RALPH FOX

A WRITER IN ARMS

Edited by

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LONDON
LAWRENCE AND WISHART

First Printed 1937

PUBLISHED BY LAWRENCE AND WISHART, LTD.
2 PARTON STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN

PRINTED BY WESTERN PRINTING SERVICES LTD., (T.U. THROUGHOUT) BRISTOL

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Members of the British Section of the International Brigade killed in action against the Spanish rebels, July, 1936—January, 1937

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NOTE

Acknowledgments are due to John Lane Ltd., for permission to include the extracts from *Genghis Khan* and *Communism* and to Victor Gollancz, Ltd. for the selection from *Lenin*

TRIBUTES TO RALPH FOX

RALPH FOX

By HARRY POLLITT

RALPH FOX was born in Halifax in 1900. He came from a comfortable middle-class home. He received the education and upbringing of his class, finishing at Oxford. The choice of a life of letters, of aloof culture, for which Ralph had all the intellectual capacity, seemed to open before him. Instead, in 1920, he went to the most hard-hit famine area of the Soviet Union. Instead he joined the Communist Party. Instead of mellowing gradually into a Literary Editor he died at 36 fighting the forces of Fascism in Spain. And as Harold Laski has written, his death was, "a fulfilment. It was, for him, simply a necessary service to his ideal." Fox, in his combination of qualities, his devotion to the Communist Party and his intellectual ardour, was able to foreshadow the alliance between mental and manual worker in the fight against Fascism and war, the destroyers of culture.

There was no personal economic reason why Fox should have joined the Communist Party. He did so from a deep sense of intellectual conviction, and from the moment he took out his Party card, his life was dedicated to the cause of Communism. Whether as author, journalist, or instructor of our factory groups in various parts of London, Fox undoubtedly influenced the thought of thousands of working men and women, and also of a big section of the professional classes of this country.

Fox had, what so many of the members of our Party lack—the recognition that the supreme aim of his work must be to build the Party to which he belonged, for he recognized that as a necessity, not in some narrow and sectarian way, but because he understood that the more powerful the Communist Party becomes, the more powerful

the working class as a whole becomes in its historical struggle against capitalism.

We do not speak as mourners of those who have died in Spain. We speak as their comrades in arms.

Friends of Spain who are not members of the Communist Party will pardon me if I refer with pride to the achievements that have been carried out by all sections of the Communist International in support of the Spanish Government. Without the existence of this International of steeled and disciplined revolutionary fighters, the material and moral forms of aid sent to Spain would have brought no accomplishment. Thus the dream of Marx and Engels has been realized, that dream which dominated them when they formed the First International, that one day there would arise a real World Party, that could mobilize the best of the people in every country to come to the assistance of comrades in other lands fighting a deadly enemy.

The International Brigade now covering itself with such honour and glory in Spain, is a real People's Army. It is an army composed of the best anti-fascist fighters of all countries. The core of that International Brigade in Spain is formed of disciplined and revolutionary fighters from all sections of the Communist International, and they have, by their example, developed a force around them that all the dark and bestial forces of fascism will never be able to conquer. Ralph Fox was part of that core. He would only wish to know that others have come along to take his place in the ranks.

It would be a crime against the whole future perspective of working-class advance, a crime against the whole future perspective of peace, if that single idea now dominating men who, in their thousands, look death in the face in Spain—to bring about the defeat of fascism—did not also become the driving force of all our efforts to build up a united labour movement and fighting People's Front of all the democratic British people.

We take legitimate pride in what comrades like General

Kleber, Ludwig Renn, Hans Beimler, André Marty have said of the work of the British battalion in the Brigade. General Kleber has declared that when there is a particularly tight corner calling for coolness and courage, he has only to ask for the British Section, for those men to go immediately to that tight corner; and when that happens he feels safe that the position they are defending will be held to the very last. Their coolness and bravery have endeared them to all who have come into contact with them, and especially has the British battalion inspired the Spanish militia who fight alongside them. Life itself, in all too many cases death, has shown that international solidarity is not a First of May slogan, but a living reality for the best of our people.

I have in mind a comrade unknown to many, for though he had to do with books he was a bookseller not a writer, Comrade McLaurin, a comrade from Cambridge University, a member of our Party and a citizen of New Zealand, who, in a series of ways has demonstrated his loyalty to Communism. A short time ago I heard that McLaurin was a skilled machine-gunner; I sent him a telegram asking him to see me. He came. I asked would he go to Spain because I had received an S.O.S. telling me that machine-gunners were especially scarce. I asked him to go, and explained that it meant facing death. Without a moment's hesitation Comrade McLaurin gave up everything he held dear and went the next day.

In the company of German, French and Spanish comrades he was given on the 8th to the 10th of November one of the most difficult posts to defend in Madrid and behind his gun he stopped those fascists; his aim was so deadly and the work he did so magnificent that the objective that the democratic forces aimed to take was taken, but unfortunately one of the last shots of the retiring enemy smashed our comrade's head, and he died at his post, having vindicated everything that solidarity means to the mass of the British working class.

The British battalion has retrieved the honourable tradi-

tions of the British Labour Movement; it has upheld the fine democratic traditions that have characterized the fight on behalf of liberty. The great poet Byron went to Greece to fight for liberty; in a later period Comrade Brailsford fought for liberty in Greece; these are the examples our British comrades are following to-day in the conditions of our time.

I read one tribute to Comrade Fox which declared that the writer in question could only see in his death "a tragic waste." That is a misunderstanding of the situation. When, unarmed, in tatters and rags, with bare fists and sticks, our Russian comrades fought a civil war from 1917 to 1920, when on seven fronts the counter-revolutionary armies of the imperialist world opposed them, we had people in this country who said "it was a tragic mistake that men should fight against such fearful odds."

Thousands of our Russian comrades laid down their lives with the same courage and vision and understanding as the comrades who have laid down their lives in Spain. Their sacrifice was not a tragic waste, for out of it has grown the mighty Soviet Union. I ask you to believe me when I say that out of the sacrifice of Comrade Fox and these others a new Spain will be born, a new world will be born, and it is not a waste therefore that in the heat of the fray these comrades have laid down their lives.

Our comrades are not dead, they live again, in the way that we will now work for victory for Spanish democracy. And in working for that, we are fighting for our own lives and liberties.

I recall to you the words of the poet Byron:

> "Still Freedom yet, thy banner torn but flying,
> Streams like a thunderstorm against the wind."

Our comrades who have died in Spain have helped us all in our work of guarding the banner of freedom and liberty.

RALPH FOX

By SIDNEY WEBB

I MUST, perforce, confine this fragment of appreciation to Ralph Fox's biography of Lenin, which has unaccountably been omitted from the list of his books in various obituaries. This pleasantly written and easily read account of the personal life of Lenin, I have found to be the most acceptable introduction to Soviet Communism for British inquirers. Few of those who read it can refrain from further exploration of the amazing developments of the U.S.S.R. It is certainly not the least valuable piece of work that we owe to the life which has been so tragically cut short.

MY FRIEND, RALPH FOX

By RALPH BATES

I RECEIVED the tragic news of Ralph's death just before addressing a Madison Square Garden meeting, here in New York. He was one of my best friends. I mean, outside of all questions of political sympathy, he was a man I naturally delighted to be with. Behind all the enormous panoply of that meeting, the vast hall, the gigantic machine of vulgar yet impressive sound passing out of the organ, booming and wailing across the ceiling, the banners of defiance hung around the balcony, the piles of military clothing, the ambulances—behind all the surging excitement that hung before me, there was the remembrance of my friend as I last saw him sitting at my table in London.

And then, during the meeting, Professor Dewey asked everyone to stand in memory of those who had fallen in defence of the world's liberty. With a noise like—strange how the imagination will not outlive it, childhood's symbols though the mature mind rejects them—with a noise like a rushing wind twenty thousand people stood to the known and the anonymous dead. Ralph was not anonymous to me, nor to thousands present—but it was not the landscape of shattered olive-trees among which he had died that I thought of, but again his boyish laugh and the love of a boyish tale. For that is how we had talked, the five of us, that evening, in London, before we all went off to Spain.

Ralph had been longing to go to China. I say longing, because though he had no trace of romanticism in his nature, he never accepted any idea with a merely intellectual and dry assent. I suppose that China for him, as Spain for me, represented two things, escape and reality. Ralph was one of those magnificent fortunate men who escape into

reality. He could not go to China, which he already knew and loved. Instead he met his death in Spain.

I think I described his character correctly in the first improvisatory attempt I made in telling another friend of his death. Standing in a room high above Fifth Avenue I said, to another friend of ours, Rebecca West:

"He was a mature boy," I said and Rebecca answered, "I expected to find him quite a young man when I first met him. After that conference I went out and bought all of his books." That was the effect Ralph always made on people. She was speaking of the International Association of Writers in Defence of Culture at which we were all present. In Defence of Culture! Less than six months later he had died defending it!

At that dinner in my flat we fell into excited argument, as we often did. The writing of an encyclopædia had been proposed by André Malraux. Ralph was enthusiastic, I less so. "No, no, no," I said, "in less than three months we shall have a Fascist rising in Europe." I expected the seat of that rising to be France, yet within three weeks it had broken out and André, Ralph and I were all in Spain.

I do not want to write about his books because I cannot regard them as separate from the man. I had enjoyed all of *Storming Heaven* with its intense sincerity and superb direction, *Lenin* and *Genghis Khan*, and his latest and perhaps most beautiful piece of work, *Conversation with a Lama*, all of wise things, expressed his character for me. He was a fine writer and would have done splendid things. He died in Spain, defending the light that no writer may dare to let flicker out.

TILL WE HAVE BUILT JERUSALEM

By MICHAEL GOLD

RALPH FOX, James Hanley and I shared the same hotel room in Paris during the International Writers Congress, held in the spring of 1935.

Hitherto I had known Ralph only through his writing; in left literary circles here, he was building a reputation as a Marxist scholar, journalist and artist of the first rank. The bourgeois magazines of literary America, too, had received his books with great respect.

Ralph had done a great deal of the dogged, loyal, day-by-day Communist work that few writers buckle down to. I knew that, also, and am ashamed to confess that I thought of Ralph as less writer than active political worker. One day with Ralph, and I blurted it out to him.

"Damn it," he said, "everyone thinks it of me! I must write a string of novels to break down the silly notion!"

We are in the century of the great social change, a time of war and revolution. The writer who has purged himself of the poisonous drug of bourgeois complacency, and has come out of the rancid atmosphere of the Ivory Tower into the strong winds of nature and society; the writer whose human feelings are alive, who cannot stand by while Fascists threaten all that is dear to freemen, that writer, like Ralph Fox, finds himself involved in a mental conflict.

Ralph, I discovered, was a true writer by temperament; not only because of his anti-Philistine gaiety, his thirst for experience, his sensitive response to human beings, his deep interest in the technique of writing. Ralph also had that strange and irrational passion of the true-born writer, who lusts for experience, but cannot feel it is completed until it has been re-distilled in artistic form. The world is well lost to such people unless they are fulfilling themselves

daily at the task of writing. But Ralph, like so many others in our ranks, found himself torn between this and another, newer passion that said: Take your place in the ranks! Organize! Educate! Fight! Freedom needs every soldier, and books are not enough!

The bourgeois critics demand at least a Shakespeare or Goethe of us to prove our claim to a proletarian literature. But our writers are of a new pattern; they claim none of the privileges of the neutral bourgeois writer; they are proud to be in the ranks of the People, serving the People in whatever way the time demands, by pen or by sword. If they die, like Ralph Fox, it is a great loss to literature. But they know that if Fascism wins, all literature will die, so they go into the battle gladly.

Americans are taught in childhood to have an anti-British prejudice. It is the vulgar snobbery, the affectation and hypocrisy, the vile, endless, historic treachery of the British upper class that we know and hate best. But three Englishmen helped change this feeling in me: Tom Mann, John Strachey and Ralph Fox. Ralph loved England; some of our many discussions in that Paris hotel were of England. He claimed that the British upper class is, even racially, a foreign group of invaders; the true historic nation has always been oppressed by them, and always had to fight them for its liberties. It is the masses who are England.

Ralph Fox was fighting for English liberty on the barricades of Madrid. The British rulers, naturally, are on the side of the Fascists; but they will lose, both in Madrid and in London. The masses are at last taking possession of their own home, the world. They will root out the usurpers who have so long fouled this beautiful home.

We grieve for dear Ralph Fox, good friend, good soldier. But many more of us mean to fight and even die like him before this thing is finished. The carpenter will leave his hammer and plane; the coal-digger his pick; the scientist his test-tube; the writer his pen; and go out to crush the beastly parasites of international Fascism.

Ralph was one of the first to fall in this international war of the People against the Parasites which has opened in Madrid. He was no Rupert Brooke or Lord Byron to dramatize himself; he was modest and simple in his devotion; it is impossible to write of Ralph Fox in purple phrases. He was only doing his proletarian duty; his job. Millions of the People everywhere are responding to the defence of Madrid in the same spirit. The Fascists will never pass. How can they when this spirit is abroad? Every day sees the great inevitable drift, the slow rising of world democracy in England, France, America—yes, and Italy, China, Japan and Germany. The Fascists have stirred the sleeping lion awake; and they will never be able to cage him again.

I mourn the loss of a fine working-class writer; and I mourn the good companion, the gay friend and devoted comrade who was Ralph Fox. So long, dear Ralph; some day Jerusalem will be born in England's green and pleasant land, and the People will name their children proudly after you, who died that they might be free!

Los Angeles, California.

HOW RALPH FOX WAS KILLED

By HUGH SLATER

[From *International Press Correspondence*]

RALPH FOX, the well-known English Communist writer, was killed in the fighting near Lopera in Andalusia, while he was acting as Assistant Political Commissioner to a brigade of the International Legion.

The Fascists had advanced from the direction of Cordova and the Government had thrown special troops into action for a counter-attack. Lopera is the first village in the province of Jaen on the road to Cordova. The country is hilly, with gigantic, ragged mountains in the distance. The low hills are covered with olive-groves, planted in endless, symmetrical rows. The most furious fighting was among the trees in the olive-field, covering what is now to be called "English Crest." One can imagine how intensely Ralph must have appreciated the beauty of this country.

The counter-attack in which the English-speaking company played a prominent part was made from the bottom of a hill. The Government troops, taking cover behind the olive-trees from the hail of rifle fire from the enemy positions on the crest and also from the dozens of German Junker planes bombing and flying low, machine-gunning with explosive bullets. Ralph Fox was with the brigade commander on the road half-way up the hill, when it became evident that there was an unforeseen possibility of our machine-gunners establishing invaluable positions covering the enemy's right flank. Fox set off running, bending low across some open ground, to organize this manœuvre. It was a supremely brave thing to do; the bombing and machine-gun fire were at their most intense, and it was almost certain death for anybody to leave cover.

Fox knew this, but he considered it necessary to take the risk.

Later the whole front changed, and this open ground became No-Man's Land in the centre of the cross-fire. That night a soldier was instructed to crawl out and bring in the papers from the pockets of our dead. Among the things he collected were Ralph Fox's note-book and a letter addressed to him. The next day a group of comrades were organized to go out at night to identify the bodies, but unfortunately the whole brigade was moved to a new sector that afternoon, and this could not be done.

The military commander with whom Ralph worked said that it was difficult for him to find words to describe Fox's amazing bravery. He said:

"He was an exceedingly brave man, and it was very largely due to his example that we were able to hold the enemy and save as many of our men as we did. I am not just paying a conventional tribute to a dead man when I say that he was a real hero."

MADRID, 11 *January*, 1937.

EXTRACTS FROM RALPH FOX'S LETTERS FROM SPAIN

ALBACETE, 7 *December*, 1936.

LIFE has gone by very slowly and somewhat monotonously since I arrived here. The French who came with me have departed for a nearby village, and the friends who came yesterday are about to join them. So I remain on alone, all because some people think it would be nice if I put on a pair of red tabs, which is the last thing I want to do.

This little town is very quiet, and one knew far more in London about what is happening in Spain. Indeed I never was so cut off in my life from the great world.

What is happening here is really the greatest thing since 1917. Victory means the end of Fascism everywhere sooner or later, and most likely sooner. In any case, the very fact of the resistance has wakened up the Democratic forces, encouraged them and weakened the enemy to an extent we don't quite yet realize. So however hard one's work may be, and exasperating, we do feel it counts, is history, and must be effective. When this job is over, life will be easier for everyone.

ALBACETE, 10 *December.*

STILL stuck in this place, though all the boys are now at another village where I hope to join them soon. This is a funny little town, rather like the Russian provincial town of ten years ago. Little two-storey houses, mostly of an early nineteenth-century character, narrow streets, cobbles and lots of mud. At night and at early morning there are strong frosts, in the daytime, blue skies and lots of sun. It is a pretty healthy climate. The Spanish militia are interesting to watch. Dressed in every variety of uniform or no uniform at all, with all kinds of arms, no particular march discipline, but tough, wiry looking fellows. If some

genius could arise to organize them they would certainly play hell with Franco, a revolutionary General Gordon perhaps.

The position at the front is interesting and many things which seemed so odd and inexplicable at home, are clearer here. However, in general we had the right ideas about things at home. I don't know when the stalemate will break, but it should not be long. I am sure it is still true that one severe defeat for the Fascists would win the war. Not at once of course, but their morale, already weakened, won't stand defeat.

The whole atmosphere is revolutionary, the very streets full of the people, few signs of any bourgeoisie, and out of all this talking, gesticulatory, variegated crowd, the energy of the workers will surely create something firm and stable in the end. The Party here grows daily, though their difficulties are naturally enormous. We want more and quicker volunteers—no limit, but good stuff essential.

ALBACETE, 11 *December.*

THE comrade coming on leave is bringing this letter to you. This is a most wonderful experience. We left Paris in two special coaches, and all the way across France people were greeting us with clenched fists, not even waiting for us to salute first, but knowing where we were going and wishing us "bonne chance." The defence of Madrid has saved Europe. The spirit in France is quite different to what it was a few weeks ago.

In Barcelona we marched through the town, passed the Party and Anarchist headquarters, greeted everywhere by the people. . . .

Our little army is of every nation, French, Belgians, Germans, and Poles predominating. I have talked to Ukrainians from Poland, fellows who have been soldiers nearly all their lives, happy at last to be fighting for something worth while.

For years, the Liberal bourgeoisie has talked about a

League of Nations' army to impose Peace on the world. Well, we have created the first International Army to fight for Peace and Freedom. At present I am on the staff at the Brigade Headquarters here. Hanging around makes me fed up, but they promise that as soon as the English are all here I shall join as Political Commissar.

ALBACETE, 18 *December.*

I AM now doing much more interesting work as Political Commissar at the base for English people. I have the job of educating the political workers for our force as they come, and look forward to it immensely. But it is all very topsy turvy—five or six hours' sleep at the best, and meals if and when one can.

Still it is, when we really get our men going, to be such work as we never did before in our lives, any of us. I am a general nurse, mother, teacher, and commander to all the English as they pass through, and it is wearing. It will be some time before we go to the front.

I

THE HISTORIAN OF THE PAST

THE MONGOLS AND THEIR WORLD

[From *Genghis Khan*]

To understand the peculiar character of Asiatic history, the causes of its political instability, the real root of that Asiatic pessimism, miscalled fatalism, which has placed such a distinguishing mark on the civilization of the continent, we must go deeper than a mere description of the political divisions in the period which interests us. The very idea of change, in the form of enrichment, of concentration (in the chemical sense) which is the basis of the Western view of life, is foreign and incomprehensible to the Asiatic. He thinks always in terms of renewal, of the eternal return to the starting-point in order that the cycle of life may begin afresh.

When you ride over the steppes and plains of Central Asia, an islander from the North Sea, you are assailed by the strangest, most contradictory emotions until you become used to the vast distances. At first you feel overwhelmed by the feeling of land, that here you are in the driest, most continental and essentially land parts of the world. The sea becomes a distant dream; so many thousands of miles away in this or that direction—you are equidistant from all the great oceans, as near to the Atlantic as to the Pacific. And then, when, choked with dust and blinded by the monotonous glare of yellow earth, brilliant sky and bright sun, you have at last forgotten the very existence of sea, you are suddenly seized by the feeling that you are riding by the shores of a great ocean. That long purple-brown cliff which stretches to your left must surely have the waves beating at its foot.

There is an explanation for this. The centre of Asia in pre-historic times was filled by a vast inland sea. The cliff whose sharp outline caught your attention contains sea

fossils in its crumbling, gravelly clay. The natural history of Asia is a history of desiccation, of the gradual drying up of vast areas till only the unnatural pools of the Caspian and Aral salt-lakes are left now in this desert of land.

The causes of this desiccation, which continues throughout historical times, are to be found in the mighty ranges of mountains which cut across Asia from north to south, the ranges of the far Siberian north, the Altai, the Tien Shan, the Himalaya and the Hindu Kush. The changes in the glacial life of these snow-clad giants have altered the face of a great part of the earth. The drying-up of Asia has also given a peculiar stamp to the life of its human population.

Two features stand out, the great rivers, and the vast expanses of steppe. Around these features in historical times men began to live in two different ways: in the oases, along the river valleys, they lived a settled life in towns and villages, tilling the earth, producing and manufacturing; on the steppe they lived a pastoral, nomad life. This conflict of two economies, those of "the desert" and "the sown," has been the central feature of Asiatic history, determining its peculiar course. Because of it, struggles between classes and nations have in Asia assumed a different form and gone a different way from the way of Europe and the West.

The two economies, as each developed to civilized life, could not exist independently of one another. They must meet, exchange and conflict. It would be wrong to regard the nomad way of life as barbarous. The earliest civilizations in Northern Asia were nomadic and the steppe culture of Siberia, carried into China, helped to build the greatest of all the settled civilizations of Asia. We know to-day that the nomad Scythians were also far from being barbarians, that they gave much to all the settled peoples with whom they came in contact.

But the nomad life could not remain self-contained and self-sufficient. It is a poor life and a hard one by its very nature. The Chinese poets loved to compare the free and happy horseman of the grassy plains, riding with his hunting

eagle on his wrist, with the luxury and contradictions of their own court life. But at the beginning of this book I placed deliberately another and a truer image, that of the frozen, horseless, ragged, enduring nomad alone against the cruelty of the elements. There is a Turkish proverb, "the steppe is wide and heaven is far," which sums up exactly the real position.

The deserts are sandy and waterless, burning hot in summer and freezing in winter. The grass lands are torn by mighty winds, lashed by storms, frozen in winter also. In midsummer the grass is brown and dry, useless for man or beast. The burning summer is a very brief one, the thunderstorms of August heralding the grey cold autumn which begins in September. Then there may come a brief Indian summer, the best time of the year, when the cool dry air is sun-warmed and kind, keen and quick to the blood. As for winter, with its great frosts and bitter winds against which there is no protection, it is only a torment to those who must live through it.

The people live by their beasts alone, the sheep, cattle, horses and, in some places, camels. The animals are not always as hardy as the men and women. Many of them die on the winter pastures. The horse, the small, sturdy, shaggy Mongolian pony, is the best loved and most important of the nomad's possessions. The mare gives him milk, the *kumys* which is the national drink, a sharp, sour, bluish-whitish liquid, which has great properties of strength-giving and is not to be despised after a long day's ride by the most finicking European. On his pacer the nomad can ride untired for days on end, master of the great distances of the steppe. The stages of nomad history are connected with the horse, with the invention of the bridle and then, much later, of the stirrup, which gave the nomad fighter the chance to wield his deadly lance and shoot accurately from the saddle with the bow, so that he became the most effective and dreaded cavalryman in the world. From the ability to fight and manœuvre in mass given him by the stirrup, arose the need for military leaders, and with these

leaders developed the nomad feudalism that reached its highest point under the Mongol Chingis-Khan.

Imagine him then, this typical rider of the steppe, short, round-skulled, big-boned and sturdy, the brown eyes set just above the high cheek-bones and reddened with exposure and grit, the unwieldy carriage that of a man always in the saddle, his dress a long coat of brown, coarse cloth, girded across the middle, the sleeves wide and long, his cap of fox-skin or of white felt embroidered in red and blue wool. The hair on his face is sparse, but he has something of a beard, while his head is unshaven, the wiry black hair bound into two plaits. His teeth are dazzling white and he is cheerful and friendly enough in company, though inclined to long periods of gloomy moroseness.

He eats mutton, loves gluttonous feasting and heavy drinking, but can do so only very rarely, owing to his poverty. In the early summer, however, when the worst is over with the breeding of his flocks, when the mares are giving milk freely and the grass is still fresh and green, he goes to the clan meeting, to the wrestling and races, where a feast is held, horses are killed, and for a brief moment he knows satisfaction and plenty.

Crossing the steppe is an art—like navigation without instruments. He knows his position partly from memory, the astonishing nomad memory that knows the position of every stone and carries the shape of the country in mind as true as a photograph, partly, at night, by the stars, or again by the flight of the cranes or wild geese urgent across the blue sky. The sky is his supreme spirit, his God. But the winds, the stones, the rivers, the forests, all have their spirits, mostly evil. The *shaman*, the medicine-man, can commune with them and is, if not the master of nature, at least its confidant. Life is a constant battle, against spirits and against man. His own spirit is as hardy and fearless as his rough life compels him to be and he is as indifferent to suffering in others as in himself. His speech is poetry, for he does not know writing and poetry is the easiest way of communicating his thoughts. He sings the past of his

race, the great Khans of the Huns and the Turks, the joy of battle, the skill and pleasure of the hunt, the beauty of his quiet, dark-eyed, light-skinned women. His speech and song are full of images from the life of the steppe, the birds, the wild animals, the carts which bear his tents, his horses, his weapons, and he knows no other, for his imagination, like his life, is bounded by these.

His way of life at the time of which we write was rougher, his society more democratic and less corrupt than that of the towns, and his military skill infinitely higher than that of the settled peoples with whom he was constantly at war. Racially the nomad of Central and Eastern Asia was little different from the townsman. By our era no such thing as a purely nomadic race was left. The Iranian (Persian) population had been settled on the land and in the towns for over a thousand years. The Turanian peoples (Turks) were fairly divided. Many kept their old life and traditions, but a good half were settled, and even the Mongols, whom we think of as purely nomadic, had whole tribes living a settled existence near the Great Wall of China.

The towns of Asia, rising as military camps and trading posts, had become great and beautiful cities, the marvel of the civilized world. The streets of their bazaars were filled with the booths of busy craftsmen of all kinds, they were splendid with their tiled mosques and colleges, their fountains and shady ponds, beautiful with green gardens and orchards. The social life of these settled states was, however, entirely conditioned by this strange dual economy of the continent.

Any development among the nomads had its immediate effect on the great states. A temporary unification of the tribes was always followed by an invasion of the settled countries, their conquest, and the establishment of a nomad dynasty and a new feudal ruling class. The aim of the new rulers was the plunder of the population. To strengthen themselves they built up armies from the tribes, often slave armies, quite apart from the people. With their own assimilation by the higher culture which they had conquered came their degeneration and decay, together with

that of their armies, and inevitable conquest by a fresh invader from the steppe.

The wealthy towns sometimes sought freedom from this yoke by becoming free republics under a merchant oligarchy, as in Italy. But this never lasted long enough to ensure the supremacy of the merchant class. Either the oligarchy became a tyranny, as in Bokhara and Samarkand, or else it gave way in time to a stronger nomad conqueror. There were no nations and no national forces. Classes there were, and between the classes a bitter unending struggle, a struggle which could never end in the enrichment of life, in the smelting of a new society, but only in destruction and renewal. Ibn Haldun, the great Arab philosopher, when he wished to describe the societies of Asia used the image of an Arab poet—they were "like silkworms which weave a cocoon that they might die in it." The pessimism engendered by history is expressed by yet another Arab poet. "The end is like unto the beginning—morning and evening—one and the same miracle."

This then was Asia at the time of the birth of Temujin: in science, in art, in philosophy and literature, in the size and grandeur of its towns, the wonder of its libraries and universities, centuries ahead of Europe. Yet it was a society in which nothing was firm and stable, in which the very poets and philosophers could only mourn the beauty of passing things and seek comfort in a mystic communion with an absolute spirit outside of the agony of life, a society where every man was at war with his brother, in which cruelty, violence and oppression were the laws of being. States and empires rose and vanished on the immense steppe, their very names unknown in the West. Only the legend of the immense wealth of Asia was constant in the imagination of the youthful peoples of Europe, so that when a petty Tatar princeling adopted the Nestorian heresy the fame of it spread to the courts of Europe and the forged letter of Prester John awakened men's greed as well as their religious instincts with the fabulous story of the riches of this illiterate nomad and the great state of his equally fabulous court.

THE FOREST OF MANY TREES

[From *Genghis Khan*]

THE *kuriltai* on the Onon is one of the great events of world history. Here the nomad adventurer was proclaimed king and his monarchy organized, while there gathered about him the leaders of all the tribes and peoples of Mongolia whom he had united by his genius and military skill. He now had by his side not only brave generals but wise counsellors also, men who wrote down his decisions and saw to the execution of his judgments. The chancellor of the Naiman Khan was a Uighur called Tatatungo. After his master's death he was taken by Chingis into his own service where he performed great and important work in spreading the Uighur culture in the Mongol court.

When first taken prisoner and brought before Chingis he had with him his golden seal. "What use is this seal?" Chingis asked him.

"Every time my lord wished to levy silver or grain or give a commission to any of his subjects, he caused his orders to be obeyed by this seal, in order to give them an authentic character," the Uighur told him. From that day Chingis commanded that all his orders be marked with a seal which he entrusted to Tatatungo. It is not too much to assume that in the great work accomplished at the *kuriltai*, the advice and experience of this first minister played its part. By now also Hassan, the merchant of Turkistan, and the Christian Mongol merchant Chinkai, both of whom had "drunk the waters of Baljun lake" with Chingis and his band of heroes after their defeat by the Wang-Khan and Jamuga, were in his permanent service. They were men who knew well other lands and the ways of the great rulers of the settled nations to west and east.

We have called Chingis, King, and king he now was in

fact, but it must be remembered, if we are to understand his achievement properly, that he was the first king among the Mongols, who till this time had never known the institution of monarchy. When he had been proclaimed Khan many years before, after the break with Jamuga, it was no royal power that was then invested in him, only the leadership of a little band of adventurers. Yet the need for such a centralized power as he now held, for a firm feudal state such as he now created, had been long felt among the Mongols and the germs of all its institutions had been in existence even in the days of his father Yesugei. Chingis created nothing new. He only understood with truly remarkable insight the meaning of the changes taking place among his people, speeded up those changes through his own impetuous energy and genius, and gave them final form.

As the old blood clan broke up, as separate houses fell away and formed their own clans with their vassals and serfs, seeking to find in this way a firm basis for their individual nomad economy, away from the hampering ties of the old patriarchal union, new forms of social organization and new relationships grew up out of the old. These nomad seigneurs, *noyod*,* to use the Mongol word, were wealthy horse and cattle-ranchers who were compelled to lead an independent existence with their herdsmen and shepherds.

For protection they must keep their own armed force. So to the great lords there came youths of other noble houses, in search of adventure and a livelihood, to take a pledge of chivalrous service as *nökŭd*,† "companions" or esquires. The *nökŭr* brought with him nothing but his horse and his arms. The lord, the *noyon*, must keep him, and the better the lord is able to keep his followers, the more free and generous towards them he is, the greater will be his reputation, his knightly fame.

So the same institutions developed among the Mongols as in feudal Europe. The poorer, weaker and more unfor-

* Singular is *noyon*. † Singular is *nökŭr*.

tunate lords sought the protection of the stronger or the wealthier and a gradual process of unification went on. A group of such adventurers would elect a Khan to lead them in battle or the chase, thus winning greater security for their property, the opportunity to increase it at the expense of enemies and to maintain their followers and vassals in fitting state. Yet this very striving for security and unity inevitably, in the conditions of nomad life, led to greater insecurity and anarchy. The old society had been destroyed, the new had not grown up. Life was a series of wild forays, of continual desertions, of the splitting up of groupings and tribes, a constant struggle between the Khans.

Temujin was made Khan of a small group who broke away from Jamuga's leadership. None of the existing Khans joined him, and even the most important chiefs of his own clan of the Borjigin viewed his rise with mistrust and took the first chance of betraying him to the Wang-Khan of the Kerait. Hence the merciless character of this steppe warfare. Everything called for one man to unite the Mongol people and the nobles themselves were conscious of the need for unity. But when every weathy owner of great herds, every ambitious Khan, saw himself as the potential leader of the people, the man who in fact was to unite them could only succeed through the physical destruction of his rivals.

Rashid ed-Din tells us of a clever and shrewd old man of the Bayaut tribe who summed up this situation perfectly and enumerated those Khans who aimed at the overlordship of the steppe and imperial greatness.

" 'Sacha-beki,' he said, 'of the tribe of Kyiut-Yurkin, has the desire of lordship, but he is not fitted for it. Jamuga Sechen, who is for ever setting one against another and contriving tricks and pretences to work his own way, will also fail to achieve it. Juchi-bera, that is Juchi-Kasar, brother of Chingis-Khan likewise nurses such a desire and seeks to distinguish himself by his strength, power, skill and his shooting from the bow. However, he also will not

succeed. Neither will Olan-Udur, of the tribe of the Merkit, achieve it. But this Temujin, that is Chingis-Khan, is of such a kind, quality and aptness for this, for lording and for ruling, that he will verily reach the King's dwelling.' These words he spoke in rhyme and artfully." Rashid is careful to emphasize that the old man spoke these words "at the time when Chingis-Khan had not yet made himself *padishah* (supreme ruler) and there was a lust for the first place and lordship among the tribes."

Of the greatest importance in this new feudal society was the institution of *nöküd*, the esquires of these khans and nobles, who formed a kind of chivalry of free companions and were the nucleus of the military state organization which was growing up. The *nökür* might be a member of the Khan's guard, or an officer in command of a tribal levy, or a great general. The important thing was that his allegiance was a personal one to his lord and was quite independent of any ties of family or clan. He might be a messenger or ambassador, an organizer of the chase and a camp commander, or simply a personal attendant on the lord. He was a free man, without the obligations of the vassals or the painful and degrading toil of the slave.

The lord in turn must feed and clothe his men, find them arms, booty and women. Temujin well understood that it was by winning a reputation for lordly and chivalrous treatment of his followers that he would win the boldest fighters and most devoted servants to his banner. He liked to be thought "a lord who feeds his slaves and possesses men-at-arms"; to have men say of him, "this prince Temujin will doff the coat he wears and give it away; get down from the horse he is riding and give it away. He is a man with a country who feeds his warriors and keeps his *ulus* in good order."

Mongol society was exceedingly poor, its productive power very small. In the early days of Temujin's warfare, the capture of a few silver ornaments was a great event. A saddle or bridle was a piece of property of very great value and every new mouth to feed and lusty warrior to

provide for was an economic problem to be solved. Naturally enough it was solved in war. Every clan leader became a danger and menace to his neighbours, while the growth of this military aristocracy and their chivalrous following, the *nöküd*, could only mean the final break up of the old clan and the enslavement of the poor and weak. So long as the blood tie lasted the poor had some hope from the obligations of the clan to all its members. In this new society they had none. Instead of being maintained, they must now maintain. "Those who were adept and brave fellows I have made military commanders. Those who were quick and nimble I have made herders of horses. Those who were not adept I have given a small whip and sent to be shepherds," Chingis declares in the "Sayings" reported by Rashid.

The organization of these esquires into a military bodyguard was the next step. Chingis was not alone in this, for we read of the Wang-Khan also possessing a guard. But it is this step which is the most important one in the revolution then taking place, for from this guard the military leaders are chosen and soon in place of the old blood chief we have the feudal military leader appointed by his lord to rule a domain (the Mongol *ulus* or grouping of tribes) and give him faithful allegiance in return.

Chingis had the genius to see what a tremendous weapon the institution of the *nöküd* could be if developed and properly used. In place of the unruly Khan, the treacherous aristocrat of the old clan leadership, he proposed to substitute his own vassals, bound to him by inviolable allegiance, at the head of the subdued, defeated and broken tribes. From the day he first became Khan, when he was still an unknown adventurer, he paid special care and attention to his personal following. This following strengthened and developed in the struggles which ensued and from among them he made the most talented into the little group of picked military leaders, devoted to himself, which later won him such fame, "the four Knights of Temujin," his "four hounds."

The great *kuriltai* of 1206 gave final form to the organization of the Mongol feudal state. To each of his trusty leaders Chingis now gave his own domain, or *ulus*, made up of different tribes or fragments of tribes, dwelling in a definite piece of territory and pasturing their stock there. The leaders now became *noyons*, princes, and each had the obligation of providing from among his subjects so many men for the army of their Khan, this man ten thousand, that one a thousand, even down to a hundred men. This was the tribal levy. But in addition he had developed the guard into a splendidly disciplined regular army to which each free family must send recruits. The officers of the guard were chosen from among the faithful who had drunk with him the bitter waters of Lake Baljun in the days of his defeat. The privileges of the guard were great, but the discipline in turn was strict. No such military force existed anywhere in the world at that time and such a closely-knit, highly-trained and courageous body of men had rarely taken the field.

Each seigneur, or *noyon*, was given possession of suitable lands to maintain his people. He had the right to the first choice of the spoils of the chase, then after him the lesser nobles and free men shared in order. The serfs and slaves could keep nothing for themselves of the game killed or captured and the first privilege given to a freed slave was "to take for himself the game and beasts trapped or killed in the chase." Military booty was divided in the same way, a portion being set aside also for the Khan. Even the serf, however, might own stock, for without horses and cattle no Mongol could live. But they and their families had to perform many services for the lord, killing goats and sheep for him on certain great occasions, sending their cows and milch mares to pasture with those of their lords for certain periods and also paying actual tribute each year in cattle. There were many of these Mongol simple folk who were unable to perform even these services, so poor were they. They were called "houseless folk" and when Chingis organized his army at the great *kuriltai*, a special corps was

formed from among them and a shepherd given its command.

All those who had served him well now received their reward. Faith and loyalty had not been in vain and were paid for at the most generous rates by the conqueror. It was time to codify the changes that had been made, to give the seal of law to all that had been done. So might the lords of ten thousand and a thousand know more clearly their rights and their duties, while the task of ruling this great multitude of poor and turbulent horsemen would thus become easier.

On the basis of the ancient customs of his people he drew up a code of law, the *yasak*. Chingis was an innovator, more than any man he had destroyed the old life of his nation, yet he was careful to take from its past all that might strengthen and fortify the empire he had built up. We have no complete knowledge of his *yasak*. The best account is the work of an Egyptian historian, Maqrizi. It contains the law on sexual relations, punishing fornication and sodomy. It prohibits untruth, magic, spying and interference with one another's conduct, quarrelling or participation in the quarrels of others. Clearly this last is an effort to stamp out the petty clan feuds which had so long made secure life impossible among the nomads. It is interesting to note that "whoever receives merchandise and goes bankrupt thrice is put to death after the third bankruptcy." We do not know when this was introduced into the *yasak*, but it could not have been long before the settled conditions of the new empire allowed a considerable growth of trade.

A number of laws are simply rules of desert hygiene and codifications of the hospitality of the steppe or of its religious prejudices (for example, the punishment of death for any who piss upon water or ashes). Then follows a code of behaviour for the army and the rules with regard to slaves and prisoners. If a soldier in the heat of battle drops his bow or quiver the trooper behind must pick it up. Failure to do so means death. It is interesting to find the frugal

nomads compelled to wear their clothes without washing until they should be worn out, a necessity forced on them by the hardship of their life.

The rules for the inspection of troops and arms are most strictly laid down. The Khan must carry this out in person, must know everything the soldiers should have with them and punish a soldier who lacks any article of equipment. The women accompanying the armies must do all the work and undertake all feudal services imposed on the men while the latter are away fighting. On their return from a campaign the soldiers must perform certain services for the Khan. It is important to find the *yasak* confirming by law the position of the new class of feudal nobles, the *noyod*, and dividing them into commanders of a thousand, a hundred and ten.

If a noble committed a fault and the Khan sent even the least of his servants to punish him, the guilty noble must throw himself down on the earth before him in humble submission till the royal representative had inflicted the chastisement to which he was condemned, though it were death. The Khan desired all nobles to address themselves solely and directly to himself and pronounced penalty of death against all who addressed themselves to other than the Khan, a very important provision indeed.

His adopted brother he made chief judge, with instructions that all his judgments were to be inscribed on tablets, while his son Jagatai was to see to it that the *yasak* was enforced throughout the empire. That it was enforced with implacable severity wherever the Mongols ruled we know from many sources and it proved an invaluable weapon to them in binding their empire together, though it was an intolerable burden for the conquered peoples, as well as for the poorer Mongols themselves. It was the fullest expression of the Mongol feudal spirit, with all the harsh intolerance that distinguishes every purely military civilization. The Japanese are perhaps the only nation in the world who are an exception to the law that militarism and a high culture cannot exist together.

The Mongol army was to prove itself in the next fifty years the most powerful military weapon ever forged. For this the credit must go to Chingis-Khan, its creator. The social changes which he had so accelerated among his people had also their effect on military tactics. His first army was made up of clan levies, each clan forming its own division in battle, with its own clan and tribal leaders. By 1206 this system had completely disappeared. The clans themselves were so broken and dispersed that they were no longer blood unions but the feudal appanages of military leaders directly under the Khan's command. In addition the guard formed a regular army of great mobility, shock power and disciplined strength. In war the Mongols were able to adopt the tactics of shock attacks by deep and extremely mobile formations which never failed to shatter the thinner and ill-disciplined ranks of their enemy, even when the latter's numbers were greatly superior.

Because he was a military commander, with trusted lieutenants and a disciplined force behind him, Chingis could take swift decisions and strike lightning blows which were impossible to his enemies, hampered by family divisions and jealousies. The campaign against the Naiman is a most striking example of this, where the small Mongol army, on its worn-out horses, by a series of swift marches over a great extent of country struck terror and surprise into a superior enemy who was better equipped and resting on his own bases.

Chingis himself, now fifty years old, was a man of indomitable will, violent energy and great mental power. These qualities were born in him, but they had been developed to their highest point by the conditions of his long and bloody struggle for power. Power was his passion and this passion happened to coincide with the path of development and the interest of his people. He had the confused and misty sensualism of all men of violent will and a vague religious mysticism of his own. The historian Juzjani tells us that as he drew on in years he would fall into long epileptic trances and it was in these trances that

he spoke the words which were taken down by his awed followers—the "Sayings" of Chingis-Khan—and given the force of law.

Yet he showed his great mental power in the strength with which he dominated his own stormy nature, the prudence which he employed in all things. Towards an enemy he showed no mercy, but to a follower who made a mistake he could be lenient and even generous. Like all his people, who lived such a hard and insecure life, he loved to gorge himself and drink to stupidity when occasion permitted a feast, yet he was careful to be neither a drunkard nor a glutton. When he received a present of six flasks of Chinese wine from a friendly chief he declared that "a little of this stuff raises the spirits, but an overdose confuses them" and in general he refrained from an overdose.

He was superstitious, himself practising magic and divination by burning the shoulder-blades of sheep in his camp-fire till they cracked, but he was perfectly aware that superstition is also an excellent weapon for fooling the ignorant and we know at least one occasion when he used it thus deliberately. He had few prejudices and it was no doubt his great mental energy which made him such an eager listener to those with better education and wider experience than himself. Few conquerors in history have made better use of their intelligence service than this illiterate nomad.

When the work of the great *kuriltai* was over, when the organization of his empire was completed and he was once more on the march, an emotion very like love overcame him as he looked down upon his hosts camped in the green valleys of the Altai. "My archers and warriors are dark like a vast forest of many trees," he said. "It is my care and intention to sweeten their mouths with the gift of sweet sugar, to bedeck them in front, behind and upon the shoulders with brocaded garments, to seat them upon goodly geldings, to give them to drink from pure and tasty rivers, to vouchsafe their four-legged beasts good lands with abundant grass, to order that from the roads and ways which serve

the people all rubbish, roots and harmful things shall be cleared, and to allow no thorn or pricking plant to grow upon the pasture."

Pride? Perhaps, but pride which had so grown that it already mingled with some other deeper emotion. In the strange mind of man the violent and lonely struggle with reality which is the basis of the strong will and the love of power sometimes creates new emotions, reveals new features, which hide for a moment the treachery, cruelty and dark lusts which are the other side of that struggle. These creative emotions may be the justification for life, the single parts which go to form the joy of being of which even the vilest pages in human history nevertheless form a part.

1905

[From *Lenin: a Biography*]

DISASTER followed upon disaster in the Far East, till at the beginning of August the shameful negotiations for peace began at Portsmouth, Mass., under the watchful eye of Theodore Roosevelt, guardian of American imperialism. In Russia the conflagration spread throughout the summer: strikes in Tiflis, Riga, Kovno, Warsaw, in all the outlying provinces of the Empire; demonstrations and shootings in every great city; Jewish pogroms, the workers arming themselves against the pogromists; and lastly, as the hot days of the harvest approached, most terrible of all the beginnings of a jacquerie in the countryside.

Strikes of agricultural labourers had been common throughout the year, but now the peasant, the Russian muzhik whom the more imbecile and reactionary intellectuals had always delighted to picture as a holy idiot, joined in. The church bell ringing at night echoed with its dismal metallic boom over the dark, parched fields, resting uneasily from the agony of the harvest. The bands of excited peasants gathered together, a few armed ex-soldiers, survivors of the Manchurian slaughter, in front, and marched to the squire's manor house. They destroyed the machinery, emptied his barns, divided his cattle, sent his servants away, and systematically, with an almost loving care, burned the manor and the farm to the ground.

The red cock was out! Night after night the dark line of the wide and yearning Russian horizon was broken by the leaping flames, the heavy rest of the countryside disturbed by the hollow clanging of the rallying-bell. Sometimes the squire was beaten; very rarely he was killed; more often he was simply sent packing, the peasants being convinced that if his manor was destroyed he could not come back.

Only in Courland, on the Baltic, and among the mountains of the Caucasus did this peasant movement become an armed struggle, but there the hatred of the German junkers and the Georgian princes, bound up with national hatred for the Russian oppressor, grew into a people's revolt. But to the terrified Tsar and his councillors there was no difference. If to the intellectuals and the workmen were to be added the peasants, then indeed they were alone against a whole people. The order went out to crush ruthlessly the peasant movement. Hardly anywhere, except in the two provinces named, was any resistance offered, but punitive expeditions of horse, foot, and guns moved through the country, and, much as bombing aeroplanes to-day deal with recalcitrant peasants in India or Iraq, so did the Tsar's generals deal with their insurgent tenants. A couple of dozen rounds from a field battery into a village soon brought the people to their senses. Awed by the burning huts, by the power it was not possible to strike back at, the "guilty" were given up for punishment.

But the growing revolt of the people was forcing the freedom the Tsar would not grant of his own free will. The universities were made self-governing; very well, the students at once turned them into permanent meeting-places where all parties could demonstrate free from police supervision. Socialist magazines, Socialist daily papers, including a Bolshevik daily *New Life*, began to defy the censor, and no one dared intervene. The revolutionary parties were already working in semi-legal conditions. Nothing could now keep Lenin back.

At the beginning of November he left Geneva for Stockholm, where he stayed two weeks, waiting for the comrade who would bring him the necessary false papers, anxiously gazing at the narrow and stormy strip of water that divided him from the revolution. On November 18th he reached Helsingfors, where he was hidden by a lecturer at the university, Hunar Kastren, and two days later, guided by Kastren's young son, a student at the university, he reached Petersburg.

He arrived at the very height of the movement, when the decisive moment in the struggle between autocracy and people was clearly at hand. In Petersburg, Moscow, and other great cities a general strike had broken out in October; bakers, lawyers, students, apothecaries, railwaymen, trammen, factory workers, every conceivable trade and profession took part. The direction of the strike was in the hands of Councils of Workers' Deputies, the "Councils of Action" so well known to the English Labour movement, twelve years later to become world famous as "Soviets." On October 17th the Tsar had issued a manifesto promising a "constitution," in the hope of dividing his enemies. That day he closed the entry in his diary with these words: "At five o'clock I signed the manifesto. After such a day my head grew heavy and my thoughts confused. Lord, come to our aid! Put down Russia!"

Nicholas had little faith in his manifesto, which indeed was a mere manœuvre, promising nothing and meaning nothing, a manœuvre till the soldiers should be back from Manchuria, to avenge their defeat with divine aid on the mutinous Russian people. The strike went on; the reaction answered with pogroms and murders, the shooting down of demonstrators; the moment for armed uprising was clearly approaching.

One of the Bolshevik leaders, Ernest Bauman, a veterinary surgeon, was just released from prison in Moscow under the amnesty accompanying the manifesto, and shot down by a group of officers as he was walking to his home. A hundred thousand people attended his funeral; the police dared not even show themselves on the streets, and at the graveside his widow openly called for an armed uprising of the people. "What are all these promised freedoms," Lenin commented bitterly on the murder, "when armed force remains in the hands of the Government?"

But it seemed as though even the armed forces were deserting the Tsar. Revolts broke out among the seamen in Kronstadt and Sevastopol, only suppressed because of the lack of energy of their leaders and the general weakness

of political leadership which characterized all this first, tragic Russian revolution.

Such was Russia in November 1905, when Lenin returned from his first exile. From his hiding-place he quickly got in touch with his party and its Press, vigorously assumed the leadership. Kronstadt had been cleverly broken by a few concessions. There remained Sevastopol. "The time has gone for ever," Lenin wrote, "when the Russian army, as in 1849, went over the Russian frontiers in order to suppress revolution." The garrisons of Petersburg and Moscow were in a ferment; from the Far East came news of a movement among the returning soldiers, who all along the dreary Siberian railway were fraternizing with the workers.

The Kaiser was hastily mobilizing naval squadrons and army divisions for intervention on behalf of "Cousin Nicky." In Austria a general strike for universal suffrage had broken out; the powers and thrones were uneasy in their places. "You are not alone, workers and peasants of all Russia!" Lenin closed his last article from Switzerland. "And if you succeed in throwing down, defeating, and destroying the tyrants of feudal, police, landlord, and Tsarist Russia, then your victory will be a signal for a world struggle against the tyrants of capital, a struggle for full, not mere political, but for economic freedom of the toilers, a struggle for the ridding of humanity of poverty and for the realizing of Socialism." If the Tsar had his reserves in the Kaiser Wilhelm's battalions, Lenin had his in even mightier battalions.

A few days after he returned he made his first public appearance, disguised by shaving off his beard, and under another name, at the meeting of the Petersburg Soviet on 27 November. The workers had demanded an eight-hour day, the employers had answered by a lock-out, and the Tsar won his first victory in the counter-attack. The industrial bourgeoisie deserted the revolution, rallied to the manifesto of 17 October, and took the offensive against their workers. In the name of the Bolsheviks, Lenin proposed that the Petersburg Soviet answer this measure by a

call for an all-Russian general strike, the prelude to revolt.

Lenin's proposal was adopted, but it was never carried out. The movement had passed its height. The Soviet itself, under the leadership of a lawyer called Khrustalov-Nosser, and later of Trotsky, called loudly for revolt and did little to prepare for it. The majority of its members supported the Mensheviks, and they were inclined to look upon themselves as a demonstrative alternative government rather than as the means for preparing a real struggle for power. The leadership of the Petersburg Bolsheviks, till Lenin's arrival, was weak, and they were content to let things drift.

The party as a whole was preparing for a rising. It had its secret military committee, at whose head was Krassin, and Lenin was in the closest contact with them, working out to the last technical detail, with his usual thoroughness, all the plans for a rising. For example, he wrote to the Fighting Committee of the St. Petersburg organization, "Here you need frantic energy, and still more energy. With horror—yes, by God, with horror—I see you have been talking of grenades for more than six months and haven't yet made one! And it's very learned people talking. . . . Go to the youth, gentlemen! That's your sole, all-saving means. Otherwise, by God, you'll be late (I can see that all right), and will be left with learned notes, plans, sketches, schemes, excellent recipes, but no organization, nothing live. Go to the youth. Found at once fighting squads, everywhere, both of students and especially of workers, and so on, and so on. Organize immediately squads of from three to ten, to thirty persons."

A note has survived in which he works out to the very last detail the tasks of the squads, the nucleus of the revolutionary army. Squads should be of any number from two upwards, but above all be self-sufficing, expecting help from nowhere and arming themselves. Nor did he propose they should arm themselves with machine-guns and armoured cars. To the peaceful intellectual the weapons he suggests must seem remarkable enough, though the

military or police officer will see their significance at once: "Rifles, revolvers, bombs, knives, sticks, rags soaked in kerosene for fires, rope or rope ladders, spades for making barricades, clubs, flares, and barbed wire, nails for use against cavalry, etc., etc."

Squads must be formed of people living together, or meeting frequently at regular times, so that they are not separated at critical moments, with proper signs, recognition signals at night, and so on. "You mustn't forget that it's ninety-nine per cent certain events will take you by surprise and that you will only be able to get together in terribly difficult circumstances."

Even without arms, squads can do a great deal; regulating crowds, attacking and disarming policemen or stray Cossacks, rescuing prisoners or wounded when the police are weak, gathering on roofs or house-tops and pelting troops and police with stones, pouring boiling water on them, etc. Training of squads has a double character, theoretical and practical, and practical training can best be gained by scouting, securing plans of Government buildings, barracks, police stations and prisons, by actual fighting against the Black Hundred bands, or, as we should say to-day, the Fascist "storm-troops."

All kinds of people—old men, women, youths, weaklings —are capable of taking part in some way or other, he emphasizes. There is work for everyone who wants to help. Finally, he drives home his greatest point: no delay, no indecision, or the revolt is lost. "The greatest decisiveness, the greatest energy, the immediate use of every suitable moment, the immediate kindling of the revolutionary passion of the crowd, the directing of it to the more decisive and most decisive actions—such is the first duty of a revolutionary."

But the moment for a successful rising had passed. It should have come while the great general strike was still on, when the mutinies at Kronstadt and Sevastopol were paralysing the Government. Unfortunately, there was no one political party capable of taking the lead at this time.

The two parties who really believed in insurrection, apart from talking of it, were the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks. The former had little hold among the workers, their members being chiefly drawn from the students and intelligentsia, and they had no belief in mass organization. Their tactics were frankly terrorist, but they had a very big influence inside the army and navy. The Bolsheviks as a party were still in their infancy—only a handful of unknown people in January, and even in December with a decisive influence only in a few towns.

But the Government had not surrendered. It struck hard when it saw that nothing followed the naval mutinies or the great strikes. The Petersburg Soviet was arrested in December, and the initiative passed from the revolution. Not, however, before one last blow, the most desperate of all, had been struck. In Moscow the Bolsheviks were the leading party, and on 19 December the Moscow Soviet declared a general strike, so complete that the whole town, with the exception of a small circle in the centre, was in the hands of the workers. In three days the strike had grown to an armed struggle under Bolshevik leadership against the garrison. The forces of the insurgents never surpassed 2,000, fighting in " shifts " with the most antiquated weapons, but they had the support of the whole working population and suffered surprisingly small casualties.

The Moscow rising was suppressed with the help of troops from other towns, and the general strike did not spread. The workers were everywhere exhausted from the long struggles of the year, during which many of them had struck as often as three or four times.

The Moscow rising marked the highest point of the revolution. Peasant disturbances, strikes, terrorist acts, and guerrilla warfare in the mountains of the Caucasus, continued for nearly two years longer. But the Government felt itself unshakable. The famous French loan was made immediately after the suppression of the Moscow rising, and there began that blood-stained reaction which was to shake the whole world, which a Russian cynic named

"the great transmigration of the Russian people into prison."

Lenin had arrived too late. But it was typical of him that he had come, while Plekhanov had remained in Switzerland. Plekhanov's comment on the December rising was, "It would have been better never to have taken up arms." Lenin's was: "But for the Moscow rising in December, no one would ever have spoken of a 'revolution' in Russia in 1905."

At the very moment the Moscow rising was taking place, the Bolshevik leaders met in a secret conference at Tammerfors, in Finland, to discuss the preparation of insurrection. Here for the first time Lenin met the youth of the party, and the legendary leader became a reality for all those of his followers who had hitherto only known him by name. Among those who came to Tammerfors was Stalin. Stalin has given his impressions of Lenin at this meeting, impressions which throw almost as much light on the enthusiastic young revolutionary from the Caucasus as on Lenin himself.

"I first met Lenin at the Bolshevik conference at Tammerfors. I had hoped to see the mountain eagle of our party a great man, not great only politically, but, if you like, physically also, for Comrade Lenin was drawn in my imagination in the shape of a giant, imposing and typical. What was my disillusionment when I saw the most ordinary sort of man, smaller than the average, literally in no way different from ordinary mortals. It is accepted that a 'great' man is usually late to meetings, so that the audience may wait his appearance with beating hearts, and then just before he appears those present warn you, 'Sh! . . . Quiet . . . he's coming.' . . . What was my disappointment when I learned that Lenin had come to the meeting before the delegates, and, hidden somewhere in a corner, was simply chatting in the most ordinary way with some ordinary delegates to the conference."

Stalin recalls that two of Lenin's speeches here, on the current position and on the agrarian question, inspired the

whole meeting by their unusual force of conviction, simplicity and clarity of argument, short and comprehensible sentences, rather than by any gestures or fine phrases. "But I was not then taken so much by that side of Lenin's speeches," Stalin continues. "I was carried away by their indefinable power of logic, which, at first a little dryly, but for all that deeply, gripped the audience, gradually electrified it, and then took it hopelessly prisoner."

Armed risings took place in many other towns besides Moscow, but they were equally failures. Nevertheless, Lenin remained on, in hiding, in constant danger of arrest and perhaps of execution, for nearly two years more. He divided his time between Petersburg and the Finnish villages, with occasional visits to Moscow. Finland was then, as a result of the armed struggle of almost the whole people, but particularly the working men, the only place in the Tsarist empire where the political police had little power, where it was possible to meet and discuss almost openly.

Lenin did not lose hope after the Moscow defeat. He felt that in the spring the workers would have gathered strength again, and that there would be renewed peasant disorders, since the new Duma had given nothing and the land question was as far as ever from any other solution than that given it by the Tsar's artillery. So the secret committee-rooms of the Bolsheviks scattered up and down Petersburg became used to surprise visits from a little neatly dressed man, an umbrella tucked under his arm, who might have been a bank clerk or a minor civil servant, but never a dangerous revolutionary. They soon guessed who the little man was, despite the false name on his credentials, by the thoroughness with which he cross-examined them as to their knowledge of the district they worked in, by the care with which he verified every little detail of their apparatus for conspiracy, the false passports, the passwords, the all-clear and danger signs, the supplies of money and arms, the connexions with other party organizations.

Then he would take an inconspicuous seat in some sub-

urban train for a Finnish station as the pursuit became for a time too hot for him. Every day a courier would visit him at the wooden villa in the forest, near the sea, where he was hiding, bringing newspapers, reports; and, while the courier waited, Lenin would read the papers, sit down at his desk, and write his daily article for the Bolshevik paper which still led an uneasy existence in the capital.

He wrote very fast, without hesitation, filling two columns in an hour, never once lifting his eyes from the note-book which he always preferred to sheets of paper. "It appeared to me," says one of these couriers, "that before me was going on, not a creative process, but the simple copying out of something already drawn up earlier by Ilyich."

Among those who came to see him in Finland were the Bolshevik military leaders, some of them workers and intellectuals, other officers and soldiers from the army. One of these, Emilian Yaroslavsky, was, like all other practical workers who came in touch with him, immensely impressed by Lenin's understanding of his work, by his eager, all-embracing questions, his desire to know, not just the general outlines, but the smallest details. Lenin could not ask too much about the way in which the secret military schools were carried on, in which the fighting squads were taught to handle and prepare explosives, to use machine-guns and other weapons, to dig mines, and the tactics of street fighting. Lenin was always more interested in the living detail on which the summary is based. In this way he not only himself was in constant, living contact with reality, but he won the confidence of everyone who talked to him because of his intense interest in what they had to say.

It might be a worker from the Putilov metal-works who brought him his papers and messages to the woodland refuge. "Well, how are the Putilov lads? What is the mood in Peter*? What are they writing in the papers? What are you up to there?" Then, as the worker slowly, patiently answers each question, the eager mind bursts out again,

* The former capital has always been referred to familiarly by Russians as "Peter."

thirsting for the smallest living detail from that swarming, working-class life. "Who's been sacked from your place? What's the situation in the shops?" And all the time joking, telling stories himself, bubbling over with happiness at being in direct contact once again with the workers who meant so much to him.

The rising tide of the working-class movement was making it difficult for the division in the party to continue. The Bolsheviks were winning greater authority among the workers; the workers themselves were demanding unity. In April 1906 the two fractions met in congress at Stockholm to work out a basis for this unity. The Mensheviks this time were in the majority and Lenin was defeated. "I first saw Lenin then," recalls Stalin, "in the rôle of a defeated man. He was not one jot like those leaders who whimper and whine after a defeat. On the contrary, the defeat turned Lenin into a whirlwind of energy, inspiring his followers to new battles, to the future victory. But what kind of a defeat was that? You had only to look at Lenin's adversaries, the victors at the Stockholm Congress—Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov, and others. They did not look much like real victors, for Comrade Lenin in his merciless criticism of Menshevism didn't leave an inch unflayed." To those who came to him depressed Lenin would answer through compressed lips, "Don't whimper, comrades; we shall certainly win, for we're right."

For a moment in the summer of 1906 it looked as though he were to be proved right quicker than anyone expected. Once again the unrest among the peasantry found its echo among the armed forces, and mutinies occurred in the army and navy. The most important outbreak was at Sveaborg and Kronstadt, the two fortresses covering Petersburg, where the sailors were affected now by Bolshevik as well as Socialist Revolutionary agitation. Lenin at once arranged a meeting with some of the sailors, and struggled hard but vainly for a general strike of the Petersburg workers in support of the mutineers.

But it was not to be yet. The Tsar was firm in his place,

though he wrote complainingly to his Ministers of the "disgrace" of being forced to hide on board his yacht or in some country villa, of being forbidden to enter his own capital. Slowly the iron hand was feeling its way once more to the people's throat. A grim wag in the Duma, referring to the repressive policy of the new Minister, Stolypin, spoke of "Stolypin's necktie." No less than 3,500 Russians, by sentence of field court-martial, died in "Stolypin's necktie." The outbursts of 1906 and 1907, serious though they were, were rather the last bitter convulsions of people who did not care much whether they lived or died than the threatening and terrible rise of a new tide of revolt. Did this mean that all the agony and sacrifice went for nothing?

No, Lenin could never accept that view. Romantic revolutionaries like Boris Savinkov, the executioner of Von Plehve, might drift into pessimism, under the pseudonym of Ropshin write bitter and beautiful mystical complaints, or like Leonid Andreyev give up all hope of overthrowing the monster autocracy. Lenin considered that Stolypin's "reforms" showed that the revolution had forced at least partial concessions, an opening of the doors to capitalist development in the semi-Asiatic empire. And it is certainly true that from 1907 to 1914, following Stolypin's effort to smash the medieval village commune, a substantial class of rich peasants began to grow up, industry went ahead with increased vigour after the crisis earlier in the century. But the mass of peasantry sank into deeper poverty; industrially Russia still remained one of the most backward countries in the world; the condition of the workers altered very little for the better; and, most important of all, despite the existence of the vote and the Duma, power remained in the hands of the reactionary clique behind Nicholas II.

THE DEATH OF LENIN

[From *Lenin: A Biography*]

He had never been seriously ill physically in his life. Only from time to time his tremendous mental energy wore him out; he became nervous, irritable, was compelled to rest. He was proud of his health, jokingly referred to himself as the model of the healthy man, who ate when he was hungry, slept when he was tired. But ever since that August day in 1918 there had been a bullet in his neck; he had worked as few human beings have ever worked, faced and solved problems that would have appalled most men, written pamphlets, articles, delivered long and serious speeches. The winters had been grim and hungry ones, and it is not astonishing that at the beginning of 1921, after the shock of Kronstadt, the dispute with Trotsky, all the heavy responsibility of the change to the New Economic Policy, he began to feel weak and ill, to understand clearly that he must rest.

He went to the village of Gorky, near Moscow, and the Central Committee of the party forbade the sending to him of any kind of papers whatever. But he would not stay more than a few days. In the spring of 1922 he underwent an operation for the extraction of the bullet in his neck. He went to Gorky to spend his convalescence in the quick beauty of the Russian spring. But the irreparable damage, unseen but deadly, to the fine mechanism of the brain, had been done, and on 26 May the first stroke paralysed his right hand and leg, partially deprived him of speech. The great inhuman tragedy had begun, the long torture of the strongest will, the noblest mind of the century, the beating down of the thought that would not die, that struggled in vain for expression, for life. The doctors told him he must not work, must not think. They might as

well have told him he must not breathe. If to work and to think meant to die, and not an easy death, then he must die. He had never been afraid of that. . . .

From Plato to Robert Owen the best minds of humanity had dreamed of a new society, a new attitude to life which should allow man his fullest individual freedom, a development which would give room for him to employ his faculties in endless creation, give him his full status in the world. Hamlet, then, need mourn no longer for "bones that cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em." Their dreams had remained unrealized because only in the last few generations has the domination of man over physical matter reached such a point that the material conditions for such a full life for all exist. Yet, when humanity reached that point, it was confronted with the possibility that the vast majority of men and women must remain slaves to the very machines which human genius had created for the domination of matter. Freedom was the privilege only of a tiny group of millionaires, statesmen, and soldiers. These alone have in fact the power to say, "This thing's to do," and do it. Only a tiny minority can ever hope to do more than sleep and feed, leaving the capability and god-like reason of the mass of men to rust unused in them.

Lenin's work had been to show that this was not inevitable, that neither the oppression of the State nor the domination of the machine need be permanent, that a revolt of the slaves could clear the way for the development of a new life.

Investigators of the Socialist State in Russia have usually given their greatest attention to statistics, to forms of control, to the new kinds of State machinery. These things are important, but the most important thing of all, in Lenin's view, was the people themselves, in whose hands it is to build this new world. Human labour is the most important thing in human history, since man cannot live unless he works, and in the difference between Socialist labour and labour in capitalist countries, between free

labour and slave labour, he saw the most important point of difference between the two societies.

The vulgar criticism of Socialism is that it makes for a grey uniformity, that it suppresses all initiative, that it creates a mechanized man controlled by an impersonal, machine-like State. Lenin's view was that this was in fact an almost exact description of modern capitalist society in its decadent, Fascist, imperialist phase. Only Socialism gives scope to initiative, to freedom of the individual, to emphasizing the real, and not the artificial, differences in individuals.

"Socialism not only does not do away with competition," he wrote in January 1918, "but, on the contrary, for the first time creates the possibility of applying it really *widely*, really on a *mass* scale, really drawing the majority of the toilers into the sphere of such work, where they are able to show themselves, to develop their capabilities, find out their talents, which have an inexhaustible source in the people, and which capitalism has held back, suppressed, stifled, in thousands and millions of people." Socialism must not only give the freest development to those talents; it must aim at making work not a toilsome, unpleasant necessity, but a spontaneous, natural need of every healthy organism.

So when, in the spring of 1919, the workers of the Moscow-Kazan railroad gave up their Saturday holiday in order to help by their own voluntary labour in the repair and reorganization of the country's disorganized transport, Lenin hailed their act as a "great initiative," and declared that it would prove to have more importance in human history than any of the great battles of the imperialist war. "The dictatorship of the proletariat," he pointed out, "is not merely violence against the exploiters, nor even chiefly violence. The economic foundation of this revolutionary violence, the guarantee of its vitality and success, is the fact that the proletariat represents and realizes a higher type of social organization of labour in comparison with capitalism. That is its essence. That is the source of

its power and the guarantee of the inevitable complete victory of Communism."

When the workers everywhere took up with enthusiasm this idea of "Saturdays," as they came to be called, he himself insisted on taking part. From early morning till dark he trudged in the Kremlin yard, the bullet still in his neck, carrying great baulks of timber. He would not rest until the others, mostly young soldiers, rested, nor would he undertake any lighter kind of work. So, when the first anniversary of the "great initiative" came round, he wrote that: "Communist labour in the narrower and stricter sense of the word is unpaid labour for the use of society, labour undertaken, not for the serving of some definite obligation, not for receiving the right to certain products, not according to already arranged legalized standards, but voluntary labour, labour outside the ordinary, labour given without any thought of reward or condition of reward, labour according to a habit of working for the common good and according to a conscious (already becoming a habit) attitude to the necessity of work for the common good—labour as the demand of a healthy organism. . . . To create a new discipline of labour, to build new forms of social connections between people, to build new forms and modes of drawing people into work, that will be the work of many years and generations."

He knew it would be also a difficult work, which could only be achieved by a violent attack upon the methods and prejudices of the old days of unfree labour, the days when the worker was forced by the weapon of hunger to labour for a master, when the peasant was bound like a slave to his wretched plot of land, wearing out himself and his family in dragging a hard living from the unwilling soil. He was also fully aware that cultured opinion in the Western democracies was against the new Russia, was offended at the thought that the half-starved working men and ignorant peasants of this semi-Asiatic country should claim to be doing what could only be done by an advanced industrial country, with a well-educated working class.

Sukhanov, the Menshevik intellectual in whose flat he had made the last arrangements for the November rising, expressed this point of view in his memoirs of the revolution. Skipping through the heavy volumes, Lenin grimly noted his comments. "For the creation of Socialism, you say, a degree of civilization is demanded. Very well. But why could not we first of all create the prerequisites of this civilization here, by throwing out the landlords and the Russian capitalists, and then already begin the movement to Socialism?"

His outlook was nothing if not international; his Socialism meant nothing to him except as a world doctrine. To him the antagonism between Russia and the Western capitalist States was not a national antagonism at all, but a war to the death between two opposing social systems, in which victory was guaranteed in the end to Socialism, for the very reason that the Socialist revolution had first broken out in a country standing between Europe and Asia, at a time when the war was remorselessly and finally dragging the East into the orbit of capitalist civilization. The vast majority of the population of the world was therefore concerned as a matter of life and death in the struggle against imperialism, for finding some way out of their terrible position which should save them from centuries of such appalling torture as capitalism represents in colonial countries.

So he believed in world revolution as firmly as he had always believed in the Russian revolution. He thought that it was coming in 1918, when the war-weary soldiers of Central Europe left the trenches and turned their rifles against their rulers. He was prepared to sacrifice everything to help it to success, and twice it looked as though the hungry Russian soldiers might in fact be the means by which Socialism would spread in Europe, as republicanism had been carried on the bayonets of the half-starved, half-naked soldiers of revolutionary France. Early in 1919 the Red armies marched West, occupying again the Baltic lands, driving south and east into Galicia, towards Soviet

Hungary and Soviet Bavaria. Red commissars from Budapest flew to Moscow with greetings. Lenin sent radiograms to the Republics of Bavaria and Hungary containing greetings and sound advice. The Communist International was set up at a meeting of revolutionaries from all countries. When Germany was covered with Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets and the Red Army was moving west almost without resistance, Lenin wrote the following note: "We will all die to help the German workers in the cause of the movement forward of the revolution beginning in Germany. Conclusion: (1) Ten times more effort to obtain grain (*all* supplies to be counted both for us and for the *German* workers); (2) Ten times bigger registration into the army. An army of three millions must be ready in the *spring* for helping the international workers' revolution."

But the left-wing Revolutionary Socialists of Germany and Hungary were not yet Communists such as years of struggle against the Tsar had created in Russia. The official Socialists of both countries were far more afraid of the working man with a rifle than of the officer with a whip, while in Russia itself the foreign-financed counter-revolution forced the Red armies to withdraw before they had reached the Austro-German frontiers with their much-needed succour. There was no European revolution. Yet Lenin did not for a moment believe that the defeat was final. Capitalism remained capitalism, and, moreover, the war had shown that as a system it was in complete decay, that it could no longer exist except by war and terror, by destroying all that had once been free and progressive in itself. A new wave of revolutions would come, and it was necessary to prepare for it as long and as patiently as he and his comrades had prepared for the struggle with the Tsar and Russian capitalism. While he never doubted that Russia could be made into a Socialist country while still surrounded by capitalist countries, he also knew that this Socialist development could only be finally completed in a Socialist world. He saw the present as a historical epoch whose decisive factor was to be this fight between

two social systems, as the last epoch in world history had been characterized by the struggle between dying feudalism and growing capitalism.

So also within Russia itself the two systems must live side by side for a long time yet, the one continually giving way to the other as the peasantry more and more stood on the path of Socialism. "Learn to trade," he had said in 1921, when Nep was introduced; "learn to trade in order to master capitalism, in order to build Socialism."

"That seems strange, Communism and trade!" he exclaims. "When we conquer on a world scale, we shall, I think, use gold for making public lavatories in the streets of the great cities of the world. That would be the most 'just' and graphically edifying use of gold for those generations which have not forgotten that for gold ten million people were massacred and thirty million crippled in the 'great liberation' war of 1914–18, in the war for the decision of the great question, Which peace was worse, the Brest peace or the Versailles peace? and for the same gold they are no doubt preparing to massacre twenty million people and make cripples out of sixty million in a war maybe about 1925, maybe about 1928, maybe between Japan and America, maybe between England and America, or some such combination."

The world to-day is full of dictators and would-be dictators. A moment's glance at any one of them is sufficient to convince one that Lenin was not such a "dictator." He was a man made in the mould of Lincoln and Cromwell, very simple, very rugged, very great, fully conscious of his own importance in the history of the world, but who never gazed at himself in the mirror of history, never in his life made a false gesture, played at heroics, or spoke hysterically. He had knowledge, intellectual power, vision; the power of swift decision and decisive action; courage beyond the normal; but yet the most striking thing in his whole character is that he was a man like other men. No one could have more detested the idea of a super-man than did Lenin, or more heartily despised the false culture and cheap

philosophy that lay behind it. If in the world's history there have been few men his equal, it is only because the great tragedy of that history has been that the talents of man have been wasted, mocked, suppressed, and vilely extinguished by the ferocity of human society.

In certain circles, in the camp of his enemies, the impression that he was cold, heartless and relentless has grown up. Ruthless and merciless in struggle he certainly could be. His whole life of polemic is proof of this, the stern vigour with which he led the revolution confirms it. Yet it is not explaining Lenin to apply any of these Cæsarean adjectives to him. From the moment he began political agitation until his death he fought untiringly against opportunism, that is against bringing into the politics of the working class the ideas and outlook of other classes. His war against the Populists, the long battle with the Mensheviks, the fight with Trotsky's centrism, his violent attacks during the war and after the revolution upon deviators both of the right and the left wing, are the marks of this overwhelming certainty of his that the working class could only achieve its task in history by undeviating adherence to the lessons of its own experience, expressed in terms of revolutionary Marxism.

Perhaps history will eventually record him not as the leader of the Russian Revolution, for that would have happened without Lenin, but as the creator of a new kind of political life, of a new kind of political party. In the Bolshevik Party, which grew up in those struggles and debates which Lenin initiated and led, history created a new factor of immense and world-wide significance. At least there is no doubt that Lenin himself would have desired this above all for his memorial.

He was "old-fashioned" in his life and tastes, loved the classics of literature and music, Beethoven, Tolstoy, Balzac, Dickens—men who perhaps approached his own direct simplicity of outlook, his own intense love of life. Yet he understood perfectly clearly that the younger generation has little respect for the Gods of the old, and he smiled

understandingly when the art students whom he visited told him they were for the futurists and "against *Eugene Onegin*," Pushkin's masterpiece.

Few men have ever had his capacity for work, yet he worked always rationally, orderly. He got up usually about nine, read the papers or looked through new books which interested him until eleven, and then began his real work-day: receptions and interviews, consultations on a thousand and one questions concerning the life of the huge country in revolution, meetings of the Government, of the Central Committee of the party, its Political Bureau, articles to write (he did not often dictate, until after his illness), speeches to prepare. Once he had gone into his study he rarely left it before late at night, or, often enough, early in the morning. After the revolution alone his works fill eight large volumes, and here it must be said that few political leaders have ever written so little that was mere words, so little that consisted of covering up an unpleasant truth or evading a direct answer. Every speech, pamphlet, or article consists of hard, crystal-clear thought on problems that would have appalled nine-tenths of the world's states-men. The style, like the thought, is hard and clear, simple and direct, full of plain, almost homely, similes, of mother-wit, and almost proverbial humour. For words as words he had no use. They were for him a means of expressing thoughts, of arranging facts.

A man full of energy, loving nature and children, with a sharp humour and a simple manner; a man who could be impulsive, whose temperament was nervous and highly strung, though controlled by an indomitable will and courage; a man with none of the affectations and all the marks of genius, who could love and was loved intensely; he made a new landmark in the history of our race: the philosopher who was a leader of men, the leader of men who was a lover of men, the lover of men who loathed the hypocrisy and cruelty of the exploitation and torment of the many by the few.

The first stroke had come in May 1922. It became clear afterwards that the disease—hardening of the arteries that feed the brain—was much more advanced than any physical signs gave evidence of, though those who worked closely to him, his wife, his secretaries, had often noticed with secret alarm the terrible, completely exhausted look that came into his face from time to time after a particularly exhausting day. In October, he had come back to work, and on 20 November made his last public appearance with a speech on internal and foreign policy at the Moscow Soviet. But the brain was already irreparably damaged. When the post-mortem was made, the doctors marvelled, not at the quantity of work he had done, but that any man had been able to work at all in such a condition.

His wife tells us that two days before his death she was reading to him Jack London's tale, *Love of Life*. "In a wilderness of ice, where no human being had set foot, a sick man, dying of hunger, is making for the harbour of a big river. His strength is giving out, he cannot walk but keeps slipping, and beside him there slides a wolf—also dying of hunger. There is a fight between them; the man wins. Half dead, half demented, he reaches his goal. That tale greatly pleased Ilyich."

He did not really believe that disease would beat him. On 16 December, 1922, the second stroke paralysed his right arm and leg. A few days later he called his secretary, dictated some letters, and gave her a list of books he needed. In the spring of 1923 he is busy preparing the articles which form his testament, his political heritage. He works more slowly, dictating for an hour or two a day, but the grasp is as firm, the thought as clear as ever. On 9 May, 1923, the third stroke deprived him of speech, and he was carried to the village of Gorky to begin that long and awful struggle with the wolf of death.

What he thought of while lying there helpless, what scenes and memories passed through his mind, we can only guess. But there was no loss of hope; there was a last tremendous conflict, a fight for life such as few men have

ever made. He was in his beloved Russian countryside, amid the meadows and forests, among the sights and sound of which fortune had so long deprived him. As the summer wore on it looked as though he were winning. His speech came back, his paralysis grew better. On 19 October he passed a few hours in Moscow. In January 1924 his eyes began to trouble him, but to the oculist he seemed well and full of courage. At 6.50 on the morning of 21 January, a fourth and last stroke killed him.

The winter was a severe one. Great fires in the Moscow streets were lit to warm the crowds who passed through in endless procession to say farewell to him. They were a strange funeral pyre against the frozen background and the quiet, ever-moving crowds. From 23 to 27 January, the procession through the great hall of the House of the Trade Unions never ceased—workers, peasants, professors, engineers, Russians, Germans, Uzbeks, Chinese, every race and every nation. At nine in the morning on 27 January his comrades carried his body from the hall to the Red Square, to the Mausoleum under the Kremlin wall. For the first time in history a man at his death was mourned in every country of the world.

II

THE HISTORIAN OF THE PRESENT

THE COMMUNE OF CANTON

[From *The Communist*, March 1928]

VERY little has appeared in England concerning the three days' heroic struggle of the Chinese workers in Canton on 10 to 13 December of last year. One or two articles in the capitalist press, containing the usual percentage of foul lies and well-disguised facts, are all the materials we have so far seen. But now the full story has come through from those who fought and suffered on the inside. It is a story of passionate interest for the revolutionary workers of the whole world, but its interest must not blind us to its immense political importance. For the Canton rising marks a turning-point in the history of the world revolution. It is the first time that in a country controlled by foreign imperialism the workers and peasants have seized and held power for a period of days against the combined forces of imperialism and their allies, the native bourgeoisie and militarists. Not only is it the turning-point of the Chinese revolution, it is a historic moment in the history of the revolt of the Eastern peoples against their exploiters.

To understand fully the significance of the Canton rising it is necessary to know the circumstances in which the rising took place, what were the forces behind the revolt, why it took place, when it did and where it did.

* * * * * *

Kwantung province, in which is the city of Canton, is the cradle of the Chinese nationalist movement and also the home of the most advanced elements in the revolutionary workers' and peasants' movement in China. When Sun Yat Sen was alive, Kwantung province was the centre of intense working class and peasant activity.

The first great strikes took place here. Here also came the

first clashes with British imperialism entrenched in its fortress of Hong-Kong, clashes which struck heavy blows at the prestige of the British, and were responsible for the great revolutionary mass movement, which has convulsed China since 1925. In 1924, during Sun Yat Sen's fight with Fascists financed by British bankers in Hong Kong, the Labour Government of MacDonald sent gunboats to Canton to protect the Fascists against the nationalist revolutionary government, an act of intervention which started a bloody process that was to end in the Shanghai and Shameen massacres the following year.

In Canton, under Sun Yat Sen's rule, the trade unions and Communist Party acquired a legal existence for the first time, the effects of which were seen in the great seamen's and dockers' strikes of 1924, 1925, and 1926, and in the strikes and boycott in Hong Kong which reacted with such deadly effect on the British imperialists in Hong Kong.

When the dissolution of the nationalist movement began in 1926, it was natural that in Canton the bourgeois and landlord reign of terror should fall heaviest upon the organizations of the working class, here stronger, more militant, and more active than anywhere else in China. The *coup d'état* of the general Li Ti Sin in the spring of 1927 cost more than 4,000 workers their lives, and, for a moment, it seemed possible that the workers' movement might be stamped out. Fortunately, the degeneration of the nationalist movement and the Kuomintang Party into cliques of squabbling militarists intent on plunder, representing more or less roughly the different bourgeois and landlord interests, prevented this.

Li Ti Sin had his work cut out to keep the rich prize of Canton in his hands. Moreover, in the countryside the revolutionary movement was far from dead. In the autumn Communist-led peasant armies captured and held for a few days the near-by port of Swatow, and, though they were defeated, their action allowed Chang Fat Kwei, a rival general, to come to Canton and occupy it jointly

with his troops. Each now sought to oust the other from control of the city and an intensely interesting situation arose. Li Ti Sin openly depended for funds on the big bourgeoisie of Canton and the British bankers in Hong Kong. Chang Fat Kwei, on the other hand, posed as a "leftist," using the politician Wang Chin Wei, the Lansbury of Chinese politics, as his tool. He sought, and partly obtained, the support of the middle classes and better-paid artisans.

On 17 November, a cleverly laid plot of Wang and Chang removed Li Ti Sin from Canton. A plenum of the Kuomintang was to take place at Shanghai to restore "unity" in the Party, and Wang persuaded Li to accompany him. As soon as they had left, Chang Fat Kwei moved his troops into the strategic positions necessary to hold the city, disarmed his adversaries, and ousted all Li's men from office. He now had Canton. The problem was to keep it. He had tried to gain the support of the workers and artisans by the use of "left" phrases, but the Communist Party did not allow the workers to be deceived. Mass demonstrations against him in the streets under the revolutionary slogans of the Communists, and the demand for the release of the political prisoners (all workers, of whom thousands were in jail), exposed Chang Fat Kwei completely to the workers.

He, therefore, next tried to win over the bourgeoisie who were regarding him with considerable suspicion as an unstable factor and a possible menace to their prosperity. Chang Fat Kwei had a particularly urgent reason for winning the confidence of the merchants and bankers—he needed their money. Had he succeeded in deceiving the workers it is certain that it would only have been to use them as a weapon with which to blackmail the bourgeoisie. Repelled by the workers, he was compelled to impress the money powers by appearing as a supporter of "law and order," as even more ruthless than Li Ti Sin. So his next step was to attempt what Li had never dared, to break the powerful organization of the Hong Kong

strikers, cut off their strike pay, arrest their leaders, occupy their premises and dining-rooms.

The reply of the workers was swift and clear. Red candidates were everywhere elected in the trade union elections, strikes broke out among the seamen, postal workers, printers and tram and omnibus men. The economic situation at the end of November was bad, the situation of the workers wretched in the extreme, and the strike movement began to assume very big proportions. Nor was this unrest confined to the towns. In the countryside a fairly good harvest had been followed by increased exactions from the militarists and officials, with the result that the peasants everywhere were in more or less open revolt. To the north-east of Canton this revolt expressed itself in a Soviet Government covering many districts, grouped round the remains of the revolutionary army of Swatow, and led by Communists. By the time of the Canton uprising nearly half a million peasants were grouped round this Government, which had expropriated the rich landlords and moneylenders.

Finally, within Canton itself discontent was rife among the unpaid soldiers of the garrison. In such circumstances the question of the seizure of power in alliance with the peasantry and soldiers was inevitably placed before the Communist Party and the Canton workers. The Government of Chang Fat Kwei was rotten and feeble, it had not yet won the confidence of the bourgeoisie, it was detested by the workers and peasants, while its own armed forces could no longer be relied upon. The will to fight of the workers had never been greater, their enemy never weaker. The only alternative to a rising was to submit to the ferocious white terror Chang was preparing to let loose on the workers to win the praise of the bourgeoisie. There was really no choice before the workers, since they could not hope to live in even semi-tolerable conditions under the Government of Chang Fat Kwei.

So much being clear, the preparation for revolution became the immediate task of the Party in Canton. The

objective situation offered no matter for doubt or hesitation. The organization of revolt must next be worked out as completely as possible, from a military point of view, in so far as the relative disposition of forces was concerned, and, also, the arming of the workers, from a political point of view, in relation to the correct slogans to rouse the masses and bring the widest number of them into the insurrectionary movement, and, finally, from the mixed military-political point of view of linking the insurrection up with the peasant movement and bringing in the peasant forces from the country to Canton as quickly as possible. The situation was at its height, for whole regiments of the garrison were permeated by the Party propaganda, peasant detachments were already on the outskirts of the city, and the workers' will to fight was at its peak.

Only one thing was uncertain, would Chang Fat Kwei be able to rally to his help those other militarists whose troops held the suburbs and especially the island of Honam, or would they stand by and watch him suffer extinction at the hands of the workers? The latter was unlikely, though possible, but in any case if the city could be held long enough to allow the main force of the peasant army, six days' march away, to arrive, the disparity in numbers could be overcome. The Party and the trade unions, if they were to retain their leadership of the masses, could not refuse battle, and, for the first time in the history of the Chinese working class, they were being led into direct and violent conflict with the bourgeoisie and landlords, and eventually, if successful, with their suzerains the imperialists. Whatever the issue the step had to be taken and a new era of class conflicts inaugurated.

The slogans which roused the masses to the banner of insurrection were well and carefully chosen to express the most immediate and pressing needs of the Canton workers, viz.: liberation of political prisoners, the arming of the workers, liberty of the press and public meeting, the right to combine, and to strike, return of their premises to the revolutionary unions, dissolution of the "yellow" unions,

out-of-work pay for the unemployed, increase of soldiers' pay from 12 to 20 dollars a month, the land for the peasants, against the reactionary generals, and the closest relations with the Soviet Union and the world proletariat. For a week the preparatory work of rallying the masses round these revolutionary slogans was actively carried out, but on the eve of the insurrection more concrete slogans of action had to be found. These were: *rice for the workers, land for the peasants; down with militarist wars; all power to the Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Soviets.*

A revolutionary War Council of delegates from the Communist Party, and the trade unions, the revolutionary soldiers and the provincial peasants was formed as a sub-committee of the Canton Soviet, which was itself elected in a delegate conference, and consisted of ten workers, three peasants and three soldiers. The insurrection was under the sole direction of the Soviet, the War Council being a technical military body subordinated to it. Connexion with the masses was arranged through the trade unions, and there were also excellent contacts with the soldiers of the garrison (but not with those in the suburbs and district of Canton), while contact was kept up with the peasants through their partisan (guerilla) forces, though unfortunately the main body was a considerable distance away.

On the night of 10 and 11 December, the rising began. At half-past three in the morning the Secretary of the Communist Party Provincial Committee for Kwantung province, comrade Chang Ta Lai (who was killed the next day), went to the barracks of one of the so-called model regiments of the garrison, and placed the slogans of the insurrection before the waiting soldiers. They were enthusiastically adopted, and fifteen reactionary officers were shot at once. With this nucleus the attack on all the police stations was at once begun, and a company of Workers' Guards carried the central police station after an hour's struggle.

The rising now proceeded swiftly and easily. The transport workers came out and carried the armed detachments from point to point of the city in trams and buses, and by nine in the morning every strategic point was occupied except the Bund (the wide avenue along the water-front). This last exception in the end proved a bad military blunder, though in the general success it was not immediately noticed as an important omission. The many thousands of active trade unionists and Communists in the jails were freed and armed, and two regiments of the garrison came over to the workers' side, enabling the artillery park to be captured.

The Bund was not carried till the afternoon of the 11th, a delay which allowed the initiative to pass into the enemy's hands during the most critical period of the rising. Having unhampered control of the river, the troops of Li Fou Lin, the so-called "king of Honam," were able to concentrate across the water opposite the city, and start a counter-attack the same night. Although this attack was beaten back the next morning it hindered the development of the insurrection, preventing the planned offensives against the outlying districts of Whampoa, Cheklong and the island of Honam itself, all strongholds of the counter-revolution. Further, the counter-revolution was enabled to bring up gunboats to cover the counter-attack.

The Red Army counted about 6,000 men, not many of them regular soldiers, and its arms and equipment were naturally poor, whereas the militarists, once they had sunk their differences, were able to employ three divisions when they renewed their counter-attack on the night of the 12th. The attack took place from three sides, and, by morning, had succeeded in penetrating the city. By the afternoon of the 13th resistance had become hopeless, and the only thing left was to attempt to cut a way through to the friendly countryside. Two thousand Red soldiers and armed workers succeeded in doing this and making good their escape to the peasant Soviets of Hai Fong and Lu Fong.

The Canton Soviet had a heroic existence of three days. Though it was hemmed in on all sides, it was not content to be a mere directing body of the insurrection, but functioned as a real organ of working-class power. The very first day of its existence it published a series of decrees which will live as vital documents of Chinese working-class history. Printed in large quantities, the decrees were everywhere spread among the workers and petty bourgeoisie, proclaiming the eight fundamental acts of the new power.

The first three dealt with the establishment of the Soviet power, the armament of the proletariat and peasantry, and the red terror against counter-revolution. In view of the atrocious terror practised by the militarist generals, *often in the name of the Kuomintang*, the legalization of the red terror and the declaration that the Kuomintang was *an illegal party hostile to the revolution*, became necessary in order to preserve the lives of many thousands of valuable workers. Though the arrest of the Kuomintang leaders and confiscation of their property were ordered, nevertheless the Soviet endeavoured to create the widest possible democracy in the conditions of civil war for the masses of workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

A fourth decree established an eight-hour day. It further granted help to the unemployed, granted a general rise in wages and re-established the rights of the Hong Kong strikers.

A fifth decree dealt with economic measures. Industry was nationalized; the land divided among the poor peasants and revolutionary soldiers; the big landlords, village moneylenders and all exploiters of the peasants to be destroyed; mortgages, rents, contracts, etc., annulled; the village Soviets legalized; and contact established with the peasant government of Hai Fong and Lu Fong.

The sixth decree dealt with the property of the bourgeoisie. Houses and house properties were to be confiscated for the workers, rent agreements cancelled, and the goods in the pawnshops nationalized for the very poor (as in the Paris Commune).

The seventh decree referred to the army. The soldiers' pay was to be raised, revolutionary soldiers' committees were to be set up in the different units, and the army reorganized on a voluntary basis.

The eighth decree was that on the trade unions. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions was legalized as the official organ of the trade union movement. Scab unions were to be dissolved and their rank-and-file members brought into the ordinary unions, the transfers being effected by special reorganization committees of the red unions.

This workmanlike programme met with a tremendous response among the Cantonese workers, and a good proportion of the petty bourgeoisie, as well as those peasants within reach of the town. More than two thousand peasants armed with pikes and pitchforks took part in the insurrection, occupying the railway stations in the outskirts, seizing the safes and sending them under guard to the revolutionary War Council to finance the rising. It is certain, from the support given by the masses, especially by the youth and the women, who were everywhere in the forefront, that, had the Soviet been able to hold out for only six days, the revolution would have been successful and Canton won for the workers and peasants. Why then did the revolt collapse so quickly? Largely because in the short time available this mass enthusiasm could not be turned into military organization and consequently the counter-attack of the bourgeoisie could only be resisted by the spear-head of the revolution, instead of by the whole working population; and this lack of time in turn was in part due to the initial military mistake of failing to get control of the Bund, and thus of the water-front, and the banks built along it. The military organization of the bourgeoisie was too strong, for in addition to the three divisions of regular troops they were able to rely on the reactionary militia of the rich peasantry (yeomanry).

This overwhelming strength in turn is explained by the immediate and complete united front of the militarist

groups, who showed a decision very rare in recent Chinese military history. Moreover, political work among the troops of these generals was very weak, almost non-existent, and the soldiers had no knowledge of the objects of the revolution. In addition must be counted the indirect help given by the imperialist forces. The British, French, Japanese and American warships in the Canton River cleared for action and moved into positions enabling them to hinder the movements of the workers, and cover those of the "White" forces. *Their guns were trained on the red positions.* Japanese sailors were even landed on the Bund and opened fire on the workers. By yet another military blunder the Tonshan quarter, where the wealthy Cantonese live, was not immediately occupied and the heads of the counter-revolution thus escaped and were able to organize their forces.

All these factors, vital though they were for the success of the insurrection, in no way diminish the world importance of what was accomplished. For three days a great city in an eastern country dominated by imperialism was seized and held by the oppressed classes ruling through their Soviet. Technical and military errors there were, but, politically, no mistakes were made. The Communist Party of China, which led and organized the revolt, has reason to be proud of its application of Lenin's teachings in the difficult cirucmstances of China. The work of the Party in the insurrection showed not only that it had the closest contacts with workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and soldiers, but that it understood how to rally the widest masses of all these classes to the support of the revolution by correct slogans and a sure political line. The comparison of the programme of the Party as expressed in the decrees of the Commune compared with the fruits of one year's Kuomintang government cannot fail to make a profound impression on the Chinese masses. The Communist Party of China emerges from the bloody but heroic trial of Canton as the acknowledged leader of the oppressed classes in China, and as the only enemy of imperialism and its allies the

landlords, militarists and bourgeoisie of China. Henceforth, the class nature of the Chinese revolutionary movement cannot be disguised, nor its inevitable class solution questioned.

But what of the future? Has the insurrection's failure caused a turn of the tide against the Party and the workers' and peasants' revolutionary movement in China? Already it is possible to answer, no. The Soviet movement in Kwantung province alone has grown and strengthened since December and the Soviets are regarded by the people with extraordinary enthusiasm. An immense wave of peasant insurrections, commencing *before* the events of December, has continued *since* with increasing vigour. In eastern Kwantung, between Canton and Swatow, the districts of Hai Fong, Lu Fong, Pulin, Hoyuan and elsewhere have set up a Soviet Government. The island of Hainang, in the south of the province, is also reported to have been conquered by the peasants and the Soviets established.

More than this, the movement is widely spread outside Kwantung province. In Hunan province, the Tsalin, Kwitong and Lincheng districts have Soviets; in western Kiangsi, near the famous mines of Ngan-Yuan, there are Soviets in Tsuichuan and Hailing districts; and, in eastern Hupeh, the district of Huang-Mei has a Soviet administration. The establishment of Soviets is carried out in an orderly way, and the widest forms of worker and peasant democracy observed. Delegate meetings of peasants, workers and soldiers are summoned, the questions of distribution of the land, the eight-hour day, workers' control of the factories, election of the Soviet and measures against counter-revolution are carefully worked out. In every district a red workers' and peasants' army has been organized.

All this is in the vast territory across which the nationalist armies swept in 1926 and 1927. But in the north, in the

very strongholds of feudal and imperialist reaction, a similar huge movement round the slogan of conquest of political power by the workers and peasants is growing.

There is immense hope for the future of the Chinese revolution under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party now that it is purged of its opportunist errors on the peasant question. The mercenary troops of the military cliques of the Kuomintang, unpaid for long months, are tending to degenerate into demoralized hordes, and either allowing themselves to be disarmed by the peasants or passing over to the side of the revolution. This process will be accentuated, though the possibility of temporary alliances of militarist leaders, such as occurred in Canton, may cause temporary checks in the development of the disintegration of the mercenary armies.

The immediate tasks of the Chinese Party are to hasten this process as much as possible by its revolutionary agitation and even military action, where possible, and the unification of the peasant movements of north and south. Already, the Party possesses big influence in two of the largest secret societies, the "Red Spears" and "Heavenly Gate."

As the differentiation on the lines of the class struggle in China becomes more marked, the need for the world proletariat to rally to the support of the revolution will become more urgent. Especially vital will be the work of the British Communists and the British working class in this connexion. Unceasing vigilance and the strongest support for the revolutionary workers and peasants of China against British imperialism must remain our watchwords. The nearer the revolution approaches to victory, the wider and more relentless will be British imperialist intervention. It is our task to defeat this.

J. H. THOMAS

[From *Sunday Worker*, 12 May, 1929]

THE comically vulgar dress-suit hero of Low's cartoons, with his cigar, his profiteer's humour, and his "let's all be jolly good fellows" air. That is one point of view on the Right Honourable J. H. Thomas, M.P., P.C. But there is another side to the grotesque which makes the joke a bad one, both on humanity as a whole and the workers as a class.

After all, the man who in private life can be the boon companion, the prize buffoon at dress-shirt spreads, the pal of Jimmy White and the Prince of Wales, takes on a slightly different aspect when he tells the world that he "almost grovelled" before these same friends for "peace" in the General Strike of 1926, when a million miners, most of whom had never seen a champagne-bottle, were faced with conditions of industrial slavery, that three years later were actually to bring crocodile tears to the eyes of his friend the Prince.

The Right Honourable Jimmy will be remembered by thousands of Arab women in Northern Iraq, not as a jolly good fellow who packs a dress-suit outfit to make you scream, but as the Colonial Secretary in the Labour Government who was responsible for the destruction of their homes and flocks, the maiming of their children by aerial bombardment, because they could not pay exorbitant taxes for the upkeep of the "great Empire of which we are all so proud."

Jimmy was elected Organizing Secretary of the old Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in March 1906, and was elected to Parliament in January 1910.

1914 found him, along with his other comrades of the Second International in France, Germany and Austria, beating the patriotic big drum and inviting young railwaymen to go out and shoot the railwaymen of Central Europe. He did not take up a gun himself, though he was forty-one when the war began and not too old.

In January 1917, he was elected General Secretary of the N.U.R., and early in the year went to the States with the famous Balfour propaganda mission designed to hearten the American masses into taking a share in the world slaughter. On his return he was duly rewarded by being "called" to His Majesty's Privy Council.

In 1919 he entered the Railway Strike with full vigour, but not with the idea of getting a programme of definite demands accepted. Jimmy used the strike as a method of re-opening negotiations, for negotiations he has always considered his long suit. The 1920 agreement which resulted was definitely on the fodder basis, and he gave his solemn assurance at the time that wages would never be reduced below the 100 per cent. increase on pre-war wages. In 1928 he secretly negotiated the agreement which, in the majority of cases, reduced wages by 2½ per cent. below the 100 per cent. increase on pre-war.

His record in combined action with other unions for defence of workers' standards is a curious one. In 1921 he was the principal agent in the failure of the Triple Alliance. In the libel action he afterwards brought against Arthur MacManus and Francis Meynell, he declared in court that "this was an industrial dispute. I interpreted it as such, and pointed out what it might lead to. I remained in it to make it an industrial dispute, and would have taken any steps to prevent it being any other."

The betrayal of 1921, however, was only a dress rehearsal for the greater treachery of 1926. No satisfactory explanation of why the General Council called off the General Strike the morning after it had issued orders for an extension of the dispute, and without even consulting the miners, has ever been given. Jimmy has remained unrepentant. But

it is interesting to note that it was publicly stated that the Government had decided over the week-end on the arrest and prosecution of the General Council. After all, a man who "grovels" can hardly be expected to face a prospect of that sort without a tremor.

His general ideas on loyalty towards his fellow-workers can be gauged from his statement in that same famous libel action of 1921 that "if volunteers, blacklegs, managers, or whatever you like, are keeping the pits clear . . . no Government can stand by and allow them to be stopped, whether it be Socialist, Labour, or any other sort of Government." Mr. Justice Darling commented, "That ought to be recorded in letters of bronze."

In this same trial he proudly declared, "I am not a Socialist." If only all Labour leaders would be so frank!

It is not so surprising in these days to discover that a Minister in a Socialist Government is not a Socialist. It is more interesting to observe the fate of the railwaymen under the leadership of such a prince of negotiators as J. H. Thomas. The 1920 agreement established rail wages on the cost-of-living fodder basis. In 1924, at exactly the same time as the Labour Government came into office, the companies extended the mileage for loco men and modified the Sunday-work agreement.

Thomas and Cramp for the N.U.R. signed an agreement accepting this; quite clearly, events were to prove, because the coming Labour Government did not dare face a railway strike in its first months of office.

In a manifesto dated 18 January, 1924, Thomas and Cramp, condemning the independent strike action of the A.S.L.E.F., declare:

"We deplore the strike. . . . The member of the N.U.R. who ceases work or refuses to do any job that he would have done if there had been no strike is a blackleg to the signature of his accredited representatives and a traitor to the decision of the special meeting."

That is to say it was a more serious crime to repudiate J. H. Thomas's signature to an abominable agreement than to blackleg upon the members of the A.S.L.E.F. On 23 January, it is significant to note, Thomas resigned his political secretaryship of the N.U.R. to become Secretary of State for the Colonies. The semi-official Government view of the strike was later made quite clear in the vicious attack on the loco men, which appeared in the *New Leader*.

After the General Strike Thomas became an open advocate of "Industrial Peace" but his alignment with the employers in the cause of railway rationalization was preceded by a particularly vile piece of "grovelling" in the shameful "we have sinned" terms he, along with Cramp, Bromley, and Walkden, signed for the railway unions. The agreement admitted the principle that the employers might take back men, not en masse but "as work offers." It continued:

"The trade unions admit that in calling a strike they have committed a wrongful act against the companies and agree that the companies do not by reinstating surrender their legal right to claim damages arising out of the strike from strikers and others responsible. The Unions undertake not again to instruct their members to strike without previous negotiations with the companies; not to give support of any kind to any of their members who take any unauthorized action; not to encourage supervisory employees in the special staff to take part in any strike.

"The companies intimate that arising out of the strike it may be necessary to remove certain persons to other positions. . . . The settlement will not extend to persons who have been guilty of violence or intimidation."

Hundreds of railwaymen suffered as a result of this agreement. Two Staffordshire men are still in Maidstone Jail, and are likely to stop there so far as Jimmy is concerned.

His crowning achievement for the workers he so ably represents was undoubtedly the secret negotiations leading to the agreement of 1928 with its 2½ per cent. wage-cut all round.

By this agreement the workers lost £3,000,000 in wages, the directors £2,700. In boosting his "victory" at a dinner in the Savoy Hotel the same day as he signed away this gift of workers' wages to the companies, Thomas said that the meaning of the sacrifice was that: "a million men, their wives, their families, will give a lesson to the world by saying they will accept a reduction in their earnings and a reduction from their weekly budget amounting to nearly £3,000,000, as their contribution towards saving the great railways of the country."

Yet in 1926 when the levy was being placed on the members of the N.U.R. to rehabilitate the union finances after the General Strike and the question of reducing official salaries was brought forward, he said: "Don't let it be recognized by the railway companies that you are in favour of reducing salaries and wages in order to meet financial embarrassment, because it will make it hard for us in future negotiations."

His activities as propagandist for the rail companies are now at their height. He stumped the country mobilizing support for the Road Traffic Bill, though the Transport Workers were against it and the whole affair was a blatant ramp by the railway companies. To-day, though he formerly in *The Red Light on the Railway* (1921) condemned the inefficiency and waste of our capitalist rail system, no one is touchier than he where the honour of the company directors is concerned. At a speech in Derby last Sunday he objected to railways being described as inefficiently managed, and declared that they were in a position to compare with those of any country.

As a "statesman," apart from his industrial record, Jimmy builds his reputation on his work as an Empire-Booster.

He is a great believer in emigration (for others), and his first speech as Colonial Secretary on 28 January, 1924, contains his confession of faith.

"I am more proud of the Empire than I ever was before. . . . This great change (the Labour Government) merely means that the Old Country and the Old Empire still go on. . . . I hope our successors will be able to say that we did nothing to weaken this great Empire of which we are all so proud."

A little later, having tasted the fruits of office to the full, and found them, if I may be excused the expression, particularly jammy, he told us that "The Prince of Wales is the Empire's Mascot." That was on 6 May, 1924. By 16 May, however, when the preparations for Wembley's great bean-feast were in full swing, he had really got into his stride. In a speech at Wembley he boldly declared that "We are no less jealous, no less proud, and no less mindful of our imperial responsibilities than the Governments which preceded us." Well, even Lord Birkenhead admits it to-day.

Such is James Henry Thomas of the boiled shirt and the cigar, our greatest after-dinner speaker in a lighter vein. Perhaps he has some tricks not quite in keeping with the character of the bluff and hearty self-made man. For example, he has a knack of procuring by unspecified means the private correspondence of other persons, as was shown at the Weymouth meeting of the N.U.R. Let me hasten to add though that this is no blemish on such a pillar of society. In a police empire we expect the policeman's mind in those who "are proud of the Empire."

How long the railwaymen will refrain from revolt against their union boss, now that all his friendship with directors cannot stop conditions from worsening, remains to be seen. There are signs. . . .

NEW SEA ROUTE OPENED

[From *Daily Worker*, 1 October, 1935]

IN the Surrey Commercial Docks there is lying a ship which has just complete an epic voyage of nearly 10,000 miles from Vladivostok, on the Pacific coast, to London, through the ice and fog of the Polar seas.

This voyage is more than a great feat of navigation. It is something that may revolutionize the commerce of the world. It provides a new outlet for the riches of Siberia, which have up to now had to be carried east or west on a long and costly overland route.

And it opens up a new trade-route between East and West which may prove of as great importance as the Suez or Panama Canals.

The Soviet steamer *Stalingrad* is neither an icebreaker nor a special expeditionary ship, she is an ordinary freighter which has brought an ordinary cargo of timber to the port of London, but there is nothing else ordinary about the *Stalingrad* or her crew.

This ship is the soul and body of mankind's greatest achievement, the land of the Soviets, the first Socialist State. Socialist blast furnaces smelted the steel for her hull, Socialist factories gave her her splendid equipment down to the last nail, and the land of the Soviets formed the thirty-nine seamen who brought her through the Polar seas on a voyage without parallel in the history of navigation.

The *Stalingrad* left Vladivostok on 25 June with a mixed cargo of 2,000 tons, and 175 passengers.

She had a big deck cargo, "a real collective farm," the mate described it. Poultry, pigs, cattle, horses, carrier-pigeons, forage for the beasts piled high in the waist, two launches for the new ports on the Arctic rivers: hardly an inch of deck space which was not occupied.

They passed through the Behring Straits and into the ice of the Churhotsk Sea, where two years ago the *Cheliuskin* foundered. The ice was heavy, sometimes a fathom and a half under water, but it was summer ice and they blasted their way through with ammonal wherever it grew dangerously heavy.

Captain Melekhov, thirty-five years old, veteran of the Arctic, only knew one golden rule for Polar navigation—"go straight ahead, always forward, through fog or ice or hurricane winds."

He was on the bridge at times for thirty-six hours day and night, neither eating nor drinking, but he brought his ship safely through to his first port, Ambarchik on the River Kolyma.

Fresh passengers were embarked and they sailed in ballast to the next port, Tixi Bay on the River Lena. Here they loaded 650 tons of coal and 200 tons of fresh water to carry to Cape Cheliuskin for the ice-breakers *Litke* and *Yermak*.

Then, at the Arctic port of Ingarka, on the Kara Sea, where ten ships were busy loading and unloading, including the British freighter *New Lambton*, they took on 842 standards of timber for London.

During the next part of the voyage the *Stalingrad* was piloting the *New Lambton*, whose compass was not fitted for Arctic navigation. Eight hundred miles to Murmansk the British ship followed in the wake of the Soviet one.

On the eighty-second day out of Vladivostok the *Stalingrad* dropped anchor in Murmansk, having accomplished the East-West trip on the Great North Route from Pacific to Atlantic, for the first time in history.

Three days later she left for London. Actual sailing time from Vladivostok to London was forty-six days. During the voyage 6,292 tons of cargo were handled and 216 passengers and seventy-five head of cattle carried. Nearly 4,000 miles of the voyage were through Polar seas, and 1,500 miles in ice.

With the *Stalingrad* went the Soviet freighter *Andyr*.

Simultaneously from West to East sailed the freighters *Iska* and *Vanzetti*, both of which have now arrived safely in Vladivostok. The Great North route is mastered.

In the quiet cabin on board the *Stalingrad* a young Soviet navigator talked with shining eyes of Willoughby and Chancellor, or Sebastian Cabot, the man who had first dreamed of this great route between East and West. Willoughby was only the first of many heroes to die in the attempt to master the Northern waste, but what capitalism for centuries failed to accomplish, Socialist courage, energy and discipline have now mastered.

The Arctic belongs to man. Science, patience and skill have conquered the waste.

From this year on the Great North Route becomes the new world trade-route, the first world trade-route which has ever been opened up, not for the exploitation of man, but for the mastery of nature and the making of a new free life.

Looking at these young sailors I remembered Gorky's words: "The heroes of the Arctic were made of fabulous energy," and the lines of the Soviet poet Beziminsky—"If we made nails of these people, stronger nails could never be."

Stumbling over the deserted timber-wharf in the dark London night I heard the faint shouting of men in a British ship lying across the pool from the *Stalingrad*, and the answering cries of the Soviet sailors. It was the crew of the *New Lambton* calling to their comrades and pilots. Was that a symbol of the future?

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF MONGOLIA

[From *Russia To-day*, March 1935]

THE Mongol question has suddenly become of first-rate world importance. The Mongols, an ancient but little-known people who once ruled the whole of Asia, are now divided between four states. Many of them live in the Soviet Union, citizens of the Buryat-Mongol republic in Siberia or of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region on the lower Volga. Others, more numerous, are Chinese subjects inhabiting the provinces outside the Great Wall, Jehol, Chahar, Kan-su, etc. Others again, living in so-called Inner Mongolia, are divided between China and the Japanese vassal state of Manchukuo. But over the traditional home lands of the Mongols, the steppes, mountains and rivers north of the Gobi and stretching almost to Lake Baikal, so-called Outer Mongolia, flies the red flag of the Independent People's Republic of Mongolia.

It is Japanese policy to gather the Mongols living outside the People's Republic, those in Inner Mongolia and Manchukuo, and launch them in an attack on the People's Republic. In this way, the Japanese hope to turn the line of Soviet defences in Siberia under the cloak of a struggle for Mongol "freedom."

Every worker has, therefore, good reason for wanting to know what is the People's Republic. Though Outer Mongolia did not become a republic until 1924 it won its final independence in 1921, when the Russian White Guardists led by Ungern-Sternberg, and paid by the Japanese, were defeated and broken up by a national rising organized and led by the Mongolian People's Party, now called the Mongolian People's *Revolutionary* Party.

The revolution was a Mongolian one, its chief forces the Mongolian Red Army, only small Soviet Red Army forces

giving help. As soon as the country was freed from invaders the Soviet forces withdrew and from that day to this have never crossed the Mongolian frontier.

A number of brilliant fighters and revolutionaries arose from the Mongols, mostly from the poorer Arats (nomad working people), though the first great Mongol leader, Sukhebatoz, who died in 1923, was from the former ruling classes.

From the heroes of those days, however, were formed the present leaders of the People's Republic, Amor, the president; Gendun, the Prime Minister, a poor nomad by origin, whose name is already immortal among the Mongols; Demid, the present commander-in-chief of the Red Army; and Choibalsan, former heroic soldier, now Minister for Cattle-raising and Agriculture.

The Mongols are nomads, and before their revolution were under the domination of feudal chiefs, both lay and clerical. The revolution destroyed the power of the feudal nobility and Buddhist lamas, as well as driving out the Chinese and Russian merchants who were rapidly enslaving the people to foreign capital. A great democratic revolution placed power in the hands of the people (Arats), nationalized the land, minerals, forests and water, annulled debts, separated church and state, gave the people their own army, nationalized foreign trade, abolished all titles and introduced complete equality—national, religious, racial and sex—for all the working people.

The constitution adopted by the Republic in 1924 contained this important phrase: "In view of the fact that the real people all over the world aim at fundamentally destroying present capitalism and reaching socialism and communism, the foreign policy of our People's Republic must correspond to the interests of the revolutionary masses and main tasks of the oppressed small nations and really revolutionary nations of the whole world."

The People's Republic, though not itself a socialist republic, has, therefore, always maintained the closest friendship with the peoples of the Soviet Union.

The path of the new Republic has not always been smooth, and many mistakes have been made. In 1927 the leadership in the Government and People's Party had passed to the right wing, who held up the anti-feudal revolution and aimed at a capitalist development with Japanese and American help. Thanks to the energy of Gendun, then secretary of the People's Party, and a small group of comrades, they were defeated and leadership passed to the left wing in the Party. The left also made mistakes, thinking it would be possible to bring the nomad Mongols directly to socialism, to destroy the power of the monasteries, and so on.

The clerical question in Mongolia is of great importance. Out of a population of just over 700,000, more than 90,000 live in the Buddhist monasteries, each of which is the centre of a so-called commune (djassa). The attempt to make the monks return to secular life by force, the mechanical formation of collective farms and ranches among people who could not understand them, led finally to the Government losing the confidence of many of the people.

Comrade Gendun again fought bitterly and almost alone for sanity. At the end of 1932 he was victorious and a new leadership in the Government and People's Party was elected. The collective farms and compulsion in religious questions were abandoned, and the policy of gradually preparing the transition to a non-capitalist development replaced the attempt to emplant socialism by force.

Tremendous progress in education, health and general culture has now been made. Co-operation in marketing and distribution extends throughout the country and the Government has also a special commercial organization for dealing with private traders. The first factories have begun working at the capital, Ulan-Bator-Khoto, and there is now a small, well-organized Mongol working class, which may become a guarantee of the eventual triumph of non-capitalist development. There is an efficient motor transport system throughout the country, and much work has been done towards eliminating cattle disease.

The Red Army of the People's Republic is now a highly disciplined, mechanized force, able to conduct extensive combined operations of motorized forces, cavalry, artillery and aeroplanes. Its leadership is excellent and should the Japanese either themselves invade the country or send in mercenaries led by the princes and monks of Inner Mongolia, they will find that no "walk-over" such as they experienced in Manchuria will be possible. They will be faced by a whole people ready and eager to fight for its national existence.

The Mongolian People's Republic is a democratic state, a dictatorship of the people against the parasites and feudal hangers-on. It is creating prosperity for its people and is a fact of great significance in the history of Eastern peoples.

LAWRENCE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY HERO

[From *Left Review*, June 1935]

LAWRENCE is dead. The hero-worshippers, the R.A.F. recruiters (for whom his death might have been specially arranged) and those bold spirits who are "not so sure, but at least he was a remarkable personality," have had their field-day in the Press. Lawrence dead is obviously going to make more money for his friends than did Lawrence living. Yet the very ordinary person who never knew Lawrence, never read the *Seven Pillars* nor *The Mint*, never had any connexion with either literary or political "inner circles," knows no more now of the real character and achievement of Lawrence than he did in the days when the conqueror of Arabia had already descended into the position of an Edgar Wallace secret agent, popping up (in the Press fiction) here, there and anywhere.

When *The Mint* and the *Seven Pillars* have been published, together with Lawrence's own letters, it may be possible to form a true idea of this man who certainly was among the most remarkable figures of modern England. No doubt it will be a long time before that happens, but in the meanwhile there is some material on which to base a few reflections, not on Lawrence as a writer, but on Lawrence as a hero. That is the important thing about Lawrence, that he is the only hero whom the English ruling classes have produced in our time, a hero who in his own lifetime gathered about him all the legendary atmosphere of the hero.

No one in writing about Lawrence has tried to analyse him as the hero, to see what historical forces made Lawrence possible and also made him such a very peculiar hero and, we may add, such a very uncomfortable one. Yet at this stage, when the full measure of his personal achievement is

hidden, that is the only possible approach, to analyse the myth, to try to see its hidden reality.

Many of the Left are inclined to sniff at Lawrence in a superior way, or else to deprive themselves of the need to think seriously about him at all by dismissing him as a "British Agent" or the man who led the Arabs up the garden. They are making an immense and serious mistake. Never did any man embody so many contradictions as this man, yet he is the man whom the ruling class of this country have chosen for their hero, for the typical man of our time.

Let the scoffers think on this one fact for a moment, that Lawrence, as a man of letters, was unable to publish in his own lifetime the two important books which he had written. When did such a thing ever happen before in history? When, indeed, did the bourgeoisie before ever make a man of letters into a hero? True enough, had the books been published, he would have ceased to be their hero, but this rather cynical reflection alone should be enough to convince us that there is something worth examining in the Lawrence myth.

Here is another contradiction. Lawrence, we are told, passionately loved England. He hated having to leave it for service in India. Yet he was fond of telling his friends that he was fascinated by the psychology of the men of the East, that he found them a far more interesting study than the European. His two books reflect the same contradiction. The *Seven Pillars* is a book about the East, above all about Eastern men. The English and Australian officers and men are pale creatures indeed beside the Arabs here. But *The Mint* is about his own countrymen, about the most typical of all Englishmen, the working lads of the Tank Corps and Air Force.

Historically, it seems to me, the secret of Lawrence lies in this contradiction. He is the Englishman in the East, capitalist civilization in contact with Asiatic feudalism, but much more self-consciously in contact than was the case with the other heroes of British imperialism, with Clive, Warren Hastings, Mutiny Lawrence and the rest.

Liddell Hart has compared Lawrence to Gordon. The pious, brilliant, whisky-drinking engineer officer who broke the Tai-ping rebellion in China and began the conquest of the Sudan, would appear to have little in common with Lawrence the atheist, the man of letters and archæologist. But the comparison is not so wild in one respect. All these men, Clive, Hastings, Gordon (Cecil Rhodes also, in another field), had one feature in common—they had a streak of the adventurer. This means, in terms of real life, of flesh and blood, that, however fierce their conscience and their loyalty to their own class and their own country, they had something which rose above a mere efficient service and loyalty, a wild individualism which was cruel, treacherous, reckless of native life, ambitious and proud. They combined the prudent morality of the new capitalist class with the rapacious ostentation of the feudal robber princes of the Asiatic civilizations with which they were in contact.

Lawrence also had this combination, but the mixtures were different. His good, upper-middle-class ancestry, with its deep piety and idea of service, gave him that streak of deep austerity which every observer remarked. But the other side was there also. Yet Lawrence was not a Gordon, nor a Clive. And it would be foolish not to understand that this is what really makes him important to us. Lawrence conquered an empire for British imperialism, but, unlike Clive, he never had to face trial for corruption and tell his accusers that he stood astounded at his own moderation. Unlike Hastings, or Rhodes, he died a poor man, and his last years were spent as much in the company of workers, though in uniform, as of his own class.

Are we to see in this strange contradiction only a peculiarity of Lawrence's own character? No, that would only be half the story. Lawrence was empire-building, not in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, but in the twentieth.

This is the secret of his Arabian exploits and their curious sequel. This means, in fact, that he represented a class and a culture which had entered their decline, and could not express the vigorous, unquestioning, brutal experience

of their youth and maturity. There is still something to add before the picture is complete. Lawrence, the representative of this declining class, went to the East at a time when it was awaking at last from its captivity to feudal and clerical reaction combined with ruthless capitalist exploitation. He went, moreover, to the old Turkish empire, at a time when it was entering on its revolutionary disintegration, the first stage of the revolutionary revival of the Turkish people.

Lawrence, the archæologist, his head full of the military history of the Napoleonic wars as well as of the glories of the dead civilizations of the Near East, was brought from the first into direct contact with this revolutionary situation. He saw the Arabs, the heirs to a long and glorious past, reduced to a poverty-stricken and helpless minority enslaved by the brutal and decaying rule of Turkish imperialism.

The Young Turk revolution had brought to power a new class, the Turkish bourgeoisie, allied with the more progressive landowners and army officers. They had declared all citizens of the empire free and equal, whatever their nationality, and then proceeded to apply a ruthless policy of Ottomanization of all the subject peoples—Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Arabs. If all were free and equal in one Ottoman state, where was the need for Greek or Arabic school? they argued. They sought to create a strong and centralized state, but at the same time, when they annulled the autonomy guaranteed by the old regime, they were trying to destroy the economic power of the non-Turkish bourgeoisie in the empire, the Greek and Armenian Christian merchants, the Syrian trading class, their commercial rivals.

Lawrence was caught up at once in the anti-Turkish national movements, particularly the Arab national movement. It fired his romantic imagination. Freedom for the Arabs, a great new state stretching from Damascus to Baghdad and the Indian Ocean, the renaissance of Arab culture, it was enough to make any man drunk at the thought of it, and it seemed so easy.

This Englishman, native of a race that had enslaved and destroyed more Asiatic civilizations than any other, that bore the greatest responsibility for the state of the Turkish empire and the vile rule of Abdul Hamid, greater even than that of the servants of the Russian Tsar, understood nothing of the real forces at work. His keen mind saw many things, saw how an Arab state built up by Britain might be of immense use to his own country by giving it access to important oil regions, but did not understand that the oil men and not the Arabs would in any case have the last word, that he himself could never be a builder, but only a tool.

He had a remarkable insight into the Arab mind, yet he did not see far enough. In reading *Revolt in the Desert*, one cannot escape the impression that often he only saw the surface. Note, for example, the wonderful descriptions of the wild indiscipline, the greedy thirst for loot of these Arabs. Yet he does not see that the Arab way of warfare was also their way of life. The nomad is not self-sufficient. When out of his poverty-stricken economy he is unable to squeeze the surplus to trade for the goods he needs but cannot produce, he seizes those goods by violence. War for him is a necessity imposed when exchange breaks down.

Nor could Lawrence understand that a united Arab state which included the cultivated merchant class of Syria and Irak, the laborious peasantry of the Lebanon and Palestine, of the Mesopotamian basin, could never exist if the leadership in it were to be in the hands of the feudal aristocracy of the nomad Bedouin. Lawrence sincerely desired Arab freedom and yet was naive enough to think that it could be imposed from without by a Britain victorious in a world war.

One-half of Lawrence was lost in speculation with romantic theory. Yet the other half had a splendid grasp of the real world. His Arab campaign showed him to have a true insight into the character of modern warfare. He combined his blows at the Turks' industrial resources with

the raising of revolt among the Arab minorities in their rear. He was able to combine war and politics in a way that, apart from himself, only the leaders of the Red Army have succeeded in doing. His view of war was very close to theirs and absolutely different from the prevailing ideas of the General Staffs of the capitalist powers.

Lawrence left the East for good after 1921, not because of a romantic disillusion, though this no doubt played its part, but because his own conception of politics proved unworkable. You cannot combine revolutionary nationalism with feudal and imperialist politics in the twentieth century. He sincerely loathed and despised the policy of his own class, but he did not understand it and he could not see any alternative to it. The man who could wait till he was in the presence of the King, during an official levee, in order to refuse a decoration, might have been over dramatic, but he was honest.

There is no means yet of probing his strange psychology, his exhibitionism, his ambition, his imagination that played tricks with the truth on occasion, his hatred of women. Perhaps part of the secret of it can be found in the general life and education of the English upper-middle class, in the traditions of Oxford and of English learning. Nor is it of great interest, when we do not know the facts, to speculate on why he joined the Air Force as a private soldier.

Here the important thing at the moment lies once again in stating the contradiction. This man who was so typical of his whole class renounced that class. He might have played an enormous part in post-war politics, have been an English dictator had he wished. He chose instead to bury himself in the Army. The reason, I think, can be given roughly. His great intellectual powers enabled him to see well enough that in politics, in national service, as his class call it, however great his position, he would always be the tool of interests he despised.

He was unable to see how those interests might be separated from the spiritual things he valued, he was unable to see any alternative to those interests, though there is

evidence that he tried. He went once to see a group of Labour M.P.'s, interviewed Maxton, whom he imagined to be a revolutionary, and, like Queen Victoria, he was not impressed. But a deep instinct, an instinct which was part of his intellect, feeding it and fed by it in turn, drew him near to the working class.

The "epitaph" which he wrote for Robert Graves is one of the most interesting documents of our time. This is what he says:

"The conquest of the last element, the air, seems to me the only major task of our generation; and I have convinced myself that progress to-day is made not by the single genius, but by the common effort.

"To me it is the multitude of rough transport drivers filling all the roads of England every night, who make this the mechanical age. And it is the airmen, the mechanics, who are overcoming the air, not the Mollisons or Orlebars.

"*The genius raids, but the common people occupy and possess. Wherefore I stayed in the ranks and served to the best of my ability.*"

The man who wrote this, whatever his personal ambition, and apparently he felt from time to time an urge to enter political life, where he must have been a reactionary force since he was unable to be a revolutionary one, was a curious hero for British imperialism to adopt. Yet perhaps the greatest tribute to Lawrence, and the greatest reflection on that imperialism, is that it did so adopt him. In doing so it has unconsciously expressed the contradictions which are rending it, the contradiction between declining capitalism and the revolutionary revival of the East, the contradiction between its own best traditions of the past and the vile interests which pervert and misuse those traditions to-day, the contradiction between the mighty prospects of the further conquest of nature and the class and property barriers which are holding back that conquest. The air is being conquered, but by the common people of the Soviet Union, who have found the formula which reconciles the genius and the plain man, the raider and the army of

occupation, which solves the sexual conflict of man and woman (how the Soviet woman would laugh at Lawrence's claim she could not understand machines), the racial conflict of East and West and the class conflict of exploiter and exploited.

THE FRENCH WORKING CLASS ACHIEVES UNITY

[From *France Faces the Future*]

THE French working class in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century led the emancipatory struggle in Europe. It gave great thinkers to world Socialism and its revolutionary traditions were unequalled. Saint-Simon, Fourier, Babeuf, are names which date from the great Revolution of the eighteenth century, though it was not till later that their influence was felt. It was the silk weavers of Lyon who in 1832 made the first armed attack by working men on the economic privileges of their masters and gave to the world an example of sacrifice and heroism, expressed in their song "We will working live or fighting die," which was later to inspire their class in every country of the world.

Socialism, as a doctrine, is a French creation. Marx and Engels built up their great work by using the ideas of the French Utopians as one of its three component parts. In June 1848, the Paris workers by their revolt made clear, as Marx liked to emphasize, the reality behind the new capitalist democracy. In 1871 those same Paris workers were the first in all history to establish their own power, though for a brief time only. But the Commune exhausted them. When they had recovered from the blow of its defeat, the world leadership of the workers had passed to Germany, and from Germany it went to Russia. In the capitalist world of to-day it has come back again to France, the consequence of the events of 6 February, 1934.

The proposal for united action against the Fascist danger was made by the national conference of the French Communists in June 1934. It was not accepted by the Socialists. Meanwhile, however, in Paris and district, unity of Socialists and Communists was already an accomplished fact. Finally

the Socialists proposed a pact of "non-aggression" between the parties, discussions reopened, and on 27 July an agreement for united action was signed.

The agreement gave back its full vigour and life to the French workers' movement. The fall of the Doumergue Government seemed to be the sign that it must succeed in destroying finally all traces of the Fascist adventure of 6 February in French social life. A great part in the growth of the anti-Fascist front now began to be played also by the intellectuals.

It is difficult to explain why it is that in France the people of the country respect their writers, painters, scientists and philosophers. A respect for the intellectual life is as deeply ingrained in the average Frenchman as in the Scot, even though in France, as in Scotland, the intellectual is considered to be improved by the chastening influence of poverty. Certainly the names of Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland have played a great part in the resurrection of militant democracy before the menace of Fascism to civilization.

A vigilance committee of intellectuals formed after the events of February has succeeded in rallying to its side most of the considerable names in French scholarship and science, while the cultural organizations of writers and artists have also succeeded in rallying to them most of those French artists and writers with great European reputations.

André Malraux expressed the effect of this energetic movement of the French workers on the intellectuals when he wrote that "Communism has restored his fertility to man."

The Radical-Socialists themselves were rapidly affected by this movement. The approach of the municipal elections in May 1935, and the fear that a divided Left would allow the Fascists to win invaluable strong points to cover their illegal arming through the capturing of the municipalities, brought Radicals, Socialists and Communists together in an electoral agreement. The result was a triumph for the anti-Fascists and particularly for the Communists who won

control of 297 councils as against 150 in 1929. In Paris the Communist Party had much the highest vote (99,877) though the reactionary Democratic Republican Union with 98,534 votes won the largest number of seats (Communists 8, U.R.D., 21).

The case of Paris is particularly interesting. For many years the city has been the centre of French reaction, anti-Republican and anti-democratic in its political sympathies. The gradual removal of industries to the suburbs has left it an administrative, trading and luxury centre, without a strong working class. The city of the Commune has been transformed into the home of French reaction.

The municipal elections showed that the anti-Fascist forces which had grown up since 6 February had won back Paris for French democracy. Owing to the grossly unfair arrangement of seats (a small arrondissement of hotels and luxury buildings returns more members than the popular quarters of the east and north-east) the majority remained in Fascist hands, with the notorious Chiappe as Chairman of the Council, but the Left parties had the bulk of the votes and an important minority of the seats. In the outer suburbs the Socialist and Communist triumph was complete.

The County Council elections later in the year brought fresh victories to this spontaneously organized People's Front of the three parties. It remained to give the organization firm and legal justification. The assumption of office by Laval and the threat of new decree laws was the occasion for this.

A committee of representatives of the three Parties was formed in order to organize throughout France great meetings of Republican defence ("For Bread, Peace and Liberty") on 14 July, the national holiday and anniversary of the capture of the Bastille by the people of Paris in 1789. In Paris two meetings preceded the great rally of 14 July, a united youth meeting in the Salle Bullier on the evening of 13 July, and the "Assize of Peace and Liberty" at the Buffalo Sports Stadium on the morning of the 14th.

Certain features of these meetings are worth recording. The youth meeting was packed to suffocation in the hot July night and the young people were both ardent and noisy, full of the restless energy of those who feel they are riding the crest of one of the waves of history. A singer from the Opera in between the speeches gave selections from the repertoire of the songs of France's past revolutions. When it came to the turn of the Great Revolution, "Ça Ira," and "La Carmagnole" were sung with tumultuous delight. And then he began the "Marseillaise."

At once there were cries and jeers; he was singing the song of French militarism and imperialism. For a split second it looked as though the meeting would end in a riot, and then quickly and spontaneously the revolutionary discipline of these young people reasserted itself. The whole audience suddenly rose to its feet and sang the national hymn with clenched fists and arms upraised in the Red Front salute. They had remembered its origin.

The next day there were two official hymns at the great demonstration—the "Marseillaise" and the "Internationale." A few months later, at Lyon, the Secretary of the Communist Party, Maurice Thorez, speaking to the Congress of his party said:

"We have taken up again the verses of Liberty, and have applied to the Fascists, the enemies of the French people, the words of Rouget de l'Isle:

"Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras
Egorger nos fils et nos compagnes."

At the Assize of Liberty delegations from every provincial city met to take the oath which was to be put to the great demonstration to be held in the afternoon. Professor Jean Perrin (a Nobel Prize winner), in a burning speech, warned the people to be on their guard against bourgeois encroachment on proletarian victories, and quoted Joan of Arc, daughter of the people, deserted by her King and burned

by priests and now canonized by the bourgeoisie of to-day.

Jacques Duclos (Propaganda Secretary of the French Communist Party) met with a tremendous ovation when he declared: "In the tricolour we see the symbol of the fight of the past, and in our Red Flag the present struggle and future victory. We Communists are the heirs of the glorious revolutionary tradition of our country. Forward, citizens of France! Fascism shall not break through!"

This is the oath which was sworn and repeated in the afternoon by the half-million men and women who marched through the Place de la Bastille:

"We swear to remain united, to defend democracy, to disarm and dissolve the Fascist Leagues, to put our liberties beyond the reach of Fascism.

"We swear on this day on which the first victory of the Republic lives again, to defend the democratic liberties won by the people of France, to give bread to the toilers, work to the youth, and a great human peace to the world."

Whilst these dense columns were marching through Paris, at the other end of the city, along the fashionable Champs Elysées, the Fascist bands were marching to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in the name of "national solidarity." But it was difficult not to feel, that burning summer afternoon, that the real unity of the nation was already achieved and marching through the Bastille Square, where once stood the monument of feudal tyranny. Socialist and Communist workers, Radical shopkeepers and Civil Servants, writers, artists, teachers and scientists, men and women of all ages and classes, passed through in deep, unending columns, from three in the afternoon till eight o'clock at night.

On the Monday morning after this great people's demonstration of 14 July in Paris, the reactionary Press all sang the same tune. "You see how united France is! De la Rocque sang the 'Marseillaise'. The People's Front sang the 'Marseillaise.' Everyone enjoyed himself, there was no violence, only devotion to the country, expressed in slightly different accents."

At the same time, of course, they tried to minimize the success of the People's Front.

But on Tuesday the tune was changed.

The demonstrations, it appears, were different after all. De la Rocque and the Fiery Cross were military and patriotic, the Popular Front were dull, revolutionary and disorderly.

"They were not picturesque," wrote Henri Bordeaux, novelist of the infidelities of the French bourgeoisie, and pillar of the Academy, after viewing the great procession at the Bastille.

No, the People's Front was not picturesque.

To a man who has made a fortune writing novels about "he and she and he," or "she and he and she," there was nothing picturesque in the war-wounded in their invalid chairs, the men with their faces halftorn away, the war-widows in black, wearing the decorations of their dead husbands, the forest of banners of ex-servicemen's organizations which led the procession. This was "dull."

Nor, of course, could he see anything very interesting in the officers of the Army Reserve, their tricolour flag with a red Phrygian cap on top, who marched together with the workers. These men were Republicans, descendants of the victors of Jemappes and Valmy, were solid, middle-aged, upright figures.

Yet in spite of themselves, Henri Bordeaux and the other scribblers of the reactionary Press noticed many interesting things.

They noticed that this great mass of half a million men, women and children was gay and good-humoured. They noticed that they did not treat their leaders with awe or undue reverence. On the march, when the supporters of the Radical leader Daladier cried out "Daladier au pouvoir" (Put Daladier in Office), his friends caught up the little man and tossed him gaily in the air.

Thorez, the Communist leader, an ex-miner, young and burly as a professional footballer, did not feel it necessary to scowl like Mussolini or Hitler.

He smiled broadly at this friendly human mass, his own flesh and blood, fellow-workers and fighters.

As the procession swept down the Faubourg St. Antoine, storm centre of the great revolution of 1789–93, a street of small shopkeepers, petty traders and little furniture workshops, the reception was tumultuous.

M. Henri Bordeaux felt much more at home watching the Fascist march to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe. The Fascists marched in step, they marched quicker, and they did not sing.

They had a leader also. The famous novelist could see that at once. Not merely because he marched alone, a gap of twenty paces fore and aft of his sacred person, but because, you see, he looked like a leader should, a drawn face, dreaming eyes, a supple step.

No wonder all the bourgeois women risked tearing their fine silk stockings as they climbed not very gracefully onto the café chairs to watch him march by.

Some were disappointed that he was not taller. Others felt his nose was rather large. But then he is a colonel, and colonels must have big noses, or what should one respect in them?

On the whole though, they agreed with M. Bordeaux, whose novels they read so eagerly, that he looked their ideal of a leader of men.

No one could claim that this crowd of a hundred thousand in which women predominated, gathered in the fashionable streets near the Etoile, was either gay or good-humoured.

But how they cheered when the Fascist troops appeared! Vive de la Rocque! Vive le dictateur! This was their only cry. Long live the dictator!

Who are the French Fascists? From the march past it is clear they are not a real mass movement, that they have no social programme. The kernel of the march was the 10,000 ex-servicemen, including priests and officers in uniform in their ranks. Their bearing was impressive, their discipline excellent.

The 15,000 or 20,000 "National Guards," who are the youth movement of the Croix de Feu, are a joke compared to these men—merely middle-class youths who follow the drum.

An incident at the official military parade of the morning was significant. The Croix de Feu were there as spectators. When President Lebrun appeared to take the salute they greeted him with cries of "Vive de la Rocque."

When Premier Laval came to his side they shouted: "Vive de la Rocque et Laval." That Laval was secretly in relation with the Fascists no one could doubt.

Will these two forces ever meet, the People's Front and the Croix de Feu? asked M. Henri Bordeaux in the *Echo de Paris*. He evaded the question and told us that France does not want Fascism, but that we must have "responsible authority, an *élite*," otherwise the country will die.

Perhaps it will really die, this France of M. Henri Bordeaux, the France which persecuted Dreyfus (who died the night before this parade), the France of the Versailles Treaty, the France of Stavisky.

But in its place another France not unknown to history will win new life, the France of the Jacobins, of the June days of 1848, of the Commune, the France of the People's Front.

III

THE IMAGINATIVE WRITER

RALPH FOX, THE WRITER

By JOHN LEHMANN

IT is nearly three years ago that I first met Ralph Fox, although I had known and admired some of his works, chief among them the remarkable biography of Lenin, many years before. These books had prepared me for a powerful mind; but one of the things that impressed me most during our early meetings, apart from his friendliness and ease of manner, was the intense interest in literature *as literature* which he showed. This was a surprise to me then, chiefly I think because I was not yet free of the delusion, common among my contemporaries, that Marxists had a cut-and-dried method of dealing with literature, and were really only interested in it insofar as it proved something political.

Talking with Ralph Fox soon made me see how stupid this idea was, and opened, too, an entirely new and exciting world to me. He was as intolerant as anyone of those who dismissed half the classics of the world as "bourgeois propaganda" or "counter-revolutionary," and who believed that the smallest trifle written about the struggles of the masses was of greater æsthetic value; and for far clearer and more carefully grounded reasons. The novel was his passionate interest, and he would talk about any English novelist, from Fielding to D. H. Lawrence, for as long as you liked, expatiating on beauties of style and description, or brilliance of character-creation in a way that showed, not only how real and important these things were to him, but also that he had a novelist's instincts himself. It was clear from his conversation that he liked to read and re-read a novel, digesting it slowly, until he felt that he understood every side of the author's achievement. And it was the same with French and Russian

literature, in both of which his reading and knowledge were immense. Essentially, the secret of his literary perception was that he let himself be passive to a story or novel, allowing his critical intelligence to come in only afterwards; and he despised those who approached literature with preconceived ideas and prejudices that had little to do with æsthetic pleasure.

But if he took a delight in every kind of imaginative writing, provided it was good, he had no fog in his mind about the vitally important part literature could and did play in the shaping of men's minds, and therefore of history. His critical sense seemed to me to be very keen; he never let himself deliver a slapdash verdict in conversation on any point, however small, and he would suggest where one had gone wrong oneself perfectly unpretentiously, but at the same time incisively. And what gave his judgment so often convincing depth and force, though I do not think he felt by any means that he was at the end of his explorations, and was always open to new ideas, was that he had as a critic not merely a lively intelligence and fine emotional reactions, but also a profound unifying philosophy of literature, to which his Marxism had led him. There is a passage in *The Novel and the People*, where he says that Marxism "consciously gives to man his full value, and in this sense is the most humanist of all world outlooks;" and he adds in a later chapter: "there is no human character, no emotion, no conflict of personalities outside the scope of the revolutionary novelist. Indeed, he alone is able to create the hero of our time, the complete picture of modern life, because only he is able to perceive the truth of that life." This seems to me to put in a brilliantly concise and inspiring way the dynamic effect a revolutionary, materialist philosophy, properly understood, can have on a modern writer.

The most humanist of all world outlooks: this was the aspect of Marxism undoubtedly that appealed to the deepest things in Ralph Fox's nature. He seemed to have an enormous zest in life, and an enormous admiration for

vital personalities, as he showed many times by the fire that came into his writing when he was dealing with such characters as Genghis Khan or Lenin; and when he did not approve, ethically or politically, of an outstanding character—Lawrence of Arabia for instance—he nevertheless could not, and did not want to, conceal his admiration for the qualities of genius his subject displayed. But he was interested in every kind of intense living, from the epic lives of his favourite Eastern heroes to the splendid courage of ordinary workers and soldiers. I do not think he ever wrote anything more deeply-felt and more revealing of himself than the "dream" of Frank Whittam's execution, the death of the "criminal" who was the true friend of the people, in his unfinished novel. His enjoyment and appreciation of life led him, I think, to his first sympathy with the Revolution, as it led him, after he had completely identified himself with it, to a hatred of any kind of puritanism or narrowly moral attitude inside the movement.

His imaginative grasp of characters and events was so striking, in all he wrote as well as in his conversation, that in time he might well, if he had given himself a chance among all his other activities, have written one or two of the finest revolutionary novels of our generation. *Storming Heaven* is a remarkable piece of work; but I do not think anyone can read *Conversation with a Lama*, almost the last thing of this sort that he wrote, without feeling a very great advance in technical and imaginative power. When I first asked him to help us with advice and suggestions in the creation of *New Writing*, he agreed very readily, and I never had a telephone talk or a meeting with him after, when he failed to produce two or three fruitful ideas or criticisms. Among other things we would often discuss his projects for stories, novels, and sketches. He had any number in his mind, but seeing how busy he was in other ways it was not easy to pin him down to the writing of any of them. In the summer of 1936, however, while he was waiting for the final arrangements to be made for his long-planned return to Mongolia, he told me that he wanted to write

several other stories on the lines of *Conversation with a Lama*, showing all the changes in the psychology of the East since its contact with the West. He intended, he said, to devote himself far more to creative writing in the future, believing that the Eastern atmosphere which he loved so much would fire him to the work.

A few weeks later the insurrection of the fascist Generals broke out in Spain, and Ralph Fox's realism and love of life led him away from the East, and the novels that might have been, for ever.

A DREAM OF GREAT CONQUERORS

[From *People of the Steppes*]

THE second night in the teplushka I fell asleep and dreamed that I was on the Iron Hill again. It was dark, the velvet sky was spangled with stars, but land and water stretched dimly away beneath, carrying mysterious roads into the unknown. Such a hush of mysterious silence hung along the Aral Sea, over Lake Raim and Kamishli Bash, over the slow delta of the Jaxartes.

A man strode out from behind the mud walls of the tombs and stood near me, gazing into the blue infinity as though he must make it all his and then die in the approaching dawn. He made a most majestic figure in a long khalat, a curved sword at his side, and yet he was familiar. As he stood there greedily staring, I remembered a phrase of Renan's about the hills of Judæa. Looking down from them, he said, over the great plains, one feels the immensity of the world and the desire to conquer it. So, I thought, must this man be feeling, but I resolved to speak to him, for I was certain now that he was Konat. Approaching quietly I gave him "Aman," and "Aman," he answered me, untroubled, in a voice I knew.

"Konat," I ventured, and at the name he turned, and I saw that it was not Konat, but Timur Lenk, Tamerlane the Great, he who remade Asia to his own vision.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I know that no more than you, Timur, but I think I must have fallen asleep here in the heat of the afternoon. But you, what are you trying to drag from Infinity with your gaze?"

"The shape of a woman I have wronged."

"I too, seek a woman I wronged," came from a deep voice near by, and turning I saw Ak Bala, short, strong and

sturdy, but as he came up I knew he was not Ak Bala, but Temudjin, Genghis Khan, Emperor of the World.

"I am seeking the shade of Bibi Hanim, my noble wife," went on Timur. "When I was away in the West, fighting the Sultan Bajadzet, conquering the men of Roum, Bibi Hanim, for love of me and my fame, commanded a mosque to be built. The arch of the entrance into the court was to be the tallest and loveliest in the world, as my fame was the greatest and her beauty the fairest. A young Arab architect, the most renowned in Asia, came especially to Samarkand to build this dream for her. The mosque rose slowly, but all men who watched its growing beauty wondered and were amazed, for it was something unearthly and exquisite, like the gates of Paradise. 'Verily this mosque is beautiful, verily this mosque is delicious,' they said, and added, 'It is for the fame of Timur Lenk, built by command of Bibi Hanim.' Some went away marvelling, but others said that no such divine beauty as this grew up to celebrate the bloody victories of Timur. The building grew so slowly that Bibi Hanim, became afraid lest it be not finished against my return. Day after day she sent for the young architect to bid him hurry, but he only looked at her with burning eyes and said that beauty will not grow at the command of even the greatest queen in the world. At last, in despair at his delay, she cried out, 'O fashioner of loveliness, what then can command beauty to grow?' 'Only Love,' he answered, and my wife, the pearl of all women, understood then what she had secretly known in her heart for a long time. 'What is your price then, architect of madness, that this monument may be finished against the return of my husband?' for above all things she wished to greet me with this on my return, loving me beyond all else in the world. 'One kiss upon your cheek, Queen of Women,' answered the architect. She granted him this, but the fire of that kiss burned a mark on the cheek of Bibi Hanim, and she fell from his hot embrace like a dead woman.

"The mosque was finished when I returned, and I, like

the whole world, marvelled at its beauty, but I too knew in my heart at the first glance that this soaring loveliness was not inspired by the conquests of Timur. The mark on my beloved's cheek told my jealous heart the rest, and sword in hand I sought the young architect. He fled to the summit of his mosque, high over my town of Samarkand, face to face with the white mountain peaks. As I ran up with lifted sword he sprang into the air with a wild cry, of joy, or fear, or love, I do not know, for God, who knows all, snatched the falling body and changed it into a Dove."

The shade of Genghis spoke. "What did you then, O Timur? Did God's miracle quiet your turbulent heart?"

Timur shook his head. "I pulled down the frozen music of that arch and built it again, grander and taller, to fit the fame of Timur Lenk. When it was done the beauty of the mosque was dead, for I had destroyed the loveliest poem ever made to the glory of a woman. That is the wrong I did my noble wife."

Genghis Khan sat down beside me and stretching out his hands to the night said, "I too have sinned against Beauty, not so greatly as you, Timur, but yet it remains like a little thorn pricking my foot. I remade the world to my own fashion, as God bade me, and my work, like yours, endures, yet that one little thing can sting me yet."

"Speak and be comforted," said Timur.

"It was in the days when I conquered Khorasmia, beyond the hill there," and he pointed towards the long ridges above Raim in the West. "My son Djoudji brought me among his captives as I lay in Samarkand the singing-girls of the Sultan. One of them, Bent Zendkidja, was of singular beauty, as even I remarked, who care little for the beauty of women, for the antelope spreading over the steppe had not more grace of body than she. By my side was Zin, the oculist of Samarkand, who had just cured my eyes of a painful disease, an ugly wretch crouched up behind his iron-rimmed spectacles like a perching owl. This lecherous old man asked me for Zendkidja for his own delight, and I out of gratitude answered his prayer. The singing-maid

looked at him with the loathing he deserved, and fled for refuge to the house of Nidham-el-Molk, the treacherous ex-Vizier of the old Sultan. Here she remained three or four days, regretting the sultan, her late master, and his tall young sons, talking of his vanished glory with the Vizier who had betrayed him, and the pair of them drowning their sorrows in love and drunkenness. Zin could not get her away, so implored my aid. I gave him his singing-girl by force and rid the earth of the filthy blood of Midam-el-Molk. So that I might keep my imperial world I linked in unholy bonds vile age and lovely youth. This is what pricks me like a thorn picked up from some bush upon the steppe; a little thing, but it rankles still."

When both had told their tales we sat all three a while looking out into the silence of night. Then I asked a question which was puzzling me sorely about the griefs of these two kings.

"This is all that troubles the peace of your departed souls? You have no sorrow for the people massacred, the bright cities destroyed, the carnage of your mighty wars? Two beautiful women wronged, that is all that works in you still, making your souls uneasy in the night?"

Genghis Khan remained silent, but Timur answered me. "I regret only the wrong I have done against Beauty. For the slaughter and destruction you reproach me with I have no regret, nay, only joy, for I built a greater work with my sword than many with stone or paint or cunning words."

"But the dead, do not their shades reproach you? Is it just that a man should build his dreams out of men?"

Here Genghis Khan rose with an impatient sign.

"You speak like a fool. The work I did endures, and life flows the quicker for it. Who are these dead? If one or all had lived, would the great world have been the better or the wiser for it? Perhaps some among them were good or wise, but life is rich and there has been no lack of the good or wise since. I spared all men of arts and crafts. The rest the world could do without. Tell me now, if

to-morrow a plague killed all in your land who were not among the artists or craftsmen, would they be missed?"

I answered that maybe no, for life is a little thing indeed and most men only wasters thereof.

"You are with me? Well, then, my work which I built up from their clay was the work of God. I gave peace to Asia, I gave strength to her trade and commerce, I brought East into contact with the West, and had there been those in the West saw as far as I, they had never parted again."

Timur spoke then. "I too did the work of God. The Champion of Islam, the Sword of the Faith, I made Islam supreme in Asia. All her beauty since is my child, for only those despise her who know here least. I ask you, friend, is not Islam a lovely thing? Did I not do well when I established her over Asia?"

I answered, "You did well, Timur, and the hand of God worked powerfully in you. You are two great conquerors; you stopped at nothing to fulfil your divine dreams, and now I salute you because you were victorious and yet have remembered Beauty, whom all men forget."

Timur laughed. "It was by remembering what all men forget that we became great conquerors, and a great conqueror is a great artist. But who is this?"

An iron stick rang on the pebbles and looking up I saw Fedor Ignaty'ick limp towards us leaning on an iron-tipped staff he sometimes used. Another was following him, a more sinister figure I had learned to distrust, and I felt for my revolver, fearing he might mean harm to old Yaganov, for I had recognized Steklov. Steklov held out his hand commandingly and cried, "Put up your revolver, I am not he you think." As he spoke he was indeed no longer Steklov, but the figure broadened, the Tatar face became more familiar, and I knew that here was Vladimir Lenin. Yaganov too was altered, his clothes were strange, Old Boyar's costume, and from my history books I remembered pictures of Ivan the Terrible.

Ivan sat heavily down and looked sharply at the two Emperors. "Still here, old enemies? I was the first crowned

Tsar in Russia and I took Kazan and Astrakhan from your children."

Genghis smiled, while Timur Lenk salaamed and said, "It was after my day, first Tsar of Russia. Not so easily did I yield my cities. The Duke of Moscow knew me as a conqueror."

"My bastard Djoudji took your women for his bed," added Genghis grimly. "Not so great then, White Tsar."

"We are quits to-day," said Ivan. "I roused the West against you. I made Russia a nation and I carried her frontiers into Asia. I brought the West farthest to the East since Alexander. To-day we hold you to the wall of China."

Lenin stepped into the group, his Tatar face lit with fire. "We are one to-day. Russia is Russia no longer, but the work started by Ivan I have completed. East and West meet to-day in Moscow. The steppe is free to the Hindu Kush and the Great Wall, and the East is awake again. Not in vain have we four lived."

I turned to Lenin, in whose eyes still lurked that reminiscence of Steklov; "Vladimir Ily'ich, I took you for another, a man I hold a scoundrel and a thief. Such men have been your tools in this work of yours. Even if what you say is true, how can you stand beside these three great conquerors when murder and famine have blazed your trail? I understand them, for they had dreams of Beauty and strength and made them true. But yours, what is it, this gospel of a German Jew?"

"It is the gospel of Life," he answered proudly. "Life is production, making and destroying; the process of Life, the process of production. Life is love and drunkenness and creation, huge, vast, vigorous and various, like this steppe itself. To live we must conquer, struggle, rejoice and sorrow, but always seek, find and create. Sensuality, vice, they are the necessary materials of love, as sleep is necessary to life. They are also the materials of production, and I am not ashamed of them, because they are part of the glory of being, of changing shape and movement. Man and the machine make the product, man and woman the

child. Work, like love, is a passion and a creation of life. I have struggled to free the forces of production, to give its glory back to work. That is my gospel, and that it comes from a German Jew is of no importance, since in the end it has come from God."

"What he has said is true," said Genghis, and the other two nodded assent. "He has spoken like a man and a child of the steppe."

Timur turned to the East, where the grey of morning was appearing, and one by one the stars were fading. "The dawn is near," he said, "and before I go I cry to the world that I love this steppe which flowers in spring, is burned up in summer and frozen in winter." "I too," said Ivan. "And I," said Genghis. "I am its child," said Lenin.

The sun rose behind the Serpent Hill and I was alone. I walked back to Kamishli Bash and saw there Konat and Ak Bala riding out to the south-east, where our horses were pastured. On the station was Steklov, a portfolio of worn black leather under his arm. He smiled at me in his strange anonymous way and climbed into a waiting train. On the porch of our little white house stood Yaganov and with him a shaven priest of the new Church. "It is the name-day of our village," he cried as I came up. "A health to Saint Michael," and he drained off a glass of white samagondka. The priest who was also drunk, stood in the dawn on the step of the porch and called out:

"I believed in the Sun and the Emperor Tamerlane. There is no God but God, and I am his prophet."

THE PASSING OF ALI HODJA

[From *Storming Heaven.* Book One: Part Three: Chapter XII.]

LEFT alone with Ali Hodja, John grew to like the old man more and more, a feeling which was warmly returned. He talked to John of horses, of racing and hunting, of rich "Bais" and beautiful girls among his own people, told him stories of vanished Khans and warriors, sang him songs and poured out to him all the rich life of the nomad Turk.

He was so thick-set and sturdy, the white teeth flashed so amiably beneath the sparse moustache, that in spite of his host's many faults John could not yet bring himself to leave Tashkent. For Ali Hodja was far from faultless; he loved to boast of his herds, his horses, his wives, and his prowess with herds, horses and women alike. For all his Muhammadan faith he drank freely of the sweet wines of Turkestan and invited dancing-girls to his house—and on occasion dancing-boys, Batchas, who dressed like women and danced lasciviously before Ali Hodja and his friends. Then from time to time he had an access of religious fervour, said all his prayers regularly throughout the day, conversed with Mullahs and inveighed against the atheism of the Bolsheviks.

Once or twice John asked him why he did it all—what pleasure he found in the dancing-boys, what point there was in the religion whose tenets he broke almost hourly. But Ali Hodja laughed at him.

"Am I not the equal of a Christian since the Revolution? Is it only a Mussulman who is expected to observe every letter of his faith? But listen, my dear soul, I am not a religious man, it is true, yet Islam is the faith of my fathers, and to-day the house of my fathers is being threatened.

As for the Batchas, well, my wives are far away, and from the dancing-girls I can get nothing but syphilis. Listen, my heart, I have a tale to tell you," and he proceeded to tell John a tale that made him hold his sides with laughter.

Yet the dancing-girls soon came oftener and the Batchas less frequently. And in time Ali Hodja confided to John that he too had got syphilis. "But what would you, my soul? It is the fate of our race when we desert the steppe for the towns, which are verily the home of all evil."

Before long John noticed also that his friend began to have much business to transact in private with Mullahs and other individuals, who came for the most part secretly by night.

Ali Hodja was one of the richest Bais in Turkestan. His own Kirghiz tribe pastured in the valleys around Auli Ata, but he had been a merchant in the great towns and married for his first wife a Tadjik woman from Samarkand, who brought him a property in the hills outside the city. One morning he announced his intention of visiting his property. John suspected there was something else behind the plan and remembered Yasha's warning. But the very next day he was given a reason that allayed his doubts.

"Listen, my two eyes, I am going to Samarkand to marry a young Uzbeg maiden. I have spoken with our doctor and he tells me that I may cure my evil sickness by lying with a young virgin. There is such a one in Samarkand, the daughter of my friend, Kerim Bai. The wedding is arranged and you shall be present, my dear."

John accepted, and within two days they were in Samarkand. Here he found a very different life from the free existence of the nomad Kirghiz. Kerim Bai's house was a large one, but half of it was sealed to all other men but himself, the half within which the veiled women moved mysteriously and prepared the bride for the wedding.

On the second day he learned from the two old men that she was a far from willing bride. Her name was Hanim Djané and from somewhere she appeared to have received modern ideas that made her revolt against both

family and religion. She spent her days in weeping and swore that though the Mullah recited the whole Koran, she should never give herself willingly to an old man whom she did not know.

Willingly or not, within a week Ali Hodja made her his fourth wife and they departed to the village in the hills some thirty miles from Samarkand, where his property lay, taking John with them.

Ali Hodja was no longer the man he had been in the caravan, or even at Tashkent. Trouble with his girl wife made him preoccupied and sad, and John, who now spoke Uzbegi well enough, picked up whispers in the village sufficient to learn that there were also other matters troubling him. For the war in the mountains was not over, though one by one the Basmach chieftains were being overcome. Enver Pasha had died in battle a few months previously, but there were still men left able to keep the field against the Soviet Power, aided by British arms and munitions. It was whispered too that Ali Hodja's lands at Ak Su were in danger of confiscation, the fat pastures, the vineyards and the orchards. As many of the villagers were sure to benefit by this measure, opinion among them was divided, and in argument the division always seemed to centre around the vexed question of Hanim Djané, one side taking her part and blaming her husband for a rich old tyrant, the other calling her an atheist, a kafir, a loose woman.

John saw little of her, for here in the heart of Turkestan his host put aside his free nomad ways, isolated his wife and her servants and spoke little of her. One evening, however, as they were riding home together towards the village, Ali Hodja opened his heart a little to John.

"Look you, my dear, is not this country fair, and are not my possessions goodly to see?"

And indeed it was so. The little white village on the hill-top, flushed with red from the dying sun, the vineyards, the fields that stretched below them, and in the distance the mountains, snow-capped and grand, it was a sight which John loved.

"And they talk of taking it from me. Not this alone, for that I could bear, but in time my herds and my horses that are far away on the steppe. How then shall I feed my wives? How shall I marry my daughters or find wives for my tall young sons? Ai, my wives. Take no woman for your bed in marriage, my soul, lest she poison your being. I have a wife, a fair young girl, whom I would love as hotly as I might, but she hates me. She has not cured my sickness and she has turned my bed into a battleground. Ai, my soul! And Allah knows I am merciful and have forborne to chastise her. I am old and I am sick, and life is becoming as dirt to me."

Indeed he was growing thin and querulous, very changed from the cheerful epicure of Tashkent, or the gay companion of the caravan route. John could feel the tragedy closing in around him. Ali Hodja spent most of his time in the women's rooms and there, behind that inviolable screen, events marched swiftly, which the outsider might not penetrate, for now not even to his closest friend did the old man talk about his wife.

One morning when John and he rode into their yard they saw a white stallion tied to one of the posts of the veranda. Ali Hodja looked at John anxiously, as though about to speak, but checked himself and said nothing. He went straight in, vanishing again behind the inviolable door, but this time another man was with him and John heard the murmur of their voices.

From the villagers he soon learnt who was their visitor. He was Hazret Bek, the Basmach leader. The villagers told John that he had doubtless ridden in to call out Ali Hodja to his side, for the two were old friends and Hazret Bek was sorely pressed just now.

In the evening he went back to the house, still to find no sign of his host. Behind the door to the women's rooms was absolute silence, but Yussuf, the servant boy, had news for him. In fact, in and around the house there were a dozen waiting to tell him the tale.

A terrible thing had happened—Hanim Djané had

insulted Hazret Bek, the guest of her husband, called him a horse thief and a brigand, a ravisher of maidens, a criminal from the jails. And Ali Hodja had lost his patience and beaten his wife soundly. She, smarting from the whip, had sworn she would send word to the town and get the help of the militia, that women in the Soviet Republic were now the equals of men, and no longer to be treated like cattle. She had stormed at her husband till he had fled, calling him a diseased old debaucher, a robber of the poor, and one who cared nought for a woman's honour. He had been so taken aback at her outburst, he had not dared lift his hand again, but locking her in had ridden off to the Mullahs with Hazret Bek.

When Ali Hodja came in that night he was very serious. "Jan, my two eyes, thou must leave me now, I go on a long journey whither none may follow."

"Indeed I have no will to do so, my father," John replied. "Your fate is your own, and if you go you must, I can say nothing, yet it is folly, for Hazret Bek is in the wrong, and in his company you will win only sorrow and maybe death."

"It is true," said Ali Hodja, "but I am a Turk. I will strike one blow before I die and it shall be a good one. Shall I give up the heritage of my fathers and the law of Allah for the naked scoundrels of the cities? I have made up my mind and I go. I am an unhappy man, my dear soul."

He left that same night and the following morning John set out for Samarkand, suddenly tired of Asia, and his face turned to the north.

In Tashkent again he heard from his Uzbegi friends the end of Ali Hodja. Two weeks after he had ridden out of his house in the night, he returned at dawn, wounded, hard pressed, and with less than a dozen followers. He had come back to sell his life on his own soil, and this he did, fighting valiantly to the end. But strangest of all, they related that Hanim Djané, his young wife, took a rifle and fought by his side, and that their bodies were found together.

John pondered long over the fate of his friend. Asia.

An old and diseased man fighting to the death for his great possessions, for his faith, that all his life he had ignored, for his right to command, and by his side had fought a girl whom he had bought and tainted and who had rebelled against all he stood for with her whole soul. Why? Asia. An Asia that was disappearing for ever before the urge of a new world that only the healthy and the free could inhabit.

Then in the spring, when the rills were running clear through the streets with melted snow from the mountains, and the fruit trees were blossoming, John met Mrs. Pennifold. With that meeting his own life began.

JOHN WITH THE QUAKERS

[From *Storming Heaven.* Book Two: Part One: Chapter V.]

PETER was sitting at Sunday morning breakfast with Mrs. Pennifold. John was not there, he had disappeared when Saturday's work was finished, and had not been seen since. He rarely came home now before two or three in the morning and had suborned the servant girl to leave a window open for him each night on that account. One night she had forgotten to open the window and John had climbed in through Mrs. Pennifold's bedroom window. Faith considered herself broadminded, but she had nevertheless objected strenuously, and indeed when she woke suddenly in the night to see that dark boyish head, the broad shoulders and the moonlight on the round throat, coming through the narrow window, she had been unable to prevent the thought arising that if anyone had seen John doing this, it would have been difficult to convince them of the innocence of the whole thing. She had never mentioned it to anyone, but Peter knew nevertheless, for John had not felt the same reticence about the peradventure.

"Peter," she said, buttering with great care a slice o white bread, "what is the matter with John?"

Peter looked up, no sign of inward smiling in his candid eyes. "With John? Nothing, surely. I believe he has just joined a trade union of some sort and is taking a class at nights in the village. He is very serious about social work."

Faith's large eyes fixed him steadily. "Peter, you don't get away with that sort of thing here. I believe you're in league with him. Why does he stop out all night? Why is he never in before three or four in the morning? Why, when I take him with me on a tour round the villages,

does he always find some excuse to get back a day before we should?"

"Really," said Peter, "I didn't know he came in so late. I always go to bed early myself, and I have never heard him," and he looked straight at her very innocently.

Faith blushed, and, despite her maturity, her blush was not unattractive. Furthermore, she knew she blushed and she was angry at it. "Well, I know he does. We have to be very careful about our behaviour, working in a foreign country. It's only because the Quakers and everyone connected with them have such a disinterested standard of conduct that we're able to work at all. A scandal would ruin us for the people here, and you know it, Peter."

Peter did know it. He also knew that Faith's whole heart was in her work and that she would suffer if the work suffered. Whether the work was necessary or not was another question. Once, no doubt, it had been so. But Faith was a good woman and Peter liked her, though she was an egotist and difficult in many ways.

"Quite frankly, Faith, what John is and does is something neither you nor I will ever have control over. Personally I don't think he is playing the village Don Juan because he stops out at night. He has his own strange life and lives it. A boy who has had a life like his is beyond the comprehension of simple folk like you or me."

"Bah!" Faith exclaimed, pushing her cup away and lighting a cigarette. "Nonsense! He has no morals or scruples, and I'm afraid of him."

Peter could not help laughing. "Afraid of him! Why, he's only a boy."

"Yes, he's only a boy, but at times he might be a man of forty. He has no roots in any kind of life we know, and no restraints or decency."

"But he's not so bad as all that, Faith. You don't know him or you would realize that there's all sorts of remarkable possibilities in him, if only he can get on the right track."

"That may be, only somehow I can't believe very strongly in his staying long on any track. When I'm with

him I sometimes feel as though all the dirt of all the slums of the world is in him."

"He certainly hasn't moved in the most refined circles, but you can't deny there's a lot more than that to him."

"Oh, I don't deny there's a certain poetry of the slums, a certain romance in vagabondage, where a strong enough character is concerned. All I say is, I'm not going to have him spoiling our work. If he does, back he goes to America."

Faith was a determined woman, and her first romantic feeling for John had fast turned to dislike when she saw that she would never be able to control him. Peter, who was far more romantic than she was, stood up for his friend.

"He is remarkable, with his energy and strength he'll do something one day that will make people sit up."

She sighed. "Perhaps. However, I'm not interested in that, and your effort to see the founder of a new race of men in every strange creature you come across makes me sorry for you. Peter, when you're about forty you'll begin to regret it." She got up to go into her own room.

"You don't like John because he doesn't believe in you," was Peter's defence.

She stopped by the door. "Oh no, that isn't the reason at all." But she blushed, and Peter saw that he had struck home more deeply than he thought.

He rose also and went over to the window. "You know," he said meditatively, looking out on to the wide and sunburned village street, "we English middle-classes are too apt to adopt people for their own good without asking their permission. And we cling on to what we adopt as though it were a part of ourselves. If anybody raises doubts as to the good we are doing, or as to its necessity, then we are as mad as a she-wolf whose litter is threatened."

Faith answered impatiently. "That has nothing to do with what we are talking about, Peter. You know it hasn't, though it may be true in some ways." And she went

out abruptly, to read her Bible and meditate in her own room.

But Peter knew it had. He knew that Mrs. Pennifold had adopted the Russian peasants, that she admired them like clever children, that she scolded them like naughty ones, that she wanted no interference in her self-appointed task of raising their cultural level to hers and that she resented what she considered the rivalry of the Government in interfering in the welfare of her children, and that above all she could not tolerate anyone who doubted the essential goodness and disinterestedness of her work. Thinking of all this and of John and Nadya, he put on his panama hat, sighed, and went out for a walk.

It was mid-July, and the air was hot, hotter than Peter was used to, and he walked slowly. Pavlovka lay in the midst of the open steppe, the nearest forest over thirty versts away, and there were few trees to protect one from the remorseless sun, some silver-plumed and slender birch, two or three dusty poplars, and by the little river, reduced now to a trickle between its high, hard-baked banks, occasional forlorn willows. The steppe itself was golden-brown with the harvest, and lovely with the wild flowers of red and blue that drooped thirsting in the stubble beneath the burning sun. He looked over the steppe, heavy with the harvest, saw here and there men and women at work binding the sheaves where the corn had been cut, and the lumbering carts piled high with golden grain coming slowly in over the purple-brown stubble to the village. It was Sunday, but many were working, for the harvest was the first since the world had gone mad with the fury of war, since the black famine had retreated from the land. It was theirs, the fruit of their earth and their toil, and they were gathering it in.

From the direction of the river he saw two figures strolling, a youth and a girl. They came nearer, straight, handsome figures, the girl with a scarlet kerchief bound about her fair head, her sturdy legs bare and brown beneath the short skirt, and the boy bareheaded, with curly black

hair, his shirt open at the throat to show his bare sunburned chest. They were John and Nadya. A little white mongrel dog followed them, a new find of John's, which he had christened Grishka.

Peter gazed enviously at them, and since it was too hot to be pleasant for him, followed slowly behind them as they strolled arm in arm towards the village. On the outskirts Nadya parted from John and he went on with the gambolling mongrel, up the untidy, grass-grown street, till he came to the square where stood the white, green cupolaed church, the schoolhouse and the Ispolkom. From the church came the sound of singing and the drone of prayer. John stood listening, Peter not far behind, but not interrupting him. Grishka, the mongrel, who had a curious mind, bent his attention also to the singing and the drone of prayer. And then, perhaps because the heat and flies were troublesome outside, perhaps because the church gave promise of a dark and cool interior, perhaps merely because he saw John's attention fixed upon the open door, and he wished to see what was interesting his master, Grishka trotted into the church and was lost to view.

John looked up, smiled and followed him inside. Fascinated, Peter drew up to the door and glanced within, blinking at the darkness after the brilliance of the sunlight. Gradually he was able to distinguish the rumps of innumerable peasants, men and women who were bending towards the altar screen. The choir sang a deep and sonorous note of triumph. The screen opened and the priest appeared, splendid in white and gold, holding aloft the body of his Lord. The screen closed again, the service proceeded, and the worshippers were on their feet, when Grishka yelped, for the heavy foot of a mouzhik had come down upon his paw.

There was a stir of superstitious horror in the church. For to a Russian peasant the dog is a beast of almost supernatural uncleanliness. Grishka retreated to the wall, yelping piteously, and the mouzhik who had trodden on his paw was lifting his boot to kick him unmercifully out when John dived forward and sent him staggering. He

picked up the whimpering dog and prepared to walk out. But the stir of horror gave place to a cry of rage and a crowd of angry menacing shadows closed round him and cut him off from Peter's view. He would have rushed in himself to help his friend but the voice of the priest rose deep and stern above the hubbub, and the white-garbed figure moved down to part the crowd. He heard the rich voice speak curtly and guessed rather than knew that John was safe.

He drew back into the street relieved, and in a moment John came out unharmed, Grishka in his arms, his face flushed and his eyes hot, but otherwise himself. He saw Peter and smiled.

"It's lighter out here," was all he said, and they walked back together in silence to the Quaker house.

Faith Pennifold heard of the incident that same afternoon, and Peter was surprised to find her almost in tears over her afternoon tea and biscuits.

"He'll ruin everything yet," she told him. "How can we get the confidence of these people if John behaves like this? Taking a dog into the church! It's sheer sacrilege. He was lucky to get out alive."

"It was rather the dog took him," Peter assured her, and told the story as he had seen it.

But she would not be consoled. "It doesn't matter. The peasants will never believe that. They will think that the Quakers are trying to throw contempt on their religion and so force them to change it. Look at that ridiculous story that got around during the famine, that we would not give food unless they would take a Bible with it and promise to come to our meetings!"

Peter felt that the situation was difficult. "Suppose I go round to see the priest and explain everything to him? He will put things right with the peasants."

"You can if you like. He is a good man, but if this sort of thing goes on we shall be driven away. It makes me terrified every day lest news should come of some terrible escapade or other." Faith had her mind on John's nocturnal absences, but she did not reveal this.

"Well, I will go," said Peter, and so disturbed was Faith she forgot that if he went he would have to take John with him to interpret. Later, when it was too late, she remembered this and swore to herself that John must go if any more trouble arose. And then when the oath was made she felt upset lest she was being unfair to him for some reason she could not fathom. Men had always irritated her, yet she could not despise John as she had done her husband, for example, or as she did Peter. She told herself it was because he was only a boy, and retiring into her room she wept a little, and then prayed to herself, a big unhappy woman, who might have been beautiful had she not been so heavy, so untidy, so strangely self-conscious through her large, prominent blue eyes.

THEY HANGED FRANK WHITTAM

[From an unfinished work, part of which was published under the title "A Wasted Life," in *New Writing* 1.]

GREAT in stature, black-haired, red-faced, black-moustached, strong as the current of the Pennine streams, rugged as the black rocks of the Pennine hills, Frank Whittam was not afraid of dying.

He had thought about dying all through the night. He had told young Ned Murgatroyde in the cell beside him that if he so much as snivelled as they marched to the gallows he'd wring his neck all over again for him when they met in Hell.

Frank had seen too much of death in the American war to be afraid of it. For seven years in America he'd lived with death very familiar, almost on his door-step, you might say. Young Ned had been a soldier too, in the same regiment, though he'd never seen service.

Yes, they'd had to fetch down secret agents from London to catch Frank Whittam and the Hebbenstall coiners. He laughed in the night when he remembered that, and told young Ned the whole story over again, for Ned had only been a boy when it happened.

But he hadn't served for nothing in the American war. He was leading the Hebbenstall weavers in the fight to keep their homes from the bloody manufacturers, and he'd used the same tricks in that war as the American farmers had used against him and his mates, even to the ambush on a dark night, and shooting down the secret agent with a sawn-off gun from behind a wall.

Money! There had been a time when you never needed money. He'd told young Ned about that. When he was a lad, before he'd 'listed in the thirty-third, there was no brass in the village and they wanted for nowt. Every

cottage had its own loom, and its garden at the back, and its shed for the cow. They'd sold their cloth for a fair price in the town when they needed owt, which wasn't often.

Then he'd come back from America, with yon hole in his leg and the pension from Chelsea Hospital. It was all changed. The Overtons had enclosed all t' common land. Half the weavers had lost their looms and worked on hire for the Websters. The merchants and manufacturers had put up a great cloth hall in the town and they were like t' lords o' creation. Only there wasn't any brass anywhere, and now you couldn't live without it.

Nobody had any. Even t' Websters couldn't get all they wanted for their big business. So the old soldier had set to and made it. Grand stuff. Rare work had gone into the Portuguese moidores and doubloons, even King George's guineas. Well, John Webster himself had come to him in Bradford at the Black Swan Inn. There wasn't a one o' them all, not one out of all t' lot o' bloody manufacturers that hadn't taken Hebbenstall money, Frank Whittam's good money.

Now they were going to hang him. Not for coining. Oh, they were too sly for that. For riot and mutiny and bursting the doors off the grain stores when all t' folk in the valleys were nigh starving.

"They never dared lay hands on me before, Ned," he told the shivering lad beside him in the cell. "When they come for us, you mun walk straight. Hold up thy head and spit in their faces.

"Aye, and when us 'as got to t' top o' t' Beacon Hill, don't be scared, lad, at what you'll see. Jim Wright and Ben Oakroyd's hanging there in chains, been hanging there these seven years. Good mates, both on 'em, and I'm glad to meet 'em again, and you'll be bloody glad, too, or I finish thee now, wi' my hands, before ever hangman gets thee.

"It was me that shot 'im, from behind t' wall, just as he was reaching t' gate of his house. But it was Jim and Ben they hanged for it, because they were all feared o' what I

knew about who'd been taking t' brass from Hebbenstall coiners.

"But thou'rt a brave lad, Ned. Thou'lt face 'em steady."

Frank Whittam had talked to Ned all through the night, about his famous mare, Black Jane, who used to carry him on his errands over the hills, about the women and lasses of their village, who were dear to them, about the hares they had gone coursing for, summer afternoons, with their dogs, about the famous winters there had been in their hill village, and how this man prayed, and that one drank, and another whored, and yet another was a good friend.

The jailer brought them breakfast, the vicar came and prayed with them. Outside drums rolled, and they stepped out of the cell smartly, as though going on parade, except that great Frank's leg made him limp because of the wound he'd got in the American war.

Frank was glad, out in the sun, to see how many people were gathered for the execution. He strained his thick neck, bare and free for the rope, lifted up his head, and on the hill top above he could see the two gallows posts waiting for them like patient wives.

There were people all up the hillside also. The Sheriff was reading, great words a man couldn't understand, and behind him was John Webster and the manufacturers, with the magistrates and some of the gentry, all in their best black broadcloth, with clean cravats and their hair powdered. It was a good day for them that saw the last of Frank Whittam.

Frank pulled himself up, felt glad because he towered above them all and because in their cold faces he could still read fear of him, fear of his black face, his great strength, his cunning. When they asked him to step in the cart he swore at the Sheriff.

"Us'll walk on us feet. It's a grand day for a walk over t' hills. Blast thy cart and blast thee."

The soldiers closed round the pair of them, and he watched how they held their firelocks, noted the belts of this man, the buttons of that, and the slow, friendly faces

of all of them, trying to give him the courage he didn't need.

The drum beat and they began the long march to the hill top. Ned was pale, his red head drooping a little, for he was young and the pity in the women's eyes was worse than a caress. But limping Frank towered above them, and his strength made it seem he was leading the march himself.

The weavers, farm labourers and their wives were watching stolidly, grimly, hate in their eyes at the magistrates and the rich men walking by. The vicar was reading, but the long, steep walk made him sweat and puff uncomfortably, so that the words no longer sounded solemn.

Sometimes a man groaned, or a woman cried out hysterically in farewell, and as they passed up the rough track all those watching, waiting people fell in behind and climbed up with them. They had come from all the villages in the hills.

When they reached the top Frank alone seemed untired, though the sweat poured down his red face. He could see his country before him now. The Holder running down its steep valley, the woods of oak and silver birch along the hill sides, the walls running over the green fields at Overden, where they had enclosed the commons, and far away, to the west, the bold shoulder of Hebbenstall, with the grey church tower on top, and line after line of heather-covered hills beyond.

The hangman was coming near, and Frank knew what he was thinking. "Here's a mountain of a man. Will the rope hold, or will I have to hang him twice?" And Frank knew they'd have to hang him twice.

Only a few yards away, just moving in the breeze, were the noisy skeletons of Jim and Ben who'd been hanged at York in the Castle Yard and brought here to rot in chains, still protesting gently. Ned was trembling and muttering prayers to himself.

Frank was hanged with his eyes on his native hill, church-crowned, and he was seventeen minutes dying, for the rope broke.

They wanted to leave him there, but the people wouldn't let them. The bodies were cut down, put in a cart and started back home to Hebbenstall. That was because his last words had brought a groan from the waiting crowd which scared even the soldiers in their red coats, so that the hands holding the firelocks were sweating and clumsy.

The vicar had spoken to him as he stood there beneath the gallows tree, the rope round his neck, waiting to swing off.

No one heard what the vicar said, but every soul of them heard Frank's last words, in his great hoarse voice that everyone last remembered roaring at the magistrates when he burst open the doors of the granary in the riot.

"Parson Sands," he said, "I fed them when they were hungry."

So John Webster and the parson and all the other folk had slunk off behind the red coats and left the bodies to their own folk.

They stopped the cart in every village in Holder valley on their way back to Hebbenstall that afternoon, while folk came out to look at the dead, and groan a little, and swear a little.

They put Frank on the table in his own cottage on the hillside, pushing the table to the window. And as the sun went down the women and children walked past, flattened their faces on the glass, were horrified and cried at the swollen, livid face, the great purple mark round the neck, while the men stood apart, very silent.

But somehow Frank never looked like a dead man, perhaps because his face was so distorted by the hanging that it seemed to be fighting still with something, even as he lay there cold on the table.

CONVERSATION WITH A LAMA

[From *New Writing* II.]

IT was early summer, the grass was still green on the steppe, but the sun was setting behind me in a savage nakedness that altered all colours, disturbed all sounds. The eastern sky caught the reflection and flaunted long banners of red and yellow, so that I felt, as the sharp outline of the monastery came nearer, that the Buddhist monks had rent their tattered robes out of the sunset sky.

The hollow air echoed from the horse's quick and nervous trot, the grass rustled, grew darker, seemed to be full of evening life, and then, as we approached the monastery gates, the dogs gave tongue, baying the arrogant sky, leaping fiercely but harmlessly at the visitor from the West.

I cursed and hit at them with my whip, but these lean outposts of religion were too wary to get within reach. They fell back, unappeased, but obedient to the cry of the lama who came out of the gate to greet me.

The Temple was closed, the fires were alight in the round beehive tents of felt where the lamas lived, and few were curious enough to come out and observe the stranger. With a greeting to the gatekeeper I dismounted at the tent of Parchen-lama.

He was waiting for me, tea already brewed in the little Russian teapot with its silly flower pattern. It was only the day before that we had met for the first time and been immediately attracted to one another, I by a wise and honest simplicity that found its expression in the shrewd brown eyes summing me up without illusion from under the wrinkled forehead, he, apparently, by the fact that here was a foreigner who was interested in Mongols rather than in Mongolia.

Of all the Mongols I had met surely there were few so

interesting as Parchen, the tulchi, or rhapsodist, singer of the epics of his people, Buddhist monk and teacher of astronomy to his fellow lamas. That was as much as I had learned the day previously, when he had invited me to spend the evening with him in his tent. I had come, eager to hear him, sure that he was going to tell me something of infinite value, that his life held the essence of his people. For the real typical man of any nation is not the ordinary man, but the genius. Your typical Englishman is not the inhabitant of the country-house but a mixture of Marlowe and Warren Hastings. My typical Mongol was before me and I was determined to discover what mixture had gone to his making.

The night followed swiftly on the sunset, but it was not dark; through the lattice work of the open tent roof the stars were bright against a light sky, almost a northern sky. The fire in the brick hearth in the tent's centre glowed redly enough for us to see without the help of artificial light. Outside the noises of the camp died away gradually, even the dogs grew silent, and we two alone were talking, awake, so absorbed we did not notice the silence around and the deep quiet of night. Within the tent all clear objects faded, the Buddhist shrine with its silk banners, the carved bed, the lacquered boxes, the silver trappings on the saddle, all save Parchen, the glow from the fire mingling with the red and yellow of his old robe, his shaven head and brown, wrinkled face outlined above them till he looked like one of those very old, sacred paintings which explorers have dug out of the ruins of ancient cities in the Gobi.

But when he spoke Parchen was not at all like a picture from the past. His eyes shone, his movements were quick, unusually quick for the square, solid body, and his speech was salty and refreshing as the Mongol tea we were drinking.

"How does a man become a singer, you ask? Not through straining his voice on the bare hill-tops, nor yet through making presents to many teachers."

"Is a singer born a singer then, Parchen-tulchi?"

"No, neither is a tulchi (rhapsodist) born. How can a man invent pictures of the world of heroes, how can he see the hundred snowy peaks of Altai and the ten blue lakes and the seventy swift rivers and the red and yellow camels and the herds of black and roan and piebald horses, if these things are not communicated to him by forces other than his own?"

"What forces are these?"

"When I was a boy of twelve I pastured my father's flocks on the steppe. One day I saw a giant ride up on a dragon, whether in dream or in fact I cannot tell you. The giant asked me if I wished to become a singer of epic tales. I told the giant that this indeed was my dearest wish but I feared it might never be. For my father was sending me to the monastery to put on the lama's robe and learn the sacred books. The giant pointed to a white goat, the largest and best of my father's goats. 'Give me that goat to sacrifice to the King of dragons,' he said, 'and you shall sing such heroes' songs as will make your name for ever dear where men gather at night around the fires, or meet at the great feasts of the princes.'

"Gladly I agreed, the giant struck me on the shoulder, mounted his dragon and was gone. When I came to myself there was no one, no giant, no dragon, but nearby a wolf was eating the white goat, the very one the giant had demanded for a sacrifice. From that day I knew that I had the gift of song, given me by the lord of dragons himself."

"And all then was easy—song, and fame, and learning?"

Parchen smiled. "Nothing was easy. For my father beat me sorely because the wolf had eaten his goat. He sent me to the monastery and there the monks beat me because I could not learn the sacred doctrine."

"Yet you became a singer?"

"I had the gift. They let me learn the songs and sing. When I knew them I felt the steppe call and left the sacred walls to wander among the tents of the princes and sing the deeds of my people.

"I had many songs, and the spirits spoke easily to me, so that I became famous among men. Many were the gifts I had, silks, garments, saddles, carpets, horses, and sheep, but I spent all and went back again to the monastery. In those days I was gay and careless, given to drunkenness and women, was prodigal of all things and loved the life of men. Even at one time I loved a Russian woman, and she me."

I would have asked him more of that, but he was an Eastern man and would not speak of his life with women. Rather he told me how he grew tired again of the monastery and roamed the steppe from one princely camp to another, always welcome for his songs and high spirits. He was keenly curious of all the life of his people, was there whenever there was a judgment of a horse-thief or a murderer, gave counsel to the princes, heard all the scandals of the steppe and broke away completely from the religious life.

"Yet I did not prosper. I was a spendthrift. I lived to drink and through too close acquaintance with the affairs of men I grew dispirited, my song flagged and my hearth grew cold. So I returned once more to the monastery, began to study and to understand the structure of the Universe and the fate of man. I learned how once all space was filled with a fine matter, till the blowing of the winds set this matter in motion so that it thickened and first the earth appeared, then water, then fire, and lastly the air on which all things rest.

"I learned of the secret mountain Simbur—yes, which is the centre of the Universe, on whose snowy peak, above the lonely clouds, dwells Buddha. But it is not so that you believe? Your science is different?"

I am no scientist, but as best I could I explained to him how our science says that the Universe is like a starry melon flying and spinning through space, that matter is made of charges of positive and negative electricity (did he know what is electricity, I wondered, but his grave intent face showed no sign as I explained) and that this matter into which all things can be analysed generates

energy in one place, which becomes apparent in another through the power of radiation.

"How are these things established by your science?" asked Parchen. The stars of the Universe were plain above us in the summer night, a spangled roof to our tent, a challenge to the two enquirers, one from the East, the other from the West, who sat by the glowing fire.

"Our men of science have instruments by which they examine the nature of matter and analyse its parts. With a telescope they can see to the uttermost stars, with a spectroscope they measure the rate at which stars approach or recede from the earth, and are able to understand the composition of light."

He asked me to explain these instruments, and this I did as well as I was able. He thought for a few moments, sipping his tea, and then said slowly, but coldly, as though he were simply stating two facts:

"Yours is a subtle science, if you can really tell of what each star is made. You formed your science on experiment in what you see and know. For us all is sacred revelation in the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. But I know that there is much truth in your science, that your world has accomplished miraculous things and that your machines and instruments are indeed more marvellous than the dragons and magic spirits."

He paused again, then suddenly looked at me with his shrewd smile. "Indeed, I know your world well. You are not the first Englishman I have met, and I have seen many Western countries."

"You have travelled in the West?" I could not believe him, but thought he had begun to boast and lie as some lamas will do in order to impress a foreigner with their superiority. Parchen saw my disbelief, and with a smile like a happy child, said, in recognizable English:

"Good evening, sir, how are you?"

He had won. In a short time he explained how he had come to make his journey.

"That telescope you spoke of, that was the first cause. I

was restless, tired of the monastery, anxious to be out in the steppe again, but afraid of the life which had given me nothing. Then came a Russian merchant with a telescope, and through it I saw the stars. A great desire came over me to possess such a thing, to travel, to see the world where men lived in such close communion with the blue heaven.

"The Lord Buddha must have heard and approved, for a relative died who had engaged in trade with the Russians and, miraculously, not lost by it. That was the first miracle. The second miracle was that he left me his money, a strange stroke of humour, since all knew me for a spendthrift. I took the money and left the monastery for Russia.

"I travelled in a train, terrified but glad in my heart, and came to Petersburg. There I lived with countrymen, Buryat Mongols, till the desire to see more possessed me and I went to Germany, where misfortune overtook me. When I got off the train at Berlin I had lost the paper on which was written the address of the Mongol in whose lodging I should live."

"What dress were you wearing?" I asked curiously.

"These same garments, my robe of red and yellow, my pointed hat."

"And so, what happened?"

"After I had sat for a long time on the station a man took me to a great house. Here a little man with gold spectacles and a bald head met me and took me to his room. He smiled very much, asked me to be seated, looked long at me, and then at a book he held, spoke into a machine, till finally a tall German with a beard arrived and addressed me in my own language. He was a teacher in one of their schools and I lived with him in Berlin. He told me that the little man in spectacles had discovered my nationality by looking through a book of pictures of the peoples of Asia."

"And then where did you go?"

"To Italy, but I did not like that country. From there to Constantinople by steamer. From Turkey I went to

India and visited for many months the holy places of Buddhism. I wished to return by Tibet, but the English were afraid and refused me permission, so I came to China and was very glad of it."

"Why so?"

He gave me another of those shrewd smiles from the bright eyes. "This tea revolts the stomach," he answered, "let us drink a cup of airik."

I laughed. "Even in the monastery you have spirits?"

"Well, you must by now have understood I am no ordinary lama." And from a recess of the tent he fetched a skin of airik, the spirit thrice-distilled from the milk of mares, and poured two cups. "Drinking so, one talks more easily. In the old days, I drank too much. Sometimes I would be drunk for three days before I sang an epic."

"You might drink for three days now and sing ten thousand verses on the subject of your journeyings. But tell me, why were you fortunate in China? Was it the wine, or the love of Chinese women?"

"None of these things. I was fortunate in China because I met good men."

"What manner of men?"

"It was the year 1912 and there was revolution in China. I met men of the society called Go-Min (Kuo Min Tang) and these took me into their company. It is the belief of the Go-Min that men should run their own affairs without princes. They have moreover another doctrine, of great daring, though it is not without justification in the teaching of Shakyamuni. They believe there should be neither rich men nor poor, but that all should be equal."

"And you also accepted these beliefs, Parchen?"

"I examined them carefully. I had seen many things in my life, the oppression of the great, the forced cunning of the poor, the wretchedness of all life. I had travelled on the great sea which tosses ships like corks and I had thought deeply. It seemed to me that the poor man stole a horse because the great Khan had too many. I saw also that in my own country even a prince, if he be not cold of heart

and sharp of wit, may become a poor man in debt to the Chinese or the Russian merchant. I examined these beliefs, I talked of them with my countrymen in China who were part of the Society Go-Min, and we agreed they were good beliefs."

"Such beliefs are common to-day, Parchen-tulchi. In Russia the State is also being organized on the foundation of such beliefs and many heroes are fighting for these ideas. It is thought, too, that they will be victorious. In Europe also these beliefs are held. I am myself of the Go-Min of my own country."

He drank another cup of spirit and looked sideways at me, as though he wanted to know if I were speaking the truth.

"It is good news you tell me, I have heard such things, but dimly."

"How then did you return to your own country?"

"It was said that the Mongol people were preparing to proclaim their nation's greatness once more, so I came back to my home, to the monastery near Kobdo where I then lived."

"And you were welcomed?"

"Aye, indeed, with rods. I had broken scandalously all the laws and oaths that a man could break. They judged me to receive eighty blows and I took them all. At the time I was drunk, so I felt but little."

"And then?"

"Then the news came that the Djai Lama was calling the Mongol people to destroy the Chinese oppressors who still held the town and fortress of Kobdo. I took my tobshur (guitar), the best horse on the pastures of our monastery, a rifle bought from the Russians and rode to join the Mongol armies. Four months we besieged the fortress of Kobdo, and Djai Lama led our armies with the fierceness of a dragon and the valour of a god."

"Why did you take your tobshur, Parchen-tulchi?"

"Can we fight if our voices are silent? Must not the old songs of valour rouse our people? Hear how once it

happened during the siege of the fortress. It was summer, we had little to eat, the heat was great, and the enemy defended his walls stubbornly. Our soldiers were without spirit in the camp and Djai Lama sat alone in his tent eating out his great heart. . . .

"One day some Derbet Mongol, the son of an evil genie and a broken-winded camel, began to sing in the camp the tale of Bum-Erdeni. He sang like the crows sing over the bodies of the slain. He sang without colour, without expression and hesitatingly. I took away his tobshur, struck the strings myself and the spirits filled me with ecstasy as I sang."

He picked up the little guitar, struck the strings, and in the quiet night his voice shrilled out, thin and exciting, from the throat, in the Eastern manner:

"Like the wind Hadjir-Hala rode to the borders of his great homeland and saw that the pastures of the cattle were grown over, that the dung had dried, that his country was the prey of the birds and gazelles. He rode to the summit of Han-Zambal and saw that all his subjects, all his people, every living being, were winding away to the west in ninety-nine great streams. 'What black dog is this?' he exclaimed, 'who is this that has devoured his father's flesh, who feels no friendship for his lord, no love for his wife, who is this who has taken away my country!' "

The rhapsodist was silent. Outside, the dogs, roused by his voice, bayed the night for a while and then slept again. Parchen had put aside the guitar, was drinking the hot spirit of his country, thinking of the fight beneath the walls of Kobdo.

"Ah, they knew then that it was I, Parchen-tulchi, the singer of his people. The warriors were glad. The hero Djai Lama came from his tent, tall, fierce and terrible, and courage filled us all. The next day we stormed the town and the day after, the fortress. From that day our country was free."

"It is not free now, Parchen-tulchi."

"No, the Chinese have returned. The Japanese too are

intriguing to enslave us, while they tell me that a Russian devil, a prince of their race, has seized Bogdo Chure (Urga) with a force of Cossacks. But they will not remain. Djai Lama has returned and will drive them all out."

I wondered if he believed it. It was said mechanically, again with that sideways glance at me. Parchen somehow did not seem to me to be the type to believe in that crazy, fanatical monk, even though he had served under him at the famous siege of Kobdo.

"Tell me, Parchen, do you know the Djai Lama well? What is the truth of his strange life, and what manner of man is he?"

"As to what manner of man he is, some say one thing, some another," he answered diplomatically, and added, with a twinkle, "At least this Mongol is very unlike an Englishman."

"Is it true he is a Kalmyk, from Russian Astrakhan?"

"Yes, it is true. He is a Kalmyk Mongol, but his parents sent him as a boy to study at the Monastery of Lake Orlon and later, when his qualities were perceived, to Tibet. It is thirty years and one year since he first appeared in the lands of the Khalkha Mongols and stirred up the princes against the Chinese rulers. When his arrest was ordered from Peking, he fled towards Russia with two white camels, but was taken on the road. His cunning was great and he escaped by a trick. After this he disappeared from the ken of man for a space of ten years, and then appeared again to guide the Russian traveller Kozlov to Tibet. Then for ten years again he disappeared. When he returned to his people once more, he had been, he said, in India, China, Tibet, and Russia. I met him first in 1912 when he had proclaimed himself to the Mongols as descendant and reincarnation of Amursan, our last great ruler."

"And when you met him, how did he appear?"

"A man tall and strong, shaven clean, fierce of look and merciless to his toes. He knew the Canon of Buddhism as only a very holy man can know it. When he was angered or would seek the truth, he retired alone for many days

into a tent pitched apart and when he appeared again all knew that he possessed the truth and must be obeyed. I have seen him pluck the heart from the breast of his living enemy. I have seen him flog to death princes and holy lamas who crossed his will. Which was to make our people great again. Yes, men feared his look, for he knew many hidden things."

"But was he not arrested in the end by a simple captain of Cossacks and taken to the prisons of the Tsars?"

"True, but only by his own will, for so it was written that he should suffer, to learn the intentions of his enemies. For three years ago the revolution freed him in Astrakhan and now he rules again in Kobdo. Men fear him. He knows no mercy and controls the spirits of wind and mountain, the forces of evil and the dragons of hell. Let us drink again, brother, for some things are better forgotten."

And we drank again that sour spirit, that was already mounting to my head, so that the stars reeled a little in the open gap of the tent roof and the smell of the glowing fire of dung mingled with the sour smell of the spirit to disturb my mind. But I had an idea, and through the fumes in my head I clung to it.

"Parchen, many Mongols say the Djai Lama has magical powers and that no man can stand against him. But you, who have travelled over the blue sea and seen many lands, you who know other sciences beside the sacred Canon, do you believe it?"

I saw his still image across the dim tent bent for a moment, as though he took thought, but he was only looking for the skin to pour himself more airik. He drank deep. A man who could drink so and show no signs of it need not fear magic. When he turned towards me again there was the same questioning twinkle in the little brown eyes and the lines on his face were deeper.

"There are two forces that fight for mastery in the world, brother, a force for good and a force for evil. If the Djai Lama is the force for good, then there are many forces

for evil, the Chinese who rob our people, the Russian lord who plunders and makes merry in Urga, the spies of Japan, many, many forces of evil. But if the Djai Lama is the force of evil, then where is the force of good? Can you answer me that question, brother?"

No, I could not answer. What was this cunning old man getting at, what did he want me to say?

Now he was swaying a little, as he sat there crouched on his heels, his fingers were plucking at the strings of his tobshur, the cunning had passed from his face and the drunken old rhapsodist was humming quietly as though creating new verses of a new song.

"You must know of what is happening in the country," he said at last, putting down the guitar, as though all his secret song had been nothing but a meditation on politics.

I told him that the days of the mad bandit Ungern-Sternberg in Urga were numbered, for the Mongol forces, with Red Army detachments from Russia, were closing round him.

"And Djai Lama has not moved against Ungern-Sternberg?" he asked, and then without waiting for a reply, went on: "A new song is being sung, that a hero has arisen on the steppe whose name is Suhebator. Men are riding to him. These men are simple shepherds and the time of all simple men has come. To help him is to remember the wise teaching of Chingis Khan and keep the Mongol people strong. Suhebator has made a Mongol army. Suhebator has made a People's Party (Go-Min). Suhebator will kill the white dog Baron Ungern. Is there a force for good, brother? It is the force of Suhebator, and the wise eyes of Parchen-tulchi, who for thirty years has sung the heroic songs of his people are open now. Djai Lama is not the force for good. That is the answer to my question."

"Will you sing another song, then, Parchen?"

"I will sing such a song that the young men, the slaves and the simple shepherds, will take the horses of their princes and of the monasteries and ride to join Suhebator.

In the corner of my tent is the rifle I carried at the siege of Kobdo, in my hands is the tobshur I held when I sang the story of the hero Bum-Erdeni in the Mongol camp and the young men took courage from it to storm the walls of Kobdo. The cattle shall tread again the thick fresh pastures, the herds of coloured horses shall roam the hills, the white tents shall be pitched by the waters of the lake and the people shall make a great feast. No enemy shall lord it against us, no harmful thing shall stand in our way, and in this time which is coming, there will be no winter, but always summer, there will be no death, but only eternity, there will be no more springs, but always autumn, there will be no more old grass, but always fresh grazing, our thoughts will be quiet and our platters full!"

I did not know if he was saying this to me in simple speech, or singing it in soft rhymes, for I had drunk too much of the spirit. But I heard the strange note of the guitar, and the thin voice that came from the throat, and the lama who was teacher of astronomy was again the drunken rhapsodist on the steppe, the child who had taken his calling from the lord of the kingdom of dragons himself.

Outside the tent the dogs slept and the shadow of the Tibetan temple fell across the monastery court. Parchen was helping me to mount and my eyes caught the flash of my steel stirrup for a moment before I swung into the saddle. The young moon had risen.

IV

THE POLITICAL THEORIST

RALPH FOX'S POLITICAL WRITINGS

By T. A. JACKSON

RALPH FOX's political writings formed naturally the greater bulk of his work. At the same time, since their purpose was more immediately utilitarian, they tend to show his powers less fully than do the works in which he was able to take a wider sweep and give a freer rein to his imaginative-creative bent.

This does not mean that Ralph Fox was ever either an example of pedestrian orthodoxy or an advocate of such. At his most orthodox—in the Communist sense of course—he was never pedestrian. Rather did he, in those moods and on those occasions, tend from sheer exuberance of vitality to out-orthodox the orthodox and cap all with an individuality and force of expression which, at times, all but landed him unwittingly in the heretic camp. All but—never quite; for though Ralph Fox in his earlier work showed to a harsh criticism the perky irreverence of the newly graduated, along with not a little of sheer Yorkshire impudence, he showed also even thus early his more solid and enduring qualities—a large fund of Yorkshire homeliness and good humour, more than an ordinary share of traditional Halifax canniness, a fine understanding developed by excellent training, and above all that special imaginative understanding that was never wholly missing from even the most occasional and utilitarian of his works.

His reply to Professor Laski, for instance, which though published under the same title must not be confounded with his later work, *Communism and a Changing Civilization*, included in the Twentieth Century Library, was quite a bright and useful performance. At the same time there is no reason to regret the fact that it is out of print and forgotten, since all that was good in it and more is included

in a riper and more comprehensive form in the later and more mature work.

His two slim volumes on *The Class Struggle in Britain*, his *Colonial Policy of British Imperialism*, his pamphlet *Marx and Engels on the Irish Question*, and his *Lenin: A Biography*, were all in varying ways the product of his term of service in the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. It was there that he made the elaborate set of notes which formed their basis. And it was there, too, and in that service that he acquired his profound sense of the significance of Marx and Engels to the working-class movement in Britain.

At that time the materials accessible to the ordinary English reader for a study of the life and significance of Marx and Engels were scanty to the point of non-existence. Worse still: a legend had been promulgated of Marx buried inextricably under piles of the more repellent volumes in the British Museum Library; and of Engels parked in his arm-chair by the fire in his Regent's Park home, or in his Eastbourne lodgings, spending his days in drinking old Burgundy and cursing the British Labour and Trade Union leaders for a pack of *verdammte Schweinhunde*!

The dissipation of these malicious legends and their replacement by a full, varied, and stimulating knowledge of the actual Marx and the real Engels—mighty men among the mightiest fighters that ever upheld the banner of a glorious cause—was not wholly, or even mainly the work of Ralph Fox. But he did play a prominent and a worthy part in that work. And most particularly to him must be awarded the credit of having been among the very first to rediscover the truth that it was to the personal exertions of Engels more than to any other single man that we owe the revival of Socialism in Britain in the 1880's.

There are indications of this in both Ralph Fox's *Class Struggle in Britain*, and in the pamphlet on the *Irish Question*. The former work unfortunately remains incomplete. It was intended originally to cover developments down to 1932, and in that design the concluding instalment—covering from 1923 onwards—would have been both the largest

and the most important section. But Ralph Fox had the defects of his qualities. That very exuberant vitality which makes his work vivid, carried him into so many differing fields of activity in rapid succession or simultaneously that his plans often suffered a crash in consequence. It was, it would seem, the chance of writing a life of *Lenin*—prompted by a publisher's inquiry—that caused him to postpone, temporarily (as he thought), the completion of his *Class Struggle in Britain*. Similar distractions, all, in part, growing out of the need to earn a living, caused the postponement to become prolonged—and now permanent.

Another of those defects of his qualities marred somewhat his work on *The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism*. Like many another, Ralph Fox could not always read his own notes, and set down dates and proper names as best as he could decipher them, intending to verify them later. In the swift rush of his multitudinous commitments he did not, unfortunately, always remember to do this. And, consequently, the *Colonial Policy* laid itself open to criticism on the score of inaccuracy in detail. Moreover the whole picture suffers from a lack of dialectic discrimination. It is too one-dimensional. But, this notwithstanding, it was, and is, a creditable and a useful work.

All these however must take rank as his minor works, as the apprentice-work of a writer of exceptional gifts who must needs sow his literary and political wild-oats before coming to the full development of his powers. He began to show his full powers in his *Lenin*, and in his *Communism*. In his *Genghis Khan* he reached the threshold of his full strength.

From the first Ralph Fox showed an ability to break away from the two besetting sins of British Marxist writers —the substitution of a Party jargon for living English; and its concomitant: the substitution of fossilized and frozen concepts for real thinking. Even before he had met with Engels' grim protest—"to many of our comrades the Materialist Conception of History is an excuse for not studying history"—Ralph Fox had shown an eagerness to adven-

ture into and explore phrases and aspects of Marxism, and concrete applications of the Marxian method, that the old, bad, pre-war British Marxian tradition, hidebound in its pre-occupation with economics (conceived in their most abstract, formal, and therefore falsified sense), would have condemned as heretical and freakish. Even in his most ultra-orthodox moods, when he was most exuberantly insisting upon the Party line in its ultra-purity—and therein, let it be confessed, falsifying the line to the extent of making it too Euclidian—even in those moods of exuberance Ralph Fox never degenerated into clichés or jargon of any kind. In his more enduring moods he showed a spontaneous many-sidedness which made him an invaluable ally in the fight to claim "all knowledge" as the proper province of Marxism.

In his *Lenin* micro-criticism has detected many faults. Sometimes he attributes to Lenin a saying which Lenin merely repeated from another. At times he errs in detail. His statement of Lenin's theoretical position lacks the diamond-like clarity and sharpness of definition of such a little masterpiece as R. P. Dutt's short life of *Lenin*. Even so, I know of no other work, not even the engaging recollections of Clara Zetkin, or the still more engaging memories of Krupskaya, that makes the glow and warmth of Lenin so real and apparent.

His *Communism* is remarkable in a similar way. While its statement of Communist theory is quite competent, and fully sufficient for its purpose, there are other works which tell us more of what Communists *think*. Yet there is no work, easily accessible, which tells us more of what Communists *feel*—even though it does this more by implication, by the colour and rhythm of its presentation, than by direct statement.

His *Genghis Khan* has never yet been adequately appraised. In one sense it was too well written. It moves with such a sparkling ease and facility that the profundity of its historical grasp, and the truly revolutionary significance of its material content is lost in the fascination of its flow.

Only those who know how very little has hitherto been done towards bringing this immense tract of history within the scope of a Marxist comprehension—or, indeed, of any sort of comprehension at all—can have any idea of the dimensions of the task that Ralph Fox succeeded in performing. He had exceptional qualifications for the task. His interest in Asia was of old standing; and he was early among the very few who realize that what commonly passes for universal history, and that most of all in England, is at best the history of one-third of the human race. It is not too much to say that his study of the rise of the Central Asiatic civilization—a civilization that is linked spacially with that of China and that of nearer Asia, while historically its roots run back to Babylon and Nineveh and forward to Delhi and the empire of the Moguls—is a permanent contribution to the understanding not only of world history, but even of the history of Europe itself. The transition from nomad clans, each with their petty "king" or khan, to a vast feudal empire, was never more clearly shown. And it is infinitely suggestive in its analogies with the obscurer tracts of European history.

Possibly my reactions to his *Genghis Khan* are coloured by personal associations. It was a subject we more than once discussed while we worked together on the *Sunday Worker*, and I believe I can claim some small share in stimulating him to contemplate and ultimately to produce the work. We worked well as friendly goads to each other. In fact, as I now remember, our last conversation took the form of a fraternal bragging match in which we sought each to outbid the other in promises to contribute to the "The Past is Ours" series of literary studies in the *Daily Worker*. Ralph Fox, I remember, insisted upon his claim to "do" Fielding and Thackeray. He surrendered Smollett and Dickens to me. We were still fighting with burlesque animosity over our respective claims to "do" Jane Austen when one of us, I forget which, had to leave. He did carry out his promise as to Fielding. My promises remain unfulfilled. Instead I am contributing to a memorial which

carries with it the melancholy reminder that they will have to be fulfilled without the stimulus of his rivalry, and the aid of the friendly criticism he was always ready to give.

In such circumstances it is hard, indeed, to appraise his work objectively. To find fault seems worse than churlish. To praise runs the even more intolerable risk of seeming to surrender insincerely to conventional sentimentality. Yet as Ralph Fox was never ashamed of his own emotions—those who were with him at the last speak of him as shouting from sheer joy in battle—there can be no better course than to follow his example and say flatly that the extracts here given prove that, grieve though we must over what we lost in losing all that Ralph Fox might yet have become, our grief must be tempered by the realization that we are very greatly the richer in possessing what he actually achieved.

MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN ON THE BRITISH WORKERS' MOVEMENT

[From *Communist Review*, March 1931]

WE speak loosely of the Chartist "movement," but few of us look on Chartism as a movement; that is, as a developing class struggle having definite origins, having relations to the changing class conditions of the England of that day, having definite aims. Yet this was precisely how Marx and Engels regarded Chartism.

They themselves were "Chartists." Their own political tactics they based largely on the experience of the Chartists. They studied every development of Chartism, had opinions on every Chartist leader. Yet no one has ever troubled to find out what were the ideas of the founders of revolutionary Communism upon revolutionary Chartism and its leaders. Indeed, in our press, in our literature we find ideas which are absolutely the opposite of those of Marx and Engels on Chartism.

Engels, who from the end of 1842 was closely connected with the Chartists, saw the movement in its beginning as a revolutionary democratic movement, the natural development of the Radical movement of 1793 to 1799, which developed on a mass scale at the close of the war with France in 1815.

The English working class was the best organized, the most advanced in Europe. If the six demands of its Charter were those of the democratic revolution and not of the social revolution, the workers were not long in making it clear that they were fighting for the democratic revolution, not in order to pull chestnuts out of the fire for a cowardly bourgeoisie, but in order to establish themselves, the workers, as the ruling class in order to start the social revolution. The day had passed when the democratic

revolution could be realized in England without leading directly to the emancipation of the proletariat.

"The whole struggle of the workers against the factory owners," writes Marx in 1848, "which has already lasted eighty years, a struggle which began with machine-breaking and then went through the stages of combinations, separate attacks on the persons and property of factory-owners and the few workers devoted to the factory-owners, through more or less big revolts, through the insurrections of 1839 and 1842, has developed into the most conscious class struggle which the world has ever seen—the whole of this class struggle of the Chartists, the organized party of the proletariat, against the organized State power of the bourgeoisie . . . . is a social civil war."

A little earlier Marx had written that in the Chartists the workers had formed a political party whose fighting slogan could in no case merely be "monarchy or republic?" but "the rule of the working class or the rule of the bourgeoisie?"

At this time all the political efforts of the bourgeoisie were concentrated on winning free trade through the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Chartists, the real banner-bearers of the democratic revolution, were never for a moment deceived by the efforts of their class enemies to draw them into this "fight for freedom." They fought equally hard on two fronts against both the free trade exploiters and the protectionist exploiters. The Chartists forced the Corn Law Leaguers to hold their meetings by ticket in guarded halls, drove them off the streets and out of their press. They ironically compared their liberal words with their reactionary practice. "Everyone knows," Marx said, "that in England the struggle between Liberals and Democrats takes the name of the struggle between Free Traders and Chartists."

What were the personal relations of Marx and Engels to the leaders of Chartism? Max Beer and Rothstein would have us believe they were quite uncritical, or that where

they criticized they were wrong. Groves follows them in making idols of Harney and Jones, while J. P. Lilburne accepts the Beer-Rothstein estimate of O'Brien.

O'Connor they rightly considered a brilliant agitator and journalist, but his political rôle was reactionary. "A true representative of old England. By his nature he is conservative and fosters a fully determined hatred both to industrial progress and to revolution. All his ideas are thoroughly permeated with a patriarchal petty-bourgeois spirit." O'Connor in many ways resembled Cobbett. He represented the revolt of the dying hand-weaver, or pre-industrial-revolution England against the triumph of the new industrial bourgeoisie.

O'Brien, the other petty-bourgeois Chartist leader, Marx and Engels always considered the least talented of the Chartists. Engels told Belfort Bax that O'Brien's *Rise, Progress and Phases of Human Slavery* was the least valuable production of the whole movement. As a politician O'Brien was beneath contempt, moved by personal spites and intrigues and even in his best period, that of the first Convention, having no fixed policy. He was a Roman Catholic, a currency crank and land reformer. His followers in the First International, who believed in land nationalization, were sometimes used by Marx as a counter to the trade union element. Some O'Brienites survived into the S.D.F., and Hyndman praised them extravagantly. His ideas on the class struggle were only those of the Chartist movement in general and had no particular influence on Marx and Engels.

Harney, who was a real revolutionary and a close collaborator of Marx and Engels, was also judged by them very critically. Once even they called him, not without reason, "a lousy little fellow." Harney was something of a phraseur. He never took the leading part in the Chartist movement his abilities entitled him to, and he lacked political sense. After 1848 he became a worshipper of Louis Blanc, and in a few years had become a petty-bourgeois radical. He sent a subscription to the First International, but never worked for it.

Ernest Jones was a man of more serious calibre. In 1848 and later Marx and Engels saw in him the leader of the English workers. When ten years later he gave up the struggle Marx wrote to Weidermeyer, "Imagine an army whose general on the day of battle deserts to the enemy." He never wrote with such bitterness of Harney, for Harney's desertion was of less importance. Even after Jones in 1859 became a Radical Engels continued his friend. He refused to join the International but asked for its support in his election at Manchester. "One more of the old guard," Marx wrote sadly on his death. "Certainly his bourgeois phrases were only hypocrisy," Engels wrote in answer. "Here in Manchester there is no one to replace him among the workers. . . . He was the only EDUCATED Englishman among the politicians who stood fully on our side."

Jones, they knew, "was no Harney." He was the greatest leader the English workers produced in the nineteenth century, and it is not without significance that he was also the most revolutionary, the most Marxist. He was broken by circumstance and by his own ambition, but to the end remained an honest man, respected even by those he had betrayed. Marx would not speak at the memorial meeting arranged by the Reform League in 1869 in Trafalgar Square, but he nevertheless bitterly regretted the loss of Jones.

There are many lessons to be learned to-day from a Marxist estimate of the Chartist movement of the past, its class relationships, its mistakes, its triumphs. There is nothing to be gained by concealing the Marxist viewpoint, either on the movement as a whole or its different leaders.

In 1881 the London Trades Council began to publish a weekly paper, the *Labour Standard*, edited by George Shipton. For many weeks the leading articles were written by Frederick Engels, and they are the first open summons to the organization of a new independent class political party of the workers since the days of Chartism. Even before Hyndman, before the Democratic Federation,

Engels was using the workers' press to try to organize a mass political party.

The old trade unionism, with its slogan "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," was useless, wrote Engels. Economic struggle "is a vicious circle from which there is no issue. The working class remains where it was and what our Chartist forefathers were not afraid to call it, a class of wage slaves." The position of the unions must change. "They will no longer enjoy the privilege of being the only organizations of the working class. At the side of, or above, the unions of special trades there must spring up a general union, a political organization of the working class as a whole." "In a political struggle of class against class, organization is the most important weapon."

The articles were premature. Engels broke with Shipton, but he had foreseen the future development of the English proletariat and given it the necessary guidance for when the hour should strike. England's industrial monopoly was then on the wane. Engels hoped it would break the last link binding the English working class to the English middle class, "the common working of a national monopoly." The monopoly went, but another, unforeseen, had taken its place—the common working of the colonial monopoly. Only to-day, when the second monopoly is becoming a brake on the development of the workers, is forcing large sections of them into poverty and unemployment, has the final stage of their organization as a class, the mass Communist Party, been reached.

But out of the crisis in English capitalism in the 'eighties and 'nineties arose the second great English workers' movement. The break-up of the Tory and Liberal parties, the pressure of the Irish revolutionary movement, the class struggle at home, all pointed to the present coming on the scene of English politics of a third political force, that of the proletariat.

In 1881 Henry Mayers Hyndman joined in a general move to form "a proletarian radical party," and succeeded in capturing the movement and turning it into the "Demo-

cratic Federation," with a Radical programme and Socialist leanings. Hyndman fancied himself the British Lassalle. As Lassalle flirted with Bismarck he flirted with Beaconsfield and Lord Randolph Churchill, the leaders of Tory democracy. Churchill promised to adopt his programme, the radical Joseph Chamberlain refused. Marx, whom Hyndman knew at this time, considered him "an empty-headed fellow" with a "doubtful political mission."

Ambition was Hyndman's chief characteristic. He turned his society into the Social-Democratic Federation and began to plan an "independent" rôle in politics, putting forward candidates with Tory money. When this happened in 1884, on Engels's advice the honest Socialist elements left the S.D.F. and formed the Socialist League (Eleanor Marx, Aveling, William Morris, Bax, etc.). Hyndman began to organize "stunts" with the unemployed, which had a certain temporary success but which Engels roundly condemned as substitutes for serious mass work. Engels proved right, for the S.D.F., after the unemployed agitation died down, were left without influence or contact with the workers.

The Socialist League proved no more successful than the S.D.F., and Engels refused to identify himself with it. Sectarianism and fractionalism he hated. He was always urging the serious elements in all the sects, the Avelings, Burns, Tom Mann, to get down to the organization of the masses and the daily struggle.

Hyndman and the S.D.F. never ceased to attack Engels bitterly. Their own tactics remained half those of Tory Chartism, half those of the French Possibilists, the reactionary reformist wing of French Socialism of that day. At the same time they used lavishly Marxian and revolutionary phrases. Meanwhile the movement became more and more sectarian. Champion left the S.D.F. and set up a real Tory-Socialist group around the *Labour Elector*, which had mass contacts and aimed at forming a Labour Party under Tory dominance to draw the workers away from Liberalism.

The Fabians were formed by the intellectuals in the movement, Shaw, Webb, Bland, etc. They started a paper, the *People's Press*, and attempted to slip into the workers' organizations, but failed. "The Fabians are a band of careerists," wrote Engels. "Fear of the revolution is their fundamental principle." Either they must remain "officers without soldiers," wrote Engels in 1893, or else permit themselves to be absorbed in the growing mass movement by pressure of their working-class members. The first, as Engels desired and foresaw, happened and the workers left the Fabians.

All these sects sickened Engels. He urged his own friends, Eleanor Marx, the most brilliant and devoted personage in the movement, and her husband, Edward Aveling, to go direct to the masses. They went to the Radical clubs of London, particularly of the East End, and by their agitation there laid the foundation for the first mass independent movement of the workers. They took part in the strikes and struggles of the workers which signalized the rise of the new unionism. Aveling wrote the Gasworkers' Constitution, in which Socialism was for the first time mentioned as the ultimate aim of trade unionism. Eleanor was on the union executive and an active organizer and strike leader. Both together joined in the great dockers' fight of 1889, when the S.D.F. officially stood aloof because the dockers would not "fight under the Red Flag."

Engels encouraged the formation by Aveling of the Eight Hours League, to organize the strong desire among all sections of the workers to win the eight-hour day. Tom Mann took a leading part in the work of the League, which soon had immense influence, especially in London. It mobilized over 100,000 workers to its May Day demonstrations and was, with its affiliated Socialist parties and trade unions, the forerunner of the Labour Party. It was Engels's hope that it would become a Labour Party with a revolutionary Marxist leadership, but Aveling's personal weaknesses, though counterbalanced by the devotion and ability of Eleanor Marx, prevented the fulfilment of this

tremendous task. Had Eleanor lived to rally and educate a leadership British Labour would have had a more glorious story.

In 1893 the mass movement for a workers' party had advanced to such an extent that the various currents met at Bradford and united in the Independent Labour Party. The Fabians and S.D.F. remained aloof. Aveling joined and Engels hoped the Marxians might succeed in curbing ambitious opportunists like Keir Hardie by using the masses against them. He was critical of the new party, but hoped that the healthy proletarian elements in its ranks might prove strong enough under proper leadership to keep it on the right lines; that is, as a really independent class political party of the workers. Engels hoped these honest elements would either "teach the leaders decency or throw them overboard." But the leaders proved too strong.

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Marx and Engels did not live to see the epoch of imperialism, but Lenin, who applied Marxism to the study of the problems of imperialism, the last stage of capitalism, very carefully studied all they had written about the English workers. The indications given by Marx and Engels as to the development of the English proletarian under monopoly conditions, the buying over of the upper section of the "Labour aristocracy," the creation of "a bourgeois Labour Party" (the old trade union movement of Burt, MacDonald, Shipton, etc.), gave Lenin valuable ideas as to the development of the working class as a whole in conditions of monopoly capitalism, of imperialism.

More than this, between 1908 and 1914, when the war finally split the Labour movement in Europe, Lenin closely followed the development of the English workers, noting every sign of a revolt against opportunism. Engels's struggle with Hyndman he approved to the last word, noting after Engels's death how the S.D.F. continued by its policy to justify Engels's position.

The crime of the S.D.F., and of the S.D.P. and B.S.P.

which followed it, was that they made of Marxism a dogma instead of a guide to action, to practical activity; that they did not know how "to penetrate into the unconscious but powerful class instinct of the trade unions." The creation of the Labour Party, with which the S.D.F. refused to affiliate, was a great step forward in the mass organization of the British workers. At the same time Lenin points out it would have been a mistake to consider the Labour Party as independent of the bourgeois parties, as carrying on the class struggle, as Socialist, etc.

The S.D.F. committed typical Left sectarian mistakes in their policy towards the Labour Party, while the I.L.P., on the other hand, behaved in a typically Right opportunist fashion in trying (and succeeding) to make the workers believe the Labour Party was a party of struggle, a Socialist party.

This brilliant characterization of the two wings of British social democracy Lenin gave in 1908. Three years later he was already able to notice a reflection of the growing class struggle in Britain in a revolt against the leadership of both parties.

At the Coventry Conference of the S.D.P. the Hackney Branch had a resolution condemning Hyndman's jingo "Big Navy" articles. Although the whole Executive defended Hyndman the resolution was only defeated by forcing a group vote in place of individual voting. At the Birmingham Conference of the I.L.P. a strong move was also made against the dependence of the Labour Party in Parliament on the Liberals.

Lenin here for the first time made his ironical comment on the I.L.P., that it is "independent of Socialism, dependent on Liberalism," and pointed out the tremendous importance a workers' daily might have for fighting opportunism. Next year the *Daily Herald* was started, but its opportunism was almost at once evident.

The *Daily Herald* hastened to declare in a leader that "we stand for absolute freedom of thought and action, freedom from any kind of party ties." "A Socialist paper," Lenin

comments bitterly, "disclaiming all party ties—you cannot find a better characterization of the pitiful condition of the political organization of the working class in England."

But 1911 saw the great railway strike; 1912 the great miners' strike. The workers were learning to fight independently of all so-called leaders. A syndicalist movement —not very strong—began. In fright the bourgeoisie, led by Lloyd George, began to grant concessions they had never given to the Labour Party's "peaceful persuasion": a minimum wage for the miners, a plan for agrarian reform. It is true the concessions were worthless, but Lloyd George was a master showman and deceiver of the masses.

As a result of these great class movements changes again took place in the Social Democratic parties. At the Merthyr Congress of the I.L.P. in 1912 a demand was again made to break with the Liberals in Parliament. Keir Hardie and Snowden had the greatest difficulty in getting the resolution defeated. In the B.S.P., the rank-and-file delegates at the Blackpool Conference in 1913 succeeded in decisively defeating Hyndman and the Executive Council on the Big Navy question. Only two of the old members were re-elected. This ability to throw overboard an "old-guard" leadership which had proved thoroughly opportunist in practice Lenin counted "a big plus for the English movement."

There is no need to deal with Lenin's relation to the English movement during and after the war. These things are well known, particularly his decisive part at the Second Congress of the Comintern in formulating the tactics of the newly formed British Communist Party. But it is important to remember that Lenin's tactic for the British workers was not something accidental; it was the development of views held for many years, firmly based on the teaching of Marx and Engels in regard to the British movement and developed to correspond to the conditions of imperialism. That movement Lenin had watched very carefully, knew thoroughly.

The British Communist Party is in no sense the "heir"

of the old S.D.F., as some comrades would have us believe. It is in a much truer sense the heir of the Chartists, with almost a century of working-class experience to aid it in avoiding the mistakes of the Chartists, and having the advice and teaching of the three greatest teachers of the international working class to guide it, a teaching which developed continuously, from 1843 to Lenin's death in 1924, in unbroken living contact with the realities of the British situation.

THE COLONIES AND THE WORKING-CLASS

[From *The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism*]

LONG ago, writing of the relations between the Irish and the English workers, Marx said that "a people which enslaves another people forges its own chains." Indeed, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that in so far as they have participated in the plunder of the colonies, the English working class have strengthened their own oppressors and weakened their own chances of freedom. The English capitalists were able for many generations to guarantee to a large section of the working class, a very high standard of life entirely out of the profits of colonial exploitation. The English worker became known for his "respectability," for his political support of the two capitalist parties.

The Labour Party, when it was formed, reflected this bourgeois character of the English movement. It was not, and did not even lay claim to be, the party of the working class. It was rather an alliance between this aristocracy of labour and the lower middle class, the petty bourgeoisie, a party not of one class but of two. With the development of imperialism, and the great intensification of class struggle and class exploitation which accompanied it, with capitalism definitely entering on its decline, the possibility of supporting a large labour aristocracy in a privileged position became much smaller. The basis of such an aristocracy, in conditions of a general crisis of the capitalist system, is rapidly shrinking, while a party which represents the working class, and only the working class, is now being slowly but surely built up in the form of the Communist Party.

But the prejudices and outlook which come from generations of bourgeois influence remain. It is only slowly that the mass of the workers are emancipating themselves from

these, building the basis of their unity as a class which alone can guarantee victory over capitalism. The hardest of all prejudices to uproot are those connected with the Empire, the Empire jingoism which permeates the whole of British life. This feeling is deliberately fostered and spread by the reformist leadership of the British Labour movement, who can congratulate themselves on having produced Mr. J. H. Thomas, who is such a fine flower of imperialist sentiment that at times he appears to be a caricature upon the crudely violent imperial "patriotism" of the bourgeoisie. Yet the ineffable Mr. Thomas is a very significant symptom, the representative of one of the deepest and most dangerous illusions among the workers—the illusion that the Empire is a "benefit" to them in some mysterious form or other.

It has long ceased to be that, except to a small gang of Labour politicians and trade union bureaucrats. To-day the unemployed Lancashire cotton weaver, or the Dundee jute worker, can see clearly enough that he is not getting much benefit from the Empire or anywhere else. But the illusion that he *might*, if only things were different, persists, thanks to the insistent propaganda of his leaders, and it is in this illusion that British Fascism will find its roots.

The Labour Party has remained more faithful to the ideals of the capitalist class in the colonial question than in any other, and for a good reason, since the Empire is the real corner-stone of British capitalism. The three and a half years of Labour Government, in 1924, 1929–31, left forced labour untouched, failed to emancipate a single child slave, but imprisoned many thousands, hanged scores, and shot down hundreds with bomb or machine-gun, including women.

The attitude of the Labour Party towards nations struggling to be free, can be judged from the following extract from their manifesto of 1920 on Ireland, when the Irish people were waging a life and death struggle against the Black and Tan regime of terror and blood.

"It is impossible," declared the manifesto, "to treat Ireland as a separate country from Great Britain for military

purposes. An invasion of Ireland would be an invasion of *Britain*. . . . The two islands should form a single unit for all war-like purposes."

The pacifist and Labour leaders here speak in the true voice of the imperial general staff. Indeed, pacifism has never proved an obstacle to the development of imperialism's armed forces, and former conscientious objectors have blithely ordered bombing squadrons to attack the villages of Irak or the North-West Frontier. Yet it is not sufficient if we simply say that in colonial questions the Labour Party carries out the policy of the other capitalist parties. True, it does so, but it has nevertheless, to cover up its support of capitalism in this respect as in others, worked out a specious theory which is intended to make this policy appear as a *Socialist policy*.

For the origin of that policy we must go back a long way, to 1907, that is to the very interesting period after the first Russian Revolution, when the nationalist and revolutionary movement had just begun to raise its head in India, Turkey, Persia and China, when hundreds of millions of people who had hitherto seemed sunk in helpless apathy, began to stir with a new life. In that year the Second International held a Congress at Stuttgart, at which the colonial question was the central discussion—along with the question of militarism. The Colonies, war and militarism, imperialism had linked these problems together and was forcing them more and more sharply on the attention of the working class.

The German "Socialist" David, opening the discussion, declared that "Europe needs colonies. She does not even have enough. Without colonies, from an economic point of view, we shall sink to the level of China." A resolution was then proposed by a majority of the Colonial Commission of the Congress and introduced by Van Kol, a Dutchman, "representative of one of the oldest colonizing peoples" as he proudly claimed, which contained the following remarkable phrase: "The Congress . . . does not condemn in principle and for all time every kind of colonial

policy, which—under a socialist regime—can be a work of civilization." The resolution concluded by proposing that Socialist members of Parliament should propose to their respective governments the conclusion of "an international agreement aiming at creating an international law, safeguarding the rights of natives, of which the contracting nations will be the mutual guarantors." In other words, "Socialists" were proposing the Mandate System in 1907.

The militant section at the Congress, the Bolsheviks, a section of the German Social-Democrats, the Poles, certain French and Belgian Socialists, the Social Democratic Federation through the mouth of Harry Quelch, who was deported from Stuttgart two days later by the German Government, bitterly opposed and finally defeated this point of view. It is interesting, however, that the representative of the Labour Party and I.L.P., Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, supported the resolution.

MacDonald considered that "we must have the courage to draw up a programme of colonial policy. . . . Capitalists cannot do all they want in the sphere of colonial policy, for they are generally submitted to the control of parliaments."

Lenin's comment on this discussion at Stuttgart throws a light upon its real meaning and the whole relation of the colonial question to the working class, particularly to the British working class. He mentions that Marx liked to recall a saying of Sismondi to the effect that the proletarians of the ancient world lived at the expense of society, whereas modern society lives at the expense of the proletarians. "But," Lenin points out, "a wide colonial policy has led to the European proletariat *partly* falling into such a position that the whole of society does *not* exist by its labour, but by the labour of the almost enslaved colonial slaves. The English bourgeoisie, for example, draws bigger revenues from the tens and hundreds of millions of the population of India and their other colonies, than from the English workers. In such conditions in certain countries a material and economic basis is created for the poisoning of the proletariat of this or that country by colonial jingoism.

This can, of course, be only a passing phenomenon, but nevertheless it is necessary to recognize the evil clearly, to understand its causes, in order to know how to rally the proletariat of all countries for struggle against such opportunism. And this struggle will lead inevitably to victory, for the 'privileged' nations comprise an ever smaller share of the general number of capitalist nations."

The policy of the Labour Party to-day, in its latest form of the Policy Report on "The Colonies" presented to the 1933 Conference at Hastings, is a direct continuation of the resolution proposed at Stuttgart in 1907, so much so that its very phraseology is often almost the same.

The Policy Report has no complaint to make against colonial exploitation as such, only against certain phases of it, mostly connected with the plantation system in East Africa. Extraordinary as it may seem, after the picture of conditions in West Africa given by the women's movement in Nigeria, West Africa is held up as the ideal of "socialist" colonization in the following passage:

"In the West African Colonies, for example, no land is permitted to be expropriated for immigrant settlers, and the administrative and technical services are run in what is believed to be the best interests of the general native communities. The difference in the results of this policy on the well-being and happiness of the people, as compared with the position in much of East Africa, where a contrary policy has been pursued, is a clear indication of the lines on which a Labour Government must proceed."

The very next paragraph of the Report makes it clear that the Labour Party does not consider the national and social emancipation of the colonial peoples as its aim, but rather their retention and "enlightened" exploitation by a capitalist Britain. "In none of the Colonial territories," runs the Report, "however, has there been a sufficiently conscious and sustained effort to make the education, development and well-being of the common people the

main function of the Government. It is this objective for which the Labour Movement stands." How exactly it is proposed to obtain this "development" we shall see later when examining the practical proposals behind these high-sounding words.

It is, however, very interesting to note that the Stuttgart proposal of 1907 that colonies should be exploited under international treaty agreement, finds its complete development here. "It seems," says the Report, "both right and logical that the mandatory system should be accepted for all Colonies inhabited mainly by peoples of primitive culture. The Labour Party, when it is in power, will make such a declaration and will accept the scrutiny of the Mandates Commission in such cases, if it can be arranged." Lenin, commenting on the original Stuttgart proposal, roundly stated that "Socialism never has renounced and never will renounce the defence of reforms in the colonies also, but that has and ought to have nothing in common with any weakening of our principles against conquests, the subordination of alien peoples, violence and plunder, which 'colonial policy' consists of. The very idea of a 'socialist colonial policy' is an utter confusion."

The Labour Party consider that there are two existing policies, roughly represented by the West African and the East African Colonies, of which the first is an "African policy" which socialists should support, and the second is a "capitalist policy" which they must change. The "African policy," because it allows native land ownership and severely restricts ownership by white men, "aims at promoting a native community of agriculturists and arboriculturists, and of fostering the growth of large native industries." It is certainly true that the West African peasant is better off than the plantation slave of Kenya. But the Polish worker is better off than the Chinese worker, yet this could hardly be taken as an argument for showing Pilsudski to be pursuing a "socialist policy" as against the "capitalist policy" of Chiang Kai Shek and the Nanking Government.

The facts are that the peasants of West Africa are grossly

exploited by the British imperialist monopolies who buy their produce and by the feudal land-owning system which British imperialism has developed. The peasant, though he is not taxed in such a way as to force him to abandon his land and work for a white plantation owner (as in East Africa), is nevertheless, as British officials themselves admit, grossly overtaxed. The fact that the native courts use flogging to enforce payment of taxes (admitted by the Colonial Secretary in 1933 in regard to a certain case in Nigeria), is additional and overwhelming evidence of this. Native landlordism exists and is growing, money-lending exists and is growing, even the plantation system to some extent exists. In every sense of the word the policy pursued by imperialism in West Africa is a capitalist policy and so long as capitalism exists in England and the existence of such giant monopolies as the Unilever continues, it will remain a capitalist policy.

It is indeed a new and naive definition of "socialism" or of a "socialist policy," to apply it to places where the tyranny and vile oppression of capitalism work in a more concealed form, and only to call "capitalist" those forms of oppression whose horror is too great to be concealed. Yet when we examine the actual proposals of this report, we find that they are aimed at leaving things precisely as they are.

On the question of land, it is proposed to protect native rights in land and the natural and cultivated products of the soil. Landlordism is "to be prevented or progressively eliminated." How it is to be prevented or eliminated is left an open question. But we know that in both West Africa and East Africa great tracts have been simply *stolen* by white settlers or syndicates. What is to happen with them? Simply this, our "socialist" policy will see to it that "no further alienation of land should be allowed," and "where too much land has been alienated, the Governments must be prepared to resume ownership." So the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation need not worry about its 50 per cent. dividends, nor the Kenya settlers about their

Old Etonian right to stolen property. For who is to determine whether "too much" land has been alienated? As if every inch of stolen land was not "too much," and the blood and suffering of the natives had not a million times over paid the price of "civilization."

It is interesting to know that the next Labour Government will prohibit slavery (the last two apparently overlooked it) and that forced and contract labour will only be allowed on the best "socialist" principles, and not abolished altogether. Such questions as the 8-hour day, factory conditions, wages, are of too little importance to be even noticed in this code of liberation. There will, however, be "education," and taxation will be imposed "solely for revenue purposes." Finally, the workers of the colonies are already enjoying the fruits of complete socialism to a certain extent, so that the establishment of complete socialism should be easily obtained within the period of one more Labour Government. "Already," we are informed, "there is a considerable application of practical socialism in the Colonies in State Railways, Medical Services, Public Works, etc." The workers of the Indian State Railways in particular will rejoice to know they are living under conditions of socialism and will cease to strike against intolerable hours, wretched wages and bullying foremen.

The question of India is left out of the Report altogether, but the Labour Party officially supports the National Government and the White Paper, for the bulk of which it was indeed itself responsible, since it is the considered fruit of the Round Table Conferences which the Labour Government itself initiated. Indeed, speaking on the Indian debate in April 1932, Mr. Maxton wound up by saying, "I do not want to challenge a vote," and gave as his reason that it would have a bad effect in India if it appeared that there were only five members of the Labour Party who opposed the National Government. The presumption would seem to be not quite what Mr. Maxton wished to convey, since the Indian people could hardly be more pleased to think that every member of the Labour Party supported repres-

sion in India, than to feel that there were five who still had sufficient working-class honesty to protest against it.

The most subtle and dangerous section of the Labour Party's colonial policy, does not, however, appear in its policy reports but in the books and articles of journalists like Mr. H. N. Brailsford who pose with some success as the friends of "Rebel India." For example, in the *New Leader* on 8 January, 1932, Mr. Brailsford writes "The Indian Revolution has begun. It will inevitably proceed to a social and agrarian revolution." Then, after this radical beginning, he goes on to show how the combination Lord Irwin—Wedgewood-Benn was a lesser evil than the present Willingdon—Hoare combination, and even that some sections of the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy are a lesser evil than others when he refers to "the bureaucracy, or that part of it which has a police mind," and blames the atrocities of imperialism on this "part of the bureaucracy." Finally, the radical Mr. Brailsford who is all for the "social and agrarian revolution," condemns the peasant "no rent" movement in the United Provinces and approves its forcible suppression because it was 'not compatible with the truce" (i.e., the Gandhi—Irwin truce). At the same time he tries to show that the peasant movement is not political, i.e., anti-imperialist, but is purely economic. On 5 March, Mr. Brailsford returns to the attack and blames 'the clumsiness of the Government in letting themselves appear the aggressors." The conclusion to be drawn from this is obvious. The Labour Party can fight the Indian revolution by less "clumsy" methods and in fact *be the aggressor without appearing so.*

What then should be the policy of the working class towards the Colonies? This question was discussed at the Second Congress of the Communist International on a report made by Lenin, and one of the English delegates, Tom Quelch, the son of the revolutionary socialist who spoke up so boldly against imperialism at Stuttgart, declared that any British worker who attempted to defend the colonial revolution would be considered a traitor by

his fellows. Lenin in his reply to the discussion attacked this point of view in these words: "I wanted further to point out the importance of revolutionary work of the Communist Parties not only in their own country, but also among the soldiers which the exploiting nations use to hold the peoples of their colonies in subjection. Comrade Quelch of the British Socialist Party spoke about this in our Commission. He declared that the rank and file English worker would count it treachery to help the enslaved peoples in their revolts against English rule." Lenin went on to point out that certainly the jingo worker aristocracy in both England and America was a great danger for socialism as well as the greatest support of reformism, but that the real test of a revolutionary party was revolutionary work and help for the exploited and oppressed people in their revolts against the oppressors.

A working-class party should carry on continuous struggle to expose the tyranny and brutality of imperialist rule in the colonies, to organize support for the movements of the colonial workers and peasants, to stop all "little wars" on colonial peoples and agitate for the withdrawal of British military forces from India and the colonies. Its aim should be, not the "development" of the Colonies, as expressed in the Labour Party Policy Report, but their complete national freedom, combined with the maximum help to the native working class in developing industry and laying the foundations of real socialist economy.

Two objections are usually raised to such a policy. The first that it is impossible to give national freedom to backward or primitive peoples, the second that to lose the Empire means starvation and ruin for the English worker and his family. Neither of these objections is frivolous, but both are rooted in a misunderstanding of the real character of socialism, a relic of that middle-class influence which still weighs so heavily upon the workers' movement.

Certainly the natives of, say Kenya, could not be expected to build up a modern socialist country unassisted, but that is a question which can be, and must be, separated from

the question of national freedom. For the native population cannot win back its right to life, save itself from extinction, unless it is able to take back its stolen land, drive out the white settlers, make an arrangement by which autonomy is given to the immigrant population from India, and take over for the benefit of the African masses the railways, factories and public works constructed on their slave labour. These things it cannot do unless it has national independence. In West Africa the landlords and money-lenders, the feudal elements, cannot be destroyed, the alienated land restored, the deadly grip of the great imperialist trusts shaken off, without similar national freedom.

Given this national freedom, won with the help of the British workers, the native peoples can freely ask for help from the workers of Britain and other socialist states in building up their emancipated countries, help asked for on an equal basis, given without thought or possibility of exploitation in return. Only in this way, as the example of similar peoples in the former Tsarist Empire shows, can the leap from primitive darkness to socialist freedom be made, avoiding the horrors of capitalist development.

The second question is one which is more persistent and clearly more troublesome to the average worker, whose class consciousness revolts at the atrocities perpetrated by imperialism in the Colonies, but who, in view of England's peculiar economic and geographical position, cannot understand how it would be possible to get along without colonies, particularly without India. If the Colonies won their independence, they argue, and began to build up their own industries, then no trade would be carried on with England and our own industries would simply die out. Yet a little thought only is needed to be convinced that exactly the opposite would happen. For it is not socialism which restricts and destroys world trade, but, as is being strikingly proved to-day, capitalism.

The population of the Empire, including India but excluding the Dominions, is over 400 millions, mostly peasants living in conditions of abject poverty. The

average annual expenditure of the African peasant on British goods is something under 2s., of the Indian peasant about 3s. National freedom under a workers' and peasants' government would have only one object, to raise the standard of life of these vast masses as rapidly as possible, a process quite impossible so long as they remain the victim of imperialist oppression, which indeed, further depresses their already wretched level of life. The effects of such a general raising of the standard of life have been shown by the Soviet Union, which cannot expand industry and agriculture rapidly enough to meet the demand. Moreover, the Soviet Union has carried on a great and valuable trade with other countries, a trade which, given freedom of exchange and proper credit facilities, might expand indefinitely. Yet this foreign trade of the U.S.S.R. has been carried on with capitalist countries in the face of great difficulties, embargos, seizure of trading institutions, even armed attacks. How enormous such a trade might be between socialist countries, or countries whose economy was progressing in a socialist direction under the rule of the workers and peasants, is clear.

Not only would the granting of freedom to the Colonies mean that every factory in England would be kept busy supplying them with textiles and articles of consumption, but it would also mean that the industrialization of these countries would for many generations keep British heavy industry working to capacity. Socialism can only be built up in Africa and Asia under the leadership of a strong working class and on the basis of the most modern industry. A socialist Britain would do its utmost to develop the forces of production in these countries, and thereby help to create a strong and educated modern proletariat, capable of putting the new countries of Asia and Africa on a level with the "advanced" peoples of the West.

As things are at present the exploitation of the Colonial peoples is the greatest obstacle to the freedom of the British workers, the chief cause of the enormous taxation which the workers of the home country must bear in order to pay

for the vast armed forces that protect the Empire against imperialist rivals and keep down internal revolt. The capitalist class in Britain remains powerful because it is still able to transfuse the blood of its Colonial slaves into its own anæmic system. It derives its own class strength, its own reactionary forms of class outlook and class repression, from its parasitic existence at the expense of these Colonial peoples. Just as British imperialism is Colonial imperialism, so British fascism will be Colonial fascism.

A socialist Britain without a people's revolution in India and the other Colonies is unthinkable. All schemes for ending unemployment, for raising the standard of life in Britain, are mere Utopias or demagogy intended to deceive the workers and lower middle-class masses, unless they admit the essential fact that a prosperous Britain, prosperous in the sense of guaranteeing the work and well-being of the whole toiling people, is impossible while the Colonies are enslaved. The path outlined by the Labour Party, Empire Free Trade, Ottawa agreements, cannot raise the standard of life of the Colonial workers and peasants, but only depress them still further, preparing the way for another war for the redivision of the world between the rival robber powers. The worker can see his way to freedom only in the maxim of Karl Marx, "no nation can be free which oppresses another."

COMMUNISM'S FIGHT ON THE CULTURAL FRONT

[From *Daily Worker*, 11 September, 1935]

In his report to the World Congress, Comrade Dimitrov laid great stress on one form of mass struggle against Fascism which in this country has hardly begun.

This struggle is the struggle of the working-class to smash the capitalist monopoly of culture, to win over to their side the best and most honest of the intellectuals, to neutralize others.

Science, education, the Press, cinema, radio, art, literature, medicine, the theatre, all these and many other activities are controlled by the ruling classes and used by them in order to maintain capitalist society.

But the scientists, teachers, writers, doctors and others are to-day rarely members of the privileged upper section of society. They are men and women of the middle sections, often, indeed, of the sections which are nearest to the working-class, living in their youth lives of poverty and hard struggle.

These sections are deeply affected by the crisis in the capitalist system. They see capitalism beginning to look upon their activities, save when they are useful for military purposes, as overheads, to be cut down.

Lastly, the best of these intellectuals see with alarm that capitalism, now a decaying social system, can no longer develop human culture, but only debase and destroy it.

However, because of the desperate nature of their economic position, these intellectual workers are also liable to become active agents of Fascist demagogy, and certain sections are quite willing to prostitute themselves to the worst and most Jingo elements in the capitalist State.

The victory of Socialism not only means that the best in the heritage of past achievement of humanity is preserved (whereas capitalism endangers it) but that a vast new prospect for its further development is opened up by the freeing of the forces of production.

Among the millions of workers who are barred from real cultural activity to-day, there is an immense thirst for knowledge, for health and for beauty, which only Socialism can satisfy. The demand of these millions for schools, laboratories, clinics, new modes of travel, art, literature and music, means a new and splendid future of creative work for scientists, artists, doctors and teachers.

This is the basis of the unity between the intellectuals and cultural workers and the working-class. Its practical working out is an essential part of our United Front campaign.

A writer who can influence thousands through his work, if he comes ever so little towards the working-class, even if only to understand that Fascism and war are evils, is a valuable ally.

These things are still little understood by those among us who should be most conscious of them.

Recently, for example, there was a review in the *Daily Worker* of a book on the lives and work of British scientists in the nineteenth century. The author, a well-known popular writer on science, had tried to view these men from the standpoint of Marxism.

How do we receive this book? The reviewer, after omitting to tell us what the book is about, at the end of a prosy column loftily informs the author he is guilty of "silliness" because he does not understand Marxist teaching on imperialism.

The silliness here, of course, is in the reviewer's attitude to this honest intellectual who, however weakly, has tried to give us a true picture of some of the most important Englishmen of our age, men whose lives have been neglected by the bourgeoisie as "dull."

This is a perfect example of the kind of attitude we must

crush relentlessly if our Party is to become a leading force in cultural work.

We must develop Communists who can express this policy and work out these solutions. Recently a great "Jamboree" of the academic forces of all nations took place at Oxford simultaneously with a very important Congress on academic freedom.

Though our Party was very active at Oxford in the various meetings, it had not yet developed sufficient authority for our members to speak in the name of our Party, expressing the views of our Party on the very important questions discussed.

In France the triumph of the People's Front has been an example to every country. That triumph was made possible by the successful building of working-class unity.

But that fight for unity was helped on, and in turn was helped by, the fight on the cultural front which won over to its side great names like Langevin, Rivet, Gide and Rolland. Our Party was the leader in this work and we must all recognize what immensely valuable allies have been won.

In France we have smashed a breach in the hold of the bourgeoisie over the minds of the people, with the result that the mass work of the Party is enormously facilitated.

"Communists who suppose that all this has nothing to do with the cause of the working-class, who do nothing to enlighten the masses on the past of their own people, in a historically correct fashion . . . who do nothing to link up their present struggle with its traditions and past—voluntarily relinquish to the Fascist falsifiers all that is valuable in the historical past of the nation, that the Fascists may bamboozle the masses."

These words of Comrade Dimitrov apply with as much force to Britain as to France We, too, have our revolutionary past, stretching back for hundreds of years. Marxist-

Leninist dialectic applies to English history as much as to French.

It is good that the historical Seventh Congress of the Comintern has given us such a lead and that our Party is now in all seriousness preparing to attack these questions.

MARXISM AND LITERATURE

[From *The Novel and the People*]

MARXISM is a materialist philosophy. It believes in the primacy of matter and that the world exists outside of us and independently of us. But Marxism also sees all matter as changing, as having a history, and accepts nothing as fixed and immutable. In the seventeenth century few English writers would have quarrelled with a materialist view of life, though their view of materialism would not have been the same as that of Marx and Engels. To Shakespeare, drawing his philosophical views from Rabelais and Montaigne, there would have appeared nothing outrageous in the Marxian view of life. For the greater part of the eighteenth century a materialist view of life would have been accepted without question by many of the greatest British writers.

It is not so to-day. It has not been so for more than a century. To-day the literary journalists protest that materialism and imagination cannot go to bed together. The result, they suggest, would not be creation, but simply an unholy row. It is a curiously perverted view, for it would appear to be the most natural thing in the world for the imaginative writer, and particularly the novelist, to adopt a materialist view of life.

"Being determines consciousness" is the Marxist definition of the ultimate relation between matter and spirit. Whether or not this is the actual view of the artist it must, in fact, be the basis of his creative work. For all imaginative creation is a reflection of the real world in which the creator lives. It is the result of his contact with that world and his love or hate for what he finds in that world.

It is the lights and colours, the forms and shapes, the breath of the winds, the scents of life, the physical beauty or the physical ugliness of animal life, including the lives of

human beings, the acts, the thoughts, the dreams of actual men and women, including the creator himself, that form the stuff of art.

Milton demanded three things of poetry, that it be "simple, sensuous and passionate." Art that is not sensuous, that is not concerned with perception of the real world, with sensible objects, is not art at all, not even the shadow of art. The essence of the creative process is the struggle between the creator and external reality, the urgent demand to master and re-create that reality. "But does not Marxism claim that works of art are merely a reflection of economic needs and economic processes?" it will be objected.

No, this is not the view of Marxism, though it is the view of a number of materialists of the nineteenth century of the positivist school whose views have nothing in common with Marxian, dialectical materialism. Marx has clearly stated his ideas on the relationship between the spiritual processes of life, of which artistic creation is one, and the material basis of life, in the famous Preface to his *Critique of Political Economy*. Here is the passage:

"The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then opens an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such revolutions the distinction should always be between the material revolution in the economic conditions of produc-

tion which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the juridical, political, religious, æsthetic, or philosophic—in short, ideological forms—in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out."

Marx, then, certainly believed that the material mode of life in the end determined the intellectual. But he never for a moment considered the connexion between the two was a direct one, easily observed and mechanically developing. He would have laughed to scorn the idea that because capitalism replaces feudalism, therefore a "capitalist" art immediately replaces "feudal" art, and that all great artists must in consequence directly reflect the needs of the new capitalist class. Nor, as will appear later, did he consider that because the capitalist mode of production was a more progressive one than the feudal, capitalist art must therefore always stand on a higher level than feudal art, while feudal art in turn must stand above the art of the slave States of Greece and Rome, or the ancient Eastern monarchies. Such crude and vulgar views are foreign to the whole spirit of Marxism.

Changes in the material basis of society, Marx rightly urged, can be determined by the economic historian with the precision of natural science (which, of course, is not the same thing as saying that these changes are scientifically determined). But no such scientific measurement of the resulting changes in the social and spiritual superstructure of life is possible. The changes take place, men become conscious of them, they "fight out" the conflict between old and new in their minds, but they do so unevenly, burdened by all kinds of past heritage, often unclearly, and always in such a way that it is not easy to trace the changes in men's minds.

It is true, for example, that the Code Napoleon is the legal expression of the social and economic changes wrought by the French Revolution. Yet the knowledge of this does not in itself explain the Code Napoleon. One must understand also the past history of France and the relation of classes

in that country before the Revolution, one must understand the course of the Revolution itself and the changes in class relationships which the Revolution brought about, and finally, one must understand Napoleon's military dictatorship. Then only does the Code become comprehensible as the legal expression of the new bourgeois society and the French industrial revolution which began during the Napoleonic period. And law is perhaps the most responsive part of the ideal superstructure, it changes most easily in accordance with changes in the mode of production. But art is much farther from the basis, responds far less easily to the changes in it.

Engels in a letter to J. Bloch written in 1890, was quite emphatic about this point. "According to the materialist conception of history," he wrote, "the determining element in history is *ultimately* the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.—forms of law—and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless *host* of accidents (*i.e.*, of things and events whose inner connexion is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree."

Marxism, therefore, while reserving the final and decisive factor in any change for economic causes, does not deny that "ideal" factors can also influence the course of history and may even preponderate in determining the *form* which changes will take (but only the form). It is only a caricature of Marxism to suggest that it underestimates the importance of such a spiritual factor in human consciousness as artistic creation, or to make the absurd claim that Marx considered works of art to be the direct reflexion of material and economic causes. He did not. He understood perfectly well that religion, or philosophy, or tradition can play a great part in the creation of a work of art, even that any one of these or other "ideal" factors may preponderate in determining the *form* of the work in question. Among all the elements which go to make a work of art it is, however, only the economic movement which asserts itself as *finally* necessary, for what Marx and Engels considered to be true of historical changes they also considered true of æsthetic creation.

It is often objected against Marxism that it denies the individual, who is merely the prey of abstract economic forces which drive him to his doom with the inevitability of a Greek fate. We will leave aside the question of whether or not the conception that man is driven by external fate to an inevitable end makes the creation of a work of art impossible. Perhaps Calvinism has never produced great art, but the idea of doom and fate has done so—in the Greek tragedies, in the works of Hardy, to mention only two instances. It is nevertheless possible that the objection, if it really represented the Marxian view, would be a valid one. At least this objection is prompted by the humanist tradition of the great art of the Western world, and is therefore worthy of respect, even though it is based on a grave misunderstanding.

For Marxism does not deny the individual. It does not see only masses in the grip of inexorable economic forces. True, some Marxist literary works, particularly some "proletarian" novels, have given innocent critics cause to

believe that this is the case, but here perhaps the weakness has been in the novelists who have failed to rise to the greatness of their theme of man changing himself through the process of changing nature and creating new economic forces. Marxism places man in the centre of its philosophy, for while it claims that material forces may change man, it declares most emphatically that it is man who changes the material forces and that in the course of so doing he changes himself.

Man and his development is the centre of the Marxist philosophy. How does man change? What are his relations with the external world? These are the questions to which the founders of Marxism have sought and found answers. I do not wish here to outline Marxist philosophy, for that is done more capably elsewhere, but let us examine for a moment this question of man as an active historical agent, man at work and struggling with life, for this is the man who is at once artistic creator and the object of art. This is the way in which Engels explained the part of the individual in history:

"History makes itself in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each again has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant—the historical event. This again may itself be viewed as the product of a power which, taken as a whole, works *unconsciously* and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. Thus past history proceeds in the manner of a natural process and is also essentially subject to the same laws of movement. But from the fact that individual wills—of which each desires what he is impelled to by his physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his own personal circumstances or those of society in general)—do not attain what they want,

but are merged into a collective mean, a common resultant, it must not be concluded that their value = O. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to this degree involved in it."

Here is not only a formula for the historian, but also for the novelist. For the one concern of the novelist is, or should be, this question of the individual will in its conflict with other wills on the battleground of life. It is the fate of man that his desires are never fulfilled, but it is also his glory, for in the effort to obtain their fulfilment he changes, be it ever so little, in ever so limited a degree, life itself. Not X = O is the Marxist formula for the fate of man, but "on the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to this degree involved in it."

The conflict of wills, of desires and passions, is not, however, a conflict of abstract human beings, for Engels is careful to emphasize that man's desires and actions are conditioned by his physical constitution and, finally, by economic circumstances, either his personal circumstances or those of society in general. In his social history it is, in the last resort again, the class to which he belongs, the psychology of that class, with its contradictions and conflicts, which plays the determining part. So that each man has, as it were, a dual history, since he is at the same time a type, a man with a social history, and an individual, a man with a personal history. The two, of course, even though they may be in glaring conflict, are also one, a unity, in so far as the latter is eventually conditioned by the former, though this does not and should not imply that in art the social type must dominate the individual personality. Falstaff, Don Quixote, Tom Jones, Julien Sorel, Monsieur de Charlus, are all types, but they are types in whom the social characteristics constantly reveal the individual, and in whom the personal hopes, hungers, loves, jealousies and ambitions in turn light up the social background.

The novelist cannot write his story of the individual fate unless he also has this steady vision of the whole. He must

understand how his final result arises from the individual conflicts of his characters, he must in turn understand what are the manifold conditions of lives which have made each of those individuals what she or he is. "What emerges is something that no one willed," how exactly that sums up each great work of art, and how well it expresses the pattern of life itself, since behind the event that no one willed a pattern does exist. Marxism gives to the creative artist the key to reality when it shows him how to discern that pattern and the place which each individual occupies in it. At the same time it consciously gives to man his full value, and in this sense is the most humanist of all world outlooks.

WORLD COMMUNISM—THE ULTIMATE AIM

[From *Communism*]

We have seen that all human history has been the history of struggles between classes, that is to say, between groups of persons occupying definite places in the process of production, having definite production relations one with another. As productive forces develop they change these relations, create new classes and destroy old ones. When productive forces (which consist of three elements, the instruments of labour, the object of labour and human labour power) no longer correspond to the production relations, when the latter cease to develop and enter into conflict with the former, then a violent conflict takes place, the issue of which is a new form of production relations corresponding to the development of productive forces.

In modern society, the productive relations are considerably simplified and the class struggle is chiefly waged between the two main classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat, capitalist and worker. That modern society has reached the stage when productive forces have outgrown the old forms of production, when the productive relations have entered into sharp conflict with them, is seen from the almost complete breakdown of capitalism in the sphere of relations of distribution. Not only is capitalism no longer able to maintain its wage slaves, it is also driving into ruin, famine and disease millions of small producers in its colonies and dependencies. So sharp is the conflict, so violent the antagonisms between classes, that society is living in a state of open civil war. On the day upon which these lines are written the newspapers contain news of civil war in Austria, of a general strike in France, of a hunger march upon London by two thousand unemployed workers, of strikes and revolutionary movements in Spain, of a

revolutionary demonstration by Oxford students, of mass executions in Bulgaria, of arrests and executions in India.*

Karl Marx, whose analysis of society showed that capitalism was bound to reach such a stage of collapse, summed up the chief points in his own teaching as follows:

"(1) That the existence of classes is only connected with definite historical forms of the struggle of developing production;

"(2) That the class struggle inevitably leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat;

"(3) That this dictatorship is itself only a transition to the abolishing of all classes and to the establishment of a social system in which there shall be no place for class divisions."

In the former Russian Empire the class struggle has already led to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that dictatorship has shown in practice that it is a transition to the establishment of a classless society. In China workers' and peasants' Soviets are already preparing the way for the moment when it will be possible to unite the whole country under a workers' dictatorship and commence the transition to socialism. The idea of Soviet power is daily becoming more conscious among the workers of the whole world, a guarantee that Marx was not mistaken in his view that the class struggle must inevitably lead to proletarian dictatorship. But Communist society is meaningless unless it is able to become a world society, the revolutionary struggle of the workers hopeless, unless it can eventually conquer on a world scale.

What is the guarantee that this is not only possible, but certain? It lies in the fact that capitalism in its last, imperialist stage, rouses up in opposition to itself not only the working class of the most advanced, industrialized countries but also the many-million mass of oppressed

* 13 February, 1934

peasantry in the backward countries. It lies in the fact that the first workers' dictatorship has risen in a vast and rich area lying on the border between these backward countries and the advanced states of the West. It lies in the fact that the working class of this country has succeeded in converting it from an economically backward country into one of the world's most advanced industrial countries and has led a great peasant population away from the wretched deadlock of private property to socialist, mechanized farming. Lenin, in the last words which he ever wrote, summed up these conditions of final victory as follows:

"The issue of the struggle in the last resort depends upon the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., comprise the immense majority of the world's population. But it is precisely this majority of the population which during the last year has been drawn with unusual rapidity into the struggle for its own emancipation, so that in this sense there cannot be a shadow of doubt as to what will be the final decision of the world struggle. In this sense the final victory of socialism is completely and unconditionally guaranteed."

When capitalism everywhere is overthrown, when the working class is everywhere in power, for what aim will that power be used? What is to be the future society of the human race?

Is the working class merely seeking to eternalize its own power, to destroy capitalism but to live at the expense of other classes, such as the peasantry?

No, the working class, as the name of its party implies, fights for Communism. It wins power in order to guarantee the victory first of socialism, and then of complete Communism. Under world Communism class society, the anarchy of production which characterizes capitalism, the degradation and waste of life which arise from exploitation of man by man, nation by nation, will have been abolished for ever. Mankind will look back with shame and horror upon the society of the past, with its coercion, its poverty,

its blinding of humanity, its deliberate cultivation of the vilest passions on the one hand, and its fettering of human nature and human understanding on the other. The dying out of classes and the disappearance of private property will eventually inevitably bring in their train the dying away of the State, of all forms of class domination. The rule over men will be replaced by the administration of things, mankind will pass into the adult stage of its history, into the world commonwealth of labour.

Freed from the fetters of private property relations, the forces of production in Communist society will develop at a rate so rapid as to constitute a great leap forward in history. Above all, the development of human labour power will perhaps prove to be the most important feature of this growth of the productive forces of society. Communist society must depend upon the fullest flowering of the initiative and individuality of every one of its members. Such a many-sided, *complete* development is impossible in general in class society, where only a handful of millionaires, ministers and war lords have any opportunity for full self-expression, though in their case the kind of self expressed is naturally enough to a large degree conditioned by the most repulsive features of the society in which they rule. In class society, save in the rare periods of revolutionary reconstruction, of renaissance, the best human beings are liable to become entangled in the terrible network of contradictions in which they live and their life becomes a torment of doubts and frustrated desires.

Such a complete, many-sided development becomes possible because the growth in the forces of production allows social economy to be constructed upon the basis of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Marx summed up the characteristics of Communist society in the Gotha Programme so concisely that there would be no point in paraphrasing them. "In the higher phase of Communist society," he wrote, "when the enslaving subordination of individualism in the division of labour has disappeared, and with it also the antagonism

between mental and physical labour; when labour has become not only a means of living, but itself the first necessity of life; when along with the all-round development of individuals, the productive forces too have grown, and all the springs of social wealth are flowing more freely—it is only at that stage that it will be possible to pass completely beyond the narrow horizon of bourgeois rights, and for society to inscribe on its banners: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' "

The present development of technique, accompanied though it is in capitalist society only by unemployment and poverty, is nevertheless such as to enable us to see that the factory of the future will be merely the practical department of the scientific laboratory. Most of the dirty and degrading labour in the world could even now be abolished. While capitalism, in its death-throes, dreams of re-establishing the mediæval squire in his manor as a last ally against the coming revolution, Communism would make agriculture merely a variation of industry. Electrification, modern methods of cultivation and stock-breeding, once the basis of private property is smashed, would destroy the stupidity of rural life, the age-old opposition of town and country. The great city, the octopus of modern life, would disappear no less completely. Great areas of the most beautiful and interesting parts of the world would be preserved as natural parks for the health and recreation of humanity, parks which, with the development of transport, would become easily accessible to all.

So long as capitalism exists there will be preventable disease, madness, prostitution, crime; people will continue to exist and suffocate in their own filth; modern transport will slaughter more people in a year than did the great wars of the French Revolution; the rulers of the greatest empire in the world will each day note with self-satisfaction that they are unable to manage the traffic of their capital city, to house and feed their citizens, or to work their enormous productive apparatus at full capacity. They will declare that the cause of war is love of peace and

therefore pile up enormous resources in the means of destruction of human life.

Perhaps two concrete examples will suffice of the kind of work which will be undertaken by a world Communist society, and which only such a society could undertake, even though technically such undertakings have been possible for the last twenty years. The experience already gathered in the construction of socialist society in the Soviet Union, in the building of such enterprises as the Dnieper dam and the new great project of the Volga chain of hydro-electrical stations is more than sufficient for us to be able to formulate with some exactness how the world would be transformed by a Communist society.

As far back as 1922 Lenin was discussing with comrades the possibility of presenting to the Genoa Conference a proposal for building an electrified super trunk-line from London to Pekin, passing through most of the important European capitals. This line was to have been part of a gigantic plan for the electrification of all Eurasia and would have brought bread and work to many millions of people ruined by the war. Instead, of course, Genoa became the scene of an attempt to enforce colonization of socialist Russia by imperialist Europe, and the project was never put forward for discussion. The victory of the Chinese Soviets on the one hand, and of the German revolution on the other, will be necessary before this plan can be brought to life.

A German engineer (no doubt he is now in a concentration camp as a dangerous "Marxist") has worked out a plan for utilizing the Straits of Gibraltar for the generation of electrical power. The plan is an elaborate one, involving, in its final details, the construction of dams at both the Gibraltar Straits and the Dardanelles, the building of enormous power stations as the level of the Mediterranean falls, and the practical uniting of the continents of Europe and Africa. If this plan were realized the Adriatic would disappear, all the Mediterranean countries would increase their territories by vast areas of fertile land in the most temperate climate in the world. The Rhine, the Po and

the Nile would become sources of immense energy. The "darkness" of Africa would pass into the legendary history of mankind. Such an enterprise would take perhaps two generations to complete, but a socialist Europe would not only not hesitate before it (obviously in a capitalist world it is a fantastic dream), it would even be compelled to undertake and complete it.

Clearly such developments are essential before mankind can realize the slogan of "from each according to ability, to each according to his needs." In the course of such great works human beings would change and grow, as the nature they must struggle with will change and grow. New forms of labour, a new attitude towards work, would become second nature.

A few years ago it was the fashion, even among "socialist" intellectuals to believe that socialism was only a dream, that at best we might hope for a more "efficient" and "just" social system than the present, which, however, would in its fundamentals remain unchanged. The working class of the Soviet Union have shown that the intellectuals are in fact the "dreamers" and socialist, classless society is a reality. Recognizing this, the intellectuals retreat to their next line of defence. A "crude" form of socialism is certainly in being, but of course the higher, Communist stage of this society is again merely an amusing propaganda slogan of the tiresome Bolsheviks.

However, the most tiresome of all bolshevik habits is that of keeping their word, or rather of seeing to it that there is no gap between word and deed. Lenin answered as follows the doubters who sneer at the possibility of complete Communism:

"The State will be able to wither away completely when society has realized the rule: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs,' i.e., when people have become accustomed to observe the fundamental rules of social life, and their labour is so productive, that they voluntarily work according to their ability. 'The narrow

horizon of bourgeois rights,' which compels one to calculate, with the hard-heartedness of a Shylock, whether he has not worked half an hour more than another, whether he is not getting less pay than another—this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for any exact calculation by society of the quantity of products to be distributed to each of its members; each will take freely 'according to his needs.'

"From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare such a social order 'a pure Utopia' and to sneer at the Socialists for promising each the right to receive from society, without any control of the labour of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, automobiles, pianos, etc. Even now, most bourgeois' 'savants' deliver themselves of such sneers, thereby displaying at once their ignorance and their self-seeking defence of capitalism.

"Ignorance—for it has never entered the head of any Socialist to 'promise' that the highest phase of Communism will arrive; while the great Socialists, in *foreseeing* its arrival, presupposed both a productivity of labour unlike the present and a person not like the present man in the street, capable of spoiling, without reflection . . . the stores of social wealth, and of demanding the impossible.

"Until the 'higher' phase of Communism arrives, the Socialists demand the *strictest* control, by *society* and *by the State*, of the quantity of labour and the quantity of consumption; only this control must *start* with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the control of the workers over the capitalists, and must be carried out, not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of *armed workers*."

Socialism, therefore, is the first stage of such a Communist society, in which private property in the means of production and distribution is destroyed, and consequently class divisions and the exploitation of human labour power. Socialist society is at the same time a great school for the re-education of liberated humanity, a process of fitting human beings to take their place as conscious

builders of Communism. Socialism, organizing humanity for labour in higher and freer forms than are possible under capitalism, is able to develop all the forces of production to a point where the transition to Communism becomes possible and inevitable.

Complete Communism is still a long way off, but socialist society, in which the seeds of the future society are ripening, is no longer a mere slogan or a dream, but a practical reality. Very soon after the socialist revolution had become victorious in the former empire of the Tsars Lenin wrote that "if Russia is covered with a thick network of electrical stations and powerful technical equipments, then our Communist economy will become an example for the coming socialist Europe and Asia."

It used to be considered that it was impossible for socialism to come save as the result of a simultaneous revolution in several of the most advanced capitalist countries. Lenin always combated such an idea as being utterly out of accord with the realities of modern imperialist capitalism. The very powerful development and centralism of capitalist dictatorship behind the cover of parliamentary "democracy," the ruthless and efficient military machine at its disposal, made it unlikely that the workers of the most advanced countries would be the first to break through, however theoretically advisable that might be. The whole development of capitalism, moreover, is uneven to the last degree, not only as between different countries, but within each country, within each branch of industry, even as between the level of consciousness of the working class and their preparedness for struggle. From this Lenin drew the conclusion that it is impossible for socialism to be victorious in all countries simultaneously. It must first be victorious in one or a few countries, and these not necessarily the most advanced, but rather the weaker links in the capitalist chain.

In the country in which the working class first seizes power, Lenin wrote in 1915, "the victorious proletariat . . . having expropriated the capitalists of this country and

organized socialist production at home, would stand against *the rest of* the world, the capitalist world, attracting the oppressed classes of other countries, raising among them revolts against the capitalists, in case of necessity even launching armed forces against the exploiting classes and their states."

The idea that not only is it possible to build socialism in one country, but that its successful accomplishment changes the whole relation of world forces, undermining and further weakening capitalism, has lain and still lies at the basis of the whole policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Communist International. Lenin never tired of emphasizing that, since the victory of the Russian working class, the whole future of the world revolution is bound up with the course of socialist construction in the Soviet republics. Socialism grows directly and inevitably out of capitalism, but it is itself a higher form of productive and social organization, as much in advance of capitalism as capitalism was an advance on feudalism. The complete construction of socialism in a country with the vast resources and population of Russia, cannot therefore mean anything but a tremendous increase in the strength of the world working class, giving it an invincible and powerful base for its onslaught on capitalism.

Lenin, developing Marx's teaching that the development of the class struggle inevitably leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, knew that there could be no other way of constructing socialism save through class struggle, that no other force save the working class was capable of reshaping the whole economy of the country so that it should be "impossible for any bourgeoisie to grow up." Only a relentless war, *after the revolution*, against the relics of the defeated classes and their allies, rooting up the very last remnants of resistance, can finally clear the way for the abolition of classes and of the habits of mind and action engendered by the old society. Such a struggle must be a dual one, consisting partly of repression of active resistance or sabotage and partly of re-education.

The working class, therefore, in order to build socialism, must use as its chief weapon its class dictatorship, its position of complete supremacy in the state. The Communist Party, uniting all the most conscious and active forces of the working class, must maintain its position of leader, of a general staff in the new phase of revolutionary reconstruction of society, able to point out at any given moment what are the chief tasks and the means of solving them. But the dictatorship of the proletariat is not the dictatorship of a party. The chief task of the Party is to draw the whole working population of the country into the task of administration by means of the Soviets, to organize millions of workers into becoming active participators in the construction of socialist industry and agriculture by means of the trade unions, which Lenin called "a school for Communism."

The capture of power by the workers, its use in order to smash the old bureaucratic state machine, to replace it by a State in which the courts are controlled by the workers and justice is administered in their interest, in which revolutionary law becomes a weapon with which to fight for a new society, in order to draw millions of men and women into the great task of accounting and control of the property of the State, in order to place the printing-presses, cinemas and theatres at the disposition of the workers, these are the first tasks of the workers' government.

Only then is it possible to start upon the long and difficult task of uprooting the capitalist elements in the country, to bring the small producers upon the path of socialist, co-operative production, build up a socialist trading system, abolish the parasitic elements which eat away the national income, the elements living on capitalist rent, interest and profit. Then, having industry and transport, banking and distribution, firmly in its hands, the working class is able to abolish finally the contradictions and anarchy characteristic of capitalist production and proceed to the complete planning of agriculture and industry.

The end of capitalist exploitation means that the condition of the masses must improve by leaps and bounds, that far from there being any question of over-production and of unemployment, a shortage of labour and a shortage of goods have to be reckoned with and overcome. The release of millions of people from wage slavery means a great increase in the demands and needs of the people. It becomes possible, as in the Second Five-Year Plan, to arrange for an increase of consumption of from two and a half to three times for the whole population.

It is frequently forgotten, no doubt with deliberation, that in the Soviet Union, where no differences between race or nation are recognized, the Samoyed or the nomad Kirghiz is considered to have as much right to the elements of civilized life as the worker of Leningrad or Moscow. The revolution has brought a higher standard of life to many millions of people who in 1917 were living in conditions no better than those of the mass of the people in British India. If it is true that the *average* level of life in the Soviet Union was not as high in 1933 as that of the small body of British *skilled* workers, it was infinitely higher than the average level of life for the British Empire, which would be the only fair comparison. Moreover there is plenty of justification for assuming that at present, in 1934, the *average* level of life is as good or better than that of the German *skilled* worker, and that very soon it will probably be among the highest in the world. Had the revolution been confined to Great Russia, no doubt that level would have been reached long ago. In fact it has affected not a country but a continent, and many nations of vastly differing levels of culture.

Considered from any point of view, however, the purely material gains of the revolution are enormous. The fact that the working class in Russia have used their victory in order to overcome the forces of capitalism in the country, in order to ensure that the entire product of social labour shall be socially distributed, has meant a rise in the general well-being of the country unprecedented in human history.

But more than that, it has meant that certain features of this improvement in the life of the people are of such a character as to make it perfectly clear that here we are dealing with differences which are *qualitative* and not merely of quantity. The abolition of unemployment, the nightmare of modern life, the ending of agrarian poverty by which the future of the peasant has been made, through the collective farms, as secure as that of the town workers, are perhaps the two most revolutionary of such changes.

Yet there are others hardly less striking. The *Daily Telegraph* of 28 February, 1934, prints a telegram from Bombay announcing the protest of the local branch of the Bombay Medical Association against the immigration into India of forty German doctors, on the grounds that this will swell "medical unemployment in India." "Medical unemployment" in a country where in some years 100,000,000 people suffer from malaria, where at the time of writing the Government has just appointed a famine relief commission in the province of Bihar! In the Soviet Union, millions of whose citizens live within a day's rail journey of India, the amount spent annually on social insurance alone, which includes medical care of a variety of kinds, is greater than the total national budget of many leading European States. The thoughtful who ponder over this comparison can hardly fail to conclude that here is a difference of *quality*, that here is a difference arising from a *higher form of society*.

The fact that in the Soviet Union wages are paid and some people receive higher wages than others, is in fact no contradiction to this. The higher, Communist society, is not something which comes ready-made. It is already implicit in capitalist society itself, but it is born out of that society, still bearing all the marks of its origin, and it is created, moreover, by people brought up in that society. The first, socialist phase of Communism cannot produce that justice and equality, that complete equilibrium between the individual and society, towards which mankind is evolving. "Justice," writes Marx in the Gotha Programme,

"can never rise superior to the economic conditions of society and the cultural development conditioned by them."

The socialist revolution has destroyed for ever the great "injustice" which consists in the ownership of the means of production and the plundering of society by a few individuals, but it has not destroyed and cannot destroy at once "the further injustice consisting in the distribution of the articles of consumption 'according to work performed' (and not according to need."* So it comes about that wages, as a measure of social labour, continue to be paid, and the greater the quantity and the higher the quality of that social labour, the more substantial the wages and therefore the quantity of the social product which the worker obtains. But wage slavery, by which one man is compelled to sell his labour power to another, disappears, is destroyed for ever. The content of wages is changed, and this revolutionary change at once brings deep and fundamental changes in the whole conditions of life of the workers, changes obvious at once to any observer.

Communism, in its first stages, in its lower, socialist form, is a continual and deadly struggle between the old and the new. "The old surviving in the new confronts us in life at every step, in nature as well as in society," Lenin wrote about this stage. But this very struggle is the basis of the greatest liberation of the human mind, of human energy and creative power, which history has yet known. The period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the construction of socialist society, in which this struggle is fought out, is above all a period of growth, of creation and of re-education. It is no accident that the greatest advances in material well-being and general culture have been made by the Soviet workers precisely at a time when the misery of the people in the capitalist world has been exposed at its deepest, when the whole violent, plundering character of the capitalist system has appeared in its most naked and brutal forms, as in the destruction of the homes of the Vienna workers by artillery fire, or the terror in Germany,

* Lenin, *The State and Revolution.*

or the financial scandals which accompany the growth of reaction in France, the lynchings which take place under the Roosevelt regime in America, and the fascist savagery at the Olympia meeting in London.

In this period socialism has made elementary education compulsory in a country of 170 million inhabitants, including children of nationalities condemned by capitalism as "historically" illiterate, it has made secondary education compulsory in all towns and increased its higher educational institutions from 91 in 1914 to 600 in 1933, its scientific research institutes from 400 in 1929 to 840 in 1933. Clubs, theatres, cinemas, newspapers, books of all kinds increase with an abundance which is still far behind the demand, but at a rate which shows that in its general level of education the population of the Soviet Union is already outstripping even the most advanced countries of the capitalist world.

The establishment of complete sexual equality has liberated for creative work an immense force whose significance even now can hardly be calculated. But beyond doubt the equal participation of woman in every sphere of life, which is only possible under socialism, must mean the creation of a far more human, deeper and finer civilization than any yet dreamed of by man. For the effect of the destruction of exploitation has meant not only that hundreds of thousands of workers have come into a new life as leaders and directors, as writers and poets, as organizers and inventors, but that completely new creative forces are released for humanity which even in the most advanced "democracies" of the West are restrained, corrupted, or simply crushed out of existence. Not only the equality of the sexes, the cleansing of the springs of life itself by the growth of a new relationship between the sexes, of new family forms, but the releasing of the energies of all those peoples of so-called inferior race or nationality who have had no chance of self-development, are creating new human forces of a richness unknown to the old world.

The appearance of cities is changing with the complete

wiping out of slums and the building of new workers' quarters which in many cases surpass in rational comfort and beauty the luxury quarters of the former ruling class. The villages are also changing their face, and already the beginnings of the breaking down of the old opposition between town and country are to be seen in the new State and collective farms, in the organization of the machine tractor stations for serving the farms.

Above all it must not be forgotten that the very organization of life itself changes under socialism with the change in human relationships which follows upon the elimination of exploitation and the gradual destruction of classes. The soviet factory, with its production conferences, its workers' rationalization, is a living example of how it is possible to combine authoritative leadership with the creative participation of the masses in production. The whole structure of the government, repeated down to the local soviets, arises out of and is responsive to, the creative tasks of socialist society. As the ugly blots of the inefficiency and bureaucracy inherited from the past are progressively wiped out there can be seen the clear and supple outlines of a newer and higher form of human organization.

But these tasks are only solved, these victories achieved, because the working class, the creator of the new society, has held power firmly in its hands, never hesitating to use it relentlessly in the battle against the old. As the existence of completely classless society comes nearer, this power does not weaken, but becomes stronger. The enemies of the new society do not give up the fight until they have been either physically destroyed, when they prove incorrigible, or else completely re-educated and absorbed into the new society. It is impossible to teach people to work together for the good of the whole community until such elementary truths as the necessity for respecting the property of the community have become completely accepted. It is impossible to build a socialist society if the slacker, the thief, the wrecker, the criminally negligent, the drunkards, are to be allowed free play. But repression without

re-education is foreign to the whole conception of socialism. The Cheka, the G.P.U., the organ of the proletarian dictatorship once most dreaded by its enemies, was always an immense force in the re-education of both the backward sections and the enemies of the working class. Its members were themselves engineers, inventors, organizers, able to build canals or raise ships from the sea-bed, to found model colonies for so-called "criminals," to check inefficiency in production and fight red tape or bureaucracy, as well as to fight to the death for the cause of their class, the creation of classless society. "For when *all* have learned to manage," Lenin writes, "and independently are actually managing social production by themselves, keeping accounts, controlling the idlers, the gentlefolk, the swindlers and similar 'guardians of capitalist traditions,' then the escape from this national accounting and control will inevitably become so increasingly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are men of practical life, not sentimental intellectuals, and they will hardly allow anyone to trifle with them), that very soon the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of everyday social life in common will become a *habit*.

"The door will then be wide open for the transition from the first phase of Communist society to its higher phase, and along with it to the complete withering away of the State." (Lenin, *The State and Revolution.*)

V

THE LITERARY CRITIC

RALPH FOX AND OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

By DONA TORR

> "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for not without dust and heat."—(MILTON, *Areopagitica.*)

WHEN Ralph Fox wrote his book, *The Novel and the People*, he had no idea that he was to go to Spain, although his mind was much occupied by the struggle there. But this book, which defines his view of the relation between art and politics, "the true relation between man's vision and man's life," also explains why, when he received his commission from the Communist Party, he went so gladly.

The book is an essay in that Marxist interpretation which had undoubtedly become the mainspring of his life. Here, only a few words on the final chapter, "The Cultural Heritage," where the keynote is struck by Wordsworth.

Wordsworth, in his prose, *Tract on the Convention of Cintra* (1809)—that magnificent battle-cry wrung from him by the resistance of the Spanish people to Bonaparte—showed the fundamental source of inspiration which can weld together poet and man of action:

"The true sorrow of humanity consists in this;—not that the mind of man fails; but that the course and demands of action and of life so rarely correspond with the dignity and intensity of human desires: and hence that, which is slow to languish, is too easily turned aside and abused."

Wordsworth passionately denies the "belief propagated in books, and which passes currently among talking men as

part of their familiar wisdom, that the hearts of the many *are* constitutionally weak; that they *do* languish, and are slow to answer to the requisitions of things." He appeals first to "the history of all ages; tumults after tumults . . . wars—why and wherefore? Yet with courage, with perseverance, with self-sacrifice, with enthusiasm. . . ." Then to the evidence of men's desires and emotions—love, grief, ambition, shame, revenge, the miser, the gamester. Finally to "the visible and familiar occurrences of daily life in every town and village:

"the patient curiosity and contagious acclamations of the multitudes in the streets of the city and within the walls of the theatre; a procession, or a rural dance; a hunting, or a horse race; a flood, or a fire; rejoicing and ringing of bells for an unexpected gift of good fortune, or the coming of a foolish heir to his estate;—these demonstrate incontestably that the passions of men (I mean the soul of sensibility in the heart of man) . . . do immeasurably transcend their objects."

Of Spain, however, it could be said "that the enormity of the outrages of which she has been the victim has created an object of love and of hatred—of apprehensions and of wishes—adequate (if that be possible) to the utmost demands of the human spirit."

For Fox, this was equally true of the struggle against Fascism in Spain to-day—the struggle of the international working class against the forces of barbarism:

"Wordsworth's view is a revolutionary one and an heroic one, for it is rooted in the belief that man is 'the sovereign of circumstance' [Marx], that the dignity and intensity of his desires can only find fulfilment by transcending themselves in action. There are rare occasions in history, in the personal history of each individual, in the common history of mankind, when the demands of life fully correspond with the dignity and intensity of man's desires. Such an occasion

confronts us to-day. . . . The novelist who is able to understand this will rise like a giant above his times, re-create the epic art of modern civilization, and truly inherit the tradition of our English letters."

The task of the artist and writer is to open our eyes; to liberate our spirits from the death grip of custom and prejudice, from the long slow poison set working through every channel of culture to-day, dulling our perception of the dangers which threaten us. But thought and vision cannot free us unless we also create the conditions in which "liberty, which is the nurse of all great wits," can flourish. It was thanks to the new form of government won by overthrowing tyranny that, as Milton told the Parliament of England, "our hearts are now more capacious, our thoughts more erected to the search of greatest and exactest things."

This was why the Soviet Union, which Ralph knew intimately at every stage of the last fifteen years, was such an inexhaustible inspiration to him; here man was becoming "sovereign of circumstance" and showing us the way to enter into our own heritage of liberty.

In the last months of his life, especially, Fox's thoughts dwelt very much on the "great refusal" of present-day writers to face reality as a whole, the cynicism and atrophy which leave the way open for the enemy. This "fear of life, the effort to keep out of the community of humanity," means self-exile from the greatest spirits of all ages, from the "spiritual community binding together the living and the dead" which is our cultural heritage. "We would not be rejected from this community: and therefore do we hope," says Wordsworth. "Hope," writes Fox, "will return on that condition alone, that we are not rejected from the community."

"Our fate as a people is being decided to-day. It is our fortune to have been born at one of those moments in history which demand from each one of us as an individual

that he make his private decision. . . . We are a part of that spiritual community with the dead of which Wordsworth spoke, we cannot stand aside, and by our actions we shall extend our imagination, because we shall have been true to the passions in us."

THINK BEFORE WRITING

[From *Communist Review*, March 1929]

T. A. JACKSON did a great service to the movement by his article in last month's *Review*. The *Manchester Guardian*, in a leading article, characterized the article as "an alarming heresy," and proceeded to poke superior fun at the vocabulary of the Communist International. The *Guardian*'s point was that if the Communists spoke and wrote in plain English and not in jargon "the spell would be broken" and the workers would cease to listen to us. Fortunately we know that the workers have a liking for plain truths plainly expressed, and have no such low opinion of them as the Liberal and capitalist parties generally possess.

"If the British Communist is taught to try to express his faith in simple English, may he not find that there is nothing worth expressing?" asks the *Guardian*. Well, if one may develop Jackson's point a little, complicated and unintelligible phrases generally do conceal poverty of thought, but a monopoly of such writing is by no means in the hands of the Communist Party.

. . . .

Lenin, for example, was a master of the simple and striking phrase. Except in his scientific works, he never used a word or constructed a sentence that the worker found difficult to grasp. On the contrary, his homely phrases and metaphors were understood with striking force.

This was for two reasons. First, Lenin never wrote until he had first thought. He was not in the habit, as so many energetic comrades are who have no real work to keep them busy, of standing up and unburdening himself at intolerable length to a hapless typist. Having thought hard, and thought as a man trying to express the masses, their needs

and struggles, Lenin found no difficulty in expressing himself.

The following quotation from Clara Zetkin's recently published reminiscences is typical: "When I shook Lenin's hand in enthusiasm, I could not refrain from saying, 'Do you know, Lenin, that a speaker at a meeting in the most out of the way place would be shy of speaking as simply, as plainly, as you do? He would be afraid of not being "educated" enough.'

"And Lenin answered: 'I don't know. I only know that when I "became a speaker" I always thought of the workers and peasants rather than of my audience.' " Alas, few of our comrades when they "become writers" think of anything else but their audience. Plainness and simplicity are the last of the virtues they affect. Another time Lenin said "we must write so that the peasant women who clean the workshops and offices can understand us." But do we? Is Lenin the ideal of our present-day writers?

There are also two neglected writers called Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who together produced a *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, now almost forgotten but worth the attention of any comrade who wishes to know in simple and yet magnificent language what Communism is. If every writer in the Communist International were to read that Manifesto through three or four times before ever again putting pen to paper, or opening his mouth to a typist, and ask himself how that great piece of Communist writing was achieved, he would, if he got the answers right, be a better and more useful writer from that moment onwards.

Now the first thing Marx and Engels had in mind was that they were explaining something, the principles of Communism, and the first sentence of the Manifesto leaves the reader in no doubt whatever as to that fact. "A spectre is brooding over Europe, the spectre of Communism." And they proceed to develop that theme, having first thought out *what* they wanted to say and *how* they wanted

to say it, until we reach the tremendous and inevitable conclusion: "Workers of all lands, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain."

There is no more than that to the secret of clear writing. First *think*, then, having got clear in your mind what you are thinking about, there is no difficulty in deciding *how* you shall say it. When these preliminary processes, which should take plenty of time, are completed, the writing itself is relatively a short and simple matter. With most of our leading comrades, alas, the process seems to be reversed and they think aloud into a typewriter, or into a shorthand notebook. This appears to be true throughout the Communist International, and yet it is impossible to imagine Lenin writing an important book, or even article, without careful notes, references and plans in his own mind.

Perhaps I am being unjust. I do not think so. Take a recent number of the *Communist International*, that for 15 January, 1929. There is an article here which emphasizes the point particularly. Lest I be considered invidious, I will omit the title and the author's name. It does not begin, as Marx and Engels began their Manifesto, with a short and striking sentence which tells you at once what they are writing about, such a sentence as can only be written after taking thought. No, the first sentence is a whole paragraph, and is 150 words long. This is it:

"The closeness of the war danger, the nearing clash of British and American imperialism, the formation of a new Triple Entente of Paris, London and Tokyo, all signs of the fearfully rapid rate of growth of capitalist contradiction in this new period; the hunt for markets, the process of rationalization, the growth of huge reserves of unemployed; the intensified fight against the world revolution, either in the form of the U.S.S.R., of colonial revolt (especially the great awakening strikes in India) and proletarian struggle at home (resistance to increased exploitation); the move to industrial peace, the attempted transformation of the trade unions into peace and war organs of the bourgeoisie,

linked up with the State and the employers' organizations or both; all these things are at the present time brought to a focus in Great Britain."

It is followed, at a short interval, by another sentence "analysing" the present position of the Labour Party to the tune of 200 words, consisting of the same wearisome "catalogue" construction. There is little need to emphasize the paralysing effect on the mind of a reader who tries to grapple with such strings of commonplaces tortuously contrived to save the author the trouble of thinking and so expressing his meaning simply and clearly. What is the general effect? None but the brave and super-conscientious plough through these articles, especially when they are interlarded with such difficult barbarisms as "renegations" and "renegadism."

When an author approaches us in this fashion let us beware of what he has to say, because, like the *Manchester Guardian*, he also is treating the workers with contempt. He is giving us words in place of thought. He is guilty of the worst of deceptions. There is something, you may be sure, fundamentally wrong in such an author's attitude to life and the revolutionary struggle, which is the highest expression of life to-day. It may only be laziness, or it may be political inexperience, but beware. The old working-class suspicion of the man of many words will be found fundamentally just, for such a man uses words to clothe his own nakedness.

This is not a criticism of any particular writer. It is a criticism, unfortunately, of many of those who write in our press. It is true in some respects, to a greater or less degree, of every contribution to the number of the *Communist International* here mentioned.

We are all of us guilty of such crimes against clear thought from time to time. It is a symptom, no doubt, of the general feeling of transition, of marking time, which we are experiencing now. In moments of crisis and revolutionary excitement we are forced to think quickly and

clearly, or perish, and at such times our revolutionary writers are simple, forceful, and direct. Unfortunately it is just as essential to have hard, clear thinking, and consequently good writing, in periods such as the present, when the Bolshevik party is being moulded which will have to act in times of crisis. We cannot all be Lenins, but we can all try to follow Lenin's example and get our teeth into each problem that faces us until we have chewed all the essential juice out of it.

I have written this because comrades have often at lectures asked me how to write. I have always answered that I cannot yet write myself as I should wish, but that the only method known is first to think out what you want to say and then to say it. Your writing will vary in quality according to the quality of your thought, but so long as you have something to say, *and you know clearly what that something is*, you will write and your writing will be read, even though it is not Lenin, or Marx, or Engels.

All this is a digression, because the Editor asked me to write, not about writing, but about reading. However, that is only another important factor in writing, for you always think better if you know what other people have thought about the same subjects before you. Lenin would not have been such a great and original writer if he had not read thoroughly and understood the great classics of socialist thought. Reading is, to borrow an expression used of something else, the dung at the root of the flower of writing. To have a knowledge of the great socialist writers, to be able to know their approach to the problems of life and politics, is to have a socialist culture. And we shall defeat capitalist culture not only by our organized mass might, but by the power of our superior socialist culture, enabling us to organize and direct that might correctly. Therefore, let us read.

TYL ULENSPIEGEL: LEGEND OF REVOLT

[From *Sunday Worker*, 23 September, 1928]

The Legend of Tyl Ulenspiegel, by CHARLES DE COSTER (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.).

IT is a strange irony that it needed the bloodiest war in history, the most terrible suffering the Belgian peasants had undergone for centuries, to make this great book known outside its own country. For its author, Charles de Coster, hated war and loved the poor, detested with violent fury the makers of war and the tyrants of the poor. But when he died in 1879 he was unknown, his book, the greatest historical novel of the nineteenth century and one of the greatest revolutionary epics of all time, was also unknown. And without the sentimental interest aroused in Belgium by the imperialist war it would still be unknown in England.

It was first published in English in 1922 at a great price. The same translation is now re-issued, 677 pages of excellent print, for 7s. 6d. It is a lot, but in these days when the slightest fabrication of the popular novelist costs the same, it is cheap.

Tyl Ulenspiegel (Owlglass) is the son of a Flemish coalman, born in the time of the struggle for Freedom against Philip of Spain. Claes, his father, an honest, merry worker, is denounced to the Spanish by an informer and burned to death as a heretic. Tyl's mother, Soetkin, dies as a result of torture used to extract the knowledge of where Claes has hidden his savings.

And Tyl is an implacable rebel. "The ashes of Claes beat upon his heart." He is the immortal type of the worker in revolt. In the fiction of the Russian revolution there are scores who resemble him, merry, sensual, loving his beer and his food, always ready for a rough joke to

strike home his point at the expense of the priest or the bourgeois, yet fearless, quick-witted, and hating his enemy to the death. If you read this book you will often laugh till your sides split, but oftener still you will feel the ashes beating on your heart as they beat on Tyl's, reminding you of the immortal revolutionary purpose.

The Legend of Tyl Ulenspiegel and Lamme Goedzak, and their Adventures Heroical, Joyous, and Glorious in the Land of Flanders and Elsewhere, is a novel, connected and finely developed, having nothing to do with the German folk-lore hero of Richard Strauss's musical poem. The first part is the story of Tyl's birth and youth, of the betrayal and death of the good workman Claes, of the half-wit Katherine and her bastard daughter Nele, Tyl's sweetheart and companion, and of Tyl's call to action for the salvation of his country from the Spaniards.

The second part tells of Tyl's journeys through Flanders with Lamme Goedzak, his fat friend, the biggest drinker and greatest eater in all Flanders, kind, sentimental, and mournful. Tyl seeks the forces that are making for revolt; Lamme his wife, who has fallen under the influence of a Spanish Rasputin and left him. It is a wonderful picture of the secret stirrings of revolt, of brave peasants, printers, blacksmiths and workers who secretly make arms and circulate the forbidden Flemish Bible, the while the great nobles, Egmont, Horn, and the rest, hesitate and squabble, unwilling to unite and fight boldly against Spain. The age-old system of imperialist oppression, of spies, informers, agents provocateurs, is seen at its foulest, exactly as you may see it at work in India to-day.

With the third part revolt has come. William the Silent is leading the rebels, Tyl and Lamme go through the land in disguise, spying out the Spanish dispositions, organizing the smuggling of arms and recruits to the rebel armies. Tyl whistles like a lark and when he hears in reply "the clarion of the cock" he knows he is in touch with one of the secret agents of the rebels.

In this part also he captures the murderer of his father,

who has taken to preying on lonely passers-by in the dunes, women or drunken peasants returning from the fair, slaying them foully and robbing them.

The traitor's end is terrible, "And he had his hand cut off, and his tongue pierced with a hot iron, and he was burned alive by a low fire, before the doorway of the Town-hall." There is no sentimentality in this book. The rebels are never treacherous like the Spaniards, but their vengeance is swift and unrelenting.

In the fourth and fifth parts Tyl and Lamme take to the sea in the fleet of the beggars, and the rebellion which failed on land wins on the sea. Tyl marries Nele, and Lamme finds his wife. They are the most stirring and most beautiful parts of all, and here de Coster lets one see fully what is at the back of his mind. For in the end Tyl does not die. He is lying on the ground, seemingly lifeless, Nele weeping beside him, when he is found by a priest, a burgo-master and two aldermen, and a rich peasant.

The priest puffs with pleasure at the sight:

'Ulenspiegel the Beggar is dead," he said. "God be praised! Peasant, make haste and dig a grave. . . ." Then the peasant dug the grave and placed Ulenspiegel therein and covered him with sand. And the curé said the prayers for the dead above the grave . . . . suddenly there was a great upheaving under the soil and Ulenspiegel, sneezing and shaking the sand out of his hair, seized the curé by the throat.

The curé, the aldermen, the burgomaster, and the peasant, symbol of all that Tyl derided and hated, took to precipitate flight.

"Can any bury," said Tyl, "Ulenspiegel the spirit and Nele the heart of Mother Flanders?" For to de Coaster it is the worker who is the eternal spirit of his country and through him alone will its salvation come. Lest this should not come clearly out of his work he wrote a preface, a savage, bitter preface, the words of a man who hated and had

suffered under bourgeois oppression and smugness. It is not translated in this English edition because, according to that "excellent owl" Sir Edmund Gosse, it is "obscure" and the author has "slipped out of his depth."

The preface is called "The Preface of the Owl," and the owl is taken as the symbol of self-satisfied vileness, the all-wise bird of prey who lives on blood and strikes in the dark. The owl writes the preface and this is what he writes.

"Perhaps you find it strange to symbolize wisdom by a sad, grotesque bird, a pedant, in glasses [Sir Edmund!] an actor at a fair, a friend of darkness, of silent flight, and who slays, like death, without one hearing his coming? You are like me for all that, false, good fellows who laugh at me. . . . Have there not, in the history of you all, broken certain pale dawns lighting with their sickly gleam pavements strewn with the bodies of men, of women and children? On what do your politics live since you reigned over the earth? On murder and massacre. . . ."

The owl speaks to the author:

"Are you sure there is no Charles V or Philip II living now in the world? Are you not afraid that a careful censorship will seek in the stomach of your elephant for allusions to illustrious contemporaries? Why did you not let this Emperor and this King sleep in their tombs? Why do you bark at so much majesty? Who seeks blows shall perish by blows. There are people who will not pardon you, neither do I pardon you, you trouble my bourgeois digestion."

Poor de Coster. Aflame with the pure spirit of '48 he knew his book was bound to be a failure. But he need not have feared the censorship. A worse fate was to befall him, to be patronized by the owls of this world as a "patriotic" writer. He will be safe only with his own people. He wrote his book for the workers. Let them treasure it.

SWAN SONG

[From *Sunday Worker*, 29 July, 1929]

Swan Song; by JOHN GALSWORTHY. (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.)

"SWAN SONG" of many things. Of the Forsyte family, of British Imperialism, and lastly of John Galsworthy, the writer who has spent his life in observing the ruling class of his country and setting down what one might fairly call "the Middle Class Scene." All those who read novels have read the *Forsyte Saga*, that immense history of a middle-class family, its rise, and finally in this second trilogy, of which *Swan Song* is the last volume, of its disintegration. Take it for all in all, the history of the Forsytes is a true picture of a class, of a remarkable class which in its day built up the most ruthless imperialist system in the world, which dominated and hated, and was hated by, the rest of the world.

"Damned foreigners" is Soames Forsyte's comment on those not fortunate enough to be born in the purple of British citizenship, and for Soames, we might add, the only British citizenship which counted was membership of a wealthy and respectable family like his own. Although he never in so many words expressed it, damned foreigners also were the mass of his women who created his wealth. Only to his own parasitic body servants, the gardener, the chauffeur, the butler, did he grant a certain measure, a very tiny measure of common humanity.

For the rest, the chauffeur was usually, "that fellow Riggs," the gardener he supposed "did work some time or other; in the small hours perhaps—precious small hours!" and the butler was "this butler chap."

During the General Strike Soames made them all enlist as "Specials." During the strike also Soames and all his

kind, even the most muddle-headed and sentimental of his kind, like his insufferable son-in-law, Michael Mont, declared quite openly that the mass of their fellow countrymen were only "damned foreigners."

Before then they had hardly been conscious of them at all, save as a hobby when they had nothing else on hand, when they went in for slumming or chicken raising for the unemployed.

But the General Strike, with which *Swan Song* opens, made them conscious enough. Then they were "England," defending the country, full of glorious memories of 1914. The others, the millions of strikers and their families, are "they" a vague, unknown and hostile force, the enemy to be fought as the Germans were fought. Soames and his friends on the other hand, are "we." "They say we can't organize!" young Mont observes, going to Hyde Park the day after the strike began. "Can't we just—after the event!"

Soames has a daughter, a leader of society of the more daring kind, heroine of a scandalous law case, determined organizer of amusements of the pyjama and bottle variety. Young Mont, son of a baronet, is her husband and an M.P. Fleur thinks we should have a Mussolini, but in the end runs a canteen for scabs at a railway terminus. One of her uncles is a popular parson of the Dick Shepherd type. He becomes a "Special." When Mont meets him in Whitehall and expresses surprise at seeing him in uniform, the parson retorts, "Are you one of those who think the Church is debarred from mundane pleasure?"

Jon Forsyte, an early flame of Fleur's, who is married to an American "Forsyte," rushes back to England when he hears of the strike. He works as a scab fireman on an engine. "Extraordinary pleasure in being up against it—being in England again, doing something for England!"

And, strangely, the author also seems to imagine that he is describing England in this group of foolish, cruel, avaricious and lecherous, middle-class men and women. He realizes that they are faced with a crisis, and that in some

way the crisis threatens from "them," the dark, unknown masses. But that is all. Try how he will, Galsworthy cannot make his people, who are essentially real and true types, seem worth preserving. They are "England," "English" culture, "English" civilization. Old Soames, the most vital of all is grasping, his sense of property is the dominating emotion of his life. Even his mad love for his daughter, Fleur, is a love for a piece of beautiful flesh and blood which is his, made by him and endowed by him with the necessary circumstance in which it can appear most splendid and beautiful.

Fleur herself is shallow, a snob, ambitious only socially, with the same sense of property as her father. In her case it is expressed in a mad desire to tear Jon Forsyte away from his American wife. For five minutes, in a wood on a summer's night, she succeeds. Then Soames dies as a result of an accident at a fire in his home, and Fleur, seized with artificial remorse, returns to husband and child.

And the rest are a futile crowd of ne'er-do-wells. They take up slumming, a great "reconstruction" scheme, because they must have something to fill their empty, useless lives and politics do not seem enough. They fiddle and potter about with vital problems, knowing nothing and understanding nothing, and when they are menaced fight blindly and brutally. The gentlemen of England! They are incapable even of looking after their racehorses properly.

The degeneracy which Galsworthy pictures in *Swan Song* has also bitten deep into his own ability as a writer. He was never more than a faithful observer with a competent pen. But that at least is something. In *Swan Song* he goes quite to pieces, as though he were tired to death of all these people. The writing is slipshod, automatic, a mere jerking out of the old Galsworthy formulas for "English" landscape and "English" humanity.

What is one to make, for example, of such a phrase as this: "It did not occur to him that Fleur's longing for Jon might also symbolize the craving in her blood for life, the

whole of life and nothing but life." It might serve Gilbert Frankau, or a writer of *Peg's Novelties*, but for the literary lion of the British bourgeoisie it is a sign of severe mental collapse. The style of *Swan Song* is full of such excuses for psychological observation. If there were a Marxist literary critic who had the time he might find much to interest him by a comparison between the two trilogies, the Forsytes ascendant, the Forsytes decadent, and the corresponding decay in their creator's style.

THE OPEN CONSPIRATOR

[From *Left Review*, December 1934]

IT is the rarest thing in the world for the imaginative writer to leave an autobiography. Perhaps this is the most significant thing about Mr. H. G. Wells's *Experiment in Autobiography*.* For Wells thinks of himself as being above all rather the expression of a tendency, than as a creator of imaginative literature. "I have spent a large part of my life's energy in a drive to make a practically applicable science out of history and sociology," he writes in his introduction. With the frankest honesty he makes clear that he thinks his popularizations of history, science and economics more important than his novels. Perhaps the very fact that at the end of his life he has written this autobiography means that he believes that H. G. Wells the man may prove more important than any of his books.

It may be this is true. Stalin in his interview called Wells "an important public man." Certainly it is what he has written which has made Wells important, but in a sense he has also become as a man more important than his work. The autobiography is a confession of this.

In the first volume, very occasionally in the second also, we glimpse the creative writer with his great passion for life, busy absorbing, feeling and observing, preparing for the day when he will write Kipps and Tono-Bungay. But this Wells very quickly becomes the Open Conspirator, and it is with the latter that the book is chiefly concerned. "For all his devotion to larger issues, for all his subordination of lesser matters, the Open Conspirator like the communist or the positivist man of science, remains as consistently *actual* as blood or lungs, right down to the ultimates of his being."

* *An Experiment in Autobiography*, 2 vols., H. G. Wells. Gollancz & Cresset Press. 10s. 6d. per volume.

So the purpose of the autobiography is revealed, to show Kipps and Mr. Lewisham behind the abstraction of the Open Conspirator. And the purpose is an important one. Moreover it is successfully carried out.

For the irony of history worked in such a way that at about the time when Kipps became audible, when the little man found a voice and a means of expression, he also found himself faced with a fight for his life. Modern capitalism, entering its last phase at the end of the nineteenth century, greatly increased the numbers of the lower middle class, the clerks, the teachers, the shop assistants, the technicians, the intelligentsia, but it also saw to it that the upper and the nether millstones were given a power and weight undreamed of in the past.

Kipps and Mr. Lewisham, for all their weaknesses, are men of intelligence, of deep curiosity, of passion and sense. Why should they be crushed? They can see as well as any man ever born that the world is ill-arranged, ill-ruled, untidy, planless. They understand that their brains have value and that their contribution to modern civilization is no mean one. In life they have only the two alternatives, either to rise to a decent comfort and prosperity, or to fall into the mean poverty and squalor of Atlas House in Bromley, Kent, or the lodging in Euston Road. Naturally, they prefer to rise, to find their way to the class above, away from the dreaded nightmare of final ruin.

But since they are also men of good will, since their very struggle has forced them to try to understand the world, they see that the world is not good, they feel that it must be changed, and as life goes on and they see that the chances for Mr. Lewisham, instead of growing greater, are infinitely less, they demand the change with increasing vigour, they become Open Conspirators.

As its name implies, there is no secret about the Open Conspiracy. It seeks to change the world without revolution. It would do it by influencing the class to which it aspires, the class of the "organizers," the Rockefellers and Fords, it would do it by combining the "best" of this class

with the enfranchized members of the middle-classes. As for the mass of workers, the conspirators fear and dislike them. About this dislike also Wells is very honest. "I have never believed in the superiority of the inferior. . . . My thought, as I shall trace its development in this history, has run very close to communist lines, but my conception of a scientifically organized class-less society is essentially of an expanded middle-class which has incorporated both the aristocrat and plutocrat above and the peasant, proletarian and pauper below."

Wells is the voice of the intermediate sections of modern society, this is his great importance. They long for escape from the contradictions and antagonisms of modern life, but themselves possess neither the organization nor the possibility for solving those contradictions and destroying those antagonisms. They understand well enough that only Socialism can do this and in Socialism they believe with great sincerity. But Socialism must come because they will it, because it is "reasonable." "The truth remains that to-day nothing stands in the way to the attainment of universal freedom and abundance but mental tangles, egocentric preoccupations, obsessions, misconceived phrases, bad habits of thought, subconscious fears and dreads and plain dishonesty in people's minds—and especially in the minds of those in key positions. That universal freedom and abundance dangles within reach of us and is not achieved, and we who are Citizens of the Future wander about this present scene like passengers on a ship overdue, in plain sight of a port which only some disorders in the chart-room prevents us from entering. Though most of the people in the world in key positions are more or less accessible to me, I lack the solvent power to bring them into unison. I can talk to them and even unsettle them but I cannot compel their brains to see."

That is Wells's problem. He does not solve it, and it is part of his fundamental honesty that he does not pretend very confidently that he has solved it. It is also the problem of the intellectual, the scientist, the technician in general.

They also can talk to the "key people" and remain unheard, while all the time the ship of humanity lurches and shivers in the gale that threatens it with immediate destruction. H. G. can see the "disorder in the chart-room," but he cannot make the brains of the navigators see. He wishes to continue the effort on behalf of the passengers, even though the ship is not only overdue but in peril of becoming a total loss. There are others who think that a mutiny of the crew will alone suffice to bring the ship safe to port. But the passengers' comfort would be interfered with by such a drastic remedy and they would rather continue the argument than take such a risk. Yet the sailors, though they may not possess a single Board of Trade certificate among them, are capable of navigating the ship, not without danger, but sufficiently well to make port.

Wells does not believe this and fears to trust himself to a mutinous crew, however great the provocation and danger. Reading the autobiography it is easy to understand why. For he grew up in the faith that there is no magic greater than that contained in a Board of Trade certificate. This is the outlook of the Fabian society.

The Fabians believed they could rule the country by winning the "key positions" in the Civil Service. "They strove to think that any contemporary administrative and governing body, a board of guardians, a bench of magistrates, Parliament, Congress, was capable of playing the rôle of the 'community' and 'taking over' the most intricate economic tasks." Wells never believed in this, an idea he shrewdly saw to be based on the infallibility of the governing class, a class in which he did not trust. So he quarrelled with the Fabians.

But was his own idea ever very different? He saw what he calls "the competent receiver" in a body of chosen men and women, bound by a strong discipline, an aristocracy of intellect, whom he calls first the "Samurai" and later, the "Open Conspirators."

Despite the terrible lesson of the war, despite the present crisis, he does not see that it is a matter of power, of class

alignment. Indeed he violently reacts against such a view, though surely the scientific mind, for which he has such a genuine passion, must realize that those who were able to sacrifice millions of lives, to risk the whole human heritage, in war to divide up the world, are not likely to make way for an aristocracy of talent. The only use they have for brains is to buy them.

Wells has made the great mistake of overlooking the fact that the captain and officers in the chart-room are also the ship's owners. They would no more hand over control to a picked force of passengers than they would to a mutinous crew. If the passengers wish to save themselves as well as the ship, they can only do so by joining hands with the crew.

His hatred for Marx is curious, though easily explained. First, of course, Wells has never read Marx and Engels, or he must know such elementary things as that the two founders of scientific socialism never condemned the Utopians. On the contrary, they knew them and revered their work much more than does Wells. This is what Wells says of Marx:

"He collected facts, scrutinized them, analysed them and drew large generalizations from them. But he lacked the imaginative power necessary to synthesize a project. . . . He fostered among his associates a real jealousy of the creative imagination, imaginative dullness masqueraded among them as sound common sense, and making plans, 'Utopianism' that is, became at last one of the blackest bugbears in the long lists dictated by Marxist intolerance."

Now this is such a laughable travesty that one can only explain it by saying that Wells has never read Marx and Engels. This is perhaps not sufficient. It can only be fully explained by the fact that Wells has only heard of Marx and Engels at second-hand from those who have distorted their work. The picture he paints is accurate enough when applied to Hyndman, to Belfort Bax, to pre-war English "Marxism," which Engels attacked with all the militant fury of which he was capable.

For the outlines of the Socialist Society of the future are clearly enough given by Marx and Engels in *The Gotha Programme*, in *The Housing Problem*, in *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*, in *Anti-Dühring*, in their letters, in a score of other places. These two men had a knowledge of science, of industrial organization, which makes the student of the Kensington Normal School look a very shoddy amateur in comparison. Wells is proud of his military imagination, but his pre-war romances, brilliant though many of their forecasts are, fade before the real knowledge and prophesies of Engels in this field.

Marx and Engels differ from Wells, not in a disregard for planning, but in the vital respect that they were the first to show the conditions in which planning becomes possible and capitalist anarchy disappears. Stalin in his talk with Wells sums up this fundamental difference so simply that it would be foolish to try to summarize him.

"Of course, things would be different if it were possible, at one stroke, spiritually to tear the technical intelligentsia away from the capitalist world. But that is Utopia. Are there many of the technical intelligentsia who would dare break away from the bourgeois world and set to work to reconstruct society? Do you think there are many people of this kind, say, in England or in France? No, there are few who would be willing to break away from their employers and begin reconstructing the world.

"Besides, can we lose sight of the fact that in order to transform the world it is necessary to have *political power*? It seems to me, Mr. Wells, that you greatly under-estimate the question of political power, that it entirely drops out of your conception. What can those, even with the best intentions in the world, do if they are unable to raise the question of seizing power, and do not possess power? At best they can help the class which takes power, but they cannot change the world themselves. This can only be done by a great class which will take the place of the capitalist class and become the sovereign master as the latter was before. This class is the working class. Of

course, the assistance of the technical intelligentsia must be accepted; and the latter, in turn, must be assisted. But it must not be thought that the technical intelligentsia can play an independent historical rôle. The transformation of the world is a great, complicated and painful process. For this great task a great class is required. Big ships go on long voyages."

Volume II of the Autobiography closes with the Open Conspirator's pilgrimage to Roosevelt and Stalin. It is an exciting finish and in one way it solves for the thoughtful reader the problem of this curious, busy, fascinating life. Wells found Roosevelt a simple, courageous, intelligent and energetic man. He discovered to his delight that the President had a "Brains Trust" of open conspirators, of flexible and intelligent minds. He might have sensed a warning in the phrase, but his outlook had to blind him to this as to many other great dangers in his creed. The very word, Trust, is packed with the idea of monopoly, of private property. American capitalism, grappling with the crisis, buys up the brains of the intelligentsia, forms a "trust" and goes into battle.

Roosevelt has such support from the American masses as no capitalist leader has ever had in history, also he has his Brains Trust of open conspirators, and yet he is powerless to "plan," to make a reality of all the windy talk of organization and planning that fills the press and pours into the air from the radio. The American elections are a warning.

Roosevelt was returned on a whirlwind vote. Opposition has dwindled almost to nothing. Yet two things stand out in that immense victory. One is the defeat of Roosevelt's supporter, Wells's friend, Upton Sinclair, for the Governorship of California. Sinclair's proposals for "ending poverty in California," though they were a mild enough threat to vested property interests, were sufficient to make his defeat certain. If Roosevelt were ever foolish enough to take the Open Conspiracy seriously, his fate would be the same.

The second lesson is to be found in the comments of the

Press. The millions of American workers, farmers, small middle-class have declared their faith in Roosevelt to work miracles. Therefore, says the wise Press, we may be quite sure that Roosevelt will go warily. Those who voted for him want an end to social anarchy without revolution. Those who rule the country understand that the greater the support he wins, the more dangerous his position becomes. Roosevelt, we are told, will not go "left." He will try no rash experiments on "Epic" lines. And those who tell us so are right.

Roosevelt is a symbol of the helplessness of the Open Conspirator. Intelligent, brave, energetic, he remains the plaything of forces he cannot control. Whatever his desires, however strong his will, Roosevelt is not a master of reality but only the tool of those whom in all sincerity he may hate or despise.

Wells also found Stalin a simple, brave, modest and intelligent man. It may be that in the abstract, supposing for a moment it were possible to look at human beings in the abstract, he is no greater a man that Franklin Roosevelt. He also has the confidence and love of the people he leads, to a greater extent than Roosevelt even. But for Stalin this confidence is no embarrassment. On the contrary, it is the first necessity of his work.

Stalin, unlike Roosevelt, can lead the Soviet peoples in planning their future, in the organization of their society, because he and they have *the power*. No tribute has to be paid to the anarchic forces of capitalism, their country and its resources are their own. Here is no questions of a "Brains Trust." Here is a Communist Party, the organization of the great class of the propertyless.

Is there a difference? Are not the Communists also an aristocracy of brains, something like the Samurai of Wells's imagining? Only to a very small degree. They are not a trust, not a monopoly of intelligence. They are the advanced guard of a class. All that is alive, active, conscious, desirous of changing the world, of building the new Society, is in their ranks. This is not the ideal of an

intellectual aristocracy, still less of a trust. An aristocracy it is in the literal sense that it joins in itself all that is *best* among the fighters for the new world.

Wells has never believed in the Civil Service, or in parliamentary institutions, as "competent receivers" for the new society. He is right in this. The making of a new humanity cannot be the privilege of a handful of bureaucrats. But neither can it be the work of an equally small handful of "organizers." The task of the Communists as an advanced guard is to rouse and lead, to make everyone to some degree an organizer, to break down all the old barriers. It is for this reason that Stalin, talking to the Soviet working class of the Five Year Plan, was able to say, "The reality of our plan consists in live people, you and me, our will and our labour, our readiness to work in the new way, our determination to carry out the plan."

Roosevelt could never say this, because he is not the master but the slave of reality. In the Soviet Union the captain can talk of "you and me, our will and our labour" and what he says has a real meaning. In the capitalist country the best of human effort, human will and human labour, is imprisoned and defeated and any talk of "our plan" is only a mockery. A five-year plan for putting up Belisha Beacons or rehousing the Metropolitan Police, yes. But a plan to build a new Britain, a country in which the workers and the intellectuals could strive together for a society in which there should be no more workers, no more intellectuals, only co-operators in one great task, this remains a Utopia if considered apart from power.

Nevertheless, the autobiography is one of the most important books of our time. It is the faithful story of a man who in a period of changing landmarks has expressed better than any other the outlook of his own middle-class. If he fails to solve the problems of his class, as he has failed to solve his own literary problem, it is not through lack of honesty or purpose. It is because the path he is on can lead to no solution, though that does not deprive his life of value or his imagination of interest. Among the literary

figures of our time Wells stands out. He does so in spite of the fact that his own literary life is a surrender, or perhaps because of this. In the fascinating *Digression About Novels* he confesses frankly that "exhaustive character study is an adult occupation, a philosophical occupation. So much of my life has been a prolonged and enlarged adolescence, an encounter with the world in general, that the observation of character began to play a leading part in it only in my later years. It was necessary for me to reconstruct the frame in which individual lives as a whole had to be lived, before I could concentrate upon any of the individual problems of fitting them into this frame."

That is a very brave statement. His conclusion that the novel will give way to biography is, however, wrong. For the curious paradox will always remain that the reality of a man who has actually lived is one of the hardest things to express truthfully, however abundant the biographical materials. Biography becomes fiction whenever it tries to present the full truth. Nevertheless, Wells is right a thousand times when he abandons the novel to find a framework for reality. A greater man might have succeeded in expressing his age in fiction, but few men can have ranged over the intellectual life of their time as freely as Wells, the great journalist and popularizer, the "encyclopædist" who for all his doubts of the future is nevertheless one of its heralds, even though the note of his bugle quavers a little fearfully as he sounds the challenge.

HENRI BARBUSSE: IN MEMORIAM

[From *Daily Worker*, 31 August, 1935]

IT is only a few weeks since I saw Henri Barbusse on the platform of the World Writers' Congress in Paris, inspiring, leading, burned up with the fire of his own devotion to the cause of the new world.

The thin, gaunt figure, the noble head with its prominent cheekbones and deep-set, inspired eyes that, in contrast with the worn body, were never weary, impressed everyone who saw him.

When he rose to speak to the packed and expectant hall, a great burst of cheering greeted him, enwrapped him and shook him for a moment with the warmth of its love.

This man and the people were one, you felt.

Henri Barbusse was beloved of the French workers and revolutionary intellectuals for his deep, unswerving devotion to their cause, to the cause of the workers of the whole world, the cause of Communism.

Once again, only three weeks later, I saw him and it was the last time. But perhaps it was the greatest day of all his life. He was standing in a taxi, his tall, bent figure almost merging in the folds of a great red flag, and he was at the head of the greatest demonstration of the people of Paris which even that city of revolutions has known.

It was 14 July, the anniversary of the great revolution of 1789, which changed the world, and the People's Front was marching, nearly half a million of men and women sworn to defend the rights which that revolution had won, to give bread, work and peace to the toilers and to disarm the Fascist bandits who threaten civilization.

No man can claim more credit than Henri Barbusse for the success of that great popular movement, whose effects will still be felt throughout the world. It was he who, by

founding the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement for unity against war and Fascism, made 14 July, 1935, possible, and the great triumph of the People's Front was also his triumph.

It is like that one should always remember Barbusse, warmed by the love of the splendid workers of France, and inspired by their revolutionary fire.

Yet no one, looking at the worn body and the ravaged face, could ever forget what a terrible and difficult struggle his had been. Born in 1873, Henri Barbusse was formed by the pre-war generation of French intellectuals. Their despair, their æsthetic pessimism were his.

Poet and novelist, the young literary editor of a fashionable journal, he had neither contact nor sympathy with the masses, only, even then, a deep sincerity and feeling for the tragedy of human life.

He was, as Lenin has said, quite ignorant, oppressed by his own ideas and prejudices, a peaceful, modest, law-abiding member of the middle classes.

Barbusse was transformed by a crime. The crime of the imperialist war. He became, to use Lenin's words once more, a remarkably strong, talented and just character.

His book, *Le Feu* (*Under Fire*), was the first protest against the war, a protest which showed that its author, in the hell of the trenches, had seen through to the end.

For *Le Feu*, cautiously, still a little uncertainly, but quite clearly and unmistakably, drives home one lesson alone, that the crime of the war can be expiated only by a war to the death against the criminals in each country who are driving the masses to the slaughter.

Written in 1917 by a serving soldier, an officer, it was an act of remarkable individual and social courage. Lenin always emphasized that Barbusse's *Under Fire* and its sequel, *Light*, were among the most striking symptoms of the revolutionizing of the masses in the West.

Barbusse from then on knew only one path, that of revolutionary struggle for Communism. His health, shattered by the war, his personal life far from happy, he devoted himself and his talent utterly to the working-class.

His great novel, *Chains*, an attempt, not quite successful, to show the enslavement of man through the ages, his burning tales of a hate against the tormentors and oppressors of the people in all countries (*Les Bourreaux*, *Faits Divers*), were at once a witness of his great love for the oppressed and his loathing for their exploiters.

In France he was one of the first to restore that great writer Zola to the place from which he had been thrown by the æsthetes and intellectuals, while as the editor first of *Clarté* and then of *Monde*, he gradually built up a strong Left Wing inside the French intellectual movement.

His last book, to be published in England in a few weeks' time, was the life of Stalin, a great writer's tribute to the leader of the world's workers and to the successful building of a free, Socialist society in the Soviet Union.

When he died he was working on an annotated edition of Lenin's letters and on a great novel which was to show the changes now taking place in all human relationships.

Barbusse was a name known all over the world. There is hardly a language into which his works have not been translated. To millions who have never seen him, who did not know his country, he was the symbol of the outraged conscience of civilization, protesting against the monsters of capital and their servants.

He was a man who had re-made himself in the course of a bitter struggle, re-made himself to become the voice of millions in their fight for a new, free society, from which capitalist cruelty, the capitalist defiling of human relationships, shall be banished for ever.

Barbusse, whose great book *Under Fire* was a shot fired in the face of the enemy by a man who still felt himself alone, died fighting, worn out in the struggle, but already one of the beloved leaders of a countless army marching to victory.

On the eve of a new world war, Hail and Farewell to Henri Barbusse, hero of the revolution!

THE NOVEL AS EPIC

[From *The Novel and the People*]

IT is the main argument of this essay that the novel is the most important gift of bourgeois, or capitalist, civilization to the world's imaginative culture. The novel is its great adventure, its discovery of man. It may be objected that capitalism has also given us the cinema, and this is true, but only in a technical sense, for it has proved so far unable to develop it as an art. The drama, music, painting and sculpture have all been developed by modern society, either for better or for worse, but all these arts had already gone through a long period of growth, as long almost as civilization itself, and their main problems were solved. With the novel, only one problem, the simplest one of all, that of telling a story, had been solved by the past.

Yet the novelists did not start off altogether from scratch. They had a certain amount of accumulated experience, an experience we can still use with profit to-day. As the Middle Ages drew to their close the trading communities of Italy and England produced the first tellers of tales in the modern manner, in which the characters of men and women, the way they did things, began to matter almost as much as what they did. Chaucer and Boccaccio first showed the most important feature of the novelist, a curiosity about men and women. Perhaps you can feel it a little in Malory, but he was writing almost a century later than Chaucer, and though his medium was prose, one feels that he has fallen a long way behind the poet. True, he was writing in the midst of a society in the full anarchy of decay, but you will find truer Englishmen and women (and sometimes better prose) in the Paston letters than in Malory.

Malory's knights and ladies, his Round Table and his mystic Grael, his killings and his bawdrie, have all the

elements of that most pernicious form of bourgeois literature, Romanticism. I will not allow Malory to the Middle Ages any more than Scott or Chateaubriand. He tells his tale as well as Scott and his sentiment is seldom so nauseating as Chateaubriand's, but he remains the first great escapist, a man seeking refuge from a present both fearful and repellent in an idealized past. He abandoned realism, or rather, it never existed for him, Chaucer might never have lived, and if Malory ever read the *Canterbury Tales* he no doubt considered them unpleasantly vulgar. In a sense, Euphues and Arcadia are part of his romantic tradition, as was the Faery Queen. They have their virtues as poetry, or as imaginative prose, but they held back the English imagination from developing in fiction. Perhaps that was no great matter. Dramatic poetry took all the best of our national genius at that time, and the Elizabethan age, though it produced some glorious pub stories and rogues' tales in defiance of the Euphues tradition, did not noticeably advance the novel.

Nor did the seventeenth. But here I think there is a point worth making. H. G. Wells, in his autobiography, lets slip a very profound piece of self-criticism. "Exhaustive character-study," he writes, "is an adult occupation, a philosophical occupation. So much of my life has been a prolonged and enlarged adolescence, an encounter with the world in general, that the observation of character began to play a leading part in it only in my latter years. It was necessary for me to reconstruct the frame in which individual lives as a whole had to be lived, before I could concentrate upon any of the individual problems of fitting them into this frame."

It is true that novel-writing is a philosophical occupation. The great novels of the world, *Don Quixote*, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Jonathan Wild*, *Jacques Le Fataliste*, *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, *War and Peace*, *L'Education Sentimentale*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Way of All Flesh*, are great precisely because they have this quality of thought behind them, because they are highly imaginative, inspired,

if you like, commentaries on life. It is this quality which distinguishes the first-rate from the second-rate in fiction. It is true that there are philosophers who have lamentably failed to write novels, but no novelist has ever been able to create without possessing that ability for generalization about his characters which is the result of a philosophical attitude to life.

The seventeenth century produced no great novels, but it did produce the philosophers who made possible the triumphs of the following century. Somehow I cannot but feel that the eighteenth remains the supreme period in English fiction because it follows so closely upon the supreme period in English philosophy. English philosophy was the creation of the bourgeois revolution in our country, and it was profoundly materialist. "Materialism is the true son of Great Britain," writes Marx. "It was the English schoolman, Duns Scotus, who asked 'whether matter could not think.'" Berkeley, the first English idealist, only inverted Locke's sensualist philosophy, as Sterne only sentimentalized the materialism of Rabelais and the imaginative power of Cervantes.

Rabelais and Cervantes, the real founders of the novel, were more fortunate than their successors in that they did not live in the new society of which they were the heralds. They were men of the transition period, children of the revolutionary storms which broke up medieval feudalism, and they were inspired by the greatest flow of new ideas, the most exciting rebirth that man has ever known in his history (leaving aside the vexed question of whether or not we are to-day again entering on such a period).

Their two works are still to this day unchallenged for vigour of life, for force of imagination and for richness of language. They stood between two worlds. They were able to mock and to flay the vices of the old world, but they by no means uncritically accepted the new. The same is true of Shakespeare, and, indeed, of all the great figures of the Renaissance. Man has lost in stature since then what he has gained in mastery over the brave new world which

they saw beginning to open before their delighted but not uncritical eyes.

Rabelais asserts the independence of that pathetic, curious and delightful instrument of life, the human body, and gives a new war-cry to the mind within that body, the mind which was just discovering life anew, "Do what you will!" He wrought a revolution in language no less astonishing than in thought, as a study of any competent historical grammar of the French language will tell us. Here again is a point to bear in mind—the immense significance of the writer in the revolutionizing of language. After the Renaissance the next great flow of life into the French language came from the romantic movement which was the child of the Great Revolution. The same is roughly true of our own language.

In Cervantes the revolutionary nature of his work is more implicit than explicit. The drama of his view of life expresses itself in the relation between his two chief characters and again in the relation of Quixote and Sancho to the world outside them. In this way his novel marks a step forward from Rabelais, but between them these two forged for the novelist every weapon that he needed. Rabelais gave him humour and the poetry of language, Cervantes gave him irony and the poetry of feeling. They were universal geniuses and no work equal in stature to theirs has since been written in that variegated prose fiction which we call the novel.

It is worth while to note that both were men of action as well as novelists, that both suffered persecution, and that neither of them would have known what Mr. David Garnett meant if he had been able to talk to them about a "pure artist." If they had managed at last to understand that curious and contradictory phrase each would have hugged it, after his own fashion, to his bosom, and then unburdened himself, the one obscenely and happily, the other gravely and ironically, upon such a peculiar and perverted concept.

The novelists, the epic writers of the new society, had

therefore a great heritage on which to draw. How did they acquit themselves of their task? In our own country, for a half-century or so, with honour, even though they never achieved the heights which the French and Spanish giants had conquered. The novel was a weapon, not in the crude sense of being a political pamphlet, but in the period of its birth and first healthy growth it was the weapon by which the best, most imaginative representatives of the bourgeoisie examined the new man and woman and the society in which they lived. That is the all-important fact about the eighteenth century writers. They did not shrink from man, they believed in him, believed in his ability to master the world, while they were not for a moment blind to the cruelty and injustice of this world of which their heroes were so much a part.

Fielding has been blamed because he introduced "sermons" into his novels, but if the sermons were all removed, the social criticism would be there just the same, implicit in his story, and we should have lost some of the best essays in the English language. Better to leave the essays and accept the sad truth that Fielding, having lived before Flaubert and the Goncourt brothers, not to mention Henry James, really did not know that there were certain rules in polite literary society which have to be observed in the writing of a novel. He was the first Englishman to understand that the job of a novelist was to tell the truth about life as he saw it, and he told it in his own way. In *Jonathan Wild* he told it as it has never been told before or since, as even Swift never succeeded in telling it, with a fierce and brutal anger which lives because it is human anger awakened by the degradation of human life.

Fielding has been criticized, notably by Mr. David Garnett in his essay in *The English Novelists*, for lack of imagination expressed in a certain brutality towards suffering. It is true that there were some intimate depths of the human heart which found no expression in his work, he was an objective rather than a subjective writer, and if this limitation is at times a hindrance to his observation, it

would be fair to say that the subjectivists, Richardson, Sterne and Rousseau, have probably lost even more by their renunciation of the objective world, and have limited their vision still more severely.

But the accusation of brutality as a reproach to Fielding the novelist is inept as well as unjust. He lived in a brutal world, the world of conquering capitalism, the period when the English squire was crushing the English peasant out of existence, when the English adventurer was stealing the wealth of the Indies by means as horrible as they were (in the abstract sense) immoral, and when that accumulation of stolen wealth was being made in the country which was to make possible the Industrial Revolution. That strange genius, Warren Hastings, our English revenge on the East for Genghis Khan, was a child in Fielding's day. Walpole was the Prime Minister of his maturity. And the chapters of *Jonathan Wild* on the great man's share in the proper division of booty and "of hats" are the true reflection of his corrupt and plundering age. As well accuse Fielding of brutality as the author of *Lady into Fox* of being insensitive to the real life of his own age.*

There is a dualism in the writers of the eighteenth century, not only interesting but important. Defoe, Fielding and Smollett are concerned with a purely objective picture of the world. Their characters have little or no "inner life," and these authors spend no time on analysis either of feeling or of motive, for they are more concerned with describing "how" than "why." This does not exclude "why." Far from it. It is usually sufficiently clear to the reader why a character acts as he does, for the action flows from the character as we know it. In the famous case, for example, where Moll Flanders refrained from murdering the child whom she robbed, it seems clear enough why she refrained, perfectly in keeping with Moll's character as

* The "brutal" Fielding, it is worth remembering, instigated some of the most important reforms in the barbarous judicial system of our country. He was also the first man to draw up a scheme for a civilized police force which should inspire public respect and affection rather than fear and hatred.

we know it. For Defoe the interesting thing is that she was satisfied with robbery and stopped short of child murder. That appears more interesting than "why." Dostoievsky, however, could have written a whole novel for us entirely around this (relatively) trivial incident, a novel entirely concerned with "why."

The eighteenth century developed a completely new kind of novel, the novel concerned only with the individual's motives and feelings, in which the general social picture hardly counts at all. Robinson Crusoe was a supreme affirmation of the individual, but he was an individual who lived entirely outside himself, the typical man of the new world in one sense, but not in another. Crusoe discovered that he alone could conquer the world. It was left to Sterne and to Rousseau to discover that the individual alone *was* the world. The same thing had happened in philosophy when Berkeley turned Locke's empiricism upside down and produced his philosophy of subjective idealism which admitted no reality outside our own consciousness. It was a revolutionary and far-reaching idea in fiction, this taking of the consciousness of the individual as the starting-point of one's picture of the world. It early reached its logical conclusion when Restif de Bretonne dedicated his autobiographical novel *Monsieur Nicolas* to himself, but if it could sometimes be ridiculous, and if in the end it destroyed the novel, the new method could also be sublime.

The fact is that neither the view of Fielding on reality nor the view of Richardson and Sterne is a complete one. The exclusion of sentiment and analysis, the failure to see the subjective side of the individual, deprived the novel of imagination and fantasy, just as the centreing of all action in the individual consciousness deprived it of its epic quality. Such a division in Cervantes was unthinkable. It was the creation of a fully developed capitalist society which had completed the separation of the individual from society, just as in another two generations it was to begin the subdivision of individuals themselves in the completion of its minute and complex division of social labour.

The new school, however, with their disturbing discovery of "sensibility," were the forerunners of a revolution in the novel. Richardson, a little tearfully but none the less truly, disclosed the most intimate feelings of the human heart. Had he only possessed Fielding's steady vision of life and firm hold on reality nothing could have prevented him from becoming one of the world's greatest novelists. It is a vain thing to wish a writer had possessed qualities he most obviously did not have, but this time there is some justification for the silly regret, since Richardson's failings have inevitably if unjustly reduced him to the position of a museum piece, from being a living writer to an historical and literary "influence."

Sterne carried the retreat from reality even further. Richardson had only been concerned with the feelings of his characters, but he had retained, despite his correspondence form which he borrowed from France and his own domestic experience, the traditions of the story told in time. Sterne at a blow destroyed all this. "To be or not to be" might well be called the central problem of the hero's fate in *Tristram Shandy*, in a literal sense undreamed of by Hamlet, and so far as this reader is concerned he never could discover for certain whether the problem was adequately solved, despite the complications attending the physical process of Tristram Shandy's birth which are so amusingly described. Sterne murders time in his novel. Shall a novel tell a story? Yes, answer the school of relativists, it may tell a story if it can be a detective story in which the reader seeks for the clue to beginning, middle and end, is continually baffled, and then has it all explained to him later by the author, or, in extreme cases, by the author's friends in specially written commentaries.

Sterne had all the divine gifts of the greatest novelists, he had irony, fantasy, a delight in obscenity, a love of humanity, everything the fairies bring to the genius at birth, everything but one gift, the ability to set his characters to live in a real world. He liked to think of himself as the English Rabelais, he copied Cervantes in the creation of

Uncle Toby and Trim, but he was not Rabelais and he was most certainly not Cervantes. These two were discoverers of a new world, they were at war with life as well as in love with life, but Sterne was only the garrulous eighteenth-century gentleman trying to reconcile himself with Aristocratic society. He is much more amusing and has much more genius than his remote descendant Swann, but it is the same impulse that created the two books. Sterne was the first author to destroy time, to introduce relativism into the novel, but he did it, not in the interests of a greater reality, but because he found it easier that way to talk about himself. What greater reality, asks the idealist, can there be than oneself? Why, the reality of those who don't like you and think you rather an ass, of course, the reality of those who thought Sterne a self-advertising obscenity and Proust a pretentious social climber. But they were wrong? Yes, they were wrong, though Sterne and Proust by trying so desperately to prove them wrong diminished their own value as *creative* artists.

The real revolutionary of the eighteenth-century was, strictly speaking, not a novelist at all, though he was one of the greatest imaginative prose writers of all time. Rousseau held the illusion, fostered by eighteenth century French materialism, that education could change man. Certainly this is not all illusion, and if man's social environment is favourable it may even be true, provided man is also actively working to change himself. Rousseau's theory led him to believe that the influence of nature is one of the most powerful influences which can change man's character for the better. It is a sad illusion, but in cultivating that illusion Rousseau did a great service to literature, for he brought back nature into art. Without him we should never have known Egdon Heath, nor Tolstoi's reapers, nor Conrad's Pacific.

The eighteenth century was the golden age of the novel. The novel of this period did not have the high fantasy of Cervantes and Rabelais who showed how imagination can transform reality by a dæmon force, but it was not afraid

of man and spoke the truth about life with an uncompromising courage. It had wit also, and humour, and it compelled man to understand that the individual had an inner life as well as an outer life. It discovered nature for him and it roused him to consider, in the work of Fielding, Swift, Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau, that all was not for the best in the best of all possible worlds. It roused him not before it was time, because the world of the eighteenth century was about to die in the greatest revolutionary convulsion of all history. But one thing the century failed to do. It produced no novel which combined the humane realism of Fielding with the sensibility of Richardson, with Sterne's ironic wit and Rousseau's passionate love of nature. Nor was the nineteenth century to succeed any better, though in Balzac and Tolstoi it came nearer than ever before. Indeed, taken as a whole, the nineteenth century was one of retreat, a retreat which has ended in a panic rout in our own day.

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