

A DEFENCE OF COMMUNISM — R. FOX



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**A DEFENCE OF
COMMUNISM**

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In reply to H. J. Laski

By RALPH FOX

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INTRODUCTION

DISCUSSION upon the methods for bringing into existence the new Socialist society is as old as the Socialist movement itself. There always will be differences or controversy on questions of tactical policy until the capitalist system is abolished. Only sickly sentimentalists will wring their hands at that. The real proletarian revolutionary movement, however, takes no notice of sentimentalists or peacemakers. It pursues its own logical path serene and contemptuous of both, moving towards its goal at times with hesitation, at other times with break-neck speed, but always sure and irresistible.

No movement has given rise to so much acrimony and discussion as the Communist International. Hated and feared by all sections of the bourgeois class and their supporters, the Communist International and Communism have had to bear responsibility for all the crimes in the Newgate calendar. Common theft, robbery with violence, incendiarism, immorality, hooliganism, murder and every vice and crime that is catalogued in capitalist polite society have been associated with Communism. Unfortunately the great mass of the working class are accustomed to take their opinions ready-made from the bourgeois press, and many have succumbed to the lies with which they have been saturated. The task of counteracting this is no easy one.

For the great mass of the working class, who have little leisure or inclination to read, thanks to the demands made by capitalism on mind and body, a certain measure of excuse is permissible.

But even this section of workers, as may be proven by a little probing, is not altogether convinced. What has confused their intellect is refuted by their class intuition. At most they are confounded, but receptive to the truth when they are brought up against it. How to get the truth to them, however, is ever the problem of a movement handicapped for the lack of a press or financial means to reach them by written or spoken word.

The Communist Party in this country, for the above reasons, is at a decided disadvantage. The bourgeois class has a tremendous advantage over us in their millionaire press, in the powerful financial interests behind publications of all kinds, and in their command of the platform from the street corner soap-box to the floors of Westminster, Windsor and Buckingham Palace. Indeed, a whole army of writers and speakers is continuously at work pouring forth arguments and misrepresentations without scruple, blackguarding Communism in the "holy" task of saving "capitalist" civilisation.

Not content with enlisting the labour of open and avowed enemies of the workers and everything savouring of working-class opposition to the capitalist order, the bourgeois class do not stop there. They enlist in their service, from time to time, people associated with the workers' movement: writers, speakers, trade union leaders, Labour politicians, etc.—names will immediately jump to the reader's lips—who have had their training in the workers' movement, and are therefore more deadly poison than those obviously bourgeois in origin and bearing.

Communism, for certain, has not been allowed to

escape. Nothing less than a real professor bearing a Fabian and Labour badge will do for Communism. It matters not that Communism has its own writers, or that these have stated the case for Communism over and over again with a theoretical exactitude backed up by such practical experience as no professor in Britain could possess—a Lenin, for example. There needs must be a “disinterested” professor, and that, one with the halo of Labour to his head. Such an one has been found in the Oxford professor, Laski.

The workers’ movement in Great Britain has never been blessed with a galaxy of theorists. We are supposed to be a people with an aversion to theory. It is probably true that the workers have been content to leave the field of theory to middle-class careerists, since they were too busy fighting the capitalists for bread and butter. This is no evidence of a real aversion to theory amongst the workers. It is more probably due to a kind of “craft” complex for which they have had to pay a heavy price, witness, for example, the Parliamentary Labour Party.

In the following pages the reader will find the views of a Communist upon the subject matter of Laski’s “popular” exposition of Communism. This book has been rendered necessary because of the use of Laski’s reputation in Labour circles, but principally because of the extraordinary and amazing distortion of facts regarding the aims of Communism and the Communist Party. As to the necessity for this the reader can be safely left to judge for himself.

The opportunity has been taken on the following pages to restate as simply as possible the views

of the Communist Party on a number of questions, views that are made the targets for the opponents of Communism, because vital for the workers' movement.

Such questions as revolution in Great Britain, working-class dictatorship, violence, imperialism and the Empire, and religion are subjects of importance for the workers' movement in this country. They must be openly and fearlessly discussed. Nothing is to be gained by ignoring them. That is the last thing the Communist Party wants to do, though opponents of Communism speak and write of them as if they had unearthed secrets of the Communist movement.

It will be a great gain for the workers' movement in this country when the veil of secrecy, mystery and prejudice thrown over these questions by the bourgeois class, and especially their Labour lieutenants and hack writers, is torn aside. When they become questions for serious discussion amongst the workers in the factories, in the trade union branches and the local Labour Parties, the revolutionary movement in Great Britain will be on the high road to victory. It is with the hope that a contribution is being made to that end this popular defence of Communism is issued.

THOS. BELL.

A DEFENCE OF COMMUNISM

PART ONE COMMUNIST THEORY

CHAPTER I.

THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

“THE theory of historical materialism,” says Bukharin, “has a definite place; it is not political economy, nor is it history; it is the general theory of society and the laws of its evolution, *i.e.*, sociology.”

What is this general theory of society and its evolution which Marx first gave to the world, thereby revolutionising the whole historical outlook of humanity? It is that man’s ideas, his “soul,” or “spirit,” as it used to be termed, are determined by his material environment, and that the vital factor in his material environment is always the system of production.

“Does it require deep intuition,” he writes in the *Communist Manifesto*, “to comprehend that man’s ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man’s consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?”

“What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.”

And the law of movement, of growth in society, Marx showed, was to be found in the attempt of men to adjust themselves to their external condi-

tions as expressed in the most fundamental and changing of all these conditions, the prevailing system of production. This effort of mankind expressed itself in the struggle of classes, in the fight between those in control of the means of production and those whom changes and expansion in these means are relentlessly pushing forward to claim their place in society.

The *Communist Manifesto* opens with the sentence: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

And it continues: "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, master and journeyman, in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

In his great work "Capital," Marx analysed present-day industrial society, and there also he discovered the class struggle in active being, in the opposition of the capitalist to the wage-earner, the bourgeois to the proletarian. To-day, the ideas of society, the laws of society, are those of the capitalist class, and even the so-called democracy of industrial civilisation is only a mask veiling the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Workers who have lived through the Great War, when not only their liberty but their lives were sacrificed to British capitalism, workers who have suffered under E.P.A., which is the formal suspension of "democracy" in the interests of capitalism, miners who have felt the whole force of the State used to compel them to accept abominable conditions of hardship and poverty, trade unionists who

see their rights of self-defence taken away by the Trades Disputes Act, and the mass of the working population of Britain who see a decadent capitalism attempting to impose an open dictatorship through the supremacy of the House of Lords, can have no doubts as to the existence of the class struggle in its bitterest forms, or of the expression of capitalist rule in a capitalist dictatorship.

This dictatorship, Marx claimed, can only be broken by raising the proletariat to the position of ruling class, by substituting for the employers' dictatorship, the dictatorship of the workers. "The proletariat will use its political supremacy, to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible." (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 21.)

When the workers' dictatorship has destroyed the last vestiges of capitalism and the old capitalist class, then class distinctions will finally disappear, and "in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

CAPITALIST ECONOMY

Lenin, in his article, "Three Sources of Marxism," has given a magnificent description of the manner in which Marx analyses capitalism. "The wage-earner sells his labour to the proprietor of the soil, of the factory, of the workshop. He employs one part of his day in covering the cost of his upkeep, for himself and his family (by wages); for the rest of the day, he works for nothing, creating

what is called surplus-value, the capitalist's profit, the source of revenue, the source of the wealth of the capitalist class.

"The theory of surplus value is the corner-stone of the economic doctrine of Marx.

"The capital created by the labour of the worker, crushes this same worker, whilst ruining the small employers and bringing about the formation of a veritable army of unemployed. In industry, the victory won by large-scale production is apparent from the first; but in agriculture, we also note the same phenomenon; the privilege of big capitalist agriculture tends to increase at the same time as the use of machinery is extended; peasant economy falls under the sway of finance capital, it declines and is ruined, because of the insufficiency of its backward technique. In agriculture, the decay of small production is presented under other aspects than in industry; but this decay is, in itself, indisputable.

"Capital, which ruins small production, intensifies in a greater and greater degree the productivity of labour and tends to constitute a monopoly-privilege for the syndicates or trusts of the biggest capitalists. Production itself becomes more and more social—hundreds of thousands, millions of workers are bound to a system, to an economic organism—whilst the product of common labour is attributed to a handful of capitalists. The anarchy of production goes on increasing; crises follow, a furious search for outlets and markets; the existence of the masses of the population cannot be assured.

"By increasing the dependence of the workers with regard to capital, the capitalist regime has created the great power of unified labour.

“From the first signs of merchant economy, from simple exchange, Marx has followed and described the development of capitalism up to its higher forms, up to large-scale production.

“And the experience of all capitalist countries, whether old or new, shows, from year to year, to an ever greater number of workers, how right is this doctrine of Karl Marx.

“Capitalism has conquered throughout the whole world, but this victory announces another: that of labour over capital.”

From this description, true of capitalism as a whole, we can clearly trace the development of British capitalism, the oldest, the “classic” capitalist power of the old world. The small water-power textile factory of 1800 becomes a great steam-driven factory by 1840, and its owner is a wealthy man. In the reign of Victoria, the factory grows, from hundreds it employs thousands of workers, the son of the founder is knighted, the grandson made a baronet, by the gracious Queen.

But business gets more difficult. About the time of the South African war there is a slump, for by then rivals in France, Germany and the United States are disputing the markets. The great Powers fight for spheres of influence, for colonies; other textile factories spring up in China and India, which produce more cheaply from coolie labour. The great-grandson decides that politics is of more interest than business. He does not object when, to meet the difficulties of competition, the firm becomes part of a great textile trust, financed by one of the big banks, with interests in those other factories in China and India.

Banks insist on efficient management. The cut-throat character of modern business demands it.

The great-grandson buys an estate in the country, though nominally remaining a director; he invests his surplus capital in oil, rubber, West African railways, Chinese loans: and since he finds politics rather difficult, marries a daughter of the land-owning aristocracy and is made a peer by King Edward.

Of the founder of the firm, only the name now remains. The banks control the rest. The original bold and enterprising capitalist has become a parasite, living on share dividends, interested in hunters and musical comedy actresses. The epoch of imperialism, the domination of finance-capital, the era of *monopoly* has arrived.

The firm now employs five hundred men in place of the fifty it began with, but those five thousand are only a small proportion of the whole employed by this textile syndicate. It employs thousands of workers in the East from whom it makes huge profits, which are re-invested in other Eastern enterprises, harbours, railroads, etc., or in building further textile factories. The trust can afford to run its British mills at a lower rate of profit.

In 1914, there is the war, the greatest crisis in the history of capitalism. The mad scramble for markets and sources of raw material has led to a clash with the deadliest rival of British capitalism—Germany. Hundreds of the men from the syndicate's mills go out to fight, their places being filled by women. Many are killed. The son of the director-peer with the country estate dons red tabs and becomes a staff-major at Marseilles, the gateway to the war in the East.

After the war begins the period when "the existence of the masses of the population can no longer be assured." The mills work half-time, nearly half

the workers become more or less permanently unemployed, and the same is repeated in the other basic industries of the country: engineering, coal-getting and shipbuilding. The crisis has now become *chronic*, a part of the capitalist system. Meanwhile in the East, in the slave-factories, there are strikes, troops are called in, there are heard rumours of rebellion, capitalism is in its last phase, the phase of *imperialism*, with a vengeance.

The peer, who is getting old, resigns his complimentary "directorship," and his son, having survived the war without a scratch, though not without serious danger of a rather unpleasant disease, gets two decorations, one British and one French, a seat in Parliament as a Conservative, and marries the daughter of a director of the Bank which controls "the old firm."

So in this last phase of capitalism we see an increasing concentration of capital in the hands of a few individuals, a growth of parasitism, a close mingling of politics with finance-capital, while at the other end the workers become poorer, millions have no work, the cost of living is high, three times higher than at the beginning of the century, and in the colonies and Eastern slave countries there is a rumbling of revolt.

In rough and popular form this is the development of capitalism according to the analysis of Marx. The last phase, that of capitalist-imperialism, the phase of monopoly and finance-capital, he did not live to see, but the tendencies which were to produce it he knew and described accurately. The work of analysing this last phase is the greatest gift of Lenin and the Russian Bolshevik theorists to the working class movement.

Within the framework of capitalist society there

are certain insoluble contradictions which tend towards its eventual destruction and supersession by a higher form of society. These have been best described by Engels in his famous book "Anti-Dühring," in the chapter on the "anarchy of production."

ANARCHY OF CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

By anarchy of production Engels means that under capitalism each producer is not producing simply to satisfy his own needs, as in ancient society, or according to a given plan to satisfy the needs of society, as under socialism. He produces for the market, for exchange at a profit, and his hand is against every other producer's.

Herein lies the first great contradiction of capitalist production, for capitalist production in itself is essentially social, since it concentrates the instruments of production on an ever-increasing scale in large factories, since it practises with ever-growing minuteness *the division of labour*, and brings closer together the units of mankind by means of its rapidly developing transport system. *The organisation of production has become social, its ownership remains anti-social, individual.*

So we have organisation of production within the factory, anarchy of production in society as a whole. Since each capitalist concern has to fight for its existence on the market locally, each capitalist nation to struggle against its rivals on the world market, capitalism assumes a character of *unheard-of violence*. War is its essence, locally in the factory, nationally in the world. In the terrible words of Engels, "The field of labour has become a field of battle." And as capitalism becomes more strongly organised, more centralised, violence be-

comes chronic. In the epoch of imperialism we find a state of continual warfare, in the colonies and slave States, in the semi-dependent countries such as the Balkans, and among the great imperialist groups themselves. Since the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 there has been almost unceasing warfare to the present day, now on a large, now on a small scale.

The first consequence of these contradictions has been the *proletarianisation* of the masses. Thousands and thousands of manual labourers were driven from the field of production to toil in the factories, with no property save their own labour power. Their labour power became a commodity like any other to be bought and sold upon the market, with the capitalists united to drive down its price and extract the greatest possible amount of surplus-value from their labour. As industry became more highly organised and centralised, the capitalists were able to create a "reserve army of labour," the unemployed, who could be absorbed during a boom, cast aside in a depression, and used to bring down the wages of their fellow workers. To-day when crisis is permanent, this unemployed army is enormously increased and has become permanent also. With every improvement in organisation, in the creation of new trusts ("rationalisation," as it is called to-day), this army is added to until it attains alarming proportions, now becoming an immense burden on industry.

The workers, forced into necessary antagonism to their employers, since the interests of the two classes can never coincide, have been driven to unite in self-defence. They have formed unions, they have created political parties to forward their class interests, and the more widely they have organised,

the more sturdily they have defended themselves, the greater has been the capitalist violence they have had to fight in self-protection.

The workers, brought together in the factories, have developed their own psychology distinct from and in opposition to that of the ruling class, the capitalists. Paul Lafargue, the son-in-law of Marx, expresses this perfectly in his book "Communism and Economic Evolution," when he writes: "Living in the presence of the vast machinery which employs them, they understand instinctively, that they will never be able to possess it individually, that only its possession in common is possible. Mechanical production has swept from the head of the proletariat the idea of individual property; it has planted there the idea of communal property."

But Marx, as usual, sums up most strikingly these contradictions of capitalist society and their consequences. In "The Genesis of Capital," we find these sentences: "In proportion as the number of potentates of capital who usurp and monopolise all the advantages of this period of social evolution diminishes, there is an increase of poverty, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation, but so also increases the resistance of the working class which is ever increasing in numbers, becoming more and more disciplined, united, and organised by the very mechanism of capitalist production. The monopoly of capital becomes a hindrance to the mode of production which has grown and prospered with it and under its auspices. The socialisation of labour and the centralisation of its means of production reach a point where they come into conflict with the integument of individual property founded on the acquisitions of the capitalist era. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist

property has sounded. The expropriators are in their turn expropriated."

Who to-day, in face of over one million unemployed, of mass imprisonments of workers, of penal measures such as the anti-Union and Local Audit Bills, of such facts as the awful evidence given by the miners in the Cwm disaster enquiry, can deny that the poverty, degradation, slavery, oppression, and exploitation of the British working class has reached its limits, that the cup of their bitter misery is full to overflowing? And who also can deny, in face of the magnificent response of the General Strike, in face of the seven months' resistance of the miners to their employers, both so wretchedly betrayed, that the discipline, unity and organisation of the British workers have increased in proportion with the intensity of the attacks made upon them?

The victorious Russian Revolution, the uprising of the poverty-ridden peasantry and workers of China, the struggles of the British workers against their capitalists, are the fulfilling of Marx's historical and economic analysis of capitalism and the predictions he based upon it.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPITALIST STATE

In order to ensure that the process of exploitation be carried on with the requisite smoothness and efficiency, in order to protect the capitalist system of production within the national boundaries against its world rivals, in short in order to govern, the capitalist class have built up a vast apparatus of law, police, and military force which we call the State. Such a machine is not peculiar to capitalism. It has always been used by the dominant class to maintain power, and before there was a capitalist State there existed a feudal State, before the feudal State, the slave State. To obtain possession of this State machine and change it for its own ends has always been the objective of each revolutionary class. The great upheaval of the French revolution represented the seizure and destruction of the feudal State apparatus and its replacement by the State of the revolutionary French bourgeoisie.

Engels describes the rise of the State in ancient Greece out of the remains of the old communistic clan organisation, after the establishment of the new relationship of private property, with its consequent division into the classes of those who have and those who have not. An institution was needed, he says, "that lent the character of perpetuity not only to the newly rising division into classes, but also to the right of the possessing classes to exploit and rule the non-possessing classes. And this institution was found. The State arose." According to Lenin, "the State is the product and the manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms," it is "the organ of class *domination*, the organ of oppression of one class by another."

The organs of the State are not confined to the law, the police, and the military forces. The whole of the bureaucratic machine or Civil Service, the Church, the schools, and also the Press, as a propaganda agency, are agents or auxiliaries of the capitalist State and combine to keep the capitalist class in untroubled possession of the means of production.

With the growth and organisation of the workers capitalism has granted certain apparent concessions to them in the nature of Parliamentary franchise and other democratic pretences, but good care has been taken that none of these concessions touch the ultimate control of the State by the capitalist class. Moreover, even these concessions have never been willingly granted by capitalism, they are in every case the result of mass pressure on the State.

Such privileges as freedom of speech and press resolve themselves into pure illusions the moment that the fundamental positions of capitalism are threatened, and finally even freedom of organisation is forbidden to those workers who are part of the State machine, as in the present Trades Disputes Act which forbids Civil Servants to combine for political purposes, i.e., to secure their rights as workers against the State as employer.

The real nature of the State became apparent to the British workers during the General Strike and the miners' lock-out of 1926. Then, though even the capitalist Press had to admit that the miners were being forced to accept conditions beyond human bearing, at the bidding of the influential mine-owners, Government, army, police, law, pulpit and press presented a united front against the workers. Freedom of speech, of assembly, of the press, were suspended *for the workers*, thousands were im-

prisoned or savagely beaten, armed troops with machine guns and armoured cars paraded the streets, the blackleg and the treacherous trade union leader were exalted into national heroes, and in a few days the miners, a short time before the object of such copious crocodile tears, were written of in the Press and spoken of in the pulpit as though they were the national enemies.

And in fact, if the capitalist State be the nation, as in effect it is when spoken or written of by capitalist priest or publicist, they were the national enemies, because they had dared resist the commands of their masters to accept semi-starvation as their permanent lot.

Despite the possession of the vote and the possibility of electing a Labour majority to Parliament, it is certain that no Labour Government would be allowed to exercise *power*, if that power were likely to be exercised against the privileges and monopolies of capitalism. The whole State machinery of capitalism, the whole of its vast propaganda apparatus, would at once be turned against such a Government, which, unless it were prepared to fight the State, i.e., *to assume the role of a revolutionary Government*, would be forced to submit.

The Labour Government of 1924 made no attempt against the strongholds of private property. It openly declared its policy at home and abroad to be that of "continuity," of no break with capitalism, yet it was turned out of office in a few months because it yielded so much to pressure of the workers as to attempt a treaty with a Workers' State. That this Government did not hold a majority is of little importance. Had it done so there can be no doubt that the effect would have been the same. By financial pressure, if possible, or by more open

and forcible means if not, such as threatened the Asquith Government over Home Rule in 1914, it would have been driven ignominiously from office.

Marx, basing his arguments upon the revolutionary experience of 1848 and upon the Paris Commune, declared that the workers, in order to retain power, must break the capitalist State machine and substitute for it a workers' State. To do this it will be necessary to employ violence, to a greater or less degree according to the strength of the bourgeois State. In "Anti-Dühring," Engels puts Marx's point of view clearly: "that force also plays another part in history, namely, a revolutionary part; that, as Marx says, it is the midwife of every old society when it is pregnant with a new one."

That the necessity for a frontal attack upon the State machine of British capitalism may by some magical means be avoided, that British capitalism will abjectly renounce its State power when confronted with a Labour majority in Parliament, is an illusion which will no doubt die a hard death in this country. But that the process of debase has begun and that the Tory party, the militant expression of British imperialism, will prove an efficient undertaker, there can, after the last two years, be little doubt.

Indeed, it would appear that the British capitalists are not even willing to take the slight risk of a "constitutional" Labour Government. Before the present Government leaves office we are promised that the House of Lords will be "reformed" into an exclusive dictatorship of bankers, beer barons, bishops, blood princes and their like. The Marxian and Communist view of the State has no need to look beyond the shores of Britain for confirmation of its correctness.

CHAPTER III.

THE DISINTREGATION OF CAPITALISM

Till the last quarter of the nineteenth century the chief feature of industrial capitalism was free trade, the free exchange of commodities. It was in its essentials a fairly peaceful era. Wars there were, the young nations of Europe did not free themselves from the remnants of feudal reaction without bloodshed, and Prussia, Italy and France were all engaged in armed conflicts from time to time, in which Austria was the chief sufferer. England led a general onslaught of Western Powers on Russia, in defence of her Eastern empire, but the wars of the period were largely bourgeois-nationalist in character, such as the Italian series, or mere marauding expeditions. Not till 1870 did there come a real clash of nations.

Capitalism was settling down. It had to pass through two revolutionary periods in 1830 and 1848, and civil war was a fairly common feature, but by 1850, in Britain at least, it was grown-up, established, respectably married to prosperity, with charming concubines in India and China, and its difficult adolescence a thing of the past.

But in the twenty-five years after the Paris Commune, a slow change came over the system of production. Prosperity had brought expansion, accumulation, and *change*. What was the difference between the old and new forms of capitalism? Lenin describes it in "Imperialism." "In the old type of capitalism, that of free competition, the export of *goods* was the most typical feature. In the modern kind, the capitalism of monopolies, the export of *capital* becomes the typical feature." The

new era, the era of imperialism, is that of the reign of finance-capital.

Again Lenin describes finance-capital. "The concentration of industry: the monopoly arising therefrom: the fusion of banking and industry: these are the steps in the rise of finance-capital and the notions contained in the term." This growth of monopoly, expressed in the creation of great trusts, the control of industry by a financial oligarchy, and the export of capital, as distinguished from the export of commodities, changed the whole face and nature of capitalism. From being comparatively peaceful, from a long and regular development, it now became essentially warlike, its development uneven and unsteady.

The race for colonies, for the control of undeveloped countries, now became a mad scamper. "The principal characteristic of modern capitalism," writes Lenin, "is the domination of monopolist alliances of the biggest capitalists. These monopolies are the most solid when *all* the sources of raw materials are controlled by the one group. And we have seen how furiously the international capitalist groups devote themselves to the task of making it quite impossible for an opponent to compete, by purchasing, for instance, all iron deposits or oilfields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives complete guarantees of success to the monopolies against all the risks of the struggle against competitors, including the possibility of the latter defending themselves by means of a law establishing a State monopoly. The more capitalism develops, the more the need for raw materials arises; the more bitter competition becomes and the more feverishly the hunt for raw materials proceeds

throughout the whole world, the more desperate becomes the struggle for the acquisition of colonies."

We know now how that mad struggle led to the imperialist war of 1914-18, with its laying waste of all Europe, with its dragging Westwards, to feed the maw of the imperialist powers, of coolies from China, peasants from India, Nomad herdsmen from Central Asia, and negroes from Africa. It was, indeed, a world war, with consequences immense and terrible for the whole world. The war destroyed the equilibrium of capitalism. In Russia the workers and peasants rose and drove out the imperialists, native and foreign, set up the first Workers' State, and opened the era of proletarian revolution.

The United States, as a consequence of the war, developed enormous power, pushed Britain from her position as centre of the world market, became the creditor of all Europe, and owing to the high organisation and growth of her industries, began to seek feverishly for markets for the export of surplus capital, for fresh sources of raw material to maintain the world monopoly she was seeking. The United States as a result of the war has become the most formidable figure in the world, and her rapid growth has become a menace to at least two rival imperialisms—Britain and Japan. Slowly but surely she is circumscribing the activities of these two nations, pushing them out of markets they have held for years, making them seek new alliances, fresh combinations, in a struggle to redress the balance. The United States of America on the one hand, aggressive, militant, imperialist, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the other, peaceful, proletarian, socialist, these are the two great phenomena of the post-war period of imperial-

ism, and their existence, like the magnetic action of great iron deposits, causes violent oscillations and disturbances among the other Powers.

Imperialism has had its special reactions upon the workers. Their organisations also have been centralised, unified, and reformed to meet the changed conditions. But imperialism had its prosperous period, when, though real wages slowly fell and cost of living rose, it could afford to buy over whole strata of the working class to its side, especially the leaders. The leaders of the Labour Party, of the Trades Union Congress, the leaders of the German Social Democrats, and Second International, have bound themselves up with the fate of their respective imperialist bourgeoisies. "Cased in layers of imperialist fat," as comrade Palme Dutt describes them, these leaders led the workers blindly to the slaughter of 1914. With the reaction after the war they yielded for a time to the revolutionary temper of the masses, playing with "left" slogans. But once this temper pushed them into conflict with capitalism, they dropped all pretence, became purely reactionary and betrayed the struggles of the workers. This has been the common experience of every country in the world since 1918.

The contradictions of capitalism referred to in the third section become more acute, are carried to extreme limits during the epoch of imperialism. Three such contradictions assume particularly vital importance. The first is that between Labour and Capital, as outlined in the preceding paragraph, the necessity for labour to unite and centralise its forces to fight the violence of the omnipotent trusts and financial oligarchy. Stalin, in "The Theory and Practice of Leninism," puts the position for labour thus: "Either to put itself at the mercy of capital,

to vegetate and degenerate more and more, or to adopt a new weapon and engage in direct conflict: such was the alternative that imperialism put before the innumerable army of the proletariat. Thus imperialism leads the working-class to the revolution."

The next contradiction has been already referred to; it is the mad struggle for exclusive possession of the sources of raw materials, whither capital may be exported, a struggle which weakens the powers and accelerates the approach of revolution. The third contradiction is of the highest importance; it is the contradiction between the great imperialist powers and the weak, oppressed nations and colonial peoples. China is the classic example of such a country, where in order to pile up unheard-of profits, the imperialists have imposed the most brutal and shameless exploitation in all history. They have built railways, factories, harbours, sunk mines and created great cities, *all by the labour of the Chinese people, with profits wrung from their bitter toil.*

In carrying out this work, imperialism has created a Chinese working-class, a Chinese bourgeoisie; it has awakened national consciousness and the desire for national liberty. To secure the political subjection of the country it has supported feudal reaction and brought about the utter ruin of the peasantry, incurred the enmity of the native bourgeoisie and the hatred of the young working class. All these forces have come into conflict at last with feudal militarism, the tool of foreign imperialism, and in the end with imperialism itself, anxious to defend its shameful rights of robbery and exploitation. The revolutionary movement in the East, with China at the head, has become an open menace to imperialism; it has proved itself the

determined ally of the proletarian revolution. The workers of the West, depressed by declining imperialism, threatened by the rise of industry at the source of cheap labour and cheap supplies, violently attacked by their capitalist class when they defend themselves, can only obtain salvation by striking in alliance with the revolutionary masses of the East against their common enemy and oppressor, capitalist imperialism.

Such are the contradictions of imperialism; violent antagonism between capital and labour, strikes, lock-outs and Fascist violence, violent antagonism between the imperialist groups themselves, leading to almost constant war, and finally the rise of the nationalist and social-revolutionary movement among the peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Imperialism is the epoch of war and revolution, it is "perishing, decaying capitalism," and it will finally disappear, overwhelmed by its own contradictions in the onslaught of the proletarian masses, in the victorious social revolution.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORKING CLASS AND REVOLUTION

Let us return for a moment to the workers in our imaginary textile mill and consider the history of British capitalism from their point of view, instead of from the capitalist owner's. The first fifty workmen in 1800 were artisans whose living had been taken from them by the growth of machine production. They were men who had no choice between starvation over an idle hand-loom and endless, scantily rewarded toil in the factory. They naturally regarded the machines as their enemies, and combined in secret organisations of Luddites to break the machines. Many of them were shot by yeomanry, their leaders were hanged at York Assizes, their revolt was crushed out in blood.

In the early days of its growth, British capitalism made use of unheard-of violence against the workers. To-day we may reflect with some bitterness that in 1820 the workers were forbidden to combine even as friendly and benefit societies, because of the dangerous political implications of such societies. In 1927, capitalism is forcing the trade unions to become friendly societies once more, and none but an imbecile, in view of the history of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, can pretend that the very circumstances of capitalist society will not compel the emasculated trade unions to fight on behalf of their members as did the secret benefit clubs of those days. The Trade Union Act is inevitably but the first step to the complete destruction of an independent movement. In 1927 the cry of enlightened capitalism is, "Back to 1807."

The workers of this textile mill joined in the semi-legal agitation for the repeal of the Combina-

tion Acts which prevented them combining to raise their starvation wages and shorten their endless hours of toil. When the radicals secured the repeal of these savage laws, they formed a union and hoped for better times, for a vote, for a say in the framing of their own lives, and these same middle-class radicals told them that this would be obtained by patient and peaceful agitation. Their patience was exhausted, they threatened violence, and the Franchise was reformed, but not to include the workers. Only the radical tradesmen and manufacturers benefited, including their own employer who sweated them so grievously.

They grew alert to the need for fighting for themselves, and as their numbers grew into many hundreds with the increase of the business, they flung themselves wholeheartedly into the agitation for the Charter. They applied their experience of the class struggle and began to think in terms of a General Strike to secure a National Convention in which the majority of delegates would be working men. They followed Ernest Jones and O'Connor, and signed the great petition, and many of them were imprisoned as agitators. But the middle-class agitator crept back; the workers had no clear idea of what they wanted, though they listened to many voices, and in the end the General Strike failed, the demand for the Charter failed, and once again they were leaderless, broken.

Now the mill was huge and prosperous. Better times came and new leaders who bade them leave politics alone and trust to negotiation through their union leaders. One thing some of them had got as a result of Chartist agitation, the vote, and so for a time they were contented and satisfied. The Victorian knight and his baronet son invited the union

leaders to banquets and toasts of mutual prosperity were exchanged. Each hoped he might one day see the other in the House of Commons. All remained well while Britain maintained her textile monopoly.

But in the '80's that monopoly began to disappear. New leaders arose who told the workers to reform their unions, to amalgamate the little craft societies into central organisations to meet the new combinations of the masters. It was said it was high time they had a party of their own, since neither Liberals nor Tories cared for them. Then there was unemployment, first after the Franco-German war, then again in the '80's. In 1893 the Independent Labour Party was founded; in 1902 the Labour Representation Committee, forerunner of the Labour Party. The Tories were alarmed by the growing organisation and militancy of the workers and attempted to circumscribe their activities by the Taff Vale judgment. The result was the Labour Party and a score of Labour men in Parliament.

Marx had always stated that it was essential for the working class to form their own Party. He saw the Party as an absolute necessity for the leading of the working class to the conquest of power. In his Inaugural Address to the First International, he says: "The proletarians have one element of success—the masses. But the masses can really weigh in the balance only if they are directed by an organisation and directed towards a determined end." The Party Marx had in mind was a revolutionary party, the end, the conquest of power; and such an organisation as the British Labour Party was not, in the Marxian sense, a working class party at all.

The Labour Party did not manœuvre for power; it manœuvred for concessions from the Liberal Government which depended on its votes and those of the Irish Nationalists to remain in office. So long as it could obtain those concessions, such as the Insurance Act, Old Age Pensions, etc., the workers remained tolerably satisfied, while the Party became imbued with Liberal and class co-operation ideas. No challenge was ever made to capitalism as such, to imperialism as such, and even the war met with enthusiastic response from the Labour leaders, who joined the imperialist government to help in the defence of British capitalism. True, in 1914 things were already changing, there had been much unemployment, great mass strikes, an industrial crisis was approaching, a political crisis over Home Rule was threatening the country with civil war, but the Labour Party remained still above the battle. And after 1914 it became part of the war machinery of capitalism, together with the trade unions.

The disillusionments of the war, still more so those of the peace, changed the face of things. The most active Liberals joined the Labour Party and completed the Liberalising of the Parliamentary Labour Party. But with the masses another process was going on. Capitalism could no longer make concessions. On the contrary, it began to attack and in 1921 started a long offensive to take back the gains of the last century, to save itself from collapse at the expense of the working class.

A Liberal policy was no longer practicable for the workers, class collaboration with those who had nothing to give, but everything to take, became suicidal. Working class imperialism, when colonial industry was making its competition felt

in every branch of basic industry, in textiles, steel, shipbuilding and mining, was now little more than self-immolation on the altar of finance-capital. Capitalism was in decay, the only solution was clearly the taking over of industry by the workers, as had been done in Russia. Could the Labour Party do this?

Obviously not, since the first necessity is the seizure of power and the smashing of the capitalist State. From 1921 to the present day, in struggle after struggle forced on the workers by a desperate capitalist class, in a position to make no concession without abdicating its power, the Labour Party and trade union leadership showed their unwillingness to face the issues, to fight capitalism squarely back, to tread the path to power which is the only defence of the workers.

Yet in 1921 the alternative leadership, the real Party of the working class was already there. Since then it has grown in strength and influence, it has had to fight the most bitter enmity of the reformist leaders, it has had to strive against the liberal traditions of almost a century of development, and in a country where the shams of democracy have gained a greater hold than any other, to expose the real character of the capitalist State. The fight has been stern, but it has shown clearly that the problem before the British Labour movement to-day is one of leadership. The attitude of the Baldwin Government, the publication amid intense interest of such a book as Professor Laski's prove that the leadership of the Communist Party in the British Labour movement is the spectre which broods over the minds of capitalist and reformist alike.

What is the Communist Party? In the *Communist Manifesto* we read as follows: "The Com-

munists in the proletarian movement in various countries put forward and champion the common interests of the whole of the proletariat, irrespective of national interests . . . in the various stages of development through which the proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie is proceeding; they always champion the common interests of the movement as a whole. Thus, the Communists practically represent the most determined and the most progressive section of the Labour Parties of all countries, and with regard to theory they have this advantage over the rest of the masses of the proletariat, that they understand the conditions, the progress, and the general results of the Labour movement. They have no interests other than those which coincide with the interests of the whole of the proletariat."

In the same way the theses on the role of the Party passed by the Second Congress of the Communist International say that: "The Communist Party is a *section* of the working class; its most progressive, most class conscious, and therefore its most revolutionary section. . . . The Communist Party has no interests differing from the interests of the working class." At the same Congress, Lenin said: "A political party can combine only a minority of the class, in the same way as the really class conscious workers throughout the whole of capitalist society represent only a minority of all the workers. For that reason we are compelled to admit that only a class conscious minority can guide the vast masses of the workers and get them to follow it. . . . If the minority is really class conscious, if it succeeds in getting the masses to follow it, if it is able to reply to every question that comes up on the order of the day, then it is in essence a

Party. . . . If the minority is not able to lead the masses, link itself closely up with them, then it is not a Party and is good for nothing, even if it calls itself a Party."

This is the Party of the working class as understood by Marx and Engels, and as Lenin first gave it form in the Russian Bolshevik Party. The aim of the Party is to lead the working class to the conquest of power for the purpose of building up socialism, and to do this it must win over to its side the majority of the working class. To do this it must be active and take the lead in every form of working class organisation, proving its ability and showing the workers how best to fight for their interests against capitalist violence. Lenin sums up the role of the Party in his book "Infantile Sickness."

"The Party," he writes, "is the highest form of the class organisation of the proletariat; it should lead all the other forms of proletarian organisations, and take a most active part in their struggles. This it does through Communist fractions."

The Communist Party is the Party of the masses, it has its roots in the masses, in the words of Lenin: "Every factory must be our stronghold," and it alone opposes a direct and open challenge to the existence of capitalism and its right to change at will the life of the workers. Since monopolist capitalism is to-day international, since the struggles of the workers in one country can no longer be isolated from the struggles of those in another, the Communist Party is *international*. As the fighting Party, the vanguard, of the workers, on whose success depends the eventual victory of the workers over their enemies, it demands an undivided allegi-

ance to the Party and imposes an iron discipline on its members once a decision has been arrived at by free and open discussion. The final allegiance of the Party as a whole, of the International, is to the working class, the best and most class-conscious elements of which it seeks to draw into its ranks.

The victory of the Communist Party is the victory of the working class. Its leadership of the British Labour movement will come, not by "Machiavellian manœuvres," or by intrigue, but because it is accepted by the masses of the working class as the only leadership capable and willing to lead them into the battle with predatory capitalism.

PART TWO

LASKI'S "COMMUNISM"

CHAPTER V.

TENDENCIES OF CAPITALIST DECLINE

PROFESSOR LASKI writes in the Preface to his book that he has sought to state the Communist "theses" upon the subject he discusses so that its own advocates would recognise that an opponent can state them fairly. It is a curious state of affairs when the writer of a "scientific" study, however popular in character, goes out of his way to claim that he has given a correct description of the object of his study. This should hardly be necessary for a university professor in the 20th century. However, the object of this pamphlet is not a criticism of Professor Laski's presentation of Communist theory. We are willing to agree that, within its limitations, it is a correct description. It is not our purpose here to point out how narrow are those limitations, how his lack of understanding of his subject has been responsible for grave and important omissions in his book. We do not even wish to show that the scientific accuracy claimed for Professor Laski's study under the naive name of "fairness," is but a pseudo-science.

The object of our criticism of Laski's work is to show, that on the basis of this partial study he has drawn conclusions which are unjustified, incorrect and in some cases foolish. While attempting to avoid the inevitable conclusions of Marxian analysis applied to contemporary British capitalism, Professor Laski is driven into conclusions of his own

on that subject. And in formulating those conclusions he is driven to attack the position of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It is with these aspects of his work that we are here concerned.

“Communism,” states Professor Laski, “remains as a definite challenge to those who believed that social evolution is possible in the medium of peace.” And there can be no doubt that Professor Laski, though with somewhat weakened faith, does still believe social evolution to be possible for the British working class “in the medium of peace.” It is the aim of this book to point out the Professor’s errors which arise from this pre-determined position of his, and to show that British capitalism is unable to make further concessions “in the medium of peace.” That being the case, Professor Laski, if he is an honest man, must admit the necessity of revolutionary in place of reformist leadership for the working class. So it is also essential that we point out other errors of our professor in the matter of Communist leadership in the working class movement, on the vital questions of violence, dictatorship, the united front, etc.

These then are the points we must chiefly deal with: (i) Can British imperialism stabilise itself sufficiently to raise the standard of life of its working class beyond all question of revolt?; (ii) Is revolution practical politics in an island and purely industrial community?; (iii) Are violence and dictatorship alien to the working class in this country?; (iv) The questions of Communist discipline, of the united front, and of the national-colonial problem; (v) The success of the Russian Revolution, of Communist democracy, and the question as to whether or not Communism in practice is but a new “religious” culture.

These questions are of pressing and fundamental importance to the British workers to-day. We hope they may be answered to their satisfaction.

It should be made clear at the outset that Communists make no claim to gifts of prophecy or divination. The most they pretend to do is, on the basis of exhaustive analysis, to indicate tendencies, and to form their policy in accordance with those tendencies. This is of the utmost importance in replying to Professor Laski's first argument against the Communist case, namely that it is possible that new forms of organisation, or fresh scientific discovery *might* put British imperialism in a position vastly to improve the lot of its workers, or, should this not prove possible, that faced with the alternative of revolution capitalism would make such concessions "as to purchase its avoidance." (p. 89.)

Now no Communist will deny that the discovery of, say, the utilisation of atomic energy, would change the face of capitalism. At the same time, the argument as to what *might* happen is a foolish one. We can safely say that no sane scientist holds out immediate hope of any such revolutionary discoveries as would change the character of capitalism in favour of the workers. It is just as reasonable to suggest, as other imaginative writers besides Professor Laski have done, that this planet might collide with some other heavenly body, to the mutual destruction of capitalist and Communist alike. Or we might have a world-wide and disastrous earthquake, or a visitation of some appalling and deadly plague. All these things have been suggested with every air of possibility in the pages of fiction. All we can say is that fiction is not our business, and that when Professor Laski writes of the possibility

that "better industrial organisation and the prospects of scientific discovery might easily make of capitalism a system able to satisfy the main wants of the workers," (p. 87), he is not dealing with what *is*, or even shows any strong *tendencies* to be, discernible in capitalist production to-day. He is writing of what he would like to be.

As Communists we must examine what *is*. Within the framework of British capitalism to-day, do we see any possibility that better organisation, or scientific discoveries, within the immediate limitations of industrial organisation or scientific research, are likely to put the British capitalist in a position "to satisfy the main wants of the workers," and "avoid revolution"? And we are to assume, according to Laski's thesis, that the concessions are to be made within the framework of capitalism, without jeopardising the capitalist grip on "the instruments of economic power." (p. 88.)

To prove his case by any means other than those of prophecy, Professor Laski should have examined British imperialism to-day, and shown us precisely what possibility there is of its recovering sufficiently to do this. That was surely his scientific duty. We are not surprised that he has not undertaken it, and no one would have been more grateful and astonished than the capitalists themselves if he could have shown them how to stabilise their system, though the workers would have been the last to benefit by such a "discovery." However, Professor Laski knew well enough that he could find no way out for capitalism.

Nevertheless, as Communists, it is our duty to attempt the examination which throughout his book Professor Laski so carefully avoided.

CHAPTER VI

THE BREAKDOWN OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

The Geneva Economic Conference has just been held to discuss the problems of capitalist stabilisation, and though, like the rest of the conferences held in that talkative city by the lake, its only apparent result was to widen the differences it sought to heal, it nevertheless furnished exceptionally interesting material on the world economic situation. The report of the British delegation is an excellent summary of the difficulties of British capitalism.

The kernel of the problem is neatly expressed. "At the present time Great Britain is more dependent than any other great commercial country on its export trade to enable it to supply the needs of its economic life." As everyone knows, it is precisely these industries which suffer from the greatest depression. "From the standpoint of Great Britain, a recovery of British exports is essential." It is pointed out that a recovery of exports is dependent upon a recovery of world prosperity, and that on the other hand a recovery of British exports is also an important prerequisite for world prosperity, which would seem to be what Engels termed a "vicious spiral." And British purchases can only increase with the absorption of our unemployed and with a renewed advance in the standard of living in Britain. But this, Mr. Laski, and it is a fact of tremendous significance for us all, the Report declares "is unlikely to happen for a long time to come." In other words British capitalism itself confesses it can hold out no prospect of improvement in the conditions of its workers. In effect we know

that the greatest body of skilled workers in the world are suffering a steady decline in their standards.

Not only are our exports shrinking, their character is also changing. "There is ground for the belief that we are exporting in a greater proportion than before the war the higher and more expensive kinds and qualities of goods." Britain is showing a tendency to become a luxury manufacturing nation, or one employed on the most highly finished objects. The great staple industries are emigrating, to the colonies, to the Dominions, to the undeveloped countries of the world. Finally, that other vital export of an imperialist country, the export of surplus capital, is also declining, the so-called "balance of trade" is dwindling to nothing and the national savings are affected. "It follows that, with a larger population whose standard of consumption has been maintained, the volume of goods and services directly consumed has increased; but, as the total productivity of the country is practically stationary, there must have been a smaller margin for savings . . . The deficiency in savings has chiefly affected our export of capital, which has been greatly reduced."

Capitalism is a world phenomenon, and one of the most striking features of its present position is its unequal development. One-sixth of the world is now outside the orbit of capitalist economy—the U.S.S.R. The Pacific and North American countries show rapid development, but in Europe, once the centre of capitalism, there is relatively complete stagnation or actual decline. The falling-off in British heavy industry is not confined to this country, it is a European phenomenon. The Memorandum on production and trade of the same con-

ference gives some remarkable features of this unequal development.

The table of production indices over the twelve-year period from 1913-1925 gives an alarming picture of European capitalism. For example, in the important textile industry, despite the new artificial silk manufacture, there has been no development. "The imports of 1925 of raw cotton into the countries which owned 70 per cent. of the European spindles were in fact over 10 per cent. lower than in 1913. Further, the increased production of many raw materials elsewhere reflects no industrial growth in Europe, but, on the contrary, an increase in the productive capacity of other Continental groups and a contraction of demand for European goods."

The interesting feature of the production tables is that they show a rapid shifting of the centres of production during the last twelve years "from Europe west to the United States and Canada, and to the Far East." The effects of this shift are particularly noticeable in the basic industries, on the recovery of which Britain's prosperity depends. "Europe in 1913 contributed 48 per cent. of the world's fuel supply; in 1925, 37 per cent." The development of oil has revolutionised fuel supply, but "in the production of coal alone Europe's share sank from 51 per cent. in 1913 to 47 per cent. in 1925." In metals the picture is equally cheerless; whereas in 1913 Europe produced 52 per cent. and North America 42 per cent., in 1925 the figures were 41 per cent. and 51 per cent. respectively, an "almost exact reversal" of the position.

The same is true of trade as a whole. In 1924, "North American trade was over a quarter greater than in 1913 and Asiatic trade, just under a quarter. . . . In both these years the total trade of

Europe was considerably . . . below the 1913 level." The Memorandum then proceeds to its most pregnant sentences. It states that "there has been a general tendency in recent years for countries possessing raw materials to manufacture them for their own needs themselves. . . . *The smaller proportion of the total wealth produced which enters into international trade, in so far as it is due to the domestic treatment of raw materials, and the failure of Europe to recover her status in world trade, are no doubt connected to some extent in the relationship of cause and effect.*"

No one disputes the facts. Concessions from British capitalism depend upon the recovery of the export industries; until that process begins the capitalist offensive against the workers will continue and all talk of "class peace," of "co-operation between capital and labour" is so much window-dressing intended to disguise the emptiness of the national shop. This kind of eyewash is accepted with equanimity by employers, who see in it a way to get the essential "adjustments" made with a minimum of friction, while trade union leaders and politicians peddle it around as the makeshift of political bankrupts. On the workers' side class peace means surrender to ever-increasing poverty and hardship. No honest man can deny this for a moment.

Nor is there any immediate prospect of a revival of export industries under capitalism. The Memorandum has put its finger on the weak spot. "The domestic treatment of raw materials" by, we may add, cheap labour and even slave labour, is the hard fact which the British workman is brought rudely up against when he lines up in the unemployment queues at the Labour Exchange, though

he may be ignorant of the fact. But one aspect of this growth of industry in the colonial countries the Memorandum not unnaturally ignores, the effects of this domestic treatment in the Colonies themselves. The growth of a native bourgeoisie, the terrible conditions of the millions of artisans faced with the competition of machine labour, the ruined peasantry and the proletarianisation of the countryside, the angry and toil-ridden working-class, forbidden elementary rights of humanity, in short the growth of revolution in the East, all this is not mentioned in the Memorandum. Nevertheless we have no doubt that it was not absent from the minds of the business men at Geneva, and that the Chinese revolution and the hostile attitude of the British delegation to the Russians were not unconnected. The revolt in the East is one deadly reason why British imperialism will not recover.

But there is another. It is mentioned in the Memorandum. The war dealt a vital blow at European capitalism. It shifted the balance of economic power to America and the East, it started that terribly uneven development of capitalism which in time will bring the structure tottering to earth. What are the prospects of European recovery? The fact is the war and the consequent shift have brought about a strange position in European economy. Not only has there been a slump in the basic industries, in the European proportion of the world export trade, but imports have risen madly in many countries, because of the *foreign capital borrowings*. The fact is briefly alluded to on the last page of the Memorandum. The chief lender is the United States. A long way behind, but still a heavy creditor, stands Great Britain. While the countries of Europe are burdened with these enormous loans

there is little hope of a recovery to a normal level of trade and production. It is in the interests of British capitalism that European economy should come back to the normal level, but while American and British loans are to be repaid we are not likely to see that achieved.

An analysis of the present position of British imperialism shows only tendencies to greater disintegration and none towards recovery. Capitalism cannot recover and *remain capitalism*. Professor Laski may like to think so, but he has no reasonable grounds for his belief and has taken good care to abstain from stating any. Our own presentation of the question is mild enough. One of the strongest causes of collapse we have not mentioned at all, the feverish expenditure on war preparations, the almost certainty of yet another European war and the black outlook in the Pacific.

Our statement is deliberately confined to the confessions of impotence which the British capitalist class itself has made.

CHAPTER VII

IS A REVOLUTION POSSIBLE IN BRITAIN?

Deep in his own mind Professor Laski is afraid that it may after all be true that there is nothing to be expected from the British capitalists, that the workers' lot is going to be almost beyond bearing. But anything rather than revolution, anything rather than socialism and an era when middle-class professors may find life not quite so respectful to their pretensions. A revolution is not possible in Britain. This dictatorship of the working class is all very well in Russia, or Peru, or the Sahara, but not in Britain. It would mean complete collapse, ruin, starvation, the emergence of a Fascist dictatorship. Pages 169 and 179 of the professor's book are devoted to showing the hopelessness of a British revolution.

The revolutionaries "would have to obtain control of the national arsenals; and that would mean the dispersion of forces in any case small by hypothesis [what hypothesis, Mr. Laski?]. They would have to possess, and know how to use, the weapons of chemical and aerial warfare; and their possession of them alone would argue, under modern conditions, a government devoid of authority. . . They would have to guarantee a supply of food which, in any but a predominantly agricultural society, would be practically impossible if the State credit were seriously impaired." Mr. Laski then goes on to argue that a complete general strike (i.e., passive resistance) must also fail as a revolutionary weapon owing to alternative services assured by the army and navy. "The Communist theory of a secretly armed minority assuming power at a single stroke, is, in fact, unthinkable in the modern State if the

army and navy are loyal to the government. It would have to imply either a government so weak that it had practically ceased to be a government at all, or, what is perhaps equivalent, a population actively sympathetic to the revolutionary minority."

This all sounds very terrible and imposing. Simple folk, having read it, might wonder why the Communist Party does not immediately liquidate itself, or change its name to the Suicide Club. Happily though, Mr. Laski's argument is an empty one, for the simple reason that it does not represent Communist ideas on a successful insurrection at all. It assumes that the Communist Party, having attained some power and influence, should proceed in secret to organise military detachments fully armed with aeroplanes and gas, and at a given signal make a bold bid for power. Quite in the traditions of 1848, in fact. We should wake up one morning to find barricades across the streets and red bombers in command of the skies. We seem to remember a man called Blanqui, who held some such views, but where did our Professor discover that he was a Marxist, that he inspired the seizure of power by the Russian workers?

It will be as well if we state at once the conditions under which the Communists consider insurrection possible. In "On the Road to Insurrection," Lenin presents the problem in a masterly fashion. "In order to be entirely victorious, insurrection must not depend on a conspiracy, or on a party, but on a revolutionary class. That is the first point. Insurrection must depend on the revolutionary pressure of all the people. That is the second point. Insurrection must break out at the apogée of the rising revolution, that is at the moment when the activity of the vanguard of the people is greatest,

when fluctuations among the enemy *and among the weak and indecisive friends of the revolution* are strongest. That is the third point. It is in bringing these three conditions to the consideration of the question of insurrection that Marxism differs from Blanquism." (*Blanquism*, not Leninism, as Mr. Laski for some extraordinary reason misquotes.)

Mr. Laski makes the fundamental mistake of assuming that the majority of the people is always the government. Of course, this is not so. In a revolutionary situation it might happen that a government elected by a majority of the people would be thrust out of existence within a few months by those who were at first its most enthusiastic supporters. This is what happened to the Kerensky government in Russia. In fact it happens often enough in modern civilisation without a revolutionary upheaval. Mr. Laski says, quite correctly, that the possession of arsenals, arms, military equipment, etc., argues a government devoid of authority. The Communist would be the last to deny it. Indeed revolution can *only* break out with hope of success when the government is devoid of authority, when its rule is no longer accepted by the vast majority, when it is "fluctuating," as Lenin says, and when the State apparatus has been thoroughly weakened by the prevailing discontent.

"The Communist theory of a secretly-armed minority," a reference to the quotation from Lenin shows to be no Communist theory at all, but the very reverse. According to Lenin, the victorious insurrection can only come as a result of the revolutionary pressure of *all the people*, or, as Laski himself admits, with "a population actively sympathetic to the revolutionary minority." As Lenin points out, these were the actual conditions in

Russia in November, 1917, when the Bolsheviks led the workers to the seizure of power. There is no Communist theory of secret minorities. As Lenin so clearly says, dependence on a party, in place of a class, means disaster. Only when the activity of the workers, the vanguard of the people, is at its height, can the Communist Party say to the workers, "Now is the time, seize power."

Gas, aeroplanes, tanks were all known and in use during the Russian revolution. They did not prevent its success, because the State could no longer rely on the uniformed workers and peasants to use them against the people. No Communist is mad enough to suggest insurrection against military forces whose obedience to capitalism can be implicitly relied upon. Mr. Laski can be certain that, having once seized power, the workers would know how to use the apparatus of chemical and aerial warfare in *their own defence*. Capitalism taught them very thoroughly from 1914 to 1918.

Other critics of insurrection have objected that, granting the possession of power and arms by the workers, the counter-attack of capitalism would be so terrible as to bring about complete destruction. A few bombers could wipe out the East End of London in an hour. This sort of talk we may discount at once. We have no doubt that no scruples would prevent capitalism using gas and bombs on working women and children. Neither would any scruples prevent the workers concentrating the women and children of the bourgeoisie in the threatened areas.

Critics of this type are usually I.L.P. pacifists. Any ex-service man will tell them that a low-flying aeroplane which sought, for example, to sweep the streets with machine-gun fire would find great

difficulty in doing so over a city of high buildings such as London, since these aeroplanes would themselves be thus exposed to volley fire and machine-gun attack in such a fashion as to make their destruction certain. The bogies of militarism need not frighten a resolute working class determined on defending its power against all the brutalities of desperate and dispossessed capitalism.

The question of food supply, which is also raised, is likewise no insoluble problem. A British revolution would have the sympathies of the workers of all Europe, a blockade would be an exceptionally difficult thing which would hit first and hardest the British bourgeoisie. As Lenin says, "We shall carry off all the bread and boots of the capitalists. We shall leave them nothing but crumbs, we shall give them nothing but clogs." And if there were any question of starvation they would be the first to go without either crumbs or clogs. But we could rely upon the Red fleet to keep the seas open, and upon the enthusiastic support of the Russian people to feed our revolution. The nation which fed the miners in 1926 would not desert the British workers in their hour of triumph. Moreover, the terrible lock-out of 1926 showed with what iron courage British workers can endure starvation if necessary. The seven months which the miners endured would be more than enough to ensure the victory of a British revolution.

Mr. Laski is a professor. It is natural that he should forget the existence of a world revolutionary movement, of a world working class, when discussing British problems. It helps him to make his academic points. The Communist Party does not forget their existence, because it is part of a world movement, because the world working class

and the problems of its emancipation are part of its daily life. The idea that a revolution here would simply mean a world war of intervention is ludicrous when the strength of the Continental workers' movements is considered, when the fact is taken into account that the disappearance of British imperialism, to-day acknowledged as the most reactionary factor in world politics, would automatically let loose all those revolutionary forces which have been stifled by its aid in the period since the war.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND VIOLENCE

On this vexed question, like a good many other people, Mr. Laski has much to say, and like most of these critics he is by no means clear in his own mind either as to the nature of violence or the Communist attitude thereto. At first he pretends that the Tolstoian attitude is not his, he attempts by cold reasoning to prove violence an inferior method, its dangers are greater than its rewards, etc., but soon the cloven hoof appears and our professor reveals himself as no better than he should be. Such Tolstoian phrases as "wrong wiped out with wrong," such great thoughts as that the use of violence sometimes brings rough, unpleasant, non-professorial characters into prominence, and other stock pacifist arguments appear.

Professor Laski is worried by the psychological effect upon the opposing capitalist forces of the threat of violence (p. 173): "It is obvious that if revolution is justified to the Communist merely because it is *his* logic of history, it will be justified also in any other people with a cause which they deduce from *their* logic of history; and no community can then hope for either security or order." In short, the arguments a Communist uses for revolution a Fascist may also use.

Is this the case? The working class overthrows the capitalist State when that State can no longer guarantee its existence. The genius of Marx found a terrible phrase to express this position: "On the eve of each refashioning of society the last word of social science will always be: 'Battle or death; a bloody struggle or annihilation; thus is the question invincibly put.' (George Sand.)" This quo-

tation from the "Poverty of Philosophy" sums up the grim tragedy of the worker. He has no choice. He must fight for his life. But if he is victorious, what a prospect for society! Socialism, the era when real human evolution, with the freeing of the productive forces, begins, the era of no classes, of peaceful development, the achievement of manhood by humanity!

The worker fights because he must, because he has no choice. If there were no Communist Party, no scientific philosophy of the working class, it would still be the same. This month the workers of Vienna, with bare hands, rose up and took possession of their city, driven to desperation by capitalist violence, *by Fascist violence*.

The Fascist seeks no justification for the use of violence from the threat of a revolutionary working class. On the contrary, Fascism is but an extreme expression of a system based on oppression and violence which makes the workers revolutionary, which forces them to seize power and crush for ever the thugs and armed bullies of capitalism. A victorious workers' revolution, Professor Laski, does not destroy security and order, it creates them. For the worker there is no security and order under capitalism. Ask the Russian worker if he found security and order under Tsar Nicholas and his Black Hundreds. Ask the Italian worker if he finds it under Mussolini and his Black Shirts. Ask the miners of Britain if they find it under the bayonets and batons of Baldwin and Joynson Hicks. Only after November 1917 has there been order and security in Russia for the worker and the peasant, that is for the huge majority of the population.

It can only be the notorious near-sightedness of professors which can cause them thus to put the cart before the horse.

The other argument of our professor, and it is a common one in this country, is that human life is sacred, that violence is wrong, however used. This is an argument which when sincerely held it is impossible to argue against. If a person thinks so, and acts according to his belief, there is an end to it. He is a Tolstoian and can only exist in a colony of his fellow-religionists.

Unhappily this argument is widely used in the English Labour Movement by people to whom it is impossible to pay the tribute of sincerity. It is almost the official doctrine of the I.L.P. Such men as George Lansbury habitually make use of it. It would be almost true to say that, with the exception of one or two imperialists like J. H. Thomas and boot-and-spur militarists like Lords Haldane and Thomson, every Labour M.P., every trade union leader, has at some time or other expressed such sentiments.

Yet the fact is that the Labour movement in this country has never hesitated to condone the use of force, nor even to apply force itself. In the imperialist war the Labour Party entered into coalition with the capitalist conspiracy of slaughter; Ramsay MacDonald wrote his famous recruiting letter; the representative of the Labour Party, Arthur Henderson, "the hammer of the Reds," was in the Cabinet which ordered the shooting of James Connolly, leader of the Dublin workers. The capitalist State machine is a machine of force, as every State machine must be. It has its army and police force, yet the Labour Party, including

Tolstoian pacifist ministers from the I.L.P., took over that machine of force and operated it. They sent gunboats to threaten the revolutionary government of Sun Yat Sen in Canton, they used bombing aeroplanes to collect taxes from Iraq natives and to instil a sense of propriety into the peoples of the Indian frontier, they fired on strikers in Bombay, and they prepared to use E.P.A., with its accompaniments of troops and police, against the transport workers of London. Crowning irony, these Christian apostles arrested a Communist for telling the soldiers and sailors not to use armed violence upon working men!

All this was right, all this was moral. Even Mr. Laski does not condemn this use of violence as "wrong wiping out wrong." Lansbury wept no tears over the murdered workers of Bombay, and no doubt would not refuse a ministry in the next Labour Government, even though its first act was not the disbanding of army, navy, air force and police. Only the Communists are wicked, to be denounced by every self-appointed high priest of virtue because they are resolutely and on every occasion against violence being used on the working masses, on the immense majority of the population of the world. Unfortunately, the sole and radical difference between the Communists and every other political Party, including the pacifists of the I.L.P., is that the Communists will only justify the use of violence on *behalf of the workers*.

The cream of Mr. Laski's joke is when he signals out Karl Kautsky, the German Socialist leader of the Second International, its theoretician *par excellence*, as the apostle of the sanctity of human life. Kautsky, it appears, was shocked by the

mass murder of the war. In this he had finer feelings than Lenin, and consequently was unable to approve of the Russian Revolution. We may thank Mr. Laski for dragging in this graceless traitor to the workers' cause, for he is the supreme hypocrite, the grand Tartuffe of Socialism; the leaders of the British Labour Party are mere tyros in self-deception, smugness, and rank hypocrisy compared with him, though we readily grant that they are learning fast and may be trusted in time to out-Kautsky Kautsky and out-Noske Noske.

Ever since 1918 this German renegade has been advocating armed attack on the Soviet Republic. This creature who wrote that to use terrorism is to "betray the principle of the sacredness of human life" three years ago wrote a book which in effect was an incitement to a military crusade against the Soviet Union. This year, as a result of British provocation, the Russian workers' leaders have been exposed to a campaign of espionage and terrorism, and they have replied by applying terror to the terrorists. The General Council of the T.U.C., Messrs. Lansbury and Brockway, have all protested against this "outrage" on the sanctity of human life. But our friend Kautsky outstrips them all. A news message from Berlin dated July 14th gives us the glad tidings that Kautsky has published an article in "Vorwaerts," wherein he writes that, "contrary to many of his political friends, he considers that the dictatorship in the Caucasus can only be suppressed by mass risings," and in the course of his article goes on to provoke very subtly a "revolt" against Bolshevism. This, of course, is *apropos* the arrest by the Russian police of a courier from the Paris Committee of

the Georgian Mensheviks carrying letters from "comrade" Jordania to the Secret Committee in Georgia urging them to a campaign of terrorism against Communist workers. Jordania and the Georgian Mensheviks are the darlings of the Second International, the friends of Kautsky and MacDonald, towards whom even Mr. Laski displays especial tenderness. But, as we have said, provided violence be only exercised against the workers, it is moral and has the blessing of God.

How comes Mr. Laski, who is a professor and an intelligent man, to make such an exhibition of himself over these questions of violence and the possibility of revolution in Britain? The answer, of course, is that he is an intellectual. He has ceased to believe in capitalism, but is too timid to make the sacrifices necessary before men of his class can join their lot with the workers. The more British capitalism decays, the fuller the Labour movement becomes with such "deserters." If we are to get a complete picture of their minds we cannot do better than take it from the pages of their friend Kautsky, who in "The Social Revolution" wrote: "The fighting tactics of the intellectuals are at any rate wholly different from those of the proletariat. To wealth and power of arms the latter opposes its overwhelming numbers and its thorough organisation. The intellectuals are an ever-diminishing minority with no class organisation whatever. Their only weapon is persuasion through speech and writing, the battle with 'intellectual weapons' and 'moral superiority,' and these 'parlour Socialists' would settle the proletarian class struggle with these weapons. They declare themselves ready to grant the proletariat

their moral support, but only on condition that it renounces the idea of the application of force, and this not simply where force is hopeless—there the proletariat has already renounced it—but also in those places where it is still full of possibilities. Accordingly, they seek to throw discredit on the idea of revolution, and to represent it as a useless means. They seek to separate off a social reform wing from the revolutionary proletariat, and they thereby divide and weaken the proletariat.”

CHAPTER IX.

DICTATORSHIP AND THE BRITISH WORKERS

It is natural that Professor Laski, having sought "to throw discredit on the idea of revolution, and to represent it as a useless means," should not hesitate to take the next step, that of discrediting the idea of workers' rule, of Communist dictatorship. We learn from him that the fact of the workers being forced to fight for their lives against the violence of the decaying capitalist State will let loose all kinds of dark appetites and passions, that "the condition of Communism is the restraint of exactly those appetites which violence releases; and the Communist has nowhere shown how this difficulty can be met except by affirming that dictatorship will destroy them." One would have thought that a sufficient answer. But, no, the very fact that the workers' republic still exists in Russia after ten years disproves this! The puzzled reader may well ask how, and it has needed a most persistent effort to pierce the obscurity of the following remark of Laski: "The survival of Communism in a world of capitalist repression is itself proof that repression is futile." The ordinary worker, who is far from being a professor of political science, might have thought it was rather a proof that Communism was strong, that the armed dictatorship of the workers is looked up to by huge sections of the world's workers as *their* government, that consequently the capitalists dare move only with extreme caution. Presumably we are expected to argue from this that if the Russian workers had established Communism and then disarmed themselves, the Communist lamb would have

flourished and grown fat amid the capitalist wolves, since "repression is futile." Fortunately the workers are not so simple.

The next argument is a "moral" one. The Communist "is ignorant of the time the dictatorship is to last, nor does he explain why those who control it may be expected to accede to its termination. It is a commonplace of history that power is poisonous to those who exercise it; there is no special reason to assume that the Communist dictator will in this respect be different from other men. Indeed, no group of men who exercise despotic authority can ever retain the habit of democratic responsibility. That is obvious, for example, in the case of men like Sir Henry Maine and Fitzjames Stephen, who, having learned in India the habits of autocracy, become impatient, on their return to England, of the slow process of persuasion which democracy implies. To sit continually in the seat of office is inevitably to become separated from the minds and wants of those over whom you govern. For any governing class acquires an interest of its own, a desire for permanence of power, a wish to retain the dignity and importance of its functions; and it will make an effort to retain them. That, after all, is only to insist that the exercise of power as such breeds similar habits in its operators. The corollary of dictatorship appears to be that which follows from all other systems—that it is incapable of voluntary abdication. The only way to prevent this is to educate the people in government by associating them with the act of governing. But this is to postulate the undesirability of dictatorship."

(This long quotation contains the kernel of

Laski's argument against dictatorship. For superficial shallowness it is also the pearl of his book. Clearly our professor of political science has not understood the first thing about Communist dictatorship, and it will be necessary to enlighten him on the fundamental teachings of Marxism on this point. Laski's difficulty here is the same as on the question of violence where he confuses the *Party* with the *class*. Now he proceeds to confuse the *Party* with the *State*. He sees revolution not as the uprising of a class, but of a Party, dictatorship not as the State rule of a class, but the State rule of a party. All the ludicrous statements about "despotism," "love of power," etc., quoted above, arise from his ignorance of the relations of the Party and the working class in the system of proletarian dictatorship.

To-day when we discuss proletarian dictatorship we no longer talk in the abstract, we have a concrete working example before our eyes, and from the example of the U.S.S.R. can draw all the conclusions necessary, that is, provided we are not professors of political science. If such a worthy wishes to study dictatorship he does it from the inner recesses of his own mind, which is richly stored with recollections of *capitalist* dictatorship, of Anglo-Indian despots, Sumner Maines and Fitzjames Stephens.

That Laski has made the elementary mistake of confounding the Party with the State is certain if we consider a remark of his on page 202 to the effect that a Party "cellule [i.e., group] must think of itself as an incipient Soviet, ready, when the time comes, to assume quasi-governmental functions." In fact, nothing could be more ridiculous

than this conception. It reminds one of another professor, this time of modern languages, who had the naive illusion that in Russia every Party member is a privileged government official, whereas, of course, the large majority are rank-and-file workers in factory, field or co-operative.

Lenin deals scornfully with such attempts as Laski makes to separate the Party from the working class, to make a division between "leaders" and "masses." In "Infantile Sickness" we read as follows: "The very question 'Dictatorship of the Party *or* dictatorship of the class, dictatorship of the leaders *or* dictatorship of the masses,' bears witness to an amazing and hopeless confusion of mind. People bend every effort to elaborate something extraordinary, and, in their zeal to be intellectual, they become ridiculous. It is common knowledge that the masses are divided into classes; that to contrast masses with classes is possible only when we contrast the largest general majority, undivided in respect to its position in the social scale, with categories occupying a definite position in the social scale; that the classes are usually and in most cases led by political parties, at least in modern, civilised countries; that political parties, as a general rule, are led by more or less stable groups of the more influential, authoritative experienced members, elected to the most responsible positions, and called leaders. All this is elementary. It is simple and plain. Why, then, all this rigmarole?"

Why, Professor Laski? Can it be that a professor of political science has really not discovered that the State organ of the workers' dictatorship is the Soviet, not the Party? To confuse the

Soviets and the Party is to place oneself in the position of the reactionary Tory who for political reasons confounds the Communist International with the Government of the U.S.S.R. Indeed, this paragraph on dictatorship throughout betrays the most vulgar errors and confusions in the writer's mind. Laski states that "any governing class acquires an interest of its own," etc. But what is this governing class but the working class? Surely our professor does not want us to believe now that the Communist Party is a class? That would indeed be a new discovery in political science.

Stalin, in his little book on "Leninism," written for the Leningrad Party Organisation, gives four organisations as going to make up the mechanism, the structure, of proletarian dictatorship. First are the *trade unions*, with their ramifications under the form of organisations for production, education, culture and so on. They "may be considered as the general organisation of the working class in power in the U.S.S.R. They are the school of Communism." Then come the *Soviets*, with their numerous ramifications, administrative, economic, military, cultural, etc. The Soviets are "organisations of the mass of workers in town and country. . . . They are the direct expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is through the soviets that pass all measures designed for the consolidation of the dictatorship and the realisation of Socialism." Thirdly, we have *co-operation*. The co-operatives "unite the workers, at first, as consumers, and, in time, as producers (agrarian co-operation). . . . It [co-operation] facilitates the union of the advance guard of the proletariat with

the peasant masses, and allows of the bringing about of the participation of the latter in Socialist construction." Lastly, we have the *Union of the Youth*. This mass organisation of young workers and peasants is chiefly cultural. "It has for aim to aid the Party in forming the young generation in a Socialist spirit."

What is the rôle of the Party towards these organisations? What is its place in the dictatorship? The Party, "by grouping the élite of the working class," *unites* and *directs* those organisations towards a single end, the liberation of the workers. The question, then, arises, is it possible for the Party to divorce itself from its chief function, that of uniting and guiding, for the vulgar one of ruling? Naturally Professor Laski is not the first enemy of proletarian dictatorship to raise this question, and again the answer is provided by Lenin in "Infantile Sickness." He writes: "And, first of all, the question arises—Upon what rests the discipline of the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat? How is it controlled? How strengthened? Firstly, by the class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its steadiness, spirit of self-sacrifice and heroism. Secondly, by its ability to mix with the toiling masses, to become intimate and, to a certain extent, if you will, to fuse itself with the proletarian masses primarily, but also with the non-proletarian toilers. Thirdly, by the soundness of the political leadership, carried on by this vanguard, and by its correct political strategy and tactics, based on the idea that the workers by their own experience must convince themselves of the soundness of this political leadership, strategy and

tactics. Without all these conditions discipline in a revolutionary party, really capable of being a party of the advanced class whose object is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform society, is impossible of realisation. Without these conditions, all attempts to create discipline result in empty phrases, in mere contortions. On the other hand these conditions will not arise suddenly. They are created through long effort and bitter experience. Their creation is facilitated by correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not dogmatic, but which forms itself in its finality only through close connection with the practice of the real mass and truly revolutionary movement."

Unhappily we have not come to the end of the difficulties which obsess the mind of our professor over this question of workers' rule. "It is not easy," he says, "to see why the transition period between capitalism and communism should create the atmosphere out of which the latter develops." He then proceeds to instance the small trader, the specialist, the rich peasant, as representatives of anti-communist culture which might gain ground and check real proletarian and revolutionary development. Once more "Infantile Sickness" provides the answer. It is a pity Mr. Laski should not have read and digested that little masterpiece of Lenin. It would have saved us much laborious pain in underlining the obvious.

This is what Lenin says: "To abolish classes means not only to get rid of landlords and capitalists—that we have accomplished with comparative ease—it means also to get rid of the small commodity producers, and they cannot be eliminated

or suppressed. There must be an understanding with them, they can and should be regenerated, retrained; but this requires a long, gradual, careful organisation. They surround the proletariat on every side with a petty-bourgeois atmosphere, impregnating the proletariat with it, corrupting and demoralising it, causing it to relapse into petty-bourgeois lack of character, disintegration, individualism and alternation between moods of exaltation and dejection. To oppose this, it is necessary to have the strictest centralisation and discipline within the political party of the proletariat. It is necessary, in order to carry on the *organising* activities of the proletariat (and this is its principle rôle) correctly, successfully, victoriously. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a resolute, persistent struggle, sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative, against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit of the millions and tens of millions is a formidable force. Without an iron party hardened in fight, without a party possessing the confidence in all that is honest in the given class, without a party capable of observing the disposition of the masses and of influencing them, the conduct of such a struggle is impossible. To defeat the great, centralised bourgeoisie is a thousand times easier than to 'defeat' millions and millions of small owners, who, in their daily imperceptible, inconspicuous but demoralising activities, achieve the very results desired by the bourgeoisie, and restore the bourgeoisie. Whoever in the least weakens the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship) aids in reality the bourgeoisie against the proletariat."

The last of Mr. Laski's difficulties is that he cannot see why the destruction of capitalism should result in a classless society. That is an unfortunate confession for a professor of political science who is supposed to have made a special study of Marxist socialism. Surely it must have sunk into Mr. Laski's head during his reading that the *aim* of the workers' dictatorship when the means of production are concentrated in the workers' hands as the ruling class, is to destroy the remnants of the other classes. Of course, the proletarian dictatorship will encounter difficulties and dangers without number, including the danger suggested by Mr. Laski that certain opportunists may attempt to obtain special privileges at the expense of the workers as a whole, or even, as Bertrand Russell suggests, that there might arise conflict between those desiring short hours and low productivity and those wanting long hours and high rewards. But such conflicts are natural, so long as the remnants of petty bourgeois individualism have not been defeated. They do not represent conflicts between different forms of the new, they are still conflicts between the old and the new. Such conflicts will occur until "the forces and traditions of the old society" are finally defeated, until the Laskis and the Russells are but dim ghosts of the past. That is why it is so necessary for the political party of the working class always to have a correct policy, to follow a Marxist line. And finally, Mr. Laski, that is what the works of Lenin are all about, to one who reads them with intelligence.

In Britain, precisely because the small producer, the petty tradesman and the peasant are so weak,

because the working class is so numerous, experienced and highly organised, the problems of dictatorship will be much simpler, the defeat of the old society quicker and more complete than in Russia. As the reply of the Comintern to the I.L.P. says, it is even possible "to think that the working class in England can secure government power without a revolution and by means of parliamentary election victories." But, says this excellent document, "whoever tells the British working class that it can overthrow the capitalist dictatorship in the British Empire, through any other means than the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, by taking the full power into their own hands by depriving of political power all those who defend capitalist exploitation, and by organising a Red labour army—deceives himself and others." Those words remain as true to-day as the day they were written. In the light of recent events the class-conscious workers of this country will have no difficulty in seeing their full force, and seeing at the same time the emptiness of all those false intellectual friends of the workers who play with phrases while compromising with the enemy.

CHAPTER X.

THE UNITED FRONT AND COMMUNIST DISCIPLINE.

In his chapter on the "Strategy of Communism" Professor Laski devotes considerable space to the question of the united front. This is quite correct, for it is by its appeal for the united front against capitalism that the Communist Party has gained its popularity among the working class, that it has spread its influence far and wide and recruited its strength. But here again Mr. Laski makes some serious mistakes. Though at first he quite rightly states that the united front is not a "union of parties but a limited collaboration," he completely mistakes its nature by assuming that it is an appeal to the reformist leaders for collaboration. That is precisely what it is not. Such an appeal, of course, would get no response. It is an appeal to the masses over the heads of the leaders for unity of working class forces in the common struggle as against the policy of splitting and expulsions used by the Right against class-conscious sections of the workers. It is not a "Machiavellian manœuvre." Such manœuvres are not understood by the masses and only breed distrust in those who use them. Machiavellian policy is to invite co-operation for the one end while really meaning another. This is the reverse of Communist policy, and though it may on occasions be employed by individual Communists it brings nothing but disaster and members of the party who employ such *un-communist* tactics do not, as a rule, remain long within its ranks.

The resolution on Tactics of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International describes as

follows the tactic of the united front : "The tactic of the united front is the law of the common struggle of the Communists with all the workers belonging to other parties and groups, and with all non-party workers, with the aim of defending the most elementary interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie. Each struggle for the least daily demand is a kind of revolutionary instruction and education ; for the experience of the struggle will persuade the workers of the inevitable necessity of the revolution and of the truth of Communism."

The Communist is careful to explain fully and without reserve to the workers the meaning of the co-operation proposed, in contrast with the bureaucratic leadership of the Right, who take their decisions and lay their plans without the full consultation and participation of the rank-and-file, who are, in the real sense of the word, truly Machiavellian. It is because of the Machiavellian tactics of the reformists that the workers become disillusioned with them and turn to the Communists for real leadership. The usual Right tactic of telling the worker that to fight will gain him nothing, whereas negotiation will provide a satisfactory compromise, is to say one thing, while really meaning that negotiation will bring about what the capitalist wants, the complete subjugation of the worker. It is saying one thing and applying another in practice. It is Machiavellian. The same applies to the pseudo-left who talks loudly of fighting so as to play up to the militant spirit of the workers, while meaning to desert to the enemy at the first opportunity. . An example of pseudo-left Machiavellian manœuvring is to be seen in the

betrayal of the General Strike by the left wing leaders of the General Council in 1926. An example of right wing Machiavellianism is the pusillanimous attitude of the Joint Council of the T.U.C. and Labour Party towards the Trade Union Bill, which they denounced but refused to fight, and which they now tell us "will make little difference to the workers." (Bromley and other leaders.) Communist policy is the complete opposite of these two forms of Machiavellianism.

The statement that "since the policy was first adumbrated, in 1920, it cannot be said to have progressed rapidly," is curious indeed. In Germany the united front on the question of expropriation of the Hohenzollerns was a great triumph for the Communists, as also, in most European countries, has proved the slogan of the "united front against Fascism." In France the united front has so weakened the Socialist Party and strengthened the unity of the workers *from below* that a union of the two trade union confederations is now within measurable distance of reality. In Britain the united front has been in practice locally in nearly every important industrial centre for at least three years, has resulted in the building of a Minority Movement nearly a million strong, and considerably strengthened the Communist Party. While the I.L.P., which has consistently refused a united front, has steadily declined in numbers and in influence, the Communist Party has as steadily grown. The recent success of the united front tactic over British intervention in China was remarkable. As a result of united mass pressure the unwilling Labour Party leaders were forced to

modify their policy, to move a vote of censure on the Government and vote against war credits.

This confusion of leaders with the masses leads Laski into some strange errors. He writes (p. 195), "It is difficult to see why the leaders of the Second International should co-operate with them [the Communists] when the purpose of Communists is to destroy their allies at the first opportunity." But it is not the co-operation of the leaders that is sought at all, it is that of the masses who still follow the policy of those leaders. In the words of the resolution quoted above, "The real success of the tactic of the united front comes 'from below,' from the depths of the working masses themselves." To prove his point about the failure of the united front Laski is compelled to show how completely he is divorced from the reality of the British Labour movement, how his knowledge of it is gained only from books and newspapers, not from day-to-day participation in its struggles.

He writes: "It was noteworthy that in the British General Strike of 1926 the Communists played practically no part at all." Such a statement takes one's breath away. It would suggest that even Mr. Laski's reading was incomplete, or he would surely know that to-day the lament of every right wing leader who cries "Never again!" is that the trade union movement was rushed into the Strike against its will by the Communists and "left" workers. Certainly the long campaign of the Communist Party in support of the miners rallied the masses to a great extent and prepared them for united action. Surely that was some part to have played!

Perhaps Mr. Laski means that the Communists

played no part in the betrayal of the General Strike. There he is quite right. But in the conduct of the fight our Party played a great part, and if Mr. Laski failed to notice it that is because here was an example of the united front in full operation. On every strike committee the members of the Communist Party were active. Often, alas, the only active members. The paper of the Party appeared locally throughout the strike in duplicated sheets, and among those imprisoned as a result of the strike the majority were Communists. All this though the Party throughout the strike was in a condition of complete illegality! When the strike was betrayed by the leaders our Party alone raised its voice against the traitors, and was listened to with approval by the masses. The masses are a better judge than our professor, and they showed what they thought of our Communist "inactivity" by swelling the numbers of the party from five thousand to nearly fourteen thousand in the days after the strike.

The fact that the tactic of the united front commands the "unswerving devotion" of members of the Communist International, Mr. Laski makes the excuse for an examination of Communist discipline. This leads him to the conclusion that the Communist International "resembles nothing so much as the Roman Catholic Church. There is the same width and intensity of discussion before dogma is imposed; there is the same authoritarian imposition of dogma; and there is the same ruthless purging of dissident elements which show unwillingness to accept the decisions made." That is to say Mr. Laski attempts to show that the Communist Party is a *dogmatic* body, that it

claims *infallibility*, and that it is ruthless to those who disagree with it.

That the Communist Party tries to forge for its members an iron discipline, and that that discipline is essential to the emancipation of the workers, the quotation we have already given from Lenin's "Infantile Sickness" clearly shows. But that Party discipline erects the Communists into a narrow, authoritarian, dogmatic sect, such as the Jesuits or Puritans, is not true. If it were the case the Party would completely isolate itself from the workers, who would regard it with respectful admiration no doubt, but not with love, not as *their* Party. The Communist aim is to prevent any barriers from being built up which would isolate the Party from the workers, and Mr. Laski's view, though common among intellectuals, is an entirely romantic one.

Our Party has little use for the fanatic, who is a useful agitator, but a dangerous leader. In fact, the Communist International is the most completely democratic body in the world. Indeed, on page 227 Laski himself admits this. "To some extent," he writes, "perhaps the British Labour Party's annual conference . . . proceedings reveal, not seldom, an effort by the machine to repress the discussion of inconvenient questions very different from the boldness with which they are faced in Communist Congresses." Indeed, it is so. A reading of the proceedings at any Communist Congress, and especially of the Russian Party Congresses, reveals the utmost freedom of discussion. Only in two points does Communist discipline insist upon absolute obedience to the will of the Party, and no unprejudiced observer can say that these

are unreasonable. The first is that when any decision has been taken, locally, nationally or internationally, the members of the Party shall unite loyally to put it into operation, whatever their personal views. The second is that each member of the Party shall contribute something to the work of the Party as a whole, and not be a mere "useless mouth."

The Communist Party does not consider that the action of the I.L.P. in permitting within its ranks members who openly carry out a policy hostile to that of the Party to be evidence of breadth of mind, but of imbecile weakness and treachery to the working class. Neither, within any sensible meaning of the word, can it be justly claimed that Communism is dogmatic. Indeed, it expressly renounces all dogma as essentially un-Marxian and un-scientific. Certainly if a devotion to the Marxian interpretation of history be dogmatic, then we must plead guilty. But so must the sailor who avails himself of compass, sextant and deep-water log. Nor does Mr. Laski himself give any example of a mere mechanical use of Marxian analysis. He contents himself with saying, "The effort, for instance, to read the problem of India in the set terms of Marxism is rather an exercise in ingenuity than a serious intellectual contribution to social advance." What efforts has Mr. Laski in mind? He is careful not to say. Of course the Communist International does not claim that all its theorists have the suppleness of mind of, say, a professor of political science. We have our share of blockheads. But in justice our critic should be more precise. We assume that he did not have in mind Palme Dutt's brilliant book

“Modern India,” and we will risk the statement that he simply had nothing in his mind.

To conclude, we may quote the resolution on organisation of the Third Congress of the Communist International for a clear contrast between Communist discipline and Social-Democratic bureaucracy :

“In the organisation of the old, non-revolutionary Labour movement there has developed an all-pervading dualism of the same nature as that of the bourgeois State, namely, the dualism between the bureaucracy and the ‘people.’ Under the baneful influence of bourgeois environment there has developed a separation of functions, a substitution of barren, formal democracy for the living association of common endeavour, and the splitting up of the organisation into active functionaries and passive masses. Even the revolutionary Labour movement inevitably inherits this tendency to dualism and formalism to a certain extent from the bourgeois environment.

“The Communist Party must fundamentally overcome these contrasts by systematic and persevering political and organising work and by constant improvement and revision.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE NATIONAL-COLONIAL QUESTION

The reference of Professor Laski to India brings us to another point which he has very much at heart—Communist misuse of the national-revolutionary movement in the East. “Nor can it be said,” he writes, “that their Eastern propaganda is likely to have the results they foresee. Undoubtedly it will exasperate the relations between East and West; but the destruction of Western influence does not necessarily mean Communism. There is no special reason to suppose that the handful of Eastern intellectuals who frequent Moscow could, in a crisis, dominate India or China in the way, and with the purpose, of Lenin and Trotsky. It is much more logical, on the evidence, to admit that such propaganda would produce confusion. But what would be the outcome of that confusion no man save the boldest of prophets would venture to predict.”

It is clear from this quotation that Mr. Laski regards the national-colonial problem as a purely geographical one. There is East, there is West, where exactly the one ends and the other begins is not stated, but clearly the twain shall never meet, save in confusion, whose outcome cannot be predicted. To look at the problem that way must be very comforting, it is so simple. (Yet we seem to remember Mr. Laski gibing at the Communists for refusing to see the complexity of modern civilisation.) Mr. Laski is like the “Times” leader writer who surveys Chinese affairs and then gives up the ghost with the remark that

only gifts of divination could produce sense out of the chaos.

What are the relations between "East and West"? They are the relations between imperialism (which is not entirely Western) and the subject or semi-subject races (who are not entirely Eastern). To-day, according to Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International, 70 per cent. of the world's population is contained in the colonies and backward countries which are under the domination of finance-capital. The relations between "East and West," if we consider that the vast majority of that huge Eastern mass of people consists of peasantry, that even the proletariat is proportionately small in numbers and the native bourgeoisie almost negligible, are the relations between exploited and exploiter. Whether it is the politics of the Comintern which "exasperates" those relations or not is another question. We rather think that they were sufficiently exasperated before that body ever existed.

What, then, has the Communist International done to upset Mr. Laski? It has laid it down that the proletariat of the exploiting countries must as a sacred duty support the peasantry and workers of the exploited countries against their common enemy, capitalist imperialism. It has declared that it is possible for the exploited peasantry, having defeated their masters, the imperialists, and secured national independence, to form peasant Soviets and avoid the stage of capitalism. It has, moreover, proved this in practice by the example of the oppressed countries in the old Tsarist Empire, which have now obtained, through their alliance with the Russian workers, full national independ-

ence, and by their peasant Soviets are successfully working, not towards capitalism, but Communism.

“The destruction of Western influence” means the destruction of imperialist influence, it means the loosening of that deadly grip which creates and maintains conditions of dire poverty and semi-starvation among the peasantry of India and China, conditions that must be seen to be believed. It is imperialism which creates race war, deadly antagonism between Asiatic and European. It is the Communist workman who destroys that antagonism. To-day the name of comrade Tom Mann is known to hundreds of thousands of Chinese peasants because they have seen him and heard him denounce British imperialism as the enemy of the British worker as well as of the Chinese peasant. They know that Tom Mann and the million supporters of the Minority Movement for whom he speaks are as resolute enemies of the square-faced officers in the warships on the Yangtse as themselves. The great mass “Hands off China” movement in Britain is a living proof of the alliance between toilers of East and West’ against imperialism.

“Well,” Mr. Laski says, “but can you deny that there is confusion in China?” Of course not. But who would expect the awakening of nearly 400,000,000 peasants to move with complete order, like a mechanical football match which works by putting a penny in the slot? We will give Mr. Laski a tip, however. It is not ours but Bukharin’s—“Put your money on the masses,” and don’t expect the greatest revolution in history to work itself smoothly out in a few months by

kind permission of the British admiral in Chinese waters.

Finally, we have in fact no reason to suppose that any "handful of intellectuals" is going to lead a successful revolution in China, India or anywhere else. The Kuomintang Party of China, with over a million members; the Chinese Communist Party and Communist Youth, with over a hundred thousand; the trade unions, with nearly three millions; the peasant unions, with far above five millions—all these certainly hardly form a "handful of intellectuals." But they are the driving force of the Chinese revolution, not the generals and mercenary soldiers, not the handful of suborned intellectuals who form "ministries" for the generals and intrigue with the imperialists. And in India also, when the time comes, the same thing will be seen. In spite of British white terror, mass murder and imprisonment, a Communist Party will grow there, whose leaders will not be in Moscow, but will rise from the rank and file of the Indian workers themselves, and there will grow up also in India a great mass revolutionary movement of trade unions, peasant unions, nationalist revolutionary organisations.

Mr. Laski's last complaint need hardly detain us long. "It is necessary to distinguish," he writes, "between the Communist strategy of self-determination and the theory and practice of that principle. Georgia, for example, was a Menshevik community, and the Soviet Government overran it, partly for military and partly for economic purposes, exactly as a capitalist government might have done." We would advise Professor Laski to read the recently published correspondence between

the heads of the Menshevik Government and the German and British generals in occupation of Georgia. After this refreshing entertainment he should turn to Nitti's last book on Fascism and Bolshevism, which contains the revelation (admitted in Parliament) that Georgia was "offered" by Lloyd George to Italy. The "Menshevik community" was no community at all, but a small country with a Menshevik government imposed on the population by foreign generals, who themselves were the real rulers. The Mensheviks were men who deliberately attempted to sell their country to foreign imperialism, who shot and imprisoned Georgian Communists, and who finally provoked a revolt of the population against their tyranny, which the Russian workers aided to prevent its being crushed by the aid of foreign intervention.

Georgia is far more Georgian to-day than ever it was under the Menshevik-cum-White-Russian-cum-British-general regime, with its shady intriguing to sell the vast oil resources of the country to foreign imperialism, and with them the national independence. No, as another professor, Professor Herford, has admitted in the "Manchester Guardian," the Soviet policy towards the nationalities of the old Russian Empire is one of Bolshevism's greatest cultural triumphs, placing Communism in this respect far above any capitalist country.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Mr. Laski's knowledge of the Soviet Union is as limited as his sources of information, which consist apparently only of aged and out-of-date works by H. N. Brailsford, Bertrand Russell, and Michael Farbman. Even his copy of the constitution of the Soviet State is an old one in which no account is taken of the 1923 changes in the constitution. His account of Russia on pages 48 and 49 of his book is written in such a way as to suggest that we have had a great deal of fuss about nothing, that if this is all that can be boasted after a bloody revolution, it is no advertisement for revolution. Mr. Laski does not say this—he only suggests it. Let us see how far he is justified.

He admits the abolition of agrarian feudalism, he grants that the peasant owns the land, though herein, if you please, "Russian agrarian life shares all the characteristic features of the new peasant States of Eastern Europe." We may assume that Mr. Laski has never been to Eastern Europe or he could hardly have made such a wild statement. We will commend to his notice, however, recent articles in the "Manchester Guardian" on the discontents of the peasant masses in (a) Poland and (b) Hungary. An appalling picture of poverty and oppression is given in these, and the revolutionary character of the peasant political movements is emphasised. In Bulgaria there was once a peasant government. It was overthrown and bloodily suppressed by a feudal-militarist coup, and ever since the Bulgarian peasantry also has suffered under

the white terror. The same picture applies to Roumania. In all these countries there have been "land reforms," and of all them reliable bourgeois observers have reported that the reforms are a farce and the condition of the poor and middle peasantry deplorable.

So much for the happy family of "the new peasant States of Eastern Europe." In Russia, before the revolution, the peasants held 76 per cent. of the land; in the Ukraine 55 per cent. Today the figures are 97 to 99 per cent. in Great Russia and 96 per cent. in the Ukraine. The State provides funds for the settlement of the land on the poor peasantry. The settlers are freed from taxation for a period of years; their belongings and families are transported at reduced rates, and special credits for the purchase of stock and machinery are granted through the co-operatives. The agricultural co-operative movement is the largest in the world, the number of producers' societies, excluding the Ukraine, being on October 1st, 1926, 33,500, with 5,948,460 members. The whole agricultural co-operation of the U.S.S.R. comprises 5,960 united co-operative societies, grouping 7,379,000 members. The co-operatives, according to Stalin, are the peasant schools of Communism. These are but a few facts taken at random from the Soviet Union Year Book, showing a few advantages which the Russian peasant does not share with the "new peasant States of Eastern Europe." It is in a conglomeration of such facts that Professor Laski may, if he chooses, find reasons to suppose that after all the Russian village may "prove more amenable to Communist ideas than the peasantry of other lands."

The nationalisation of industry is fobbed off with some such remark as that the Workers' Trusts resemble "nothing so much as the railway companies of England and America." Such remarks can only be the product of mere ignorance. Even bourgeois economists now admit the Socialist nature of the trusts, and a recent writer in the "Economist" declared that they were the form which all nationalised industry would certainly assume in the future. That is a nasty blow for the highbrow reformists who sniff at the "crude" Russians and their "rickety" organisation. For it evidently follows that the Russian workers have actually worked out in practice, and not in academic treatises, the first forms of Socialist organisation of production.

The chief feature of the State industries is their rapid expansion compared with the relatively slow development of the weak and inefficient private production which still remains. In 1923-24 and 1925-26 the total value of industrial output in million roubles at pre-war prices was as follows :

STATE INDUSTRY.	1923-24	1925-26
Large	2,383	5,309
Small and handicraft ...	17	24
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	2,400	5,333
	<hr/>	<hr/>

CO-OPERATIVE INDUSTRY	1923-24	1925-26
Large	108	247
Small and handicraft ...	64	91
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	172	338
	<hr/>	<hr/>

PRIVATE AND CONCESSION INDUSTRY		1923-34	1925-26
Large	136	241
Small and handicraft	706	1,011
Total	<u>842</u>	<u>1,252</u>

This table should be convincing enough for anyone. Owing to the rapid expansion of trade all branches of industry have increased, but it is obvious that the rate of increase of State and co-operative industry is far beyond that of private industry, and is fast leaving it behind as a negligible factor. It is indeed only in peasant handicraft and very small industry that private enterprise has a hold at all.

Finally, in the Russian Socialist State all branches of economy are subject to control of the State plan for industry. The anarchy in production is abolished, and we no longer have a battle of monopolies, a desperate fight for ever wider and wider forms of private capitalist control of the national resources, but an ordered, Socialist workers' control of production, with the interests of the toiling masses considered first, last and all the time.

Laski's statement that "the trade unions . . . have nothing of that freedom of action characteristic of England and France; they are rigorously disciplined, and may, on an English analogy, be said to live under the shadow of a drastic and permanent Emergency Powers Act" is not only a deliberate lie, but, in the light of the new British Trades Disputes Act, farcical in the extreme.

There are no restrictions on the liberty of the Russian unions with regard to freedom of organisation, the rights to strike and to picket, to take part in political action on behalf of their members, or any other normal trade union functions. Neither is there any Russian law comparable to E.P.A. in existence whose clauses could possibly apply to the trade unions. Unlike the unions in France and Britain, the Russian unions play a large and ever-increasing political part in the life of the State, they are able to help their members by cultural activities unknown elsewhere, and their share in the control of production is not inconsiderable. Indeed, any attempt to shackle or restrict the rights of the trade unions in regard either to control or criticism would bring disaster to those who attempted it. The trade unions are "the school of Communism" for the Russian workers, and are respected as such.

The question of the trade unions brings us to another of Professor Laski's misconceptions. Throughout his book we find continual references to "democracy," and to alleged attempts at its suppression within the Soviet Union. Indeed, we are told that democracy is the antithesis of proletarian dictatorship. There is a grave error in this point of view. Lenin says of this effort to oppose "democracy" to "dictatorship," "to put the problem thus, outside the question of classes, while pretending to consider the nation as a whole, is really to laugh at the fundamental doctrine of Socialism, namely, the doctrine of the class-struggle. . . . For in no civilised country, in no capitalist country, does there exist democracy in general: there is only bourgeois democracy."

("Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship.")

But within the framework of bourgeois society, opposed to bourgeois democracy, there does exist, in the trade unions, in the co-operatives, in the workers' political parties, another democracy, proletarian democracy. This democracy is the only real one to the worker, for it affects him in almost every action of his daily working life, while parliamentary democracy, parliamentary forms, leave him untouched. The feature of the class-struggle in the decay of capitalism is the narrowing down of bourgeois democracy, the "gerrymandering of the constitution" in the interests of capitalism, restriction of freedom of speech, press and assembly, while proletarian democratic organisation expands, groups together wider and wider millions of workers, comes ever more frequently into conflict with "bourgeois democracy" which attempts to stem the flood, until we have the final conflict, the triumph of the proletariat. In this sense we have capitalist statesmen in Britain referring to the trade unions as a "State within the State," which must be fought, as a threat to "true" democracy, i.e., bourgeois democracy. This is essentially correct. The capitalist dictator has a keener eye for reality than the reformist professor.

The victory of the workers over the capitalists means the triumph of proletarian democracy over bourgeois democracy, it means the dictatorship of the proletarian democratic State and the destruction of the bourgeois democratic State. This is precisely what is happening in Russia, where, as Lenin said, the workers' dictatorship simply means the class-struggle when the workers have got the upper

hand and are the ruling power. The trade unions, the co-operatives, the Soviets, the youth organisations, and finally the Communist Party as director and unifier, these are the expressions of victorious proletarian democracy. In Britain dictatorship would mean the same, with, in place of the Soviets, the Trades Councils and Councils of Action, which have already played such an important role in the workers' struggle.

Ah, says Professor Laski, determined to have one last hit, but the workers "are unprepared to starve quietly under a proletarian dictatorship which cannot offer proof that the ideals of Communism will ultimately triumph." How right you are, professor, only the workers are not *under* a dictatorship, they *are* the dictatorship, it is they who will make the ideals of Communism ultimately triumph. In Russia they did not starve quietly. They starved noisily and vigorously until the causes of starvation were defeated by them, by the workers, and to-day these same workers are busily and actively engaged in constructing Socialism to the confusion of their enemies and of all purblind professors.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMMUNISM AS A "RELIGION"

The success of the Russian workers in defeating their enemies and laying the foundations of a Socialist State in face of the hostility of world capitalism, the heroism of revolutionary workers in all countries, the victories of the small British Communist Party, have seriously upset those intellectuals who think themselves so superior to the common worker. When the bourgeoisie was revolutionary it was rationalist and materialist, in the days of its decadence it seeks for explanations of the surprising in mysticism, in spiritualism; it turns to the "consolations of religion" and the supernatural. So the latest intellectual game is to explain the revolutionary enthusiasm and victories of the workers as "religion."

"The compelling strength of Communism," writes Mr. Laski, "is that it has a faith as vigorous, as fanatic and compelling as any in the history of religions." Another professor to write pompous nonsense about "religious Bolshevism" is Bertrand Russell, a third is J. M. Keynes. That Communist workers, that all class-conscious workers for that matter, are capable of devotion, self-sacrifice, and great courage and endurance is a fact clear to the unprejudiced observer, but that these qualities in themselves form a religion, or brand a man as a religious fanatic, is a new definition of those terms to us. Neither in the fact that the Party of the working class uses the scientific weapon of the working class—Marxism, do we see any evidence of religious dogma. Marxism is a scientific attitude to life, and no sane Com-

unist regards the words of Marx, Engels or even Lenin as a "Bible," as divinely inspired authority or a revelation of new life. We treat their books with the respect due to great men and great thinkers, whose works have been justified by history; that is all.

When Mr. Laski says that the atmosphere of Communist effort "gives something of the mental and moral excitement that is felt by the reader of the poetry inspired by the French Revolution, the unconquerable hope, the heedless and instinctive generosity, which makes great ends seem worth working for because they are attainable by ourselves," we can have no quarrel with him. His words are fully justified and finely true, but that out of this generous spirit which is striving towards the destruction of the old world and the building of the new, he should try to erect a narrow, gloomy and fanatical religious creed, is a shameful distortion. Certainly there must be few ordinary working men, interested in politics and the destiny of their class, who have not in their hearts echoed something like the words of Wordsworth on the French Revolution, "Great was it in that dawn to be alive." And these men are nearer to the truth of things than all the sneering professors who seek for "religious" explanations of the ordinary phenomena of the oppressed human mind in revolt against its chains.

"Communism," our professor tells us, "has made its way by its idealism and not its realism, by its spiritual promise, not its materialistic prospect." We would take off our hat to the compliment did we not feel briefly like characterising this condescending nonsense as so much "highly-

coloured" rot. Indeed, the professor's previous statement that the workers would be "unprepared to starve quietly under a proletarian dictatorship which cannot offer proof that the ideals of Communism will ultimately triumph," is a blatant contradiction of this. In 1926 the miners did not follow the lead of the Communist Party against their own leaders because of the "spiritual promise" of an ideal Communism, they did so because then and there they considered Communist policy the right one for their own interests. If all that the Communists had to do was to spread spiritual promises theirs would be an easy lot, and Mr. Laski's profitable little volume unwritten.

The workers rally to the Communist Party because of the Communists' devotion to their day-to-day struggle against capitalist violence and oppression, to which their own leaders and the whole gang of moral intellectuals would abandon them in the name of "peaceful evolution." The life of the worker under capitalism is "nasty, brutish, and short." He has no time in the struggle for existence to sit still and contemplate the moral excellences of academic seclusion. He is not able to stand still and think how nice it would be if capitalism would but give him the opportunity to satisfy his legitimate desires, because all the time capitalism is hitting him hard between the eyes. And when some of these exasperated workers begin to call on their fellows to strike back, to defend themselves by defeating the enemy, Professor Laski comes along and admires their pluck, calls them religious fanatics, and mournfully remarks that Communism "is a creed in which there is intellectual error, moral blindness, social per-

versity. Religions make their way despite these things.”

We may close this examination by remarking only that Communism will make its way despite the opinions of Professor Laski, despite the attacks of other “Labour intellectuals” more prejudiced than himself, and despite the persecutions of capitalist dictatorship. It will in time rally to its side the vast majority of the working people of this country, and, having overthrown capitalism, establish the rule of the workers and the first Communist Republic of Great Britain.

