

# politics

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## Comment

**War With- out End** Churchill's speech in Missouri, with its call for an Anglo-American military alliance and its open incitement of an ideological war against Russia, prompts me to some reflections on the late war. While it was in process, those eccentrics who opposed it were told by all sensible philistines that they were Unrealistic: granted that "our" side was far from perfect, was it not obvious that an Allied victory would be a lesser evil than a Nazi victory? I was myself the beneficiary of many such homilies. It made no impression on these sensible people to reply that the problems we faced were dynamic ones which could not be solved by a military victory of either side, that the triumph of the lesser evil would turn out to be merely the triumph of the greater evil in a different form, and that a choice between an Allied and a Nazi victory was a choice between being strangled or poisoned.

It is less than a year since the war ended in Europe, and already the world, having avoided being hanged by Hitler, is being poisoned by the victors. The gloomiest predictions of those of us who opposed the war are being fulfilled with a speed and on a scale which to me at least is quite unexpected.

What was the war fought for, according to the Realists?

*The war was fought to secure freedom of speech and freedom from fear—i. e., freedom from political dictatorship.* Russian totalitarianism has direct control of all Eastern Europe, has great influence in Western Europe through its disciplined Communist parties, and is expanding throughout the Orient.

*The war was fought to secure freedom from want.* A world food crisis, for which the American government is largely responsible, has materialized. Not for centuries have so many millions of people been faced with actual starvation. It is expected to be many months, perhaps years, before these famine conditions are mastered.

*The war was fought to eliminate Racism.* The newspapers constantly tell us that anti-semitism is more widespread in Europe today than it was under the Nazis; the tragic remnants of the Jews of Europe have one overwhelming desire—to leave their native lands, where they are despised, persecuted, threatened.

*The war was fought above all to lay the foundations for a peaceful world.* The Russian and the British empires have been clashing with mounting intensity, and now, with Secretary Byrnes' recent speech and his protests to Russia on Iran and Manchuria, this country enters the conflict. The UNO is already a bad joke; Russia fears the Anglo-American axis, which in turn fears Russian expansionism; both sides are exasperated, intransigent, bellicose. The development of the atomic bomb adds the maximum technological force to the blind nationalistic antagonisms that are conducting us to World War III.

Already, Stalin's Russia has taken the place of Hitler's Germany as a ruthless totalitarian power that is out to upset the Anglo-American status quo; the parallels that can be drawn between 1945-6 and 1934-9 are really terrifying. Already, the Realists are making another lesser-evil choice, preparing to "defend" an admittedly imperfect Anglo-American "democratic way of life" against Russian totalitarianism. Already, the arguments are becoming horribly familiar: Isn't our imperfect democracy better than Stalin's (Hitler's) dictatorship? If Stalin (Hitler) is not "stopped", it will be our turn soon. Are you willing to face the prospect of a Communist (Nazi) world? There are only two Realistic alternatives: either "appeasement" or resistance, by force if necessary. Just one more war, and we shall have those famous Conditions for Democratic Progress at last firmly established!

It may be that there is little or no chance of the kind of revolutionary change in our own and Russia's institutions which would be needed to avoid a third world war; it may be we are once more in a blind alley, and this time with the actual extinction of human life on this planet as its ending. But let us at least face the real situation and not continue to deceive ourselves, and corrupt our values, by making another lesser-evil choice. From both the scientific

and the ethical standpoint, it will be disastrous to think that "our" side will be any more successful in eliminating by force of arms the evils represented by Russian totalitarianism than it was in the case of the Nazis; even less so, in all probability. It may be there is no exit from the blind alley, but surely the first condition for finding one is to give up the superficial lesser-evil approach, with the support it implies for a future war against Russia, in favor of a more radical and basic approach, be it pacifist or social-revolutionary or perhaps some new combination of both.

**The One Bright Spot** There is one rift in the dark clouds rising throughout the world: the spirited rebellions of the peoples of Indo-China, Indonesia, and now India. The Indonesian revolt has turned out to be the most successful native uprising in modern history. The turning-point probably came towards the end of December. For two months, the British forces under that great Laborite commander, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, had been meeting increasingly violent resistance from the Indonesians, and had reacted to it with the usual military reflex: rocket-plane attacks, naval bombardments, importation of tough paratroops, reprisal burnings of native towns. But then, it appears, the British and Dutch governments, being civilians and therefore somewhat more in touch with political realities, decided that the resistance was being exacerbated rather than broken, and therefore countermanded Mountbatten's orders for an even "firmer" policy. (The intensity of the feeling for freedom is indicated by the fact that there are 183 different political groupings among the Indonesians—*N. Y. Times*, Feb. 25—which have been able nonetheless to present a solid front against Dutch rule.) On February 10, the Dutch government offered Indonesia dominion status, with its own popularly elected parliament, equal civil rights with citizens of the mother country, and the right—after a "limited period" not yet specified—to vote freely whether to continue in partnership with Holland or to become completely independent. To date, this offer has not been accepted by the leaders of the "Indonesian Republic" which heads the rebellion, a fact which indicates the strength both of the rebels' position and of their justified suspicions of the Dutch.

That History is a goddess with a wry sense of humor has often been remarked. Certainly she has rarely shown a more ironical spirit than in the booby-trap she rigged up to expose the sham of British Labor Party "socialism." The Indonesian affair was only the beginning: here the Laborites found themselves forced to suppress a colonial rebellion against the Dutch lest the whole structure of imperialism, in which they have a considerable investment, be shaken. But now they are confronted with "problems" much closer to home: the fabric of the British Empire, in fact, which Bevin has indicated he cherishes as dearly as Churchill did, is coming apart at the seams. Bloody rioting has broken out in Egypt, Jamaica, India. Since they have nothing to offer the natives except the old hypocritical promises (which in turn is because the BLP lacks any real vision of a better world), the Laborites so far have reacted with military force; if they later on make concessions, as the Dutch have done, it will be because they simply cannot do otherwise.

The Indian situation is the most serious. Towards the end of February there occurred the first large-scale mutiny of native troops since the great Sepoy Mutiny of the last century. On the 21st the crews of a large part of the Indian Navy mutinied against bad food and racial discrimination, held their officers captive, and exchanged shots with shore batteries; on the 27th some 2,500 Sepoy troops

mutinied at Jubbulpore. The naval mutiny stimulated widespread rioting in Bombay, with looting, burning, and a casualty list running into the thousands. These riots were spontaneous popular demonstrations, expressing discontent with the failure of the Labor Government to take steps towards Indian independence and also fear of the impending famine which the British raj has been unable to avert. The Congress Party had no part in organizing them. Indeed, Gandhi and the other Party leaders appealed to the rioters to refrain from violent action, which was against the Party's principles. Premier Attlee blamed it all on "Communist Agitators", in the classic reactionary formulation, and it is unquestionable that Russia was delighted and probable that her native followers took an active part in the riots. But, as is always the case, the agitators could only agitate successfully because there was something to work on. The riots seem to have been an elemental, formless outburst, not a revolution but rather a sign that a revolution may not be far off.

The depth of this popular resentment against the British is shown by its penetration into the military forces. To help fight the war, Britain created an Indian Army of no less than 2,500,000 men, to whom relatively high pay was given as an inducement to enlist (India footed the bill, of course). Now this huge force, on which the Labor government depends to police such trouble spots as Greece, Syria, Egypt, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Malaya shows signs of "disaffection." On February 28, the day after the Sepoys mutinied at Jubbulpore, General Auchinleck, British Commander in India, announced that the withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia was going to begin "tomorrow."

As a *N. Y. Times* correspondent put it, in words which recall Trotsky's analysis of the decomposition of the Czarist army during the 1917 revolution: "The most disturbing factor is that the personnel of the armed forces are now being subjected to all the political stresses and strains that affect the civil population."

**No. 1 Political Fact: Hunger** "The main political fact in the world today is hunger." The British M.P. who recently said this in Parliament was not exaggerating. When I wrote "Starvation—America's Christmas Gift to the European Peoples" three months ago, the gravity of the food crisis was not generally known; our press had minimized it, our political leaders had kept silent or even issued optimistic reports. Since then, even the most

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casual newspaper reader knows that the world faces a crisis worse than anything in the war, that famines on a scale unknown for centuries are imminent in both Europe and Asia.

The first danger sign was France's reimposition of bread rationing (lifted a few months earlier) on December 27; a few weeks later, the DeGaulle Government fell, largely on the food issue; today France is hungrier than ever and—judging from the dozens of letters that come to POLITICS every week from our friends there—the situation is getting worse.

On February 5, the British Food Minister stunned the country with an announcement of severe ration cuts.

The following day, Truman made his first public admission of the wheat shortage, proposing certain mild steps and hinting at a reimposition of rationing over here.

On March 1, the British cut rations in their zone of Germany from 1,500 calories a day to 1,040; similar cuts will almost certainly follow in the other zones, and Truman has made it clear that “we are certainly not going to give more food to our enemies than to our friends”, which means the already desperate position of the Germans is becoming much worse. (The 2,000 tons of relief per month which Truman has now permitted private agencies to begin shipping into Germany is just a token—UNRRA ships about 500 times as much goods a month.)

Italy is even hungrier than Germany: rations now are officially set at 650 calories a day; UNRRA will spend \$375 millions there this year, but this will at best only keep rations at this famine level.

In the East, MacArthur has just tripled his original request for American grains to feed the Japanese, while India faces a far worse famine than that in Bengal in 1943, when some 1,500,000 persons died.

**The American Failure (Cont'd.)** In “Starvation” I described the shocking failure of over-fed America to help Europe: the three-month delay in Congress over UNRRA appropriations, the refusal to use our huge military surpluses abroad for relief, the timidity and incompetence of the Truman administration, the sabotage by the food interests. The pattern still remains about the same. Some recent items:

¶ As of March 2, of the \$3 billions worth of usable *civilian* supplies in U. S. Army stockpiles in Europe, only slightly over \$100 millions worth had been sold—and almost all of that to UNRRA. I have been unable to find any one who can give a sensible explanation of why this enormous cache of desperately needed goods is allowed to rot month after month, guarded by thousands of homesick GI's.

¶ Last fall Truman promised 8 million tons of coal to Europe this winter. On January 4, Reconversion Director Snyder revealed we were then 2 million tons behind schedule on deliveries.

¶ The US quota of meat for UNRRA was 300 million pounds for the first quarter of 1946; deliveries in the first half of this period were 9½ million pounds. One reason: The Department of Agriculture refused to start deliveries until it had the actual cash in hand; although UNRRA had been voted funds by Congress in December, it takes weeks of red tape to get them through, and meanwhile not a pound of meat. Note: on February 6, Truman grandly announced that the US will ship abroad in the first half of 1946 one BILLION pounds of meat—but forgot to mention that up to then less than 1 per cent of that total had been shipped. Also note: by mid-February, Canada had shipped over one third of the meat she had promised UNRRA for the entire year.

¶ Congress has yet to show any sign of passing the final \$600 million appropriation for UNRRA. If this is not passed by the end of March, there will be another break in UNRRA's pipeline.

¶ The Department of Agriculture estimates that Americans now waste one-fifth as much food as they eat—or enough to feed 25 million people.

¶ The lifting of rationing has been a headache to the New York City Department of Sanitation. Commissioner Powell complains of increased garbage collections: “No one saves anything, now that rationing is over. Two weeks in early February showed an increase of 124,115 cubic yards of material picked up by our trucks as compared with the same period in 1945. It wasn't just those two weeks either. You could pick any two weeks this winter and it would be the same.” (*N. Y. Times*, March 10)

¶ Another kind of waste is caused by the successful efforts by the food industry to keep things within commercial channels. The Victory Collection of Canned Foods drive is an example. For months a nationwide campaign was put on to get people to donate canned foods to UNRRA for overseas shipment. Millions of cans were collected, which is fine and a tribute to the American people's generous impulses. But how much more food could have been given to UNRRA had the same money been used in bulk purchases instead of spent at retail prices, which include advertising and distribution. Also the transportation effort in collecting the cans would have been greatly reduced.

¶ It won't do to blame it all just on “the interests.” Governmental lack of foresight is equally important. Thus the food industry was having its annual convention when Truman made his February 6 speech. Its leaders insisted they were taken by surprise. “They said they had been operating on the assumption that conditions were moving toward normal, and their major concern, fostered by Government speakers on their programs, had been with maintaining high sales volume and disposing of possible surpluses.” (*N. Y. Times*, Feb. 8.) It seems likely that this is a sincere protest. Truman's method of dealing with unpleasant issues is to do nothing as long as possible; it becomes catastrophic when famine threatens the world.

**The Wheat Shortage** Of all basic foods, wheat is the most important because it is cheap, plentiful, easily stored and transported, and very nutritious.

The deficit in the world's wheat supply is the most serious element in the present crisis. Although grain traders and Government officials have known since last summer that a wheat shortage was impending, the first the general public knew about it was when the papers of January 4 carried an inside-page story estimating that the four wheat-exporting countries (USA, Canada, Australia, Argentina) could not possibly supply more than 12 million tons of the 17 million tons Europe and Asia would need for the first half of 1946. A month later, the shortage was so bad that Truman was forced to devote his February 6 speech to it. By early March, estimates of world need had risen to 21 million tons, largely because of upward revisions in the needs of India and Japan. And a Washington dispatch dated March 9 suggests that the USA, as usual, will fall behind on the 6 million tons it is supposed to contribute for this half-year, perhaps by as much as a third. *If this happens, the deficit—assuming no further increases in estimates of need—will be 11 million tons by the end of June.* Because wheat is the cheap basic food (fats, meats, eggs, milk, are in even shorter supply, so there is nothing to take wheat's place) a deficit of anything like this figure can only mean the death in the next few months of millions of people in Europe and Asia.

The tragedy could have been avoided had certain steps been taken last summer, instead of in February, 1946. Price policies to divert wheat from animal to human consumption, a veto on use of wheat for beer and whisky, requirement of a darker loaf of bread—these obvious steps, now being taken, are a half year late. The most essential step has not even yet been taken: a transportation priority for wheat on American railroads like that given to munitions during the war. Lack of boxcars and handling facilities at the ports is one big reason this country can ship abroad only 6 million tons of wheat this half-year (and probably not even that much). But the railroads and their customers can make more money on other goods, and Truman is not one who would throttle free enterprise.

The tragedy could even have been avoided had two steps *not* been taken. One was the lifting of all controls from wheat last August by the Combined Food Board (USA, Britain, Canada), which had handled wheat exports all through the war under international allocation. Despite the shortage of ships, the CFB had been able to get enough wheat shipped to maintain at least minimum nutritional levels throughout the war. But last August, perhaps infected by the epidemic of headlong "decontrolling" then taking place in this country, the CFB freed wheat from all controls, stating: "Supplies of wheat in North America and Argentina will be adequate to meet all indicated import requirement for human food. . . . Wheat and flour have been removed from formal international allocation recommendations." The results of this abdication of planning are now being felt. On February 6, UNRRA Director-General Lehman cabled the UNO asking that "the governments concerned. . . . reconsider most urgently the decision taken in mid-1945 to remove wheat and flour from international allocation." To date this has not been done.

The other step was much the more serious: the readjustment of farm prices which the U. S. Department of Agriculture made last spring. The effect of the Department's new price policy (which Secretary Anderson now admits was "an error in judgment") was to make it more profitable for farmers to feed their grain to livestock than to sell it for human consumption. Accordingly, last year US farmers fed over 200 million bushels of wheat to their hogs, cattle and chickens. This was *four times* as much as they had so used in prewar years, and comes almost exactly to the 6 million tons our Government *hopes* to ship abroad during the first half of this year. A ton of wheat consumed directly by human beings will feed a lot more people than the same amount if it is first converted into meat. Thus the diversion of wheat from animal feeding to human consumption has been urgent for a long time, and yet even now the original mistake has not been remedied in any vigorous fashion. A ceiling has been put on the weight of hogs, and on March 2 the price of wheat was raised by the trivial sum of 3c a bushel. These measures, long overdue, are inadequate. Truman has also taken two other timid steps to get more wheat for export. He has ordered the millers to extract a higher percentage of the wheat kernel in grinding their flour; this will gain about 25 million bushels.\* And he has forbidden the use of

\* The order calls for 80% extraction, instead of the previous 70%. This will make our bread more nutritious, tastier and slightly darker. The order, of course, is bitterly opposed by the millers and bakers, because the more of the wheat kernel that is extracted, the less chance there is of the flour spoiling. Also, the whiter bread is, the longer it will keep fresh. The concentration of the milling industry in a few huge corporations located in Minneapolis, and the similar high degree of concentration in baking, so that a few big corporations like Wards and Bond supply vast areas from central bakeries—these facts make it of prime importance to the millers

wheat in the production of beverage alcohol and beer. (Brotherhood of nations note: in 1945, American whisky distillers increased production 25% over 1944.)

I may conclude with a news item from the *Times* financial page of February 10: "The picture painted by the Chicago grain trade for Europe is far blacker than admitted officially, but the scarcity of grain abroad has been known to the Department of Agriculture, the combined wheat board and high Government and relief officials for at least six months, brokers said." The grain traders also predicted that the 1946-7 crop year would also be one of "acute food shortage" abroad.

**Stalin's Election Broadcast** Stalin's speech of February 9 was an important statement of policy. To the foreign ministries of Britain and the USA, it was a formal "resignation" from the wartime alliance. To the Russian people, at whom it was primarily aimed, it justified socialism (or rather "the Soviet social system" as Stalin termed it throughout—perhaps a significant verbal shift) as a good thing because it wins wars, which are assumed to be man's chronic fate because of the wickedness of all nations except the Soviet Union.

What Stalin said may be briefly summarized, since he always says everything at least three times—as: "Moreover, after this war no one dared any more to deny the vitality of the Soviet state system. Now it is no longer a question of the vitality of the Soviet state system, since there can be no doubt of its vitality any more." (On the evidence of Stalin's barbarous oratorical style alone, one could deduce the bureaucratic inhumanity and the primitiveness of modern Soviet society.) His main points, then, were:

(1) The war was "no accident" but rather "the inevitable result of the development of . . . monopoly capitalism." ("Our Marxists declare that the capitalist system of world economy conceals elements of crisis and war.")

(2) *We* won the war; not a word about Lend-Lease or any help from the Anglo-American military operations. ("Our victory implies that it was the Soviet armed forces that won. Our Red Army has won.")

(3) Our victory proves we have a good social system, the best in fact. ("The war has refuted all the assertions of the foreign press as without foundation. The war has shown that the Soviet social system is a truly popular system, issued from the depths of the people and enjoying its mighty support. . . . The Soviet social system is . . . fully viable and stable.")

(4) The military victory was possible because of the industrial base created by the first three Five Year Plans, which are presented as a historically unique achievement of the viable and stable Soviet system. ("In 1913 our country produced 4,220,000 tons of pig iron . . . in 1940, 15,000,000 tons of pig iron. . . . As you see, the difference is colossal . . . an unprecedented development in production.")

(5) This achievement was possible because while "in capitalist countries industrialization usually starts with light industry", "in our country the Communist Party reversed the usual path and began . . . with the development of heavy industry."

(6) The past Five Year Plans were justified by the vic-

and bakers that their product be, above all else, durable. It is just our bad luck that their flour comes so close to being a chemically "inert" substance, like plaster, that rats and cockroaches are said to flee from it (which does not displease the millers, who don't get any sales from cockroaches), while their white bread in taste and texture closely resembles moist flannel. (On this matter of bread, see James Rorty's articles in *The New Leader* and elsewhere.)

tory won in World War II and the future Plans will, by implication be similarly justified by victory in World War III. ("The party intends to organize a new mighty upsurge of national economy, which will enable us to increase the level of our production threefold . . . 50,000,000 tons of pig iron a year. . . . Only under such conditions will our country be insured against any eventuality. Perhaps three new Five-Year Plans will be required to achieve this, if not more. But it can be done, and we must do it.")

Thus the Five Year Plans are admitted to have had nothing to do with a better way of life but to have been simply military measures. This to Stalin appears entirely natural: making war successfully has come to be the acknowledged aim of Soviet "socialism", and the supreme test of a social system, for the Stalin bureaucracy, has nothing to do with Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, nor with Liberty Equality and Fraternity, nor with Marx's Kingdom of Freedom, but quite bluntly: can it win wars? Even on this level, one must reject as unfounded the claim that only Sovietism could have industrialized Russia so quickly. Capitalism in America produced comparably speedy results in the decades 1850-1870; and in Russia itself a similar growth took place after the liberation of the serfs. (Cf. Engels letter to Danielson of Sept. 22, 1892, on "the hot-house process of fostering industrial revolution" in Russia

after 1861 "which . . . crams into twenty years a development which otherwise might have taken sixty or more years.") But it is true, as Stalin boasts, that the Communists have "reversed the usual path" of capitalist development and begun with heavy instead of light industry. What a world of human misery in that dry economic formulation! Light industry means consumers' goods, heavy industry means steel and dynamos and other inedible and unwearable things. The only way to *begin* with heavy industry is for the mass of workers to live like beasts, as they have in fact been living for a generation under Stalin. No wonder the Red Army soldiers would commit any crime for the possession of a watch or a bicycle. But all of this is, of course, necessary because the Soviet fatherland is encircled by wicked "monopoly capitalist" nations—the similarity to what Hitler told the German people is striking—and "our Marxists declare that the capitalist system of world economy conceals elements of crisis and war." Therefore, the Russian people may look forward to three more Five Year Plans "if not more", and the Red Army, in the Order of the Day which Stalin issued on February 22, is enjoined during "the new [i.e., post-Hitler] conditions" to "vigilantly guard the peaceful, creative labor of the Soviet people . . . and make the borders of our motherland impregnable against enemies."

## War as an Institution (7)

# Words and War

by Simone Weil

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was originally published in the April 1 and 15, 1937, issues of Nouveaux Cahiers (Paris) under the title: "Ne Reconnaissons pas la Guerre de Troie." The translation is by Bowden Broadwater. The article has been shortened, for space reasons, the deletions being indicated by dots.*

**O**UR visions of security, now that scientific man has nature under lock and key, are disappearing in the destruction which war-making man is bringing on himself. If the danger is great, it is no doubt partly because of the power of the weapons technology has put into our hands. But weapons do not go off by themselves, and it is unfair to blame on inert matter a situation for which we ourselves bear full responsibility. The most disastrous wars have something in common which, though it may comfort some observers, is their real danger: *they have no definable aims.* Throughout history, the most desperate wars have been those which were fought for nothing. This paradox, when we come to understand it better, may prove to be one of the keys to history. It is certainly the key to our own period.

When a conflict has a well-defined aim, each side can calculate the cost and decide whether it is too high; generally, a compromise is more profitable to either than a victory. But if a conflict has no objective, we have nothing to measure, or weigh, or compare; compromise is inconceivable; we can only judge a battle's importance by its sacri-

fices, and as these sacrifices perpetually ask for new ones, wars would never stop if human forces did not have their limits. This paradox is so violent that it escapes analysis. All cultivated men know its perfect exemplar, but some kind of fatality makes us read about it without understanding.

The Greeks and Trojans slaughtered each other ten years over Helen; except for the dilettante warrior Paris, she meant nothing to any of them; they all wished that she had never been born. Her person was so far out of scale with this monstrous war that no one took her for more than a symbol of the real goal which could not be defined because it did not exist. They guessed that the war was important from the incontestable deaths—and with these, its importance passed beyond assignable limits. Hector dreamed that the Greeks would destroy his city, massacre his father and brothers, and degrade his wife to a servitude even more terrible than death; Achilles knew he was handing over his father to the misery and humiliation of defenseless old age; the people knew that their family life would be destroyed by such a long absence; still none of them thought this was too great a price because they were all fighting for an illusion whose value was the price they had to pay. Minerva and Ulysses only had to recall the sufferings of the dead to silence the Greeks who wanted to go home to their families. Three thousand years later, in 1917, Poincaré used precisely the same argument against the advocates of compromise. Nowadays, in order to explain our own frenzy

for ruins, we try to lay the blame on Big Business. But there is no need to go so far. The Homeric Greeks had no munitions-makers, no steel trusts. Indeed, in the minds of Homer's contemporaries, the gods of Greek mythology took the roles we assign to mysterious economic oligarchies. Neither gods nor plots drive men to ruin. Human nature suffices.

**T**ODAY, nothing distresses the intelligent observer more than the illusory character of our conflicts. The Trojan war made more sense. At its heart there was a woman at least, a woman of perfect beauty. For us, capitalized nouns take her role. If we squeeze one of these words, all bloated with blood and tears, we find it empty. Words with content, however, are not murderers. One of them may be bloodstained, but only briefly, and more accidentally than not. But men will spill torrents of blood and pile ruin on ruin for meaningless, upper-case words, and, since they mean nothing, never find anything which corresponds to them. Success is the annihilation of whomever supports the enemy words; because—another characteristic—these words come in antagonistic pairs. One word by itself, if we bothered to define it, might not be totally without meaning. But a defined word loses its capitals, and becomes no more than a reference that helps us to grasp at a concrete reality, at a concrete objective, at a method of action. Though it may seem strange, the deflation of congenitally swollen words and the definition of others, along with the clarifications of ideas, could save human lives.

We are not equal to this. The glitter of our civilization covers an intellectual decadence. We do not, like the Greeks, give superstition any special place, and it revenges itself by invading, under cover of an abstract vocabulary, the whole realm of thought. Our science is a warehouse of the most exquisite intellectual mechanisms for solving the most complex problems, but we ourselves cannot apply the basic methods of rational thought. We seem to have lost the very rudiments of intelligence, the notions of measure, standard, and degree; of proportion and relation, of affinity, of consequence. To get a firmer grasp on human events, we people our political world with monsters and myths; we recognize nothing but entities, absolutes, finalities. Look at any word in our political and social vocabulary: Nation, Security, Capitalism, Communism, Fascism, Order, Authority, Property, Democracy. We never say "Democracy in so far as . . ." or "Capitalism to the extent . . ." An expression like "in so far as . . ." taxes our intellectual capacity. Each one of these catchwords stands for an absolute reality, freed from all conditions; for an absolute end in a different world than the world of action; for an absolute evil; and then we put anything and everything under these words. Reality, however, shifts and changes; is determined by the interplay of external necessities; operates under certain conditions and within certain limits. Yet we act, we fight, we struggle, we sacrifice ourselves and others for fixed and isolated abstractions which cannot be harmonized either with each other or with concrete reality. Our bragging technological age thrashes at windmills.

**E**XAMPLES of this deadly nonsense are easy to find. National rivalry is a prize one. When we put the blame

on warring capitalists, we ignore the intricate network of competition, pyramiding, and trusts which disregards national boundaries and spreads over the world. The clash of interests can set in opposition two French groups and unite each of them to a German group. French smelting companies compete with rival German companies, but it makes little difference to the Lorraine mineowners whether Frenchmen or Germans convert their ore, and the wine-growers and the Paris specialty houses have their stake in German prosperity. Thus, our theory about national rivalry is absurd. If we say nationalism conceals capitalist motives, we must say whose. The mineowners? Big Steel's? The machine-shop owners? The utility magnates? The textile manufacturers? The bankers? Since their interests conflict, surely not all of them; and if we settle on a single group, we must explain how it gets control of the state. At any given moment, state policy coincides with the interests of some group or other, but what of it? With the world circulation of capital, a capitalist can put pressure as easily on a foreign nation as on his own. World economy follows political structure only so far as state authority forces it to; but the form which state authority takes cannot be explained by the simple interplay of economic interests. "National interest" is not even capitalist interest. "We think we are dying for our country," Anatole France said, "but we die for a few industrialists." It is really worse. We don't die for anything as substantial, as tangible as a big-business man.

We cannot say that national interest is actually the mutual interest of industry, commerce, and banking because they have none; nor the life, liberty, and prosperity of the citizens, since they constantly sacrifice their prosperity, liberty, and life for national interest. If we analyse modern history, we conclude that national interest is the state's readiness for war. In 1911 France was willing to go to war over Morocco, but why was Morocco so important? Because of the native troops which North Africa could supply, and because raw materials and markets help to make national economy independent from the standpoint of making war. What a country calls "vital economic interests" is not what enables its citizens to live, but what enables them to make war; thus, it is easier to start a war over oil than wheat. We make war to keep or increase the means of making it. International politics rotate in this vicious circle. Our "national prestige" is our ability to make other countries feel helpless before us. Our "national security" is a delusion by which we aim to take the means of war from every country but our own. A self-respecting nation, in short, will go to any length, i. e. war, to preserve its right to make war.

But why must there be war? We know no more than the Trojans knew why they defended Helen. That is why the peace-plans of those men of good will, our statesmen, are so worthless. They could find compromises if opposing interests really divided their countries. But when economic and political interests center around the ability to make war, how can statesmen find a peaceful mean between clashing interests? The very concept, "Nation", must go. Or rather, "National:" for millions of corpses, orphans, and disabled men, tears and despair, are the content of this otherwise meaningless word.

THE quarrel between fascism and communism is another example of lethal nonsense. The fact that it forces us into both civil and international wars makes it perhaps the most dangerous symptom of our intellectual bankruptcy. If we examine the present meaning of these two terms, we find about the same political and social conceptions. The same marshalling of individual and social life; the same frantic militarization; the same deceptive unanimity, obtained by the coercion of a single group which identifies itself with the state and holds on to its power by this confusion; the same serfdom of the working-classes instead of the wage-system. Germany and Russia, more alike in structure than any other two nations, threaten each other with international crusades, and each discovers in his opponent the Apocalyptic Beast. How can we still think there is any rational opposition between fascism and communism? A fascist victory only means: wipe out the communists; a communist victory only means: wipe out the fascists. Antifascist and anticommunist are equally meaningless terms. The antifascists' stand is: anything but fascism, anything being fascism under the name of communism. The anti-communists' stand is: anything but communism, anything being communism under the name of fascism. For this fine cause, each enemy camp resigns itself to death, and prepares to kill. During the summer of 1932, in the streets of Berlin, crowds often gathered about two laborers or white-collar workers, one communist and the other Nazi; each of them always found, after arguing a while, that he was putting forward the same program as the other, but after a moment's confusion, this discovery made him all the angrier. That was four-and-a-half years ago; the Nazis still torture the German communists, and a catastrophic war between the antifascists and the anticommunists threatens France herself. If this happens, the Trojan war will look like a model of good sense; for though we may agree with a secondary Greek poet that only the ghost of Helen was present at Troy, even a ghost is more real than the conflict between fascism and communism.

Whatever else it is, the opposition between dictatorship and democracy, which allies itself with order *versus* freedom, is a true opposition. But it is silly to think as we do these days, that one entirely excludes the other, for neither term is an absolute; it is a criterion which helps us to judge a social structure's character. Clearly, there can be no absolute party or dictatorship, or a perfect democracy, for the social organism is a compound always and everywhere, in varying degrees, of liberty and authority. The degree of democracy is in the relations between the parts of the social machine, and depends on conditions which affect the operation of the machine; and so it is these relations and conditions that we saw change. Instead, we start with the idea that all groups, nations, or parties truly embody either Dictatorship or Democracy, and according to whether our taste is for order or for freedom, we feel driven to wipe out its "opposite." Many Frenchmen honestly believe that their military victory over Germany would be a victory for Democracy. Freedom resides in France and tyranny in Germany as they see it; so for Moliere's contemporaries, a sedative virtue resided in opium. If "national defense" one day turns France into an armed camp and clamps the nation under military rule, and this new France goes to war against Germany, these

men will let themselves be killed, after killing as many Germans as they can, with the touching illusion that they are giving their blood for Democracy. It never strikes them that Nazism was born out of a specific situation; that it might be worth more to stimulate conditions which would let the German state relax its hold than to kill boys from Hamburg and Berlin. . . .

THE *class struggle*, a term which might be more precise, is the most fundamental and serious, perhaps the one real conflict which divides human beings. What is legitimate, vital, basic is the eternal struggle between those who rule and those who obey, since social power itself entails the obliteration of human dignity in those below. The ruling-class, whether it knows it or not, always thinks less of its subjects than itself. Wherever authority exerts itself, it cannot respect, or only in special cases, the human qualities of its instruments. If it takes the attitude that men are things, quite incapable of resistance, it finds these things very malleable; for at the threat of death, which is the supreme sanction of authority, men are more compliant than inert objects. As long as there is a social hierarchy, whatever its form, the bulk of mankind will have to fight for its human rights. The resistance from the top, if it ordinarily seems unjust, has its own basis in reality. First, from personal reasons; except for rare cases, the privileged do not want to give up any real or moral privileges. Then, from higher ones. Whoever holds authority thinks it his mission to preserve order, which is essential to society, and he cannot believe in any order but the one there is. He is not entirely wrong; until another order becomes a reality, no one knows whether it will be viable; for there is definite social progress only when the pressure from below changes the balance of power, and compels new social relations. The encounter between the pressure from below and the resistance from above produces a constantly unstable equilibrium, which defines from moment to moment the social structure. This is not war; it can change into one, but it is not predestined. Antiquity has left us the story of Troy; but, also, it has left the story of the vigorous, united action by which the Roman plebeians, without blood, emerged from a state bordering on slavery with new rights, and with tribunes to protect them. Exactly in the same way, the French workers, by taking over the factories, but without violence, won certain basic rights, along with their own representatives.

EARLY Rome had a great advantage over modern France. In social matters it knew neither abstractions nor absolutes, neither capitalized words nor isms . . . Pry into any term, any expression of our political vocabulary; it is empty inside. This applies to that political cry, so popular at election-time, "Smash the trusts!" A trust is an economic monopoly that big-business uses, not for the public interest, but to increase its own power. And what is so bad about this? It is the fact that a monopoly, instrumentally, has a will-to-power that is alien to the public good. Still, this isn't what we want to smash; our target is the fact, unimportant in itself, that this arbitrary power is in the hands of an economic oligarchy. For these oligarchies, we propose to exchange the state, which wields an arbitrary power quite as alien to public welfare; indeed, since power be-

comes military rather than economic in the state, it is a much greater menace to those ordinary people who would like to live. So, too, with the owning class, which is hostile to state socialism—although it approves of private monopolies, which have the economic and technical inconveniences of state monopolies, and perhaps others as well . . .

**W**HAT do the people for whom the word, "capitalism", represents absolute evil—what do they have in mind? Our society crushes human beings through restraint and oppression, painful inequality, needless suffering. On the other hand, it is characterized, from the economic point of view, by certain modes of production, consumption, and exchange, which are in a continuous state of flux, and which depend on a few basic relations between the production and circulation of goods, between the circulation of goods and money, between money and production, between money and consumption. We take it on ourselves to crystallize these separate and shifting phenomena into an abstraction, called Capitalism, which cannot be defined, and then credit it with all our own and others' hardships. A man can prove himself by devoting his life to the overthrow of capitalism, or what amounts to the same, to revolution; for today revolution has this purely negative sense.

As the "Overthrow of Capitalism" is meaningless, from the fact that Capitalism is an abstraction, and as it does not permit certain specific corrections in the regime—corrections are contemptuously called "reforms"—it can only mean wiping out the capitalists, especially those who don't declare themselves against Capitalism. Apparently, it is easier to kill, even to die, than to ask oneself a few simple questions, such as these: do the laws, the conventions which actually regulate our economic life form a system? What, if any, tie binds this or that economic phenomenon to the rest? How much would the modification of one of these economic laws affect the others? To what extent do the burdens our society imposes stem from this or that economic convention? To what extent from the sum of all these conventions? What is the effect of factors common to all economic systems? Of factors we could eliminate without eliminating "the system?" What new burdens, passing, or permanent, would the transition to a new system inflict? And might not a new social system impose special burdens of its own? If one seriously studied these problems, perhaps one could still say that capitalism is an evil, but only a relative evil, and then a new social system can only be proposed in view of a lesser evil. Whatever the change, its purpose should be specified.

**T**HIS whole criticism applies just as well to the other camp, replacing the problem of the lower classes' hardships with the elite's anxiety to safeguard itself, and the urge to change with the urge to retain. The owner-class assumes that anyone who anticipates the end of Capitalism is an enemy of order, even assumes this of a person who wants to reform it, because it does not know to what extent and under what circumstances the economic relations lumped together as "Capitalism" are natural to order. Not knowing, besides, what modification may be dangerous, it often prefers to hold on to everything, unaware that, if times are changing, this itself is a change which may end

in disorder. As for the people, although the economic laws may change daily before their eyes, they invoke them as religiously as the unwritten laws of *Antigone* once were invoked. Preserving Capitalism also means nothing to them; they do not know what, when, how much to preserve; again, it means to wipe out everybody who talks about its fall. The struggle between the foes and defenders of capitalism, a struggle between innovators who do not know what to innovate, and conservatives who do not know what to conserve, is a blindman's buff which by its very lack of purpose risks mutual obliteration.

Similar things are true for the conflict within the smaller field of industry. A worker instinctively connects any hardships he endures in the factory with the owner; he never asks himself whether, under all other kinds of ownership, the administration would not have to impose at least some of these hardships, or even identical ones, or perhaps more; he no longer asks which ones he might cut out by a direct attack on their causes, rather than on the property system itself. His conflict with ownership is mixed with a human being's natural protest against a hard life. The owner, from his viewpoint, is right to hold on to his authority. For management has its real functions: supervising and coordinating the work; maintaining, by means of a certain pressure, a standard product; and any system of enterprise, where this coordination and supervision can be expected, gives management a responsible role. But the owner also bases his authority on a certain atmosphere of submission and respect which need not have anything to do with the execution of good work; and, furthermore, as soon as he sees an undercover or open revolt among his workers, he always attributes it to a few individuals, although revolt, whether stormy or silent, aggressive or despairing, is physically and morally essential to all overburdened human beings.

If his feeling of dignity confuses the worker's case against the owner, the owner's self-regard and professional pride partly account for his fear of "troublemakers;" each side expects the impossible, and cannot possibly set any limits on the conflict. Whereas strikes called on definite points are arbitrated without too much trouble, others, in which neither side has any real objective, remind us of wars; strikes where nothing is real or tangible except the halt in production, the deterioration of machines, the suffering, the hunger, the women's tears, the rickety children; while both sides obstinately refuse to give way. Here already is the germ of civil war.

If one analyzes the other words and slogans which, throughout human history, have inspired the combined spirit of sacrifice and cruelty, they turn out to be equally empty. Nevertheless, these bloodthirsty absolutes must have some link with real life. They have, indeed. There was perhaps only the phantom of Helen at Troy, but the Greek army and the Trojan army were not phantoms; likewise, if "nation" and the nationalistic slogans are nonsensical, the separate nations with their own bureaucrats and tariffs, their prisons and arsenals and barracks are very real. . . . The catchwords for and against capitalism are meaningless but partisans form behind them. Every empty abstraction has its faction. If any abstraction exists for which this is not true it is harmless; also, groups which do not form about an absolute stand a chance of not being dangerous.

Jules Romains magnificently represented the group-absolute when he gave Dr. Knock the words, "Above the interest of the invalid and the interest of the doctor is the interest of medicine." It is funny because the medical profession has not yet announced it; a dictum like this issues daily from all social organisms striving for power or holding on to it. The absurdities which make our history an endless nightmare are rooted in one basic absurdity, the nature of power. There is a real place for power in society, because human life is unthinkable without order; but power is arbitrarily assumed, since men are equal or nearly so; yet if it is seen to be arbitrary, there would be no more power. Prestige—i.e., illusion—is the heart of power. . . .

Naturally, a state interprets national interest as war-power when it is surrounded by other states which, if they see it is weak, are able to subjugate it. Between keeping up in the race to prepare for war, or exposing oneself to the mercy of armed states, there is no middlecourse. General disarmament would only work if it were complete, which is scarcely conceivable. Furthermore, the moment a state fails to stand up to an alien nation, it risks an uprising from its own subjects. Priam and Hector could not simply return Helen; they would have incited the Greeks, at the walls of what would then seem a defenseless city, with even hotter ideas of plunder; they would have risked a general uprising at Troy, not that the Trojans would be angry about Helen, but because the men to whom they submitted would no longer seem all-powerful. A whisper of peace from one of the two camps in Spain encouraged the enemy camp, increased the weight of the offensive; and, also, risked uprising within the camp's own lines. Likewise, a man who is neither an anticommunist or an antifascist may not be stirred by the clash of almost identical ideologies; but since the two camps exist, and the stronger will crush the weaker, he must pick a side and fight for his life; meanwhile, the rival commanders, to keep their hold on the troops, spur them on to destroy the enemy; in short, as soon as these blocs have a certain power, neutrality is untenable. . . .

The fundamental contradiction of human society is that every social situation rests on a balance of power, on an equilibrium of pressures like the equilibrium of fluids; but a boost to one country's prestige is a blow to others'. Yet prestige is inseparable from power. This is an impasse that humanity can only escape by a miracle. But human life is made up of miracles. Who would believe that a Gothic cathedral could stand? As we are not always at war, perhaps we may have an indefinite peace. A problem posed with its known quantities is near its solution. But we have never posed the problem of international and civil peace this way.

**C**LOUDS of empty absolutes hide the problem's known quantities, even the fact that this is a problem to solve, and not an inescapable fate. They dull our minds; they carry us to our death, but what is infinitely worse, they make us forget the value of life. The *pursuit of absolutes* in every sphere of political and social life is now a sign of civic health. This chase is not an easy one; for our intellectual atmosphere is kind to the flowering and increase of absolutes. If we remedied our scientific vulgarization and our teaching methods, ran down the gross superstition which favors an abstract vocabulary, restored

to good usage such forms as "within the limits of," "in so far as," "on condition that," "in relation to," we would do our contemporaries a great, practical service. There is certainly no lack of people to preach appeasement; but, in general, the object of their sermons is not to awaken minds and to eliminate false conflicts, but to lull and smooth away the real ones. The speech-makers who understand international peace as an indefinite *status quo* for the exclusive benefit of the French nation, or the advocates of social peace who merely want to hold on to their privileges or to leave change to the privileged, are the most dangerous enemies of international and civil welfare. For the solution is not to artificially fix the power ratio, which always changes, and which its victims always try to change further; but rather to differentiate the imaginary and the real, and by this, to diminish the risk of war, and yet not give up the struggle, which Heraclitus calls the condition of life.

#### THE MYSTERIOUS EAST

Fresh from an audience with Emperor Hirohito, Major de Seversky said the Emperor believed that aviation would play a major role in cementing friendship among the nations of the world.

—N. Y. Times, Nov. 3, 1945.

#### ENTERING INTO THE SPIRIT OF THE THING

Major Thomas Winwood, British officer acting as defense counsel for Josef Kramer, former commandant of the Belsen death camp, said that "the concentration camps contained undesirable elements from the dregs of the ghettos of Europe."

—N. Y. Times, Oct. 12, 1945.

#### THE MILITARY MIND: Peace Planning Section

Gen. Carl A. Spaatz, new Chief of the Army Air Forces, asserted that the only way to prevent war was to stop it before it started. Air power, he added, gave the peace-loving countries the weapons to do just that and "for the first time in history it is possible to destroy an enemy which does no fighting."

—N. Y. Times, Jan. 25.

#### THE OCCUPATION FOLLIES: AMERICAN VERSION.

One of the problems that is vexing the American military government is that of re-educating the Koreans in regard to the bonuses and bribes that were paid by the Japanese in an effort to get production. . . . Now, our military government numbers among its tasks the assignment to persuade the Koreans that liberation and democracy ought to be so highly prized that people will work for less money. (The Saturday Evening Post, Jan. 12.)

The German must be provided with a conscience by the use of propaganda. (Review in N. Y. Times, Feb. 10.)

The future status of Venezia Giulia being unknown, Italian boys and girls are taught in primers "Hail to my country!" instead of "Hail to Italy!" as formerly. When the big powers decide what country Venezia Giulia is going to belong to, Lieutenant Simoni thinks it will be relatively easy to tell the school children which country they are going to hail. They will hail meanwhile the simple idea of "country", so that they can learn patriotism. (N. Y. Herald-Tribune, Nov. 26, 1945.)

Allied Headquarters is undertaking to censor Japanese popular songs. . . . The Japanese must no longer play by radio or print the sheet music of "Moonlight on a Ruined Castle," a sentimental ballad. Because it refers to a castle, headquarters considered the song "too feudal." At the same time the censors barred "Chinese Night", a song that is popular among Chinese Chungking Army troops as well as Japanese. The second proscription caused considerable laughter among Japanese, who know that their military tried to stamp it out during the war because it was "too languid." Now the Allies have done it for them, charging the song is "too popular" and, therefore, suspect. (N. Y. Times, Nov. 21, 1945.)

One question most frequently asked by the Japanese—at present fumbling with the establishment of a democratic system here—is how, under American democracy, the Yalta agreement was possible. One Japanese told this correspondent: "We are used to important decisions being made without consulting the people, but we did not understand that this could be done under the United States system." (N. Y. Times, Feb. 1.)

## LONDON LETTER

THERE is a great deal of activity in parliament and in the government departments—so great that in a time of housing shortage hundreds of dwellings in central London have been converted into new offices—but the changes are greater in appearance than in reality.

The lack of a real change in direction is illustrated by the way in which the government departments still contain the same reactionary personnel and still maintain the same tradition of legalistic bureaucracy. In one section of the executive, the police, the situation is actually becoming worse, and there is evidence of a deliberate tendency on the part of the police authorities to build up the "crime wave" as the excuse for an increase in their own power. When the "wave" first began, the police asked for special assistance, but when volunteers appeared they were expected to sign on for three years as part of a "Special" Police Force. Recent check-ups in London have been obviously little more than demonstrations of power, for they served no purpose in foiling any astute criminals. But the most ominous of these moves in the increase of police power has been the appointment of Sir Percy Sillitoe to a "mystery" post on the Imperial General Staff, where he will be able to co-ordinate the activities of both the military and the civilian police. His ostensible work will be connected with "banditry", but those with long memories recall that Sillitoe played an active and ruthless part in the suppression of the General Strike of 1926. It may well be asked what a Labour Government wants with such a man!

This increase in police power goes very well with the lack of concern for personal liberties shown by members of the Cabinet. Demands for an amnesty for deserters, one of the most sensible ways of ending the "crime wave", have been rejected, and ministers take a legalistic line on cases of discrimination with which they are taxed. This attitude is causing annoyance among the younger and more radical Labour M.P.'s. Among particularly flagrant recent cases are those of Philip Sansom, one of the anarchists sent to prison in April last year for attempting to disaffect the forces—who has now been jailed again for refusing to enter the army, and Adolfo Caltabiano, an Italian anti-Fascist who has been put into a lunatic asylum for having a feeling of persecution after the political police has actually been persecuting him for nearly a year.

THE three significant measures before parliament at present are the Coal Industry Nationalisation Bill, the new National Insurance Bill, and the measure to repeal the Trades Disputes Act. The Coal Bill is the first of the measures to nationalise industrial undertakings, and is thus a demonstration of what the government means by "nationalisation". As in the case of the Bank of England, it is clear that no fundamental change is contemplated. Production will be rationalised by a central board, which Shinwell (Minister of Fuel and Power) has emphasised will be dominated by people of business ability. The active owners will enter the new structure as managers, and the shareholders will be presented with stock at a fixed rate which will protect them against any future fluctuations of the coal market. As one would expect, the Mining Association (representing the industrialists) accepted the terms with alacrity. Workers' control of any kind is not even considered, and it will be interesting to see the reaction of the miners, whose ideas of nationalisation tended rather to-

wards some form of modified workers' control than towards the creation of a centralised business bureaucracy to extract money for compensating the shareholders out of a dying industry.

The National Insurance Bill is in one way an improvement on past conditions, in that the rates of benefit are slightly increased in purchasing power. But, even so, the payment of 26/ (about \$5.40) to a single man represents a standard well below accepted nutritional levels. The worst parts of the Bill are the clauses which interfere directly with the independence of the beneficiary. For most of the benefits the applicant must be able to show a yearly average of 50 weekly contributions, credit being given when sick or unemployed. This means virtually that all people of working age are expected to be in regular work for the whole of their productive lives, and makes no allowance for the man with a taste for periods of voluntary leisure. Similarly, in the case of unemployed people, there will be a tribunal to decide on the availability of work and the suitability of the applicant to undertake it. The man who is not willing to take the work offered will also be debarred from benefit, although he will have paid for it. This is an example of the way in which the government is at present removing the labour restrictions based on legal compulsion, and replacing them by equally formidable means of economic compulsion.

The repeal of the Trades Disputes Act is an example of the other side of the same process. As *The Observer* mentioned recently, there is an apparent inconsistency in a government whose conception of socialism is so patently authoritarian, giving up one of its most formidable weapons of industrial compulsion. But this repeal is in fact only a token gesture, to save the faces of the Trade Union leaders in the Labour hierarchy and to satisfy a traditional promise made to the workers ever since 1926. The Government can make this concession partly because under the Transitional Powers legislation it can still issue orders involving industrial compulsion and any serious strike could be covered by such an order.

But there is another reason why anti-strike legislation can be repealed, and that is because the Trade Unions are already working in almost complete co-operation with the state, and no serious official strike is likely to occur while the present circumstances continue. An illustration of the value set on a strong trade union as a means of industrial discipline was given in the High Court decision last year, when the Municipal and General Workers' Union won a libel action against the left-wing (I.L.P. sponsored) Chemical Workers' Union, for having made accusations of ineptitude and bad faith. The judge made very clear the "national" value of a strong trade union and the need for its reputation to be guarded against attack.

The startling difference between the English and American industrial situations is due mostly to the fact that, while American union leaders have still to make the grade to a secure position in the ruling class élite, and for that reason must still appear both as champions of their followers and as potentially useful allies to the state, English union leaders have already reached security as part of the administrative hierarchy. In England also there has been a large fall in wages, owing to the cessation of overtime, and many demobilised men are finding that their civilian pay is actually less than what they received as privates in the army. Nevertheless, there have been no official strikes, and only one large unofficial strike, that of the dockers.

This industrial calm has come as a surprise to many who held historicist beliefs in the postwar militancy of the workers. Yet there is no doubt that any body of men who begin

a strike are fighting a difficult battle. Their union funds give them no benefit, their leaders condemn them, the whole of the daily press, from the *Daily Worker* to the *Daily Telegraph*, accuses them of treason, and the Government which went to power on their votes sends soldiers to break their strike. The dockers built up an efficient strike organisation and acted with the greatest voluntary discipline, so that even Labour M.P.'s were led to praise them, but in the end the lack of money drove them to return to work for an award of a mere fraction of the increase they had demanded. After this example, men in other industries are chary of embarking on strikes, and in recent months there have been only a few very small disputes of short duration. Working slow, on the other hand, seems to be gaining in popularity, but it is very difficult to see whether it has much real success, as few of the incidents are made public.

THE principal industrial worry of the government comes not so much from disputes, as from the labour shortage in basic occupations, particularly coal mining and farming. The men released from the army are choosing more highly paid and less unpleasant jobs, and farm workers and colliers who are offered special release from the army to return to their old work are electing to stay on in order to be free to choose better work. In mining there is estimated to be an annual wastage of more than 70,000 men, partly due to the reluctance of young men to enter the industry, and to a less extent due to the severe increase of lung disease in South Wales. Efforts at compulsion, and particularly the Bevin Boy scheme, have failed completely. Few of the conscripts became good colliers, and a large number—estimated at 20,000—have deserted and are still being hunted out. At present there is a high degree of absenteeism among the discontented miners, and the Minister of Fuel has threatened new penalties for men who persist in taking holidays when they want them.

The cause of trouble in farming is the extremely low wage rate of £3.10.0 (14½ dollars) a week, the lowest industrial rate in the country for skilled work. The failure of an attempt to raise the level by £1, has caused bitterness among the farm workers, who are joining the trade unions more rapidly than for forty years. There is not likely to be any large strike of farm workers, as their grouping into small units makes organisation difficult, but they are already beginning to work slow, and also to leave the land as far as they can. During the war the farms were cultivated with the help of large groups of outside labour, land girls, conscientious objectors and prisoners of war, and when all these are released and the labour restrictions on land workers are removed, there will be a great labour crisis in the farming industry, which can only be alleviated by better conditions of work.

Yet, although there are not enough men for mining and agriculture, unemployment is already reappearing in the industrial centres. In mass it is not very serious—300,000 in all—but the significant fact is that it is appearing almost entirely in the old depressed areas of Wales, Scotland and the Tyne, which were given an artificial stimulus by the munitions industry during the war. Wales, with 5% of the population of Great Britain, has 20% of its unemployed, and there are towns in Scotland where up to 50% of the people are out of work owing to the failure of wartime employment. The government has completely failed to provide the industrial means of implementing wartime promises that the "depressed" areas would never suffer again as they did before the war, and it seems likely that any future economic crisis will once again devastate these areas.

THE United Nations carry on their deliberations among the almost complete indifference of the English people. Few even mention the subject, and if they do, it is usually in cynicism. Among the intellectuals there has been a rush for highly paid jobs, and the foreign sections of the B.B.C. have been denuded by a flood of resignations.

Russophobia is on the increase, and only the Communists and a few isolated intellectuals like J. B. Priestley are continuing the chorus of praise for the Red Army which was in full swing a little while ago. The other evening I heard Vyshinsky hissed when he appeared on a news reel in a central London cinema. Some of this feeling is of a spurious kind, arising merely from the official anti-Russian line, but much of it reflects a genuine horror at Russia's record in Europe. This attitude is particularly strong in the army, which a year ago was pro-Russian, but which, since British soldiers began to encounter the Red Army in the flesh, has become steadily anti-Communist. Among the intellectuals the change in attitude has been shown by the great popularity of George Orwell's satire on Russia, *Animal Farm*, which a year ago he was peddling round publishers who were afraid to bring out such an anti-Communist book.

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The general return to insularity has led to an increase in xenophobia. The other day my West Country accent led to a pro-British spinster on a bus in Hempstead accusing me of being a "dirty foreigner". I was surprised, but enlightened. As many of the more successful foreigners resident in England are Jewish refugees, there has also been a rise in specifically anti-Semitic feeling, but so far this has not gained really serious proportions.

There is popular annoyance about food, which is scarcer than it was during the war, and most other essential goods are in short supply. The other day a queue three-quarters of a mile long formed outside that had sheets for sale, and for almost everything one has still to stand in a line of some kind.

Meanwhile, the future of military compulsion is uncertain. The old pacifistic tendency within the Labour Party is reasserting itself, and a fair number of the back bench M.P.'s are known to oppose peace-time conscription. *The Observer* has criticised conscription recently on grounds of expediency, and a number of military experts, led by B. H. Liddell-Hart, are also opposed to it. It is still a moot question whether the day will go to the authoritarian tendencies in the Cabinet or the libertarian tendencies of the rank and file. But it is an improvement that conscription should even be regarded as a matter for discussion. A year ago everyone took it for granted as a permanent feature of English life.

This appears to represent a general tendency in the English political situation today—that while the Government itself remains authoritarian and benefits the capitalists more than anyone else, there are libertarian forces among its own followers who apply a steady pressure on a number of issues, and it may be that in at least some of these cases the Cabinet will be forced to give way. It is a doubtful hope, but we have no other, for all the minor radical groups in England are so tiny and divided that only by a revolt *within* the Labour Party can we expect any change in the direction of political development during the next few years.

However, gleams of light appear in unexpected places. For instance, during the dock strike the Government asked the B.B.C. to broadcast an appeal to the men to return to work. The B.B.C. replied that they would only do so if a docker's representative were allowed to state the men's case. The Government let the matter drop, completely baffled by such an unexpected show of independence and fair-mindedness.

London, February 11

GEORGE WOODCOCK

#### WITH THE HEAVY THINKERS: Dept. of the Obvious

Obviously the United States must have a military establishment; and if it is to have one, it may as well be a good one; and if it is to be a good one, it must rest on universal training; but after all this has been said, where are we? We are not one step closer to peace. . . .

—Samuel Grafton in "The Chicago Sun", October 29, 1945.

#### THE METAPHYSICS OF THE RIGHT OF STRIKE

Freedom and security will not be obtained by sacrificing the right to strike. . . . Even in war this important tradition should be maintained. . . . We do not claim it was a mistake to agree not to strike for the duration. Quite the contrary. For this fact, if properly used, can perhaps help secure the right to strike.

—from an article, "Scientific Mediation—Tool of Democracy" by Horace S. Fries, in "The Antioch Review" for Fall, 1945.

#### ENGLISH AS SHE IS SPOKE

The headline in the London Daily Mail yesterday morning was cryptic and clear . . .

—James B. Reston, Washington correspondent, in N. Y. Times, March 3.

## Commonnonsense

THE Germans are indifferent. My, how indifferent they are. They seem stunned. Of course, as we have all read in the papers, the most striking Christmas display in Berlin shop windows was the sign: "COFFINS—FOR DECEASED OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES ONLY". This may account for *some* of their indifference (but of course let's not get soft now and excuse them.) When you are busy trying to establish whether your nearest relative will or will not "make" the coffin (it's the latest in graduation), even the history-making trials of Nurnberg are apt to be as exciting as last month's *Reader's Digest*.

I see here a headline in the Times: "INEPT PROPAGANDA REPELS GERMANS. SUBJECTS FOUND UNTIMELY." Of course, of course, it is all and only a matter of propaganda. Find subjects that are timely, give them a self-compensating, wind-propelled projection of America, and everything will be all right. Even the towns will be re-educated to rise out of their ruins.

But isn't there something we can do for *you*, O Liberators, Judges, Educators, Rehabilitators, Conglomerators, Incinerators and Concoctors? Don't you think you too need something, I don't know what, but something, to break your own indifference? It is natural that the Germans should be hardened by what they have done and endured (which, for the purposes of your Justice is exactly the same). And then, and then, all those crimes belong to the past by now. Whatever the effect on the living of the juridical farce, the dead do not come back and the memory of evil remains. But YOUR crimes, O Liberators etc., your crimes are taking place now; they may still be stopped; you may let people migrate to America, Brazil, Australia, Russia, Canada, South Africa, *by the millions*; you may revive and make true the Old Lies called Atlantic Charter and Four Freedoms. It is therefore CONSTRUCTIVE (pardon me for using such unseemly language) that we busy ourselves with you and not with them. And it may even shake the indifference of the Germans to see that you are less beastly and more Christian than they were. Nor will your honesty need comment from an idiotic O.W.I. or an even more idiotic State Department. Don't you know the great educational force of sheer example? You are always talking of Germany as if that were the patient that needs cure. But you are mistaken. That is not the patient that is the corpse. Don't act now as if you did not remember that you won the war. You won it, and how. Look at Germany, please, and . . . rejoice.

AND now tell me: why this pretense that you never fought this war? Let's get clear about this: Did you or didn't you? And the destruction, on what part of the ledger shall we put it? Wasn't that what we call "punishment" in English? And if it wasn't punishment, what was it, please? Are you the judges? Well, now, have you ever seen a judge enter the courtroom through the walls, through the roof, smashing the whole damn place to bits, killing almost all the defendants, and then sit on the only chair that's left intact and say "Now, Gentlemen, silence, please, because this is a trial"? Have you? And would you call it a trial or a smash-up? I remember once, many years ago, when the cobbler of my village was tried as a brigand, and I, as a law-student went to hear the trial, the judge entered the room from the same corridor as the defendant, and stepped on his foot. And he said: "Pardon

me". That was on the day of the sentence. Ten minutes later the same judge condemned that man to thirty years at hard labor. Now, logically, he knew what he was going to do to this man, and although thirty years at hard labor are as a rule more painful than when someone steps on your foot, the judge was not a hypocrite, and he remained a judge even if he said pardon me. Because he was a judge and not The Law. He did not need this man to be a judge. But you need your defendants, for without them you're nothing. You must cling to them as one clings in a shipwreck to anything that floats. It's THEY who keep you afloat, and you must beg them: "Stay alive, for God's sake, stay alive, or we are no longer your judges, we are YOU".

Indeed, why not reward them for distinguished service to your self-respect? Because the law in the name of which you thunder, while staying safely outside its striking range, DOES NOT EXIST. Your law has but one article and it reads: *It is a crime to lose a war. Whoever commits it, will be shot.* And that, damn it, was already known.

Tell us about Nurnberg. How did you find the building? Wasn't it lucky that the airforce had spared it? Was it all planned that way, so that Justice, and especially that old whore called History would not catch cold, or was it just good luck? And how's the plumbing? Do you carry your soap with you? And are all those files of the Wilhelmstrasse very filthy? Do you wash your hands before or after? Oh, after. They must be filthy then. I think this is quite an improvement on Pilate. He refused to have anything to do with it.

And from the windows, what do you see? Wreckage? And people? What? STILL indifferent? I guess they are incorrigible. All your fine efforts will be in vain. They will turn their back on you, bending over all day to find, either a bone that belongs to the family, or something they may sell for food. Poor, poor judges. . . .

But, as they say in America, let's not get controversial.

NICCOLO TUCCI

## Exit, Pursued by a Bear

(1)

To appease the small states they had slighted  
The Powers said: "Let's be united!"

So they joined for a day  
—And then vetoed away  
Till the Balance of Power was righted.

(2)

"Poland's gone," Bevin said, "you can have.  
But the Lifeline of Empire? Nava!"

"If you bring up Iran,  
"We'll throw Greece in your pan,"  
Said Vishinsky, "and Hong Kong and Java."

(3)

"If you let us keep Iwo and Malta,"  
Said Byrnes to the Reds, "we will alter

"The colonial folly  
"Of the Kuriles . . ." "So solly,"  
Said Stalin, "We bought them at Yalta."

Selden Rodman

## Rebellion?

### - or Reconversion?

THE most significant news-items produced by the great strike movement that began last fall seem to me to be: (1) the enrolment in the Citizens' Committee to Aid Families of General Motors Strikers of six bishops, plus Henry Luce, of Time, Inc. (slogan: All This—and Henry Too!);\* (2) the breaking-up of a picket line of striking telephone girls in Newark, N. J., by a rumor that nylon stockings were on sale down the street.

This may seem a frivolous way to begin a discussion of a period which included the steel strike (biggest, in numbers involved, in our history) and the still-continuing GM strike (biggest in wages and man-hours lost); which made ghost cities, for a time, of Pittsburgh and New York; which spread into the rubber, oil, meat-packing, and electrical-goods industries; not to mention the coal and railroad strikes which are still possibilities. The statistics are impressive, and the left-of-center press has reacted to them with its customary reflexes; at the very, very least, one gathers, the CIO is fighting for survival, while it is suggested that the American workingclass is "on the march" towards class-consciousness and, ultimately, socialism. Some readers may have wondered why no comment has yet appeared in POLITICS about these strikes. One reason is that they did not, from the beginning, appear to me to be of basic importance. The way they have turned out confirms this view. Neither side has won or lost very much; the strikers have usually gained about 19 cents an hour, or roughly half of what they demanded, but even this modest economic advance will probably be cancelled out by the rising prices which Truman is permitting; the employers have not broken or even weakened any major unions. This stalemate is not the tense deadlock of bitter-end antagonists, but the reasonable compromise of "practical" men on each side.

It was only the archaic types in Congress, and their similars on the Left—in short, the Old Believers in the simple class struggle doctrine—that got excited about the strikes. A "prominent industrialist" is reported to have said, after a visit to Capitol Hill: "I was shocked by the jitters in Congress over the strike situation. Actually, there is much in the picture which seems to me encouraging. Never in my memory have so many men been on strike with so little violence or social disorder. Of course industrial unrest was certain to follow the end of hostilities. As business has grown bigger, so have the unions, with the result that the numbers affected by strikes are very large. But the really notable fact is that the strikes are orderly, the labor discipline is excellent and the issues are, on the whole, focused with logic and intelligence rather than passion." (*Human Events*, Jan. 16.) Or, as a young French radical, over here for a visit, remarked to me: "These strikes of yours seem to be part of the reconversion program." For all their gigantism, our postwar strikes have lacked quality; neither side has been too much in earnest; the unions and the employers have met on the "do-business" plane rather than the "make-or-break" plane. So we find Henry Luce

\* The same week that Luce joined the Strikers' Committee, his Congresswoman wife, Clare, was received into the Catholic Church. The coincidence was less bizarre than it might appear: both were riding the tide.

manning the strikers' soup kitchen and the strikers suspending the class struggle to buy nylons.

The two big previous strike periods in our history differ significantly from the present one. In 1919-20, the employers took the offensive against the war-expanded unions and smashed some of them, as in steel, for almost a generation; the workers were fighting for their unions' very existence, and fighting against the whole weight of the rest of society; the strikes took on the tragic and passionate color of the Great Steel Strike (there were no millionaire publishers in the soup kitchens then). In 1936-7 there was first the great surge forward of unionization in the mass production industries, the automobile strike with its bold occupation of the Detroit plants being the center and symbol, and then the vicious counter-attack by the bosses, with private gunmen, labor spies, citizens' vigilante committees ("Mohawk Valley Formula") all culminating in the bloody Little Steel Strike. The Federal and local authorities either sided with the employers (1919-20) or else temporized in such a way as to finally throw the victory to the employers (1936-7). This time, however, (1) the employers are not out to smash the unions; (2) the strikers' participation is orderly, passive routinized; (3) the State is on the side of the strikers.

(1) There has been remarkably little violence in these strikes, considering their scope, because the employers have made no effort to reopen struck plants or to break up picket lines. The few exceptions prove the rule. The only deaths reported were those of two pickets who were shot down by company thugs on the Toledo, Peoria & Western Railroad; but this is a minor road controlled by one George P. McNear, a violent foe of unionism and New Dealism, whose road was taken over by the Government for three years in 1942 because of a previous strike; McNear's tactics, which in the days of Gary or Girdler were normal, today make him a lunatic-fringe eccentric in the eyes even of conservatives. It is also interesting that when Philadelphia police brutally broke up a mass picket line of electrical workers, even such anti-labor papers as the *Times*, *News* and *Mirror* of New York printed pictures of police clubbing strikers; the two tabloids gave over their whole front page to one especially dramatic shot of five cops closing in on a prostrate picket. Both sides, in general, showed no disposition to fight very hard on the picket line. When a judge in Pittsburgh enjoined mass picketing of the Homestead steel plant, the union protested—but obeyed. And Jones & Laughlin made an unprecedented deal with the United Steel Workers, agreeing not to try to resume production in exchange for unrestricted access to the plant.

(2) The strikers showed none of the spontaneity of the 1936 strikes; nothing like the widespread "sit in" tactic of 1936-7, with its disrespect for property rights and its rank-and-file initiative. And indeed why should they? Neither the existence of their unions nor any serious economic pinch was involved. Since 1937 collective bargaining has been generally accepted by the big employers, the CIO has become respectable and well-entrenched, and during the war the more far-sighted employers came to see that their labor force could be controlled even better by working amicably with the union bureaucracy than by trying to destroy it. As for the economic angle: the strikers were almost all in manufacturing industries, in which average wages increased from \$26 a week to \$45 a week (71%) between 1940 and 1943, as against a rise of only 21% in white-collar wages. (The steel, automobile and electrical workers, furthermore, did very much better than the manufacturing average during the war.) This is not to deny that the cost of living has risen greatly—though not as much as wages—and cer-

tainly not to imply that the strikers were making enough to live decently even with their wartime gains. The point is that *relative to their own pre-war earnings and to the earnings of most of the other wage-earners in the country*, the strikers were in a good economic position when they struck. Hence their lack of "passion". On the first day of the GM strike, Reuther is reported to have exulted, "Just like old times, isn't it?" But it was not at all like old times, and the comment in *Time* (Nov. 22) seems to me just: "The UAW dispute with GM has assumed the aspect of a battle of experts rather than the essentially violent character of the big strikes in 1937."

(3) The role of the Government has perhaps been the decisive new factor in these strikes. Although Truman at first tried to take the classic "plague on both your houses" stand that Roosevelt took in 1937, and although he and his advisers surely cannot be accused of much ideological sympathy with labor, he was slowly pushed over to the union's side. Thus, at the beginning of the strikes, he proposed "fact-finding boards" which would have the power to enforce a month's "cooling off period" on labor and to determine the employer's ability-to-pay by inspecting his books. Both sides at once objected. But as the strikes evolved, the ability-to-pay principle became the big issue, with the cooling-off period forgotten; and since Truman insisted on the point, he clashed more and more with business. His intervention in the crucial steel and auto strikes was on the unions' side. In steel, he proposed an 18½¢ hourly raise on January 17, four days before the strike began; this was accepted by the union, rejected by U. S. Steel. On February 15, he settled the strike, in a conference in the White House, on the 18½¢ basis—plus a \$5-a-ton increase in prices. The steel men were still reluctant to sign, but could not resist the pressure from the White House. This is a far cry from the hostile or indifferent attitudes to labor of the Federal Government in the last two great strike periods. So, too, the President's "fact-finding" board in the auto strike recommended a 19½¢ wage raise and no price increase. The UAW promptly accepted this settlement, which gave it over half the raise it had asked for, and which also took Reuther's line that a wage increase should not be accompanied by higher prices. GM rejected it with equal promptness. The union's latest proposal for ending the strike (March 2) was that the issues be submitted to arbitration by a White House appointee; GM was not interested. No wonder the great business publishers, McGraw-Hill, in an editorial printed in its 25 magazines, accused the Administration of conducting "an active campaign for promoting large wage increases" and drew a pathetic picture of American business "confronted with combined union and Government pressure."

The postwar strike movement thus shows, on the one hand, that the great CIO unions in the mass industries have become a stable part of the nation's economic system, with enough political and economic power to force a not over-friendly Administration to intervene on their behalf; and on the other, that the workers in these unions are less militant, less class conscious than they were in 1937, while the control of the top bureaucracy over the ranks has become much stronger. This fatal combination of strength as institutions of the status quo and weakness as organs of workingclass rebellion may be observed in an even more extreme form in the British trade union movement. Radicals who see in our postwar strikes an advance toward socialism, or even a demonstration of *workingclass* (as against trade union) power, would therefore seem to be short-sighted.

# *Marxism and Ethics*

by Philip Spratt

**M**OST professing Marxists are eclectics. They accept from Marxism what seems true or pleases them, and from other theories likewise. That is, they treat Marxism as a scientific discipline on a level with others, a discipline which has made contributions to economics or sociology, but has no wider pretensions. This version of Marxism may be the most defensible, but it is not the version I want to discuss, for obviously it is compatible with any ethical belief.

The problem of the relation of ethics to Marxism arises only when Marxism is treated as a philosophical system. The same problem arises with any comprehensive philosophy, but is peculiarly acute in Marxism because this theory is of a unique character. Being materialistic or naturalistic it has no ethics of its own and tends to give the subject very little importance, while, being a "practical" philosophy, whose purpose is not merely to understand the world but to change it, it must set forth ethical principles and give them great importance. It is worthwhile to examine both sides of this dilemma.

The classical European philosophies all attached high importance to ethics. In Platonism the keystone of the system of ideas is the Idea of the Good. (I am using the term ethics in the older manner to include what is now called axiology, the theory of values, as well as the theory of the distinctively moral values and obligations). Platonism was not unique in this. Indeed the sharp difference we now perceive between ethics and other subjects, between fact and value, is and ought to be, was only made acceptable by science and as a popular idea is new. Science has to be ethically neutral, that is it has to deal with the facts and ignore their desirability or otherwise. It is only in this spirit that it is possible to get useful results in such subjects as anthropology and psycho-analysis. Eventually this objective attitude came to prevail, and it is now normal to discuss, for example, the nature of the universe and the evolution of life and mind, without assuming or raising the question whether it is a good or bad thing that all this has happened.

It is possible to treat ethics itself in the spirit of ethical neutrality. One may establish that certain people have certain ethical beliefs, and others, others, and how this came about, without raising the question who is right. This is the history, or-psychology, or anthropology of ethics. Or one may discuss the logical structure of the subject and the meanings of ethical terms, such as "good" and "right" without committing oneself to statements of more than a certain specificity as to what sort of acts are right or things good. . . .

## Materialism and Ethics

Modern philosophers are divided roughly into two schools the empiricist, naturalistic or materialistic school, and the

rationalist, system-building, normally in some sense idealistic school. The former has adopted the scientific approach, typically with its ethical neutrality. It treats of special subjects, logic, epistemology, scientific method, ethics, all in separation from each other, usually without committing itself to materialism, but with the naturalistic background normal among scientific men. Its ethics tends to be, though it need not be, ethics as a phenomenon rather than normative ethics. There is at least a marked lack of fervour or uplift in such authors as Hume, Mill, Sidgwick, Moore, Broad, and even Ross. For this school ethics is in any case a special department, independent of the rest of philosophy.

Now this treatment of ethics as logically independent of the rest of knowledge is natural for any empirically-minded or naturalistic philosophy, but for materialism it is more than merely natural, it is obligatory. Other philosophers merely tend to assume that the universe is ethically indifferent, but materialists must postulate this. For materialists material objects in themselves can have no value nor impose any obligation upon minds; nor can the universe, which, apart from the finite minds in it, is a material object. For materialists, ethics is a purely human creation, not deducible *a priori* from the nature of the universe, and therefore to be examined empirically and treated independently like any other department of knowledge.

But, it is important to notice, there is no incompatibility between materialism and ethics. Materialism allows of any ethical theory which does not appeal to extra-natural authority. For materialism, ethics is as it appears in our experience, and has as much or as little authority as we find it has. The commonly alleged disharmony between materialism and ethics is of a different type: it is supposed that belief in materialism will lead people to disregard their obligations. They may be true, but it is a psychological effect, not a logical implication. In short, materialism must treat ethics as authors of the empirical tradition usually have treated it, as a part of their subject of greater or less interest of its own but having substantially no logical connection with the rest of their system. A materialist who sets out to expound a philosophy, i. e. to exhibit the nature of the universe, will treat of ethics as an anthropological, social and psychological phenomenon, and if he is of an academic turn of mind he may discuss the logical structure of ethics; but if he sets forth his ethical beliefs, i. e. states what men ought to do and to value, it will be found that these have little logical connection with the rest of his system, are not in any sense an implication of it or an essential part of it, and might very well have been otherwise or have been omitted.

The system-builders on the other hand still give ethics the central place it has always taken in these ambitious constructions. Their main aim indeed is to prove that the

universe respects man's values, that it is a place in which he can feel at home. Ethics for this type of philosophy is more than a department, it is implicit in the whole structure. It is not an oddity peculiar to man, but a pervasive feature of the whole universe. And it tends to be normative ethics. The attitude of neutrality is out of place in such a theory.

### The Marxian Dilemma

Marxism is a materialist theory. It cannot regard its universe as having any ethical characteristics or imposing any obligations upon men. The universe may be evolving in an ascertainable direction, but there can be no reason for regarding this direction *a priori* as ethically desirable or otherwise. Ethical categories are a human affair, and have no more than human authority. That is to say, Marxism, so far as it is a materialist philosophy, has no positive ethical implications. No ethical system can be deduced from Marxism.

But Marxism is not merely contemplative, not merely a philosophy. It does not set out merely to discover the nature of the universe: it sets out to bring about certain practical changes in the universe. Now people claiming to be men of principle, not mere adventurers or careerists, who set out to do something practical, and urge others to join in, must justify what they propose to do. And to justify is to show that it is right according ultimately to an ethical criterion.

No characteristic of an act other than its ethical rightness or the goodness of its aim will serve as justification. In ancient times it seems to have been thought that if a prophet had prophesied a certain action, that was justification for doing it. It is often thought even now that if an event can be regarded as "inevitable" that is a justification for bringing it about. If I see a motorcar rolling towards the verge of a precipice, I may judge that it is too late to stop it and that a catastrophe is inevitable, but that does not make it my duty to push it over. This is the "wave of the future" argument so popular a few years ago.

The point is elementary, but anybody acquainted with Marxist literature will agree that it needs to be made. It is argued in a number of recent Marxist books that anyone who accepts the Marxian analysis, which claims to show that socialism is the inevitable next stage in social evolution, is obligated to work practically for it. Thus J. D. Bernal writes ". . . the understander of Marxian dialectic must needs take his place in the struggle for the proletarian revolution." (*Aspects of Dialectical Materialism*, p. 120) . . .

But a man who judged that socialism is inevitable but will be bad would be under no obligation to try to bring it about. It is only if socialism is good that it is one's duty to do so, and it is one's duty because socialism is good and for no other reason. It may be inevitable, or probable, or just round the corner, or predicted by an interesting theoretical argument, or have any other naturalistic character: all these are irrelevant. The only characteristic which can make it my duty to work for it is its goodness (more correctly its betterness than any alternative).

Marxism must therefore have a theory of what is good and bad. Unless it can define or explain these terms and

show that consistent with this explanation socialism is good, a logical gap remains in the theory. I do not mean that filling the gap is necessarily difficult: merely that it is logically necessary.

Thus Marxism is caught in a dilemma: so far as it is materialism, it has no distinctive ethical theory, while so far as it is a "practical" philosophy, it imperatively requires such a theory. The difficulty could be met, though at the price of the theoretical unity which Marxists like, by just adopting some ethical theory. But in fact the situation is more complicated than this.

Marxists have not been content to develop their philosophy in the piecemeal fashion of other followers of the empirical tradition. They have believed themselves to possess a comprehensive theory of the universe and have consequently been tempted to take up something like the attitude of the rationalists, the constructive philosophers, who cannot leave any aspect of experience out of the purview of their system. Thus they have been tempted to give ethics a place in the system, i. e. to exhibit ethics as a logical implication of it. But if the system is materialism this cannot be done, since materialism has no positive ethical implications. Accordingly they have committed what I may call a Hegelian deviation; while believing themselves materialists they have smuggled in Hegelian ideas which do have ethical implications, and have taken these to be the ethical theory of Marxism.

### A Hegelian Deviation

The ethical theory of Hegel is a peculiar one. He makes ethics a special section of his great structure, just as naturalistic authors do, though not quite in the same way. For him ethics is a necessary part or phase of the cosmic development which his theory expounds. Man's duties to the family, society and the state, morality and the conscience, all have their logically determined places in the scheme. But in another sense the whole system is ethical. The dialectical movement from Being through all the categories to the Absolute Idea is a progress: the Absolute Idea is absolutely good. He conceives of the evolution of nature and the history of humanity also as a progress in time, a passage from worse to better.

These are two very different ethical conceptions, and in fact there is in Hegel a certain opposition between them. In the light of the cosmic process he attaches little importance to the precepts he lays down in the sections devoted to the subject. It is certainly man's duty to obey the laws of the cosmos, but *sub specie aeternitatis* it does not matter much what a man does. Even if he sins, i. e. obeys his own laws instead, that also serves the purpose of the cosmic dialectic, and progress goes on towards the inevitable goal, not in spite of but because of his sin. Hegel sometimes shows outright contempt for morality. He is especially slighting in his remarks on subjective morality, right motives and the individual conscience. He gives right motives no greater value than true opinions. Social utility is for him a better criterion. In fact he hardly considers morality a problem for the individual at all. As McTaggart says, "he shows everywhere a strong inclination to treat ethical problems as matters for mankind, and not for this or that man." (*Studies in the Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 169)

Hegel is thus typical of the idealist system-builders in that his system is ethical all through, but resembles rather the empiricists in allotting a special small corner of his system to his substantive ethical teaching, and in his indifference to this teaching.

The pronouncements on ethics and the implicit ethical assumptions of the Marxist classics fall under three heads: (1) those of strictly materialistic character, i. e. an analysis—logical, anthropological, psychological, “historical”—of ethics, ethics treated as a phenomenon, with a tendency to ignore or even to deny ethics as normative; (2) smuggled-in Hegelian ethics; (3) the ethical aims which Marxism as a “practical” philosophy, a political “movement”, puts before the public.

A few familiar quotations will remind the reader of what I refer to.

### (1) Ethics As Historically Relative

On the materialist analysis of ethics Engels's *Anti-Duhring* is the classical source: “. . . all former moral theories are the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society had reached at that particular epoch. And as society has hitherto moved in class-antagonisms, morality was always a class-morality.” (*Anti-Duhring* I,9) Karl Kautsky in *Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History* and Achille Loria in Part I of *The Economic Foundations of Society* have developed this thesis. It has, in its simpler form, become one of the best established Marxist common-places.

Though compatible with ethics, materialism has no positive ethical implications, and accordingly materialists tend to deny ethics. The relativity of Engels's analysis makes this all the more plausible. He himself draws the inference: “We therefore reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and for ever immutable moral law.” (ib)

Marx often showed a fairly far-reaching ethical scepticism or indifference: “the communists do not preach morality . . . They do not desire to turn the private individual into a professional ‘for-love-sacrificing’ creature. But they alone have discovered that what have been called ‘general interests’ in the whole course of history have really been the extension of the ‘private interests’ of particular men . . . The opposition between the two forms of interest is only apparent.” (quoted by Sidney Hook in *From Hegel to Marx*, p. 181) This statement seems to be, and is taken by Hook to be, a derivation of duty from interest. It is now generally agreed that such derivation is impossible. In any case it is a denial of obligation, a fundamental ethical category.

Several other statements by Marx of similar implication could be quoted. “For us, Communism is not a condition of affairs which ‘ought’ to be . . .” (*German Ideology*) He denounced those who wanted “to give socialism ‘a higher, idealist tendency’, or in other words to replace the materialist basis of socialism . . . with a modern mythology whose gods are Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.” (Letter to Sorge, qu. by Franz Mehring in *Karl Marx*, p. 514) He apologised for using the expression “to acknowledge truth, justice and morality as the basis of conduct” in the Statutes of the First International (Letter to Engels, qu. by Hook in *From Hegel to Marx*, p. 218). He criticised

Heinzen for considering the problem of property in terms of “right” and “such like simple question of conscience and pious phrases”. (*Selected Essays*, p. 141)

These should be enough to illustrate the tendency to slight ethics, and show how nearly so philosophical an intellect as Marx came to complete self-contradiction by denying it altogether. . . .

### (2) The Ethics of Progress

In regard to smuggled-in Hegelianism, it would be possible perhaps to illustrate a tendency among Marxists to echo all the peculiarities of the Hegelian doctrine mentioned. Thus Hegel's relegation of morality to one corner of his system concerned with institutions like property and the family, could probably be paralleled in Marxism. Certainly his treatment of ethics as just a natural phenomenon is common. Thus Plekhanov: “Jaures . . . talks about morality, which, to use Taine's expression, gives injunctions; whereas the Marxists, in what may be called their moral teaching, only try to state laws.” (*Essays on the History of Materialism*, p. 262) . . .

I have already quoted evidence of the Marxian contempt for morality—which probably derives as much from Hegel as from materialism. It is hardly necessary to dwell on the hostility shown to subjective morality. Levy attacks as obsolete the conception “that ‘I’ have to decide what ‘I’ should or should not do . . . it is ‘my’ conscience that tells me whether this is right or wrong” (*Thinking*, p. 195). Similarly Marxists tend to follow Hegel in giving right motives no greater value than true opinions. Marxist authors again like Hegel take delight in showing (what is of course true) that in some cases defiance of the laws of morality has produced good results. Genghis Khan's and Napoleon's campaigns and Ivan the Terrible's excesses have all been declared progressive.

This brings us to the most characteristically Hegelian belief, that of progress. Marxist authors are always repudiating teleology, but the charge is always being renewed. It is in fact at the back of many Marxian minds, and sometimes slips out. Engels says: “The world . . . is made up of processes, in which in spite of all seeming accidents, and in spite of all momentary set-backs, there is carried out in the end of progressive development.” (*Feuerbach*, Kerr edn. pp. 96-7) Plekhanov says: “Human reason . . . moves forward in its development only thanks to economic necessity, but precisely for that reason the really reasonable must not remain for ever in the condition of the ideal.” (*Essays*, p. 272) Hecker says: “*Contradiction leads forward*. This is the revolutionary doctrine of Hegel which was rediscovered and brilliantly applied to history by Marx and Engels.” (*Moscow Dialogues*) Lewis says: “Philosophy is the self-consciousness of a self-moving, self-directing world in a process of progressive development.” (*Textbook of Marxist Philosophy*, p. 21)

In fact in the classical Marxists, progress is a dominant idea, and a main source of their ethical beliefs. Thus Lenin's much-quoted statement: “Our morality is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class-struggle of the proletariat. We deduce our morality from the facts and needs of the class-struggle of the proletariat.” I do not say this could not be justified in terms of other theories, but it almost certainly did spring from a tacit belief in a

law of progress. It is an application of the Hegelian cosmic ethics. It is evident that a belief of this sort will tend—and all the more certainly for being unacknowledged—to overshadow the humbler and more specific rules of an ordinary moral code. As we have seen, it is so in Hegel. Lenin in fact admits it: “Our morality is wholly subordinated . . .” That is, all the ordinary moral rules can be neglected if politics demands it. A dangerous doctrine, and one may venture to say that it has proved harmful on some occasions.

Quite apart from that, the principle of progress is incompatible with materialism. Materialism can admit progress as an empirical fact—given that it has formulated criteria, which must be ethical, to judge whether changes are progressive or not. But it cannot assume that change must be progressive, or even that change must on the whole be progressive.

### (3) “Common-Sense Ethics”

Other ethical principles and values are however present to the minds of Marxists, though they are seldom discussed. They are the aims and principles put forward in political propaganda, the principles whose importance we discover when our opponents fail to observe them, and the aims which we advance as realisable under a socialist order. Such are the principles of truth, fair dealing, abstention from theft or exploitation, the sanctity of life, the equality of men in the sense that the values experienced by humans are to be regarded as in principle equal irrespective of skin-colour, wealth, intellectual attainments, etc., and the values of physical comfort, health, exercise of faculties, art, knowledge, association, etc. In short the principles and values which are acknowledged by all sensible men everywhere. The only glimmering recognition of this I have found in any Marxist classic is in Lenin, who remarked that the laws of social behaviour “have been preached for thousands of years in all sermons”, and that “qualities like good and bad, though they presuppose a social relation, are not reducible to it. These qualities have an objective basis . . .” (quoted by Hecker in *Moscow Dialogues*).

Thus Marxist ethics is in some confusion, self-contradictory and entangled with Hegelian mystification. It is obvious that the tendency (1) above to deny ethics altogether is a mistake, and incompatible with politics. I contend further that almost everything Hegel said on ethics is either wrong or incompatible with materialism, so that almost all the trends under (2) above are errors; and that the common-sense ethics of (3) is the source in which a sound theory is to be found.

### Needed: A Non-Relativistic Ethic

Marxism needs, as justification for its politics, an ethical theory. It must admit values and obligations. Values are needed because it aims at a better social order, and “better” implies values. This is sometimes denied. Marxist authors condemn the idea that a thing can be good in itself. But if nothing can be good in itself, nothing can be anything else. Otherwise we should have a series of events each useless in itself but justified as producing its equally useless successors, which is absurd. Things are good and bad in themselves. Of course the only things

possessing these qualities are experiences, or, as Moore says, totalities containing experiences. This word implies nothing of passivity: many of the most valuable experiences are of active striving. Aristotle said that the greatest good is the exercise of the intellect. However most experiences probably have some value. It is good just to be alive.

Obligations also are needed because Marxism holds that it is in some sense incumbent upon people, or at least upon Marxists, to work for the better social order; and of course Marxists admit many of the ordinary social and political obligations. In view of Marx’s apparent attempt to derive obligation from interest it is worthwhile to insist on this point too. The clearest proof that obligation cannot be derived from interest is the obligation we all, including Marxists, admit we owe to future generations. We ought not to waste natural resources, for example, whose loss will be felt only after we are dead. None of us can have any personal interest in what happens then, but the obligation is undeniable. Thus obligation cannot be reduced to interest, and so cannot be denied.

Thus Marxism must admit values and obligations. If authority for this statement is sought, remember that Marx wrote of “the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a degraded, servile, neglected, contemptible being.” (*Selected Essays*, p. 26) Here both obligation and values are proclaimed.

Next to the contempt the Marxian classics display for the whole subject, the greatest obstacle to acceptance of values and obligations is the ethical relativity Engels preached: “We reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and for ever immutable moral law . . . We maintain . . . that all former moral theories are the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society had reached at that particular epoch. And as society has hitherto moved in class-antagonisms, morality was always a class-morality.” (*Anti-Duhring*, 1,9)

If morality (sc. ethics) is only a class-morality, what claim has it upon us? None, people are tempted to answer, and they are right. A relativistic ethics is no ethics. One of the standard ways of destroying confidence in moral laws is to show that they differ in various social conditions. Thus if a man, invited to join in working-class politics, asks the justification for rebellion or expropriation, he will not be satisfied if told that it is right according to “working class-morality”. That is arbitrary, he will think. Any group can set up a morality for itself. Gangsters do. He wants true morality. But if he is shown that these proposals are justified by an application of valid general principles to the special situation, his objection is overcome.

It is usually overlooked that Engels continued the paragraph quoted above. In the next sentence he forgets the dialectic, and, common sense resuming its sway, he admits universal ethical principles: “That in the process there has on the whole been progress in morality, as in all other branches of human knowledge, cannot be doubted.” This clearly implies some standard by which to judge, and this standard must be ultimately valid. Thus Engels agrees with us.

It is not enough however to have caught Engels con-

tradicting himself. The question is what is the truth of the matter. It is easy to see that relativism is destructive of ethics, but in view of the actual variation of belief on ethical questions relativism is hard to get away from.

### The Progress of Ethics

I believe that this negative conclusion is not inevitable. An absolute ethic can be stated, or at least outlined. How this can be done is suggested in an article by J. N. Findlay in *Mind* (April, 1944), to which what follows owes much . . .

For reasons which are not difficult to suggest, the history of homicide is relatively straightforward. Homicide must always have been prohibited ordinarily within the social unit, except when committed by the chief. The directions of change have been these: enlargement of the bounds within which it is ordinarily prohibited, until these now include the whole human race; abolition of class-privileged homicide (by slave-owners, king, samurai etc.); abolition of ceremonial homicide (religious sacrifice, duelling); reduction of customary homicide (killing off of the helpless aged or unwanted infants); reduction of the variety of circumstances in which homicide is legal, till it is now almost confined to punishment for murder; reduction of the killing of war-prisoners; and earnest but hitherto unsuccessful efforts to abolish war.

There is here a clear thread of ethical principle. The history of homicide is not a chaotic jumble. "Thou shalt do no murder" has never been a complete statement of the principle of any society, but it has always been the guiding principle, and the number of exceptions has steadily decreased, and the task of defending them in terms of the general welfare has become less difficult. This we recognize confidently as a progressive change. It has come about in a way which is probably typical. A custom or law which is historically conditioned is drawn up, as it were, having in view both purely ethical and other considerations. In course of time these other factors, economic, social, technical, will change, but the purely ethical factor will remain at least relatively constant. Our history has been one of increasing social stability, enlargement of the effective social unit, decrease in the rigidity of class-distinctions (at least for the last two millennia), and increasing control of nature; and these changes are such as to permit the purely ethical element in moral custom or law to become more evident.

An interesting prospective change in the morality of homicide, apparently in the reverse direction, is euthanasia. This is however intended not as an exception to the principle of no homicide but as a fulfilment of the principle of no cruelty. And whatever their attitude to euthanasia, cruelty is a matter on which even professed relativists will have no doubt. The ban on the intentional infliction of pain is now approaching the absolute, and we are quite sure that on this point we are right and our callous ancestors wrong. Nothing the Nazis have done, even their mass murders, has been so shocking as their revival of torture and training of their young men in "hardness". . . .

It would be wearisome to discuss all the traditional moral principles, and I think if we did so the same sort of conclusion would emerge. The extent of the variation in morals is less than is commonly supposed, and than a

superficial glance at the variety of custom would suggest. If we get at the purpose in these traditional rules we find a fair degree of uniformity. There is however a broad change in time, which we recognize with some confidence as generally progressive, i. e. a change towards absolutely right principles. Factors which have assisted this change are the progress towards the unification of mankind, by the breaking down of national and class barriers, i. e. an approach towards equality, the improvement in political stability, policing etc., and so in public order and general behaviour, which have enabled the individual to set himself higher standards, the increase in our control of nature, the decline in superstition, and the increased application of reason to ethics.

### Towards an Absolute Ethic

The consummation of these developments might be expected to be the recognition of a single supreme principle. Many believe that this goal has been achieved, the principle being of course that of the general welfare, or in somewhat archaic language the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It is still a matter of controversy whether from this principle can be deduced the other principles which we recognise as having a high degree of validity, such as obeying the law, telling the truth, keeping promises, respecting people's possession, showing gratitude towards benefactors, refraining from inflicting pain, respecting life, and so on. The dispute is interesting, but of little practical importance, and of no concern to us.

It remains to discuss welfare. There has probably been less change in ideas on this than on duties. From the beginning of discussion of the subject the main types of value were recognised. The trend towards a democratic outlook may be discerned in the greater stress on values or welfare now than in earlier times—all duties and no rights may be admirable when voluntarily undertaken by a puritan, but when imposed on others it is a slave morality. The democratic trend is also shown in our conception of value, which is broader than the rather intellectual and moralistic ideas of the old academies. We recognise a hierarchy of values, but also see that human nature varies, and so claim that each man has a right, at least within very wide limits, to the kind of life he prefers. Accordingly the doctrine of welfare, while asserting the basic common needs, health, food etc., becomes beyond that equivalent to the demand for opportunity to develop the personality—that is, freedom.

Thus it can be said that there is an *absolute* ethic, towards which thought, and even conduct, are moving, and to which approximate the theoretical beliefs, or perhaps rather the emotional impulses, of most men. This ethic is nothing new: Lenin was literally correct when he said it had been preached for thousands of years. It seems to have arisen in the first millennium B. C., perhaps in response to travellers' reports or political developments which first suggested the possibility of the unification of mankind. Whatever may have been true in the past, morality now is not a class-morality, but is approaching a universal or human morality. There are of course many remnants of older ideas, but anyone whose memory goes back before 1914 will admit that they are mere remnants. The typical modern member of the privileged classes or nations no longer defends his privileges as just or desirable. He

admits that equality is the ideal, and in many cases is genuinely willing to see it established. Even when he is opposed to practical equalitarian policies he rationalises his opposition as due not to ethical but to factual, for example economic, considerations. And in fact socialists make the same admission, on the same grounds. The fascists are now almost the only people who proclaim inequality as right, and this was found so shocking that bourgeois and proletarian formed a united front against them.

We are approaching a universal, human ethic. Marxists betray in their non-political conduct, and in their political propaganda except when they are indulging in theoretical disquisitions, that they believe in this ethic. They are in fact freer than most men from primitive superstition, ideas of inequality, and national prejudice, the chief sources of opposition to this ethic. There is no reason then why they should not admit it.

### How May We Escape Anarchy?

It is striking that no Marxist author has ever discussed ethics as normative, as valid (except Lenin). From Engels on, most Marxian theorists have discussed the subject, but always in the spirit of ethical neutrality: it is ethics as a social phenomenon, public, casually determined, changing. But the practically important question about ethics is not how or why it changes, but what is valid in it—what principles will help me to decide what I am to do now. And from this point of view ethics as a social phenomenon is in principle no guide. What others have believed, and even believe now, does not tell me what I ought to believe. What others believe is a mere psychological fact, from which, unassisted, there can be no inference as to what ought to be the case.

This is not mere abstract theory. Majorities are sometimes wrong. Perhaps sometimes everybody is wrong. Suppose the Axis had won the war; then after some time probably a majority of the world's population would have held wrong beliefs on a number of ethical questions.

Thus the prevailing view, the consensus, "working-class morality" or what not, has no authority of its own. No principle is valid for me until I have incorporated it into my system of beliefs, that is, my conscience has approved of it.

The authority of the conscience must not be confused with the infallibility of the conscience, which is anarchy. The conscience is authoritative in ethics in the same way observation is authoritative in science: unchecked, it is not infallible, but it is ultimately the only source of information. To render consistent and acceptable our judgements in these matters is the business of ethical theory, which is notoriously voluminous, disputed and inconclusive. All that is claimed is that the conscience is logically necessary.

This should be obvious above all to materialists. Hegelians can afford to despise the conscience because they have other sources of information on the matter: they know that the Demiurge is working for them and that the Real is the Reasonable. Materialism knows no Demiurge, though from Marxist philosophical writing one would almost suspect the contrary, and has to acquire its knowledge on this as on other matters in the painful, step-by-step, human way.

Obviously a theory which stresses the individual con-

science will tend to stress liberty, whereas Hegelian ethics is the ethics of totalitarianism. This is surely an important recommendation. But how does this conscience-ethics escape anarchism? I recommend the problem to the dialecticians. . . .

A further great benefit of the conscience type of ethical system is that it allows of change when change is necessary. Some modern Marxists, such as Bernal, have written as if the conscience were a wholly conservative influence. They are mistaken: it is the individual conscience which saves human society from the fate of the ant-hill.

Thus Prof. Levy is certainly wrong when he denies that "it is 'my' conscience that tells me whether this is right or wrong". The conscience is influenced by society, but it is not wholly social. But is it possible that he is just a little ahead of his time? That the conscience soon will be obsolete if it is not so yet? Kautsky thinks so: "It was the Materialist Conception of History which . . . taught us to deduce our social aims solely from the knowledge of the material foundations." (*Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History*, Kerr edn. p. 201) Bernal does not assert that it is yet so, but demands that it be made so. He condemns as "distortion" the "distinction between the world of fact and the world of values", and claims that "Science must have something to say not only on how values can be achieved but also on our appreciation of values, and on the validity of the values themselves." (*Science and Ethics*, ed. by Waddington, pp. 115-7)

Doubtless there is nothing ultimately beyond the reach of science. But the emotional constitution of man is still out of our reach. We have not yet devised a pulchrometer to register the beauty of a poem. When we have done that we shall believe that science can determine "the validity of values." Meanwhile we are left to our old devices.

### THE INSOLENT OF OFFICE

The demand that an invitation to testify be extended to Mr. Ford was made by Rep. Fred L. Crawford (R., Mich.). "It's going pretty far," he said, "when the President of the United States attacks an industry like General Motors and when the head of OPA attacks Mr. Henry Ford II."

—N. Y. World Telegram, Feb. 20.

### THE MILITARY MIND: Democratic Vistas

(1)

FRANKFURT: Following the discovery that German Socialists were taking advantage of the new-found democratic freedom of speech to denounce the Potsdam Declaration, Gen. Lucius Clay, deputy U. S. military governor, called together the German minister-presidents of the American zone. Free criticism, he told them is definitely a part of the democratic form of government, but the time for full use of democratic prerogatives has not yet come.

"We would much prefer that the minister-presidents prevent such occurrences voluntarily than that it become necessary for the military government to take other measures," Gen. Clay told them.

—N. Y. World Telegram, Jan. 9.

(2)

Sir: I have learned with surprise that in its January 7 editorial column the Chronicle wrote that "thousands of Japanese schoolbooks are being burned on the order of General MacArthur." We are entirely in accord with your belief that ideas cannot be destroyed by book bonfires. No schoolbooks or any other books have been or will be burned on General MacArthur's order. . . . Such is the paper shortage in Japan it would be foolish to burn these books. As you will see in Annex A (attached), they are to be pulped in order that paper may be manufactured for new schoolbooks.

—FRAYNE BAKER, Brigadier-General, Public Relations Officer, Pacific Theatre.

—Letter to editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 28.

## THE MAD KING

I think that the recent discussion in POLITICS of political and moral responsibility bore no fruit. The motivation for the enterprise was dubious: was it not, in essence, the wish to feel that one's own decisions make a social difference where in fact they make no difference, by accepting "responsibility" for social catastrophes? We have been treated to the spectacle of Dwight Macdonald assuming his share of the blame for Hitler, and by corollary, for Buchenwald and Dachau. This seems to me to reduce the conception of responsibility to uselessness: we *know*, you and I and the paymaster of the German death camp (whose words, what have I done? as Macdonald observed, ring true) that we are not responsible for those things. In this connection I would like to propose another theory of the State.

Let us define him as responsible, who rules. None other. One who fails to put up a resistance to oppression may be stupid, callous, lacking the proper vitamins, or simply afraid (with good reason) but he is not responsible.

"He who rules, call him king." This sentence contains a profound meaning. Do we not all wish to be able to point to the source of our fate? The psychological motivation for the principal theoretical production of the left in the last decade, the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism", was, in my opinion, a growing desire to find out who really rules, who is really responsible; whom, in fact, to call the mad king.

There was a deep discontent with the former conception of the state as a respectful servant of the capitalists. But the theoreticians of "bureaucratic collectivism" have misunderstood the nature of social development in the last decade. The meaning of the new phenomenon, the Slave State, is not, as they have supposed, the shifting of power from the capitalist class to the bureaucracy, but the capitalists' loss of control over the social machine, the state. The swell and prosperity of the bureaucratic strata is of no more significance, as regards control, than say a similar effect upon industrial (but not "managerial") technicians. The fact that more, and more highly paid, foremen invest a factory is merely an index of expansion, and no indication that they have received power over the enterprise. The direction of our fate is now not determined by the people, nor by the bureaucracy, nor even by the owners of the social machine, *but by the social machine itself*.

As the economy has long since been running blind and free from control, developing by the self-propagation of abstract laws, at no point affected by any human desire; so now in our time, when it is compelled by its inherent laws to merge with the state, so far from its now coming under the control of men, *it imparts to the political state also its own destructive qualities*. The economic machine is not brought under submission to the state; on the contrary, the difference now is that *the machine, evolving, has acquired a super-brain*, a much more complex and sensitive machine, the state, capable of regulating it in the interests of efficiency but obedient to its rigid laws.

If I may be permitted an extended metaphor: the capitalist class is now in the position of a technician alone

in a colossal factory which never stops running and adding to itself, attempting to synchronize the multiplying aspects of the machinery. Every hour new and complicated dials and switches are attached to the control board of which the technician has no knowledge and which he dares not stop to study. In 1916 he can no longer predict the action of the machinery from his manipulation of the controls. At this point, his idiot child attempts to straighten the situation out, and actually does get ahold of some of the principal levers and makes a horrible botch. The technician now has to worry about keeping him away from the rest of the controls. Pretty soon the only effect the technician has on the factory is the use of some old controls, but even these are now acting queerly. Suddenly he realizes to his horror that the factory itself is deliberately nullifying the effects of his manipulations.

This is the position today. Wall Street is just as likely, in fact, more likely, to be vaporized as any other place. Will this even delay the next war? Of course not: anyone can go down and read on the meter of the machine its intentions. But there is nothing to be done about it; the machinery has no "off" switch; it will pulverize the owners of the machine and the janitor, impartially.

Just as the capitalists have been powerless to control the *economy*, so now they are powerless to control the *state*. This does not prevent the acquisition of profits, of course. One of the premises of the machine is the provision of profits: this is its sole responsibility, its only product. I recall a scene a few years ago, from *Fantasia*, which struck me as highly symbolic, though probably unconsciously so. Mickey Mouse overhears the magic word that fills an enchanted pail with water. One evening after the sorcerer has gone out to get drunk, Mickey sneaks in and pronounces the magic word, just for fun. But he is ignorant of the word that stops the process: the flood rushes out and fills the lonely castle. The film has a happy ending, the sorcerer arrives with the other word in time to save Mickey. But the only sorcerer the human race is provided with, that is to say, God, has less talent for dramatic effects.

The significance of the development of the state in our time does not lie in humanity gaining more control over the economic machine, as for instance the bourgeois liberals of the Max Lerner \* type suppose, *but in the machine's gaining more control over humanity*.

The capitalists, their stooges the dictators presidents generals liberals lawyers secretaries, are just kidding us, and themselves, along; they are as basically frightened as we are, most of them (the others are too numb even to be scared)—like, perhaps, Frankenstein assuring us that his monster is really a nice fellow when you get to know him; he hasn't had his breakfast yet, which accounts for his surliness. It is only later we learn that we are to be the breakfast.

In my opinion, the State, having developed so far from its original premise, or sin, cannot be controlled any longer, either by the technician or his idiot child (actually a genius, who has been deranged by continuous frustration

\* Incidentally, reverting to the question of responsibility, Lerner once referred obliquely to the "Responsibility of Peoples" in one of his PM (Profound Meditations) pieces, saying "I am sick of such abstractions as 'if all are guilty, none are guilty'", little reflecting how he himself might stand in need of such abstractions some day.

—perhaps he can be cured in time, by the social equivalent of insulin shock, but it seems unlikely). Fortunately, however, it has suicidal tendencies.

The “conquest of power” by the socialists in Russia was not a triumph but a catastrophe for humanity. God forbid that the socialists should ever again “take power” except over the complete wreckage of civilization! In the event of anything short of total destruction, this little sketch may safely be predicted:

The socialists enter the conquered palace in triumph, and are met in the marble hall by the lieutenants of the mad king, who, falling prostrate, cry: “Know, O noble Comrades, that our master awaits thy coming with a joyful heart! No less than the people, he hath groaned under the hateful capitalist rule. Now his burning desire is to bring succour to the people. And who can do so, but he? He hath secret granaries hidden under the earth, engines that accomplish with a single stroke the work of ten thousand men! Will thou destroy these in thy righteous fury, mistaking friend for enemy? If so, beware! thou hast promised the people plenty, canst thou return to them with less than they had before?”

“Our king sayeth, furthermore: All his arsenals he resigns to thee; thou mayst come armed into his presence. The power that he never had, he gives with relief into thy hands. His purpose of life is now, he sayeth, to labor as thy humble slave.”

As these socialists are really popular monarchists at heart (the machine is not in itself evil, but only misused—we will use it properly) they are naturally pleased at this cooperative attitude, although they do not fail, of course, to take precautions against treachery. Much to their relief, the arsenals are surrendered without a hitch, and things begin to look rosy. Is it really necessary, after all the experience we have gained, to fill out the rest of the sketch, ending in the happy Socialist Fatherland? \*

To return to our starting point, the question of “responsibility.” I have argued, that by the nature of the State at no point is there any human intervention except in the more or less exact execution of its laws. He who stands in its path is crushed; he who attempts to alter its path is himself altered. In the last instance, he may even have the illusion that, because the relative position has changed, he has impressed his will upon the State. This is the fallacy of, for instance, the *PM* liberals.†

“He who rules, call him king.” Here is our king, then, to hold responsible, mad or not: the Super-brain of the

\* The reintroduction of the term “Fatherland”, after so many years, at first caused some confusion. However, this was cleared up quickly (in fact, the next day) by Comrade Bigbertha's thesis published in the official organ of the party. Bigbertha first pointed out the petty-bourgeois nature of the confusionists, and then decisively demolished them. “Can it be said, as these ‘intellectuals’ maintain, that to love and honor our glorious socialist fatherland, without peer in the history of the human race, detracts from the self-respect of the individual? No, it cannot be said. Why cannot it be said? It cannot be said because these same petty-bourgeois, lacking in the dialectical sense, mechanically transfer the former justified hatred of the proletariat for the vile capitalist national institutions to our socialist national institutions, which are an entirely different thing. He who does not understand this, understands nothing of Marxism.”

† *PM*, from the naive humane enthusiasm of the first issues to the frenzy of hatred that accompanied its coverage of the entry into Germany, would make an interesting study for someone.

economic system, the social machine. This discovery is at once our despair and our salvation. For if we have to realize that in our time our fate is not within our control, at the same time—and this renews our hope—we see how false and sinister this concept of “responsibility” is, that seeks to place the source of evil within the human heart.

JACK JONES

## Periodicals

“*Laissez-Faire, Planning, and Ethics*” by S. Moos. *The Economic Journal* (London), April, 1945

An analysis of the ethics-efficiency duality prevalent in the modern approach to economics and of the dangers of a non-ethical basis for economics.

In times of political or economic crises, the “what-ought-to-be” of economics tends to be regarded as a separate field from scientific analysis of existing conditions, for the economist who asks if the present order is aimed at the greatest human happiness possible, is rejected by the insecure society. In the modern world, in which power politics and economic forces are the dominating factors, the economist trained to think in terms of ethics is at a severe disadvantage, for what is demanded of him is a solution of problems in terms of matter-of-fact efficiency. Hence the present phenomenon of painstaking economic research in isolated fields with no awareness of the need for a broad interpretation and a final aim.

Moos traces the history of the relationship of ethics to economics in English thought in terms of that country's leading economists. The society of the second half of the nineteenth century felt secure enough to tolerate and even welcome the ethical approach to its economic problems demanded by writers like J. S. Mill, Henry Sidgwick and Alfred Marshall. Toward the end of the century, however, when the stability of nineteenth-century Europe began to be threatened, hints of a separation of the moral from the scientific in economics appeared and this tendency culminated with J. R. Hicks, who defines economics as the science of business affairs.

And hence to the modern economists, who, while not “reactionary”-minded, have no opportunity to work on socio-economic lines; they have become ashamed of their ethical principles, and, at the very moment when society is moving toward a point where the application of ethics to economic problems would be possible, they have begun to lose their sense of ethical values. Thus in their planning for full employment, the most important modern economic problem, our economists are likely to plan a society without freedom of thought or movement and even without a desire for these.

Moos' conclusion is a personal challenge to modern economists: our sense of higher non-economic values has been dulled and will be deadened by further acknowledgment of efficiency as the primary guide of rational action. We must return to the moral fervor of the economists of the past, for the God of efficiency alone is too weak to build a world of work, food, and homes for all. And a future built on principles of superb efficiency-organization, while producing a society stable enough to accept an ethical approach to its problems, will offer no encouragement for a

revival of ethical principles if they are lost in the process of building such a society.

*"Is Gunnar Myrdal on the Right Track" by Leo P. Crespi. The Public Opinion Quarterly, Summer, 1945*

Crespi points out the danger of Myrdal's assertion that the Negro problem is primarily a moral issue, and shows how Myrdal, in *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, contradicts his central thesis.

To maintain, as Myrdal does, that the Negro problem is a moral one is to imply that its determinants and solution lie in the moral realm, that it is the individual who must be cured of prejudice by education, and not society by socio-economic reform. Crespi shows the race problem to be a socio-economic one by citing Myrdal's own analysis: (1) liberalism is an important factor in the solution of the Negro problem; (2) because of their insecure economic status, the masses of poor people are not liberal; (3) the first practical step in increasing liberalism is to lift the economic status of the masses. Thus Myrdal contradicts himself in his denial of the importance of economics in this problem.

Again, Myrdal admits that the upper classes are less prejudiced against the Negro than the lower classes, who are in economic competition with Negroes. If racial prejudice is a moral problem, why the great difference in degree of prejudice among people of different economic levels? Or are the rich more moral than the poor?

If Myrdal means by moral that the individual is the *locus* of the problem, the word is badly used. He makes clear that prejudice is prompted by desire for higher economic or social status, that whites do not consciously recognize this as the cause of their prejudice, but instead make elaborate rationalizations of it. But to be moral, both sides of a conflict must be consciously recognized. Education could make the Negro problem a moral issue, but so far whites have ignored this point.

*"On Contemporary Nihilism" by Aron Gurwitsch. The Review of Politics, April 1945.*

"At the present time," the author begins this illuminating study of an important moral problem of our time, "reason is not held in any too great esteem; 'rationalism' is deprecated in most intellectual circles. 'To believe in reason' is to be behind the times, to give evidence of a mode of thinking that is out of date, out of contact with what today is called 'progress.'"

"The 'belief in reason' is now replaced by all sorts of psychological and sociological sciences. . . . Formerly man was considered to be an *animal rationale*, a rational being; now he has become simply a vital being, not further qualified. Since man lives in community with his fellows, it was formerly the practice to inquire into the structure and organization which society ought to have in order to correspond to the rational and human nature of its members. But today no such question is raised; it is taken for granted that man, as a social animal, must adjust himself to his environment or suffer the consequences to his well-being and his happiness. It is no longer a question of whether one may or one should adjust oneself to certain social conditions; it is now only a question of what is the most effective means or technique of adjustment."

This psychological naturalism and the philosophical relativism which accompanies it, Gurwitsch tries to show logically culminate in totalitarianism. He also argues that their root is nihilism, which he defines as "the substitution of 'concrete' things [he instances "biological advantages,

satisfaction of desires and needs, utility"] for 'abstractions' [he instances "truth . . . justice"]."

Psychological naturalism represents man as primarily a vital being, endowed with reason as an instrument to achieve the interests of his animality. Ideas are produced by the individual reacting to purely causal circumstances, his psychological set-up being determined by similar causes. Thus one idea is as good as the other, for both are the result of certain causes which could be traced, both are but attempts of individuals to adjust to their surroundings by using reason as a tool. There can be only differences of opinion, not questions of truth or falsity, since no one can help having his particular set of opinions; hence the best thing to do is to tolerate, or be indifferent to, all ideas and the actions springing from them unless they interfere with one's own personal interests. Pure subjectivism is the only basis on which acts and ideas can be condemned, for psychological naturalism recognizes no abstract truth as an objective standard.

One consequence of this approach is that the thinker yields to the propagandist. The problem is no longer to lead men through reason and intelligence to enlightenment, to elimination of prejudices and errors, to truth, but, given the mental composition of a group, to induce that group to accept a certain proposition, regardless of the right or wrong, truth or falsity of it.

The full implication of psychological naturalism begins to appear. Denying the validity of abstract notions of truth and justice, taking what the mass of mankind can be made to accept as the criterion of "truth", casting all thought into a bottomless sea of relativism, "it becomes possible, by starting from the basic principles of psychological naturalism and relativistic philosophy, to arrive at totalitarianism by a purely logical construction." The psychologists of that school would say that totalitarianism is the abuse of controlling man through knowledge of the causes of his behavior; but to distinguish between abuse and legitimate use there must be an abstract standard for making the distinction. No such standard is possible in their scheme, however.

Psychological naturalism is the negation of the principle in whose name the war was fought, "equality of all men and all nations." In emphasizing man's animal qualities, this doctrine strips him of the dignity of simply being a human being. Man has succeeded in overcoming animals; therefore, he is merely a superior animal and should dominate his inferiors.

Recognize, however, that reason is what constitutes man as a human being, and there is no difficulty in establishing the principle of human equality. Beside this one great distinguishing determinant, all concretely ascertainable dissimilarities among men become insignificant. It becomes man's moral duty to examine society with intellectual integrity and to reject the unreasonable in it, for if he allows unreason to exist in his institutions, he challenges, by his own handiwork, that which makes him a human being, reason.

True tolerance is born of reason, of a recognition of all men as bearers of mankind's distinguishing quality, for it assumes that the differing opinion is also oriented toward truth and is therefore worthy of consideration and respect.

Man is not an impotent creature driven by blind forces. He is a rational and therefore a free creature, for he can "conceive of states different from the one which actually exists; he can take his stand and form his decisions in regard to the actual situation, and finally, he can act in accordance with these decisions."

Once man allows nihilism to take root, it progressively

lowers him morally and intellectually until he becomes the creature of his appetites, the perfect totalitarian subject. "Allows" nihilism to take root, for man has not been pushed into this condition by irresistible forces, but has consented, perhaps passively, to it. He was free to drift into nihilism and is free to reclaim his rightful heritage as the *animal rationale*.

**"Battle and Other Combatant Casualties in the Second World War" by Alfred Vagts. *The Journal of Politics*, November, 1945.**

Working with limited statistics, Vagts attempts an estimation of the deadliness of the Second World War by comparing it with the First World War in three ways: 1) in ratios of dead to wounded; 2) in ratios of losses in dead to losses in prisoners; 3) in ratios of wounded who died to wounded saved.

In the Second World War, there was an unmistakable increase in the relative number killed, the mean ratio for the First World War being 1 killed to 6 wounded, and for the Second World War, from 1:1.4 for the British Empire to 1:3.52 for Germany. Vagts ascribes this increase to the improvement of artillery and bombing and the replacement of rifles by these; greater fanaticism; and drownings in amphibious enterprises, shipwrecks, and sinkings of transports.

The ratio of dead left on the battlefield to prisoners, wounded and unwounded, taken by the victor, reflect ferocious or weak resistance, good or bad morale in the losing side, different codes of honor and outlook upon life and survival in battle. Thus the war was most ferocious in the Pacific theater, where the United States Army killed thousands of Japanese, but in two years captured only 377, against 110,000 Germans and 170,000 Italians during the same time. On the Russian front, the ratios of German dead to prisoners taken by the Russians do not vary enough to point to any serious deterioration of German morale.

Russia took care to make captivity extremely harsh for its soldiers by not entering upon international agreements as to treatment of prisoners. This effectively reduced its ratio of dead to prisoners of the First World War (17:25), thus eliminating what Lenin called a "save-the-skin mentality."

The ratio of wounded who died to wounded saved has improved from 1:9 in the War of 1870-71, to 1:17 in the First World War, to about 1:40 as a mean average in the Second World War. This improvement, however, has failed to compensate for the higher relative number of combatants killed.

**"Sociological Elements in Veblen's Theory" by Arthur K. Davis. *The Journal of Political Economy*, June, 1945.**

Davis sees Veblen's contribution to social theory in the issues he raised rather than the way he solved them, in his insistence on the integration of economics with the main body of social thought rather than in the way in which he attempted their integration.

Veblen's extreme empiricism led him to reject classical economics on three grounds: (1) in treating economics as a science separate from a general social science, it failed to explain concrete reality; (2) it was teleological or animistic, relying on individual self-restraint to produce the maximum group welfare; (3) it was a taxonomic science, concerned with static categories in a "normal equilibrium", whereas the machine age was an ever-changing process. Having rejected the classical approach to economics, Veblen took a position close to Marx, for both were essentially

moralists, though Veblen was the probing ironist, not the revolutionary prophet. His thought was rooted in the nineteenth century canons of progress and material welfare, to which minority interests were to be subordinated.

Veblen made no comprehensive or explicit critique of modern society, but rather attacked specific abuses, such as tendencies toward restricted output to maintain prices and the maldistribution of wealth. He saw capitalism as a whole as superfluous luxury, frustrated labor and technology, and an intense competitiveness which made an ethical approach to economics almost impossible under that system.

In demanding that economics be related to the broader stream of social thought, Veblen mixed science and ethics indiscriminately; in insisting on considering ideologies and all of knowledge as functions of a socio-cultural milieu in all phases of investigation, Veblen set an impossible goal for himself. The result was a scientific nihilism which denied the validity of research in special fields.

Davis's comment is that in the complex modern world it is impossible to begin research in economics by taking into account all the related non-economic factors, for the subject would soon include such a great part of human knowledge and activity that the result would be chaos. He concludes that social science and social ethics must be kept distinct but that the results of each must be made available to the other. Both must make their contribution to the necessary ethical awakening and social reorganization. Veblen was a pioneer in raising the issue of the integration of economics and ethics, but his solution to the problem was an impossible one.

KATHRYN CARLISLE

## Books

**ANIMAL FARM: A Fairy Story.** By George Orwell. London: Secker & Warburg. 6 shillings.

When the animals of the Manor Farm drove out their human masters, slammed shut the gate, and took over complete management of their own affairs, they looked forward to a happy Animalistic state in which each member should contribute to the common welfare according to his strength, while each shared in the common pool of products according to his need. Major, the old boar, now dead, had taught them the true gospel: that the life of an animal, under human exploitation, was misery and slavery; that all men were enemies, while all animals were comrades; that the revolution was inevitable, after which animal solidarity would produce a perfect society. Well, the revolution had come, the human exploiters had fled, and nothing now remained but to enter into possession of the promised land. In their enthusiasm, the animals sang their revolutionary hymn, "Beasts of England," seven times through without once stopping.

It was natural that the pigs should assume leadership, for they were the most intelligent of the farm's inhabitants, and among the pigs Napoleon and Snowball were pre-eminently gifted. So these two took over the arduous duties of leadership, the first of which was to replace the name Manor Farm by that of Animal Farm, while the next was to paint on the big barn the Seven Commandments to which the principles of Animalism had been reduced by three months of porcine study. These commandments—the first reading, "Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy,"

and the last reading, "All animals are equal"—charmed everyone, and were quickly memorized by the cleverest. After which they all rushed to the fields to get in the hay, but not before the cows had been relieved of five buckets of creamy milk by the adroit trotters of the pigs.

"What is going to happen to all that milk," said someone.

"Jones used sometimes to mix some of it in our mash," said one of the hens.

"Never mind the milk, comrades!" cried Napoleon, placing himself in front of the buckets. "That will be attended to. The harvest is more important. Comrade Snowball will lead of the way. I shall follow in a few minutes. Forward, comrades! The hay is waiting."

"So the animals trooped down to the hayfield to begin the harvest, and when they came back in the evening it was noticed that the milk had disappeared."

It was odd about the milk, but the incident was generally ignored amid the excitements of the greatest harvest the farm had ever known, during which "every animal down to the humblest worked at turning the hay and gathering it." That is, of course, with one exception: "The pigs did not actually work, but directed and supervised the others."

Yes, it was odd about the milk, but odder happenings were to follow. There was the training of the dogs, for example, into a ferocious police corps ready to prove the error of anyone who ventured to disagree with Napoleon. There were the complicated relations between Napoleon and Snowball, ending with the latter's sudden banishment and his erasure from Animal history, even though every beast had once believed that Snowball was their outstanding military strategist and the undoubted hero of the Battle of The Cowshed, at which the forces of counter-revolution had been hurled back. There was the mysterious alteration of the original commandments, one after the other, culminating in the final reduction of all commandments to a single sentence: All Animals Are Equal But Some Are More Equal Than Others. There was the strange fate of Boxer, sturdiest and most faithful of party wheel-horses. There was the banning of the old hymn, "Beasts of England." And there were certain climactic, but not entirely astonishing happenings, which, to be appreciated properly, must be read in George Orwell's own perfectly selected words.

That *Animal Farm* is vastly amusing is a fact that may be already apparent to readers of this review. That it is truly brilliant is a fact that can be dodged by no reader of the book itself. That it will infuriate all those who believe in Stalinism is a fact as certain as is the existence of the U.S.S.R. It will infuriate because, as an account of a great revolution's perversion, it admits of no confutation. Statistics are sometimes deadly, but the lethal range of satire is deeper, wider, more comprehensive than that of statistics can ever be. And George Orwell has managed his medium with sure judgment, with steady precision. His satirical parallels and correspondences are just numerous enough and clear enough to serve his purpose; not so numerous nor so obscure as to divert the reader's interest from the narrative's course to the demands of a possible puzzle. Avoiding exaggeration of manner as well as distortion of matter, the author has scored consistently by his evenness of tone and his power of understatement. It almost seems that he has used his skill merely to arrange for truth to show itself in satire's mirror; a mirror that, performing an act of translation, simultaneously performs acts of interpretation and illumination.

It is more than likely that George Orwell's story of the great revolution that went wrong is destined to become a minor classic. But, whatever its future fate, there is no

doubt that in our day it is a book to read, to read aloud, to talk about, and to give away. So it is good to hear that Harcourt, Brace is to publish *Animal Farm* in this country.

BEN RAY REDMAN

## New Roads

### Discussion

Sir:

In your issue of January, 1946, you printed a letter, signed Constant Reader, which complained of the anti-Marxist rubbish you print, and asked: "Don't you . . . at least allow Marxist critics (Morrow, Farrell, Shachtman, etc.) space to answer?" (Sic.) Your answer to this letter included the following statement: "As for allowing space to Marxists to answer, they have always had it. They just don't speak up—on paper at least. The inadequacies of a Marxist position may have something to do with this paralysis." I wish to take advantage of your offer of space, and to present some criticisms. However, I wish to add that I am speaking only for myself, and not for the others mentioned by Constant Reader.

The suspiciously clique nature of the thinking expressed in *POLITICS* is threatening to degenerate into egomania. Thus, your unguarded statement that Marxists suffer from literary paralysis, and with this, your clear-cut implication that I am one of the literary paralytics. In the two years that have elapsed since you founded *POLITICS*, I have done more writing than I have in any other two years of my entire literary career. A considerable portion of this writing attempts to use and to defend what I consider to be valid Marxian hypotheses. I have spoken a lot on paper. When an article in *POLITICS* more or less declares that Karl Marx did not know how to think, it doesn't necessarily follow that the most important task of anyone interested in Marxism is that of immediately abandoning other work and answering this article. Briefly, *POLITICS* is *not the only magazine*.

Two years have elapsed since *POLITICS* first appeared. In this time, the contents make it clear that this magazine is a personal organ. Its pages are dominated by the interests and inclinations of its editor. In the discussions it carries on, the editor is a central figure. Frequently, the formal discussions of an issue in *POLITICS* end up in a discussion of Dwight Macdonald, his merits or demerits, his habit of putting hasty generalizations down on paper, his carelessness in theoretical formulation, the omissions from his writings. In consequence, it is appropriate here to discuss Dwight Macdonald. Furthermore, the constant criticism of Dwight Macdonald, in the pages of his own magazine, indicates that when he wants to make himself understood, he experiences difficulties. Friendly readers of his aren't always sure that they know precisely what he is talking about. This fact sheds a curious light on his confident demand that Marxists answer him when he criticizes them.

Constant readers of Dwight Macdonald cannot but be aware of the flighty character of his thinking. He is continually changing his mind. With this, he is persistently engaged in the practice of refuting the ideas he has held in the past. After he left the House of Luce, Dwight Macdonald became a Trotskyist. He became a refugee from Trotskyism in the early stages of the War. His pattern of change has run more or less as follows. He seems to have discovered some imperfection in economics: this im-

perfection seemed curable with politics. He tried to cure economics with politics. But politics suddenly revealed that it was tainted. He tried to cure the taint of politics with morals. Now, morals is becoming tainted, and he threatens to fumigate morals with religion. In this way, we can see a dialectical evolution. A one man revolution is gradually turning into a one man religion.

Writing in *Partisan Review*, August 1940, Dwight Macdonald stated: "Only if we meet the stormy and terrible years ahead with scepticism and devotion—scepticism towards all theories, governments and social systems; devotion to the revolutionary fight of the masses—only then can we justify ourselves as intellectuals." He more or less began his career of devoted scepticism and sceptical devotion by trying to develop a theory of his own. This theory, briefly, held that fascism was a new social system, productively superior to capitalism, but reactionary. On the basis of his theory, the sceptic of all theories, interpreted the war and made predictions. He claimed that unless the governments of the United States and England became either fascist or socialist, they would be incapable of defeating Hitler. In *Partisan Review*, August 1941, he published jointly with Clement Greenberg, 10 *Propositions on the War*. One of his conclusions made the flat prediction: ". . . the truth is that the democracies cannot defeat Hitler by force. They cannot get close enough to slug it out—even assuming that they are better at slugging than the Germans. And so for years to come they must content themselves with long-range attrition, warfare that exhausts and kills but does not decide." Anyone can make mistakes. But Macdonald, so adept in crowing when others make mistakes, doesn't ever try to correct his own mistakes. He doesn't follow through his scepticism of all theories by applying it to his own. After formulating a new theory of fascism, he did not develop it, test it, apply it to events as these unfolded. The fact that he didn't do this casts a curious light on his charge that Marxists don't speak up on paper because their position is presumably inadequate. Macdonald speaks on paper: but he doesn't speak on paper about the claims and predictions he made in the past. This offers objective proof to warrant the statement that he is not theoretically serious. And since this is so, he is brave and foolhardy to demand that others take him seriously and answer him when he thinks that he has discovered some important theoretical criticisms of Marxism.

Additionally, if readers will look back to the founding issue of *POLITICS*, they will discover that Macdonald declared that he was issuing a new magazine in order to defend socialism, and to interpret, month by month, events from the standpoint of basic human values. (This is utterly vague, of course.) He proposed that intellectuals must enter the "historic process." He criticized Koestler, remarking that he could not discuss Koestler's spiritual values, because he did not know what spirit and spiritual meant. In those days, Macdonald—the present moralistic critic of Marxian materialism—was a very very awkward materialist, himself. It is necessary to remind readers of these facts in his past not solely because he happens to have changed his mind. If one reads him when he was an awkward Marxist, one readily discovers that he never seriously worked through Marxist ideas. Thus, his insistence on stressing basic human values in his founding statement about *POLITICS*. Anybody can believe in "human values," verbally. The belief in human values is one of the standardized formulae for retreat from Marxism. If these facts are kept in mind, a careful reading of Macdonald's invulnerable anti-Marxism of the moment will suggest that he is really reacting against something he never clearly grasped.

This can further be attested to by the further fact that he has never worked out his critique of Marxism. For several years, for instance, he has been incidentally, casually, off-handedly declaring that Lenin is responsible for Stalin. This can be a very serious issue. But Macdonald has never even troubled to specify how and why Lenin is responsible for Stalinism. When he makes this charge, one doesn't even know what he is talking about. He raises questions of this kind, and doesn't deal with them so that it is possible for one to join issue with him, openly, seriously, sharply. In general then, the new morality and religiosity which he is spreading across the pages of *POLITICS* is the product of a background of confusions and flighty changes of mind.

Concerning *POLITICS* as a whole, it is clear that with every passing month, this magazine becomes less political. Founded as an independent magazine, it rarely reveals any independence of thought. After two years, it has not developed a rigorous and systematic analysis of world political events, an analysis which would open up perspectives for its readers. Generally speaking, the political analyses of *POLITICS* have veered back and forth between a Left Wing New Dealism and an Orthodox Trotskyism. The editor is more or less politically torn between these currents, and they push him and pull him back and forth. *POLITICS* has often printed useful information, but it is rare that it knows how to handle this information. It opposed the war. It offers space to various currents of opinion. But, at the same time, it is a characterless magazine. It specializes in comments on and jokes about other peoples' politics. It resorts to the editorial practices of bourgeois magazines, the use of jokes, poems, quotations, fillers and the like, mainly items of a kind which suggest that other people are stupid. As such, it is a Left Wing *New Yorker*. Its real specialty is political pepsi-cola. It is the privilege of the editor to put out such a magazine. But an organ so edited looks slightly foolish when it suddenly starts crowing and challenging others to take it seriously on the highest level, to consider it as expressing a new theoretical tendency, to stop other work in order to answer its endless and banal attacks on Marxism. This is to be stressed especially when we recall that *POLITICS* set out as a true socialist magazine whose editor put himself forth as an unorthodox and specially competent interpreter and defender of Marx. From the very beginning, he has advanced and advocated socialist ideas, he has been Marxist by presenting anti-Marxist heroes to his readers. It seems as though his notion of the best way to understand Marx and to understand socialism is to print the criticisms of Marx and socialism which are always to be gotten from anti-Marxists and anti-socialists. In the beginning, the editor separated himself from such tendencies. But while separating himself, he did not defend his own avowed socialism and Marxism. Now, he has capitulated on these questions. He and a large number of his contributors are wallowing in the highest moral sentiments and the most blinding confusions. They express their morality and their confusion in articles which are, merely looked at from the standpoint of methodical thinking, a joke if not a disgrace. Writers of occasional articles and book reviews now bloom in the pages of *POLITICS* as theoreticians and moralists, almost as Leo Tolstoy's. And the editor, that sceptic of five years ago, cannot cast even a sceptical glance at all such developments.

Dwight Macdonald and most of his anti-Marxists take a moral position against Marxian writings. With this, they present themselves as morally more sensitive than Marxists. A statement of the moral differences involved will make the issue clear.

In *POLITICS*, then, Marxism is attacked on the moral plane.

Thus, we can see presented the difference between social morality and individual morality. Marxism presents a position of social morality. The premise for this position is that the major evils in this world are the consequence of the exploitation of man by man. Human nature is affected by this exploitation, and so the human behaviour that results in societies based on exploitation causes needless misery, suffering, injustice, brutality, war, bestiality, and in consequence, human nature is deformed—deformed for the worse. In this sense, we can say that there is implicit in Marxism a distinction between a conception of human nature and human behaviour. Medievalists, amateur instinct psychologists like Max Eastman, devotees of an undefined Absolute Justice, and others often confuse human nature and human behaviour.

This happens in POLITICS. To continue, Marxism presents the moral problem as the social problem. As the social problem, that which is called for is change, the elimination of the conditions and circumstances which enforce the continued practice of the exploitation of man by man. Thus, the social problem becomes the political problem. This view requires that the test of consequences be applied to action: It requires that men be judged by more than their assumptions, no matter how valid, by more than their statements of good intention, no matter how noble.

Contrasted to a view of social morality, there are various doctrines of individual morality. All such individual doctrines are premised on the idea that the moral problem is that of the regeneration of the individual. Whereas Marxism claims that better individuals will be socially created, in the long run, if a better society is created, this counter-doctrine argues that a better society will eventually result, once we start making better men. One type of individual morality is Christian, and this sees the creation of better individuals in terms of the ideas of eternal salvation. There are many variations of this, one of which is Tolstoyism. It claims, in the last analysis, that better individuals are created by men loving one another, practicing non-violence, political non-resistance, and (although Tolstoy's disciples usually don't adopt this key proposal of his) absolute continence. The end of Tolstoyan morality is the attainment of human perfectability: human perfectability will result in man's harmonizing himself with the Will of God, in his attainment of purity, and in the necessarily consequential dying out of the human race. Another variation of individual morality—one which is popular in these pages—bases itself on Absolute Morality, Absolute Justice. Neither of these is defined. In consequence, one cannot say, with any exactness, what either of these mean. However, these undefined Absolutes are presented as ideals which must be followed. Undefined, they must guide political actions; they must encourage us to engage in undescribed common struggle and common effort, although usually common struggle and common effort must be carried on outside of any *and even all* organizations. Absolute Justice, Absolute Morality must, here, be accepted as a human motive and as an ideal. It is presumably the consequence of some need in man's nature. In a vague way, the exponents of these Absolutes try to warrant their position, then, on the basis of a vague need. Further, they ask us to accept their views on the ground that they have valid assumptions. But this is a groundless argument. Man has a vague need for an Absolute. That vague need gives him a valid assumption. Because of this, his words and actions must be taken seriously, and the consequences of these words and actions are secondary. (In passing, it should be added that on more than one occasion, our Absolute Moralists will abandon their position here, and they will judge Marxists in terms of the consequences

of their actions. They do this without making clear and illuminating co-relations: thus, as I have noted, Dwight Macdonald has for several years been saying that Lenin is responsible for Stalin, but he never tells us just how this is the case.) Still another variation of this individual morality is based on psychiatric writings. Here, the regeneration of the individual really means preventative psychiatry and the cure of psycho-neurosis. And this is usually developed into a doctrine of sexual emancipation. Before society can be emancipated, the individual must be emancipated. He must be sexually free. And sexual freedom includes the creation of moral attitudes and material conditions which will permit boys of ten and eleven to have affairs without feeling guilty afterwards. Here, in substance, are the attitudes which underly the presumably unanswerable criticisms of Marxism printed in POLITICS.

POLITICS now claims that the social problem is reducible to a series of personal problems. Insofar as it proposes anything, it proposes that people become better, and sometimes, more sexually free. In answer to this, let it be said that the moralists and the amateur psychiatrists might go ahead and practice what they preach. They might become better and more free. But their prescriptions give us no levers for social change. For they do not deal in the terms in which the serious problems of the real world are posed. *These are problems of power.* These problems cannot be evaded by describing power as evil and corrupting. All that one does when one makes this charge is to call names. To say that power is evil is like saying that life is evil. Because the bread and butter problems of humanity are fought out, generalized, concretized through political struggles: and once we deal with politics, the problems that concern power arise. The political nature of the anti-Marxist writings in POLITICS amounts to little more than modernized and bohemian incantation. You call names.

With your name-calling, you adopt the air of being morally superior to whomever you criticize. The moral superiority of POLITICS, in fact, threatens to become merely the moral priggishness of a little clique.

There is a sharp cleavage in the writings which appear in POLITICS. When contemporary political events are analyzed, Moral Absolutes disappear. Thus, the editor does not analyze the British Labor Party and its policies by testing their conduct in terms of these Absolutes and, with these, of basic human values. He tries to make a political analysis. Similarly, he and others do not accept Labor politicians on the ground that these men can state valid assumptions, and that they, also, believe in justice. If they are questioned, you will undoubtedly find many of them more than willing to affirm their belief in Absolute Justice. Moral Absolutism and frivolous psychiatry are reserved for a critique of Marxist writings. And these critiques reveal an utter carefreeness with fact and theory. Often, Marxism will be "annihilated" in the most casual and incidental sentences. Casually, incidentally, the editor or one of his contributors will merely tell us that the law of the falling rate of profit has been refuted, that Marxism does not understand imperialism, that Marx couldn't prove why it was necessary for there to be a class structure in societies which have developed historically on the basis of a rise in the level of production. Helen Constat, who made this last charge, misstated what it was necessary for Marx to prove. Marx, in his historical analysis of social evolution, was striving to give a sequential picture of what happened. She would criticise his historical analysis and descriptions by degrading theory to the level where one discusses fruitless historical *as ifs*. Thus, she declared that socialism was possible in the time of Caesar and of Charlemagne. And

behind her critique, all that she has to base herself on is the same old vague and undefined affirmation of an Absolute. Frankly, why do people ask that time be wasted discussing such claims?

Looked at merely from the point of methodology, one can expose the nature of your anti-Marxist criticisms. You and your contributors attack Marxism. You charge it with being immoral, with lacking in scientific capacity, and you nibble at isolated Marxian statements. But you give no alternatives. You accuse Karl Marx, and others of not knowing how to think. You accuse. And then you say—defend yourselves. But you offer no alternatives. Thus, one has no means of checking your own statements. You base yourselves on Absolutes, and can't tell us what these are, how we are to apply them, how they concretely affect human actions and human history. And since you are hiding behind Absolutes, you more or less will claim that you don't have to defend yourselves. In consequence, we must take you seriously on faith. Why should we? If you do not offer alternative explanations which are empirically verifiable, we cannot check and evaluate your criticisms. This is one of the mere ABC's of methodology. But, literally, your "unanswerable" arguments drag us down to this level. And to repeat, you and your contributors are yet to show your capacity to explain and analyze events in terms of your valid assumptions, your Absolutes, and, in the case of some, your psychiatry. If one should agree with you, one will remain in just about the same situation as he was when he was, presumably, a Marxist. He won't know what to do, other than talk. In other words, there is no perspective in your anti-Marxist criticisms. The only practical proposals you have, then, are those of self-betterment. One can try to better oneself without having to dredge the writings of Dwight Macdonald and Nicola Chiaromonte in order to try and make a little sense out of them.

In conclusion, let me ask you to answer a question. Where, precisely where is POLITICS going?

NEW YORK CITY

JAMES T. FARRELL

—Some of Farrell's general points, such as the difference between his and my view of morality, will be discussed in "The Root Is Man" next month, so I won't go into them here. But I cannot resist taking advantage of a few of the many openings his letter presents:

(1) When I spoke of Marxists suffering from paralysis as to theory today, I didn't mean to impugn Farrell's literary productivity, which is certainly enormous. Nor did I mean that Marxists don't apply their doctrines to current events. I meant that they seem unable either to defend the basic assumptions of their thinking, if they are adequate, or, if not, to reshape them to fit the present world better. Specifically, they seem unable to handle the kind of basic criticisms our "New Roads" series has tried to make. Farrell's letter itself I submit as Exhibit A.

(2) The difference between Farrell and myself is that he has found certainty many years ago, while I am still looking. I am, therefore, forced to plead guilty to many of his charges. I admit I have been "constantly changing my mind" and hope to continue to do so. Why not? Only those who have stopped thinking, or never started, boast of never changing their minds. Presumably, it is only the last change that Farrell objects to—at least, I assume he does not condemn my changed attitude towards capitalism and the Luce-papers. I confess I am not "a real Marxist" and have never been, but this was hardly a secret even when I was in the Trotskyist movement. I also plead guilty to having made mistakes but not to having concealed them. On the con-

trary, those lucky people like Farrell who are in possession of a foolproof, money-back-guarantee System usually instance my frequent admissions of error as one more sign of my incompetence.

(3) Farrell's estimate of POLITICS is confusing. It is clear he disapproves of it, and he scores some telling points, as the charge that POLITICS writers sometimes go in for the bourgeois practice of being funny. (He might have added that it is frequently possible to read their articles with some pleasure and interest, another capitalistic corruption from which the Marxist press is free.) But just what he dislikes is not at all clear. He charges that POLITICS is (a) "cliqueish", (b) a one-man organ, (c) "not independent", (4) "characterless." Since a clique implies several people, it is hard to imagine an organ that is both "one-man" and "cliqueish." Also, clique or one-man organs would by definition seem to be independent (otherwise, dependent on whom or what? on the editor? the clique? in that case, the magazine depends on . . . itself). And a definite character, of however revolting a quality, would seem to be the very least one might expect from a clique magazine. There is also some confusion as to how seriously Farrell takes POLITICS. He protests, on the one hand, that it is a waste of time to answer our imbecilities and is indignant that we exact such a labor from him (he somewhat exaggerates the moral obligation we intended to lay on him, but no matter). But then he composes a truly massive answer; in fact his repeated complaints as to the absurdity of taking any notice of our "rubbish" is one reason for the extraordinary length of the notice he does take. (After this, by the way, I trust no one will complain that the defenders of Marxism are excluded from our pages.)

(4) What confuses Farrell about POLITICS is that its articles sometimes are Marxist in character and sometimes non-Marxist; such a magazine, from his parochial standpoint, is just "characterless." Thus he is bewildered by the fact that in analyzing such things as the British Labor Party, we talk in political rather than moral terms. But why not? Our contention is not that events cannot be profitably analyzed from a political standpoint, including a Marxist one, but rather that it is onesided to make this one's exclusive concern, and that today especially more emphasis needs to be placed on ethical factors than Marxists put there. Incidentally, I cannot see why Farrell, who can work up plenty of moral heat about the lies and injustices of Stalinism, should be so disturbed when POLITICS talks in moral terms—unless because the blade is sometimes turned against his side.

(5) POLITICS must also plead guilty to offering no systematic alternative to Marxism; this is part of that "negative" and "purely destructive" character that has aroused complaints, and congratulations, since the magazine began. But the fact that we haven't yet found or worked out—and may never—a system better adapted to the needs of today than Marxism does not in any way make Marxism itself adapted to those needs. One should not make a "lesser evil" choice among social philosophies any more than among belligerents in a world war. Some of us have come to the sad conclusion that Marxism is no longer adequate to the socialist ends we have in view. We are groping around, changing our minds, doubtless often making fools of ourselves, but until a drastic break is made with the old tradition—which involves the risk and discomfort of being so to speak ideologically homeless—a new approach will not be found. People are lazy and won't really bestir themselves until they lose confidence in the old ways. This doesn't mean that Marxism was simply a vast mistake, to be forgotten, cast aside. Only crackpots with a panacea behave

like that towards the achievements of past thinkers. As Marx himself built on what had gone before—British “classical” economics, the political thought of the Enlightenment, Hegelian philosophy—so must any new approach grow out of Marxism (among other ancestors) and not simply reject it. But just as Marx, while often acknowledging his debt to these predecessors, also did not hesitate to disagree basically with them, so today, in my opinion, must we behave in similar irreverent and even hostile fashion towards Marxism.

(6) As to where, “precisely”, is POLITICS going—I have to confess I don't know. Farrell and other readers, however, may find out for themselves by promptly renewing their subscriptions.

## The Intelligence Office

### PROUDHON IN ENGLISH

Sir:

I was exceptionally interested in reading the splendid article on Proudhon in your September issue. I would, however, like to correct an error. The article states that there is only one major book by Proudhon available in English. An accompanying advertisement implies that this work is John Beverley Robinson's translation of *The General Idea of the Revolution in the XIX Century*.

I would like to call your attention to Benjamin R. Tucker's translation of *What Is Property?* Also there is in English a collection of Proudhon's writings entitled: *Proudhon's Solution of the Social Problem* (Vanguard, 1927), edited by my brother, the late Henry Cohen.

PALM SPRINGS, CALIF.

THYRZA COHEN

—Our ad used the phrase “now available in English.” I believe the two works mentioned by Miss Cohen have long been out of print.—Ed.

### “EVERY ONE SEEMS EXHAUSTED . . .”

Sir:

Your letter reached us this very morning (Feb. 15) and it brought us hope and joy.

In the past we have done a lot for international solidarity. We have sheltered and helped hundreds of Italians, Germans, Austrians and Spanish people. But now that Europe is so terribly shaken, we can't expect any help but from the States.

It is the first time we heard a friendly voice from over there. This last winter has been terrible for us. We managed to keep our courage alive for 5 years although we went through terrible sufferings, but now everyone seems exhausted. Although my husband and I were used to fight and felt once hardship would never get the better of us, we are terribly down-hearted, even desperate.

Our country is ruined, so are our hopes. Most French people have got the habit of living on black market. Morality is terrible. We feel we've become a kind of Spain.

My husband is a teacher so am I. As it was impossible to live on my husband's wages, I started working again, although I am 48 and my husband is 47. . . . Our daughter is 25. She got nerve trouble where we were bombarded—then we are so short of food she got worse and worse.

My husband is also a writer. If you feel interested in an honest man's opinion, he will send you a letter in a few days, but it will have to be in French. My English is too limited to allow me to translate something serious. I can just manage baby talk.

We don't remember having tasted a real good meal cooked with decent fat. We don't remember having been warm enough, and we don't remember having been dressed decently. The lack of food is terrible, but one gets used to it. The lack of clothes is more awful. Our underwears are rags with 10 or 20 patches. After 4 years of this misery we feel terrible. Now we know what people living in slums must feel like. Of course we manage to be decent when we go outside, but all the time we feel rotten because of our worn out underwears. Rotten and cold.

How I hate to ask for anything. I should feel very pleased simply to write to American friends. For years we've been stifling. It is good to speak freely. Tell the people who want to keep in touch with us that however great and bad our needs are, what we want above all is understanding and the opportunity of writing freely. I wonder if you know that no one in France is allowed to start a newspaper without the government's approval. My husband used to write for antifascist newspapers, but he has given it up.

We thank you very much for your sympathy. You may be sure we shall be overjoyed to answer the American friends who will write us. I enclose several names of friends who need help badly.

DIJON, FRANCE

MARIE X

### AN APPEAL FOR AID AND SOLIDARITY

A declaration from the POUM to labor organizations and revolutionary workers groups of all lands!

The POUM, the party which during the Spanish revolution struggled so heroically and so uncompromisingly for the victory of the workingclass against fascism, the party which, slandered and persecuted, knew how to defend its program and its membership, in spite of the terrible Stalinite repression,—this party remains at its post.

The POUM was reorganized in Spain in 1939—a few months after Franco's victory. Ever since then, to fill in the gap produced by the absence of other organizations, its militants organized various resistance groups, among them—“Freedom Front”.

The POUM held its first illegal national conference in the autumn of 1943, laying the foundations for the definite reorganization under the Franco terror. It held another conference in the summer of 1944—a few weeks after the liberation of France.

From 1939 to 1944, the POUM has published 3 underground newspapers. Since September 1944 the POUM has published its central organ “La Batalla” (in small tabloid form) and has just inaugurated a new illegal paper “Socialist Cataluña” in the Catalan tongue.

The POUM has had to reconstruct its Central Committee 3 times due to the imprisonment of its leading members. In the prisons and jails of the Falange, hundreds upon hundreds of our best militants are languishing. But the POUM continues its struggle against Franco and for socialism. Its third national conference held in October 1945 somewhere in Catalonia, has shown its vitality and growth.

Heavy responsibilities weigh upon the POUM—to help the prisoners and their families; to protect the persecuted comrades; to assure the continued regular publication of its organs “La Batalla” and “Cataluña socialista”, the material support to all our fighting groups—only to mention the most important.

Through the expressed wishes of our comrades in Spain, we address ourselves to those organizations, groups and friends of our party—to all those who aided us during the evil days of the Stalinist repression. Ours is a revolutionary socialist party. It does not have the treasury that Negrin was able to take out of Spain. Ours is an interna-

tional organization and for that reason it counts on the active solidarity of the workingclass and its most progressive sections. It is to those that we address ourselves at this moment and we are fully convinced that our appeal will not go unheeded.

BORDEAUX, Jan. 6, 1945.

COMMITTEE OF THE POUM IN FRANCE

—Aid should be sent to: Pedro Bonet, Chez M. Planas, 23 Rue des Volontaires, Paris 15, France.

### A COMMUNION OF FASTING

Sir:

In the entire field of small periodicals there is none I know so alive with intellectual integrity and compassion and the beginnings of spiritual discernment as POLITICS is. And only because I feel this way about your magazine am I writing to you now to suggest that what you have commenced to do in the direction of relief packages is admirable, and yet for you, as editor of POLITICS, and for the body of your aware readers, it is not enough. Let me try to explain why.

Here in America, relatively untouched by the War's aftermath of starvation, most of us are pervaded by a profound feeling of guilt commingled with a paralyzing apathy and dread towards the future. A vast psychic cloud, like a terribly magnified spiritual repercussion of the monstrous atomic explosions, lies like a pall over victorious America. It has eclipsed this false peace, and we move through it

desperately seeking rifts of light and glimpses of a living human future.

No wonder, then, when POLITICS announces a program for relief packages for destitute families in Europe, that its readers meet this appeal with a generous response. No wonder, because all of us—especially Americans—are seeking, consciously or unconsciously, ways of easing our oppressive burden of guilt. And the relief packages seem at first glance to offer a measure of partial absolution.

Yet if we be honest withourselves, we must come to admit that this is an illusion. Entrance into absolution and into the beginnings of inward peace cannot be so easily gained. If we pause to reflect, we will know that it is but a shallow charity to share our *surplus* food or cash with our destitute earthly brothers. And if we search our hearts we shall see that we derive from such acts only a deceptive reward: a false sense of our own goodness and generosity, which sooner or later will grow barren, leaving us as inwardly oppressed as before.

What can we do, then? Many things, no doubt. Yet whatever we do, if we are dedicated to the healing of humanity into a true brotherhood of peace, we must move on a deeper level than charity.

We, as Americans, to form a *living* communion with the suffering peoples of Europe and Asia, must share—no matter in how humble a portion—their actual hunger and want. We must experience within ourselves, not by thought, not by abstract sympathy, but in our own flesh, in our own bodies, the pangs of deprivation. And we must do this voluntarily, of spiritual necessity. O my comrades, it is more, far more, than food and cash we must share—it is *ourselves* we must share. Don't you see that?

This is a most crucial point in human history. We all sense it. Who knows how profoundly some simple act of love may alter the deathward drift of contemporary society? Who knows? No one, really. Yet we must explore all the small cracks and fissures in this labyrinthian tomb of modern civilization. And surely this is one hopeful fissure still open to us.

We can begin by fasting from one main meal each week. I know how quickly many will shy away from this. I know that to many moderns it smacks of fanaticism to speak of fasting. I know that it's much easier just to make up a package of foodstuffs from the surplus on our shelves; and easier still just to send some surplus cash and let someone else go to the bother of purchasing, packaging, and mailing. But you who turn aside, would you if instead of remote strangers it was your beloved? Or your own children? You know you could not. When we love, the confining bounds of self are dissolved and our identity merges with the beloved. When our beloved suffers, we suffer, and we yearn to take literally that suffering onto ourselves, into ourselves. That very suffering is precious, since it is part of the beloved. Have you forgotten? Have you forgotten too the intense joy, the mysterious ecstasy of that release from the lonely prison of self? Why, then, has your love become short-circuited? Why do you so fear it, or deny it, when it is the very open sesame into the absolution which your numbed and oppressed heart so craves? How can you confine yourself to relief packages? What are relief packages but charity, and what is charity but *caritas*, or cherishing, and what is cherishing but love? Let the desiccated churches and the benevolent groups be content with such shallow charities, but don't let us.

Where we came together before for feasting, we must now join in communions of fasting. Our hearts will guide us into further extensions of our initial weekly fasts. And as we shed superfluous luxuries, we shall find ourselves

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growing ever inwardly richer and surer of our way. It is the beginning that is hardest, the sloughing off of our old selves, our old habits, our old false solaces to which we still cling as if adjusting ourselves to a perpetual mole-like existence within our tomb.

Only in the nightmare world do the chimeras of brutality and force and violence hold sway. In the inrush of light from our spreading fissures they will begin to fade. Let us commence now to let in the light in which they shall at last vanish.

HAYDENVILLE, MASS.

JAMES P. COONEY

## *politicking*

Beginning with the next issue, the price of POLITICS will be raised to 35¢ a copy, \$3.50 a year. This is partly due to increased costs, partly to a desire to be able to expand the size of issues when material warrants it. Present subscriptions, of course, will be honored in full at the old rate.

A postcard from Carl Jawurek, of Los Angeles, put it very well, I thought: "My advice is *not* to depend on voluntary contributions for a sustaining fund but to raise the price according to the needs contemplated. People generally are allergic to contributions, and if they give, they do it only once. That's why every progressive publication has to fight for existence. Those who want to read a mag edited to their liking will gladly pay the price for it. (Be your own angel.)"

*Notes for Package Senders:* To date (March 13) 2,612 packages have been sent (1,316 last report); 850 people are now sending (730 last report). More senders are still urgently needed, as requests from Europe are coming in heavily. Drop us a card asking for as many leaflets describing the project as you can use among your friends. . . . The Post Office recently warned the public that many packages are not getting through because of improper wrapping; heavy string, plenty of it, and above all *tightly* tied is the secret of good packaging. . . . The French Government on Feb. 19 announced that about 150,000 gift parcels a month are going from American individuals to families in France, that loss from all causes are less than 1% of total parcels; and that steps are being taken to expedite parcels. Our own recent experience partly confirms this: our mail shows that parcels are getting through safely, and the time of transit is currently about a month (as against two months previously) . . . Put rice, tea, cereal, etc., in metal containers. "Otherwise," writes one recipient, "they're apt to come out of the cardboard packet and congregate in the bottom of the box; then when a rat gnaws a corner, as often happens, they slip out." . . . Letters and postcards may now be sent to Austria, and after April 1 may be sent to Germany. . . . WANTED: SECOND-HAND PORTABLE TYPEWRITERS FOR WRITERS ON OUR LIST. DONATE OR SELL. Incidentally, we have just heard from the Spanish leftist leader to whom we sent, by hand, a typewriter: "I can tell you it was the greatest pleasure we have had in years. We have just gotten a translating job and this will facilitate our work enormously." . . . Those wonderful 40-pound Army food packages which the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe ("CARE") will deliver to European families for an all-inclusive price of \$15 are not yet a

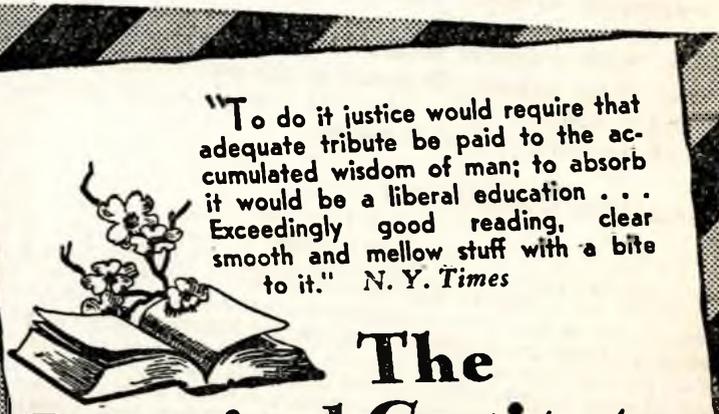
reality; they have been bought and are ready for shipment as soon as certain final obstacles are overcome; we will let you know as soon as the plan is actually working, but don't count on it for current needs of your families.

It looks now as though the second series of POLITICS Friday evening meetings will have to be postponed until next fall. I don't have the time at the moment to plan and execute them properly. Unless I can find some one else able and willing to be the impresario, the thing will have to lie dormant a while.

As possibly one or two readers have noticed, "The Root Is Man" does not appear in this issue. I've come to distrust my promises, but it does look likely for April.

*Contributors to this issue:* GEORGE WOODCOCK is a poet and journalist; he edits the anarchist quarterly, *Now*. He will send us a London Letter every two months. . . . SELDEN RODMAN, formerly editor of *Common Sense* magazine, and co-editor of the current anthology, *War and the Poet*, has published several volumes of poetry; he has just returned to civilian life after several years in the Army. . . . PHILIP SPRATT's article is reprinted from the first issue of an interesting new magazine published in Bombay, India, and called *The Marxian Way*. (A soldier-reader sent it in to us, for which many thanks.) Its editor is M. N. Roy, the original founder of the Communist Party in India, who, as a leading figure in the Bukharin-Thalheimer "right" wing in the Communist International, was expelled by Stalin in 1929; he has maintained a small following of his own. . . . JACK JONES is a young novelist who is now working in Florida. . . . KATHRYN CARLISLE is a student at Bard College, N. Y.

The new book Dr. Karl Jaspers is working on is not about *Proust*, as stated last issue, but about *Truth*. A bad



"To do it justice would require that adequate tribute be paid to the accumulated wisdom of man; to absorb it would be a liberal education . . . Exceedingly good reading, clear smooth and mellow stuff with a bite to it." *N. Y. Times*

## The Practical Cogitator

By Charles P. Curtis, Jr. & Ferris Greenslet

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59 University Place New York 3

phone connection is responsible for the error. As an instance of human (and mechanical) fallibility and the resulting spread of non-knowledge (better, anti-knowledge), the incident might be worth a footnote in the book.

Apropos Orwell's *Animal Farm*, reviewed in this issue, George Woodcock writes me that it "has done good work here. The Stalinists are so rattled that they haven't attempted any serious attack on Orwell. Instead their reviews all pretend it is a book about Nazi Germany!" (This is some kind of a high even in Commie literary circles.) Orwell himself writes:

"A month or two back, the Queen sent to Warburg's for a copy (this doesn't mean anything politically; her literary adviser is Osbert Sitwell, who would probably advise her to read a book of that type), and as there wasn't a single one left, the Royal Messenger had to go down to the Anarchist bookshop for a copy, which strikes me as mildly comic. However, now a second edition of 10,000 has come out, also a lot of translations are being done. . . . I had a lot of difficulty placing it in the USA. —, who had been pestering me for a book, rejected it on the ground that the American public is not interested in animals. . . . I also had an awful fight to get it into print over here; no one except Warburg would look at it. . . . Even the Ministry of Information horned in and tried to keep it out of print. The comic thing is that after all this fuss, the book got almost no hostile reception when it came out. The fact is that people are fed up with this Russian nonsense and it's just a question of who is the first to point out that the emperor has no clothes on."

What struck me about *Animal Farm*, in addition to the literary tact with which it is done so that it never becomes either whimsical or boringly tendentious, was that I had rarely been made so aware of the pathos of the whole Russian experience. This fairy tale about animals, whose mood is reflective rather than indignant, conveys more of the terrible human meaning of Stalinism than any of the many serious books on the subject, with one or two exceptions. It is as good in its way as the chapters on Russia in Koestler's *The Yogi and the Commissar* are good as a journalistic summary, based on solid research, of the case against the Stalin regime in every department of Russian life. Some publisher should bring out the two in a single small cheap volume. It would be the perfect thing to put into the hands of those who still nourish honest illusions about the Soviet Union of today.

#### DIALECTICAL CONFUSIONISM

(1)

The Los Angeles section of the Socialist Workers Party have announced their endorsement of Charlotta A. Bass, independent Negro candidate for councilman from the 7th district. . . . Her program is the program of the corrupt Communist Political Association (Stalinists) which is one of craven submission to the Big Business capitalists and their political representatives, who are the real authors of all the injustices which Negroes suffer. . . . Her election to the City Council . . . will be a progressive step toward independent Negro political action.  
—The Militant, April 7, 1945.

(2)

The New York local of the Socialist Workers Party is supporting the candidate of the American Labor Party, Johannes Steel, in the special election in the 19th Congressional district. . . . At best, he is a rank opportunist with a shady political record, acting for the moment as a handpicked tool for the Stalinists who dominate the ALP. This gang . . . have for years been sabotaging the movement for labor's independent political action by making foul-smelling deals with the corrupt boss-ridden political parties of the capitalist class. . . . A victory of the ALP candidate would strengthen the movement for a genuine independent labor party.

—News release from the Socialist Workers Party, Feb. 13.

## Complete your files of *politics*!

- No. 1. February 1944.  
Walter J. Oakes: *Toward a Permanent War Economy*  
Dwight Macdonald: *A Theory of Popular Culture*
- No. 2. March 1944.  
Peter Meyer: *The Soviet Union, a New Class Society (Part I)*  
Daniel Bell: *The Coming Tragedy of American Labor*
- No. 3. April 1944.  
C. Wright Mills: *The Intellectual in Society*  
Peter Meyer: *The Soviet Union, a New Class Society (Part Two)*
- No. 4. May 1944.  
Kurt List: *The Music of Soviet Russia*
- No. 5. June 1944.  
Nicola Chiaromonte: *Croce and Italian Liberalism*
- No. 6. July 1944.  
Don Calhoun: *The Political Relevance of Conscientious Objection*
- No. 7. August 1944.  
Bruno Bettelheim: *Behavior in Extreme Situations (Notes on a Year in Nazi Concentration Camps)*  
Wilfred H. Kerr: "Negroism", *Strange Fruit of Segregation*
- No. 8. September 1944.  
Dwight Macdonald: *War as an Institution (1): Notes on the Psychology of Killing*
- No. 9. October 1944. . . . Exhausted.
- No. 10. November 1944.  
George Orwell: *The Ethics of the Detective Story*
- No. 11. December 1944.  
Llewellyn Queener: *War as an Institution (3): Inter-Enemy Ethics*
- No. 12. January, 1945 . . . Exhausted.
- No. 13. February, 1945.  
Simone Weil: *Reflections on War*  
Meyer Schapiro: *A Note on Max Weber's Politics*
- No. 14. March, 1945.  
Dwight Macdonald: *The Responsibility of Peoples*
- No. 15. April, 1945.  
"Why Am I Fighting?"
- No. 16. May, 1945.  
Daniel Bell: *The Political Lag of Commonwealth*  
*The Gratsos Memorandum*
- No. 17. June, 1945.  
*Conscription & Conscientious Objection, a Symposium*
- No. 18. July, 1945.  
Paul Goodman: *The Political Meaning of some Recent Revisions of Freud*  
*The Japanese People—3 Basic Books*
- No. 19. August, 1945.  
Louis Clair: *The Peace Criminals*  
*Text of General Patton's D-Day-Minus-One Speech*
- No. 20. September, 1945.  
Nicola Chiaromonte: *Koestler, or Tragedy Made Futile*  
Dwight Macdonald: *Labor Imperialism*  
*The Atomic Bomb—3 articles*
- No. 21. October, 1945.  
P. J. Proudhon: *Selections, with introductory article*  
Nancy Macdonald: *Are Hospitals Made for People?*
- No. 22. November, 1945.  
Simone Weil: *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*
- No. 23. December, 1945.  
*New Roads (1)—articles by Will Herberg, Paul Goodman, and "European"*
- No. 24. January, 1946.  
*New Roads (2)—articles by Helen Constan, Albert Votaw, Don Calhoun and James Peck*
- No. 25. February, 1946.  
Nicola Chiaromonte. *On the Kind of Socialism Called "Scientific"*

The above issues cost 25¢ each, except for Nos. 2 and 22, which are 50¢.

\$5.00 for all issues still in print (23).