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Speech by Professor Powell in the Town Hall, Stockholm, on December 10th, 1950, at the Banquet given in Honour of the Nobel Laureates

LADIES and Gentlemen,—Those placed in the position which I now occupy commonly feel concern about their worthiness to receive the great honour which has been done them. How much more must this be so in my own case, for I am conscious not only of the great names and achievements of those who have preceded me, but also of the living presence of many of my masters and teachers.

I am the fortunate representative of a group of many scientists, drawn from more than twenty nations, who have worked together in great harmony in Bristol in contributing to the development of a new tool in nuclear physics—a new method of making manifest the tracks of atomic particles in their passage through matter. Any device in science is a window on to nature, and each new window contributes to the breadth of our view. The particular features of the photographic method of detecting atomic particles enabled us to establish the existence of transient forms of matter which had escaped recognition by other methods.

In the course of this work, my colleagues and I have been deeply impressed by the powerful constructive forces which are set free when the representatives of many national traditions work harmoniously together for a common purpose. Within the limits of a single laboratory, we have experienced the invigorating effects of that international collaboration which is the life-blood of the sciences in general. And this experience has given us some small insight into the tremendous advances which will become possible for humanity when that vision of a peaceful world and the fraternity of nations, which has animated men of goodwill since the beginning of history, has been made a reality. Make it so we shall because we must, and then we shall surely go out and conquer the universe.

In all our work, my colleagues and I have received inspiration, even when we were least conscious of it, from those great aims of natural philosophy which were embodied in the doctrine of Utility and Progress, so clearly enunciated by my great countryman, Francis Bacon; from the view that the true end of the sciences is

the lightening of the burden of labour and the enrichment of human life; from that philanthropia, that love of humanity, which asserts that nothing is too trivial for the attention of the wisest which is capable of giving pleasure or pain to the meanest. These are the same aims which animated those who formulated the Code of Statutes of the Nobel Foundation. They are our most precious heritage; the source of our moral prestige without which we tend to become merely clever and lacking in humanity. May they ever be cherished so that we may all become, in Bacon's own words, the benefactors indeed of the human race, the propagators of man's empire over the universe, the champions of liberty and the conquerors and subduers of necessities.

Permit me to thank you for the great honour you have done me; for myself, since you allow me to think that I have made some small contribution to that great scientific tradition in which I have been fostered, and which is part of the glory of my country; for my family, in giving us a most memorable experience on which we shall look back with great pleasure all our lives; and for my colleagues, because, in honouring me, you honour them also.

Later, Professor Powell gave an extempore speech, in reply to representatives of Swedish student organisations at the Banquet in the Town Hall, Stockholm.

My dear students, students of Sweden,—I have the privilege of replying to your kind greetings on behalf of the assembled Nobel Laureates.

It has seemed to me possible that if you have read of the great names and achievements of those assembled in this hall, and if you have heard the speeches this afternoon about this year's prizemen, that you might have reached the conclusion that everything possible has been written or discovered, that nothing remains to be done. Let me do what I can to remove any such impression.

Twenty-five years ago, when I was a student under Lord Rutherford, he used to conclude the series of lectures in which he had described the then recent great advances in our knowledge of the atomic nuclei by saying: "It's all right, boys. Don't worry. We haven't discovered it all; much remains to be done." Surely I speak for my generation when, in turn, I say: "It's all right, boys and girls. Nature is inexhaustible and the process of discovery endless." All of us, of course, feel with Newton, that we are like boys who

have picked up a few bright pebbles on the beach, whilst the great ocean of truth opens out before us.

You then will join us in the task, and will continue when we shall leave it. Let me wish you good fortune and persistence. Good fortune, for chance plays some role in the lives of scientists as in all human affairs, and opportunity does not knock with equal insistence on every man's door. And persistence in order that you may take advantage of opportunity when it comes. In this connection, let me quote some words of a Greek philosopher, a natural philosopher, who more than two thousand years ago wrote to this effect: "Those who are altogether unaccustomed to research at the first exercise of their intelligence are befogged and blinded and quickly desist owing to fatigue and failure of intellectual power, like those who without training attempt a race. But one who is accustomed to investigations, worming his way through and turning in all directions, does not give up the search—I will not say day or night, but his whole life long. He will not rest, but will turn his attention to one thing after another which he considers relevant to the subject under investigation until he arrives at the solution of his problem." This is the authentic voice of the spirit of enquiry, coming to us across the centuries, a voice which has a message for us all.

We thank you most warmly for your good wishes and for your delightful entertainment. May you contribute to the great Swedish traditions in the arts and sciences which give such lustre to the Nobel Foundation.

Malthus and Malthusiasm

By James Fyfe

THE main tasks of bourgeois theoreticians are two: they have to provide theoretical bases on which their class can work and at the same time they must conceal the impermanence, the transitory character of capitalist society. Whether or not the second aim is consciously pursued in particular cases is of secondary or even trivial importance. It remains a necessary condition which a theory must fulfil if it is to be accepted by the bourgeoisie. The result is that though a bourgeois theory may contain a great deal of value, it always presents a picture of the world distorted to some extent in the interest of an exploiting class.

In considering how strongly this distortion operates in the case of any problem which comes up for examination, there are three factors to be taken into account: the distortion will be stronger the more fundamental the problem, the more closely it is related to practical politics and the nearer to dissolution is capitalist society. It is self-evident that the subject of this article—the current attitude to the so-called "population problem"—is likely to suffer under all three headings. One result is Neo-Malthusianism, a pernicious dogma (it can hardly be called a theory) which needs to be exposed rather than refuted; but this misanthropic rubbish is only one form, though a characteristic one, of the distortions which more or less openly and intentionally serve to prolong the rule of greed and increase the sum of human misery. Examples are not wanting of thoughtful and well-intentioned people who fall into the errors of the "over-population" type. As long as such errors are propagated, socialists have the duty of fighting them, of restating the case against them and bringing it up to date.

Malthus maintained that "population has a constant tendency to increase beyond the means of subsistence" for when unchecked it increases in a geometrical ratio while "subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio." As Halevy[1] justly points out, "in its author's pseudo-mathematical statement the Malthusian thesis is not easy to maintain; it would be difficult even to give it an intelligible meaning." Yet this nonsensical mumbo-jumbo has won unquestioning support from that day (1798) to this. It has enabled Malthus to give his name to a school or series of schools of people who have taught that the excessive procreative powers of the

[1] *England in* 1815, 2nd Edn., London, 1949, p. 574.

human race are the source of all its ills. It has even played its part in the development of a theory of rent. The last point deserves passing attention for it illustrates very well that important aspects of bourgeois theory may be observed to be founded on a mere expression of prejudice devoid of any support in either logic or experience.

Marx, of course, took Malthusianism by the scruff of the neck and with an expression of disgust, threw it out. In particular he showed that differential rent arises in capitalist society from the differences in yield, situation, etc. of different localities, regardless of whether marginal land is being forced into cultivation, or out of cultivation, or neither. He did not spend much time in refuting Malthus or his numerous predecessors—the English parsons whose traditional fecundity he found "unbecoming" and in strange contrast to their insistence on the need for the poor to practise continence. If the problem were purely an intellectual exercise, there would be no need to spend much time on it. One would simply acknowledge that food supply is one of the many factors which might influence the rate of growth of human populations and ask for the evidence that it is *the* limiting factor. No such evidence being forthcoming, that should be the end of the matter.

We now know, a century and a half after Malthus, that it is not the end of the matter. The Malthusian ideas do not die. On the contrary they go from bad to worse. Their latest exponent, Vogt, in his book *The Road to Survival*, expounds the notion that not only is the rate of increase of food supplies limited, but there is a limit beyond which they cannot increase at all. Vogt's enthusiasm for war, pestilence and famine as factors limiting the growth of human populations deserves a special name, for which I propose the word *malthusiasm*. Like enthusiasm and like many diseases, malthusiasm is catching. It therefore needs to be exposed. We must show that it has no basis in fact, that it is merely a *cri de cœur* from a dying system and that it disappears completely when human affairs are rationally ordered.

We have seen that it is difficult to extract an intelligible meaning from the Malthusian proposition. Nevertheless we have to test the possible meanings.

One possible interpretation is that as the world's population increases food shortages will become more and more acute. Since Malthus's time there have been enormous increases in the population of North America. Has food shortage been a problem there?

On the contrary, the main problem has been one of "embarrassing" surpluses. To this the modern follower of Malthus may reply that the problem has not yet become acute, though he will be hard put to it to explain the decline in the rate of increase of American populations coinciding with ample food supplies. No doubt he will hastily draw our attention to the Far East, to India, Japan and Java. In these parts of the world the population is estimated to have increased by between one quarter and one third in about 30 years up to 1940. Is it then possible for food production to increase in proportion? Spender's figures for sugar-cane yields per hectare in Java show that yields increased at about twice that rate (cf. M. T. Jenkins, *Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc.*, 1951, *95*, 84–91). This is a most instructive example and we shall return to it later. But first we must meet another possible objection from the Malthusian side. Though bound to admit that technical progress leads to increased yields on comparable land, this may be offset, they claim, by the fact that land of ever lower fertility has to be brought into cultivation to supply the growing population. Jenkins (*loc. cit.*) quotes figures for rice production in Japan based on 5-year averages from 1878–82 to 1928–32. They show that the acreage steadily increased from 6·4 million to 9·7 million acres. In the same period the production increased from 5 million short-tons to 10 million. The increase in acreage was accompanied by an *increase*, not the decrease foreseen by Malthusians, in the yield per acre. These two examples are taken from what the neo-Malthusians, in their perverse way, would regard as their happy hunting-ground. They show that so far as food shortage is a problem in the Far East, it is not a result of any insuperable natural law.

In any present or past instance it always turns out that the Malthusians can only make any semblance of a case by leaving out political conditions. If we bear this in mind, it becomes easier to understand why Malthus's ideas have not disappeared into their well-deserved oblivion. They serve to disguise the fact that human suffering is due to the defects of a political system, by seeking to explain it as due to the operation of natural phenomena. In the history of the British Isles the classic case is the Hungry Forties in Ireland. It has become a well-established popular fallacy, at least in England, that the Irish famine was caused by the outbreak of a new disease of potatoes, the potato blight. It is in fact true that blight caused tremendous losses in potatoes, which had become the staple article of diet of the Irish. But there was no shortage of

grain in Ireland: it was shipped out to England, under armed guard when necessary. And why were the Irish dependent, in the first place, on such a miserable diet? The Irish know the answer.

Finally, the Malthusians may argue that even if food shortage pure and simple has never limited populations since Malthus's time, yet there must come a time when it will. In that case we may as well face the issue now and take steps to avoid it. Is there any scientific evidence that this is true? The law of diminishing returns seems to bear on the problem. In economics this law takes the form of a statement that successive investments of capital in a given piece of land yield successively smaller returns. We cannot, however, regard the existence of an "economic law" as in any way decisive, for as Engels pointed out in his letter to F. A. Lange (March 29th, 1865), "to us so-called 'economic laws' are not eternal laws of nature but historic laws which arise and disappear; and the code of modern political economy, in so far as it has been drawn up with proper objectivity by the economists, is to us simply a summary of the laws and conditions under which alone modern bourgeois society can exist—in short, the conditions of its production and exchange expressed in an abstract and summary way." The economic law of diminishing returns is therefore suspect and we have to examine how securely it is founded on natural science (and for our present purpose bourgeois natural science will serve, though it is itself also suspect).

In soil science there is also a law of diminishing returns. It may be broadly stated as follows: If we single out one of the factors which may influence the yield of a crop and study the effect of successive increments of this factor leaving all the other factors unaltered, then we shall often find that, within limits, the successive increments give successively smaller increases in yield. This has been expressed concisely in Mitscherlich's well-known equation $dy/dx=(A-y)C$, where y is the yield when x is the amount of the factor present, A is the maximum yield attainable by increasing x alone and C is a constant.

This rule quite often fails to agree with observation at the top and bottom of the range of yields, but in the middle range (with which the agriculturist is often concerned) it can give remarkably good agreement. At first glance, then, it might appear that the economic law of diminishing returns has some basis in natural laws. If, however, Mitscherlich's rule were universally and exactly valid, the economic law would be most unlikely to be true. The jump in

reasoning from particular single factors to capital investment in general implies either that the different factors can be substituted one for the other, indifferently, which is absurd, or that they interact in a very curious way, which is unlikely.

An example will make this clearer. Gregory, Crowther and Lambert (*J. Agric. Sci.*, 1932, *22*, 617) give the following figures from an experiment with cotton in which manuring with sulphate of ammonia and the rate of irrigation were varied simultaneously. The yields have been translated to pounds of seed cotton per acre.

Sulphate of ammonia applied per acre	*Rate of watering*		
	Light	*Medium*	*Heavy*
None	414	462	474
300 lb.	594	735	840
600 lb.	684	912	1,137

By reading down any column or along any row (except perhaps the last) the law of diminishing returns can be verified, in so far as it applies to a single factor. But the cultivator is not bound to confine his attention to one factor. He can relate sulphate of ammonia to water by means of their cost in money. Suppose, for simplicity, that 300 lb. of sulphate of ammonia costs as much as one increment in watering and that the cultivator has decided to confine himself to the combinations shown in the table. His starting point is light watering with no manure. His best investment for his first capital increment is obviously in 300 lb. of sulphate of ammonia, which brings him a return of 180 lb. of seed cotton. His next increment is best spent on increasing the watering to the medium level. This brings him 141 lb. of seed cotton. His next increment goes again on sulphate of ammonia and brings 177 lb. of seed cotton, while his fourth increment, spent on watering, brings him no less than 225 lb. of seed cotton. By this time he is probably thinking about changing his variety, or increasing the number of plants per acre or adding phosphatic or potassic manures and so on. Whether he or some monopoly will reap the benefit depends on political circumstances. The experiment quoted refers to the Sudan and so we might expect the benefit to be reaped in Manchester or London.

The example has been made perhaps unduly schematic, but it serves to illustrate the main point, that the economic law of diminishing returns is only valid when some cause operates to prevent the best investment of capital. If we ask whether there is an ultimate limit to the production of food, we are in effect asking whether these causes, whatever they are, will always operate.

One cause of faulty investment which immediately leaps to mind is lack of knowledge. Quite a few articles have been published giving future estimates of the food situation of the world. To the extent that such estimates are based on current yields they are bound to be pessimistic in a technical sense. Even so, they usually show that if world war is avoided, there is no technical reason why any danger of food shortage should not also be avoided.

Is there, then, no problem of food shortage at all? Obviously, there is and in spite of our current pre-occupation with the scale of rations in Britain, it is in the East that we see the problem at its worst, both in intensity and in scope.

An exact comparison of diets which are radically different in quality as well as quantity is a difficult matter and bound to give rise to controversy. For our present purpose it is enough to say that the question is not whether our diet is 5 or 10 per cent. better than the average say in India, but rather whether it is 5 or 10 *times* better. As we have seen, the Malthusians would like us to attribute this to population density, yet India is not as densely populated as England. The relations between England and India are of much more importance than their respective population densities. Two centuries of British rule in India have created the problem. First the country was looted and an alien rule was imposed. Then the home crafts and industries were smashed in the creation of a market for British manufactures. Finally a distorted development to provide super-profits on exported capital was imposed, a stage of imperialism which is not yet at an end. For details of this process the reader is referred to R. Palme Dutt's classic study, *India To-day*. We are simply concerned here with its effect on Indian food production.

Palme Dutt has shown how the acreage under food crops declined in proportion to the total acreage and even began to decline absolutely. Local irrigation systems were allowed to fall into decay while vast dams and schemes were built with the object of increasing the production of cash crops like cotton, from which super profits can be extracted. The fostering of a corrupt class of allies like the *Zemindars* by the British led to a fantastic degree of peasant indebtedness and even to outright slavery: the "divide and rule"

policy, deliberately encouraging communal strife, was another potent factor. But perhaps the most important factor of all was the prevention of industrial development. When the English peasantry was pauperised, they moved into the towns and became the industrial proletariat. With the rapid development of industry, the agricultural revolution and the exploitation of overseas food supplies, a new industrial economy was established. Under British rule this was not allowed to happen in India, hence, in turn, not only a terrible degree of poverty, but also a severe restriction in the possible improvement of Indian agriculture, through the lack of an industrial base.

The restrictive and distorting influence of imperialism is not a special feature of British imperialism, nor is the influence of British imperialism confined to the British Empire. Lenin showed in his analysis of imperialism how all the contradictions and antagonisms of capitalism become sharper in this, its final stage. In the desperate eat-or-be-eaten struggles between different imperialist camps the weakest goes to the wall. A country which fails in this struggle suffers the same kinds of restriction and distortion of its economy as have been seen in India. The standard of living of the people in that country suffers as a result and, in particular, they go short of food.

The British bourgeoisie have known this for many years. The British people are now learning it, the hard way. As Britain sinks from ally to satellite and to tool of American imperialism, the British economy is being forced to adopt a policy of guns before butter, bombers before houses, restrictions and prohibitions in overseas trade, devaluation of currency, etc. One result is increasingly severe rationing and dearer food. Only by reversing this policy can the British people begin to raise their standard of living.

Logically, the Malthusians are required, if they are to support their nebulous case, to show that the features of the imperialist epoch sketched above are mere epiphenomena. They would have to dispose of the argument that those features account for food shortages and show that the "population law" is a more basic cause. In practice they do not even attempt to do so. Their main purpose is precisely to prevent these features being seen at all. In the age of imperialism their propaganda is directed *against* the peoples of the colonial countries, but it is directed *to* the middle classes of the imperialist countries. As imperialism in its headlong progress reduces stratum after stratum of society to proletarian

status its need for allies becomes more and more acute. Neo-Malthusian doctrines have a part to play here and so they come into favour. Their main value is to deflect attention from the real causes of desperately low living standards by setting up pseudo-scientific "laws." They also serve to split the anti-imperialist movement by setting the "metropolitan" peoples against the colonial peoples.

What has been said so far goes a long way to explain the survival of Malthus's ideas. But it does not suffice to explain the peculiarly disgusting character of the version which is now emanating from the other side of the Atlantic. Two quotations from Vogt's ***Road to Survival*** should be enough to show what I mean by ***Malthusiasm:***

"Until about the time of the Industrial Revolution, mass transport of foodstuffs was impossible and storage facilities were almost nil. When crops failed, people died. When people outbred the capacity of the local land to sustain them, there was rarely any escape but death. An exception was ancient Greece. The wisdom of its people found an expression that is rarely commented upon; they were aware of the constant threat of over population, and purposefully reduced the danger by prostitution, infanticide, emigration, and colonisation. To many, the ethics of some of these measures are repugnant; they would prefer mass misery and starvation" (p. 58).

There are some people who would prefer neither. Presumably Mr. Vogt would regard them as un-American and beneath contempt.

On doctors: "The modern medical profession, still framing its ethics on the dubious statements of an ignorant man who lived more than two thousand years ago—ignorant, that is, in terms of the modern world—continues to believe it has a duty to keep alive as many people as possible. . . . They set the stage for disaster; then, like Pilate, they wash their hands of the consequences" (p. 48). Taking into account the general theme and the contempt expressed for 2,000-year-old ethics, one does not need to be a devout Christian to find Vogt's reference to the Passion particularly offensive.

Since it is generally agreed that the leadership of the capitalist part of the world has passed from Britain to America, it is not surprising that America should take over the ideas and outlook of the British bourgeoisie. But why should those ideas have their worst features exaggerated to the point where the revulsion they evoke is likely to negate their utility? The hatred of humanity infusing these ideas is more likely to repel than to win allies, and those allies it wins will be more of a liability than an asset.

The *Economist* (January 6th, 1951), almost put its finger on the answer: "The leadership to which the United States has succeeded has turned out to be that of a half-world on the defensive. . . ." It is on the defensive against *people*. The "teeming millions of Asia" are on the move against imperialist oppression. Hundreds of millions throughout the world have unequivocally voiced their hatred of atom warfare. On every side the American imperialists find hostile people. Even at home they do not feel secure, as is shown by their régime. Hence more and more their propaganda and their actions express a hatred of mankind.

The American imperialists' contempt and hatred of humanity is not always so openly expressed. In Truman's "Point Four" the imperialist aim is disguised under the heading of aid to the economically backward countries. Chernyshev, the Soviet delegate to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, threw some light on this by giving figures for profit rates according to the U.S. Department of Commerce:

	1945	1946	1947	1948
At home	7·7	9·1	12·0	13·8 per cent.
Abroad	9·2	12·2	15·2	17·1 per cent.

Chernyshev's analysis (*Soviet News*, March 13th and 15th, 1951) shows that American imperialists follow the same policy as was developed by their British forerunners—exploitation of cheap labour, rapacious use of raw materials, holding back industrial development, support for corrupt, reactionary governments and, finally, dragging the people of the oppressed countries into a war which is against their own interests. The ultimate in American "aid to backward countries" is to be seen in Korea, a country smashed from end to end by American bombs, its people slaughtered by the million by Americans and their satellites, in furtherance of American policies of conquest.

The shortage of food suffered by millions of people to-day and the danger of worse shortages in the future are not due to any natural law. They are the result of imperialist policies.

Does the remedy lie in persuading the imperialists to modify their policies? No. The one thing the rich will not do for the poor is to get off their backs. The economies of colonial and semi-colonial countries are distorted not because imperialists are stupid, but

because they must maintain their rate of profit or succumb to another more ruthless imperialism. As a technical problem, food shortage prevents no special difficulty to imperialism. We have seen how the yield of sugar cane in Java increased faster than the human population. The research work behind the increased yields was sound, thorough and competent. It required no unexpected flash of brilliance, though it included some remarkably successful plant breeding. The results of the Java cane-breeding, especially the "wonder cane of Java," the hybrid variety, P.O.J. 2878, spread round the world to all regions of sugar cane cultivation. The Dutch tried to stop the spread of their improved varieties to their rivals, but they could not stop them applying the lesson that better varieties could be bred. The result was that an international agreement was needed to limit production of sugar and save the imperialist's profits. Obviously there is no law of nature which prevents equally striking advances in the production of native food crops, given a similar amount of well directed research work, backed up by the necessary resources to apply the knowledge won. And the necessary expenditure would not compare with that devoted to military purposes. But resources devoted to raising living standards do not produce super-profits.

There is another solution of the food problem which has been offered as a way of avoiding the dissolution of imperialism. Let the imperialist industrial countries supply the brains and the power, while the colonial countries supply the land and the labour. The result—the Groundnuts Scheme! A full analysis of the reasons for its failure is not yet possible, but the basic reason is clear enough and important enough to need emphasising. The Groundnuts Scheme failed because it was to be worked by an African population, not by African people—by labour units, not by human beings. The idea of applying industrial resources to food production is sound enough, though hardly original; to succeed, it must be based on an all-round improvement in the cultural level of the people.

This means that the people must be free. Let us turn now to examine briefly what can be done by people who have won their freedom, who are free not only from the alien fetters of imperialism but also from the "classic" restrictions which capitalist society imposes on the increase of food production, such as private property in land and production for profit.

It is not necessary to tell again the story of the building of

socialism in the U.S.S.R. We take that as our starting point, noting the contrast between their standard of living steadily rising and ours plunging down. On the basis of their industrial development, their mechanised, socialist agriculture, their advanced science and their own skill and enthusiasm, the Soviet people are now advancing to the construction of communism.

To provide the abundance of food needed for a communist society is the task of the mighty Stalin Plan. The bare statistics of this plan indicate a scale of operations that it is difficult to grasp. Excavators shifting enough earth to make a mountain the size of Scawfell: one canal (the Turkmenian Canal) irrigating an area the size of Egypt: the afforestation of 14,000,000 acres, spread over a territory twenty times as great and including over 3,300 miles of national shelter-belts: three great hydro-electric schemes, one of them including the largest power station in the world, the formation of a new inland sea. These plans are inspiring enough in their own right, but our admiration is all the keener because the confident enthusiasm with which the Soviet people have already started on their fifteen years of joyous work stand in such contrast with the apprehension and bewilderment of the capitalist world.

Yet the idea behind this magnificent plan is simple enough. It is to ensure the wise investment of national resources so as to secure maximum and stable returns of food. All the improvements over this vast area are to march in step so that the maximum benefit is gained from each: rotation of crops and leas, manuring, irrigation, shelter belts, power supplies. Thus the law of diminishing returns is defied and the jeremiads of the neo-Malthusians fade into insignificance.

The Stalin Plan is based on the present technical, scientific and human resources of the U.S.S.R. In executing the plan those resources will be still further improved. Even more majestic plans will then become practical possibilities. An example is the plan to change the course of the northward-flowing Siberian rivers Ob and Yenisei, diverting them through the Aral to the Caspian Sea. This is said to involve the creation of a new inland sea five times the size of Switzerland, the irrigation of an area six times that of Egypt and a radical improvement in the climate of Siberia.

The long term historical importance of the construction of communism in the U.S.S.R. is that, within our lifetimes the unlimited possibilities of man's control over his environment, once an assertion of reasoned belief, a prediction, are being realised in actuality.

These possibilities are open to all the peoples of the world once they can throw off the cramping fetters of dying capitalism. And they *are* throwing them off. China is now lost to imperialism. The more desperately the imperialists struggle to maintain their failing grip on Asia, the more obvious it becomes that they cannot hold it. Ally after ally deserts them, leaving only useless scum in their hands.

In Europe, Communism is no longer a spectre, it is a flesh and blood movement of millions. As the economies of European countries suffer more and more distortion in the interests of American imperialism, so the peoples of Europe, including Britain, will learn more and more clearly that their standards of living, their very existence, can only be saved by joining with the colonial peoples first to throw off imperialist domination, then to give each other mutual aid in defending themselves against imperialism's desperate attempts to revive, and mutual aid in building a free, socialist world.

The Soviet Union has shown how a new relationship of fraternal help to former colonial countries can be developed. It changed the Tsarist Empire into a voluntary association of many different peoples, invincible against military attack and daunted by no natural obstacle. The establishment of the same relationship on a world scale is the only way to secure plentiful food supplies.

Changing the British Empire into a fraternal association of peoples, free from monopolist exploitation and political repression is the key to the achievement of this aim and it is within the grasp of the British people.

Peasant Struggles in Italy

By Walter Pendleton

THERE is perhaps no country in Europe where the crisis of capitalism is more patent and provoked than in Italy. Here is a country where all the signs of this crisis erupt clearly and crudely through the polished surface of official propaganda: the survival of property relations long outmoded in more advanced capitalist countries, the poverty of technical development, the millions of unemployed and under-employed, the application and reapplication of direct repression to quell the people's unrest—and, on the other side, the birth and tremendous growth of a public consciousness and understanding of these shackles of the past, giving rise to an irresistible desire to strike them off and build a better life. Such is the pressure of economic necessity that trade union leadership remains, in spite of every effort at penetration and division by the "reformist" parties, firmly in the capable hands of the *Confederazione Generale Italiana di Lavoro*. Millions of workers and peasants have found their vanguard place in a Communist Party which has united the militant traditions of pre-1914 Socialism with the revolutionary realities created by the October Revolution and the victories of the Soviet Union; millions of other workers and peasants look increasingly to this party for a guide to the new life they are beginning to believe is possible. Through the presence of the Communists, these Italians have lost their old sense of inferiority and isolation: they breathe a new self-confidence and self-belief.

The unity of town and country that was sadly lacking in the left-wing movement after 1918 is to-day a powerful and consistent factor in Italian political life: time after time, in the last two or three years, strike action in the plains of Emilia has brought the workers' organisations of Milan and the cities of the Po Valley into closely-planned supporting action. Even in Sicily, traditionally an area of weak organisation, the land seizures in the autumn of 1949 were accompanied by imposing demonstrations by the trade unions of the city of Palermo. And an illustration from last October will show, perhaps, how profoundly shaken is the settled pattern of Italian society. The justices of the city of Milan—indifferent revolutionaries—declared at the end of September that they would initiate "working to rule" as the sole means remaining to them of drawing public attention to the Government's refusal to give them adequate clerical staff.

Even the officials of the Marshall Aid Administration have had

to recognise this all-pervading crisis, though their recognition, to say the least, is elliptical. Italian capitalism, they find, is inefficient; there must be remedies, Keynesian remedies. They could scarcely say less. "Nearly half the population still remains dependent on agriculture, and the ratio of employed population to the total population is critically low," stated their first general report, issued in February, 1949. "Pre-war *per capita* income in Italy was only half that in France and Germany, one-third of that in the United Kingdom, and one-quarter of that in the United States. Moreover, within Italy, the degree of economic development and industrialisation of the north and the south has been very unequal. It has been estimated that in 1938, *per capita* income in the northern provinces was double that of the southern provinces and the islands [Sicily and Sardinia]".[1] Nor were things getting any better, for the Italian capitalists are loth to change their ways. "It can be said that the Italian economy has not taken sufficient advantage of the available foreign aid . . ." In conclusion, "It is essential . . . to accelerate expansion of industrial capacity in Italy at a rate well above prewar, if Italy is to become independent of extraordinary external aid by 1952–3. Because private initiative in this direction is not now sufficient, vigorous public action is needed to expand production in the directions indicated by foreign and domestic demand."[2]

It goes without saying, perhaps, that this American analysis stopped well short of penetrating to the roots of the problem. To ask such general and self-generated expansion of the Italian economy in this year of grace is totally to ignore the circumstances which govern and limit this economy. Not the least of these is the domination of Italian industry by a relatively small number of extremely powerful trusts and combines. These interlocking groups are no more disposed to permit—or organised to encourage—a *general* expansion of industry than water is disposed to flow uphill. Caught in their own contradiction, the Americans are thus constrained to probe and poke with one hand the structure of monopoly which they have protected and guaranteed with the other. Only last October, nearly two years after the Marshall Aid "advisers" had pronounced their first criticism, the newly appointed "administrator," a Mr. Dayton, declared that the Italian Government's deflationary policy had "certainly curtailed Italian recovery." But it is this deflationary policy, none the less, which has allowed the big quasi-monopolies in motor-car-making and electric power to

[1] *Italy, Country Study*, February 1949, p. 7. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

return improved dividends, close down their competitors where competitors have still survived, and reassert their control after the democratic upheavals of 1945 and 1946. Italy, once again, provides perhaps the clearest example in Europe of the way in which the Marshall Plan has made more difficult that very survival of capitalism which it set out, at any rate ostensibly, to achieve.

The condition of the countryside of Italy provides overwhelmingly strong evidence of a crisis so extended in time and human misery as to pass beyond the bounds of any remedy within the ideological capacity of the present régime. Consider for a moment the evidence for absolute impoverishment—a doctrine with which the history of Italy, at least, allows no argument. The astonishing figures which follow are drawn from official and semi-official sources by *Svimez*, an "Association for the Industrial Development of Southern Italy" which might be roughly comparable with a vocational offshoot of the British Legion and whose politics, if it has any, are prudently liberal. These figures show that the population of the six southern provinces—Abruzzi-Molise, Lazio, Puglie, Campania, Lucania, Calabria—and of the two principal islands, Sicily and Sardinia, amounted in 1861 to 9,800,000; of these, about 5,600,000 were gainfully employed. Over the following seventy-five years—up to, that is, the census of 1936—the population of this area, (the *Mezzogiorno*) increased by 9,400,000, or nearly 100%. Evidence, one might conclude, of a contented and well-ordered society. But the facts are otherwise. Analysis of the population increase of 9,400,000 shows that 3,800,000 emigrated, that the number of persons *not* gainfully employed more than doubled itself—while the gainfully employed population increased by only 200,000. The proportion of gainfully employed to total population (not allowing for the 3,800,000 who were driven abroad) thus fell in seventy-five years from about 57 per cent. to 37 per cent. A closer examination of the increase by 200,000 of the gainfully employed shows, furthermore, that they have found work almost exclusively outside industry and agriculture—on the railways, in commerce, or in the State bureaucracy.

Translated into human terms, the evidence for impoverishment is terrible and all-pervading. Here in these parched and barren hills of southern Italy you will find a teeming wretchedness which is probably unique in Europe—and is probably worse even than that of Spain, if only because the people are so many and increase so fast. Villages perched on the summit of Calabrian hills by their

medieval founders can have changed almost not at all in the past hundred years. Albanians, settled in the seventeenth century, still retain their own communities and speak their own language. If there are any new houses, it is those which the peasants have built again from the stones of others which have fallen down. In a village like Melissa, memorable for the police murders in 1949, a population of about 3,000 is living to-day in medieval quarters designed for a fifth of that number. The back streets of a comparatively large southern town like Crotone, on the east Calabrian coast, reveal a pinched misery and squalor such as I have seen nowhere else in Europe.

. . . . .

For the origins of so much misery, orthodox commentators have pointed habitually to the heat of the sun, the habits of the Mediterranean, the feckless indifference of the people; they have diagnosed the nature of the south Italians as incapable of prolonged effort, or have found the roots of the evil exclusively in the all-pervading influence of the Roman Church. Politicians and publicists of every stripe and colour have wrestled with "the southern problem" and have claimed to solve it; great reservoirs of State finance have flowed into the pockets of landowners who have promised everything and anything so long as their bankruptcy might be relieved; innumerable commissions have taken their fees and travelled southwards in a spirit of discovery not dissimilar from that of Dr. Samuel Johnson in the Hebrides. But the problem, which is a problem of crushing, hopeless poverty, has remained, has grown worse.

It has grown worse, but it has also, in a sense, grown simpler. The great tide of land seizures in southern Italy in 1949 and early 1950 revealed nothing more clearly than that the class struggle in the south can now be expressed in relatively simple terms. On the one side are the masses of the peasantry—not only the landless *braccianti*, but also the dwarf-holders and many small farmers—who are supported in their common interests by the working people of the Southern towns and by a widening segment of the professional middle-class. On the other side is the landowning interest, small in number, but sustained by the armed and, if necessary, the violent partisanship of the State. It is no longer an over-simplification to say that the future lies all to the one side, and the past all to the other: so obvious is this indeed, that even the Government in Rome, which is a Government of the landowners and their industrialist and banking allies, now finds it politic to pay lip-service, and

even a little more than lip-service, to the principle of land reform.

But the disposition of the forces of hope and of despair was not always so simple. There is perhaps no more convincing demonstration of the truth of contemporary Italy's having reached, in these years since the Second World War, the climactic point where the ruling class is no longer capable of government but the emerging class is united and prepared, than a comparative survey of the century of peasant wars and revolts which began with the incursion of Napoleon's armies into the Kingdom of Naples. The material which bears on this period is little known outside Italy (or even, indeed, inside Italy), but is undoubtedly of great importance to any satisfactory historical analysis of "the southern problem." The few references I can make to it may perhaps serve to whet the appetite for further reading. Much of it can be found in the careful volumes of Lucarelli's unique study of "brigandage" in the nineteenth century. Antonio Lucarelli, it should perhaps be explained, was one of those old-style Italian Liberals who was allowed by the fascist régime to burrow away in obscurity at his own academic specialty, and even to publish his findings.

For about seven decades the "brigands" scourged the then wooded countryside of Apulia and the Molise, of the Lazio, Lucania and Calabria—the Capitanata and the Basilicate, as they were then called; they burnt and plundered and robbed; they blackmailed and held to ransom; they fought the French armies and the armies of the restored Bourbons and, at the end, the Piedmontese armies of Victor Emanuel. They became part of the folklore and of the village legends of the south; and their names can still be heard in songs whose origins are long forgotten or ignored. Carlo Levi, in his *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, offers some strange instances of this.

That there was peasant unrest in the eighteenth century, before the Napoleonic invasion, goes perhaps without saying. But it was not accidental that the great era of the "brigands" should have opened with the arrival of the French and the formal overthrow of feudalism. The decrees of 1806 which formally abolished the feudal order in the Kingdom of Naples were the signal for a peasant insurrection which was not quelled until 1811, and which broke out again and again in the half-century which followed. For this abolition of feudalism was seen by the peasants, quite rightly, as the new dynasty's reward to the *galantuomini* and the landowners who had welcomed the invasion. Lands previously held in fief now passed inalienably into the hands of the wealthy. There at once began,

and continued throughout the century—indeed, it continues even to-day—a merciless enclosure of the common lands, *terre demaniali*, from which most of the peasants drew at least a part of their livelihood. Thus expropriated, the peasants replied with guerilla war.

Hence a dire confusion of aims and interests. At the beginning, the peasants felt their interest to lie with the old régime of the Bourbons, although that régime had become throughout Europe a by-word for corruption and brutality. Gaetano Vardarelli, one of the earliest and most successful of these guerrilla leaders, carried with him the pennants of the Bourbons while he raided the landowners of Apulia, "forbade—on pain of execution—that taxes should be met or conscription levies obeyed; fed to the flames the records of the village communes; plundered without pity the *galantuomini* and the landlords—protagonists of the new régime—and sought relief to the humble of society, who were wracked by poverty."[1]

Such is Lucarelli's comment, inspired partly perhaps by Apulian fellow-feeling but mainly, beyond doubt, by that bitterness against the landowning interest which has turned many South Italian intellectuals into liberals and rebels at least "at home"—a fact which explains the importance of Croce in the last few decades. The value of Lucarelli's work lies principally in his careful sifting of the State archives of Bari and Naples. These records have survived largely intact, and provide a detailed picture of the wars against the "brigands." It is clear from documents in these archives that the Bourbon authorities from the King downward repeatedly plotted and intrigued to win peasant support—whether against the Napoleonic dynasty, against the *carbonari*, or simply against any who were discontented with their lot—and that often these plots were successful. In 1810 Vardarelli even received aid in stores and munitions from the British Navy. As late as 1861 we find the then defeated Bourbons circulating clandestine appeals throughout their former provinces, calling on the peasants to rise in defence of the old régime, and promising, after the Bourbons should be restored, that the possessions of the rich should be shared among the poor—and, above all, that the common lands enclosed by the landlords should be given back to the people.

Fooled, tricked, exploited, and finally betrayed, the peasants' leaders were consistently true to one guiding star: they were fighting for the poor against the rich. They met force with force, cruelty

[1] Antonio Lucarelli, *Il Brigantaggio Politico del Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, 1815–1818, p. 17.

with cruelty. Here, for example, is a report (quoted by Lucarelli) that was received by the High Court of Trani on February 11th, 1817:

> "On departing [writes the local justice of the village of Andria], Don Gaetano Vardarelli on horseback called the bailiff [of the local landowner] and ordered him upon the instant to give bread to every working man on the estate . . . and if, upon his return, there was one working man who had not received this, he would massacre the bailiff as he had already massacred two other bailiffs."

Orthodox historians have affixed dark labels of cruelty to the memory of these peasant guerrillas—just as, in a later day, their successors were to pin such labels upon the partisans and patriots who fought the anti-Fascist war of national liberation—but closer examination will show another side to the story. Keppel Craven, whose *Tour through the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom of Naples* was published in London in 1821, notes that the brigands rarely attacked travellers, and their violence was generally not impelled by cruelty, except in a number of cases of vendetta caused by broken promises. And the Irish general Richard Church, who served in the Bourbon interest at a time when Naples was at war with the brigands, remarked that the peasant bands rarely or never committed crimes in cold blood. But to abstract peasant cruelty from its historical context—and from the calculated and cold cruelty of the Bourbon oppressors—is in any case to make a nonsense of history.

Here is Lucarelli again:

> "What seizes the attention is the attitude of Meomartino [Vardarelli] towards the landed bourgeoisie of the areas which were dominated by him. According to ancient custom, the women and the children of the people had the right to glean the fields after reaping. But the so-called *galantuomini* who had plundered the public lands would not allow the poor people this meagre comfort. And so Don Gaetano [Vardarelli], claiming himself the protector of the humble, fulminates against the bourgeoisie, casting down upon them order after order that they shall, on pain of inexorable punishments if they fail, cease altogether to prevent the poor people from gleaning, and from saving themselves in this way from disease and hunger."

Two such orders, preserved in the State archives at Naples, convey some of the flavour of this rich flamboyant character:

> "*To the Mayor of the Commune of Atella:*
>
> "I, Gaetano Vardarelli, order and command you to call together all the landlords of the Commune of Atella, and make them understand that they shall allow gleaning to the poor people, or else I will warm their backsides, and I say what I say.
>
> "GAETANO VARDARELLI, *Commander of the Fulminate Comitiva a Cavallo.*"

> "*To the Mayor of the Commune of Foggia:*
>
> "Mr. Mayor, you will be good enough to instruct all landlords of your region, in my name, to stop feeding their gleanings to the cattle, and to give them to the poor. And if they are deaf to this order I will burn down everything that they have. Do this much and I salute you with esteem, and I tell you that if I have any complaints that you have not seen my orders carried out, then you will be responsible.
>
> "I, VARDARELLI."

Vardarelli's fall was characteristic of the confusion of mind which marked all this violent humanitarianism. Soon disillusioned with the Bourbons after the restoration of 1815, Vardarelli and his like were driven into sympathy with the *carbonari*, the liberal faction which was later to welcome Garibaldi and the armies of Piedmont. Seeing this, the Government at Naples was put in a panic lest an insurrection backed by Vardarelli should erupt and succeed against the dispirited and demoralised soldiers and mercenaries of the Neapolitan King. They accordingly found means of approaching Vardarelli with an offer of pardon for himself and his "officers," and permanent employment in the State service as an additional gendarmerie. (The Germans were to try the same trick on groups of Italian partisans in 1944, and not always with less success.) Hostilities, now engaging many thousands on either side, were thus brought to an end. The Government capitulated to Vardarelli's personal terms in July, 1817, and Vardarelli and his principal lieutenants put on the Bourbon uniform. But betrayal soon brought its own reward. The following April, upon orders from Naples, units of the Bourbon army set upon the newly made gendarmes and destroyed them, killing Vardarelli himself and many who were with him.

A still more extravagant Robin Hood was Vardarelli's contemporary, Don Ciro Annicchiarico, the priest of Grottaglie, who also and with as much courage and persistence, put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. Don Ciro, more

instructed than Vardarelli, at once saw that his natural allies were the *carbonari*, and soon after the restoration he joined the sect of the *decisi*. His ideas outstripped even theirs in utopian grandeur. He saw the Kingdom of Naples, once more as the ancient Salentine Republic, regain its former glory as the first of a chain of republics which were to form the Grand European Republic. Against the priests who served Bourbon absolutism, Don Ciro, excommunicated and outlawed, launched a manifesto which began with these words: "In the name of the Grand Assembly of the ex-Kingdom of Naples, or rather of the whole of Europe, peace and greetings. . . ." [Unlike Vardarelli, Don Ciro made no truce with Naples; a year or so after the restoration, he was run to earth, captured, and beheaded.]

Don Ciro and his contemporaries disappeared from the scene, but not the poverty and injustice in which their revolt was rooted. In 1848, while the bourgeoisie celebrated its brief triumph, peasant insurrections erupted once more in the Kingdom of Naples; this time the accent is a little more modern, a little more easily recognised. The mobs which stormed the quarters of the *Guardia Civica* at Gioa and Altamura, Noci, Acquavia delle Fonte, were demanding not only the restoration of the common lands—now, records Lucarelli, "one hears vague allusions to hours of work, to fair trading, to the equality of human rights, and, more than might be thought, to communism." Legal records that refer to the troubles of 1848–9, and are preserved in Bari and Naples, contain many references to communism: police correspondence of 1841 speaks of a "Society of Communists" and of its theories promoted by German and French "followers of the bloody Robespierre." Almost invariably, however, the leaders of these peasant risings appear to have looked for a salvation, both for themselves and for the people, in a return to the Bourbon past. It was the same in 1848 and after 1860 as it had been after 1806: the brigand leaders of the later years, like their predecessors, "assumed titles and high-sounding ranks taken from the military hierarchy: they too ravaged our country most horribly in the name of the Catholic faith, King, and People."[1] Yet for the common people, all this confusion notwithstanding, the brigands remained heroic. "The people . . . succoured them and helped them . . . followed their fortunes with passionate care, because they saw in them the paladin of the proletarian class, the inexorable judges of the dominating *galantuomini*, the fighting protagonists of the old régime. And whenever they were not

[1] Antonio Lucarelli, *Il Brigantaggio Politico delle Paglie dopo il* 1860, Introduction.

overawed by the presence of the regular Army, and could freely give vent to their feelings, the people feted and honoured them." The long decades of "brigandage" in the Mezzogiorno, Lucarelli concludes, must be viewed in the light of history "as an open and declared war against legalised injustice."[1]

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The unification of Italy, the displacement of the Bourbons by the comparatively efficient Government of Piedmont, the appearance of modern arms, the flow of contemporary history—all these things finally suffocated the guerrillas of southern Italy. The cinders might still burn hot, and flames burst out from time to time—most hotly of all, in the latter years of the nineteenth century in the conspiracy of the Sicilian *Fasci*—but the "brigands," one by one, disappear from all but popular balladry and the secret memory of the peasants. There is the rise in northern Italy of workmen's associations, the beginnings of the Socialist movement, the extension of Anarchist and then Socialist ideas to the countryside, the growth of massive peasant organisation in the plains of the Po. In these years the north leaps forward in social development: the south, bled white and terrorised by the landowning interests and their ally, the State, lingers in wretchedness. The land is entirely swallowed up by the nobility and the upper bourgeoisie; the *terre demaniali* are nothing more than the memory of a golden past; the people emigrate or starve.

The *Mafia* has given Sicily a deserved reputation for murder and brutality. But distinctions must be made. The bandits of Sicily bear no resemblance to the nineteenth century "brigands" of the mainland. Murderers of the type of Giuliano, who achieved notoriety in Sicily after the Second World War, had nothing in common with the rebellious peasants of the Sicilian *Fasci* of the 'nineties. The latter were peasants driven by hunger and despair into seizing the land they so much needed. The bandits of the *Mafia* were—and are—of a different stamp. They are the instruments of landowning oppression: and it was characteristic of the land-seizures of 1949 and 1950 in Sicily that the demonstrations and the political struggles of the peasants were against the *Mafia* in Sicily, just as they were against the landowners on the mainland. For the *Mafia* is a product of the system of land tenure peculiar to Sicily: whereas on the mainland the role of intermediary tenants between

[1] *Loc. cit.*, p. 16.

landowner and cultivator is of secondary importance, in Sicily it carries the key to the whole situation. The Sicilian landowners, accustomed through long decades to live as far away from their estates as possible, and preferably in Palermo, Naples or Rome, have traditionally let their land to tenants—no doubt, originally bailiffs—known as *gabelloti* (*gabella* being the legal instrument of contract). These *gabelloti*, in turn lease the land to other tenants, so that the actual cultivator is sometimes removed as many as three or four times from the landowner himself. The *gabelloti*, in other words, do not work the land they hold in lease; their interest is to screw from their sub-tenants as much rent in cash and kind as they possibly can—and to pay to the landlords as little as they must. Hence a community of interest among the *gabelloti*—to keep rents as high as possible, but to give to the landowners as little as possible. And hence the *Mafia*, the semi-secret organisation of the *gabelloti*, who use terror as their guarantee of livelihood. Thus the *gabelloti mafiosi* (those intermediaries, and they are the vast majority, who join this conspiracy) keep the peasants "in order" by murdering those who protest against this form of exploitation; at the same time, they protect themselves against attempts by the landlords to acquire a higher share of the spoils by murdering any intermediaries who prove inconvenient, or even by terrorising and capturing and holding to ransom the landlords themselves.

The *Mafia*, as might be expected, has its ups and downs in accordance with the political balance of power. In the aftermath of both the First and Second World Wars, when peasant agitation proved intense, the landlords were well content to give the *Mafia* its head. As soon as the Fascist *squadristi* had destroyed the organisations of the Left during the 'twenties, and the danger of peasant agitation for land reform had disappeared, the landlords at once called in the State to curb the *Mafia*. It was Mussolini's boast, indeed, that he had destroyed the *Mafia*: all he had done, in fact, was to make the *gabelloti* understand that there was no longer any need for them to murder recalcitrant peasants, and that they themselves would suffer if they continued to molest the landlords. Much the same thing occurred after 1945. Between 1945 and 1948, the landlords were content to give the *Mafia* its head, and in this period the *Mafia* murdered over 100 peasant trade unionists—since the *gabelloti*, of course, can afford to contemplate land reform no more than can the landlords. But after the Christian-Democratic electoral success in 1948, and the installation of "law and order" on good

old-fashioned lines, the Government of De Gasperi sent down strong forces of armed police to Sicily, and the *Mafia* was once more tied in leading strings.

The landlord's weakness to-day—and therefore the Government's weakness—is that terror is no longer enough to overcome peasant striving for a better life. The political and trade union organisations of the Left are now so powerful among the peasantry and even the peasantry of the backward south and the big islands—that terror defeats its own end. This was seen most strikingly in the case of Melissa. Upon a barren hillside near this Calabrian village, armed police of the notorious *Celere* shot down thirteen peasants in October, 1949. These peasants belonged to a Christian-Democratic co-operative which had decided to seize and occupy some nearby land which had not been worked for a decade or more. Most of the able-bodied young people of the village took part in this land seizure; and they belonged, as might be expected, to all parties. One of the three peasants who were shot dead by the police belonged to the Neo-Fascist *Movimento Sociale*: although financed by the local landlords, this stooge party none the less considered it wise to publish wall-posters lamenting the death of their beloved comrade killed at Melissa (and one of these posters I took from the walls of Melissa myself). The movement to seize land, in other words, was spontaneous and universal, although its impetus and direction came from the *Federterra*, which is the confederation of agricultural trade unions in Italy. Initially, this movement was met with brutality and murder, as the case of Melissa showed. Yet the killings at Melissa evoked such immediate and violent protest that the wave of land seizures was doubled and trebled within a few weeks, and reached proportions where no amount of police terror could have any effect, and where in fact the police themselves became afraid to act against the working peasants. This, perhaps, is the great basic change in rural Italy: the peasants to-day are defended, not by spasmodic recourse to armed resistance, but by strong and self-confident political and trade union organisations. More and more, they are defended by their own conscious and directed unity of purpose and action. Against this unity the wrath and violence of the landlords and their allies break in vain.

. . . . .

The peasant organisations of contemporary Italy have one central aim. Like the aims of their comrades in the factories of the

north, this aim is for *structural change* which shall not only give the working people the basis for a better life, but shall also make it possible for Italy to reverse the process of impoverishment which now grips the country. What the peasants want, and know that Italy must have if the nation is to win a better life, is capitalised land reform: not simply, that is, a redistribution of the land, but a redistribution accompanied by capital investment. The distinction is vital, for a land reform *without* capital investment is the only kind of reform which governments in Italy have ever found possible, and is one which the peasants know is little better than none at all. In this connexion, it is worth recalling that the Fascist Government attempted in 1932 to introduce a large-scale "improvement" of agricultural land in southern Italy. They did it on lines which were very close to those now proposed by the Americans with the use of "counterpart funds." They voted a large sum of money for "primary improvement" to be carried through by the State; and they voted another large sum for "secondary improvement" to be carried through by the landlords. The State was to provide large-scale public works for irrigation and basic works; and the landlords on their side, were to take advantage of these improvements by transferring their lands to *intensive* cultivation. What happened, in the event, was that the State built the public works, but the landlords, well enough pleased with things as they were, neglected to alter their methods of cultivation—and the money accordingly, was largely wasted. Such are the property and social relations of southern Italy, that no radical improvement in agriculture is thinkable without removal of the absentee landlords and their whole system of ownership. But it is precisely this that the Government of De Gasperi, or any government remotely like it, must refuse to do. The Christian-Democrats cannot envisage—any more than the Fascists could envisage—an Italy without landlords; but, constrained as they are to pay lip-service to democratic procedures, the Christian-Democrats have found it necessary to make a gesture here and there. They have expropriated a small quantity of land in central Calabria, and they have promised a small quantity of money to the peasants who are being given—or are to be given, for the whole thing is vague and unsure—this expropriated land.

Yet such expropriations, made to quieten peasant unrest, are no more than a drop in the bucket. Consider the wider picture. One of the few useful developments in contemporary Italy has been a

survey of land ownership conducted by the National Institute for Agricultural Economy. Reasonably accurate figures of ownership are now available for the first time. They summarise a multitude of human sufferings. In brief, it appears that there are in Italy 40,000 big landowners, with a total of 22 million acres, or about 550 acres each. There are $2\frac{1}{2}$ million peasants who are quite without land; and there are 1,700,000 peasants who have an average of 1 acre each. These 4,200,000 peasants, it must be remembered, are reckoned without their families and dependants. Such is the fractional division of property that in Sardinia there are many cases where several peasants jointly own one olive tree.

For the four main southern provinces and Sicily, it may be worth quoting more detailed figures, since these, so far as I know, are nowhere else available in English (see table on p. 226).

The table reveals imposingly how the number of properties divides away, but the size of them grows monstrously, as the eye moves from left to right. Yet even these figures conceal the real measure of concentration. One landlord may own several properties; and the bigger the landlord, of course, the greater the concentration of property. Thus in the Crotonese of Calabria, one of the worst-cultivated areas and the region where the village of Melissa is situated, a closer inspection shows that forty-seven landlords own 51 per cent. of the land, that another 126 lesser landlords own 27 per cent., while the remaining 22 per cent. is owned by 10,306 peasant families—which leaves unmentioned, of course, those innumerable peasants who have no land at all.

The factual evidence of the need for radical land reform within the structure even of a capitalist Italy would seem to afford no ground for denial. Nor does the Government of the landlords deny it. The Government ignores it. Rather than open its mind to the real and crying needs of the Italian people, the Government of De Gasperi, of the landlords and the bankers, of the fustian ideas of yesterday and the dollars of to-day, thinks it far better to order out the *Celere* and shoot down the peasants who cry for land and bread. *For we have got the Maxim gun—and they have not.* But the days of the Maxim gun are numbered. What this Government of the past now faces is no longer the violence of spasmodic revolt, ill led, confused, and easily betrayed. It faces the invincible weapon of to-day and of to-morrow—the knowledge of the people that the people is right, and why the people is right.

Province	Total	Distribution of Land in the Mezzogiorno (hectares)										
		Up to ·5	·5–2	2–5	5–10	10–25	25–50	50–100	100–200	200–500	500–1000	+1,000
CAMPANIA	803,730	469,246	238,661	66,115	18,014	8,320	2,002	838	360	141	28	5
	1,009,346	79,343	240,214	200,972	123,096	125,224	67,980	57,003	48,889	42,161	18,412	6,052
APULIA	681,388	307,405	270,454	65,864	18,866	10,457	3,749	2,223	1,379	785	165	41
	1,713,698	64,747	272,014	198,880	129,746	160,441	130,404	155,864	192,736	232,926	111,025	64,915
LUCANIA	278,530	141,821	86,971	30,117	10,041	5,668	1,828	1,012	623	362	63	24
	794,990	24,602	91,052	93,577	69,310	86,584	64,181	69,696	86,970	108,281	44,055	56,682
CALABRIA	520,716	326,162	129,807	39,326	13,012	7,411	2,474	1,276	705	407	106	30
	1,025,977	48,942	131,303	120,773	89,721	118,356	86,223	88,335	98,168	119,520	71,641	57,495
SICILY	1,236,342	722,842	358,789	98,621	29,168	15,960	5,476	2,822	1,489	893	226	56
	2,343,203	123,402	363,186	300,090	201,003	243,152	190,068	195,762	207,934	269,025	153,454	96,127

Note: In each case the upper row of figures refers to the *number* of properties, and the lower row to the *area* in hectares.

Mr. Morrison and Soviet Students

By Andrew Rothstein

On October 13th, 1950, Mr. Herbert Morrison addressed the Cambridge University Labour Club on the position of students in the U.S.S.R. Mr. Morrison attributed considerable importance to his speech: copies were supplied to the Press beforehand, the *Daily Herald* reproduced an authorised summary as its main feature the next morning, and other newspapers printed somewhat shorter versions. Everything was done, in fact, to make clear to the world that this was the weighty verdict of a Cabinet Minister and one of the leaders of the Labour Party. The occasion was all the more interesting because no Soviet Minister had thought it necessary to subject British higher education to critical analysis in this way; and because Mr. Morrison himself had never figured before as an authority—even a hostile one—on Soviet affairs. Something very exceptional, it seemed, must have moved the Lord President of the Council to venture into an unknown field like this. The extremely nervous way—not to put it more strongly—in which Mr. Morrison reacted to any attempt at his meeting to question his statements only heightened this impression.

Several members of the British delegations which visited the Soviet Union in October and November, 1950—from the British Soviet Friendship Society, the Scottish–U.S.S.R. Society and the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R.—had independently decided to investigate Mr. Morrison's statements on the spot, and had armed themselves with the appropriate cutting from the *Daily Herald*. I was one of them. We decided that we would enquire at every university we visited, and in particular would read out Mr. Morrison's speech textually to a group of students, asking them for their comments. At Tbilisi University, which Professor C. L. Wrenn and I visited first (November 4th), I collected some information bearing on this particular subject (amidst a mass of other valuable material), but did not manage to raise it with students through lack of time. At Kharkov University (November 11th), a group of worker-delegates and myself were able, not only to supplement our previous data in a long conversation with the Dean of the Faculty of Geology, but also to interview separately four women undergraduates in the same faculty—two second-year students of nineteen, two third-year students of twenty

—reading them out the speech and taking down their answers. At Moscow University (November 21st), I did the same with three men students—the Chairman of the Students' Union Committee (post-graduate in physics), a fifth-year history student, and a third-year physics student. At both Kharkov and Moscow the students were given no notice of what we intended, and indeed were taken from the corridor at random, so to speak (apart from the student Chairman at Moscow).

The result of this enquiry was sharp and unambiguous. It throws such light on right-wing Labour's methods of conducting international relations—as well, of course, as on the Soviet system of higher education—that I venture to reproduce it here; and the best form will probably be to contrast Mr. Morrison's successive assertions with the facts as I have discovered them.

"Only a few economically privileged families can afford to pay for their children's education after 14."

Here the figures are the simplest reply:

Year	*Total at school*	*Getting education after fifteen*	*Proportion*
1913	8 millions	600,000	Under $\frac{1}{13}$
1928	11 millions	1,600,000	Over $\frac{1}{7}$
1940	35 millions	11,000,000	Nearly $\frac{1}{3}$
1950	36 millions	12,000,000	$\frac{1}{3}$

Let Mr. Morrison have the courage to tell us what proportion of British school children are receiving general education after fifteen—the "economically privileged families" and the working class separately! One of the greatest changes in the Soviet people that strikes a visitor after an absence of fifteen years, in point of fact, is just this conquest of secondary and higher education by the workers which is proceeding at an increasing tempo, allowing for the fearful destruction which had to be made good after the war.

"If he isn't the son of a member of the highly-privileged groups in Soviet Russian society he is going to find life so hard that he will be at a serious disadvantage in his studies. . . . There is something particularly sad about the increasing tendency for the new privileged classes in Russia to monopolise the opportunities of university education for themselves and to shut out the poorer student."

Here one can present in the form of a little table the answers of the four Kharkov and three Moscow students to the question: "What highly privileged class do your parents belong to?" although it is difficult to convey the sarcastic tones in which they replied.

University and Student	*Father*	*Mother*	*Other Children*	*Remarks*
Kharkov, No. 1	Railway signalman	Housewife	3	—
Kharkov, No. 2	Railway shopman	Housewife	4	One sister studying in faculty of journalism.
Kharkov, No. 3	Fireman	Shop assistant	1	Sister just finished teacher's training college.
Kharkov, No. 4	Hairdresser	Knitting mill operative	1	—
Moscow, No. 1	Metalworker	—	—	Chairman of Students' Union; was a turner, then a miner before beginning studies.
Moscow, No. 2	Village teacher	Housewife	3	Brother student; two sisters at school.
Moscow, No. 3	Oilworker (dead)	Librarian	—	—

At Moscow, the chairman of the Students' Union estimated, "two-thirds of us are children of industrial workers or collective farmers." At Kharkov the students said that 70 per cent. not only of the students, but of the teachers and research workers, had the same social origin. At Tbilisi the figures were given by the Rector: 45 per cent. children of collective farmers, 30 per cent. children of industrial workers, 25 per cent. children of clerical workers.

There is "something particularly sad" about the British people having to pay the salary of a Cabinet Minister who, in face of facts like these, talked the sanctimonious rubbish that Mr. Morrison inflicted on his Cambridge audience.

Mr. Morrison spoke of the "number of hoops" the intending Soviet student must go through—producing an "autobiographical character of himself" (the regulations, however, only say "an autobiography": a British student must fill up an elaborate form, giving his biography and procure testimonials to character), a ten-year education certificate (just as the British student has to produce his matriculation or Higher School certificates), his internal passport (i.e. identity card) and three photographs (one intended for his examination sheet, as the regulations make clear, one for the student's permanent card of admission to libraries, etc., and one for the records, as in at least one London college) and "documents relating to his military service" (as you must at Sheffield and Birmingham, for example). Comparison of the latter remark with the original regulations reveals another of those neat little forgeries for which the anti-Soviet services are so justly famous, and which they have foisted on the innocent Labour leader.

For the real text is: "Certificate as to relationship to military service (for those liable to military service)." In other words, (*a*) whether the student has served in the armed forces already, (*b*) whether he is of military age and fit for duty. Why? The perverse ingenuity of Mr. Morrison's purveyors of information becomes particularly clear when we ask this question. *Because ex-Service students of World War II are admitted without examination if they have a secondary education, and are given priority and pay no fees if they were wounded or invalided out. Because students in places of higher education are freed from call-up—doing their military training during the first two years of their five year course without leaving the university!*

These are "hoops" indeed. But Mr. Morrison was not satisfied. All these details, he said, must "correspond to the details about him in the possession of the Special Committee of the University—in other words, the Secret Police."

Where did Mr. Morrison get that from? He was discreetly silent. It was the fruit of his own imagination: for there is certainly nothing about it in the regulations—*Vysshaya Shkola*, a substantial volume of 600 pages. What they do say is that (i) the director and the admissions committee (composed of his academic deputy, and the

deans of the faculties and two professors) must *personally* interview all applicants and check their documents, (ii) the director appoints "special boards of examiners" to carry out entrance examinations. And who are these examiners? To judge by the provision that a record of the examination "is drawn up by the examiners separately for each subject," they are as like boards of examiners in other countries as two peas—and certainly not the "Secret Police."

That, indeed, explains the laughter with which the Kharkov girls greeted this passage in Mr. Morrison's speech—and the coldly polite remark of the Moscow student, Khunisov, that this was "a strange statement of your Minister's," seeing that he was examined by the professor and teachers under whom he has since been studying!

But the entrance examination, the Cambridge students were informed by their omniscient visitor, must show "among other things that he has formed the correct political ideas at school." How could that be, asked Khunisov, when his entrance examination had been in Russian language and literature, physics, mathematics and chemistry? We turn to the examination regulations, and find similar provisions for all the science faculties; for the arts faculties, the subjects are: (i) Russian language and literature, (ii) history of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., (iii) geography, (iv) a foreign language, (v) the native language—if teaching is not in Russian. Where do correct political ideas come in? Probably (to judge by Mr. Morrison's personal political ideas) in accepting the overthrow of the Russian monarchy in 1917 as a step forward, and the overthrow of the capitalists (whom Mr. Morrison once proclaimed to be "men and brothers") as still greater progress. But these happen to be generally held opinions in the U.S.S.R., requiring no special schooling.

So keen was Mr. Morrison to insinuate that there is a test of "political reliability" that he forgot to mention, as we have seen, that ex-Service students with secondary education have no entrance examination at all; nor do those who passed out of secondary schools with excellent or very good marks (gold or silver medallists); nor do those who have completed technical school with excellent marks. What a dangerous open door for students without "political reliability"!

If the student "is rich enough to find his own accommodation . . . he has a better chance of being admitted than others of equal ability and political reliability who need a place in a students' hostel," quoth Mr. Morrison.

"Those who need hostels have preference," said one of the Kharkov girls with some irritation. "I had no friends in Moscow when I came," said Yegorov, "and this is my fifth year in a hostel." About 5,000 students of Moscow University live with their parents or in their own homes, said the Pro-rector, over 4,200 in hostels and over 1,000 in rooms rented from friends and relatives; but directly the great new University building is finished (with its 6,000 single rooms for students of the science faculties) there will be hostel accommodation for over 10,000. At Tbilisi there is hostel accommodation for all students from the provinces. Moreover, the regulations make clear that when a student has to rent a room he has a legal rebate of 25 per cent.—which means that (as rents go in the U.S.S.R.) he will be paying at the outside 3 per cent. of his stipend (without linen or service). So much for the "rich" student of Mr. Morrison's fertile imagination.

"He will find himself in a communal dormitory holding about ten students, for which he will normally pay between 20 and 40 roubles a month," Mr. Morrison stated, with a sarcastic remark about housing shortage in the U.S.S.R.—of course, taking care not to remind his youthful audience that the Soviet Union lost many millions of dwellings as a result of the war.

But in point of fact in none of the three universities visited were there anything like as many students in one room as he asserted. At Tbilisi, it was a maximum of four or five in the first year, falling to three or two in later years: at Kharkov (a city terribly ravaged and a university heavily overcrowded) six or seven the first year, and an average of three or four; at Moscow a maximum of four or five, many with only two, with the prospect of a room each after next year as already mentioned. Moreover, the payment for hostel accommodation was available to Mr. Morrison's informants from the official regulations—15 roubles a month, including heating, cleaning, lighting and bed-linen (not merely Mr. Morrison's "mattress," as the Kharkov and Moscow students were quick to point out). This represented, as we could easily calculate, from 4 per cent. to 6 per cent. of the average monthly stipend. What British student could say the same?

Then came more figures from Mr. Morrison, intended to show that, without parents to keep him, the Soviet student "will find it practically impossible to make ends meet." From the stipend—which over 90 per cent. of all students get (96 per cent. in Moscow, 92 per cent. in Tbilisi)—about 10 per cent. will go in fees, said Mr.

Morrison. He only forgot to mention the categories freed from all fees (about half, they said, at Kharkov; more than half at Moscow): war-wounded, invalids, pensioners, or their children; children of schoolteachers; children of regular (long-service) officers of the armed forces on superannuation (N.B. for Mr. Morrison: there are no long-service *rankers*); children of privates and N.C.Os. called up for military service; war orphans (many more of these in the U.S.S.R. than in Britain, Mr. Morrison); teachers and librarians engaged in extra-mural study; students of fourteen Asiatic nationalities in the Caucasus, the Altai and Central Asia, and, finally—mark this, O Minister so tenderly concerned for "the poorer student"—those students "from among the needy." Who decides whether they are in need? The Rector, jointly with the Students' Union Committee!

Space forbids more detailed examination of the other items: the subscription to State Loan, which Mr. Morrison "upgrades" from under 4 per cent. of stipend (a fortnight's stipend in twelve months) to "5 or 10 per cent."; income-tax, likewise inflated from an average of 3–4 per cent. to "over 6 per cent."; compulsory Union contribution (as though British students do not pay an equivalent—but Mr. Morrison omits to say it amounts to 1 per cent. of the monthly stipend, and gives the right to social insurance and holiday facilities on a scale beyond the dreams of a British student). By overpricing necessities, in addition, Mr. Morrison arrives at the grand conclusion that the student is "out of luck" if he wants a suit or a pair of shoes.

How was it, then, that the students we saw at the three universities in the corridors and courtyards and reading-rooms were all well shod, neatly dressed and full of life? Partly because Mr. Morrison had overlooked that only half of them paid fees, that even those who do have over 75 per cent. of their stipend to spend on food, clothing, writing materials, books, and transport, that their main meal (a most substantial one) costs them in a month no more than 25–30 per cent. of their month's stipend at the outside, that in no country in the world are students' books and writing materials as cheap as in the U.S.S.R. Partly because he does not know (let us charitably assume) that for excellent results Soviet students get a 25 per cent. increase in their stipend (over 1,000 at Tbilisi, out of 5,000, so they are not all that difficult to get).

Partly, too, because he had omitted to remind his hearers that the Soviet student's stipend is calculated so as to provide him or her with a reasonable standard of life *every* month—in vacations

as well as in term time—and that for vacations, in addition, his organisation (the Union of Workers in Higher Education and Research Institutions) provides him with facilities of which the following illustration was given by the Chairman of the Moscow Students' Union Committee:

Student Holiday Facilities, Moscow, 1950, at State or Union Expense

1,000—four weeks' rest home: 200 free, 800 pay 72 roubles (actual cost, 250 roubles).
700—four weeks' sanatorium: 140 free, 560 pay 240 roubles (actual cost, 1,000–3,000 roubles).
275—four weeks' student sports camp (for members of teams, etc.): free.
1,200—three bases for eighteen days' hiking: provided with rucksack, tent, cooking equipment, food, 20 roubles fare and 3 roubles cash per day.
2,000—week-end hikes, 20 kilometres: provided with tent, rucksack, food, and 6 roubles cash per day.
2,000—faculty field work (geography, geology, biology, history), all at State expense (fares, hostels, food allowance).

The utter absurdity of Herbert Morrison's pontifical utterances from a brief supplied to him by unprincipled Government propagandists—of the genteel breed who produced the forged *Pravda* in 1920, the "Zinoviev Letter" in 1924 and the German "M Plan" in 1947—was revealed in the picture he drew of how the Soviet student begins his day: "For breakfast he eats some black bread and a little sausage in the dormitory, and drinks tea which he makes for himself in the hostel kitchen." This pathetic picture was obviously inspired by novels of student life thirty years ago, and supplemented from the notebooks of capitalist diplomats during the hard war years, when, posing as "allies," they could gather such juicy data with impunity. It bears no relation to reality. The British delegates laughed loud and long when the Kharkov students told how they *had* started that day. Here is their report, brought together with that of the two Moscow undergraduates (*see opposite*):

Indeed, the Soviet people as a whole, both in town and country, are so much better off nowadays than the British people in respect of food—as responsible British delegates, including health experts, have been reporting since the summer of 1950—that it would be

most surprising if the students did not share in the general well-being.

"Whatever other subjects he is studying, he cannot graduate without passing three compulsory examinations, which are Marxism-Leninism, physical training and military training. This goes for both men and women students."

Apart from the fact that (i) women students do no military

Student	*Breakfast*	*Where taken*	*Remarks*
Kharkov, No. 4	Omelette of three eggs, white bread and butter, coffee, end of mother's cake	Hostel	Cooked herself Stipend, 265 roubles per month
Kharkov, No. 3	White bread and butter, cocoa	Hostel	"Don't eat much breakfast." Stipend, 265 roubles.
Kharkov, No. 2	White bread and butter, coffee	Hostel	"Prefer black bread." Stipend, 300 roubles (25 per cent. bonus)
Kharkov, No. 1	White bread and butter, coffee, *halva* (nut sweet)	Hostel	Stipend, 240 roubles
Moscow, fifth year	Four fried eggs, white bread and butter, tea	Canteen	"Plenty of milk products." Excused fees: war invalid
Moscow, third year	Two boiled eggs, white bread and butter, tea	Hostel	"There's a row if white bread is missing in the mornings"

training, (ii) military training for men students—in the modified form mentioned earlier—is part of their legal obligation as citizens, and has no "compulsory exam." attached to it, (iii) physical training (for two hours a week) is compulsory only during the first two years of the general five-year course, (iv) there is no "compulsory exam." in it, one may say that Mr. Morrison's statement is approximately correct. Incidentally, Birmingham University also has compulsory physical training during the first year.

Mr. Morrison doubted whether the Soviet student, after all this "has any time on his hands."

"We go to the theatre and the cinema, and we do social work," said one of the Kharkov students. "For example, our faculty are patrons of one of the Kharkov factories. We give talks and lectures in their club; we lend books to the factory hostel. Last year in the Tenth Class of the Young Workers' School [secondary schools at which workers who missed their continued education can take a six-year course outside working hours, which brings them up to university entrance standard] there was a lad of eighteen falling behind and needing help. Several of us took him in hand, coached him, and he finished well. He is now a first-year student here." In Moscow University over 1,000 students are members of research societies; they prepare, read and have published at University expense a mass of valuable papers. At Tbilisi we saw several volumes of such papers. Very large sports societies, with sections of every kind from football to mountaineering, and dozens of student amateur circles of art and culture of all kinds, are to be found in every university. At Tbilisi University we saw scores of schoolchildren whom the students were finding time to instruct in basketball and gym., fencing and Georgian wrestling.

Mr. Morrison's last kick was one which recalled the early propaganda against the U.S.S.R., alleging that workmen were being cruelly forced to accept higher wages and shorter hours, and that the land was being forcibly divided among the peasants without allowing them to pay the landlords. He stated:

"One ingenious device which interested me in the Soviet university arrangements is that the student who has passed his final examination is summoned to a posting commission, which assigns him to his post in the Soviet economy, in any part of the country, regardless of his own taste or convenience."

By this ingenious device, indeed, Mr. Morrison sought to conceal from his audience, who, like all British students after their first year, were well aware of the problem of graduate unemployment, the plain and unmistakable fact—confirmed by the authorities or senior students in all three Soviet universities visited—that Soviet graduates find themselves with more offers of jobs than there are candidates, and are able to pick and choose at will. Everywhere we were given the same picture. In January of each year the Ministry of Higher Education for the arts faculties—the technical or economic Ministries for the others—send lists of vacancies, which are put up for the fifth-year students to study. In the early summer a commission is formed in each faculty, composed of the dean, profes-

sor or other teachers, with representatives of all the interested Ministries, who discuss with each student separately which of the jobs available he or she would like to take (assuming they have not qualified for, or chosen, post-graduate research). Occasionally a student is reluctant to leave a big city or the comfortable family nest; but these are rare exceptions nowadays, so boundless are the opportunities and so favourable the starting conditions (a skilled workman's wage as initial salary, all fares and expenses paid, an extra month's stipend to cover initial costs, etc.). Moreover, the graduate's obligation to the State for the money it has spent on him (at Tbilisi, the average cost per student is 12,000 roubles per annum, against the 400 roubles received from *half* the students) only binds him to take some job in his own speciality—if it comes to that—for the first three years.

And so at Tbilisi, in 1949, out of 1,100 who graduated, all were unfortunate enough to get well-paid jobs in their own speciality, 900 in the national economy or public services, 200 for post-graduate research (with a much higher stipend). At Moscow, where nearly 2,000 graduate yearly, 1,100 miserable victims got posts in 1950 in industry, agriculture, public services, secondary schools and museums; the rest took research work. No one was left jobless, no arts students had to join the Army or become assistant bricklayers, no science graduates had to become lab. assistants or waiters, no women graduates had to look out for marriage as a refuge from unemployment. Most "arbitrary"! Most "ingenious"! Mr. Morrison would do well to read Robert Blatchford on the subject (*Merrie England*):

"Suppose you are out of work, can you have work for the asking? No. But under Socialism you could always have work. Is *that* a proof of slavery? Suppose under Socialism you were told that you must work or starve! Would that be any more despotic treatment than the treatment you get now? Tell your present employers that you do not wish to work! and see what the alternative will be. You must work or starve now. The difference between present conditions and the conditions of Socialism are that you now work long hours for a bare existence, whereas in a Socialistic state you would work short hours for a life of honour and comfort. The Socialistic state would not compel any man to work; it would prevent him from living on the work of others."

Evidently Blatchford in 1892 understood the essence of Socialism a good deal better than Morrison in 1950; and of capitalism too.

Morrison does not even appear to know the facts of capitalism, much less its essence; or what would have possessed him to finish his speech to the Cambridge students with the following really brazen piece of impudence, which has aroused loud laughter at every students' meeting at which it was read (the London School of Economics Union, a meeting jointly sponsored by the Labour and Socialist Clubs at Cambridge, a meeting at Oxford), as well as at more general meetings?

"A manual worker's son or daughter has a far better chance of a university education here in England than in Russia, which parades itself as the workers' paradise."

Turn to the *Year Book of Education*, 1950. It shows (p. 610) that in 1947–8, when the ex-Service men's training grants scheme was at its peak, i.e. when the percentage of students from the working class was higher than ever before (and than to-day), manual workers in agriculture and industry were estimated at 70 per cent. of the English population, but had 40–45 per cent. of university places. On the other hand, what are called "upper groups"—employers, managers, persons of independent means, higher ranks in the Civil Service and the professions—provided 9 per cent. of the population, but had grabbed 35 per cent. of the university places. In the Soviet Union as we have seen, the workers in industry and the collective farmers have 67–75 per cent. of the university places. Furthermore, proportionately to the population, there are more than twice as many students (1,230,000 in the U.S.S.R. out of roughly 200 millions: 130,000 university students and students taking degree courses in technical colleges, at a very generous estimate, out of the British population of 50 millions). So that the manual workers in the U.S.S.R. have in fact *between three and four times* as good a chance of sending their sons and daughters to the university as our own in Britain!

Impudence can carry a Cabinet Minister a long way, but there are limits to human credulity which even he cannot defy.

It remains, however, to consider why he should attempt that ungrateful task. Probably the key will be found if his speech be considered in the setting of a series of attacks on the U.S.S.R. by leading Ministers, mounting in their virulence and in their disregard for the truth, since last autumn. On September 5th, 1950, Mr. Attlee used his fraternal address to the T.U.C. to denounce the Soviet trade unions as "merely a part of the machinery of the police state, servile instruments of the ruling bureaucracy"—a statement

to which the overwhelming mass of testimony from leading British trade unionists and members of his own party, during the last twenty-five years, gives the lie direct. On October 13th, Mr. Morrison made the speech examined in the present article. On January 26th, Mr. Attlee denounced the members of the Soviet Government as preaching "slavery and the negation of human happiness," adding that they "reject the moral values on which our civilization has been built up." This outburst was particularly significant because (i) no Soviet Minister had made any such attack on the principles and morality of the British Ministers, (ii) exactly fourteen days before, Attlee had signed the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' declaration that they "would welcome any feasible arrangement for a frank exchange of views with Stalin" in order to "make a supreme effort to see clearly into each other's hearts and minds." On January 28th, Mr. Morrison returned to the charge again, calling the Soviet Government a "small, self-appointed gang" who had "captured a great nation," and the Soviet Union "an imperialist Empire." The same day, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the Soviet Government were seeking to build up an intense national hatred against the West. On February 12th, Mr. Attlee told the House of Commons: "The Soviet Union never disarmed after the last war," and "while Britain and the United States demobilised their forces at the end of the war, Soviet Russia did not": the fantastic untruth which Stalin exposed.

What were the circumstances of this series of ever more monstrous falsehoods and provocations? They were (i) from June onwards, the open attempt of the United States Government to provoke war between the U.S.S.R. and China on the one hand and its satellite "Atlantic Powers" on the other, by its invasion of Korea in defence of its bellicose puppet, Syngman Rhee, (ii) from September onwards, the naked pressure of the United States Government on Britain to raise the burden of armaments to a crushing level, at the expense of the living standards of the British people, (iii) from the summer onwards, the growing revolt of the British people against this outrageous situation—expressed in the strike of the gas-workers defying Order 1305, the overthrow of the wage-freeze by the T.U.C., the national outbreak of protest against the Truman threats to use atom bombs against Korea and China, the widespread movement of the Z Reservists against the foreign policy which was leading to their call-up, the general disgust and protest at German rearmament, and the present revolt against

Order 1305 all over the labour movement. In these circumstances, truthful and objective accounts of life in the Soviet Union, so startlingly different from life and prospects in the capitalist countries, spell exposure and disaster to the Tory right-wing labour policy of Attlee and Morrison. And it was just such truthful accounts that, from the summer of 1950, were beginning to reach the British people on the biggest scale for years—in the report of the May Day Workers' Delegation (*Russia with Our Own Eyes*) and of the Women's Delegation, of the Electrical Workers and Foundrymen's and Scottish Miners' Delegations.

In its wider historical setting, therefore, Mr. Morrison's address to the Cambridge Labour students should be seen as part of the increasingly desperate efforts of the right-wing Labour leaders at a critical moment to combat the "dangerous" effect of truth about the Soviet Union on the alarmed and disgusted British people. In these efforts, the more reckless and blatant the falsehoods, the more certain we may be that the truth about the Soviet Union is going home and the barriers between the British and Soviet peoples erected in five years of steady lying are beginning to break down.

But it is the conscious will of men and women, fighting against still formidable obstacles, that is breaking them down: they do not collapse of themselves. The value of realising the stuff and nonsense inherent in speeches like Morrison's is to spur us on to bigger efforts to expose them—and slanders like them. To put it plainly, this is the time when Marxists and non-Marxists alike can transform the first small successes of the fight for peace into a triumphant drive by taking an active interest in the work of the organisations promoting friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of Britain and the Soviet Union—the Society for Cultural Relations, in the special field of mutual information on developments in science, education, art, literature and social and economic life: the British-Soviet Friendship Society and the Scottish-U.S.S.R. Society, in the active struggle on every side to fight the liars and promote living contacts and friendship between our nations.

Socialist Realism

ON THE ROLE AND CHARACTER OF SOVIET LITERATURE

By Eric Hartley

THE mistakes made by Professor Lukàcs and the controversy aroused by them in the Hungarian Press have brought certain problems of Socialist Realism into sharp relief and posed the question of the superiority of Soviet literature in relation to bourgeois literature, both past and present. "Marxism-Leninism is indeed the Himalaya of ideologies," wrote Professor Lukàcs, "but it does not follow that the little rabbit jumping on its top is therefore a bigger animal than the elephant in the plains."[1] In our own country there is a similar tendency among many quite progressively-minded writers to ignore the achievements of Soviet literature and to look rather condescendingly down on Soviet writers—"Ah, but they haven't produced a Tolstoy yet" is our oft-heard parallel to Professor Lukàcs' metaphor. Neither the theory of Socialist Realism nor the experience of Soviet writers have been adequately studied in England, nor the lessons drawn from the development of Soviet literary theory and practice which could assist in the creation of a literature worthy of the British labour movement and able to become a leading force in the achievement of its socialist aims. A correct appraisal of the character and role of Soviet literature and of its superiority over all forms of bourgeois literature is essential if these lessons are to be learned.

Does the statement that Soviet literature is superior to bourgeois literature mean that a Fadeyev is necessarily superior to a Tolstoy or a Sholokhov greater than a Balzac? No, it does not. As Vera Panova has remarked:[2] "It is very difficult for us to write. Behind us is a literature of giant stature of which there has been no equal. The giants look on us from their heights. . . . There are unsurpassed examples created by great writers . . . we must learn from the great Russian classics. . . ." But the great literature of the past is composed of a number of isolated giants amid a sea of mediocrity and vulgarity, a sea which is ever increasingly submerging the whole of bourgeois literature. The quality of greatness of the important

[1] Cited by Jozsef Rèvai, "On Some Questions of our Literature," in the *Information Bulletin* of the Foreign Section of the C.C. of the Hungarian Working People's Party, for April, 1950.

[2] *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, No. 66, 1950.

realists of the past is completely different from that of the writers of Socialist realism, based as it was on different social-historical conditions and on different interpretations of reality. It is by the sum-total of its manifestations and their overall character, and by the qualities lent it through the socialist realist interpretation of reality that Soviet literature must be judged superior to bourgeois literature as a whole, in fact as well as in potential.

The Soviet writer and the Soviet reader are living in a world of the future in relation to their British counterparts of to-day. This fact inevitably tends to create a psychological gap between them. In order to bridge this gap and understand the specific features that give Soviet literature its outstanding position of leadership in world literature to-day it is necessary to obtain a correct historical perspective of the development of Socialist Realism. Very briefly, in the space available, we can trace this development through two important themes: the changing relationship between author and reader and the changing relationship between the individual (the hero) and society.

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The reader, though his presence be acknowledged, is apt to be overlooked as an *integral factor* in a literature. But great writers and poets have always recognised him as such.

Throughout the nineteenth century we find the writer complaining of loneliness and isolation—of lack of contact with the reading public.

> *A crowd uncaring hems the poet round*
> *And buzzes careless praise into his ear.*
> *But pensive, caring nought, he hears the sound*
> *While absently he thumbs the tuneful lyre. . . .*[1]

These sentiments of Pushkin's are echoed and re-echoed in his own and other poetry of the XIXth century. Belinsky, in a famous passage, castigated the reading public of his day, the well-to-do who liked the type of literature which did not remind them of unpleasant realities.[2] Turgenev frankly stated: "I never wrote for the people, I wrote only for the class to which I belong"[3]—it must be admitted a comparatively small one. Dobroliubov pointed out

[1] A. S. Pushkin, *Poetic Works*, St. Petersburg, 1887, p. 238.
[2] "Review of Russian Literature for the Year 1847," *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1949.
[3] Letters to E. Lambert, [1863], Moscow, 1915, p. 161. Cited in *Russian Writers on Literature*, Leningrad, 1939, p. 373.

in the sixties that the social critics were writing for an extremely limited nucleus. In the eighties there was a crop of suicides of lonely young writers and poets.[1] Chekhov complained of lack of contact with his readers. Tolstoy, disgusted with his own reading public sought to break with it and find an entirely new, peasant reader.[2] Shchedrin summed it up when he wrote: "There will be no direct contact between author and reader until the point of view of a friendly reader can be taken account of on the scales of social consciousness."[3] But for the time being he saw such a reader as extremely elusive.

Gorki was particularly concerned with the attitude of the reader to literature. He explored the reaction of the reader to realism and romance in a number of his early stories and plays—for instance, in *Varenka Olesova* in *How I was Shaved* and in his play, *Dachniki*. He saw that the reading public wanted romantic heroes, but he was not prepared to give them the escapist types that Varya and his barber wanted. Even when praised by the intelligentsia of his time, the early Gorki felt as lonely and isolated as any of his predecessors. He felt he was writing for "a soul like a worn out rag,"[4] as he put it, and he repeatedly snubbed his unwanted admirers.[5] Gorki, coming as he did from the ranks of the people, was particularly sensitive to this problem. He wanted to write for the people. But in writing of the "down-and-outs" he could not hope that the "down-and-outs" would read him.

At the turn of the century, however, a new friendly reader had come into being and was multiplying fast. Workers' circles arose through the struggle for the emancipation of labour, drawing in, at the same time, fresh members of the intelligentsia, especially among the youth.[6] Speaking of the people's libraries that had been formed, the young worker, Pavel Zalomov, prototype of Pavel Vlasov in *Mother*, declared: "In many libraries, despite the fact that the majority of worth-while books are prohibited, the number of subscribers exceeds the number of books."[7] From then on, the

[1] E.g. Garshin and Palmin, both friends of Chekhov.
[2] Cf. L. N. Tolstoy, *What is Art?*
[3] N. Shchedrin, *Complete Works*, ("Polnve Sobranie Sochineni") Vol. XVI, p. 556.
[4] Cited by B. Bialik in "*Problems of Socialist Realism*" from a letter by Gorki to L. V. Sredin in December, 1900, pp. 141–2.
[5] Cf. "The Writer who Gave Himself Airs," *Oktyabr* No. 6, 1937, p. 99.
[6] Cf. V. Desnitski, *M. Gorki*, Leningrad, 1940, pp. 49 *ff*. Such a circle is closely described also by Gorki later on, in his novel, *Mother*. Cf. also, N. Krupskaya, description of her work with Lenin in St. Petersburg a few years earlier, in *Memories of Lenin*, Vol. I, London [Martin Lawrence].
[7] Cited by L. Timofeyev, *Contemporary Literature*, Moscow, 1948.

number of working-class "friendly" readers was, with fluctuations, on the increase.[1] The revolutionary difference which this made for those concerned, and in particular the writer, might be summed up as follows, bearing in mind always the example of Gorki.

The new writer was not only to know and understand, but to move in the life of the reader and help him towards the fulfilment of his aspirations in the example of his heroes. It is interesting to compare this view with that of Tolstoy's, that "art is a means of infecting the broad public with the experiences of the artist." The whole of Gorki's early work is centred around the problem of the real and the romantic, in order precisely to achieve this. He seeks to present a picture to the "friendly" reader of the revolutionary, romantic hero (in this, of course, fundamentally differing from Tolstoy's religious pacifism), a hero who sets an example to the reader and so "lights the road forward," as he put it later.[2] The corollary to this was, of course, close contact and discussion between writer and reader and the need for the reader to be an active critical agent, since both writer and reader formed part of one social family with a common purpose. This Gorki sought to give effect to in his personal activity and discussions, through the journals and publishing which he promoted and by encouraging the new proletarian reader himself to write.[3]

Since the social and political revolution of 1917 and, above all, since the economic and cultural revolution of 1929–1932, this new writer-reader relationship has, from covering only a small sector of society, developed, as we shall shortly see, to cover virtually the whole of the new Soviet society. At the same time, a fundamental change in outlook has taken place. The new reader and writer are no longer regarded as "proletarian" in the sense that they were before.[4] They are seen as the common owners of their country's wealth and means of production, as classless Soviet citizens. They still seek to change society, but by revolutionary means of a different kind. The motive force of social development is described as "criticism and self-criticism."[5] To further these, no effort is

[1] Cf. Gorki's estimation of the position in 1914 in his "Preface to an Anthology of Proletarian Writers," *Literature and Life*, London, 1946.

[2] *Za vysokuyu ideinoct sovietskovo iskusstva*, Moscow, 1946, p. 54.

[3] He founded the publishing house "Znanie" for this purpose, participated in the School for Russian Workers on Capri (course of lectures on history of Russian literature), to name only two of numerous undertakings.

[4] Cf. Gorki, speech delivered before leaving Moscow for Vladikavkaz, *The Rule of Labour*, 1. viii. 28, and in *Izvestia*, 21. iv. 28.

[5] Cf. A. A. Zhdanov, *On Literature, Music and Philosophy*, Lawrence and Wishart, p. 106.

spared, since literature is regarded as one of the greatest influences in life. The Soviet writer is encouraged to live among the people, to share their life and to write of them and for them. Discussions on literature take place in factories, among miners and on farms. Readers criticise and their criticisms are featured in the press. Readers suggest urgent themes reflecting problems of society. Writers visit factories and farms to discuss their books with workers.[1] The Union of Soviet Writers has a special Commission for the encouragement of young writers. Amateur writers' circles exist in all parts of the country, at which beginners' efforts are read, discussed and criticised. These have served as a recruiting ground for many new writers.[2]

All this may be so—but what special ability have Russian workers and peasants to discuss and criticise works of art? First we have to recognise that such discussion is not influenced by the widespread existence of a cheap, escapist literature. All literature, be it successful or not, is an attempt to deal artistically with significant problems of society. Secondly, one may judge something of a people's cultural standard by its reading. To illustrate, I will risk quoting a few figures that are significant of the development of the Russian reading public. Up to 1856, twenty years after his death, Pushkin's works had been published in only 10,000 copies. Censorship here, of course, was partly to blame. Later, with the growth of the reading public, the position improved. Between 1887 and 1917 (30 years) his works came out in 11 million copies. Alongside Tolstoy this was the biggest circulation of a classical author in pre-revolutionary times. But when we come to Soviet editions we find that the general publication of Pushkin's works totals 40 million copies in thirty years, while in 1949, the jubilee year of his birth, 12 million copies of the poet's works were published. They have been translated and published in all the languages of the U.S.S.R. Is not this something like the realisation of Pushkin's dream:

The noise of me shall go abroad o'er all great Russia
And every tongue within her bounds shall speak my name . . .

If we turn to the Soviet author we find no less striking figures. Ostrovsky's *How the Steel was Tempered* by 1944 had run to over $4\frac{1}{2}$ million copies in forty-six languages. The works of Sholokhov

[1] It would be invidious to provide documentation of the above points when they may be verified from any random selection of current Soviet journals and magazines.

[2] Vide *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, No. 7, 1951, Editorial. A conference of new writers is being held this spring.

had come out in 192 editions in fifty-one different languages and totalled 15 million copies. Eleven million copies of works by Alexei Tolstoy had been printed by the same date.[1] None of these editions lie about in bookshops. They are snapped up and sold out almost as soon as they are issued. The problem is not how to find a market but how to meet an insatiable demand.[2]

August 14th, 1950, was the twentieth anniversary of the introduction of universal compulsory primary education in the Soviet Union. To mark it, the *Literary Gazette* sent representatives to visit a number of towns and villages. In one small railway hamlet, isolated amid the forests of North Western Russia the twenty-three adult inhabitants had all read some works of Pushkin. Twenty of them had read Tolstoy, fourteen Gogol, eleven Gorki, seventeen *Quiet Flows the Don*, twelve *How the Steel was Tempered* and eleven *The Young Guard*. A number of similar instances were given, claimed to be taken at random.[3] Thirty to forty years previously such interest in worth-while literature, let alone such literacy would have been unthinkable. Nor, I think, would it be easy to reveal parallel interests at random in any part of Britain to-day.

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Our second theme, that of the individual hero and his development from the old to the new society is so vast that it is possible, again, only to touch on the general changes that have taken place.

Soviet critics see the romantics and realists of the early nineteenth century as wresting the pen from the classicists who had sought to depict man in relation to their own rigid, monarchic, form of society. The new school created an entirely new method. They began to depict society through man as an individual and in his intimate family life.[4] By Gorki's day, however, this method had become quite inadequate. The central focus on the private life of the individual could no longer reflect the true development of society. The issues of the day were being fought out in Russia in the factories and on the streets, in the mines and on the land, as well as in people's private lives. The central focus demanded to be shifted

[1] The above and additional information on the extent of Soviet publications is given by L. Timofeyev and associates in *Bolshaya Sovietskaya Entsiklopedia*, 1947.

[2] Cf. *Kultura i Zhizhn*, 30. xi. 49, apropos of Azhaev, Babayevsky and other writers and constant complaints from readers in *Literary Gazette* and other papers of shortage of supply of publications, often fully subscribed to before they even appear.

[3] *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, No. 68, 1950.

[4] Cf. V. Kirpotin, "The Classical Tradition and the Soviet Novel," in *Sovietskaya Literatura* [Sbornik], Ogiz, 1948, p. 390. This method reflects the spontaneous character of the rising bourgeois mode of life, he points out.

on to the individual as a member of society, and in his relationship to society. This demanded a wide canvas of the writer, an ability to depict the life of a whole community in its harmony and discord, and not of the heroes purely from the angle of their individual fate. The new hero must be shown as an integral part of society in its revolutionary development, both influenced by it and, in turn, influencing it. In fact the new method was to depict the hero through a whole gamut of developing relationships.[1] If this could be done, obviously it meant a great deal more than the mere presentation of an isolated picture of the working class hero, such as Gorki first gave in the character of Nil, in his play, *The Philistines*. It meant more than a mere synthesis of the real and the romantic. It meant a new quality entirely, based on the depiction of human relationships in their revolutionary perspective. This is what Gorki achieved in *Mother*. The development of the mother's character from that of an ignorant working woman into a person with full scope for the expression of all her human, womanly and motherly qualities in a world that has expanded for her from the limits of her hovel to the furthest boundaries of the earth, so that she is ready consciously to sacrifice herself, not for her son alone, but for the far vaster family of humankind—this development would be unthinkable without the social interplay and perspective of the novel with its historically typical events, without the dynamic pictures of the other heroes, their interrelationships and their aims. It is this communal interrelationship on the basis of the working-class movement seeking to change the world which provides the whole pathos of *Mother*, the new atmosphere of the book.

The heroes of *Mother*, of course, though very much positive heroes, were fighting against the world as it was. In that sense it remains a critical-realist work. The individual was still in conflict with established society.

The Revolution of 1917, however, left the new hero the task of building the new society of the future and put him in a vantage point for fighting the reality of the past. But in the early 'thirties he was no longer fighting only for the realisation of socialism. Socialism had entered into the life of the whole people. The conflict between individual and society was now said to be finally solved. A classless society had come into being in

[1] Cf. V. Kirpotin, *op. cit.*, p. 406. Also A. Fadeyev, "The Tasks of the Literary Theory of Criticism" in the same collection, p. 45, and *Kultura i Zhizhn*, No. 7, 1947. *O Bolshevistskoi Partiinost Sovietskoi Literatury.*

which the hero ceased to be the 'proletarian' hero and became the 'Soviet' hero, a hero multiplying throughout the whole people.[1] A completely new set of social relationships had come into being as the result of his activities, entirely different in quality from those depicted in Gorki's *Mother*. It was this new basis of social relationships which made possible the formulation of the theory of Socialist Realism, expounded by Gorki at the first congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934. Although *Mother* exemplified in practice the method of Socialist Realism under the conditions in which it was written, such conditions could not provide a basis for the formulation of the theory. Men were still struggling to change the old. Thus the first need was to evolve the concept of the partisan character of literature, as was done by Lenin,[2] introducing a socially subjective basis as a fulcrum for the writer. This *partiinost* still remains, but no longer in the old sense, directed to the revolutionary overthrow of a ruling class. The motive force for transforming society, for creating a new world with which it is now linked is 'criticism and self-criticism'—the dialectics of discussion, and it is to this system that Socialist Realism corresponds.

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One of the first points made by Gorki in his exposition to the Writers' Congress was that the processes of labour came before thought, and not *vice versa*. "It is hard," he said, "to imagine Kant in a bearskin and with bare feet, reflecting on *das Ding an Sich*." "The social and cultural development of man is normal only if the hands teach the head, then the now wiser head teaches the hands and then the even cleverer hands again, and even more thoroughly, stimulate the further development of the brain."[3] As soon as the head becomes divorced from the hands thought is cut adrift from firm ground. The road becomes open for every form of distortion and misconception.

Socialist Realism rests on this principle of the creativity of labour, on the principle that art is an extension and a reflection of that creativity, both mirroring and influencing directly or indirectly, the level and character of changing social relationships.

[1] Cf. B. Bialik, "Gorki and Socialist Realism," in *Problems of Socialist Realism*. Moscow, 1948, p. 169.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "The Party Organisation and a Party Literature," *Works*, Vol. VIII. Moscow, 1931, p. 386.

[3] See Gorki, *O Literature*, Moscow, 1937. Speech before the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers, 1934. Extracts from this speech are to be found in *Life and Literature*, Hutchinson, London, 1946.

Gorki pointed to the fact that, in the past, the deepest, most artistically developed types of hero were created by folklore—by the oral creation of the working people. From Hercules to Ivan Durak they are the harmonious creations of a fantasy based on labour and labour successes. Folklore is alien to pessimism despite the bitter conditions under which its creators often live. Prometheus represented a revolutionary advance through the creative use of fire in opposition to the old authority represented by Zeus.

Perhaps one of the most interesting examples of this for us, is the embodiment by Euripides of Greek myths in his *Alcestis*. How clear, how apposite to the present day ring out the words of Hercules as he denounces Diomedes and his four war horses as destructive beasts that live on human flesh! What a splendid picture is given of labour achieving the impossible when we are told how Hercules rescued Alcestis by superhuman efforts from the arms of Orpheus! These, surely, are among the finest passages written to inspire man's faith in the invincible power of creative labour.

Gorki compares these labour and defence heroes of the ancients with those of the middle ages to the latters' disadvantage. The chevaleresque heroes, deflected by the temptation of individual acquisition, saw it was easier to take away from others than to create themselves. They were followed later by the acquisitive rogue, who becomes a respectable middle-class hero and, finally, by the superfluous man, divorced from both the process of labour and from that of amassing capital.

In ancient Greece, philosophy, science and art were organically one. Socialist realism sets out from precisely this conception, but on an entirely new qualitative basis. This new basis is seen as the transformation of the capitalist contradiction of individual ownership and control on the one hand and mass methods of production on the other, into a classless society where all work, all own the means of production, and the hand is no longer divorced from the brain. The level of consciousness is regarded as already quite different in such a society and as producing a literature on an altogether different level from either folk, ancient or bourgeois literature.[1]

This, however, does not lesson the importance of folklore, nor for that matter, of the living language of the people for the socialist

[1] For an authoritative account of the Soviet view of Socialist consciousness, see F. V. Konstantinov, *The Role of Socialist Consciousness in the Development of Soviet Society*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1950. A further lucid account in Russian may be read at the end of Chapter II of Psikhologia, A *Pedagogical Textbook*, by Kornilov, Smirnov and Teplov, Moscow, 1948.

writer. This has been underlined by Stalin's recent contribution to the controversy on linguistics.[1] Two Soviet poets offer particularly fine examples of popular yet literary language of truly national character [*narodnost*]. They are Isakovsky—many of whose songs have passed into the folk-repertoire of the people—and Tvardovsky, whose great poem, *Vassili Tyorkin*, an epic of the rank-and-file Red Army man, has yet to be translated.

The language and mythology of the people are regarded as touchstones of the Soviet writer's art, as a source for the constant rejuvenation of his style and imagery. At the same time, however, the subordination of his language to the influences of dialect or the adoption of any gross naturalism of speech is frowned on.[2]

In defining a myth Gorki pointed out that, although it is an invention, it is one which is drawn from reality, one based on a real fact or event and incarnated in an image. This, he went on, is essentially the method of realism. If we eliminate the *fantasy* of the invention and retain the element of purpose, of the thing desired and embodied in the myth, we have also the stimulus of romanticism in a revolutionary sense, the stimulus to change the world in the way desired.

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Under the old society labour sought emancipation in order to regain its creative character. This implied a common subjective factor in all those who laboured and an ability on their part to look into the future to illumine and guide their actions in the present.

This purposive factor determines what Lenin called the "partisan character" of literature[3]—as much a factor of the classless society of the Soviet Union to-day, as it was before the revolution. Without this factor, common to the whole of a Socialist society, literature would become stilted and complacent; the writer, as Gorki put it, would become a sort of Malinov from ***Dead Souls***. Thus, in his work, the writer should show those features in present day labour and social relationships which bespeak the future. By stressing them he influences society, practising a romanticism founded in reality. For example, in a society advancing from Socialism, where

[1] J. V. Stalin, "Concerning Marxism and Linguistics," supplement to *New Times*, No. 26, June 20th, 1950.

[2] Cf. Report of Writers' Conference on Stalin's statement, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, No. 8, 1951.

[3] "The Party Organisation and a Party Literature."

there is "distribution of goods according to work performed," to Communism, where the principle is "from each according to his ability to each according to his need,"[1] the writer will seek to stress the devotion of the worker to his labour, not only as fulfilling a present social function, but as creative of the conditions which will make possible the realisation of Communism—that is, a devotion to social creativity for its own sake and regardless of personal reward.[2]

It is now possible to set out what we may call the three realities of Socialist Realism: the reality of the past, the reality of the present, and the reality of the future—the new reality we have been talking of, which bears an essentially human, socially purposive character.

It is the task of the writer to view the present from the heights of the future, as Gorki once put it: "To show our people not only as they are at the present time, but to glance into their future and help throw a searchlight on the way forward."[3] To do this does not mean to invent what does not exist, but to discern in the womb of the present the embryo of the future. In the past the critical realist writer had stressed, on a horizontal plane as it were, the typical characters of his time—typical in the sense that they represented the utmost possibilities of their time rather than that they were in any sense average. The task of the socialist realist is regarded as far more than this. It is to typify on a vertical plane as well, the historical development of his characters in perspective of past, present and future. In a word, to show reality in its revolutionary development.[4] In Soviet conditions of to-day the writer thus seeks to show the new cultural and moral qualities of the future arising in men as individuals and expressed in their social relationships. These, of course, are regarded as determined by the quantitative growth of social production and of educational and cultural amenities in a socialist society. This has been expressed in drama, for instance in such plays as Surov's *Signal Green*, Korneichuk's *Makar Dubrava*, or Sofronov's *Moscow Character*,[5] which set out to show the diminishing barrier between the intellectual and the manual worker as part of the conscious advance towards a communist

[1] Cf. V. I. Lenin, *State and Revolution*.

[2] This, for example, is the central theme of A. Kron's new play, *The Party Candidate*, now running in Moscow.

[3] *Za vysokuyu ideinost sovietskovo iskusstva*, Moscow, 1936, p. 54.

[4] Cf. M. Serebriansky, *Literaturniye Ocherki*, Moscow, 1948, pp. 308-11.

[5] A translation of this play has been published in *Soviet Literature*, No. 8, 1949.

society. An excellent example of this discernment of the future may be found if we turn back to the early thirties. The elements of the future are brilliantly portrayed by Sholokhov in *Virgin Soil Upturned*, in the scene of the blacksmith's reward and in the ploughing competition.[1] Another important feature, portrayed in the character of Davydov, which is excellently brought out in the ploughing competition, is the ability of the hero to create the conditions for changing the peasants' attitude without merely waiting for conditions or opportunities to arise. This ability and initiative is of particular importance in the Soviet Union where the revolution is regarded as having made social progress the responsibility of every individual.[2]

What is the attitude of the writer to present reality? In the past the answer of all the great writers to the question: "Do you approve in the main of life as it is?" was a big NO. But in contrast to his predecessors the Soviet writer found himself saying a big YES to the reality of his day. Did this mean the elimination of all criticism of Soviet reality? By no means. Conscious movement toward the future meant, for one thing, an implied criticism of the present. But what is important, and also follows from this, is that the criticism should be constructive and not destructive. As an illustration of this one might turn to Vera Panova's *The Factory*[3] or *Bright Shore*,[4] and contrast them with, say, *Dead Souls*, where the positive (in Panova a part of the very texture of her work) can only appear in lyrical digressions.

Turning now to the third reality, to the past, we find that its elements are also regarded as playing an important part in the present. These vestiges of the past are, from one angle, a butt for Soviet satire.[5] They are those undesirable elements which Gorki regarded as an encumbrance, holding man back, and therefore to be rooted out.[6] They have been pilloried in such plays as Leonov's *An Ordinary Fellow*, in Korneichuk's recent *Kalinovaya Roshcha*, in Virta's *Our Daily Bread*, whose woman-chairman of the collective farm committee is something of a literary descendant of Ostrovsky's type of *samodur*, a self-willed matriarchal tyrant. This view of humour was perhaps best summed up originally by Marx who spoke of comedy as "the ultimate world-historical form." "The

[1] London, Putnam, 1942, pp. 283 *ff.* and pp. 435 *ff.*
[2] Cf. Konstantinov, *op. cit.*, p. 92. [3] Translation published by Putnam 1949.
[4] Translation in *Soviet Literature*, No. 3, 1950.
[5] Cf. Boris Gorbatov, "Soviet Satire and Humour," *Novy Mir*, No. 10, 1949.
[6] Cf. M. Gorki, *Life and Literature*, London, 1946, p. 140.

gods of Greece," he said, "at one time tragically, mortally wounded in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* were destined once more to die a comic death in Lucian's *Conversations*. Why does history move in this way? In order that mankind can say good-bye to its past with a *laugh*."[1]

But flaying the past is not only the task of satire and in Ehrenburg's hands the pen of satire is transformed into a surgeon's knife. It exposes the innermost secrets of the psychology of the most unfortunate types of human relic, both in the Soviet Union and in the West, his Labazov and his Lancier, temporiser and self-deceiver, of his novel, *The Storm*.

The past is not merely something for the Soviet writer to pillory. It is regarded as holding far more that is of value, appreciated in a new light in relation to the tasks and the achievements of the Soviet people to-day. Socialist realism claims to achieve a far truer perspective and deeper understanding of the past than the critical realists were able to achieve.[2] This claim is based on its understanding of the past as a revolutionary historical process.

Lunacharsky, the Bolshevik critic, later Commissar of Education, was very fond of stressing that appreciation of the great classics varies in relation to the class and to the epoch which views them.[3] This fundamental tenet of Socialist realism led, by the 'thirties, not only to a completely new evaluation of the literary heritage of Russia, but to a re-evaluation of Russia's historical past itself. Such historical novels as Alexei Tolstoy's *Peter I*, Shishkov's *Pugachov* or Olga Forsch's *Radishchev* have a fresh and compelling approach to their periods and characters that offer a deeper interpretation than the former historical novel, though Soviet critics would not indulge in comparisons of them with the work of the giants of realism, such as *War and Peace*. To the new writer, history is above all necessary to an understanding of what is happening to-day. It is an evaluation of the past in the light of the present and of the tasks for the future.

Alexei Tolstoy's *Peter I* is motivated by a deep understanding of the social-economic factors at work on a national and international scale and gives due importance to these factors in the

[1] Karl Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, Moscow, Vol. I, 1928. *Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law* [1844], p. 403.
[2] *Vide* M. Serebriansky, "On Socialist Realism," *Literaturniye Ocherki*, Moscow, 1948. p. 313.
[3] A. V. Lunacharsky, "The Heritage of the Classics," *Russkaya Literatura*, Moscow, 1947, p. 15. See also Speech on occasion of the Centenary of Griboedov's Death, *Russkaya Literatura, khrestomatiya*, Moscow, 1948, pp. 135 *ff.*

relationships of his hero to the reactionary and progressive forces of his time and to the mass of the people. Peter's own realism in face of initial setbacks and his ability to see these in perspective and coolly plan victory ahead, are excellently brought out. Such traits were of particular significance for the Soviet Union in the years of approaching crisis in the 'thirties.

Events had raised more sharply than ever the issue of patriotism. The experience of great Russian patriots of the past needed re-evaluating. The present threw a new light on them and aroused a fresh appreciation, not only of Peter I, but of Ivan the Terrible, Lomonosov, Suvorov, Kutuzov, Pushkin and Griboedov, to name only a few. And the past itself threw into relief the new qualities and strength of Soviet patriotism. No longer were the dispossessed fighting for an ideal alone in driving off the invader. After all, in the past the Russian peasantry and working people, Russian lands and Russian wealth, had been at the mercy of an autocracy representing a small landowning class, and later a capitalist class as well. Now the Russian writer and reader did genuinely feel that the land and the wealth belonged to them—that they were able to defend what really was their own in union with those whom they are taught to regard as their free and independent brothers of the former Tsarist colonies, now themselves the proud possessors of their own national wealth and industry. All this meant the development of new qualities of endurance, courage and heroism on a mass scale, growingly reflected in Soviet literature, which seeks at the same time to develop them further.[1]

This attitude, as might well be expected, imparts an *epic* character to Soviet literature as a whole. Nowhere is this better brought out than in Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*,[2] an epic of the Civil War, and in Boris Gorbatov's *The Taras Family*,[3] written in 1943. Both these works have common roots in their inspiration with those of the Lay of Igor's Campaign—an appeal to rally in the face of a threat to Russian existence. Both are profoundly imbued with a lyric quality and *narodnost*—of popular national feeling in its best sense. The scene of the meeting between Stepan and the village elder in *The Taras Family* is a remarkable revelation of the roots of Soviet patriotism, and of its fundamental difference from, say, the patriotism of a Dron or even a Ferapontov in *War and Peace*.

Alexei Tolstoy's *Road to Calvary*[4] and Ilya Ehrenburg's *The Storm*[5]

[1] Cf. Konstantinov, *op. cit.*, pp. 72 *ff.*, and L. Timofeyev, *op. cit.*, pp. 214 *ff.*
[2] Martin Lawrence, London, 1935.
[3] Hutchinson, London, 1946.
[4] Hutchinson, London, 1945.
[5] Hutchinson, London, 1949.

are impressive in their historical approach and epic character. Behind them lies, not only the motive of Soviet patriotism, but also its organic complement, socialist humanism—a term frequently met with in Soviet criticism. Socialist humanism is linked with this epic quality as an essentially active factor. It is opposed to the passive humanism of pity which goes back in Russian literature to the "laughter through tears" of Gogol's story, "The Greatcoat," and which Dostoevsky took up and developed in his work. Soviet humanism postulates not only individual responsibility for wrong doing, as with Dostoevsky, but action by the individual together with his fellows to set it right. The Dostoevskian idea of suffering as an atonement for evil is alien to Soviet thought and is regarded as unrealist.[1] In the last resort it is seen as inhuman and dehumanising, in that it serves to perpetuate suffering and devitalise the individual. The humanism of the *Road to Calvary* (the translation of the title is not altogether apt) and of *The Storm* lies essentially in the authors' historical, revolutionary-active approach in depicting their heroes. Roshchin in *Road to Calvary*, and Mado in *The Storm*, are characters who, appearing at first entangled in reaction, are yet brought, through the interaction of historical events with their *human qualities*, to active, conscious, participation in the shaping of history. The development of these characters seeks to show the transformation of all the best that survives of the old bourgeois values in face of the disintegrating effect upon that bourgeois society of crisis, civil war and invasion—the transformation of that best into new socialist values of qualitatively enhanced content.

Both these novels—historical novels of the present, they might be called—despite their shortcomings, have their roots in Gorki and continue his revival of the novel in its epic form. This epic revival is also linked with the socialist realist attitude to tragedy.

Hebbel once penetratingly remarked that bourgeois tragedy, to achieve greatness, must be constructed out of "that abrupt confinement which opposes an individual incapable of any dialectic to an extremely narrow circle—out of the terrible *imprisonment of life in narrow-mindedness*." At the same time he saw a "reconciliation (*Versoehnung*) in the tragic . . ." which "happens in the interest of the whole body, not in the interest of the unit, of the hero."[2]

[1] Cf. V. Yermilov, "Against the Reactionary Ideas in the work of Dostoevsky," published in *The Modern Quarterly*, No. 2, Spring 1950.
[2] *Maria Magdalena*, Vorwort, Blackwell, Oxford, 1944, p. 113. Cf. also the expression of *Versoehnung* in Egmont's vision, in the tragedy by Goethe.

Narrowmindedness can be of many types and all bourgeois society tends to form a closed circle, no doubt—but within that circle, by Gorki's day, the forces that were destined, in Russia, to break out of it had sprung up and had grown tremendously. And with them had grown anew the significance of that element of *Versoehnung* which Hebbel had sensed.

In Gorki's *Artamonov Business*[1] we see the historical tragedy of a whole family, and its *Versoehnung*, elevated from an individual to a social and historical plane. With the history of the Artamonov family we pass from the problems of Hebbel and the rising middle class to the age of Gorki and the rising proletariat. It is no longer a question of the ancient fates pursuing their victim, nor is it a question alone of some closed family circle—there is a qualitatively new understanding. The Artamonov *family* expiates its guilt as a result of clearly portrayed social and economic contradictions in revolutionary movement. The business the Artamonovs have created produces the forces that will destroy them, the workers in their mills, and that will nevertheless take on to the future the best that survives in them, in the person of Ilya, the grandson. Here the *Versoehnung* is now playing a major role. There is no longer any question of the fateful narrowmindedness of the old middle class society operating against the hero even from within his own mind, like some Trojan horse. The social forces at work are evident, but the knowledge of wider truths is available for the hero, and the forces for him to join in order to break through the closed circle are there. Thus, although the Artamonov family, as a family, must follow the path of doom, for the individual member of the third generation there is a way out, and there is no excuse for him if he does not take it.

"Tragedy," wrote Chernyshevsky, "is the terrible in human life."[2] In the conditions of the Socialist revolution, and of the pre-revolutionary period, when the forces of revolution are emerging, there is no inevitable necessity for tragic guilt of the individual according to socialist realism. A positive solution is there for the individual. Failure of the individual to take the way out is reflected in tragedy on a social scale for the men and women around him, for those who are the victims or sufferers, directly or indirectly of his failure to "cross that . . . line which, in days of trial, divides those who make history from those who accept that history, like a storm, like fate."[3] And it is the tragedy of those who fall or suffer in the fight for a new

[1] Translation published by the Novel Library, London, 1948.
[2] N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Selected Works*, Gosizdat, Moscow, 1934, "The Æsthetic Relations of Art to Reality," p. 69.
[3] Ehrenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

life—the tragedy of Gorki's Mother—a tragedy of conscious sacrifice where the hero is capable of dialectic, where the element of *Versoehnung* is so magnified that the tragedy becomes an optimistic tragedy. For though the mother dies, she knows, and we are given to understand, that the human cause she fought for will go on to ultimate triumph, creating a new, full life for the people.

Such a conception of tragedy, of course, is only possible where the individual rises above himself and consciously, not blindly, sees and acts as a member of society. The hero of Socialist Realism faces whatever consequences there may be for himself, confident in the belief that what he is doing is for the greatest good of the greatest number. In this lies his inner happiness, his fullest individual development and his dignity as a human being.

There are always those who protest that literature will be a drab affair without any future Hamlets and Onyegins, without its Childe Harold or its Pechorins. Let us face facts. If we try to ape the ideas of the past under modern conditions we may well find that instead of a tragic hero or a sympathetic superfluous man we beget a monster or a worm. This is precisely what happened in the case of Sologub.[1] In his *Petty Demon* (1905) he created in Peredonov the prototype of the Nazi-Fascist, of a Belsen overseer on the path to sadistic insanity. The elements discernible in Dostoevsky already, for instance in the lascivious pleasure with which Svidrigailov's dream is depicted, are taken in Sologub to their logical conclusion. The *Petty Demon* is a double of irreal symbolism and the crude psychological naturalism. Sologub's style may be described as impeccable, but this merely goes to prove anew that all that glitters is not gold.

Vishnievski's *Optimistic Tragedy*,[2] Leonov's *Invasion*[3] and many other works of Soviet tragedy stem from Gorki's conception of tragedy and humanism. So too does Afinogenev's play, *Distant Point*,[4] where the attitude of the Soviet citizen to an inescapable death—tragedy in the socialist realist sense—is portrayed. Matvei's attitude to death is based upon the underlying unity of his outlook on life. It is inseparably linked with his attitude to labour—the very point with which we broached this exposition of Socialist Realism. In contrast to Matvei is the alternative—Vlas, the

[1] The reader is invited to compare the efforts of contemporary English bourgeois novelists such as Orwell and Greene in this respect.
[2] Translation published in *Four Soviet Plays*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1937.
[3] Translation published in *Four Soviet War Plays*, Hutchinson, 1943.
[4] Cape and Pushkin Press, 1941.

ex-Dostoevskian, who, not without cause, has degenerated into a nihilist, for whom nothing is worth while and whose life is miserable —the logical outcome of individualism in the conditions of Soviet collective society.

J. V. Stalin, in his answer to questions on Marr, found occasion to state that "the law of transition from an old quality to a new by means of an explosion is inapplicable not only to the history of the development of languages; it is not always applicable to other social phenomena of a basis or superstructural character."[1] This applies very much in consideration of social realist tragedy. In the Soviet Union the way is regarded as open for dialectical development into communist society through the critical and constructive means already described.[2] Here there is no conflict between fathers and sons, between individual and society, and all roads, all opportunities are declared open to youth.[3] Tragedy may still be met with in conflict with nature or as a result of armed conflict with an outside aggressor, in the Soviet view. But the future of Soviet society offers the increasing elimination of tragedy. It has challenged and declared war on this grim companion of humanity's past, on the basis of socially creative labour.

Soviet writers and critics to-day sincerely regard their literature as superior to bourgeois literature and this judgment does not arise from either a narrow patriotism or ignorance of the literary achievements of the non-socialist world. It arises from the consistently democratic nature of its ideas and characters, from the fact that Soviet literature is nearer and more comprehensible to the people than the literature of any other age or national culture. Literature has been lifted onto a higher plane because the gap between art and the people has disappeared, as has the age old dilemma which, in a society based on exploitation, induced the writer either to adapt himself to the master class or to oppose that class in complete isolation, in the absence of real ties between the writer and the people. The Soviet writer to-day is isolated neither from life nor the people, neither are they enmeshed in their own spiritual conflicts and subjective reactions. Possessing clarity of outlook and breadth of political vision they see their endeavours as part of the effort of an entire nation and regard themselves, with the people they are proud to serve, as builders of a new society, advanced people imbued with the creative spirit.

[1] J. V. Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 14. [2] A. A. Zhdanov, *op. cit.*
[3] Cf. Kornilov, Smirnov and Teplov. *op. cit.*, p. 58.

The Caudwell Discussion

Following Maurice Cornforth's criticisms of Christopher Caudwell and Professor George Thomson's reply we publish in this issue three invited contributions from Alan Bush, Montagu Slater and Alick West and a number of other communications, which have been abridged owing to considerations of space.

Alan Bush

IN the Introduction to *Illusion and Reality* Caudwell describes the book as "a book not only about poetry but also about the sources of poetry" (p. 7). It is not surprising, therefore, that the book does not deal exhaustively with other arts, such as music, or that the basic controversy of musical theory is only briefly touched upon, the reference buried in a seemingly unimportant paragraph.

This basic controversy involves the question: is there an extra-musical content in music? What, if anything, does music express? Throughout its history until the year 1854, composers and performers of music, whether singers or instrumentalists, had always assumed that music expressed human emotion. In that year Eduard Hanslick, Professor at the Vienna University, published a treatise called "Of the Musically-Beautiful" described as "a contribution to the revision of musical æsthetics." In it he wrote as follows: "The crude material which the composer has to fashion . . . is the entire scale of musical tones and their inherent adaptability to an endless variety of melodies, harmonies and rhythms. . . . To the question—what is to be expressed with all this material? The answer will be: musical ideas. *Now a musical idea . . . is an end in itself, and not a means for representing feelings and thoughts*" (pp. 66-7). "The composer *thinks and works*; but he thinks and works in *sound*, away from the realities of the external world" (*ibid.*, p. 172). This theory is consciously propagated to-day, among others by Igor Stravinsky, who wrote in his Autobiography: "*Music is by its very nature powerless to express anything at all*, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature" (p. 83).

Musicians and theorists of music often disregard this theory, without apparently considering any answer necessary other than

a mere negation of it in words in view of its apparent ridiculousness. Thus Zhdanov, Marxist theoretician, speaks of music "which is realist and of truthful content" (Zhdanov, *On Literature, Music and Philosophy*. p. 57) "which reflects the spirit of our epoch and people" (*ibid.*, p. 68), "which can reflect Soviet society to-day and enable the culture and the communist consciousness of our people to attain still greater heights" (*ibid.*, p. 74). Hindemith, non-Marxist musical practitioner, pleads for the development of the highest technical skill, for, he asks, "is not an immense mastery of the medium needed to translate into tones what the heart dictates?" (Hindemith, *Craft of Musical Composition*, Bk. I, pp. 11-12). Yet how the "truthful content" or "dictates of the heart" can find themselves incorporated in air waves of a certain range of frequency neither Zhdanov nor Hindemith appear concerned to explain. *It is evident, however, that until this process is established at least as a possibility, the realist theory of music remains insecurely founded.*

Caudwell perceived that in poetry there is both a manifest and latent content. "The manifest content can be roughly arrived at by paraphrasing the words . . . it is the external reality in the poem. It can be expressed in other ways and in other languages. But the latent content of poetry is in that particular form of wording and in no other. How is the latent content contained in the original word and not contained in the *sense* of the words, i.e. in the portions of external reality which the words symbolise? . . . answer, by *affective* association of ideas" (*Illusion and Reality*, p. 212). Developing this explanation, Caudwell writes: "Why is there a manifest content at all? . . . Why should poetry state, explain, narrate, obey grammar, have syntax, be capable of paraphrase, since if paraphrased it loses its affective value? The answer is, because it is an adaptation to external reality. It is an emotional attitude towards the world. . . . The manifest content represents a statement of external reality . . . and the emotional content is attached to this statement of reality, not in actual experience, but in the poem" (*ibid.*, p. 214).

Applying the same perception to music, Caudwell observes that here the manifest content is the musical tones themselves. Unlike the manifest content of poetry, musical tones, firstly, cannot be translated into other tones (a different piece of music would result from any substitution), secondly, they do not refer to external reality but are themselves portions of external reality, organisable only within a framework of objective laws, the laws of acoustics.

What, then, is the latent content of music, which selects one particular series of tones rather than any other? Caudwell answers: "the affective manifold is here the organising force" (*ibid.*, p. 247). (The affective manifold is Caudwell's term for the artist's, in this case the composer's complex of thoughts and emotions.) Yet despite Caudwell's profound analysis of manifest and latent content, musical tones and the musician's emotions have still only achieved a hypothetical union in his theory; the process is not yet established as a possibility, to a convincing demonstration of which he seems scarcely nearer than Zhdanov or Hindemith.

Let us for a moment turn to consider music as it originated in human society. "Music began with singing." This statement by Curt Sachs sums up the research of decades into the music of primitive peoples (Curt Sachs, *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World*, p. 21). Later Sachs makes this further statement: "The earliest melodies traceable have two tones" (*ibid.*, p. 32). How could such two-tone melodies arise? Consider how, in primitive tribal society, any heavy work, hauling of logs, heaving of boulders, involving two or more members of the tribe, could be most efficiently performed. Obviously, by synchronising the movements of all concerned. The strenuous muscular effort of hauling or lugging would be accompanied in all cases by grunts or shouts, uttered involuntarily. Later it would be discovered, perhaps by accident, that the movements could be synchronised by pairs of shouts, consciously uttered at regular intervals of time, the first of the pair a preparatory signal, the second coinciding with the moment of actual maximum exertion. The human larynx utters automatically a note higher or lower in pitch according to the greater or lesser exertion of the moment (unless a special conscious control over the breathing muscles is exercised in order to prevent this). *Thus would result some, perhaps all, of the earliest traceable melodies of two tones.*

Similarly with the tribal dances. The movements would be consciously co-ordinated by shouts uttered at regular intervals of time, higher or lower in pitch according to the greater or lesser degree of exertion required to perform the movements with which they coincided.

In its origin, then, music is the conscious physical expression by the human organism of greater and lesser degrees of tension, muscular, emotional, or nervous, or of all three together. But what is the tension and relaxation, muscular, emotional, or nervous, of the musician, other than his affective manifold? *Thus musical tones are*

in very truth the most direct possible expression of this manifold, they are the manifest content organised by the latent content, the reflection, it may be, of the spirit of an epoch, the faithful transmitters of the heart's dictates.

George Thomson, in *Marxism and Poetry* (1945), dealt with the role in the development of rhythm as an ingredient of poetry and music of consciously timed shouting for the purpose of organising movement in the communal labour or group festivals of the primitive tribe. David Ellenberg, in an unpublished paper of some ten years ago, noted the significant fact that vocal tones *of different pitch* would be uttered as a by-product of muscular exertions of greater and lesser degrees of tension. The implications for the general theory of music of these two points, and of Caudwell's analysis of works of art in general with their peculiar structure of manifest and latent content, have now been made clear. *The realist theory of music receives therewith its foundation.*

For reasons of space Caudwell's contribution to musical history and criticism and his suggestions for our present practice must await further discussion. If this article will only stimulate practitioners of musical art to study the Marxist classics and, in their light, Caudwell, a growing clarification of the perplexing problems of musical theory will result, and our musical practice correspondingly improve, both inside and outside the working-class movement.

Montagu Slater

I BELIEVE there is more common ground between Maurice Cornforth and Professor Thomson than the surface polemic would suggest. Professor Thomson seems to agree to drop, or at least modify fundamentally, the main theses of *Illusion and Reality*. For although he points out Caudwell grappled again with the problem in his essay in *Further Studies* on Beauty, so far as *Illusion and Reality* is concerned he says, the central argument of the book, "opened in Chapter VIII . . . and concluded in Chapter XI, ends in deadlock."

If this is so, then Professor Thomson and Maurice Cornforth would perhaps agree with the following propositions. (1) It is a dangerous over-simplification to argue that the origin and function of poetry is to resolve the conflict between the genotype and social man. (2) The same applies to Caudwell's theory of rhythm as "emotional introversion." (3) The picture of the Mock-Ego of science

and the Mock-World of Art is suggestive as an analogy, but pressed farther becomes misleading.

Professor Thomson makes an apt quotation from Lenin's letter to Gorki saying: "Actually 'animal individualism' was not bridled by the idea of god: it was bridled by the primitive herd and the primitive commune." Gorki at this time was claiming for religion what Caudwell claimed for poetry. Both were mistaken. Both made a part of class ideology stand for the whole, and in so doing produced a misleading picture of the social process.

How easy it is to fall into this trap is illustrated by almost the opening words of Professor Thomson's article. For this is how he describes the first of "the two leading ideas" running through *Illusion and Reality*: "First, science and art are complementary and mutually indispensable activities of the human mind, both concerned with the extension of man's understanding and control of nature and himself, the one directly through the reason, by changing the external world, the other indirectly through the emotions, by changing his subjective attitude to it." A moment's thought will show that what is said here of art applies equally to philosophy, to politics and what Caudwell calls "rhetoric," and, in certain periods of history, to religion. All these work through emotion, as well as reason, and change subjective attitudes. (So also do more direct forms of social pressure.) But if we remove the word "art" from Professor Thomson's sentence and substitute the word "ideology," then the antithesis with science breaks down too.

Consequently I must add two other propositions—though I do not expect Professor Thomson to accept these at once. (4) Despite Caudwell's clear and effective exposure of some of the fallacies in Freud, his own account of "poetry's dream work" suffers from similar flaws. (5) His antithesis between poetry and rhetoric (and therefore between poetry and prose, poetry and the novel, etc.) breaks down.

A chief source of obscurity is to be found in what Caudwell understands by the word "poetry." He takes from Mallarmé the second half of a famous phrase, "Poetry is not composed of ideas, it is composed of words." Now Mallarmé, of course, was following Baudelaire, who translated the originator of the theory, Poe. All three were concerned to change the notion of poetry then current,—e.g. Poe argued that most of *Paradise Lost* was not poetry—they demanded a final specialisation of function, aiming at what later came to be called "pure poetry." In this late phase of bourgeois

literature, poetry was asked to shed its earlier "irrelevant" functions such as exposition, narrative, satire, drama, song—achieving a literary tincture, an essence. But it soon became clear that pure poetry was not to be found this side of the grave, and by 1929 even T. S. Eliot was writing, "It would appear that 'literary appreciation' is an abstraction, and pure poetry a phantom: and that both in creation and enjoyment much always enters which is from the point of view of 'Art' irrelevant." Poetry has probably a mixed origin and certainly a mixed function.

Historically of course the narrow and self-styled decadent theory of poetry which Caudwell accepted was in practice being challenged on every side at the time he was writing. Poets were trying to regain some of their lost territories, to bring back wit and humour into poetry, to write satire, narrative and argumentative poetry, to bring poetry back to the theatre, and to make inroads into such promisingly mixed media as opera, films and radio. Poets were also exploring the intimate relation between poetic rhythm and everyday popular speech (it is of course clearer than in prose) which Caudwell brushed aside so brusquely in his few lines on Wordsworth. And this attempt to bring back poetry into the everyday world is still going on. For my part I have no doubt that its initial impulse came from the growing influence of the working class movement—most marked in the later war years. But certainly this initial impulse can be lost and perverted, indeed it is perverted more often than not.

To discuss these events fruitfully demands an approach quite different from Caudwell's. The difficulty goes right to the foundation of Caudwell's thinking about poetry. I believe it may be found in the antithesis he assumes between Nature and Society. To found a theory on this antithesis is misleading since from the point of view of the individual man the important part of "Nature" is the rest of mankind—other people!—even in the earliest phase when other people are "the primitive herd." Caudwell speaks finely of what he calls "the social contents of the psyche." But the "social contents" are all that matter of "the contents of the psyche." Self-consciousness is a social state. The conflicts in the self are social conflicts. These certainly it is the function not of art alone but of all types of social activity, to resolve. To analyse these conflicts as if they were mainly between society and something more primitive, leads us astray.

"Poetry's dream work" is a misleading conception because the poet is not separated from society in this way. The poet is not

asleep. If he were asleep then, as Caudwell nearly does, we might substitute for literary criticism the psycho-analytical interpretation of dreams. But no, the poet is awake, aware of an audience, and, if the contact is no longer direct, closely haunted by editors, publishers, producers, actors, singers. It is true there is a significant parallel between the dreamer's fantasies and the poet's inventions, the poet writes from what Caudwell calls "unconscious mentation", as well as conscious thought. But if we look only for unconscious inspiration and pure poetry we shall find our Eurydice like Orpheus did—in death. In life inspiration is never pure in this sense. The literary effect is always a mixed effect. But in *Illusion and Reality*—less so in his other works—Caudwell looked at *life* and *the world*, and, in Professor Thomson's curiously revealing phrase, "concentrated them apart."

For this reason I find little of the resemblance Professor Thomson observes between Gorki's summary of social realism and Caudwell's dream-work. Gorki said in 1934 in words that were certainly accessible to Caudwell: "Myth is invention. To invent means to extract from the sum of a given reality its cardinal idea and embody it in imagery—that is how we get realism. But if to the idea extracted from the given reality we add—completing the idea by the logic of hypothesis—the desired, the possible, and thus supplement the image, we obtain that romanticism which is at the basis of myth, and is highly beneficial in that it tends to provoke a revolutionary attitude to reality, an attitude that changes the world in a practical way." Here is no "dream-work" in the psychoanalytical sense, nor in Caudwell's sense, but an active understanding.

Caudwell I think would agree. In almost every page he writes we find lighting flashes of this understanding. He gave his life to this understanding. To quote again Professor Haldane's metaphor his work is indeed "a quarry of ideas." But we would not go to a quarry for an ordered argument, nor to *Illusion and Reality* for a theory of literature. Great as is my admiration for Caudwell I believe this is an important point to make because I believe the influence of the theories I have mentioned has led not towards social realism but away from it.

Space limitation makes what I have written sound cocksure and dogmatic. I would like to put in a hundred qualifications. The matter is too important I think for the necessary limits of discussion in a quarterly magazine. I suggest a conference. A Saturday and Sunday would be well spent in arguing these things to a conclusion.

Alick West

CAUDWELL'S words to bourgeois intellectuals spring from his own practice. He had felt the aesthetic emotion aroused by literature. He did not deny that experience; he advanced Marxist criticism by asking and giving the answer to the question: What is the relation of literature as literature, of poetry as poetry, to the movement of society?

Caudwell carried his Marxism into a field which too often is kept as a secret reserve for bourgeois thought and emotion—one's own subjective experience, and particularly aesthetic experience.

Caudwell's interest in aesthetics was guided by his determination to be a Marxist without compromise. Because he attacked the problem of aesthetics in order to make himself a communist also in his aesthetic activity, his work is part of that cultural transformation which is being brought about by the advance of communism.

To make a critical assessment of Caudwell's work, one must learn, as he learned, that Marxism means not the denial nor the suppression, but the transformation, of oneself.

Maurice Cornforth appears to me to fight shy of subjective activity. As George Thomson justly remarks, he "chooses the object." For this reason, he fails either to appreciate Caudwell's achievement or to bring his criticism to bear at the right point. He accuses Caudwell of idealism because, having the audacity to assert his own existence, Caudwell spoke of "inner energy." As other contributors to the discussion have pointed out, one might as well accuse Marx of idealism for speaking of "slumbering powers," or indeed for having put forward the basic concepts of *Capital*. What does Cornforth mean when, attacking Caudwell for having said that in the labour process man exerts "inner energy," he thereby implies that the energy comes from without? When the proletariat sell their labour-power, do they sell a power outside themselves? If there is in man no inner energy, and an inner energy that can produce more value than it requires for its maintenance, whence does the capitalist extract surplus value?

Since human labour-power is a fact, some conception of labour-power is an inevitable category of thought. Though Cornforth bans with bell, book and candle all mention of "inner energy," he himself necessarily asserts its existence. He does so by quoting with approval Belinsky's statement about poetry that it is "the creative

reproduction of reality as possibility." For the words "creative" and "possibility" imply that in the activity of poetry man, as Cornforth says, does not only mirror reality but makes an image of the future reality which through the exercise of his labour-power and—in class society—through the class struggle he will bring into existence.

But Cornforth only repeats Belinsky's words in order to admit what cannot be denied—the reality of the subject. He does not note how the words "creative" and "possibility" have changed their meaning since Belinsky used them. "Therefore what cannot exist in reality is false in poetry too," Belinsky went on to say. If, as Belinsky indicates, the dividing line between the possible and the impossible is a criterion of good and bad poetry, since what cannot exist in reality is false in poetry, then the basis of aesthetic judgment is the sense not only of the actual, but of the possible, not only of what does exist in reality but of what can exist, of what men can create. When it becomes possible for men to make their own history according to their conscious will, then poetry and consciousness, and the part played by them in the movement of society, undergo a revolutionary change. To-day, the fact that poetry is "the creative reproduction of reality as possibility," means that poetry is the poetry of socialist realism.

And socialist realism means a different conception of reality than Cornforth's. He writes:

> "Marxism knows only one world, the real material world in which we live, move, and have our being, which is the source of our emotions and feelings no less than of our concepts."

What is this "one world"? The passage does not make sense if the "one world" is non-human nature, for it is not non-human nature alone that is the source of our emotions, feelings and concepts, but our interaction with it. The passage does not make sense either if the "one world" is humanity, for what becomes then of non-human nature? Finally, if the "one world" is both non-human nature and humanity, the statement that we "live, move, and have our being" *in* this "one world" obscures the contradiction between the human and the non-human; for we live in, but we are not, non-human nature; we do not live in, but we are, humanity. Beneath Cornforth's "we" there seems to be concealed the ghost of a bourgeois "I": it is that ghost to whom the world appears an indiscriminate conglomeration of nature and society—that is, of all other

people except himself; and it is that ghost who calls down St. Paul from the Areopagus to give to this conglomeration a semblance of meaning.

Socialist realism and socialist humanism assert the contradiction between nature and people. For our aim is freedom—that we, "freely associated men," should control nature, not that nature should control us.

Because Cornforth "chooses the object" and only pays lip-service to the subject through his quotation from Belinsky and his embarrassing use of the words "passion," and "feeling," his conception of the subject remains feeble and false. Contemptuous of inner energy, even while he quotes Belinsky, he ignores the decisive fact, the power of men to create. Poetry therefore becomes a vague, weak "concentration" of "the very essence of the matter," and he attacks Caudwell for what is his great achievement—that he showed poetry to be part of the theory and practice by which men learn and decide what can and shall exist, and change dream into reality.

Caudwell's work needs and merits critical appraisal, but not from the standpoint which he overcame.

G. M. Matthews (Turku University)

AS Maurice Cornforth has pointed out, it is high time that *Illusion and Reality* and the two books of *Studies* were subjected to criticism, and the sharp warning against swallowing Caudwell whole is a welcome one. But Cornforth's approach seems unsatisfactory in many respects. He appears to be so anxious to prove Caudwell entirely wrong that the value of his own criticism is impaired.

There is no general evidence that Caudwell failed to understand "the real nature of classes" or the Marxist interpretation of history. On the contrary, the accounts given elsewhere show that he understood them perfectly well (e.g. on pp. 62, 165, 271–9 of *Illusion and Reality*, and especially on p. 104: ". . . the very tension which drives on all society to future reality. In bourgeois society this tension is that between the productive forces . . . and the social relations . . . this is the fundamental contradiction"). Moreover, Cornforth is himself not free from error in criticising this initial passage. Caudwell refers to "the actual production in which men engage . . . which considered as a whole, is unconscious," and Cornforth comments, "But the fact is that men produce consciously." This is not so: it is

only in a planned economy that "production as a whole" is conscious. In Marx's words:

> "The point of bourgeois society consists precisely in this, that *a priori* there is no conscious social regulation of production" (*Letters to Kugelmann*, p. 74).

British Marxists have recently had the benefit of the controversy on genetics in the Soviet Union to remind them of dialectical principles in this science. "Now that it is pointed out to us, it is difficult to disagree," as a Marxist biologist wrote in *The Modern Quarterly* in 1949. Caudwell did not have this reminder; nevertheless, if his theory of poetry is really based on immutable entities of this kind then certainly he "tries to be a Marxist but does not succeed." But Caudwell did not believe in anything so silly. His terminology is certainly faulty, since he frequently found it necessary to put "the instincts" into inverted commas and to insist that by "the genotype" he did not mean, as Cornforth thinks, an entity existing within the organism which is not born and modified and developed in the course of the life of the organism. The genotype is only "relatively unchanging" (*Illusion and Reality*, p. 205); for the purposes of discussing poetry it is true that man has had a "relatively constant biological make-up during historical times" (*ibid.*, p. 16). If this were not so, it would make nonsense of the reasons Marx suggested for the enduring appeal of the Greek epic ("Is not the character of every epoch revived perfectly true to nature in child nature?"—*Critique of Political Economy*, p. 311). Caudwell nowhere says that it is only the outward characteristics of man that are changed by the environment while his innermost nature remains unchangeable. On the contrary, the instincts do not blindly follow the necessities of any germ plasm (*Illusion*, p. 32), they are "changed in action" (*ibid.*, p. 170), and art, incidentally, is among the things that change the instincts (*Further Studies*, p. 112).

Caudwell's theory of poetry is based on man's struggle with Nature (*Illusion*, p. 16). The animals, unfree because they behave according to "innate patterns of behaviour automatically elicited by stimuli" (*Further Studies*, p. 180) also struggle with Nature. But in man, by definition, the system of blind obedience to reflexes has been *changed* by the struggle with Nature in association, by the productive process. Consciousness has replaced the innervation patterns of the animals, but economic necessity still impels men to grapple with the environment: hunger must still be satisfied by

harvest. This is the sense in which Caudwell uses "the instincts." Associated man's increasing control of Nature is still accompanied by the necessity for further control, and art is born of this necessity. Poetry, therefore, according to Caudwell, is produced as the result of internal conflicts arising from the external conflicts of man with Nature; it is concerned with emotional conflicts in the first place, but its ultimate function is to increase the mastery over Nature. I have given this bald paraphrase because I do not see that it differs essentially from Cornforth's view that poetry portrays "in poetic images the reality of the world and of our own life in it," except that this definition is *passive* and fails to specify the all-important factor of *conflict* in reality as so portrayed. But at this point it becomes difficult to follow Cornforth very closely, as he does not seem to follow the text he is criticising very closely. He does not understand what Caudwell meant in declaring poetry to be "irrational" (i.e. not subject to the logical orderings of prose), but seems to take it as meaning "anti-rational" or "mad." Caudwell simply does not say that poetry's "congruence" has no connection with the real world. He does not say that poetry carries us "down into the emotional underworld," but that in reading poetry the reader must allow his attention to "sink below the pieces of external reality symbolised by the poetry, down into the emotional underworld adhering to those pieces." He does not say that poetry is "instinctive, barbaric and primitive," but that it is more so than the novel. That the passage about the "breath and pulse-beats and dark vegetative life of the body," whose superficial resemblance to Lawrencian mysticism has evidently deceived Cornforth, is expressed too rhetorically may be true enough, but it cannot affect this particular argument since it refers not to poetry but to music. And so on. Cornforth seems to have fallen into an error of which he accuses Caudwell—that of juggling with words. He sees the *words* "irrational," "emotional," "barbaric," "illusion" and the rest, and without examining what precisely Caudwell means by them, and the contexts in which they are employed, he assumes that because they have an idealist ring they must have a non-materialist significance.

Cornforth is least helpful when he tries to say how he thinks *Illusion and Reality* ought to have been written. Belinsky's observations are further quoted to the effect that the poet produces "vital and vivid depictions of life," a "faithful picture which stimulates the imagination of his readers," and shows us pictures which convince. "This," Cornforth assures us, "is materialist æsthetics."

It is true that these ideas derive from Aristotle; on the other hand they are also generally acceptable to idealist critics, to Sir Philip Sidney, for instance, who was no materialist. The fact is that such statements, *unelaborated*, are so vague that they cannot help being true; and as they stand they are true not only of literature in general but also of pornography and advertising. Neither idealists nor materialists are likely to deny Cornforth's further precepts, that poetry "enhances and enriches both perception and feeling," and so forth.

Cornforth's "explanation" multiplies confusion rather than shows what Marxism teaches about poetry. What is the "reproduction of reality" which nevertheless does not "depict" what "happens to exist or to have existed?" What sort of "image" is it which does not do this? We may well suspect that in the images of great poetry is "concentrated the very essence of the matter," but what is the "matter," what is its "essence," and how is it "concentrated?" How does it follow that poetry "raises us" and "teaches us to live," and how is this moral end achieved in art? The essential business of poetry, according to Cornforth, is doing and understanding; feeling and passion are present merely as catalysts, by-products or ingredients. This is not, at least, how the great poets themselves (unbemused by any "bourgeois illusion") have regarded poetry.

He attacks Caudwell's concept of the "bourgeois illusion" on the grounds that "the bourgeois" is an abstraction about whom it is impossible to make any general statements. Does Marxism teach that because human society develops in various forms and at various paces generalisations about it are impossible? Obviously not. *The Communist Manifesto* would be one of the first Marxist writings to be damned by such an absurd fiat. Generalisation must of course proceed from "the study of processes as they really are," as the statements of the *Manifesto* did. But if it can be stated that, on the whole, a given mode of production prevailed at a given time, it is hard to see why it should be *a priori* "a caricature of Marxism" to suppose that a corresponding ideology prevailed, on the whole, at the same time.

To suppose that a great poet, simply by virtue of being a great poet, can somehow escape these categories and "sing of real life" is to be naïve and idealist. The sort of questions a Marxist must then ask are these: What is there about a great poet which enables him to portray class-society without being himself at the same time a product of class-society? What *is* a great poet's relation to class-

society? What ideological relation does he bear to the particular social movement of which he is a part? Is it true, as Plekhanov put it, that "the depth of any given trend in literature and art is determined by its importance for the class, or stratum, whose taste it expresses, and by the social role played by that class or stratum?" or is a poet's "depth" automatically guaranteed so long as he resolutely sings of real life and avoids emotional conflicts in his inner world?

Caudwell's great weakness as a Marxist literary critic is surely not that he invented the bourgeois illusion within which all the modern English poets have written, but that he does not study these poets from any other angle than that of the illusion. This makes his criticisms of these poets correct, generally speaking, as far as it goes, but almost entirely *negative*. His treatment of Shakespeare, cited by Cornforth, seems sound enough, but he stops at the very point where *constructive* Marxist analysis should begin. He shows how participation in the illusion of the ruling class affects poetry; he sees also that poetry's "truth" does not lie in its abstract statement, its logical ordering of reality, but concealed behind these. But having achieved this he stops short, as well he might, before the immensely complicated task of examining the depth to which each poet actively probed the realities of class-society within the limiting historical illusion. This is the task of Marxist critics who follow Caudwell.

Cornforth has usefully drawn attention to several of Caudwell's weaknesses: the hasty writing of some of his work; his inadequate or misleading terminology; his anxiety to deal with too much material at once, leading to "cut-and-dried" schemes; his occasionally over-enthusiastic style; the negative sphere of his literary criticism. I do not see that Caudwell's main contentions have been seriously damaged. But Cornforth has inaugurated the serious criticism of Caudwell's work; and all Marxists working in the same field must be grateful for this.

Jack Beeching

EVERY fundamental development in science requires a fundamental development in Marxism. The weakness in Caudwell's work sprang not from the "muddle" in Caudwell's mind but from the fact that certain important questions in a Marxist analysis of poetry cannot be satisfactorily answered until psychology is fully

a science. (Belinsky's key-word, "imagination," in the passage Cornforth quotes, is itself but a stop-gap, and largely lacking in useful meaning until we know scientifically what we mean thereby.)

When Marxism can treat confidently, definitively, the nature of poetic inspiration, the precise way in which poetry comes into being and affects society (and these are questions of burning practical interest to the poet) man's conscious control of a productive activity—the production of poetry—will have been extended. The poet will be able to trace his own productive processes with more certainty, employ them with greater control, respond more consciously to criticism amd self-criticism, and more effectively reproduce in creative work, "reality as possibility."

Caudwell made an immense beginning to this task, which before his time had not been so much as stated by Marxists.

Caudwell not only stated the problem, but also roughed in a series of ways by which a Marxist theory of poetry might be built up. And each of his ways was based on relating poetry to the productive relations and forces of the society within which it was produced; on the use of such sciences and quasi-sciences as affected the problem (insofar as they were developed); and on dialectical thought.

Judging by the further development of his views, Caudwell himself at the last must have viewed much of *Illusion and Reality* in a critical spirit. What his reputation now deserves is a critical and dated collected edition of his writing.

Poetic practice, particularly in Communist countries; the development of Marxist theory (such as giving latterly of an enhanced importance to criticism and self-criticism); and the development of a genuine science of psychology;—these three will, in the process of time, supplement, advance and remould Caudwell's massive contribution. In the meantime he has extracted the process of poetic inspiration from the darkness of utter mysticism that enshrouded it. He has directed the attention of those who seek a solution of æsthetic problems to the practical, real life of man. And finally, he has asserted to the artist in moribund capitalist society: "you must take the difficult, creative road—that of refashioning the categories and techniques of art, so that it expresses the new world coming into being, and is part of its realisation."

Cornforth quotes from Shelley's "Song to the Men of England," to deprive of its force Caudwell's assertion that the poet "speaks

for the bourgeoisie who. . . voice demands not merely for themselves, but for the whole of suffering humanity."

> "*Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap,*
> *Find wealth—let no impostor heap,*
> *Weave robes—let not the idle wear,*
> *Forge arms—in your defence to bear.*"

But these lines reflect that Godwinian philosophical anarchism, an extreme position of bourgeois radical thought, which Shelley now and then (for instance in "Prometheus Unbound") surpassed intuitively, but never explicitly.

If put into practical effect as political slogans these lines would give rise to a society identical with the American frontier of Shelley's day—home of so many radical "utopias," real and imaginary.

Shelley, the anarchist thinker but the poet who suffered variously in his own imaginative being, the agony of the young proletariat, might indeed, as Marx later suggested, have come over eventually to communism and so to the intellectual leadership of a working class no longer conceived of as passively suffering, but it would be well if Marxists aspiring to step into Caudwell's shoes recognised that he did not live to do so.

Peter Cronin

THE value of Caudwell to many of us has been that he showed us how to use Marxism creatively in a number of difficult and unfamiliar fields; he was not afraid of breaking new ground, drawing fresh conclusions, making mistakes and learning from them. Cornforth greets all this as a pedant, first paying tribute to a brilliant pupil, and then getting down to the serious task of comparing texts and tearing out contexts.

When Caudwell speaks, of "energy. . . flowing out to the environment of society," Cornforth remarks: "For him, evidently, this 'energy flowing out' has not its source in the external material world, but comes from somewhere within us." To Cornforth, the idea that anything should come from within us is an "idealist notion": "this idealist notion of 'inner energy,'" he goes on. What solemn nonsense! Happily, Cornforth was not on his guard when he quoted Stalin's dictum that writers are "engineers of the human soul," otherwise he might have detected an "idealist notion"

here also; or in Marx's reference to man's "slumbering powers." Something very much like "inner energy" here, one would have thought.

A Marxist must always distinguish between social and personal consciousness, while showing that they are a unity. Caudwell attempts to do this; Cornforth, on the other hand, is content to bandy words. The truth of the matter is that *man*, as a *species*, produces consciously; this is what distinguishes him from the ant or the bee; but *men*, in class society, do not produce according to a definite overall plan, i.e. not yet, as a whole, "consciously."

When he comes to Caudwell's theory of poetry, anyone reading the chapter on Poetry's Dreamwork and comparing it with Cornforth's summary will see the method at its misleading worst. Cornforth misses the entire point of Caudwell's main analysis, which is to show the *specific* qualities of poetry as compared with other art forms. Belinsky, whom Cornforth quotes against Caudwell, uses poetry as a generic term covering the novel (see, e.g., *Selected Works*, p. 436).

It is good that Caudwell should be subjected to a critical review, and important that we should re-work some of his material and findings in the light of recent advances. The living core of his work is sound. The weakest part is his criticism of individual poets, and it is through a more detailed and practical study of the ambiguity of bourgeois poetry that we shall be able to correct his generalisations where these are false or over-simplified. In particular, I do not think he sufficiently discriminated between different kinds of poetry, and treated drama in much the same way as lyric, where the subjective or illusory element is strongest. Cornforth seems horrified at the idea that poetry should contain an element of illusion, but it is a very elementary point that without illusion, there is no poetry.

CORRECTION

On Page 124 *of the last issue the name of Professor Štoll was given incorrectly as Vladimir Stoll: it should be Ladislav Štoll.*

Marx Against Keynes: By JOHN EATON. Lawrence and Wishart Ltd. Cheap edition 3*s.* 6*d.* and Cloth 7*s.* 6*d.*

THE General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money by the late J. M. Keynes was published in 1936. Since then, its central ideas have become a new orthodoxy in the universities, and have, through popularisation, set their stamp, not least in the Labour Movement, on much of the thinking about economic problems in the capitalist world.

A recently published life of Keynes[1] has been the occasion for a favourable re-appraisal of his influence by British bourgeois economists. So far the Marxist examination of Keynes' role has been left to critics in the U.S.S.R. and elsewhere. Now, with the appearance of John Eaton's *Marx Against Keynes*, the opportunity has come to get clarity on a theory of great significance to the British working class movement.

Marx Against Keynes is a most welcome book. Not only is it the first attempt of a British Marxist to get thoroughly to grips with Keynesian ideas, but it is directed especially to active workers in the Labour Movement. It can be read without previous specialist knowledge of capitalist economic theory. It tries to answer such questions as—Why does economic theory matter to the Labour Movement? What does Keynes say? Why have Right Wing Labour leaders taken up his theory so eagerly? Whose interests does the theory mainly defend? Why must the Labour Movement reject Keynes? In the course of answering these questions Eaton sets out the main points of Keynes' theory and explains the attraction of this theory for Labour Party 'theorists' and monopoly capitalists alike. He exposes Keynes to the searchlight of Marxist political economy, and points out the fallacies in the practical remedies associated with Keynes' theory. He shows the Keynesian system as a wrong theory about capitalism which is used to hold back the struggle of the workers.

The great merit of this book is its partisanship. The author sees the fight against a wrong theory as an integral part of the class struggle. He consistently returns from a discussion of theoretical problems to the class issues involved. We need more of this kind of writing on questions of economic theory. Too often the antagonism between Marxist political economy and bourgeois theory is seen as a discussion issue outside the class struggle. This attitude must be overcome if work is to be produced which will be a real contribution to deciding the struggle.

The book would however have been improved by a more closely knit argument. The discussion is often diffuse and there is a tendency to repeat in a slightly different form points which have already been sufficiently established.

. . . . .

Any evaluation of Keynes' economic ideas must start from an understanding of the stage of development of capitalism and of the working class movement at the time when he wrote. *The first step to a critique of*

[1] *The Life of John Maynard Keynes* by R. F. Harrod. Macmillan.

Keynes is the recognition that his work is the child of the general crisis of capitalism. It is perhaps a weakness of Eaton's book that it does not make this point clear at the outset.

The general crisis of capitalism was ushered in by the First World War and the October Revolution. The significance of the general crisis is that imperialism with its basis in monopoly capitalism ceases to be a single world-embracing system. It is faced with the challenge of the socialist system developing in the Soviet Union. As a result of this its own contradictions are greatly intensified. It passes from one crisis to another finding only temporary and partial solutions (e.g. rearmament) which prepare the way for greater future difficulties. Mass unemployment, idle plant, and destruction of products are the economic symptoms of this period in the interval of rearmament and war.

In these circumstances the small group of monopoly capitalists who in this period dominate the economy, are more and more driven to use the *state* as a means to propping up and extending their control over economic life. Lenin recognised this tendency during the First World War and called it in the preface to the first edition of *State and Revolution* "the transformation of monopoly capitalism into state monopoly capitalism." A Soviet economist has recently expressed the same idea by describing the state as "an extension of the arm of the monopolies."[1]

Against this background of the general crisis of capitalism with its appalling symptoms, the increasing conversion of the state into an "arm of the monopolies," and the rising challenge of socialism, Keynes' role was two-fold.

First, he modified traditional bourgeois theory, making it take into account some of the symptoms of the general crisis. This left its apologetic essence intact but gave theoretical sanction to the use already being made of the state by monopoly capitalism.

Second, he knitted into coherence a number of policy measures not all new in themselves, which have been used to show against the challenge of socialism that capitalism *can* work. In the hands of the Labour "theorists" they have been used to justify their theory of the neutral state. In the hands of the Government "planners" in recent years they have played an important part in hoodwinking the people about the class nature of inflation. To-day they assist the development towards a war economy.

. . . . .

Keynes' two-fold role needs further examination. Here, however, the discussion will be mainly confined to his modification of theory. Important questions are raised in this connection not only by Eaton's book but by an article by Ronald Meek in a recent issue of *The Modern Quarterly.*[2]

[1] There is an article in the April *Communist Review* on State monopoly capitalism by Stephen Wren. It summarises the conclusions of discussions on this subject by Soviet economists, arising out of the reformist errors of Varga. It then applies some of these conclusions to Britain.

[2] "The Place of Keynes in the History of Economic Thought," *The Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1.

A full estimation of Keynes' role as a theoretician demands a consideration of his theories in relation to those that preceded it. The development of economic theory has its own logic, propounds its own questions, shapes the form of new developments. But to make this examination *in terms of the development of economic theory alone* is to risk completely wrong conclusions.

Meek's main weakness is his separation of the development of economic thought from the developments in the mode of production. This leads him to misstate the position both of Marx and Keynes. It is necessary therefore to clear up these points first.

After discussing the Classical school of political economy which ends with Ricardo, Meek speaks of Marx's contribution to economic thought as "much greater" and "more individual" (p. 44) than that of his predecessors. Marx, he says, makes two main contributions which fulfil his aim "to liberate political economy from its bourgeois prison" (p. 44). One is the answer to the "question of the origin and persistence of profit under conditions of competition" (p. 44). The other is the revelation of "the nature of the connection between cyclical fluctations and the deep-rooted social and economic contradictions involved in the capitalist mode of production" (p. 44). Meek's approach to economic thought only in its own terms is clearly shown here. He has failed to point out Marx's *revolutionary role*. Marx's main contribution was the discovery of surplus value as the form of exploitation of the worker under capitalism. This is just as basic when "conditions of competition" have grown into monopoly. Secondly, on the basis of the analysis of the accumulation of surplus value he was able to discover not just a convincing trade cycle theory, but the *law of motion* of capitalism. As Lenin pointed out in his essay, *Karl Marx*, "Marx deduces the inevitability of the transformation of capitalist society into socialist society wholly and exclusively from the economic law of movement of contemporary society." Marx provided the scientific basis for the fight against capitalism by a revolutionary working class. Marx's analysis was further developed after his death by Lenin and Stalin in the period of imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism. That Meek has entirely omitted Lenin and Stalin from his discussion of the development of economic thought is a reflection of his failure to take into account the historical epoch which separates Marx and Keynes.

When dealing with Keynes' relation to his bourgeois predecessors it is important to ask questions from a Marxist standpoint. Capitalist apologetics—the essence of which is the concealment of capitalist exploitation—found its clearest if not earliest expression in the school of subjective value theorists headed in England by the Cambridge economist Marshall. It was in this school—sometimes called the neo-Classical school—that Keynes received his early training as an economist. Meek

tries to clarify Keynes' relation to this school. But, instead of seeing him against the background of the general crisis and clarifying his *class* role, he poses the problem of Keynes' greater or lesser "reality." He says that Keynes' place in economic thought depends on the answer to the question: "How far did Keynes succeed in escaping from neo-Classical dogma? How far, that is to say, did he succeed in revolutionising neo-Classical economics and in bringing it back into contact with reality?" (p. 51). He reaches the vague conclusion that Keynes was only "partially successful, because the real reason for the divorce of economic thought from reality lies much deeper than Keynes suspected" (p. 51). From the tenor of the whole concluding section one is led to believe that Keynes missed the path of Marxism in his "partially successful" return to "reality" only because of his thorough steeping in the ideas of his predecessors.

The truth is of course that Keynes was not diverted from a fuller "reality" in theory because he was bound to tradition. He was bound to tradition because the reality he recognised was the need for the continuance of capitalism, whose essence was defended by traditional theory. Keynes' "revolution" in theory, as Eaton points out, "was his contention that the capitalist system, if left to itself, does not necessarily lead to full employment" (p. 30). Previous bourgeois theory had assumed that when economic forces had "worked themselves out" the whole economy would settle down at an "equilibrium" where all resources would be fully employed. But as Eaton shows, Keynes saw no reason to dispense with subjective value theory and the whole apparatus of "factors of production" which follows from it, giving to capitalist and worker alike their "due" reward. The main features of the traditional school still did well enough to explain away capitalist exploitation. Keynes' innovations in theory provided the apologetics for the new stage of monopoly capitalism.

Reality in political economy means the analysis of production relationships. The pre-Marxist Classical economists were realists in this sense. Keynes never gets near an understanding of production relationships. Therefore however many symptoms of the general crisis of capitalism he imports into his theory—this is what has misled Meek—he is as far from reality as his apologetic forerunners.

For example, one of the central features of Keynes' theory is his emphasis on the problem of investment. He has recognised that the optimism that capitalists had in the expanding era of the nineteenth century has passed away. They are no longer as willing to undertake new investment projects as they were, and the results are disastrous for employment. Having recognised this, his solution is to encourage investment by a variety of means. Investment expenditure is for Keynes just an important way of keeping up the demand for goods on which employment depends. In this it is on a par with expenditure on consumption

goods. If the latter falls off the "gap" can be made good by new investment expenditure. In this analysis Keynes has taken account therefore of one symptom of the general crisis—the greatly intensified contradiction between the tendency of production to expand and the restricted purchasing power of the mass of the people which results in periods of investment stagnation.

But Keynes is ignorant of the real nature of capital as a sum of values which embodies capitalist ownership and the means of capitalist exploitation of which capital only finds its way into new investment with the object adding to surplus value. It is this which makes fallacious the Keynesian proposal of investment expenditure as a solution to the problem of deficient demand. As Eaton shows "The very process that expands the means of supplying . . . ultimate consumers restricts their share in the products. . . . Keynes' remedy is in reality the source of infection" (p. 90).

. . . . .

It is worth noting here some of Keynes' own views on his class position and the role of his theory.

Keynes was an astute bourgeois, who, whatever his delusions about the workability of capitalism, was well aware that he lived in a period of revolutionary working-class advance which he felt to threaten all that was dear to him in the way of life of his class. In his *Short View of Russia* he asks, "How can I accept a creed which preferring the mud to the fish exalts the boorish proletariat above the bourgeois and the intelligentsia who, with whatever faults are the quality in life and surely carry the seeds of all human advancement?" His essay *Am I a Liberal?* throws more light on what he felt to be his position. After stating that the class war will find him "on the side of the educated bourgeoisie," he goes on to discuss the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties. He rejects the Conservatives as a diehard party; he rejects Labour as a class party (not his class) apt to be dominated by the Party of Catastrophe (Communists); he decides for the Liberals if they can only produce a sensible seeming alternative to the attraction of the class programme of Labour. It is possible to see here a parallel to his position in economic thought. He attacked his predecessors who alienated thinking people by talking in terms of laissez-faire; he had a fanatical contempt for Marxism (calling it "the *reductio ad absurdum* of Benthamism") matched by abysmal ignorance about it; he evolved a defence of capitalism which avoided diehardism while conceding nothing to a class analysis of relations of production. That the *General Theory* was in part at least, intended as a broadside at Marxist political economy is shown by a letter he wrote to Bernard Shaw before its publication. He says of his book: "I cannot predict what the final upshot will be on action and affairs. But there will be a great change and, in particular, the Ricardian foundations of Marxism will be knocked away."

But to be anti-laissez-faire and anti-Marxist in the period when Keynes wrote, was objectively to play the role of defender of monopoly capitalism.

. . . . .

The part played by Keynesian ideas in the working class movement is of special importance in Britain.

Eaton points out that the struggle between the reformist and revolutionary trend in the Labour Movement is fought out in the field of politics and must be fought out in the field of theory too. He shows Keynes as heir to a long reformist tradition.

"The reformist trend imports into the Labour Movement bourgeois theory and bourgeois ideas; it buttresses up the prejudices and preconceptions that capitalist society implants in men's minds and tries to kill the growth of the most class-conscious Marxist ideas. . . . The social democratic trend starts with certain advantages; it trades in ideas which years of capitalist power has made current in men's minds, whereas Marxist ideas are ultimately more powerful because they are true and truly serve the needs and aspirations of the working class and all progressive mankind. But they have to be fought for inch by inch.

"In economic theory the reformist, Fabian trend in Britain of half a century ago rejected Marx for Marshall, the leading figure of bourgeois economics of those times. To-day they reject Marx for Keynes, the new leader of bourgeois economic thought" (pp. 55–6).

The adoption of Keynes by the Labour Movement was closely connected with the crisis in leadership that took place in the 'thirties, following the betrayal of the movement by Ramsay MacDonald. Those who remained in the leadership of the Labour Party intended no less than MacDonald to carry out a capitalist policy. But in the conditions created by the depression and the split in the party they needed a fresh justification for them. This to a large extent they found in Keynesian theory. Eaton shows how to-day the main Keynesian ideas appear in the programmes of the Labour Party and the arguments of Trade Union leaders, and are consistently used to foster false ideas of the state and hold back militant struggle e.g. on wage demands.

All this reinforces the need to read Eaton's book, to discuss further the points raised there, and to use it.

KIRSTINE AARONOVITCH.

The English Rising of 1381. By H. FAGAN and R. H. HILTON. Lawrence and Wishart Ltd. 10*s.* 6*d.*

BECAUSE the bourgeois revolution was carried through in Britain at a relatively early stage in capitalist development, the bourgeoisie has been able to cultivate the illusion of exceptionalism in English history by obscuring the role of the people and thus burying the

revolutionary traditions which might have inspired the modern labour movement. Hence the re-assessment of the role of popular revolutionary movements in the transition from feudalism to capitalism is an important task in the preparation of the working-class for the transition to Socialism.

H. Fagan's *Nine Days that Shook England*, published in 1938, was a valuable pioneer contribution to this task. But the present edition, revised and re-named, with the addition of five new chapters by R. H. Hilton, is a work of much greater significance and reflects the notable advance which has taken place in Marxist historical studies in Britain. For it seeks not merely to re-tell the story of the great popular revolt of 1381 "by reconstructing the inadequately recorded motives and aims, not of the oppressors, but of the oppressed," but to explain its significance as "at once a symptom and cause of the collapse of a decaying order of society." Recent scholarship has provided much evidence that feudal society in England, after reaching its highest development in the thirteenth century, entered a long period of general crisis, marked by economic decline, plagues, falling population, recurrent revolts and wars, foreign and civil. Hilton, in the chapters rather modestly entitled "the preparation for the rising" and "aftermath" has written a brilliant essay in Marxist analysis of the decaying feudal society of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He examines the economic roots of the crisis and its repercussions on political institutions and ideology and shows that its character and outcome can only be understood by placing class struggles in the centre of the picture as the main driving force of social change. Feudalism is depicted as a complex, living society containing within it both vestiges of earlier, pre-feudal society and embryonic forms of future capitalist relations: a society rent by contradictions and in the throes of change. Fundamentally the crisis developed because the landowning class, incapable of making any basic improvements in the technique of production "could do no more in the long run than overstrain the organisation at its disposal": that is, intensify the exploitation of the peasantry. Thus they provoked not only plagues, but "daily resistance, which was the preparation for the village revolt, just as the village revolts, going on for over a century, were the preparation for the great revolt of 1381." The ruling class reacted by strengthening its central state apparatus and thus already laying the foundations of the final form of feudal state—the absolute monarchy—which was to emerge in developed form in the sixteenth century. But the immediate result was to broaden the political horizon of the peasantry and the scope of their revolts.

The revolt of 1381, though it shook feudal society to its foundations, was inevitably defeated, since the peasantry, then as now, could not become a ruling class and neither proletariat nor bourgeoisie had yet emerged as developed classes capable of leading it. Nevertheless, peasant

revolts played a decisive role in the collapse of feudalism. They compelled the ruling class to seek a way out by changing its methods of exploitation in ways which promoted the development of capitalism and the disintegration of the peasant class. Already in 1381 rich peasants, small gentlemen and town bourgeois striving for freedom to develop along capitalist lines played a significant part in what was still, in the main, a united peasant movement against feudalism; and their importance was to increase in each of the successive popular risings which shook decaying feudal society until the conditions for bourgeois revolution matured in the seventeenth century.

Particularly striking, both in analysis and narrative, is the prominence given to the role of ideas. As the ruling class, faced with crisis, sought to re-emphasise the "chivalrous" ideals of its past, the contrast between ideal and reality provoked bitter social criticism, which, reflected in popular ballads and sermons, helped to inspire and organise the struggle of the peasantry. But, because the peasantry could not be a truly revolutionary class, it could not develop a truly revolutionary ideology: it expressed its aims in terms of orthodox theology and of a utopian popular monarchy in which the king—conceived as standing above classes—would represent the interests not of the nobility but of the peasantry. This illusion played a central role in the defeat of the rising of 1381 and it was only gradually, as a bourgeois class developed, that elements of a truly revolutionary ideology in the form of religious heresies came into being.

The narrative chapters show these forces at work in the summer of 1381. The authors have, as they say, not set out to write a work of erudition and have therefore omitted most of the elaborate apparatus of criticism which would be needed to explore to the full all the obscurities and contradictions of the surviving evidence. But within the limits of a popular work, they have succeeded well in combining a critical approach with the aim of describing the course of events clearly, simply and dramatically. Vividly portrayed are the initial panic of a ruling class divided and impotent to resist a united popular movement; and the cunning and duplicity with which it subsequently manœuvred, sacrificing scapegoats and playing on the peasants' naïve faith in the honour of the king. Nor can any reader fail to be immensely inspired by the courage, the fighting spirit and the revolutionary energy of the rebels, their discipline, their loyalty to chosen leaders and the strength of their belief in a society based on justice and human brotherhood. In the hour of defeat and vengeance, their leaders, with only one known exception, went to their deaths proclaiming their confidence in the justice and ultimate victory of the people's cause.

This book, furnished as it is with an excellent guide to further reading and marred only by the absence of maps, is an outstanding example of

the kind of history book, based on sound scholarship yet written for the non-specialist, which is needed to arm the working class and its allies today with an understanding of the lessons of past struggles. It deserves both to be widely read and to set a model for similar studies of the popular risings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

A. L. MERSON.

Communication

MARXISM AND ETHICS

IN Dr. John Lewis's "The Moral Complexion of Our People" there were several formulations which, I am sure he will agree on re-reading, do not clearly represent Soviet policy. May I draw attention to the following three quotations: (*a*) "There is nothing the new generation so despises as a private and professional career aiming at personal success and wealth." (*b*) The aim of the Bolsheviks over thirty years has been "to establish honourable service rather than gain as the motive of daily work." (*c*) "The one thing the Soviet people are interested in is the welfare of the individual."

(A) It is true that in the U.S.S.R. a "private" career is despised, but certainly not a professional one. Moreover, personal success and wealth arising from service to the community is not despised, but highly revered. The presenting of Stalin prizes, for example, for outstanding service to the community, gives both the joy of personal success and material increase of wealth to the individuals who have made outstanding contributions to society. Thus, *both* personal success *and* wealth (in the form of high earnings for good work) are objects of respect in the U.S.S.R.

(B) To say the Bolsheviks have up to now tried to "establish honourable service rather than gain as the motive of daily work" repeats the above error. While enormous stress is laid on honourable service in the U.S.S.R., material gain is still used as an incentive. The principle, "to each according to his work," embodied in the Soviet Constitution, confirms this. So far the Bolsheviks have tried to establish honourable service *as well as* gain as the motive of daily work.

(C) "The one thing the Soviet people are interested in is the welfare of the individual." While in the above two formulations, Dr. Lewis tends to underestimate the role of individual gain in Soviet society, it appears that in this third formulation he goes to the other extreme. While the Soviet people are certainly deeply concerned with individual welfare, and the greatest possible development and expression of each and every individual, this is all within a framework of *social* purpose, the transition from capitalism to socialism, and now from socialism to communism. It is precisely because of the Soviet people's concern for the welfare and progress of Soviet society *as such, as well as* with individual welfare within this society, that such progress has been possible.

The three formulations criticised above have one character in common: they do not express to the full the *unity* which exists today between individual gain (according to work done) and social gain (resulting from the work).

PAT SLOAN.

I AM grateful to Pat Sloan for pointing out a certain ambiguity in two of the passages (*a*) and (*b*) which he quotes, and while I am not entirely happy about the phrases he uses I accept the emphasis he desires. I am less convinced that I was in error in stressing the great importance which the Soviet people attach to individual welfare. I was careful to qualify my statement by adding: "The individual, however, is important as part of the group and only finds himself in seeking the common good that flows back to refresh every individual in the Group." The intimate relations of the individual and the Group and the fact that in a Socialist society their interests are not incompatible but one, were dealt with in some detail both in the first part of the article, "Marxism and Ethics" (pp. 223, 224) and in the second part, "The Moral Complexion of Our People" (pp. 58, 60, 62). This point cannot be stressed too much and I am glad of the opportunity of saying once again how vitally important it is to the understanding of Soviet ethics.

JOHN LEWIS.

Review of Foreign Publications

ITALY

The *pièce de résistance* in *Società*, 1950 (June, September, December), is Cesare Luporini on the *Lettres philosophiques* of Voltaire. The *Lettres* belong to the period when Voltaire was in the van of the progressive movement in France, creating the revolution in ideas which led the way for the French revolution. He set out to attack the Church as the guardian of the feudal order in Europe. Luporini points out that the *Lettres* are still topical in Italy to-day, where the feudal order has never been abolished. He shows by an analysis of the *Lettres* and of Voltaire's intellectual development that they are no idealisation of the English constitution, but a programme for the French bourgeoisie, nicely adjusted to actual conditions in France. English readers will be interested in the attack on Trevelyan's interpretation of the Whig revolution of 1688.

Società 1950 (December), has a study, very moving and written from the inside, of the class war in a small town of Lucania in southern Italy by E. de Martino, *Note lucane*. Here opposition to the landlord and priest may take the form of popular open-air drama and folksongs, invented by a group and sung with constant changes and additions. We are shown the struggles of a peasant woman, "a great communist" and at the same time a devout though rather unorthodox catholic, against the anti-communist line of the clergy (she remarked that "God was finished with" when the sermon began). The inhabitants, living in "dens" in the hillside with their animals, have been promised "streets and latrines" by the government; all they get is repairs to the archiepiscopal palace. But they ask the author to tell the world that "we are no longer mere cattle" and that "it isn't all misery down here." The article makes an excellent corrective to recent novels describing southern Italy as a land of mere hopelessness and squalor.

The studies of the Marxist philosopher, Gramsci, continue with a paper on his views of "science and nature as history" (*Società* 1950, September) by Massimo Aloisi, and the studies of nineteenth-century Italian history with Nicola Badaloni on the social structure and political struggle in Livornia, 1847–9 (the same number).

B. S.

GERMANY

Einheit, Issues of September, 1950—January, 1951, inclusive.

The new *Einheit*, continuing its fundamental change of policy outlined in our last review, closely relates every theoretical issue to practical activity, to the immediate tasks confronting the German Democratic Republic in internal construction, in relation to the varied and sometimes subtle assaults of imperialism and to stressing the example provided by Soviet history and present Soviet policy. Among the articles specifically concerned with German questions two are outstanding; a historical survey of the German revolution of 1918 by Walter Ulbricht and a study of University culture, especially at Leipzig, by Ernst Hoffmann. Ulbricht's manifold survey is in the manner of and infused with the insight that made the "Eighteenth *Brumaire* of Louis Napoleon" of Karl Marx our inspired guide to the intricacies of class relations in decisive moments. With this difference. In Marx's study the revolutionary immaturity of the workers and the still meaningful divisions of nobility, financiers, industrialists, vague middle classes and *déclassés* provided the background. In Ulbricht's study, based on the analyses of Lenin and Stalin, the rôle of leaders of mass organizations of workers, of the Socialist party, becomes the crucial element first in deflecting, then distorting, at last betraying the workers and ultimately cancelling their own servile importance through the "ingratitude" of those they served. The rising resistance to the war among German workers, the beacon light of the Russian revolution, then the mutinies of German sailors, the sudden proliferation of workers and soldiers councils, the heroic leadership of Liebknecht brings about the automatic recognition among the harried monopolists and militarists of the real meaning of Social-Democratic leadership. Instantly they who had carried out a lifelong battle against the "spectre" of socialism, recognized their nascent allies. Having overreached themselves in the struggle against other Imperialisms they, nevertheless, calculated the internal forces in Germany with cynical exactness. Throughout the war Kautsky and his following sought a "transition economy" with basic class positions unaltered. The obvious

imminent catastrophe of Kaiserism resulted in the entrance of high Socialist functionaries into the government, saviours of the "State." The masses, however, had no such objectives: under their pressure the "saviours" resigned. The abdication of Wilhelm II released the gigantic revolutionary potential. The workers, nurtured in Socialist conceptions, moved to the consummation of their hopes. By concrete analysis of the specific means whereby their trusted leaders wrecked the revolution, the reasons for their success, the weaknesses of theory and tactics that made so much heroism temporarily futile, Ulbricht provides rich lessons for contemporary action. His lambent prose, charged with passion, reveals the cost to mankind of these tragic errors. Historical writing as a weapon has rarely been better forged.

Hoffmann deals with the function of the universities in the shaping of a culture suited to the new workers', peasants' and intellectuals' commonwealth, such as is being shaped in the German Democratic Republic. The Marxian professors, and they alone, are singled out for his criticism. The remains of *bourgeois* culture, worship of the accumulated mass of theories that have been the "glories" of their erstwhile colleagues, greater respect for the theories of the certificated learned than respect for the capacities of the rising class that is remaking the world, these are among the faults he castigates with a multitude of examples, from (simply as one instance) Leipzig University. The Marxian professors are asserted to be aloof from the (to them) "elementary" studies of *The Short History of the C.P.S.U.(B).*, to seek refuge in specialisation, contrary to the Stalinist dictum that learning is enriched, acquires significance through the identification of the savant with the pulsating life of the masses, to be insufficiently combative (because of academic courtesy) to flagrantly anti-Socialist views of entrenched, glib, colleagues (those who could function under Hitler but find Socialism distasteful). These negative aspects are then contrasted with the new groupings of students (mostly workers and peasants), suffused with Bolshevik insight, militant, academically thorough, who are creating new *cadres* to replace the, alas, overwhelming remains of the former culture. For it is true that thirteen years of Fascist barbarism, after fourteen years of cold persecution of the true Marxians under the Weimar Republic, the whole superimposed on generations of Kaiserist servility, have reduced the Marxian contingent, capable of teaching subjects that require years for their acquisition, to a small minority. Hence University education, and those of higher Technical Institutes are the weakest link in the new Socialist Democratic Germany. Every effort must be made to assure that both the competence and the social functioning of University professors be augmented as swiftly as possible. Some of the instances cited by Hoffmann appear just, others somewhat strained, but of the general adequacy of his treatment there can be little doubt.

W. J. B

Our Contributors

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