

LABOUR REVIEW

Vol. 4

JULY - AUGUST 1959

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

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IN DEFENCE OF TROTSKYISM

BECAUSE it firmly adheres to Marxism, and because it is attracting militant workers to its ranks, the Socialist Labour League has been under constant attack in the short period since its establishment. Its first major proposal on a vital social question—that the London Labour movement form united defence committees and defence squads to protect the citizens of north Kensington from fascist gangs—has had the compliment paid to it of systematic misrepresentation in practically every national newspaper. Transport House has passed a series of solemn decrees proscribing the League and banning its weekly paper, and has even succeeded in expelling ten very active members of the Labour Party. Dutt, the Stalinist leader—who generally manages to find his own level in controversy—has written about the ‘lavish American finance’¹ that is supposed to be sustaining the Marxist movement in its challenge to capitalism and to class collaboration! It is with a certain measure of pride that we face these attacks. They show the Socialist Labour League is on the right road.

And now, over the noise of the heavy artillery of Fleet Street and Smith Square and the poisoned arrows of King Street, it is possible to hear the faintest ping of a peashooter, as a body with the high-sounding title of ‘The International Secretariat of the Fourth International’ joins in the attack. Anxious not to miss the chance of adding their mite, the international secretaries have the following to say about the Socialist Labour League:

By inordinate attacks against the leaders of the L[abour] P[arty] and the trade unions, and by its ‘third period’ activity at the rank-and-file level, disregarding the most elementary discipline necessary towards the party in which supposedly the essential work was to be done, [the Socialist Labour League] is now destroying all the positions won inside the L[abour] P[arty] and the trade unions, in a struggle—ill-chosen both in terms of the correlation of forces and in terms of timing—with the reformist bureaucracy.² ‘Inordinate attacks.’ ‘“Third period” activity at rank-and-file level.’ This is how this body describes the activity of *The Newsletter* and the Socialist Labour League, whose only aim is to build an alternative working-class leadership to that of the Right wing and the Stalinists!

¹ R.P.D., ‘Notes of the Month’, *Labour Monthly*, vol. xii, p. 155, April 1959.

² ‘Open Letter to the Organizations of the International Committee’, *Internal Bulletin of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International*, April 1959.

Serious workers will ask: how does it come about that a body professedly Marxist, professedly Trotskyist, can make such a farcical assessment of the recent developments in the Marxist movement in Britain? Who are these international secretaries and what do they stand for? And what is the road to the construction of an international revolutionary leadership that can restore the good name of the Fourth International—which the international secretaries tarnish with every breath they utter—re-establish the political and ideological authority of world Trotskyism, and construct a world communist party in the best traditions of working-class internationalism?

FOUR attempts have been made to organize working men on an international scale. The First International was founded in London on September 28, 1864. The defeat of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the vast expansion of world capitalism checked the development of the revolutionary vanguard and prevented its becoming an international working-class party. The Second International collapsed ingloriously as an international force when the first imperialist world war broke out in 1914. The reformist leaders capitulated to ‘their’ imperialist governments, betraying the pledges they had made to wage an international struggle against war. The conquest of power by the Russian working class in 1917 set the stage for the creation of a new world party. Those socialists throughout the world who were faithful to Marxist principles came together to form the Third International—the Communist International. Unlike the loose association that was the Second International, in which each national leadership put collaboration with ‘its’ own capitalist class above the interests of the working class throughout the world, the Third International was truly international; it was a disciplined, fighting organization; it was a world party, dedicated to the cause of socialist revolution.

But the degeneration of the Soviet Union led to the degeneration of the Communist International. The bureaucratic leaders of the Soviet Union usurped the authority of the Russian revolution and turned the Communist International from an instrument of world revolution into an organization for the defence of their own bureaucratic privileges. To Stalinism ‘inter-

nationalism' stands for working-class collaboration with the Soviet bureaucracy. It means the subordination of working-class and colonial struggles to the diplomatic needs of the Soviet leaders. Stalinism transformed the communist parties into frontier guards for the Russian bureaucracy. By 1933 the inability of the Communist International to prevent the victory of German fascism showed that it had decayed as a world revolutionary party. It was a mere formality when ten years later, at the behest of Roosevelt and Churchill, Stalin finally buried the corpse.

From 1933 onwards there could be no doubt of the urgent need for the revolutionary vanguard to build a new international. It was then that the world movement which had developed around the struggle of Trotsky and the Left Opposition inside the communist parties issued the call for a new communist international, a fourth international.

TWENTY-ONE years ago, in September 1938, thirty delegates from eleven countries, representing the most advanced sections of the international working class, met and set up this new international. These founders of the Fourth International were the true heirs of Marx, Engels and Lenin. They had carried forward the internationalist traditions of Bolshevism in a struggle against Stalin's narrow, nationalistic doctrine of 'socialism in one country'. They had pitted their strength against the policies of defeat and capitulation which the Communist International in its degeneration had imposed upon the struggles of the German workers, the French workers, the Spanish workers.

From the historical experience of the working class and its revolutionary vanguard in the ninety years since Marx and Engels had written the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, they drew conclusions about what the workers of the world and the oppressed colonial peoples must do to overthrow decaying capitalism. Their conclusions were embodied in the 'Transitional Programme', written by Leon Trotsky and adopted at this founding congress as the programme of the new international.³

The world was on the brink of a war which the policies of the Right-wing and Stalinist reformists had helped to prepare. These mis-leaders had led the working class into a series of defeats. In Germany the social democrats had refused to mobilize the working class for social revolution—the only way Hitler's road to power could have been barred. The German Communist Party had pursued an ultra-Left policy and,

with Stalin's theory of 'social-fascism', had split the German working class. Both parties collapsed miserably with the victory of fascism. In 1935 the seventh and last congress of the Communist International had met, veering from the ultra-Left theory of 'social-fascism' to the Rightist, reformist theory of the people's front, based on the Stalinist bureaucracy's desire for an agreement with French and British capitalism. It was the application of this theory by the Spanish Communist Party which destroyed the revolutionary initiative of the workers and peasants; the party confined the struggle to a defence of the bourgeois republic when the only way Franco could have been destroyed was by carrying forward the socialist revolution.

In Russia, the progress of the working class towards socialism had been retarded and distorted by the political dictatorship of a privileged caste which could only betray revolutionary movements in the rest of the world. The Stalinist rulers had lately carried through their abominable frame-ups, executing the Old Bolsheviks almost to a man.

The 'Transitional Programme' declared that objective conditions for socialist revolution on a world scale were ripe. Capitalism was in decay. Ever more destructive wars, fascism and unemployment were the marks of that decay. The working class had both the power and the numbers to destroy this outmoded system. But between the working class and socialism stood all the old working-class leaders. 'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat', the programme began. But 'the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus'.⁴ By these words Marxists expressed their confidence that the working class would be able to break the stranglehold of Stalinist and Right-wing reformism, and fulfil its historical task: freeing humanity from capitalism. That task, however, could be fulfilled only under the leadership of a Marxist vanguard, which would be built in the inevitable conflict between the workers and their traditional leaders. The 'Transitional Programme' was the foundation for the new international which would eventually lead the working class to the overthrow of imperialism, and to political revolution in the Soviet Union—the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the restoration of soviet democracy—which would be spurred on by an extension of the socialist revolution in the west.

In 1938 the Marxists who founded the Fourth International expected revolutionary explosions in the major capitalist countries in the forthcoming imperialist war. They expected that these developments would hasten the disintegration of Stalinist and Right-wing reformism. They predicted that the crisis caused by

³ *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Working Class. The Transitional Programme of the Fourth International* (n.d.).

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 3, 5.

the war would enable the Fourth International to win the leadership of the masses of the people.

YET the Fourth International did not emerge as a mass force out of revolutionary developments brought about by the war. The members of the Fourth International on the Continent were decimated by the war and by Nazi occupation. In the main it was a new, young generation of supporters of the Fourth International that emerged. By the end of the war the movement still consisted of groups in the major countries, for the most part carrying out only propaganda activity, still with much work in front of them if they were to show that their programme was correct and win support for it.

Discussing the defeat of the Spanish revolution, Trotsky had written: 'Even in cases where the old leadership has revealed its internal corruption, the [working] class cannot improvise immediately a new leadership.'⁵ Trotskyism came out of the second world war still isolated from the mass movements, still weak in numbers. Despite Stalinist and Right-wing betrayals, it was unable to win mass support.

Thanks to the treachery of Stalinism in western Europe the old capitalist politicians assumed leadership once again. Mass movements in France and Italy were diverted by their Stalinist leaders. In Britain the Right-wing Labour leaders came to power and successfully headed off the mass movement against Toryism. The Fourth International now faced a period of slow, painful, uphill work to build the Marxist movement in the various countries.

Then in 1947-53 came the period of the Cold War. The question that presented itself to the Marxists was this: could revolutionary parties be built in time, before war began?

It was in this period, under the pressures of Stalinism and imperialism, that certain prominent individuals in the Fourth International, headed by Michel Pablo, secretary of the international executive committee, began to revise, and reject, the fundamental principles of the Marxist movement. It was these revisions which caused a split in the Fourth International in 1953.

PABLOISM had as its central thesis a deeply pessimistic prophecy of inevitable and immediate war. This forecast not only presumed the organic incapacity of the American and European working class to prevent such a war—thereby dismiss-

ing their revolutionary potentialities—but also attributed to the imperialist rulers a power, homogeneity and stability which they did not possess. Pablo made this forecast of inevitable, immediate war in a speech he delivered on July 12, 1952. He said: 'The international situation is evolving irreversibly within a very brief period towards a world war of a given character and within a given relationship of forces.' He went on to proclaim, modestly, that 'this evaluation, which we were the first to make, not only within the ranks of the workers' movement but even to a certain extent of all political movements, no one dares to attack any longer'. Referring to this 'evaluation' as 'this inevitable evolution of the situation', Pablo added: 'Not wanting to lull ourselves with illusions, we attempt to act as of now in *consequence of this position and in practice*.'⁶ Thus the 'inevitable' war and all that Pabloism saw as flowing from it in the policies and activities of working-class bureaucracy were to be the immediate axis of the Fourth International's activity.

Since the 'inevitable', 'immediate' war would be a war against the Soviet Union, Pablo declared that by its very nature it would be an international civil war, a 'war-revolution'. The world was already being polarized between the forces of revolution and the forces of imperialism. Working-class bureaucracies, both Stalinist and Right-wing, were in a vice. On the one side was the irreversible march of imperialism to war—a war against the whole working class. On the other side was the irreversible revolutionary wave. 'The situation is pre-revolutionary all over in various degrees,' declared Pablo in February 1952, in a report to the executive committee of the Fourth International, 'and evolving towards the revolution in a relatively brief period. And this process from now on is irreversible.'⁷

But these irreversible developments did not mean that the working class and the oppressed peoples in struggle would come into ever sharper conflict with their bureaucratic leaders; or that the latter would seek, as in the past, to head off and destroy revolutionary development. On the contrary: according to Pablo the conflict between the interests of the bureaucracy and those of the working class would be overcome. The bureaucrats would be swept along by the revolutionary wave, which would end imperialism.

⁶ 'For a Decisive Turn in France (Speech of Comrade M. Pablo at the 8th Congress of the P[arti] C[ommuniste] I[nternationaliste]—French Section of the Fourth International)', *International Information Bulletin* (Socialist Workers Party, New York), November 1952, p. 5.

⁷ 'The Tactical Application of the Third World Congress Line. Report by M. Pablo (Adopted by the Tenth Plenum of the I[nternational] E[xecutive] C[ommittee]) February 1952', *International Information Bulletin* (Socialist Workers Party, New York), 1952, p. 8.

⁵ Leon Trotsky, 'The Class, the Party and the Leadership. Why Was the Spanish Proletariat Defeated? (Questions of Marxist Theory)', *Fourth International* (New York), vol. 1, no. 7, p. 193, December 1940.

In this way Pablo revised the conception of the bureaucracy as being by its very nature a barrier to working-class struggle. In its place he put the idea that the present leaders of Right-wing and Stalinist parties—or some of these leaders—would adjust themselves to ‘mass pressure’ to the extent that they would be forced to carry through the final battle against capitalism. For example, speaking of ‘countries where the [Right-wing] reformist movements embrace the political majority of the [working] class . . . as in England, Austria, Belgium, Australia, Canada, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and, with certain reservations, India and Germany’, Pablo declared: ‘These organizations cannot be smashed and replaced by others in the relatively short time between now and the decisive conflict. All the more so since these organizations will be obliged, whether they wish it or not, to give a leftward turn to the policy of the whole or at least a part of their leadership.’⁸ The bureaucrats were trapped by the revolutionary wave and forced to act counter to their nature—‘whether they wish it or not’. To use words properly, they were forced to *change their nature*; for if a counter-revolutionary no longer acts as a counter-revolutionary he ceases to be one. The Stalinist bureaucracy in particular was caught between the drive of imperialism to war on the one side and, on the other, the pressure of the masses of the people in a continuous, unfolding revolutionary wave. While this bureaucracy might wish to betray the revolution, imperialism could no longer offer it any compromise. So, in its own interests, it was forced to go forward in struggle against capitalism under mass pressure. Under this pressure communist parties could be forced to struggle for power, or, as Pablo delicately put it, ‘project a revolutionary orientation’. ‘The communist parties of the capitalist countries . . . find themselves placed in conditions absolutely different from those of pre-war days’, declared a document called *Rise and Decline of Stalinism*, which embodied Pablo’s ideas, and around which the sharpest controversy developed in 1953. This document, adopted as a resolution by Pablo’s ‘Fourth World Congress’ in 1954, stated:

In countries where the C[ommunist] P[artie]s are a majority in the working class, they can, under exceptional conditions (advanced disintegration of the possessing classes) and under the pressure of very powerful revolutionary uprisings of the masses, be led to project a revolutionary orientation counter to the Kremlin’s directives, without abandoning the political and theoretical baggage inherited from Stalinism . . .

Under these conditions the disintegration of Stalinism in these parties must not be understood in the next immediate stage as an organizational disintegration of these parties or as a public break with the Kremlin but as a gradual internal transformation, accompanied by a political differentiation within their midst. It is even possible that such a process of

Stalinist disintegration may be accompanied in some communist mass parties by a certain consolidation or an organizational strengthening, to the extent that, under the pressure of circumstances, they modify their policies to conform closer to the interests of the masses.⁹

The ‘irresistible process’ was also at work on the Soviet bureaucracy itself. Pablo was one of those who after the death of Stalin predicted a liberalization of the Soviet bureaucracy when it was forced to grant certain concessions to the Soviet people in order to maintain its rule. Pablo wrote:

The dynamic of their concessions is in reality liquidatory of the entire Stalinist heritage in the USSR itself, as well as in its relations with the satellite countries, with China and the communist parties. It will no longer be easy to turn back Once the concessions are broadened, the march towards a real liquidation of the Stalinist régime threatens to become irresistible.¹⁰

The programme of the Fourth International had maintained that the Soviet bureaucracy must be overthrown by the Soviet masses under the revolutionary leadership of a Marxist movement in the USSR: ‘Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet régime and guarantee its further development towards socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection—the party of the Fourth International!’¹¹ Pablo placed a question mark over this basic proposition.

Pablo’s theory of ‘mass pressure’ is set forth most clearly in a recent article where he states: ‘In the concrete currently existing conditions, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries, this transitional political power will be able to take on the form only of a government of the workers’ party or parties, supported by the revolutionary organization of the masses

⁹ ‘Rise and Decline of Stalinism. Resolution Approved by the Fourth World Congress of 1954’, *Fourth International* (Paris), no. 1, pp. 52, 53, Winter 1958. The June 1957 issue of the French Pabloist journal *La Vérité des Travailleurs* summed up the conclusions of Pabloism, which it said had been ‘remarkably well confirmed’. Among these conclusions it gave the following: ‘The antagonism between capitalism and socialism cannot but lead to a war-revolution, i.e., an armed class struggle on the world scale In the course of the process leading to the war-revolution, and during the latter, the proletariat in the countries where the recognized leadership is Stalinist will tend to regroup itself around the C[ommunist] P[arty]. **This leadership may put forward a revolutionary policy under pressure of the masses** The outcome of the war-revolution which is by far the most likely is the victory of socialism. The **building of socialism** will take place under the banner of the Fourth International’ (English translation in *Against Pablo Revisionism*. Bulletin no. 1, pp. 41-3, September 1957. Our emphasis).

¹⁰ Michel Pablo, ‘The Post-Stalin “New Course”’, *Fourth International* (New York), vol. xiv, no. 2, p. 39, March-April 1953.

¹¹ *The Death Agony of Capitalism*, p. 39.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 11.

in committees.¹² In Britain this would mean a government of Labour Party and Communist Party MPs—which is precisely the present policy of the British Communist Party. Pablo goes on to outline his followers' tasks:

In reality the goal of the extra-parliamentary revolutionary action of the masses could not be to bring about a parliamentary government of a coalition between the workers' parties and one wing of the bourgeoisie, but to impose a government of the workers' parties, and to support it in the application of its transitional programme. By educating and mobilizing the masses for a whole period of years on the basis of a transitional programme oriented towards workers' power of the workers' parties in the advanced capitalist States, it would turn out to be possible to impose this political solution, either by winning the parliamentary majority or by forcing the bourgeoisie to accept the government of a coalition of workers' parties

A consistent class policy on the basis of a concrete transitional programme adapted to the conditions in each country, and a united front of the parties claiming to be of the working class, would be able also in certain cases to win a parliamentary majority, and in others to impose a government of the workers' parties even if it were minority [sic] from the viewpoint of parliamentary representation. Then, beginning with the formation (however it came about) of a workers' government, mobilization and organization of the revolutionary masses, enabling the workers' government to begin to act by going outside the bourgeois framework.

The 'new road' to socialism in each advanced capitalist country, i.e., the concrete transitional road to socialism, depends on three conditions: the working up of a transitional programme adapted to the peculiarities of the country; a systematic united front policy of the workers' parties; the orientation of the programme and the front towards the government of the workers' parties applying this programme and backed by the extra-parliamentary mobilization and organization of the masses.¹³

In an article on 'The Arab Revolution' Pablo calls for the formation, not of revolutionary parties, but of 'transitional parties'. In Morocco and Tunisia he calls for the formation of a mass Labour Party based on the trade unions. 'In the more special case of Algeria, it is obvious that both the revolutionary Marxist tendency and the essential forces of a mass Labour Party of tomorrow will emerge from the inevitable social and political differentiation within the present FLN.'¹⁴ The Marxists in these Arab countries must first work to form the Labour Parties so that they can work inside them in accordance with the theory of 'mass pressure'.

All this rigmarole shows Pablo not only turning his back on Marxist principles, as embodied in the 'Transitional Programme'; it also shows him arrogantly refusing to take into account the rich experience of the Marxist movement in Ceylon, where the Lanka Sama Samaja Party has established itself as a mass party.

What is the essence of Pablo's theories? They are a

complete negation of the Marxist conception of the *conscious intervention* of the Fourth International. If one accepts the Pabloite dogma of irresistible processes, then the entire struggle for correct working-class leadership, and therefore for the building of the Fourth International, becomes completely redundant. If 'objective conditions', the 'new reality', as Pablo called it, can make bureaucracy act as a revolutionary force, then what earthly purpose does the Marxist movement serve? Why should Marxists put forward their own policies against those of the present leaders of the working class? Why should the Marxist movement fight to build itself as a realistic alternative before the working class, if 'mass pressure' can cut revolutionary channels along which the present leaders, or at least sections of them, will have no option but to travel?

But it is not simply a question of running away from the difficulties of building a revolutionary movement, and covering one's retreat by an artificial and mechanical scheme of 'irreversible processes' which will bring the victory of socialism. Those who declare that irresistible, irreversible mass pressure can prevent bureaucrats from carrying through counter-revolutionary acts as in the past are in practice helping those bureaucrats. They are blunting the fight for correct policies and providing excuses for the bureaucracy.¹⁵

¹⁵ When the east Berlin rising took place in 1953 the main lesson the Pabloists drew was that the bureaucracy was no longer able to repress in the same way. They sharply attacked articles in the *Militant*, the weekly paper of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, declaring that these articles were contrary to the 'line' of the International and 'devised from old schemas and reminiscences and not from a correct analysis of the present reality, of the relationship of present forces, from present dynamics'. A correct analysis of what happened in east Berlin should have been based, according to them, on 'international revolutionary dynamics and the new relationship of forces between the masses and the bureaucracy, obliging it to make real concessions and limiting its possibilities of repressions and purges'. Again, according to the Pabloists the events in east Germany 'did not primarily demonstrate the reactionary and repressive role of the bureaucracy (which we know very well) but its weakness in relation to the masses and its dislocation under the pressure and influence of the masses. The native and Soviet Stalinists in east Germany did not respond **primarily** by mass repressions, shootings etc. to the workers' revolt but **much more** by a series of concessions. Elsewhere, in Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Bulgaria, Albania, they proceeded by the granting of concessions even before the pressure of the masses erupted, precisely in order to avoid it On the other hand, the events in eastern Germany have given rise to a highly significant and precious phenomenon for the understanding of the real and not the bookish course of the political revolution in these countries, namely a split from top to bottom of the Stalinist party, an entire wing of the bureaucracy capitulating before the workers and taking their side at the time of the workers' uprising' (Letter of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International to the Socialist Workers Party, September 3, 1953). Three years later the bureaucracy, which was no longer 'responding primarily by mass repressions, shootings etc.', brutally crushed the uprising of the Hungarian workers.

¹² Michel Pablo, 'Democracy, Socialism, and Transitional Programme', *Fourth International* (Amsterdam), no. 6, p. 34, Spring 1959.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 35.

¹⁴ 'The Arab Revolution', *Ibid.* pp. 56, 57.

No revolutionary organization, no combat organization, will ever be built on the basis of theories such as these. That is why Marxists must oppose them.

AS the proverb says, 'Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are'. Is it accidental that the ideas of Pablo were first taken up in this country by one John Lawrence and a small group around him in St Pancras? Lawrence has now developed Pablo's ideas to their logical conclusion by joining the Communist Party. A small monthly paper, *Socialist Fight*, carries the torch for Pablo in Britain. It is a flickering torch; but the British Pabloites have bravely tried to keep its feeble flame alight by joining in the attacks on *The Newsletter* and the Socialist Labour League. Its February issue denounces as 'irresponsible adventurism' *The Newsletter's* call for the rank and file of the trade unions to organize around militant policies. To *Socialist Fight* it is no less important to warn against this 'folly' than to criticize the policies of the Right-wing Labour and trade union leaders. To *The Newsletter* the main task is to build an alternative leadership with a socialist policy in the factories and trade unions. To *Socialist Fight* the main task is this: 'Above all pressure must be mobilized at branch and district level.' (The emphasis is in the original.) By distorting the position of the Socialist Labour League, by declaring that the aim of the League is to get together a tiny handful of militants and artificially call them a rank-and-file movement, the British Pabloites seek to cover up their own avoidance of the task of building an alternative leadership. The prospect that Pabloism holds out is that one sits tight contemplating one's navel until the 'process' within the Right-wing and Stalinist parties pushes the bureaucracy in a revolutionary direction.

The Socialist Labour League has not come into being by accident, but out of the struggles of the past year, which showed that such an organization was needed by the British working class. It has come into being to intervene in the experience of the working class, to organize, educate and prepare the vanguard which is drawing fundamental lessons from the employers' offensive, from rank-and-file resistance and from Right-wing betrayals. It has come into being at a time when the growing militancy in industry is not yet being carried into the Labour Party. It has come into being to fight for class struggle policies inside the Labour Party and trade unions, so continuing and carrying forward in present-day conditions the best traditions of Trotskyist work within the mass organizations of the working class.

Pablo and his band of international secretaries have

made not the slightest attempt to analyse or assess the present situation in Britain, the objective class relations, the industrial struggle, the political struggle, the problems and tasks of Marxists that flow therefrom. This is not their method. For one thing, such an analysis and assessment could be fruitful only if it drew on the experience of practical activity by the Marxist movement in Britain. But the international secretaries do not need to draw on anyone's living experience. They have their ready-made scheme. And that means subordinating one's own intervention in the class struggle until mass pressure forces the bureaucracy or sections of it into the leadership of a revolution.

The anti-Marxist idea that 'mass pressure' could change the essential nature of the bureaucracy; the anti-Marxist idea that 'mass pressure' could force the bureaucracy to go along with the world revolution; the assumption that—again under 'mass pressure'—the communist parties could lead the working class to the conquest of power: it was against these Pabloite theories (which are indeed the 'crude revision of the Marxist conception of the bureaucracy'¹⁶ which LABOUR REVIEW branded them almost two years ago) that Marxists defending the principles of the Fourth International gave battle. There could be no compromise, for what was at stake was the International itself as a revolutionary force. For while Pablo and his supporters might repeat, side by side with their revisionist ideas, formal phrases about the necessity for the Fourth International, their revisionist ideas in practice steadily undermined its very foundations. Formal adherence to the International while destroying its content, its programme: that sums up Pabloism. Those who put forward Pabloite ideas in the proud name of the Fourth International are impostors.

Trotskyists in various countries who opposed this revision of Marxism therefore set up an International Committee to defend the programme and principles of the Fourth International against these people who posture as Marxists.

The supreme task for Marxists today, as the International Committee sees it, is to establish the political independence of the working class through the construction of powerful revolutionary parties in every country, parties which will provide the solid foundations for the Fourth International. If this task is to be achieved there can be no compromise with Pablo's theories. Between Pabloism and the Marxist ideas which guide the practical activity of the Socialist Labour League there lies an unbridgeable gulf. The Marxist *cadre* of the future cannot emerge without a consistent struggle against Pabloism.

¹⁶ 'Soviet Reality', *Labour Review*, vol. ii, no. 5, p. 130, September-October 1957.

A STRONG guiding centre for the revolutionary workers' movement in all countries must be built. An international cannot be a simple sum of parties; it must be a unified organization undertaking revolutionary tasks and able to help the workers' struggles throughout the world.

But how is such a powerful world party to be built?

The crisis of the proletarian leadership cannot be overcome by means of an abstract formula. It is a question of an extremely humdrum process. But not of a purely 'historical' process, that is, of the objective premises of conscious activity, but of an uninterrupted chain of ideological, political and organizational measures for the purpose of fusing together the best, the most conscious elements of the world proletariat beneath a spotless banner.¹⁷

The International will not be built by a group of impressionistic 'world strategists' handing down the tactical line to each country; nor by commentators charting the 'irreversible processes'. An international movement will be built by helping national movements to reach a thorough understanding of the realities of struggle in their own countries, and of their tasks. The richest and most important lessons for the development of the revolutionary movement will be drawn from its practical struggle to win leadership, from the struggle for its programme, from its intervention in the battles of the working class and the oppressed peoples.

The building of a world party is in many ways more complicated than the building of a national party. But nationally and internationally alike the authority of leaders can only be based on confidence, born out of experience, in their ability and the correctness of the practical and theoretical help they give to revolutionaries participating in the class struggle.

IN association with the International Committee of the Fourth International, the Socialist Labour League is proposing to call an international conference open to all revolutionary parties and groupings that are seeking to build Marxist movements in their

countries. It is planned to hold this conference in the autumn of 1960. To this conference there will be invited: all who stand for the building of Marxist working-class parties in the capitalist countries, in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and in the countries under the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy; all parties and trends which stand for the defence of the Soviet Union, China and the countries of eastern Europe; all those directing their efforts to the construction of a revolutionary leadership capable of organizing the working class for the socialist revolution; all those who, seeking to be in the forefront of the national liberation struggle in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, base their activity on the need to build independent working-class revolutionary movements as the only leadership able to carry through the struggle for national independence to the end by fusing the national revolution with the socialist revolution; all those who oppose the idea that Stalinism and social democracy can be transformed into revolutionary forces and who consciously intervene in mass movements for the purpose of winning leadership and smashing the bureaucrats' hold over the working class.

This conference will have the purpose of assessing the present state of the Marxist forces throughout the world, and of elaborating ways and means whereby the common experience of these forces can help each national movement to develop as a revolutionary force. The conference will be a step towards the eventual unification of the international revolutionary forces into a world party on a realistic basis, with a centre whose functions can develop as the growth of the movement permits the rise of representative executive bodies with an authority that has been earned by work.

The time has come to reorganize the Fourth International and build it as a powerful international party linking the vanguard of the working class throughout the world. We are confident that the proposed international conference will be a milestone along this road.

¹⁷ Leon Trotsky, 'Luxemburg and the Fourth International. Cursory Remarks on an Important Question', *New International* (New York), vol. ii, no. 5, p. 169, August 1935.

Marxists in Conference

Peter Fryer

THE inaugural conference of the Socialist Labour League, held in London at Whitsuntide, demonstrated that the ideas to which a generation of Marxists held firm through three decades of isolation and persecution have struck root in British soil. The Marxist movement has taken shape. It has flung down its challenge to capitalism, to fascism, to Right-wing and Stalinist misleaders, to 'new thinkers' and 'new Left' coteries, and to the various sectarian groupings. Here is a movement that means business, as every witch-hunting attack, every ban, proscription and expulsion testifies; a movement that is based on the proletariat in a period of mounting class struggle; a movement that is therefore rapidly extending in size and influence.

Compare the analysis, democracy, composition and fighting spirit of the Socialist Labour League's conference with the deliberations and the lineaments of any other political movement or institution in Britain today. A long series of letters to *The Times* has proved what we all knew: that the Labour Party cannot attract young people, because its leaders fear youth's radical and revolutionary instincts; and because they have nothing to offer young people. The Communist Party held its congress at Easter: the same set speeches; the same incantations; and now the same aging and discredited hacks and hatchet-men are re-elected to the political committee. The Co-operative congress, wrote the special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*,

virtually expired . . . this evening. 'The movement,' the delegates have explained continually during the past three days, 'has lost its dynamic.' The proof of this statement is perhaps to be found in the failure of the congress even to last its appointed course of four days.¹

The headline to this melancholy report read: 'Co-op. Congress fails to last four-day course. Tepid discussion about H-bomb.' Or take Parliament itself. One after another the political commentators have bemoaned the MPs' listlessness, apathy and poor attendance. 'The only subject anybody at Westminster discusses at all,' wrote one correspondent recently, is

the rigid catalepsy that from Left to Right holds almost undisputed sway within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster. Zombie-like, they go back and forth about their duties . . . If some enterprising lead-slinger should summon up the energy . . . to circularize all his fellow-Members with a suggestion that they should none of them come back at all . . . the chances are that they would accept the suggestion with joy and unanimity, and that when they put it into effect nobody would notice.²

So little, indeed, can one veteran parliamentary correspondent find to occupy his time that he has begun writing his memoirs—or those of Lord Beaverbrook; one cannot quite make out which.

In this drowsy political climate, scarcely ruffled by the murder of a Negro in north Kensington, by the

murder of eleven others in a Kenya concentration camp, by a mutiny at a 'hell-hole' of a military prison, by the hanging of a young worker alleged to have killed a policeman in a brawl, or by various instances of malpractice among the police³—in this political climate, which sets politicians slumbering because it is the climate of a moribund social system, the challenge of the Socialist Labour League came with all the shock of an icy wind. Unlike any other movement, the Marxist movement bases its policies and programme on a scientific analysis of the real position, tasks and capacity for struggle of the working class. Unlike any other movement, the Marxist movement is attracting to its ranks the best of the so-called 'beat' generation: young workers whose imagination is stirred by the revolutionary alternative to the frustration and aimlessness that is engendered in them both by capitalism and by the quack remedies proffered by the Fabians and the Stalinists alike. And, again unlike any other movement, the Socialist Labour League faces the future with complete confidence in the validity of its message and its ability to go forward triumphantly along its chosen path.

The Whitsun conference dashed the hopes of all who last November had fancied that the—for them—unexpected and disagreeable success of the National Industrial Rank-and-File Conference was a mere flash in the pan.⁴ It was a conference of a League united, vigorous and ready for battle; determined to take its policy to the workers, determined to give them leadership in battle, determined to win the most militant and active workers for the liberating ideas of Marxism. Small wonder, therefore, that the call of the conference—for working-class action, for resistance to wage cuts, for an end to bans, proscriptions and expulsions, and for united defence committees to resist fascist violence against immigrants—touched the British bourgeoisie and its Press on their rawest nerve. Even 'Cassandra' had to scrape around in his rich vocabulary of hate-words for some extra-vituperative epithets; thereby (and for this we are greatly indebted to him) informing some 13 million readers of the *Daily Mirror* for the first time

³ One choice example among many that could be quoted was reported as follows in the *Daily Telegraph* of May 22, 1959: 'P.c. gave himself leave to park. Ipswich magistrates yesterday dismissed a summons against P.c. Roy Rushmore for a parking offence. They agreed that when in uniform he could give himself permission to leave his private car in a restricted area for any length of time. P.c. Rushmore said he had to attend Ipswich court as witness. He knew the borough traffic regulations did not allow him to park more than 20 minutes without special permission from a policeman in uniform. "I was in uniform and as there was no other policeman about was in my right to give myself permission."'

⁴ See e.g. *The Times*, November 17, 1958: 'The composition of the group is so diverse that it would be surprising if they were to cohere for long.'

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, May 21, 1959.

² *Spectator*, May 15, 1959.

of the existence of a genuine Marxist movement in Britain. Meanwhile in the *News Chronicle*, which first discovered a 'Red Club' under the bed, the usually *blasé* Mr Douglas Brown confessed himself 'surprised': 'The Socialist Labour League, surprisingly, appears to be making some impact.'⁵ Let Mr Brown take heed. There are many more surprises in store for him.

But Marxists never have used and never will use as any kind of yardstick of their successes the number of column inches devoted to their activities in the Press of their enemies, which is stupid when it is not ill-informed, and malicious when it is not stupid. For such a yardstick we must turn to the conference itself. Examine, for instance, the report of the credentials committee for some idea of the movement's attractive power and of the tempo of its growth. Two-thirds of the delegates had declared for Marxism in the past year; one-fifth had done so since the launching of the League at the end of February 1959. In the same period, it was reported, the sales of *The Newsletter* had doubled to ten times what they were when the paper was launched in May 1957. Here are truly remarkable coefficients of growth, which show no sign of diminishing.

Or consider another index of the movement's strength: the seriousness and keenness of the two major debates. In thirteen hours of debate—not counting reports and replies from the platform—the delegates hammered out, first a political resolution covering all major premises and aspects of the League's activity,⁶ secondly a constitution setting forth the League's democratic centralist structure and the rights and responsibilities of its members. To the draft of the political resolution, seventy-six amendments. To the draft of the constitution, forty-seven amendments. After the withdrawal or compositing of those that overlapped, nearly half these amendments were argued out in debate, in a cut and thrust of opinions that fashioned, clause by clause, worthy political and organizational weapons for the new League. Despite the youthful character of the conference, whose average age was 29 years and 10 months; despite the inexperience and immaturity of a considerable section of the delegates; despite the novelty of the occasion, platform and delegates alike often feeling their way in deciding new and unexpected problems of procedure: nevertheless the debates were distinguished at once by their smoothness, by the lack of any platform domination whatever, and by the high level of the majority of contributions.

A third outstanding feature of the conference was its overwhelmingly proletarian composition. There was a handful of clerical and professional workers. There was a handful of students—too few, perhaps, considering the recent advances the League has been making in the universities. Nine delegates out of ten came from the basic industries: engineering, mining, building, the docks, the railways. The general debate on the political report, before the conference proceeded to discuss the political resolution section by section, was a procession of industrial workers: two miners, two

printworkers, a building worker, a boilermaker, an engineer. Here were revolutionary ideas in the process of *becoming* a 'material force'. From this feature of the conference there flows an imperious task: the need for the most systematic and thorough education of the hundreds of militant workers who have come and will be coming towards the Socialist Labour League, so as to equip them as soon as possible with the theory and method of Marxism and develop their initiative, self-orientation and power of leadership.

The League has room neither for Philistinism nor for the arrogance and aloofness that characterize certain kinds of self-styled 'intellectuals'. The conference brought together the movement's precious *cadre* of writers, historians and economists in a consultation with the industrial workers whom they serve and who need their specialist knowledge. The fruits of this and future consultations will, we hope, be seen in *LABOUR REVIEW* and in classes, schools, syllabuses and books of all kinds. The Socialist Labour League has turned its back on the kind of 'Marxism' which looks askance at the workers' real struggles and problems. For us Marxism is a class weapon, and our militants and our intellectuals will together study it, enrich it, develop it and destroy a good many false ideas with it in the battles that lie ahead.

But the unity of the conference was expressed in another way, too, without which the historical significance of this remarkable gathering cannot be understood. The conference represented the definite merging of three political streams. First, the old Trotskyist movement, whose roots go back to the early thirties, when Marxist groups in the Independent Labour Party and Left opposition groups in the Communist Party brought Trotsky's criticism of the Soviet bureaucracy to the attention of the British workers for the first time. Young workers who join the Socialist Labour League should know of the historical continuity of the Marxist movement in Britain. There is an unbroken line of tradition, of work, activity and method running through the Marxist groups of the thirties, the Revolutionary Communist Party of the forties, and the Trotskyist movement that in the fifties did so much to strengthen the work of the Labour Left. The second stream is that of the oppositionists within the Communist Party who, after the Khrushchev speech and the Hungarian revolution, broke with Stalinism: not to go to some neo-Fabian funk-hole away from the shot and shell of the class struggle, but to accept the Marxist alternative to Stalinism and the responsibility this imposed of taking the revolutionary road to the construction of a real communist movement in Britain. And the third stream is that of the Left-wing Labour Party members, young people for the most part, whose experiences of betrayals by Transport House and by Aneurin Bevan, and whose desire for a fighting socialist policy, have led them to study Marxism and to accept it.

What all these three streams had in common, and what made possible their convergence into one strong, assured and formidable movement, was *regard for theory*. The Trotskyists of the thirties respected the books, in which, for the tragically few eyes that read them, truth did battle with Stalinist and social-democratic lies and vanquished them utterly. When in 1956-57 members of the Communist Party needed

⁵ *News Chronicle*, May 22, 1959. On November 21, 1958, the same Mr Brown had written: 'In my view, it is unwise to overrate the importance . . . of this curious group of Trotskyists.'

⁶ See below, pp. 43-9.

guidance in their search for 'what went wrong', the guidance was there, in the shape of books. Some had been passed from hand to hand till they fell to pieces. Others were so rare that the whole of them had been cyclostyled. But the books were there. When, during the fifties, young members of the Labour Party have seen the failure of Centrists of fifty-seven varieties, the books have been there to show them that Marxism alone keeps faith with the working class and is prepared to go with the working class to the very end—the conquest of power.

The Socialist Labour League, therefore, has two firm bases: close links with the workers' struggles; and a powerful theoretical armoury. These links must be strengthened. And these theoretical weapons must be sharpened and, above all, used in battle. There is no time to be lost. The witch-hunt that has hitherto greeted the activity of British Marxists is as the patter of spring rain compared with the storms that are going to be hurled against the movement by those who are seized with fury at its very existence, and whose dearest wish is to destroy it before it becomes the recognized leader of tens of thousands of workers. A vigorous campaign against bans, proscriptions and expulsions; an all-out effort to bring the message of the conference to printworkers, railwaymen, miners, dockers, building workers and all other sections in battle or likely to be in battle; the building of powerful branches of the League, rooted in industry; the education of League members in Marxist theory and method: these are the tasks now facing the Socialist Labour League. If these tasks are accomplished, the League can make a contribution of incalculable importance to the defeat of the employers' offensive and to the mobilization of the British working class for the overthrow of capitalism.

* * *

The important task now before members and supporters of the Socialist Labour League is to rally support for the National Assembly of Labour called by the Editorial Board of *The Newsletter* for November 15, one day before the first anniversary of the National Industrial Rank-and-File Conference. The Assembly, unlike the Conference, will be open to the political as well as the industrial wing of the Labour movement. The broadening of the basis and composition of the rank-and-file gathering, so that it will be more than simply a recall of the 1958 Conference, reflects the changes which eight months have brought about. What was said at the 1958 Conference about the employers' offensive and the need to prepare the working class to resist it is now being confirmed in the experience of the printworkers. There have been clashes between aggressive police and pickets reminiscent of the scenes on South Bank last autumn; Martell has made plain his intention of producing 'black' newspapers with scab labour and under heavy police protection; like the

London busmen before them, the printers are bearing on their shoulders the entire brunt of the struggle. At the same time as the industrial fight goes forward, with the need for strong rank-and-file movements becoming more obvious all the time, there is growing disquiet among active members of the Labour Party about the failure of their party's leaders to help the printers, and about such trickery as the 'non-nuclear club' scheme. As a straw in the wind, the anti-H-bomb decision of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers came as a shock to the Right wing: all the more so since it showed that the very policies for which Marxists in the party are being witch-hunted do correspond to the thinking of a significant, and growing, section of the rank and file.

The National Assembly of Labour will enable the threads of revolt against Right-wing betrayal to be drawn together in one mass movement. The programme which the Assembly will be invited to discuss has purposely been kept simple, in order that the greatest possible number of working-class representatives can find common ground—and, most important of all, can take, on a basis of principle, decisions for united *action* on the major fundamental questions of common concern: (1) the fight against the hydrogen-bomb; (2) the fight for shorter hours, higher wages, the defence of jobs and the protection of shop stewards; (3) the fight for the extension of nationalization; (4) the fight against oppression in the colonies and racialism in Britain; (5) the fight for democracy in the Labour Party, against witch-hunting, bans, proscriptions and expulsions.

An Assembly of this kind will provide a meeting-place for all who, in different ways, at different speeds and with as yet different degrees and forms of consciousness, are moving into action against capitalism—even where, as with some sections of the anti-H-bomb movement, many of the participants have not yet realized the social and political implications of their policies and activities. Such an Assembly could unite the rank and file of the Labour movement around a common policy of industrial and political struggle. Such an Assembly could be a spring-board for a vigorous mass movement against the Tories, and could help to alter decisively the balance of forces in the Labour movement against both the present leaders and the fake 'Lefts' who in practice support the Right in its efforts to stifle all advances of the real Left.

In calling this Assembly, the Marxists are once more showing their confidence in the strength of the organized workers to break through all barriers preventing them from launching a counter-offensive against Capital. Between now and November 15 every branch, every member and every supporter of the Socialist Labour League has the responsibility of undertaking planned, systematic work to gather support for the Assembly and ensure the widest possible representation.

Document

Political Resolution of the Socialist Labour League

The following is the text of the political resolution adopted by the inaugural conference of the Socialist Labour League, which met in London on May 16-18, 1959:

I. WHAT IS THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE?

1. The Socialist Labour League is an organization of Marxists within the Labour and trade union movement, dedicated to fighting for socialist policies in place of the present policies of class betrayal.

2. As distinct from others who call themselves socialists, Marxists do not believe that it is possible to reform capitalism out of existence or to change it into socialism by peaceful means.

The experience of over a century of working-class struggle shows that when confronted with a direct challenge to its political and economic power the capitalist class will renounce the façade of parliamentary democracy, and by utilizing the State machine and fascist organizations will attempt to ensure the perpetuation of its power and privileges.

3. Marxists hold that only through the struggle of the working class for the achievement of State power can capitalism be overthrown.

The working class will be able to take and hold State power only by smashing the capitalist State machine and creating its own organs of power (e.g. workers' councils). Participation in Parliament and in local councils by workers' representatives can help the struggle for socialism, but only if the fight of those representatives is linked with direct action by the organized working class.

4. The present leaders of the trade unions and Labour Party are not determined to end capitalism, achieve working-class power and build socialism.

They have a stake in the preservation of capitalist society, in which they fulfil the role of mediators in the conflict between Capital and Labour. High salaries, liberal expense accounts and a mode of life remote from that of the ordinary worker ensure their acceptance of capitalist society and explain their opposition to independent working-class action, which threatens the very basis of their existence.

One of the chief tasks of the Socialist Labour League is to help trade unionists and members of the Labour Party, Communist Party and other working-class organizations, through joint activity and political discussion based on their own experiences, to build a new leadership, firmly rooted in the working class and devoted to socialist principles.

II. THE PRESENT PROBLEMS OF THE WORKING CLASS

1. At a time of deepening economic crisis the employing class is determined to preserve its system at all costs, and to put the burden of the crisis on the backs of the workers.

2. The growth of unemployment to an official figure of over 500,000 (with unregistered unemployment, short-time working and young people leaving school the total is nearer to one million) confirms in a striking way the socialist indictment of capitalism as a system unable to guarantee full employment and a rising standard of living.

New techniques are available to make more goods and make them more cheaply. Yet workers are unemployed and go without.

These new techniques could raise the workers' living standards to a level undreamed of a few years ago. But capitalism is unable to utilize them to benefit mankind.

3. Instead, vast resources are squandered on the production of murder weapons: the hydrogen-bomb, rocket bases and the botulinus toxin.

The very testing of the H-bomb is poisoning our food, spreading cancer and putting a question mark over the health of unborn generations.

4. These problems which face the working class, and which spring from an obsolete and bankrupt social system, cannot be solved by reformist leadership.

Such leadership weakens the working class. The reformist leaders betray the workers at a time of crisis, as MacDonald did in 1931.

III. THE END OF CAPITALIST EXPANSION

1. Under capitalism, production and distribution are increasingly carried on by large-scale units. Workers labour in ever bigger factories and enterprises, while ownership and control are kept in a decreasing number of more and more powerful hands.

Modern technique and organization thus make production social in character, while subjecting workers to the increasingly concentrated power of capital, which appropriates the fruits of their labour.

With the post-war boom, living standards have risen for some workers, but the power of the monopolies has grown tremendously.

2. War-time destruction, and subsequently the rearmament programme, made necessary the expansion of production. This provided immense profits for the capitalist class, which at that stage found it in its interests to give certain concessions and make efforts to avoid all-out clashes with Labour.

The boom also obscured class antagonisms and strengthened the grip of reformism in the Labour movement.

Joint conciliation and consultative committees became a regular part of industrial relations. Both the Right wing and the Stalinist leaders of the Communist Party supported the introduction of these methods into industry, thus preventing the working class from using its power to make still greater advances in wages and conditions.

3. While in office, the Labour Party leaders shifted steadily to the right—a process which culminated in the return of a

Tory government. The socialist aspirations of the rank and file have been blocked and frustrated by the foreign and domestic policies of these Right-wing leaders, which are in basic agreement with those of capitalism.

Reformism and gradualism have been put to the test since the end of the war. The nationalization measures of the Labour government left the capitalist system intact and saddled the nationalized industries with a burden of compensation and interest payments.

The present crisis in the coal industry and in railways, the attacks on the standards of railwaymen and miners, show the complete fallacy of the idea that socialism can be introduced industry by industry and without the working people first securing political power firmly in their hands.

The nationalized industries are run in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole, while the workers in them are now suffering worsened conditions resulting from the anarchy of capitalism.

4. Capitalism has failed to expand the consuming power of the working class sufficiently. Yet overproduction and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall remain.

The harnessing of new productive techniques in the scramble for profits makes labour redundant.

At the same time the sharpening competition among capitalist nations forces ever greater technical advances within capitalism, accentuating still further the tendency towards mass unemployment.

5. The increasing power of the government to control credit has not solved the basic problem. Such measures as cuts in hire purchase restrictions and easier facilities for credit have left the hard core of unemployment untouched.

Whatever zigzags there may be the economic difficulties of capitalism will persist and will very likely get worse. At present the capitalist economy is neither in a boom nor in a slump, but in a state of stagnation that could be the prelude to still steeper economic decline.

IV. THE STRATEGY OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS

1. To meet competition and retain its position in capitalist markets is the central aim of the British employing class. This aim determines its class strategy.

2. Whereas in the period following the war the expansion of production was consistent with high profits, this is no longer the case.

Now, in order to reduce production costs to 'competitive' levels, the capitalist class has to break the resistance of the working class by smashing both 'official' and 'unofficial' strikes. It has to seek, by legislative and other means, to cripple trade union organization in the workshops.

Nowhere have the aims of the employing class been set forth more nakedly than in the document issued by the engineering employers, 'Looking at Industrial Relations'.

Their disclosure that twice in four years they sought a show-down with the engineering unions is an arresting contrast to the honeyed tones used by the employers just after the war.

3. The capitalist class offers the working class the prospect of helping it engage in a cut-throat trade war with other capitalist nations.

This could end only in a wholesale worsening of working conditions, and, finally, in total economic collapse or war.

4. Thanks to the intensified struggles of the colonial peoples and the fiercer competition offered by the USA, Germany and Japan, the present capitalist offensive will be still fiercer than in the past.

Class struggles in industry are likely to be more bitter, and more far-reaching in their effects, than those of the twenties.

5. But British capitalism is confronted by a working-class movement which, if properly led, is big enough, experienced enough and strong enough to destroy capitalism. With this fact the capitalist class must reckon.

Up to now it has been unable to defeat decisively any section of the working class, let alone the working class as a whole.

What progress it has made in sackings, victimizations and wage cuts has been made as a result of betrayals by Labour leaders.

Indeed, the employing class was disagreeably surprised by the capacity of the busmen, dockers, engineers and building workers to remain solid and fight back, even when hampered by bad leaders. Nothing has been settled yet in industry.

6. Likewise in the political field the Tories have been unable to secure a decisive swing to the Right, though, thanks to the lack of socialist leadership and a socialist policy, they have held their own.

7. The employing class seeks at all times to avoid an all-out struggle with the working class, particularly with a general election in prospect. If the Tory Party obtains a working majority, it can hope to be able to introduce anti-trade-union legislation, particularly against unofficial strikes and shop stewards' committees, in order to cripple the resistance of the working class. Such legislation would be supported by certain trade union leaders, as their statements have shown.

Failing this the Tories hope for the return of a Right-wing Labour government whose class collaboration policies would pave the way for a Tory government, as in 1931.

It must be understood, however, that Tory policy is extremely flexible and should the opportunity arise for the Tories to deal a blow at a section of the working class they would not hesitate to do so. On the other hand the determined resistance of the workers could force the Tories to retreat, if only as a temporary measure.

The form the employers' offensive will take in the future largely depends, therefore, on how prepared the workers are to resist and to take solidarity action with their fellow-workers.

V. THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP

1. Neither in the industrial field nor in the political field are the Labour leaders making preparations to meet the employers' attacks, or to evolve a counter-strategy to that of the capitalist class. On the contrary, they are trying to lull the workers.

2. The Labour Party's election pamphlet, 'The Future Labour Offers YOU' does not challenge capitalism. It scarcely mentions the word 'socialism', and then only in a perfunctory way.

Although the Tories have been discredited to a great extent by the growth of unemployment, the mass disillusionment and discontent have not been harnessed behind Labour, as recent by-election results show.

3. No fighting socialist alternative is put forward by the leaders of the Labour Party.

Labour stands committed to continue the manufacture of the H-bomb, the construction of rocket bases and the continuation of the arms programme; there is to be no extension of nationalization to any industry except steel, and even here Labour is not seriously answering the steel barons' propaganda campaign. There is no effective policy for ending unemployment.

4. The trade union leaders have turned their backs on any real struggle for higher wages and shorter hours.

In the mines and the building industry, in face of the employers' point-blank refusal to grant anything, the leaders go to arbitration.

On the railways, a new claim is submitted only under rank-and-file pressure.

In engineering, Carron's only reply to the bosses' arrogance is that their statements are unwise.

In hosiery, the union leaders defy their members' mandate by accepting a cut in wages.

5. Despite their reformist leaders the trade unions and Labour Party command the support and loyalty of the overwhelming majority of the working class.

The leaders use this support and loyalty in a constant effort to prevent those they lead from getting to grips with capitalism. No advance to socialism is possible while these leaders are in control.

VI. MARXISTS AND THE LABOUR PARTY

1. Marxists work in the mass organizations of the working class with the aim of winning the working class from reformism to revolutionary socialism.

The British Labour Party is based on the trade unions. It grew up as the political expression of the organized working class in a period of capitalist expansion and imperialist exploitation.

The leaders of the movement have a social stake in the preservation of capitalism. This explains their inability and refusal to lead a real struggle for socialism. The undemocratic structure of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress is the organizational safeguard of the bureaucracy that controls these bodies against the rank and file.

Since the party came into being the dominant Right-wing bureaucracy has fought the Left by means of bans, proscriptions, witch-hunts and purges. So far the Right wing has been generally successful in this, for three reasons:

(a) The Communist Party has zigzagged in its attitude to the Labour Party, from sectarianism to opportunism.

At one time the Labour Party was called a 'social-fascist' organization and no distinction was drawn between leaders and rank and file.

Today the Right-wing leaders are wooed, and the General Council of the Trades Union Congress is praised by Palme Dutt.

By both policies the Communist Party has failed to demonstrate to the rank and file the need for a Marxist alternative.

(b) The concessions made by capitalism since the end of the war in the fields of education and health have buttressed reformism inside the Labour movement.

(c) Left-wing movements inside the Labour Party hitherto have not been led by Marxists, have not based themselves on the working class as the decisive force for change, have seen alliances and manoeuvres as the key factors, and have collapsed as soon as their leaders went over to the Right wing.

The weakness of Victory for Socialism is that it ignores the main job of socialist organization—to help workers in struggle. It fails to challenge the main source of Right-wing power by building support in the factories and trade unions—the decisive places for any serious fight inside the Labour Party.

2. The Socialist Labour League has come into existence, not in order to repeat the experiences of such Centrist groupings, but to lead a new kind of struggle against Right-wing leaders and Right-wing policies in this new period.

An organization of Marxists is necessary, not only for the purpose of theoretical education and the discussion of policy, but also to give help and leadership to the workers in their immediate struggles against capitalism.

3. The proscription of the League within a month of its establishment is a tribute to the way the Marxists and their journal *The Newsletter* have helped the workers in struggle in

the transport, docks, building and engineering industries.

The Right wing sees what serious repercussions the alternative presented by the Socialist Labour League could have for the exponents and practitioners of class collaboration policies.

The witch-hunt against the Socialist Labour League and *The Newsletter* will not succeed in its aim of smashing our organization and our paper. We shall conduct a determined struggle against the expulsion of socialists whose only crime is that they recognize and perform their duty of working for a genuine socialist policy.

The Socialist Labour League will continue to fight for working-class policies inside the Labour Party, despite bans, proscriptions and expulsions, and will continue to demand the right to be affiliated to the Labour Party.

VII. THE INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

1. The majority of the world's population is ruled by governments of the international capitalist monopolies. In the countries of western Europe and the former colonial countries governments rule in the interests of their own capitalists and of the dominant monopolists of the United States.

Their political and military policies are directed to the suppression of the working class in their own countries, the maintenance of colonial slavery and an eventual defeat for the Soviet Union and its allies.

2. Imperialism offers the working people everywhere the prospects of increasing unemployment; trade wars, with the lowering of the workers' standards and the smashing of their organizations; colonial wars; and a nuclear holocaust with the possibility of the destruction of human civilization itself.

3. Recognizing that the working class is the only consistently revolutionary class, the Socialist Labour League affirms the common interests of the workers of all countries against the capitalists and their governments. From these common interests follows the duty of working-class organizations throughout the world to act in solidarity in their fight against exploitation and imperialism and in defending the Soviet Union from imperialist attack.

The Socialist Labour League will therefore press for and support common action extending beyond national frontiers on such issues as the campaign against nuclear war, the struggle of the colonial peoples for independence and the fight of the European miners against the growing coal crisis.

4. Large communist and socialist parties have not prevented a consolidation of the Right wing in western Europe, supported by American imperialism.

Since 1945 French capitalism has sought to retain its imperialist possessions by an unbroken succession of colonial wars. Only fourteen years after the 'war to end fascism' the democratic institutions of the capitalist State have crumbled.

De Gaulle's success in France; the Adenauer régime in Germany; the successive Catholic Right-wing coalitions in Italy; the continued rule of fascism in Spain and Portugal: this is the context in which the British Tory Party enters the general election fight. Its victory would further strengthen European reaction.

5. Stalinist and social-democratic leaders offer no road out for the working people. Each in their own way advocate policies of class collaboration.

There is need for working-class leadership on genuine revolutionary lines, based on the interests of the working class, not on the diplomatic requirements of the Soviet bureaucracy nor the privileges which western imperialism confers on 'Labour' leaders.

6. The Socialist Labour League warns the working-class

movement that a strategy based on the hope that European capitalism will split from the USA is no substitute for the waging of an international working-class struggle against war, and can lead only to further defeats.

7. The spirit of the oppressed peoples and the working class's will to struggle have nowhere been crushed.

In the major capitalist countries big class battles have yet to take place. The colonial and semi-colonial areas are in continual ferment. The peoples of Africa are awakening, and the crimes of white landowners and of imperialist troops will not hold them back. In the Middle East and Far East there are insistent demands for national unity and freedom from imperialist oppression. In Latin America there is a continued resistance to national bourgeois dictatorships and American imperialist domination.

The struggles of the working people against capitalism in the metropolitan countries and the fight against imperialist exploitation by the peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial countries help each other and weaken the common enemy.

Blows against imperialism give more self-confidence to the workers under Stalinist rule and spur on their demands for socialist democracy by weakening their fear of capitalist encirclement.

8. International unity of the working class is even more vital today than it was a hundred years ago when Marx and Engels proclaimed the battle cry: 'Workers of all lands, unite!' and declared that the emancipation of the working class could come about only by their common action on a world scale.

To develop that unity there is an urgent need in every country for Marxist movements linked throughout the world in mutual help and with a common strategy for the international struggle for socialism.

We need to build a great revolutionary socialist international based on rank-and-file militancy throughout the world.

The Socialist Labour League will strive to construct fraternal ties with all those Marxists in the world who stand for independent working-class policies as an alternative to Right-wing reformism and Stalinism.

VIII. THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE AND THE SOVIET UNION

1. The working-class revolution of October 1917 which overthrew the power of the capitalist class in Russia and established the power of the working class was the greatest blow yet struck against the capitalist class.

To the Socialist Labour League the unconditional defence of that revolution is the duty of every Marxist; and the extension of that revolution till socialism has been achieved all over the world is our central strategic aim.

The Socialist Labour League will by every means open to it defend the Soviet Union, China and the countries of eastern Europe against imperialist attack.

But by defence of the gains of October, defence of the workers' States against imperialism, we do not mean the defence of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy nor the whitewashing of the policies of whichever section of it happens to be in control at a given time.

Khrushchev himself pointed out to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party how Stalin's policy betrayed the interests of the Soviet people.

What Khrushchev could not and dared not show is that the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy were committed in order to defend and maintain its privileged position in Soviet society.

2. This bureaucracy, which first developed in the early 1920s and grew at an increasing tempo after Lenin's death,

gave ideological expression to its political power and economic privileges in the nationalistic and conservative theory of 'socialism in one country'.

The expansion of capitalism (1850-1914) helped the process of the watering down of socialist ideas until they lost their revolutionary character altogether. This was one kind of revisionism.

The Stalinist kind of revisionism had a different origin. Working-class internationalism came to the side of the Russian revolution with the 'Hands Off Russia' campaign, but its effect was nearly three years too late.

The task of maintaining the socialist direction of the revolution in a vast country still emerging from the middle ages was too much for the handful of devoted and experienced revolutionaries round Lenin and Trotsky.

Owing to the failure of the international revolution and the exhaustion of the Russian people after years of civil war and intervention, the Bolsheviks were excluded from office, persecuted and finally murdered by Stalin and his fellow-bureaucrats. Some of the worst traditions of tsarism were revived and strengthened. But not even Stalin could undo the revolution itself.

It was to preserve and extend their privileges and power that the new bureaucracy in the Soviet Union replaced working-class internationalism with narrow nationalism, the extension of the socialist revolution with its containment inside the national boundaries of Russia.

3. Linked with this anti-Marxist theory of 'socialism in one country' there developed the theory of 'peaceful co-existence', equally anti-Marxist, which repudiated world revolution and subordinated the revolutionary needs and interests of the workers of the capitalist countries to the short-term diplomatic interests of the Russian rulers.

This policy led to all kinds of unprincipled alliances and manoeuvres both by the Soviet government and by the leaders of the communist parties, whose chief task became that of acting as pressure groups to work for a climate of opinion favourable to the current line of the Russian bureaucracy.

The communist parties thus became frontier guards for the Soviet bureaucracy, basing their policies not on a Marxist analysis of the conditions which operated in their countries, but on the temporary needs of the Soviet bureaucracy as expressed by Stalin.

4. The international communist movement remains under Stalinist control today, and continues to operate policies which sacrifice national communist parties and the interests of the workers of particular countries to various diplomatic moves by the Kremlin.

In certain capitalist countries moreover (Italy, France) the Stalinist leaders have acquired their own material base (e.g. seats in local and national government, well-paid trade union positions) which further contributes to their narrow, conservative social outlook and precludes their parties from ever fulfilling a revolutionary role.

5. Because of its failure to give solidarity and support to revolutionary movements Stalinism is unable to solve the problems that face the international working class. Only by the taking of power in the hands of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries can peace and the defence of the Soviet Union be guaranteed and socialism be constructed, for the building of socialism requires that world resources be rationally utilized and that full advantage be taken of the international division of labour already created by capitalism.

6. The Socialist Labour League rejects the false idea that the Soviet bureaucracy will gradually 'liberalize' itself.

The defeat of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union requires the creation of a genuine Marxist party which will fight for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy by the working class and which will link the struggles of the Russian workers with the struggles of the working class in other

countries.

Only the creation of such a Marxist party can ensure the development of socialist democracy in the Soviet Union.

7. One of the main tasks of the Socialist Labour League is to combat the false ideas of Stalinism; to show in particular that the best contribution British workers can make to the defence of the Soviet Union is to struggle for the achievement of working-class power in Britain; while at the same time our members engage in joint anti-capitalist activity with rank-and-file members of the Communist Party, who in many cases still sincerely believe that the policies of 'socialism in one country' and 'peaceful coexistence' are really in the interests of the working class.

IX. THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE AND THE COLONIAL REVOLUTION

1. Without any qualification or condition, the Socialist Labour League stands for the right of every nation to self-determination.

The present era has seen the tremendous development of the revolutionary movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The struggles have taken many forms, depending on the nature, state of organization and traditions of the peoples concerned, and have considerably weakened imperialism.

We fully support the struggles of all colonial and dependent peoples for independence from imperialism, not only out of considerations of humanity but because for the British workers this is a common fight against a common enemy.

2. We recognize in particular that in Britain the working class bears a heavy responsibility to fight alongside its class brothers in the colonies.

The linking of the struggle of the British workers with that of the colonial workers is for us one of the keys to social advance.

3. But we recognize also that political 'independence'—as in India and Ireland—can mean freedom for native and foreign capitalists to exploit.

Real victory for the independence struggles in the colonies is not possible except under working-class leadership.

We therefore stand for working-class leadership of the national liberation struggles and for the growth of strong socialist organizations that will seek to extend the national revolutions into socialist revolutions.

4. We oppose the opportunist attitude taken by Stalinism in relation to certain national struggles, which has meant, for example, the abandonment of socialist principles (and even the term socialist) from the programme of such organizations as the Connolly Association, and the submerging of the socialist aim in the Arab national struggles.

5. We bring to the fore the common class interests of immigrant workers in Britain with the white workers.

The splitting of the working class on racial lines can only be in the interests of the capitalist class. We therefore urge united opposition by white and coloured workers to all forms of racialist propaganda, incitement or violence directed against any section of the working class.

In particular we urge the necessity of building committees embracing trade union branches, Constituency Labour Parties and immigrant workers' organizations, actively to combat racial violence.

We feel that only by such organization is it possible to defeat future racial outbreaks in such areas as Notting Hill.

X. FOR A WORKING-CLASS STRATEGY

1. The Socialist Labour League has the duty of pre-

paring the working class for the impending industrial and political battles, since the employers have declared war on the workers.

There is no other organized force in the Labour movement that is systematically seeking to warn the workers, to prepare them, mobilize them or lead them into struggle.

2. The preparation of the working class for struggle implies the following: the exposure of the Labour and Communist Party leaders' policy of class betrayal; the winning of masses of workers for an alternative socialist policy; the waging of a consistent, united campaign in industry in defence of jobs and workshop organization, for higher wages and shorter hours; the linking of the struggle in industry with the struggle for an alternative policy and leadership in the Labour Party.

3. The Socialist Labour League frankly recognizes that the fight for socialist policies demands a struggle against the Right-wing leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions, and that this struggle must be waged, persistently and patiently, in the mass organizations of the British working class.

4. Against the inability of the present Labour leaders to fight unemployment or the H-bomb, against their refusal to engage in any serious struggle with the capitalist class, the Socialist Labour League advances this socialist policy:

(a) For a vigorous fight against unemployment, under the slogan 'Not a single worker on the street. Share the available work with no loss of pay.' For the opening of the books to workers' inspection.

(b) For the defence of shop stewards, including legislation by the next Labour government to protect active trade unionists from victimization.

(c) For the nationalization of basic industries under workers' control, without compensation to the ex-owners.

(d) For the withdrawal of British troops from the colonies.

(e) For an end to the manufacture of the H-bomb, the construction of rocket bases and the preparations for germ warfare.

5. The Socialist Labour League warns the working class that, in the future as in the past, the employing class aims to challenge and defeat section after section of the working class separately.

If this strategy is to be resisted and smashed, there is a great need to spread the understanding that the common class interests of the workers necessitate common class action in defence of each section under attack.

6. Experiences such as the London bus strike, the Smithfield meat market strike, the South Bank and Belvedere lock-outs, the BOAC dispute, the Harland and Wolff strike, and the disputes at Ford's and Morris's, all show that a defensive strategy of limited struggle is totally inadequate to meet and beat back the employers' offensive.

7. For any leadership to call a body of men out on strike without aiming to bring the full strength of the organized working class behind the strikers is to court disaster.

A prolonged struggle by one factory or one section in isolation, against which the whole might of the employing class and its State machine can be focused, stands less chance of success today than in the 1945-56 period.

8. In every major struggle today the need from the outset is swiftly and boldly to develop solidarity action of all kinds with the workers engaged in the struggle.

Every effort should be made to extend the strike while the initiative remains with the workers; financial aid and token stoppages after the initiative has passed to the employers are no substitute for resolute action to 'black' an employer's other establishments, his raw materials and finished products, as soon as battle is joined.

The employers must be made to feel that by sacking a single militant they are challenging the whole might of the organized working class.

Either the workers reply to arrogant employers in language they will understand, or the working class will see its organization and its gains whittled away piecemeal.

9. But this objective of taking the offensive in every strike, of waging each dispute from the outset with the aim of winning a decisive victory, implies efficient, thorough and conscious preparation.

Every encouragement must be given to the development of rank-and-file committees in each industry, consisting of the most experienced and trusted militants, and to the linking-up of these committees on a local, area and ultimately national scale.

10. In rank-and-file committees, built by the workers themselves, directly responsive to their needs and wishes, the working class possesses all the means of preparing for major industrial struggles.

They provide the machinery for exchanging information and experiences; for bringing the trade unions and trades councils into action more speedily as each issue arises; and for the production of all kinds of strike bulletins and broadsheets that are indispensable if the lies of the capitalist Press are to be answered.

11. Rank-and-file committees are in no sense 'anti-union' or 'outside the unions'.

On the contrary they are a traditional means inside the British trade union movement of organizing the members to fight despite the leaders' sell-outs and betrayals.

When the leaders refuse to fight, then the rank and file, since they and not the paid officials are the union, have the right and the duty to replace their leaders with men who will adhere to trade union principles.

12. The Socialist Labour League must explain to the working class how every partial, immediate struggle in industry today raises, in no matter how embryonic a form, the key question of control, of power.

The moment the workers in a given factory challenge their employer and seek to prevent his depriving men of their livelihood this is a rehearsal on a local scale of the eventual national challenge to the whole employing class for control of the factories.

That is why every strike experience, particularly the work of strike committees and other rank-and-file organs of struggle, must be carefully studied, compared and analysed, and the necessary lessons drawn from every victory and defeat.

13. The Socialist Labour League regards the barriers that the Right wing seeks to set up between 'industrial' and 'political' activity as quite artificial.

It is of the utmost importance to link the struggles in industry with the political fight inside the Labour Party; to make local Labour Parties into working-class campaign centres that will help strikers in their areas by every means in their power; to strengthen the Labour Left by drawing into the party fresh forces from among the most active and militant trade unionists.

The fight for a socialist policy means the linking of the industrial and political fights against capitalism, as two sides of the same coin, just as the employing class and its Tory government are two expressions of one and the same social force.

XI. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MARXIST

1. Marxists are the most politically aware of all workers. They do not look upon socialism or the struggle for its achievement in an idealistic way, but in a scientific way.

They base their policies and programme on a study of the objective class forces operating in society, on a study of the real position and needs of the working class. Marxism is the science of working-class struggle and working-class power.

2. Since Marxism is a science, it must be studied as a science. The Socialist Labour League therefore carries out systematic and thorough education of all its members in Marxist theory, in the experience of the working-class movement in all countries, showing the laws and lessons of that experience.

3. But Marxism is not merely a theory, but a theory of human action, and first and foremost of class struggle. To be a Marxist is therefore not merely to study, but to study in order to be better equipped to fight and work on behalf of the working class.

4. But to fight and work as an individual is not enough. Marxists fight and work as a disciplined team, with agreed policies based on democratic discussion, with a division of labour, and under the guidance of elected and accountable leading bodies.

5. One of the principal responsibilities which membership of the Socialist Labour League entails is that of extending the sales and influence of the League's publications, which are a bridge between our ideas and the militant workers who are seeking an alternative to reformism and Stalinism.

The higher the circulation of The Newsletter and Labour Review, the more workers can be won for Marxist ideas and mobilized in anti-capitalist activity.

6. The Socialist Labour League is not an independent revolutionary working-class party. But its work and activities are laying the foundations for a future party of this kind, which is essential for the overthrow of capitalism and the achievement of working-class power in Britain.

Meanwhile the Socialist Labour League aims to win to its ranks all those workers in the Labour Party and Communist Party who want to build a revolutionary alternative to the betrayals of reformism and Stalinism, together with all other workers of like mind.

XII. THE SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE'S FUTURE ACTIVITY

This inaugural conference of the Socialist Labour League resolves to extend the activity of the League in the following ways:

1. That we strive for a united campaign for increased wages, shorter hours, the defence of jobs and the defence of stewards.

2. That we strive for the most extensive distribution of propaganda on these questions, by means of leaflets, factory-gate meetings and similar forms of activity.

3. That particular efforts be made to arouse resistance to the wage cuts imposed on the hosiery workers, which are a threat to workers in every industry.

4. That we urge the maximum resistance to the coming redundancies on the railways and in the aircraft and engineering industries, under the slogan 'Not a single worker on the street. Share the available work without loss of pay.'

5. That we urge the fullest support for strikes against non-unionism, so that every gap in trade union organization can be sealed up and trade unionism strengthened.

6. That we advocate a real drive for the third week's

annual holiday with pay.

7. That the industrial struggle be brought into the heart of the Labour Party with the demand that the party pledge its full support to the workers' struggles on wages, hours, jobs and workshop organization, as well as pensions, housing and the other social services, the aim being to inundate the leaders of the party with demands from trade union branches and jobs for the necessary policy changes.

8. That the demand be raised for Labour's policy to include: an end to the capitalist arms programme and to conscription for the defence of capitalism; a break with NATO, SEATO, the Baghdad Pact and all such imperialist war alliances; an end to secret diplomacy; the ending of British manufacture of the H-bomb, the ending of the construction of rocket bases and the closing of the germ warfare establishment at Porton (Wilts.); a campaign to mobilize the world working class against the H-bomb and rocket bases.

9. That full support be given to the campaign for the cessation of work on the construction of nuclear missile factories; and that every encouragement be given to the setting up of anti-H-bomb committees in the trade unions to win

support for the idea of 'blacking' work on the H-bomb and rocket bases.

10. That the demand be raised for the next Labour government to withdraw British troops from the colonies and give their peoples immediate and unconditional independence.

11. That towards the end of this year the National Industrial Rank-and-File Conference should be recalled, with the participation of local Labour Parties and other organizations of the Labour movement, in order to consider the further development of the campaign for socialist policies in the trade union movement and Labour Party.

The Socialist Labour League, recognizing that the Labour and trade union leaders will never move of their own volition, will work for the building of a powerful rank-and-file movement in the trade unions and Labour Party, which alone can guarantee the winning of these demands.

This movement can be completely successful only under Marxist leadership. That is why the strengthening of the Socialist Labour League in numbers and in influence is essential.

The 'New Left' and the Working Class

Cliff Slaughter

MANY others in Britain today besides contributors to LABOUR REVIEW are consciously trying to make a Marxist theoretical contribution to the socialist movement. Those connected with the *New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* number avowed Marxists in their ranks and some of their work is of great value. However, in the belief that theory is very important, indeed basic, to the building of a Marxist working-class leadership—and we assume that the editors of those journals agree that this must be the primary aim of all of us—we think it vital to state sharply where we differ on basic questions of theory and method, as well as genuinely to try to find areas of common ground in research and common fronts in current political struggles.

The aim of this article is to open the columns of LABOUR REVIEW to an outspoken debate on basic theoretical positions, as well as to joint research on present-day problems. It follows from the meeting of university teachers and students held in London on April 13 to discuss the universities and the Labour movement. The examples given in this article are largely confined to the issue of *Universities and Left Review* devoted to the theme of 'culture and community', not only because this is easily referred to, but also because it seems to me to exemplify some dangerous trends in the present thinking of Left intellectuals.¹

LABOUR REVIEW and *The Newsletter* come under fire from *Universities and Left Review* quarters for supposedly embracing a rigid dogma of pre-Stalin Marxist gospel, and behaving politically as though

nothing had changed since then. Norman Birnbaum refers in *Tribune* to the 'mindless militancy' of *The Newsletter*² This implies that our militancy is derived from an over-simplified model of capitalist society divided into employers and workers, in which the struggle of the latter against the former must be intensified above all, 'mindless' of all else. While one suspects that Birnbaum was concerned more with a nicely rolling phrase than with precise meaning, it might nevertheless be worth while pursuing his criticism a little further. If *The Newsletter* advocated the simple and single pursuit of the maximum militancy in each partial and local struggle, then of course it could justifiably be criticized.

But surely the persistent call of *The Newsletter* has been for a unified strategy in industrial struggles, as the only answer to the employers' strategy. One reason for advocating such a single strategy, with a rank-and-file movement as its only instrument, is to prevent partial disputes from being bitterly fought to the end in isolation. Such fights usually lead to temporary cynicism, bitterness and loss of confidence in the efficacy of working-class action. Indeed, our criticism of union officialdom is that by confining struggles like the London bus strike to one section of workers they expose those sections to defeat and disillusion and weaken them for future battles. Was it then 'mindless militancy' to call for support from London Transport electricians and underground workers? The task of our critics is to show that the ideas behind this call,

¹ *Universities and Left Review*, no. 5, Autumn 1958.

² *Tribune*, March 27, 1959.

ideas of class strategy, were wrong, not to pretend that there were no ideas there at all.

In fact the 'new Left' has put forward nothing in the way of working-class industrial strategy. Stuart Hall complains that he is tired of hearing since the war that the great slump is around the corner;³ people made similar remarks when at the end of 1957 we warned of the growth of the employers' offensive. Somehow we were out of date; we were foolish enough to think that the employers would consciously gang up against the workers.

The famous document of the engineering employers,⁴ the closing of pits, the co-ordinated policies against inflation which led to a halving of the rate of wage increases in 1958—were these not an employers' offensive, despite all the differences over policy which certainly divide sections of the ruling class? Our talk about industrial struggle naturally did not sound as new-fangled as 'A Sense of Classlessness' or *The Uses of Literacy*.⁵ But we submit that for the time of day it was a bit more to the point.

One more point is worth making here on the 'mindfulness' of *The Newsletter's* militancy. At the April 13 LABOUR REVIEW meeting Ralph Samuel made a very interesting remark reminding Gerry Healy that 'the industrial struggle is not the decisive thing—what is decisive is the fight for political power'. We shall certainly return to the importance of the struggle for power; meanwhile let us dwell on the interrelation of the industrial and political sides of the class struggle. This is a theoretical question, a historical question, and one on which intellectuals should be constantly working in order to arm the working class. I suggest that a building worker, Brian Behan, showed himself a long way ahead of Samuel when he wrote last year of the need for Victory for Socialism to concern itself with industrial struggles: 'There can be no "victory for socialism" if decisive sections of the working class are defeated industrially.'⁶ This successful presentation of the relationship between these two aspects in action is in sharp contrast to Samuel's formal and false dichotomy. Take away industrial struggle and what 'political' activity are you left with? Parliament? We look across the channel to France and shudder.

It is just a little difficult to see what remains of the 'Marxism' which some in *Universities and Left Review* and *New Reasoner* circles avow. Do they regard any of the theoretical discoveries or conclusions of Marx as still valid? If so, which ones? Or do they claim that only Marx's method (dialectics) remains valid and that the social reality of today demands completely new discoveries, using that method. One suspects that in fact the dialectic would be rather haughtily sniffed at

by most of these critics as a hang-over from Hegel which old Marx could not quite shake off. Just what remains, then?

For our part we will 'discredit' ourselves still further by saying that Marx's dialectical method exposed the basic antagonism of capitalist society, the struggle of the workers against the employers and their State, reflecting the contradiction between social production and private appropriation. Stating this is, of course, no substitute for detailed and intensive research on the changes within capitalism. But these are changes within capitalism, and if they are not studied with that fact always in mind—that the changes have taken place within the constant framework of the power of Capital over Labour—then such study will be useless. By useless we mean not only 'practically' useless for the working class, but also scientifically worthless.

The dialectical method means that the laws which govern the functioning and development of the components of a given social system are to be understood in terms of that system's basic contradiction. Capital is the starting point for a scientific understanding of our society, not because it is historically antecedent to all sorts of other phenomena in our society, and not because the 'common-sense' observer would immediately spot its determining character, but because it is in fact the dominant power in bourgeois society. From the specific historical character of capitalist development flows the modern class struggle. Yes, there is a growth of differentiation within the working class; yes, there is a growth of new 'middle classes'; yes, capitalist ownership is distributed in more complex ways. But if these developments are viewed as things in themselves it will take their investigators much longer to appreciate their real historical significance, which is their significance for the class struggle, than if they recognized from the start the essence of Marx's method and the central discovery he made about class society.

It is around the concept of class that the drift from Marxism is concentrated, despite the lip-service paid to Marxism. There is not a scrap of Marxism in any approach to class which does not have class conflict at its core. The working class is defined basically, not in terms of status, income or any formal social characteristic, but in terms of its necessary antagonism to the capitalist class, deriving from and constantly developed by the proletariat's special position in capitalist production. You can define the working class by any number of formal characteristics; it defines itself historically by the development of its organization and struggle against the bourgeoisie. Marxists in the social sciences bear the task of helping the working class to a clearer consciousness of its position and the actions necessitated by that position. At its highest point, this means playing a part in the greatest task of this historical period: the establishment of the political independence of the working class. Such is the important function of theory, and of the political and organizational instruments based on theory; it must be the test of all theoretical contributions from Left intellectuals.

Now I do not wish to be misunderstood in this respect. Such a test is not to be reduced to a narrow insistence that only agitational speeches or incendiary pamphlets, together with the occasional direct 'lesson' from working-class history, will do. If anyone believes

³ Stuart Hall, 'A Sense of Classlessness', *Universities and Left Review*, no. 5, p. 31, n. 1.

⁴ *Looking at Industrial Relations* (Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation, n.d. [1959]), which declared on p. 40: 'Twice in four years the federation had been prepared to "fight it out" with the unions. Clearly, the unions' capacity to pay strike pay was limited. Such a course, involving as it would have done the virtual closing down of the industry, might have been a worthwhile calculated risk. It was no occasion for the kind of compromise which would inevitably emerge from a court of inquiry.'

⁵ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957).

⁶ Brian Behan, 'Socialists and the Trade Unions', *Labour Review*, vol. iii, no. 4, p. 103, August-September 1958.

that to be the only kind of thing that can help the working-class struggle, he betrays a sad underestimation of the historical role of that class, of its role as inheritor of all the scientific achievements of civilization. Above all, Marxists should insist that the class struggle is not just a 'side' or a 'facet' or an 'aspect' of society, but its articulating principle.

Writing in the *New Reasoner*, Peter Worsley referred to my review of Peter Townsend's *The Family Life of Old People* (1958),⁷ as trenchant, but narrow.⁸ I criticized Townsend for not seeing that into the tragic plight of old workers and their wives was built all the rottenness of capitalism, and that a more thorough investigation of the problem would have led Townsend to revolutionary conclusions rather than the reforms which he does suggest. Peter Worsley thinks that this is correct, but that there are still problems of what to do about old people now. Further, there will still be problems of old age under socialism, and we should therefore welcome research of the Townsend type.

Of course these problems are real ones. But surely I took up the central question for Marxists: the relevance of the problem to the class struggle and to the development of working-class consciousness. The fact is that the problems Worsley raises will get no correct answers until seen in this wider (not narrower) framework. Further than this, to consider such problems, as Townsend does, apart from the historically vital conflict of classes, will in the end weaken the working class by encouraging the illusion that reforms, regardless of the general development of revolutionary strategy, can qualitatively alter the oppressed position of the working class.

In my review of Worsley's own book on religion in the South Seas⁹, I was at pains to show that he had in fact made a contribution to Marxism and to anthropology because he had illuminated the relation between social conflict and the consciousness of oppressed groups.¹⁰ His acceptance of Marxism differentiated him in this way from the exciting but fundamentally static psychologizing of Norman Cohn.¹¹

John Saville's contribution on 'The Welfare State' in the *New Reasoner* and the discussion provoked by it illuminate the basic question very clearly. Saville showed conclusively that even a purely qualitative assessment of the Labour government's post-war reforms gave us no reason to suppose we had anything like a 'socialist society'. By comparison the social services dominated our culture no more than in Western Germany and many another obviously capitalist country.¹²

Dorothy Thompson, taking up Saville's point, exposed very sharply the distance which many of the 'New Left' have travelled from Marxism. The 'institutions' of the 'Welfare State'—the educational

system, the National Health Service and so on—represent for Dorothy Thompson manifestations of working-class values as against capitalist values within the capitalist system. From this flows a complete capitulation to Fabianism and the abandonment of Marxism. We must surely judge institutions and the part they play by their relation to the system of capitalist exploitation and the political power built up to defend that exploitation, not by any superficial 'values' and 'attitudes' which may possibly inspire the personnel of those institutions. But Dorothy Thompson's main point is that 'welfare' institutions are based on the criterion of human need rather than profit, and are therefore historically part of socialism rather than of capitalism.¹³ Saville's fundamental argument, part of the answer to Mrs Thompson, was that so long as they remain within the framework of capitalist exploitation and power these institutions are supports of the capitalist social and political system.

The problem for Marxists is the construction of a movement to overthrow that system, not, as Dorothy Thompson suggests, a strategy which gives pride of place to 'preserving the gains already made'. We fight to preserve those gains, in health, living standards, education and so on, but primarily in order to build the consciousness and strength of the working class for the struggle for power.

Dorothy Thompson attempts a theoretical justification of her view that 'the welfare services, and . . . the legality of trade unions and other working-class organizations . . . are objectively victories for working-class values within capitalist society'. In fact, she says, 'new modes of production, new social relationships, new institutions and new values can always be seen growing within the old social and political framework'.¹⁴ Certainly the bourgeoisie developed its own mode of production in miniature, within the feudal system, and its role in the anti-feudal revolution was to lay down political conditions for the domination and spread of its own particular mode of appropriation. But the working class does not have a method of appropriation which it develops under capitalism, a method which bursts the political and social bonds, requiring a new political system. The working class, because it possesses none of the means of production, cannot achieve freedom without overthrowing the whole economic and political system. 'When the proletariat is victorious, it by no means becomes the absolute side of society, for it is victorious only by abolishing itself and its opposite. Then the proletariat disappears as well as the opposite which determines it, private property.'¹⁵

The desire to find something concrete, established, within present-day society as a solid foundation-stone for future advance is fundamentally a petty-bourgeois standpoint, a refusal to face up to the need for a radical rupture with the world of private property, a confinement to the horizons of what Birnbaum calls the 'administrative technologist'¹⁶ who lives by manipulat-

⁷ *Labour Review*, vol iii, no. 2, pp. 61-2, March-April 1958.

⁸ Peter Worsley, 'Britain—Unknown Country', *New Reasoner*, no. 5, p. 55, Summer 1958.

⁹ Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound. A Study of Cargo Cults in Melanesia* (1957).

¹⁰ Cliff Slaughter, 'Religion and Social Revolt', *Labour Review*, vol. iii, no. 3, pp. 77-83, May-June-July 1958.

¹¹ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957)

¹² John Saville, 'The Welfare State: an Historical Approach', *New Reasoner*, vol. i, no. 3, pp. 5-25, Winter 1957-58.

¹³ Dorothy Thompson, *ibid.* no. 4, pp. 125-30, Spring 1958.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 128.

¹⁵ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Holy Family* (1956), p. 52.

¹⁶ Norman Birnbaum, 'Social Constraints and Academic Freedom', *Universities and Left Review*, no. 5, p. 48.

ing things-as-they-are and who approximates in his social life to the bourgeoisie rather than to the proletariat. The busy concern in *Universities and Left Review* with 'socialism in the here and now' is the worst manifestation of these ideas. For Marxists the only contributions to socialism in the here and now are the objective tendencies of the capitalist mode of production (concentration, international division of labour etc.) and the growth of a revolutionary movement distinct from all that is respectable and accepted by bourgeois society, for the working class is 'a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal . . . which claims no traditional status but only a human status'.¹⁷

If the concern for 'socialism in the here and now' amounts to the setting of tasks outside this building of the revolutionary movement, the consequences soon become in fact a support for capitalism, a retreat from the primary tasks of the working class and its intellectuals. Thus Charles Taylor quite deliberately ranges himself against Marxism:

For Marx, the collective appropriation of the means of production was the necessary and sufficient condition to which all energies must be bent. But first, this largely ignores the need for the preparation of the new society in the here and now, except for the part of it which is incidental to the struggle itself. We have no lack of 'Marxists' to tell us that all such preparation is foredoomed in a capitalist society. But, if this were true, then the change would never come, the new society would be still-born, or, if by some chance [?!] it came to birth, would be more terrible than that which it had replaced.¹⁸

Here is all the petty-bourgeois intellectual's refusal to accept that the working class is the force for change and the basis of the new society. This refusal to commit himself to the working class gives rise in the 'Left' intellectual to the desire for something to cling to through the storm: otherwise who knows what shall be delivered unto us? Taylor fears that victory over capitalism without him and his coterie will perhaps come 'by some chance'—thus the role of the working class is reduced to that of the irrational force which erupts against civilization, and must be mellowed by the nice things we build up between whites; if not, 'the new society . . . would be more terrible than that which it replaced'. One understands now the sympathy for Pasternak's musty, middle-class revulsion against the October revolution. In Taylor's writing it has not even the advantage of literary merit, but is squeezed into a desiccated Jesuit commentary on Durkheim.

The editorial in the same issue of *Universities and Left Review* suggests that this is not merely Taylor's personal outlook. Here we find the same call for 'some alternative image of human and community relationships which can sustain us through and beyond the Stalemate State'; here we are told that 'within the jungle of capitalism itself we (?) have begun already

to sow the seeds of the new society. What we have to do now, more than ever, is to believe in it.'¹⁹ Is this really much better than telling us to count our blessings? Taylor, however, does not think that the immediate job of socialists is quite so purely contemplative; for him

the most urgent job is therefore to rescue the old communities, to prevent their sinking into the amorphous mass of the surrounding conurbations, to open them out by rescuing the local theatres, art galleries and museums from financial asphyxiation, to plan the rebuilding so that the old relationships are not torn down with the condemned housing, to give their development some of the impetus that has been given to the New Towns, to associate the communities in their own development projects. This salvage work [!] is as important, if not more so, than the development of the New Towns.²⁰

By way of an apology, perhaps, Taylor adds that this work 'requires a context of socialist policy in education, and industry'.²¹ But this is only the prerequisite of 'the most urgent job'—the 'salvage work'. If it were not all so petty, one might feel almost back at one's reading of *The City of God*.

Stuart Hall is another who, in the tradition of Hoggart, is prepared to look at the working class from any angle except as a fighting force, and so falls into an even worse morass about 'the most important things'. His article 'A Sense of Classlessness' tries to insure in advance against adverse criticism by the following cry from the heart: 'One is not any less against the system because one suggests that, in many important respects, it has changed. That smear is a form of subtle political blackmail.'²² But the point is hardly how strongly Hall *feels* against capitalism; the question asked historically of intellectuals by the working-class movement is: to what extent can you arm us for the struggle against capitalism? Perhaps Stuart Hall will claim that he is pointing out complexities that must be taken into account for the movement to 'establish contact with contemporary reality' (to borrow a winged phrase from Norman Birnbaum). But in fact his message is so unclear that no socialist will find it of the slightest use in orientating himself in politics. Trying to find the core of Hall's argument, I marked innumerable massive assertions which can hardly all be true.

'Clearly there has been a *major shift* in the patterns of social life in this country.'²³ For Marxists such a statement requires precision. A 'major shift' could be anything. Does it mean that the basic class division has altered? Hall himself acknowledges that 'how deep [these changed patterns] go, and whether they alter our older notions of "class" is difficult to tell'.²⁴ (For him it is a question of whether the *notions are altered*.) But later on we find that the changes are world-shaking. 'The third and *perhaps most crucial change* can be observed in the rhythm and nature of industrial work . . . [In the 'technological' industries] the very nature of work itself, the rhythm and skills

¹⁹ *Universities and Left Review*, no. 5, p. 30.

²⁰ Taylor, *op. cit.* p. 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Hall, *op. cit.*

²³ *Ibid.* p. 26 (emphasis mine, here and in other quotations from Hall, unless otherwise stated—C. S.).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ K. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Introduction. Cf. K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Religion* (1957), pp. 56-7.

¹⁸ Charles Taylor, 'Alienation and Community', *Universities and Left Review*, no. 5, p. 17.

involved, have *changed out of all recognition*.²⁵ There seems to be no understanding that the importance of wage-labour for socialists is not the quality of the labour involved but its *social* character as a commodity.

Whether or not the post-war boom has changed the working class into something else is also an important question for Hall: 'It is a matter of a whole way of life, of an attitude towards things and people.'²⁶ Perhaps Hall takes as read the important objective basis of class—relationship to the means of production and to other classes? No:

The **central distinction** between working-class and middle-class styles of life has always been . . . a distinction 'between alternative ideas of the nature of social relationship', embodied, as it were, in typical working-class institutions . . . The **crucial difference** is that between the bourgeois notion of society as a stage upon which each individual tries to 'realize' himself through personal effort and competitiveness; and the working-class notion of society as a co-operative entity.²⁷

Again, the idea of the working class possessing a separate culture within capitalism asserts itself: 'Working-class culture, as we have experienced it, grew up as a series of defences against the encroachments—economic and social—of bourgeois society.'²⁸ Just what is this bourgeois society outside the working class? Hall tries to be more explicit than Dorothy Thompson and succeeds only in demonstrating his failure to understand Marx: thus Marx

saw the new social relationships growing within the womb of the old society itself, as men forced themselves out of the constraints which the old industrial ghettos and factories imposed, until the separate communities became a single community, and—in this sense at least—the bourgeois world was 'proletarianized' . . . He saw an industrial working class not merely surviving into, but itself creating conditions of prosperity and abundance.²⁹

As we have seen above, this is the diametrical opposite of Marx's idea of the role and destiny of the working class in capitalist society.

You might think we had enough 'crucial' and 'central' points by now, but on the same page we have a '*central problem* [which] concerns the different objective factors which shaped and were in turn shaped and humanized by an industrial working class'. 'These *primary factors* have *changed radically* with the development of capitalism.' Again, that could mean anything, but it turns out to be a claim for something very significant. 'The *whole nature of private property* has been *revolutionized*.' But a few lines later "'property" has gone underground.'³⁰ Just what are we to make of this sort of language? Lack of precision in the use of what are technical terms for socialists can only be a source of confusion.

On the same page Hall suggests that there have been significant changes in the rate of exploitation; in support of this he quotes advances in wages and the standard of living, which every socialist knows from his first lesson in political economy to be entirely beside the point. Hall now reaches his conclusion: 'Consumption has been so built into capitalism that it has

become the *most significant* relationship between the working class and the employing class.'³¹ Apparently capitalism's big problem is to break down the workers' sales resistance, derived from the days of poverty. Hall has not yet finished with 'central paradoxes' and 'deepest conflicts', but we must settle for this one—perhaps (who knows?) the nub of his whole argument: 'Capitalism as a social system is now based upon consumption' because 'in their lives and their work, working-class and lower-middle-class people can *realize* themselves through the possession (on hire-purchase perhaps) of "alien things".'³²

If all this is true, that property has been revolutionized, that techniques of investment and advertising have assimilated the working class to capitalism, then of course the working-class is *not* the force predicated by Marx, and there is no question of theory *arming* the working class—it needs, not an armoury but a set of gardening tools, which will no doubt be provided by the worthy preservers of the museums and theatres in the New Towns and the salvaged old communities. While the workers cultivate their orchids or watch their colour-television, some idiots are playing about somewhere at games which lead to the victory of de Gaulle, or the rape of an African colony, or the preparation of cobalt bombs. Any number of articles on 'culture and community' will fail to upset the generals and the 'Insiders'. There is nothing they would like better than a working class concentrating—at the behest of 'new thinkers'—not on their struggles, their fighting capacity, the horizons of a society freed from exploitation, but on the search for a 'decent' cultural environment for the volume of consumer goods sold to them by the advertisers. Hall at least talks about the need to overthrow capitalism, and does not seem to share with Taylor the concentration on 'salvage work', but even so he has nothing to say about the instrument for that overthrow, the organization and leadership of the working class; consequently his readers are left with a feeling of pessimism and confusion. He obviously cannot reconcile the dehumanization of men under capitalism with the character of the socialism that is to replace it. But this is surely no new problem, despite the increasingly shameless, vulgar and deliberate nature of the techniques of propaganda and manipulation.

In a long note at the end of his article, Hall suggests that a too mechanical interpretation of Marx's model of 'material basis and ideological superstructure' has been the source of much confusion among socialists. This is of course true, but it is no excuse for Hall's own misunderstanding of Marx and Engels. To suggest that his letter to Bloch—'We make history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions'³³—shows Engels in 'significantly revisionist role' is to show not only a surprising condescension to Marx's thought, but also plain ignorance. In their first mature statement, *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels had already formulated their interpretation of history in terms almost identical with those of Engels in the later letters:

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 28.

³² *Ibid.* p. 29 (emphasis Hall's).

³³ Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (1956 ed.), p. 498.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.* (emphasis Hall's).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms Our conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the simple material production of life, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this (i.e., civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history; further, to show it in its action as State; and so, from this starting-point, to explain the whole mass of different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics etc. etc., and take their origins and growth, by which means, of course, the whole thing can be shown in its totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another).³⁴

Indeed this work of the young Marx and Engels contains the basic answer to all the meanderings of those who refuse to accept the role of theory as a class weapon. 'Communism is for us not only a stable state which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things.'³⁵ It is their refusal to accept this undiluted revolutionism

³⁴ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (1942 ed.), pp. 14, 28.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 26.

which leaves so many 'Left' intellectuals in the dilemma of Hall, Taylor and others—'How can we get a good society from something that makes people so bad?' The answer is not an idealized patterning of part of the existing relationships but the building of a revolutionary movement. This was the essence of Marx's theory of history and politics:

The communistic revolution is directed against the preceding **mode** of activity, does away with **labour**, and abolishes the rule of all classes with the abolition of the classes themselves, because it is carried through by the class which no longer counts as a class in society, is not recognized as a class, and is in itself the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities etc., within present society Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a **revolution**; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class **overthrowing** it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.³⁶

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 69.

Scientifically — or 'Somehow'?

A Letter to a Friend

L. D. Trotsky

This article, only fragments of which have previously been available in English, was written by Trotsky when, as People's Commissar for War, in January 1919, he was travelling about the fronts of the civil war ('in the train, between Tambov and Balashov'). It was printed in the journal *Voyennoye Dyelo (Military Affairs)*, February 23, 1919, and reprinted in the collection of Trotsky's writings called *Kak vooruzhalas revolyutsia (How the Revolution Armed Itself)*, vol. i (Moscow, 1923), from which the

present translation has been made by Brian Pearce.

At the time when this article was written, Stalin, Vorshilov and others were working up an agitation on demagogic lines against Trotsky's use of former tsarist officers to help build the Red Army. Trotsky points to some of the roots of the opposition to the 'military specialists,' which a few years later revealed themselves as roots of the narrow-minded, selfish bureaucratism that strangled the Bolshevik Party.

DEAR FRIEND,

You ask how it can have happened that the question of specialists, such as the officers of the old General Staff, has assumed such great importance among us. Let me tell you that what is at issue here is actually not the matter of military specialists—it is a question both broader and deeper than that.

We are the party of the working class. Together with its advanced elements we spent decades in underground conditions, carried on our struggle, fought on the barricades, overturned the old régime, cast aside all the in-between groups such as the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks and, at the head of the working class, took power into our hands. But though our party is deeply and unbreakably linked with the working class it has never been and cannot become a mere flatterer of

the working class, expressing a gratification with whatever the workers may be doing. We treated with contempt those who preached to us that the proletariat had taken power 'too soon', as though a revolutionary class can take power whenever it likes and not when history forces it to take power. But at the same time we never said, and we do not say now, that our working class has attained full maturity and can cope, as though playing a game, with all tasks and resolve all difficulties. The proletariat and, all the more so, the peasant masses, have only recently emerged, after all, from many centuries of slavery and bear all the consequences of oppression, ignorance and darkness. The conquest of power, in itself, does not at all transform the working class and does not confer upon it all the attainments and qualities it needs: the conquest of power merely

opens up for it the possibility of really studying and developing and ridding itself of its historical shortcomings.

By a tremendous effort the upper stratum of the Russian working class has accomplished a gigantic historical task. Even in this upper stratum, however, there is still too much half-knowledge and half-skill, too few workers who, by virtue of their knowledge, breadth of horizon and energy are capable of doing on behalf of their class what the representatives, hirelings and agents of the bourgeoisie did for the former ruling classes.

Lassalle once said that the German workers of his day—more than half a century ago—were poor in understanding of their own poverty. The revolutionary development of the proletariat consists also in the fact that it arrives at an understanding of its oppressed position, its poverty, and rises against the ruling classes. This gives it the possibility of seizing political power. But the taking of political power essentially reveals to the proletariat for the first time the full picture of its poverty in respect of general and specialized education and government experience. The understanding by the revolutionary class of its own inadequacies is the guarantee that these will be overcome.

It would undoubtedly be most dangerous for the working class if its leading circles were to suppose that with the conquest of power the main thing had been done, and were to allow their revolutionary conscience to go to sleep upon what has been achieved. The proletariat did not, indeed, carry through the revolution in order to make it possible for thousands or even tens of thousands of advanced workers to settle into jobs in the soviets and commissariats. Our revolution will fully justify itself only when every toiling man and woman feels that his or her life has become easier, freer, cleaner and more dignified. This has not yet been achieved. A hard road still lies between us and this, our essential and only goal.

In order that the life of the working millions may become easier, more abundant and richer in content, it is necessary to increase in every sphere the organization and efficiency of work and to attain an incomparably higher level of knowledge, a wider horizon for all those called to be representatives of the working class in all fields of their activity. While working it is necessary to learn. It is necessary to learn from all from whom anything can be learnt. It is necessary to attract and draw in all forces that can be harnessed to work. Once more—it is necessary to remember that the masses of the people will evaluate the revolution, in the last analysis, by its practical results. And they will be quite right in so doing. Yet there can be no doubt that a section of Soviet officials have adopted the attitude that the task of the working class has been fundamentally fulfilled by the mere calling to power of workers' and peasants' deputies who cope 'somehow' with their work. The Soviet régime is the best régime for the workers' revolution just because it most truly reflects the development of the proletariat, its struggle, its successes, but also its inadequacies, including those of its leading stratum. Along with the many thousands of first-class people whom the proletariat has advanced from its ranks, people who learn and make progress, and who undoubtedly have a great future before them, there are

also in the leading Soviet organs not a few half-equipped people who imagine themselves to be know-all. Complacency, resting content with small successes—this is the worst feature of Philistinism, which is radically inimical to the historical tasks of the proletariat. Nevertheless, this feature is also to be encountered among those workers who, with more or less justification, can be called advanced: the heritage of the past, petty-bourgeois traditions and influences and finally, just the demand of strained nerves for rest, all do their work. In addition, there are fairly numerous representatives of the intelligentsia and semi-intelligentsia who have sincerely rallied to the cause of the working class but have not yet had a thorough internal burn-out and so have retained many qualities and ways of thought which are characteristic of the petty-bourgeois milieu. These, the worst elements of the new régime, are striving to become crystallized as a Soviet bureaucracy.

I said 'the worst' without forgetting the many thousands of technicians merely lacking in ideas who are employed by all Soviet institutions. Technicians, 'non-party' specialists, carry out their tasks, well or badly, without accepting responsibility for the Soviet régime and without charging our party with responsibility for themselves. It is necessary to make use of them in every possible way, without demanding from them what they cannot give . . . Our own bureaucrat, however, is real historical ballast—already conservative, sluggish, complacent, unwilling to learn and even expressing enmity to anybody who reminds him of the need to learn.

This is the genuine menace to the cause of communist revolution. These are the genuine accomplices of counter-revolution, even though they are not guilty of any conspiracy. Our factories work not better than those belonging to the bourgeoisie, but worse. The fact that a number of workers stand at their head, as managers, does not in itself solve any problems. If these workers are filled with resolve to achieve great results (and in the majority of cases this is so or will become so), then all difficulties will be overcome. It is necessary to move from all directions towards a more intelligent, more improved organization of the economy and command of the army. It is necessary to arouse initiative, criticism, creative power. It is necessary to give more scope to the great mainspring of emulation. At the same time it is necessary to draw in specialists, to give opportunities to all talents, both those that emerge from the depths and those that remain as a legacy from the bourgeois régime. Only a wretched Soviet bureaucrat, jealous for his new job, and cherishing this job because of the personal privileges it confers and not because of the interests of the workers' revolution, can have an attitude of baseless distrust towards any great expert, outstanding organizer, technician, specialist or scientist—having already decided on his own account that 'me and my mates will get by somehow'.

In our General Staff Academy there are some party comrades now studying who have in practice, in bloody experience, conscientiously understood how hard is the stern art of war and who are now working with the greatest attention under the guidance of professors of the old military school. People who are close to the Academy tell me that the attitude of the pupils to their

teachers is not at all determined by political factors, and apparently it is the most conservative of the teachers who is honoured with the most notable marks of attention. These people want to learn. They see beside them others who possess knowledge, and they do not sniff, do not swagger, do not shout, 'tossing their Soviet caps in the air'—they learn diligently and conscientiously from the 'tsarist generals', because these generals know what the communists do not know and what the communists need to know. And I have no doubt that, when they have learnt, our Red military academicians will make substantial corrections to what they are now learning, and perhaps will even make some fresh contributions of their own.

Insufficient knowledge is, of course, not a fault but a misfortune, and moreover a misfortune which can be put right. But this misfortune becomes a fault and even a crime when it is supplemented by complacency, reliance on 'maybe' and 'most likely',¹ and an attitude of envy and hatred towards anybody who knows more than oneself.

You asked why this question of the military specialists has aroused such passion. The essence of the matter is that behind this question, if we dig far enough, two trends are hidden: one, which proceeds from an appreciation of the tasks confronting us, endeavours to utilize all the forces and resources which the proletariat has inherited from capitalism—to rationalize, i.e., to comprehend in practice, all social work, including military work, introducing in every sphere the principle of economy of forces, achieving the greatest possible results with the minimum of sacrifices—really to create conditions under which it will be easier to live. The other trend, which fortunately is much less strong, is nourished by the moods of limited, envious, complacent (and yet at the same time unsure of itself) Philistine-bureaucratic conservatism 'We're managing somehow, aren't we, so we'll keep on managing all right.' It isn't true! We shall not manage 'somehow' in any case: either we shall manage completely, as we ought, in accordance with science, applying and developing all the powers and resources of technique, or we shall not manage at all, but collapse in ruin. Who has not

understood this has not understood anything.

Returning to the question you raise about the military specialists, let me tell you this, from my own direct observation. There are certain corners in our armed forces where 'distrust' of the military specialists is particularly flourishing. What corners are these? The most cultured, the richest in political knowledge of the masses? Not a bit! On the contrary, these are the most deprived corners of our Soviet republic. In one of our armies it was considered not long ago a mark of the highest revolutionariness to jeer rather pettily and stupidly at 'military specialists', i.e., at all who had studied in military schools. Yet in this very same army practically no political work was carried on. The attitude there was no less hostile, perhaps more so, towards communist commissars, these political 'specialists', than it was towards the military specialists. Who was sowing this hostility? The worst sort among the new commanders—military half-experts, half-partisans, half-party people who did not want to have anyone around them, be they party workers or serious military workers. These are the worst sort of commanders. They are ignorant but they do not want to learn. Their failures—how could they have successes?—they always seek to explain by somebody else's treachery. They quail miserably before any change in the morale of their units, for they lack any serious moral and military authority. When a unit, not feeling the hand of a firm leader, refuses to attack, they hide behind its back. Hanging on for dear life to their jobs, they hate the mere mention of military studies. For them these are identified with treachery and perfidy. Many of them, getting finally into a hopeless mess, have ended up by simply rebelling against the Soviet power.

In those units where the level of the Red Army men's morale is higher, where political work is carried on, where there are responsible commissars and party cells, they have no fear of the military specialists; on the contrary, they ask for them, use them and learn from them. Moreover in those units they catch the real traitors much more successfully and shoot them in good time. And, what is most important of all, those units win victories.

That is how it is, dear friend. Now, perhaps, you can better grasp the root of the differences that exist on the question of military and other specialists.

¹ Trotsky uses the Russian expressions which traditionally symbolize a lazy-minded, happy-go-lucky attitude to serious problems—Trans.

Communications

'The Origins of Sectarianism'

The definition of sectarianism as 'mouthing "Left" formulas to an unheeding world' is J.A.'s, not mine. Both at the beginning and end of my article [Labour Review, vol. iii, no. 5, pp. 146-52, December 1958] I defined sectarianism as the consequence of abandoning the scientific method.

J. A. writes about sectarianism before 1847. This in my opinion is unhistorical, for reasons given in this article. Sectarianism is a new historical quality that can only feature in politics coexistentially with scientific socialism, and therefore it cannot predate 1848.

Before 1848 Chartism in general was Utopian. The workers of this country, having seen the upper and middle classes use Parliament to achieve their economic ends (for example the Corn Laws) took the view that winning the vote, the secret ballot and the other demands of the Charter would enable them to get economic results. Chartism until after 1848 was essentially a demand for 'bread and butter' through politics, but without socialism.

Yet given that Chartism was Utopian in general, it does not follow that it was all of a piece. Elements of sectarianism and of opportunism (class collaboration) were the subject of passionate argument, but they had not yet crystallized. A. R. Schoyen in 'Chartist Challenge' (1958) gives a detailed account of this situation.

It is perfectly clear that Marx and Engels had very considerable 'authority' over Ernest Jones. I gave the evidence for that. (In fairness to the Marx of 1850-52 it should be pointed out that he had not yet mastered the English language and that his domestic fortunes were then at their lowest ebb. It was then that the bailiffs put him and his family on the street.)



My case was not that 'Marx was really a sectarian'. J. A. should be more careful. What I attempted to show was that at a particular time and place and for particular reasons Marx made a sectarian mistake. This was when Ernest Jones, with Marx as his mentor, denounced and opposed trade unions as reformist organizations in the years 1850-52. Both men later changed their attitudes, but it was too late. Chartism was dead.

It was very much more than a question of what two individuals thought. Jones was the editor of a Chartist paper. He was a highly educated man who had just suffered two years of vicious imprisonment and solitary confinement for his devotion to his principles and the cause of the working class. His prestige was immense. With the disappearance of Feargus O'Connor the burden of leadership had fallen on his shoulders and those of George Julian Harney. Trusted as he was, he proceeded to lead Chartists into the desert of sectarian futility by his misreading of the times (endorsed by Marx) and his consequent opposition to the supporters of trade unionism of the Harney 'school'.

J. A. writes: 'The pamphlet "Wage Labour and Capital" quite clearly shows the role of trade unions . . .' I can only suggest that he reads the pamphlet again. It was written and rewritten as a lecture in the 1842-49 period and subsequently amended. The standard version is that of 1891 with an introduction by Engels. In this lecture, addressed to working men on the subject of wages, trade unions are not mentioned once.

Writing in 1847 in 'The Poverty of Philosophy', Marx set out the function of trade unions in general theoretical terms: 'Large-scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, the common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance—combination.'

This was a general proposition only. It reappears without development in the 'Communist Manifesto' written some months later: 'The workers begin to form combinations (trade unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they form permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.'

It is important to note that in the definition of the function of trade unions given at the time Marx in no way suggests that they might have a political purpose as well, or that working in trade unions was a prime responsibility of communists. To quote the 'Manifesto', 'The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: Formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat' (my emphasis—P. C.).

Even seventeen years later, in 1865, this estimate of the part played by trade unions was still apparent. In that year he delivered his double lecture 'Value, Price and Profit' to the General Council of the First International. It takes up fifty-six pages, and only in the last one and a half is trade unionism discussed. The last and key paragraph (in the form of a resolution) is still an echo of 1848:

'Trades unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system.'

A moment earlier Marx had suggested to trade unionists that 'instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banners the revolutionary watchword: "Abolition of the wages system!"'

Now consider that last statement in the context of his general definition of the function of trade unionism. What do we see? We now know, with the hindsight of a century to help us, that between the two slogans he gives there is and must be a third. It was left to Tom Mann and Keir Hardie to discover it, empirically rather than in terms of general theory. It is this:

'The trade union is the means whereby the worker fights for the wages and conditions he wants, it is a form of organization in which he develops his political as well as his industrial consciousness. It is his primary agency in the struggle for socialist power and for the abolition of the wages system itself. Political organization is complementary to trade union organization. It is another aspect of the activity of the same people. It has a special responsibility for leadership in social ideas and in relation to the State but in the last analysis power belongs to organized numbers at the point of production.'

Except for the reference to 'the wages system itself' this is no more than a summary of the ideas contained in the Charter of Workers' Demands recently approved at the Newsletter conference. It is a series of generalizations reflecting and

made possible by a century of experience on the part of the British Labour movement. But it needs to be appreciated that if it is true it marks a vital new development of Marxism. Do we realize that what we are saying today is not what was said by Marx and Lenin?

Marx thought of the revolution in terms of the action of the working class through its political parties—taking shape as the struggle developed. The barricades of Europe in 1848, the First International and the Paris Commune were the experiences he had to build on. Lenin and Trotsky, proceeding from that point, learnt the lessons of the soviets of 1905. Lenin then focused his attention on building 'a party of a new type'.

But although Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky cleared a way through a jungle of capitalist ideas and inspired and led great movements the world today is still without socialism. If we are going to succeed we have to go much further than they did. We need, among other things, a new development of the theory of the Labour movement in relation to the conquest of State power and a more explicit concept of the vital political role of the trade unions. As has been shown above we have already taken this step—or at any rate a step in this direction. It amounts to a crystallization of the experience of militant socialists over a period that dates at least from the great Dock Strike of 1889 and the foundation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893. What has been done empirically can now be helped theoretically by our seeing it in its national and world context, past, present and future.

Just as Trotsky provided us with a vital theory of the transitional character of the Soviet system, so we (for rather different reasons!) must proceed with a theory of the transitional period that will both precede and follow the socialist revolution in Great Britain.

It is not true that our first task is to 'defend principles'. Our first task is to discover the truth and live by it. Principles are 'true' to the extent that they approximate to reality's changing character. It is reality that is fundamental. We cannot make a principle more significant than its subject-matter. Yet plenty of us have tried to do just that!

Dialectical materialism has been established. It has its mandate in space, time and society. What is now required is not that it should be affirmed or denied but that it should be explored. Its truth will then become more demonstrable to more people. Science is self-evident to the scientist. It is the emergence of reality in consciousness. But time is the emergence of new qualities in reality. It is the business of the scientist therefore to be for ever delineating the character of these new qualities. A science that stands still is its own negation. Marxism, in its aspect of historical materialism, must be for ever added to like any other science. To think otherwise would be to deny time itself. Thus, to say that a thing is true now is not necessarily to say that past Marxists were ill-informed in not discovering it. It may well have been not discoverable.

To establish that Marx, and perhaps Lenin, made a different valuation of trade unions to the one that is apparent to us may be to find them wrong. This is an extremely difficult question, and discussion of it is only necessary to the extent that it helps us to make a judgment about the present situation. The important thing here is not so much rightness or wrongness but development and difference. The past always contains indications of the future, and Marx with extremely little to go on in this instance seems to me to have missed something that was just barely discoverable. It is possible to maintain this because George Julian Harney, who probably had greater knowledge and experience of the British working class than any man then living, took the view we now take, and wanted to form a political party that would synthesize political and industrial struggle by including the trade unions.

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, having laboured mightily themselves, have made things so much easier for us. The

trouble is that they have also made it difficult by so blinding us with science that we tend to study them to the exclusion of their subject-matter. For this they would not forgive us!

We must free ourselves from the absurd religiosity that has made 'Marxism' the laughing-stock of science for thirty years. Soviet science has got results by the pursuit of the scientific method despite official 'Marxism', in much the same way that the science and art of Galileo and his contemporaries got results despite the religious dogmatism of the ruling class of their time. Indeed, when Milton wrote 'Paradise Lost', he based it upon a Ptolemaic conception of the universe, with the earth at its centre, that he knew was already a hundred years out of date! He was not prepared to defy the conventions of his class. But he managed to work creatively nevertheless. Soviet science likewise pays lip-service to Stalinism and will continue to do so until such time as the Soviet people are so placed as to be able to discard the absurd notions of bureaucratic ideological orthodoxy.

But to return in conclusion to the central question and issue. If it be granted that a mistake was made in the 1850s it would be quite wrong to exaggerate its effect. History is not made by individuals alone, whatever their ideas. The most that could have been hoped for with better foresight and policy was the maintenance of a group of a few people 'carrying the banner' until changing circumstances proved them right. One great service they could have provided was that of a scientific socialist analysis of the movement of which they were part and its ideas. This was never done and has not been done satisfactorily even yet. That is one reason why this discussion is important. Engels in his 1888 preface to the 'Communist Manifesto' wrote: 'It is self-evident that the criticism of socialist literature is deficient in relation to the present time, because it comes down only to 1847' (my emphasis—P.C.).

It might now be pointed out that if I had not levelled a charge of general sectarianism at Marx in my original article, then this reply has done so now. I think that would be untrue. Consideration has been given to one point only—Marx and the trade unions. But Marx wrestled with the whole of man's history. He took it upon himself to challenge the whole capitalist universe in the name of the workers of the world and of humanity. He completed only a fraction of his own design, yet mankind with good cause still thrills, or trembles, at his name. If in his study and pursuit of the grand design he missed something right under his nose then that only proves him human after all! And that in itself is not a bad thing.

Peter Cadogan

There are, I think, two basic weaknesses in Peter Cadogan's article on 'The Origins of Sectarianism': (1) He has formed a mistaken impression of what constitutes sectarianism. (2) He has willy-nilly provided a theoretical justification for closing the door on the formation of a new revolutionary socialist party in the future.

The Chartists, of whom Julian Harney was one, were for all practical purposes an independent working-class party before Marx and Engels adopted the idea. In fact it was from contact with the Chartists that Engels got the idea and passed it on to Marx. I do not think that Marx and Engels—whatever A. J. P. Taylor may say to the contrary—ever pretended that they had invented the idea.

What they did was to supply the socialist theory. Not all the Chartists were socialists. Julian Harney was, however, and he worked closely with Marx and Engels and translated the 'Communist Manifesto' into English.

In the 'Communist Manifesto' Marx and Engels describe the various stages of the development of the working-class struggle:

in the factory; in the nation-wide struggle, which necessarily becomes political and leads to the creation of a party for political action; in a consciously socialist party; in a socialist State.

To say that Marx and Engels were responsible for the 'first manifestation of sectarianism in England' shows a curious understanding of earlier English Labour history. The attitude of the Owenites to Chartism was as sectarian as you like.

I do not know enough about the Jones and Harney controversy to answer the question whether Marx and Engels were sectarian in backing one against the other. But the main fact is that in the early years in England of Marx and Engels there was no live working-class political party, and therefore nothing to be sectarian about. The Chartist movement collapsed after 1848; and working-class activity went entirely into trade unionism and co-operation. Politically, for about thirty years, the workers' leaders tagged along behind the Liberal capitalists. Until the 1880s—long after Jones and Harney were dead—there was no working-class political party in Britain. Given the conditions of that period, it could not have been otherwise.

But even if we were to recognize that Marx and Engels made sectarian mistakes in their dealings with individual Chartists, sectarianism had nothing to do with the decline of the Chartist movement. After 1842, when the second national Chartist petition was rejected, Chartism declined, for several reasons:

(1) The ruling class was really frightened and began to make some concessions (the landlords and capitalists of course quarrelling among themselves as to who should concede what!). Thus in 1842 an Act of Parliament prohibited the employment in mines of women and of boys under ten. In 1844 another Act reduced the hours of children in textile factories to six and a half per day, and the hours of those over 13 to twelve per day. The workers were demanding a ten-hour day, so it was a grudging concession. But the workers had not expected to gain anything from the bosses without a struggle.

(2) Trade revived, largely owing to the rapid construction of railways from 1844 onwards. This led temporarily to more employment. Chartist supporters drifted into the Anti-Corn Law League (founded by capitalists like Cobden and Bright to

fight the landlords over cheaper food), or else helped to form trade unions and co-operatives. The Rochdale pioneers, for example, began in 1844.

(3) The Corn Laws were abolished in 1846, the ruling class being panicked into this by the Irish potato famine. In 1847 the landlords, in revenge for losing their corn duties, voted for an Act reducing hours in textile factories to ten hours a day and eight hours on Saturday. So when the thieves fell out the workers came into a little of their own.

As to sectarianism and the Labour movement generally, in the 'Communist Manifesto' Marx and Engels say: 'The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.' It is sectarian to attack working-class parties which are carrying on the class struggle, but which may not accept a particular theory or programme. For example, it was sectarian of the Social Democratic Federation to secede from the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 because the latter did not then adopt socialism as its objective.

It is not sectarian to criticize leaders of working-class parties who deny the class struggle and take sides with the capitalists; for they are betraying the cause for which the working-class parties exist. For example, it was not sectarian of the SDF to attack Ramsay MacDonald's leadership. We know now that MacDonald was betraying socialism from the start (though calling himself a socialist) and that he made a secret bargain with the Liberals that the Labour Party would support them in the House of Commons. It was not sectarian of Lenin to attack the German, French and British Socialist leaders for supporting the world war, which was a betrayal of every principle of socialism and of working-class interests. It is not sectarian today to attack Labour 'leaders' who support Tory policy. But it would be sectarian to attack the Labour Party because it does not accept the theory of Marxism.

James D. Young

Book Reviews

The Boss Class

The Boss, by Roy Lewis and Rosemary Stewart (Phoenix House, 21s.)

The fashion these days is to play down the role of the capitalist class and to spread the myth that this class no longer exists; or if it does it is no longer important. This theory has found its way into the Labour movement and appears in most of the Labour Party policy statements. Here at last is a book which acknowledges the fact that the boss still exists and, what is more, claims unashamedly that he is the mainspring of the economy.

The current theory among the Labour 'new thinkers' runs on these lines. The old days of the capitalist entrepreneur of the nineteenth century are gone. The one-man boss of the factory has virtually disappeared. With the development of a complicated financial structure in the economy, the ownership of capital has become diffused, so that the members of the board room in general own only a small share

of a firm's total capital. In these circumstances it is claimed that ownership of capital is no longer important, that the capitalist class as a class wielding decisive influence has disappeared and that it has been replaced by a managerial class (interested only in doing a good job!). As ownership is therefore no longer decisive, it is control that matters; and so it is claimed it is important for Labour to control industry rather than to own it. From this the buying of shares by the State in enterprises is deduced, as being an effective method of controlling the capitalist economy.

The authors of this book give the lie to these assertions.

'If it comes to a show-down a man is not master of a firm unless he has 50½ per cent. of the voting stock; but security of tenure can be very complete for the directors of a firm in which they have barely a share apiece. It takes a cataclysm—that is, a shareholders' revolt organized on a formidable scale—to unseat them . . . Twenty per cent. of a company's equity is sufficient in practice to ensure control, but much less often suffices.'

It has in fact become fashionable to talk about management

and not business, and this is the mask under which the capitalist class likes to masquerade when the word 'capitalist' or 'boss' carries with it certain emotional overtones.

'Most place their hopes . . . in describing themselves merely as "top management" so that they will persuade the public to look on them in a new and perhaps even American way. They wish to get over to the public an echo of the modesty of the Elizabethan statesman who said "We are but the upper servants in a great house".'

It is not easy to distinguish precisely between the capitalist proper and a member of the managerial class. Inevitably, in the complicated financial structure of industry and commerce, this distinction is blurred. But one suggested distinction is

'between men who understand the strategy of business and those who are only concerned with their own functions. The salaried company official in middle management whose highest ambition is to be head of his department—even if it is the sales department—and retire on the firm's contributory pension scheme in a manner perfectly analogous to that of his suburban neighbour, a Civil Servant, who will not think of himself as a business man as he thinks of one of his directors as a business man, or the tough owners of firms to whom he "sells" the firm's output, or the proprietors of the garage that services his car.'

One of the themes of this book is how the capitalist class must come to terms with the socialist aspirations of the Labour movement. Some doubt is even entertained as to whether or not the British business man has failed in his labour relations. The authors say that in the early nineteen twenties most British employers wrecked the original hopes of those who set up the Federation of British Industries that it would sponsor a great charter of labour relations, welfare and fringe benefits such as a guaranteed minimum wage and compensation on redundancy; instead the employers turned the initials FBI into a synonym of reaction. They acknowledge however the employing class's debt to Keynes

'to have a vision of a new regulated private enterprise system which would not run into periodical crises because it would **bring into relation the two basic qualities of the business spirit, thrift and enterprise, saving and investment.** He could be described as the saviour of private enterprise, as he showed how limited government planning could maintain a reasonable equilibrium in the economic system and thus remove some of the revealed defects of private enterprise without destroying it. Though many business men disliked him, Keynes alone could claim to have produced the only usable philosophy of business since "laissez-faire" ceased to be an all-conquering battle-cry.'

No apology whatever is made by the authors for the fact that the boss in making his fortune often does it in a way which contributes nothing to the fundamental strength of the economy. In times gone by—that is, in the last century—the Victorian business man would justify everything by saying that he was doing a useful job. Nowadays, however, it has to be admitted that the greatest post-war fortunes have not been made out of a productive asset but out of the buying and selling of businesses on a large scale by means of the 'take-over bid'.

'Small and medium-sized public companies which have been unduly conservative in their dividend policies, either in response to the government's call for wages restraint or perhaps because the management does not care for shareholders, are sitting ducks for this kind of deal. It is possible to offer the shareholders a very much higher price for the assets than the existing stock market price of the shares, which reflects past dividend distributions and current and conservative management policies. Often the break-up assets of a firm exceed the current market valuation of the equity capital. If the shareholders accept the offer—which they normally do—it is sometimes possible to pay them off from the accumulated reserves, and thus acquire the buildings,

plant, machinery and goodwill for next to nothing.'

It is by no means true that it is impossible nowadays to make a fortune (how often have we heard from the Right wing that the rich are taxed out of existence?). The dialectic of the situation is understood by the authors when they say that the high and progressive taxation and creeping inflation provide a bigger incentive for people like Mr Charles Clore to exercise their talents than for a young engineer to build up a great firm from the purchase of a second-hand machine and its installation in his own backyard (i.e., it is by virtue of high taxation and the so-called 'wage-price spiral' that fortunes are being made by some).

What sort of moral atmosphere exists in the rat race to the top? The boss must be prepared 'to sacrifice friends, betray confidences, turn the screws with threats, unmask unexpected batteries of blackmail, enter into pacts with enemies, even men he despises and regards as wholly disastrous to the company'. His relations with other people become warped. 'Because they [the bosses] are only interested in practical and immediate results they have shallow relations with most human beings other than their superiors or heroes, and in particular see their subordinates as doers of work rather than as people.'

One must learn not to form close attachments, because it is easier, as one American business man has said, 'to fire the guy when you are moved ahead of him'. Small wonder then that in business (more in the USA than here) the psychologist as father confessor is required to restore the balance. Ludicrous as it may seem, in one American company all top managers spend an hour a week with the psychologist consultant 'who helps to relieve them of their guilt feelings, of their sense of isolation and of not being understood'.

The main object of the employers' venom is the working class. 'As the business man sees it, labour expects the annual increase in the standard of living as advertised but will make no real contribution to get it.' There is irony in this. What has increased production now availed the miners? What has increased production periodically availed the motor-car workers when stocks accumulate and men are laid off redundant? The authors, as might be expected, ignore the fundamental contradictions of capitalist society. For them, as for the business man, it is simply a question of expansion: 'If the nationalized industries fail to make their contribution by not producing enough coal or extra power which will be needed in the years ahead, private industries will have to step into the breach.'

The authors must be thanked for revealing some of the ways and means of minimizing the impact of high taxation. The point is made that at an income of £15,000 a year, net income after tax is £5,090 (married man with two children) and thereafter every £1,000 of income represents £75 disposable income. Here again, one is reminded of speeches made by the elder statesmen of the Labour Party that capitalists have virtually been taxed out of existence. Top positions in industry and commerce allow means of supplementing income, avoiding tax and living at a considerably higher standard than a gross income at current tax levels permits. They allow this to a far greater extent than in any other walk of life. There is the expense account and all that this involves.

'The free use of a large car may be easily worth £700 a year; of a large house or luxury flat in town at least £1,000. A free secretary provides the equivalent of £700 or £750 of service, and free service in the company house or flat almost as much again (and indeed more, since servants are not easily obtainable even by those who can afford them). Meals may easily be worth £1,500 a year and holidays tacked on to business trips another £1,000. This is quite a modest assessment of the worth of such things—yet it totals already £4,700, which is the equivalent, to those who must pay for them from their net earnings, of a gross income of at least £55,000 a year on a basic salary of £8,000 gross. In short,

though it may look as if few Britons can have a net income of £10,000 a year on present taxation, in fact it is possible to live on a £10,000 a year basis, and indeed considerably higher, without drawing on capital or being dependent on capital gains.'

Underlying much of this book is the fear of socialism and workers' control of industry. The latter part of the book deals with this. The bosses, from long experience, know how to play their cards well. 'Having a trade unionist on the [nationalized] board means having a director who knows a hundred ways of saying "no" that a man who has spent his life on the management side would never know.'

In the authors' view getting rid of the business man does not get rid of industrial society, which must continue to be run by the power-loving, infinitely committee-minded organization man. 'He, of course, could very well be a socialist. Here, indeed, through the boards of nationalized industry, is an avenue for the envious angry outsiders to become powerful, happy insiders.'

The authors anticipate that the erosion of capitalism will be slowed down at the point at which the trade unions feel that it is losing them their independence of action'. This will be the time that the trade union boss will come to the rescue of the big business boss. 'Do not despair,' they seem to say to the employing class, 'with a little more old-type nationalization, a little more State participation in industry, there will come this closer alliance between the trade union bureaucracy and the employers.' And as if to anticipate the worst possible trends in the future for the employing class, the example of the USSR is taken and some consideration is given to the ways and means by which top Russian executives maintain their privileges. There is a basic salary which is far higher than the average. Add to that premiums based on the plant's performance and graded according to the degree of managerial responsibility—et voilà. Under socialism as under capitalism, the social goals of management are a high standard of living, prestige, power and authority; in short, privilege' (i.e., if it should come to the worst there is still a place for the boss).

Reforms are necessary, provided the fundamental dynamic of capitalist society is accepted, 'not as blocking change but as easing it'. Workers must not be feather-bedded. They must accept unemployment but be given generous compensation on redundancy. At all costs the capitalist class must learn to accommodate itself to the growth either of nationalization or of State intervention in private enterprises. The following observations throw a great deal of light on Right-wing Labour Party policy. They speak of the last stage of capitalism but this may prove to be extremely prolonged. 'Indeed, it may well prove very convenient for Labour governments of the future to prolong it indefinitely. Business men may be with confidence recommended to study this phase and all the possibilities inherent in it for making the world safe for business men.'

Ingeniously, the authors point out that the Labour leaders can say to the rank and file that they are in the last stages of capitalism and that everything is now evolving naturally into socialism without the export trade being impaired or the sterling or gold reserves being endangered. 'To the Russians (and to idealistic Left-wingers in Asia and elsewhere) they can equally say "Stop calling us rude names; we are in the last stage of capitalism, and we are ahead of you in evolving a new and happier society".'

Business men are recommended to continue their criticisms of nationalized industry for its inefficiency and shortcomings. They should keep up the shouting and maintain the contrast, say the authors. It is pointed out that the fight of the private bus companies against nationalization in the last years of the Labour government was a striking success just for this reason. 'But private industry must choose the ground to stand on with great tactical skill.'

In the working-class movement we use slogans. The bosses also have their slogans. One prominent industrialist, asked what business men in an industry threatened with nationaliz-

ation should do, replied: 'Get on the committee, boys.' The final conclusion drawn by the authors is that 'all in all the last stage of capitalism properly managed could be a great deal pleasanter for the individual capitalist than was the first'.

We have been warned.

SAM REYNOLDS

Workshop Floor

The First Principles of Industrial Relations, by A. E. C. Hare (Macmillan, 12s. 6d.)

This book is by no means the last word on industrial relations, but as a contribution to that very vexed subject it is quite good. The author covers a fairly wide field, examining the industrial and political structure of our present society, and tracing the changes that have taken and are taking place in industry, and the attitude of the workers to these changes.

The part that interested me most was that devoted to an examination of the causes of discontent on the shop floor. This part gives a balanced insight into the causes of friction, discontent and strikes. Hare not only hits the nail on the head, but very often drives it well and truly home.

In the closing pages, however, the author wanders all over the place looking for a remedy. But he does not find one, and I am not surprised that he states that profit-sharing does not bear fruit and that many other things have not had the desired effect. He misses the real point: that until workers control the industries in which they work there can never be lasting industrial peace.

JOHN BYRNE

Yorkshire Colliers

The Yorkshire Miners. A History, vol. i, by Frank Machin (National Union of Mineworkers, Yorkshire area, 25s.)

Few industries can provide a clearer picture of unmitigated class warfare than the pre-1947 coal industry in this country. Here the employers had early recognized the need for mutual co-operation against consumer and worker alike. The benefits obtained by combination among the coal-owners served only to reinforce their hostility to any similar action on the part of their employees. From their often dominant position on the standing joint committees and the Bench the coal-owners as a class were further able to manipulate the forces of law against incipient militancy among the miners.

But the Yorkshire miners too had a basis for class solidarity which transcended the place of work. The tradition of mutual self-help developed in response to common problems of poverty, insecurity and disaster, and provided a basis upon which the early trade unions were built. Machin's first volume describes the growth of trade unionism from the handful of small, isolated but militant branches which existed in the early nineteenth century to the formation of the Yorkshire Federation in 1881, and from his narrative a picture of the class struggle clearly emerges.

Emerges, since the author is not so much concerned to describe a period of working-class history as to trace the development of an institution—the Yorkshire Miners' Federation (now the Yorkshire area of the National Union of Mineworkers), by which the book is sponsored. Yet its pages adequately catalogue the weapons of the employing class: from the lock-out and victimization, to company unionism and the 1865 version of 'profit-sharing'.

The Yorkshire Federation is formed in the last few pages of

the book by a merger of two previously existing associations covering south and west Yorkshire respectively, but already these latter organizations are to be found opposing the actions of local branches. Perhaps in his second volume Machin will show how the Barnsley bureaucracy first became alienated from the village communities upon whose militancy it was founded and was finally submerged in an even more unwieldy organization. If so, his work should certainly provide the source material for a living history of the Yorkshire miners.

JOHN PEEL

Bourgeois Democracy

The British Political System, by André Mathiot (Hogarth Press, 30s.)

British Pressure Groups. Their Role in Relation to the House of Commons, by D. M. Stewart (Oxford University Press, 30s.)

Anonymous Empire, by S. E. Finer (Pall Mall Press, 12s. 6d.)

André Mathiot is a reputable French academic political scientist. Envy and admiration have spurred him to ask why British governments are so much more stable than French ones. His answer is a readable and interesting popular course for Workers' Educational Association classes on 'British democracy'. Its foundations are the metaphysics of Morrison and Butler.

This is not to be insulting. Mathiot explains how the two-party system over-represents the majority. This provides a firm basis for the Cabinet. The Cabinet takes control of Parliament—hence firm government. Like Voltaire's *Candide*, Mathiot sees the world of British politics as the best of all possible worlds, and all is for the best in it.

But platitudes really will not do. They obscure the assumptions on which they rest. Why is the two-party system stable, and why has it frozen all but the two parties out for the last thirty years? Because, says our *Candide*, Britain is lucky in having no dogmatic Conservatives. Because Britons have an inherent love of freedom. Because Britain is socially homogeneous. Because the monarchy 'is important as an institution which, in a singular combination of dignity and familiarity, personifies the entire history of a nation proud of their glorious past'. These phrases explain nothing.

It ought to be the scientist's job to provide a basis for forecasting the future. Mathiot has not a word to say about the future of British parliamentarism (I do not use the question-begging word 'democracy' in this connexion). For instance, what about the Tory and Marxist critics of the British system? How can it come about that the Economist can write: 'It has long been clear that the House is not making sensible use of its time. This has repelled the able and left the dull, and the silting up of the House with the dull has made it duller still' (February 8, 1958)? Mathiot has no comment.

Yet he himself points to the next step in the analysis—without realizing it. We ask what the future holds for this machine of government, encrusted with tradition and manned by incompetents. 'On most major political issues there are no really fundamental differences . . . In the course of centuries they have become tolerant.' And he goes on to argue that the apparatus of each of the two parties curbs its 'wild men' and thus contributes to the compromise of parliamentary rule. It seems that no one has told him about the régime in the Labour Party, about Transport House's lists A and B. How does this square with the 'inherent love of freedom'?

And what if extreme measures are necessary? What if Britain faces a situation in which mutual toleration and compromise no longer permit problems to be even shelved, let alone solved? What if the employers say that wages and social services must be cut, and the people say that they must stay as they are?

Again, what if the Daily Post-Bag out-shouts the Daily Reflector, and the Tories get another majority by trickery? Will that be a stable government when the people take action outside Parliament? Or, the better variant, when Labour gets back with a big majority, what if the workers reject wage restraint at the hands of Wilson? In other words, what will happen when the two-party alchemy is no longer able to keep the decisive forces of the country from participating in politics?

It would be contrary to all experience if there were not huge new movements at a time when the employers are on the offensive against the workers. When the women workers, the youth, the middle class—the hitherto silent people—raise their voices will they always go home quietly and leave it all to the two-party system to patch up a bargain which irritates the workers without satisfying the employers? Once perhaps, but never again.

And in these days to come no one will be more horrified than the Fabians, the purveyors of 'democratic' commonplaces, whose lectures lull the public into ignoring their future in times of social peace.

Bourgeois democracy can exist nowadays only so long as the parties of the Left screen the parties of the Right, only so long as they damp down instead of organizing the political feeling of the inexperienced masses of the people. British parliamentarism has enjoyed fifty years of stability not because it is mystically endowed with strength through age, but because British capitalism has not yet declined as far as French capitalism; and equally important, British parliamentarism has more efficiently papered over the cracks.

Stewart's book studies a very limited field and a peripheral one. Nuffield College seems to have thought worthy of two years' study how the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or the Lord's Day Observance Society exert pressure on MPs. The book leaves out practically everything that serious students of politics would like to know. It says nothing about how the outlook of the MPs themselves, or of the higher administrators, is formed, or how the latter are selected to take responsible decisions. Surely the targets of pressure are relevant to the study?

The book does not mention the Iron and Steel Federation, the Engineering Employers' Federation or the Catholic hierarchy. It expressly warns: 'This is a study of proper, recognized activities. There is nothing written here of the underhand'. Perhaps the author was right not to mention the struggles which determine really important policy decisions, but the result is to study the pettiest small change of the parliamentary game.

The best thing about Finer's book is its title. It is not what it claims to be, a study of the 'lobby' in Britain. It is a very naïve study of some superficial aspects of the representation in Parliament of special interests within capitalist society.

The important questions about what goes on behind the scenes in Parliament require serious thought; this in turn requires a serious method of study. Professor Finer offers a table in which he has listed alphabetically the members of the 1955 Parliament, citing against each one or more organizations with which he has some relationship, and what the relationship is. For instance, one man appears as related to the National Council of Labour Colleges in the relation of voluntary tutor!

This is where 'research' based on the social contract theory finishes up, when we start by assuming that the State expresses the aspirations of 'all the people'. A more useful result might be obtained by starting from the Marxist hypothesis and testing whether the 'democratic' State is a complex of institutions through which the owners of great masses of capital at this time expect solutions to be reached to the political problems raised in the process of appropriating surplus values.

ROBERT SHERWOOD

Baldwin's King

King George VI, by John W. Wheeler-Bennett
(Macmillan, 60s.)

Wheeler-Bennett's laborious essay in hagiography resembles in treatment the official portrait by Philip Laszlo of which a reproduction (in glorious technicolour) adorns its pages. So long as he is dealing with the King's early life as a competent naval officer, patron of an annual 'Duke of York's Camp', hard-working president of the Industrial Welfare Society and pertinacious wooer of the charming girl who eventually became his wife, there can be no objections to the author's method. It is only after the abdication crisis, when the new king, handicapped by shyness and a stammer, found himself unexpectedly a leading figure in the drama of world conflict, that the Laszlo technique proves inadequate.

George VI, as this record reveals, retained throughout his life the naive conservatism of a junior naval officer. A pathetic example of the ignorance in which he was kept by his advisers is the personal letter to Hitler which he drafted during the Munich crisis on the basis of 'one ex-serviceman to another'. Even Lord Halifax, who in 1937 in his capacity of Master of Foxhounds had accepted Goering's invitation to shoot foxes and been introduced to Hitler at Berchtesgaden, was 'doubtful of the efficacy' of this appeal. In his account of the Munich period, throughout which the King warmly supported Chamberlain, the author overlooks Russia as carefully as, in the fifties, Dulles overlooked China.

On January 11, 1939, Lord Halifax and Neville Chamberlain went to Rome, no doubt in the hope of 'driving a wedge' between Mussolini and Hitler. On this occasion they toasted the diminutive King of Italy as Emperor of Abyssinia, a country they were under obligation to defend. This incident, which Viscount Cecil describes in biting terms in his autobiography,¹ does not appear to have shocked George VI or diminished his confidence in his Ministers. Litvinov's despairing appeal, some month's later, for a conference at Bucharest to concert measures of collective resistance, was airily dismissed by Halifax as 'premature'. Wheeler-Bennett does not consider it worthy of attention. The ignorance in which the Conservative court circles kept our pathetically well intentioned monarch is once again shown by the King's entry in his diary for September 3, 1939, in which he states, with evident satisfaction, that the country was 'united behind its leaders'.

The Soviet campaign in Finland is referred to by the author as 'Finland's gallant struggle against Soviet aggression'. He suppresses the agreement made on February 4, 1940, between the British and French governments, with the approval of the Labour leaders, to send an army of 100,000 men via Sweden to fight Russia. Only the fact that at that time no such force existed and the Swedes refused to permit the passage of troops over their territory saved us from national suicide. What were the King's reactions? We are not told.



The events of May 1940—when Chamberlain was dismissed from office as a result of the revelations in the House of Commons about the mismanagement of the Norwegian expedition—seem to have been misunderstood both by the King and his advisers. 'It is most unfair on Chamberlain,' the King recorded in his diary, 'to be treated like this after all his good work. The Conservative rebels like Duff Cooper ought to be ashamed of themselves for deserting him at this moment.' As Chamberlain's successor the King's 'first and personal preference was undoubtedly Lord Halifax', who also had the support of Dr Hugh Dalton and other Labour leaders. Once

in control, however, Churchill quickly won the complete confidence of the King, who addressed him by his Christian name and ever afterwards treated him as a trusted friend. When, after the Labour landslide of 1945, George VI advised Attlee to appoint Bevin to the Foreign Office he was almost certainly acting under Churchill's influence. It was an astute move. Bevin's 'continuity' speech in the autumn of 1945 inaugurated the bipartisan policy which enabled Attlee to fritter away his enormous majority in five years and brought Churchill back to power in six. Its effects are still with us.

Wheeler-Bennett's biography establishes the late monarch's stern sense of duty, honesty and courage. It does not conceal the fact that except in his choice of a wife, where he was singularly happy, his judgment was almost invariably at fault and his advice to his Ministers bad. To those who like to think of Britain as a mixture of Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe and Madame Tussaud's, with animated waxworks dolled up in fancy dress, it will confirm some of their suspicions. It is doubtful whether George VI knew either by name or sight many of the most eminent figures who flourished during his lifetime. If this book proves anything it is that the Crown and the Conservative Party are indivisible and that socialism is incompatible with the present system of titles and honours.

DOUGLAS GOLDRING

German History

A Short History of Germany (1815-1945), by E. J. Passant
(Cambridge University Press, 20s.)

This study covers with great economy the rise and collapse of a modern national State. The late E. J. Passant did well to trace Germany's development from the Prussian reforms of 1807, although there is nothing noticeably original in his treatment.

We are shown clearly the failings of the German political parties. The 'extreme passivity' of progressive forces in fighting through with their principles became a characteristic of the German political tradition, beginning with the incompetence and apathy of the middle-class Liberals in 1848, continuing through the whole of the last century and into the twentieth. On the eve of the first world war the expansionist Right was boisterous, well organized, and closely knit together, while the Left Liberals, Centre and social democrats were too divided among themselves to pursue a consistent policy'. In 1918 it was 'the Majority social democrats under Ebert, deeply imbued with the German love of order' who rejected social revolution, and in March 1933 there were more than a few Liberal deputies who voted in the Reichstag for Hitler's Enabling Act. Moreover a tradition had grown up simultaneously in which the parties evolved as realms of abstruse political theory, but shied at responsible political practice. The analysis here of the failure of the Weimar Republic is admirably comprehensive and concise.

For his section, 'Germany at War', Donald Watt has made sound use of original official documents from captured German files; here, as throughout the book, first-rate sketch maps have been reproduced, and these are singularly helpful.

PHILIP WIENER

Swift Was Sane

The Personality of Jonathan Swift, by Irvin Ehrenpreis
(Methuen, 15s.)

Should one toss the phrase 'mad genius' into a conversation, the chances are that several persons will say or think 'like Swift'. Or if one mentions Jonathan Swift, the ordinary moderately educated person is very likely to respond with a

¹ A Great Experiment (1941). An indispensable source for the historian, this book does not appear in Wheeler-Bennett's bibliography, and its author rates only a line in a footnote.

description or a mental image of a brilliant man, never too sane, who wrote 'Gulliver's Travels', took a gloomy view of mankind, went raving mad and died in a public asylum. The eighteenth century found madness a convenient reason for dismissing his social and political criticism; the nineteenth century, unconcerned with Bolingbroke and iron-curtaining the plight of Ireland, mourned Ophelia-like over the pathos of it: 'O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown'; the twentieth century, obsessively fascinated by neurasthenia, has probed dark secret roots and used Swift's case as yet another specimen for the post-Freudian album. The madness of Swift has for two hundred years been an object-lesson, a tragedy, a terror . . .

Yet, quite simply, it is just not true.

Swift was no more mad than any other old man suffering from intermittent deafness and vertigo, and later the failure of the speech organs. When his memory was failing, and unscrupulous persons were exploiting him, his friends took the only recourse they had in order to protect him: a 'statute of lunacy' was taken out so that a committee of guardians should be legally empowered to manage his affairs. He was increasingly senile, nothing more. 'Sometimes he would say nothing, sometimes incoherent words: he never talked nonsense or did a foolish thing.' At the last, finding himself unable to speak his meaning to his servant, he managed to say 'I am a fool', and presently died.

Ehrenpreis's examination of Swift's old age presents us with a quieter and yet even more heart-rending picture than that of the too-celebrated myth. The first five chapters are interesting, but they serve in the main to prepare for the startling and entirely convincing conclusion. Not the least striking of the points Ehrenpreis makes is that at the very beginning, while Swift was still alive, the 'madness' rumours were being put out by his personal enemies, and that the myth owes its power to Dr Johnson's perpetuation of these tales.

It is only to be regretted that Ehrenpreis chooses to make his case in such a low-pitched murmuring tone, instead of using the vigorous polemical note it undoubtedly deserves.

S. F. H.

Amoral Morality

Communism and the Theologians. Study of an Encounter, by Charles West (SCM Press, 35s.)

There is a large and growing library on the subject of the relations between Christianity and communism, and a remarkably high percentage of it is so much waste paper, either because it has been written by Christians who have never taken the trouble to find out what communism is, or because it has been written by communists who have never taken the trouble to find out what Christianity is. The first thing that has to be said about this book is that it is a serious one, and

for that alone we may be profoundly grateful.

For all this it has also to be posed at once that like all such literature now appearing this is a cold war book. The author has no hesitation in writing (p. 11):

'Communist power may wax or wane. It may shift from the military to the diplomatic sphere and back again. But it will not disappear, nor will the non-communist world's responsibility for containing it, negotiating with it, seeking some viable structure of order this side of total war.'

This is a peaceful position and one of a rational opponent of communism, who sees the world as inescapably involved in revolutionary change: 'The revolution is bigger than communism' (p. 12).

On this background West chooses a number of contemporary theologians, some who see in communism simply the enemy, some, as Hromadka, who see in it judgment and hope, and others who take a variety of different positions. It is perhaps a pity that the only form of Christian socialism which is discussed is that of Tillich; there are schools of Christian socialism in England which have not been without influence.

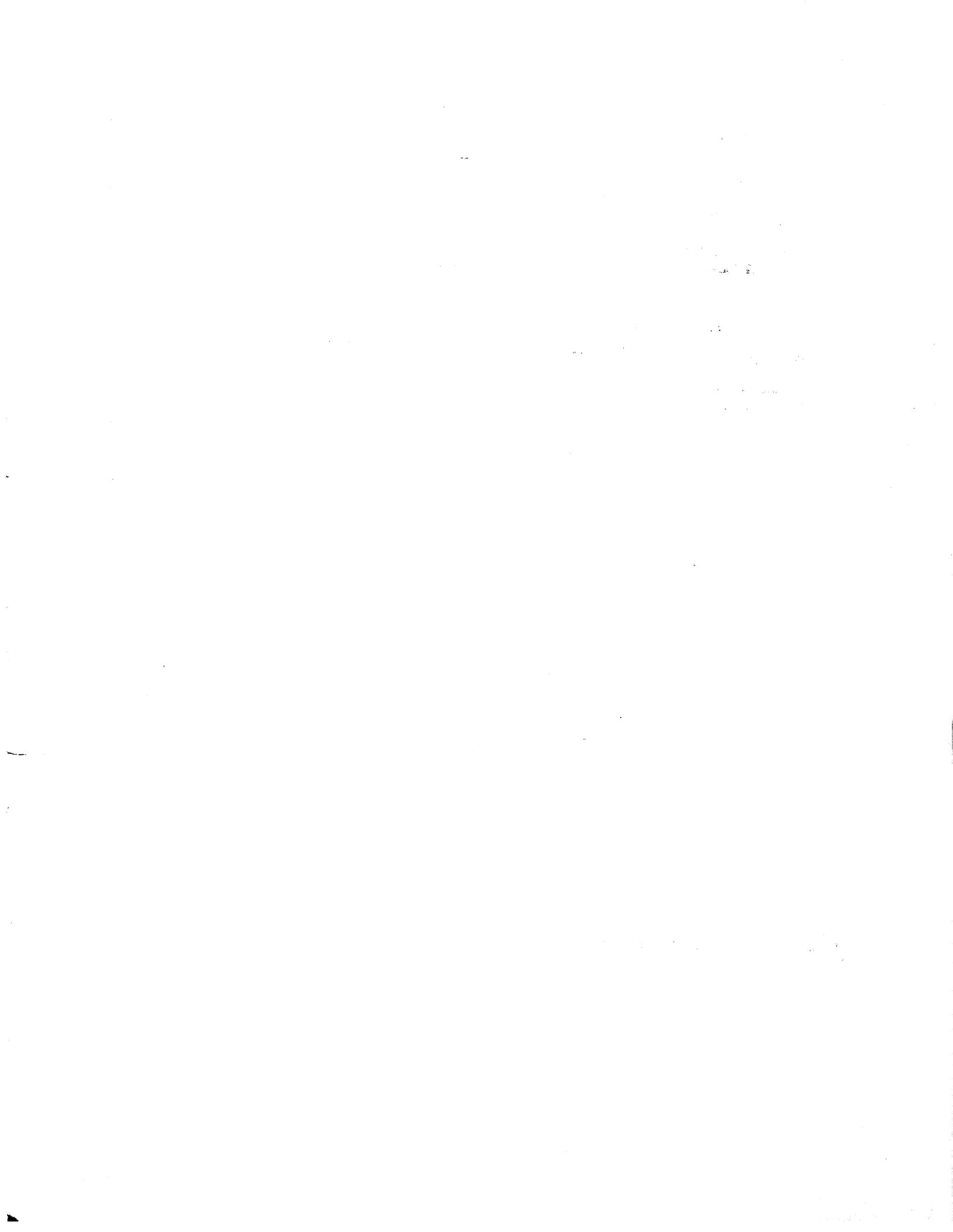
That a book written by an assistant secretary of the World Council of Churches should be able to face the fact that Marxism has effectively criticized the amoral morality of 'the secular world' more than Christianity has done is a sign of the tremendous movement of opinion in the world today. That the writer feels compelled to see communism not only as this salutary revolutionary force but also as a tyrannous power is something which communists would do well to ponder.

STANLEY EVANS

Year Book

The International Year Book and Statesmen's Who's Who, 1959, edited by L. G. Pine (Burke's Peerage, £8 8s.)

This, the seventh edition of what has become a standard reference work, runs to 1,476 pages, not including the index. The bulk of the space is taken up by information on the countries of the world, in alphabetical order—from which one may learn all sorts of useful knowledge, from the new French Constitution (given in full) to details about public services and communications in Trucial Oman—and by a directory of prominent persons. The latter's scope is indicated by the fact that it includes entries on five Maliks—the Soviet ambassador, the Lebanese politician, two Pakistani diplomats and an Indian judge. There is also a fascinating section of 'Reigning Royal Families', from the United Kingdom to Sikkim, and notes on 'International Organizations', including the Socialist International, which, it appears, has an office at 280 Euston Road, London, N.W.1.



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