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Marxism and Ethics

By JOHN LEWIS

I

"The schism between communism on the one hand and Christian ethics and Western civilisation on the other, is the most deadly, far reaching and rending that the human race has known." WINSTON CHURCHILL.

EVERY social system creates an ethical system to support and maintain it. Religion adds its supernatural sanctions. The Social Order is believed to be rooted in the absolute, and subversive elements are therefore not only opposed on political grounds but charged with immorality and heresy.

The radical social reformer therefore does more than criticise social forms. He attacks the ethical and religious foundations of society. He challenges those absolute ideas on which the existing order tries to base its moral superiority. That is why a period of radical change is also a period of ethical controversy which becomes more furious as the period of transition draws near. "Slow drift is accepted," says a contemporary philosopher, "but when for human experience quick changes arrive, human nature passes into hysteria. In such times while for some heaven dawns; for others hell yawns open."¹

One certainly notes the overtones of hysteria in the current onslaught upon the morals of communism. This surely implies doubt as to the stability of capitalist society and a growing realisation that its successor has already appeared upon the stage of history. Even *The Times* has sought to explain the panic fear of communism in the United States as arising "from a sense of bewilderment, a profound recurrent anxiety about American capitalism" and the knowledge that socialism is the only alternative.

It is particularly from the Church, which has always played an important role in lending religious authority to social principles, that the present ethical offensive comes, though it might have done better to heed the words of one of its most saintly leaders. It was Bishop Gore who said: "It is true—most lamentably true—that since the days of Constantine the Church of Christ has dared absolutely to reverse the method of its master, and thereby has lost its ethical distinctness and its moral power. How utterly on the whole, has

¹ A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*.

the official Church failed to exhibit the prophetic spirit! It should make a tremendous act of penitence for having failed so long and on so wide a scale to behave as the champion of the oppressed and the weak; for having so often been on the wrong side."

The Church no less than the moralising politicians and secular champions of Christian ethics have indeed merited the rebuke: "Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." What judgment on those responsible for the destruction of Hiroshima was forthcoming from those who so piously declare their concern for the individual and their detestation of policies which justify ruthless means to achieve their ends? Where is the religious and moral protest against the repression of the exploited colonial people of the East Indies and Africa, or of the imperialist wars now being waged in Indo-China and Malaya? A lonely Bishop and a courageous priest may protest against racial discrimination in South Africa, but the vast majority of Christians both here and in the United States show little concern.¹

Professor George Thomson has said: "It is the habit of the bourgeoisie to charge their opponents with their own delinquencies." Certainly it is among themselves that we find everything which the critics of communism attribute to their opponents. They even admit it, for Press and pulpit are loud in their lamentations over the decadence of our times, its sordid commercialism, its growing and uncontrollable crime, its immorality and corruption. In spite of this their main attack is directed not against their own civilisation but against those who are working for a complete reconstruction of society.

These reflections would suggest that the moral judgment is not as detached and objective as it always claims to be. Morality is never unbiased, but is invariably, either in its formulation of principles or their application, the expression of men's actual interests, which in every class society, reveal themselves as the interests of a class. Engels said: "Men, consciously or unconsciously, derive their moral ideas in the last resort from the practical relations on which their class position is based—from the economic relations in which they carry on production and exchange. . . . Morality was always a class morality; it has either justified the domination and

¹ The recent Conference of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa has put it on record that the policy of *apartheid* has full sanction in the principles of the Christian religion.

the interests of the ruling class, or as soon as the oppressed class has become powerful enough, it has represented the revolt against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed."¹ "Right," says Marx, whether it be equal right or any other kind, "can never be higher than the economic structure of society and the cultural development thereby determined."² If that is the case then neither the moral principles of society as they are set forth by bourgeois moralists nor the ethical assault on Marxism are as absolute as is assumed. "Your very ideas," says *The Communist Manifesto*, "are but the outgrowth of the condition of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property." The bourgeoisie has transformed into eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from their special mode of production and in consequence the exalted principles on the basis of which it criticises Marxism are revealed as "so many bourgeois prejudices behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests."

II

Marxists derive morality not from any transcendental source, or fixed principles of right, but directly from the needs of men living socially. What functions do ethical beliefs fulfil? In general terms they make it possible for men to live together in society; without them, mankind would be no more than a collection of animals or isolated egoists, perpetually battling each for himself alone. They reflect certain relationships between man and man which themselves arise out of the way men grapple with nature to get a living. Under specific conditions certain ends come to be valued and certain duties are regarded as essential. Thus in any society a moral code emerges reflecting the mode of conduct necessary for its survival and is regarded as final and absolute. Frequently it is supported by supernatural sanctions.³

¹ Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 107.

² Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

³ Such a moral code is not, as some naturalistic philosophies have supposed, a reflection of human nature as such, or of social life as such, as though there could be but one pattern of society, and one type of human nature. On the contrary it depends on the particular stage of man's productive life, since it is that that determines the pattern of social relations. For the same reason Marxism rejects the relativism which regards moral systems as almost a matter of accident or whim. From this point of view the significance of the social pattern is obscure and the moral code has no particular purpose. A people chooses, apparently of its own free will, whatever type of social organisation and ethical code it wishes to have (Boas, Benedict, Mead and their school). Naturalism of this kind is disposed to treat the human nature which is really the reflection of a particular form of society as absolute. It is quite unable to account either for the variability or the development of morality or for the conflict of ethical systems and it has, of course, no standard by which to evaluate the different forms of ethical life.

It is sometimes argued that any naturalistic account of human morals necessarily implies the rejection of moral values. But this is to assume that matter and mind are two fundamentally different substances and that Marxists, rejecting mind, are therefore limited to a mindless and valueless material world. Marxists, however, do not reject moral values or reduce the world to mindless matter. They regard all mental, moral and spiritual phenomena as aspects of matter at the human level of development, just as life itself is an aspect or mode of behaviour of matter *at a particular level*. Marxists not only derive morals differently from idealists, they reject one kind of morality and accept another. They have a different conception of morality. Idealism strips the material world of life and value, which are then derived from outside it and beyond it. Marxism finds in the material world itself, in its developed conditions, and as an integral part of it, both mind and value, thus the one view degrades the material world, the other elevates it.

The idealist cannot find any good that is not derived from some supernatural source of value. Unless it is thus rendered valid he cannot see how we can know that it is good. In acknowledging values we are implicitly recognising an ideal that belongs to the spiritual world, and that is manifesting itself either in some good or beautiful thing or in some form of conduct which we morally approve. As a corollary it is often asserted that those who reject a transcendental source of value are reduced to merely physical satisfaction, since there can be nothing else that they can mean by "good."

Such a view reveals at once its own inadequate conception of human life, for this is considered to be, in itself, and apart from a special supernatural endowment, merely driven by organic needs and elementary sensual appetites. Everything beyond these is removed from the sphere of nature to the realm of spirit, of the ideal. But Marxists do not take this reductionist view of human life and therefore have no need to postulate a spiritual sphere to take care of the human qualities which the idealist has extruded from nature. Idealism is the reverse side of a false materialism, and this crude materialism is the other side of an idealism which places morals and all other values outside the purview of science. Such an external counterposing of ethical values with organic needs is false. Science elucidates the genesis of new, specifically human forms of mental and moral life but not in detachment from organic needs. The moral emerges with the social because "the very fact of social life and social division of labour naturally, by an internal necessity,

brings it about that the activity of man is directly aimed at the satisfaction not merely of his own personal needs but of those of society as well . . . this implies the transition to new specifically human forms of motivation which are both genetically connected with organically conditioned needs and qualitatively diverse from them."¹

Neither is there anything transcendental about the conception of the good, nor does it need validation from the plane of the absolute. The good is never absolute, but it is none the less good for that. What is good we determine on the basis of experience as interpreted by scientific social understanding and organise into our scheme of life. In all societies man creates on the basis of what is good *for him* ideals of what he wants his life to be and judges things and events as good, or bad in so far as they help or hinder him in pursuing these ideals. Good may be determined by deficiency. Heat is good when you are frozen, food is good when you are hungry. The good is strictly relative to our actual condition at the moment. Good will be relative firstly to wants most felt at the particular level of technical and social development and in relation to the particular environment, and secondly to one's class position as master or slave, as worker, peasant, landlord or employer, as we shall see later. If the idealist still persists in telling us that we cannot be sure that what we feel to be our vital needs are really good unless we can show that the values embodied in them are values "good in themselves," and independent of man, of history and of conditions, if he still asks how it is possible to "prove" that it is better to be healthy than diseased, to have a sufficiency of food, clothing and shelter rather than a deficiency, to enjoy economic security rather than to suffer insecurity, most sensible people would be puzzled that anyone should require "proof" of these things and would regard it as more important to consider how such values can be attained rather than what grounds there are for considering them to be valuable. We rightly suspect, if not the intentions and conscious motives, at least the actual social consequences of prolonged philosophising about whether life is better than death or health preferable to disease. Selsam has suggested that queries of this sort come from an ideology of moral cynicism and nihilism which in the interests of the *status quo* seeks to hold back man's advance to the general satisfaction of such fundamental needs.

The naturalism that derives morals from the social nature

¹ Rubinstein, *Under the Banner of Marxism*, 1943, Nos. 9 and 10,

of man marks a considerable advance on all dualisms of mind and matter and all transcendentalisms. It rightly rejects as childish the idea that unless standards and rules are absolute, and hence eternal and immutable, they are not rules and criteria at all. But it is in the same danger as absolutism of accepting the special needs of a class society as somehow a reflection of the "nature" of man, or, by failing to detect the real origin of social institutions and codes, of taking a completely relativist and subjectivist attitude toward them. Thus a Freud or a Russell finding men in the particular circumstances of our time in almost perpetual conflict, attributes this to the natural aggressiveness of man, while some anthropologists explain regressive forms of social life as due to pure chance, just as subjectivists explain moral judgments as mere expressions of personal feeling. Thus naturalism eventually finds itself as little able to understand the real function of morality as transcendentalism. Whether men explain human behaviour as due to the laws of God or the nature of man, as Marx said, "the phantoms of their brains have gained the mastery over them. They the creators have bowed down before their creatures."¹ For "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."²

III

We therefore need a much more specific and concrete account of the real meaning of any particular moral code. Putting aside both human nature as such and moral principles as such, we find men's behaviour arising from their real interests however much this dependence is concealed from them. All notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, altruism and egoism reflect the actual social condition of those who hold them. There is no human action that can be pronounced *a priori* to be right or wrong without regard to circumstances. It follows that the precepts of morality will change with changes in the condition of society; if we want to know what is ultimately responsible for the appearance of any particular form of morality or ethical conflict we shall have to ask what determines these changes in the condition of society. Marxists relate these conditions to the general system of production and the class interests involved.

This relativity does not however invalidate ethics; on the

¹ Marx, *The German Ideology*.

² *Ibid.*

contrary it alone can give morals significance. "A morality to suit all periods and all conditions is never and nowhere applicable," says Engels. It is because morality is always and in all places relative to circumstances that it is binding at any time or in any place. Just as it is a delusion to suppose that because all our knowledge is relative and partial that it is therefore untrustworthy, so it is equally a delusion that moral ideas are invalidated because they arise out of particular conditions of social production and organisation. How else could they be competent and relevant? The validity of ethical judgment is not abstract but concrete and resides in its very lack of metaphysical encumbrance. This strict dependence is morality's very sanction.

But when we say that morality can only be understood on the basis of actual conditions we must remember that society as it has existed for the whole of the historic period has been a class society, that is to say divided into groups occupying a particular status in relation to the means of production,¹ freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, wage earner and capitalist. These divisions give rise to as many ways of looking at the world and therefore to rival ethical codes.

The succession and variety of moral codes is a succession and variety of moral *fact*. Whether consistent or inconsistent there they are and our interest should be primarily in how they develop and what purposes they serve. There was a morality for slavery, nor could the slave possibly have had the ways of seeing and the passions and the sentiments of his master. There was a morality for the peasant conditioned by his servile status, his ignorance and his superstition, as well as by the co-operative life of his village. There was a morality for the way of life, regulated and monotonous, of members of the trade guilds, whose existence seemed embedded in a providential plan; but quite another for the modern proletarian with his new economic relationship to the employer. There is a morality for the modern industrialist, but it is not that which arises from the conditions of serenity and intellectual elevation which gave to the Athenian his virtue.² "What power of docile Christian persuasion will extract from the Souls of

¹ It must not be supposed that because classes to-day are crystallising in the West into the main distinction of bourgeoisie-proletariat that it was always the case that there were so few class distinctions. Marx and Engels speak of no less than a dozen classes in various countries and at various times even within the earlier modern period, and in many countries to-day the peasantry constitute an important class even if it is not a class which can lead.

² Labriola, *Historical Materialism*.

the modern proletarians their natural reasons of hate against their oppressors? If they wish that justice be done, they must appeal to violence; and before the love of one's neighbour as a universal law can appear possible to them, they must imagine a life very different from the present life which makes a necessity of hatred. In this society of differentiations, hatred, pride, hypocrisy, falsehood, baseness, injustice and all the catechism of the cardinal vices and their accessories make a sad appendage to the morality, equal for all, upon which they constitute the satire."¹ The mistake is to recognise this for every past morality but not for our own, which is supposed to be something more sublime, and to proclaim our limited purposes and procedures to be for the absolute welfare of humanity.

It is inevitable that a ruling class should enforce its special needs under the form of prescribed right and the step to an absolute right from that is a short one. But no universal validity can be granted to such rights. They remain strictly limited to the class interests they serve. Thus the *ruling* ethical conceptions of any age will be those reflecting the needs of the ruling class, upholding and sanctioning conduct in harmony with its interests and with the needs of the established economic order. Such a code will acquire a special sanctity and its principles will be regarded as absolute, unchanging and authoritative. Members of the ruling class inevitably identify the particular social order which they have created with the principle of order itself. They regard the threat of a competing political order as synonymous with the peril of chaos, and its representatives as violators of eternal sanctities.

Yet in fact nothing can prevent the rise of ideas and ethical principles reflecting interests which are opposed to those of the ruling class. When such an opposition becomes that of a new class rising to power and seeking to change the relations of production in its own favour, it asserts itself as a political force and the new ethic becomes an instrument in the struggle for power. The morality which thus arises out of a particular situation becomes a powerful instrument helping to transform the very social order which produced it. In that case it will challenge the moral code which expresses and supports the established order, attacking those elements in it which reflect only the needs and conditions of the ruling class. As Professor Carr says "a true revolution is never content merely to expose the abuses of the existing order, but

¹ Labriola, *Historical Materialism*.

attacks at their root the values on which the moral authority of the existing order is based . . . the gravamen of the Marxist revolution is . . . that it has called in question the moral authority of the ideals and principles of western democracy by declaring them to be a reflection of the interests of a privileged class."¹ The fact that such an assault undermines the moral authority of the ruling class and saps its own faith in the sincerity and efficacy of the principles on which its moral authority rests, shows how influential ethics can be as an agent of social change.

Thus ethics do not merely reflect conditions. They are social forces; powerful to change society or to defend it from unwanted change. Ethics therefore must not only be related to the general conditions of production and social life, but to the conflict of classes which arises out of these conditions. That is to say ethics can only be understood in terms of the class interests they are called upon to serve.

IV

But are there not at any rate some principles which persist through all the successive forms of social life and are to be found in all ages and climes? There certainly seem to be. But, as Engels pointed out, since these successive forms are found within the general system of exploitation characteristic of class society from slavery to capitalism, they necessarily have much in common. Thus in all forms of property owning society the moral law, "Thou shalt not steal," will appear. Is it therefore an eternal and absolute prohibition? "By no means," replies Engels. "In a society in which the motive for stealing has been done away with, in which therefore at the very most only lunatics would ever steal, how the teacher of morals would be laughed at who solemnly tried to proclaim the eternal truth; Thou shalt not steal!"²

When we consider such principles as *equality* and *brotherhood*, which have often been supposed to be the very ideals from which socialism is derived and which give it its high moral quality, we shall find that *equality* far from being an absolute moral ideal reflects the concrete demand of some section of the population discriminated against. It implies an inequality against which people are fighting. Thus it arises under particular circumstances and only has meaning in these circumstances. In the period of the French Revolution and in the eighteenth century it expressed the needs of the bourgeoisie when rising to power and demanding equality

¹ E. H. Carr, *The Soviet Impact*, p. 96.

² *Anti-Dühring*, p. 107.

before the law and the ending of economic privileges. But it was magnified into a general principle of abstract right, for every class aim (up to the time of Marxism) is invariably formulated in this way, i.e. as though it were derived from a principle which had nothing to do with class interests. Two things followed: firstly, classes which were themselves exploited by the bourgeoisie as well as by feudalism adopted the principle because it expressed their interests too, thus giving the principle a more extensive range and a different content; secondly, the most it ever represented for the bourgeoisie, who were making the running and fighting for political power and whose interpretation of the principle was the one that could be enforced, was a demand to end feudal privileges, and its main significance was seen in the kind of freedom and equality of rights which developing capitalism required.¹ As Engels points out, as adopted and developed by the proletariat this principle is interpreted in an anti-capitalist sense, although it is based on the capitalists' own assertions, since it is the workers' demand for the abolition of classes and not merely of class privileges; this follows because the inequality as between owner and propertyless proletarian is what matters to them. This demand for equality will spread to every part of the world in which either feudal privilege, racial discrimination, sex inequality or capitalist exploitation is found. It will be a valid moral demand for all who suffer under any form of discrimination. It will never be accepted as morally valid by any class whose privileges are thereby attacked: either they will deny it absolutely, if they themselves have no privileges to attack, or they will formulate it in such a way as explicitly to deny its wider application, as the founders of the American Republic did when they excepted slavery from its meaning.

When all privilege ends, the slogan disappears since it is of no significance except in the story of past struggles. It thus ceases to be a moral principle because it is no longer challenged.

The principle of human *brotherhood* again has narrower limits than the word suggest. In fact it has either stood for the rather close fellowship of tribe, or club, or association, zealously looking after its own interests; or it has sprung from a deep social need, a burning sense of injustice, an energetic will for something which is the opposite of the condition of exploitation and misery which prevails. But once again the ideal of "brotherhood" inevitably becomes a transcendental principle, by the favourite ideological

¹ Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, pp. 116-21.

method which first creates a concept from particular experience and then deduces reality from this mental image and ideal. This principle also is seized upon by the suffering and given a content far beyond the class aims of their exploiters, who are thereby required to interpret, qualify, limit and in every possible way take the edge off the ideal to which they pay lip service. Hence the glaring hypocrisy of bourgeois moralists, who find no difficulty in professing the brotherhood of man as a principle while maintaining all the privileges of their class, accepting without question the exploitation of the colonial peoples and fighting hard for the economic victory of their country over its trade rivals.

The principle cannot of course be accepted in its widest sense by an exploiting class or, if it is so accepted, it will be found impossible to realise it. Nor, of course, can it be accepted by the proletariat if it means loving the exploiter. Hence the emptiness and vagueness of all such ideals. If they are above the interests of any class they are in the interests of nobody in particular and are simply nobody's business. But once again if the proletariat achieves that limited relative brotherhood which is the expression of its own class interests it brings into view and makes possible a real, universal society, in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." This is real universal brotherhood, and this is the only means for its realisation. It is however a road which the bourgeoisie, proclaim the ideal though they may, can never tread.

It has sometimes been supposed that the validity of socialism depends on some such principle as "treat every man as an end in himself and never merely as a means" being accepted as *a priori*, as true in advance of and independent of experience, conditions or even consequences. But "nothing in heaven or earth has decreed that men ought to treat one another as ends and not means, nothing except men themselves as a result of the concrete conditions of their social development. . . . Workers are becoming aware that they are being treated as means and are demanding that they be the end of production. The working class cannot and does not need to derive its principles from anything other than its own interests which are eventually those of mankind as a whole. The working class has discovered that it is exploited. It does not like being exploited and means to do away with exploitation. The conditions of modern industry—the productive forces developed by capitalism taken together with the capitalist relations of production—are such that

the workers cannot see any good reason why they who do the work of the world should not themselves reap the fruit of their labour, that is, be the end of production."¹

Therefore when the workers become not only conscious of their sufferings but aware that they are totally unnecessary and that it is possible to end them by eliminating an owning class, there is no need to invoke general principles to justify their awakened moral feelings as if they could only be considered valid if derived from such a principle. Only concrete right exists. Principles are formed by abstracting from actual demands and thus creating general notions. If we then derive the "justice" of a particular demand from a principle thus established we are not really finding some external guarantee of its validity; we only imagine that we do. That being the case the less we have to do with "principles" the better.

V

In quite a different category are certain simple rules of human society: *honesty, kindness, pity, comradeship* and the like. It is often declared that Marxism rejects these out of hand. That is not so. Marx speaks of "the simple laws of morals and justice which ought to govern the relations of individuals."²

Lenin speaks of "the observance of the elementary rules of social life, known for centuries."³ All Marxist writing is obviously deeply concerned with moral questions.

But let us in the first place note that these virtues do not derive, as is often supposed, from certain *a priori* moral principles. They are practical rules of social living. They have no more validity than their appropriateness at any particular time, and they are *not* always appropriate. *They could be more generally appropriate, but only after a total reorganisation of society.*

In our existing society they are valid up to the point at which they cease to be useful to one class or the other, or to the nation in its relations with other nations. To take life and wilfully injure others is generally condemned, but the nation finds it 'right' to go to war, to blockade, to intern alien civilians, to deceive, to bomb and to kill. The worker may find himself in a situation in which he is compelled to injure his employer, withhold his services and

¹ H. Selsam, in *A Century of Marxism*.

² Marx, *Address to the First International* (Selected Works, Vol. IV, p. 442).

³ Lenin, *State and Revolution*, p. 92.

inflict hardship on the community. Under the stress of poverty and exploitation it becomes impossible for him to keep those precepts which all agree in accepting as right in general. The capitalist also finds himself breaking them, constrained by the necessities of profit. Competition, the need to reduce costs, the struggle for markets, the need to reduce wages or sack redundant workers, the opportunity for securing cheap native labour, the situation in which his survival means his competitor's annihilation, are not conducive to the practice of these virtues which we all feel to be necessary for communal living. All agree that theft is wrong and honesty right, but this does not make exploitation wrong in the eyes of the capitalist or expropriation wrong for the socialist. Clearly these moral rules become inapplicable where the interests of classes are opposed or the interests of a section is contrary to that of society as a whole.

Marxists are clear about this, and are called immoral. Other people profess moral principles and declare them to be absolute but in practice they cannot live up to them. Usually they ignore their own inability to do so but are loud in condemnation of others; especially their class opponents, for breaking the same moral rules. Moreover by maintaining a class system of society in the face of growing contradictions, the bourgeoisie promotes conditions in which they are less and less capable of general application. Yet they go on proclaiming their absolute validity. This is the explanation of the growth of bourgeois hypocrisy in the declining phase of capitalism.

But there is a sharp difference between the necessity which compels the capitalist to set honesty and kindness aside in his own interests and the necessity which constrains the socialist to do the same; for the actions of the capitalist perpetuate the conflict of interests and continuously narrow the field in which human interests are common. The actions of socialists bring class society to an end and widen the field in which common interests prevail. The latter are therefore morally justified, whereas the former are not.

This approach puts the "means-ends" controversy into its proper light. It is as untrue that Marxists seek to achieve their ends by any means however foul as that Christians only choose means that conform to their acknowledged standards of right and wrong. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who is a severe critic of communist morals, explained to the House of Lords in the debate on Capital

Punishment the occasions on which the Sixth Commandment (Thou shalt not kill) may be broken: The Church, he declares, permits the taking of life in punishment for murder, in punishment for treason, in war and in cases of self-defence. In other words whether the taking of life is permissible depends on the case in question, and that depends on the end in view. If the end is legitimate, e.g. self-defence, defence of one's country, the protection of society, then the necessary means are rendered valid.

The Commission appointed by the British Council of Churches, which included a number of distinguished theologians, sanctions the use of the Atomic Bomb in cases of aggression.¹ The Commission appointed by The Church Assembly went much farther;² first, it decided that not only was "the possession of atomic weapons genuinely necessary for national self-preservation" but "in certain circumstances defensive 'necessity' might justify their use against an unscrupulous aggressor"; second, it defended 'strategic bombing' involving the wholesale destruction of civilian life (though carefully distinguishing this from 'obliteration bombing' and 'terror bombing').³ The Commission justifies many examples of the killing of civilians under certain circumstances and the destruction of towns where this is incidental to a legitimate military objective;⁴ finally it explicitly affirms that "there can be circumstances in which the maxim that 'necessity knows no law' applies."⁵ In an elaborate exposition of the teachings of moral theology, based on the writings of Vitoria and Grotius, the founders of modern international law, they record that the Church not only permits "whatever killing or destruction may be unavoidably incidental,"⁶ but extends this principle to "the action of police and troops within a state in times of peace." We are not concerned to dispute these conclusions but only to point out that whether they are legitimate or not the whole principle of suspending certain generally necessary moral rules when circumstances render that necessary is accepted by the Church and by all moralists. It is only Marxists who are not allowed to argue in this way.

There is a very good reason for this which is not suspected by the moralists. What really determines the validity of the means is

¹ *The Era of Atomic Power*, p. 55.

² *The Church and the Atom*, p. 111.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 50, 63, 66.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶ Christian casuistry draws a clear distinction between permitted killing (which is not evil), incidental killing (which is not evil), and killing contrary to the rules (e.g. massacre of civilians to create pressure of public opinion in favour of surrender) with the intention of winning a just war or securing some other good end. Only the last is held to be "doing evil that good may come."

the validity of the proximate end¹ and nothing else. The real disagreement with communism is not about means but about proximate ends. The ends of the owning class determine what means are necessary and therefore valid. Thus it once decided that slavery was right, and now justifies interest on capital, wage-labour, etc. Socialism, with a different aim, rejects these as wrong and advances as its methods confiscation, expropriation and the rule "he that will not work neither shall he eat." All this seems merely immoral (i.e. adopting evil means) to the capitalist, because he rejects the end that is thus achieved. It follows that where class interests exist proximate ends cannot be identical and each class will judge the methods of the other to be immoral. Once again, does this imply an absolute relativism? Certainly not, because the proximate ends of socialists are the means to a society genuinely organised for the common good. The proximate ends of capitalists of course operate in an exactly opposite direction, for the perpetuation of capitalism leaves a situation in which the majority continue to find their interests subordinated to a minority. The victory of socialism, while it begins by subordinating the interests of a minority to that of the overwhelming majority, goes on to establish a society in which there is no fundamental incompatibility of interests and in which therefore the clash of morals incidental to opposing class interests disappears.²

VI

This discussion raises an important ethical question upon which Marxism throws much light. The objection to the suiting of methods to the ends one has in view arises from the notion that motive rather than consequences should determine conduct. Thus if I am kind-hearted I cannot do wrong. But really moral conduct must consider the consequences of actions and discriminate between kindness that has good consequences and kindness which has bad consequences. The ultimate ends one's conduct actually leads to are the ends one is really following, whatever one's ideals, or motives. If those ends are evil then the means one is adopting, being those which bring about evil ends, are evil too. That is what is the matter with many who advocate noble ideals but consistently bring about their opposite. This is not an ethical procedure. We

¹ I say "proximate" end, because all would agree upon some vague distant end such as universal brotherhood. The proximate end of socialists (socialisation) is the means to this more distant end.

² The *Means-Ends* controversy was more fully discussed in *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 1, in my article, "The Great Moral Muddle."

condemn such people, and we condemn equally a whole society, not because general social welfare is not *hoped for*. It is. But because everything that is *done* is contrary to the general welfare and puts its achievements farther off. For this reason the standards and principles on which such a system depends, and to which it appeals as "right" in themselves, must be condemned as *immoral*. On the other hand the standards and principles of communism, while flatly contradicting these capitalist moral principles, lead to that very general welfare which the orthodox moralists proclaim to be their ideal. Clearly it is the latter principles which must be approved if principles are to be judged by what they result in rather than by what they hope for.

VII

In spite of everything that may be said to the contrary Marxists have a very definite moral aim. It has been described as the collective rescue of mankind "from the pitiable, fragmentary, self-divided, class-enslaved state in which they find themselves."¹ It aims at making man "dignified, integrated, complete and free, so that the resources and potentialities that reside in him . . . may develop, expand, and find fruitful expression."² The basic assumption is the dignity and worth of human personality; and the goal is the maximum possibility of each individual freely developing his own potentialities, the fulfilment of his unlimited capacities for knowledge, enjoyment and creation.³

But if Marxism did no more than enunciate the brotherhood of man or the value of the individual or the emancipation of the exploited it would not be Marxism. It would be as ineffectual as all utopian idealisms and its noble aims would be mere empty phrases. That is why Marx does not base his policy on moral exhortation or the endeavour to win men to the acceptance of certain social ideals. He does not try to lift the world by a lever outside the world. The Marxist has no ideals that are separate from reality, as though they could have an independent existence outside historical and class reality. His ideals, his moral imperatives, arise out of actual needs, and in the field of society and politics these are class needs. "Communism," says Labriola, "is neither moraliser nor preacher, nor herald nor utopian—it already holds the thing itself in its

¹ V. Venable, *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. 151.

² *Loc. cit.*

³ But it should be clearly understood that the individual is always a social individual and that the single path to this goal is the identification of individual and social interests by abolishing a class society.

hands, and into the thing itself it has put its ethics and its idealism"¹ Marx is concerned with practical steps rather than with ethical generalities. Moral idealism is not only ineffectual but, since it is without positive and progressive effect, since it does not know what to do, or what is the condition of its realisation, it diverts energies from the real tasks, substitutes unrealisable hopes for achievable objectives, and actually immobilises people from effective action. That is why Marx was disposed to regard all such preaching and dreaming as "so much worthless earnestness."

Lenin had his ideals, as Marx had, but he says, "My ideals for the upbuilding of new Russia will not be chimerical only *if they express the interests of an actually existing class that is compelled by conditions to act in a definite direction*. In adopting the viewpoint of the objectivity of the class struggle I do not thereby justify reality; on the contrary, I point to *the profound* (if at first glance invisible) *sources and forces that exist within that reality and make for its transformation*."² This is the very essence of Marxist ethics. A vague general ideal of human welfare is ineffectual because the actual motives operating in the world are class interests. An ideal that transcends actual interests is simply *nobody's business*, a general good is nobody's good in the actual world. Men find the good, and must find the good, in what is good for them, however much they may camouflage this as a good lifted high above their interests. It can be put another way: to make any ideal effective it must become the ideal of a class, that is to say it must express the actual interest of a class. To advocate instead of such a concrete good some distant good that will be good for all will leave the effective mass of real people unmoved. No one will abandon the struggle for what he needs now for a distant and rather vague ideal condition supposed somehow to be satisfactory for himself and everybody else in the distant future.

VIII

We have now established the fact that what is called immorality arises from the clash of incompatible interests; that under any system of exploitation the interests of exploiter and exploited are opposite and therefore the claims of the worker will be denounced as selfish because they can only be satisfied at the expense of the owner and vice versa. Under conditions of unemployment every

¹ Labriola, *Historical Materialism*.

² Lenin, *The Political Line* (Collected Works, Vol. XVI).

man in work keeps another out of a job. Under conditions of modern international trade every market secured bankrupts a competitor. The question that arises is whether the situation in which interests are thus in irreconcilable opposition is inevitable, no matter what the form of society, or *whether it derives from the very nature of a class society*. Marxists hold the second view and point out that only the ending of capitalism and the establishing of a classless society makes genuine co-operative living and a universal morality possible. If we drew the conclusion from this fact that what is necessary is simply the advocacy of a classless society then Marxism would only be another form of Utopianism. However this demand arises when the full development of capitalism creates both the condition for a fresh advance in social organisation and the urgent necessity for that advance. Moreover capitalism has itself created the instrument to carry that change into effect—namely, the proletariat, which suffers increasingly under the stresses of a declining capitalism. This class, driven by the urgency of their situation and schooled in long years of organised struggle, is equipped and prepared to play a unique role in history. It is required in its own interests, and to save itself from destruction, to seize political power and bring to an end the private ownership of capital. It is on the basis of their actual situation that their theories, their political ideas and their moral imperatives arise. They are not based on abstract or ideal principles but derive from the historical movement going on under their very eyes. In its conflict with the bourgeoisie the working class is compelled firstly to organise itself as a class, and finally to make itself a ruling class and to sweep away the old conditions of production. In so doing it sweeps away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and thereby abolishes its own supremacy as a class. In order effectively to improve its own conditions it must struggle for collective ownership of the means of production. The only salvation for the proletariat therefore is to abolish itself as a proletariat, as mere wage earners dependent upon the chances and necessities of a declining profit system; but the only way to do that is to abolish classes altogether. Thus the transformation of society from a class to a classless basis is the very form of reorganisation which society needs in order that the radical incompatibilities wrought into the very structure, not of all social living but of class societies, may give way to a condition in which a harmony of interests becomes for the first time possible.

Nothing gives greater offence to the critics of Marxism than the assertion that the very basis of proletarian ethics is the supreme duty of overthrowing the bourgeoisie. This seems to degrade ethics to mere sectional interest of the working class and to abandon moral persuasion for violence and “the fomenting of class hatred.” It may be replied that all ethics are class ethics anyway. The bourgeoisie, whether they realise it or not, have exalted their own interests into transcendental absolutes. Their ethical concepts although proclaimed to be “independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws,”¹ are really derived from the social and political relations of bourgeois society. The bourgeois thinks, no doubt, that he is “framing a doctrine of morals for all times and for all worlds, he is in fact only making an image of the interests and tendencies of his time and of his class. An image which is distorted because it has been torn from its real basis, and like a reflection in a concave mirror, is standing on its head.”² The difference between proletarian and bourgeois ethics in this respect is simply that the bourgeois does not realise that this is so, while the Marxist does.

The fact that morality has a class source does not necessarily invalidate it either in the case of bourgeois or proletarian ethics. Class interests and the uprising of new classes have carried history forward. What is in the interests of a class may be in the interests of society and to that extent of wider moral validity. This, as we shall see, was once the case with bourgeois morals.

Proletarian ethics are now doing for the world what bourgeois ethics once did, and more. It is the motive force of the next advance in social development, but what it demands is for the advantage not only of the working classes but ultimately of all. Bourgeois demands claimed a similar universality but actually stopped short at the satisfaction of bourgeois interests and turned against the interests of the masses.³ The realisation of proletarian aims makes possible for the first time a truly human morality wherein standards binding for all are in the interests of all. It thus fulfils what was only partially achieved in the preceding stages of society or was rendered impossible owing to the incompatibility of class interests. Thus is achieved, by means of a *class* victory, inspired by a *class* morality, a society in which classes have been eliminated. There is

¹ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 65.

² *Anti-Dühring*, p. 110.

³ E.g., “Just as much freedom as was sufficient to make the fortunes of Lancashire capitalists and to create the proletariat.”

no other way in which a morality which is above classes can be realised. To assume that such a morality is possible while classes persist is to use morals to disguise and further narrow class interests; such morals, however full of affirmations of good will, peace and benevolence are actually potent weapons in the class war of the rich against the poor.

IX

Not only do class moralities thus stand in opposition, attacking and defending the *status quo*, acting as powerful forces either of reaction or progress, but these moralities themselves undergo profound modification as the result of the changes they bring about. Thus when a morality radically different from that of a ruling and exploiting class arises among the dispossessed, this will be at first a morality of protest and compensation like that of early Christianity.¹ The morality of a class which is beginning to rise will possess utopian elements which act as a powerful incentive to struggle in the period during which it still lacks effective power. But when such a class secures power and begins to transform society, the ideal loses its utopian character and embodies itself in practical policies, thus suffering considerable modification, a change which may seem to some a sad decline from the enthusiastic ideals of earlier times. Such has been the development of the socialist ethic.

Bourgeois ethics also had a period of protest and struggle for power followed by modification to give sanction and support to a new form of exploitation. But when the bourgeois form of society decays, while its "absolutes" are re-formulated to defend the rights of property and of the individual, we also witness an internal decay which reflects the inadequacy of the forms of bourgeois society for human existence, hence the growth of hypocrisy on the one hand and immoralism and subjectivism on the other. The morality of the rising proletarian class both attacks the defensive absolutes and exposes the moral breakdown of the bourgeoisie. It points out that the increasing conflict of interests within the ruling class weakens social bonds and makes it impossible for it to keep its own morality. At this stage the bourgeoisie is "unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery," because the productive forces are in revolt against the property relations that are the conditions for its

¹ Thus the ethics of the oppressed among whom suffering is believed to be unavoidable will tend to make a virtue of self-denial and the patient bearing of affliction. The advocacy of altruism is always a cry for help.

own existence. The persistence of capitalism at this stage of its development is wholly opposed to the interests of society, involves destructive wars and social conflicts, and threatens the disintegration of society and its ultimate collapse. It is at this stage that the severest condemnation of bourgeois morals becomes meaningful since it is now no longer possible to show that the system is in the interests of society. Every claim to be serving wider interests than those of a class is plainly falsified. "To-day when wholesale destruction of human life is the order of the day, and human suffering and deepest torture have become a commonplace, the fundamental contradiction between ethical principles and the world of physical reality is so apparent, that only its most superficial exponents refrain from silence and dismay. Every moral teacher worth his salt knows in his heart of hearts that all ethical systems of the past have bankrupted themselves in the present. There is hardly a single precept of the great moral preachers of the past that does not stand out as inept and inapplicable."¹ It is under such conditions that philosophies of despair and a literature of pessimism and defeat appear in society. Well aware of the growing uncertainty and demoralisation of their own class and sick at heart at all they see around them, some of our ablest writers, who once perhaps hoped for a reform of morality within society without any radical change in the social structure, now see the futility of any such expectation but still cannot accept any fundamental criticism of capitalist social relations. In consequence, they attribute to the very nature of man the contradictions they discover in themselves and the decay they find in their own narrow circle, though these belong not to man as such but to a class and a social system. "It is true," says Garaudy, "that if the world were limited to that group by which these writers' social experience is delimited we ought really to despair of man and his future."² But they are only projecting into the absolute or into the very nature of existence the maladjustments and paradoxes of their own sick society. Hence in Britain, France and the United States our writers slander the very nature of man. Somerset Maugham finds the main characteristics of humanity to be malice, cunning and wantonness; Evelyn Waugh looks in vain for some positive values in his own decadent world with which to counterpoise the cheap standards of the American way of life; Eugene O'Neill finds only people who cannot live without falsehood because they are too

¹ H. Levy, *Social Thinking*.

² R. Garaudy, *Literature of the Graveyard*.

feeble to face the truth: "The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober."¹ Aldous Huxley's pessimism covers a universal moral vacuum and his horror of human existence makes it seem a little odd that he should trouble to write novels about human beings at all. In France Malraux and Sartre give us only pictures of morally devastated people who feel alien to this earth and are cynical and indifferent to all things. Unable to discern the new man who is coming to birth, all these writers remain captives of the world they have been unable to transcend, making their tragic pessimism into something universal, creating in their novels the model of the decadent neurotic they make typical of all human consciousness.

Cyril Connolly, one of our leading critics, writes: "Beneath the mask of selfish tranquillity nothing exists except bitterness and boredom . . . when I contemplate the accumulation of guilt and remorse which, like a garbage can, I carry through life, and which is fed not only by the lightest actions but by the most harmless pleasures, I feel Man to be of all living things the most biologically incompetent and ill-organised. Why has he acquired a seventy years' life-span only to poison it incurably by the mere being of himself? Why has he thrown Conscience, like a dead rat, to putrefy in the well? . . . When did the ego begin to stink? Those of us who were brought up as Christians and who have lost our faith have retained the Christian sense of sin without the saving belief in redemption. This poisons our thought and so paralyses us in action."²

The last stage of this regression is either the anguished despair of those who still oppose an ineffectual moral ideal to an intransigent reality or a cynical abandonment of the ideal as mere self-delusion and an unnecessary encumbrance. Then it is frankly confessed that there is no moral law but that of the stronger and that the restraints of pity and justice are only the futile cries of the weaker who must be made to yield to the necessities of the élite. But the ethics of Nietzsche and of fascism are to-day hardly to be confessed except by the boldest; for most despair or hypocrisy must do.

X

In our day bourgeois morality thus lies in ruins. Either it is impotent and hypocritical, or perverted and decadent. The morality of the working class, struggling for power, now takes on the positive, practicable, and hopeful character which formerly

¹ Eugene O'Neill, *The Iceman Cometh*.

² "Palinurus," *The Unquiet Grave*.

belonged to bourgeois morality when the bourgeois class was fighting for power. But there is a profound difference. The very success of the bourgeoisie required the suppression of the democratic hopes of the masses and the ruthless imposition of a new class rule on the workers. The victory of the workers, on the other hand, fulfils those hopes and establishes a really equalitarian society.

The workers make a classless society their aim not because this conforms to an abstract moral ideal which they alone are noble enough to realise, but because this is the concrete task which their situation with its perils and possibilities lays upon them. But they know that in serving themselves they are helping all society to break out of the evils and immoralities, the oppressions and hypocracies of a class society. This lifts their class ethic on to a higher plane. Because the workers know that in fighting for their own emancipation they are fighting for all mankind, the ethical drive behind their movement far exceeds both in purity and intensity that which inspired all preceding systems of class ethics and becomes one of the most potent of those energising and mobilising forces which, as Stalin has pointed out, play such a vital part in the development of society.

The role of bourgeois ethics to-day, for all its lofty claims and assumption of objectivity and impartiality, is an ignoble one. At every point it either supports and justifies the class interests of the bourgeoisie or attempts to disarm and paralyse the resistance of the workers. Nowhere is this seen so clearly as in the advocacy of class peace. Society is based on unequal power whose equilibrium is idealised and rationalised by morals and political theories. Peace is only an armistice within an unjust order. Inequalities and injustices, sanctified by history and justified by tradition, are frozen into every contemporary peaceful situation. Coercion, overt or concealed, maintains this order, but the moralist is unconscious of the basis of violence upon which society actually rests—a police force which while supposed to be impartial is really the guardian of ruling class interests; an army used either at home or abroad without a moment's hesitation to maintain "essential services" or "restore order"; the economic power which is wielded by those who own the means whereby others live; the immense propaganda power of the class which controls the Press, the radio, publishing and education; the limitations imposed on social changes embedded in the apparatus of governments, legislative and administrative. He therefore places an unjustified moral onus upon advancing groups

which use violent methods to disturb this coercive peace; but his own hatred of violence does not persist if police repression is wanted to protect capitalist interests. Whatever the nature of the threat to privilege, even when completely lacking in violence itself, if it is a real threat those means which are necessary will be used to maintain it and the moralist may be counted on to find plausible arguments to justify them.

The ethical objections to class struggle are hypocritical. Class struggle is not brought into existence by communists. It has existed for centuries because for centuries society has been divided into classes with opposing interests. It has been intensified whenever a new class has transformed society and won political power. Our present capitalist system is itself a product of class war. Whatever coercive pressure is brought by capitalism upon the worker is an instrument of class war. When the worker resists oppression, injustice and exploitation, he is only fighting back, since the essence of capitalism is exploitation, since its every move is aimed at increasing its profits at the expense of the worker, and since to-day its survival can only be at the cost of fierce attacks on working-class standards. The aggression comes initially from the ruling class. There would be peace if the workers never complained, never organised, never struck, never used their industrial and political power. When they do they are accused of waging class war. Marxists see in this protest not something to be deplored but the beginnings of a movement which when it becomes conscious and informed will end the perpetual strife of interests. By moving from mere protests and resistance to power, as the bourgeoisie did before them, the workers end class exploitation and so end class war. We do not create class war, we find it. We do not damp it down, for that would increase it anyway by encouraging exploitation and postponing the transformation of society. We do not like it; we want to end it. Moralism talks of goodwill, but not only fails to create it but actually increases ill will. The pacifist and the moralist, pretending that by maintaining and preaching social peace they can eliminate class war, actually only succeed in strengthening the class forces which are waging war against the workers. This is sometimes appropriately called "moral rearmament."

XI

The problem of ethics is not to say what is good but to create it concretely in society. So long as moral injunctions are completely

unfeasible, as they must be in a class society, they are unethical, in fact they are silly, stale and basically reactionary. Moral obligation depends on feasibility, not merely on desirability.

If the development of society has itself established both the need and the conditions for the abolition of classes this places actually within man's power the possibility of bringing into existence a higher ethical level. In demonstrating the feasibility of successful revolutionary action Marx indicates the course which will eventuate most directly and speedily in a classless society. This at once gives it an ethical quality, for it both emancipates the exploited class and establishes the possibility of a genuine co-operative society. This puts a tremendous ethical impulse behind the class struggle, an impulse not only derived from its objective but from the fact that it is the actual way, the way opened by history, by which a really human society is to be established.

Such an ethics can only be the ethics of struggle. There is no reason to suppose that the bourgeoisie are going to abdicate merely because history has rung their knell, convinced that their historical role is established and that they are now obstructing social advance. When the continued existence of a ruling class benefits only itself and it is committed to the bitter end to the maintenance of its privileges, the class struggle must be intensified to the point of their final defeat. We cannot therefore seek to escape from conflict or the ethics of conflict. "It must be welcomed, undertaken wholeheartedly, pressed with unremitting intelligence, realism, constancy, and discipline in all its forms. It is the only existing means by which man's history and human destiny can be brought within man's power."¹

We are now in a position to understand why Lenin declares that "our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. Our morality is derived from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat."² Kalinin tells us what that morality is, and a dozen Soviet novels have done the same more concretely. The struggle gives rise "to ethical qualities such as honesty to one's class, discipline, mutual support and self-sacrifice in struggle and organisation. These characteristics of the ethical complexion of the proletariat formed the basis of the incipient socialist morality which, until the conditions of capitalism, stood in direct opposition to bourgeois morality with its cruel,

¹ V. Venable *Marxism and Human Nature*.

² Lenin, *The Young Generation*.

rapacious principles: 'Man is a wolf to man.' 'Everyone for himself.'"¹

Proletarian morality, like all other moralities so far, is of course not an ideal social morality. It is limited by its class aims. But just because it is the ethics of a subjugated class, it is superior to the prevailing ethics of the class bent upon maintaining acquired privileges. A social conflict which aims at a higher order has a moral justification which must be denied to all social practices which perpetuate privilege and all violence directed to that end.

XII

It should now be clear why Marxists, while strictly relating all morals to class interests, can nevertheless apply a standard by which to judge the comparative merits of class moralities and thus, without inconsistency affirm the superiority of proletarian and socialist ethics.

The common accusation that for Marxists morals are *no more* than mere class interests falls to the ground. Nor is it a valid criticism that Marxists while treating other systems as relative quite inconsistently hold their own ideals to be absolute.

It is of course fundamental, as we have seen, that men cannot but derive their moral ideas from the practical relations on which their class position is based; that all so called "principles" really have a limited and specific content; that men cannot afford to ignore their vital interests and must frame codes of conduct to strengthen their position in society; and therefore that men will seek the good of their own class rather than of other classes or the general good. All this is the case whatever men believe or say. We are profoundly sceptical of all claims that class interests are really those of society or that men are seeking a general good beyond class interests. But we have now demonstrated that the significance of the class basis of morals is profoundly modified by the fact that class interests are not always or to the same extent merely in the interests of that class. In its progressive phase capitalism operated in the general interest. *We can therefore ask how far what is in the interests of a class furthers interests beyond those of the class itself. In this we have a criterion outside class interests wherewith to judge them.* We do not say that from its own point of view every class is right and that there is nothing

¹ Kalinin, *The Moral Complexion of our People.*

more to say. We accept the fact that classes must and do seek their own good, but we ask to what extent they further the development of society in doing so, to what extent a wider good than a mere class good is achieved or retarded. All classes assert that in following their own interests they are serving society; the point is to find out whether it is so, or, where it may once have been true, whether it is still the case.

Marx and Engels *evaluate* class morals; they do not merely accept them as brute fact. Thus while Engels argues that no system of morality has universal validity, nevertheless "that which contains the maximum of durable elements" can be judged to be the higher form, and that is proletarian morality. They speak of more and of less advanced forms of such conceptions as equality. They speak of progress in morality, of passing beyond class moralities to "a really human morality which transcends class antagonisms and their legacies in thought," a morality which "becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class contradictions but has even forgotten them in practical life."¹ Marx has not only specified some of the principles which are basic to this form of society. "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," "An association in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all," but he has pointed out that it is only with the abolition of classes that man loses his commodity status and regains his humanity. It is at this stage that we can "organise the empirical world in such a manner that man experiences in it the truly human, becomes accustomed to experience himself as a man, to assert his true individuality."² It is man's return to his "universal nature in a universal manner, that is as a total human being."³

Because socialism moves towards this goal its ethics are higher than the capitalism which either refuses to go forward towards it or moves away from it. Every step towards that society is to be judged as *right*. This is the element of absolutism in Marxist ethics. It should be clearly recognised however that this standard is not located outside the historical process and has no transcendental status. It arises out of the development of society. Even when it is achieved it is not the final stage in human evolution, but on the contrary the starting point for real human history. In fact it may be said that the goal of history for us, in a class society, and the standard by which we judge ethically both systems of society and

¹ Engels, *Anti-Dühring.*

² Marx, *Ökonomische und Phil. MSS.*

³ *Ibid.*

the moral codes of such systems, is simply that state of affairs which is the pre-requisite for future advance. It is therefore both our goal and our starting point. It is good, absolutely good, because it alone makes all wider goods possible. That which is the indispensable *basis* of a truly human society has in it an element of permanence and absoluteness although it is only the starting point for further progress.

We have next to notice that what socialism achieves is not an "ideal," as though its virtue lay in its conformity with a *principle* that was good in itself. There is nothing holy about "the general good," as an absolute moral value, given to our moral intuition or apprehended by the moral reason. Even when we judge systems and movements and morals by it, the general good is the *actual* good of real people.

We thus find a sequence of class systems that is progressive, each system representing an advance in the method of production and the organisation of society. The principle by which we judge advance is progress in the mastery of nature; our aim the development of the productive forces up to the point at which a full life becomes possible for all. If the coming of class society by introducing the exploitation of man by man was a fall, was in fact *the fall of man*, carrying with it every form of oppression, inhumanity, and moral evil, it was none the less a fall upstairs, in that the succession of class societies was the way to that developed capitalism which is the indispensable economic basis for socialism. That being so at any particular stage the duties which are enforced and the standards which are accepted are both class standards, and therefore good relative to the interests of that class, but also good in relation to the goal towards which it lifts society.

The moral advantage of the proletarian movement consists in the fact that the workers are fated to contend for a society which the logic of history affirms. Their morality condemns what history has already condemned. When conditions are no longer conceived as necessary for society, but only for a particular stage, when social development makes it possible to change these conditions, *then* moral condemnation becomes meaningful and effective. The equalitarianism of the workers may be derived from their own interests but it will benefit the whole of society. The bourgeois democrats of the nineteenth century were able to ride roughshod over their foes because they believed that the principles of democracy for which they fought had universal validity. History has proved their faith

to have been mistaken and has revealed these democratic principles to have been screens for middle-class interests. But a class which possesses no privileges and which needs to abolish all special privileges, including the private ownership of the means of production, in its own interests, and needs to maintain that condition, again in its own interests, has the right to claim that its ideals transcend its interests.

XIII

What singles out the goal of the workers' movement as a class interest with a universal and thus an absolute value is the fact that it achieves the conditions under which individual and social interests are harmonised. Kant postulated this harmony by simply affirming its desirability in the abstract. Helvétius went farther when he declared that men would become moral *when society was so organised* that the interests of the individual were not different from those of society. Bentham and Adam Smith burked the problem entirely by dogmatically and falsely asserting that if all sought their individual interests the social good would be achieved automatically. Hegel proceeded in the opposite direction by asserting that when society in its organised form appears the good of the whole is necessarily best for the individual; and he held that the existing German State was the realisation of this ideal.

All these attempts mistake the ideal for the reality and fail to state the conditions under which this harmony can be realised. "The material conditions for the synthesis of the individual and society is the abolition of exploitation and the social ownership of production; only socialist society can firmly safeguard the interests of the individual. Socialism therefore preserves and advances all that is healthy and sound in bourgeois teaching of the individual personality and its development. The greatest obstacle to individual development is the poverty of the masses."¹

Marxism, therefore, unlike liberalism, unlike conservatism, unlike Hegelian state absolutism, is the one system which does not sacrifice the individual to the system or to society. "One must always avoid setting up 'society' as an abstraction, opposed to the individual," said Marx. "The individual is the moral entity. The expression of his life is therefore an expression of the life of society."²

It is only in a form of society in which the individual does not have to be sacrificed to the system that it becomes possible for

¹ H. Selsam, *Socialism and Ethics*.

² Marx, *Ökon. und Phil. MSS.*, p. 115.

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people to behave in an ethical way. Under capitalism people are compelled to follow courses which are to the disadvantage of others. Capitalism talks universal ethics but allows no one to practice it. Socialism removes the necessity of injuring others whenever we seek to achieve our own interests.

Thus the logic of history moves inexorably, though not without the moving power of ideas and ideals, towards a judgment on the evils of a class society and the achievement of a moral goal. "The mighty are cast from their seats, and those of low degree are exalted; the hungry are filled with good things and the rich are sent empty away."¹ But this will not be the victory of the meek. "Justice without force is a myth," said Pascal, "because there are always bad men; force without justice stands convicted of itself. We must therefore put together justice and force, and so dispose things that whatever is just is mighty, and whatever is mighty is just."

Nor will it be a victory won by pure and dispassionate means. The executors of judgment in history are always driven by both hunger and dreams, by both the passions of warfare and the hope for a better world. Conventionally nice people have always held up their hands in horror at the processes of "rough justice" through which history moves forward. But conventionally nice people who live leisured lives at the price of other men's toil do not have as pure moral judgment as they imagine.

For the Marxist, only conduct based on the great struggle for the liberation of man from all forms of exploitation and bondage is really moral. "Such traits of character as honesty, sincerity, devotion, courage, energy and solidarity amongst comrades, devotion to the cause, and many other moral qualities have developed and strengthened among the workers and their allies, although the bourgeoisie have trampled underfoot these moral principles and poisoned the social atmosphere with selfishness, extortion, hypocrisy and other amoral sentiments."²

Observing the workers who were joining the socialist movements Marx said at the commencement of his revolutionary activity: "The brotherhood of man on their lips is not a phrase but a Truth, and from their faces hardened by affliction the whole beauty of mankind looks upon us."³

¹ Luke i. 52.

² Kolbanoski, *Communist Morality*.

³ Marx, *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 661, Russian Edition.

The Development of Idealist Philosophy from Mach to Heidegger

BY ALBERT FUCHS¹

OF all the contradictions which run through the history of modern philosophy, that between idealism and materialism is the most important. The idealist trend has split up into innumerable special schools. One of them, which has acquired international influence, derives from Comte in France and a group of Austrian thinkers. It is linked with the name of Mach and is known as *positivism*.

Before we deal with the teachings of Mach, however, we shall endeavour to make clear in a few words the fundamental difference of view manifested in the debate between idealism and materialism before the rise of positivism.

Materialism, in essence, assumes the existence of an outer world which is independent of human consciousness. The world was there long before thinking beings inhabited the earth. It is what it is regardless of how we envisage it. All scientific endeavours have the purpose of conveying to us an adequate picture of external reality. We speak of knowledge when a portion of reality is correctly reflected in our consciousness; of error when reality and mental image differ. In short, materialism involves the theory of knowledge by which every investigator of nature is guided in practice, no matter what his philosophical convictions may be. At the same time it is the theory which underlies the every-day actions of the ordinary man. It is characteristic of the idealist outlook that it is very far removed from the habits of thought of the ordinary man; in fact, its chief aim is to correct these habits. Our alleged knowledge of the outer world, it declares, is derived from experience. We hear the clock strike, see and touch the book that we hold in our hand. Or, to speak more correctly, it seems so to us. If we examine the content of experience more closely, we find that it supplies us only with sense data. It tells us nothing about the "things" which lie behind sensations and which produce them. That such things exist is something we have to add on to experience, but in doing so we enter the sphere of metaphysics, that is to say we pass a judgment which goes beyond the bounds of immediate knowledge,

¹ This article is translated from *Erbe and Zukunft* (Vienna) by William Clark, and considerably abridged.

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or even of possible knowledge. Now surely it is illegitimate thus to pass beyond the world as given in experience and postulate a duplicate world of things which cause those sensations?

This certainly sounds strange, but also at first sight, harmless. For what difference does it make if I speak of a "book" or of the sensation of seeing and touching a "book"? But in truth the difference is enormous. The materialistic writers insistently point out the tremendous consequences which follow from the idealist standpoint. In the first place it follows from this standpoint, that the room in which I have just been sitting at work disappears when I go out and shut the door behind me. I now have no sense impression of the room, and I must not assume the existence of things which produce sense impressions. Moreover, the teaching of geology that the earth is millions of years older than the human race must obviously be false. For if "to be" means "to be perceived," then it is sheer nonsense to assert that the earth existed before human beings existed to perceive it. Finally, the idealist is of necessity compelled to believe that he, the thinking philosophising subject, is not a member of a community of similar beings, but rather is the only creature in the world endowed with consciousness. The only sources of knowledge are sense impressions and psychological introspection. I can obviously never have the sense impressions of anyone but myself. By self-observation I can acquire no knowledge whatever of another ego than myself. The consciousness of every other person is always like a room the door of which is permanently locked to me. Just as such a room does not exist for the idealist, so also another "I," in fact all other "I's" do not exist. Idealism inevitably leads to the crazy conception that only the thinking being exists; i.e. it leads to "solipsism." In the history of philosophy we meet with few cases of completely solipsistic views. This is hardly surprising, for such a point of view is manifestly absurd. Idealists are keenly aware of the danger of a rigorous following up of their premises. Most of them therefore endeavour to show that the unnatural results of the idealist way of thought can be avoided. Consequently, we have, for instance, Kant's theory of the "thing-in-itself." Kant is a genuine idealist in so far as he says: the senses give us a false picture of the world, mere *phenomena*. But he adopts the materialist standpoint when he adds: This phenomenal knowledge must be caused by something or other. *What* things are "in themselves" we do not know; *that* they are we are able to perceive. It is hardly necessary to point out that this is

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a highly inconsistent theory. It has been rejected by idealist philosophers of every type, including even the Kantians.

It may seem strange that idealism has flourished for centuries in spite of the artificialities which it involves and in spite of the endless difficulties which arise from it. Its viability is based not on its scientific worth, however, but on its social significance. Again and again in history idealism has appeared to the ruling class as a highly useful philosophy and thus they have been predisposed to believe in its truth. It has served at different times to defend very different class interests. What function it exercises at the present time we shall speak of later, for the moment we will merely say that idealism, unlike materialism, is compatible with religion. If the world is spirit, then the spirit of God may originate it and may direct it. But if Nature (matter) produces spirit, then "God" occupies only a very subordinate and ungodlike position. Therefore, since the struggle between the medieval and the modern world outlook began, idealism has been favoured in every way by those classes which found religion of use in defending the *status quo*.

After these introductory remarks we can proceed to describe in outline Mach's theory and the discussions connected with it.

Ernst Mach (1838–1936) held the position of Professor of Physics in Graz and at the Germany University in Prague, and from 1895 that of Professor of Philosophy in Vienna.

His principal works are *Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwicklung (The Science of Mechanics)* (1883), *Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen (The Analysis of Sensations)* (1886), *Populär Wissenschaftliche Vorlesungen (Popular Scientific Essays)* (1903) and *Erkenntnis and Irrtum* (1905),¹ and in addition many contributions to academic journals on physics, and some textbooks.

The trend initiated by Mach is known in the history of philosophy by the name of "Empirio-Criticism." Alongside of Mach, his friend, Richard Avenarius, the Zurich professor (1843–1896), is always cited as one of the founders of empirio-criticism. Thinkers in various countries accepted Mach's views and sought to develop them further and popularise them. Mention should be made of Friedrich Adler in Austria, Josef Petzoldt in Germany, and Karl Pearson in England. Mach himself designated the Frenchmen Pierre Duhem and Henri Poincaré fellow travellers. After the First World War there arose the so-called Vienna Circle (*Wiener Kreis*) (Moritz Schlick, Philipp Frank, Rudolf Carnap, who founded the Ernst

¹ The English titles are given where translations have appeared.

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Mach Association (*Verein Ernst Mach*). Some of the members of the Vienna Circle agreed with Mach on fundamentals, while others, like Schlick, dissociated themselves from him.

Mach's writings became especially influential in certain Russian circles. Several writers who had formerly associated themselves with the Bolsheviks (Bogdanov and others) advanced an idealist revision of Marxism. At the beginning of 1908 a volume of essays by a number of writers, who accepted the theories of Mach, appeared under the title *Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism*, among the contributors were Savorov, Bazarov, Bogdanov, Lunacharsky (subsequently Commissar for Education), Berman and Yushkevich. Gorky was also deeply influenced by this tendency. Lenin replied first by an article entitled "Marxism and Revisionism" (April, 1908) and then by his well-known *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (May, 1909).

Empirio-Criticism as formulated by Mach and Avenarius has three features: (1) it is idealistic, (2) it reduces matter to certain "elements" of sensation, (3) it explains scientific theory as "economy of thought."

1. Mach's thought is profoundly idealistic. In his old age he once spoke of "the idealistic youthful phase" of his thinking, which he had long since left behind him. He deceived himself. He was never unfaithful to the philosophical views of his early years. In a work written in 1872 he said, "The Task of Science can only be—

"1. To determine the laws of association of ideas (psychology),

"2. To discover the laws of the associations of sensations (physics),

"3. To explain the laws of the connection between sensations and ideas (psycho-physics) or (physico-psychology)."

One could hardly speak more plainly. But a generation later he was speaking as plainly as this:

"While there lies no difficulty in constructing every physical experience out of sensations, that is out of psychical elements, it is impossible to imagine how one could produce psychical experience from physical elements as conceived by present-day physics, which in their static character are serviceable only for physics itself."¹

This, as Jodl remarked, is simply pure idealism.

2. Mach's theory of "common elements" is the very heart of the

¹ Mach, *Erkenntnis und Irrtum*, p. 13.

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empirio-critical system. In it he sought for a reconciliation of idealism with modern science and common sense. Arguing that physical and psychical phenomena could be resolved into common elements—and identifying physical objects with their sensible appearances, Mach thought he had abolished the alleged intrinsic differences between mind and matter.

"All natural science can only picture and represent complexes of those elements which we call sensations. It is a matter of the connection of these elements. . . . The connection of A (heat) with B (flame) is a problem of physics, that of A (heat) and N (nerves) a problem of physiology. Neither exists alone; both exist simultaneously. Only temporarily can we neglect either. Even processes which are apparently purely mechanical, are thus . . . always physiological."¹

"Wherever, in what follows, the terms 'sensation,' 'complex of sensations,' are used alongside of or in place of the terms 'element,' 'complex of elements,' it must be borne in mind that it is only in this connection (namely, in the connection of 'complexes which we ordinarily call bodies' with 'the complex which we call our body') and only in this and relation, only in this fundamental dependence, that the elements are sensations. In another functional dependence they are at the same time physical objects."²

"A colour is a physical object when we consider its dependence, for instance, upon the source of illumination. . . . When we, however, consider its dependence upon the retina . . . it is a psychological object, a sensation."³

All that may seem pretty obscure. But it becomes transparent when one reads the comment which Lenin made upon it. In his critical work we read:

"Thus the discovery of the world-elements amounts to this:

"(1) all that exists is declared to be sensation,

"(2) the sensations are called elements,

"(3) elements are divided into the physical and the psychical; the latter is that which depends on the human nerves and the human organism generally; the former does not depend on them;

"(4) the connection of physical elements and the connection of psychical elements, it is declared, do not exist separately from each other; they exist only in conjunction;

¹ Mach, *Die Mechanik*, U.S.V., 1883, p. 498.

² Mach, *Die Analyse der Empfindungen*, 5th Edition, 1906, p. 13.

³ Mach, *ibid.*, p. 14.

“(5) It is possible only temporarily to leave one or the other connection out of account;

“(6) the ‘new’ theory is declared to be free from one-sidedness.”

“Indeed, it is not one-sidedness we have here, but an incoherent jumble of antithetical philosophical points of view. Since you base yourself *only* on sensations you do not correct the ‘one-sidedness’ of your idealism by the term ‘element,’ but only confuse the issue and cravenly hide from your own theory. In words, you eliminate the antithesis between the physical and psychical, between materialism (which regards nature, matter, as primary) and idealism (which regards spirit, mind, sensation as primary); indeed, you promptly restore this antithesis; you restore it surreptitiously, retreating from your own fundamental premises! For if elements are sensations, you have no right even for a moment to accept the existence of elements *independently* of my nerves and my mind. But if you do admit physical objects that are independent of my nerves and my sensations and that cause sensation only by acting upon my retina—you are disgracefully abandoning your ‘one-sided’ idealism and adopting the standpoint of ‘one-sided’ materialism!”¹

3. The theory of “the economy of thought” is perhaps the best known of the Machian theories. Not only has it been discussed in detail in philosophic literature, but it has spread far beyond the circle of specialists. Reduced to the briefest formula it says that scientific terms have the function of saving us mental work. In this respect the terms of the various special fields are very similar to each other. “Strange as it may sound, the strength of mathematics is that it economically arranges our experience of numbers so that they lie ready for use.”² In the same way physics is economically arranged experience in its particular field. “Physics shares with mathematics the comprehensive description, the short, compendious definition of concepts, excluding any possibility of confusion, it is a way of dealing with a multitude of things without burdening our heads. The rich content can however at any moment be called up and developed with complete clarity.”³

Speaking generally, science can be regarded as the task of “presenting the facts as completely as possible with the least mental effort.”⁴ “It recognises as its aim the most economical,

¹ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, English (1945) Edition, p. 41.

² Mach, *Populär Wissenschaftliche Vorlesungen*.

³ Mach, *ibid.*

⁴ Mach, *Die Mechanik*, 5th Edition, 1904, p. 530.

most simple understandable expression of facts.”¹ When one reads these and similar statements in Mach’s writings one is at first filled with a certain amount of astonishment. It appears that this celebrated philosopher calmly elaborates the most simple, in fact one can say banal, ideas. Multiplication takes less time than addition, by which it could be replaced; a physical law can be retained in the memory more easily than the individual facts from which it is deduced. True enough, but is it a remarkable achievement to state such a thing? On further consideration it will be found that Mach wishes by his economy theory to say far more and something very different from what one might suppose at first glance. One must bear in mind that Mach is an idealist. That means that for him the definition of the “true,” which from the materialist standpoint is correspondence with reality, does not apply, for to speak of reality is in fact “metaphysical.” The concept of truth is to be determined therefore by the concept of economy. That a thing is true will mean nothing more than that it saves mental effort. It follows that the economy theory is by no means something commonplace, but on the contrary is a paradox. This theory turns an incidental quality of knowledge into its chief quality and constituting feature. Those who find it incredible that Mach could have erred to such an extent must bear in mind that idealism necessarily leads to a paradoxical definition of truth. Avenarius, the co-founder of the economy theory, believed it possible to eliminate the concept of matter in view of the saving of mental work thereby effected.² Lenin had good reason for interpreting the expositions of Mach as pure idealism and good reason to call the attention of the empirio-critics to the fact that human thought only saves labour when it correctly reflects objective truth.

In this controversy with Mach Lenin combined logical argument with a particularly ruthless polemical tone. In his view Empirio-Criticism was only spreading confusion among the intellectuals of the socialist movement, particularly among the Russians. It seemed to him a flat denial of dialectical materialism which he regarded as the indispensable basis of Marxism. He who followed Mach was lost as a Marxist.

Although Mach himself was a conscious atheist, his teachings, simply by reason of their idealistic character, cleared the way for

¹ *Populär Wissenschaftliche Vorlesungen*.

² Richard Avenarius, *Philosophie als Denken der Welt gemäss dem Prinzip des kleinsten Kraftmasses*, 1876, pp. 30, 51 ff.

religious ideas. His objective function consisted in "rendering faithful service to the Fideists¹ in their fight against materialism in general and historical materialism in particular." Moreover, empirio-criticism encouraged the inclination to apathy and passivity which the Socialist movement has again and again to overcome afresh. Every idealist philosophy tends to produce passivity. If the world is nothing else but my conception, then the importance of the struggle for life, and equally the class struggle, shrinks to nothing. To replace the "appearance" of the social order which exists to-day by some other "appearance," cannot be very important. In short, viewed from the standpoint of socialism, empirio-criticism was a danger. The Bolsheviks would not have been Bolsheviks if they had not taken up the fight against this intellectual trend with all their might.

Nevertheless, the harmfulness of the Machian philosophy should not cause one to condemn the man and his life-work altogether. He was a socially-minded man. His political opinions were those of the petty-bourgeois radicals, that is to say by no means the worst which were current in the old Austria. He felt a lively sympathy for the socialist movement, although he was ignorant of its theory. The seat in the Second Chamber which he obtained in his advanced years gave him repeated opportunity to prove this attitude by deeds. As a scientific historian and investigator of nature he enjoyed merited respect. In his books on mechanics and theories of heat the development of these branches of science are excellently presented. He was among the first to recognise the untenability of the older mechanistic world picture and to acknowledge the necessity of that relativity which dominates modern physics. Unfortunately, he was misled precisely by these views to idealistic ways of thought—which would not have taken place if he had become acquainted in good time with Marxist dialectics.

What is the position of the school which Mach created? Have the numerous younger philosophers whom he stimulated further developed his theories in any remarkable manner? One can hardly say so.

Friedrich Adler in a work he wrote while serving his term of imprisonment in Stein² on the Danube, gives not only a survey of

¹ *Fideists*: those who believe in faith as prior and superior to reason. Used especially in the last fifty years to denote those philosophers who in one way or another leave a door open for belief in religion and the supernatural.

² *Friedrich Adler* was from 1911 to 1916 Secretary of the Austrian Social Democratic Party. On October 21st, 1916, he shot the Austrian Prime Minister, hoping

the Machian teachings but at the same time attempts to set forth precisely the relation of empirio-criticism to Marxism. It was a courageous (although reprehensible) deed for which he had to serve a term of imprisonment. Courage does not forsake him even in face of the paradoxes of idealism: "The two expressions 'the leaf is green' and 'I have the impression of green' on closer consideration reduces itself to one fact: different I's repeatedly have the sensation of green. When 'I' and the leaf are in relation to one another, green appears. When I look another way the sensation of green no longer exists. When I look again it is green again. We know nothing of the leaf at which no one is looking. Assumptions regarding how the leaf at which nobody is looking looks can only be introjections. The leaf is green when 'I' and 'leaf,' or, more generally speaking, when subject and object stand in relation to one another."

Regarding the relationship between empirio-criticism and Marxism, Adler says that Mach has done for the knowledge of nature what Marx and Engels have done for the knowledge of society. In one place he sets out to prove that Engels was in fact an empirio-critic. Then, however, he does not seem to be very pleased with this discovery, and reproaches the author of *Anti-Dühring* for not having dealt more fully with the theory of knowledge. Engels did not know what "experience" is. Adler, however, explains to us the nature of experience. The difficulties with which Engels contended can be seen from what he has to say regarding the relation of thinking and being. When he speaks of concepts as "images of real things" and also . . . of the "reflection" of reality in the heads of human beings, this does not exclude misunderstanding. . . . A man can only think about what was formerly his experience. . . . The "reflection" in the head of the man is not the reflection of something with which he had nothing to do hitherto but is the re-reflexion (memory) of his former sensations and feelings. Adler's work on Mach is thoroughly confused. It does no credit to Austro-Marxism.

Mach was not only criticised by Lenin. Two distinguished Austrian scholars dealt with him very effectively. Ludwig Boltzmann, a leading physicist, in the course of a vigorous polemic against Machian subjectivism wrote, "It is said that since we have only sense impressions to go upon we have no right to go beyond

that the deed would be a signal for the rising of the proletariat against the war. He was condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to eighteen years' imprisonment. After the Revolution, he was freed and held high positions in the Social Democratic Party and was one of its leading theoreticians.

them and postulate an external world. But to be consistent one must further ask: are our sense-impressions of yesterday also given? What is immediately given is only the sense-impression we are experiencing at the present moment. Hence, to be consistent, one would have to deny not only the existence of other people outside one's self but also all conceptions we ever had in the past."¹

Another distinguished scientist, Friedrich Jodl, pointed out that idealist philosophical views even if entirely non-religious themselves nevertheless provided support for religious belief. He drew attention to the helplessness of many thinkers, including scientists, when confronted by idealist theories like those of Mach. They seem to assume that they are irrefutable and must be accepted by anyone who proposes to take philosophy seriously. In other words no critical philosopher can possibly be a materialist. What is the reason for this helplessness which, although it purports to be laying the foundation for real knowledge, is really pure scepticism? Jodl believes that it is a deliberate attempt to escape materialism, that their chief object is, on Kantian lines, to open the door to belief in the supernatural while seeming to accept the body of accepted scientific beliefs, since these beliefs constitute too vast an edifice to be brushed aside and not even the Church, with all its propaganda resources, has been able to do this.

An open declaration against scientific knowledge would hardly sound credible but rather exceedingly reactionary—therefore the whole of science is left in its place, in order the better to bring it under suspicion, to undermine the foundation of its knowledge, to degrade it as being a mere sham science, i.e. to reduce it to a science of *phenomena*, i.e. of mere mental appearances, in preparation for deeper intellectual demands which will now proceed to open up another road to ultimate reality.

In empirio-criticism we have an idealistic system which derives more or less directly from Berkeley. It was Berkeley who, at the beginning of the age of natural science, transformed that distrust of sense perception, which produced natural science, into an extreme subjectivist doctrine. Now there always has been and still exists to-day, in addition to Berkeleianism, an idealistic philosophy of a simpler sort. A philosophy which does not set out to eliminate the outer world by means of sophistries but accepting matter as given contents itself with proclaiming its subordination to spirit. It is

¹ Ludwig Boltzmann, *Populäre Schriften*, 1905.

claimed that spirit has produced matter, imposes its law upon it and is immanent in all things, etc. The consciousness (spirit) which is here considered, can be human consciousness, but often it appears to be a higher and supernatural, a divine consciousness. Generally speculative doctrines of this kind make little attempt to conceal their affinity with religious ideas. In this they differ from empirio-criticism, which appears to have nothing to say on the question of religion. But one must not think that the difference is very deep. A doctrine which regards the world as mentally constituted must obviously have close affinity with that other doctrine which considers the world as spiritual. Therefore we need no further justification for adding in this article, when considering empirio-criticism, some remarks on the philosophy of Brentano and Husserl which paved the way for some of the most significant forms of contemporary idealism—the existentialism of Heidegger, Jaspers and Sartre.

Franz Brentano, born 1838, came of a family famous in the history of German thought. He studied philosophy and Catholic theology and became professor of philosophy in Würzburg. In the dispute on the question of papal infallibility, which became very heated at the end of the 'sixties of last century, he espoused the anti-papal standpoint and abandoned the priesthood.

Of Brentano's system we will deal with the doctrine of the intentionality of consciousness and of unreal objects of thought. In abandoning the priesthood Brentano did not break with catholic philosophy. In the chapter of his *Psychology* in which he for the first time expounds the idea of the intentionality of consciousness he refers expressly to his scholastic teachers. Every mental act is characterised, according to the scholastic philosophers of the Middle Ages, either as objects of first intention or of second intention. The former are actual, existent objects, the second are *non-existent objects*, that is to say they are objects which cannot exist outside the mind (e.g. a subject, a predicate, universal ideas and so forth), because the mind with its abstraction and relation, has imposed upon it conditions essentially mental. Accepting this doctrine, Brentano holds that the mind therefore does not know itself, it *always* knows objects; but not all objects exist in the material world. True, all non-existent objects, such as the general idea of "horse" have their foundation in actual things, such as actual horses, but the universal is not a "thing," it is only an object of thought. Our inwardness is the inwardness of outward

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directed beings. We are acquainted with ourselves only in the exercise of referring to what is *not* ourselves.

Meinong (1853–1920) developed this “theory of objects” and held that such objects of thought could include round squares, unicorns, or anything that could intelligently be referred to. The thought universe, he pointed out, is wider than the sum of existent things. Whatever a man thinks must somehow *be*, and much that we think of does not exist. Numbers do not *exist*, but twelve eggs may; numbers *subsist*. The “similarity” of two peas subsists; the peas exist.

The importance of these ideas lies in the infinite amount of confusion which they generated in subsequent philosophies. They recur again and again as the fundamental ideas of phenomenology, a trend which made its appearance about 1900, at first interested only specialists, but in the period between the two world wars became the dominating doctrine in German philosophy. Phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938).

Phenomenology as Husserl elaborated it in the *Logischen Untersuchungen* (1900) and later, with deviations, in the *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie* (1913) and other writings, took over from Brentano the idea of descriptive psychology which operates with *a priori* judgments; the idea of the inherence of objects in psychic acts; the idea of the special mode of existence of certain objects which have no concrete existence. Whilst with Brentano these objects are regarded as marginal, with Husserl they occupy a central position. Numerous kinds of them are presented to us. Among them are, for example, the abstractions (colour, blushing, skillfulness, greed, beauty), the classifications (tiger, mammals, animals), mathematical concepts (sphere, trapezoid, figures from zero to infinity), sentences and other significations, also expressions such as “the non-existence of the dragon.” Regarding all such objects or forms of thought we are able to make statements which are characterised by *universality* and *necessity*. We recognise, for example, that a tone must have a pitch and intensity, that twice eight are sixteen, that sentences cannot be green. To deny that objects, about which we are able to say so much and with such certainty, “are” would be absurd. Obviously, in their specific manner they “are” as ideal objects, ideas or entities.

Now we can consider the different types of thinking and the objects which correspond to those types in abstraction from what actually exists. We thus get back to a kind of Kantianism, working

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with *forms of thinking* which belong necessarily to the mind. We thus give our attention to *essential structures*, pure forms. The science of pure possibilities must everywhere precede the science of real facts. The actual world thus becomes an exemplification of the essential structures that have been already determined. These modes of thinking, possible forms of existence, objects of pure thought, are discovered by a psychological enquiry into the activities of thinking as such. We thus intuit certain essences. It is a way into the heart of reality. At this point Husserl falls into complete Berkeleian subjectivism. All objects tend to be objects of consciousness; it is of the very nature of objects that they should be perceived. In point of fact the relation of an object to consciousness is that it has been found after existing prior to consciousness. It enters into the situation of being known without prejudice to its independent existence.

This is where Heidegger and Sartre come in. Husserl never abandoned the notion of a real world, but his existentialist successors keep the word *existence* for what we freely chose to will into being. The raw material of life, the given, has in itself no meaning; it *is*, but it does not *exist*. It takes on meaning, i.e. it *exists*, when it becomes something for *us*. This it does only when we deliberately choose what attitude we shall take to it, what we shall make of it. To *exist* at all, we must ex-sist (stand out) from the merely given. The total responsibility of giving meaning to the raw stuff of the actual situation is ours alone. We *create* meaning and value. Man cannot escape that responsibility. He is condemned to be free.

Heidegger (born 1889),¹ the most notable German philosopher of the Nazi and pre-Nazi epoch, was honoured by Hitler, becoming in 1933 Rector of the University of Freiburg. While not openly avowing that his philosophy was fascist, he was acceptable to the Nazis. The essential thing about him is not his servility to the Nazi State, but his genuine Nazi substance, which could not possibly be assumed. If Heidegger was supported by Hitler it is because figuratively speaking he made Hitler.

His philosophy has been described as the first bankrupt balance sheet of an existence which is meaningless, in which life is but a mirage, consisting of phenomena and no more, producing febrile shivers of anxiety in which liberation is in the realisation that the mirage is a mirage of nothingness.

¹ His principal works are *Sein und Zeit*, 1927, and *Was ist Metaphysic*, 1929.

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We thus see that the subjectivity of Mach and his successors, all of them in the true Kantian succession, leads through Husserl to the belief that the world has no significance apart from that which we choose to give it. Man himself determines all possibility and all actuality. It is because of this frightful responsibility that man dwells for ever in a condition of dread; because of this and because dread is at the same time the intuitive apprehension of the nothingness from which he comes, and to which he goes. We cannot avoid extinction, therefore either it can overtake us without our consent, or we can freely will our own annihilation. If we do so the choice gives us for the moment real "existence," "*existence unto death*." In whatever situation we find ourselves, while there is nothing we can *do*, we can choose what attitude to take to the unalterable and the inevitable. This is the doctrine of the free man, but free without hands, mutilated. It is a philosophy originating in a phase of total passivity, the words of an immobilised group paralysed by the collapse of society, unwilling and therefore unable to see the only way out in a radical transformation of society and the rise to power of a new ruling class.

Husserl's sphere of work was mainly psychology, logic and the theory of knowledge. His pupil Heidegger pursued the same path. Others, notably Max Scheler and Nikolai Hartmann, treated the problems of ethics from the phenomenological standpoint, and here they are directly influenced by Brentano. This is seen in the formation of "systems of obvious valuations." Hartmann concludes "that there is a self-existent ideal sphere in which values are nature, and that, as the contents of this sphere, values, self-subsistent and dependent upon no prior experience, are discerned *a priori*."¹ Elsewhere he says that "the universality, necessity and objectivity of the valuational judgment hold good in idea," which means that whoever has attained the adequate mentality must necessarily feel and judge thus and not otherwise. We have here a powerful reinforcement of that absolutism in ethics that is one of the main ideological buttresses of the *status quo*. Scheler made important contributions to the sociology of knowledge² and revealed a tendency in phenomenology to come to terms with religion. Scheler preferred the clarities of emotion to those of simple reason and sought to establish a set of value structures (pleasure-values, life-values, holiness) set in a universe whose essence was love. His aim was to set forth a pre-

¹ Hartmann, *Ethics* (English translation), p. 165.

² See Professor Gordon Childe's article in *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4.

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ferential system of values determinative of the validity of any specific thought form.

But in Heidegger two other streams of thought unite with Husserl's phenomenology—the deep pessimism of Kierkegaard with his maxim "choose, leap and be free," and the philosophy of Nietzsche. The revival and development of these philosophies clearly reflect the feeling of hopelessness which overcame Germany after 1920 and the emergence of "the lonely, stubborn, self-made man." Philosophers gave up the idea of a free people making a free society and let things slide. Bourgeois defeatism passively accepts the dictates of external power, on the one hand ignoring the real powers, economic and political, that limit man, and on the other despairingly accepting inescapable arrival, and irrevocable death. The "freedom" the new philosophy exults in is therefore not autonomy but mere stubbornness, a sham freedom—living to death instead of living for a cause, something between life and suicide.

It has a grimmer side. Accepting all the pessimism of Christianity, especially the idea of man's fallen condition, with none of its optimism, Heidegger's "solution" is the open and explicit acceptance of life with its whole burden of tragedy and anguish. This abstract worship of naked "existence" is but another expression of that cult of animalism and barbarism which continually breaks out in fascism and finally becomes its manifest meaning. It expresses itself as a pagan religion of Life and Death, of engendering and expanding Life, of inflicting and enduring death; a religion of Urge and Fear, of the Triumphant or else the Hunted Beast. As Chesterton depicts the pagan invaders:

*"Their gods were sadder than the sea,
Gods of a wandering will,
Who cried for blood like beasts at night,
Sadly, from hill to hill."*

The Future of Europe's Economy

By T. J. N. O'SHEA

ECONOMISTS frequently argue that the European economy is, or should be, a single entity. It is this notion which underlies much of the discussion at the economic and technical level on convertibility in Europe and the liberalisation of trade, the development of East-West trade and so forth. The purpose of this article is to examine the economic and political realities underlying this kind of discussion. First the nature of the pre-war relation between European countries and between Western and Eastern European countries will be recalled. Second the developments since the war and prospective developments in both Western and Eastern Europe will be discussed. Thirdly the character and possible scale of future economic relations between Western and Eastern Europe will be examined.

In the European economy before the war, excluding the U.S.S.R., two countries, the United Kingdom and Germany, were of dominant importance and two others, France and Italy, were of major importance. Great Britain, Germany and France accounted for about 75 per cent. of the output of steel and nearly 80 per cent. of the output of coal. About three-quarters of the value of the output of the engineering industry was accounted for by these three countries and Italy. Apart from the Polish coal industry, a certain development of Czechoslovak industry, especially in the field of consumer goods such as glass, textiles and toys, and a limited development of engineering production in these two countries and Hungary, the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe were of an impoverished agrarian character, predominantly exporters of food and certain minerals and importers of manufactures, largely consumer goods. An industrial base was virtually non-existent and there was no prospect or intention of building one.

In such an overall picture it was possible to speak of the complementarity of Western and Eastern European economies. The East was essentially a source of food and raw materials and a market for manufactures for Western Europe: 20 per cent. of Europe's grain imports came from European sources, mainly Eastern Europe. The bulk of Europe's timber imports came from European sources, and of these 30 per cent. came from European and South-Eastern European countries. Rumania supplied nearly

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20 per cent. of Europe's imports of oil. Poland and Yugoslavia were significant sources of non-ferrous metals.

Within Western Europe there was a considerable volume of trade in manufactures; for example, the United Kingdom and Belgium exported to each other iron and steel, engineering and chemical products. The basic elements in the pre-war European trading system were the British surplus of imports from nearly every European country, paid for by earnings of overseas investment and shipping; and the large surplus of German exports to most European countries, financed by Germany's favourable trade balance with the United Kingdom which in turn enabled it to maintain a large import surplus made up of supplies of raw materials from overseas. For Germany, especially, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe was a vital market.

It will be seen that the character of Western Europe's trade with Eastern Europe was similar to that of the trade between the United Kingdom, for example, and her colonies, of an avowedly imperialist pattern. Eastern Europe was preserved as a source of food and raw materials and as a sphere for the export of capital and of manufactures, mainly consumer goods. Investment was confined to utilities, mining and oil. The industrial development of this region was deliberately prevented or restricted. Already before the war, with the aid of special financial techniques, political pressure and local quislings, Nazi Germany had achieved dominance over Eastern Europe. The further stages during the war and occupation were no more than logical developments, incorporation in the Nazi economy as an agrarian hinterland to be systematically and ruthlessly plundered.

Such a conception of the role of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, even during the war when it was politic to talk in terms of "equality," "development for the benefit of the people" and so on, was by no means confined to the fascists. The plans of Western Europe for Eastern Europe before 1945 were revealed with striking clarity in an article by P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan, written on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. The author objected to what he called the Russian model on the ground that "building up heavy industries in East and South-Eastern Europe at a great sacrifice would only add to the world excess capacity of heavy industry, and would constitute from the world's point of view largely a waste of resources."¹ He advocated capital lending based

¹ *Economic Journal*, June-September, 1943, p. 203.

on "sound principles of international division of labour (which postulates labour-intensive, i.e. light industries in over-populated areas)."¹ He contemplated a loan of about £2½ million, stressing that "the whole of the industry to be created is to be treated as, and should be planned like, one whole firm or trust."² Half the representatives of the Board should be from the creditor countries and dividends should be guaranteed by the Eastern European government authorities. The ultimate aims were also considered. Thus "industrialisation of international depressed areas, once it is accomplished, may create an equilibrium, from which onwards normal private incentives may operate successfully."³ There are frequent nostalgic longings to-day for a scheme of this kind.

Post-war history has taken a very different course. The working class has gained power in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania. The capitalist class has maintained itself in power in Western Europe, although the working-class movement is much stronger. But the countries of Western Europe are steadily losing their independence to the United States, which has emerged from the war immeasurably stronger, both absolutely and relatively. Only the sustained aid of right wing social democracy and the capitulation of the capitalist classes to the United States have made it possible for capitalism in Western Europe to survive.

The next step is to consider the trend of development in Europe since the war, contrasting what has happened in Western and in Eastern Europe. Both sets of countries have proclaimed their intention to develop their economies on the basis of national plans which are designed to cover several years, but both performance and perspective are very different.

While all the economies of Western Europe are capitalist and the degree of state intervention differs, there is a strong trend in every country of Western Europe, under American pressure, towards the removal of controls and towards a return to free market economy. Nevertheless nearly every Western country has retained certain controls over foreign trade and in the sphere of monetary policy, and has prepared a long term economic plan. Most of these plans represent little more than aspirations in programmatic form and are a by-product of the Marshall Plan. It has been the declared aim of this plan that countries of Western Europe should restore the equilibrium in their external balance of payments without

¹ *Economic Journal*, June-September, 1943, p. 203. ² *Ibid.*, p. 204. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

foreign aid by 1952. The plans themselves, however, have proved to be inadequate or self-contradictory, while the recent trend of events show steady progress away from "equilibrium" and a diminished rate of economic progress.

The national programmes were reviewed towards the end of 1948 by the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation. The interim report of this organisation¹ argued that while in each individual country the objective of an overall equilibrium of balance of payments could, in terms of the paper plan itself, be attained, the plans were inconsistent with one another or over-optimistic in regard to trading possibilities with the outside world. There would still be, it was estimated, an overall deficit with the outside world of 3,000 million dollars. There was a general tendency to concentrate on developing import substitutes in each country, rather than additional sources of exports. Where additional exports were planned, there was no guarantee that they could be sold. Thus Western Germany and other countries in Western Europe were planning to sell material and equipment in excess of the amounts which other Western European countries were planning to buy. There was a general desire among all countries to sell textile products among each other, while refusing to buy them. France was planning to export more agricultural products than other Western European countries were prepared to buy. So far as trade with Eastern Europe was concerned, the completion in 1952 of the programmes assumed the restoration of the volume of imports to only three-quarters of the pre-war level.² Finally in the face, on the one hand, of a growing unwillingness or inability of the United States to import, and, on the other, of the growing competitive strength of the United States relative to Europe, the absorptive power of markets outside Europe intended to take additional European exports was clearly exaggerated. Significantly, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe comments: "the exaggeration is unlikely to refer to the capacity to produce sufficient commodities for export, but only to their ability to sell them."³

The actual trend of events is even more disturbing for the future of Western Europe. Thus in the revised estimates submitted by the United Kingdom to O.E.E.C. in August, the prospective deficit for 1949-50 was raised from £235 million to nearly £400

¹ "Interim Report on the European Recovery Programme, O.E.E.C., Paris, 1948." Summarised and analysed by the *Economic Survey of Europe in 1948*—United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Geneva, 1949, p. 192.

² *Ibid.*, p. 195.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

million. Yet the actual deficit has recently been running at more than £600 million per annum, while the actual Marshall Aid allocation seems likely to be little more than a third of this figure. In addition to the growing dollar gap the rate of increase of production has slowed down in some sectors, while prices are falling. There is growing unemployment in several countries such as Italy, Belgium and Western Germany. There is considerable unused capacity in the engineering industry in several countries. From acute scarcity, the steel market is now virtually saturated. There is considerable discussion of a substantial surplus in the near future, of cuts in production and the reconstruction of the European steel cartel.

The underlying reality of the Marshall Plan is now plain. It has never been a plan for the recovery of Western Europe. It is only secondarily a plan for the "containment" of communism. Primarily the fulfilment of its major purposes is a precondition for carrying out the policy of United States imperialism. In other words, it was designed to prepare the way for the large-scale export of United States capital to Western Europe.

There have been four important stages.

First, steady pressure upon, or intervention with Western European Governments to reduce wages, social service expenditure and direct taxation, all under the guise of fighting "inflation," but in reality to reduce the price of labour power and increase the profitability of production. Second, devaluation of European currencies, primarily to raise the value of United States capital investment. Third, the maintenance in a state of dependence of the economies of Western Europe. This has included steps to keep increases of production within reasonable bounds, restriction on domestic capital investment and the notorious export licensing policy which prevents a wide range of goods manufactured in Western Europe from being exported to Eastern Europe. This policy has been aimed less at Eastern Europe (the United States knows well that it can do little to affect the military potential of the socialist world or the steady development of its industry and agriculture) than at Western Europe. It is a well established fact that by reorientating its imports and exports, Western Europe could by now have virtually dispensed with the need to trade with the dollar area, but this would have completely blocked the basic aim of United States policy, the finding of a major new field for capital investment.

The fourth and crucial stage in the preparations is convertibility of currencies and the so-called "liberalisation of trade." Intense pressure is now being applied to complete this phase. Thereafter United States capital can be expected to pour into Europe and especially Western Germany, Italy and Austria.

In such an overall picture it will be seen that the Western European countries have adopted a policy of imperialist alliance with (and dependence upon) the United States, involving declining living standards. Such is the perspective before them.

In Eastern Europe the trend of development is very different. There is no dollar gap there since countries in Eastern Europe, deprived of dollar gifts or loans, confine their dollar purchases to levels at which they can pay out of current exports, and practise mutual help on a considerable scale, deriving particular benefit from the Soviet Union in the form of technical and financial aid.

The fourth Soviet Five Year Plan, which came into force at the beginning of 1946, has been steadily over-fulfilled and "it is probable that the aggregate production targets of the Five Year Plan will be fulfilled in four years."¹ As compared with 1940, despite the tremendous war destruction and losses, overall industrial production in 1950 will be 48 per cent. higher and agricultural production 27 per cent. higher. Engineering output will have been increased by over 100 per cent.; iron and steel production by over one-third; coal by half; electric power by 70 per cent.; and consumer goods by more than a third. The long term economic plans of the six popular democracies in Eastern Europe provide for very large increases in industry and substantial increases in agriculture. Thus electric power production will be increased by three times in Hungary and nearly six times in Poland. Steel production in Poland will be increased by three times to nearly 7 million tons. There will also be high rates of expansion in engineering and chemicals, and considerable increase in consumer goods. With minor exceptions in one or two sectors in certain countries plan fulfilment, so far, has been up to schedule. The volume of trade between Eastern countries (including the U.S.S.R.) was almost twice as much in 1948 as in 1947, and about three times as much as before the war. The volume of trade between these countries is planned to increase steadily, and although hitherto trade agreements have been marked by fairly close bilateral planning with some latitude provided by reciprocal credit margins, one of the

¹ United Nations, *World Economic Report*, 1948, New York, 1949, p. 159.

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aims of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance established in January, 1949, is the development of multilateral exchanges among the member countries.

The next problem to be examined is that of the outlook for wider economic relations between capitalism in Western Europe and socialism in Eastern Europe. This means essentially the prospects for increased East-West trade. The dominant contradiction in the world to-day is that between capitalism and socialism. The second World War and its aftermath have strengthened the socialist sector and its allies and weakened the forces of capitalism. One third of the world is now within the socialist area, and despite her terrible losses during the war the Soviet Union is growing rapidly stronger economically and politically. The working class movements in the capitalist countries, despite serious weaknesses and continuing internal divisions are stronger and more united than before the war. Colonial and national movements in under-developed countries are steadily increasing in strength. In the capitalist world, despite the enormous increase in the economic power of the United States and the deliberately fostered revival of Germany and Japan, three imperialist powers have disappeared from the front rank, and two others, Britain and France, are seriously weakened.

The growing relative weakness of the capitalist sector makes its struggle against the socialist sector all the stronger, as the history of the "cold war," the "shooting war" in several areas, and the intensive war preparations all show. Yet there are other factors, despite this all-embracing and deadly struggle, which make it perfectly realistic to examine seriously the prospects of, and conditions for, expanded trade between Eastern and Western Europe, and between Western Europe and under-developed areas in other parts of the world, such as China and soon other areas. These factors are the contradictions within capitalism itself.

The first contradiction is that between capital and labour in each capitalist country. As a result of the search for profits and the downward pressure on wages, the economic crisis is intensified, owing to the growing impoverishment of Western domestic markets. This in turn impels a search for new markets abroad. The imperialist pattern of trade leads also to an impoverishment of colonial markets. The people of Western Europe know, however, that there is an alternative path in which the purchasing power of overseas markets can grow, and thus enable living standards to be maintained and increased in their own countries. This is the

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decisive factor. In the last analysis it is only the working class which can compel a radical reorientation in the direction of Western European trade since the struggle is part of a much wider political fight.

There are other factors powerfully impelling this change. The second contradiction is that between capitalists, either within the capitalist class of a country or between capitalist states. The experience of the Marshall Plan, already discussed, shows the conflicts between the countries of Western Europe and the real aims of the United States in relation to Western Europe. By far the most important aspect of this contradiction is that between the United States and Great Britain. The law of uneven development inherent in capitalism has meant that the United States now accounts for almost two-thirds of the world's productive capacity. All the statistical indices, steel production, size of merchant shipping, average share of world's exports, etc., indicate the tremendous growth of the United States economic power. American productivity is more than twice as great as that of Western Europe; in some industries it is four times as great. The rate of growth of American productivity is also almost twice as great as that of Western Europe.

Factors which make an economic crisis in the United States on an unprecedented scale ultimately inevitable, in particular the colossal growth of productive power in relation to possible markets and the steady and high rate of growth in productivity, can be clearly seen. The steady down-turn in economic activity during 1949 shows that the crisis has already started. The conflict with Britain can, therefore, only intensify, and its manifestations can be seen in every part of the world, in the Middle East over oil, in the Far East over the price and quantity of colonial raw materials to be bought by America and in the whole British Empire, and especially Africa, over spheres of investment. Above all it can be seen in the recent Anglo-American financial discussions, the real scope of which went far beyond a discussion over Britain's dollar gap. It is now being seen quite clearly that discussions on the scale of Marshall Aid to Britain, and on devaluation, cannot be dissociated from such questions as trade discrimination, tariff policy, import restrictions, free convertibility of currencies and American investment policy. In the devaluation issue, for example, successful American pressure on Britain to devalue the pound was essentially part of the policy of breaking up the sterling area, the

only rival currency block to the dollar, to turn the terms of trade more in favour of the United States, and most important of all, an attempt to increase the value of United States capital exports to Britain and the British Commonwealth.

In this conflict the United States is steadily gaining ground. Yet there is opposition within the British capitalist class. On one side, speaking for the capitulators, the *Sunday Times* can discuss a dollar-sterling merger quite calmly, pointing out that "Its advocates also contend that the West cannot indefinitely afford friction between its two principal economic groups when facing the East."¹ On the other, a distinguished academic protagonist of British capitalist interests, discussing the Havana Charter, the implementation of which contains in a nutshell all the Anglo-United States antagonisms, points out that "in British eyes the dice of the nondiscrimination rule seem already to be loaded against the preferential system of the British Commonwealth. . . . It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the reduction of tariff preferences within the British Commonwealth is the only consequence of the Charter which is definite and certain."² He goes on to argue that the problem of balance of payments equilibrium, which is regarded by the Charter as a side issue, should have been regarded as the key objective, which it clearly is, from Britain's point of view. He says "there could be no more dangerous idea than that a depreciation of exchange rates is the sovereign remedy for a balance-of-payments deficit."³

It is such conflicts within the capitalist class of Western Europe which help to generate opposition to the United States, and periodic attempts to find salvation in trade with the socialist world.

The third contradiction is that between the imperialist powers, notably Great Britain, and the colonial or quasi-colonial territories. The initial effect of this contradiction is to turn Britain, in particular, away from trade with Eastern Europe, and to maintain the pattern of trade between the developed and undeveloped area in such a way that the latter remains under-developed. The reason that Britain has continuously given, for example, as to why she is unable to expand her trade with Eastern Europe is that her resources are fully committed elsewhere. On the one hand she relies heavily on the sterling area as an outlet for her exports; on the other, she is concentrating on exports which will earn dollars directly, and the main brunt of this policy falls on the colonies

¹ *Sunday Times*, August 28th, 1949.

² Sir Hubert Henderson, *American Economic Review*, June, 1949. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 614.

themselves. Indeed, the role mapped out for the colonies is as an increasing source of dollar earnings, whatever the cost to Britain in terms of military expenditure.

A leading characteristic of imperialism is the export of capital to areas where a higher rate of profit can be earned than in the home country. The extra profits are obtained by the exploitation of very cheap labour power, and may be earned in various ways by expanding supplies of, or cheapening prices of, raw materials imported by the home country, by additional exports to third countries, or in the form of "invisible" earnings.¹ The system also expands the market for a variety of other products from the home country. At the same time political or military domination of the colonial country is necessary, not only to ensure that the "development" of the colony does not involve the setting up of competing industries, but also to keep other imperialist powers out. The basic assumptions of imperialism are being called in question by the growth of colonial movements, while the prospects of closing the dollar gap, in the face of American policy, are slender indeed. There are forces, particularly in the Far East and Latin America, which are determined to end the old relationship with the imperialist countries, while the failure of imperialist policy under present conditions, despite enormous military expenditure, may compel Western Europe to turn more, if in a halting fashion, towards trade with Eastern Europe.

The result of these three basic contradictions makes increasingly possible expanded East-West trade. First of all the pressure of the working-class movements within the Western countries is growing, and they will find increasingly allies among producers whose markets are disappearing, or who do not relish capitulation to America. In the Anglo-American struggle the big guns are on the side of America, and Britain may be compelled to look over her shoulder in an Eastern direction, as countries like France and Italy are already doing. Colonial policy remains extremely profitable for the few, but their numbers are diminishing; the growing pressure

¹ Thus in 1938 the sterling area exports of primary products, rubber, jute, wool, cocoa, tin, tea and diamonds, to the dollar area amounted to a value of £33 million, while British manufactures amounted to a value of £24 million. In 1948 the value of sterling area exports of primary products was £188 million, while the value of British manufactures was £96 million, a substantial relative fall. (*Economist*, July 30th, 1949.) From the 1936 level, rubber output is to be more than doubled by 1952, copper output to be substantially more than doubled, and tin output to be raised by more than threefold. The output of oil by British companies in the Middle East is planned to rise from 23.3 million tons in 1946 to 80.4 million tons in 1956. (*Ibid.*, August 6th, 1949.)

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of the colonial movements along with the working-class movements of Western Europe is breaking up the old relationships.

There is no prospect whatever of closing the dollar gap along the lines of present policy. The United States cannot take Western European goods in the quantity required to pay for Western European imports from herself. Eastern Europe can provide most of the food and raw materials required by Western Europe and at present obtained from the United States and the other countries in the dollar bloc, and can take the goods manufactured by Western Europe.

Illustrations of the goods which can be obtained from Eastern Europe, and which are at present obtained in large quantities from the Western Hemisphere in exchange for dollars, can easily be given.¹ The Soviet Union at the recent Washington Wheat Conference stated that she was able to place 100 million bushels of wheat a year on the world market. This would satisfy the minimum wheat import requirements of Western European countries and still leave something over for Soviet exports to other destinations. The total import requirements of Western Europe in coarse grains could be obtained from the Soviet Union and other Eastern countries. Considerably increased quantities, and, still more important, steadily increasing quantities of meat, meat products and dairy products could be obtained from Eastern Europe. Given the perhaps disagreeable change in taste, the United Kingdom's tobacco imports could be entirely obtained from European sources, and especially Bulgaria. A steady increase in Eastern European production of oil seed, sugar beets, fruit and vegetables is taking place. Providing suitable long-term arrangements were made the necessary imports of Western Europe could eventually be obtained almost entirely from this quarter.

At present Europe obtains no more than one-third of its lead ore and one-half of its zinc ore requirements from European

¹ It is misleading to concentrate, in discussion on expanded East-West trade in Europe, or for that matter expanded trade between Europe and under-developed areas overseas, on the goods assumed to be immediately available for export to Western Europe. It cannot be stressed too much that in the case of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe there are no "surpluses" lying about waiting to be exported. There are two relevant questions which should be asked. The first is what can be exported immediately in exchange for goods which the Eastern countries actually want, and it can readily be shown that there is a wide range of food and raw materials. The second, and still more important question, is what can be obtained over a period of years if Western countries are genuinely prepared to co-operate in the development of natural resources, largely through the export of capital equipment on suitable terms.

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sources. Yet there are substantial ore resources in Eastern Europe, for example in Poland. Still more important, three-quarters of the known world resources of bauxite are to be found in Europe, the largest deposit being in Hungary. Aluminium is growing in importance and is steadily being developed as a substitute for copper, yet by 1952 Europe still plans to import one-third of its requirements. Europe is importing more than half a million tons of sulphur per annum. Sulphur can be largely replaced by pyrites, of which there are abundant resources in Europe which can be quickly developed. In the scheme which originated in the Economic Commission for Europe, but which has only been adopted in a much modified form with only Yugoslavia and Finland participating, timber cutting equipment was to be made available on credit to timber producing countries in Eastern Europe, and as a result additional timber exports valued at approximately 120 million dollars would have been forthcoming within a period of three years.¹

The counterparts of the additional exports from Eastern Europe of food and raw materials required from Western Europe are two-fold. First, the means of making the additional production available, such as mining, processing and transportation equipment in the case of ores, cutting and transportation equipment in the case of timber, fertilisers, and agricultural equipment in the case of agricultural products. All these engineering and chemical products are manufactured in Western Europe and are, moreover, now freely available. Secondly, since Eastern Europe is not prepared to accept only the means of producing food and raw materials for export to Western Europe, she requires to import heavy engineering equipment of all kinds, and this also is becoming freely available in Western Europe.

Western Europe is interested in trade with Eastern Europe not only to obtain imports of food and raw materials. Her market problem is growing as the crisis develops. Eastern Europe represents a stable and ever expanding market for many of the goods produced in Western Europe, and especially heavy engineering products of all kinds. Finally, increased East-West trade can make possible the restoration of a multilateral trading area independent of dollar domination. Thus, since Eastern Europe also requires such raw materials as tin, wool and rubber produced in the sterling area, she could pay for such products out of a surplus with, say, the

¹ The failure of this scheme was due to American pressure exerted through the International Bank, to supply half the required timber producing machinery, despite the fact that everything necessary could be produced in Europe.

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United Kingdom, who could in turn maintain a certain deficit with Eastern Europe and a surplus with the rest of the sterling area.

Eastern Europe's interest in trade with Western Europe lies in the prospect of importing capital equipment, particularly if part of this equipment can be obtained on suitable credit terms. This will enable these countries to increase the level of industrialisation and the productivity of agriculture more rapidly. It must be remembered, however, that as time goes on the interest of Western Europe in trade with Eastern Europe must grow, while the interest of Eastern Europe in trade with a capitalist West will diminish. Western Europe has a dual interest, as a source of imports and as a market for exports. Eastern Europe has no export market problem, and is interested only in obtaining certain imports for which her exports are simply means of payment. Trade with the inherently unstable capitalist world always has its disadvantages for a socialist country. There is no certainty, even on the economic plane, that a capitalist country can fulfil its commercial undertakings. There is the added uncertainty that deliveries promised may subsequently be refused on political grounds. Finally, the rate of economic advance in the socialist sector is very rapid. Of this, fresh evidence accumulates every day. As time goes on, there will be fewer and fewer goods which it is urgent to import from the capitalist world.¹

It is clear that both in Western and Eastern Europe there is a basis of mutual interest in increasing East-West trade, and objective economic and political possibilities for it.

There are, however, three essential conditions which must be fulfilled if this mutual interest is to be satisfied. First, it is not sufficient that East-West trade should be confined to annual bilateral agreements between countries on the basis of exactly balanced trade. Planned economies do not produce a casual and unpredictable "surplus" for export. If they cannot get the imports they require in exchange for their exports, the exportable food and raw materials will not be produced. If countries with such economies are to divert some of their already fully employed resources to expand production for export, trade agreements must

¹ In the case of Eastern Europe, some credits are being given by the U.S.S.R. Exports from the six smaller Eastern European countries to the U.S.S.R. were about ten times greater in volume in 1938 as compared with 1948, while the imports were about twenty-five times greater (see *Economic Survey of Europe in 1948* by E.C.E., Geneva, 1949). There is therefore a significant credit element here, while the character of the trade is capital equipment and raw materials from the U.S.S.R. in exchange for manufacturers and raw materials from the Eastern countries.

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be over a definite period of years, taking into account the period of production of the goods to be produced and ensuring that definite commitments are made that the capital equipment will be delivered on time, and the additional final products actually bought. Second, the more industrialised countries of Western Europe must be prepared to finance some of the additional production exported from Eastern Europe by means of short or medium term credits. It would have been to the long-term economic interest of Western Europe to extend credits to Eastern Europe in the period immediately after the war. Third, there must be an end of discriminatory practices, both political discrimination which prevents export of so-called war equipment, and economic discrimination by means of which the more industrialised country attempts to dictate the type of development in the less developed country. Efforts are still being made to persuade countries in Eastern Europe to concentrate less in their development plans on heavy industry.¹ The era when Eastern Europe can be regarded just as a source of food and raw materials and a market for manufactures, largely consumer goods, for the West is gone. Except in the case of Jugoslavia, the old "complementarity" is dead.

The outlook for the peoples of Western Europe, unless there is a radical change in policy towards trade with Eastern Europe, is extremely grim—a steady worsening in living standards combined with a steady drive to war. Moreover, time is running out. A considerable and expanding volume of trade is possible if a start is made now. Such trade is vital to the prosperity of Western Europe and would be of great value to Eastern Europe. Without such trade, Eastern Europe will still forge ahead and will become less and less interested as time goes on, while Western Europe's difficulties will get worse. In ten years' time the West could easily become a vast depressed area, dependent upon and ruthlessly exploited by United States finance capital. It is for the working class of Western Europe to force a change of policy; only they can do it. They know the overwhelming logic of their case, and they must learn how urgent it is to act and to act quickly.

¹ Thus the suggestion in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's *Economic Survey of Europe in 1948* (p. 210), that "if a higher proportion of investment were devoted to the light industries, the level of industrial employment and the level of real income would increase much faster," was noted approvingly by the representatives of several Western European delegations during the recent session of the Economic Commission for Europe. In the light of the past history of undeveloped areas such a statement is of doubtful validity even in the short run. In the long run it is certainly untrue.

Florentine Painting and Its Social Background

BY DEREK CHITTOCK

IT has long been understood that the art of an age cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of cultural life, from the religious, philosophical and economic aspects of the life of the period. This, we realise, must be considered as a whole and not as so many parallel and unrelated streams. A great step forward was made when it was discovered that these aspects were not merely the expression of the spirit of the age, but were in the last resort, to be understood by reference to the human relations of men on the level of production. But, while a few illuminating examples of this dependence have been indicated, it is unfortunately the case that the relationship of the economic and political background with the cultural superstructure has only been made out in the most general terms. Clearly, this is a case not for broad generalisations, which are unconvincing, but for exhaustive and detailed study of concrete examples. That in its turn means the detailed survey of a particular field, a patient and exhaustive study of concrete details.

This is what we have in Dr. Antal's important history of Florentine art in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries,¹ in which he seeks to show that the fine arts were essentially an expression of the social and intellectual thought of the period, and that the artists were craftsmen employed by the classes then rising to power to serve their special interests. The author equates the various styles of this period with the state of the society that commissioned them, beginning with the sane, sculpturesque Giotto, passing to the mystical but "popular" art of the unstable radical period, and ending (before the advent of the Medici) with the "natural" classicism of the aristocratic period of Masaccio.

In order to achieve his purpose Dr. Antal places on record a great mass of facts about Florentine economic, social and political life before going on to a detailed account of the arts and of the artist craftsmen and their employers. The author analyses the economic basis of the great prosperity of fourteenth-century Florence; he traces its decadence after the collapse of the great banking families and the rise of a lower middle class who temporarily won control of the city, but who lost it again when prosperity returned. From then on Dr. Antal describes the city moving away from political

¹ F. Antal, *Florentine Painting and its Social Background* (Kegan Paul, 1948).

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radicalism, to an upper middle-class state and from this phase towards the aristocratic oligarchy of the Medici.

On this basis, we find a parallel rise and fall of various religious and philosophical movements and cults, as well as the purely political expressions of the class movements of the times. The whole complex throws a flood of light upon the successive art forms and upon the individual works of art long known to all but never before interpreted in this light. The 160 half-tone plates admirably illustrate the development of this theme.

Antal begins by comparing two well-known Madonnas by Masaccio and Gentile da Fabriano, and asking how two paintings of the same subject which are so fundamentally different could have been painted within a few years of each other. He proceeds to analyse not only the general social background of these paintings, but the particular social groupings which actually commissioned them and were responsible for the contrasting treatments.

Antal demonstrates through a concentrated analysis that the economic and political power of Florence in the early fifteenth century was vested in the hands of the upper middle class, dominated by a few wealthy and powerful families such as the Albizzi and Uzzano, big landowners and merchants.

Both Masaccio and Gentile were largely dependent upon upper middle-class circles for their livelihood, for although earlier the artist had relied upon the patronage of the larger guilds, the church and various religious orders, by the turn of the century individual families had grown prosperous enough to become private patrons.

But the upper middle class at this time lacked the ideological unity apparent more than a century earlier when they were struggling against the feudal nobility. The alliance of the lower middle class had turned these battles into a great progressive movement; but now the pendulum of necessity had swung, and with the nobility defeated the upper middle class became the oppressors with the nobility itself as an ally.

Antal shows how this social and political alliance with the landed aristocracy is reflected in the work of Gentile—distinctly Gothicised in manner, with an inordinate realism of detail and pompous display of finery in dress. This aristocratised, almost precious tendency (which also reflected the tasks of the lesser burghers, whose cultural position Antal declares to be very similar) even extended to religious painting. Thus the Virgin, earlier depicted as a simple woman seated beside a manger, now becomes

a refined bourgeoisie with an entourage of expensively dressed ladies-in-waiting, holding gifts in their hands.

By contrast, the art of Masaccio is matter of fact, sober and clear-cut, showing an advanced interest in the logical and scientific construction of his pictures, with a notable use of aerial perspective. In addition his absorption with antiquity, part of a general revival of classical ideas, found expression in a more accurate delineation of the human form. Compared to his contemporaries, Masaccio's rendering of religious scenes are remarkably austere; even scenes depicting miracles are detached and unemotional.

The ideas embraced in Masaccio's art, unlike Gentile's, were those of the most progressive sections of the upper middle class. Their harvest was not to be reaped until later, when the bourgeoisie were better equipped to deal with them. Like so many artists, however, in advance of their time, Masaccio lived in debt and was relatively impoverished compared to his fellow painters. Antal points out, in speaking of the frescoes in Santa Maria del Carmine, that only the influence of important friends among the progressive intelligentsia gained him the commission.

He states later, when referring to the frescoes in St. Trinita: "It is noteworthy that for these, the Bankers should have chosen Lorenzo Monaco [an artist stylistically close to Gentile D.C.]. . . . We can be quite sure that they would never have seriously considered Masaccio. For the bulk of the upper middle class was not so radically progressive as its intellectuals; only the potentiality of a genuine progressive bourgeois taste existed."¹ The differences of style and outlook to be found in Gentile and Masaccio therefore clearly emerge before us as a result of Antal's analysis, as dependent on the differences in outlook among the upper middle class itself, and not as the art histories infer on chance factors of inspired genius.

This will give us some idea of Antal's approach to his problem. It differs fundamentally from that of most art historians. As he says of those who find it impossible to accept this new approach, "they cannot imagine that art history is a piece of history, and that the art historian's task is primarily not to approve or disapprove of a given work of art from his own point of view, but to try and explain it in the light of its own historical premises; and that there is no contradiction between a picture as a work of art and a document of its kind."²

¹ F. Antal, *Op. cit.*, p. 324.

² F. Antal, "Remarks on the Method of Art History" (*Burlington Magazine*, March, 1949).

Early Italian art, including the Florentines, has until now been a particularly exclusive preserve of "art for art's sake" theorists. Bernhard Berenson, perhaps the most eminent writer on the Italians, sums up this general attitude in these words: "It was upon form and form alone that the great Florentine masters concentrated their efforts, and consequently we are forced (*sic*) to believe that in their pictures at least, form is the principal enjoyment."¹

No evidence is adduced for this assertion, and the only remarkable thing about this method of unravelling art history, is that it seldom requires any. For how much easier is it to declare that the styles of Giotto and say, Duccio, differed because they were both individual geniuses or that the Italian Renaissance "was a great unfolding of the human spirit"² than to analyse the concrete social and economic causes which alone can account for both.

To understand and appreciate Antal's discoveries we must see them in relation to a continually changing historical process in which art and ideology reflect each emphasis and fluctuation of class fortune. To do this, we must retrace our steps somewhat to his developed consideration of the position which Florence occupied in thirteenth-century Italy and up to the early fifteenth century—the period with which the book deals. By the thirteenth century a flourishing textile industry, predominantly in wool, together with trade and banking, had given Florence a position of singular economic power, which was only to be rivalled considerably later by the advent of Flemish competition in silks. It is curious to note that, despite the marked similarity between the sudden irruption of artistic activity in both North Italy and Flanders, one can find no explanation for the origin of either in the art histories.

Dvorak, the art historian of whom Antal was a pupil, has pointed out that the exploration of the source of the new bourgeois culture in Flanders of which this art (of the Van Eycks) was a product could only be found in books of economic history, and adds "which no one ever reads."

Yet clearly the rise of the merchant class and the prosperity inimical to a flourishing of art that it brought with it, is the only historical factor common to both countries. In the case of Florence this class had emerged victoriously much earlier than elsewhere in Europe. Organised into guilds which were equipped to deal with

¹ Bernhard Berenson, *Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*.

² Roger Fry, *Essay on Giotto*.

opposition in a military way, the merchant class had won its most decisive battle against the feudal nobility with the adoption in 1293 of the constitution known as the *Ordinamenti di Giustizia*. This, according to Antal, virtually placed political power in the hands of the upper middle class represented by the cloth manufacturers and bankers.

During the ensuing century however, and particularly between 1340 and 1390, the lesser guilds were able to exert a greater influence owing to the economic bankruptcy of the larger organisations. The revolt of the *Ciompi* in 1378—the dispossessed wool workers who were entirely dependent on the domestic master-craftsmen—was instrumental in winning important political concessions for the middle and lower strata of the bourgeoisie as well as for themselves. Not until the early fifteenth century, as we have already seen, was power restored to the oligarchy of the upper middle class.

It is against Antal's presentation of this political and economic background that we can more readily understand the great conflicts of the religious orders, which were not, as we have always been led to believe, abstract movements of the spirit but rather served as ideological battle grounds for class interests. The religious movements—notably those of the Franciscan and Dominican orders—are of the greatest importance, not only because of their role as art patrons but because frequently even political issues were made to assume a religious guise. For example Antal quotes the Dominican preacher da Rivalto as being appalled that the merchants of the wool guild should cause wretchedly underpaid weavers to be excommunicated because the spun cloth did not come up to the merchants requirements, and that the clergy in their sermons should threaten the workers with the same penalty.

Originally both Franciscan and Dominican movements arose from the needs of the laity and poor, each achieving a large popular following. In the early thirteenth century St. Francis, the founder of the former sect, had preached the equality of all men before God and proclaimed that riches were a hindrance to that relationship. The dangers of such an insurgent philosophy, and particularly one which the Franciscans were prepared to effect with the most convincing acts of asceticism, became quickly apparent to the orthodox church, who finally succeeded in incorporating it as a closed order in their midst and thus emasculating it. The Spirituals and Fraticelli, moreover, who persisted in maintaining and practising the original ideas of St. Francis were persecuted and exterminated.

Similarly, the Dominican movement, somewhat more opportunist in its tactics, ended in a like compromise with the ruling upper middle class, in whose interest it was that religious sentiment among the lower classes “should be completely passive, untroubled by problems, opposed to any dynamic mysticism, and yet very intense.”¹

St. Francis is a frequent figure in Florentine art, notably in the thirteenth century, before the eventual supremacy of the Dominican Order, and Antal shows clearly how the change of attitude in religious matters is reflected in the various rendering of legends in which he appears. In the revolutionary phase of the middle class when St. Francis has a wide and popular following he is depicted with truth as puny, emaciated and ugly. E. Burney Salter has described these early renderings of the Saint (by Berlinghieri and Margaritone) as “veritable nightmares” and “repellent,”² preferring the sweetly idealised portrayals by Fra Angelico. She thus betrays, with some lack of detachment, how class prejudice to-day is capable of warping a balanced appreciation of art history.

Later pictures of St. Francis, from the fourteenth century onward, show him as a much more imposing and monumental figure, and it is worth noting that some of the earlier works carried out when the Franciscan movement was at its height were destroyed. The respectability the order then enjoyed is apparent by the frequent appearance of pictures portraying the Pope's confirmation of Franciscan rule, the act which won it to the side of orthodoxy in 1223.

Antal develops with a wealth of detail the similar changes which took place in the rendering of Christ. Previously when on the cross, he had been depicted as a cult image, sometimes even partially clothed, since nakedness in the Middle Ages was a sign of bondage and inferiority. But with the rise of the revolutionary movement of the thirteenth century he became radically transformed. There is an emotional emphasis on his suffering and he appears more emaciated with numerous signs that he has suffered an agonising death. In this way, the rising middle class and poor were able to feel a greater personal attachment to a figure which had suffered and died for them.

In the fourteenth century, however, when the middle class is no longer revolutionary-minded, the agony of Christ becomes calmer and more subdued. With Giotto, for example, an excellent

¹ F. Antal, *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

² *Franciscan Legends in Italian Art*.

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representative of Florentine middle-class rationalism, we see a more idealised figure, studied and thoughtful in composition, and with an intensification of interest in anatomy.

The position occupied by Giotto, the great progressive of fourteenth-century Florentine art, is a most interesting one. Clearly embodied in him are all the aims and ideas of the new humanist culture. He was one of the first artists to reach any considerable social status, and supplemented his income by practising usury—in itself a pointer of the times.

His position and social success were unique among his contemporaries, for art at this time was still considered as one of the manual crafts, with most artists arising from petty bourgeois or peasant circles. It was not until a century later that the artist was able to raise his status to a more middle-class level and hence to a greater level of equality with his patrons. But even in the last decades of the fifteenth century there was theoretical opposition at least to the admission of painting as one of the liberal arts, and arguments raged about the issue with great heat on both sides.¹

The clear, compact style of Giotto had its roots in the art of Rome, where the interests of the Curia and upper middle class were interlinked, as in Florence itself. But Giotto was able to render and model the human form for the first time in a real and lifelike way, construct his pictures on scientific principles, mass figures together in crowds and concern himself with the genre-like depiction of detail. Antal, in fact, describes Giotto's art as being "so modern in form and content that it was only able to maintain itself with difficulty even in so progressive a town as Florence."² Better to appreciate Giotto's innovations, one need only compare them to the static conventionalised postures of medieval art—an art which of necessity infused devotion rather than action, and loyalty rather than enquiry. The enquiry and articulate movement in Giotto's art thus makes it completely revolutionary, from a feudal standpoint.

Another important feature which we see developed with Giotto which is characteristic of humanist art generally is the emphasis on individuality. In the same way that religion had become a matter for more private devotion so art becomes more personal in its

¹ Bandinelli records in his *Memoriale* a duel fought between his cousin and the Vidame de Chartres because the latter accused the Florentine nobles of practising manual arts, in that they took an active interest in painting and sculpture. Quoted by Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1440-1600*.

² F. Antal, *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

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attentions. Thus with Giotto naturalist portraiture arises, corresponding in literature to the biography. These portraits to begin with are flat, usually in profile, but not yet in evidence as separate entities. The Giotto frescoes in the Peruzzi Chapel contain ten portrait medallions as part of the frieze which, although existing as separate heads (probably of the Peruzzi family), are still contained by the picture as a whole. Similarly, his fresco in the Bargello chapel contains among others a portrait of Dante. While it is true that a form of portraiture existed prior to the rise of humanist art (as in Egypt and Byzantium) naturalistic portraiture as we know it was quite unknown in the Middle Ages. For the most part it was a matter of symbolism, a conventional characterless figure clearly endowed with an insignia of office, such as a crown or mitre, often with the name written underneath, so that no mistake was possible. It is not without significance that the only comparable example from antiquity should be the Roman portrait bust (and the medallion) which made its appearance around the fourth century.

I have indicated in this article some of the more notable arguments advanced by Antal in his impressive study. The light which he casts on many of the minor Florentine artists is for the most part quite new and even the truths he has unearthed relating to the more important figures we have never before seen in so clear a light.

Continually throughout the discussion we are brought back to the dominating influence of the social background of Florentine society—its changing class structure and the position occupied by the artist within it. The evidence has been marshalled so convincingly that even those hostile to Antal's scientific method are hard put to it to refute him. John Pope-Hennessy, for example, in a splenetic review in *The Listener*, refers to it as "crude historical romanticism" and proceeds to criticise Antal in the following terms: "How surprised Felice Brancacci would have been to learn that the 'Scenes from the Life of St. Peter,' which he commissioned from Masaccio for his chapel in the Carmine, were intended 'to express that the wealth of the State was to be sought on the ocean,' or the patrons of the Spedale degli Innocenti to find themselves accused of 'parading their charitable intentions for the benefit of the poor.'" Now Engels points out in a famous passage that history 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

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—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.”¹ This applies equally to a work of art. Whatever the individual intention of either patron or artist, it is the function of the art historian to reveal the objective role played by a work of art in the historical process. The two are not necessarily the same. Intention is one thing, society’s law of motion is another, and it is precisely this law of motion and the part played by art in it both consciously and unconsciously that Antal has laid bare for us.

What criticism I have to offer of the book is firstly on the question of historical interpretation. Is Antal correct in believing that the bourgeois revolution, the effective transfer of power to the middle class, took place at such an early date? Has he exaggerated the revolutionary role of the merchant capitalist class and under-emphasised its purely precocious and local development against what is in fact an over-all feudal setting? As a non-specialist in this field, I will leave this question to be taken up by others, while pointing out that this criticism in no way invalidates Antal’s main thesis.

Secondly, I believe Antal’s failure to consider changing style in relation to changing technique to be an important omission. Fresco painting (*buon fresco*), for example, underwent considerable technical advancement during this period, as shown by Cennini’s account of the method and that of earlier writers such as Didron and Theophilus. The greater freedom of treatment that resulted clearly has a bearing on stylistic factors yet no attention is paid to this important point. Likewise the explanation Antal advances for the preferential use of fresco painting over mosaic is that the former was cheaper. While no doubt this was a cardinal consideration, the increased naturalism and detail afforded by fresco made it more suitable to express the new content which was arising.

These and some other points relating to the interpretation of style are, however, minor matters. The book is an immense achievement, and as a pioneer work of applied Marxism in the field of art history it is destined to become a classic.

¹ Engels, *Letter to Bloch*, September 21st, 1890.

A Journey to American Parnassus

By ROMAN KEIN¹

I LAND IN U.S.P.

FROM the distance it looked something like an arch. It stood a long way off at the end of a straight, wide speedway marked off into traffic lanes. I could not make out exactly what it was; at least I had never seen anything like it before. My curiosity aroused, I decided to investigate.

I do not know how long I walked. My watch had stopped; I had forgotten to wind it. The closer I got to the arch the more I realised that its proportions were colossal. As far as I could judge, it was almost as high as the Statue of Liberty. Something gleamed at the top, and as I drew nearer I was able to make out three letters—U.S.P.

I walked over to a man in a cap who was sitting on a bench outside a filling station and asked him politely whether he could tell me where I was.

This arch, he obligingly explained, marked the beginning of a special territory that belonged to no state—something like the District of Columbia where Washington is located. The three letters were the abbreviation of the name of the district at whose border I now stood: U.S.P.—United States Parnassus.

Ah, I thought, this must be the centre of the spiritual culture of America.

Geographically the district is nowhere, yet it forms part of modern America. On one side it borders on Wall Street with its Stock Exchange and other powerful institutions; on another, it is contiguous with that famous Los Angeles suburb, Hollywood, and elsewhere it touches on all the thirty-three industrial hubs of the United States.

An imposing figure, known as “The Boss,” takes the investigator on a conducted tour of this district, which is wholly devoted to “THE SPIRITUAL FOOD INDUSTRY.”

All the enterprises mass-producing spiritual food are concentrated in this district. The Boss went over to the window and

¹ Abridged from *Soviet Literature* and translated from the Russian by Rose Prokofyeva.

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pointed to the city. "The real literature of America is made right here. Our district is the centre of the spiritual food industry. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Our district is the pride of America!"

THE READER MUST BE WON OVER ENTIRELY

After visiting the factories for the mass-production of magazines, they consider the new industry of making "pocket" books.

"Here you have what we call the pocket book," said the Boss. "The pocket book is one of America's greatest contributions to world culture. To study our literature without including the pocket book is like making a study of a country's army without taking its infantry into account. The pocket book is the infantry of American literature. America is the home of the pocket book, i.e. cheap books of convenient size that can be carried in the pocket.

"We are thinking of publishing books to fit pants and vest pockets as well," the Boss went on. "And 'compact books' for women, made to fit inside handbags. The portable principle ought to be developed as much as possible."

"But the reader has a head as well as pockets," I suggested.

"Oh, we've got his head, but not altogether. To take care of that, we've got to make literature portable not only in size, but in content. We already have one form of literature that answers these requirements. But not everybody reads it yet."

"What literature is that?" I asked.

"The objective must be to make all literature portable in every respect," the Boss went on, ignoring my question. "Then we will be able to say that we have won over the reader completely.

"We make a systematic study of the reader with a view to ascertaining his tastes. For instance, we have devised the *bookette*, which gives digests of novels and stories. Bookettes enable the reader to economise an average of about one and a half thousand hours of reading time a year. This is done by trimming down lengthy descriptions of landscape, details of setting and emotional experiences of the characters. Magazines like *Omnibook* condense all best sellers for the convenience of the reader. For five dollars you can read at least fifty novels a year, quite sufficient to enable anyone to take part in any literary conversation.

"An abridged version of a full length novel takes up little more than ten pages including the illustrations. That is just about fifteen minutes' reading time. Anyone can read that much in the subway

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en route from Bronx Park to Times Square. Everything for the convenience of the reader. The bookette is to literature what extract tablets are to the food industry."

The Boss showed me an issue of a magazine lying on the table. "Review of literature, art and public affairs," I read on the cover. "The reader who has no time for critical articles and reviews but who nevertheless wants to know what is going on in the literary world can learn everything of interest to him within the space of one minute."

When I had finished looking through the magazines I shook my head and laughed.

"You're laughing to conceal your envy," my guide remarked with a grimace. "You don't have magazines like that in your country."

I agreed. "You're quite right," I said heartily. "We don't have magazines like these. Magazines that feature sensational crimes and corpses of every variety: sliced up, strangled, drowned, roasted, wrapped up in neat parcels and dispatched by air mail. Our magazines don't play up seers like Griswell who is supposed to have predicted the day the war would end; or articles like the one by the director of the California Observatory who claims that the atom bomb caused changes in the surface of other planets; or about the dog in London who set the world record by running 550 yards in 28.2 seconds; or about the marriage of an eighty-year-old man to a rich woman aged seventy-nine, and how they spent their honeymoon on Coney Island; or about the man from Texas who ate seventy-five live lizards on a bet in one sitting; or about film actress so-and-so being film star so-and-so's umpteenth mistress; or that one hundred and twenty cats committed suicide in Vermont last month. In *Newsweek*, for instance, I read about someone who teaches the technique of kissing and claims that there are more than three thousand different ways of osculation. If you ask me, that sort of trash ought to make wonderful reading matter for monkeys, provided you could teach them to read."

He is put in charge of a new guide, known as P., who professes disgust at the commercialism of American literature, but cannot or will not carry his analysis any deeper. They discuss new editions of the classics.

"Why, look at this," I said, pointing to some small volumes of Shakespeare and Dickens. "What's the idea of accusing the publishers of commercialism when they produce cheap convenient editions of the classics for the mass reader. . . ."

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P.'s face was contorted with rage.

"Why, that's a crime of the first water!" he exploded. "In broad daylight they steal the classics, slaughter them and tear the guts out of them, and then sell them in grocery stores, drug stores and on the streets. Some of them play such ducks and drakes with the classics that you cannot recognise them. The same operation is performed on modern writers. Their books are sliced up and put out under different titles."

P. pointed a derisive finger at a booklet with the words "Shakespeare arranged for modern reading" on the cover.

"Read the review of this edition in the *Weekly Book Review*," he said. "This, it says, literally, 'is Shakespeare in light doses.' They talk as if Shakespeare were like the castor oil they serve in drugstores as cocktails. Shakespeare doctored up for the modern reader is a sort of patent medicine. You might call it 'Shakespeareine.' And there are 'Dickensol,' 'Twainines,' 'Hugoles,' and so on. The publishers are following in the footsteps of Hollywood which has long since 'adapted' the classics for the movie-going public. The cheap edition of the classics is a form of murder committed à la Hollywood!"

THE PIN-UP BOYS

For the writer the road to stardom begins from the moment his book is declared a best seller. The author begins his ascent up the flower-strewn ladder of Fame. The author moves to a new apartment, he buys period furniture and a Lincoln car on the instalment plan, gets himself a new typewriter and the necessary electrical gadgets, beginning with a refrigerator and ending with an electric massage, and, moreover, he does something he has dreamed of doing all his life—he spends a month in Florida or takes a trip to Paris to taste some fresh Burgundy snails. The trip to Paris costs less owing to post-war American-French economic relations. His dream trip over, the writer comes home and settles down to write. He signs a contract with his publisher. Since his household expenses have risen and all his prize money has gone to pay for his dream and since on no account must he miss the next payment on the worldly blessings he has acquired on the instalment plan, he is obliged to furnish his publisher with a definite number of words within a prescribed time.

Hollywood spares no expense. No publisher or magazine can

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compete with it. Hollywood screens all the most successful best sellers. The book's success guarantees the success of the screen version. Hence the more best sellers and the bigger the sensation they make, the better for Hollywood.

Having received his prize, the author pays a visit to the director of the film company. The latter suggests that he write a new novel. The number of words, the subject and the plot—all that is left entirely to the author; the company has not the slightest intention of encroaching on the creative imagination of the author, it would not dream of violating the sacred prerogatives of an artist. "We Americans," Eric Johnston, head of the Film Association of America, declared to the world, "are strongly opposed to regimented art; we stand for freedom for the artist." All the film company wishes is that the picture that will be made from the novel should feature little Margaret O'Brien. She could play the part of the daughter of, say, the scientist who invents a new super-powerful weapon—bacteriological, for example; the little girl could be kidnapped by the secret agent of a certain power (George Brent could play that part, he makes a first-rate villain); his partner would be a wicked adventuress he has hired, played by Jane Russell, with Randolph Scott as the fearless exposé of the enemies of mankind. What part he will play in the novel—whether an F.B.I. man or an officer of Technical Intelligence of the American General Staff, or a special correspondent of the *New York Daily News* in Moscow—that, of course, would be entirely up to the author, since the company wouldn't dream of encroaching on the creative imagination of the author. Of course, it might be well to bear in mind that the public likes *risqué* situations featuring Alice Faye, who should try to seduce the professor, since she will provide the sex angle. And inasmuch as the picture will be in colour, the scene ought to be set in some country with plenty of colour and light effects, say Greenland, Sinkiang, Greece or Southern Korea; but the accident with the professor, who will be played by Walter Houston, must positively happen on an old-fashioned English estate, because ever since Hitchcock's famous *Rebecca*, based on a Daphne du Maurier novel, the public has taken a fancy to murders committed in gloomy old mansions. If the novel turns out to be readable and adaptable for the screen, everything will be done to make it a hit. It would have to be written as quickly as possible so that the book could come out in December and the shooting of the picture could begin in the middle of January,

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because Kay Francis, who will be the leading lady, will be free the last week in January. And so, go ahead and good luck to you.

INTERVIEW WITH A GHOST

He is then conducted over a famous literary agency, where teams of authors write anything to order. The firm's slogan is: WE WRITE, YOU SIGN!

I spread out my hands.

"It is incredible. True, I had heard about America's ghost writers, but I would never have believed in the existence of an office like this."

"He's from Moscow," said P.

The official of the agency with whom we were talking threw a scared glance in my direction, but in a few seconds his face lit up with a smile of comprehension.

"Oh, I guess you ran away from there? And now you want to write an exposé. Is that it? We have experts on Soviet themes. We can do anything you want—novel, short story, play, reminiscences, essay, series of articles entitled 'On the Other side of the Iron Curtain,' 'A Land without Literature,' or 'The Secret of the Kremlin.'"

They make their way to a neighbouring park, the man from Moscow turning over in his mind the queer impression made upon him by the faces of all the authors he has so far met, including P.

At close quarters his face seemed even more remarkable. It reminded me of a pencil drawing that had been erased with an indiarubber. Strictly speaking, there was no face to speak of. The blurred outline of a mouth gave a vague hint of the general expression. But that was all.

We sat down on a bench and lighted cigarettes. P. moved closer to me and said in a confidential tone:

"Incidentally, I'm a ghost too."

I looked at him in polite curiosity.

"I noticed," P. went on with a sad smile, "that at the beginning you were very much surprised by my face and manner of speaking. No doubt you wondered why I had no face. I know it had you puzzled, but you were too polite to broach the subject."

"Yes," I confessed. "I really was surprised at first, but after a while I realised what the trouble was. You probably weren't aware of it yourself, but when you began to say what you thought,

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your features began to take shape. I solved the mystery all by myself."

P. looks at his watch and jumps up. It is time to get back to work. He has been talking too much. He has been revealing his disgust with the control and exploitation of American literature not by some abstract "commercial spirit," which is his sentimental affectation but by the control of journals and the publishing of mass literature by the great financial monopolies. He shakes his Russian colleague by the hand.

"It has been a pleasure to meet a member of my own profession. I have enjoyed our talk very much. But there is one thing I would ask you: when you write about your trip make sure you quote me correctly. I maintain that even the sun has its spots. And if American literature has spots, that merely proves its cosmic significance. For American literature is free of the dictates of politics and writers are free to write as they please. Be sure you quote me as saying this," he added in a lower tone, "otherwise I'll be hauled before the committee for the investigation of un-American activities and thrown out on to the street on the basis of Truman's loyalty test regulations. . . ."

"Don't worry, P.," I assured him. "I shan't misquote you."

At that moment a car slid noiselessly up to the entrance. The Boss emerged. Sighting him, P. raised his voice and said solemnly: "Writers must serve pure art and refrain from turning it into a branch of politics!"

The Boss glanced at me and a sarcastic smile played on his lips.

The Boss exchanges a few words with the man from Moscow. "In your country technique is sacrificed on the altar of politics," he says. A discussion ensues on the importance of the ending of a story. P. is asked to explain how he enormously improved a story on which he had been working by adopting a suggestion from the Boss for a more satisfactory ending.

"It was a story about a man who indulged in a number of refined vices, but was caught in the end. In its original form the story was not suitable because it was just another crime novel. So a snappy ending was devised which gave the whole thing the proper flavour. One phrase at the tail end did the trick: '*The membership card of an ultra-left organisation was found in the murderer's pocket.*'"

The Boss raised his finger.

"The ending is the most difficult thing to write. A good ending is an index to the standard of literary technique. You and your colleagues could learn something from us!"

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He waved his glove and disappeared inside the building. P. turned to the door. His face had become a featureless mask once more.

THEY WON'T SELL THEIR BRAINS

There have been several disturbing incidents in the course of the tour: The beginning of a strike, a row with the police. Eventually they meet a group of young film workers and writers who are in revolt against the whole thing. They explain that there are writers who won't sell their brains:

"Many of our writers beginning with Pearl Buck have been fighting the reactionaries for a long time. When Sinclair Lewis won a Pulitzer Prize for *Arrowsmith*, he refused it on the grounds that the prize was a symbol of literary commercialism. William Saroyan followed his example and also declined to accept the Prize. Not so long ago three hundred writers, artists and movie workers clubbed together and started a magazine called *47* without the participation of the capitalists. It remains to be seen what will come of it. It will probably end like Marshall Field's attempt to publish newspapers independent of big business, or Stone and Kimball's effort to put out high-grade literature only, relegating the profit motive to a secondary plane. Both attempts failed. Many people are aware of the evil of commercialism."

"You know, of course, that Wyler's picture, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, about the ex-Servicemen and how disillusioned they are by post-war America, was a sensation from the moment it appeared." . . . "The success of Wyler's film," said the lad with the red star, "like the popularity of books by Caldwell, Sinclair Lewis, Howard Fast, films by Chaplin and other big movie men show that in spite of Wall Street there are still plenty of Americans who think for themselves."

Reviews

Principles of Agriculture. By W. R. WILLIAMS. (Translated from the Russian by G. V. Jacks.) Hutchinson & Co., 12s. 6d.

"SCIENCE'S part in agriculture is to instruct agricultural workers how to provide crop plants throughout the whole of their lives with continuous and simultaneous maximum quantities of water and food—in other words, to teach them how to transform all our land into a condition of high fertility."

This introductory remark by the author clearly shows the purpose for which the book has been written; and, though this book has been written for agriculturalists in the U.S.S.R., the principles on which Soviet agricultural practices are based need to be understood elsewhere, not least in Great Britain. On further study, one can begin to appreciate the differences in aim between socialist and capitalist farming systems and the different tasks facing agricultural workers and scientists under such widely contrasting conditions. First of all, it is essential to realise that the application of science under capitalism is limited by the aim of agricultural production, which must be to make a profit. Goods must be produced for sale in a market subject to fluctuating prices. Though it may be possible to adopt a farming system which increases the fertility of the soil on individual farms or over limited areas, in the country as a whole there can only be uneven treatment of the land; more intense production is achieved on the most fertile soils, while the less fertile soils become uneconomic to farm and tend to pass out of cultivation.

On a state becoming fully socialist, all the natural resources of land, forests, rivers and mountains belong to the people as a whole; the use of large areas, apart from those under direct state control, may then be granted to groups, such as collective farmers, for cultivation. The possibility, or rather necessity, then arises of planning agricultural production in the interests of the whole state economy. W. R. Williams points out that all soils can be made to produce good yields; also that everything must be done to lessen the likelihood of floods and the effects of drought. The way in which the main branches of agriculture are related to the use of land as forest, field or pasture must be planned to fit the main elements of the relief, whether this is watershed, slope or plain; while the conditions under which plants are grown should correspond to their particular requirements.

In discussing the needs of plants for water and food, particular stress is given to their varying requirements on water supply in the soil and why these variations occur. The closest attention to the needs and behaviour of plants themselves is essential if increased soil fertility and larger yields are to be obtained.

Great importance is attached to the "phasic development" of plants. W. R. Williams distinguishes four critical phases of development; germination, tillering, flowering and ripening: he asserts that the transition from one phase to another occurs only when specific metabolic processes have taken place. The whole question of phasic development has featured largely in the recent Lysenko controversy, for it is by subjecting plants to particular conditions of environment during critical periods, though not necessarily distinguished as those mentioned by Williams, that the supporters of Lysenko claim that development of plants can be affected in such a way as will create new characters, which are inherited and developed in their descendants by means of repeated selection and proper cultivation.

In discussing how all soils can be made fertile, W. R. Williams refers to the properties of structureless soils—soils in which no crumbs or aggregated particles exist. When sufficient moisture is available, the aerobic conditions in the soil permit full use of the plant nutrients, but the rapid destruction of humus which thus also takes place results in poor water-retaining capacity. On such soils crop yields are very variable, depending greatly on the weather and the amount of rain. Where anaerobic conditions exist in the soil, humus builds up and thus the power of water retention; but, correspondingly, the availability of plant nutrients become less. However, in structural soils where the soil particles are aggregated into crumbs, a temporary balance between each of these conditions is achieved. The water-holding capacity of such soils is great; little of the water in the subsoil, the uncultivated layer underlying the upper cultivated layer, is lost during dry weather. The crop yields in such soils are very uniform. The problem in good farming is therefore how to change all soils into a structural condition, and also how to maintain them in a state of high fertility.

Much of the land in south-eastern Russia is not yet in a structural state, which means that difficulties are experienced in maintaining adequate supplies of water during the period of plant growth, while droughts can be extremely serious. In addition, widespread floods are common in the spring, causing deposition of silt. The fallow system of farming, previously used in this area, consisted of attempting to build up organic material again in soils which had become ploughed out, by leaving the land fallow for several years, allowing reversion to steppe grassland before reploughing. This system requires abundance of land and is unworkable in settlements with increasing populations, for then the period of fallow needs to be reduced, perhaps only to one year. Even where manuring of the fallow is practised, it is not possible to produce stable crop yields and to build up soil fertility. Another important aspect of this system is that attention is concentrated on the arable land, while the meadows are kept as permanent pastures. Any

lessening of the meadow area then has a critical effect on the farm's fodder supply for livestock. The adoption of another farming system, the grass-arable system, is now taking its place. The principle of this system is to put all land which can be cultivated down to alternate periods under grass and other crops. On land particularly suited to arable crops the inclusion of grass in the rotation is periodically to accumulate organic matter and to build up a crumb structure, so that, on ploughing up the grass, the soil is then in a suitable condition for cereal or fodder crops. The period under perennial grass may vary from one year, in the case of soils where it is only necessary to maintain fertility, to two years where fertility is being built up. However, where land is suitable for meadows and fodder crops, it is also necessary to adopt the grass-arable system. Why should this be so? The reason is that it is a question of making the best use of the land, for after several years the productivity of grassland declines owing to the accumulation of organic matter. It becomes necessary to plough up this old grassland and to use up the excessive organic matter by growing a succession of crops, such as flax, linseed, vegetables and cereals, before putting the land back to grass again. The high value of these crops covers the big cost of ploughing up the grassland and resowing to grass later. The length of time such land is under perennial grass is usually seven or eight years, after which it should be free from weeds and also from the spores of fungal and other parasites, a matter of great importance for high crop yields. To quote the author: "Thus two kinds of farming land, the slopes and valleys, must be distinguished in the grass-arable system; and two corresponding rotations, adapted to the respective conditions in the slopes and valleys, must be used. This is necessary in order to fulfil one of the main purposes of the grass-arable system, the raising of the productivity of labour. The two rotations may be distinguished as the fodder rotation and the arable rotation. . . . It must be emphasised that the boundaries of these rotations will not be sharp. . . . The proportions will vary with the local conditions and the type of husbandry. If there is much bottom land suitable for meadows, the fodder rotation will cover a wide area, and the main direction of agricultural economy will be towards animal husbandry. If the Government plan requires concentration on the production of grain, the area of arable rotation must be extended. The boundaries of the rotations will be determined on the basis of the general conditions of agriculture and the overall Government plan. But in all adjustments of the boundaries we must take into consideration the part of the landscape with which we are dealing, for each part will require its special agricultural treatment. In planning each rotation, the problem of maintaining soil fertility will arise."

The grass-arable system is, of course, bound up with a high livestock production. According to recent announcements by leaders of the

U.S.S.R., the development of livestock production is to take first place in agriculture, and a great increase is planned.

It is interesting to note that W. R. Williams argues that market gardening and the establishment of a separate vegetable rotation, outside the general farm system, should be replaced by growing vegetables as a necessary part of the grass-arable rotation; for vegetable crops require soils with a high content of organic matter. This can be supplied in the most economical way by using the soils which have accumulated this matter during the time the land has been under grass. The result is cheaper production of such essential items of food as vegetables; at the same time, the incidence of pests and fungal diseases, which is frequent when intensive cultivation is adopted, can be greatly reduced.

Although in Britain there is no large problem of structureless soils, the need to plough up old permanent grassland is acute. Many of our agricultural scientists have stressed this matter, but the Communist Party is the only political body consistently to urge large-scale ploughing up as the only way to increase greatly the output from the land. Besides enabling a rapid increase to be made in food production, the measure is essential for increasing the fertility of the land and for introducing farming methods more in accordance with scientific knowledge and with Britain's changed economic position.

In the U.S.S.R. the application of new techniques is accompanied by the development of new types of agricultural machinery on a large scale, in a way which is impossible under a capitalist economy, where every firm tries to introduce new patented designs and various gadgets as a means of selling its own products; while individual farmers may either be unable to buy needed machinery or else to make full economic use of the machines already in their possession. For instance, W. R. Williams discusses all the factors involved in autumn cultivation of arable land and urges that the land should be scuffed by disc implements simultaneously with harvesting, thus inverting the soil surface to cover weed seeds and preventing the soil becoming drier. The latter object is partly to make the subsequent ploughing a less difficult operation and less expensive in the use of fuel. Later, ploughing to a depth of about nine inches should be carried out, using a plough and fore-plough to invert the furrow slice completely in such a way that the torn-up stubble and germinating weed seeds are ploughed under and thus made into humus. Cultivation in this manner has been insisted upon by decree, and the design of implements is therefore co-ordinated with the demands of scientific practice. According to one of the speakers in the discussion in 1948 on T. D. Lysenko's Report, only ploughs fitted with fore-ploughs are now being manufactured in the U.S.S.R. He also referred to the many hundreds of plough designs in the world, most of which are unnecessary; even in the U.S.A. attempts had been made to reduce the

number of types of plough, but, in spite of considerable agreement among technicians, the conditions of capitalist economy prevented effective action, and even encouraged methods which destroyed soil fertility. Recently Soviet technicians have designed combine harvesters which can also carry out the scuffling operation. By this means one of the practices advocated by W. R. Williams can be followed without involving the time and expense of a separate cultivation.

As regards the matter of fertilisers, it is clear that their increased use is welcomed, but only as aids to sound husbandry practice in maintaining and increasing soil fertility. Certainly, there is full recognition that the soil cannot be regarded mainly in its physical and chemical properties, a tendency which is often shown by scientists in capitalist countries and which is perhaps not unconnected with the influence of the fertiliser industry! As W. R. Williams writes, "There is little justification for speaking of 'chemistry of the soil,' for the number of purely chemical reactions taking place in the soil is negligible. Biochemical reactions dominate the soil almost completely and all the measures we use for its chemical amelioration are, in fact, measures for regulating the activities of bacteria." Thus there is no question of considering soil apart from the life which goes on within it or considering plants apart from their environment.

The interest of this book lies largely in indicating the scope of those problems which it becomes possible to solve only under socialism. It serves to illustrate how closely, under socialism, all agricultural workers, mechanics and scientists are concerned directly with agricultural economy and techniques in the achievement of planned production; it also illustrates what is involved in developing a socialist agriculture side by side with other sections of a country's economy.

Perhaps special mention should be made of the author's early reference to the so-called Law of Diminishing Returns, for the false conclusions to which it leads set artificial limits to the possibilities of agricultural production. It is only by analysing in the most comprehensive way how all factors operate in their relations to each other that these limits can be shown to have no basis in reality. The whole book is an example of the manner in which this approach is made.

A. S. WALKER.

India from Primitive Communism to Slavery. By S. A. DANGE. People's Publishing House, Bombay. 7s. 6d.

THE author of this book is well-known as one of the leading figures in the Indian working-class movement. Those familiar with his long career as a militant Communist, in the course of which he has served five terms of imprisonment (including savage sentences in the

historic Cawnpore and Meerut Conspiracy Trials in 1924 and 1929), will be surprised that he has found time to write what may be claimed as the first Marxist study of ancient Indian literature. However, in the Introduction Dange makes it clear that it was precisely his experiences in the day-to-day struggle which impressed most forcibly upon him the necessity of this ideological task, and publication of the book at a time when bourgeois nationalists are doing everything within their power to discredit Marxism as alien to Indian thought and tradition and inapplicable to Indian history is an event of political significance.

It must be stressed that the book is a historical interpretation of early Indian literature rather than a study of history in the broader sense, and the picture Dange builds is conditioned by the limits set to the enquiry. Inevitably, those expecting a summary and Marxist analysis of all available evidence relating to India's transition from classless to class society, including the evidence of archaeology and anthropology, will be disappointed, and may even protest that the title is misleading. Nevertheless, as a historical study of the ancient literature, the book contains much brilliant and original thought and represents a pioneer achievement of importance to other Marxists working in the same field.

The literature of ancient India is unique. Nowhere else have we sources so complete for tracing the development from tribal to class society. That is not to say that the transition can be easily traced. In fact, apart from problems of language, the task is fraught with special difficulties, due to the complicated interaction of different cultures in India and to the slow and elaborate development of a people too numerous and in a country too large for the continuance of a single centralised state developing directly and rapidly through the usual stages. In this book, Dange has made it his main task to sift out the historical realities from the palimpsest of anachronisms and class-biased recensions characteristic of the ancient literature as we know it.

The best documented and most original part of the book is that dealing with the pre-class society of the Aryans as reflected in the Vedic scriptures. The word *Brahman*, as used in these scriptures, Dange identifies with the concept of the collective, the commune of Aryan man; and the *Yajna* ritual, featured so prominently in the Vedas, he shows to have originally been the enactment of the primitive mode of production. The drinking of Soma juice from the common pot, involved in this ritual, symbolised the collective enjoyment of the proceeds of labour. The participants were all blood-kin (*gotra*) and of both sexes; and the functionaries of the rite were elected for the occasion, relinquishing office when it was over. Similarly, the concept of collective production and consumption is shown to dominate the story enshrining the *Kratu* rite. Bourgeois scholars, noting that grass had to be cut with a bone and

corn pounded with a stone, concluded that the rite arose when metal and querns were unknown. But Dange shows that there is much more to it than that. A whole pattern of society is implied, and the rites described give no hint that this was class-stratified. The later idealistic philosophy of the Upanishads makes of *Brahman* a mere original intelligence, without qualities; but to the men who named him he was a sentient and very human creature, who originated the *Yajna* rite to help mankind in the transition from hunting to more settled pastoralism.

In Chapters IV and V, Dange deals with the blood-kin (*gana-gotra*) organisation of the Aryan commune, basing his argument on a mass of incident and precept from ancient literature. He shows beyond question the existence of many fragmentary survivals which can only be understood on the hypothesis of the endogamous kin-group on the one hand and the exogamous phratry organisation (*gana gotra*) on the other.

Dange assumes that the exogamous organisation, whereby new blood-kin units were being continually split off from the original group, led to an increase in population. But here (as in his statement that the evils of inbreeding induced the change from endogamy to exogamy) he begs the question. As far as we can tell—and it is a mysterious business—primitive communities fairly effectively control their birth-rate in accordance with the food-supply, and it is the latter which inhibits or promotes the growth of population. The resources of the physical environment and other external factors being equal, it is the technological level which, by increasing the food supply, allows the tribe to increase its numbers.

In Chapter VI, devoted to the question of disposal of war booty, Dange finds most interesting evidence of the inability of the exogamous group to absorb the material fruits of war except on a basis of equal division, or war captives otherwise than by full adoption.

Space allows mention of only a few points. In Chapter VII is postulated the rise within the gens (*gana*) of the three free castes (*varna*), based on division of labour, and the Sudra caste, which he calls slaves. Here he fails to give convincing evidence from his sources and perhaps relies too much upon Engels. His failure to substantiate the chattel-status of the Sudra caste; the suggestion that the division of labour was the reflex of external trade; the assumed contemporaneity of the discoveries of agriculture and metallurgy; the neglect of the sociological repercussions of specialised craft (metallurgy); and above all his failure to make clear whether or not a stage of society existed in which slave production *dominated the economy*: these must be regarded as major blemishes in his thesis.

After reviewing the *Grihya Sutras* as a reflection of growing class society, Dange enters the dark forest of Indian gens-classification on the testimony of Panini, Kautilya, and the Greeks. Here is a record of

communities at various stages of compromise between communal right and class division. The material of this chapter is admirably presented. Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, usually attributed to the late fourth century B.C., describes societies which did not know the meaning of "thine" and "mine." This we may infer is the healthy gens enjoying the communal rule which later Indian historians inevitably equated with anarchy. The type next in importance is represented by those gens—situated in both North and South India—which had developed the caste divisions of labour, property differences and even patriarchal slavery. These communities represented the model society to the author of the *Purusha Sukta*. In them a form of democratic rule obtained for the three free castes (*varna*), but the Sudras were excluded from it. The third stage is the *Swarajya* ("self-rule") gens described in the *Aitareya Brahmana* which prevailed in Western India. Here rule was in the hands of a council of elders, in which was the seed of a privileged aristocracy, and ultimately the owner of the greatest quantity of land and slaves became the hereditary monarch: the state was born. In the confederated gens (*ganasamghas*) discussed by Panini and Kautilya, all classes except the Sudra bore arms. In these confederacies, Dange sees a slave-owning gens (having democratic institutions limited to the free castes), which for self-preservation had joined forces to oppose the expansive aggression of the slave-owning monarchies. In Chapter XII, Dange connects the rise and growth of the latter with the conception of force (*Danda*) which is placed superior to *Dharma*, the democratic and self-regulating principles of gens-organisation. By *Danda*, in short, Hindu theory denotes the rise of the state. At this point Dange reaches the termination of his thesis. It is unlikely, however, that any reason will be found to alter his assessment of the sociological implications of the famous Gita poem in the Mahabharata. Its profoundest principle was a charter for feudalism:

"You have only to do and go on doing what has been ordained for you by your station in life. You have no control or right over the results of what you do. Do not do things with an eye on getting the fruits of your doings; and never stop working."

It has already been said that the picture Dange builds is conditioned by the limits he sets to his enquiry. Depending entirely on literary sources, he is untroubled by the problem of the original cultural entity underlying the linguistic entity of the Aryans. This leads him to endow the Aryans with a unity removed from time and space, and to credit them with all the basic inventions of human progress—the discovery of fire, agriculture, metallurgy, etc. He neglects the anthropological and archaeological approaches, and reconstitutes and interprets a phase of ritual and myth on its own internal evidences. As far as it goes, this is a legitimate process, for the ritual and its myth mirrored a social ideology,

and was never itself an historical or analytical record. But the Marxist historian must define them against a fuller background. Engels was acquainted with the anthropological and archaeological data of his times and used them in elaborating historical materialism. Since his day both these sciences have advanced, and in particular the Indian field has been opened up, with results that Marxist historians cannot afford to neglect. When the limitations of Dange's method are realised, the value of his findings are enhanced, and his proposition that the Vedas record memories of pre-class society is in no way invalidated.

In his endeavour to show that Indian history conforms to universal laws of historical development, it must be said that Dange has not sufficiently emphasised the *special* characteristics of Indian society. For example, he never takes into full account the extent to which survivals of the village-commune organisation modified the development of class forces in India, and how it gave to Indian society its distinctive characteristics. This is the aspect on which most stress has been laid by Soviet Indologists (D. A. Sulcikin, *Questions of History*, No. 10, 1947), who maintain that the development of slavery in India was modified by the organic unity within this society of two antagonistic elements: slave-owning classes and the village commune. This helps to explain variations of opinion between Dange and Sulcikin on the periodisation of Indian history. The period which the former regards as marking the break-up of slave society, the latter regards as the period of flourishing slavery.

In chronology and etymology, Dange ignores the conclusions of Western bourgeois scholarship and is to some extent misled by Indian traditional non-scientific speculation. Such criticisms, however, do not invalidate the general thesis, and in conclusion we cannot do better than quote Dange himself on the significance of this study:

"India is now in an epoch where its working class is faced with a serious responsibility towards Indian and world society. To discharge that responsibility, the working class must sharply break away from the bourgeois view of history. . . . It is my firm opinion that the vast storehouse of Hindu mythology and religious social laws and practices, if read and sifted on the basis of historical materialism, would yield a consistent and rational picture of India's ancient history, though it will not be to the liking of Hindu orthodoxy or bourgeois philosophy. It will then appear that the law of historical materialism, the law that productive forces and productive relations determine man's history through the ages, is valid for India too, for the past, the present and the future."

INDOLOGISTS' STUDY GROUP.

Discussion

MENTAL TESTING

MAY I make a further brief comment on the subject of mental testing. This question has been under discussion for some time, particularly among teachers, and my article was framed in the light of these discussions. It was not perhaps as clear as it might have been, partly because the argument had to be formulated in reply to an alternative thesis advanced in Angus McPherson's article, "The Philosophical Aspects of Intelligence." It is now probable that an agreed statement on mental testing will shortly be forthcoming which will cover all the main points at issue. In the meantime, it is necessary to make one or two comments on McPherson's rejoinder to my article; these have to do with basic Marxist theses rather than any disagreement about their application to the detailed problems of psychology.

I

Marxists do *not* "unequivocally state that human personality is determined by social environment," as McPherson still believes. This, as I attempted to show, is roughly the standpoint of the environmentalist school in bourgeois psychology, and derives directly from a mechanistic view of the phenomena of nature and of life. In this view the individual is a being who (as Caudwell puts it) ends at his own skin; who feels the impact of outer reality only in the form of tappings on the nerve endings which are thereafter "decoded" and interpreted inside. Here, at the outset, are two separate and distinct "things"—the individual and the environment; from the impact between them human personality is supposedly born. It remains to be established whether it is the kind of tapping or the quality of the decoding which is the decisive factor in forming it.

The argument which results is endless and futile because it is based on false premisses. Marxism does not, of course, deny the significance of either environment or heredity; but it does repudiate the view that either constitutes the main force determining the psychological development of the human individual. In the Marxist view this development is an internally contradictory process, just as is the development of the mind in the course of biological evolution and in the course of the historical development of society. For example, human consciousness itself is prepared for in the animal world, but arises uniquely in man with the development of social forms of life whose basis is labour. Labour, a qualitatively new mode of activity gives birth to a qualitatively new characteristic of the mind—the conscious reflection of objective reality.

This characteristic, corresponding to the conditions of social labour, develops with the further complication of the labour process, in contradistinction to those other characteristics predominant in the animal world which are doomed to extinction; it develops, of course, in indissoluble unity with its material basis—the living human organism.

Human mental development, therefore, takes place in the course of human *activity*, and so *in dependence upon* the concrete-historical conditions of human life, i.e. the material and social relations within which the basic modes of activity themselves develop. The term "social being" implies this argument in all its further ramifications; it is far from being synonymous with "social environment" and was formulated precisely in answer to the simple mechanist assumption that man is the product of his social conditions.

II

The essence of the dialectical materialist approach to mental phenomena is that consciousness is inseparable from activity and so can be known objectively through human activity (i.e. scientifically), and not only subjectively as human experience. The Marxist dialectical method requires that the phenomena of consciousness be studied "from the angle of their movement, change and development, taking into account their origin and extinction." Soviet psychology, therefore, studies men's "consciousness in action." It investigates "psychic *processes*, such as perception, memory, thinking, by investigating man's action, his *concrete activity* both practical and theoretical, etc."

This is plainly something quite other than analysis of the abstracted mind into its component parts in the framework of a general metaphysical scheme. Such an analysis leads inevitably to "reductionism"—the reducing of "the unique qualities or forms of movement of the whole to the sum of the separate motions of the parts"; the concomitant of this is the introduction of a motive force which impels the whole mechanism into action, but is itself not determined by it. Such is "intelligence" in the scheme of bourgeois psychology; it penetrates and determines all the other fixed abilities, but is itself subject to none of them. It can only be decided on another plane of the bourgeois system whether this intellectual ability of abilities, this quality of qualities, is itself determined by heredity or environment; in order to decide this question, genetical techniques are illegally imported.

The categories of bourgeois psychology, arrived at and upheld in this way, are profoundly suspect and must be subjected to close examination; with this McPherson agrees. "Intelligence" when so examined is certainly not a psychological category in any scientific sense; he does not challenge my arguments. What does concern him, however, is that the elimination of this quality of qualities may mean the elimination of all qualities, all

categories. But to criticise the bourgeois mechanist approach and the categories which result is not tantamount to saying there can be no fundamental categories at all to the science of psychology—such as perception, memory, imagination, the emotions, the will. What we do say, however, is that if the object of psychology is not “the mind,” the categories of psychology are not “categories of the mind.” In other words, the human mind is not a “thing-in-itself,” made up in turn of finished parts each with its own fixed properties; it is a complex of processes in which things arise, have their existence and pass away. The task of a Marxist psychology is to investigate those processes in their interrelations; the categories of a Marxist psychology will cover these processes.

To reject the mechanist approach, the conception of fixed things with fixed qualities, does not, of course, mean the elimination of all qualities. It does mean that qualities, and the power of changing and originating them, are—as it were—returned to living, concrete man. There is not an abstract unchanging quality of the mind as a whole—“intelligence”—which merely inheres quantitatively in the mental make-up of individuals and can be measured by devious means; there is a concrete man whose specific mental processes undergo quantitative and qualitative change to a point where his whole mental make-up changes qualitatively. Similarly, Soviet psychologists maintain that every ability (i.e. every psychological characteristic which is important to the successful carrying out of an activity—such as visual memory, musical hearing, power of observation) is the product of development and is realised chiefly in the process of the relevant activity itself. However, the successful fulfilment of any activity depends, not on any such single characteristic but on a whole series of abilities. Man, in his concrete activity, is, therefore, able to compensate for weakness in one ability by developing others; it follows that weakness in any particular direction can never provide the basis for judging a person incompetent for this or that pursuit or lacking in this or that quality of intellect.

In fact there is no such thing as a fixed, unchanging characteristic of the human mind; abilities originate and develop in the course of activity, in dependence upon the concrete conditions which make this or that activity possible. The key to their development is correct education and training, the opening up of opportunity. Mental testing denies this in theory and obscures it in practice. The aims and methods of teaching are now subordinated to the pseudo-scientific theories of the mental testers. The objective result is the direction of education to exclusively capitalist ends, the denial of opportunities for the development of ability to the children of the working class.

III

It is true that Soviet psychology is, as I pointed out, in the throes of much self-criticism. The biological discussions have intensified this criticism because they have provided a new perspective for psychology; they had thrown into relief existing weaknesses while providing at the same time a key to overcoming them. There is nothing negative about such criticism; it is the conscious realisation and direction of social phenomena; it is the motive force in the development of Soviet society. On the contrary, to underestimate the advances already made by Soviet psychology, to slur over its decisive break with bourgeois psychology, to suspend all judgment as a result is to take an entirely negative attitude. It is to perpetuate the illusion that a little adjustment and “reinterpretation” of bourgeois categories is all that is required, coupled with a criticism of the reactionary purposes to which present theories are put. But this involves serious inconsistencies which inevitably lead to departure from Marxism and compromise with bourgeois views.

A retreat from Marxism inevitably means a retreat from Marxist tasks, a failure to engage in the battle of ideas which is such an important aspect of the class struggle; in its turn this leads to a perpetuation of theoretical confusion. It is no accident that McPherson's original arguments led him to omit a “class analysis of intelligence testing in practice”; nor is it accidental that his reiteration of those faulty theories now leads him to suggest that further detailed theoretical discussion is now the primary need. On the contrary, theoretical clarification can never be completed in the discussion circle; it can only be achieved on the plane of practice, on the basis of concrete application of Marxist theses. We cannot retire into the conference chamber to perfect our arguments. We must come out into the open, expose and oppose mental testing in its theory and its practice, and make a sharp criticism of “intelligence,” and the whole mythology surrounding it. Only to the extent that we take such action, only when we consciously accept and operate fundamental Marxist theses, will our theoretical arguments be clarified and advanced.

JOAN SIMON.

Review of Foreign Publications

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Tvorba contains two important articles: Professor Ladislav Stoll of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences on "A Socialist Intelligentsia," and Jaroslav Boucek on "The Tasks of Literary Criticism in a People's Democracy."

Professor Stoll discusses how the Czech People's Democracy is demanding and developing a new kind of intelligentsia linked to the workers by class and ideology. He shows how during the years of development of the working class in the past century a new type of man has developed distinguished by his relation to the productive forces, his co-operative organisation, his labour discipline, comradeship, objective outlook, productiveness, typical humour and socialist ideology. This development gives rise to an intelligentsia with a completely different outlook from the old individualist egoistic bourgeois type. Here is a worker who is aware that it is possible to change the world through his productive work—a conscious socialist. Now the working class is going into the universities to learn the theory of how to change the world for the better—this is the task of the new socialist intelligentsia—to learn the theory of Marxism-Leninism, the theory of the working class in its struggle for a new society, and then to apply this knowledge to the practical tasks of building socialism in the framework of the Five-Year Plan.

In Boucek's article, we have a glimpse of the work of one section of the new people's intelligentsia—the authors and literary critics. Novelists are making use of subjects of a new heroic type and dimension, the February events, the Five-Year Plan, the problems of the countryside, and the development of the youth. But the literary critics haven't yet begun to approach their work in a true spirit of socialist criticism. They are still in the stage of thinking that all they have to do is to appraise the political elements in a work of art and not consider its artistic form. They do not realize that if a work is bad artistically its ideology will suffer. For instance they judge an agricultural novel by whether it enumerates the appropriate points of the Five-Year Plan rather than by following through the development of characters living in a People's Democracy. Also works are criticised in isolation from the general body of art. Criticism

should educate artist as well as public, and much could be learnt from the Soviet Union, where criticism comes from reader as well as critic, and is not merely an isolated specialist task.

M. E.

GERMANY

The latest numbers of *Aufbau*, the organ of the Cultural League for the Democratic Renewal of Germany, show clearly the tasks the editors have set themselves. The monthly serves as a forum for discussion of the main political problems for the new Germany; it gives space for articles mainly on literary and artistic topics; and it serves as a source of information on progressive literature in other countries.

There are several discussion articles, including some from well-known writers who are critical towards the dominant trend of the Eastern Zone; that is, the paper seeks to meet squarely the difficulties of those German intellectuals who still cannot relinquish hope in the policy of the Western Governments. The view of the editorial committee is well expressed by Professor Ernst Niekisch in No. 3, 1950: "The German East has understood, after the defeat of 1945, that we cannot go on living as before. The catastrophe was felt to be a sentence upon the social, economic, and political forms of the past. They had resulted in the ruin of Germany, and, if one stuck to them, they would bring only new disaster upon the German people. We were resolved to make a new foundation, and this resolve was the sign of an effective and genuinely political will to life. The transformation of the social structure, which was realised in the land-reform, the smashing of the great industrial concerns, and the educational reform, meant a revolution in good truth. . . . A new political class comes to political power."

Among the literary articles are criticisms of such writers as Nietzsche and Sartre. In contrast to the *Modern Quarterly*, there are several articles on pictorial artists, and quite a number of interesting reproductions of paintings, drawings, etc. In No. 2, 1950, there is homage paid to Masereel on his sixtieth birthday, and some of his woodcuts are reproduced. Masereel's work is of extremely high quality, and it is a pity he is so little known in Britain.

It is clear that the Germans of the

Review of Foreign Publications

Eastern Zone are in much livelier contact than we are with the cultures of the East. Several numbers are given a special character by a grouping of articles and translations of writers of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, China. It is very helpful, I think, to have, alongside critical and theoretical articles, tales and poems from the new cultures. The new forms of life, new types of personality, and new mode of expression give a desirable reality to the ideological definitions that we seek. Here is an ode of Mao-tse Tung, written in 1945 as he was going to a fateful meeting with Chiang Kai-shek; and an unassuming, but highly valuable, interview by K. Simonov of a new mayor in a city of Soviet China (No. 10, 1949, and No. 2, 1950).

R. P.

ITALY

The most topical and important articles for an English reader are on the agrarian question. The peasant movement in Italy has no modern parallel in Great Britain, except for the land-seizures by Highland crofters in the 1914-18 War. Alberto Caracciolo, studying the background of the class struggle in the districts around Rome, 1870-1915, in *Società*, December, 1949, explains its historical context. Already, before the unification of Italy, the depression of the peasantry, both by feudal exploitation and encroachment on common rights, and the accumulation of property in a few hands, with the neglect of arable for pasture, was reducing the Campagna to a desert. Caracciolo traces the efforts, first of the Papal, then of the Italian government, to increase the numbers of peasant proprietors and in the second case to induce capital investment in agriculture. Neither legislation nor the liquidation of ecclesiastical estates have succeeded in checking the system of *latifondia* or in modernising agriculture to any serious extent. The Roman nobility won every time. Gradually, however, the peasants and agricultural labourers have been drawn into the intensive campaign waged in other parts of Italy to demand land for their own subsistence economy and better conditions of tenure or employment. This resistance to exploitation, the author insists, has done at least as much as government measures towards forcing a more scientific method of farming on the landlords. Duccio Tabet examines the

actual figures of land distribution in Italy and the suggested agrarian reform in *Rinascita*, October, 1949. The January number of the same review has a paper by Ruggiero Grieco on the new phase of the struggle. He exposes the inadequacy of the law projected by De Gasperi and puts forward a series of demands on behalf of the peasantry. He defines the correct Marxist attitude to the problem as follows: Italy is in passage from a feudal to a bourgeois system of agriculture. Hence the expropriation of the landlords and the creation of small peasant farms on the *latifondia* is a progressive step. While co-operatives are to be encouraged, it would be futile, in present conditions, to call for compulsory socialism in farming. The duty of the Communist Party is to further the peasant movement in its present form by all possible means.

Rinascita, July, 1949, has a paper by Giulio de Rossi on the international policy of the Vatican. He shows that the Vatican has aimed at breaking down the agreement reached at Yalta in favour of a war against the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern Democracies. The Pope has attacked the thesis, put forward by a highly placed Catholic writer, that, given modern methods of warfare, no war can correctly be described as "a just war." Religious considerations have increasingly been subordinated to reactionary politics. The Catholics in Eastern Europe have been put in a position in which they are practically obliged to choose between their religion and their country. By allying with the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, the Vatican has thrown the whole Catholic Church into danger. Paolo Alatri studies the background of the Catholic political movement in Italy in *Società*, June, 1949. Beginning with the neo-Guelph and liberal Catholic movements, he traces the continuous subordination of the more progressive to the more conservative elements in Catholic political groupings.

Finally, readers will be interested in a survey of English culture since the two wars by Gianfranco Corsini, *Società*, September, 1949. The effect of the "political marriage between social democracy and conservatism" has been to encourage the abstract and mystical tendencies of the English intelligentsia. "One can state, without exaggeration, that only in the field of science to-day has

the break with the past, with bourgeois traditions, been clearly made." There is warm praise for English Marxists, and for the work of the *Modern Quarterly* in particular.

B. S.

POLAND

Myśl Współczesna (Contemporary Thought), published in Warsaw and Lodz. No. 1, 1950.

An article in this issue by Henryk Raort (pp. 76-94) describes the peasant rising in June-July, 1932, in Eastern Galicia. In this region the Polish magnates held 50-60 per cent. of the land. The Ukrainian peasants held land, usually of poorer quality: over 50 per cent. of the peasants farmed holdings of 2 hectares or less. For the most part they were illiterate. The large landholders could on the one hand represent disturbances as the result of ignorance, on the other argue that the existence of their estates was essential for the preservation of the Polish character of the area, for much the same reasons as Prussian landlords pleaded that their estates were strongholds of Germanism in the pre-1914 period.

In the famine conditions of 1932 the authorities attempted to enforce a "Holiday of Work"—compulsory labour of a social character, but in fact mainly to the advantage of the large landowners. The peasants resisted, not being deterred by the use of force by the Polish *gendarmierie* and Army. The peasants declared bluntly that the "Holiday of Work" was merely serf-labour (*pańszczyzna*) in a new form. The Ukrainian Nationalists (U.N.D.D.) significantly did not support the action of the peasants, but professed their loyalty to the Polish Government. Only by the action of Polish democrats were the death sentences passed on the peasant leaders commuted.

The district of Lesko, the area of the rising, still within the present Polish frontiers, received the land reform of 1944, but, as Dr. Raort points out, land reform by itself was insufficient. Only by offering in addition the fullest opportunities for entry into the professions, the officer corps, and other hitherto inaccessible occupations, and by electrification, the building of good roads and the guaranteeing of prices for agricultural produce could the present stability be achieved. What is true of Lesko is

true of the rest of Poland. The opening of all opportunities to the neglected peasantry in the post-war period is one of the most interesting features of modern Polish life.

Nowe Drogi (IIIrd Plenum of the Central Committee of P.Z.P.R.), November 11th-13th, 1949.

Nowe Drogi, the organ of the United Polish Workers' Party, printed in special supplement form the speeches at the meeting of the Plenum of Central Committee of November 11th-13th, 1949, at which Gomulka, Kliszko and Spychalski were deprived of party office. The present discussion on this theme finds a response, in addition, in literary circles, especially in the weeklies, *Odrodzenie* and *Kuznica*, in which writers are now discussing the relation of the author to the citizen of the socialist community. The lead in this respect was given by the Minister, Jakub Berman, in his speech to the Writers' Conference of February, 1950. This discussion should be of considerable interest and should give modern Polish literature, hitherto inclined to Romanticism, a new emphasis and direction.

R. L.

U.S.S.R.

The two chief Soviet economic periodicals devoted to theoretical questions are now the (combined) Economic and Law Series of the *Izvestia of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.* and *Voprosi Ekonomiki* (Questions of Economics). More specialised publications, such as *Planovoe Khoziaistvo*, the monthly organ of Gosplan, and organs of various industrial ministries, deal also with economic questions, but generally in connection with more particular problems of planning or industrial organisation and administration.

Apart from the Varga controversy (which was more or less terminated by Varga's own summing-up of the discussion and self-criticism in *Voprosi Ekonomiki*, 1949, No. 3) and some criticism of formalism in statistics, the discussion to which chief interest attaches during the past two years is that concerning the proper criteria for choosing between investment projects of different types in the course of planning. The discussion originated from two main sources: an article by Academician Strumilin in the Economic and Law Series of the *Izvestia*

of the *Academy*, 1946, No. 3, entitled "The Time-Factor in the Planning of Capital Investment," and a number of articles in specialist industrial journals in recent years propounding various theories as to the criteria to be used for investment projects. These early contributions were reviewed and criticised in an article by P. Mstislavsky, "On Errors in Methodology in Economic Literature on Industry and Transport," in *Voprosi Ekonomiki*, 1948, No. 10. While criticising the solutions propounded to date, the writer declared the problem posed to be an important one deserving further study by Marxists: but study in terms of the actual problems of socialist economy. The notion that any single formula, or "efficiency-ratio," could be simultaneously applied to all spheres of production must be rejected.

In *Voprosi Ekonomiki*, 1949, No. 6, two further contributions to this discussion appeared (from economists): "The Efficiency of Capital Investment and the Theory of Reproduction," by D. Chernomordik; and "Some Questions of the Efficiency of Investment in Soviet Economy," by P. Mstislavsky. Since then a further contribution has appeared in No. 11, 1949.

The issues in this debate are technical ones which can scarcely be summarised here. Suffice to say, that it bears at least some analogy with the discussion in the 20's and 30's among Western economists as to the "problem of economic calculation in a socialist economy": with the difference that it takes place in a Marxist setting and, not *a priori*, but in terms of actual planning problems. In the past it has been a common practice for Soviet industries, in choosing between different technical projects (e.g. one involving large initial construction costs, but lower subsequent operating costs, and another which is cheaper to build initially, but yields higher operating costs in the future) to use the device of a "term of repayment" of the original investment. It was from a criticism of this method that Strumilin started his own solution (which turned on the fall in value of commodities over time, as a result of technical progress, enhancing the productivity of labour). Other industrial economists advanced the notion of a minimum "efficiency-ratio" of an investment as a criterion—some even

a "marginal efficiency of investment" (criticised by Mstislavsky as a notion derived from bourgeois economics).

Among other articles of general interest over the past two years, one may mention an article (in *Voprosi Ekonomiki*, 1948, No. 9), "Towards a Theory of Railway Rates," which discussed the new schedule of railway rates and its significance in bringing the charges for goods transport into line with the cost of their transport, a concrete illustration of the meaning of Soviet discussion about the use of the law of value in Soviet economy.

M. D.

Vestnik Akademii Nauk S.S.S.R. No. 11, 1949.

The journal of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. contains an important article by Professor G. P. Serdyuchenko, on N. Y. Marr, the Founder of the Soviet School of Linguistics.¹ The essence of the Marxist view of language is that it is inseparable from thought; it is communicable thought.

Thought and language are a social product, but the social relation must be understood in a materialist and dialectical way. The fundamental question in linguistics, the analysis of language in its development, is the origin of language. Spoken language originated with the introduction of fashioned tools; it was preceded by language based on a system of gestures, a pre-logical system of images, not concepts.

A history of language must include not only the formal side, sounds and their combinations, but meaning; this is impossible to analyse without the history of material culture. The naming of things depends upon their social function.

Language is a weapon of the class-struggle. The language of the Armenian and Georgian feudal ruling classes was more alike than either to the respective popular language. This invalidates the bourgeois conception of languages as native to whole peoples, derived from ancestral languages spoken as it were by distinct races. All languages are mixed; fusion is the driving force of both social and linguistic development. But it is possible to classify linguistic material according to the social stage it represents. Marr began to do this; much remains to be done.

¹ See the Communication from Eleanor Fox on Academician N. Y. Marr in *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2.

Our Contributors

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Marx Memorial Library

THE Marx Memorial Library announces, for the information of students of Marxism, that it has received a number of issues of the *Marx-Engels Archives* (in Russian), published by the Institute of Marx, Engels and Lenin in Moscow. Among the important manuscripts (for the most part previously unavailable) printed in this collection (in the original, with Russian translations) are:

BY KARL MARX: 1. *Oekonomische Manuskripte 1857-1858*; 2. *Chronologische Auszüge*: a chronological review of the political history of European countries from early times to the middle of the seventeenth century; 3. synopsis of Morgan's *Ancient Society*.

BY F. ENGELS: 1. "On Proudhon": a critical analysis of Proudhon's book, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*. The Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute attaches great importance to this manuscript, stating in the Introduction: "The Manuscript on Proudhon is one more proof of the ideological collaboration of Marx and Engels; it is a new document reflecting one of the episodes of the struggle by Marx and Engels against Proudhonism."

2. SEVERAL HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS. The most important is the first part of Engels' book on the history of Ireland, which he was writing in 1869-70. It was to have been an important work, but it was never completed. Karl Marx, writing to his daughter Jenny in May, 1870, said: "The history of Ireland by Engels . . . will be interesting in the highest degree."

Terms of membership of the Marx Memorial Library may be had on application to the Librarian, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.1.