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# **LABOUR REVIEW**

Vol. 3

MARCH - APRIL 1958

No. 2 ✓

## **WAGES AND THE BOMB**

<b>An Unreasonable Reasoner</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Marxism &amp; the Algerian Revolution</b>	<b>37</b>
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<b>COMMUNICATIONS ● BOOK REVIEWS</b>	

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266 Lavender Hill, London S.W. 11  
Editors: John Daniels, Robert Shaw  
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# Wages and the Bomb: A Single Front

**Industrial strife inevitable—Labour lacks leadership—Solidarity with the busmen  
—The socialist objective—The struggles merge—The H-bomb and working-class  
internationalism—The warning for the VFS leaders**

**A** MAJOR industrial conflict now appears inevitable. Tory arrogance has provoked the London busmen to the point where there is little alternative for them but to take strike action within the next few weeks. Frank Cousins, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, has recognized that strike action cannot be avoided, and has declared that he will support such a measure in his union's leading committees.

**W**HEN the events of the past month are reviewed, one thing stands out clearly, and that is the determination of the employers and the Government to have a show-down with certain sections of the trade union movement. We emphasize the phrase 'certain sections' because the Government in our view is not strong enough to engage the trade union movement as a whole, or even certain powerful combinations within the movement. The Tories are planning to take on what they consider to be the weaker sections, to isolate them and defeat them piecemeal. They can succeed in doing this only if the rest of the trade union movement remains indifferent. The weakness of the trade unions today lies in their leadership. The leaders are not prepared for an all-out struggle against the Tories and in practice they confuse and hold back their own membership. Every active trade unionist knew that the Cohen Council was anti-working-class, yet the Trades Union Congress majority participated in its deliberations. In the face of the Tory offensive against wage increases, the TUC has steadfastly avoided calling a meeting of the unions concerned, so that common action could be planned. It is this lack of leadership which provided the Tory Government with its most powerful weapon.

**W**E must not leave the busmen to go it alone. By themselves they can be defeated, and this would be a major setback. Since the official leaders drag their feet, the initiative now passes into the hands of

the shop stewards and other rank-and-file leaders. It is up to them to organize nation-wide solidarity action to force the employers to their knees. The oil tanker transport men and the dockers can give a powerful lead.

**I**N spite of the weaknesses of the official Labour Party and trade union leadership, the working class has one important advantage. If we take as a whole the fight on the industrial front together with the massive campaign against the manufacture of the H-bomb and the building of rocket bases, all roads lead to a common objective—the need to replace capitalism with socialism, the next step being the overthrow of this Tory Government and its replacement with a Labour Government pledged to a socialist policy. This policy must include the nationalization of all the basic industries, with strictly limited compensation only of those who need it. The present bureaucratic form of capitalist nationalization must be replaced by a system of workers' control. Only on such firm foundations can a real socialist economy be built.

**G**ONE are the days when foreign affairs seemed remote to the vast majority of the working class. The H-bomb has changed all that. Today the fight against this most terrible of all weapons is more and more seen as a matter of life and death. Moreover this fight and the wages fight tend to merge in one single class struggle, in which economic and political resistance alike to a government of hunger and suicide place on the agenda the overthrow of the capitalist system and the capitalist State machine. And the struggle for socialist policies on the home front is interwoven with the struggle for socialist policies abroad.

**T**HE H-bomb is forcing the working class to develop an internationalist outlook. The struggle at home inevitably emphasizes the importance of international working-class action. The demand for inter-

national working-class action to stop the manufacture of the H-bomb flows logically from the struggles which are now on the order of the day in Britain. Internationalism has become a matter of everyday concern for the traditionally insular British Labour movement, and this must undoubtedly stimulate a great awakening of interest in Marxism, the only socialist theory which lays stress on the international ties and international role of the workers.

**L**ABOUR'S political leaders are no less inept than their trade union counterparts. At Brighton last October Bevan justified his alliance with Gaitskell the Right-winger on the ground that this was the best way to protect us from the H-bomb. Now Gaitskell has informal talks with Macmillan—also justified on the ground that this is the best way to save us from the

H-bomb. And who is Macmillan but the representative of the system which introduced the H-bomb, which pins its faith on the H-bomb, which genuflects before the H-bomb as the Great Deterrent, to be used 'whatever the cost'? Thus does the bankruptcy of Bevan's Brighton policy reveal itself. There is here a most urgent warning for the leaders of the Victory for Socialism group. Let them resolutely guard against mere playing with Left ideas and Left phrases. Unless they are determined to organize and lead the fight to end British imperialism and replace it with a socialist society, unless they are prepared to mobilize the industrial workers in this fight, then the movement will sweep by them and they too will end up as Bevan has ended up. But not, perhaps, in his present congenial surroundings; for the H-bomb holocaust cannot be stopped by reformism and middle-of-the-road theories. Only the mass movement of the workers, on an international scale, can destroy the bomb and the system that spawned it.

## An Unreasonable Reasoner

'Not only were the leadership unwilling to take part in the discussion, they were also unwilling to see the discussion take place at all.'

—('Statement by the Editors', *The Reasoner*, no. 3, p. 41, November 1956.)

**A**S with most previous communist oppositions, two main tendencies rapidly became apparent among those who broke from the British Communist Party in 1956-57. Some, wishing to remain communists, embarked on a study of earlier Marxist criticisms of Stalinist theory and practice, continued and intensified their activity as industrial militants, joined the Labour Party with the aim of strengthening the Left and fighting for a socialist policy and programme, and, in the course of their study and activity, derived benefit from discussions and joint work with Trotskyists. Others, retaining from their Stalinist conditioning only the firm beliefs that Trotsky wrote nothing worth reading and that Trotskyists are, if not quite 'fascist agents', at any rate 'undesirable elements', turned their backs on revolutionary theory, especially its application to the history of the USSR and the world communist movement. By and large the organ of the first trend has been *LABOUR REVIEW* (most of whose contributors and supporters are in fact recent ex-members of the Communist Party), and the spokesman of the second trend has been E. P. Thompson, co-editor of the *New Reasoner*.

**O**N the part of *LABOUR REVIEW* there has never been the slightest desire to widen the gap between these two trends; on the contrary we have desired, and still do desire, the utmost co-operation on matters of

common concern, while naturally reserving the right to criticize certain views expressed in the *New Reasoner* and elsewhere, more especially on matters of theory and principle, in an atmosphere of comradely discussion. We had hoped that such friendly discussion and polemic might be fruitful for all of us, helping to clarify in all our minds the way forward for British Marxists. Unfortunately Comrade Thompson has made it only too clear that he does not want such a discussion; that he will not even accept for publication a reply to Harry Hanson (it will be published in the next issue of *LABOUR REVIEW*); that he prefers to make a series of hostile comments remarkable only for the distorted picture they give of Trotskyist policy. We profoundly regret that not even an elementary measure of comradely co-operation and discussion has been possible. But the goodwill is lacking. It is not lacking on our side, and we feel it is time our readers were given the facts.

**I**N the latest issue of the *New Reasoner*, we read: 'The Right has speculated upon revolt or collapse behind the "Iron Curtain". The Left has awaited the classical slump which would awaken old-style revolutionary responses among the Western working class. The Trotskyists have hoped for a coincidence of both. All views have led to a common conclusion: the British people must wait for something to happen, somewhere else, for some other nation to move first.'<sup>1</sup> It would be difficult to construct a paragraph more at variance both with Trotskyist views and policies and with recent practical confirmation of the validity of their analyses and their forecasts. As Marxists, the Trotskyists 'hope' for noth-

<sup>1</sup>'Beyond the Bomb', *New Reasoner*, vol. i, no. 4, p. 1, Spring 1958.



ing; they make predictions based on a scientific analysis of social forces, and suggest appropriate action for the working class and its organizations to take. Events since 1956 in the countries ruled by Stalinism have shown that working-class struggle is the key to the achievement of socialist democracy there; Malcolm MacEwen, in this same issue of the *New Reasoner*, puts a much more realistic point of view than his colleagues on the editorial board when he forecasts for the Soviet Union

an intense internal struggle to overcome the resistance of the ruling bureaucracy in party and State . . . There are forces at work in socialist society . . . that are stronger than Khrushchev, and will carry the movement for democracy further than he wants to go.<sup>2</sup>

With every word of this LABOUR REVIEW is in agreement.

**A** GAIN, the slump which was announced by the American authorities, no doubt at the same time as this issue of the *New Reasoner* was being printed, may not be 'classical' enough for Comrade Thompson, but the 5,200,000 unemployed in the USA are proof that Marxist economics have not quite been superseded yet. Moreover it is quite misleading and ludicrous to accuse British Trotskyists, either now or in the past, of advocating passivity, of advising the British workers 'to wait for some other nation to move first'. Has Comrade Thompson never heard of the demand that British Labour take a lead in an international working-class campaign against the H-bomb? Has he not heard of the current campaign for the British workers to set an example to the workers of other countries by 'blacking' work on missile sites and on nuclear weapons? Has he not heard of the struggle for trade union democracy on the docks, of the fight against redundancy in the Midlands motor industry, of the struggles around *Socialist Outlook* till it was banned by Transport House?

**B** UT the really unwarrantable gibe in the above-quoted paragraph is its separation of the Trotskyists from the Left. It is high time that Comrade Thompson got a few things straight, and one of them is this: only those who learned in the Stalinist school to hate, vilify, persecute, beat and frame up Trotskyists<sup>3</sup> could or would contest the right of the latter to be counted among the Left. Comrade Thompson seems to have cast away all the luggage he was equipped with in the Communist Party except—one soiled old suitcase labelled 'anti-Trotskyism'. He retains his

<sup>2</sup>Malcolm MacEwen, 'The Two Camps', *ibid.* p. 15. Cf. MacEwen's earlier statement ('The Soviet Changes', *ibid.* no. 2, p. 108, Autumn 1957): 'The further development of the Soviet Union in the direction of freedom and democracy is inevitable, although it will take place by a process of struggle.'

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., the pamphlet by William Wainwright (now assistant general secretary of the Communist Party), **Clear Out Hitler's Agents** (1942), wherein workers are advised: 'They hide their black aims with "red" talk . . . They are called Trotskyists . . . They are a greater menace than enemy paratroops . . . You must train yourself to round up these . . . cunning enemies . . . They should be treated as you would treat a Nazi.'

spleen against the Trotskyists, who were contesting Stalinist lies, slanders and betrayals of socialist principles at a time when one had to swim against the tide to do so, when anti-Stalinism was not the fashionable pastime it is on the Left today, when physical courage and moral steadfastness were needed to stay the course, when Comrade Thompson himself was . . . a Stalinist.

**S** PLEEN? Yes, it is a harsh word. But we have been exceedingly patient in the face of quite undeserved and unprincipled sneers, which no one who *really* believed that 'we have a great deal to learn from the analyses of Trotsky'<sup>4</sup> and who had set himself to learn from them, could possibly utter. In the first sentence on the first page of the first issue of the *New Reasoner* came a remark about 'the State orthodoxy of "Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism" . . . and . . . its stunted opposite, dogmatic Trotskyism'.<sup>5</sup> We were told that the approach to Stalinism 'which sees it not as an ideology so much as a hypocrisy . . . is the general view of most Trotskyists' and that Trotskyism therefore 'fails to present a serious theoretical confrontation [what a *frivolous* book that *Revolution Betrayed* is!], and instead . . . descends to personalities or to abuse of "the personality"'.<sup>6</sup> Caricature was piled on caricature:

There might be some danger . . . of the Trotskyist ideology taking root and, if victorious, leading on to similar distortions and confusions. Trotskyism is . . . at root an 'anti-Stalinism' . . . arising from the same context as Stalinism, opposing the Stalinist bureaucracy but carrying over into opposition the same false conceptual framework and attitudes—the same economic behaviourism [read 'historical materialism'], cult of the élite [read 'belief in the need for a revolutionary party'], moral nihilism [**Their Morals and Ours**, for instance?]. Hence the same desperate expectation of economic crisis [5,200,000 unemployed!], denunciation of movements . . . which find expression in constitutional [read 'class-collaborationist'] forms, attacks upon the world-wide movement for co-existence [read 'co-existence between exploiters and exploited, between slave-holders and slaves'] . . .<sup>7</sup>

**C** OMRAD E THOMPSON, it is your magazine. You have the right to write in it as you please. No one asks that decency, that respect for the blood of countless Trotskyist victims of Stalin's GPU terror, should restrain your facile comparisons, your putting an equals sign between Stalinism, with its theoretical decay and terrible crimes against the working class, and Trotskyism, with its record of resistance to these crimes and championship of Marxist theory. 'The same . . . false attitudes.' 'The same . . . moral nihilism.' You equate the murderer and his victim. You put the torturer and the tortured on the same moral level. You refuse to let even one Trotskyist put his case in your columns. It was out of moral revulsion that you left the Communist Party. If these are your own moral principles, so be it. You who once chafed at censorship, you who launched the *New Reasoner* as a

<sup>4</sup>E. P. Thompson, 'Socialist Humanism. An Epistle to the Philistines', *New Reasoner*, vol. i, no. 1; p. 108, Summer 1957.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* p. 107.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 139-40.

means of securing free discussion for *your* point of view—you will discuss with anyone, even with King Street. But you send back a Trotskyist's typescript, though his in fact was the only piece offered to you for the discussion section of your fourth number. Pre-Khrushchev anti-Stalinists are too 'dogmatic', too fond of raising questions of principle, to be permitted to rub shoulders with William Blake, Harry Hanson and Konni Zilliacus . . . As unwilling as King Street even to acknowledge the existence of LABOUR REVIEW, you omit our journal from your list of magazines which welcomed the birth of the *New Reasoner*. (In fact we told our readers how interesting the contents looked like being, and encouraged sales by giving them your address.) You promise a reply to unnamed critics of your 'Socialist Humanism' article; a fundamental criticism of your views on Marxist philosophy appeared in LABOUR REVIEW so long ago as last September.<sup>8</sup> Two issues of the *New Reasoner* have come out since then, and the challenge has not yet been taken up. We are sure that you do not accept our criticisms; is your silence due to the fact that it was in LABOUR REVIEW that they appeared?

**B**Y all means let us accord Comrade Thompson the right not to discuss with Trotskyists, just as King Street did not want to discuss with Comrade Thompson. But perhaps he has room for a small correction of a factual mis-statement by Joseph Clark about the U.S. Socialist Workers' Party? Not a bit of it. According to Clark this party expounds 'dogmatic sectarianism'.<sup>9</sup> It was suggested to Thompson that another view of this party (and of the American Left) might in all fairness be obtained from one of its members, Joseph Hansen, who after all was battling against Stalinism when Clark was still in political diapers, and who ought to be given a chance to set the record straight. Sweetly reasonable was Thompson's reply: the American Left was not really big enough or important enough to warrant another article; the *New*

*Reasoner* was moving round the world in its foreign coverage. Now comes the Spring 1958 issue with a quotation from a letter of John Gates ('. . . splinters on the Left . . .') and the announcement: 'Ties with America are being maintained. Joseph Starobin is booked to write in our next number.'<sup>10</sup> (Starobin's views are known to be essentially similar to Clark's.) In place of discussion, abuse and distortion. In place of the common courtesies of the revolutionary Press, silence.

**W**E have spoken plainly. We have done so for four reasons. First, LABOUR REVIEW itself has never been afraid (and never will be afraid) to open its columns to root-and-branch criticisms of its own standpoint—a 4,500-word article by R. W. Davies was entitled 'The Inadequacies of Russian Trotskyism'<sup>11</sup>—since it believes that such free and frank exchanges can only help the Left and, in particular, educate young people and foster respect for ideas, for theory, for socialist principles. (We gladly offer Comrade Thompson the space for a 5,000-word reply to this present article.) Secondly, the *New Reasoner* claims to speak for 'the revolutionary Left in Britain';<sup>12</sup> this claim is nugatory if an increasingly important section of communist opinion is denied even the briefest of contributions to its columns. Thirdly, several contributors to the *New Reasoner* have mentioned the existence of a Marxist analysis of Soviet history;<sup>13</sup> if the editors have any regard at all for Marxism and its enrichment they should permit, we do not say a full-length exegesis of this analysis, but at least the participation in the discussion of those who accept it as valid. Lastly, in our view the time has come to challenge those who under the guise of opposing 'Trotskyism' are in reality opposing Marxism, to ask them to grapple with that which they oppose from the standpoint of political and ideological principle, and so educate their readers, instead of setting up and knocking down cheap and sleazy Aunt Sallies for their amusement.

<sup>8</sup>Peter Fryer, 'Lenin as Philosopher', *Labour Review*, vol. ii, no. 5, pp. 136-47, Sept.-Oct. 1957.

<sup>9</sup>Joseph Clark, 'A Letter from America', *New Reasoner*, vol. i, no. 3, p. 88, Winter 1957-58.

<sup>10</sup>'Letter to Our Readers', *ibid.* no. 4, p. 138.

<sup>11</sup>*Labour Review*, vol. ii, no. 4, pp. 111-15, July-Aug. 1957.

<sup>12</sup>'Can We Have a Neutral Britain?', *New Reasoner*, no. 4, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>See, e.g., John St John, 'Response to Harry Hanson', *ibid.* no. 3, p. 104: 'Deutscher and Trotsky . . . have presented Marxist analyses which do the very opposite to excusing what has happened [in the USSR]'.



# Marxism and the Algerian Revolution

*Michael Banda*

ALGERIA, which was ruled by the Turks for three centuries, was invaded by the French in 1830. Apologists for the French occupation have sought to explain the subsequent piecemeal conquest of Algeria on moral and humanitarian grounds. The conquest, they tell us, was necessary in order to stop the Mediterranean piracy from which Algiers derived its income.

The history of Algeria has given the lie to the apologists of colonialism. France annexed Algeria in the first place because its fertile hills and valleys and its thriving woollen industry offered lucrative prospects for French settlement and trade.

Before the French conquest Algeria was a semi-independent State ruled by a Turkish Bey who owed formal allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. She had treaty relationships with England, France, America and Holland. However, unlike Morocco, Algeria did not have a strongly constituted and centralized State buttressed by an important religious hierarchy. Marshal Lyautey—the Lugard of France—comments on the state of Algeria at the time as follows: ‘We were confronted in Algeria with a completely crumbling and disorganized state of affairs where the only established power was that of the Turkish Bey, whose Government collapsed immediately upon our arrival.’<sup>1</sup> Lyautey, in true imperial tradition, was embellishing the truth. Algiers nevertheless capitulated within a month. The Treaty of Algiers (July 5, 1830) signed after the surrender of the town stipulated that ‘the exercise of the Mohammedan religion will remain free, liberty of all the inhabitants, including all classes, their religion, property, businesses, industries will not be interfered with. Their women will be respected.’

The collapse of the Bey’s régime rekindled the flame of nationalism, and in November 1832 the people of South Oran proclaimed the Emir Abdelkader leader of the resistance against France. A government of national defence was established and was exercised throughout Algeria, with the exception of Bone, Algiers and Oran. This was the first truly national, representative and popular government Algeria had experienced in four centuries. It was also to be its last.

The resistance organized by the Emir was bloody and protracted. It lasted fifteen years. So fierce was the struggle that in 1834-35 Abdelkader’s government was able to force the French to give it diplomatic representation in Algiers, Oran and Paris. The backbone of the resistance was nomadic tribesmen and farmers, and its leadership was recruited from the emirs—the representatives of a dying feudal order. In this lay its weakness. In 1847 the Emir surrendered and went into exile. The war continued but not on the same scale nor with the same success as before. The major areas of disaffection were the Kabylie, Constantine and South Oran. Sporadic fighting continued in these areas for

another fifty years until the troops of Bouamama were driven into Morocco from South Oran in 1881.

The thesis that Algeria is a part of France is a very recent innovation. Between 1830 and 1848 Louis Philippe considered Algeria an ‘embarrassing legacy’ and he pursued a policy of limited occupation. This was not based on altruism, but on the low level of French capitalist development. Even under the régime of Napoleon III, when Algeria was formally declared French property, there was no attempt at extensive penetration. In fact military rule was restored and colonization was completely stopped for fear of another national rebellion. This policy was reversed in the sixties and seventies when France experienced a vast industrial and commercial expansion. Finance capital extended its operations. The struggle for markets and raw materials intensified. The colonial question took on a new and important significance. The protagonist of colonial expansion, Jules Ferry, summed up the prospects of French imperialism under the Second Empire when he wrote: ‘France, which has always exported capital abroad, should consider the colonial question from this angle. For countries like ours, which, because of the nature of their industries, have to export, it is a question of markets. Where there is political predominance, there is a predominance of products—an economic predominance.’<sup>2</sup> His words were echoed in 1894 by Eugene Etienne, chairman of the colonialist group in the Chamber of Deputies: ‘We have created and intend to preserve and develop a colonial empire, in order to safeguard the future of our country in the new continents, to ensure a market for our goods and find raw materials for our industries.’<sup>3</sup>

Since Algeria was France’s major acquisition she was the first to experience the full force of the new colonialism. The first task which confronted the French was the obliteration of Algeria’s national identity and the cultural and religious homogeneity which made her an integral part of the Arab Maghreb. This was achieved by a judicious admixture of administrative decrees and violent reprisals. In 1865 the Senatus Consulte was decreed and all Moslems were declared to be French subjects. In the same year the first customs union was set up between France and Algeria.<sup>4</sup> In 1870 another decree converted Algeria into three French departments. 1871 marked a turning point in Algeria’s history.<sup>5</sup> The defeat of France by Bismarck and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine led France to intensify the exploitation of Algeria. Military rule was abandoned and a civilian governor was appointed under the authority of the French Minister of the Interior. Colonization

<sup>2</sup>*Arab News Letter*, supplement 2 to no. 16 and 17, Oct. 30, 1956.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in *Morocco*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup>A new customs union in 1884 assured a monopoly of the Algerian market to French industry.

<sup>5</sup>In 1871 the great uprising of the Kabylie was followed by the most violent massacres in French colonial history.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in *Morocco* (World Muslim Conference, London, 1951), p. 49.

was resumed in earnest, thousands of displaced Alsations being resettled in Algeria. The spoliation of Arab land was extremely rapid. As Bugeaud—a notorious *colon*—has stated: 'It only matters that the land be good; it does not matter to whom it belongs'.<sup>6</sup> In 1850 the *colons* had 115,000 hectares, in 1900, they had 1,600,000 hectares and in 1950, they had 2,703,000 hectares.<sup>7</sup> Besides the land owned by the *colons* there are another 11 million hectares held by the French State, known as *terres domaniales*. In a century of unprecedented poverty and repression the Arabs have been deprived of two-thirds of their land.

The Cremieux Law of 1870 promised the rights of French citizenship to all Moslems who rejected their personal status and accepted French civil law. That the vast majority of Algerian Moslems rejected this law is not at all surprising. It implied the renunciation of Islam and a departure from koranic law and custom. What this law did achieve, however, was the creation of a new privileged layer of Spaniards, Italians, Jews and other non-French colonists who took advantage of the law to acquire French citizenship. Only one-third of the *colons* and other Europeans in Algeria are French by blood. These 'new French' *colons*, together with the French, dominated the local assemblies created after the ending of military rule. Using their newly won political power they attacked and confiscated the communal property of Arabs and by means of forced judicial sales were able to extort enormous tracts from the Arab farmers.

After 1889 European foreigners born in Algeria were naturalized automatically. The high birth rate of the non-French Europeans alarmed the Administration and from 1904 settlers from France were given special rights in assigning lots of land. By the end of the nineteenth century French economic and political domination was securely established. France next turned her attention to the Sahara, whose pacification took another twelve years (1899-1911).

### ALGERIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: ASSIMILATION

The social and economic problems created by French imperialism are numerous and complicated, and it is possible here only to outline the major ones and to suggest a socialist solution.

The political structure of Algeria is simple. At the head of State is a governor-general with administrative, judicial and military powers. Certain special legislative powers are delegated to him by the French Chief of State. He not only prepares the budget, but has the right to dissolve the Algerian Assembly and to proclaim a state of emergency.

Between the wars, particularly after the Popular Front took office, a determined attempt was made to 'assimilate' Algeria. The idea behind this policy was to create a social buffer of loyal Algerian Moslem landowners and petty bourgeoisie between the *colons* and the dispossessed. This attempt at division, known as the

*Projet Violette*, was defeated by the *colons*, who feared the slightest incursion on their rights and wanted to keep the Moslems in perpetual disfranchisement. The result of this defeat was particularly galling to the French reformists: in 1938 only 3,000 Moslems were French citizens.

The second world war weakened France considerably. She suffered her biggest defeats in her North African territories. By the end of the war it was plain to the most obtuse administrators that Algeria was on the verge of a social upheaval.

France hurriedly promulgated a new election law which modified the Cremieux Law of 1870 and conferred French citizenship on 60,000 Moslem without loss of personal status. But this niggardly concession, which affected a very small minority of Moslems, was ineffective. Unlike the British in India the French had failed (it is doubtful whether they ever tried) to create a solid and relatively strong native ruling class of Moslems on whom they could rely in an emergency. Thanks to the opposition of the *colons* this task had become a hopeless one. France also increased native representation in the Algerian municipal and general councils from one-third to two-fifths, but even this was no help in stemming the tide of resurgent nationalism. It satisfied only the *évolués*, who had nothing to gain and everything to lose in a revolution.

Soaring inflation, a terrible shortage of imports and three successive bad harvests produced a bloody insurrection in the Kabylie in May 1945. While the world was celebrating the victory of the 'democratic Allies' over 'totalitarianism' France was indulging in an orgy of murder and rape in Algeria.

Dr. J. Thomas, of Algiers hospital, described the conditions of the Algerian Moslems at this time, and the attitude of the French:

I have been living in Algeria a long time. I have seen legions of children in rags earn their living, starting from the age of five, by selling newspapers and polishing shoes; I have seen slums in the Arab quarters and the 'bidonvilles'—a shame to civilization. At the time of the wine harvest, I have met farm labourers walking for hundreds of miles in search of employment, sleeping the night in ditches, feeding themselves with a few dates and grapes, marauding along their way.

I remember talks I had with European settlers, and, seeing their haughtiness, their insolence and their hatred of the Arab people, I was ashamed of being French . . .

I was in Algeria in 1945 at the time of the famine, when thousands of people died of hunger during a year of drought. The criminal policy of the government allowed wheat—the Moslems' staple food—to be uprooted everywhere in order to replace it with vineyards . . .

I have seen the appalling repression which resulted in 60,000 dead. I have seen children a year old eat earth and I have seen 200 persons die of malaria in a few days in Chardaia. How could we not reap rebellion when for such a long time we sowed hatred, humiliation and misery?<sup>8</sup>

After the crushing of this abortive rising the administrative machinery went into top gear and produced the infamous Algerian Statute of 1947. This was the product of an unholy alliance between the French bourgeoisie and the French Stalinists, who wished to continue the policy of assimilation which Blum and Violette

<sup>6</sup>Arab News Letter, supplement 2 to no. 16 and 17, Oct. 30, 1956.

<sup>7</sup>These figures were cited by Jean-Paul Sartre in a speech in Paris, Jan. 1956.

<sup>8</sup>France Observateur, Oct. 4, 1956.

had begun in the palmy days of the Popular Front.<sup>9</sup> The 1947 Statute confirmed the untenable thesis that Algeria was a part of France. It abrogated the Ordinance of 1834 and set up a special status for Algeria; increased the representation of Moslems in the financial delegations of the Algerian Assembly; and established a new Algerian Assembly in which nine million Moslems had the same representation as a million Frenchmen. It had no legislative power and all its decisions were subject approval by the French National Assembly. The same principle of parity applied to the representation of Moslems in the French National Assembly.

In order to confuse the picture further, and to divide the Algerians, France has set up a clumsy and exceedingly complicated administrative structure. Algeria is divided into two parts: the territories of the North (Oran, Constantine and Algiers) and the territories of the South. The latter were in 1956 amalgamated with the Sahara to form a new administrative unit.

Under the *Code de l'Indigénat*—the basic administrative directive—Algerians are deprived of all fundamental liberties. Even French jurists have characterized it as a 'judicial monstrosity'.

The meagre reforms of the 1947 Statute were never implemented. The *colons* sabotaged the elections to the Algerian Assembly and the majority of the Nationalists under Messali Hadj boycotted the elections and refused to co-operate with the French administration. The Algerian delegation in the French Assembly walked out after the first article of the Statute had been adopted.

The defeat of the Statute signified the death of the theory of assimilation. Since then two new expedients have been put forward. The first is federalism—put forward by a section of the socialists and Sedar Senghor, deputy from the Senegal. Federalism envisages local autonomy with defence, foreign affairs and finance in the hands of France. This, if implemented, would mean the creation of a castrated commonwealth in place of the French Union. The other idea comes from the extreme Right, from Jacques Soustelle, who proposes 'integration'. This would mean the complete integration of France and Algeria, with Algeria sending 100 representatives to the French Parliament and enjoying the same rights, social services and salaries as France.

Both theories are based on the same assumption: the denial of Algerian nationhood. They are bound to fail.

### THE LAND QUESTION

Algeria's economy, which is dominated by agriculture, performs two functions for metropolitan France: it provides a source of raw materials and a market for manufactured goods. The discovery of oil will no doubt alter the structure of the Algerian economy, but at present the dominant position is held by agriculture.

Six-sevenths of Algeria is desert. Half of the remainder is steppe. Most of the 16 million cultivable acres are in the moist coastal area known as the 'Tell'. Of the cultivated area one-third is owned by about 25,000

<sup>9</sup>The French Stalinists had helped to crush the 1945 uprising, Thorez publicly calling for the execution of Ferhat Abbas and Messali Hadj. Eleven years later the French Communist Party was to sanction the policy of 'ratissage'—the genocide policy pursued by Mollet.

French landowners and the rest by Arabs. The individual holdings of the French average 235 hectares, and many of the estates are over 1,000 hectares in size. The average Moslem holding is about 1.6 cultivated acres. Seventy per cent. of the holdings are normally unviable. This is not the whole story however. Overgrazing and the wind and water erosion of the steep slopes have produced dust bowls and are daily depriving the fellah of his land. What is even more tragic is the fact that the Moslem cultivator is absolutely helpless against the unpredictable climate and the capricious rainfall of this area. Every drought is invariably followed by a famine, and the precarious balance between subsistence and starvation, between life and death, is upset. The *colons* are protected against such natural disasters. They occupy the humid areas. Their land is irrigable and the French Government spends milliards of francs on public works and irrigation projects whose beneficiaries are the *colons*.

Most of the *colons'* estates are exempt from taxation. There is no legal limit to the extent of their estates. Of government credits granted to agriculturalists in Algeria 99 per cent. have gone to the *colons* and only one per cent. to the impoverished fellah.

Periodic famines, constant erosion, a high rate of indebtedness, lack of irrigation, absence of cheap credit, high prices for imports, high taxes and the exhaustion of all sources of arable land—all these things have contributed to the social and economic disintegration of the Algerian nation. Algerian agricultural productivity, symbolized by the donkey and wooden plough, remains extremely low, leaving little surplus for export or accumulation. There is only one alternative: 'They have no recourse but to sell their lands, abandon their communities and emigrate to the cities of the littoral, where they swell such terrible African slums as the notorious eastern section of Algiers, the Casbah.'<sup>10</sup>

There is another and more sinister aspect to the agrarian problems, which dominates the colonial structure of Algerian economy and emphasizes its complete dependence on the French market. That is the displacement of cereal production in favour of wine growing. This was particularly true of the period from 1927 to 1937, when more than half the land taken from the Moslems was devoted to the production of wine. What are the effects of this policy? First, Algeria is forced to import—at high prices—50 per cent. more foodstuffs than she exports (excluding wine). Secondly, the production of cereals has gradually moved away from the fertile maritime belt to the southern desert region, which is not irrigated and is infertile. Thirdly, and most important, it has created a vast agricultural proletariat (sub-proletariat, it would be more correct to say) who lead a precarious and migratory existence. Thousands of these labourers periodically emigrate to France in search of employment. They constitute 73 per cent. of the Moslem population. Their annual income does not exceed 55 dollars, of which 78 per cent. is spent on food. In the Oran province, for example, a farm labourer is not employed for more than 150 days a year; yet the labourer is considered privileged in comparison with the thousands of unemployed who are too poor even to emigrate. It is these propertyless workers who form the

<sup>10</sup>Josué de Castro, *Geography of Hunger* (1952), p. 183.

backbone of the Liberation Army, but not its leadership.

The only solution for the unrelieved poverty of the Moslems is the industrialization of Algeria, which abounds in mineral wealth. But France will never tolerate such a project. She is determined to keep Algeria as a market for the industrial products of France. The consequences of industrialization would be disastrous for the *colons*. They would automatically lose their only source of cheap and abundant labour. Industrialization would also mean the growth of trade unions, the creation of a skilled and educated working class and, inevitably, the growth of a socialist movement.

## RELIGION

To smash the basis of Algerian economy and to let it suffocate in the grip of pastoralism and primitive agriculture was not the sole object of French rule in Algeria. It was necessary to consolidate the economic conquests with an attack on the spiritual basis of Moslem resistance. Before 1830 the Moslem religion had played an important and vital part in cementing the unity of Algeria. It provided a moral and legal basis for society. The *wakf* or *habous*—the property of the religious foundations—provided for the social and educational services. Not only schools but public works and charity were maintained by *wakf* revenues.

The French appropriated the trusts and kept only a tiny fraction of their revenues for the upkeep of Moslem institutions. The mosques today are under the direct control of the colonial administration. All Moslem preachers and judges are appointed and paid by the State, and are consequently its servants. The sermons of the imams are censored and only the official clergy—those in the pay of the administration—are allowed to preach.

Despite these efforts the Moslem religion continues to play a part in unifying Algerian resistance. The mosques have become the rallying point for national resistance and a target for French revenge.

If the Moslem religion was an important ancillary pillar of Arab culture the Arabic language was its central support. The xenophobia of the French found ample scope for its destructive activities in attacking the Arab language. French was made the official language and the medium of instruction. In the government schools Arabic is either excluded or taught only in the colloquial form. Consequently Arabic has degenerated into a clumsy patois. The persistence of Arabic learning despite the French is due mostly to the efforts of the Society of Algerian Ulema, a religious and political organization founded in 1929, which maintained 125 schools by means of private donations. It provided a strong bulwark against the French policy of assimilation, thanks to its links with centres of Arab-Moslem culture in Tunisia and Morocco.

The social and educational policy of the French is largely determined by the economic needs and privileges of French vested interests. Between 80 and 90 per cent. of the Moslems are illiterate. In the University of Algiers there were in 1956 only 557 Moslem students out of a total of 5,146.

As far as the Moslems are concerned the sanitation, housing and public works projects do not exist. As for the administrative and social reforms, they are worse than useless.

The reform of rural administration in 1956 which began with the removal of the caids (the Beni Oui Ouis) and the formation of communes under the Specialized Administrative Sections has been an utter failure. It was motivated in any case by the desire to win the villagers from the rebels.<sup>11</sup>

The land reform programme has proved to be just as hopeless and ineffective. Here the Government proposed to purchase in the areas irrigated by Government projects all land over 150 hectares per man (and 100 hectares per child) for distribution among Arab farmers. The amount of land thus affected would have amounted to about 475,000 acres. Even this timid reform could not be implemented because of the violent opposition of the *colons*. The reform, known as the Martin Law, still remains on the Statute Book. Paris proposes—Algiers disposes!

## CLASSES

One of the unique features of present-day Algerian society is the complete absence of a native Arab bourgeoisie. There are a small number of big Moslem landowners, a considerable petty bourgeoisie and an immense mass of labourers and rural paupers estimated at 700,000 families. But there is nothing approximating to a genuine Third Estate.

The petty bourgeoisie, which dominates the national movement, constitutes 6 per cent. of the Moslem population and has a per capita income of not more than 372.5 dollars per year. The 'middle class'—the term is used in a very wide context—constitutes less than one per cent. of the Moslem population and has an income per head of 673 dollars per annum. The heights of Algerian society are dominated completely by a handful of French landowners and businessmen. On the other hand the huge emigration of landless labourers to France has given rise to a well-organized, skilled industrial proletariat whose experience in the French political and Labour movement has helped to give a proletarian tempering to Algerian nationalism.

## PARTIES

From its inception Algerian nationalism has reflected the uneven and belated development of class relations among the Moslem population. After the first world war the essentially political struggle of Algerian nationalism was diverted into reformist channels. The leaders of this movement—mostly petty bourgeois lawyers—declared categorically in favour of the assimilationist

<sup>11</sup>The 'loi cadre' of the Gaillard Government is another device of the French Administration to woo the more 'moderate' elements among the Moslems. Its promise of regional autonomy and free elections exists only on paper; its real motive is revealed by the admission of General Massu—the 'butcher of Algiers'—that 'the rejection of the first outline-law by Parliament . . . was a major set-back for the policy of pacification' (*The Times*, March 4, 1958).

policy of France in exchange for certain administrative and social reforms. The leader of this movement, Ferhat Abbas, wrote in 1936 about the Algerian nation:

This homeland does not exist. I did not find it. I asked history. I asked the living and the dead. I visited the graveyards: no one spoke about it to me. We have dispersed for good the clouds and the ghosts in order definitely to attach our future to the French work in this country. We are the sons of a new world born out of the spirit of the French effort.<sup>12</sup>

Abbas soon modified his views on assimilation in favour of an Algerian State within the French Union. But his method and aims remained reformist—and adapted to the perpetuation of French rule in the Maghreb.

The growth of an Algerian proletariat found its reflection in the national movement by the formation of the North African Star (ENA) founded and led by Messali Hadj, who was himself an emigrant Algerian strongly influenced by the Russian Revolution, the Riff war and the Kemalist revolution in Turkey. The programme of the North African Star was diametrically opposed to that of the bourgeois group of Abbas—known as the UDMA (Friends of the Algerian Manifesto). The ENA, in its programme adopted in 1933, called for: complete independence for Algeria; complete withdrawal of the occupation troops; establishment of a national army; a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage; free compulsory education; and agrarian reform. The majority of Algerians supported the ENA in preference to the weak and compromised UDMA.

There is no doubt that ENA, with its predominantly proletarian character, would have rapidly grown into a revolutionary socialist party had it not been for the treacherous and pro-imperialist policies of the French Popular Front, elected in 1936. The policy of assimilation pursued by the Blum régime quickly disillusioned the Algerian nationalists in socialism and communism, and tragically turned them back towards Islam and Pan-Arabism. The dissolution of the ENA (also known as PPA (People's Party of Algeria), MTLD (Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties) and MNA (Algerian National Movement)) by the Popular Front in 1937 confirmed this trend and left the Algerians with no alternative but to rely on their own forces and ideas.

Despite—or rather because of—the violent repression of the French administration (both Vichyite and Free French) the ENA built up a nation-wide organization with a membership of 600,000 during and after the second world war. The support of the bourgeois faction during this time dwindled almost to nothing while Messali's influence spread.

The defeat of 1945 not only depleted the forces of the ENA but threw it back considerably and contributed to growth of reformist tendencies inside the party. These tendencies became more pronounced after the failure of the 1947 Statute and the policy of corruption practised by the French on the more conservative elements of the party. From 1947 the ENA went backwards politically. The president, Messali, living in exile, was unable to check this development which embraced a majority of the central committee. This reformist

faction began to revise the programme of the party and emulate the tactics and concepts of the bourgeois Neo-Destour of Tunisia and the Istiqlal of Morocco.

At the Second Congress of the ENA-MTLD held in 1953, the old policy of the party, which included nationalization and land reform, was discarded in favour of 'the reorganization of agriculture in the general interests of Algerians'. Anti-communism and a favourable attitude to 'the progressive evolution of North American policy' were the keynote of the conference. The problems of the women, the youth and the working class were ignored or glossed over. This line—or lack of line—was strongly resisted by the rank and file and by Messali. Moreover the isolation of the MTLD and its stagnation contrasted strongly with the other national movements in the Maghreb, which were snatching concession after concession from the French.

In the summer of 1954, after a bitter struggle, a new congress was convened in Hornu (Belgium) and the 'centralists'—as the revisionists were known—were expelled. This historic congress, the last legal gathering of the ENA-MTLD, reaffirmed the revolutionary nationalism which inspired its foundation and growth. It pledged its solidarity with the Tunisian and Moroccan independence struggles and decided to struggle with the French 'by all and any means'.

The 'centralists' attempted to set up a rival centre in Algiers with the funds of the MTLD, which they had appropriated fraudulently. The Algerian people, however, turned a deaf ear to their pleas and prophecies.

In the meantime a new force had emerged grouped around some of the leaders of the old paramilitary organization of the MTLD, the OS (Secret Organization). This new organization, known as the CRUA (Revolutionary Committee for Unity of Action) was led by men who had little contact with the party in France and even less knowledge of political realities. Among the leaders of this faction were Ben Bella, Mohammed Khider, Krim Belkacem, Omar Oumrane.

According to what little knowledge is available of this organization, it decided, independently of the 'centralists' and Messali, to launch the insurrection. On the night of October 31–November 1, 1954, a series of armed attacks were launched against police stations in the Aures and Kabylie regions. This was the signal for a nation-wide insurrection which soon covered the three departments of the North and many of the southern territories.

Why did the CRUA (whose leaders had turned to Cairo after the 1952 revolution) launch the insurrection before the plans of MTLD were ready? Why did it not only exclude but actually help to imprison the Messalist delegates in Cairo? The only probable explanation which conforms with subsequent events is that Nasser feared that the Algerian revolution would pass under the effective leadership of the Messalists once it began, which would constitute a deadly threat to the ambitions of the Egyptian bourgeoisie, who want to dominate the Arab world. The 'centralists' were too compromised, but the CRUA proved an effective tool. It had a number of militants, some capable administrators and military organizers. Its greatest asset, as far as

<sup>12</sup>Annex no. 3, Document on the Algerian Revolution, *Inter-Afrique Presse*, no. 118-119, June 27, 1957.

Nasser was concerned, was its lack of political perspective.

But the CRUA leaders, because of their lack of political experience and forensic skill, were forced to group around them all the ragtag and bob-tail of the reformist wing, including of course the 'centralists', whom they ignored before the insurrection. This new constellation of patriots and charlatans was now called the National Liberation Front (FLN), and included the UDMA, the 'centralists', the Ulemas, the Independents and the Stalinists. The latter were allowed to participate only as individuals. One of the most curious recruits to this curious conglomeration was the ex-president of the Algerian Assembly and one of the most violent opponents of Algerian independence—Mr Fares.

Gilles Martinet, whose profession seems to be that of permanent apologist of the FLN, stated fairly explicitly the reasons for its formation:

I remember a discussion I had about a year and a half ago in Cairo with Ben Bella, precisely about the case of Messali Hadj. Ben Bella, who was then the main leader of the FLN, told me that the tactics of his organization were to be explained by the desire to avoid the occurrence in Algeria of a new Bao-Dai phenomenon. He explained: 'To avoid "Bao-Dai-ism" we have to accept among us—and not as leaders—all Algerians, including those who collaborated with the French Administration. But for this purpose we have to have a single organization. An association of movements (what Messali Hadj demands) would present for us enormous dangers, for the French Government would be able to play one against the other. That is why we are ready to welcome Messali to the FLN but not to compromise with the MNA.'<sup>13</sup>

This view is also confirmed by Raffaello Ubaldi, foreign correspondent of *Avanti*: 'ALN [Army of National Liberation] units reject any internal division. It is severely forbidden to do any political propaganda in the name of any party. One must limit oneself to slogans of a general character against the French Administration and relating to the basic programme of the FLN.'<sup>14</sup>

Since the programme of the FLN does not involve land reform or nationalization it is safe to assume that the anti-democratic and totalitarian character of the Front is neither accidental nor episodic, but arises from the class basis and ideology of the Front. In order to impose their policy on the people and to combat the rival propaganda of the MNA the leaders of the FLN have resorted to methods of intrigue, terror and murder. In Algeria they murdered Ben Boulaid, one of the foremost military leaders in the Aures, and Goffal. Added to this we had the massacres of Melouza and LaFayette. The most serious aspect of this terrorist campaign has been—and still is—the murder of MNA and USTA militants in Paris. These murders have nothing in common with the struggle for Algerian freedom. They serve only to alienate the French and European working class and thus undermine the heroic struggles of the fellaghas.

The following extract from an interview between Jean Daniel, reporter for the journal *L'Express* and an FLN representative in Tunis reveals the anti-socialist, anti-working class character of the FLN leadership:

<sup>13</sup>France Observateur, Dec. 14, 1957.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

**FLN:** The Messalists were only stronger in France. When over a year ago we attempted to turn the Algerian workers away from the counter-revolutionary Messali, they started shooting down our people. So we did the same. From now on we shall continue to do this and now we have the initiative. This matter concerns us alone . . .

**J.D.:** Is it your intention to continue?

**FLN:** Certainly. Without a moment's respite. We are here training commandos whose mission is to shoot down traitors wherever they may be . . .

**J.D.:** Aren't you worried about repercussions on French public opinion?

**FLN:** For three years French public opinion has had no influence on events. Even if, as some of us suggest, we were to take French opinion into account, this would mean less to us than to get rid of the traitors.

**J.D.:** Why do you call traitors people who claim they want independence and who have the same objectives as you have?

**FLN:** Because we have all the proofs of their treason. Because they are protected by the socialists and the police.

**J.D.:** No, they are being arrested, persecuted, condemned to death.

**FLN:** That only applies to some of them. It is to create a diversion . . . Terrorism must be tolerated, without it there would be no revolution.

**J.D.:** There are revolutionary workers in France in whom the execution of trade union leaders inspires considerable doubt about your revolution: it recalls to them the physical destruction of the anarchists by the Stalinists during the Spanish Civil War . . . And if French opinion appears to you as insignificant as all that, you will finish by attacking Frenchmen in France itself. It is madness!

**FLN:** Some of us have considered such action . . .<sup>15</sup>

Significantly, the attacks against the MNA were stepped up only after the foundation of the USTA (Algerian Workers' Trade Union Federation) in the summer of 1957. The setting up of the USTA was an historic step towards the independent organization of the Algerian workers and a step towards their emancipation. The programme of the USTA is undoubtedly one of the most advanced trade union programmes in the Arab world. It includes the demand for the forty-hour week, the sliding scale of wages, three weeks of paid holidays, absolute prohibition of heavy or unhealthy work by women, equal pay for equal work for youth and women, the right for agricultural workers to organize unions and strike and the institution of a national fund for the unemployed, to be secured by a tax on the profits of the large estates. It is quite easy to understand the anxiety and terror that such an organization and programme would strike in the heart of the Arab bourgeois in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. For this reason the FLN has attempted to organize the workers in Algeria and France under the aegis of the UGTA (General Union of Algerian Workers). The extension of the UGTA in France is the AGTA (Friendly Society of Algerian Workers) which is a friendly society working in close collaboration with the Communist Party and CGT (General Confederation of Labour).

#### SOME APOLOGISTS FOR THE FLN

The internecine struggle between the FLN and MNA in France has naturally become the concern of the French Left. With a few exceptions, every Left-wing

<sup>15</sup>*L'Express*, Nov. 7, 1957.



leader and intellectual has denounced the murder of the leaders of the USTA, Bekhat, Fillali, Semmache and Maroc, which took place in the autumn of 1957. The exceptions are the Communist Party, the Socialist Party and the journals *Quatrième Internationale* and *La Vérité des Travailleurs*. The arguments contained in these journals would not be worth considering if it were not for the spurious claims made by the authors to be 'Marxists' and 'Trotskyists'. Following in the footsteps of Martinet and Bourdet these gentlemen attempt to use the 'Bellounis affair'<sup>16</sup> as a means to prove that the MNA is actually an adjunct of the French administration and is an enemy of the Algerian people. Conversely they try to dress up the FLN as the sole authentic leader of the Algerian Revolution without defining its class basis or its programme:

It is a fundamental fact in the North African situation and the revolution: the FLN has taken the initiative in the armed struggle at the present stage. The MNA on the other hand does not occupy such a place in the mass movement and on the other hand by its 'more realistic' positions finds itself to the Right of the FLN.<sup>17</sup>

This is truly amazing! But they go even further in trying to give a 'socialist' tint to a bourgeois programme:

The growth to maturity [of the national movement] is expressed on the political plane by the abandonment, to some extent, of grandiloquent and hollow phrases in favour of a more concrete, precise and better formulated policy, and of more suitable slogans in response to the very concrete problems which the movement now has to solve every day. The Maquis living in the country districts on the support of the peasant masses have to respond to the daily needs of these masses and to their demands for tomorrow. A new administration has arisen in the villages and popular assemblies are being set up, inspired by the FLN. **The agrarian question has become one of the essential preoccupations of the new leaders.** (My emphasis—M.B.)<sup>18</sup>

The reader's distinct impression is that the FLN leaders are gradually adapting themselves to the pressure of the rural masses and are solving the problems of the democratic revolution in Algeria. The reference to the agrarian question is deliberately vague for the authors know only too well that the FLN leaders have done nothing and will do nothing to solve the agrarian question. In their time Chiang Kai-shek, Nehru and Thakin Nu also paid attention to the agrarian question, but did nothing to solve it. The fault lay not in themselves but in the class they represented. It would be dangerous to imagine that the FLN, because

it has 50,000 men under its command, can do what Nehru could not do. As Trotsky remarked, 'Civilization has made the peasantry its pack animal. The bourgeoisie in the long run only changed the form of the pack.'<sup>19</sup>

The authors also go out of their way to prove that Messali is prepared to guarantee in an independent Algeria 'the legitimate economic, cultural and strategic interests of France', whereas the FLN is prepared to nationalize French enterprises 'if the general interest demands'. The last phrase is indeed felicitous. It is also contrary to the most recent statement made by Mr. M'hammed Yazid on behalf of the National Council of the Algerian Revolution on October 1, 1957, to the chairman of the First Committee of the Twelfth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. While calling upon the United Nations to intervene in a just and democratic solution of the Algerian problem the message concludes thus: 'The Front of National Liberation is prepared to consider any formulation of free co-operation between France and North Africa, such co-operation taking into account the legitimate interests of France.' This formulation does not differ in any way from the oft-repeated statements of Messali in relation to a Franco-Maghrebin Commonwealth and the preservation of French interests in Algeria.<sup>20</sup>

What they do differ on however is the means adopted to secure an independent and Free Algeria. The FLN states that the recognition of Algerian independence must precede any negotiations for a cease-fire and that a provisional government (the FLN) would be charged with establishing the new relations with France as well as deciding when and how elections to a constituent assembly should take place. The MNA, on the other hand, demands a round-table conference of all trends of Algerian nationalism and the French, to be accompanied by the immediate cessation of executions, liberation of all political prisoners and the re-establishment of democratic liberties. This is to be followed by the organization of general elections for a sovereign constituent assembly under United Nations supervision and the designation of an Algerian government which would negotiate with the French.

The FLN proposition precludes the right of any group or party apart from its own to help determine the future relations between France and Algeria. The MNA, while it does not lay down any preliminary conditions to a cease-fire, nevertheless provides a more democratic framework for an independent Algeria.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>L. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. iii (1933), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>*Arab News Letter*, no. 23, Dec. 1957.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. *The Times*, March 3, 1958: 'Of the system on which the future State would be run, there is not a word, although some of the leaders, such as Ouamrane or Abbane Ramdane, are reported to think that Algeria should begin its independence by three or four years of military dictatorship! The extreme weakness of the Moslem bourgeoisie in a world in which capitalism is tottering makes a stable, democratic, capitalist régime absolutely impossible. The enormous pressure of the landless peasantry and the workers on the Left, and the danger of a French reconquest from the Right, would tear a democratic parliamentary régime apart in a short time. That is why a military-Bonapartist régime—even more to the Right than Nasser's—is the only conceivable Government for an independent capitalist Algeria.'

<sup>16</sup>See *The Newsletter*, Feb. 1, 1958, pp. 33-4.

<sup>17</sup>*Quatrième Internationale*, Jan. 1958.

<sup>18</sup>*La Vérité des Travailleurs*, Oct. 1957. This statement does not bear out the testimony of the correspondent of *The Times*, who, after spending some time with the FLN leaders, observed that the 'FLN's elephantine tactics and the complete absence from their programme of such familiar essentials as land reform make it difficult to support the French thesis that this is a revolutionary movement a la Mao Tse-tung' (*The Times*, March 3, 1958). Cf. *The Economist*, Feb. 22, 1958, p. 646: 'As it stands the FLN is a movement without a leader . . . and without a programme beyond victory . . . The members of the executive committee either have not thought, or have failed to agree, about the kind of State they would like to create in place of the legal extension of France that they seek to destroy.'



The most revolting thing about the *canard* of *Quatrième Internationale* is the unconscionable way in which it treats the murder of trade union militants in France. This resembles the worst traditions of Stalinism:

The campaign of indignation which was launched against the FLN has little in common with proletarian morals: it is a question of a political operation intended to turn opinion against the North Africans and specifically against the FLN.<sup>22</sup>

The logic of this argument defies description. It repeats, in a different context and in a different period, the insinuations and slanders used by the Stalinists against all those who protested against the Moscow trials and other abominations of the Stalin régime.

Another scurrilous calumny hurled against the USTA by this journal is that its founding congress in France was held legally with police protection and that its representatives were allowed to travel to Bamako for the conference of the RDA (African Democratic Assembly). If the authors of this argument seek to prove that the USTA leaders are police agents then they will find themselves in the most unexpected company. For it is a fact that the AGTA-FLN also held its congress legally in France in September 1957 with police protection and under the presidency of a well-known Stalinist—Andre Tollet. The hall was also lent by the Stalinists!

If the USTA is a pro-French organization then how

explain the fact that the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions—and Irving Brown<sup>23</sup> in particular—turned down the affiliation of the USTA? Does this mean that the ICFTU is anti-imperialist? The persons around the *Quatrième Internationale* will have to fabricate better myths if they wish to delude the French working class about the aims and composition of MNA and USTA.

Whereas the FLN in its social composition and its programme is predominantly petty-bourgeois, the MNA, because of its overwhelming proletarian composition and its long traditions of struggle, is, though not a socialist party, the *precursor* of a revolutionary socialist party of the future. It is difficult to predict when such a party will arise. That will depend on how soon a strong Marxist movement can be created in France and on how the war progresses. The formation of the USTA is a step in that direction.

This much is certain. The future of Algeria does not rest with the FLN and its apologists but with the working class and landless peasantry. Only they can carry through the political and economic liberation of this martyred land.

The task of Marxists is not to apologize for and defend the accomplished fact but to hasten the day when the Algerian working class through its independent organizations will rise up as the true protagonist of Algerian freedom.

<sup>22</sup>*Quatrième Internationale*, Jan. 1958.

<sup>23</sup>Representative of the AFL-CIO in the ICFTU.

# The British Stalinists and the Moscow Trials

Joseph Redman

[DW stands for *Daily Worker*, throughout]

'Foreigners little realize how vital it was for Stalin in 1936, 1937 and 1938 to be able to declare that the British, American, French, German, Polish, Bulgarian and Chinese communists unanimously supported the liquidation of the "Trotskyite, fascist mad dogs and wreckers" . . .'

—W. G. Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent* (1939), p. 79.

'These apologists for Stalin will one day regret their hasty zeal, for truth, breaking a path through every obstacle, will carry away many reputations.'

—L. D. Trotsky, *Les Crimes de Staline* (1937), p. 62.

TWENTY years ago there took place the trial of Bukharin and twenty others, the third and largest of a series of three historic State trials in the Soviet Union. Like the fraction of the iceberg that shows above the water's surface, these trials were the publicly-paraded fraction of a vast mass of repressions carried out in 1936-38 by Yagoda and Yezhov under the supreme direction of Stalin. It is not the purpose of this article to examine the trials themselves or to discuss their

causes and consequences for the Soviet Union and the international working-class movement. Its purpose is merely to recall how the leaders and spokesmen of the Stalinist organization in Britain reacted to the trials and what some of the effects of their reaction were in the British working-class movement, so that lessons may be learned regarding the political character of the organization and the individuals concerned.

## THE FIRST TRIAL

The first of the three great 'public' trials took place in August 1936. Immediately upon the publication of the indictment, the *DW* came out with an editorial (August 17) accepting the guilt of the accused men: 'The revelations . . . will fill all decent citizens with loathing and hatred . . . Crowning infamy of all is the evidence showing how they were linked up with the Nazi Secret Police . . .' This instantaneous and whole-hearted endorsement of whatever Stalin's policemen chose to allege at any given moment was to prove characteristic of the British Stalinist reaction to each of the successive trials.

The prototype of another statement which was to reappear regularly throughout this period figured in the *DW*'s editorial of August 22: 'The extent and organization of the plot, with its cold-blooded killings of the leaders of the international working class, has shocked the Labour and socialist movement of the world.' In reality, of course, the effect of trial was to compromise the Soviet Union in the eyes of many workers and to play into the hands of the most Right-wing sections. Accordingly, a third 'keynote' had to be sounded right from the beginning, with the headline in the *DW* of August 24 to the report that the International Federation of Trade Unions had asked the Soviet authorities to allow a foreign lawyer to defend the accused: 'Citrine Sides with Traitors'. On the other hand, any expression of approval for the trial by a bourgeois newspaper or other 'source' was to be eagerly seized upon and publicized during these years, and already in this issue we find *The Observer* quoted, in a special 'box', as saying: 'It is futile to think the trial was staged and the charges trumped up.'<sup>1</sup>

With the minimum of delay the implications of the trials for current politics began to be drawn, especially with regard to Spain. The *DW* leader of August 25 affirmed that 'Trotsky . . . whose agents are trying to betray the Spanish Republic by advancing provocative "Left" slogans . . . is the very spearpoint of counter-revolution', and next day J. R. Campbell had an article comparing Zinoviev to Franco. At the same time, a programme of rewriting of the history of the Bolshevik Party and the October Revolution was launched with an article by Ralph Fox in the *DW* of August 28, entitled 'Trotsky Was No Great General', followed by another on September 1: 'He Was Always a Base Double-Crosser'.<sup>2</sup> A Communist Party pamphlet *The Moscow Trial*, by W. G. Shepherd, carried the retrospective smear campaign further, telling readers that in October 1917 'the organization leadership was not, as is sometimes supposed, in [Trotsky's] hands . . . He was

<sup>1</sup>This was the issue with the editorial headed: 'Shoot the Reptiles!' Commenting on it, the *New Statesman* of August 29 remarked prophetically: 'Those who shoot them today may be themselves shot as reptiles at the next turn of the wheel.' (This was to be the fate of Yagoda, head of the NKVD at the time of the first trial, shot in 1938.) It was presumably by an oversight that the *DW* never quoted the verses which graced the August 29 issue of the Paris White Guard paper *Vozrozhdenye* following the announcement of the executions after the first trial.

'We thank thee, Stalin!  
Sixteen scoundrels,  
Sixteen butchers of the Fatherland  
Have been gathered to their ancestors!  
\* \* \*  
Today the sky looks blue,  
Thou hast repaid us for the sorrows of many years!  
\* \* \*  
But why only sixteen?  
Give us forty,  
Give us hundreds,  
Thousands;  
Make a bridge across the Moscow river,  
A bridge without towers or beams,  
A bridge of Soviet carrion—  
And add thy carcass to the rest!'

<sup>2</sup>Fox did not live—he was killed in Spain a few months later—to reflect on the fate of two of the persons whom he named

a bad organizer.' The main point of this pamphlet, however, was squarely to identify 'Trotskyists' with police agents.

Shepherd based himself in his defence of the trial upon the declarations of D. N. Pritt, KC, ('None can challenge either Mr Pritt's integrity or his competence to understand the significance of court procedure and the value of evidence'), and indeed the importance of these cannot be exaggerated in assessing how this trial and its successors were 'sold' to the Left in Britain.

Mr Pritt made two principal contributions to the propaganda for the August 1936 trial. He wrote the preface to the pamphlet *The Moscow Trial*, 1936, a report of the proceedings published by the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee (secretary, W. P. Coates). This report omitted from the testimony of Holtzman, one of the accused, his reference to a meeting in a non-existent 'Hotel Bristol' in Copenhagen, a slip in the 'libretto' which had been widely remarked upon. (Compare p. 49 of this pamphlet with p. 100 of the English version of the *Report of Court Proceedings. Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre*, published in Moscow, 1936.) 'Once again', wrote Pritt, 'the more faint-hearted socialists are beset with doubt and anxieties', but 'once again we can feel confident that when the smoke has rolled away from the battlefield of controversy it will be realized that the charge was true, the confessions correct, and the prosecution fairly conducted . . . But in order that public opinion shall reach this verdict . . . it must be properly informed of the facts; and it is here that this little book will be of such value.' Pritt also wrote a pamphlet of his own, *The Zinoviev Trial*, in which he dealt with the suspicion some sceptics had expressed that the confessions might not be entirely spontaneous—might, indeed, be influenced by torture or intimidation of some sort. The abjectness of the confessions was 'sufficiently explained when one bears in mind the very great differences in form and style that naturally exist between one race and another . . . In conversations I have held in Soviet prisons with accused persons awaiting trial on substantial charges, I have not infrequently been struck by the readiness with which they have stated to me in the presence of warders that they are guilty and cannot complain if they are punished.' And anyway, after all, accused persons often plead guilty when they see 'the evidence against them is overwhelming'. True, no evidence was actually produced at the trial other than the confessions of the accused; but 'it is no part of the duty of the judicial authorities to publish reports showing exactly how they have conducted preliminary investigations of which the persons who are at once most interested and best informed, viz., the accused, make no complaint.' Actually, 'one can well imagine that the Soviet Government, so far as concerns the point of view of properly informing foreign criticism, would much have preferred that all or most of the accused should have pleaded Not Guilty and contested the case. The full strength of the case would then have been seen and appraised . . .'

What strikes one most forcibly in re-reading today

in this article as examples of how there were still plenty of Old Bolsheviks around and loyal to Stalin: 'Bubnov, Stasova and Krestinsky continue to hold important and honourable places in the leadership of the Soviet State.'

the literature of the first trial is the complete silence of the British Stalinists about some of the most contradictory and question-begging of its features. Not only the famous Hotel Bristol—the even more famous Café Bristol was not ‘discovered’ until February 1937—but many other, less ‘technical’, points were passed over. Molotov was conspicuously missing from the list of the ‘leaders of party and State’ whom Zinoviev and Co. were accused of plotting to murder—and from the ceremonial list of these leaders included by Vyshinsky in his closing speech—though he was the nominal head of the Soviet Government at the time. (Alexander Orlov, a former NKVD officer, tells us in his book *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (1954), p. 81, that the dictator, who wished to frighten Molotov a little, personally struck out his name from the list of ‘intended victims of the conspiracy’!)<sup>3</sup> Nor did they refer back later on, when Kossior and Postyshev were put away as ‘Ukrainian bourgeois-nationalists’, to their presence among the leaders whose deaths had allegedly been demanded by Rudolf Hess, through Trotsky. Nobody questioned the consistency of accusing Trotsky of being a fascist while stating (Smirnov’s last plea, *Report of Court Proceedings*, pp. 171-2) that he regarded the Soviet Union as ‘a fascist State’. Nobody suggested that it was somewhat premature of N. Lurye to get himself sent into Russia by the Gestapo in April 1932 (*ibid.* pp. 102-3); or that Trotsky had shown curious tactlessness in choosing five Jews—Olberg, Berman-Yurin, David and the two Luryes<sup>4</sup>—to collaborate with the Gestapo. That Holtzman testified to meeting Trotsky’s son Sedov in Copenhagen whereas Olberg said Sedov had not managed to get there (*ibid.* pp. 87, 100) excited no surprise. Above all, the complete unconcern of the Prosecutor about these and other contradictions and oddities in the confessions, which he made no attempt to sort out, was matched by a corresponding unconcern among the British Stalinists.<sup>5</sup> Like Vyshinsky, too, they gave no

sign of finding it suspicious that the treasonable intrigues of these ‘Trotskyites’, dating from 1931, had been carried on exclusively with Germany, no role having been played, apparently, by Britain, France, Poland or Italy. (As Trotsky observed, there ‘terrorists’ might make an attempt on Stalin’s life, but never on Litvinov’s diplomacy.)

Jack Cohen, in those days responsible for the political education of communist students, contributed to the party monthly *Discussion* for September 1936 a piece on ‘Heroes of Fascism and Counter-Revolution’ in which he asserted that in 1933 Trotsky had issued a call for ‘terroristic acts to “remove” the party leaders’, in an article in the *Weltbühne* which actually speaks not of terrorism but of a workers’ revolution against the bureaucracy. (Neither Cohen nor any of the other Stalinists ever quoted, of course, from Trotsky’s numerous writings condemning terrorism as useless and harmful, as ‘bureaucratism turned inside-out’, such as *The Kirov Assassination* (1935).) Pat Sloan, of the Friends of the Soviet Union (now British-Soviet Friendship Society), wrote in the *New Statesman* of September 5: ‘I do not see what was unconvincing in the Moscow trial.’<sup>6</sup> Walter Holmes, in his ‘Worker’s Notebook’ in the *DW* of September 4, told of a conversation with ‘members of the Labour Party’ who reassured him: ‘What are you worrying about? . . . Everybody in our party has got enough sense to know they ought to be shot.’ Reg Bishop, however, admitted in *Inprecorr* of September 5 that Labour was not quite so solidly convinced on this point: ‘The Labour *Daily Herald* vies in venom and spite with the *Daily Mail* . . . It is pathetic to see men like Brailsford and Tom Johnston failing to see through the tricks prepared for them by Trotsky to cover up his tracks.’ Douglas Garman, in the *New Statesman* of September 12, demanded: ‘If . . . they were innocent, why should they have confessed at all?’ (The editor replied: ‘We say that confessions without independent corroborative evidence are not convincing.’)<sup>7</sup> Ivor

<sup>3</sup>As soon as Molotov had made up his quarrel with Stalin, defendants began confessing to plots against him so far back as 1934 (Muralov, Shestov, Arnold, in the trial of January 1937) of which nothing had been said in the confessions of August 1936. Trotsky commented: ‘The conclusions are absolutely clear: the defendants had as little freedom in their choice of “victims” as in all other respects.’

<sup>4</sup>It was Moisei Lurye, incidentally, writing under the pseudonym ‘Alexander Emel’, who wrote in *Inprecorr* (German edition), November 15, 1932, that ‘in Pilsudski’s Poland Trotsky enjoys the particular sympathy of the political police’. Cf. J. Klugmann: ‘The secret police of the Polish dictatorship were specially educated in Trotskyism . . .’ (*From Trotsky to Tito* (1951), p. 82).

<sup>5</sup>Contrast the earnest efforts of Christian apologists to reconcile the contradictions and differences between the various Gospels. Anyone approaching the study of the August 1936 trial for the first time is recommended to notice the following points. Ter-Vagianian stated that the terrorist group was formed in autumn 1931 and Zinoviev that it began in summer 1932, while Mrachkovsky made it date from the end of 1932. In November 1932 Kamenev and Zinoviev had been banished to the East and were not allowed back until the middle of 1933. Smirnov was in prison from the beginning of 1933 onwards, so could hardly have participated effectively in the plot to kill Kirov (December 1934). Berman-Yurin dated the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in September 1934 (it took place in July-August 1935), and explained that a plot to kill Stalin at a Comintern executive meeting failed

because David, the assassin-designate, was unable to get a pass to enter the hall, whereas David said the plot failed because Stalin did not attend the meeting. A number of persons whose alleged testimony was quoted in the indictment or in court (Radin, Schmidt, Karev, Matorin etc.) were never produced either as witnesses or as accused at this or any later trial. Trotsky’s appeal (to the central executive committee!) in his ‘Open Letter’ of March 1932 to ‘put Stalin out of the way’ (*Report of Court Proceedings*, p. 127) was actually an appeal to them to ‘at last put into effect the final urgent advice by Lenin, to “remove Stalin”,’ i.e., a reference to the document known as ‘Lenin’s Testament’, as may be seen from the *Bulletin of the Opposition* in which this ‘Open Letter’ quite openly appeared.

<sup>6</sup>Contrast the sceptical mood of many Soviet citizens reflected in the story which was current in Moscow during the trial: Alexei Tolstoy, upon being arrested and examined, had confessed that he was the author of *Hamlet* . . .

<sup>7</sup>The example of Galileo, who ‘confessed’ and repudiated his own discoveries under the mere threat of torture, seems never to have been discussed in Stalinist writing on the trials; nor that of the numerous ‘witches’ who, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, went to their deaths confessing to having had communication with the Devil; nor even that of the Duke of Northumberland who in 1553 confessed to Catholicism even on the very scaffold, in the delusive hope of a pardon from Queen Mary. Krivitsky (*op. cit.* p. 212) remarks that ‘the real wonder is that, despite their broken

Montagu, in *Left Book News* for October, pooh-poohed suggestions that torture, whether physical or moral, or promises of pardon in return for perjury, could have anything to do with the confessions, and gave some historical background in which he quoted Lenin's criticisms of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, while saying nothing of his criticisms of Stalin. R. Page Arnot, in the *Labour Monthly* for October, wrote: 'Trotskyism is now revealed as an ancillary of fascism . . . The ILP is in great danger of falling into the hands of Trotskyists and becoming a wing of fascism. Let the members of the ILP look to it.' Pat Sloan, again, in the October number of *Russia Today* specially devoted to the trial, had a new explanation for the confessions: 'These were men who, in their desire for publicity, had never refused an opportunity to speak to a large audience.' From the same inspired pen came an argument, in *Controversy* of December, worthy of the confidence men of South Sea Bubble days: 'The Soviet Government does not intend to broadcast to the whole world *all* the evidence of activities of Hitler's agents it *could* broadcast.' (Though well-informed about the secret archives of the Soviet intelligence service, Sloan was, at this stage, a bit shaky on the topography of Denmark's capital: 'Anyway, are we sure there's no Hotel Bristol in Copenhagen? The denial, I believe, comes only from Norway.')

Towards the end of 1936 and beginning of 1937 there were two trials in Germany of real Trotskyites for real subversive activity. In Danzig, Jakubowski and nine others were given severe hard-labour sentences for issuing leaflets declaring that 'the defence of the Soviet Union remains an unconditional duty for the proletariat', and in Hamburg a group of fifteen, which included a Vienna Schutzbund member and a worker who had fought in the 1923 uprising, suffered similarly for similar activity. There were no confessions and there was plenty of material evidence. No report of these cases appeared in the *DW* or other Stalinist publications. It is curious that Nazi propaganda in this period alleged that in spite of appearances the Fourth International was a secret agency of the Third, operating on the basis of a division of labour. Accounts of a conference (at Breda) between representatives of the two Internationals were spread by Goebbels, just as Stalin told the world of Trotsky's talks with Hess.<sup>8</sup>

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condition and the monstrous forms of pressure exerted by the OGPU on Stalin's political opponents, so few did confess. For every one of the 54 prisoners who figured in the three "treason trials", at least 100 were shot without being broken down.'

<sup>8</sup>At the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal the Soviet representatives conspicuously refrained from asking Hess about his alleged anti-Soviet negotiations with Trotsky. In March 1946 a number of prominent British people, including H. G. Wells, George Orwell, Julian Symons and Frank Horrabin, signed an appeal to the Tribunal asking that Trotsky's widow be allowed to interrogate Hess in order to clear her husband's name, or that at least the Allied experts examining Gestapo records make a statement showing to what extent they had found confirmation of the story told in the Moscow trials. No action was taken on these requests, and to this day no evidence of Nazi-Trotskyite negotiations has been published.

## THE SECOND TRIAL

Already during the period of the first trial, as we have seen, King Street's concern for 'working-class unity' was subordinated to the paramount need to attack anybody and everybody in the Labour movement who expressed doubt regarding the justice of the verdict. This became still clearer when the second trial was launched, in January 1937. The *DW* of January 25 carried the headline: 'The "Herald" Defends Spies and Assassins', and a leader 'Enemies of the Working Class', which declared: 'It is for the working class of Britain to deal with those who in this country constitute themselves the defenders of the Trotskyites and thereby assist fascism and strike a blow at socialism all over the world.' On January 29 the paper attacked the *New Leader* for 'playing into the hands of the enemy' because it had called for an independent inquiry into the trial such as Pritt and others had organized in connexion with the Reichstag Fire trial in 1933. Arnot was the *DW*'s reporter at the second trial: he assured readers that the only pressure which had been brought to bear on the prisoners was 'the pressure of facts' (January 27).

The campaign to justify Stalin's purges and to make the utmost political capital out of them was raised to a higher level and put on a more organized basis than hitherto by John Gollan, in his address to the enlarged meeting of the national council of the Young Communist League held on January 30-31. The historical 'rewrite' adumbrated by Ralph Fox was undertaken more thoroughly and at some length by Gollan. The address was published as a duplicated document under the title *The Development of Trotskyism from Menshevism to Alliance with Fascism and Counter-Revolution*. Gollan showed how Lenin's chief assistant in building the Red Army was not Trotsky but Stalin, how Trotsky had advocated that industrialization be carried out 'at the expense of the peasant masses' (saved by Stalin) etc. etc. This remarkable assemblage of half-truths and untruths concluded with a list of 'the real Bolshevik Old Guard', in which figure the names Rudzutak, Bubnov, Chubar, Kossior and Postyshev, all shot or imprisoned by Stalin shortly afterwards. Harry Pollitt went one better than this in *his* list of 'the real Old Guard' who 'are still at their posts', by including the name of . . . Yezhov, whom hardly anybody—probably not Pollitt himself—had even heard of until his sudden elevation in September 1936 to be head of the NKVD following Yagoda's fall! This exploit occurred in a pamphlet called *The Truth About Trotskyism*, published at the end of January. Another gem from the same source is Pollitt's comment on the confessions of the accused: 'The evidence produced in the Moscow trial is not confessions in the ordinary sense but statements signed in the way depositions are signed in any British court . . .'<sup>9</sup> The main point of the pamphlet, made in a contribution by R. P. Dutt, was to show that it was 'essential to . . . destroy the Trotskyist propaganda and influence which is seeking to win a foothold within the Labour movement, since

<sup>9</sup>Pollitt also wrote in this pamphlet: 'The bold Trotsky, eh? Wants an international court of inquiry. His tools are left to face it out. Why doesn't he face it with them? Why doesn't he go to Moscow?' Neither here nor anywhere else in Stalinist publications was it ever revealed that Trotsky repeatedly demanded that the Soviet Government bring extradition proceedings against him—which would have necessitated their making a case in a Norwegian or Mexican court.

these attempts represent in fact the channel of fascist penetration into the Labour movement'. In addition to the Gollan address and the Pollitt-Dutt pamphlet the *DW* brought out a special supplement on the trial in its issue of February 1 ('Keep It Always'), in which, after the ritual statement 'everywhere in the British Labour movement the scrupulous fairness of the trial, the overwhelming guilt of the accused, and the justness of the sentences is recognized', readers were urged to send protests to the *Daily Herald* regarding its sceptical attitude thereto. A statement by the central committee of the Communist Party published in this issue emphasized that 'the lead given by the Soviet Union . . . requires to be energetically followed up throughout the whole Labour movement, and above all in Great Britain . . .'

From this time onward one can say without exaggeration that the fight against 'Trotskyism' became one of the main preoccupations of the Communist Party, diverting the energies and confusing the minds of its members and disrupting the working-class movement more and more.<sup>10</sup> R. F. Andrews (Andrew Rothstein) now came well to the fore, as might be expected, with a series of articles in the *DW*. 'The criminals have received their well-merited sentences . . . Millions of people have had their eyes opened to the inner essence of Trotskyism' (February 5); 'Trotsky . . . a malignant, avowed and still dangerous criminal' (February 9); 'Herald—Shameful Blot on Labour', i.e., for doubting the justice of the verdict (February 15).<sup>11</sup> A mere pamphlet such as Pritt

<sup>10</sup>Anti-Trotskyism eventually became for a time the chief activity of J. R. Campbell, as is reflected in Phil Bolsover's article, in the *DW* of April 2, 1938, 'The Man behind the Answers', describing Campbell at work preparing his 'Answers to Questions' feature: 'And if you see sometimes a grim, but not unhappy, gleam behind those horn-rimmed spectacles that are lifted occasionally to survey the busy room, you'll know it's ten to one that Johnnie Campbell is dealing with some Trotskyist or other. One of his sharper joys is to take an artistic delight in dissecting the sophistries, the half-truths, the complete falsehoods of the breed; laying bare the poverty of their creed for all to see. "Give him a Trotskyist and he'll be happy for hours", someone once said.'

<sup>11</sup>Around this time died Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Commissar for Heavy Industry. Under the headline 'Stalin bears Coffin of "Bolshevism's Fiery Knight"', the *DW* of February 22 reported the funeral: 'As Stalin stood with his hands sorrowfully crossed, a wave of the people's love and loyalty swept towards him. Beside him stood Zinaida Ordzhonikidze, Sergo's wife . . .' An article about the dead man which appeared next day was headed: 'Health Shattered by Trotskyist Wrecking.' On August 12 a leader headed 'Foul Lies' denounced the Herald for carrying a story that Ordzhonikidze had killed himself and that his brothers had been arrested. ('All Labour men and women [should now] protest against the anti-Soviet line of this most scurrilous rag in the newspaper world.') *Russia Today* for September, under the heading 'Another Daily Herald Slander', declared that 'we are able to state definitely there is not a word of truth in this assertion'. In his secret speech of February 25, 1956 (*The Dethronement of Stalin* (1956), p. 27) Khrushchev said: 'Stalin allowed the liquidation of Ordzhonikidze's brother and brought Ordzhonikidze himself to such a state that he was forced to shoot himself.' When Khrushchev and Bulganin came to Britain in the warship *Ordzhonikidze*, Walter Holmes published in his Worker's Notebook (*DW*, April 16, 1956) a note on the man after whom the ship was named: 'Ordzhonikidze died in 1937, when many of his assistants were being arrested on charges of spying, sabotage etc. There were rumours that he had been driven to suicide . . .'

had devoted to the Zinoviev trial was now realized to be inadequate and a whole book, *Soviet Justice and the Trial of Radek* (1937), was published, the work of a fresh legal talent, Dudley Collard, though not without an introduction by Pritt ('The impression gained from Mr Collard's description will, I think, enable many who were puzzled by the first trial not merely to convince themselves on the genuineness of the second, but also to derive from that a conviction of the genuineness of the first'). This pathetic effort contains such propositions as (p. 52): 'I have read some statement to the effect that no aeroplanes flew from Germany to Norway in December 1935. It seems hard to believe that this is so . . .' Here the reference is to the statement issued by the Oslo airport authorities that no foreign aeroplanes landed there in December 1935, contrary to Pyatakov's confession that he had landed there on his way to visit Trotsky. (Attempts were later made to explain that perhaps Pyatakov's memory was at fault and his aeroplane had actually landed on a frozen fiord; but, alas, this version was incompatible with the accused man's account of his journey by car from the aeroplane to Trotsky's dwelling.) After a display of quite extraordinary gullibility, Collard came to the conclusion (p. 79) that 'the court was more merciful than I would have been!' That was sufficient to ensure his book the maximum boost treatment throughout the Stalinist movement. William Gallacher, reviewing Collard in the *DW* of March 19, wrote: 'Here one sees the Soviet legal system as it really is, the most advanced, the most humane in the world . . . It is a book which once read must make any normal human being resolve that never again under any circumstances will he have truck with Trotsky, his followers or any of his works.' Harking back to one of the mysteries of the first trial, the *DW* gave a sizable bit of its valuable space in the issue of February 26 to a plan of the Grand Hotel, Copenhagen, allegedly showing that one could enter a café said to be called the Café Bristol through this hotel—though how Holtzman could have proposed to 'put up' at this café still remained unexplained!<sup>12</sup> The egregious Arnot, in an article on 'The Trotskyist Trial' in the *Labour Monthly* for March, quoted Lenin on MacDonald to show how workers' leaders can degenerate (but did not quote Lenin on Stalin!), took a swipe at Emrys Hughes ('a middle-class Philistine') for an article in *Forward* critical of the trials, and opened up with all guns against the *Manchester Guardian*. Principled political criticism of the Liberals was 'out' in this epoch of Popular-Frontery, but here was something more important. The *Guardian* had stated that, in the course

It has now been established that Sergo Ordzhonikidze was suspicious of Beria's political position. After the death of Ordzhonikidze, Beria and his fellow-conspirators continued cruelly to revenge themselves on his family . . .'

<sup>12</sup>The extreme concern shown to shore up Holtzman's evidence is explained by two facts—his was the only statement giving anything like precise details of time and place, and it furnished the basis for all the rest of the story. Concentration on the place where Holtzman allegedly went also served to divert attention from the fact that the person—Sedov—whom he had allegedly met there had been able to prove conclusively, by means of his student's attendance card and other documents, that he was taking an examination in another city at the time!

of the waves of repression sweeping over the Soviet Union in the wake of the second trial, 'the Polish communists . . . have suffered heavy casualties under the Stalinist persecution'. As is now admitted, almost the entire leadership of the Polish Communist Party was in fact liquidated by the NKVD in this period, and the party itself dissolved. This was the buffoonery that Arnot wrote at the time: 'They have not "suffered heavy casualties"; there is no "Stalinist persecution" . . . At one time the Trotskyists complained that the condemnation of their errors was a sign of anti-Semitism. Now, apparently, the condemnation of their crimes is to be presented as "the assault on the Polish Virgin" . . .'

At this time the Stalinists were putting forth determined efforts to capture the Labour League of Youth, for which they published a paper called *Advance*. The March issue of this journal carried an article, 'We Have Our Wreckers, Too!' by Ted Willis, later to win fame as author of *The Blue Lamp*, but then the leading Stalinist youth-worker. 'The recent trial and sentences on the Terrorists in Moscow were of particular interest to the members of the League of Youth for an obvious reason. That being the fact that, for the last year we have been blessed (is that the right word?) with a tiny group of people in the League who style themselves Trotskyists . . . Turn them lock, stock and barrel out of the Labour movement!' Fittingly, at the same time as Ted Willis was making his debut in this field, John Strachey, then the top Stalinist publicist in this country, was telling readers of *Left News* that he believed that

The psychological student of the future will look back on the long-drawn-out incredulity of British public opinion over the Moscow trials of 1936 and 1937 as one of the strangest and most interesting psychological phenomena of the present time. For it will be clear to such a student that there were no rational grounds for disbelief. The fact is that there is no answer to the simple question: 'If these men were innocent, why did they confess?' . . . Before the inexorable, extremely prolonged, though gentle, cross-examination of the Soviet investigators, their last convictions broke down.

Major contributions to the fight against Trotskyism now came thick and fast. Stalin's speech at the February-March plenum of the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party, setting out his thesis that the further the Soviet Union progressed the more intense became the class struggle and the greater was the need for security work, was published in full in the *DW* ('Especially in Britain do we require to pay heed to his words regarding the danger of the rotten theory that because the Trotskyists are few we can afford to pay little attention to them . . . This is a report to be carefully read and studied, not once but many times'—March 31). At the second National Congress for Peace and Friendship with the USSR, Pritt soothed the anxieties of those who had doubts about the course of justice under Stalin. 'I do happen to know that, when you are arrested in the USSR . . . there are very elaborate rules of criminal procedure to see that your case will be proceeded with promptly and to ensure that there shall be no delay in having it put forward' (Congress Report, p. 51). In *Left News* for April, Ivor Montagu reviewed, under the heading 'The Guilty' the official report of the second trial, together with Collard's book. A feature of this article was its misquotation from *The Revolution Betrayed*, designed to show that Trotsky prophesied the defeat of the Soviet Union in war with Nazi Germany. (Montagu gives:

'Defeat will be fatal to the leading circles of the USSR and to the social bases of the country.' Trotsky actually wrote 'would', not 'will', and made plain in the following paragraph that he considered the defeat of Germany more probable:

Notwithstanding all its contradictions, the Soviet régime in the matter of stability still has immense advantages over the régimes of its probable enemies. The very possibility of a rule by the Nazis over the German people was created by the unbearable tenseness of social antagonisms in Germany. These antagonisms have not been removed and not even weakened, but only suppressed by the lid of fascism. A war will bring them to the surface. Hitler has far less chances than had Wilhelm II of carrying a war to victory. Only a timely revolution, by saving Germany from war, could save her from a new defeat. (*The Revolution Betrayed*, chapter viii, section 5).

Montagu also referred to Trotsky as 'perhaps the star contributor to the Hearst Press on Soviet affairs'. In fact, Trotsky always refused even to receive a representative of the Hearst Press, and anything they published over his name was 'lifted', often with distortions, from other papers. (Lenin had had occasion in July 1917 to remark regarding a similar slander by the Menshevik Montagus of those days: 'They have stooped to such a ridiculous thing as blaming the *Pravda* for the fact that its dispatches to the socialist papers of Sweden and other countries . . . have been reprinted by the German papers, often garbled! . . . As if the reprinting or the vicious distortions can be blamed on the authors!')

In *Challenge* of May 27 Gollan asserted 'the absolute necessity . . . of once and for all ridding the youth movement of all Trotskyist elements as a pre-condition for unity', thus subordinating the urgent need for workers' unity to the requirements of the NKVD.

### BETWEEN THE SECOND AND THIRD TRIALS

The case of the Generals—a sort of intermezzo between the second and third trials—gave the British Stalinists fresh occasion to display their 'loyalty' and quarrel with other sections of the working-class movement on its account. This was a secret trial, without confessions, but no matter: the first announcement of the case was greeted by the *DW* with a leader stating that 'thanks to the unrelaxing vigilance of the Soviet intelligence service, a further shattering blow has been given to the criminal war-making elements who seek to undermine and destroy the Socialist Fatherland of the international working class' (June 12). On June 14 the paper announced: 'Red Army Traitors Executed.' The leading article affirmed, as usual, that 'the workers of Britain will rejoice', but nevertheless Pollitt, in a special statement published in the same issue, had to rebuke the *Herald* for getting 'so hot and bothered' about this trial. In a statement congratulating the Soviet Government on the executions, published in the *DW* of June 16, the central committee welcomed, on behalf of the British workers, 'the wiping out of the bureaucratic degenerates associated with fascism . . .' Arnot proclaimed (*DW*, June 18) his conviction of the reliability of the official account of the crimes of Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik, Eidemann and the others: 'That it is a true story no reasonable man can doubt.' Montagu added his stone next day ('A Blow at Fascism') and called for heightened vigilance against 'such agents in the working



class movement elsewhere and working to the same end'. Pat Sloan's *Russia Today* (July) hastened to identify itself with the executioners: 'No true friend of the Soviet Union . . . can feel other than a sense of satisfaction that the activities of spies, diversionists and wreckers in the Soviet Army have been given an abrupt quietus . . . All talk about the personal struggle of the "dictator" Stalin is rubbish.' Dutt pitched into Brailsford for his doubts ('On Which Side?', *DW*, June 21)<sup>13</sup> and Jack Gaster denounced the 'slanders' of the *Herald* at a Hyde Park meeting (*DW*, June 22).

About the middle of 1937 it began to be known in the West that a truly gigantic, unprecedentedly sweeping wave of arrests was engulfing many who hitherto had been regarded as secure and loyal pillars of the Stalin régime. This put the British Stalinists in a quandary. When Mezhlauk, for instance, was appointed to succeed Ordzhonikidze as Commissar for Heavy Industry, he was headlined in the *DW* of February 27 as an 'Old Soldier of the Revolution'. When he was arrested a few months later they could thus hardly dispose of him in the traditional way as 'never an Old Bolshevik'. So they ignored the arrest, and dealt similarly with the many similar cases that now poured out of the tape-machines. A photograph of Marshal Yegorov appeared in the *DW* of July 14; when he was arrested shortly afterwards, nothing was said. A photograph of Marshal Blucher was published in the issue of February 25, actually *after* his arrest! (At the same time, the wretched *Daily Herald* came in for another pasting in the *DW* of October 8 for having published a report of the murder by NKVD agents in Switzerland of Ignace Reiss, an NKVD man who had tried to break with Stalin.)

Perhaps the most revealing instance of the methods of the British Stalinists in dealing with the arrests which they knew about but dared not admit to their dupes is provided by the case of the Lost Editor. When the Soviet official *History of the Civil War*, Vol. I, was first announced as a forthcoming publication, in the *DW* of March 11, the list of editors, headed by Stalin and Gorky, included the names of Gamarnik and Bubnov. General Gamarnik having allegedly committed suicide as an exposed accomplice of Tukhachevsky ('Entangled with Enemies of USSR, Took Own Life'—*DW*, June 2), his name had of course disappeared from the advertisement of the book published in *Russia Today* of November 1937. But though Bubnov had been arrested as an enemy of the people in time for his name to be removed from the title-page of the book before it reached the shops, it was still to be seen on the fly-leaf! When Rothstein reviewed this work in *Russia Today* of February 1938 he cannily listed the editors as 'Joseph Stalin, Maxim Gorky and others'. The arrest of Bubnov was a particularly hard blow for the British Stalinists, since they had made special use of his name as that of an Old Bolshevik still in favour. Perhaps resentment at his inconsiderateness in getting arrested was the reason why the *DW* did not report his return to Moscow in

1956, as an old, broken man, after nearly twenty years in prison.<sup>14</sup>

Particularly worthy of being rescued from oblivion, among the achievements of 'working-class journalism' in this period, is an article in the *DW* of August 20 by Ben Francis, the paper's Moscow correspondent, in praise of the wonderful work being done by Zakovsky, in charge of security in Leningrad. Around this time, as Khrushchev described in his famous 'secret speech' (*Manchester Guardian* pamphlet version, *The Dethronement of Stalin* (1956), p. 15), Zakovsky was having prisoners brought before him after torture in order to offer them their lives in return for their agreement to make a false confession ('You, yourself', said Zakovsky, 'will not need to invent anything. The NKVD will prepare for you a ready outline . . . You will have to study it carefully and remember well all questions and answers which the court might ask').

An example of the contempt into which the trials were bringing both the Soviet authorities and the British Stalinists is provided by the article by 'Y.Y.' (Robert Lynd) in the *New Statesman* of June 26. On the ascription of all shortcoming in Soviet industry to Soviet sabotage, he wrote that, apparently, 'wherever there is a screw loose in Russia it was Trotsky who loosened it', and he summed up the King Street theory of the trials thus: 'Stalin can do no wrong. He will give these men a fair trial, but, as a matter of fact, they would not be put on their trial at all unless it were certain that they were guilty. Therefore, even without knowing the evidence, we know that they are guilty.'<sup>15</sup> Desperate in their concern to keep the other point of view from their dupes, the Stalinist editors of *Left Review* refused to publish an advertisement of *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, being the report of the examination of Trotsky, regarding the statements affecting him made in the trials, carried out by the Commission of Inquiry headed by John Dewey. This was revealed in a letter in the *New Statesman* of November 6 from the publisher, Mr Frederick Warburg. Replying for *Left Review* in the next issue of the *New Statesman*, Randall Swingler explained that 'there is a line at which criticism ends and destructive

<sup>14</sup>Even nearer the bone than the Bubnov case was that of Rose Cohen, a British Communist Party member since 1921, one-time office-manager of the Labour Research Department and member of the Party's colonial bureau, wife of Petrovsky-Bennett, the Comintern's nuncio in Britain. While working in Moscow on the staff of *Moscow Daily News* she was arrested as a spy and never heard of again. An earlier (and unluckier) Edith Bone, her case was never mentioned in the Stalinist press. For details, see *Fight* and *Militant* (London) of June 1938 and subsequently.

<sup>15</sup>William Rust was perhaps the most honest of the British Stalinists in the matter of admitting that there was nothing whatever to go on beyond the confessions. In his review, in the *DW* of March 1, 1937, of the verbatim report of the second trial, he wrote: 'Of the treason and the actual negotiations with the fascist governments there is, of course, no documentary proof . . .' Desperate for 'documentary proof' of some sort, the *DW* of November 10 published a block showing, side by side, the symbol used by a 'Trotskyist' publishing firm in Antwerp—a lightning-flash across a globe—and the Mosleyite 'flash-in-the-pan'. The caption supplied read: 'Similarity with a significance.' (During the second world war the five-pointed star was used as an emblem in various ways by the Soviet, American, Indian and Japanese armies).

<sup>13</sup>Returning to the attack on June 8, Dutt wrote with characteristic scorn of 'liberal intellectual waverers who are incapable of facing the hard realities of the fight against fascism'.



attacks begin, and we regret that this line separates us both from Dr Goebbels and from Leon Trotsky'.<sup>16</sup> This spot of publicity compelled the publication of a review of the book in the *DW* of November 17, in which J. R. Campbell claimed that it gave 'added confirmation to the Moscow trials, which showed Trotsky as a political denegerate, an ally of fascism, a vile maniacal enemy of socialism and peace'. A letter from Charles van Gelderen pointing out some glaring inaccuracies in Campbell's article was refused publication in the *DW*; it appeared, however, in the (London) *Militant* for December.

The political consequences of all this pernicious nonsense were well summed up in an article by H. J. Laski in the *New York Nation* for November 20:

There is no doubt but the mass executions in the Soviet Union in the last two years have greatly injured the prestige of Russia with the rank and file of the Labour Party. They do not understand them, and they feel that those who accept them without discussion are not satisfactory allies. I do not comment on this view; I merely record it. In my judgment, the executions undoubtedly cost the supporters of the United Front something like half a million votes in the Bournemouth Conference.

The year 1938, which opened with the final disappearance of the slogan: 'Workers of all lands, unite!' from the masthead of the *DW*, was to see even further feats of genuine sabotage of workers' unity by the Stalinists under the banner of anti-Trotskyism. Communist speakers refused to appear on the same platform with ILP speakers at 'Aid Spain' meetings. All remnants of shame and caution were cast aside in this truly maniacal campaign. Thus, in *Discussion* of January, Pat Sloan wrote: 'Masses and leaders are united; the people adore "our Stalin". Stalin respects the masses as no other political leader of today respects the masses . . .' In *Controversy* of the same month the same propagandist declared himself unfamiliar with and unready to accept as genuine Stalin's statement of November 6, 1918, on Trotsky's role in the October Revolution (Stalin, *The October Revolution*, published in the Marxist-Leninist Library by Lawrence and Wishart in 1936, p. 30), which had been mentioned by a contributor, and proceeded to withdraw from the battle on the grounds that 'it is impossible to continue a controversy with someone as unscrupulous . . . Trotskyism . . . is incompatible with historical truth'.<sup>17</sup> Dutt, in the *DW* of January 21, quoted

some remarks of Lenin's about Bukharin (also, incidentally, Dzerzhinsky and other 'Left Communists' who died in the odour of Stalinist sanctity) as though they referred to Trotsky. R. Osborn (Reuben Osbert, the psychiatrist) brought out a book, *The Psychology of Reaction* (1938), in which he tried to identify fascism and 'Trotskyism' psychologically ('A knowledge of the psychology of fascist leaders is at the same time a knowledge of the psychology of the Trotskyists') and this was reviewed enthusiastically by John Strachey in *Left News* for February. (Strachey offered as his own view that 'Trotskyists' were recruited mainly from 'insufficiently sensitive', 'inhuman' types).

### THE THIRD TRIAL

Now came the third and last of the great 'public' trials—the Trial of the Twenty-One, bigger and more fantastic than any of the foregoing, with Bukharin, Rykov, Rakovsky and Krestinsky in the leading roles. The British Stalinists (who had made extensive use of the writings of Bukharin and Rykov in the anti-Trotskyist campaign of 1925-28, presenting them as great Marxist thinkers and statesmen) did not flinch.<sup>18</sup> The *DW* leader of March 2 declared: 'Soviet justice will prove itself once again as the unsleeping sword on behalf of the working class and the peoples of the world against their enemies.' Eden having been replaced by Halifax, British agents now found their place in the legend alongside the German ones, and R. Page Arnot, in his dispatches from the Moscow court-room, solemnly explained how Rakovsky had been in British pay since 1924 and Trotsky since 1926. As before—Stalin still retaining confidence in the Franco-Soviet Pact—it appeared that none of the accused had had any contact with France, even in the years when French imperialism was heading the anti-Soviet forces in the world. Even so far back, it seemed, the cunning 'Trotskyists' had foreseen what the pattern of diplomacy would be at the time of their trial.

Furthermore, Trotsky had been a *German* spy since 1921; though why he should wish to link up with an impoverished and defeated State such as Germany was then, or why, indeed, being at the height of his authority in Russia at that time, he should have troubled to make such connexions at all, was never explained. The British Stalinists knew their place better than even as much as to comment on these oddities. (Arnot confined his observations to such safe remarks as: 'Vyshinsky . . . is

<sup>16</sup>J. R. Campbell defended in the *DW* of April 11, 1938, that paper's refusal of advertisements for 'Trotskyite' publications: 'It would be senseless for the *Daily Worker* to give a free advertisement to opposition political tendencies.' With this may be compared Walter Holmes's 'Worker's Notebook' of November 27, 1936, in which he reproduced a letter from Mr Warburg telling how the *Observer* had refused an advertisement for John Langdon-Davies's book *Behind the Spanish Barricades*, and commented: 'We agree with Messrs. Secker and Warburg about the grave character of this censorship of advertisements.'

<sup>17</sup>Sloan came back to the pages of *Controversy* in the March issue to denounce Stalin's words as 'an unscrupulous misquotation by Trotsky', to defend the Communist Party's refusal to allow republication of John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook The World* ('It is a little naïve, I think, to ask communists to popularize an inaccurate account of the internal affairs in Bolshevik leadership in 1917'), and to declare regarding the victims of the trials: 'It is a good thing they have been shot. Further, if there were more of them, then more of them should have been shot.'

<sup>18</sup>J. R. Campbell, closely associated in his time with the Bukharin-Rykov trend, wrote firmly in the *DW* of March 17, after the executions: 'It is enemies of socialism and peace who have perished. We should not mourn.' Lawrence and Wishart brought out a book about the trial—*The Plot Against the Soviet Union and World Peace*—by B. N. Ponomarev, in which this Soviet authority made it plain that one of the chief criteria for people's political reliability was 'their attitude towards . . . the struggle against Trotskyism' (p. 186). (Ponomarev is a member of the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party, working with Suslov in the department concerned with relations with other Communist Parties, and in this capacity recently received, e.g., a delegation from the Australian Communist Party, according to *Pravda* of January 5, 1958.)

always a credit to his calling.')<sup>19</sup> As before, however, certain ill-conditioned elements in the Labour movement gave trouble. The *DW* had to devote a leading article on March 7 to—'Brailsford Again'. ('They did not confess of their own accord. They held out to the last until they realized the Soviet authorities had complete proof of all their crimes, and then admitted only what could not be denied.') The central committee of the party published in the *DW* of March 8 its routine, required declaration kicking the accused ('Every weak, corrupt or ambitious traitor to Socialism'), denouncing 'the fascist agent Trotsky' and expressing 'full confidence' in Yezhov, 'our Bolshevik comrade'. William Wainwright, in *Challenge* of March 10, really went to town on the trial: 'This is more than a trial. It is a fight between the forces of war and the forces of peace.' After the ritual bit of historical untruth (Trotsky 'was not one of the leaders of the rising. Stalin was'), Wainwright went on to allege that the accused wanted to let the fascists into Russia. Just as Franco did in Spain . . . Let us be glad that this trial has taken place, that these men will be sentenced . . . Let us in our youth organizations clean out those . . . who support those whose crime is against the people.'

The *DW* leader of March 11, dealing with the ILP's appeal to Moscow not to execute the convicted men, was entitled: 'Degenerates Appeal for Degenerates'. In *Inprecorr* of March 12, Reg Bishop welcomed the publication in certain bourgeois papers of articles accepting the genuineness of the trial,<sup>20</sup> while at the same time deploring that at the most recent meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party a resolution had been moved condemning it. The resolution was defeated, true; 'but it is a deplorable thing that it should even have been mooted in a responsible Labour gathering'. The *New*

<sup>19</sup>One really might have expected some comment on the statement made through Rakovsky that Trotsky had put the British imperialists up to the Arcos raid in 1927, arranging through 'a certain Meller or Mueller . . . the discovery of specially fabricated provocative documents' (*DW*, March 7). After all, the line of the Communist Party had always been that the Arcos raid had produced nothing to justify the charges made against the Soviet agencies in this country. No mention of Rakovsky's statement at his trial is made in the detailed account of the Arcos Raid in the *History of Anglo-Soviet Relations* by W. P. and Zelda Coates published by Lawrence and Wishart in 1944. Yet in their book *From Tsardom to the Stalin Constitution* (1938) Mr and Mrs Coates had declared their belief in the genuineness of the confessions . . . In his dispatch printed in the *DW* of March 9, Arnot quoted without comment an alleged statement by Trotsky in 1918: 'Stalin—Lenin's closest assistant—must be destroyed'. It would indeed have been hard for Arnot to comment acceptably, for in 1923 he had written for the Labour Research Department a short history of *The Russian Revolution*, in which he showed how far Stalin was from being 'Lenin's closest assistant' in 1918, and who in fact occupied that position! Much was made, by Arnot and others, in connexion with all three trials, of the alleged fact that some of the accused had at one time or another been Mensheviks, but no mention appeared of Vyshinsky's having been a Menshevik down to 1920.

<sup>20</sup>All through the period 1936-38 Walter Holmes had kept up a running fire in his 'Worker's Notebook' in the *DW* of quotations from bourgeois papers directed against the 'Trotskyists'. Perhaps his best bag was one from the *Times of Malaya* which he published on August 7, 1937, reporting the formation of a bloc between Monarchists and 'Trotskyists'.

*Statesman's* attitude had been unsatisfactory, too; but then, that was 'mainly read by intellectuals'. Albert Inkipin, secretary of the World Committee of Friends of the Soviet Union, had a letter in the March 12 issue of the offending weekly, telling the editor that 'all fascists and reactionaries' would applaud his doubts about the trial. (Replying, the editor declared that it was rather the picture of nearly all the founders of the Soviet State being spies and wreckers that was likely to give pleasure to the enemies of the USSR. Besides, if the *New Statesman* had ventured to suggest such a thing, not so very long before, the FSU would certainly have jumped on them. 'What Soviet hero dare we praise today? Who is tomorrow's carrion?')

Harry Pollitt himself, in the *DW* of March 12, told the world that 'the trials in Moscow represent a new triumph in the history of progress', the article being illustrated by a photograph of Stalin with Yezhov, that Old Bolshevik shortly to be dismissed and die in obscurity. Forces from the cultural field also joined in the battle on this occasion. Jack Lindsay put a letter into *Tribune* of March 18 affirming that 'surely the strangest thing about the Moscow trials is the way that critics find them "psychologically" puzzling . . . That is the one thing they are not . . . The cleavage between the men who trusted the powers of the masses, and the men who trusted only their own "cleverness" had to come. And naturally persons with "individualistic" minds can't understand! Naturally they get scared and see themselves in the dock.' So there! Sean O'Casey contributed a lamentable article in the *DW* of March 25 ('The Sword of the Soviet') containing such statements as: 'The opposition to and envy of Lenin and Stalin by Trotsky was evident before even the Revolution of 1917 began.' (O'Casey cannot but have known how little cause Trotsky had to 'envy' Stalin before 1917 and would have been hard put to it to show how such envy made itself 'evident'!).

Rather unkindly, in view of the efforts of Messrs Lindsay and O'Casey, *Russia Today* for April dismissed the victims as 'almost all middle-class intellectuals'. The same issue carried an article by Kath Taylor describing the anger of Russian workers at the revelations of sabotage made in the 'Bukharin' trial. Now they realized, she wrote, why 'they waited hours long in the food queues only to find the food almost unfit to eat when they got it home . . . Now we knew why our wages had been held up, and the reasons for many other things that had made life so hard at the most difficult moments.'<sup>21</sup>

Let us conclude our quotations with one from John Strachey, who wrote in the *DW*, appropriately enough on April 1, that 'no one who really reads the evidence, either of the former trials or of this one, can doubt that these things happened', and assessed the conviction of the wretched victims as 'the greatest anti-fascist victory which we have yet recorded.'

<sup>21</sup>Compare eyewitness Fitzroy Maclean's account of the trial in his *Eastern Approaches* (1949). Zelensky, former chairman of Gosplan, 'confessed' to having put powdered glass and nails into the butter and to having destroyed truckloads of eggs. 'At this startling revelation a grunt of rage and horror rose from the audience. Now they knew what was the matter with the butter, and why there were never any eggs. Deliberate sabotage was somehow a much more satisfactory solution than carelessness or inefficiency. Besides, Zelensky had

# British Empiricism and Natural Science

*John Marshall*

THE peculiar traits of British empiricism, and especially its pronounced dualities, cannot be explained without examining its affinities with the natural science of the seventeenth century.

## CLASSICAL EMPIRICISM AND MECHANICAL SCIENCE

The empirical and mechanical trends in natural science, initiated in England by Gilbert (1544-1603) and Harvey (1578-1657) and more fully cultivated by Hooke (1635-1703), Boyle (1627-91), Newton (1642-1727) and other members of the Royal Society, exerted direct and powerful influence upon the formation of empirical philosophy. Locke (1632-1704) was a friend of Boyle and Newton and regarded his theory of knowledge as a philosophical counterpart to the work of these master-builders of natural science.

Mechanics was the central science of Locke's time, as electronics is today; the conceptions derived from that branch of natural science dominated the philosophizing of the age. Mechanics took this commanding position because the most vital concerns of bourgeois society were tied up with the requirements of water-transport, mining and metallurgy, and military engineering. These decisive branches of social-economic activity put major technical and theoretical problems before the scientific investigators of the early capitalist epoch.

Their inquiries concentrated on the analysis of the displacement of physical masses in space and time. From their researches in physics and astronomy, these pioneer scientists arrived at a particular mechanical-mathematical conception of nature, which was first sketched out by Descartes (1596-1650). According to this conception the world consisted of matter in motion. Matter was divided into tiny particles (corpuscles, atoms) and was essentially inert. Motion was impressed upon bodies by some external force and was exclusively local in character. The different bodies in nature and their diverse properties were generated by variations in the local motions of material substances striking against one another. 'I look upon the phenomena of nature to be caused by the local motion of one part of matter hitting against another,' wrote Boyle.

Neither magnetism, discovered by Hooke, nor gravitation, investigated by Newton, fitted into this mechanical scheme since they appeared to depend upon action at a distance. But these anomalous modes of motion were left to shift for themselves. The simple mechanical action of large and small masses impinging from without upon one another was conceived as the fundamental form of material motion.

Despite the central role played by gravitation, Newton gave a tremendous boost to the mechanical view of nature when he united celestial with terrestrial mechanics. His universal laws of motion sought to explain all material movements from the orbits of the whirling planets to the fall of a stone on earth. These movements were analysed in mechanical terms, quantitatively expressed in mathematical formulas.

The various schools of bourgeois philosophy in England prepared, promoted and shared this mechanical outlook. The materialists, Bacon (1561-1626) and Hobbes (1588-1679), most consistently formulated these theoretical tendencies of natural science. Bacon remarked that 'nature knows only mechanical causation, to the investigation of which all our efforts should be directed'. Hobbes went much further. He tried to squeeze all types of movement, from the operations of nature to social and political actions and the processes of the human mind, into the framework of purely mechanical categories.

The empiricists did not draw such sweeping conclusions from the premises of the mechanical doctrine as the materialists, but they proceeded, up to a point, along similar lines. Locke accepted the mechanical view of nature as the foundation of his theory of knowledge. This entangled him in a knot of theoretical difficulties.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

The first problem the mechanical philosophy presented to Locke was whether true knowledge of the material world was possible and how much of it was available to mankind. It was certainly paradoxical that the capacities of the human mind should have become questioned at a time when men were expanding their positive knowledge of the world at an unprecedented rate. But the theoretical dilemmas arising from the advances of

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admitted that he had been in contact with a sinister foreigner, a politician, a member of the British Labour Party, a certain Mr A. V. Alexander, who had encouraged him in his fell designs. No wonder that he had put ground glass, in the butter. And nails! What a warning, too, to have nothing to do with foreigners, even though they masqueraded as socialists.' Doubtless taking his cue from the

inclusion of A. V. Alexander in the dramatis personae of the 'Bukharin' trial, Arnot went even further in attacking fellow-socialists in his *Labour Monthly* article of May 1938 than he had ventured to do previously: he now wrote of 'H. N. Brailsford and ILP leaders, whose position as dupes of Trotsky or agents of Trotsky is still to be examined.'

the natural sciences and the new mechanical world view were among the compelling reasons why Locke undertook his inquiry into the origins, nature and extent of human knowledge.

Boyle and Newton doubted whether the natural reason of man, shut up in a small portion of the brain, could attain true knowledge of the inner nature of things. Newton, for example, ascribed no cause to gravitation; he was content to accept this cosmic force as a given fact. Thus the most fundamental force then known remained an unexplained property of matter, the effect of some unknown cause.

Newton had sound scientific reasons for refusing to speculate on the cause of gravitation. Gravitation is observed as a property of huge aggregations of matter, the earth, the sun and other celestial bodies. The effects of gravitation could be observed, described and formulated but because of their colossal scale could not readily be harnessed, experimented with or produced by laboratory means.

Chemistry, not to speak of other sciences, was still in its infancy, as were capitalist industry and its experimental techniques. Natural processes for the most part could be observed but not reproduced in laboratories. Under such conditions it appeared plausible that no more could be known about things than certain of their outward manifestations, while their innermost essence must remain inaccessible. What was still unreachable and unproducible in the social practice of the period appeared forever incomprehensible in the empirical theory of knowledge.

How Locke's theory of knowledge reflected the immature development of science is graphically shown in the following quotations:

Another great cause of ignorance is the want of ideas we are capable of . . . Bulk, figure, and motion, we have ideas of. But though we are not without ideas of these primary qualities of bodies in general, yet not knowing what is the particular bulk, figure, and motion, of the greatest part of the bodies of the universe, we are ignorant of the several powers, efficacies, and ways of operation, whereby the effects which we daily see are produced. These are hid from us, in some things by being too remote; and, in others, by being too minute. When we consider the vast distance of the known and visible parts of the world, and the reasons we have to think that what lies within our ken is but a small part of the universe, we shall then discover a huge abyss of ignorance. What are the particular fabrics of the great masses of matter which make up the whole stupendous frame of corporeal beings; how far they are extended; what is their motion, and how continued or communicated; and what influence they have one upon another, are contemplations that, at first glimpse, our thoughts lose themselves in. If we narrow our contemplations, and confine our thoughts to this little canton—I mean this system of our sun, and the grosser masses of matter that visibly move about it, What several sorts of vegetables, animals and intellectual corporeal beings, infinitely different from those of our little spot of earth, may there probably be in the other planets, to the knowledge of which, even of their outward figures and parts, we can no way attain whilst we are confined to this earth; there being no natural means, either by sensation or reflection, to convey their certain ideas into our minds? They are out of the reach of those inlets of all our knowledge; and what sorts of furniture and inhabitants those mansions contain in them, we cannot so much as guess, much less have clear and distinct ideas of them.

Locke's pessimism over the possibility of ever attaining scientific knowledge of the universe or even the planetary system was a concomitant of the technological backwardness of his society. Astronomical photography and spectrum analysis were music of the future. His pessimism extended equally to the atomic world:

If a great, nay far the greatest part of the several ranks of bodies in the universe escape our notice by their remoteness, there are others that are no less concealed from us by their minuteness. These *insensible corpuscles* being the active parts of matter, and the great instruments of nature, on which depend not only all their secondary qualities, but also most of their natural operations, our want of precise distinct ideas of their primary qualities keeps us in an incurable ignorance of what we desire to know about them. I doubt not but if we could discover the figure, size, texture, and motion of the minute constituent parts of any two bodies, we should know without trial several of their operations one upon another, as we do now the properties of a square or a triangle. Did we know the mechanical affections of the particles of rhubarb, hemlock, opium, and a man, as a watchmaker does those of a watch, whereby it performs its operations; and of a file, which by rubbing on them will alter the figure of any of the wheels; we should be able to tell beforehand that rhubarb will purge, hemlock kill, and opium make a man sleep; as well as a watchmaker can, that a little piece of paper laid on the balance will keep the watch from going till it be removed; or that some small part of it being rubbed by a file, the machine would quite lose its motion, and the watch go no more. The dissolving of silver in aqua fortis, and gold in aqua regia, and not vice versa, would be then perhaps no more difficult to know, than it is to a smith to understand why the turning of one key will open a lock, and not the turning of another. But whilst we are destitute of sense acute enough to discover the minute particles of bodies, and to give us ideas of their mechanical affections, we must be content to be ignorant of their properties and ways of operation; nor can we be assured about them any farther than some few trials we make are able to reach. But whether they will succeed again another time, we cannot be certain. This hinders our certain knowledge of universal truths concerning natural bodies: and our reason carries us herein very little beyond particular matter of fact.

We may imagine Locke's surprise, and possibly the adjustments he would have made in his theory of knowledge, could he have witnessed, two centuries later, Mendeleev's successful predictions of both the physical and chemical properties of three elements mankind had not yet discovered. But in Locke's time the 'clearest and most enlarged understandings of thinking men find themselves puzzled and at a loss in every particle of matter'.

Accepting the transitory limitations upon scientific development at that given stage as forever fixed and insuperable, the empiricists made them into the cornerstone of their theory of knowledge (or rather of the limitations upon knowledge). They treated effects as though they gave no clues to the character of their causes and could be considered independently of them. They regarded summaries of observable facts as adequate explanations for phenomena. In such a view it became unnecessary to get at the causal origins and essential constitution of the forces of nature; it was enough to trace out the coordination of their manifestations.

This habit of thought subsequently, in the nineteenth century, became a cardinal doctrine of empiricism under the name of positivism. Positivism substituted descrip-

tions of the observed sequences of phenomena for the discovery of their inner causes and organic connexions.

Locke shared the belief of Boyle and Newton that the intrinsic nature of material reality is cut off from direct human observations and thereby shut off from human knowledge. He pictured the world as composed of independent, self-determining, unchangeable substances. But then he stated that the mind of men could not penetrate to the 'real constitution' of substance. We cannot form any idea of 'the secret abstract nature of substance in general', he said; it was a supposed 'we know not what'.

The presumed unknowability of substance played a key role in Locke's theory; his doctrine of the inescapable imperfections of our knowledge is based upon it. 'We may be convinced,' he wrote, 'that the ideas we attain to by our faculties are very disproportionate to things themselves, when a positive, clear distinct one of substance itself, which is the foundation of all the rest, is concealed from us.' If we cannot have any idea of substance, then it is equally impossible, concluded Locke, for us to know the real constitution of the two great divisions of substance: bodies, which are material substances, or minds, which are spiritual substances.

Locke's theory of substance contains the germ of the scepticism and subjectivism which were lodged like a latent infection within empiricism and ultimately ravaged it. The theoretical source of his error lay in his absolute separation of material substantiality from the qualities of things. Locke could not find any substance in the world, or any clear idea of it in his mind, because he totally detached the 'substratum' of things from the qualities they exhibited. However, substance does not have any concrete existence or determinate content apart from its qualities; without these it is nothing but an empty abstraction. Fruit does not exist except in the specific material forms of apples, pears, peaches etc. Locke's quest for 'a pure substance' in general, which is 'the same everywhere', was bound to be as vain and illusory as the search for fruit without any definite characteristics of any species.

But Locke's difficulties did not end with the contradictory conception of substances which existed but whose real constitution was inaccessible and unknowable. The mechanical doctrine landed Locke into similar difficulties in respect to the qualities of things as a reliable source of knowledge about the world around us. Like Galileo, Descartes, Boyle and Newton, Locke divided qualities into two opposing groups: primary ones like 'solidity, extension, motion and rest and number' and secondary ones like colours, smells, tastes, sounds.

The first actually inhered in bodies; they were objective and permanent aspects of things which provided the basis for a dependable knowledge of nature. The secondary qualities were the effects of the powers of the primary ones upon ourselves. They were subjective, fluctuating, confusing ideas which hung like a deceitful shimmering curtain between our minds and the external world.

Locke did not have valid *empirical* grounds for asserting the properties of things and the contents of sensation into two such opposing groups, one with objective existence and the other essentially subjective.

Taken strictly from the standpoint of sensory experience, which is the supreme standard for empiricism, both kinds of qualities stood upon the same level. Solidity, for example, which Locke classified as a primary quality, is as much an aspect of things which depends upon the impression of the senses as are colour and sound, which he regarded as secondary and subjective. The solidity of metals is relative; under certain conditions their constitution is porous and penetrable. X-rays will pass through so solid an object as a crystal, showing in the process the lattice structure of crystals.

As a matter of fact, Locke was impelled to draw so sharp a distinction between the two types of qualities, not for empirical reasons, but because the mechanical system, which was the model of scientific knowledge for him, demanded it. Mechanics had singled out these particular features of the world for special status, not because they were primary in sense-experience, but rather because they were foremost in the solution of the problems of mechanics and were susceptible of being handled mathematically and formulated in purely mechanical terms. The physical qualities of length, mass and time that could be measured by a rule, weighed on a scale and timed with a watch were the key factors in the mechanical conception of nature upon which the science and industry of that age hinged.

The entire weight of the empirical theory of natural knowledge rested upon the primary qualities. These were like suspension cables which were anchored at one end in an unknowable substratum of substance and connected at the other end with purely subjective secondary qualities. These provided extremely insecure support for a theory of knowledge.

If the primary qualities alone give authentic information about objective existences, but these cannot divulge their inner nature to us, then how much can we actually know about the world around us? The rigid and untenable distinctions which Locke maintained between known qualities and unknowable substances, and between objectively existing primary qualities and purely subjective secondary ones, considerably cut down the extent of human knowledge. Locke declared that our knowledge of the world was mediocre, enough for our everyday affairs but not very comprehensive or profound. Mankind was condemned to 'incurable ignorance'.

With the sturdy common sense of the complacent bourgeois, Locke urged his fellow-men to be satisfied with enough knowledge to get along in the ordinary business of life.

All our business lies at home. Why should we think ourselves hardly dealt with that we are not furnished with compass and plummet to sail and fathom that restless, un-navigable ocean of the universal matter, motion and space? There are no commodities to be brought from thence serviceable to our use, nor that will better our condition.

## SUPERFICIAL APPEARANCE AND MATERIAL REALITY

Mechanical science was an immense step forward for human thought. All further advances in natural science have had to build upon this achievement of bourgeois society in its rise. But the view of nature it presented was not an unconditional triumph for empiricism.

Unlike the science of ancient and medieval times, the new science of nature was based upon the verification of facts by experiments. Salvirati, a character speaking for Galileo himself (1564-1642) in the *Dialogues Concerning the Two Principal Systems of the World*, says 'that one sole experiment, or conclusive demonstration, produced on the contrary part, sufficeth to batter to the ground . . . a thousand . . . probable arguments'. This demand that theoretical conclusions submit to the test of observation and experiment, this appeal to the given facts as the court of last resort in science was empiricism's great source of strength.

On the other hand, the methods and conclusions of the new science conflicted with familiar facts of everyday experience. According to Copernicus the daily rotation of the celestial sphere about the earth was only an appearance; the earth, like the other planets, really revolved around the sun in a circular orbit. The apparent movement of the earth, which contradicted this causal relation, was explained by the complete rotation of the earth about its axis every twenty-four hours.

Mechanics as well as astronomy developed in defiance of the direct testimony of the senses and demonstrated that phenomenal appearances often invert the essential reality. Aristotelian physics taught that all heavy bodies had a 'natural' tendency to fall toward the centre of the universe, which was identified by medieval thinkers with the centre of the earth. All other motion was 'unnatural' because it required a constant counter-force to produce and sustain it.

Galileo, however, asserted that a body remains at rest or continues to move in a straight line unless some outside force intervenes to change its course. This principle of inertia was not so close to familiar experience as Aristotle's theory of motion; we have no experience of bodies moving with absolutely constant speed or of things being permanently at rest or of any process going on forever. But experiment proved that Galileo's principle was far more in accord with the real movements of things and could explain them far better.

It is not obvious to direct inspection that the blood flows in a continuous one-way circuit of the body. Vesalius (1514-64) and earlier anatomists supposed that the blood ebbed and flowed forwards and backwards in the veins and arteries. Harvey discovered the real action of the human blood system by assuming that it functioned like a hydraulic system. He regarded the heart as a pump, the veins and arteries as pipes, the valves as mechanical valves and the blood itself as a fluid like any other.

In these fields of science superficial phenomena were set aside as misleading and reinterpreted as contradictory manifestations of a hidden network of causal relations which produced them. The machinery of nature operated behind the scenes to generate the effects we observe, just as clockwork moves the hands on the face of the clock. The task of science was to probe through the outward expressions which first impressed themselves upon our senses to the more remote and hidden materially active causes in the background.

The significant rational kernel in the distinction between the primary and secondary qualities adopted by Locke was the recognition that some properties and relations of things are more decisive in determining

their natures than others, that reality consists of endless aspects of existences, and that science progresses by uncovering ever deeper layers of determining factors.

The new mechanical method did provide a deeper insight into the operations of nature and a greater control over them. But this extension of the knowledge of nature also produced new problems for the theory of knowledge. What were the relations between these underlying realities revealed by mechanics and formulated in mathematical terms and our subjective impressions of them? Which was the reality and which the appearance, the world of scientific objects and relations or the world of sights, sounds, colours, of our sense-experience?

Neither the mechanical scientists nor the empirical philosophers succeeded in finding a satisfactory solution to this perplexing problem of reconciling the outward show of events with the driving forces behind them. Their answers swung from one extreme to the other. The more rationalist-minded tended to exalt the principles and laws of science as the expression of a super-sensible reality while the concrete sensory impressions were discounted as mere appearances. The empirically inclined viewed the generalized concepts as mere abstractions compared to the given evidence of the senses.

The first thinkers who undertook to examine the functioning of the capitalist economy encountered parallel difficulties in explaining the connexions between appearance and reality. In England these were sometimes one and the same people since Locke, Berkeley (1685-1753) and Hume (1711-76) concerned themselves with analysing money, commodities and prices as well as qualities, ideas and knowledge.

The apparent movements and relations of capitalism are very different from their real nature. To the superficial observer it looks as though the worker receives payment in full for his work from the employer. If this were really so, if there were an equal exchange of wages for labour and its products, then what would be the incentive for capitalist production and where would the profits of the capitalist come from?

The monetary transaction between the employer and the wage-worker disguises the real relation between them. What appears on the surface as a relation of equality (the worker sells his 'labour' for a price which he agrees with the employer—if he does not like the price the employer offers, he need not work for that employer) is *in reality* a relation of inequality. The task of scientific investigation is to go from the phenomenal, superficial forms in which the relations directly present themselves, to the hidden *causes* which constitute their inner reality.

To those who stick to the semblances of economic relations, these internal workings of the capitalist system, discovered by political economy, seem grey, unsubstantial and irrelevant mere abstractions. They are indeed abstractions for the very reason that they disregard the accidental, accessory circumstances and select what is *essential* in determining the phenomena under investigation. But abstractions are the tools for unlocking the workings of the real, 'practical' world. Abstractions are generalized formulations of the more profound realities which lurk in the background and



produce the immediately experienced but contradictory appearances of things.

The peculiar nature of capitalist social relations influenced the conceptions of the world evolved by the mechanical empiricists. Both mechanical science and bourgeois economics approached the respective spheres of existence they studied in order to penetrate beneath their phenomenal aspects and expose the concealed causal forces which generated them. Mechanical science disclosed certain important mainsprings of material movement in the solar system, in the actions of masses on earth, in the physiology of the human body. Classical political economy discovered some of the secrets of money as the depository of value and ultimately found the substance of value itself in labour. But their conceptions of the world of nature, and of the world of commodities, were inescapably narrow. They could not pass beyond the historical limitations of the society in which they lived.

### HOW BOURGEOIS THOUGHT VIEWS OBJECTIVE REALITY

Capitalism in its rise fostered a special type of mentality which had contrary characteristics. On the one hand, the creative bourgeois thinkers proved far more capable than their medieval and ancient predecessors of developing and employing abstract thought to probe through the phenomenal world to its underlying general structure. On the other hand, their thinking was dominated by the fetishistic worship of abstract quantity as the primordial feature and cardinal category of material reality.

These two characteristics are conspicuous in Locke's analysis of the external world into three aspects: unknowable material substances, objectively existing primary qualities which are exclusively quantitative in character, and subjective secondary qualities. How could the empiricist Locke have adopted a view of the world in which the realities of things were so utterly divorced from their everyday appearances?

Locke lived in the atmosphere of a thriving mercantile capitalism. The merchant capitalist had to look behind the use-value of commodities to what was essential in them—their exchange value. He saw the latter first of all as quantitative. Commodities do not appear on the market in their natural state as things with diverse specific and useful qualities. They are appraised, bought and sold only as so many distinct amounts of homogeneous and abstract value. This social property of value is exclusively quantitative; it embodies so much expended labour time. Value is made palpable through money, which functions as the means by which its quantity can be measured and compared.

This type of relation not only dominates the economic calculations of the capitalist system but also the higher intellectual activities of its philosophical representatives. The whole world comes to be conceived in similar terms of abstract quantities. Just as the objects of social existence acquire reality in the market only in their quality of abstract value expressed in definite sums of money, so the objects of nature seem to have reality only in their purely mechanical properties expressed as definite magnitudes in mathematical formulas.

To make this point clearer, imagine a department store stocked with goods from all over the world. This display of material wealth, however, exists as such only for the consumer. All these articles of use and enjoyment have a very different meaning to the owner of the establishment. To his capitalist eyes their aesthetic and useful characteristics are negligible. The objects count only as so many amounts of money-capital. Their value, expressed by their price tags, is their sole reality.

In a similar way all the rich variety of material forms, forces, properties and relations impress the mechanist, not in their immediate natural guises, but as so many quantities of identical units of such primary qualities as mass, motion, weight etc. In this conception of the world homogeneous quantity rules like an absolute monarch at the expense of the manifold diverse qualities of things.

The real things which exist in both nature and society are stripped of all those concrete qualities which do not fit into the fundamental relations and categories of the mechanical or the capitalist systems. These residual qualities are set aside as secondary, superfluous, merely subjective. Nature is deprived of its infinite abundance and diversity of real determinations, just as society is robbed of its concrete wealth.

This emphasis upon the quantitative aspect of things was necessary for the advancement of science. Today it is a commonplace that the progress of scientific knowledge depends upon increasing accuracy of measurement. But in Locke's time this procedure was a revolutionary novelty with immense untapped consequences for theory and practice. The social sciences as well as the main branches of physical science received a powerful impetus from the application of precise measurement by quantitative methods. This same period witnessed the compilation of the first indices in political economy and the first essays in the tabulation of vital statistics.

Thus science, bourgeois economy and the empirical philosophy shared a common preoccupation with the measurable properties of things. The coldness and greyness of bourgeois science has often been unfavourably contrasted with the warm, multi-coloured world of medieval religion. This inhumanity is not inherent in science but was a reflection of its bourgeois form of development and of the emotional attitude that capitalism inspired in its adherents. At the same time it must be recognized that a certain ruthlessness and callousness were required for the violent break they had to make from feudalism and scholasticism.

The same tools of thought which the early bourgeois scientists devised to probe into nature were used to inquire into the operations of capitalism. Although the early economists undertook their investigations the better to build a wealthy society, that is, to enrich the bourgeoisie, the social sciences benefited.

What we now call 'classical' political economy arose. It discovered that value is not only quantitative but qualitative—and that its peculiar quality comes from labour. This discovery coincided with a higher stage in capitalist development: the organization of workshops by the merchant capitalists and their conversion into industrial capitalists.

Locke was the spokesman and herald of this development in England. As Marx noted, John Locke 'was an



advocate of the new bourgeoisie in all forms, the manufacturers against the working class and paupers, the commercial class against the old-fashioned usurers, the financial aristocracy against the state debtors, and . . . went so far as to prove in his own work that the bourgeois reason is the normal human reason'.<sup>1</sup>

The bourgeois bent of Locke's mentality accounted

<sup>1</sup>K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1904), p. 93.

not only for the fundamental features of his inquiries but also for their limitations. In both the philosophical system of empiricism and the economic system of capitalism the inner essence of things remained enigmatic to the bourgeois mind. Substance in the mechanical system was as mysterious as the essence of value and the secrets of its monetary form were to the capitalist theoreticians. However much Locke strove to introduce rationality into his conceptions of nature and society, his inquiring mind, great as it was, had to retire baffled before these impenetrable sanctuaries of the bourgeois epoch.

## Communications

### *Dogmatism and Revisionism*

IN a recent issue (no. 18, December 1957) *Kommunist*, the theoretical journal of the Soviet Communist Party, publishes an article by D. Shevlyagin under the title: 'The Struggle of the Fraternal Communist Parties against Modern Opportunism.'

The author says the Communist Parties have had to fight on two fronts—against dogmatism and against revisionism. Dogmatism is dismissed in one paragraph. The author says it 'fetters the creative activity of the party, dooms it to isolation from the masses'. Together with sectarianism it 'impedes the political activity of the party, leads to its political impotence'.

Shevlyagin then gets down to the real purpose of his article, which turns out to be to unmask 'revisionism' wherever it rears its ugly head. He begins with a quotation from Mae Tse-tung: 'Revisionism or Right opportunism is a bourgeois ideological tendency; it is much more dangerous than dogmatism.' We are treated to a review of 'revisionism' on a world-wide scale: Berens in East Germany, the Petöfi circle in Hungary, the Po Prostu writers in Poland, Pinto in Brazil, the 'Right-wing minority' of the British Communist Party's commission on inner-party democracy (Peter Cadogan, Christopher Hill, Malcolm MacEwen) and so on. It appears that the characteristic features of revisionism are:

- (1) opposition to the dictatorship of the proletariat;
- (2) support for the theory of a peaceful transition to socialism;
- (3) opposition to democratic centralism.

The revisionists, we are told, want to re-examine the basic concepts of Marxism-Leninism.

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the typical muddle-headedness of the Moscow theoreticians, who regard reduction to 'political impotence' by dogmatism as less serious than disruption by revisionism. Dogmatism, it appears, is a harmful communist tendency, but revisionism is a bourgeois tendency and consequently more dangerous!

However, it is clear from the article that the author has no understanding of what is meant by the term 'revisionism', which for the Stalinists has degenerated into a term of abuse to be hurled against those who do not whole-heartedly accept Moscow's views. It is therefore useful to attempt to define this term more exactly from a Marxist point of view.

Marxism is characterized by a scientific outlook and approach. A Marxist examines objectively the social situation

in which he finds himself, with prejudice as to the outcome of his investigations, and from the results he builds up a theory to explain the behaviour of that society at a particular stage of its development. In this he follows closely the method of the scientist who is seeking a theory to explain processes observed in the physical world. From this scientific standpoint, however, the Marxist can regard a theory as valid only so long as it correctly predicts the behaviour of a given social system. If it ceases to do this, the theory has to be modified or even discarded. Lenin, for example, took such a step when he modified and developed Marxist theory to account for the phenomena of imperialism.

It follows that it is not necessarily revisionist to question Marxist theory, as the Soviet theorists would have us believe. On the contrary it is only by constantly questioning and scrutinizing our theories that they develop and give a more and more accurate representation of reality. In Marxism there is no room for 'eternal truths' any more than in any other science. The feature which is, however, basic to Marxism and inseparable from it is its scientific method. Anyone who rejects the scientific method and refuses to recognize experience as the final arbiter of the validity of a given theory is of necessity a revisionist.

A necessary corollary of this is that dogmatism is itself a revisionist tendency since it places certain theories above the test of reality.

Theory is of course the guide to practice. Consequently no tactic is above scrutiny any more than any theory is.

Regardless of whether or not we accept the charges levelled by the Soviet theorists against certain individuals and groups as just, guilt in relation to any of them is not proof of revisionist tendencies. They do not prove whether an individual accepts or rejects the scientific method. To advance such charges is yet another result of the dogmatist tendencies of the Soviet leaders.

Chandlers Ford (Hants)

Noel Anderson

### *Persuasion, not Lecturing*

THE section on the continued existence of the Communist Party in the editorial of the January-February issue of *LABOUR REVIEW* raises certain issues of tactics that in my view should not be left in the form proposed in the editorial.

It is correct that the continued existence of the Communist

Party prevents its members from joining the Labour Party and fighting with the Left wing for the ending of the present Right-wing domination of that party. It is also true that the King Street 'leaders' can never provide Marxist leadership because this would necessitate repudiating their own past. All the editorial's analysis of the present role of the Communist Party is a scientific and carefully considered statement of fact. I also feel that it is correct to be brutally frank when exposing the role of the Communist Party to its rank and file.

But is it so Marxist to call on members of the Communist Party to 'demand and fight for the disbanding of the Communist Party and the entry of its members into the Labour Party'? For years the Stalinists fed people like myself with nonsense about the 'Trotskyists' being 'destructive' and pursuing a policy that would destroy the Communist Party. Now, in black and white, we give the Palme Dutts what they want—the written word. They are not concerned with the rights and wrongs of the present existence of the Communist Party. They are very much concerned with further 'proof' that those who oppose King Street are out to destroy, and not to build socialism. If the Communist Party leaders have enough acumen they will make a direct quote of this editorial to bolster and preserve their tottering edifice for a while longer.

We say: 'There are still inside the Communist Party a considerable number of workers who have yet to see that their party's industrial policy is not based on winning victories and exposing the Right wing in industrial and political struggles.' Do we really expect more than a handful of these very sincere people, these hard-working men and women, to 'fight' for the disbanding of their own party at this stage in their political development?

If, instead of lecturing (one gets so sick of this very thing inside the Stalinist apparatus) the 'serious militants' in the Communist Party with our pearls of wisdom directed at them from our pinnacle and advising them to disband that party,

we continue to advise our own adherents to **persuade serious militants** in the Communist Party to get out and join the Labour Party 'so that its members can strengthen the work of those who are building a Marxist movement in the trade unions and the Labour Party' we shall do a job worthy of communists.

Leave the job of destruction of the Communist Party to the Gollans and Rothsteins. Let their guilt be proven by the thousands of socialists that they have driven out and smeared through their diseased 'policy'. Against this viewpoint may be the objection that the party still claims over 25,000 members and can still do a lot of damage. Possibly. But we must examine the nature of the process that has decimated the Communist Party, taken its best thinkers and robbed the Daily Worker of its most talented journalists. Peter Fryer did not leave the Communist Party because he wanted to do so. He was expelled because among other things he attacked the Stalinists over Hungary. It is the job of LABOUR REVIEW to find a Marxist alternative for the Peter Fryers (and the Tony Guthries). Let us keep it that way. In our historical circumstances only one person in a hundred has the psychological make-up to stay in a party in order to dissolve it. Let us think again—in order that more and more members of the Communist Party will be alienated from the Stalinists and 'strengthen the work of those who are building a Marxist movement'. The alternative, suggested in the editorial, will alienate from us many Communist Party members already well on the way to supporting LABOUR REVIEW, as it has already done my wife.

May I conclude by congratulating LABOUR REVIEW on its high standards and especially for its role in spreading the conception of undogmatic, unfettered Marxism. Eventually this journal will drive Labour Monthly, together with the rest of the Communist Party periodicals, where they belong—into the dustbin.

Tony Guthrie

## Documents

### Pat Dooley's Letters

The obituary of Pat Dooley in the Daily Worker omitted any reference to his criticisms of Stalinism, which were based on first-hand experience of the Cominform apparatus in eastern Europe. These criticisms were embodied in letters, here printed for the first time, which were duplicated, circulated and passed from hand to hand by Communist Party critics. They are an important part of the history of the 1956-57 Opposition in the British Communist Party.

December 12, 1956.

DEAR MRS B—,

It was kind of you to remember me and to write. Forgive the delay in replying. I have been ill—and also I wanted to contact Peter Fryer and Basil Davidson, both of whom were in Budapest, before replying.

Yes, on my return from Roumania and from Prague in 1953, I told Pollitt, Campbell and Gollan all that is now publicly being said. (I didn't see Pollitt on my final return from Prague—I returned after a heart attack in Prague—and with a broken one.)

Pollitt didn't want to know—treated me as a naïve boy who

has just heard the facts of life—and smiled at me—told me to keep quiet, don't talk 'while at home' and go back and don't get mixed up in anything!

Gollan said almost the same, word for word. Campbell, too, although Campbell is, in my opinion, still the best of the bunch of them, he **knows** what's going on: knew before I did, but he thinks the larger issues should predominate. (This despite his present Right-wing stand).

You may be shocked to hear me say I despise Harry Pollitt—not for his refusal to face facts before the Hungarian tragedy but because of his failure to face up to the implications of the Twentieth Congress and his shameful silence throughout the Hungarian-Polish business. Search the Daily Worker since the Polish business began and you'll search in vain for a message with which to be guided. Even old Gallacher, bruised by time, spoke his piece as soon as he returned from China.

I am glad your branch is 'discussing' things. Any guidance I can offer may be dismissed as the ravings of one of the 'dispossessed' or as coloured by prejudice. But the bodies of the Hungarian people will long remind us all of the 'mistakes' of those that shot them down—thus completing the temporary destruction of the work which we all have tried to do for so many years.

Nothing, of course, will destroy socialism—or indeed communism. But I venture to suggest that we must start again—on new and more humane foundations, with a livelier critical faculty and with new leaders and perhaps new models!

I have just read Peter Fryer's book.<sup>1</sup> He has been kind enough to refer (obliquely) to me on page 10, and to quote my letter on page 92. I support his views—even to going outside the party (after the idiotic suppression of *The Reasoner*) to make himself heard. I too should have done it—even though it was before the Twentieth Congress.

If you read Fryer's book, as you should, forgive his occasional intemperate language, written white-hot to denounce an evil he saw for the first time—and remember **his conclusions are not invalidated by the methods he chose to get a hearing.**

Basil Davidson, diplomatic correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, whom I have known for some years as a really warm supporter of socialism, publishes his pamphlet (via the Union of Democratic Control) today.<sup>2</sup> I haven't yet seen this, but judging from his talks with me he arrives at much the same conclusions as Fryer.

I repeat, thank you for writing; it is nice to know one's opinions are still wished to be heard. But you doubtless know that I left the party on my return from Prague and therefore your branch may pay scant attention to an 'enemy of the people', as we such are erroneously called.

December 14, 1956

DEAR MRS B—

Thank you for your letter. Yes, I can give examples of fear, anti-Semitism, denial of trade union practices and social inequalities.

**FEAR:** Almost everyone walked and worked in fear. Only the most courageous, and after they got to know they could trust you in 'Czecho', would speak of political matters—and then to deplore the way the system was being worked.

There was a spy in every office and none knew who it was until experience eliminated the more courageous and left the finger of suspicion pointing in the right direction.

One thing engendering fear was the refusal of the political management to believe any 'mistakes' could be made. 'Mistakes' were always said to be counter-revolutionary acts with the result that although the country starved for cadres, every capable communist who could (read dare) leave a responsible position, fled from it (some of my friends into coal-mines or to the factory floor where no large responsibility was expected of them).

My colleague on the journal I edited, *Czechoslovak Life*, was threatened with arrest because of a mistaken caption under a picture. Incidentally, this journal, circulating throughout the world, was allowed to **send only 160 copies to Russia**, for Czech embassies etc., because the pictures indicated a higher standard of life than in Russia: this at a time when **millions** of copies of Russian translations of everything were being produced in Prague in a special institution, at Czech expense.

Every worker has a work dossier, kept by the firm's political cadre. The worker never sees it. Every spy or enemy can report him: down it goes into the report—and if the

worker is allowed to leave the next firm's political cadre will not take him on without an O.K. and the dossier from his last job.

Do you wonder that communists and secret police were the first to be strung up in Budapest as soon as the opportunity presented itself or that every bureau holding documents was the target for arson?

**ANTI-SEMITISM** was rife in Czecho—unloosed by the Minister of Information, Kopecky, who is still in charge.<sup>3</sup> No attempt was made to differentiate between anti-Semitism and Zionism in political propaganda.

It was even shared by ex-trade union leader Zápotocky,<sup>4</sup> then premier, now president since the death of the weak, vacillating Gottwald, who 'died' in Moscow after Stalin's funeral.

On New Year's Eve, 1953, twenty-seven Jews in my building (the equivalent of Reuter's building in Fleet Street) were sacked because of their birth. They were not even allowed to come back to the office and clear their desks. One was my secretary (her Christmas letter to me arrived with your second one).

They walked the streets for months trying for work, fighting against the telling dossier—and these were brave, honest communists who had the indelible numbers printed on their arms by the fascists in concentration camps.

'What's the difference, now?' they asked me bitterly. Such as these led those workers who rose in Budapest—and had I been there I would have been with them!

**TRADE UNION** membership was obligatory, and attendance at meetings—but such was the farce they were, so far as righting injustices or even getting them aired, that there was an understanding: no questions, no discussion at any meeting. Get it over with as soon as possible.

Yet such was the extent of the working-class democracy façade that hundreds of well-meaning visitors (including me) have been taken in by seeing only the façade and not the reality. Workers rock with laughter at the simplicity of 'visitors' who see and believe in the 'façade'.

Different flats, different wages (totally disproportionate), different food shops and rations (as a diplomatic journalist I had diplomatic rations and access to special shops from which I fed half the office!), different health resort hotels: all these mount to gross inequalities enjoyed by higher party officials at the expense of the rank and file (see Fryer's book and Anna Kethly's statement to Labour MPs this week).

The list of crimes is so great that I too could write a book—which I ought to have done, because only when the British workers **know** these things can they understand Poland and Hungary (and the long-suffering Russian people) and also prevent our bureaucratic little Stalins here from exercising similar excesses. What chance would Fryer have of liberty had Mahon, Pollitt and E. Burns been vested with **State** power?

I must close or the post will not be caught.

<sup>1</sup>*Hungarian Tragedy* (1956).

<sup>2</sup>*What Really Happened in Hungary?* (1956).

<sup>3</sup>Václav Kopecky is now vice premier.

<sup>4</sup>Antonin Zápotocky, elected president March 21, 1953, died November 13, 1957.

# Book Reviews

## *Society and the Aged*

**The Family Life of Old People.** An Inquiry in East London, by Peter Townsend. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 30s.)

SOCIOLOGY was a long time getting established in this country; it sounded like socialism, and the people who talked about it seemed to be always somewhere on the Left. Born as it was in the period of greatest success of private enterprise, of laissez-faire individualism, sociology's stress on institutions and on 'the group' rather than on the individual and his interests was enough to delay its breakthrough for many years.

The development of sociology and anthropology from their warfare with theology has not yet been completed, and in Britain the present state of the social sciences reflects very clearly an adaptation to the particular character and mode of development of British imperialism. The author of this book correctly acknowledges his debt to two traditions in the 'social sciences': 'I have learned most about the discipline of research from Professor Titmuss and his predecessors in the best tradition of English social empiricism . . . but also from the writings and teachings of British social anthropologists.' Here Townsend summarizes the end-result of the process of adaptation of his subject to its social environment.

One needs more than the space of this article to fill out the process by which British empiricism (muddling-through etc.) found its haven of rest in the Fabian Society. These Fabians were representatives of the most limited interests of 'the most bourgeois working class in the world'. Gradualism and reformism, adaptation to that national capitalism which depends on a privileged position in world markets and the possession of a vast empire; these were the nursery not only of MacDonal, Attlee and Gaitskell, but also of Rowntree, the Webbs, the London School of Economics, and now Titmuss, Crossman, the Labour Party pension scheme, and the Institute of Community Studies, of which 'The Family Life of Old People' is the second product. In this tradition of research particular problems are surveyed intensively with a view to making detailed reforms in the area of the limited problem—social insurance and the poverty line, pensions, housing development, educational selection etc.

Social anthropology, properly the comparative and historical study of societies at the earlier levels of economic development, has similarly adapted itself to British imperialism, but in this case much more directly. Where the old anthropology, both materialist and idealist, stressed development and change, the modern school, doing most of its research in colonial areas, insists and for many years there must be an empirical basis of limited field-studies of the way particular societies work. Then perhaps we can draw some 'generalizations'. Of course these will normally be of the kind 'in no society does the husband get on well with the mother-in-law' or 'interaction tends to create solidarity'. Social anthropology in Britain to-day is little more than a guide to district officers in the colonies. Of course a large amount of material has been collected by the 'monographic method' and awaits historical and theoretical analysis on a materialist basis.

With these two sources of inspiration, Townsend approaches the agonizing problem of old age in capitalist Britain. Both the virtues and the limitations of the book can be traced to the author's method. He has gathered together many examples of situations and attitudes which working-class readers will find very familiar. So far as is possible this information is subjected to statistical analysis as a test (sometimes adequate

but sometimes, as the author honestly admits, necessarily crude) of its typicality. Working-class readers will recognize the examples as authentic without referring to the tables, which in any case are admirably simple and ought not to put anybody off. As in the work of Booth, Rowntree and others, we have a convincing and often very depressing picture of the problems of old people, and no deliberate attempts are made to run away from this.

But old age is not a problem in itself, and the 'extended families' of the old community studied in Bethnal Green do not constitute a society, and are thus not a proper framework of explanation of the social problems of old age. The tendency of British 'empiricist' social research to concentrate on particular 'problems', and of Townsend's teachers in social anthropology to take 'the community' as the unit of study are at the root of the trouble.

While it is certain that for old people family ties are of much greater importance than for those of working age, and that in a long-established community like Bethnal Green local family ties over three or more generations tend to persist more easily than in normal urban conditions, Townsend's stress on the family and 'kinship' seems to be something of a residue from social anthropology's concern with tribal societies. In a society based on a backward subsistence economy, very often 'the community' was identical with 'the society' because of the smallness of scale dictated by the level of production and the size and density of population. Thus 'community-study' was a relatively useful approach. Secondly, in such societies, in the absence of private property, division of labour or class differences, kinship structure was the framework of social organization and contained the principles on which all groupings were based. The individual in such a society depended above all on integration in his kin-group, and was scarcely differentiated from it. His daily experiences, in work, ritual, love, were more or less coterminous with the traditional culture on which his society depended. Here then a description of family and kinship structure was the key to the understanding of the society and of the individual's place in it. But our own society is structurally completely different; the interaction of factors (capital and labour, class and class etc.) which determines its structure and development takes place at a level much higher than that of the experience of any individual worker or employer. The understanding of this society requires a study of political economy and the history of classes and institutions. Marx founded the scientific method of study of society. Central to his approach were (a) the understanding of the class relationships based on exploitation of a definite historical type, as against individual motives and interests, and (b) the need to study a society in its whole development, since no one part of a society developed independently for very long, and the character of the parts, or of particular problems, was to be understood only as part of the whole.

It is just these two basic propositions of social science which are ignored by the empiricists, who borrow mechanically from Marx his rigorous respect for the facts, and even his stress on the economic basis of social development. As in dry theory, so in politics: reformism bases itself on just this empiricism, revolutionary working class politics on the class struggle and dialectics.

Just as social anthropology is the theoretical counterpart of 'indirect rule' in the colonies, so sociological 'empiricism' is the counterpart of bureaucratic reformism. It provides factual material for the smoother and quicker handling of administrative problems within the basic framework of capitalism, of

the status quo. What are Townsend's conclusions, for example? Policies must be devised to make families capable of succouring their aged relatives, because it is old people cut off from their families who are the main recipients of State assistance. In order not to make this more difficult, other areas of public policy, such as housing, must not be at cross purposes with family integration; the ideal arrangement is nearness to aging relatives, but with complete domestic independence. These suggestions are based on field-work conclusions about 'the social anatomy of successful family life'. One is tempted to ask: may it not be that the social system we have is capable of providing only a certain number of families with even what Peter Townsend calls 'successful family life', so that trying to spread this condition is trying to cover up the spots rather than purify the blood? At least the investigator should consider this possibility and tell us why he regards it as outside his scope.

Empiricism, the concern with limited problems and areas, while superficially it looks like a 'straightforward' facing up to the facts, is in fact an escape from the real problems, those rooted in the very nature of capitalist society.

It is not these real problems which are tackled in this book, and one admits that it is perhaps unfair to criticize a book for something that it is not about. For example, at the beginning of his tenth chapter, Townsend is concerned to answer an objection to his foregoing analysis. Perhaps he has exaggerated the importance of family life to old people in Bethnal Green? He sets about defending himself by showing that in fact contacts with non-relatives and extra-familial activities are less numerous and less intense than those with relatives. Very well, but the author's first question should have been a bigger one. Has he exaggerated the importance of 'the family' old working-class people? What the individual in his daily life in a society like ours finds important to him is by no means the same thing as what the sociologist may find to be in fact most important in determining the character and development of the society and the class of which that individual is a part. A simple point, but one which is neglected at great risk. Incidentally, it is because of the failure to appreciate this distinction that sociologists are so easily laid open to the charge that they only tell people what their own eyes have told them already.

The best section of the book, the one which exemplifies most clearly the points just made, and the one which provides the best and most convincing factual evidence, is that concerned with 'retirement' and its problems for old workers. Here the class differences are inescapable; for the business or professional man, retirement is normally something to look forward to, a time to indulge his pleasures. Townsend states categorically that for the worker retirement is a tragedy in the full sense of the word. 'Their life became a rather desperate search for pastimes or a gloomy contemplation of their own helplessness, which, at its worst, was little better than waiting to die'. The old friendships prove impossible to maintain or re-create, the solidarity of feeling based on work is lost, the independence of a job and a wage has vanished at one blow. As one man said to Townsend: 'You remember the song "When you're down, the world don't want you"?' Another rejected and oppressed group, the Southern Negroes, had its equivalent: 'Nobody knows you when you're down and out'.

In these later chapters the real theme is the oppression of the working class; exploitation is so thorough that it chokes a man off at 65 without 'savings, without developed personality or tastes, without even the means of a decent independent existence; yet the same exploiting society tells him all his life of the virtue of independence, pride and 'success'. It is fashionable to dismiss with a smile Marx's idea of 'alienation', but is not the whole phenomenon personified in our old workers? Working men in our society produce the means of high culture and civilization, of education, of contact with the

highest achievements of the human hand and the human spirit. But the way to these is barred for the real producers, who are another 'cost of production' to be thrown on the scrap-heap when they become worn out, inefficient, 'depreciated'. This is alienation: the gap between what a man produces, what he puts into life, and what he gets out of it, thanks to the restrictions of the property relations of capitalism. Let Townsend's evidence speak again; his witnesses 'were forced to recognize that it was not their working life which was over, it was their life'. Exactly. So far as capital is concerned, a man's life is his life as the bearer of a commodity, labour power.

Some of Townsend's secondary information is very significant. He estimates that there are 750,000 old people in this country who never leave their homes. He shows that on 'retirement' there is a fall in income of over two-thirds for single people and over half for married people. He paints a simple yet terrible picture of the 'desolation' of many old people, and of the conviction among them that death is much more likely once they give up work: 'the possibility of sudden physical degeneration, after retirement, for men, and after bereavement for men and women'. He suggests that the longer expectation of life among women is at least partly a social phenomenon as well as a sociological fact. The difficulties faced by a working man in acknowledging his uselessness and unwantedness are no doubt a contributory factor, and may also partly explain the higher incidence of suicide among men (p. 180).

The author might reply to my criticism that his concern was with only a limited area of problems, and that he collected and analysed the data available on these limited problems. But he is drawing conclusions for social policy, implying that on the basis of such limited studies the 'problems' can be ironed out. From a working-class point of view the conclusions from his description of the social death of retired workers are revolutionary; one must condemn such an inhuman society and work for its overthrow. From the study of such atrocities one must move as Marx did to an understanding of the motive forces in the economic system which produces them.

Yet Townsend says only: 'The obvious implication for policy is that there is a major need for occupation for old men.' Really he remains within the ethos of bourgeois society, showing no breadth of vision of human potentialities. Yet even from this narrow viewpoint he sees the limitations inherent within capitalism. 'One thing has to be faced. The problem cannot be solved by normal employment practices.' It cannot be solved within any of the 'normal practices' of capitalism, but requires the treatment of men as human beings; and that is impossible so long as the working class remain an oppressed class.

CLIFF SLAUGHTER

## *A Study of Personality*

*Personality, Appearance and Speech*, by T. H. Pear  
(Allen and Unwin, 15s.)

THIS book is essentially a study of personality, from a very original viewpoint: one which reflects the impact of radio and television on our attitudes and thinking. Professor Pear considers here the more superficial aspects of personality and how they impinge on others—manners, appearance and accent. He writes in his usual provocative and allusive manner, in a way which holds the interest of the reader. Those who expect a solemn tone will be disappointed, for this work cannot be regarded as a serious contribution to scientific psychology. Indeed it appears to ask more questions than it provides

answers. Herein lies its value, for it deals with a subject that has been given surprisingly little attention by psychologists, compared with that given by politicians and other influencers of public opinion. It ranges widely and entertainingly over many problems. This may give it the appearance of being 'bitty', but nobody can complain that any one problem is worked to exhaustion and boredom, for the book is as witty as it is stimulating. My only complaint is, that being one of the few people who still have not a television set, and therefore not being an ardent television fan, I found the text a little obscure sometimes.

M.H.

## Caribbean Colony

Jamaica Land of Wood and Water, by Fernando Henriques (MacGibbon and Kee, 25s.)

AT its recent annual conference, the Labour Party pledged itself that when Labour was returned to power 1 per cent. of Britain's national income would be devoted to developing the colonial territories. The only opposition to this proposal in the ranks of the Labour movement comes from those who feel that 1 per cent. is an inadequate compensation for all that has been done by British imperialism to its colonial subjects—and but poor recompense for the immense wealth which British capitalism has drained out of the colonial peoples.

Jamaica is a typical example of a British colony, and in this book Dr Henriques has given a graphic picture of life in this Caribbean island from the time when it was first discovered by Christopher Columbus and seized for Spain till today, nearly four centuries later, when it is on the eve of becoming the centre of the newest dominion—the West Indian Federation.

When the Spanish Conquistadores landed in Montego Bay the island had an estimated population of 60,000. A hundred years later, as a result of the vicious exploitation to which they were subjected, there were barely 1,500 of the native population left alive. Today all trace of them has disappeared.

To make up for this loss of labour power, Negro slaves were imported from West Africa. This slave trade increased after the British seizure of the island in 1655, for the newly-established sugar plantations had an insatiable appetite for workers. In addition to the Negro slaves, convict labour in the form of bondservants was brought in and the supply was augmented by kidnappings in Scotland in the early eighteenth century. Thus we learn that a Welsh or Scotch bondslave cost £18 and an Irish one £15.



Much of Jamaica's present troubles flow from the single-product economy, introduced by the British. (This is the cause of the steady emigration of Jamaican workers first to the United States, and now to Britain, in search of work.) The sugar plantations were highly capitalized and a source of immense profits for British capitalism. Chattel slavery in the West Indies was an adjunct to wage slavery at home.

The gentlemen who adorned the board rooms in the City, interested only in their bank balances, were not concerned with the means employed to create these profits. When a Select Committee of the House of Commons investigated the conditions in the slave colonies (Jamaica in particular), in 1790-91, they refused to accept responsibility for the cruelties enacted by their factors and overseers.

It is impossible to read without horror the extracts from the reports of this Select Committee.

'The field slaves . . . are called out by daylight to their work . . . If they are not in time they are flogged. When put to their work, they perform in rows, and without ex-

ception under the whips of the drivers . . . By these means the weak are made to keep up with the strong [and] many of them are hurried to the grave . . . the drivers in using their whips never distinguish the sex . . . Much the same work was expected from pregnant women as others.'

In the sugar mills, the slaves were worked 'as long as they can, which is as long as they can keep awake or stand on their legs. Sometimes they fall asleep, through excess of fatigue, when their arms are caught in the mill and torn off'.

These are but the mildest of the many fiendish things contained in the report. There are authenticated cases of slaves being put to death by their masters (and mistresses) by methods which can only be compared with those of the Nazi concentration camps. Yet it was forty years after the report of the Select Committee came out before slavery was abolished in the British Empire.

The slaves did not always accept their lot meekly. They made constant efforts to achieve their freedom through rebellion. This was usually put down with the utmost ferocity. These revolts brought to the notice of British public opinion the fearful conditions of the slaves and speeded the hour of emancipation. Other slaves chose suicide as a means of escape from their degrading condition.

From the social and economic pattern established by slavery has developed the Jamaica of today. The abolition of slavery did not end exploitation. Wage labour replaced chattel slavery. The wealth of Jamaica still found its way into the bank accounts of Britain's sugar barons.

Just as conditions drove the slaves to desperate revolt, so in 1938 a wave of rioting swept through the British Caribbean in protest against the poverty-stricken conditions in the islands. The Colonial Development and Welfare fund was the direct outcome of this threatening rebellion. Thus every reform wrung from the imperial power has been won by the struggles of workers and peasants.

Today a powerful trade union movement is in the van of the battle for freedom of the Caribbean people. Socialist ideas have taken a firm hold. The descendants of the slaves are no longer defenceless but are arming themselves ideologically in preparation for the task of throwing off the last of their shackles.

C. van GELDEREN

## Reforming the Law

Speed-up Law Reform, by Robert S. W. Pollard (Fabian Research Series, no. 194. Fabian Society, 3s.)

THIS pamphlet will not appeal to the widest section of the lay public. The main purpose of the author is to set forth proposals for the reform of the machinery of the law rather than the law itself. Nevertheless he does deal with several fields of English law which are in need of reform and I would have been happier to see a bolder approach in this respect. To be quite fair however to Mr Pollard, he says at the start that his conception of law reform 'includes subjects which are not primarily questions of social welfare or economic policy or political warfare'. Even if his excessive caution is accepted, there appears to be no reason why he should not have dealt with topics where injustice is done to the greatest number of persons, e.g., as far as the working class is concerned, the need for employer's strict liability in respect of machinery and methods of work which can be regarded as inherently dangerous, to replace the onus upon the injured worker of proving negligence, and, with it, amendment of the Factories Acts.

This would have been better than consideration of the law relating to charities, for example. Or, under the heading of legal aid, the author should have dealt with the serious problem that the contribution required by the legal aid authorities is often prohibitive and sometimes as much and more than would be required by the applicant if he were to





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