SOCIALISM RECONSIDERED

SOCIALISM RECONSIDERED

BY
M. R. MASANI

PADMA PUBLICATIONS LTD
BOMBAY

First Published March 1944
Second Edition October 1944

Printed by V. R. Sawant at the Associated Advertisers & printers Ltd., 505, Arthur Road, Tardeo, Bombay 7, and Published by Morarji Padamsey or Padma Publications Ltd., Laxmi Building, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta Road, Fort, Bombay

CONTENTS

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The First Edition of this little book had a wider and warmer welcome than I had dared, in view of its heresies, to anticipate for it. Judging alike by press reviews and personal letters, by the requests for permission to translate into different Indian languages and by the public demand which has made this edition necessary, *Socialism Reconsidered* would seem to have met a badly-felt need on the part of those whose thoughts were moving away from *orthodox* socialism and capitalism alike.

The book may also claim to have served to a certain extent the purpose with which it was primarily written —to stimulate discussion on issues which are becoming of ever increasing importance. In the course of that discussion, some critics have complained about the inadequacy and incompleteness of the suggestions thrown up in the second part of the booklet. The answer to that is twofold. First, that no one individual can be expected to come forward with a complete alternative theory to that of orthodox socialism, and I certainly had not set out to do so. The second is that *Socialism Reconsidered* was, after all, only an essay of fifty-five pages, and could not possibly cover all the questions that the critics would have liked answered.

The discussion on the book has revealed one or two misunderstandings. One of these is that I have accepted Gandhiji's theory of ' trusteeship '. What I had done (on pp. 53 and 54 of the First Edition) was specifically to state that I do not accept trusteeship as an alter-

native to the method of nationalisation of property, but that I consider it of value as one of the conceptions to be utilised during the period of transition. The other misunderstanding is that I have accepted Burnham's thesis in favour of *The Managerial Revolution.* There is here a double misconception. To start with, Burnham himself does not *favour* the Managerial State. He only *warns* against the probability of its emergence. I am inclined to share his view as to the probabilities, but it is precisely because I am keen that India at least should escape the Managerial Revolution that I have suggested a study of Gandhiji's contribution in the hope that it may provide an escape from the managerial *cul de sac* ; it is precisely because I am anti-totalitarian that I refuse to accept present-day Russia as a socialist state.

The publication of the First Edition was followed by that of Professor M. L. Dantwala's *Gandhism Reconsidered,* a study which has further fortified and strengthened the line of thought which I have advanced for consideration. Two other publications followed—purporting to be replies to my booklet. Both emanated from Communist quarters, though the usual efforts were made to camouflage this by Communists becoming ' socialists ' and comrades becoming " Sriyuts "! With delicious inconsistency, I was supposed by one to have unmasked myself and yet by the other to invite an answer. Both these ' replies ' suffered from the fact that the Communists have so got into the habit of mistaking vituperation for argument that they have lost the very capacity to distinguish one from the other. That is perhaps inevitable because they have such a weak case ; and so they resort to the time-honoured argument *ad hominem.* Almost in the same breath I have

been accused of being a Fascist, a Trotskyist and an agent of the capitalists. The late Gabriel D'Annunzio once protested : " Even *I* cannot be in two places at the same time "! I may with equal modesty be permitted to protest that it is beyond even my capacity to be a Trotskyist, a Capitalist and a Fascist *all at the same time !*

It is not necessary to take fuller note of the Communist ' replies '. Their palmiest days lie in their past, and no better epitaph can be prepared for them than Mahadev Desai's words in the last issue of *Harijan* which he was to edit, that of August 9, 1942 :

> " The Communists, I am glad, have won *their* liberty. They deserved it, even if they had not paid for it the price of supporting the war effort. But I wonder if they have won the liberty of India. They have not only forsworn their country's liberty but their own principles."

Even Professor H. J. Laski, who has spent years of fruitless effort in trying to establish understanding with the Communist Party in his own country, is driven in his *Marx and Today* to write of " the follies committed by the Communist Party here, and elsewhere, its tergiversations, its mania for conspiracy, its lust for personal invective, its economy in the use of truth."

Perhaps the only serious attempt at a rejoinder was that by a certain Professor in a weekly journal. Being an extremely erudite and able writer with a brilliant and incisive pen, and not being a Party member but only a ' fellow traveller ', he wrote with that restraint and that subtlety which the hundred per cent Communist has lost. It is because his line of argument is so typical of the intellectual fellow travellers of the Communist Party in this country that I propose to

deal in a certain amount of detail with his review, And just in case any one should have doubts regarding the angle from which the learned Professor really approaches the subject, I would refer him to the *People's War* of 9th July, 1944, where, in the course of a congratulatory message to that journal so distinguished for its attempts at disruption of the national cause, he made this amazing statement : " The *People's War* represents the best nationalist thought of India "!

This reviewer accused me of selecting my facts and of having gone to the professed opponents of communism for them. Let us see what truth there is in this charge. I have tried, as far as possible, to eschew the testimony of capitalists, fascists and anti-socialists of all kinds. If I have condemned Soviet Russia, it is out of the mouth of socialists and communists themselves. Each of the people whose testimony I have cited, *e.g.*, Max Eastman, Louis Fischer, Eugene Lyons, Andre Gide, Arthur Koestler and Freda Utley, have been consistent socialists, more than one has been a member of the Communist Party, and all of them were at an earlier stage ardent friends and admirers of the Soviet Revolution. If, however, it is desired that the testimony of such a valiant friend of Stalin and of today's Russia as Mr. Winston Churchill should be quoted, I have great pleasure in reproducing the following remarks of the British Prime Minister made in the House of Commons on May 24, 1944 :

> " Profound changes have taken place in Soviet Russia. The Trotskyist form of Communism has been completely wiped out . . . The religious side of Russian life has had a wonderful rebirth. The discipline and military etiquette of the Russian army are insuperable. There is a new National

Anthem, the music of which Marshal Stalin sent to me, which I liked the B.B.C. to play on frequent occasions . . . The Comintern has been abolished . . . These are marked departures from conceptions which were held some years ago (*Tory Cheers*)."

The Professor was good enough to go on to suggest that "Lucien Laurat would have been a better guide for our author than Mr. Eastman." I turned to Laurat's book *Marxism and Democracy* with every desire to learn and, if necessary, to stand corrected, because undoubtedly Lucien Laurat is one of the finest commentators of Marx and scholars of Marxism. But lo and behold, what should I find but that Laurat completely endorses the argument of the first part of my book and contradicts all that the reviewer had to say! Here is just one passage from that book describing Russia in language which I had hesitated to use :

"Although the Russian economic system has often been called 'State capitalism,' and although the term 'State slavery' employed by Karl Kautsky seems to us a more appropriate designation, in our opinion the present Russian regime is not slavery, or serfdom, or capitalism, but something of all three. It is related to slavery and serfdom by the absolute and total suppression of all freedom for the workers, who are tied by domestic passports to their places of residence, and often to their places of employment, like the feudal serf to the *glebe*. It is related to capitalism by the preservation of a great number of economic categories and legal forms. However, it is fundamentally different from any of these systems."

An attempt was made by the reviewer to correct me on three points of fact which are of considerable importance— the absence of political democracy, the absence of workers' control, and the rise of economic inequalities. It was alleged that it was unfair of me, for instance, to omit references to the hundred thousand primary meetings in field and factory at which the Constitution of 1936 was discussed before its final adoption. To the erudite Professor, this is evidence of democracy. The fact that no political party except the one in power was and is allowed even to exist, that at not a single one of the hundred thousand meetings was the Constitution rejected or amended, and that these meetings were nothing but propaganda meetings to boost Stalin's regime are, according to the learned Professor, irrelevant details. If I may respectfully urge it, what is important is not the number of meetings but the fact that they should be *free* meetings, where free discussion and even that (to Communists) odious phenomenon—opposition—should be possible.

The absence of workers' control the Professor sought to controvert by stating that the directors of industrial trusts are " at the mercy of production Committees in the factories." Here, I am afraid the Professor is badly out of date. It is true that factory committees did exist many years ago, but they caused too much ' trouble ' and so they were liquidated along with the ' Red ' Directors. Today, Russian Trade Unions have become the counterpart of Dr. Ley's Labour Front in Germany—and their only purpose is to act as instruments for speeding up production.

The third objection was to my emphasis on the restoration of economic inequalities in Russia and the reference to the Stakhanovist movement.

Evading a distasteful development with the plea that his 4,500—word review provided no space for a discussion of Stakhanovism, the reviewer went on to present figures of Russian incomes which he thought refuted my thesis. Actually, he only provided further evidence for my proposition. Quoting Mr. Bergson in the *Journal of Economy* of April, 1942, he pointed out that in 1934 the spread in wage-earning was practically as wide as that in other countries. That is precisely what I had said.

In this connection, it would perhaps not be out of place to mention that more than one correspondent has enquired how my statement that State Bonds carried 7 per cent interest was to be reconciled with a reference in Wendell Willkie's *One World* to non-interest-bearing bonds. I can only guess that Mr. Willkie was referring to special War bonds carrying no interest. Of the fact that at the outbreak of the war normal investment in State Bonds carried 7 per cent there can be no question. Among the many authorities for that fact are none other than those pillars of *Soviet Communism*, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, who also go on to refer to " twenty-five million depositors " in the State Savings Banks who are " encouraged by interest at the rate of eight per cent and by total exemption of deposits from income tax, inheritance tax, and various stamp duties."

In consonance with the falsification of facts and the distortion of Marxist theories which have been proceeding in Russia for many years now, it has been claimed that the maxim : " To each according to his need," pertains to communism, while : " To each according to his work," is characteristic of socialism, and that judged by this test socialism has been established in Russia. This definition of socialism is of course a vulgarisation of the socialist

ideal and an attempt to bring it in line with the prevailing realities. But even this modest claim can no longer be substantiated in Russia today. That earnings are *not* according to work is brought out very clearly in the following passages from Eric Strauss's *Soviet Russia*:

> " Wages of 800, 1,000, 1,200 and more roubles a month are not unusual for Stakhanovists of repute, and the ' heroes of labour ' tell in interviews in the Soviet Press about motor cycles and cars, wireless sets and gramophones, private lessons in dancing or in foreign languages, and many other good things which they are now able to enjoy....
>
> " This wage system obviously contradicts the principle of Socialism as expressed by the slogan ' to each according to his work.' It may be said that the higher utility of this work justified the extra payment made by the State. But this strange principle of reversed marginal utility not only resembles suspiciously many justifications of interest and profit, it has in any case nothing in common with the Socialist principle of payment according to the amount of actual work done. In view of the fact that piecework on the basis of a differentiated wage scale already takes into account differences in quantity and quality of labour, the premium paid to the group leader is paid without any equivalent—unless the social utility of his work consists in speeding-up the work of his subordinates and lowering the piece rates paid to the average worker. To claim the achievement of Socialism as perfected under the pretext of general piecework under extremely onerous conditions is nothing but adding insult

to Socialism to the injury done to the working class . . .

" If a minority of skilled workers makes a contribution to the common fund of goods which is 10 or 20 or even 100 per cent greater than would follow from their number, while every member of this minority receives consumption goods to the tune of 300, 500 or even 1,000 per cent more than a common workman, the remaining quantity of consumption goods does not suffice to reward the majority of workers ' according to the work done ' by them . . .

" The unskilled strata of the working class receive certainly somewhat less, and the upper strata of Stakhanovists and industrial managers—not to mention the members of the ruling bureaucracy —receive appreciably more than warranted by their work."

The result of this process was stated by Leon Trotsky in 1939, on the basis of the collation and analysis of statistics published in the Soviet press, to be that " the upper 11% or 12% of the Soviet population now received approximately 50% of the national income. This differentiation is sharper than in the United States, where the upper 10% of the population receives approximately 35% of the national income."

The political reflection of this new social stratification is to be found in the composition of the formal organs, for what little they are worth, of the Russian State. " Among the 2,016 delegates of the last Congress of Soviets (December 1936), 937 (or 47 per cent) were," according to Eric Strauss, " members of the Central Executive Committee, directors of enterprises and specialists, responsible officials

of the Party and the Trade Unions, and higher army officers ; 589 delegates (or 29 per cent) were presidents of local soviets, of collective and state farms, etc.; 430 delegates (or 21 per cent) were Stakhanovists ; and 60 (or 3 per cent) were simple workers and peasants."

I do not think there is need to labour this point any further. Wide and growing economic and social inequalities are there to see for any one who does not choose to blink. The kind of socialism that exists in Russia today can, to quote Lucien Laurat (to whom the Professor so kindly referred me) " attract only those who prefer blind obedience to reason ; only slothful minds prepared to believe every lie told to them about the so-called Soviet paradise ; only people who are not astonished to hear elections called free in which there are only official candidates and which take place under a regime of bloody terror ; only people who display no surprise at hearing a regime called ' a model democracy ' in which there is only one party in power and all the others are in prison ; only people who are not shocked to hear ' the building up of socialism ' claimed for a country in which socialist thought has been proscribed, persecuted and stifled for twenty years in the ' polit-isolators,' and who are, finally, not embarrassed to hear confessions extorted from political prisoners which are manifestly in contradiction to the known and verifiable facts."

It is a sad case—that of our Professor and of those many intellectuals (fortunately their number is now shrinking) of whom he is so representative in India today. They had placed their hopes on the October Revolution and its fruits. They have seen that revolution recede in one after another of its manifold aspects. Not finding a ready-made alternative Mecca to which to turn, they

seek ostrich-like to avoid facing developments so that they can cling to their old benefits. " Nothing has aided the persistence of falsehood, and the evils resulting from it," writes Liddell Hart, " more than the unwillingness of good people to admit the truth when it was disturbing to their comfortable assurance." Not that the minds of these good people are free from doubt. But they would rather escape the torment of facing those doubts, and of making them ' a stepping stone to higher things.' Precisely because they are aware of these doubts and questionings within themselves, they turn with ferocity on any one else who dares to give open expression to their own secretly rebellious thoughts. The Professor was kind enough to attempt a psychological explanation of my turning away from the Russian model and he will not therefore mind if I hazard this explanation and suggest that he comes forth to share with us all the perplexities which I am sure lurk within and which he managed so effectively to smother, but not to conceal, when he wrote his review of this book. Many others before him have hugged their old beliefs till they have awakened to find them stiff corpses in their arms. If he would make any contribution, and he is so well equipped to make it, it is time he too came to that belated recognition. There is no sin in error except in the half-conscious persistence therein.

Many things have happened since the First Edition of this book was published that have reinforced the conclusions at which it arrived, and references to some of them are incorporated in the text of this edition. The Russian recognition of Bodoglio, the butcher of Abyssinia, when even England and America were holding back from such a step ; the extortion from Finland and Rumania of indemnities, which were con-

demned as imperialist by Lenin ; the breach of pledges for the independence and integrity of Poland given as late as 1941, and the cynical farce of the Polish ' Patriots ' led by Wanda Wasilevska, the wife of Korneitchuk of the Soviet Foreign Office and Commisar of the " Autonomous " Ukrainian Republic ; the reported capture in Normandy by the Anglo-American forces of an entire Russian regiment led by Russian officers fighting on the German side ; the Moscow boost for the British Empire as " a very useful organisation not only to its members but also to the other United Nations "; the rejection of equality of big and small nations and the assertion of the right of ' Big Three ' to dominate the world ; the Decree of July 14, 1944, for the placing of motherhood in the forefront of national life and the fostering of bigger families by a graded system of tax and premium ; the attack on Vice-President Wallace by the *Daily Worker,* the American Communist organ, in June 1944, for daring to criticise Wall Street on the ground that " Vice-President Wallace unfortunately doesn't help the struggle against the anti-Tehran elements by his general attack on Wall Street. The widest kind of national unity is necessary to defeat them, including clear-headed business from Wall Street ;"—all these and many other significant pointers have underlined and spread wider the painful lesson which it is the lot of socialists of our generation to learn. It is of the utmost importance, if the ideal of socialism is to continue to move the minds and animate the deeds of men, that a clear dissociation should take place between that ideal and the State which in 1939 was expelled by a unanimous vote of the League of Nations Assembly for unprovoked aggression against Finland ; a State which in 1941, alone among the nations of the world,

refused even formally to adhere to International Red Cross Conventions for the humane treatment of prisoners of war.

In a thoughtful and constructive review of this book in the *Social Service Quarterly* for April, 1944, it was suggested that this book is not really a reconsideration of Socialism, nor even of Marxism, but only of Stalinism. In the sense that it is Stalinism that is categorically rejected there is point in the remark. But reconsideration does not necessarily mean rejection. The developments of Stalinism claim their roots in Leninism and, through that, in Marxism itself. One cannot deal with the fruit without an examination of the entire tree and .even of the soil. Hence a reconsideration of socialism is what is needed. Such a reconsideration by socialists will lead, for each according to his own light, to the rejection of certain parts of the theory and its manifestations, to the questioning of some others, and to the even firmer belief and re-affirmation in what remains.

1*st October,* 1944

M. R. M.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The purpose of this essay is primarily to encourage among socialists in India a re-examination of methods and a re-definition of objectives. That is why it puts more questions than it endeavours to answer, and leaves it to each reader to come to his or her own conclusions in the light of facts which must be faced. It is possible that the doubts I have raised will disturb and irritate some of my friends, who will feel I am guilty of heresy. To them, my plea is that it is the facts which are disturbing and that those who want to see justice done in the social and economic spheres cannot afford the luxury of closing their eyes or shutting their mouths.

This is a personal approach to the new problems that the twentieth century presents to socialist thought and is not meant to represent the views of any group or party. The two talks on which this booklet is based created more interest and stimulated more discussion than I had expected and I am therefore encouraged to place these considerations before a wider circle of readers.

1st March, 1944 M. R. M.

I

A FALSE DAWN

Every day brings news of Russian military advance. There is every possibility that, so far as Europe is concerned, Russia may be one of the dominant powers after the War. It is more than ever necessary, therefore, that the real nature of the Russian State should be properly understood. Unfortunately, such understanding is largely absent—particularly in India. Many otherwise well-informed people are some ten years out of date in respect of Russia. Far-reaching changes—political, economic and social—have taken place in recent years of which they are innocent.

Yet that there must have been great changes inside Soviet Russia is evident from the change in the attitude towards Russia of those who started either by praising or by reviling the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. For instance, among Conservatives and the propertied classes in England, the Bolsheviks were in the early years assailed with a chorus of execration. The foulest adjectives were showered on them. The *Daily Mail* of London carried cartoons of the sinister Bolshevik with the bristles of his beard growing at ninety degrees to his face! Among those who execrated the Soviet regime was Mr. Winston Churchill, who even planned military intervention in Russia. This move had to be abandoned because of the "Hands Off Russia" movement with which it was met by British trade

unionists. To-day, Mr. Churchill is such an admirer of Stalin and of his government that earlier this year a socialist M. P. described him in the House of Commons as "Stalin's Charlie McCarthy." On the other hand there are people like myself—Socialists—who started by hailing the Russian Revolution as a great act of human liberation and the Soviet Union as a beacon light to the world's workers. About it we could sing, as Wordsworth sang about the French Revolution :

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!"

Today some of us cannot conceal from ourselves any longer our disillusionment with the results of that Revolution. Among those who have publicly expressed such feelings are men and women who have championed the Russian Revolution and some of whom have lived for years in the Soviet Union like Louis Fischer (*Men and Politics*), Max Eastman (*Stalin's Russia and The Crisis in Socialism*), Eugene Lyons (*Assignment In Utopia*), Freda Utley (*The Dream We Lost*), Andre Gide (*Return from the U.S.S.R.* and *Afterthoughts on the U.S.S.R.*). These are just a few of many. What irony there is in the fact that recently Harold Nicholson, a Conservative, had to defend the Russian Government against the criticisms of Max Eastman, a friend of Lenin and Trotsky and an ardent champion of the Revolution !

WHO HAS CHANGED ?

What has happened to bring about this complete turn about ? Is it both Mr. Churchill and these Socialists who have changed—or is it Russia that has changed in the past two decades ?

Let us hark back to 1917. What was the Revolution about ? What did it aim at ? Russia was then ruled by an autocrat—the Tsar. The peasants and workers were in sad plight, the soldiers at the front in worse. Lenin and Trotsky made the Revolution of October 1917 under the slogan of " Peace, Land and Bread." Peace for the soldiers, land for the peasants, and bread for the workers. It was not only a political revolution like the French Revolution, but also a social revolution, which was to be the forerunner of the World Revolution. The Bolshevik leaders declared that they would, along with Tsarism, abolish capitalism and usher in the socialist society which Lenin described as a society of " the free and the equal." In other words, as all Socialists and Communists then understood it, the socialist society was to be *classless*, *democratic* and *international*. In furtherance of this objective, private property was abolished ; factories and mines were taken away from their owners and declared to be State property to be shared and enjoyed by all in common and to be under workers' control. All ranks in the army and navy were abolished. Women were to be emancipated and made the equals of men. All children were to have equal educational facilities, and to have self-government in schools. The Communist Party monopolised all political power but it was declared that, as soon as the propertied classes were dispossessed and a classless society achieved, the dictatorship would end and the fullest democracy would exist. " Every cook," said Lenin, " must learn to run the State." In fact, so happy and brotherly was every one going to be that there would be no need for a police or a government. " The State," said Lenin following Engels, " would wither away." " From each according to his ability, to each according to

his need," would be the law of life voluntarily accepted by every one. And they would all live happily ever after.

1927

But did they ? I went to Russia to try and find out. I was lucky enough to be able to go on two short visits— first in 1927 and again in 1935. From the first I came back exhilarated and enthusiastic. There was no mistaking the difference in the atmosphere from that in India or England— the spirit of fraternity, of international solidarity and of good fellowship that prevailed. For the coloured peoples there was particular warmth. I remember a Negro telling me with tears in his eyes that it was the only country where he really felt a man. The Stalin-Trotsky controversy was, it is true, already at its height; but it was being carried on freely in the columns of newspapers not, as later, in the torture chambers of the G.P.U. In spite of the fact that Stalin had secured possession of the State machine, Trotsky was the darling of the workers and was able to function in opposition with impunity. There was physical discomfort by Western standards, but also tremendous zeal in building the socialist society, with unbounded hope for the morrow.

In the factories I visited, I found that workers' control was a very real thing. In the offices sat two managers, who were called the Director and the " Red " Director respectively. The first was the technician, the other the elected representative of the workers. No decision could be taken which affected the workers' wages, hours, or conditions of work, without the endorsement of the " Red " Director.

In education too there was tremendous advance. Examinations were abolished and so were uniforms, as

vestiges of a competitive and militaristic society. Teachers could be tried by school courts which were composed of teachers and pupils alike. John Dewey was so moved by what he saw of Soviet education in the twenties that he said : " I have not sufficient literary skill to describe it."

Woman's emancipation and complete equality with man in every walk of life was one of the highlights of the October Revolution. I remember talking to Madame Kamaneva, wife of Kamanev and Trotsky's sister, who told me that to her as a feminist the greatest achievement of the Revolution had been the emancipation of women who had made a leap forward from something like Indian conditions to those of Western Europe and beyond. Marriage and divorce laws had been so radically modified as to allow a woman complete social and economic independence of her husband. Abortion in the interests of a woman's health was legalised, and information about birth-control was popularised by the State.

The Orthodox Church, which had been a prop of Tsarism, was destroyed along with monarchy, and religion was denounced by Lenin as " the opium of the people." That was Soviet Russia in 1927.

1935

By the time I returned to Russia in 1935, much water had flown down the Volga. The Five-Year Plan had materialised. There was a little more prosperity visible. But on the other hand, democracy even within the Communist Party had been replaced by a one-man dictatorship. Stalin's pictures in public places were tending to push poor Lenin's into the shade ! Trotsky had been driven into exile, later to be assassinated by his persecutors.

The G.P.U. (Secret Police, corresponding to the German Gestapo, which was modelled on it, and to our own C.I.D.) was omnipresent. Its hated initials had been changed to 'N.K.V.D.', but without any perceptible change in its spirit or its methods. Gone was the spirit of international brotherhood. One came across many evidences of a bureaucracy which had 'arrived' and which felt itself different from the common people of Russia. Particularly was this noticeable in Moscow, the capital. In distant republics like the Azarbaijan (Turk) and Armenian, some of the old revolutionary fervour still persisted.

In the factories I visited this time, there were no "Red" Directors. I was told that they had been abolished. Workers' democracy had been a casualty in the intervening years. Instead, I found what was known as Stakhanovism, which in our capitalist language we know as piece-work, and which Wendell Willkie was later to describe in *One World* as "a speed-up system which is like an accelerated Bedeaux system..... The method of employing and paying labour would satisfy our most unsocial industrialists." This was the bait which was held out to induce workers to work harder in competition against one another. The result was that a Stakhanovist doing extra hard work could earn five or even ten times as much as one who lacked his strength or skill.

In schools, self-government had disappeared and iron discipline was the order of the day. Uniforms had made their re-appearance ; so had examinations. University fees were stepped up and scholarships reduced. The Young Communist League was instructed to watch the speeches and movements of pupils both within and outside school and college and to report undesirable tendencies, very much in the way that the Japanese persecuted what

they called " dangerous ideas." All that John Dewey had praised had been destroyed.

In the social sphere, there was a queer flavour of Mussolini and Hitler making itself felt. Divorce had become more difficult. Abortion had again become illegal; birth-control was frowned upon. On the other hand, advertisements were to be found in papers offering a prize to the first family in a town to reach eleven children. Evidently the Socialist Fatherland needed cannon-fodder for the wars that lay round the corner.

Truth is always the first casualty under every autocracy. All opposition having been smashed and Trotsky having been driven into exile, the Soviet Government set about to rewrite history. Thought, evidently, was to be nationalised along with industry. According to the Webbs, the *Journal For Marxist—Leninist National Sciences* professes the following creed: " We stand for Party in Mathematics. We stand for the purity of Marxist-Leninist theory in surgery "!

Books were not publicly burnt as in Germany, but libraries were combed for " undesirable " books and new text-books were written falsifying history on points of toplical significance. One of many such victims was John Reed's epic of the Revolution, *Ten Days That Shook The World,* which Lenin had praised for its accuracy. Its crime was that it repeatedly mentioned Trotsky along with Lenin, but hardly ever Stalin whose part in the Revolution had been comparatively insignificant.

I went round the picture gallery in the House of the Red Army in Moscow, where the story of the Civil War and the war against foreign intervention following the Revolution was depicted in maps, pictures and legends. There were portraits of commanders, big and small alike.

There were Voroshilov, Budeny and Blucher. But where, of all people, was Trotsky—the maker of the Red Army, the organiser of revolutionary victories ? Strange to say, Trotsky was missing. I asked a Russian acquaintance for an explanation. " But it is perfectly correct," said the comrade unblushingly, " Trotsky became a counter-revolutionary and undid all his work for the revolution. Therefore, objectively speaking, he never existed."

These devclopments were breeding, in place of the zeal and fervour of 1927, a cynicism and sense of disillusion. In Moscow, a popular quip was : " There is no news in the *Pravda* (Truth), and no truth in the *Izvestia* (News) ."

I came back from Russia worried and puzzled, though not yet despondent, because my desire to believe and to hope was still too strong. Every religious man, whose faith is shaken, knows how he tries to cling to that faith with all the greater tenacity. I suppressed my doubts and fears and kept them to myself, hoping things would right themselves before long, and publicly continued to praise Soviet achievements. I realize now that was wrong.

I believe I was about the last non-Communist Indian in public life to be allowed to visit Soviet Russia. No, it was not the British Government which came in the way. It was the Soviet Government, which no longer wanted to have foreign socialists nosing around their country. It is not generally known that even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was kept cooling his heels for some time in London, waiting for permission to enter the Soviet Union in 1938, and had ultimately to return to India without paying a visit to Russia because the permit did not come in time. Among others who were similarly denied entry were Yusuf

Meherally, Purshottam Tricumdas and Professor M. L. Dantwala.

Since 1935, the unfortunate tendencies which were then already faintly noticeable have developed and have carried Russia much farther away from socialism. The wheel has in many ways turned full circle, until the flavour of Russian policy becomes more and more reminiscent of the days of the Tsar.

GROWING INEQUALITIES

The reversal of the engines is marked internally by the growth of social and economic inequalities. Several restrictions on the growth of inequality have one after another been relaxed. Among them was the "Party Maximum," which laid down, as a self-denying ordinance, that no member of the Communist Party could receive a salary exceeding a certain modest figure. More recently, the limit on the amount that could be bequeathed to one's children has also been removed. This makes it possible for people to inherit big fortunes, thus enabling them to live on unearned income and to become parasitic idlers as in capitalist society.

The range of inequalities in Russia was, at the outbreak of this war, not less than in any advanced capitalist country like the U.S.A. *Pravda* of November, 5, 1935 stated that in the Soviet mines, a non-Stakhanovist miner got from 400 to 500 roubles, a Stakhanovist more than 1600 roubles. The auxiliary worker driving a team below got only 170 roubles if not a Stakhanovist and 400 if he was. That is, one mine worker got ten times as much as another. Engineers' and specialists' salaries were often eighty times as high as those of unskilled workers, while Pilnyak, a popular writer, got about 30,000 roubles in royal-

ties every month. While it is not permissible to own a factory or a mine or a railway, it is now possible for Russian citizens to invest in State Bonds to an unlimited extent. These bonds carry interest at the rate of 7 per cent. Those who can save on their big salaries thus begin to form a new class corresponding to the *rentier* class in capitalist society. As these are the people who also control the State machine and are managers of big industrial trusts, one can say that a new ruling class is at present taking shape in Russia. Members of this class do not, like capitalists, own a particular factory or industry, but they own a share in the entire nationalised economy of the country.

While this is no doubt an interesting difference, the consequences of these inequalities are not dissimilar to those in capitalist society. Strictly speaking, it is not capitalistic exploitation, but it is exploitation just the same. In the old days of theocratic society, the priests exploited the masses through the State. They were not capitalist societies, but neither do we call such States socialist !

Molotov was recently described by *Time* as " Stalin's Man Friday, which is as high as a man can climb in Russia." He had been described by Lenin as " Russia's best filing clerk " and by Trotsky as " a social climber." Ethel Mannin, the well-known English writer, tells how, when she went to visit Madame Molotova (wife of Molotov), who was then the Director of the Perfumes Trust and one of the richest women in Russia, she was appalled at the contrast between the show of wealth in the Molotov household and the pig-sties in which the domestic servants of the Molotov family had to live on the outskirts of the estate.

" Meanwhile, Russia today works its women 66, its

men 84, hours a week. Children work harder than adults did before the war." (*Time*—September, 6, 1943.) When Mr. Reginald Sorensen protested in the House of Commons early in 1944 against the employment of Indian women underground in mines, a Conservative M.P. pointed out with devastating effect that women were working underground today in the mines of the Socialist Fatherland !

CO-EDUCATION ABOLISHED

The social reaction proceeds parallel to the economic. One of the most significant little items of news to come out of Russia towards the end of 1943 was that of a decree abolishing co-education in schools in the liberated territories. This decision was made more generally applicable in 1944. The director of one of the principal secondary schools in Moscow explained why : " There is an inevitable separation of men and women. The man must be a soldier..... the woman has an exceptionally important function in the State. She is a mother." Well might this communist robot have proceeded to exclaim : " Hitler must be defeated ; long live Hitler !"

The artificial forcing up of the population has now reached a thoroughness unattained in Italy or Germany. Here are the allowances paid in 1936 and in 1944 to the mother for every additional child for the first five years of its life (as worked out in the London *Economist* of July 15, 1944) :

	1936	1944
Third child	—	400
Fourth child	—	6,100
Fifth child	—	8,900
Sixth child	—	10,460

	1936	1944
Seventh child ..	10,000	14,500
Eighth child ..	10,000	14,500
Ninth child	10,000	18,500
Tenth child	10,000	18,500
Eleventh child ..	12,000	23,000

On the other hand, bachelors, spinsters and married couples with " only one or two children " are subject to a special tax.

The cumulative effect of these and other measures is likely, according to the League of Nations publication on *The Future Population of Europe and the Soviet Union* (1944), to be an increase of over 60 per cent per generation. From this to the demand for *lebensraum* is only a matter of time.

Another change of great social significance is the restoration of established religion, which Lenin had described as the "opium of the people." Napoleon, in one of his cynical moods, once asked : " How can I rule the people without religion ?" Stalin in a similar predicament has answered the question by giving recognition to that Orthodox Church which was disestablished after the Revolution because of its close association with the Tsarist regime.

THE G.P.U.

A total destruction of liberty of every kind and the complete regimentation of the people has been the culmination of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. That dictatorship is no longer even the dictatorship of the Communist Party, but that of one leader functioning through a ruthless and merciless Secret Police, the G. P. U. (now the N. K. V. D.), on which Hitler has modelled his Gestapo.

Most authorities estimate that between four and seven million *Kulaks*, that is, fairly well-to-do peasants, who were not prepared to surrender their farms for collectivisation, and between five and ten million political oppositionists, including every single prominent Communist who participated in the Revolution with the exception of Stalin, Kalinin, Molotov, Litvinov and Voroshilov, have been among the victims of the G. P. U.

Regarding the ' Trials ', which in a few cases preceded liquidation, the Dewey Commission of Enquiry into the charges made against Trotsky arrived at the following findings :

> " The system of extorting false confessions and employing them to inculpate the confessors and others is to-day a common practice of the Soviet police.
>
> " The Commission finds that this testimony, taken in connection with the fantastic discrepancies which it has pointed out in the confessions of the accused in the two Moscow trials, justifies the presumption of duress in the obtaining of these confessions. This presumption, again taken in connection with the character of the charges and the testimony in the two trials, constitutes strong justification for assuming that the trials were frame-ups . . .
>
> " On the basis of all this evidence and these conclusions, the Commission finds Leon Trotsky and Leon Sedov not guilty."

No more significant light has been thrown on the Russian purges and ' trials ' than in that work of great art and deep insight *Darkness at Noon* by Arthur Koestler. It is difficult to quarrel with the truth of Max Eastman's

remark : " If the shedded blood of innocent men were measured, Stalin's would be a lake ; Hitler's a duck pond ; Mussolini's could be dipped up by the tank-carful."

Stalin's description in Russia is " *Vozd* " which means the Leader. " Realistically," writes Joseph E. Davies, ex-U. S. A. Ambassador to Russia and a friend of Stalin, in his book *Mission to Moscow*, " the government is in fact one man—Stalin, the ' strong ' man who survived the contest, completely disposed of all competitors and is completely dominating . . . The Government is a dictatorship, not of the proletariat as professed, but over the proletariat. It is completely dominated by one man."

The extent to which the Fuehrer principle has been carried in the Soviet Union is brought out in the story which Andre Gide tells of an experience of his during his visit to the Soviet Union. At a small town, Gide, who was a State guest, wanted to send a telegram to his host. He addressed the telegram to " Monsieur Stalin ". That telegram was never despatched because the post office would only accept a telegram which was addressed to " Great and Beloved Stalin !"

Lenin had in his last months, when he was ill and powerless, evidently sensed the danger that was to come. In his last Testament he described Stalin as " rude, disloyal, capricious, nationalistic and spiteful " and recommended that he be removed from the general secretaryship of the Party. But it was too late.

The foreign policy of a State reflects its internal composition. If corroborative evidence were needed of the changes through which Russia is passing, it is to be found in Soviet foreign policy in recent years. Departing from Lenin's characterisation of the League of Nations at Geneva as " a gang of robbers," the Soviet Union chose

after 1935 to participate in the activities of that ' gang ' in the company of Imperialist France and Britain.

In 1939, Russia switched over to the Stalin-Hitler Pact with Germany, attacked Poland in agreement with Hitler, and joined in the partition of that country. When, after the signing of the Stalin-Hitler Pact, Molotov, the Russian Prime Minister, was asked how such a Pact could be reconciled with the deep antagonism between fascism and communism, he replied, with rare sincerity : " It is all a matter of taste." Hitler, on his side, responded by declaring in a public speech in February 1941 that " basically National Socialism and Marxism are the same." (Bulletin of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Vol. XVIII, No. 5, p. 269.)

BACK TO NATIONALISM

With the liquidation of the Communist International and the abolition of the *Internationale* as the anthem of the Soviet State in 1943, the last vestiges of internationalism have gone from Russia. Till then, the Russian people had been accustomed to sing the words of the anthem of revolutionary socialism :

" Arise, ye prisoners of starvation
Arise, ye wretched of the earth !
For justice thunders condemnation,
A better world's in birth.
No more tradition's chains shall bind us,
Arise, ye slaves no more in thrall !
The earth shall rise on new foundations,
We have been naught, we shall be all.
Then comrades come rally, and the last fight let us face,
The Internationale shall be the human race."

In place of this, Stalin has characteristically substituted this self-glorifying, chauvinistic battle-song :

" Stalin has taught us to be faithful to the people,
And has inspired us to work and do great deeds.
We have reared our army in battle,
We shall sweep the foul invaders from our path.
In battle we decide the fate of generations,
We shall lead our country to glory."

These acts are only the culmination of a process of " Back to Nationalism " which has been current for some years now. One of the many straws which showed which way the wind was blowing was the decree enacted before the war broke out that the medium of instruction in the schools of the ' Autonomous Republics,' such as the Ukrainian, the Georgian, the Turk, the Tartar and the Siberian, would no longer be the mother tongues of those peoples but the Russian language, which is the language of the Great Russian people who were the ruling race under the Tsar.

Pan-Slav Conferences now replace in Moscow the gatherings of international Communists. The heroes of Slav militarism are again boosted. Among them are Suvarov and Kutuzov, Tsarist generals who opposed Napoleon's invasion. An amusing illustration of this changed attitude is provided by the case of Tsar Peter the Great. For the first few years after the Revolution, Peter was invariably shown as a tyrant and a villain who had justly earned the execration of his down-trodden subjects. In the thirties, however, a change became visible. Peter started shedding his vices and acquiring new virtues, until today he is a hero on the Moscow stage. Unkind foreign press correspondents in Moscow were not found wanting to notice that Peter's features tended more and

more to look like those of Stalin ! Since the outbreak of the war, this militarism has run amok—the Guards have been re-established, epaulettes re-introduced, exclusive officers' corps and clubs set up, and even railway staffs have been given the title of majors, colonels and generals. This glorification of war reached its horrifying climax when in the course of a *Tass* message published in an Indian daily on September 11, 1944, Ilya Ehrenberg, Stalin Prize Novelist, declared : " The blood on the bayonets of our soldiers is the dawn of happiness, it is the salvation of mankind."

When a great power turns militarist and nationalist, it finds it impossible not to turn imperialist also. Of the truth of this, we shall have accumulating evidence in the weeks and months to come. Earlier this year, in answer to a statement by Wendell Willkie expressing concern at the relations between Russia and the neighbouring countries, the *Pravda* growled at Willkie : " These are our internal affairs." What is the difference between this " hands off " warning from Stalin to Willkie and a similar one administered to him by Churchill when Willkie desired to visit India last year ? This war started in 1939 professedly for the purpose of defending the independence of Poland. It is more than likely that, with grim irony, the war will end with the subjugation of Poland. There has been a lot of speculation as to whether or not the Eastern half of Poland will be incorporated into Russian territory. What has not yet been adequately appreciated is that the independence of the Western half of Poland, as well as of other countries in Eastern and Central Europe, is also at stake.

Moscow is now engaged in vilifying the Polish

Government in London as "Fascist." This is a prelude to the setting up of a puppet government in Western Poland also. What justification there is for calling the Polish Government Fascist can be seen by examining the character of the present Polish Cabinet. The Prime Minister represents the Peasant Party. There are three Socialist Ministers representing the Polish Socialist Party, which is affiliated to the Labour and Socialist International to which the British Labour Party belongs. One of these is the Deputy Prime Minister. Two other Ministers represent the Christian Labour Party and two are National Democrats (Conservatives). The remaining three do not belong to any particular party. It will thus be seen that to call such a Cabinet "Fascist" is on a par with the attempt to label Finland, one of the most progressive of Social Democratic countries, "Fascist."

Such campaigns are in fact a cynical diplomatic preparation for annexationist moves, which in the case of Poland will almost certainly culminate in the Polish Government either capitulating and merging in a puppet government or being replaced by it.

Stalin himself virtually admitted as much when, according to a dispatch from Moscow published by the *Observer* (London) on 20th February, 1944, after ridiculing suspicions of Russian expansion, Stalin proceeded in the same breath to explain that his policy was "dictated by Russia's strategic needs which require *territorial and political re-adjustments* in Eastern Europe."

Harry Pollitt once blurted out in a moment of annoyance: "The people in Britain who are so busy suggesting that the good offices of British and American statesmen may now be used to bring Russia and Poland together might pause to think of what the reaction would

be if some Russian suggested that Stalin might use his good offices to bring Churchill and Gandhi together." But Pollitt did not pause to explain why Russia had not intervened. It did not even strike him that if Russia were a socialist or even an anti-imperialist state, she *would* have intervened. What he did was to show that in his mind India was Britain's domestic concern and that Poland should likewise be Russia's !

ANOTHER ' COMMONWEALTH '

The recent *dictat* from Moscow, announcing a change in the Soviet constitution, declared that Republics forming part of the Soviet Union are supposed to get diplomatic freedom. The amusing thing is that they always were supposed to be autonomous and have the right to secede. " These Socialist Republics ", wrote Davies, " are theoretically free to disassociate themselves from the Union. As a matter of fact, such liberty is academic. It is obvious that the federal government, and, what is more, the Kremlin (Stalin) would not tolerate disunion." Those who know what little reality constitutional niceties have in comparison with the dreaded power of the G. P. U. realise that this autonomy is in the main a facade behind which it will be easier to carry out the annexation of neighbouring countries, which would otherwise not only move the peoples of those countries to patriotic resistance but might also provoke England and America to denounce the present alliance. Now, the Russian Government would also have a ' Commonwealth ' of its own and could ask a protesting Churchill : " If Sir A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar or Sir Mohamad Usman can represent India at a Peace Conference, why should not Wasilevska represent Poland or Tito sign for Yugogslavia ?"

The *Economist* (London) of 5th February, 1944, had a comment which said as much with a subtlety necessary when dealing with an ally :

> " Marshall Stalin and M. Molotov have their eye on realities. Their sixteen Republics will hang together because of the party and police structure invisible to the constitutional lawyer . . . Another purpose is probably to smooth the path for acceptance by the outside world of incorporation within the U. S. S. R. of territories which did not belong to it in 1938.
>
> " Under the constitution of 1936 each republic already possesses the right to secede, now stressed again ; but, so long as agitation for secession is forbidden and treated as an act of treason, the right is Pickwickian, to say the least. In the early thirties, all agitation, not for secession, but even for a greater measure of autonomy, was suppressed in both the Ukraine and in Byelorrussia, as well as in the Caucasus. In the late thirties similar aspirations in the Asiatic republics were similarly treated. Nothing suggests that the position has been fundamentally changed."

A day earlier, the *Times of India* had, with unconscious irony, written in its editorial of 4th February, 1944 :

> " In fact, it appears that the Russians want to establish a ' Commonwealth ' of Soviet Republics very much on the lines of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The British, who evolved the Commonwealth idea, may well regard the Russian proposal as a tribute."

It is urged in some quarters that these undoubtedly unfortunate features of Russian domestic and foreign policy were inevitable at a time when Russia had to pre-

pare to defend herself against Nazi aggression and that after the war Russia will resume its advance towards a socialist society. One wishes one could share this optimism, which is founded not on evidence but on faith which is both blind and deaf. "I expect to see the government, while professing devotion to communism, move constantly more to the right, in practice, just as it has for the past eight years," writes Davies.

SOCIALIST OR CAPITALIST ?

Only the most obtuse can today call Russia a socialist state. It does not possess even one of the three essential characteristics of a socialist society. It is neither *classless* nor *democratic* nor *international.* That is not to say that the Soviet regime has not got big achievements to its credit. It has industrialised the country, put agriculture on a sounder footing, increased material prosperity and spread literacy at a pace which other countries have hitherto found impossible of achievement. But there is nothing specifically socialist about these achievements. These are objectives of all efficient Capitalist and Fascist States. In fact, as Davies asserts, "the regime dropped the principle of communism in practical application. The only permanent and insistent initiative that the government has found is profit." Can Russia then be called a capitalist state ? I think the answer is equally in the negative. Recent developments in Russia and certain other countries have shown that it is not necessary for a State to be either capitalist or socialist. Actually a third variety of State is not only possible but is already coming into existence, and one of the countries where you can see it today is Russia.

One hesitates to call such states 'Fascist' because

'Fascist' has come to be in recent years more a term of abuse than a scientific description. In certain circles nowadays, what you do not agree with is 'Fascist.' In view of this emotional approach to the word, it is best to avoid it. We are here trying not to praise or condemn Russia nor to pass any moral judgment on it, but to understand it and learn by its experience. Russia is often described these days rather loosely as 'State Capitalist.' Perhaps the best term for such a state as Russia is that coined by the American socialist writer James Burnham in his most stimulating book *The Managerial Revolution.* As defined by Burnham, a Managerial State is neither a capitalist nor a socialist state, but one in which the bureaucrats who run the administration and the managers who run industry hold power. The similarity between the managerial state and the socialist state is that in both private property in the instruments of production, distribution and exchange is either abolished or defunctionalised and all industry and economic enterprises are owned or controlled by the State. The difference between the managerial state and the socialist state is that in a socialist state the State itself belongs to the community or the common people, while in the managerial state the State and its "nationalised economy" are not controlled by the people but by a small clique of bureaucrats or managers who constitute the dictatorship. "Totalitarianism," says another writer, "is the body of Socialism without its soul." According to Burnham, it is likely that the next phase in social organisation will not be socialism, but a managerial society. It may be that man is not at present sufficiently well equipped to control the huge machines—industrial and political—which he has created. While old type capita-

lism, with its anarchy, its incompetence and its muddle, is played out, man is not yet ripe for a socialist society.

What is important is that it should be recognised that, as Eric Strauss puts it in *Soviet Russia,* " In little more than two decades the Soviet system and the Communist Party have almost completed one of the most tragic careers in history." Else, we shall go on confusing socialism with the Soviets at great peril to the former. If the socialist ideal is to be saved from distortion and vulgarisation in the minds of men, it is necessary that it should be categorically dissociated from its Russian caricature.

It is said that in certain parts of the world when it is still night the darkness seems to lighten and men are misled into thinking that it is dawn. It turns out, however, that this mysterious light fades again and the night goes on, and it is not till some hours later that the sun actually rises. In time to come, the historian will perhaps describe the Russian Revolution of 1917 as a kind of false dawn of the socialist day. We live, in Matthew Arnold's phrase,

> *' Between two worlds, one dead,*
> *The other powerless to be born.'*

II

THE NEW DAY

Oscar Wilde has defined experience as "the name everyone gives to their mistakes." Any effort by a socialist to review Socialism in the light of, say, the past twenty-five years' experience must therefore to a certain extent involve self-criticism.

But why twenty-five years? Well, twenty-five years seems to me to be an appropriate period in the light of which to re-view one's approach to, and belief in, socialism, because it is twenty-five years since the end of the last war, when people everywhere swore "Never Again"; it is also twenty-five years since the Russian Revolution.

Looking back across the last two decades, one recalls some fundamental assumptions on which one based one's faith in Socialism as the solvent of almost all the world's ills. Those assumptions were that Man was essentially good, but that the System (with a capital S) was bad. Capitalism, with its anarchy, its creed of "Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost," its insistence on the profit motive, its free competition between the plutocrat on the one hand and helpless propertyless men, women and children on the other, appeared to be the enemy—the one obstacle between Man and a Happy Universe. It was Capitalism (with the accent on the second syllable) that kept the mass of toilers poor, it was Capitalism that kept women in a position of economic dependence and

social inferiority, it was Capitalism that was responsible for prostitution and other social evils, it was Capitalism that kept children uneducated and ignorant, above all it was Capitalism that made repeated wars inevitable. You had but to abolish Capitalism and replace it with Socialism, and all the ills of the human race would evaporate.

All you had to do to overthrow the capitalist system and to extend democracy to the economic sphere was to abolish private property and to nationalise the instruments of production, distribution and exchange. The basis of the classless society was to be the slogan : " From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs." Then the whole community would be like a single family and live happily ever after ! Lenin described a socialist society as a society of " the free and the equal," where a man's personality would have the fullest liberty to flower. These, let me stress, were the assumptions held by *all* schools of socialist thought. The Social Democrat insisted that in advanced, democratic countries like England and France, this transformation could be worked, not by bullets, but through the ballot box. The Communist argued that such a change could only be worked by an armed insurrection, as in Russia, by a *coup d'etat* and a seizure of power by the revolutionary party, (namely, his own) on behalf of the proletariat. After a short period of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the classless society would be established, the State would wither away and you would find yourself in the Socialist Society. It was common ground to all schools of thought that the only thing that could replace Capitalism was Socialism. It was also common ground that Socialism was an international creed and would result in world union and universal brotherhood. I have mentioned these assumptions of all

Socialists twenty-five years ago, because it is against this background that the developments of the past two decades must be reviewed.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

It will make for clarity if we consider the development of Social Democracy and of Communism separately. The story of Social Democracy in leading States like England, France and Germany is pretty well-known. It is a story of weakness, of lack of leadership and of an absence of confidence in the very creed professed. Under cover of the slogan of "The inevitability of gradualness," the Social Democratic leaders refused to move towards Socialism at all. Initiative and power slipped from the weak and hesitant hands of the German Social Democrats into those of Hitler. In England and France, MacDonald and Blum—despite great differences in personal quality—were equally guilty of a refusal to accept the opportunities repeatedly presented to them to attempt the social revolution by democratic means. No one was more alarmed at the success of the British General Strike of 1926 than the members of the General Council of the T.U.C., precisely because it opened up possibilities of revolutionary change.

In all these countries, there was also to be seen during this period the rise of a Trade Union bureaucracy, which separated itself by reason of its higher income and different function from the main body of the working class and which found itself very much, socially speaking, at home in the capitalist world.

Another major development in the Social Democratic movements was their gradual veering round from an anti-war and anti-imperialist to a pro-war and pro-imperialist position. The same British Labour Party, which after the

last war elected Ramsay MacDonald to its leadership because of his anti-war record and passed resolutions year after year declaring for a General Strike in the event of war, was to end up by participating in Churchill's War Cabinet.

There is a refreshing contrast to this rather depressing record when one turns to the record of the Socialists in certain small countries—particularly the Scandinavian group consisting of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. There has in these countries been a steady extension of democracy to the economic and social spheres which has not secured the notice and appreciation it deserves. If I were asked which countries were the farthest along the road to a Socialist Society when the war broke out in 1939, I would point to these countries.

PARASITISM

One wonders what this contrast between the Great Powers and the small nations is due to ? I cannot help feeling that the cause is the presence of Imperialism in the one group and its absence in the other. There can be no denying that much of the corruption in the spirit of the British Labour Movement has its origin in the fact that the British working class shares—and under bad leadership is content to share—in the profits of exploitation of the peasantry of India and other subject countries. That is not, of course, to say that the average British worker is a *conscious* Imperialist. ' Parasitism ' is the term by which the process has been known which the British ruling class has used to buy off the social revolution in England.

When Sir William Beveridge was asked how the Beveridge Plan could be financed, he is reported to have

replied that it could be done if unemployment could be averted, which was contingent on Britain maintaining and developing its export markets after the war. That means *us*—the peoples of the backward and subject countries. The British Labour Party's black record on India and the Empire is, I think, due to a large extent to the realization by the leadership of the fact that the British worker would for a while have to tighten his belt if the Empire were to go. That price the British worker and his leaders are evidently not prepared to pay. In other words, the immediate self-interest of the British working class comes in the way of an advance to a better international society.

That is what Sir Stafford Cripps must have had in mind when in 1935, in an article written for an Indian socialist journal, he said that Socialism for Britain and Independance for India were interdependent.

THE COMMUNISTS

Many of us have at one stage or another in our lives turned with some hope from the barren record of the Social Democrats to the Communists. Within a few years, however, of its formation it became more and more apparent that the Communist International and its units in various countries were nothing more than a subordinate branch of the Russian Foreign Office financed by the Soviet Government. Its record in most countries of the world has been a most unhappy one—of splitting and attempting to disrupt the Socialist and Trade Union movements and, in Germany, of joining hands with the Nazis in order to overthrow the Social Democratic Government of the Weimar Republic. The dissolution of the Comintern towards the end of last year was received

with a sigh of relief by those who are active in the working class movements of their respective countries.

In our own country, the anti-national record of the Communist Party of India has been plain for all to see. It has disrupted in turn the trade union, the peasant (*kisan*) and the student movements. There is not a mass movement of the people in the effort to gain Independence that the Communists have not opposed. That was so in 1930-31 and in 1932-33. This record was crowned in August 1942 and thereafter by the betrayal by the Communist Party of the fight for freedom and their support of the war under the specious slogan of a " People's War." Today the Communists are, along with the princes and communal organisations, a prop of British rule in India. They have all too well earned their present degeneration and isolation.

While professing to be internationalists and therefore superior to mere nationalists, the Indian Communists are in fact nothing more than Russian nationalists. Someone not inaptly described them recently as " Indo-Russians." To them the interests of their countrymen and the freedom of their country matter little beside the interests of the Russian State and the exigencies of its foreign policy from time to time. When Stalin, by signing his Pact with Hitler in August, 1939, showed Hitler the green light and let war loose on the world, the Communists were among those who declared the war to be an Imperialist War and were loud in denouncing Anglo-French-American Imperialism as the main enemy of human progress.

In an article in *Die Welt*, a Party Paper, of 2nd February, 1940, Walter Ulbricht, the German Communist leader and now a member of the " Free German Committee " wrote : " This war policy, (namely support of

the Allies) is the more criminal because Great Britain is the most reactionary force in the world."

The Daily Worker, the British Communist paper, wrote on 1st February, 1940 : " Hitler repeated once again his claim that the war was thrust upon him by Britain. Against this historical fact there is no reply. Britain declared war on Germany. Attempts were made to end war, but the Soviet-German peace overtures were rejected by Britain. All through these months, the British and French governments have had the power to end war. They have chosen to extend it." The Indian Communists followed the same line. When, however, Hitler turned on his ally and attacked Russia, the Communists carried out a *volte face* and became ardent supporters of the same imperialist war.

Many of us who were under no illusions regarding the Comintern and its branches had none the less our eyes fixed and our hopes pinned at one time on Soviet Russia. Here, we felt, was the great experiment. The fate of the Russian Revolution would decide for our generation and century the fate of World Socialism. The story of that great experiment and the way it has gone off the rails has already been told in the previous chapter.

The failure of the Russian Revolution to achieve a socialist society and the rise of a new evil, totalitarianism, make it necessary for all those whose minds are still open to new ideas to re-examine the assumptions on which their socialism had so for been based and to try and ascertain which of these premises have led them to false conclusions.

To those timid minds who are afraid of such heresy George Bernard Shaw has addressed himself in his play *Major Barbara* : " What do we do when we spend years of work and thought and thousands of pounds of solid

cash on a new gun or an aerial battleship that turns out just a hair's-breadth wrong after all ? Scrap it. Scrap it without wasting another hour or another pound on it. Well, you have made yourself something that you call a morality or a religion or what not. It doesn't fit the facts. Well, scrap it. Scrap it and get one that fits. That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam engines and dynamos ; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions.''

There is among the intelligentsia in this country still a large amount of ' slave mentality ' which expresses itself specifically in an exaggerated deference towards intellectual leaders of the West, whether they be in England, America or Russia. The record of the West and in particular the bankruptcy of its progressive movements hardly justifies this attitude of a *chela* learning from a *guru*. It is time that those who consider themselves progressive or radical in this country think for themselves and indeed aspire to provide correctives to the Western thinkers who find themselves today so confused and bewildered by what has overtaken them. We may therefore with advantage seek to ascertain the points at which socialist thought in the West has been proved by the events of the last twenty-five years to have been on the wrong track.

NATIONALISATION A SOVEREIGN CURE ?

There are at least four major assumptions of Marxism,—there may be more—which, I believe, need to be reconsidered. The first of these is that the abolition of private property and its nationalisation will *automatically* bring in economic democracy and a classless society. It has now been shown in Russia that it need do nothing of

the sort. What was not adequately appreciated by socialist thinkers of earlier times was that, while nationalised industry may belong to the State, the State itself may not belong to the people ; that in the process of achieving collectivised economy, political democracy may get lost on the way. It is now seen that it is possible with nationalised economy for a new class to arise which monopolises the control, and even a share in the ownership, of nationalised property. Instead of owning individual factories and workshops and mines, as members of the capitalist class do, this class of bureaucrats and managers owns shares in all the factories and mines belonging to the State. The workers get their wages as before, but in place of private capitalists the dividends are now drawn in the form of interest on State bonds by the new privileged class. Production is socialised, but not distribution. Plutocracy is replaced, not by socialism, but by bureaucracy. The oppression of the masses is even more complete because, as Trotsky was to live to see, " in a country where the sole employer is the State, opposition means death by slow starvation. The old principle : Who does not work shall not eat, has been replaced by a new one : who does not obey shall not eat." Nationalisation of industry *unaccompanied by political democracy* leads therefore to a different form of exploitation. It is now more and more realised that what matters most is not so much legal ownership of property as political control over it. If this were not so, the existing State ownership and management of railways in India would have to be accepted as socialist !

VIA DICTATORSHIP ?

The second Marxist assumption that needs reviewing is that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (that is, of the

Communist Party on behalf of the Proletariat) is a possible and indeed a necessary transition stage to Socialism. The theory was that having served its purpose the dictatorship would evaporate, and indeed, as Lenin following Engels put it: "The State will then wither away."

What was overlooked was the fact established through history that, in the words of Lord Action: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." In Russia, where it is claimed by the Soviet Government that a classless society has already been achieved, that Government shows not the slightest tendency to relax its complete strangle-hold on individual liberty of every kind, much less to 'wither away'! Nor is there any indication that in the years to come any democratisation or liberalisation is likely to come. "The probability of the people in power being individuals who would dislike the possession and exercise of power is," as Professor F. H. Knight puts it, "on a level with the probability that an extremely tender-hearted person would get the job of whipping-master in a slave plantation"!

Marxists often refer to socialist thought before Marx as Utopian. One wonders whether anything can be more Utopian than the touching faith of communists that a dictatorship like that in Russia, which has not hesitated to 'liquidate' its political opponents in the Party ranks in lakhs for the past six or seven years in a bloody struggle for power, is going one fine day to awaken to the fact that it has served its historical purpose and must now liquidate the G.P.U. and all the coercive apparatus of the State, which must then 'wither away'! This makes Max Eastman indulge in the quip: "Marx described as Utopian the conception that good men can bring about

socialism. Stalinists actually believe that bad men can be relied upon to do so."

A third Marxist assumption that appears to be unable to stand a review of the past two decades is that socialism can be achieved by appealing to the collective selfishness of the working class and its collective hatred for the property-owning classes. The fact of the clash of interests between different classes in society is, of course, obvious. But unfortunately the appeal to the collective selfishness of the workers leads quite as often to their becoming a party to exploitation and injustice. We have already seen how the British working class, being given a minor share in the profits of the Empire, becomes through the Labour Party a party to the perpetuation of imperialism, which is the very antithesis of a world socialist order.

Besides, can one ever get to a superior society based on co-operation and love by appealing to selfishness and hatred ? The whole complex of ends and means is here involved. Trotsky, one of the outstanding Marxists of his times, called the class struggle " the law of all laws." But science tells us that there is no law of all laws.

THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE ?

Yet another belief—and one held till now by all socialists—is that socialism is the only alternative to capitalism. I must confess I held this view myself till round about 1937 or 1938. You had somehow to destroy capitalism and then, as day follows night, socialism must dawn. But *must* it ? That old type capitalism is played out is obvious. But will socialism inevitably follow or is there not a third ' something ' that is likely to emerge ? That is a question now being asked by a growing school of thinkers. It is best posed and answered in Burnham's

Managerial Revolution. " Marxists," says he, " assert, in fact, the following syllogism : since capitalism is not going to last (which we have granted) and since socialism is the only alternative to capitalism, therefore socialism is going to come. The syllogism is perfectly valid but the conclusion is not necessarily true, unless the second premise is true and that is just the problem in dispute."

Neither Russia nor Germany today are capitalist countries in any strict sense of the word. If you have any doubt about Germany, you have only to read Burnham's book, Peter Drucker's *End of Economic Man*, or Freda Utley's *The Dream We Lost.* " Almost the only freedom left to the German employer is to put his name on the firm's stationery," says Geoffrey Crowther, editor of the *Economist,* putting the situation in a nut-shell.

The trouble is, as Burnham puts it, that both in Russia and in Germany, " the word ' Socialism ' is used for ideological purposes in order to manipulate the favourable mass emotions attached to the historic socialist ideal of a free, classless and international society and to hide the fact that the managerial economy is in actuality the basis for a new kind of exploiting, class society." This is, like all hypocrasy, a tribute paid by vice to virtue and is, to that extent, encouraging.

This is the sort of situation that William Morris, the socialist pioneer, must have had in mind when with almost prophetic insight he wrote : " I pondered all these things and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes about it turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name."

Is it not likely then that the breakdown of capitalism will be followed, not by socialism, but by what may be called—to quote Molotov, according to our ' taste '—Totalitarianism or Fascism or Hitlerism or Stalinism ? What makes this probable is that the mass of humanity is not yet equipped intellectually to control a highly organised industrial state machine. From this it does not follow that there is any truth in that old reactionary slogan : " You can't change human nature "! That is nonsense. Marx hits the nail on the head when he says that " all history is nothing but a progressive transformation of human nature." Human nature has been and is changing all the time. In Germany and Russia it has been changing drastically under our very eyes in the course of the past twenty years. What is open to doubt is whether common human intelligence has developed sufficiently to cope with and control the machines it has thrown up. Perhaps it was a realisation of this that made G.D.H. Cole confess in the columns of the *New Statesman* a couple of years back to a doubt whether the intelligence of the common man in England is capable of maintaining effective democracy in any unit larger than a parish or urban district council.

Is there no answer then to Professor Hayek's challenging thesis that the way of total planning is the *Road to Serfdom* ? Must one abandon hope and compromise with reality either by accepting one or other kind of totalitarianism or by reconciling oneself to a maintenance of the muddle and anarchy and waste of old type capitalism ? Is that really the choice before each one of us ? To me it seems that to accept this choice would be for the human spirit to accept defeat. It would be to jettison a noble ideal because it transpires that it does not appear to be just

round the corner. It is to resort to the disastrous logic of a choice of " the lesser evil." It is not by an acceptance of such a choice that human beings have led their fellows, throughout history to heights not till then achieved. To struggle for larger social aims, whether they are achievable in our own life time or not, is part of an evolved conception of living—of what the ancient Greeks called " the good life." As against the logic of those who would surrender liberty for the sake of planned economy, I would prefer that of the man who remarked : " The difficult I shall attempt immediately ; the impossible a little later."

" We repudiate," writes Lucien Laurat in *Marxism and Democracy*, " the false dilemma ' Fascism or Bolshevism,' in which many people want to cramp contemporary development. Both of these dictatorships lead to the same result : to the control of the economic system by a clique in the interests of a clique. Only democracy can guarantee society against this danger."

" In a world machine-shopped and pay-rolled, mass-produced and mass-controlled," affirms another writer, " the face of Socialist politics is changed—so that the issue is no longer between Socialism and Individualism, but between tyrannical Socialism and libertarian Socialism, between Fascism and the values of Democracy."

In the context of today, only he is a socialist who insists on having both liberty and planned economy. For all such it has become necessary to reconsider the assumptions on which orthodox socialism has so far been based and to redefine the means by which one may hope to achieve the end.

The questioning of the four assumptions of Marxism that we have found necessary amounts perhaps to nothing

more than a shifting of the emphasis which the socialist must lay in the remaining period of the twentieth century. Looked at in this light, the nationalisation or State ownership of property needs definitely to be put in its proper place. Now that it is seen that what matters is not ownership so much as control of property, nationalisation is no longer the kernel of the matter. Besides, it is coming, whether we want it or not. Economic necessities are driving inexorably towards it. The thing is to be ready to face its implications in the political and social sphere, to make sure that collectivised economy will not entail a totalitarian polity.

WHO OWNS THE STATE ?

That is the question of questions. William H. Chamberlin has, after a decade of personal examination of Soviet life, written :

> " A question that far transcends in importance the precise point at which a line may be drawn between public and private enterprise in economic life is whether the people are to own the State or the State is to own the people." (*A False Utopia.*)

Precisely because collectivised economy endangers individual liberty and political democracy, these have to be placed right in the centre of the picture of socialism in the years to come. These are the danger points of socialism. Respect for the human personality is likely to be the field on which the battles of the second half of the twentieth century will rage thickest, and no one has a right to be called a socialist who does not rally to the defence of the Rights of Man.

ENDS AND MEANS

If individual liberty and political democracy are as essential a part of socialism as economic equality, it is necessary that the methods of achieving socialism should fit the end. This calls for a repudiation of the Communist slogan that " the end justifies the means ", which more specifically means that in practice everything—lying, deceit, murder—is justified so long as it helps the Communist Party. It also calls for a repudiation of the methods of ruthless class hatred and of the military *coup d'etat*, and even more of the methods of the ' liquidation ' of opposition and of the falsification of history resorted to by Stalin. Socialism can only be achieved by clean means and with clean hands. Justice has been well defined as " Truth in action ". Without intellectual integrity and adherence to truth, we shall get lost in the woods.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge had a century back predicted the process of deterioration that has now overtaken the Communist movement when, in another context, he wrote : " He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth will proceed by loving his own sect of Church better than Christianity and end by loving himself better than all."

Does this mean that we must fall back into the ranks of the Social Democrats and limit ourselves to legal and constitutional methods alone ? If we were in a genuinely democratic country like the Scandinavian States, I would probably answer ' Yes.' In so doing I would only be following Karl Marx, who conceded the possibility of democratic countries like England and America and perhaps Holland achieving a socialist society through purely constitutional changes. But the world by and large is not democratic, and we in this country have not even the glimmerings of democracy and little individual liberty.

The problem for peoples placed like us therefore appears to be one of devising a method of social change which is dynamic and which yet eschews the violence of a *coup d'etat* and of the dictatorship which must inevitably follow. It is here, I believe, that Mahatma Gandhi has made certain contributions to the development of political thought which every socialist, who wishes to enrich his armoury and to devise ever more efficient weapons with which to bring about the social changes which he desires, must carefully study.

Gandhiji's teachings do not constitute a well-knit system of economic thought, nor need we accept them indiscriminately, but it is pertinent to note that Gandhiji has always stressed the importance of economic equality. "The whole of this (constructive) programme," he has said, "will be a structure on sand if it is not built on the solid foundation of economic equality."

There are certain points on which Gandhiji has, I believe, something significant to contribute in so far as the means to achieve our end are concerned. The first of these contributions is the forging of the weapon of mass civil resistance. That form of mass action is limited, not by legalistic formulas or constitutional niceties but by the insistence on clean and non-violent methods. The main virtue of this method is not so much that it does not involve a physical extermination of the opponents of change, though that too is in itself valuable, but that it makes it possible to maintain a democratic climate even when contending with undemocratic forces. It shows an understanding of the great truth that democracy is not only a system, but also a habit. Civil resistance is a method which, even when it fails on a particular

occasion, avoids, as we know of our own experience, the degeneration and demoralisation that sets in when a violent insurrection is suppressed. If it is once agreed that the violent seizure of power is likely to lead to violence becoming a habit, with the result that the very object for which the revolution is made may get lost on the way, as in Russia, then it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Gandhian way is on this point better suited to the needs of a country where the ballot box is not available and where bullets must be eschewed. The socialist has long argued that real democracy is impossible without socialism. Now Gandhiji points out that neither democracy nor socialism is possible in any but a non-violent society.

DECENTRALISED ECONOMY

There is another important point to which Gandhiji has called attention. That is the stress laid by him on the decentralisation of economy. This part of his teaching has often been labelled ' Back to the Villages,' and has been subjected to a great deal of sharp criticism.

What attitude should Socialists adopt towards Gandhiji's attitude on this question ? Should we regard him as an outmoded crank, fiercely opposed to all machinery and attempting to take us back to a dreary past ? If this were really so, then how can we explain Gandhiji's support to the nationalisation of key industries ? " What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such," Gandhiji has said. " The spinning wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery." So again, writing in the *Harijan* of 22nd June, 1935, he has said : " If we could have electricity in every village home, I shall not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with electricity."

" I consider it a sin and injustice to use machinery for the purpose of concentrating power and riches in the hands of the few. Today the machine is used in this way," Gandhiji wrote in *Nava Jivan* on 20th September, 1925. What socialist can disagree with a word of this ?

It would therefore be more to the point to regard Gandhiji's lack of sympathy with large-scale mechanisation and industrialisation as partly a protest against the capitalist use of the machine and partly a corrective to a tendency which even Western sociologists are now coming to realise is anti-social and undemocratic in its results.

If one reads two weighty tomes by Lewis Mumford, the renowned American sociologist, bearing the titles *Technics and Civilisation* and *The Culture of Cities,* one finds that he too comes to the conclusion that big factories and big cities are now out of date. These evils he refers to under the name of ' Giantism,' which he considers to be a relic of the nineteenth century level of technical development. According to him, electrification and standardisation are two of the recent achievements of science which make small workshops situated in small garden cities spread all over the countryside the most efficient, healthy and wholesome units of industry and of society. The Report of the American Temporary National Economic Committee (1941) appears to corroborate this when it states : " The superior efficiency of large establishments has not been demonstrated."

In the light of the present development of human intelligence which is indicated by G. D. H. Cole's remark quoted earlier, it does seem far more likely that a decentralised system of industry on a co-operative basis, " drawing the frontiers of the common man's world closer

to him," will result in the "free and equal society" of Lenin's dreams than a highly collectivised system of concentrated industry with its attendant dangers of bureaucracy and of totalitarian dictatorship. To the extent that socialism aims at releasing the minds of men from the 'ruler—ruled' complex, its success will be easier within smaller territorial units of administration, where there is less scope for regimentation and more for free co-operation. Moreover, the ruthless bombing of vital industrial targets concentrated in key areas in World War II has brought to the fore a series of fresh technical and strategic problems affecting large-scale industry. By an irony of history, perhaps the Bombing Age is paving the way for smaller decentralised industrial units. Perhaps after all, far from being an old fossil, Gandhiji will on this point turn out to be ahead of the general run of Western thinkers of his time. Perhaps, after all, he will be seen to have pointed out to us the path of escape from the Managerial Society for which Burnham, limited by his Western environment, has searched in vain.

THE TRANSITION

How is the transition from the present position to a socialist society to be achieved? The nature of the changes brought about by non-violent mass action aiming at the establishment of an economic system an appreciable part of which is made up of small-scale units of production must of necessity be different from those which are envisaged by orthodox socialist theory. One of these points of difference is in the attitude towards the ownership of property, which is the social relationship of *men* to *things*. Socialism seeks to work a revolution in that relationship. We have seen earlier that what matters most

today is not ownership so much as control of the instruments of production and that one can have, as in Russia, a totally nationalised economy without achieving a classless society. The formula that Gandhiji has put before us, as against the expropriation of all private property, is what is known as the conception of ' trusteeship ' of the owners of property in the interest of the community, to be brought about by moral suasion *plus* State pressure. The maximum income permitted to such ' trustees ' would not exceed twelve times the prevailing minimum.

A lot of scorn has been poured on this optimism which can envisage a change of heart on the part of the propertied class. I confess I have not been innocent in the past of adding my little share to it. After the awful mess that world capitalism has made, the idea of thinking of the capitalist as a ' trustee ' does rather jar on one. Nor would there be any ground for hope if the capitalist were left a free agent under a system of *laissez faire*, with unfettered discretion and power to do as he pleased. But that is precisely what the capitalist ' trustee ' of Gandhiji's would *not* be free to do.

A little detailed investigation into what ' trusteeship ' implies gives to the slogan a rather significant connotation. Trusteeship in law is the ownership of property by A under such circumstances that he is bound to use the property for the benefit of B, who is called the beneficiary. If trustee A should in any way misuse his legal ownership by seeking to make any personal gain out of it, the law sees to it that he is removed from possession. A's property rights are, to put it bluntly, a legal fiction. Applying this to the rights of property owners generally, what the theory of trusteeship comes to is that the State allows the present owners of property to continue in pos-

session only on condition that they use the property for the benefit and profit of the entire community. Any property owner who uses his property primarily for private profit would be removed from possession on the ground of breach of trust. In other words, it is a conception in which the capitalist is defunctionalised. It is a repudiation of the entire capitalist conception of property rights. The owner must produce in his factory the kind of goods and the quantity of goods that he is asked to by the State, he must pay his workers the wages which are dictated by the State and he must sell his products at prices fixed by the State. All he would get would be a five or six per cent dividend. Is the position of such an owner of property materially different from the holder of State Bonds in Soviet Russia, who draws seven per cent interest from the profits of " nationalised " industry ? And does not Gandhiji's ratio of 12 to 1 between maximum and minimum compare favourably with the existing disparity of 80 to 1 in Russia ? I cannot help feeling that if only one discards the limitations of jargon, the reality is not dissimilar. To those who consider the path of trusteeship *as a transition stage* to a socialist society Utopian, I would answer with the question : " Does not the Soviet Dictatorship also claim to be a trustee of socialist property and is it not Utopian to expect that Dictatorship to liquidate itself voluntarily when its work is done and to re-establish democracy ?" I cannot help feeling that of the two Gandhiji's optimism is by no means the bolder.

Most Marxists dismiss the conception of ' trusteeship ' with a sneer because they labour under the delusion—which Laurat rightly denounces as Utopian—

" that the capitalist world is advancing towards a

day X and an hour Y on which the proletariat will arise in its might, deal its enemies one crushing blow, establish its dictatorship and build up an ideal socialist society . . . . A dividing line certainly does exist but it cannot be represented by a day X and an hour Y. On the contrary, it may extend several generations. If we believe that the advance towards socialism implies socialisation by stages then the idea of leaving capitalist property intact in those sectors of the economic system not yet ripe for socialisation is a logical development. In those sectors capitalism still has a long time to go. The great thing in these conditions is to know whether it can still be defined as capitalism in the traditional sense of the word and to what extent the economic system in which we are living today still merits the term ' capitalist '."

That Karl Marx himself envisaged some such gradual transformation of the capitalist system is clear from the following quotations from *Capital*:

" This is the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within capitalist production itself. A self-destructive contradiction . . . It is private production without the control of private property . . . It is the suppression of private property within the limits of the capitalist mode of production. The capitalist stock companies as well as the co-operative factories may be considered as forms of transition from the capitalist mode of production to the associated one, with this distinction that the mode of antagonism is met negatively in the one, positively in the other."

" The intermediary forms of which Marx speaks," comments Laurat, " and which in his day were simple and rudimentary phenomena have become the dominant forms of modern economy. We are actually in full ' transition ' to a new form of production '." Socialism today is " an idea in the process of becoming a fact."

That is not to say that there is any reason to discard the method of nationalisation and to plump for that of ' trusteeship '. All that follows from the new knowledge of the priorities as between control and ownership of property is that in the transition to a socialist society various forms of the relationship of men to things will have a part to play in different sectors of economic life —State ownership, municipal ownership, industrial and agricultural producers' co-operatives or guilds or syndicates, and private ownership.

And the more checks and balances the better. We may usefully apply in the economic sphere the wisdom the Fathers of the American Constitution showed in devising a system of political checks and balances for the preservation of liberty. The value of the concept of ' trusteeship ' is not in its finality but rather in its elasticity as a transition technique. It stresses the ethical and social value of attempting to undo the wrong of the anti-social use of property beofre destroying or ' liquidating ' the wrong-doer. If it does nothing else it at least weakens resistance to social changes. It shows that new improvisations may not only be found necessary as we go along the path that leads to our goal but even desirable, and that dogmatism in respect of the institutional bases of society should give place to a willingness to experiment.

Karl Marx has made a great contribution to the development of political and economic thought. All schools

of socialist opinion have drunk deep at the rich fountain of his learning and it is only to be expected that he should leave a deep impress on history. But that is no reason for making of his contribution a dogma, as a church does of the teaching of a religious prophet. That is the surest way to bury the spirit of a great man. " Technology has undergone a revolution undreamt of by Marx." To make of Marx's teaching a dogma is to set up a new religion as hide-bound as that Lenin denounced as " the opium of the people ". That Marx himself was not unaware of the dangers of such dogmatism is shown by the remark which he made towards the end of his life : " Thank God I am not a Marxist "!

Much less is it necessary or desirable for us today to be Marxists or, for that matter, Gandhians. Is it not enough that we are socialists, that our objective is still that of a free, democratic, classless and international society, where the ruling principle will be : " From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs "? If in the course of our striving to help in achieving that goal we find that Mahatma Gandhi or some other thinker has something to contribute which is as pertinent today as what Marx gave us was a century back, we should gladly pay tribute to him by incorporating it in our conception of socialism and of the means to achieve it.

A wag has said that nowadays " all isms have become wasms." There is certainly a danger of this happening to socialism if those who are socialists do not constantly re-examine their assumptions and re-dedicate themselves to their ideal on the basis of newer and sounder foundations.

Suggestions for Reading

ON SOCIALISM :

Lucien Laurat	*Marxism and Democracy*
J. A. Schumpeter	*Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy*
H. W. Laidler	*History of Socialist Thought*
James Burnham	*The Managerial Revolution*
	The Machiavellians
Peter Drucker	*The End of Economic Man*
	The Future of Industrial Man
F. A. Hayek	*The Road to Serfdom*
F. Borkenau	*The Communist International*
Max Eastman	*Marxism—Is It Science ?*
E. F. M. Durbin	*The Politics of Democratic Socialism*
Peter Kropotkin	*Mutual Aid*
F. Longdon	*Co-operative Politics Inside Capitalist Society*

ON SOVIET RUSSIA :

Louis Fischer	*Men and Politics*
Max Eastman	*Stalin's Russia and the Crisis in Socialism*
Eric Strauss	*Soviet Russia*
Leon Trotsky	*Revolution Betrayed*
	The Stalin School of Falsification
Boris Souvarine	*Stalin*
Arthur Koestler	*Darkness At Noon*

	Assignment
	Stalin—Tsar of All the Russias
Andre Gide	*Return From The U.S.S.R.*
	Afterthoughts On The U.S.S.R.
Freda Utley	*The Dream We Lost*
Max Schactman	*Soviet Trials*
Walter Krivitsky	*I Was Stalin's Agent*
W. H. Chamberlin	*A False Utopia*
Victor Serge	*From Lenin to Stalin*
Anton Ciliga	*Soviet Enigma*
L. E. Hubbard	*Soviet Trade and Distribution*
	Soviet Money and Finance
	The Economics of Soviet Agriculture
	Soviet Labour and Industry
E. S. Bates	*Soviet Asia: Its Record and Its Problems*
Manya Gordon	*Workers Before And After Lenin*
Professor Florinsky	*Towards An Understanding of the U.S.S.R.*
Professor Tchernavin	*I Speak For The Silent*
Madame Tchernavin	*Escape From The Soviets*
	The Case of Leon Trotsky
	(Being the Report of the Dewey Commission of Enquiry into the charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials)