the reason for the breakdown of the wage-freeze policy of 1948/9 was due to the resentment felt towards those workers on sliding-scale arrangements by workers to whom such arrangements did not apply. The question of dividend restraint is not discussed—far less the fact that even if this could be obtained its result would not be a reduction in profits but merely a shift in their distribution between bonus shares and paid-out dividends.

As a factual survey of the institutions and machinery of industrial relations this book falls short of the standard of Professor Richardson's classic work; as an analysis of the problems and trends it is superficial and partisan; as a contribution to the new management ideology it will certainly ensure the author's appointment as syndicate-leader at a future Duke of Edinburgh's Study Conference.

JOHN PEEL

## Social Class

**The Psychology of Social Class**, by Maurice Halbwachs (Heinemann, 16s.)

Maurice Halbwachs was without doubt a staunch defender of academic and scientific freedom, and so met his death in Nazi captivity during the second World War. Along with the dominant school in French sociology (the followers of Emile Durkheim) he thought that the intellectual could arrive at an objective, scientific view of society by being uninvolved, 'above the struggle.' One of the ingredients of this view finally crystallized as a separation between the individual and some 'supra-individual', social mentality, expressed in what were called 'collective representations.' These were sets of dominant attitudes or values standing outside the individual. As a consequence, the work of the Durkheim school is often dry, formal, abstract, with neatly trimmed symmetries between social organization and the dominant categories of thought.

This has often appealed to Marxists as something very close to Marx's own views of ideology and of the relation between ideas and social existence (e.g. V. Gordon Childe, and to some extent George Thomson). In point of fact nothing could be farther from the truth. For Marxism the dominant factor in the relationship between knowledge and 'social being' is the activity of real men, in their contradictory relationships, on the basis of the material conditions in which they find themselves. Halbwachs comes nearer to this than any other member of the French school in his detailed studies of the objective needs of the working class

and in the volume under review. But he shares the proclivity of so many of his colleagues: they scarcely mention Marx, and yet most of their own most penetrating 'insights' are little more than a re-hash of Marx's own theories. Somehow, however, these insights are 'disembodied', polished up and presented as self-contained pieces of cleverness, never as part of the living whole of social conflict. Thus, instead of a study of the consciousness of the working class as expressed in struggle and in development, testing out theories and parties, developing its own forms of power, we have a formal 'hierarchy of needs' according to which one may accurately predict the things workers will put first when presented with alternatives. Certainly it is important to know precisely the meaning of insecurity and financial position for the working class, but these have scientific meaning only when they take on practical significance for the creation of a revolutionary consciousness, a prerequisite of which is an accurate understanding of the working class's own real situation. Thus Halbwachs, like all 'progressive' non-Marxist sociologists, can give us, very often, accurate and penetrating comments on class attitudes (though, as has been indicated, many of these are far from original) and yet it is in considering the working class as a **force** in history, rather than as a sociologist's specimen, that he falls short of scientific analysis. This is precisely the contribution of Marx to sociology, and it is the transition from abstract formalism to the unity of theory and practice.

C. SLAUGHTER

## Soviet Finance

**The Development of the Soviet Budgetary System**, by R. W. Davies (Cambridge University Press, 1958. 45s.)

The ramifications of the Russian budgetary system are practically co-extensive with that of the entire economy. There is no question of budgetary policy guiding the economy, as in modern capitalism, for it is the handmaiden of the plan, its financial reflection. With rapid industrialization the main objective, the budget thus became an instrument for capital formation, holding back, or pressing down, consumption and making resources available for this purpose by the 'appropriate' financial measures. The conditions under which this system grew up, and its fully-fledged operation, are studied in impressive detail by R. W. Davies in this valuable addition to the all-too-few studies of the Russian economy made in this country.

Since this is the best available book in English on the subject, it may seem churlish to lay stress on its deficiencies. But the manner and method of this scholarly apology for Stalin's economic policies invites a forthright retort. This, of course, is no starry-eyed, propaganda version obviously tailored to a standard orthodoxy: it is a factual, documented study on a high academic level. All the more reason, therefore, for dissecting carefully both what it contains and what it leaves out. Necessarily, only the elements of such a task can be attempted here.

Let us begin with the documentation, which is the necessary ground-work for any work of this kind. It is derived, inevitably, mainly from the reports, articles and speeches in which the top bureaucrats give an account of their stewardship, and the specialist works which do much the same thing with the usual apparatus of learning. Of course a due measure of criticism of errors, bureaucratism and the like will be found therein. Davies too frequently takes his sources at their face value without regard to the context of the entire situation. Who would know that behind this economic policy stood an all-pervading apparatus of repression? Admittedly it is objectively stated, in a footnote, that all but one of the People's Commissars for Finance in the period 1918-1937 perished in the purges, including G. F. Grinko, who held the post during

the critical plan years 1930-37. Surely some appraisal should be made of the consequences of having 'wreckers and spies' in the top position in the financial apparatus. As it is, while the mistakes, and the victims, are not concealed altogether, cracks are papered over and dissentient voices are hushed just as thoroughly in these scholarly pages as they were snuffed out in the condemned cells of the Lubianka.

If we turn to the decision to industrialize, similar criticisms can be made. It is presented as having been correct when taken by Stalin but foolhardy when suggested by his opponents. No evidence is offered for the assumption upon which such a view necessarily rests. While mentioning that industrialization had been advocated by the Left Opposition in 1923, 1925 and 1927, their case is brushed aside on the grounds that 'any appreciably greater rate of investment would have antagonized the peasantry'. Of course a large part of the peasantry was antagonized (if that is the right word) by the dangerous gamble of enforced collectivization as actually carried out. On the following page we learn, too, that Stalin admitted, though not in a public statement, that the adverse price ratio for agricultural commodities was 'super-profit' and 'tribute' from the peasantry. Yet for putting forward the theory of 'primitive socialist accumulation'—partly at the expense of the peasantry—as a possible road to industrialization, Preobrazhensky, one of the most brilliant members of the Opposition, was hounded and eventually liquidated. And why is no mention made of Preobrazhensky, one of the fathers of the 'turnover tax', though facts are twice quoted from his works?

The truth is Davies accepts as necessary everything that was done and pays little or no attention to the feasibility of alternative policies at this time. Partly this is based on the convenient theory that the measures actually taken were part of 'a specific system, emerging from Russian historical conditions and adapted to the task of turning an undeveloped peasant country into an advanced industrial nation' (and the former characterization hardly accords fully with the set up in pre-Revolutionary Russia, even on his own showing). Broadly this is true, indeed it is a truism—but it becomes specious, as well as being spurious Marxism, if it is taken to imply that only the methods which were used could have done the job. But such is a necessary part of Davies's argument, which evades the international political issues and gives the Stalin leadership an historically valid passport despite a few misdemeanours. Untoward events are accounted for in the balance sheet as 'the price that had to be paid for industrial development' and it is complacently observed, for example, that 'the drastic collectivization drive . . . actually resulted in a simplification of the budgetary system', i.e. compulsory deliveries at low fixed prices took the place of taxes.

Forced collectivization is the Achilles' heel of this type of thinking, and it is not surprising that its exponents find it embarrassing. As well they might, for a cursory study of texts and facts will show that Stalin's methods were far removed from the prescriptions of Engels and Lenin, though hypocritically paying lip-service to them. It becomes necessary to assume—without proof—as Davies does, in a footnote (this book contains some interesting footnotes) that 'large-scale collectivization was impracticable in the 1925-29 period'. As with industrial planning, it became 'practicable' when Stalin decided that the moment was ripe. And to throw into greater relief the wisdom of the great teacher, Davies adds knowingly, 'such a course was not openly advocated by any of the main political groupings'. We will leave aside the possibility that his researches have brought evidence that some of them advocated it in secret, or that it was the cherished creed of some tiny sect; that will be a valuable sideline for further study.

What he really omits is that a series of practical propositions, including an increased tempo of collectivization in the Engels style, were put forward in the Platform of 1927, and were advocated for a number of years before that. Although

a different kind of collectivization might have added complications to the budgetary system, that would have been a small price to pay compared with the impairment of agricultural production, the intense social crisis and chronic hardships which actually ensued. 'Might-have-beens' have no historical value: but they do serve as a necessary corrective to the interpretation which accepts and excuses everything which happened and assumes, by underrating the subjective factor, that it could not have happened otherwise. In fairness to Davies, it should be added that some of his own judgements would have qualified as 'Trotskyist calumny' a few years ago, and perhaps still do in some circles. For example, though suggesting the need for 'further study', he accepts that capital accumulation was to a large extent carried through at the expense of the peasants. He argues that in the post-war plans 'the actual powers of the planners to intervene in agricultural matters was greater than their knowledge warranted' (and one is curious to know whether Khrushchev is also to be reckoned among the ignorant). And he accepts the existence of 'contact men' and other personalities existing on the fringes of society (though no doubt handsomely rewarded) as an outcome of the imperfections in the planning system (and it is to be noted that he carried this matter into the holy pages of a recent number of 'Marxism To-day').

How well did the budget fulfil its main task of securing the means for accumulation? With the introduction of the 'turn-over tax' in its finished form in 1930, considerable reliance was placed upon it to obtain the required resources. Goods, especially the products of the peasantry, procured by the State at low fixed prices, were sold at price of production, or procurement, plus tax. The steep indirect tax, while helping to equate supply and demand (rationing through the purse) scooped up an important part of the money incomes paid out to the industrial workers. In other words, the compulsory deliveries of the peasants fed the workers who built up industry, partly through the surplus product acquired directly (excess of surplus over necessary labour) or indirectly by scooping back in tax what had been paid out in wages. In addition, and this is also dealt with very complacently, pressure was exerted on the workers so that they paid back part of their wages (2-3 weeks, Davies says; some put it higher) in the form of forced loans. The rest of accumulation came from increases in productivity and production, but since in the '30s these increased more slowly than the labour force, while money incomes paid out rose, there was inflation. Fortunately, while under capitalism socialists have been known to denounce the pernicious effects of inflation, in the Five-Year Plans it did not matter very much, being 'nothing more than a painful adjustment to the new level of accumulation and direction of investment'. At whose expense were such adjustments made? Certainly not at the bureaucracy's, since added inducements were being given to them in order to speed up the tempo of production and realise planned output.

All this process not only tends to be wrapped up by Davies in the economist's private language but put in such a way as to obscure the realities of it. Yet budgetary systems do not exist in a vacuum: and the context is visible to some extent, although he never draws the necessary conclusions. For example, the system contained in fact a series of elaborate artifices and a high degree of pressure and compulsion. These characteristics did not arise exclusively from conditions of rapid accumulation, goods shortage and the rawness of much of the labour force. They arose in large part from lack of confidence between the masses and the leadership and the explosive social antagonisms which were inherent in the situation. Hence the elaborate pretence, and the operation of the 'money illusion': with (depreciating) currency being pushed out on one side and an exceptionally high proportion being pulled back in taxation on the other.

If this is admitted it is difficult to accept the view that 'socialism' came into existence in the mid-1930s, and con-

sequently to defend the theory of 'socialism in one country'. Perhaps knowing this Davies does not openly try. Though speaking glibly of 'socialism in one country' in one place he later on identifies 'socialism' merely with an unspecified degree of public ownership. In fact, therefore, he evades the consideration of the Soviet budgetary system in terms of its consistency with socialism. Instead he discusses it in terms of the requirements of a planned, as distinct from a market-controlled, economy—which is **not** the same thing. His view that it 'is inapplicable as a general model for all direct planning' once again reflects, perhaps, some uneasiness. While his use of the term 'a planning system of the Soviet type' ('soviet' here having departed from its original sense) to describe the Russian economy, reveals some unwillingness to define it as 'socialist' at all. The sophisticated apologetics which have been displayed are therefore left hanging in an unsatisfactory manner: which perhaps augurs well for Davies's future political development.

TOM KEMP

## Scholarly Centrist?

**Communism and Social Democracy, 1914-1931.** Volume iv of **A History of Socialist Thought**, by G. D. H. Cole (Macmillan. 2 vols. 70s.)

Though he did not live to complete it, the 'History of Socialist Thought' will be a worthy memorial to the life of G. D. H. Cole, socialist, historian and publicist. The whole work is permeated by his own highly individual approach to socialism, which it is hard to classify. G. D. H. Cole was not a Marxist, but he was a militant; he was not identified with any of the main schools of socialist thought, but he was committed, in the fullest sense, to the Labour movement and to the struggle for the ending of exploitation and class society.

While Marxists will dissent from many of Cole's judgments and, here and there, from some of his factual statements, they will respect his conspicuous honesty and unswerving integrity. The October Revolution, with all its attendant evils and miseries, was, in Cole's view, 'an immense liberating force. If it repressed free speech and political freedom, it was at the same time setting more and more of the Russians free from the brutalizing social and economic repression of the old régime and creating not only a more skilled and mechanized working class but also one with immensely greater cultural and intellectual opportunities.' His interpretation of the course of the Soviet revolution will not, in all respects, commend itself to readers of *Labour Review*. He is clear, however, that while 'for the faults of leadership Stalin must take a big share of the responsibility . . . it is absurd to attribute them to him exclusively, or to a small group of amoral 'realists' of whom he was the chief. The root of the trouble was not the so-called "cult of personality", which was only a hateful excrescence.' It was rather, according to Cole, 'the cult of centralism and its accompaniment—a vast bureaucratic machine which was open to manipulation'.

Cole did not see the origins of this bureaucracy in the under-developed technology or the social structure of the Soviet Union during the 1920s. He saw them rather in the Leninist conception of the party and in the theories of 'democratic centralism' to which this gave rise. In practice, 'democratic centralism' meant 'the authoritative rule of the central committee', and Stalin 'only aggravated and consolidated a practice that had already gone a long way in Lenin's lifetime'. Things would have developed on much the same lines, Cole seems to be arguing, if Trotsky had won the fight for control inside the party. Indeed, if 'Trotsky's warnings about the increasing bureaucratization of the Communist Party under Stalin's influence were not taken very seriously by most outside observers' this was, partly at least, 'because Trotsky was himself

associated with a policy of sharp dealing with the peasants, of intensified industrialization, and even of using the Red Army as a conscript labour force'.

If Cole condemned some of the communist theories and practices he was no less critical of the abysmal record of social democracy in the period under review. The outstanding disaster and, in a negative sense, the historical turning-point, was the betrayal of the German revolution by the social democrats in 1918. Cole explains clearly why the necessary measures were not taken to introduce socialism into Germany at a time when power was in the hands of the Labour movement. 'These things were not done', he insists, 'not only because the social-democratic leaders were afraid to do them, but also because they did not want to. They feared the collapse of the existing society much more than they hoped for a really new social order; and because of these fears they betrayed the revolution and helped to bring the republic to its dismal collapse.'

The entire history of socialism between the end of the first world war and the economic collapse of 1931 is seen as a tragedy of errors in which the movement became 'disastrously divided into socialists who were no longer even aiming at socialism and socialists who refused to admit that there could be varying roads towards socialism in countries differently placed, and would recognize only a single road—the sheer imitation of that which the Russians had been forced to tread.' In the author's view the movement would have been well advised to follow the lead of the Centrist 'Vienna Union' of Socialist parties—popularly dubbed the 'Two-and-a-Half International'—which maintained an uneasy existence for about two and a half years before rejoining the Second International in 1923.

In contrast to Cole, Marxists will try to look beneath the surface of ideologies and errors for an explanation of labour history in terms of the social forces to which Cole paid scant attention. He described his own attitude as 'akin rather to that of William Morris, or of P. J. Proudhon, or even Kropotkin, than to either communism or orthodox social democracy'. In the last years of his life he felt increasingly sad at the bureaucratization of socialist and communist parties which, he feared, held out little hope that the economic and political freedoms for which he stood would be achieved in the foreseeable future.

Cole's last book will be used, as he would have wished, as an armoury of facts and ideas for socialists. Many or most of his readers will disagree with particular judgments; some will reject his basic approach; but all will find value and stimulation in the work of a great and—in the best sense—a disinterested scholar.

HENRY COLLINS

## Turgenev

**Literary Reminiscences**, by I. S. Turgenev, trans. David Magarshack (Faber and Faber 25s.)

**A Nest of Gentlefolk, and other stories**, by I. S. Turgenev, trans. Jessie Coulson (Oxford University Press, The World's Classics, 8s. 6d.)

**Portraits of Russian Personalities Between Reform and Revolution**, by Richard Hare (Oxford University Press, 42s.)

Turgenev was severely criticized in his day by Russian revolutionaries because his novels and stories drew no explicit conclusions regarding the cause of the social evils they depicted. Yet Lenin liked his work. Krupskaya tells us that her husband had read Turgenev several times, and we find him using characters and incidents from this writer in his own work—as for instance **In Memory of Count Heiden** (1907) where he refers to the 'civilized' nobleman in **A Sportsman's Sketchbook**

who orders his servant to be flogged, but without using the nasty word as his father would have done.

The impact of Turgenev's writings went, indeed, much further than his political views, as so often happens with a really great writer; and the Tsarist censorship understood better than some narrow-minded critics the dangerous character of this aristocratic liberal's little pictures of Russian country life.

Edmund Wilson, in his introductory essay to Turgenev's *Literary Reminiscences*, reminds us that he was 'The first Western writer of fiction to perfect the modern art of implying social criticism through a narrative that is presented objectively'.

Turgenev was one of the writers to whom Engels referred in his letters, against what is now called 'socialist realism', to Minna Kautsky—'the tendency' should emerge from the situation and the action themselves, without being explicitly formulated, and the writer is not obliged to present the reader with the ready-made future historical solution of the social conflicts he describes,—and to Margaret Harkness—'the more the author's opinions remain concealed the better it is for the work of art'.

Among many other matters of interest the *Reminiscences* give us Turgenev's own views on the writer's position:

'Every writer who does not lack talent—that of course is the indispensable condition—every writer I say, tries his best to give a vivid and true reproduction of the impression he has obtained from his own life and from the life of others, and every reader has the right to judge how far he has succeeded in this, and where he has gone wrong; but who has the right to tell him which impressions are of any use and which aren't? . . .

Believe me, no man of real talent ever serves aims other than his own, and he finds satisfaction in himself alone; the life that surrounds him provides him with the contents of his works; he is its concentrated reflection; but he is as incapable of writing a panegyric as a lampoon . . .'

One may compare with this Trotsky's observations in *Literature and Revolution* and *Art and Politics in Our Epoch* ('Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but, by its very essence, cannot tolerate them').

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In Richard Hare's collection of brief biographies of Russian public figures of the later nineteenth century the accounts of Turgenev and Tolstoy are perhaps the best. Others depicted include Bakunin, Dostoyevsky, the Narodnik Mikhailovsky, with whom Lenin crossed swords, the Christian mystic Solovyov who influenced Pasternak, Kropotkin, Stolypin and Witte.

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Mrs Coulson, accomplished wordwoman, has given us a new version of *A Nest of Gentlefolk*—also known here as *A Nobleman's Nest* and *Liza*. The other stories are *A Quiet Backwater*, *First Love* and *A Lear of the Steppes*.

J.B.

## Polish Trio

*The Eighth Day of the Week*, by Marek Hlasko (George Allen and Unwin, 10s. 6d.)

*Portrait of Poland*, by Bernard Newman (Robert Hale, 18s.)

*Warsaw in Chains*, by Stefan Korbonski (George Allen and Unwin, 30s.)

The central figure in the first book is Agnieszka, a philosophy student, who seeks to escape from the sordid environment of a slum tenement, in which are crowded, in mutual frustration, a seedy middle-aged father, an ailing and nagging mother and

a perpetually drunk brother. Outside in the street it is no better, for the atmosphere is made unbearable by the foul talk of the drunks.

Agnieszka and the young man she loves seek in vain the privacy of four walls; if only one could live in a room with three walls. Her brother is deeply cynical as a result of discovering the false basis of his bureaucratic efficiency as a party secretary prior to the revelations of the 20th congress. While herself strongly inclined to cynicism, Agnieszka fights for her own dignity by struggling with her brother to return to normal life. It will take quite a long time to put things right and she needs to go on living.

Thus the two contrasting themes are the despair that seeks escape in a mythical eighth day of the week, turning to cynicism; and the enduring dignity of the individual. The style is impressive, with a telling economy in dialogue, a lightness of touch in sketching environment and a skilful interweaving of the threads of action.

This is only a part of the truth. There is a more positive side to socialist development, which is a fit subject for art as well as for political propaganda. Yet the problem raised here is important, that of the alienation of the individual. We know of this under capitalism; here are individuals who tried to overcome alienation by sharing in socialist construction but were betrayed by a false orientation. If this is the contemporary vision of this writer then he must be true to his art.

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'Portrait of Poland' is a journalistic pot-pourri. It begins with some chatty gossip about post-Gomulka Poland, during the most recent of a number of visits over the years, which serves to bring out the trend to democratization. There follows an historical excursus to show how Poland lost its independence yet preserved the spirit of liberty for over a century. Pilsudski is largely justified as the strong man required to impose order on a devastated and anarchistic newly-born republic. His deal with the magnates is forgotten, his brutal colonels' régime lightly passed over, and his war of aggression in the east excused as a preventive measure. It is true, as Lenin later recognized, that the Red Army violated the national independence of Poland; but it was Pilsudski who refused to negotiate and who launched an imperialistic war.

The second half of the book contains an account of the 'October Revolution' and travel sketches, made up of odd bits of topography, local history and reportage on contemporary life. The book is readable and can serve as an introduction to Poland for someone who is not interested in serious analysis, and who doesn't mind the viewpoint of the émigré London government, which is largely presented here.

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The author of *Warsaw in Chains* was a leading member of the war-time underground government directed from London. This is his diary for 1945-47, when he was a leader of the Peasant Party and a deputy. Korbonski is an extreme nationalist, strongly anti-Soviet and anti-communist. Some of his entries leave a nasty taste; his snobbish references to the lack of the social graces of the new leaders; his pleasure in praise of himself; his comparative ease of domestic life; his reference to Pilsudski's great love of Poland, blaming the evils of the Sanacja on his entourage.

The important question is that of the methods used by the government to retain power in 1945-47. If the testimony is true, then the government used a certain degree of terror by the security police and other oppressive methods to falsify the elections. This is one of those questions from the period of Stalinism which must eventually be fully investigated if the tactics of the socialist revolution are to be properly understood.

A strong government of the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, was needed to carry through a programme of social and moral reconstruction. This diary provides little evidence of struggle for such a programme by the Peasant Party in 1945-47.

JOHN PURTON

## Poetic Sources

**The Everlasting Gospel**, a study in the sources of William Blake, by A. L. Morton (Lawrence & Wishart, 7s. 6d.)

How seldom does one wish a book was longer! This, however, most decidedly whets one's appetite for more, a lot more whether by Mr Morton himself or another. This illuminating view of Blake's background and derivations ought to be used for further studies of the works themselves, the general purport of which now becomes several shades clearer.

In outline, Mr Morton's thesis is that Blake's 'Jerusalem' and 'Everlasting Gospel', so far from being symbols of his own, date from the time of the English Revolution more than a century earlier, and that Blake was continuing and expressing a still-living revolutionary tradition, that was both English and European. As he says, in Blake's boyhood, London must have contained many old men who had seen and spoken to the famous sectaries of the seventeenth century.

'God is essentially in every creature', said the Ranters. 'Everything that lives is holy', said Blake. 'Sin and holiness are all one to God,' said the Ranters. 'Good and evil are no more,' said Blake. 'It is God in man that knows himself, believes in himself, prays to himself,' said the Ranters. 'Thine own humanity learn to adore,' said Blake.

It is very clear that much of what has been called Blake's personal and private mysticism was nothing of the sort, but a great poet's expression of longstanding popular belief and imagery. Short though it is, this invaluable work makes its point very forcibly and convincingly: it is essential reading for anyone with a sense of history and of the complex and tenuous growth of man's consciousness.

F.T.

## Socialist Lawyer

**Attorney for the Damned**, by Arthur Weinberg (MacDonald, 30s.)

Mr Arthur Weinberg has collected in book form a series of speeches by Clarence Darrow, the famous American lawyer. To these speeches he has added historical footnotes and the net result is one of the most interesting and thrilling biographies that any author ever, I am sure, intended to write.

Although essentially this book is a verbatim repetition of the final speeches of Clarence Darrow in famous legal conflicts (all against authority and for the underdog) the result is a revelation of Darrow the man.

That Clarence Darrow was one of the greatest advocates in American legal history almost goes without saying, but Mr Weinberg has succeeded in proving that Darrow was also one of the greatest of Americans—and a fine Socialist to boot. I am sure no words of mine can illustrate this better than the following quotations:

'If every man, woman and child in the world had a chance to make a decent fair honest living, there would be no jails, no lawyers and no courts'.

They had just as many criminals . . . . It was not because the world had grown bad; it was because the earth had been taken away from the people'.

'Abolish the right of private ownership of land, abolish monopoly, make the people of the world partners in production'.

' . . . . this hue and cry of today . . . . is moved and instigated by a gang of profiteers who would strangle freedom that they may get rich'.

'Twenty states would pass a statute like this . . . . so that

great interests may silence every human voice while they are robbing the American people'.

' . . . . there are things that are higher than patriotism—love of justice, the devotion to truth, the love of freedom . . . . and they will live until the last heartbeat dies in man'.

'Let me tell you about this red flag . . . . why every tyrant on earth has hated it . . . . why every man with stolen money in his pocket has hated it.'

' . . . . you would have sent Christ to jail just the same as you would these defendants . . . . just the same as there have always been prosecutors to send to jail every man who had a dream beyond the narrow vision of his fellow man'.

'I do know that capitalism does not work.'

' . . . . those who labour should have the whole product of their toil . . . . I wish the time would come when the men who work in the industries would own the industries'.

'It is but an episode in the great battle for human liberty . . . . which will not end so long as the children of one father shall be compelled to toil to support the children of another in luxury and ease'.

' . . . . if it was in my power to-morrow to provoke another strike in this City that would succeed I would do it . . . . '

'He has been called a labour agitator and he is. I will be called one, and I am. Gentlemen, I hope I will continue to be one so long as breath is spared in me to speak . . . . '

'he is mortal, he will die, but I want to say that a million men will grab up the banner of labour . . . . and will carry it to victory in the end'.

'The radical of to-day is the Conservative of to-morrow, and other martyrs take up the work . . . . and . . . . soaked by their blood . . . . the world moves on'.

These are not quotations from 'Das Kapital'—they are the words of Clarence Darrow—not made in the snug safety of the American equivalent of the monthly meeting of the Trades Council & Labour Party, but to judges and juries, to bitter and influential opponents, in defence of humanity and in defiance of its persecutors.

Indeed, Darrow was justified when he said of himself—I speak for the poor, for the weak, for the weary, for that long line of men who in darkness and despair have borne the labours of the human race'.

In spite of this book being in effect a series of speeches, it still will give to the reader the enjoyment of a first class 'thriller' and above all an appreciation of Darrow the great.

E. M. Mannheim, LLB

## Central America

**Communism in Guatemala: 1944-1954**, by Ronald M. Schneider. The Foreign Policy Research Institute, University of Pennsylvania Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York.)

The American Universities, reflecting the torment of United States capitalism at the world activities of communist parties, have created departments to investigate this subject. This book about Guatemala is one of their fruits. With exhaustive material, Mr Schneider shows how the Guatemala communist party, which did not exist prior to the revolution that overthrew the dictator Ubico in 1944, strengthened itself through the control of the trade unions and the principal peasants' organizations, and by means of penetration into the government.

For thirteen years Ubico's military dictatorship had defended the interests of the landowners, the church and especially of the all-powerful North American imperialist United Fruit Company. The fundamental task of the revolution

was to fulfil agrarian reform, but the first of the two presidents who governed during the revolutionary period did nothing in this direction. Arevalo confessed his 'socialism' in these terms:

'We are socialists because we live in the twentieth century. But we are not materialist socialists. We do not believe that man is primarily stomach. We believe that man is above all a will for dignity . . . . Our socialism does not, therefore, aim at an ingenuous distribution of material goods, or the stupid economic equalization of men who are economically different. Our socialism aims at liberating men psychologically, granting to all the psychological and spiritual integrity denied by conservatism and liberalism'.

Neither dare the author label the second president, Jacobo Arbenz, as a communist; however, he reprimands him for his intimate friendship with the leaders of Guatemalan communism. Under his government a programme for agrarian reform was initiated, which was considered 'bourgeois-campesino' by the communists. The land expropriations struck at the interests of the United Fruit Company and, similar to what has now happened in Cuba, Eisenhower's government took it upon themselves to avenge the blow.

The book is rich in detail, but its method, inclined to separate facts and groups, obscures the necessary interrelatedness of events. And although this is a work dedicated to 'facts', it is easy to deduce from it that the author is on the side of imperialism.

After Arbenz's overthrow by the mercenaries of reaction in 1954, the communists formulated their self-criticism. According to them, they had put too much trust in the president; further, in their party there was a predominance of middle-class elements. They could have added to these criticisms that the infiltration into the bureaucracy, either of the government or of the trade unions, does not secure the success of a revolution, and that, in order to mobilize the anti-imperialist feeling of the Latin American masses, it is not enough to teach them nationalism and simultaneously proclaim the excellence of the political régimes that exist in Moscow and Peking.

A.R.

## Arab Revolt

T. E. Lawrence, by Jean Bernard Villars. trans. (Sidgwick and Jackson, 30s.)

This further contribution to the literature of Lawrence and the Arab Revolt is well worth reading, as a careful study of two big questions which still attract able young people even forty years after the events. First TEL tried to re-discover forgotten methods of warfare, to cut through the formal doctrines of the militarists, to demonstrate how to manoeuvre, to harness the minds of men to a cause, to demoralize the enemy, and, especially, to minimize senseless slaughter. By 1917 imperialism needed these services very badly, after the collapse of the Tsarist armies and the French mutinies. TEL and his friend Liddell Hart tried to do for the Imperial General Staff what the Fabians try to do for the bourgeois state as a whole, to purge it of inefficiency, to rationalize it.

But what do Fabians actually succeed in doing? Thanks to what they call bad luck and what Marxists recognize as the underlying social realities, the streamlining process does not abolish but highlights and accentuates the basic contradictions. Hence the answer to the second big question about TEL; why did he break down after the war? Was it because he was a psychopath?

Villars makes it quite clear that TEL was like many of the 'hero-adventurers', in both the imperialist and the Socialist camps, who dramatize themselves as 'independent' of social

forces. They involve themselves in historic processes which they cannot equip themselves to understand. In large degree, TEL's Oxonian intellectual arrogance prevented him from ever learning to identify himself with the masses.

Villars proves TEL to have understood that no stable Arab state could come out of the Revolt unless it was the work of the Arabs themselves. While, on the other hand, he was desperately searching, with bags of gold in hand, to create a stable Arab ruling class from the desert tribes, he knew nothing of the mutually inconsistent agreements which his masters were making with the Arabs and each other, without pausing to inform him! M. Villars exposes the aims of French and British imperialist strategy so frankly that we could suspect him of cynicism . . . if he were not French: 'The war made allies of three of the competitors, England, Russia and France. Could these three nations forget from one day to the next, however, that they had for centuries kept their fingers on the trigger in the Near East? Each of the European Powers was only checked in the brutal conquest of Ottoman territory by the opposition of the other interested parties.'

Such disparity between the lofty mission which he thought he was carrying out and the sordid reality of imperialist aims has been enough to wreck even well-integrated personalities. M. Villars' interesting analysis of TEL's personality, built as he admits on somewhat slight foundations, points to profound inner conflicts, which, at this distance of time and in the absence of the evidence which a psychiatrist would need, cannot hope to be accurately explained.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

## An Irish Jaunt

The Trouble with the Irish, by Leonard Wibberley  
(Frederic Muller, 16s.)

The trouble really is that as regards treatment by Anglo-Normans, English and British, as the very first colony in the modern world, as the proto-oppresser of bourgeois civilization, as the very blueprint for fascist-type colonialism everywhere, Ireland has a completely unanswerable case which takes roughly half-a-million words to set down in outline.

Mr Wibberley—originally Anglo-Irish, but writing American Standard English—has in about 80,000 words tossed off a series of entertaining if shallow pieces which demonstrate that his heart is of gold and in the right place too, even though his brain reels quite as often as not and the flood-waters more than once turn him upside down. Oddly, his chronology grows chancier and more speculative the nearer he approaches to the present day, and the Troubles of the 1916-23 period become so snarled that at one point the Anglo-Irish War of 1918-20 appears as the result of the 1921 Treaty, the Free State having suffered as it were a retrospective premature birth.

Also, his devout refusal to let Britain bear the least jot of blame for the Famine of 1845-47, though it would have deeply gratified our dear Queen (Victoria is said to have donated £5 to famine relief, by the way), cannot be reconciled with any known facts. 'God sent the blight but the English made the famine,' say the Irish, and Mr Wibberley, since his book has a serious intent, ought to know it, and know why.

It is nonsense—official English nonsense, too—to say that the Irish parliament suppressed by the Act of Union was 'a government for hire and better ended.' It needed reform, certainly: which was precisely what the United Irishmen demanded and would have achieved, had not Pitt and Castlereagh (who, bless the Americans, was NOT an Earl) found it far more expedient to slaughter them and buy forty Commons votes and a score or so of Lords for an odd million or so.

S.F.H.

reputation as a 'Left', was able to assist the union leaders to break a strike. The best commentary on Etheridge's intervention was provided by the *Daily Worker*, which two days later reported to its readers that: 'Shop stewards told the men who returned to work that the management had failed to honour an undertaking to discuss their claim for 6d. an hour increase.'<sup>32</sup> The Stalinist policies at South Bank were not simply mistakes or errors confined to the Shell Mex strike alone but were the harbingers of a whole series of industrial betrayals all committed in the name of building 'unity'.

### THE STRIKE ENDS

By mid-November, it was obvious that McAlpines had been able to get enough labour on the job. The stewards had been stabbed in the back by a combination of employers, union officials and Stalinists, and they had been denied assistance from the Labour politicians ranging from the Right-wing to the so-called 'Left'. The odds had proved too great to secure their reinstatement. A decision was taken to end the picketing. The committee decided to continue the fight inside the unions. Although that fight has been carried on all through 1959, there still exists at South Bank today a black list which bars not only the former stewards but also other workers with records of consistent trade union activity.

The end of the mass picket marked the opening of the season for the smart alics and political wise men. These individuals had been absent from the picket lines, although in coffee bars at safe distances from Waterloo they had displayed moderate enthusiasm when victory seemed possible. Having done nothing themselves to help the South Bank men to win, they began to seek scapegoats for the set-back suffered by the strikers.

Their most frequent accusation was that the men failed to utilize the official machinery and by their actions provoked the officials. This is completely disproved by facts. The men always campaigned inside their respective unions for support. In the *South Bank Special* and in their leaflets they urged trade unionists to move resolutions in their branches demanding that the strike be made official. The building trades group of the TGWU demanded the reinstatement of the men. The steel benders and fixers' branches in London all officially declared the site 'black'. Nevertheless the TGWU refused to move. Scabs were permitted by TGWU officials to work on the site while holding union membership cards, alongside non-union labour. A sustained campaign was run by the strikers throughout the branches of the AUBTW. This resulted in decisions of support from the London divisional council and the south-east London district committee. Representatives from the committee toured innumerable ASW and ETU branches obtaining support for their fight and invariably convincing the branches to demand official recognition of the strike by the union's executive councils.

The Liverpool solidarity committee, a particular target for criticism, not only ensured that Merseyside jobs and branches were canvassed for support and money, but lobbied the Merseyside National Federation of Building Trade Operatives, which then officially went on record in support of the men.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Worker*, September 5, 1959.

Still the union leaders did not act. Presumably the men should then have called off the fight for their jobs? No one would have been provoked, and McAlpines could have carried out the sackings with the maximum of harmony and the minimum of friction.

### MARXIST LEADERSHIP AND THE STRIKE

The active support given to the South Bank struggle by *The Newsletter* is another bogey raised by the sideline critics.<sup>33</sup> They ignore—or never understood—the fact that for Marxists the task is not simply to write commentaries on, and make abstract analyses of the class struggle, but to actively engage in it. Only by actively intervening in the fight between worker and employer is it possible for revolutionaries to help workers to grasp the relationship between the everyday economic struggles and the fight for working-class power. It is not only the workers who gain when Marxists take part in their struggles. The Marxists' own experience and understanding can develop in no other way.

The Marxist movement fights consistently to win the leadership of the working class. It is serious about the class struggle and about the need to prepare the working class for power. It aims to construct the real alternative leadership to Right-wing reformism and Stalinism.

It was Mr Kean in his radio interview who paid unwitting tribute to the part played by the Marxists at South Bank. When asked whether the dispute was a new experience for the industry, he replied: 'Yes, I quite agree, it's been rather unusual in its intensity, in its duration, and I think especially in the high degree of organization associated with it.'

When pressed by his interviewer to say who he thought were the organizers, he said: 'Well, honour where honour is due, it was organized by somebody. The pickets were far more numerous than usual, our information is that many of them had never worked on the job at all, they were supported by a paraphernalia of propaganda, such as loudspeakers, publications of papers and journals. All I can say is, Mr Shanks, that it was certainly not organized by the established trade unions.'

### UNION LEADERS CHOSE DEFEAT

The interviewer was not satisfied. 'Yes, but then you still haven't answered my question as to who you think in fact was organizing it,' he said. 'Who brought up those pickets, who produced those papers? Somebody must have done.'

'Some of the national newspapers have attributed this organization to a group of people who I think have been termed "Trotsky-ites" '<sup>34</sup> answered Kean.

The recognition given to *The Newsletter* by this employer's representative and the statement of the strikers' representative Hugh Cassidy when he spoke at

<sup>33</sup> Typical of such criticisms was one that appeared in *Socialist Review*, Volume 8, No. 21, mid-November 1958 by an author using the pseudonym, Robert Emmett. Emmett wrote: 'In a series of strikes in London we have witnessed this group [*The Newsletter*] attempt to gatecrash into the strike leadership with a degree of crudity and irresponsibility that is appalling.'

<sup>34</sup> Transcript from a Telediffusion Recording of B.B.C. programme 'At Home and Abroad' October 28, 1958. See also Appendix to this article.

the National Industrial Rank-and-File Conference<sup>35</sup> both show that not only did the Marxists offer a programme and policy at South Bank but were also able to make a practical and telling intervention.

Shell Mex was more than an isolated building strike. It showed that in a period when the employers are more and more going on to the offensive, strikes need the support and backing of other sections of workers if they are to succeed. Such support will only be forthcoming if there is in existence a strong rank-and-file movement. McAlpine could have been defeated, if only work had been stopped on his other sites. But the union leaders had no intention of fighting McAlpines at South Bank, let alone extending it to their other sites. Extension of the dispute could only have taken place through a strong rank-and-file movement. In the recent print strike, as in the strike against the sacking of Ken Knight, works convener at Handley Page, and in the fight against sackings at Universal Patterns, Crawley, this lesson was brought to the fore again. In each of these disputes the issue was starkly presented—either extend it or go down to defeat—in every case the official leaders calmly and constitutionally chose defeat. Now the miners are threatened with the closure of between 205 and 240 pits in the next five years. Already their leaders have capitulated without firing a single shot. The choice confronting the miners is that which also faced the men at South Bank; either go along with the union leaders and accept the sackings, or build a rank-and-file movement to fight back. Of course rank-and-file movements are no panacea or 'cure-all' for the problems of the working class. They do however offer a type of organization to the working class which permits them to break through the restrictive and stifling sectional barriers imposed upon them by the trade union bureaucracy. Pit closures, sackings in engineering or in the building trade, are not the particular problems of those industries alone. They arise out of the needs of the employing class to cheapen their production costs and to discipline their labour force. To fight successfully against mass sackings, rank-and-file movements must draw on the support of workers in other industries. They must also develop a political strategy which can unite the entire working class in a struggle to remove the Tory government in order to replace it with one pledged to socialist policies.

South Bank was the warning signal that the employers and their government meant business and would unhesitatingly use their control of the state machine to crush strikes by police action and law courts. The attitude of the court towards the arrested South Bank pickets complemented the job the police had performed for McAlpine on the picket line.

One member of the AUBTW who appeared at Tower

Bridge court on October 27 was reminded by Mr Maddocks, the presiding magistrate, that his union 'did not approve of this business.'<sup>36</sup>

Mr D. W. Williams asked one of the charged men 'if the strike had anything to do with him.'<sup>37</sup> This worker, who worked on another site, had gone to South Bank in response to the appeal of the stewards' committee.

When Brian Behan was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment on November 27 the magistrate told him: 'I am satisfied you were there for the purpose of making trouble.'<sup>38</sup>

McAlpine's lawyer was present throughout Behan's trial and quite openly gave advice to the prosecuting counsel. When Behan drew attention to this and made a protest the magistrate simply ignored him.

Timid leaders, restricted by their opinion that policemen are custodians of a justice that operates with equal fairness to boss and worker alike, are totally unfitted to organize any strike. The meek acceptance by the print unions' leaders of the arbitrary police action against their picketing members illustrated the cowardice of the officials in face of the state machine. A quick and rapid extension of the print strike to H.M. Stationery Office—a measure once threatened by the unions—would have been the answer to government interference on the picket lines. Leaders like Briginshaw, general secretary of NATSOPA, did not reply to police action by bringing their members out from the government departments; instead he made a slanderous attack on the Socialist Labour League and *The Newsletter*.<sup>39</sup> Briginshaw probably considered this more safe and respectable than fighting against the police. Like the union leaders at South Bank he provided more aid to the employers than he did to his own members.

The strike at South Bank revealed in a thousand and one ways the tremendous fighting capacity of the working class. It showed how workers, providing they have a correct programme and the necessary organization, can rise to their feet and hit back at the employer. The apparently monolithic and unbreakable strength of the trade union bureaucracy was revealed to have very shaky foundations indeed. South Bank showed that once workers move into action, determined to fight the employers, they can and will sweep into the historical rubbish bin this parasitism which has temporarily fastened itself on to the trade union movement.

Finally, South Bank dramatically brought home the urgent need to construct here in Britain a Marxist leadership that can provide a policy and programme based on the interests of the working class.

Many workers learned these lessons at South Bank, ensuring that in future struggles the employers will be confronted with a better prepared and even more combative working class.

<sup>35</sup> Cassidy told the Conference 'that the decision to accept the paper's offer of space was taken by the 32 stewards on the site. We stated our case in *The Newsletter*. I stated my case. On South Bank we got a show of solidarity that had not been seen for 20 years.'

<sup>36</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, October 28, 1958.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, November 8, 1958.

<sup>39</sup> During the print dispute, Briginshaw, the general secretary of NATSOPA, issued a circular to his members in which he described the Socialist Labour League and its weekly paper *The Newsletter* as being 'in the pay of the employers'.

*A reprint from the mimeographed record of a B.B.C. Home Service Broadcast.*

## APPENDIX

Transcribed from a Teledisc Recording

EXTRACT FROM "AT HOME AND ABROAD"

28th October, 1958

ANNOUNCER: Work on a large new office building by Waterloo Bridge, on the South Bank of the Thames, has been held up for many weeks by an unofficial strike. On Sunday, a conference of shop stewards from all parts of the country declared its support for the strikers. And now the Amalgamated Union of Building Workers has taken steps to discipline some of the strike leaders. Robert Kean, Director of the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, is interviewed by Michael Shanks, Industrial Editor of the Financial Times.

SHANKS: Mr Kean, this is a new experience for your industry, isn't it? I mean you don't normally have a great deal of industrial trouble?

KEAN: Yes, I quite agree, it's been unusual in its intensity, in its duration and I think especially in the high degree of organisation that's been associated with it.

SHANKS: Well now, what is there about the Shell site, where this trouble has occurred, that is so peculiar? Why should there be this trouble there?

KEAN: Well, this job is the beginnings of the erection of the highest skyscraper building in Europe. It's situated in the centre of London and therefore it's ideally suited to anyone who wishes to make it a centre of publicity.

SHANKS: Yes, well that's all very well, but after all, McAlpines have dismissed twelve hundred and fifty workers after a whole series of troubles, now why have they done this?

KEAN: Well, they have not done this as a deliberate act of policy, but rather as a consequence of a series of events that have been going on since the job started. There have been a large number of unofficial strikes over a period of almost a year; the sequence of operations—the technical operations on the job have been interrupted and the situation had been brought about that there were men on the site—considerable numbers of men—standing about doing nothing. And therefore, as a practical proposition, McAlpines had no alternative but to stop the job, with a view to re-phasing it and starting up again.

SHANKS: Yes—

KEAN: I would like to add too, that the conciliation board of the industry—both sides of it—both employers and Trade Unions, said at the time that McAlpines were fully justified in what they did.

SHANKS: Yes, but you see, it's often said, isn't it, that there are no bad workers, only bad employers. But you don't think that McAlpines were to blame at all for all this trouble?

KEAN: Well, I know that's been said, I think it's been said by the people who want that to be believed. But all I can say about that is that if in fact the workers on the site felt that they had grievances, well, the proper course would be to submit these grievances to the joint machinery of the conciliation board and have them dealt with there. The fact that this procedure was consistently ignored, that demands were made and were not met, labour withdrawn, seems to imply quite clearly that the grievances were not open to proper examination.

SHANKS: Well, you've implied, Mr. Kean, that some people—you haven't said who—have been using this dispute at the Shell site for purposes of publicity. Now could you be a bit more precise?

KEAN: Well, I have said Mr. Shanks, I think, I don't know

what I've implied, but I've said that there was a very high degree of organisation associated with this particular strike. It's been extremely well organised.

SHANKS: Well, who are the organisers?

KEAN: Well, honour where honour's due, it was organised by somebody and it was organised very efficiently by somebody. The pickets were far more numerous than usual, our information is that many of them had never worked on the job at all, they had been drawn from other parts of the country. They were supported by a paraphernalia of propaganda, such as loudspeakers, publication of papers and journals. All I can say is, Mr. Shanks, that it was certainly not organised by the established Trade Unions.

SHANKS: Yes, but then you still haven't answered my question as to who you think in fact was organising it. Who brought up these pickets, who produced these papers? Somebody must have done.

KEAN: I agree somebody must have done, that is a very interesting question and some of the national newspapers have been asking that question; and some of them have been attempting to answer it. Some of the national newspapers have attributed this organisation to a group of people who I think have been termed "Trotsky-ites" and they have said that these people are people who came out of the Communist Party some time ago and have formed this group for their own particular purposes. If the newspapers are to be believed, that seems to be the situation.

SHANKS: So you, broadly speaking, accept this theory that the people behind the trouble at the Shell site are this group of ex-Communists who left the Party, I believe mainly at the time of Hungary, and who are now—can be loosely described as "Trotsky-ites" and who are out to cause trouble in industry. You accept this do you?

KEAN: That is what I read in the newspapers, yes.

SHANKS: Well then, if this is true, this would seem to be an offence—an attack on the recognised leadership of the Communist Party, as well as an attack on McAlpines? Have you any evidence to support this?

KEAN: That may well be so, and I could imagine that if the facts are as you state, that the Communist Party would not be over-pleased about it, no.

SHANKS: You haven't any evidence that the Communist Party itself is particularly pleased about the Shell dispute?

KEAN: No, no.

SHANKS: Well, I can move on to another point and that's the attitude of the official Union leaderships, which as far as I can see, has been extremely co-operative from your point of view. Would you agree with that?

KEAN: Oh, I think I would do more than agree with that. I think I would say that this in my view has really been much more an attack on established Trade Unions and the leaders, than it has been on an employer. I view the Shell site as a sort of battleground across which this battle has been waged and I view McAlpines as being the person who's really been victimised.

SHANKS: Yes, but although the Unions are now co-operating with you to a really remarked extent, will this continue? I mean McAlpines presumably when they recruit new labour are going to try to keep out the known trouble-makers, as they see them. Now will the Unions, do you think, agree with this?

KEAN: Well, McAlpines will certainly be bound in building up their labour force, to use their own judgment as to which people they take into their employment and which people they don't. And equally if any man who has worked on that

site before, feels aggrieved if he's not taken on again, then that man in our democratic country, with our democratic institutions, has the right to put his case to the Trade Union and it's for the Trade Union to decide then, what they'll do with it. If they feel he has a good case, then no doubt they will bring it before the conciliation board and have it dealt with on its merits.

SHANKS: Yes. So you don't think that McAlpines could have done more to screen known trouble-makers when the job first started?

KEAN: That may be, but it's people like McAlpines and other firms, their concern in life is to build things—

SHANKS: Yes.

KEAN: —and they're not perhaps experts in this field.

SHANKS: Well now, could I ask one short question to finish up with Mr. Kean? There's been this meeting of shop stewards last Sunday; do you think this means more trouble for your industry and if so, how are you going to deal with it?

KEAN: Well, I think the Trade Unions in our industry are very well aware of the situation and I think we on the employers side will leave it to them to handle the situation. And I don't think that it's necessary for us in the employers' side to consider any further action.

SHANKS: I see. Thank you very much, Mr. Kean.

KEAN: You're welcome.

ANNOUNCER: And with that interview, we end tonight's programme. "At Home and Abroad" will be on the air again at nine-fifteen on Friday.

# Marxism in Britain 1881-1920

*Brian Pearce*

The following survey is based on a feature given at a cadre school of the Socialist Labour League, the material for which was largely drawn from the writings of Ralph Fox, Allen Hutt, Eric Hobsbawm, Henry Pelling and others.

THIS is not a history of the general Labour movement, nor even one of the broader socialist movement. There were many people besides the Marxists who thought of themselves as socialists and conducted important activities, and we can read about them in Cole and Postgate's *The Common People* and other works. But the peculiar problems of developing a Marxist movement and leadership in Britain are not so easily approached, because the systematic study has not yet been completely made. Even our movement today is the linear descendant, the true heir, of the experiences of Marxists since the early 1880s. We have not come out of the blue; we developed from them and their experience. The Communist Party itself was not imported ready made but was formed out of groups which had already existed for some time and had a rich past. Moscow fashioned the Communist Party, and Russian history, as well as British, is needed to explain what has happened to it; but the influence of Moscow did not operate in a vacuum or on a blank sheet. The material of the British Communist Party was already formed, and the process of Stalinization from 1924 onwards operated with certain peculiar features which can only be explained by the characteristics of the British Labour movement. Many of the trends which we can see in the movement today were with us 60 years ago and form part of the general tradition of the whole Labour movement.

Three main periods may be discerned:

- (a) 1881 to the middle of the 1890s.
- (b) Middle 1890s to 1908.
- (c) 1908 to 1920.

(a) This is a period of advance of Marxist influence, of optimism in Marxist circles.

(b) A black period which is very important in explaining what we face today, when an anti-Marxist

leadership fastened itself on the Labour movement, when hopes failed, reformism grew and Marxism was treated with discredit and contempt.

(c) New period of advance, but far from a mechanical repetition of the period before 1908, and great difficulties due to the failure of the first advance.

## (a) THE TURN TO MARXISM

In the 1870s there was no Labour movement in the real sense in Britain, unlike Germany or France. The trade union movement was confined to the narrow aristocracy of the crafts, and not keen to dilute its privileged numbers by bringing more in. Politically the unions functioned as a tail to the Liberal Party; they saw success for their political aspirations in the success of the Liberal Party; they hoped for some social legislation from it, especially in the direction of protecting their funds and status but, deeper, they really believed that success for the industrial interests was success for them. This was expressed in the slogan 'A fair day's work for a fair day's wage'. Great interest among trade union leaders in social climbing at this stage, and pressure on the Liberal Party to let more working men have seats in Parliament. Very few people thought about independent class politics and there was no socialist movement. However, the ideas were just kept alive in the Rose Street working men's club in London where German social-democratic exiles met old Chartists who retained their early socialist ideas. This circle was isolated and was significant only for what grew round it at a definite time; we can note how quite small groups can quickly produce big things if they are at the right place at the right time!

In 1879 a much more severe trade depression set in than the short slumps of 1847, 1857 and 1866, and it lasted much longer. We can see now that this marked

the end of the thirty years' period in which British capitalists had had the unchallenged monopoly of the world market in manufactures—the 'workshop of the world' which had provided the material basis for the disappearance of the class-struggle ideas of the 1830s and 1840s, the loss of revolutionary content in the workers' movements and their subordination to seeking relatively minor reforms.

The end of expansion and the rise in unemployment came as a shock to everyone. There were arguments about whether charity corrupted, and reiteration of New Poor Law ideas. All this led to widespread questioning of established mid-Victorian ideas, and came at a time when the needs of industry and the State were developing public education and an intellectual middle class was increasing. With the puncturing of the accepted myth of thrift and progress, there was a new field for the old socialist ideas. Further, the actual success of the German Social-Democrat Party, which was established and thriving and contemptuous of Bismarck's efforts to corrupt it or repress it, impressed advanced people here.

Frederick Engels had some articles in 1881 in *The Labour Standard*, the organ of the London Trades Council (these have been reproduced in a small book published by Martin Lawrence), because James Macdonald, the secretary, was impressed by Marxism. These articles drew the lesson of the depression and raised the question of an independent class party.

Another force which attracted some key people to socialism was the turn of the Liberal Party towards imperialism. In 1881-82 a Liberal Coercion Act for Ireland out-Toried the Tories in harshness towards the Irish peasant struggle—regarded as 'contrary to the Liberal tradition'. This annoyed both the Irish workers in this country and the Radical elements who thought of themselves as the Left wing of Liberalism. Again, there was the imperialist attack on Egypt in 1882, bombardment of Alexandria, forestalling of the French attempt to get control, and involvement in the dirty business of Egyptian rulers' debts.

#### The Social Democratic Federation is Founded

Now at last a few people began to read Marx. Hyndman tried to popularize Marx's ideas as an answer to the new reality. The Democratic Federation was founded in 1881 and quickly evolved from being a Left Radical to a Marxist body and, to copy Germany, openly adopted the name Social Democratic Federation in 1884.

One principal job which it undertook was to campaign in defence of the oppressed Irish, and this was rather like defending the people of Kenya or Cyprus more recently; the same impression was made on the general public by the terrorism of the oppressed. Despite the unpopularity incurred among British workers it had a big success with Irish workers in Britain. Herein lay a source of weakness. The fortunate chance that it started off with this good campaigning appeal to one section of the working class gave the SDF the illusion that it had a much bigger mass following than was really the case. For in 1886 the Liberal Party split on the Irish question, and the declaration for Irish Home Rule took the Irish voters back into the Liberal camp, and actually raised antagonism in their minds against people who appeared by their independent class

politics to be weakening the Liberal vote in face of the Tories.

Hyndman, it must be said, was always very dubious about the political possibilities of the great mass of British workers; he was, indeed, as a successful business man, contemptuous of them, impatient to get results and play a political role, and socially remote from workers' lives. He thought British workers must inevitably remain stodgy and inert until some great catastrophe hit them. This explains both why he gave currency to the idea that Marxism teaches that there will be one final crisis into which capitalism will sink without hope of recovery (a completely non-Marxist and mechanistic idea), and his constant efforts to find some short cut to leadership of some particular militant section of the Labour movement. After the Irish, the SDF built its hopes on the unemployed movement. In the middle and later 1880s there were indeed large unemployed demonstrations all over the country, ending in big struggles in 1888-89.

Engels was very cautious in evaluating the SDF. He welcomed it as a sign of the times but he warned the German social democrats not to be over-impressed or to expect too much. The people who had turned to Marxism (e.g., Belfort Bax) were mostly of bourgeois origin; Bax was also of foreign origin. They needed first and foremost to find roots in the British working class. Hyndman tended to exaggerate his support and successes, hoping that this would bring in more people, for there was as yet no solid foundation under the SDF. Hence his opportunism.

Note that the same people can be sectarian at one moment and opportunist at another, because they do not see reality clearly and therefore tend all the time to both sectarianism and opportunism. One trend comes predominantly to the top, but the other is always there latent. We shall see these two aspects of the SDF together, one or another uppermost, but both present, constantly through the whole period. For instance, steps were taken to start in a modest and realistic way a monthly journal to be called *Today*. Bax was to edit it, and it was advertised as a journal of scientific socialism, with the aim of becoming a weekly when it had a good enough basis. Engels thought this a reasonable possibility. However, Hyndman insisted on floating a weekly, *Justice*, which he could finance and control, right away. Catering for a limited readership, they harmed each other by competing, and in the end Hyndman bought up *Today*. His money exaggerated his influence.

Engels thought that the real test of the SDF would come when the economic reaction of the working class to the unfavourable changes in their general pattern of life, due to the changes in British capitalism, were deeply felt; for instance the mechanization of engineering and loss of status by craftsmen, which would bring big new forces into battle. He conceived of a party to win the leadership of this movement, having already established itself and developed roots in the working class, with a *cadre* of theoretically developed people independent of Hyndman and his personal weaknesses. The SDF did not succeed in rising to this historic task. For instance, in 1884 it issued a manifesto on trade unionism in which it took the position that trade unions were a useless diversion of effort from the main task, the struggle for power. This—just on the eve of the gigan-

tic battles of the working class for the 'New Unionism'!

So when a capable worker like Tom Mann found his way into the SDF he left it in search of something better. He could not find it on his own, and turned to syndicalism, which looked better than the SDF, which, as he said, 'antagonized the trade unionists without drawing over any considerable percentage to socialism'.

Hyndman showed his general characteristics precisely in relation to trade unions—he suspected them because he could not control them. He ran the SDF in a bureaucratic way and took advantage of the inevitable shortage of funds, a common problem at this stage. He tried to dominate its internal life, creating phony branches to influence conference decisions, and generally poisoned the political life around him.

He displayed very marked British chauvinism just because he was contemptuous of the workers. When he published a popularization of Marxism, *England for All*, he did not mention any debt to Marx because, as he said, Englishmen would not be willing to learn from Germans. Engels was very annoyed on Marx's behalf, no less because of the personal ambition, egotism and chauvinism which this betrayed. This also came out in 1884-85 when the public was very interested in the aggression in the Sudan—*Justice* defended the aggression on the ground that it was bringing civilization to the natives! This antagonized Radical people who had been attracted by Marxist opposition to Liberal imperialism.

There is also no doubt that Hyndman made arrangements with Tory party managers to split Liberal votes by putting up SDF candidates in parliamentary elections. He got money in return, but few votes, and was quite genuinely puzzled at the wild indignation with which this kind of thing was received in the Radical movement. He did not see in this policy of manoeuvre a danger for a young organization. In general the Left wing of Liberalism would naturally and immediately reject anything that seemed connected with the Tories, and this helped to cut off the SDF from the workers trying to develop towards socialism from the Radical wing of Liberalism. Hyndman saw simply the 'workers' backwardness' when they objected to his intrigues with Joseph Chamberlain.

### The Split in the SDF

By 1885 a majority of the executive committee of the SDF, including Morris, Bax and Aveling, whom Engels and Eleanor Marx regarded as the only honest socialist intellectuals in Britain, though also as unpractical people, separated themselves from Hyndman and tried to start a movement free from Hyndmanism.

Only about 500 of the 1,500 members of the SDF joined the Socialist League, partly because Hyndman had carefully ensured that the party paper *Justice* was his personal property and did not go with the split, and also because many of the rank and file regarded Hyndman as at least an efficient and businesslike individual, as indeed he was, who inspired workers with more confidence than artists and bookish people did.

Aveling was a Bohemian to the extreme, irresponsible in his attitude both to money and women. Though of great intellectual ability he, like Hyndman in his way, helped to turn people away by his personal characteristics, which can play such a big role in a small movement. 'In a sect everything turns to scandal-

mongering', remarked Engels. The Socialist League never extended its organization beyond London, but of course influenced individuals who were active in their own spheres in the provinces, for instance Tom Maguire in Leeds. But the SDF did get roots in Lancashire and Yorkshire and Engels saw this as a bad sign for the Socialist League.

The Socialist League predominantly attracted clerical workers and lumpen-proletarians. It had the advantage of being free of Hyndman, but it reacted too strongly from his ideas; it over-corrected his opportunism with sectarianism. For instance it repudiated parliamentarism entirely. Its internal organization was ultra-loose as a reaction against Hyndman's centralization of the SDF round himself. Thirdly, the Socialist League turned away from the industrial struggle for immediate demands to emphasize street corner meetings and sale of papers. Its entire collective work was propaganda, though its members as individuals took part in other activities. Morris had the idea that it should be a political club embracing all shades of socialist opinion, and without political discipline.

It was therefore wide open, and when Kropotkin, the eminent Russian anarchist, came to Britain in 1886 and formed a group they entered the Socialist League and took it over, all the more easily because of the unpracticality of its leading members, and paralysed it with an internal fight. So much so that in 1887 Engels wrote the Socialist League off and advised Eleanor Marx and Aveling to turn away from it.

The SDF, having lost its adventitious basis among the Irish, tried to turn towards the unemployed, but because of its lack of realism it found contact with the lumpen-proletariat, not at all people of the kind of whom a stable socialist body can be built. It led a big demonstration of the unemployed in Trafalgar Square in 1886, which ended with the windows of the clubs in St James's being broken, but this in the long run did nothing to build the organization.

Engels had in mind always the aim of building a theoretically trained grouping of people capable of establishing roots in the mass movement, so that when political developments in the masses of the people came there would be a Marxist leadership capable of battling against all comers to guide it.

Eleanor and Aveling turned to the proletarian Left wing of Liberalism as expressed in the Radical working men's clubs in the East End, and Eleanor especially began to work to build trade unions of the unskilled, the gasworkers and match girls. The East End clubs contained some of the most thoughtful working men and this gave Marxists some links with the industrial struggles which were beginning to develop.

At the same time socialist immigrants into the USA were making considerable strides, and their successes made perhaps an even bigger impact in Britain than those of the German social democrats.

Eleanor and Aveling found some contacts in the East End, and a basis in the fight for free speech. The police had begun to interfere with speakers at traditional open-air sites and it was necessary to find people prepared to go to jail, to organize support at meetings, raise funds, etc. This led to the Law and Liberty League for free speech, in which the ranks of the Socialist League and the SDF got a bit closer to the Radical working men. It called a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square in 1887, under the slogans of 'Home Rule for Ireland

and for London'. This was not the same as the unemployed demonstration of the previous year with which it is often confused; it was indeed a very different affair. Police and soldiers were called out to deal with it. A lot of people got hurt, two people were killed, and the workers, unprepared for that kind of struggle, were scattered. The two demonstrations got mixed up in people's minds and the bad features of adventurism and stunt-mongering of the first one gave a bad taste to the second one; a sample of the harm done by adventurism.

The Trafalgar Square 'Bloody Sunday' affair sharply sorted out the leading figures in the socialist groups. Engels, who was quite used to this sort of thing from his Continental experience of 1848, and Eleanor were not put off. But a lot of people who later had big names were scared off at that time. For instance, Bernard Shaw became convinced of the impossibility of the workers taking on the capitalist State, and his plays thereafter portray workers as feckless lumpen-proletarians mouthing revolutionary phrases (e.g. Doolittle in *Pygmalion*). Many others, each along his own road, drew away from the socialist movement. Ernest Rhys, the later editor of the *Everyman* Series of books, wrote the next day: 'The Fabians for me'.

The bourgeoisie sought to combat Marxist influence among the workers in three ways. First, by terror and repression, which had a big effect on inexperienced workers who were seeing their trade unions grow, and who wanted steady and reliable people to run them, and no legal upheavals. Secondly, by putting systematic pressure on the workers' leaders with the aim of making them careerists. Thirdly, by injecting patriotic propaganda, chauvinism, imperialist ideas into the workers.

The withdrawal of Shaw and others left the whole 'New Unionism' field almost clear for the anti-Marxists. Eleanor did her best; she actually taught Will Thorne to read and write, and spared no effort on tasks however humble which would help to give Marxism a basis in the real workers' movement. But many of the small group of people round the SDF and Socialist League, having unrealistically over-estimated the revolutionary possibilities of the workers as they then were, turned to the other extreme. Eleanor transformed the Law and Liberty League into the Eight Hours League, which caught public interest. The Socialist League had disappeared from the scene by now, and the SDF sabotaged the Eight Hours' League. In the May Day demonstration of 1890, the officials of the London Trades Council conspired with Hyndman to exclude the Eight Hours' League—so can sectarians and opportunists form a united front against Marxism.

About this time the Marxists also had hopes in a man called H. H. Champion, who published a paper called the *Labour Elector* with the line of calling for an independent party of the working class. His money proved to come from Tory sources and his attacks on the *Star*, then a radical Liberal paper which gave the Marxists a chance in its columns, raised suspicions of him—after exposure he departed to Australia.

All these events helped to make difficulties for, and to estrange the Marxists from, the more advanced layers of the working class turning to the New Unionism (organization of the unskilled, small benefits and big strikes). The basic difficulty was that the best Marxists were so few in number; the real movement developed largely outside contact with, let alone control by

Marxists. In short, Marxism was unable to build a *cadre* of revolutionaries before the big movement came.

When the Independent Labour Party was founded in 1893 a few leading Marxists got positions in it, e.g., Aveling on its leading committee, but were isolated. The SDF put an ultimatum to it and withdrew.

For all these reasons Marxism was now leaving a bad taste in the mouths of the people it wanted to approach, and Engels was very disgusted with its banner-bearers in Britain; in the USA also the Marxists remained as a German-American sect.

Hyndman apparently had the idea that the SDF could never expect to hold people anyway, that it would be something that people went through; they would learn there a few ideas which they would later disseminate. He did not aim to build a solid revolutionary party.

The ILP was easily the largest group in the field, and Engels noted with interest that it had real roots in the industrial north, especially in Bradford and Lancashire. The dominant intellectual forces were anti-Marxist, repudiated the class struggle and sought constitutional methods. The positive side of this was a fear of adventures and a desire to exploit to the full the possibilities arising when in 1884 miners and agricultural workers were given votes. But it also opened the door to the middle-class do-gooders (especially middle-class women, teachers, etc.). Engels wanted the SDF and the ILP to fuse, but Hyndman would not. In addition, the nonconformist tradition in the provinces proved then, as it has proved since, to be a very tough obstacle to Marxist ideas, capable of being overcome only by experience in action of the need for these ideas. This tradition was skilfully exploited by 'emotional' socialists of the Keir Hardie stamp.

#### (b) THE DIFFICULT PERIOD—1895-1908

Two heavy blows struck Marxism. First, Engels died in 1895. This robbed Marxism of an international guiding centre and accumulation of experience. Until after the Revolution in Russia in 1917 there was no authoritative international centre except that of German social democracy later centred around Kautsky, a weak vessel. Secondly, with the end of the depression, imperialism was sold to the British workers. Economic revival and the fall of unemployment was not on a basis of revival of British trade in manufactured consumer goods, the traditional Victorian exports, but of the rise of heavy industrial exports, railway materials and the like, which depended on foreign loans, concessions, colonization, heavy financing from groups joining banks to heavy industry, and the support of the British State and British arms. 'Jobs follow the flag', and an important section of workers actually could share personally in the new flow of colonial wealth. For instance, how many of us know of whole families where there is a tradition of entering the forces as regulars and retiring with bits of pensions? The organized injection of jingoism into the working class was expressed by Cecil Rhodes among others—a parallel to the do-gooding of the Mayfair ladies in the East End. The Boy Scout movement and the Boys' Brigade arose.

In the absence of a tradition of genuine Marxist analysis of the preceding crisis the recovery completed the job of driving people away from Marxism, started

by the events of Bloody Sunday. Hyndman had preached a vulgarized conception of Marxism: that no recovery was possible and that the crisis would get worse and worse until capitalism slid into the abyss. When recovery came the Marxists often left politics or joined the Fabians. Just as prolonged depression had produced a crop of Marxists, so the recovery shook them, and just as later in 1945, the boom led a lot of people to revive their old ideas on the basis of their impressions, which in turn were overthrown by later changes.

But by 1895 the Fabians had established themselves as a powerful and sinister force in the Labour movement, working against the idea of independent Labour representation and keeping the movement in tow behind the Liberals. Whatever they may say today this is a fact proved by recent investigations. Consequently the New Unions quickly became like the old unions, riddled with careerism and bureaucracy. The ILP was dominated by anti-Marxist Christian-socialist ideas. It is necessary to stress that there is no inevitable law of history that the British workers have got to be led by fakers. The way the fakers got control is clear, and in the struggle against Marxism they were substantially victorious.

Too late, in 1897, the SDF accepted the idea of entering the unions, but even then only some did so. In 1898 Eleanor Marx and Aveling died, she in tragic circumstances and he of an incurable disease. Thus the original Marxist *cadre* was finished.

The employers' offensive against the New Unionism forced the trade union leaders to react. In the later 1890s the unions suffered some heavy defeats, and finally in the Taff Vale decision it looked as if the whole basis of their funds was gone. This forced the move to an independent working-class party, but it sought alliance with the ILP (Hyndman again abstaining) in a movement without Marxist aim in the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 and the Labour Party in 1906. The people who started it had no expectation or intention that it would ever become an independent movement big enough to challenge the Liberals, and the recent publication of the letters between Ramsay MacDonald and the Liberal leaders shows that the leaders were up to the neck in unprincipled bargaining to get a few seats for trade union leaders with Liberal support.

#### Opportunism and the Decline of the SDF

The SDF further disgraced itself by a silly appeal to the new king, Edward VII, and by appeals to the workers to vote Tory against the Liberals. Left sectarianism leads to tailism and tailism to opportunism. When in France, Millerand, a socialist, not only accepted a seat in a bourgeois government but also sat side by side with General Gallifet, who had been responsible for murdering many of the fighters for the Paris Commune in 1871, Hyndman defended Millerand. He went on to advocate the idea of a 'Big Navy' to fight the Germans. Naturally such ideas might make it easy to get votes from backward workers in Sheffield or Barrow, but they did not help to build a Marxist movement.

The SDF suffered two important splits. First, in 1903 the Socialist Labour Party was formed, based mainly in Glasgow. It was composed of anti-politicals—working-class trade union militants who recognized the corrupting effect of careerism in the movement and rejected

both the use of parliamentary struggle 'on principle', and acceptance of any official jobs in the unions. They welcomed the ideas of De Leon from the USA, which stressed the need for replacing the bourgeois State with proletarian democratic organs of administration, workers' councils, as well as the basic social character of the industrial struggle. In 1905 the Socialist Party of Great Britain broke off from the SDF. It was largely a London grouping, rejecting both industrial as well as political action, and was purely propagandist.

The SDF was seriously weakened by these break-aways but it survived right through until the Communist Party was founded, when its main *cadre* entered the new party. How did it survive? Not merely thanks to Hyndman's cash. Its members did carry the torch for Marxism as they saw it. They made regular party study of Marxist writings a duty, and this welded their small number of activists together. Lenin had many criticisms of the SDF, but when Harry Quelch died in 1913 Lenin wrote a very warm obituary of him. Quelch had been Hyndman's right-hand man, but Lenin hailed 'the great historical service which he and his friends have rendered' in keeping up the propaganda for Marxist ideas, despite their distortions of them.

An attitude of the SDF which has survived and infected the movement is its contempt for the workers as too backward to be able to solve their own problems, expressed in the 'superman' idea—that there must be clever manipulators at the top. But it should be remembered that Marxist literature then available at all in English was very limited. From America, the publications of the Charles Kerr house in Chicago were an important contribution, as were *International Socialist Review* and the weekly *People*. Then there were publications of the SLP, especially *Historical Materialism* and *Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*, taken from *Anti-Duhring*. These helped to lay a solid foundation of Marxist ideas pending the new developments towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. The SDF influenced many leaders, John Burns, Will Thorne, Tom Mann, but the agents of capitalism like Cardinal Manning and A. J. Mundella got after them. The dockers' leaders especially were smothered with personal attentions.

#### Bourgeois Ideology in the Labour Movement

In this period the lack of a sizable, stable Marxist *cadre* with roots in the Labour movement meant that there was no effective resistance in the New Unionism and the independent working-class political movement to the deliberate injection of bourgeois influence. We can list some of the more obvious forms this took:

Jobs in the State machine for trade union officials, especially in the Labour Department of the Board of Trade.

The prospect of getting into Parliament on bargains with Liberals.

Fabian training through university extension classes and Ruskin College. A good example is Leeds University, from where Fabian and other anti-Marxist influence has been exerted for fifty years.

Do-gooders in the ILP without any ideology but good intentions.

Jingoism.

Fear of bloodshed arising from militant struggle—not

of bloodshed from imperialist war.

Opportunism and hope for sectional bargains and advantages.

Touches of bourgeois terrorism.

Nonconformist ideals, especially in the provincial industrial areas, of thrift and temperance, merging with 'respectability', received reinforcement from the Fabian idea that the progress of socialism is measured by the success of the personal careers of socialists. This made life difficult for those who were prepared to sacrifice and go to jail, because this itself was used to isolate them.

But none of this was able to obliterate Marxism, and none of it was able to stave off the recovery in the period from 1908 to 1914 from the success of the employers' counter-attacks on the unions from 1895 onwards. All this shows very clearly that a conscious Marxist leadership is very far from being an automatic or spontaneous product of the workers' movement; Marxist ideas are not the direct product or reflection in the minds of the participants in the class struggle of their experiences. They have to be brought in from outside, from the whole of 'bourgeois' knowledge and science interpreted in the light of Marxist method. Weakening Marxism opened the way to bourgeois ideas. Lenin saw this very clearly and said so in *What Is To Be Done?* Just after he had translated Webb's *Industrial Democracy* into Russian.

How could Lenin talk about Quelch and the SDF as he did in spite of all their opportunism, sectarianism, jingoism and the non-Boshevik internal régime of their organizations? Partly because he recognized the dogged and devoted propaganda for socialist ideas in their very difficult environment. Partly because, in any case, the effects of imperialism on the Labour movement only began about 1900 and were not immediately recognized or felt in the corrupting form they took later. The questions were still differences between comrades, none of whom had any immediate prospect of getting into power either with the aid of the bourgeoisie or thanks to revolution. Especially on the war question all sorts of illusions were possible. Engels had always stressed the division of wars into progressive and reactionary. While a war between countries of about equal development such as France and Germany might be reactionary on both sides, a war between Germany and Russia in this period could be regarded as progressive on the German side. There was no difficulty about supporting the 'progressive' side as an orthodox Marxist. In any case no one had yet seen how a social-patriotic position opened the way to bourgeois infection; the wholesale corruption of Labour patriots was still to come.

### (c) THE YEARS OF STRUGGLE—1908-1920

In 1908 there was a short sharp crisis, a break in the imperialist expansion of British trade and employment. Moreover, the first Russian revolution had taken place in 1905-07 and it greatly impressed the world, and not only narrow circles, by its impact on and shaking of tsarism. Finally, throughout the period 1900 to 1914 the cost of living was rising, owing in part to the development of monopoly, in part to the unplanned and unconscious effects of exploitation of new gold supplies from South Africa and Australia working through the gold standard, so that more gold meant more money and credit and therefore a tendency to inflation.

Hence there was a new vast wave of industrial disputes, fought with great solidarity and stubbornness by the rank and file, who came sharply up against the entrenched bureaucratic leaders. The forms of struggle were already affected by cynicism about politics due to the weakness of the Labour Party in Parliament—never daring to put any pressure on the Liberals and bought off by the Trade Union Act of 1906, which safeguarded for a while the all-important funds. But among the militants, anti-parliamentarism was the vogue, with rejection of all politics and emphasis on industrial struggle. The SDF was quite unable to penetrate these new developments, but the groups which arose lived a life full of internal disputes and intellectual activity—any suggestion of banning factions would have been received with amazement. Tom Mann went to syndicalism saying: 'You get on with your politics and we'll get on with the real work.' Thus the very genuine and healthy desire to tap the mainsprings of spontaneous and creative mass action in industrial struggles and to get away from the debilitating influence of reformist and Hyndman politics became in practice a short cut and an illusory one, because it did not lead to the building of a conscious leadership aiming at overthrowing the bourgeois State. A fetish was made of 'the movement', in which the rank and file and the bureaucrats are all lumped together; loyalty to the 'movement' easily becomes equated with acceptance of the bureaucracy. Jack Tanner came from just this environment. Nevertheless these people did raise the important question of industrial unionism, of trade union amalgamations to get rid of the barriers erected between crafts by sectional interests and self-seeking bureaucrats.

The revolt at the trade unions' Ruskin College in 1909 over the question of whether Marxism was to be taught along with other ideas, was an important event in the training of the new leading people. The Fabians moved in and sacked the principal, Dennis Hird, so the Left-wing students broke away with great daring and set up on their own. Hence the Central Labour College, the Plebs League and the National Council of Labour Colleges. Most of them thereby forfeited the grants which their union executives had been making to keep them at Ruskin—in only one or two cases were the students allowed to keep the money. They tried at first to settle at Oxford and to keep themselves going by sharing the housework and getting lectures from sympathetic Oxford teachers. Then they set up the Central Labour College in Penywern Road in London. There was a rather mechanical Marxism; they knew little of the dialectic and were rather inclined to thinking that 'the workers movement' was going to do the job. This is understandable, since in the most petty-bourgeois of all working classes, the British, they had to insist over and over again on the historical task of the working class as a class, as against the Fabian conceptions of class collaboration. The Leninist conception of a leadership consciously organized within the working class had not yet been developed in English or proved in experience. The best that they could insist on was the spontaneous movement of the masses.

What they had seen of 'leaderships' had been the Lib.-Lab. trade union leaders, or Ramsay MacDonald or Hyndman; no wonder that at that stage of development, with a big trade union rank-and-file movement for

union amalgamations developing under them and driving them forward against the bureaucrats of the craft unions, they took the path of underestimating discipline or organized leadership. This did severe damage to the Marxist cause a few years later when the Labour-College-trained people become either bureaucrats themselves or NCLC tutors, with a vested interest in disguising the role of leadership, of pretending that what the bureaucrats impose on the masses of the people is what the masses themselves want, hiding the machinations by which the bureaucracy bases itself on the penetration of the movement by bourgeois ideas and cynicism, instead of fighting bourgeois ideas.

The term 'Plebs' itself comes from a pamphlet by Daniel De Leon, *Two Pages from Roman History*, in which De Leon makes some rather daring comparisons between the ancient plebs and the modern proletariat. But for the reasons given above the Plebs League, started to support the Labour College movement, to finance the College, to build local classes up and down the country and to organize a basis of Marxist 'independent working-class education', on the one hand doing a very important job of permeating the mass movement with Marxism and on the other, giving something of a platform to semi-anarchist ideas and a number of curious fads.

#### Formation of the British Socialist Party

In the later 1900s there were great trade union battles for wage advances, and for trade union amalgamations to undermine the bureaucracies of the craft unions, though these struggles were distorted by the idea that 'industrial unions' as such could do the job, and had a non-political or anti-political flavour. The established TUC leaders were hostile, the Labour Party indifferent and involved in petty chicanery with the Liberals. The ranks of the ILP, however, were deeply involved and the industrial struggle itself provoked the development of a Left wing in the ILP. The important result was that in 1912 the Left wing of the ILP fused with the SDF and formed the British Socialist Party. The BSP then had about 40,000 members (the SLP numbered about 10,000).

Despite great fluctuations of membership and all the other difficulties this new accession of working-class blood transformed the SDF, to the great annoyance of Hyndman and his immediate circle.

Members actively and seriously discussed very important questions, and there was no effective prohibition of factions or internal papers and platforms. A sustained struggle took place inside the BSP against Hyndman's 'Big Navy' policy and his jingoism. This was drawn by Hyndman from his general approach and was especially aimed at catching working-class votes in Barrow and Sheffield, where employment depended, in the short run, on armaments orders—a typical sectional approach, contemptuous of the ultimate interests of the movement.

But meanwhile in the Second International the necessary conclusions regarding the development of imperialism were being drawn, and Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg raised the question of a clear class opposition to imperialist war. At the BSP congresses from 1912 to 1914 there was strong opposition to Hyndman. Zelda Kahan and Theodore Rothstein led it and were attacked by the Hyndmanites as 'foreigners' who knew nothing of

British conditions.

On the then very current question of votes for women the movement also engaged in discussion, but here it allowed itself to be placed in a sectarian position which suited Right-wing parliamentarians like Ramsay MacDonald. Because the women's suffrage movement was both in leadership and content largely a middle-class or even upper-class movement of women who wanted careers and recognition in the bourgeois world, because it did not do much to reach down to the oppressed and exploited proletarian women of the East End or the industrial north, and allowing for the fact that some men even then had still not got the vote, socialists tended to take the view that this was 'not a class question'. Thus a theoretically 'correct' position, that the women's suffrage struggle merely diverted energy from the general struggle for socialism, was allowed in practice to play into the hands of the Labour MPs who wanted their hands free to support the Liberals who did not want to give women the vote. George Lansbury was an honourable exception, and he got into a lot of trouble for being associated with the suffragettes. A parallel may be drawn here with the current Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

On the question of the attitude of the BSP to the Labour Party, Hyndman opposed affiliation because he could see that the leadership would then slip completely out of his control, and he used the usual sectarian arguments. Zelda Kahan pointed out the great opportunities that were open and were being missed, given the then loose structure of the Labour Party, a federation with independence of propaganda and activity for the affiliated bodies. In May 1914 the BSP decided to seek affiliation to the Labour Party for the specific aim of facilitating its work for socialism among the trade unionists.

#### Socialists and the War

The outbreak of the war in 1914 at first fostered jingoism and confused the Left. Even the Basle resolution, which was the best that the Left in the Second International had been able to get, did not make the attitude of the socialists clear, because it merely said 'bring the war to a speedy conclusion', leaving open the question whether this would be done by negotiation, by the victory of 'one's own side' or by revolution. It was a formula actually drafted by Kautsky specifically to bridge the difference between the Left and Centre and the Right.

Both in Britain and Germany the outbreak of the war caused confusion—to the BSP and to Karl Liebknecht. We find Liebknecht at the beginning of the war voting with the Reichstag fraction, 'under discipline', for the war credits. But experience quickly cleared a number of heads. The first war was not run by the Fabians; it took the bourgeoisie a year or two to realize that the Fabians had to be brought in to devise rationing schemes, controls and propaganda, and that the bourgeoisie could not expect to run a world war on the basis of 'business as usual'. The first war imposed very serious burdens on the workers. The official trade union leaders were transformed overnight into recruiting agents and production chasers. Many people in the socialist movement saw which way this course would take them and, after at first supporting Hyndman's original call for recruits to the army, changed their

position for the better.

A great contribution came from the USA, long before many had heard of Lenin, in the book *Socialism and War*, by Louis Boudin. The BSP Left felt that this gave them a materialist explanation of what the war was about. They had always wanted to oppose the British bourgeoisie in war as in peace because that was their background; but, as later, they came up against the problem of 'What alternative?'. The best answer they could find was peace by negotiation, and this brought them closer to the pacifists of the ILP and the Quakers. The whole Left movement was permeated by the individual resistance idea, so that the opponents of war felt themselves pushed into the position of being conscientious objectors and going to jail. This had the very serious effect that many capable people were isolated from contact with the armed forces, and when movements of sailors and soldiers developed at the end of the war they found no experienced political leadership; sailors turned to a welfare officer and soldiers turned to—Horatio Bottomley.

Even the BSP did not raise the question of revolutionary defeatism, but, like the SLP, their industrial militants found a big basis in industrial struggles, especially in Glasgow and Sheffield. This brought the socialists closer to the shop stewards' movement and also drew syndicalist and non-political militants to think more about their political requirements.

*The Vanguard* came out as the paper of the anti-war trend, followed in 1916 by *The Call*, and later in the same year the opponents of the war won a majority in the BSP and drove Hyndman and his circle out, to form his rapidly patriotic National Socialist Party, which, even though it took *Justice* with it, speedily faded away.

The BSP, thus transformed, and still affiliated to the Labour Party without friction from that side, not merely opposed Labour Party policy—which the ILP often did, and did during the war as pacifists—but actually opposed the trade union leaders in their own organizations on the whole question of the attitude of the working class to the war. It proved a forcing house of revolutionary leaders in face of the united front of the trade union leaders and capitalist State—the position being wide open for the Left owing to the high cost of living. The rank-and-file trade union movement, including people up to district committee level like Murphy and Gallacher, had willynilly to take over the leadership of the rank and file against the top bureaucrats. Towards the end of the war the success of such works as Murphy's pamphlets on workers' councils, which expressed very widespread sentiments against the bureaucrats, spurred the latter into making all kinds of Left gestures and talking very 'red' to recover their position. Even so a lot of old Right-wingers were cleared out in bitter battles inside the unions (e.g., the Amalgamated Society of Engineers). Wide union amalgamations were secured and the Triple Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers was formed for mutual defence.

### Impact of the Russian Revolution

A decisive stage was marked by the first Russian revolution of February-March 1917. This was widely welcomed, not only by the Left, who welcomed the workers' and soldiers' councils, but also by the patriots,

who did not expect that the Russian working class would be serious about pulling out of the imperialist war and expected a more strenuous war effort under a more respectable 'democratic' leadership. The details of what went on in Russia were not clear, but everyone recognized that here was something very important. Even the Labour Party bureaucracy, under the leadership of the Webbs and Henderson, adopted the socialist aim in their 1918 constitution ('Securing for the workers by hand and brain the full product of their labour,') which has been such an embarrassment to them in subsequent years. But at the same time these shrewd manipulators took advantage of the demand for a tighter Labour Party organization to cut the ground from under the feet of the affiliated organizations. They introduced the category of individual membership on the model of the local electoral machines built for example by Henderson himself.

The pressure from below was forcing the BSP and the ILP closer despite the secession of Left-wing branches, from the ILP in 1912. Meanwhile there had also been developments outside the Labour Party. In South Wales, the South Wales Socialist Society united the syndicalists of the former Miners' Reform Movement (which had first raised the question of nationalization in *The Miners' Next Step*). The question 'What is it really divides us?' came up in the 'Hands Off Russia' movement. It was also raised by Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation and the East End paper, *Workers' Dreadnought*.

But it still took three years of prodding from Lenin and the Russian leaders to get them together in the Communist Party.

In these three years from 1917 to 1920 the Right wing obtained and used its chance to recover the leadership and to head off the big growth of an industrial and political movement in the short post-war boom of full employment and inflation.

Quite apart from personal difficulties and conflicts among Left leaders, many of which went back years into the past of small sects, the main political differences were on:

*Attitude to politics:* The syndicalists in the Workers' Committee movement had bent the stick back too far against politics by developing the theme that big amalgamated unions would be able, by 'encroaching control' of managerial functions, to take over industry, and that struggle against the capitalist State would not in itself be a primary problem. Here also we can see the interest of the future trade union bosses in big unions, e.g., Jack Tanner.

*Attitude to Parliament:* The long tradition of criticizing the corrupting effect of Parliament itself on Labour MPs, and fear of reformist concessions to parliamentary roads to socialism, led to fear of and opposition on principle to participation in electoral and parliamentary forms of struggle.

*Attitude to the Labour Party:* The antics of its leaders and the social patriots gave rise to disillusionment in the Labour Party and led to strong resistance to entering it in order to fight the reformists. In some cases there were local councillors who had got elected on their own ticket and did not want to be disturbed, and they gave the Communist Party trouble later on because they resisted its discipline.

### The Birth of the Communist Party

The Communist Party did not come into being until August 1920 (some Marxist groups did not come in until 1921). The period now opening, with the end of the post-war boom and the missing of the revolutionary boat, was one of demoralization and defeats. The mere declaration that there existed a Communist Party was even then only one step along the road towards a real Communist Party. It had 4,000 to 5,000 members to start with. The BSP contributed most of these, though the SLP contributed a majority of the leaders (Tom Bell, Arthur MacManus, J. R. Campbell). The BSP gave Inkpin, the first secretary and Pollitt; the Left wing of the ILP gave Murphy and Saklatvala. The BSP was not organized on a factory basis, and had a tradition of federalism, meaning that members of the executive committee tended to think of themselves as representing different localities and not as the leadership of the whole movement nationally. But the party was from the first, as it always has been since, largely working-class in social composition, though still trained more for street corner propaganda than for campaigning in industry.

Most of the Marxist groupings, and certainly the best elements of them, converged in the Communist Party. But those which remained outside, while still claiming

to be Marxist, in some cases played a role later.

Those members of the SLP who did not join the Communist Party dwindled into a little group in Scotland which kept up the publication of certain basic pamphlets, e.g., *Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*.

John Maclean, a BSP member who had played an outstanding part in the anti-war struggle on the Clyde, had a fad about Scottish workers, whom he believed to be far in advance of and superior to English workers, and he kept outside the Communist Party and formed the Scottish Republican Socialist Party.

The Plebs League, the Central Labour College and later the NCLC drew towards the trade union apparatus but did not succumb to it until the 1940s, largely because such Labour and trade union leaders as Ellen Wilkinson, John Jagger and Coppock wanted the NCLC as a Left cover. Much pseudo-Marxist nonsense prevailed in this circle, but it remained free from the subsequent process of Stalinization of the Communist Party and discussed Trotsky's writings with some pretence at objectivity. Some of those who, via the ILP, joined a group expelled from the Communist Party to form the first British Trotskyist organization in the 1930s had learnt their Marxism through the Plebs and Labour College movement.

## Communication

### The 'New Left'

The most important fact about the New Left is that it exists. When Cliff Slaughter opened up discussion on "The 'New Left' and the Working Class" he made important criticisms of the theories about our society which some writers in the *New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* have advanced. But while I agree with almost everything that he wrote, I feel that he chose the wrong starting-point for discussion. For a Marxist the question must be: What does the existence of this grouping point to in the changing character of our political life? Slaughter too easily talks of 'the petty-bourgeois intellectual' and by so doing slides the New Left into a category which gives us no illumination as to the specific characteristics of this movement. And when one begins to look at the New Left carefully it is clear that the views with which Slaughter disagrees have also been challenged from within the New Left. John Saville has disagreed with Dorothy Thompson, and both Ralph Samuel and Edward Thompson have criticized Stuart Hall fairly trenchantly. What characterizes the New Left is not the holding of an agreed set of doctrines, but something more difficult to characterize, a frame of mind.

Indeed it has more than once been argued on the New Left that it is among its merits that it is so open a movement, that it is not endangering itself by becoming constricted within some new orthodoxy. What it has created are two journals, both with far larger circulations than would have been thought possible a few years ago. *Universities and Left Review* for example has a circulation of between six and seven thousand.

It has brought hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of young people into contact with socialist discussion. And it has provided, as Slaughter does not fail to recognize, important contributions to those discussions. How has all this been achieved? The answer comes, I think, from the meeting of two different groups. There are on the one hand the ex-Communists of 1956 and some like-minded people who abandoned Stalinism and have tried to rethink their socialism from the ground up. When they rebelled against the bureaucracy of the Stalinist party machines and the mechanical determinism of Stalinist ideology they did so in the name of a conception of human nature which was authentically Marxist. And the tone of voice in which they spoke caught the ears of a whole generation of young people who had not as yet been caught and moulded into political shape by the orthodoxies of our own society. The New Left finds its audience in the generation that marched to and from Aldermaston. What it has done is to provide leadership for and articulate expression of the feelings of an age-group that no one else has succeeded in influencing so strongly.

Who are these young people and what is their mood? Certainly most of them are middle-class, students and ex-students, teachers, office-workers, journalists and so on. But they are people who could make an impressive contribution to the fight for socialism. And they are in many ways the group who are most nakedly exposed to the pressures of conformism in our society. They do not normally meet working-class people very often. They are fed from all sides with the reports of what is happening to the workers brought back by the middle-class sociological explorers from the proletarian jungle. What they do respond to sharply are the threats which

meet them in their own experience: the impact of the mass media, the debasement of values under capitalism, the appalling official cynicism in face of the H-bomb. Their vitality is a sign of the inability of the official set-up to impose its orthodoxies, of the continual revolt of people against the patterns that the bureaucrats try to impose upon them.

These young people are not impressed by the Labour Party or the Communist Party. What happened in Spain, in the Moscow Trials, in 1848 or 1905, these are things of which they have usually only the most fragmentary knowledge. They are generous and are attracted above all by the seriousness and integrity that mark so many on the New Left. But their thinking is imprisoned by two contradictions which prevent growth in socialist thought beyond a certain point. The first of these concerns the relation between a capitalist economy and the variety of social institutions within such an economy. The second concerns the problem of socialist organization. So far as the first is concerned the contradiction arises from the fact that the New Left wants to stress both the all-pervasive corrupting influence of capitalism and the possibility of transforming institutions within capitalism. Thus there is no hesitancy on the part of writers on the New Left in rejecting classical reformism. Their analyses of advertising, of architecture, of films, of television and all our other cultural forms press towards the insight that it is the whole way of life which capitalism imposes which tends to the corruption of these things. If you are going to be effective, you are going to have to oppose not this or that feature of the system but the system itself. Yet there is also the strong emphasis, which Slaughter has criticized, on the possibility of building in the 'here and now'. But anything built in the 'here and now' will be subject to all the pressures of the system. The trouble with this demand for building in the 'here and now' is its ambiguity. If this is offered as an alternative to building a working-class movement then it is doomed to frustration and failure. If on the other hand it is, as it could be, a way into the class-struggle then it is important and full of possibility. For clearly, trying to create forms of community or culture which are opposed to the values of capitalism will at once bring one into social conflict. And the danger is that one will fight a series of guerilla engagements on cultural questions which will dissipate socialist energy and lead nowhere. What one hopes is that opening up these questions will lead one to see the basic antagonism in our society at the point of production.

There is a good deal of talk on the New Left about releasing the energies of people from the bonds of the system. There is a good deal of talk about the need for people to do things for themselves and not have them done for them. But the key point in our society at which people begin to act and think for themselves is the point at which they react in their work. The spontaneity of rank-and-file movements in the unions—what has the New Left said or done about this? One suspects strongly that many of the readers of *Universities and Left Review* draw their picture of present-day working-class life almost entirely from Richard Hoggart. Hoggart's analysis is open to criticism on many points. But the most crucial fact about it is that it pictures the worker entirely at leisure and not at all at work. And this is to miss both the point at which people are formed in their social activities most effectively, the only point at which one can begin to understand the relation of the capitalist system to people who live within it.

So we in fact arrive at a situation in the thought of the New Left where two alternative roads open up. Without the insight that working-class action against capitalism is basic to the whole struggle (and 'basic' is not a strong enough word) the assertions that capitalism tends to corrupt our whole cultural and social life and that it is possible to build community under capitalism remain a bare contradiction liable to sterilize socialist thought. With that insight new ways into the class struggle are opened up. The danger that faces the New Left is a clear one. It is characteristic of our political system that it has built into it a place for a licensed radicalism. Provided

the system is not itself menaced, opposition on this or that point is encouraged as a safety-valve and the critics are praised and patronized into place. Who are to be the licensed radicals of the 1960s? Classical reformism is no longer radical enough to need a licence. Building socialism in the 'here and now' could menace capitalism as little as reformism ever did. It can be clothed in the Left vocabulary which reformism has abandoned. And it could be used to separate off the young radicals of the New Left from the working-class struggle.

This danger is the more urgent because of present tendencies in the Labour movement. Whatever the outcome of the General Election a swing towards 'Bevanism without Bevan' is becoming increasingly probable. This will find an immediate point of contact with the New Left in, for example, opposition to NATO. The Communist Party leaders are working towards a new period of 'Popular Frontism'. Those of vaguely left tendencies will feel themselves on the crest of a wave. The chief danger in all this will be that it will suggest false hopes of victory through parliament, through capturing the 'machine'; it will distract attention from the rank-and-file industrial struggle. It will foster illusions of every kind about the 'here and now'.

Nonetheless the possibilities are quite as great as the dangers. For the New Left has so far shown a determined resistance to being incorporated as the radical wing of the Establishment. And the core of this resistance has been the extremely useful work done on where power lies in Britain today. The U. & L.R. pamphlet *The Insiders* and Michael Barratt-Brown's essay on *The Controllers* are only the two most outstanding examples of information which the New Left has disseminated in such a way that a background has been provided which explains to those who feel alienated from the powers which make and threaten their lives why this is so. This makes it all the more urgent that Marxists should be prepared to make their contribution within the New Left. The very openness of the discussion makes it possible for Marxists to enter into a dialogue in which they will learn as well as teach. And if Marxists do not enter into this discussion the one necessary insight, that into the role of the working-class, will remain lacking. But if one is to do this effectively one must begin where people are. One cannot bring in the theory of working-class action from outside the discussion as a kind of magical cure-all; one has to begin with the problems that engage people on the New Left and show in detail how their solution is impossible without an understanding of the centrality of that action. This is to say that if Marxists are to participate effectively in the New Left, they must really participate. This is not everybody's job; but there is no inconsistency for some of us in being both members of the Socialist Labour League and within the New Left.

One additional fruit of this might be that it would assist in dissipating the personal misunderstandings that still too often interfere with political work. These have two sources. The struggles of the past twenty-five years bred into many people a polemical and sectarian style of approach and with all of us this is easier to see in others than in ourselves. But more than this Stalinism with its bureaucracy bred an intense suspicion of personal motives. And this has been carried over into a far too great openness to gossip and suspicion. I think that people on the New Left and in the League have only to meet properly and argue properly for this to be avoided. If Marxists will take such initiative as is open to them (and I am well aware what efforts many Marxists have already made in this direction) they could break through this particular mist.

So far I have only dealt with the first of the two contradictions which I mentioned. The second arises because the New Left wishes both to assist in building socialism effectively and yet to remain outside the form of any type of organization which might lead to the actual capture of power. The roots of this lie in the repudiation and criticism of the bureaucracies both of social democracy and of communism. But this is

extended to a suspicion of any organized political work which could provide a revolutionary leadership. The attempt to work inside the Labour Party and the trade unions is apt to be dismissed as 'factionalism' and for work outside them the loosest and most informal forms of organization are thought appropriate. How then is it expected to achieve socialism? The answer seems to be that the building up of a socialist consciousness through educational and other work will lead to a permeation of society so that finally the capitalist integument bursts asunder. But in fact there is here a failure to measure up to the forces of the bureaucracies inside and outside the Labour movement. The most brilliant criticisms of the mass media are likely to reach the attention only of those already least susceptible to those media so long as the control of the media remains in the hands of those faithful to capitalism. How do you reach the rank and file of the Labour movement? By playing your part in it and above all at the point of industrial struggle where the rank and file are themselves responding to the pressures of capitalism. In other words you can only carry through any effective educational effort as part of the political and industrial struggle.

There is also a confusion abroad about freedom of discussion. British Marxists today are likely to be under no illusions about the importance of completely open discussion; but at the same time they find in Marxism a hard core of theory which can guide them into common action, while they still disagree on a wide variety of topics. The danger of loose and informal methods of organization is that they cannot impinge upon the class struggle in any effective way. The Left Book Club is a misleading model here: it was only able to do the work it

did—whatever we think of that work—because of all the other organizations which were also at work, and especially because of the Communist Party. Likewise the New Left can only hope to be effective if its discussions assist people in a kind of political activity which the New Left itself is unwilling to foster. Here again the role of Marxists is clear. Whether the discussions on the New Left serve action or not depends partly on whether we are willing to take part in them or not. Once again this is only a task for some comrades. But we could help to meet the need for a marriage between working-class spontaneity and adequate theory, on which the League has rightly laid so much stress, by utilizing the discussions on the New Left.

The most paradoxical fact about the New Left is the way in which sometimes in New Left discussions the fight on cultural questions and the fight for political power are treated as if they were two quite separate matters. This is not the place to develop the thesis that the only way to overcome the corruption of our culture is through the achievement of working-class power. But it is this thesis which Marxists must consistently develop in discussions on the New Left. And it is at this point that all the arguments which Slaughter develops become relevant and important. What I have tried to do is give a context to those arguments which would make it clear that the relationship of Marxists to the New Left ought not to be one merely negative and critical but one which is continually looking for those points of growth in its theory that can lead on to common political action.

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE

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