

***WHITHER
ENGLAND?***

LEON TROTSKY

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Title: Whither England?

Date of first publication: 1925

Author: Leon Trotsky (1879-1940)

Date first posted: June 25, 2017

Date last updated: June 25, 2017

Faded Page eBook #20170650

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By
LEON TROTSKY



1925
INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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PREFACE FOR AMERICA

THE present work is devoted to a consideration of the ultimate destinies of England, a subject that may be of interest to the American reader for two reasons: first, because England occupies a very prominent position in the world; second, because the United States and Great Britain may be regarded as twin stars, one of which grows dim the more rapidly as the brilliancy of the other increases.

The inference to which I am led by my study is that England is heading rapidly toward an era of great revolutionary upheavals. Of course, the English secret service men and their American disciples will declare that I am engaging in propaganda for a proletarian revolution, as if it were possible for an outsider, by means of pamphlets, to alter the course of evolution of a great nation! As a matter of fact, I am simply attempting, by analyzing the most important factors in the historical development of England, to explain the historical path by which that country will be made to encounter obstacles—internal as well as external—to its continued existence. To accuse me of revolutionary meddling in the affairs of foreign countries, on the basis of such statements, would be almost equivalent to accusing the astronomer of bringing about a solar eclipse because he has predicted its occurrence.

But do not understand me as saying that astronomical phenomena are parallel to the phenomena of society. The former are accomplished outside of us, the latter through our agency. Which does not mean, however, that historical events may be achieved by our mere wish or directed with the assistance of pamphlets. Far more books and newspapers have come out and are still coming out with the avowed purpose of defending and maintaining capitalism—including British capitalism—than have ever been published to attack it. Ideas of any kind may be effective only when they are

based on the material conditions of social evolution. England is headed for revolution because she has already entered the stage of capitalist disintegration. If the guilty must be found, if we must ask: what accelerates England's progress on the path of revolution, the answer is, not Moscow, but New York.

This answer may appear paradoxical, yet it is the simple truth. The powerful and constantly growing influence of the United States on world affairs is rendering more and more impossible and hopeless the situation of British industry, British trade, British finances, and British diplomacy.

The United States cannot but tend to expand in the world market, failing which its own industry will be threatened with apoplexy because of the richness of its blood. The United States can only expand at the expense of the other exporting countries, which means, particularly, England. In view of the patented Dawes method of harnessing the economic life of an entire mighty nation in the traces of American supervision, it almost provokes a smile to hear people speak of the revolutionary significance of one "Moscow" pamphlet or another. Under the cover of what is called the pacification and rehabilitation of Europe, immense revolutionary and military conflicts are preparing for the morrow. Mr. Julius Barnes, who enjoys the confidence of the Department of Commerce at Washington, suggests that the European debtors of the United States be assigned to exploit such portions of the world market as will not bring the impoverished and indebted European cousins of the United States into competition with the expansion of their creditor across the seas. In aiding to restore the European monetary system, the United States is simply exploding one inflated illusion after the other, by giving the Europeans an opportunity to express their poverty and dependence in the language of a firm currency. By exerting pressure on its debtors, or giving them an extension, by granting or refusing credit to European countries, the United States is placing them in a gradually tightening economic dependence, in the last analysis an

ineluctable situation, which is the necessary condition for inevitable social and revolutionary disturbances. The Communist International, viewed in the light of this knowledge, may be considered an almost conservative institution as compared with Wall Street. Morgan, Dawes, Julius Barnes—these are among the artificers of the approaching European revolution.

In its work in Europe, and elsewhere, the United States is generally acting in cooperation with England, through the agency of England. But this collaboration means for England an increasing loss of independence. England is leading the United States to hegemony, as it were. Relinquishing their world rule, the diplomats and magnates of England are recommending their former clients to deal with the new master of the world. The common action of the United States and England is the cloak for a profound world-wide antagonism between these two powers, by which the threatening conflicts of the perhaps not remote future are being prepared.

This brief preface is not the place in which to speak of the fate of America itself. There is no doubt that capital today nowhere feels itself so strong as in America. American capitalism grew marvelously, chiefly at the expense of the European belligerents at first, now by reason of their “return to peace,” their “rehabilitation.” But in spite of all its huge power, American capitalism is not a self-contained factor, but a part of world economy. Furthermore, the more powerful the industry of the United States becomes, the more intimate and profound becomes its dependence on the world market. Driving the European countries farther and farther down their blind alley, American capitalism is laying the foundation for wars and revolutionary upheavals, which in their frightful rebound will not fail to strike the economic system of the United States also. Such is the prospect for America. In revolutionary development, America does not stand in the front rank; the American bourgeoisie will still enjoy the privilege of witnessing the destruction of its older European

sister. But the inevitable hour will strike for American capitalism also: the American oil and steel magnates, trust and export leaders, the multimillionaires of New York, Chicago and San Francisco, are performing—though unconsciously—their predestined revolutionary function. And the American proletariat will ultimately discharge theirs.

L. TROTSKY.

Moscow, May 24, 1925.

FOREWORD

ENGLAND at present faces a crisis, a greater crisis, perhaps than is faced by any other capitalist country, and England's crisis—to a very great extent—means a crisis for four continents and at least the beginning of a crisis for the fifth, at present the most powerful continent, America. But the political development of England presents remarkable peculiarities, the result of all its past history, which now lie directly in the way of its future growth. Without burdening our exposition with figures and details which the reader may easily find in works of reference and in special studies of the economic policy of England, we have undertaken to isolate and describe those historical factors and circumstances which must determine the history of England in the present epoch. We speak of England only, not of the British Empire; of the mother country, not of the colonies and dominions. The latter have their own paths of development, diverging more and more from those of the home country.

Our exposition, for the most part, will be critical and polemical in character. History is made by men; the evaluation of the living forces producing the history of the present cannot be otherwise than active. In order to learn what are the classes, parties, and party leaders engaged in the struggle, and what the morrow will bring for them, we must work our way through a mass of political complications, lies, hypocrisies, of an all-pervading parliamentary "cant". Under these circumstances, the polemical method is the necessary method of political analysis. The question we ask ourselves, and to which we attempt to give an answer, is quite objective: "Whither England?"

WHITHER ENGLAND?

Whither England?

CHAPTER I

ENGLAND'S DECLINE

CAPITALIST England was launched by the political revolution in the Seventeenth Century and the so-called industrial revolution at the end of the Eighteenth Century. England emerged from the epoch of the civil war and Cromwell's dictatorship, a little nation, with hardly 1,500,000 families; it entered the imperialist war in 1914 an empire, embracing within its boundaries one-fifth of all mankind.

The English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century, of the Puritan school, the hard school of Cromwell, prepared the English people, particularly its middle classes, for their approaching world function. After the middle of the Eighteenth Century, the universal might of England is indisputable. England rules on the seas and on the world market which is its creation.

In 1826, an English conservative publicist depicted the era of industry as follows: "The age which now discloses itself to our view promises to be the age of industry. . . . By industry alliances shall be dictated and national friendships shall be formed. . . . The prospects which are now opening to England almost exceed the boundaries of thought, and can be measured by no standard found in history. . . . The manufacturing industry of England may be fairly computed as four times greater than that of all the other continents taken

collectively, and sixteen such continents as Europe could not manufacture so much cotton as England does. . . .'^[1] The tremendous industrial preponderance of England over the rest of Europe and over the rest of the world was the basis of its wealth and of its unprecedented world position. The industrial century was simultaneously the century of Great Britain's world hegemony.

From 1850 to 1880, England was the industrial school for Europe and America. But this very fact undermined its special monopolistic position. With the 80's, England begins perceptibly to weaken. New nations, particularly Germany, enter the world arena. Simultaneously, the capitalist primacy of England begins for the first time to reveal its unfavorable and conservative aspects. Powerful blows are delivered by German competition to the doctrine of free trade.

The crowding out of England from its position of world ruler thus begins to appear clearly as early as the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, giving rise, at the beginning of the present century, to a condition of internal uncertainty and ferment in the upper classes, and profound molecular processes, basically of revolutionary character, in the working class. Mighty conflicts of labor and capital played the chief part in these processes. Not only the aristocratic position of English industry in the world was shaken, but also the privileged position of the labor aristocracy in England. The years 1911-1913 were a period of unparalleled class battles waged by mine workers, railroad workers, and the transport workers in general. In August 1911, there developed the general strike on the railroads. In those days the vague specter of revolution hovered over England. The leaders exerted all their strength to paralyze the movement, under the slogan of "patriotism"; this was at the time of the Agadir incident, menacing war with Germany. The Prime Minister, as we know now, summoned the labor leaders to a secret conference and called upon them to save the fatherland. And the leaders did all they could to strengthen the bourgeoisie and in this way prepare the imperialist war.

The war of 1914-1918 interrupted this revolutionary process and stopped the growth of the strike wave. Ending in the destruction of Germany, it seemed to restore to England the rôle of world hegemony. But it soon became apparent that instead of retarding the decline of England, the war had actually accelerated this decline.

In the years 1917-1920, the English labor movement entered into an extremely stormy phase. Strikes assumed immense proportions. MacDonald was signing manifestoes from which he now recoils with shudders. Only at the end of 1920 this phase terminated with "Black Friday", when the leaders of the Triple Alliance of coal-miners, railroad and transport workers betrayed the general strike. The energy of the masses, frustrated in the economic field, turned to the political sphere. The Labor Party seemed to spring up overnight.

What is the cause of this shift in the external and internal situation of Great Britain?

During the war, the enormous economic preponderance of the United States was developed and revealed in its full proportions. The emergence of that country from the stage of an overseas provincialism suddenly forced Great Britain into the second place.

The "cooperation" of America and Great Britain is at present the universal expression of the more and more pronounced outdistancing of England by America.

This "cooperation" may at any specific moment be directed against a third party: none the less, the fundamental world antagonism is that between England and America, and all other antagonisms, perhaps more bitter at the present moment, and more immediately threatening, may be understood and evaluated only on the basis of the Anglo-American antagonism. The Anglo-American "cooperation" thus prepares war, as an epoch of reforms prepares the epoch of revolution. The very fact that England has entered the path of "reforms", *i.e.*, concessions forced from her by America, will clarify the situation, and shift it from the stage of

cooperation to that of opposition.

The productive forces of England, particularly its living productive force, the proletariat, no longer correspond to the position of England on the world market. Thence the chronic state of unemployment.

The commercial, industrial and naval hegemony of England has in the past almost automatically assured the bonds between the various portions of the Empire. The New Zealand Minister, Reeves, wrote before 1900: "Two things maintain the present relation of the colonies with England; *first*, their faith in the generally peaceful intentions of England's policy; *second*, their faith in England's rule of the seas." Of course, the decisive factor is the second. The loss of hegemony on the seas proceeds parallel with the development of the centrifugal forces within the Empire. The preservation of the unity of the Empire is more and more threatened by the diverging interests of the dominions and the struggles of the colonies.

The advances in military technology seem to militate particularly against Great Britain's security. The growth of aviation and of the instruments of chemical warfare have completely annihilated the immense historical advantage of England's insular position. America, that great island, bounded by oceans on either hand, remains inaccessible. But the most important living centers of England, particularly London, may be reduced in the course of a few hours of murderous bombardment from the air, at the hands of a continental power.

Having lost the advantages of an inaccessible isolation, the English Government has been obliged to engage more and more directly in purely European matters, and in European military agreements. The overseas possessions of England, its dominions, are not at all interested in this policy. They are concerned with the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, in part with the Atlantic, but by no means with the Channel. This divergence of interests will expand, at the first clash, into a yawning abyss in which the bonds of empire will

be swallowed up. Foreseeing this condition, the British policy is paralyzed by internal friction, leading to an essentially passive attitude, and consequently to an aggravation of the Empire's world problems.

Military expenditures, at the same time, must consume a greater and greater part of the diminished national income of England.

One of the conditions of "cooperation" between England and America is the repayment of the gigantic British debt to America, while there is no hope of England's ever obtaining a repayment of the debts incurred by the continental states. The economic alignment of forces is thus further shifted in favor of America.

On March 5, 1925, the Bank of England raised its discount rate from four to five per cent. following the action of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, which had raised its rate from three to three and one-half per cent. In the City this served as a harsh reminder of its financial dependence on its transatlantic cousin. But what else could they do? The American gold supply amounts to about \$4,500,000,000, while the English does not exceed \$750,000,000, *i.e.*, about one-sixth as much. America has a gold currency, while England is merely making desperate efforts to reestablish one. It is therefore natural to find that when America raises its discount rate from three to three and one-half per cent., England is obliged to fall in with a rise of from four to five per cent. This measure reacts to the disadvantage of English trade and industry, by rendering more costly its necessary supplies. In this way, America is showing England her place at every step, on the one hand by the methods of diplomatic pressure, on the other by measures of a banking nature, always and everywhere a pressure of America's gigantic economic preponderance.^[2]

At the same time, the English press uneasily observes a "gigantic progress" in various branches of German industry, particularly in the German shipbuilding industry. The London *Times* writes on March 10: "It is probable that one of the

factors which makes for the ability of German yards to compete is the complete 'trustification' of material, from the mine to the fitted plate, from the financing bank to the sale of tickets. This system is not without its effect on wages and the cost of living. When all these forces are turned into the same direction, the margin for a lowering of costs becomes very considerable." In other words, the *Times* here notes that the organic advantages of the more modern German industry are again being revealed in all their strength, as soon as the industry of Germany obtains an opportunity to give an outward sign of life.

Of course, there is reason to believe that the orders for ships were given to Hamburg shipyards with the special object of frightening the trade unions and thus preparing the ground for exerting pressure upon them for the purpose of lowering wages and increasing the length of the working day. It is hardly necessary to point out that such a maneuver is more than plausible, but this by no means weakens our general observations on the inefficient organization of English industry and the large overhead expenditures resulting therefrom.

For fully four years the number of unemployed officially registered in England has not been less than 1,135,000; this number usually fluctuates between 1,250,000 and 1,500,000. Chronic unemployment is the most crying expression of an unsatisfactory system; also, it is its Achilles' heel. The unemployment insurance, begun in 1920, was considered at the time a purely temporary measure. Yet, unemployment has been constant; the insurance has ceased to be insurance merely; the doles given to the unemployed are by no means covered by the sums paid in for the purpose. Unemployment in England is no longer the "normal" reserve army, decreasing and increasing by turns, constantly changing its membership; it is now a permanent social stratum, born of industry in its prosperity and left without ground to stand on in its decline. It is a gouty induration in the social organism, owing to poor metabolism.

The Chairman of the F. B. I. (Federation of British Industries), Colonel Willey, declared early in April that the earnings of industrial capital in the past two years had been so low as not to encourage industrialists to develop their industries. The plants do not yield greater dividends than securities with fixed interest (national loans, etc.). "Our national problem is not a production problem, but a sales problem." Now how is a sales problem to be solved? Of course, by producing more cheaply than others. But this requires either a radical reorganization of industry, or a reduction of taxes, or a reduction of wages, or a combination of all three. A lowering of wages, which would hardly result in a great decrease of production costs, would meet with stubborn resistance, for the workers are already fighting for higher pay. It is impossible to lower taxes, for the debts must be paid, the gold currency restored, the apparatus of empire maintained, and besides, 1,500,000 unemployed must be supported. All this goes into the price of the product. As for reorganizing industry, that is possible only by introducing fresh capital. But low profits are forcing free capital into government and other loans.

Stanley Machin, Chairman of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, recently declared that the solution of the unemployment problem could be found in emigration. The amiable fatherland calls upon a million or more of its toilers, who together with their families, count several millions of citizens, to submit to being bundled into boats and borne off to other countries. The complete bankruptcy of the capitalist system is here admitted without circumlocution.

We must consider the internal life of England, in connection with the above described prospect of a sharp and ever-increasing decline in Great Britain's world rôle, for, while that country still retains intact its possessions, its apparatus and traditions of world rule, the nation is in fact being steadily driven into a secondary position.

The destruction of the Liberal Party crowns the century-long development of capitalist economy and bourgeois

society. England's loss of world hegemony has led entire branches of English industry into a blind alley, and has dealt a mortal blow to independent industries and small trading capital, which are the basis of liberalism. Free trade has been driven into an impasse.

In the meantime, the internal stability of the capitalist system was to a great extent determined by the division of labor and responsibility between Conservatives and Liberals. The breakdown of Liberalism also expresses all the other contradictions of bourgeois England's world situation, and likewise, the source of the system's internal instability. The Labor Party, in its upper ranks, is politically very close to the Liberals, but it is incapable of restoring to English Parliamentarism its former stability, for the party itself, in its present form, is merely a provisional stage in the revolutionary development of the working class. MacDonald's leadership is not more secure than Lloyd George's.

Karl Marx counted at the beginning of the 50's on an early elimination of the Conservative Party, and on the fact that the further course of political evolution would take the form of a struggle between Liberalism and Socialism. This prediction was based on the assumption of a swift growth of the revolutionary movement in Europe and in England. Just as in Russia, for example, when the Constitutional-Democratic Party, under the pressure of the revolution, became the sole party of the landowners and the bourgeoisie, English Liberalism would have absorbed the Conservative Party, thus becoming the sole party of property, if the revolutionary advance of the proletariat would have grown in the second half of the Nineteenth Century. But Marx's prediction was made on the very eve of a new period of immense capitalist development (1851-1873). Chartism completely disappeared. The labor movement assumed the form of trade-unionism. The ruling classes were enabled to express their contradictions in the form of a struggle between the Liberal and Conservative Parties. In the parliamentary

pendulum, swinging from right to left and from left to right, the bourgeoisie had a means of enabling the opposition tendencies of the working masses to express themselves.

German competition was the first serious warning to British world hegemony, and inflicted the first serious injuries. Free Trade encountered the superior German technique and organization. English Liberalism was only the political generalization of free trade. The Manchester School had occupied a dominant position since the time of the bourgeois Election Reforms of 1832, and the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846. For half a century after this time, Free Trade was an unalterable platform. Accordingly, the leading rôle fell to the Liberals, the workers trailing behind them. With the middle of the 70's, poor business sets in; Free Trade is discredited; the Protectionist movement begins; the bourgeoisie is conquered more and more by imperialist tendencies. Symptoms of decay in the Liberal Party already became apparent under Gladstone, when the group of liberals and radicals with Chamberlain at the head raised the banner of Protectionism and joined with the Conservatives. Beginning with 1895 business improved, retarding the political transformation of England, and at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, Liberalism, being the party of the middle bourgeoisie, was already broken. Lord Rosebery, its leader, came out openly for imperialism. However, the Liberal Party, before its final elimination, was still destined for another period of power. Under the influence of the manifest decline in the hegemony of British capital, on the one hand, and of the powerful revolutionary movement in Russia, on the other hand, the working class in England became politically invigorated, and, in its insistence on the creation of a Parliamentary Labor Party, brought grist to the mill of the Liberal position just when it was needed. Liberalism again came into power in 1906. But in the very nature of the case, its success could not be of long duration. The political action of the proletariat leads to a further growth of the Labor Party. Up to 1906 the number of Labor Party representatives had

increased more or less uniformly with the increase of the Liberal representation. After 1906, the Labor Party began to grow obviously at the expense of the Liberals.

Formally, it was the Liberal Party which declared the war, through Lloyd George. But actually, the imperialist war, from which England was not able to rescue the time-honored system of Free Trade, was destined inevitably to strengthen the Conservatives, who were the most consistent party of imperialism. This finally prepared the conditions that brought the Labor Party to the fore.

The organ of the Labor Party, the *Daily Herald*, ceaselessly ruminating on the question of unemployment, draws from the capitalist admissions quoted by us in the previous paragraphs the general inference that since English capitalists prefer making loans of money to foreign governments instead of expanding their own industries, the English workers have nothing left for them but to produce without the capitalists. This inference, speaking in general, is correct; but it is not offered as a means of arousing the workers to drive out the capitalists, but only in order to spur the capitalists to “progressive efforts”. We shall observe that this is the basis of the entire Labor Party policy. With this purpose the Webbs write their books, MacDonald delivers his speeches, the *Daily Herald* editors print their daily articles. And yet, if these terrible warnings have any effect on the capitalists, it is precisely in the opposite direction. Every sensible English bourgeois knows that behind these mock-heroic threats by the leaders of the Labor Party lies the real danger from the side of the profoundly discontented proletarian masses, and for this reason our wise bourgeois infers that he must not tie up any more resources in industry.

The bourgeoisie’s fear of revolution is not always and under all circumstances a “progressive” factor. Thus, there can be no doubt that the English economic system would obtain immense advantages from a cooperation of England and Russia. But this would presuppose a broadly conceived plan, large credits, the adaptation of a very large portion of

British industry to the needs of Russia. The obstacle to this consummation is the bourgeoisie's fear of revolution, the capitalists' uncertainty as to the morrow.

The fear of revolution has hitherto driven English capitalists along the path of concessions and readjustments, for the material resources of English capitalism have always been unlimited or have at least seemed so. The impact of European revolutions has always been clearly expressed in the social development of England. They have always led to reforms, so long as the English bourgeoisie, owing to its world leadership, still had in its hands great resources for its maneuvers. It was in a position to legalize the trade unions, to abolish the Corn Laws, to raise wages, to extend the suffrage, to introduce social reforms, etc., etc. But now, in view of the present radically weakened world situation of England, the threat of revolution is no longer capable of driving the bourgeoisie forward; on the contrary, it paralyzes the last remnant of industrial initiative. The thing now needed is no longer a menace of revolution, but revolution itself.

The factors and circumstances enumerated above are by no means accidental or temporary in character. They all move in the same direction, that of systematically aggravating the international and internal situation of Great Britain, imposing upon that situation the character of historical inevitability. The contradictions undermining the social structure of England will necessarily be aggravated as time goes on. We are not prepared to predict the precise rate of this process, but it will be measured in any case in terms of a few years, at most in half-decades, certainly not in decades. The general outlook is such as to oblige us first of all to put the question: Will it be possible to organize a Communist Party in England, which shall be strong enough and which shall have sufficiently large masses behind it, to enable it, at the psychological moment, to carry out the necessary practical conclusions of this ever-sharpening crisis? This question involves the entire destiny of England.

[1] Quoted by Max Beer: *History of British Socialism*, vol. i, p. 283.

[2] Since these lines were written, the English Cabinet has resorted to a number of measures of a legislative and financial character to assure the transition to a gold basis which is represented as a “great victory” for English capitalism. As a matter of fact, nothing could express the decline of England more sharply than this financial achievement. England has been obliged to accomplish this costly operation under the pressure of the sound American dollar and the financial policy of its own dominions, which were more and more basing their transactions on the dollar, thus ignoring the pound. England could not accomplish the leap to a gold basis without immense financial “assistance” from the United States, and this means that the destiny of the pound falls into a state of direct dependence on New York. The United States is thus supplied with an instrument of powerful financial reprisals. England must pay a high rate of interest for this dependence, a rate which must be imposed on her already suffering industries. In order to prevent her gold from being exported, England is obliged to decrease her exports in goods. She cannot at present refuse to shift to a gold basis without hastening her own decline on the financial world market. This ruinous combination of circumstances produces feelings of acute discomfort among the ruling circles

of England, and is expressed in bitter but impotent wailings in the Conservative press. The *Daily Mail* writes: "In passing to a gold basis, the English Government is enabling the Federal Bank (practically under the influence of the United States Government) *to bring about a money crisis in England at any moment. . . .* The English Government is subordinating the entire financial policy of the country to another nation. . . . The British Empire is becoming mortgaged to the United States." "Thanks to Churchill," writes the conservative *Daily Express*, "England falls under the heel of American bankers." The *Daily Chronicle* puts the matter still more strongly: "England is actually brought down to the level of a forty-ninth state of the United States." It would be impossible to put the thing more clearly! All these harsh revelations, which show that there is no hope and no future, are answered by Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the statement that England has no other recourse than to bring her financial system into agreement "with reality". Churchill's words mean: We have become immeasurably poorer, the United States immeasurably richer; we must either fight America or submit to her; in making the destinies of the pound depend on the American banks, we are only expressing our general economic débâcle in terms of the gold basis; water will not rise higher than its level; we must be "in accord with reality".

CHAPTER II

MR. BALDWIN AND "GRADUALNESS"

ON March 12, 1925, Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister of England and leader of the Conservative Party, delivered a long speech on the destinies of England before a Conservative audience at Leeds. This speech, like many other expressions on the part of Mr. Baldwin, was filled with nervous apprehension. We consider this apprehension to be well founded from the point of view of Mr. Baldwin's party, while we ourselves approach these questions from a somewhat different angle. Mr. Baldwin is afraid of socialism and in his proofs of the dangers and difficulties attending the path to socialism, he makes a somewhat unexpected attempt to invoke the authority of the author of these lines. This gives us, we hope, a right to answer Mr. Baldwin without the risk of being accused of interference in the internal affairs of Great Britain.

Baldwin considers—and not without reason—that the greatest danger to the system supported by him is the growth of the Labor Party. It appears that Mr. Baldwin hopes for victory, for "our (Conservative) principles are in closer accord with the character and traditions of our people than any traditions or any principles of violent change." Nevertheless, the Conservative leader reminds his listeners that the verdict of the last election was by no means a final one. Baldwin, of course, is certain that socialism cannot be carried out. But since he is in a state of nervous confusion, and since, furthermore, he is speaking to an audience already convinced of the impossibility of socialism, Mr. Baldwin's proofs in this connection are not characterized by great originality. He reminds the Conservative audience that people are not born free or equal or brothers. Appealing to each mother who is present, he asks: Were her children born

equal? His answer is a modest and contented laughter from his audience. To be sure, the masses of the English people had already heard such reasoning from Mr. Baldwin's great-grandparents in answer to their demand for the right to enjoy freedom of religion and to construct churches of their own. The same evidence was advanced later against the demand of equality before the law; still later, not so long ago, against the right of universal suffrage. People are not born equal, Mr. Baldwin; then why should they answer before the same courts and be judged by the same laws? We might also point out to Mr. Baldwin that though people are not born absolutely alike, mothers nevertheless usually feed their unlike children at the same table and make every effort in their power to see to it that each of them is provided with a pair of shoes. Of course, a wicked stepmother might act differently.

We might also explain to Mr. Baldwin that socialism is not at all proposing for itself the task of creating complete anatomical, physiological and mental equality, but merely to assure all human beings of uniform material conditions of existence. We shall not, however, burden our readers by expounding any further these rudimentary notions. Mr. Baldwin himself, if he is interested, may turn to the proper sources and, since he is—by reason of his general view of life—more inclined to old and purely British authors, we may recommend to him Robert Owen, who, though having absolutely no idea of the class dynamics of capitalist society, nevertheless provides extremely valuable general information as to the advantages of socialism.

But the socialist goal, however objectionable it may be, does not frighten Mr. Baldwin so much as the use of violence in order to attain that goal. Mr. Baldwin discerns two tendencies in the Labor Party. One of these, according to his words, is represented by Mr. Sidney Webb, who has recognized the “inevitability of gradualness”. But there also exists another type of leader, like Cook or Wheatley, particularly after the latter left his post in the Ministry, who believe in violence. In general, Mr. Baldwin says, the

responsibilities of government have always exerted a redeeming influence over the leaders of the Labor Party and have induced them, like the Webbs, to recognize the undesirability of revolutionary methods and the advantage of gradual changes. At this point, Mr. Baldwin made a number of mental incursions into Russian affairs in order to reinforce his rather meager arsenal of evidence against British socialism.

We shall now quote literally from the *Times* report of his speech.

“The Prime Minister quoted Trotsky, who, he said, had discovered in the last few years and written that ‘the more easily the Russian proletariat pass through the revolutionary crisis, the harder becomes now its constructive work.’ Trotsky had also said what no leader of the extremists had yet said in England: ‘We must learn to work more efficiently.’ ‘I should like to know,’ said Mr. Baldwin, ‘how many votes would be given for revolution in England if people were told that the only (!?) result would be that they would have to work more efficiently. (*Laughter and cheers.*) Trotsky said, in his book, ‘In Russia before and after the Revolution, there existed and still exists unchanged Russian human nature (!).’” Trotsky, the man of action, studied realities. He had slowly and reluctantly discovered what Mr. Webb discovered two years ago, the inevitability of gradualness (*laughter and applause*).’”

It is indeed very flattering to be recommended to the Conservative audience at Leeds: mortal man could not ask for more. It is almost equally flattering to be mentioned in the same breath with Mr. Sidney Webb, the prophet of gradualness. Yet, before accepting this distinction, we should not be averse to receiving from Mr. Baldwin a number of authoritative explanations.

It has never occurred, either to my teachers or to myself, even before the experience “of the last few years”, to deny the fact of “gradualness” in nature or in human society, in its economy, politics, or morals. But we should wish to have

greater clearness as to the nature of these gradual changes. Thus, to take an example which lies close to Mr. Baldwin, as a Protectionist, we are perfectly ready to admit that Germany, gradually entering into the field of world competition during the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, was becoming England's most dangerous rival. As is well known, this was the path that led to war. Does Mr. Baldwin consider war to be an expression of gradual, evolutionary methods? During the war, the Conservative Party demanded the "destruction of the Huns" and the overthrow of the German Kaiser with the force of the British sword. Those who advocate the theory of gradual changes should—I suppose—have rather depended on a general softening of the German nature and a gradual improvement of the mutual relations between Germany and England. Yet Mr. Baldwin, in the years 1914-1918, as far as we remember, categorically rejected the application of the method of gradual changes to Anglo-German relations, and made every effort to solve the question with the aid of the greatest possible quantity of explosive materials. We submit that dynamite and lignite may hardly be considered instruments of a conservative-evolutionary mode of action.

Pre-war Germany, in turn, had not emerged one fine morning in shining armor from the sea-foam. Germany had developed gradually out of its former economic insignificance. This gradual process had not been without its interruptions: thus, we have the wars waged by Prussia against Denmark in 1864, against Austria in 1866, against France in 1870, which played a tremendous rôle in enhancing its power, and afforded it the possibility of successful competition with England on a world-wide scale.

Wealth, the result of human labor, is doubtless accumulated with a certain gradualness. But perhaps Mr. Baldwin will join us in admitting that the growth of the wealth of the United States in the years of the War presents immense leaps and bounds. The gradual nature of the accumulation was sharply interrupted by the catastrophe of war which

reduced Europe to poverty and led to a mad expansion of wealth in America.

Mr. Baldwin himself has told, in a Parliamentary speech devoted to the trade unions, of the leaps and bounds in his own private life. When a young man, Mr. Baldwin managed a factory, which was handed down from generation to generation, in which workers were born and died, and which therefore is a perfect example of the rule of the principle of a patriarchal gradualness. But there came a coal-miners' strike, the factory could not work because of the lack of coal, and Mr. Baldwin was obliged to shut it down and to turn out on the street a thousand of "his" workers. To be sure, Baldwin will blame this on the ill will of the miners, who obliged him to abandon this time-honored conservative principle. The miners will probably blame the ill will of their employers, who obliged them to undertake a great strike, which constituted an interruption in the monotonous process of exploitation. Yet, in the last analysis, subjective motives are not very important in a given case: it is sufficient for us to note that gradual changes in various domains of life proceed side by side with catastrophic changes, explosions, sudden leaps, upward or downward. The long process of jealousy between two governments *gradually* prepares war; the discontent of the exploited workers *gradually* prepares a strike; the poor management of a bank *gradually* prepares bankruptcy.

The honored Conservative leader may, to be sure, reply that such interruptions of the gradual process as war and bankruptcy, the impoverishment of Europe and the enrichment of America at Europe's expense, are very tragic and that we should make every effort to fight such sudden changes, generally speaking. We can reply to this only by pointing out the fact that the history of nations is in large measure the history of wars and that the history of economic growth is embellished with bankruptcy statistics. Mr. Baldwin would probably answer that such are the properties of human nature. This we should admit. But it is equivalent to saying that human "nature" evidently includes gradual evolution and

catastrophic changes.

However, the history of man is not only the history of wars, but also the history of revolutions. Feudal rights, which prevailed for centuries and under which the economic advancement was held up for further centuries, were wiped out in France by the single blow of August 4, 1789. The German Revolution, on November 9, 1918, destroyed German absolutism, which had been undermined by the struggle of the proletariat and demoralized by the military successes of the Allies. We have already pointed out that one of the war slogans of the British Government, of which Mr. Baldwin was then a member, was: "War to the complete destruction of German militarism!" Does not Mr. Baldwin think that the military catastrophe, brought about by Mr. Baldwin's aid, prepared a revolutionary catastrophe in Germany, and that both these events were somewhat of a disturbance in the process of gradual historical changes? One might raise the objection that German militarism is to be blamed for all these, with the evil ambitions of the Kaiser to boot. We are ready to believe that if Mr. Baldwin were creating the world he would people it with the most benevolent Kaisers and the most good-natured militarisms. But that was not the condition facing the English Prime Minister; furthermore, we have heard him say that people—including the Kaiser—are not born equal, or good, or brothers. We must take the world as it is. Furthermore: if the destruction of German militarism is a good thing, we must admit that the German Revolution was a good thing, for it crowned the accomplishment of the military defeat; therefore the catastrophe, which suddenly overthrew the thing which had been formed by a gradual process, was a good catastrophe.

Mr. Baldwin may indeed answer that all this has no direct bearing on England, and that only in this chosen country has the principle of gradual change found its complete expression. But if such were the case, Mr. Baldwin had no reason to refer to my words, which dealt with Russia, and thereby

assign to this principle of gradual changes a general, universal, absolute character. My political experience does not support this observation. I recall three revolutions in Russia: that of 1905; that of March, 1917; and that of November, 1917. As for the March Revolution, Mr. Baldwin's not undistinguished ambassador, Buchanan, afforded a certain modest assistance to that Revolution, for he apparently considered, and not without the knowledge of his Government, that at the moment a little revolutionary catastrophe in Petrograd would be more useful to the affairs of Great Britain than Rasputin's gradual methods.

But is it entirely true that the "character and history of the English people" are so decisively and unconditionally filled with the Conservative traditions of gradual change? Is it true that the English people is so hostile to "changes by force"? As a whole, the history of England is a history of violent changes, introduced by the British ruling class into the lives—of other nations. For example, it would be interesting to know whether the conquest of India or of Egypt was advanced with the aid of the principle of gradualness. The policy of the possessing class in Great Britain with regard to India was expressed most frankly in the words of Lord Salisbury, "India must be bled!" It may be appropriate here to recall that Salisbury was the leader of the same party that is now led by Mr. Baldwin. Parenthetically, we might also add that, by reason of an excellently organized conspiracy of the bourgeois press, the English people actually know nothing of what is going on in India (and this is called a democracy). Perhaps it might be well to point out the history of unhappy Ireland, which is particularly rich in manifestations of the *peaceful actions of the British ruling classes*. As far as we know, the subjugation of southern Africa did not meet with any protest on the part of Mr. Baldwin, and yet the troops of General Roberts, when they broke through the defensive front of the Boer farmers, were hardly considered by the latter as a very convincing evidence of gradualness. To be sure, all these examples are taken from the *external* history

of England. But it is nevertheless strange that the principle of evolutionary and gradual change recommended to us as a general principle should not apply outside of England's boundaries, for instance, within the boundaries of China, when it is necessary to resort to war to make the Chinese buy opium; or in Turkey, when Mosul must be taken away from her; or in Persia or Afghanistan, when they must be made to debase themselves before England. . . . May we not conclude from these examples that England has succeeded the better in realizing "gradualness" within its own boundaries, since it has resorted to the use of force on other peoples? Such is precisely the case; for three centuries England has waged an unbroken chain of wars, aiming at an expansion, by the methods of piracy and force against other nations, of its theater of exploitation, seizing the wealth of others, killing foreign commercial competition, destroying foreign naval forces, and thus enriching the British ruling classes. A serious study of the facts and of their internal relations will lead inevitably to the conclusion that the English ruling classes have succeeded all the better in escaping revolutionary upheavals within their country, by reason of their greater success in increasing their material powers by means of wars and all kinds of disturbances in other countries, thus enabling them, by mean and sordid temporary concessions, to restrain the revolutionary ardor of the masses. But this conclusion, irrefutable as it is, shows precisely the opposite condition from that which Mr. Baldwin tries to prove, for all the history of England as a matter of fact bears witness that this "peaceful development" can only be assured with the aid of a series of wars, of colonial oppression, and bloody upheavals. This does not look much like graduality.

Gibbins, in his outline of modern English history, writes: "In general—though, of course, *there are exceptions to this rule*—the guiding principle of English foreign policy has been the support of political freedom and constitutional government." This is truly a noteworthy sentence: it is a profoundly semi-official, "national", traditional view which is

here expressed; it leaves no room for the hypocritical doctrine of non-interference in the affairs of other nations; it likewise bears witness to the fact that England has supported the constitutional movement in other countries only insofar as this has been of advantage to her own trading and other interests; where such support has not been to her advantage, the words of the inimitable Gibbins apply: "There are exceptions to this rule." For the information of her own people, the entire past history of England, in spite of the doctrine of non-interference, is represented as a holy war of the British Government for freedom all over the world. Each new act of treachery and violence—the war with China on the opium question, the enslavement of Egypt, the Boer War, the intervention in support of Tsarist generals—is interpreted as a mere accidental exception to the rule. In general, we thus find that there are remarkable breaks and gaps in the process of "gradualness", both on the side of "freedom" and on the side of despotism.

It is possible to go so far as to say that violence in international relations is admissible and even inevitable, while in the relations between classes it is quite reprehensible. But then why speak of the natural law of gradualness, which is represented as dominating in the development not only of nature but also of society? Why not simply say: the oppressed class must support the oppressing class of its nation, when the latter is applying force in pursuit of its objective; but the oppressed class has not the right to make use of force in order to secure for itself a better situation in a society based on oppression. This would not be a "law of nature", but a law in the bourgeois criminal code.

However, even in the internal history of Great Britain, the principle of peaceful and gradual evolution is by no means so prevalent as is stated by some Conservative philosophers. In the last analysis, all of modern England grew up out of the Revolution in the Seventeenth Century. The Great Civil War of that period gave birth to Tories and Whigs, who have alternately imposed their stamp on the history of England for

nearly three centuries. When Mr. Baldwin appeals to the conservative traditions of English history, we must take the liberty to remind him that the tradition of the Conservative Party itself is based on this Revolution in the middle of the Seventeenth Century. Likewise, this reference to the “character of the English people” makes us recall that this character was forged by the hammer of the Civil War between Roundheads and Cavaliers. The character of the Independents, who were petty bourgeois merchants, artisans, free farmers, owners of small feudal estates; busy, honorable, respectable, frugal, hard-working, enterprising—came into sharp conflict with the character of the idle, dissipated, arrogant ruling classes of old England, the courtiers, the titled officialdom and the higher clergy. Yet all these men were Englishmen! With the heavy hammer of military force, Oliver Cromwell forged, on the anvil of civil war, this same national character, which in the course of two and a half centuries has secured the gigantic advantages of the English bourgeoisie in the struggle for world supremacy, in order later, at the end of the Nineteenth Century, to reveal itself as too conservative even from the point of view of capitalist development. Of course, the struggle of the Long Parliament with the autocracy of Charles I, and Cromwell’s severe dictatorship, were prepared by the previous history of England. But this simply means that revolutions cannot be made when you want them, but are an organic product of the conditions of social evolution, being stages in the development of the relations between the classes of the same nation which are as inevitable as are wars in the relations between organized nations. Does Mr. Baldwin find, perhaps, some theoretical solace in the gradual nature of these preparations?

Old conservative ladies—such as Mrs. Snowden, who recently disclosed that the royal family is the most hard-working class of society—must of course wake up in terror at night when they recall the execution of Charles I. Yet even Macaulay, a fairly reactionary writer, had a pretty good understanding of this situation. “Those who had him in their

grip,” says Macaulay, “were not midnight stabbers. What they did they did in order that it might be a spectacle to heaven and earth, and that it might be held in everlasting remembrance. They enjoyed keenly the very scandal which they gave. That the ancient constitution and the public opinion of England were directly opposed to regicide made regicide seem strangely fascinating to a party bent on effecting a complete political and social revolution. In order to accomplish their purpose, it was necessary that they should first break in pieces every part of the machinery of the government; and this necessity was rather agreeable than painful to them. . . . A revolutionary tribunal was created. That tribunal pronounced Charles a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy; and his head was severed from his shoulders before thousands of spectators in front of the banqueting hall of his own palace” (Macaulay, *History of England*, New York, Harper and Brothers, vol. i, pp. 126-127). From the point of view of the Puritan effort to smash all the parts of the old Government machine, it was quite a secondary matter that Charles Stuart was a hare-brained, lying, cowardly cad. The Puritans dealt the deathblow not only to Charles I but to royal absolutism as such, and the preachers of parliamentary and gradual changes are enjoying the fruits of their act to this day.

The rôle of revolution in the political—and in general, the social—development of England is not exhausted by the Seventeenth Century. In fact, it may be said—though this may sound paradoxical—that *the entire recent evolution of England has taken place on the shoulders of European revolutions*. We shall give here only an outline of the most important factors, which may be of advantage not only to Mr. Baldwin.

The great French Revolution imparted a powerful stimulus to the growth of democratic tendencies in England, and particularly to the labor movement, which had been driven underground by the repressive laws of 1799. The war against revolutionary France was popular only among the

ruling classes of England; the masses of the people sympathized with the French Revolution and were indignant with Pitt's Government. The creation of the English trade unions was to a considerable extent the result of the influences of the French Revolution on the working masses of England. The victory of reaction on the Continent strengthened the position of the landlords and led in 1815 to the restoration of the Bourbons in France and to the introduction of the Corn Laws in England.

The July Revolution of 1830, in France, was the moving force behind the first Election Reform Bill, in England, in 1831; the bourgeois revolution on the Continent brought forth a bourgeois reform in the island kingdom.

The radical reorganization of the administration of Canada, involving much wider autonomy for the latter, was carried out after the uprisings of 1837-38 in Canada.

The revolutionary movement of Chartism led in 1844-47 to the introduction of the ten-hour working day, and in 1846 to the abolition of the Corn Laws. The downfall of the revolutionary movement of 1848 on the Continent meant not only the downfall of the Chartist movement, but also retarded for a long time the democratization of England's Parliament.

The Election Reform of 1868 was preceded by the Civil War in the United States. When the war between the North and the South broke out in 1861, the English workers gave voice to their sympathy with the Northern States, while the sympathies of the ruling classes were entirely on the side of the slaveholders. Naturally, the Liberal Palmerston, the so-called "firebrand" lord, and many of his colleagues, including the illustrious Gladstone, sympathized with the South and hastened to recognize the Southern States not as mutineers but as a belligerent party. English shipyards built warships for the Southerners. Yet, the North came out victorious, and this revolutionary victory on American territory *gave the right of suffrage to a portion of the English working class* (Law of 1867). In England itself, the Election Reform was accompanied literally by a stormy movement leading to the

“July Days” of 1868, when serious disorders lasted for two days and nights.

The defeat of the Revolution of 1848 weakened the English workers; the Russian Revolution of 1905 suddenly strengthened them. As a result of the general elections of 1906, the Labor Party for the first time constituted an important fraction of Parliament, having forty-two members; this was unquestionably due to the Russian Revolution of 1905.

In 1918, even before the end of the War, a new Election Reform was carried out in England, which considerably increased the number of workers entitled to the suffrage and for the first time admitted women to the polls. Surely Mr. Baldwin will not deny that the Russian Revolution of 1917 was the chief incentive for the introduction of this reform. The English bourgeoisie considered that it would thus be possible to escape revolution. Consequently, the principle of gradualness is not sufficient of itself to bring about reform measures; a real threat of revolution is needed.

If we regard the history of England during the last half century from the point of view of European and world development, it will appear that England has utilized other countries not only economically but also politically, in order to lessen its own “expenditures” at the expense of the civil wars of the peoples of Europe and America.

What is the meaning of the two questions quoted by Mr. Baldwin from my book, and alleged by him to be in opposition to the policy of the revolutionary representatives of the English proletariat? It is not hard to show that the clear and obvious sense of my words was precisely the opposite of what Mr. Baldwin needed. The easier it was for the Russian proletariat to seize power, the greater are the obstacles encountered by it in the path of its socialist construction. I did say that; I repeat it now. Our old ruling classes were economically and politically insignificant. We had practically no parliamentary or democratic traditions. This made it easier for us to free the masses from the influence of the bourgeoisie

and to overthrow the latter's rule. But for the very reason that our bourgeoisie had come into the field late and had accomplished little, our inheritance was a poor one. We are now obliged to build roads, construct bridges and schools, teach adults to read and write, etc., *i.e.*, to carry out most of the economic and cultural tasks which had already been carried out by the bourgeois system in the older capitalist countries. That is what I meant by saying that the more easily we disposed of our bourgeoisie, the more difficult was it for us to accomplish our socialist construction. But this plain political theorem implies also its converse: the more wealthy and civilized a country is, the older its Parliamentary-democratic traditions, the more difficult will it be for the Communist Party to seize power; but also, *the more swift and successful will be the progress of the work of socialist construction after the seizure of power.* To put the thing more concretely: to overthrow the rule of the English bourgeoisie is not an easy task; it requires an inevitable "gradual" process, *i.e.*, serious preparatory activity; but, after having seized the power, the land, the industrial, commercial and banking mechanism, the English proletariat will be able to put through its reorganization of the capitalist economy into a socialist economy with much smaller sacrifices, with much more success, and with much greater speed. This, the converse of my theorem, which it never for a moment occurred to me to expound or explain, is directly connected with the question that interests Mr. Baldwin.

However, that is not all. When I spoke of the difficulties of the work of socialist construction, I had in mind not only the backwardness of our country, but also the enormous opposition from the outside. Mr. Baldwin surely knows that the British Government of which he was a member expended about one hundred million pounds on military intervention and on the blockade against Soviet Russia. The aim of these expensive operations—we might point out—was the overthrow of the Soviet power; the English Conservatives and also the Liberals—at least at that period—decisively

rejected the principle of “gradualness” with regard to the Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic, and made every effort to solve this question of history by the catastrophic method. A mere reminder of this situation should be sufficient to show that the entire philosophy of gradual change was at that moment very much like the morality of the monks in Heine’s poem, who advise their flocks to drink water, but drink wine themselves.^[3]

However that may be, the Russian worker, since he was the first to seize power, had against him at first Germany, later all the Allied countries led by England and France. The English proletariat, after it has seized power, will find itself opposed neither by the Russian Tsar nor the Russian bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it can depend on the immense material and human resources of our Soviet Union, for—we do not conceal this fact from Mr. Baldwin—the cause of the English proletariat is at least as much our own as the cause of the Russian bourgeoisie was and still is that of the English Conservatives.

My words concerning the difficulties of our work of socialist construction are interpreted by the British Premier as equivalent to my saying that the game was not worth the candle. Yet my thought was precisely the opposite: our difficulties arise from an international situation that is unfavorable to us because we are the pioneers of socialism; in conquering these difficulties, we are altering this circumstance to the advantage of the proletariat of other countries; thus, in the international balance of power, not a single one of our revolutionary efforts has been wasted or is being wasted.

There is no doubt that we are aiming—as Mr. Baldwin points out—at a higher productivity of labor. In no other way is it possible to increase the prosperity and culture of our people, and of course this constitutes the fundamental task of communism. But the Russian worker is now working for himself. Having taken possession of the country’s economic life, which had been disorganized first by the imperialist war,

then by the civil war, then by the intervention and the blockade, the Russian workers have nevertheless been able to bring their industries—which almost perished in 1920-21—to a productivity amounting to sixty per cent. of the pre-war figure. This accomplishment, modest though it be when measured by our ultimate aims, is an unquestionable and important advance. If the one hundred million pounds thrown away by England on attempts to bring about catastrophic seizures of power had been invested in Soviet industry in the form of loans, or of capital in concessions, in order *gradually* to build up our industry, we should doubtless by this time have exceeded our pre-war level, paid a high percentage on the English capital advanced, and most important, would already constitute a wide and ever-increasing market for England. It is not our fault that Mr. Baldwin violated the principle of gradualness precisely where it should not have been done. But even at the present—still very low—level of our industry, the position of the workers has been much improved as compared with a few years ago. When we reach our pre-war level—a matter of the next two or three years—the position of our workers will be incomparably superior to what it was before the war. It is for this reason, and only for this reason, that we feel we have a right to call upon the proletariat of Russia to increase the productivity of labor. It is one thing to work in machine-shops, factories, shipyards, mines, that belong to capitalists; it is quite another thing to work in one's own factories, mines, etc. That is a great distinction, Mr. Baldwin! And when the English workers have taken control of the mighty instruments of production created by them and their predecessors, they will make every effort to increase the productivity of labor. English industry is greatly in need of such an increase, for, in spite of its great accomplishments, it is too much obstructed by the meshes of its own past. Baldwin knows this very well; at least he says in the speech mentioned above: "We owe our position and our place in the world largely to the fact that we were the first nation to endure the pangs which brought the

industrial age into the world; but we are also paying the price for this privileged priority, and the price in part is our badly-planned and congested towns, our back-to-back houses, our ugly factories and our smoke-laden atmosphere.” Add to this the fact that English industry is scattered, that it is technically conservative, that its organization lacks elasticity—this is why English industry is now receding before German and American industry. English industry needs, to redeem it, a broad and bold reorganization. The soil and subsoil of England must be regarded as the basis of a single economic system; only this attitude will make it possible to reconstruct the coal-mining industry on a healthy basis. The electrical industry of England is distinguished by its extremely scattered and backward nature; all efforts to render it more rational encounter the opposition of private interests at every step. Not only were the English cities, by reason of their historical origin, planned very badly, but the entire English industry, “gradually” accumulating its resources, is without system or plan. It will be possible to infuse fresh blood into it only if it is approached as a single unit. But such an attitude is inconceivable if private property in the means of production be retained. The chief aim of socialism is to raise the economic power of the people; only thus is it possible to create a more civilized, more harmonious, more happy human society. If Mr. Baldwin, with all his sympathies for the old English industry, is forced to recognize that the new capitalist form—the trusts and combines—represent a forward step, it is our opinion that the socialist combination of industry in turn constitutes a gigantic step forward as compared with the capitalist trusts. But this program cannot be carried out without handing over all the instruments of production to the working class, *i.e.*, without expropriating the bourgeoisie. Baldwin himself recalls the “titanic powers liberated by the industrial revolution of the Eighteenth Century, which changed the face of the country and all the earmarks of its national life.” Why does Baldwin in this case speak of revolution, and not of a gradual development? Because, at the end of the

Eighteenth Century, a radical alteration took place in a short period of time, leading particularly to the expropriation of small-scale industrial enterprises. Any man who is seeking an explanation of the internal logic of the historical process certainly must understand that the industrial revolution of the Eighteenth Century, which re-created Great Britain from top to bottom, would have been impossible without the political revolution in the Seventeenth Century. Without the revolution for bourgeois rights and bourgeois enterprise—against aristocratic privileges and court idlers—the great spirit of technical inventions would never have been awakened, and no one would have been able to apply them for economic purposes. The political revolution of the Seventeenth Century, which grew up on the basis of the entire previous development, prepared the industrial revolution of the Eighteenth Century. Now England, like all the other capitalist countries, needs an economic revolution, far exceeding in its historical significance the industrial revolution of the Eighteenth Century. But this new economic revolution, a reconstruction of the entire economy according to a single socialist plan—cannot be put through without a preceding political revolution. Private property in the means of production is now a much greater obstacle in the path of economic progress than were the guild privileges in their day, also a form of petty bourgeois property. As the bourgeoisie will under no circumstances relinquish its property rights, it will be necessary to set in motion the use of an outright revolutionary force. History has not yet devised any other method. England will be no exception.

As for the second quotation, which Mr. Baldwin says he takes from me, I must admit I am completely at sea. I absolutely deny that I ever, anywhere, could have said that there exists a certain unalterable character of the Russian in the presence of which the revolution is powerless. Where is this quotation taken from? Long experience has taught me that not all persons, not even Prime Ministers, quote correctly. Quite accidentally, I have come upon a passage in

my book, *Problems of Cultural Work*, which is wholly and completely concerned with the question we are now discussing, and which I shall therefore quote in full.

“What is the basis for our hopes of victory? Our first reason is that the masses of the people have been awakened to criticism and activity. By means of the Revolution, our people have cut for themselves a window facing Europe—meaning by ‘Europe’ civilization—just as some two hundred years before, Peter’s Russia cut not a window but a peephole into Europe for the topmost part of the aristocratic state. Those passive qualities of humility and modesty which idiotic ideologists have declared to be the specific, immutable and sanctified qualities of the Russian people, were in reality only the expression of its slavish oppression and cultural isolation, unhappy and shameful properties, which finally received their deathblow in November, 1917. Of course, this does not mean that we do not still carry with us much of the heritage of the past. But the great turning point has been rounded, not only in a material but also in a cultural sense. No one would now dare recommend to the Russian people to build their destinies on a basis of modesty, obedience and long-suffering. No, the virtues which now have sunk far deeper in the consciousness of the people are criticism, energy, collective creative activity. It is on this immense achievement in the national character that the hope of success for all our work is ultimately based.”

Of course, we at once see how little this resembles the statement ascribed to me by Mr. Baldwin. In justification of Mr. Baldwin, I must say that the British Constitution does not impose upon the Prime Minister the duty of precision in his quotations. As far as precedents go—and precedents go very far in British life,—I might say there is no lack of them: the example of William Pitt alone is worth a whole lot in the matter of false quotations.

It may be objected: What is the sense of discussing revolution with a Tory leader? Of what importance is the

historical philosophy of a Conservative Prime Minister to the working class? The fact of the matter is this: the philosophy of MacDonald, Snowden, Webb, and the other leaders of the Labor Party is merely a repetition of Baldwin's historical theory, as we shall show later, with all the necessary . . . gradualness.

[3] As we do not wish to transcend the bounds of modesty, we do not ask, for example, whether forged documents ascribed to a foreign government and exploited for election purposes may be considered an instrument of "graduality" in the evolution of the so-called Christian morality of civilized society. But while we do not wish to touch upon this delicate question, we can nevertheless not refrain from recalling that Napoleon long ago declared that forged diplomatic documents were nowhere used so extensively as by English diplomacy. No doubt technical methods have been much improved since then!

CHAPTER III

SOME PECULIARITIES OF ENGLISH LABOR

LEADERS

ON the death of Lord Curzon, party leaders and others delivered eulogistic addresses; the Socialist MacDonald closed his speech in the House of Commons with the words: "He was a great public servant, a man who was a fine colleague, a man who had a very noble ideal of public duty which may well be emulated by his successors." This about Curzon! When the workers protested against this speech, the *Daily Herald*, the Labor Party's organ, printed these protests under the modest heading, "Another Point of View". The wise editorial board apparently wished to indicate in these words that in addition to the courtier, Byzantine, boot-licking, lackey's point of view, there is also the point of view of the workers.

The well-known labor leader, Thomas, Secretary of the Railroad Workers' Union, formerly Secretary for the Colonies, attended at the beginning of April a dinner given by the Board of Directors of the Great Western Railway, at which Prime Minister Baldwin was also present. Baldwin had been a Director of this company, and Thomas had worked under him as a fireman. Mr. Baldwin spoke with splendid friendliness of his "friend" Jimmy Thomas, and Thomas proposed a toast to the Directors of the Great Western and their Chairman, Lord Churchill. Thomas spoke with great humility of Mr. Baldwin who—just think of it!—had lived his entire life as a worthy follower of his honored father. Thomas, the peerless lackey, said he would of course be criticized for this banquet and for his association with Baldwin, as a traitor to his class, but he, Thomas, was not a member of any class, for the truth does not belong to any class.

On the occasion of the debates raised by the “Left” Labor delegates, on the subject of appropriating money for the foreign travels of the Prince of Wales, the *Daily Herald* delivered itself of an editorial discussion of principles on the subject of the royal power. Anyone who would conclude from these debates that the Labor Party desires to abolish the royal power, says this newspaper, would be greatly mistaken. Yet, on the other hand, we must not overlook the fact that the royal family is not improving its position in the public opinion of intelligent persons: there is too much pomp and ceremony, inspired perhaps by “unwise advisers”; too much attention to the fluctuations of the inevitable totalizer; besides, the Duke and Duchess of York have been hunting rhinoceroses and other game worthy of a better fate, in Eastern Africa. Of course, the newspaper reflects, it would not be proper to accuse a single royal family; tradition connects the family too strongly with the manners and customs of a single class only. But effort should be made to separate the family from this tradition. This, in our opinion, is not only desirable but absolutely necessary. We must find an occupation for the successor to the throne, which will make him a part of the Government machine, etc., etc., in the same incomparably vile, incomparably stupid and lackeyish tone.

The inevitable Mrs. Snowden of course also came out on the subject of the royal family, and in a short letter declared that only loud mouthed street orators could fail to recognize and understand that the royal family belongs to one of the hardest working elements in Europe. And since the Bible^[4] itself declares, “thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn,” Mrs. Snowden is of course in favor of appropriating money for the travels of the Prince of Wales.

“I am a socialist, a democrat and a Christian,” this same lady once wrote, as an explanation of her opposition to Bolshevism. Of course, this does not exhaust the qualities of Mrs. Snowden, but courtesy impels me to refrain from further enumeration.

The honorable Mr. Shiels, Labor member for East

Edinburgh, declared in the press that the voyage of the Prince of Wales was useful for trade, and consequently also for the working class; he, therefore, was for the appropriation.

Let us now take one of the “Left” or semi-Left Labor members. The question of certain property rights of the Scottish Church is being discussed in Parliament. The Scotch Labor member, Johnston, taking his stand on the “Act of Union” of 1707, denies the right of the British Parliament to interfere with the solemnly accorded privileges of the Scottish Church. The Speaker declines to table the question. Then another Scotch member, MacLean, declares that if the bill is passed, he and his friends will return to Scotland and insist that the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland has been violated and that the Scottish Parliament must be reestablished (*laughter from Conservatives and applause from Scotch Labor members*). This is very instructive. The Scotch group, which is at the extreme left of the Parliamentary Labor fraction, protests against this ecclesiastical legislation, not because it favors a division of Church and State, or for any considerations of a business nature, but because it wishes to defend the time-honored rights of the Scottish Church, guaranteed to the latter by treaty more than two centuries ago. In retaliation for the abrogation of the rights of the Scottish Church, these same Labor members threaten to demand the reestablishment of the Scottish Parliament, which would of course be of no use to them whatever.

George Lansbury, a Left pacifist, in an editorial article in the daily organ of the Labor Party, declares that at one of the meetings in Monmouthshire the men and women workers sang a religious hymn with the greatest enthusiasm and that this hymn “helped” him, Lansbury. Some persons may renounce religion, says Lansbury, but the labor movement, as a movement, cannot consent to this; our task requires enthusiasm, piety and faith, and this cannot be attained by appealing only to personal interest. Therefore, if our movement is in need of enthusiasm, it must find this

enthusiasm not in its own strength, according to Lansbury, but must borrow some from the priests.

John Wheatley, formerly Minister of Health in the MacDonald Cabinet, is looked upon as almost of the extreme Left. But Wheatley is not only a socialist but also a Catholic, or rather, he is in the first place a Catholic and then a socialist. Since the Pope of Rome has called for a battle against communism and socialism, the editors of the *Daily Herald*, who do not mention the Holy Father for reasons of courtesy, ask Wheatley kindly to explain the question of the mutual relations between Catholicism and socialism. It should be noted, however, that the newspaper does not ask whether a socialist may be a Catholic or a believer of any type; no, the question asked is whether a Catholic may be a socialist. No doubt is expressed as to a man's obligation to be a believer of some kind; the only matter in dispute is the right of the believer to be a socialist and still remain a good Catholic. The "Left" Wheatley assumes the same stand in his reply. He considers that Catholicism, which does not mingle directly in politics, determines "only" the moral rules of conduct and obliges the socialist to apply his political principles "with the greatest consideration for the moral rights of others." Wheatley is merely laying down the general rule of the British Party on this question, for the Party distinguishes itself from Continental socialism in that it has never assumed an "anti-Christian" tendency. For this "Left", the socialist policy is guided by private morality, and private morality by religion. This is in no way different from the philosophy of Lloyd George, who considers the Church as the central source of energy of all the parties. It is here that the policy of harmony obtains its religious illumination.

A socialist, writing in the *Daily Herald* about member Kirkwood, who ran amuck with regard to the traveling expenses of the Prince of Wales, says that Kirkwood has in his veins a drop of the old Cromwell blood, meaning apparently the quality of revolutionary resoluteness. As to this, we cannot say, but there is no doubt that Kirkwood has

inherited much of Cromwell's piety. In his speech in Parliament, Kirkwood declared that he has no private grudge against the Prince and does not envy him. "The Prince cannot give me anything. I am in excellent health, I am an independent man, and there is only one to whom I am answerable for my actions, my Creator." We are thus informed in his speech not only of the excellent health of the Scottish member, but also of the fact that this health is due not to biological or physiological laws, but to the thoughtfulness of a creator with whom Mr. Kirkwood entertains very definite relations, based on personal favors on the one hand and on a feeling of grateful obligation on the other.

We might add indefinitely to the number of such examples, or, more correctly, almost all the political activity of the upper circles of the Labor Party may be resolved into such episodes, constituting at the first glance only ridiculous and insignificant curiosities, but which in fact embody the peculiarities of the entire history of the past, just as stones in the bladder are a record of complicated processes in the organism. And it might not be out of place to point out that the "organic" character of the origin of any such peculiarities does not preclude the necessity of surgical intervention for their elimination.

The doctrine of the leaders of the English Labor Party is a sort of amalgam of Conservatism and Liberalism, at times adapted to the requirements of the trade unions, or more properly, their upper strata. All are imbued with the religion of "gradual changes". In addition, they also profess the religion of the Old and New Testaments. All consider themselves extremely civilized persons, and yet they believe that the heavenly father created mankind in order, in his loving kindness, to curse them and thereupon to make effort to right this wretched business somewhat through the crucifixion of his son. Such national institutions as the trade union bureaucracy, the first MacDonald Ministry, and Mrs. Snowden, have thus grown up from the spirit of Christianity.

The religion of national arrogance is closely related with that of gradual changes and with the Calvinist belief in predestination. MacDonald is convinced that as his bourgeoisie was once the first bourgeoisie in the world, it would be improper for him, MacDonald, to learn anything from the barbarians and semi-barbarians of the European continent. In this respect, as in all others, MacDonald is merely aping bourgeois leaders of the Canning type who declared—but with much greater justification—that Parliamentary England should not be expected to learn politics from the peoples of Europe. Ceaselessly invoking the conservative tradition of England's political evolution, Baldwin doubtless appeals to the powerful prop of bourgeois rule in the past. The bourgeoisie has succeeded in imbuing the Labor Party aristocracy with conservatism. It is not an accident that the most resolute fighters for Chartism came from the ranks of artisans who had been proletarianized in one or two short generations by the onslaught of capitalism. It is equally interesting to note that the most radical elements in the present-day English labor movement usually come from Ireland or Scotland (which rule must not be made to apply, however, to the Scotchman MacDonald). The combination of social oppression and nationalism in Ireland, together with the sharp antagonism between agricultural Ireland and industrial England, is bringing about sharp changes in men's minds. Scotland entered the path of capitalism later than England. The greater abruptness of the break in the lives of the masses of the people is producing a more abrupt political reaction. If our friends "the British socialists" were capable of studying their own history, particularly the rôle of Ireland and Scotland, they might perhaps be enabled to grasp why and how backward Russia with its sudden transition to capitalism brought forth the most resolute revolutionary party and was the first country to take the path of a socialist upheaval.

However, the buttress of conservatism in English life is being undermined irrevocably. For decades the "leaders" of the British working class imagined that an independent labor

party was a sad privilege of continental Europe. Not a trace is now left of this naïve and ignorant self-complacency. The proletariat has forced the trade unions to create an independent party. Nor is that all. The Liberal and semi-Liberal leaders of the Labor Party continue to believe that the social revolution is a sad privilege of the European continent. Here again, the event will show the backwardness of this view. It will take much less time to transform the Labor Party into a revolutionary party than was required for its creation. The most important element in the conservatism of the political development has been—and to a certain extent still is—the Protestant religiosity of the English people. Puritanism was a school of severe training, a social discipline of the middle classes. The masses of the people, however, were always opposed to it. The proletarian does not feel that he is “chosen”; the Calvinistic predestination obviously does not favor him. English Liberalism grew up on the basis of the Independents, and its chief mission was to train the mass of the workers, *i.e.*, subordinate them to the bourgeoisie. Within certain limits and at certain times, Liberalism succeeded in accomplishing this mission, but in the last analysis, it had as little success as did Puritanism in remolding the working class. After the Liberals came the Labor Party, with the same traditions—Puritan and Liberal traditions. If we consider the Labor Party only in its MacDonald-Henderson cross-section, we might say that they have succeeded in accomplishing the impossible task of completely enslaving the working class to bourgeois society. But, in actual fact, another process is at work among the masses, opposing this desire; it will definitely dispose of the Puritan-Liberal traditions, disposing of MacDonald at the same time.

For the English middle classes, Catholicism as well as Anglicanism was a finished tradition, connected with the privileges of the court and the clergy. The young English bourgeoisie created Protestantism, as opposed to Catholicism and Anglicanism, as its form of belief and as a justification of its place in society.

Calvinism, with its cast-iron doctrine of predestination, was a mystical form of approach to the causal nature of the historical process. The rising bourgeoisie felt that the laws of history were on its side, and this consciousness took the form of the doctrine of predestination. The Calvinist rejection of freedom of the will by no means paralyzed the revolutionary energy of the Independents; on the other hand, it constituted their powerful support. The Independents felt themselves called to accomplish a great historical task. We may with perfect right draw an analogy between the doctrine of predestination in the Puritan revolution and the rôle of Marxism in the proletarian revolution. In both cases, the great efforts put forth are not based on subjective caprice, but on a cast-iron causal law, mystically distorted in the one case, scientifically founded in the other.

The English proletariat accepted Protestantism as a ready-made tradition, in other words, just as the bourgeoisie before the Seventeenth Century had accepted Catholicism and Anglicanism. And as the awakened bourgeoisie had opposed its Protestantism to Catholicism, so the revolutionary proletariat will oppose Protestantism with Materialism and Atheism. While Calvinism for Cromwell and his associates was a spiritual weapon for the religious reformation of society, it inspires MacDonald only with a genuflectory attitude toward anything that has been created in a "gradual" manner. MacDonald inherits from Puritanism not its revolutionary ardor, but its religious prejudices. From the Owenites he inherits not their communist enthusiasm, but their Utopian and reactionary hostility to the class struggle. From the past history of England, the Fabians have borrowed only the spiritual dependence of the proletariat on the bourgeoisie. History turned her back to these gentlemen and the chronicles they read in history became their program.

Their insular position, their wealth, their success in world policy, all these things, cemented by Puritanism, the "religion of the chosen people", was transformed into an arrogant contempt for everything Continental or non-English in

general. The middle classes of Great Britain for a long time were convinced that the language, science, technology, civilization of other nations were not worth learning. And this quality has passed intact to the Philistines now heading the Labor Party.

Even Hyndman issued a pamphlet, *England For All*, while Marx was still alive, which is based entirely on Marx's *Capital*, but which does not mention either that work or its author, a strange omission due to the fact that Hyndman did not wish to shock the English reader by making it appear possible for an Englishman actually to learn something from a German.

The historical dialectic process in this connection has played a sorry trick on England, in transferring the advantages of her early development into the causes for her present backwardness. We have already seen this in the field of industry, in science, in the government system, in the political ideology. England grew up without any precedents. She could not seek and find any pattern for her future among more advanced countries. She advanced by groping, empirically, looking ahead and generalizing as to her path only when absolutely necessary. The traditional cast of mind of the Englishman, particularly of the English bourgeois, is impressed with the seal of empiricism, and this same tradition was passed on to the upper layers of the working class. Empiricism became a tradition and a banner; it was combined with a contemptuous attitude for the "abstract" thought of the Continent. Germany had long been philosophizing on the true nature of the State, while the British bourgeoisie actually constructed the form of State best adapted for the requirements of its rule. But it appeared in the course of time that the German bourgeoisie, backward in practical respects and therefore inclined to theoretical speculation, was turning its backwardness into an advantage and creating an industry far more scientifically organized and adapted for the struggle on the world market. The English socialist Philistines took over from their bourgeoisie its contemptuous attitude toward

the continent at a moment when the former advantages of England were turning into their precise opposite.

MacDonald, in explaining the “innate” qualities of British socialism, declares that in seeking its ideological roots, “we must go back to Godwin, passing by Marx.” Godwin was in his day a prominent figure. But a return to Godwin means for an Englishman what it would mean for a German to go back to Weitling, or for a Russian to go back to Chernyshevsky. We do not at all mean to say that English imperialism and the English labor movement have not their “peculiarities.” Even the Marxian school always devoted considerable attention to the peculiarities of the course of events in England. But we explain these peculiarities on the basis of the objective conditions, of the structure of society, and its changes. Thanks to this circumstance, we Marxists understand far better the growth of the British labor movement and are in a far better position to predict its actions on the morrow than are the present-day “theoreticians” of the Labor Party. The old philosophic maxim, “Know thyself”, was not uttered for them. They consider that they are called upon by destiny to rebuild from the bottom up the old social system and yet they are completely prostrated on encountering the most insignificant details. How can they dare threaten bourgeois property, when they do not even dare refuse the Prince of Wales pocket-money?

The royal power, they declare, “does not interfere” with the country’s progress, and is cheaper than a president, if we count all the expenses of elections, etc., etc. These speeches of the Labor leaders are characteristic of a phase of their “peculiar” nature which cannot be called by any other name than conservative stupidity. The royal power is weak because the instrument of bourgeois rule is the bourgeois Parliament and because the bourgeoisie does not need any special activities outside of Parliament. But in case of need, the bourgeoisie will make use of the royal power with great success as a concentration of all non-Parliamentary, *i.e.*, *real* forces, aimed against the working class. The English

bourgeoisie has always well understood the dangers even of the most fictitious monarch in certain situations. Thus, in 1837, the English Government abolished the designation of “Great Mogul” in India and removed the bearer of the name from the holy city of Delhi, in spite of the fact that this name had already begun to lose its prestige. The English bourgeoisie knew that under favorable circumstances the Great Mogul might concentrate in himself the forces of the independent upper classes directed against English rule.

To proclaim a socialist platform and at the same time to declare that the royal power does not “interfere” and is actually cheaper, is equivalent, for instance, to a recognition of materialistic science combined with the use of magic incantations for toothache—since the latter are cheaper. Such little “insignificant” traits fully characterize a man by showing the complete emptiness of his recognition of material science and the complete fallaciousness of his system of ideas. The Socialist cannot consider the question of monarchy from the point of view of present-day bookkeeping, especially with doctored books. The matter at stake is a complete transformation of society, is a purification from all elements of serfdom. This task, both politically and psychologically, excludes any possibility of conciliation with the monarchy.

Messrs. MacDonald, Thomas, and others, are indignant with those workers who protested when their ministers dressed up in clownish court dress. Of course, this is not MacDonald’s chief offense: but it excellently symbolizes all the rest of his make-up. When the young bourgeoisie was fighting the nobility, it renounced side curls and silk doublets. The bourgeois revolutionists wore the black raiment of the Puritans. As opposed to the Cavaliers, the Puritans enjoyed the nickname of Roundheads. Each new content always seeks its new form. Of course, the form of dress is only a detail, but the masses simply will not understand—and they are right—why the representatives of the working class should submit to the complicated pomp of monarchic masquerade. And the masses are gradually beginning to learn

that those who make mistakes in little things will also be undependable in big things.

The characteristics of conservatism, religiosity, national conceit, will be found in varying degree in all the present-day official leaders, from the extreme Right Thomas, to the Left Kirkwood. It would be entirely wrong to underestimate the stubbornness and permanence of these conservative peculiarities of the heads of the English working class. We do not mean to say that ecclesiastical and conservative-national tendencies are entirely absent from the masses. But while in the case of the leaders and disciples of the Liberal Party, these bourgeois-nationalist traits have entered into their very blood, they are incomparably less firmly rooted in the case of the working masses. We have already learned that Puritanism, the religion of the rising class, never succeeded in penetrating very far into the consciousness of the working masses. The same is true of Liberalism. The workers voted for the Liberals, but remained, in the mass, workers, the Liberals being obliged to be constantly on their guard. Even the displacement of the Liberal Party by the Labor Party was the result of the pressure of the proletarian masses. Under different conditions, *i.e.*, if England should grow and become economically strong, a Labor Party of the present type might be able to continue and intensify the “educational” task of Protestantism and Liberalism, thereby powerfully cementing the consciousness of great layers of the working class with the conservative-national traditions and the discipline of the bourgeois order. But in the present state of England’s obvious economic decline, with the present absence of hope, we must expect a turn precisely in the opposite direction. The war has already dealt a heavy blow to the traditional religiosity of the English masses. Mr. Wells has every reason to occupy himself with the concoction of a new religion, thus preparing himself for the career of a Fabian Calvin somewhere on the road between the Earth and Mars. We must say we are doubtful of his success. The mole of revolution is working too fast! The working masses will swiftly free themselves from the national-

conservative discipline, and will work out a discipline of their own for revolutionary action. The heads of the Labor Party will pale before these shocks from below. Of course, we do not mean that MacDonald will bleach into a revolutionist; no, he will be cast aside. But those who in all probability will bring about the first change, men of the type of Lansbury, Wheatley and Kirkwood, will soon give evidence that they are only a Leftist variation of the same Fabian type. Their radicalism is bounded by democracy and religion, and poisoned with a national conceit that completely subjects them to the British bourgeoisie. The working class will very probably be obliged to replace its leadership a number of times before a party will be born which truly corresponds to the historical situation and tasks of the British proletariat.

[\[4\]](#) Corinthians ix, 9.—TRANSLATOR.

CHAPTER IV

THE FABIAN "THEORY" OF SOCIALISM

LET us overcome our natural aversion and read through the article in which Ramsay MacDonald expounded his views a short time before leaving office.^[5] We warn the reader in advance that we shall have to enter a mental junk-shop in which the suffocating odor of camphor is not sufficient to retard the effective work of the moths.

"In the field of feeling and conscience," begins MacDonald, "in the spiritual field, socialism is the religion of service to the people." These words at once reveal the benevolent bourgeois, the Left Liberal, who "serves" the people, approaching them from one side or—more properly—from above. This mode of approach is entirely rooted in the distant past, in the time when the radical intellectuals established settlements in the workers' sections of London with the object of engaging in educational and cultural work. These words are a remarkable anachronism when applied to the present Labor Party, which is built up directly on the trade unions!

The word "religion" must here be understood not only in the rhetorical sense. MacDonald means Christianity, particularly its Anglo-Saxon interpretation. "Socialism is based on the gospels," preaches MacDonald, "it is an excellently conceived (*sic*) and resolute effort to Christianize government and society." Of course, some difficulties will be encountered, in our opinion, on this path. In the first place, the peoples enumerated in the statistics as Christian amount to approximately thirty-seven per cent. of the whole population of mankind. How about the non-Christian world? In the second place, atheism is making considerable progress among Christian nations, particularly among the proletariat. In the Anglo-Saxon countries this is not yet very noticeable. But

humanity, even Christian humanity, does not consist entirely of Anglo-Saxons. In the Soviet Union, which counts 130,000,000 persons, atheism is an officially promulgated state doctrine. In the third place, England has had control of India for several centuries; the European nations, headed by England, have long had free access to China; and yet, the number of atheists is increasing more quickly than the number of Christians in India and China. Why? Because Christianity appears to the Chinese and Indians as the religion of their oppressors, misrulers, slaveholders, of powerful highwaymen who break into other people's houses by force. The Chinese know that Christian missionaries are sent to them in order to pave the way for cruisers. This is the real, historical, true Christianity! And this Christianity is to be taken as the basis for Socialism? Say for China and for India? In the fourth place, according to official records, Christianity is in its 1925th year, but before becoming the religion of MacDonald, it was the religion of the Roman slaves, of nomadic barbarians scattered all over Europe, of crowned and uncrowned despots, of feudal lords, of the Inquisition, of Charles Stuart, and, in somewhat altered form, it was also the religion of Cromwell, who cut off Charles Stuart's head. Finally, it is now the religion of Lloyd George, Churchill, the *Times* and, we might add, of that respectable Christian who forged the "Zinoviev letter" in the interest of the Conservative elections of the most Christian of all democracies. How could this Christianity which for two thousand years has been pounded into the brains of the European peoples with the aid of exhortations, compulsory religious instruction, threats of punishment in the next world, hell-fire, and the sword of the police, thus becoming their official religion; how did this religion in the Twentieth Century of its existence, lead to the most bloody and wicked of all wars, after the previous nineteen centuries of its history had already been filled with cruelty and crime? And what particularly good reasons have we for hoping that the "divine teaching" in the Twentieth, Twenty-first or Twenty-fifth Century of its history will bring

about equality and brotherhood where it has sanctified violence and enslavement? We shall in vain expect an answer from MacDonald to this simple, schoolboy question. Our sage is an evolutionist, *i.e.*, he believes that all changes take place “gradually” and with the aid of God, for the better. MacDonald is an evolutionist; he does not believe in miracles; he does not believe in sudden changes, except the single sudden change which took place 1925 years ago, when a wedge was inserted into organic evolution in the person of none other than the Son of God, thus giving rise to a number of heavenly truths from which the clergy have since been deriving a rather respectable earthly income.

The Christian foundation of socialism is expressed in two decisive sentences in MacDonald’s article: “Who can deny that poverty is evil, not only for the individual, but for society? *Who does not feel sympathy with poverty?*” We here find presented as a theory of socialism the philosophy of the socially-minded philanthropic bourgeois who feels “sympathy” with the poor and because of this sympathy makes “religion his conscience”, not permitting it, however, to interfere very much with his business habits.

Who does not feel sympathy with the poor? The entire history of England is, as we know, a history of the sympathy of its possessing classes with the poverty of the toiling masses. Not going back too far into history, it will be sufficient to trace this process, let us say, only from the Sixteenth Century, from the time of the enclosures^[6] of peasant lands, *i.e.*, the transformation of the peasants into homeless tramps, when the sympathy with poverty was expressed in the workhouse, the gallows, in the cutting off of ears, and in other measures of Christian compassion. The Duchess of Sutherland carried out this “clearing” in the north of Scotland at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and the moving tale of this execution was written by Marx in deathless lines,^[7] where to be sure we do not meet with drooling “compassion,” but with the fire of revolutionary rage.

Who does not feel sympathy with the poor? Read

through the history of the industrial development of England, particularly the exploitation of child labor; the sympathy of the rich for poverty never preserved the poor from humiliation and need. In England, as well as elsewhere, poverty never has succeeded in getting anything from wealth except when it took the latter by the throat. Is there any need to point this out in a country with a century-long history of class struggles, a history, furthermore, of miserable concessions and merciless legal judgments?

“Socialism does not believe in force,” MacDonald goes on, “Socialism is health and not mental disease . . . and therefore in its very nature it must renounce violence with horror. . . . It fights only with intelligent and honorable weapons.” All this is very fine, although not entirely new; you will find the same thoughts expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, in a somewhat superior style. And we know what all that amounted to. We cannot see why the uninspired MacDonald paraphrase of the Sermon on the Mount should give any better result. Tolstoy, who was able to marshal much more powerful instruments to convince his readers, did not succeed in converting even the members of his own landowning family to the evangelical doctrine. MacDonald also must have learned something about the inadmissibility of force when he was in power. We recall that the police were not dismissed at that time, the courts were not abolished, jails were not torn down, warships were not sunk—in fact new ones were built. And in so far as we have any ability to judge this matter, the police, courts, jails, armies and navies, are instruments of force. The recognition of the truth that “Socialism is health and not mental disease” by no means prevented MacDonald from following—in India and Egypt—in the sacred footprints of that great Christian, Lord Curzon. As a Christian, MacDonald recoils from the use of force “with horror”; as a Prime Minister, he brings to bear all the methods of capitalist oppression and hands over these instruments of force intact to his Conservative successor in office.

What does the renunciation of violence mean in point of actual fact? It simply means in practice that the oppressed must not use force against the capitalist state: the workers against the bourgeoisie, the farmers against the landlords, the Hindoos against the British administration. The State, created by means of the force exerted by the monarchy over the people, by the bourgeoisie over the workers, by the landlords over the farmers, by officers over the soldiers, by Anglo-Saxon slaveholders over colonial peoples, by “Christian” over heathen, this bloody apparatus of centuries of violence inspires MacDonald to pious genuflections. “With horror” applies only to his attitude to force when used for liberation. Such is the holy content of his “religion of serving the people”.

“In socialism there is a new school and also an old one,” says MacDonald, “we belong to the new school.” The ideal of MacDonald—for he has an “ideal”—is still the old school ideal, but the new school has a “better plan” for realizing this ideal. What is this plan? MacDonald does not fail to give an answer: “We have no class-consciousness. Our opponents—they are the people with a class-consciousness. . . . Instead of a class-consciousness we wish to advance the consciousness of social solidarity.” Continuing to thresh this empty straw, MacDonald concludes: “The class war is not the work of our hands. It was created by capitalism and always will remain the fruit of capitalism, as thistles will always be the fruit of thistles.” The fact that MacDonald has no class-consciousness, while the leaders of the bourgeoisie have a class-consciousness, is beyond dispute and merely goes to show—at bottom—that the English Labor Party has thus far been living without a head on its shoulders, while the party of the English bourgeoisie have a head—a head with a high and mighty brow, supported by a robust and powerful neck. And if MacDonald should content himself with an admission of the fact that “consciousness” is the point on which his head is weak, there would be no reason for quarreling with him. But MacDonald, from a head that is

poor in “consciousness” wishes to construct a program, which is inadmissible.

“The class war,” says MacDonald, “was created by capitalism.” This is of course not true. The class war existed before capitalism, but it is true that the *present* class war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is the creation of capitalism. It is also true that it “always has been its fruit”, *i.e.*, that it will continue to exist as long as capitalism exists. But in a war there are manifestly two belligerent sides. One of these is the side of our enemies, who, according to MacDonald, “stand for the privileged class and wish to preserve it”. It would appear, therefore, if we stand for the abolition of the privileged class, which does not wish to be eliminated, that we here have the fundamental content of a class struggle. But no, MacDonald “wishes to advance” the consciousness of social solidarity. Solidarity with whom? The solidarity of the working class is the expression of its internal union in its struggle with the bourgeoisie. The social solidarity preached by MacDonald is the solidarity of the exploited, with the exploiters, *i.e.*, a support given to exploitation. MacDonald boasts, furthermore, that his ideas are different from the ideas of our grandfathers: He means Karl Marx. As a matter of fact, MacDonald differs from “our grandfathers” in the sense that he resembles more our great-grandfathers, for the hodge-podge of ideas which MacDonald preaches as a new school signifies—on an entire new historical basis—a return to the petty bourgeois sentimental socialism to which Marx devoted his annihilating criticisms in 1847 and earlier.

In opposition to the class struggle, MacDonald sets up the idea of a solidarity of all those virtuous citizens who are aiming to reconstruct society by the path of democratic reforms. In his understanding, the class struggle yields place to a “constructive” activity of a political party, built up not on a class basis, but on the basis of social solidarity. These excellent ideas of our great-grandfathers—Robert Owen, Weitling, and others—ultimately castrated and adapted for Parliamentary reforms, sound very funny in present-day

England, with its numerically powerful Labor Party based on the trade unions. There is no other country in the world in which the class character of socialism has been so objectively, obviously, unquestionably, empirically revealed by history as in England. For in this country, the Labor Party grew out of the Parliamentary representation of the trade unions, *i.e.*, the purely class organizations of wage labor. When the Conservatives, and the Liberals too, attempt to forbid the trade unions from collecting political contributions, they are thus not unsuccessfully setting up the idealistic MacDonald understanding of the party in opposition to the empirical class character which this party has actually assumed in England. It is true that the upper ranks of the Labor Party include a certain number of Fabian intellectuals and despairing Liberals, but, in the first place, it is greatly to be hoped that the workers will soon sweep out this riff-raff; and, in the second place, already now the 4,500,000 votes given for the Labor Party are, with insignificant exceptions, the votes of the English workers. By no means all the workers yet vote for their party. But hardly any votes but those of workers are cast for the Labor Party.

We do not at all mean that the Fabians, Independents, and deserters from Liberalism have no influence on the policy of the working class. On the contrary, their influence is very great, but it is not independent in character. Reformists who resist the proletarian class-consciousness are, in the last analysis, a weapon in the hands of the ruling class. Throughout the history of the English labor movement we find a pressure exerted on the proletariat by the bourgeoisie through the radicals, intellectuals, parlor and church socialists, Owenites, who deny the class struggle, and advance the principle of social solidarity, advocating collaboration with the bourgeoisie, confusing, weakening and politically debasing the proletariat. In full accord with this “tradition”, the program of the Independent Labor Party shows that the Party aims “at a union of the organized workers together with all persons of all classes who believe in socialism”. This consciously

confused formulation has the object of obscuring the class character of socialism. No one, of course, demands that the doors be completely closed to experienced deserters from the other classes. But the number of such persons even now is quite insignificant unless we consider only the upper circles of the Party, if we take the Party as a whole; and in the future, when the Party has entered the revolutionary path, this number will decrease still more. But the Independents need their phrase about "persons of all classes" for the purpose of deceiving the workers themselves with regard to the actual class source of their power, substituting for it the fiction of a solidarity with other classes.

We have mentioned that many workers still vote for the bourgeois candidates. MacDonald cudgels his brains to interpret even this fact in accordance with the political interests of the bourgeoisie. "We must look upon the worker not as a worker, but as a man," he inculcates, adding: "Even Toryism has to a certain extent learned . . . to approach men as men. That is why the majority of the workers voted for the Tories." In other words, when the Conservatives, frightened by the advance of the workers, begin to learn to adapt themselves to the more backward workers, to undermine their unity, to hoodwink them, to play upon their most reactionary superstitions and to frighten them with false documents, this only goes to show that the Tories know how to approach men as men!

The English labor organizations that are most unalloyed in their class composition, namely the trade unions, built up the Labor Party directly on their own shoulders. This was equivalent to an expression of profound change in the situation of England: its weakening in the world market, the alteration of its economic structure, the elimination of the middle classes, the downfall of Liberalism. The proletariat needs a class party, is making every effort to create such a party, exerts pressure on the trade unions, pays political contributions. But this increasing pressure from below, from the shops and factories, the docks and mines, is opposed by

a pressure from above, from the domain of official English policy, with its national traditions of “love of freedom”, of world leadership, of primacy in civilization of democratic and Protestant responsibility. If you prepare a political mixture of all these ingredients (for the purpose of weakening the class-consciousness of the English proletariat), you will have the Fabian platform.

If MacDonald attempts to define the Labor Party, which is openly based on the trade unions, as a classless organization, the “democratic” government of English capital is for him even more classless in character. To be sure, the present state, governed by the landowners, bankers, ship-builders and coal magnates, is not a “perfect democracy”. It still has certain defects: “Democracy and, let us say (!!), a system of industry not conducted by the people, are two incompatible conceptions.” In other words, democracy still has some minor defects: the wealth created by the nation does not belong to the nation but to an insignificant minority in the nation. Perhaps this is an accident? No, bourgeois democracy is that system of institutions and measures with the aid of which the needs and demands of the working masses as they advance upward, are neutralized, distorted, rendered harmless, or, in plain words, reduced to nothing. Anyone who would say that in England, France, the United States, and other democratic countries, private property is supported by the will of the people, would be a liar. No one ever asked the consent of the people. The toilers are born and receive their training under conditions not of their creation. The national schools, the national church, imbue them with conceptions exclusively calculated for the maintenance of the existing order. Parliamentary democracy is merely a recapitulation of this condition. MacDonald’s party is a necessary component part of this system. When the course of events—usually catastrophic in nature, like the great economic upheavals, crises, wars—makes this social system intolerable for the working masses, the latter have neither the opportunity nor the inclination to express their

revolutionary indignation through the channels of capitalist democracy. In other words, when the masses learn how long they have been deceived, they revolt. A successful revolution gives them power, and the fact that they hold power permits them to construct a state apparatus corresponding to their needs.

But MacDonald does not grasp even this. "The revolution in Russia," he says, "has given us a great lesson. It had shown that revolution means destruction and poverty and nothing else." Here the reactionary Fabian reveals himself before us in all his repulsive nakedness. Revolution leads only to poverty! But the English democracy led to the imperialist war; and not only in the sense of the general responsibility of all the capitalist states for the war. No, in the sense of a direct and immediate responsibility of English diplomacy, which consciously and deliberately pushed Europe into war. If the English "democracy" had declared that it would enter the war on the side of the entente, Germany and Austria-Hungary would probably have kept out. If England had declared that it would remain neutral, France and Russia would probably have kept out. But the British Government proceeded differently: it secretly promised the entente its support and consciously deceived Germany with the possibility of England's remaining neutral. Thus, the English "democracy" deliberately worked for the war, with the devastations of which the poverty due to the Revolution cannot of course begin to be compared. But, in addition, what sort of ears and brains have people who are able to declare in the face of a revolution that overturned Tsarism, the nobility, the bourgeoisie, inflicted a staggering blow on the Church, awoke to new life 150,000,000 people, a whole family of nations, that revolution means poverty and *nothing else*? MacDonald is here merely repeating Baldwin's words. He not only does not know and understand the Russian Revolution, but he knows nothing of English history. We are obliged to bring to his attention what we have already brought to the attention of the Conservative Prime Minister.

While in the economic field the initiative remained with England up to the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, in the political field, on the other hand, England for the past one and a half centuries has been developing chiefly on the shoulders of European and American revolutions. The great French Revolution, the July Revolution in 1830, the Revolution of 1848, the Civil War in the United States in 1861-1865, and the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 imparted impulses to the social revolution of England and dotted the course of its history with the milestones of the great legislative reforms. Without the Russian Revolution of 1917, MacDonald would never have been Prime Minister in 1924; we hasten to add that we do not consider the MacDonald Cabinet to be the highest achievement of the November Revolution, but it was at any rate a by-product of the Revolution. We are taught even in children's primers that if you wish to gather acorns, you must not uproot the oak-tree. Besides, how monstrous is this Fabian conceit: Since the Russian Revolution has given "us" (whom?) a lesson, "we" (who?) will get along without a revolution. But why did not the lessons of all the preceding wars enable "you" to get along without the great imperialist war? Just as the bourgeoisie calls each new war the last of all wars, so MacDonald calls the Russian Revolution the last of all revolutions. Then why—really—should the English bourgeoisie make any concessions to the English proletariat and hand over their property peacefully without a struggle, if they have received MacDonald's solemn assurance in advance that owing to the experience of the Russian Revolution English socialists will never proceed to the use of force? When and where has any ruling class given up its power and property by the method of peaceful elections, especially a class which, like the English bourgeoisie, has behind it a century of universal banditry?

MacDonald is opposed to revolution, but he is in favor of organic evolution: he applies to society a few badly digested biological conceptions. Revolution for him, as a sum of

cumulative partial changes, is similar to the evolution of living organisms, such as that which transforms the larva into a butterfly; and furthermore, in this latter process, he overlooks precisely the decisively critical moment when the new animal breaks through the old envelope by the method of revolution. It may be observed, by the way, that MacDonald is “in favor of a revolution like that which went on in the bowels of feudalism, when the industrial revolution was maturing”. In his boundless ignorance MacDonald apparently imagines that the industrial revolution proceeded as a molecular process, without upheavals, without devastation. He simply does not know the history of England, not to speak of the history of other countries. And he above all does not understand that the industrial revolution, which had been maturing in the womb of feudalism in the form of the accumulation of commercial capital, led to the Reformation, brought the Stuarts into conflict with Parliament, gave birth to the Great Rebellion, laid England waste and bare—in order later to enrich the country.

It would be too boring to dwell here on an interpretation of the process of the transformation from the larva into the butterfly, with the object of obtaining the necessary social analogies. It is perhaps simpler and more speedy to recommend to MacDonald to ponder on the time-honored comparison of revolution with the process of birth. Should we not learn a “lesson” from birth, as from the Russian Revolution? In birth also, there is “nothing” but agony and travail (of course, the baby does not count!). Should we not recommend the populace of the future to multiply by painless Fabian methods, by resorting to the talents of Mrs. Snowden as a midwife?

Of course, we are aware that the matter is not altogether a simple one. Even the chicken which is growing in the egg must apply force in order to break its calcareous prison; if any Fabian chicken should refrain—for Christian or other considerations—from this application of force, it would be choked by its hard shell of lime. English pigeon-fanciers, by a

method of artificial selection, have succeeded in producing a variety by a progressive shortening of the bill. They have even gone so far as to attain a form in which the bill of the new scion is so short that the poor creature is incapable of breaking through the shell of the egg in which it is born. The unhappy pigeon perishes, a victim of its compulsory abstention from the use of force, and the further progress of the variety of short-billed pigeons is thus terminated. If our memory does not deceive us, MacDonald may read up on this matter in his Darwin. Having been induced to enter the path of analogy with the organic world which is such a hobby with MacDonald, we may say that the political skill of the English bourgeoisie consists in shortening the revolutionary bill of the proletariat and thus preventing them from breaking through the shell of the capitalist state. The bill of the proletariat is its party. A single glance at MacDonald, Thomas, Mr. and Mrs. Snowden, is sufficient to convince us that the work of the bourgeoisie in the selection of short-billed and soft-billed specimens has been crowned with immense success, for these ladies and gentlemen are not only not fit for breaking through the shell of the capitalist system, but are good for nothing whatsoever.

But here the analogy ends, and reveals the disadvantage of basing one's argument on scattered facts obtained from textbooks of biology rather than on the scientific conditions and stages of historical development. Human society, although growing out of the conditions of the organic and inorganic world, is nevertheless so complicated and concentrated a combination of these conditions as to demand independent study. The social organism differs from the biological organism, for instance, in its much greater elasticity, adaptability of the elements for regrouping, for a (to a certain extent) conscious selection of their tools and methods, for a (within certain limits) conscious utilization of the experience of the past, etc. The little pigeon in its egg cannot change its short bill for a longer one, and therefore perishes. But the working class, when faced with the question "to be or not to

be” will discard MacDonald and Mrs. Snowden and equip itself with the beak of a revolutionary party for the overthrow of the capitalist system.

It is particularly interesting to observe in MacDonald a combination of a crassly biological theory of society with an idealistic Christian hatred of materialism. “You speak of revolution, of catastrophic changes, but look at nature; how wise is the action of the caterpillar when it envelops itself in the cocoon; look at the worthy tortoise, and you will find in its movements the natural rhythm for the transformation of society. Learn from nature!” In the same spirit MacDonald brands materialism as a “vulgar, senseless claim, without any spiritual or mental delicacy” . . . MacDonald and delicacy! Is it not an astonishing “delicacy” which seeks inspiration in the caterpillar for the collective social activity of man and simultaneously demands for its own private use an immortal soul and all the comforts of life in the hereafter?

“Socialists are accused of being poets. That is true,” MacDonald explains, “we are poets. There is no fine policy without poetry. In fact, without poetry there is nothing fine.” And so forth, all in the same style, until, at the conclusion: “Above all, the world needs a political and social Shakespeare.” This prattle about poetry may be politically not quite so silly as the remarks on the inadmissibility of force. But the full lack of inspiration in MacDonald is here expressed even more strongly, if that were possible. The dull and timid miser in whom there is as much poetry as in a square end of felt, tries to impress the world with his Shakespearian antics. Here you will really find the “monkey pranks” which MacDonald would like to ascribe to the Bolsheviks.

MacDonald, the “poet” of Fabianism! The policy of Sidney Webb, an artistic creation! The Thomas Ministry, colonial poetry! And finally, Mr. Snowden’s budget, a triumphant love song of the City!

While babbling about his social Shakespeare, MacDonald overlooks Lenin. It is an excellent thing for

MacDonald—though not for Shakespeare—that the great English poet produced his creations more than three centuries ago; MacDonald has had sufficient time to appreciate Shakespeare as Shakespeare. He would never have recognized him had Shakespeare been one of his contemporaries. So MacDonald ignores—completely and definitely ignores—Lenin. The blindness of the Philistine finds its dual expression in pointless sighs for Shakespeare and in a failure to appreciate his most powerful contemporary.

“Socialism is interested in art and in the classics.” It is surprising how this “poet” can corrupt by his mere touch thoughts that have nothing inherently vile about them. To convince himself of this, the reader need only read the inference: “Even where there exists great poverty and great unemployment, as is unfortunately the case in our country, citizens(?) should not deny themselves the purchase of paintings or of anything, in general, that may call forth joy and improve the minds of young and old.” This excellent advice does not make it entirely clear, however, whether the purchase of paintings is recommended to the unemployed themselves, with the implication that the necessary supplementary appropriations will be made for this need, or whether MacDonald is advising well-born gentlemen and ladies to purchase paintings “in spite of unemployment” and thus to “improve their minds”. We may assume that the second explanation is the correct one. But then, we are constrained to behold in MacDonald a priest of the parlor-Liberal Protestant school, who first speaks with powerful words of poverty and the “religion of conscience” and then advises his worldly flock not to surrender too much to despair and to continue their former mode of living. Let him who will—after this—believe that materialism is vulgarity and that MacDonald is a social poet, languishing with longing for a Shakespeare. As for us, we believe that, if there is in the physical world an absolute zero, corresponding to the greatest attainable cold, there is also in the mental world a degree of absolute vulgarity, corresponding to the mental

temperature of MacDonald.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb represent a different variety of Fabianism. They are accustomed to patient and laborious literary labor, know the value of facts and figures, and this circumstance imposes certain limitations on their diffuse thought. They are not less boring than MacDonald, but they may be more instructive when they do not attempt to transcend the bounds of investigations of fact. In the domain of generalization they are hardly superior to MacDonald. At the 1923 congress of the Labor Party, Sidney Webb declared that the founder of British socialism was not Karl Marx but Robert Owen, who did not preach the class struggle but the time-honored doctrine of the brotherhood of all mankind. Sidney Webb still considers John Mill a classic of political economy and accordingly teaches that the struggle should be carried on not between capital and labor but between the overwhelming majority of the nation and the expropriators of rents. This should be sufficient to indicate the theoretical level of the principal economist of the Labor Party! The historical process, as we all know, does not proceed according to Webb's desires, even in England. The trade unions are an organization of wage labor against capital. On the basis of the trade unions we have the growth of the Labor Party, which even made Sidney Webb a Cabinet Minister. Webb carried out his platform only in the sense that he waged no war against the expropriators of surplus value. But he waged no war either against the expropriators of rents.

In 1923, the Webbs issued a book, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization*, which has as its basis a partly outgrown, partly refurbished paraphrase of Kautsky's old commentaries on the Erfurt Program. But the political tendency of Fabianism is again revealed in *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization* in all its hopelessness, this time half knowingly. There is no doubt [for whom?] say the Webbs, that the capitalist system will change. The whole question

simply is how it is to be transformed. “It may by considerate adaptation be made to pass gradually and peacefully into a new form.”^[8] But this requires a certain element: good will on both sides. “Unfortunately,” the respected authors relate, “many who assent to this proposition of inevitable change, fail to realize what the social institutions are to which this law of change applies. To them the basis of all possible civilization is private property in a sense in which it is so bound up with human nature, that whilst men remain men, it is no more capable of decay or supersession than the rotation of the earth on its axis. But they misunderstand the position.”^[9] How unhappily have circumstances conspired to frustrate us! The whole business could be arranged to the general satisfaction by applying a method of “planful adaptation”, if the workers and capitalists could only agree on the method of this consummation. But since no such agreement has “hitherto” been attained, the capitalists vote for the Conservatives. What should be our conclusion? Here our poor Fabians fail us completely, and here *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization* assumes the form of a lamentable decay of Fabianism. “Before the Great War there seemed to be a substantial measure of consent,” the book relates, “that the social order had to be gradually changed, in the direction of a greater equality,^[10] etc.” By whom was this recognized? These people think their little Fabian molehill is the universe. “We thought, perhaps wrongly (!), that this characteristic British (?) acquiescence on the part of a limited governing class in the rising claims of those who had found themselves excluded from both enjoyment and control, would continue and be extended, willingly or reluctantly, still further from the political into the industrial sphere; and that whilst progress might be slow, there would at least be no reaction. But after the War, everything fell into desuetude: the conditions of the lives of the workers became worse, we are threatened with the reestablishment of the *veto* power of the House of Lords, with the particular object of resisting further ‘concessions to

the worker’;^[11] etc. What is the conclusion to be drawn from all this? It was in their hopeless search for such a conclusion that the Webbs wrote their little book. Its final sentence reads as follows: “In an attempt, *possibly vain*, to make the parties understand their problems and each other better—in the hope that it is not always inevitable that Nature should harden the hearts of those whom she intends to destroy—we offer this little book.”^[12] Is not this nice: a “little book” is offered as a means of conciliating the proletariat with the bourgeoisie. Let us recapitulate: before the war, “it seemed” to be generally recognized that the present system must be altered for the better; however, there was no general agreement as to the character of this change: the capitalists stood for private property, the workers against private property; after the war, the objective situation became worse, and the political divergence became further aggravated; *therefore*, the Webbs write a little book in order to make both sides more inclined toward conciliation; but this hope is admitted to be “possibly vain”. Yes, possibly, quite possibly. The worthy Webbs, who are so strongly imbued with a faith in the powers of intellectual conviction, ought—it appears to us—in the interests of “gradual changes”, to apply themselves at least at the beginning to a simpler task, namely, that of persuading a few high-placed Christian scoundrels to renounce their monopoly in the opium trade and their poisoning of millions of people in the Orient.

Oh, how poor, base, weak-minded, how vile in its intellectual cowardice is this Fabianism!

It is entirely impossible to attempt to enumerate all the philosophical varieties of Fabianism, for among this class “liberty of opinion” prevails in the sense that each of its leaders has his own personal philosophy, which consists, in the last analysis, of the same reactionary elements of Conservatism, Liberalism and Protestantism, as in any other such combination. Not long ago, we were very much surprised to learn that so ingenious—we had thought—and so critical a writer as George Bernard Shaw had advised us

that Marx had been far surpassed by Wells's great work on history.^[13] These revelations, an entire surprise to all of mankind, may be explained by the fact that the Fabians constitute from the standpoint of theory, an absolutely closed microcosm of profoundly provincial nature, in spite of the fact that they live in London. Their philosophical excogitations are apparently of no use either to Conservatives or to Liberals. They are of still less use to the working class, to whom they neither give nor explain anything. Their productions serve in the last analysis only to make clear to the Fabians themselves what is the use of the existence of Fabianism. Together with theological literature, these works seem to be the most useless, at any rate, the most boring, form of intellectual creation.

At present it is customary in England in certain fields of activity to speak with a certain contempt of the men of the "Victorian era", *i.e.*, the outstanding figures of the time of Queen Victoria. Everything has changed since then in England, but the Fabian type has perhaps been preserved even more intact. The insipid, optimistic Victorian epoch, in which it was believed that tomorrow will be somewhat better than today and the day after tomorrow still better than tomorrow, has found its most perfect expression in the Webbs, Snowden, MacDonald, and other Fabians. They may therefore be considered as an awkward and useless survival of an epoch that has already been definitely and irrevocably destroyed. We may say without exaggeration, that the Fabian Society, founded in 1884, with the object of "awakening the social consciousness", is now the most reactionary group to be found in Great Britain. Neither the Conservative clubs nor Oxford University, nor the higher Anglican clergy nor other priestly institutions, can begin to be compared with the Fabians. For all these are institutions of our enemies, and the revolutionary movement of the proletariat will inevitably break down their walls. But the proletariat is being restrained precisely by its own leading ranks, *i.e.*, by the Fabian politicians and their mental

offspring. These inflated authorities, pedants, conceited and highfalutin cowards are systematically poisoning the labor movement, obscuring the consciousness of the proletariat, paralyzing its will. Thanks only to them, Toryism, Liberalism, the Church, the monarchy, the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, continue to maintain themselves and even to feel secure in the saddle. The Fabians, the Independents, the conservative bureaucracy of the trade unions, are now the most counter-revolutionary power in Great Britain and perhaps in the entire present stage of the world situation. The driving out of the Fabians will be equivalent to a liberation of the revolutionary energy of the proletariat of Great Britain, to Socialism's conquest of the British fortress of reaction, to the freeing of India and Egypt, and to a mighty stimulus to the movement and growth of the peoples of the Orient. Renouncing force, the Fabians believe only in the power of "ideas". The kernel of truth imprisoned by this vile, hypocritical philosophy is merely the fact that no system can be maintained by force alone. And this holds good also of the British imperialist system. In a country in which the overwhelming majority of the population consists of proletarians, the ruling Conservative-Liberal imperialist clique could not have maintained itself for a single day, if the instruments of force which this clique holds in its hands were not reinforced, supplemented, and coated with pseudo-socialist ideals, confusing and disintegrating the proletariat.

The French "enlighteners" of the Eighteenth Century considered Catholicism, clericalism, the priesthood, to be their great enemy, and felt it was necessary to *écraser l'infâme*, before further progress was possible. They were right in the sense that it was the priesthood, the organized system of superstition, of the Catholic mental police system, which stood in the way of bourgeois society, obstructing the growth of science, art, political ideas, economics. Fabianism, MacDonaldism, pacifism, now play precisely the same rôle in relation to the historical movement of the proletariat. Fabianism is the chief support of British and European

imperialism, if not of the entire world bourgeoisie; we must point out to the workers the true countenance of these self-complacent pedants, prattling eclectics, sentimental careerists, liveried footmen of the bourgeoisie. In showing them up for what they are, we are discrediting them forever. In discrediting them we are performing an immense service to historical progress. On the day when the English proletariat frees itself from the mental baseness of Fabianism, humanity, particularly in Europe, will increase in stature by at least a head.

[5] We are using a Russian translation of this article, taken from the *Volya Naroda*, the Socialist-Revolutionist newspaper of Prague.

[6] "Parliamentary . . . Acts for enclosures of Commons," Karl Marx: *Capital*, Chicago, 1915, vol. i, p. 796.
—TRANSLATOR.

[7] Karl Marx, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 801, 802.
—TRANSLATOR.

[8] *The Decay of Capitalist Civilization*, p. 1.

[9] *Op. cit.*, pp. 1, 2.

[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

[11] *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

[13] I regret to say that before I read Shaw's letter, I had not even known of the existence of Wells's *Outline of History*. I later became acquainted with it; conscience prevents me from saying that I read it through, for an acquaintance

with two or three chapters was quite sufficient to induce me to desist from a further waste of time. Imagine an absolute absence of method, of historical perspective, of understanding of the mutual dependence of the various phases of social life; in general, of any kind of scientific discipline; and then imagine the “historian” burdened with these accomplishments, with the carefree mind of a Sunday pedestrian, strolling aimlessly and awkwardly through a few thousand years of history, and then you have Wells’s book, which is to replace the Marxian school.

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF REVOLUTIONARY FORCE

WE have become acquainted with MacDonald's views on the use of force in revolution and have found them to be a paraphrase of Mr. Baldwin's Conservative theory of gradual changes. More curious—though somewhat more genuine—is the renunciation of violence on the part of the “Left” Lansbury. Lansbury, it seems, says simply that he does “not believe” in force. He also does “not believe” in the capitalist army or in armed uprisings. If he believed in force, he would not vote—he says—for the British fleet, but would join the Communists. What a brave fellow! But the fact that Lansbury, who does not believe in force, does believe in a future life makes it somewhat doubtful whether he is entirely consistent. Nevertheless, with Lansbury's permission, certain facts in the world have been brought about with the aid of force. Whether Mr. Lansbury believes in the British Navy or not, the Hindoos know that this fleet exists. In April, 1919, the English General Dyer, without having issued any previous warnings, gave orders to shoot at an unarmed Hindoo meeting at Amritsar, with the result that 450 persons were killed and 1500 wounded. Leaving the dead out of consideration, we may feel safe in declaring that the wounded cannot afford “not to believe” in force. But even as a believing Christian, Lansbury should know enough to understand that if the cunning Hebrew priesthood, together with the cowardly Roman Pro-consul Pontius Pilate, a political predecessor of MacDonald, had not applied force to Jesus Christ, we should not have had the crown of thorns, nor the Resurrection, nor the Ascension, and even Mr. Lansbury would not have had the opportunity to be born a good Christian and to become a bad socialist. A disbelief in violence is equivalent to a disbelief in gravitation. All life is

built up on various forms of violence, on the opposition of one mode of force to another, and renunciation of the use of force for purposes of liberation is equivalent to giving support to force used for oppression, which now rules the world.

But we are of the opinion that scattered observations will not be of much avail here.

The question of force and the “denial of force” by the pacifists, Christian socialists, and other sanctimonious persons, is such an extensive phenomenon in English politics, that a special, detailed treatment is necessary, adapted to the political understanding of the present-day “leaders” of the British Labor Party, for which reason we are obliged to beg the pardon of our other readers for descending to this level.

What is—at bottom—the meaning of a denial of any use of force? If—let us suppose—a burglar should break into Mr. Lansbury’s house, we very much fear that this respectable gentleman (we are speaking of the master of the house) would apply force or would call upon the nearest policeman to apply force. Even if Lansbury, in the fulness of his Christian mercy, should permit the burglar to depart in peace—of which we are not at all certain—it would of course only be under the obvious condition of the burglar’s immediately leaving the apartment. Furthermore, the honorable gentleman could only permit himself the luxury of so Christian a gesture by reason of the fact that his premises are under the protecting supervision of British property laws, and their numerous arguses, with the result that in general such nightly visits on the part of burglars are rather the exception than the rule. If Lansbury should attempt to answer that an intrusion into a respectable private Christian home is an application of force which calls for the necessary resistance, we shall answer him that such a view is an abandonment of the renunciation of force in general, equivalent—on the other hand—to a recognition of force in principle and in practice, which may also be applied with perfect correctness to the class struggle, where we find daily intrusions by predatory capital in the life of the proletariat and

expropriations of surplus value which fully justify the offering of resistance. Perhaps Lansbury may reply that he does not imply every form of constraint when he uses the word “force”, for our excellent social life could not get along without some such forms, but only violations of the Sixth Commandment with its injunction “Thou shalt not kill.” In a defense of such an understanding of the question, it would be possible to adduce a great many high-sounding phrases concerning the sanctity of human life, and we should then be obliged to use the language of the parables in the Gospels, which is more accessible to the leaders of British socialism, and ask how Mr. Lansbury would act if he should behold a murderer falling upon little children with a club, if there were no other means of saving them than an immediate well-aimed shot from a revolver. If our supposed fellow-debater does not prefer to engage in absolutely empty sophisms, he will answer, I suppose, to render his position easier, that our example is a very exceptional one. But this answer would merely be equivalent once more to an admission that Lansbury would transfer his right to the use of murder under these circumstances to his police, the special organization of force which permits him to dispense in most cases with the necessity of using his revolver and even of considering its practical destination.

But now let us ask about the case in which armed strike-breakers beat up strikers or beat them to death. Such cases are every-day matters in America and are not unusual even in other countries. The workers cannot entrust the police with the execution of their right to resist the strike-breakers, because the police in all countries defends the right of strike-breakers to beat up strikers and beat them to death, for it is well known that the law concerning the sanctity of human life does not apply to strikers. Our question is this: Have the strikers the right to resort to the use of sticks, stones, revolvers, bombs, against the Fascisti, the bands of the Ku Klux Klan, and other hired thugs of capital? We should like to have a clear and straight answer to this question, without

any evasive sanctimonious embroidery. If Lansbury should say to us that the task of socialism is to provide the masses of the people with such training as to prevent the Fascisti from being Fascisti, to prevent scoundrels from being scoundrels, this would be pure hypocrisy. The fact that the object of socialism is the elimination of force, first in its cruder and bloodier forms, and later in its other, less obvious forms—we do not dispute. But we are not speaking of the manners and morals of the coming communist society, but of the concrete ways and means of the struggle with capitalist violence. When the Fascisti break up strikes, occupy newspaper offices and seize their treasuries, beat up or beat to death the workers' Parliamentary representatives, while the police surround the destroyers with a protective cordon, only the most contemptible hypocrite could under these circumstances advise the workers not to give back blow for blow, by urging that there will be no room for violence in the communist society. Of course, in each given case it will be necessary to decide *how* to answer the enemy's violence, and *to what extent* to proceed in our opposition, depending on all the circumstances of the case. But this is a question of practical tactics, which has nothing to do with the recognition or renunciation of violence in general.

What is the true nature of force? Where does it begin? When is it permissible and practical for the collective action of the masses to enter the phase of violence? We very much doubt whether Lansbury or any other of the pacifists would be capable of giving a reply to this question unless it be by merely referring to the Criminal Code, which provides clearly what may be done and what not. The class struggle is a constant series of overt and covert violence “regulated”—to this or that extent—by the State, which is, in turn, the organized apparatus of force of the most powerful of the antagonists, *i.e.*, the ruling class. Is the strike a form of violence? There was a time when strikes were prohibited and when every strike almost inevitably was combined with physical collisions. Later, as a result of the growth of the

strike movement, *i.e.*, as a result of the force applied by the masses against the laws, or, more correctly, as a result of the constant blows struck by the masses against the violence of the laws, strikes were legalized. Does this mean that Lansbury considers the only permissible instrument of struggle to be the peaceful, “legal” strikes, *i.e.*, those permitted by the bourgeoisie? If the workers had not inaugurated strikes at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, the English bourgeoisie would not have legalized them in 1824. If we approve of the strike, which is a form of applying power or force, we must accept all the consequences, including that of the defense of strikes against strike-breakers with the aid of practical measures of counter-force.

Furthermore, if strikes by the workers against the capitalists or against single groups of capitalists are desirable, will Lansbury refuse to recognize the necessity of a general strike of the workers against the Fascist Government, which oppresses the workers’ unions, destroys their press, fills the ranks of the workers with provocateurs and murderers?

Of course, it must again be pointed out that the general strike should be applied not at every moment, but only in certain concrete conditions. But this again is a question of practical strategy, not a general “moral” consideration. As far as the general strike is concerned, which is one of the most decisive instruments in the struggle, it would be hard for Lansbury and those who sympathize with him to devise any other instrument that could be used by the proletariat for the attainment of so significant a goal. Lansbury will surely not fall so low as to recommend the workers to wait until the spirit of brotherly love will have won the hearts—let us say—of the Italian Fascisti, who, by the way, are for the most part pious Catholics. And if we recognize that the proletariat not only has the right, but the obligation, to resort to a general strike against the Fascist régime, we are also obliged to draw the necessary conclusions from this admission. The general strike, unless it be a mere demonstration, is an extraordinary

upheaval of society and, in any case, calls for strength on the part of the revolutionary class. The general strike may only be applied when the working class and particularly its vanguard, is ready to prosecute the struggle to the bitter end. But, of course, Fascism also is not prepared to yield to any peaceful strike manifestation. In a case of real immediate danger, the Fascisti will set all their forces in motion, will resort to provocations, murder, incendiarism, on an unheard-of scale. We now ask: Is it permissible for the leaders of the general strike to create little bands for the defense of the strikers from violence, for disarming and dispersing the Fascist bands? And as no one has ever succeeded, at least within our memory, in disarming savage enemies with the aid of religious hymns, it will obviously be necessary to equip the revolutionary detachments with revolvers and hand-grenades until such time as they may be able to take possession of rifles, machine-guns, and cannons. Or is this perhaps the stage where the domain of inadmissible violence begins? But if we pursue this argument, we shall become definitely involved in childish and shameful contradictions. A general strike which does not defend itself against violence and destruction is a demonstration of cowardice and is doomed to destruction. Only a madman or a traitor could call to arms under such conditions. An "unarmed" strike struggle, by the logic of conditions that do not depend on Lansbury, would bring about armed conflicts. In economic strikes this frequently is the case; in a revolutionary political strike it is absolutely inevitable where the strike has the object of overthrowing the existing order. He who renounces force should renounce the struggle altogether, *i.e.*, should really stand in the ranks of the defenders of the triumphant violence of the ruling classes.

But this is not all. Our hypothetical general strike has as its object the overthrow of the Fascist power. This object can be attained only by gaining the upper hand over this power by means of armed forces. Here again two courses are possible: outright military victory over the forces of reaction,

or the winning over of these forces to the side of the revolution. Neither of these two methods can be applied exclusively, in its pure form. A revolutionary uprising carries off the victory if it succeeds in defeating the firmest, most resolute and most reliable troops of the reaction, and wins over to its side the other armed forces of the system. This is possible, again, only under the condition that the vacillating troops of the Government become convinced that the working masses are not merely demonstrating their dissatisfaction but are firmly determined this time to overthrow the Government at any cost, and will not recoil from the most uncompromising forms of conflict. The hesitating military forces can only be brought over to the side of the people by impressing them with this fact. The more procrastinating, vacillating, yielding, the policy of the managers of the general strike, the less vacillation will there be among the troops, the more firmly will they support the existing power, the greater will be the latter's chance of carrying off the victory in the crisis, thereupon to let loose upon the heads of the working class all the scorpions of bloody retaliation. In other words, when the working class is obliged, in order to secure its liberation, to resort to a general political strike, it must first thoroughly understand that the strike will inevitably produce detached as well as general, armed and half-armed conflicts; it must also thoroughly understand that the strike will fail to be immediately defeated only if it is able to offer the necessary resistance to the strike-breakers, provocateurs, Fascisti, etc.; they must understand in advance that the Government, whose existence is called in question, will inevitably, sooner or later in the struggle, call its armed forces into the streets, and that the destinies of the existing system will depend on the outcome of the collisions between the revolutionary masses with these armed forces, and consequently also the fate of the proletariat. The workers must first make use of every method in order to win over the soldiers to the side of the people by means of preliminary agitation; but the working class must also foresee that the

Government will always have left a sufficient number of dependable or half-dependable soldiers, which it can call out to suppress the uprising and, consequently, the question will be finally decided in armed clashes, for which it is necessary to be prepared by means of the most thorough preliminary plan and which must be conducted with the fullest revolutionary resoluteness.

Only great boldness in the revolutionary struggle can strike the weapons from the hands of reaction, shorten the period of civil war, and diminish the number of its victims. He who is not prepared to go so far should not take up arms at all; he who will not take up arms should not inaugurate a general strike; he who renounces the general strike should not think of serious resistance at all. The only thing that would remain would be to educate the workers in the spirit of complete submission, which would be a work of supererogation, as it is already being performed by the official schools, the governing party, the priests of all the churches, and . . . the socialist preachers of the impropriety of force.

But here is an interesting point: just as philosophical idealists in practical life eat bread, meat and base material things in general, and, forgetting the fact that they have immortal souls, make every effort to escape being run over by automobiles, so these pacifists, impotent opponents of violence, moral “idealists”, in all cases when they find it consonant with their interests, invoke political violence and directly or indirectly make use of it. As Mr. Lansbury is apparently not without a certain amount of temperament, such cases occur with him more often than with others. In the Parliamentary debates on the question of the unemployed (House of Commons Session of March 9, 1925), Lansbury declared that the law on unemployment insurance in its present form was introduced in 1920 “not so much in order to safeguard the lives of the workers and their families, as—to use the words of Lord Derby—in order to prevent revolution.” “In 1920,” continued Lansbury, “all the workers serving in the army were included in the number of those

insured, because the Government was at that time not quite sure that these workers would not turn their rifles in a direction not at all to the liking of the Government.” (*Times*, March 10, 1925.) After these words, the minutes of Parliament record “applause from the opposition benches,” *i.e.*, the Labor Party, and cries of “Oho!” from the Cabinet benches. Lansbury does not believe in revolutionary force, but he nevertheless recognizes—following Lord Derby—that the fear of revolutionary violence gave birth to the law for Government insurance of the unemployed. Lansbury resists all efforts to abolish this law: he believes, therefore, that the law born from the fear of revolutionary violence has a certain value for the working class. But this almost mathematically proves the utility of revolutionary force, for, with Lansbury’s permission, if there were no such thing as violence, there would be no fear of violence; if there were no actual possibility (and necessity) for turning one’s rifles against the Government under certain conditions, the Government would never have reason to fear such a possibility. Consequently, Lansbury’s so-called disbelief in force is pure folly. As a matter of fact, he is making use of force, at least in the form of an argument, every day. And furthermore, he is actually utilizing in practice the achievements of revolutionary violence in past decades and centuries. He merely refuses to put two and two together in his own mind. He renounces revolutionary force for the seizure of power, *i.e.*, for the full liberation of the proletariat, but he is on excellent terms with force and uses it in the struggle so long as the matter does not transcend the bounds of bourgeois society. Mr. Lansbury believes in force retail but not wholesale. He resembles the vegetarian who became reconciled to devouring the meat of ducks and rabbits, but renounced the slaughter of large cattle with pious disgust.

However, we predict that Mr. Lansbury, or some more diplomatic and hypocritical sympathizer of his, will answer us: Yes, against the Fascist régime, in fact against all despotic governments, force may, in the last analysis, we do not deny

it, be used to a certain extent, so to speak; but force is entirely out of place in a democratic system. For our own part, we should at once register this statement as a surrender of the position in principle, for we were not speaking of the conditions under which force was permissible or desirable, but of whether force was permissible in general, from the somewhat abstract humanitarian-Christian socialist point of view.

When we are informed that revolutionary force is inadmissible only under a system of political democracy, the whole question is at once shifted to another plane. This does not mean, however, that the democratic opponents of force are more profoundly and more intelligently Christian or humane. We can easily show this to be the case.

Is it true that the question of the advisability and admissibility of revolutionary force can be decided on the basis of the greater or less democracy in the *form* of bourgeois rule? A negative answer is implied in all the experience of history. The struggle between revolutionary and conciliatory, legalistic, reformist tendencies within the workers' movement begins long before the establishment of republics or the introduction of universal suffrage. In the time of Chartism, and down to 1868, the workers of England were absolutely deprived of the suffrage, this fundamental weapon of "peaceful" development. However, there was a split in the Chartist movement between the advocates of physical force, with the masses behind them, and the advocates of moral force, consisting chiefly of petty bourgeois intellectuals and the aristocracy of the workers. In Hohenzollern Germany, with an impotent Parliament, there was a struggle within the Social-Democracy between the advocates of Parliamentary reform and the preachers of a revolutionary general strike. Finally, even in Tsarist Russia, under the Régime of June 3,^[14] the Mensheviks abandoned revolutionary methods, under the slogan of the "struggle for legality". Thus, to speak of the bourgeois republic or universal suffrage as a fundamentally reformist and legalistic

method, is merely an expression of theoretical ignorance, short memory, or downright hypocrisy. As a matter of fact, legalistic reformism means the submission of the slaves to the institutions and laws of the slaveholders. Whether these institutions include in their number the general right of suffrage or not, whether they are headed by a king or a president, this question is of secondary importance even for the opportunist. The opportunist is always on his knees before the idol of the bourgeois state and consents to advance to his "ideal" only through the donkey-gates constructed for him by the bourgeoisie. And these gates are so made that no one can get through them.

What is political democracy and where does it begin? In other words, where, by what countries has the stage been reached where force is inadmissible? For instance, can we call a state democratic if it includes monarchy and an aristocratic upper house? Is it permissible to use revolutionary methods for the overthrow of these institutions? One may perhaps reply that the English House of Commons is strong enough, if it should find it necessary, to dismiss the royal power and the House of Lords, and that the working class has at its disposal a peaceful means of achieving a democratic system in its own country. Let us admit this for a moment. How does the case stand with the House of Commons itself? Can this institution really be called democratic, even from the formal point of view? By no means. Important portions of the population are actually deprived of the suffrage right. Women have the vote only after thirty, men only after twenty-one. A lowering of the age limit is, from the point of view of the working class, in which the working life begins early, a rudimentary demand of democracy. And, to cap the climax, the boundaries of the election districts in England are fixed in such an outrageously unjust manner that there are twice as many votes corresponding to one Labor delegate as to one Conservative. In raising the age limit, Parliament is actually excluding the active young people of both sexes, and entrusting the

destinies of the nation predominantly to the older generations, who are more tired of life and whose eyes are directed rather to the ground than into the future. That is the mission of the high age limit. The vicious geometry of the election districts gives a Conservative vote twice as much weight as a worker's vote. Thus, the present English Parliament is a crying distortion of the will of the people, even if we understand the latter in the bourgeois-democratic sense. Has the working class a right, still standing on the ground of the principles of democracy, to demand vigorously from the present privileged and at bottom usurping House of Commons the immediate introduction by the latter of a truly democratic suffrage? If Parliament should answer unfavorably, which we consider inevitable, for Baldwin's government recently refused even to make the age limit the same for men and women, would the proletariat then have the "right" to obtain from the usurping Parliament, by means of a general strike, the introduction of a democratic suffrage system?

Even if we should further admit that the House of Commons—in its present usurping form or in some more democratic form, should decide to dismiss the royal power and the House of Lords—of which there is not the slightest hope—this would not at all mean that the reactionary classes, recognizing that they had a minority in the Parliament, would submit unconditionally to this decision. Only a short time ago we saw the Ulsterite reactionaries resort to open civil war under the leadership of Lord Carson when their opinion differed with that of the British Parliament on the question of the governmental system of Ireland, and the English Conservatives openly supported the Ulster rebels. But, we shall be told that this was an open uprising on the part of the privileged classes against the democratic Parliament, and this mutiny should of course have been put down with the aid of Government forces. We subscribe to this view but ask only that certain practical conclusions be drawn from it.

Assuming for a moment that a Labor majority in

Parliament may be returned in the next elections, which will proceed by legal methods to decree that the lands of the landlords shall be transferred without compensation to the farmers and to those chronically unemployed, that there shall be a high capital levy, and that the king, the House of Lords, and some other indecent institutions must go. There is no doubt that the possessing classes will not yield without a fight, particularly when we remember that they have the entire mechanism of the police, the courts, and the army and navy in their hands. We have already had a case of civil war in England, in which the king was supported by a minority of the Commons and a majority of the Lords against the majority of the Commons and a minority of the Lords. This was in the 40's of the Seventeenth Century. Only an idiot—we repeat—only a sorry idiot could seriously imagine that a repetition of a civil war of this kind (on the basis of the new class conditions) is impossible in the Twentieth Century, by reason of the obvious progress in the last three centuries in the Christian view of life, humanitarian feelings, democratic tendencies, and a lot of other fine things. The Ulster example alone should show us that the possessing classes do not trifle when Parliament, their own Parliament, is forced to limit their privileged position even to the slightest extent. Those who prepare to seize power must necessarily prepare also for all the consequences that will result from the inevitable opposition of the possessing classes. We must firmly grasp this fact: if a real workers' government should come to power in England, even by the most extremely democratic means, civil war would be inevitable. The workers' government would be obliged to put down the opposition of the privileged classes. It would be impossible to do this by means of the old governing apparatus, the old police, the old courts, the old militia. A workers' government created by the Parliamentary method would be obliged to create for itself new revolutionary organs, drawing their strength from the trade unions and the workers' organizations in general. This would lead to an immense increase in the activity and

independent action of the working masses. On the basis of the immediate struggle with the exploiting classes, the trade unions would be actively welded together, not only in their upper ranks, but also in the masses, and would find it absolutely necessary to create local gatherings of delegates, *i.e.*, soviets of workers' deputies. The true workers' government, *i.e.*, the government which is entirely devoted to the interests of the proletariat, would thus be obliged to destroy the old government apparatus as an instrument of the possessing classes and would oppose it with workers' soviets for that purpose. This means that the democratic origin of the workers' government—if such a thing be at all possible—would lead to the necessity of opposing the strength of the revolutionary class to its reactionary opponent.

We have already pointed out that the present English Parliament is a monstrous distortion of the principles of bourgeois democracy, and that without applying revolutionary force it is hardly possible in England to obtain even an honest allotment of election districts, or the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. But let us assume for a moment that these demands could be realized in one way or another. Would this mean that we should have a truly democratic Parliament in London? By no means. The London Parliament is a slaveholders' Parliament. Even though it be said to represent in an ideal formal-democratic way 40,000,000 people, the English Parliament passes laws for 300,000,000 people in India and has control of financial resources which are obtained by the rule of England over her colonies. The population of India has no part in the legislation which determines that country's fate. The English democracy resembles that of Athens in the sense that the equality of democratic rights (in reality non-existent) is concerned only with the "free-born", and is based on the absence of rights in the "lower" nations. There are about nine colonial slaves for each inhabitant of the British Isles. Even if we consider that revolutionary force be not in place in a democracy, this principle cannot in any way be made to apply to the peoples

of India, who do not rebel against democracy but against the despotism that oppresses them. This being the case, even an Englishman, if he be truly democratic, cannot consider binding the democratic force of British laws as far as India, Egypt, etc., are concerned. And since the entire social life of England, as a colonial power, is based on these laws, it is obvious that all the activity of the Westminster Parliament, as a concentration of a predatory colonial power, is anti-democratic at its very basis. From a consistent democratic point of view, we should be obliged to state: As long as Hindoos, Egyptians, etc., have not been given full rights of self-determination, *i.e.*, the right of secession, as long as Hindoos, Egyptians, etc., do not send their representatives to the imperial Parliament, with rights equivalent to those of Englishmen, the Hindoos and Egyptians, as well as the English democrats, have the right to rebel against the predatory government created by a Parliament which represents an insignificant minority of the population of the British Empire. That is the state of things for England, if we approach the question of the use of force from purely democratic criteria, actually applying them consistently, however.

The denial by the English social-reformers of the right of the oppressed masses to use force is a shameful renunciation of democracy, a contemptible support of the imperialist dictatorship of a small minority over hundreds of millions of enslaved persons. Before undertaking to teach communists the sacredness of democracy and to criticize the Soviet power, Mr. MacDonald should rather sweep before his own door.

We have approached the question of force first from the "humanitarian", Christian, clergyman's point of view and have shown that the social-pacifists in their search for an escape from an inescapable contradiction are actually obliged to surrender their position and to recognize that revolutionary force is permissible even after passing the threshold of

democracy. We have further shown that it is as difficult for the deniers of force to base themselves on the democratic point of view as on the Christian point of view. In other words, we have completely shown the untenable, lying, sanctimonious nature of social-pacifism, judged on its own terms.

But this by no means signifies that we are ready to recognize these terms. In solving the question of revolutionary force, the Parliamentary-democratic principle is by no means the highest instance in our eyes. Mankind does not exist for democracy, but democracy is one of the auxiliary tools on the path of mankind's development. As soon as bourgeois democracy becomes an obstacle, it should be destroyed. The transition from capitalism to socialism does not emanate from formally democratic principles, standing above society, but from the material conditions of the development of society itself, from the growth of the productive forces, from the ineluctable capitalist contradictions, domestic and international, from the sharpening of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. A scientific analysis of the entire historical process and the political experience of our own generation, which includes the imperialist war, all bear unanimous witness that our civilization is threatened with stagnation and decay. Only the proletariat, led by its revolutionary vanguard, and followed by all the toiling and oppressed masses both of the home country and the colonies, can accomplish the transition to socialism. Our highest criterion in all our activity, in all our political decisions, is the interests of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for the seizure of power and the reconstruction of society. We consider it reactionary pedantry to judge the movement of the proletariat from the point of view of the abstract principles and legal paragraphs of democracy. We consider the only proper method to be to judge democracy from the point of view of the historical interests of the proletariat. We are interested not in the shell, but in the kernel of the nut. The talk of our Fabian friends about the inadmissibility of a "narrowly class point of view" is pure balderdash. They would

subordinate the problem of the social revolution brought about by the proletariat to the scholastic rules of pedants. By the solidarity of mankind they mean an eclectic Philistinism corresponding to the *narrow class horizon of the petty bourgeois*. The bourgeoisie has placed the screen of democracy between its property and the revolutionary proletariat. Socialist pedants say to the workers: We must take possession of the means of production, but meanwhile we must introduce certain apertures and channels in this screen by legal methods. But why should we not throw down the screen? Oh, do not think of that! Why not? Because, if we should save society by this method, we should be overthrowing the complicated system of government force and deception which the bourgeoisie has taught us to consider as holy democracy.

Having been forced out of its first two positions, the opponents of force may retire to a third line of defense. They may consent to throw overboard Christian mysticism and democratic metaphysics, and attempt to defend the reformist-democratic peaceful Parliamentary method by means of considerations of mere political expediency. Some of them may say, for example: Of course, the teachings of Christ do not provide for a method of escaping from the contradictions of British capitalism; likewise, even democracy is not a holy institution, but only a temporary and useful product of the historical development; but why should the working class not make use of the democratic Parliament, and all its methods, as a legislative apparatus for the actual seizure of power and for the reconstruction of society? For this is a perfectly natural and, in view of the present circumstances, a more economical method for the accomplishment of the social revolution.

We communists are by no means disposed to advise the English proletariat to turn its back on Parliament. On the contrary, when a number of English communists displayed a tendency in this direction, they encountered opposition from our side in the international congresses. The question

therefore is not whether it is worthwhile to use the Parliamentary method at all, but what is the place of Parliament in the evolution of society; whether the strength of the classes is in Parliament or outside of Parliament; what is the form and the field in which these forces will clash; is it possible to use Parliament, created by capitalism in the interests of its own growth and preservation, as a lever for the overthrow of capitalism?

To answer this question, we must try to picture to ourselves at least with some degree of definiteness, the future course of English political evolution. Of course, any such attempt to look into the future may be merely hypothetical and general in character. But without such efforts, we should be obliged to grope in the dark altogether.

The present Government has a solid majority in Parliament. It is not impossible, therefore, that it may remain in power for three or four years, although the time may be much shorter. In the course of this period, the Conservative Government, beginning with the "conciliation" speeches of Baldwin, will reveal that it is called upon, after all, to conserve all the contradictions and disabilities of post-war England. On the subject of the most menacing of these distempers, the chronic unemployment, the Conservative Party itself has no illusions. There can be no hope of any serious improvement in exports. The competition of America and Japan is growing; German industry is reviving. France is exporting with the aid of its declining currency. Baldwin declares that statesmen cannot provide any alleviation for industry, which must find its own remedy within itself. New efforts to reestablish the gold currency mean new sacrifices on the part of the population, and consequently also of industry, thus bringing about a further growth of discontent and unrest. The radicalism of the English working class is rapidly advancing. All this prepares for the Labor Party's coming to power. But we have every reason to fear, or rather to hope, that this process will provide much dissatisfaction not only to Baldwin but also to MacDonald. We may expect,

above all, increased industrial conflicts, and, with them, a greater pressure exerted by the working masses on their Parliamentary representation. But neither can be to the taste of such leaders as applaud the conciliation speeches of Baldwin and express their sorrow at Curzon's death. The internal life of the Parliamentary fraction, as well as its position in Parliament, will thus be made harder and harder. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the capitalist tiger will soon cease purring about gradual changes and will start to show its claws. Will MacDonald, under these conditions, succeed in preserving his leadership until the new elections? In other words, may we expect a shifting of the party leadership to the Left right away, during the Party's opposition stage? This question, of course, is not a decisive one, and the answer to it may only be in the nature of a conjecture. At any rate, we can and should expect a further sharpening of the relations between the Right and the so-called Left wing of the Labor Party and—much more important—a strengthening of the revolutionary tendencies in the masses. The possessing classes are beginning to follow everything that goes on in the ranks of the working class with increasing uneasiness, and are preparing for the elections long in advance. The election campaign should under these conditions show considerable tension. The last elections, featured by a forged document, raised as an emblem by the campaign managers and circulated throughout the bourgeois press and at all meetings, was only a feeble harbinger of the coming elections.

One of three things is possible as a result of the elections, unless we assume that the latter will immediately bring about civil war (which, generally speaking, is by no means impossible): either the Conservatives will again be returned to power, with a considerably curtailed majority; or, neither of the parties will have an absolute majority, and we shall have a repetition of the Parliamentary condition of last year, but under political circumstances far less favorable for the conciliation tendency; or, finally, the Labor Party may have an

absolute majority.

In the case of a new victory of the Conservatives, the restlessness and indignation of the workers will inevitably be increased. The question of the mechanism of elections, with their crooked allotment of election districts, must at once be faced in all its nakedness. The demand of a new, more democratic Parliament will resound in greater strength. For a time, this may retard to a certain extent the internal struggle in the Labor Party, but it will create more favorable conditions for the revolutionary elements. Will the Conservatives make peaceful concessions in this question which may involve their very existence? It is hardly probable. On the contrary, if the question of power is sharply raised, the Conservatives will attempt to split the workers by utilizing the Thomases on top and those trade unionists who refuse to pay the political contributions at the bottom. It is not at all impossible that the Conservative Government may even attempt to bring about isolated clashes, in order to put them down by force, frighten the leaders of the Labor Party, the Liberal Philistines, and thus force back the movement. Can this plan succeed? That also is not impossible. By leading the Labor Party with their eyes closed, without any breadth of view, without any understanding of social reality, these leaders make it easier for the Conservatives to deliver a blow to the movement at its next and higher stage. Such an event would involve a temporary more or less serious defeat of the laboring class, but would of course not have anything in common with Parliamentary methods, as they are depicted by the "conciliators". On the contrary, such a defeat would prepare for a renewal of the class struggle at the next stage, in more decisive revolutionary forms, and consequently under a new leadership.

If neither of the parties should have a majority after the next elections, Parliament would fall into a state of prostration. A repetition of the Labor-Liberal coalition could hardly take place after their recent experience, and furthermore, under circumstances of new, more bitter inter-

class and inter-party relations. A Conservative-Liberal Government seems more probable, but this would necessarily coincide with the above-discussed case of a Conservative majority. And, if it should be impossible to attain agreement, the only Parliamentary solution would be a revision of the electoral system. The question of the election districts, of by-elections, etc., would be an immediate subject of contention in the fight for power of the two principal parties. Would Parliament be capable, divided between parties of which none can obtain power, of passing a new electoral law? It is more than doubtful. At any rate, immense pressure would be needed from below. The weakness of Parliament without a sure majority would afford favorable occasion for such pressure. But here again we are faced with revolutionary possibilities.

However, this temporary situation has no importance for us as such, for it is evident that the unstable condition of Parliament must sooner or later be succeeded by a shift in one direction or the other, either a Conservative or a Labor Government. We have already considered the former case. The latter also is very interesting from our point of view. The question, consequently, stands as follows: May we assume that the Labor Party, having secured an absolute Parliamentary majority in the elections, and having set up its Government, will enforce by peaceful measures a nationalization of the most important branches of production, and develop the socialist construction within the framework and the methods of the present Parliamentary system?

In order not to render this question too complicated, let us assume that the Liberal-conciliation alignment of MacDonald will still retain the official leadership of the party in its hands at the next elections, with the result that the victory of the workers will lead to the creation of a MacDonald Government. This Government will, of course, not be a mere repetition of the former MacDonald Government: in the first place, because we are assuming it to have behind it an independent majority; in the second place,

the inter-party relations will inevitably become more strained in the impending period, particularly in the case of a Labor Party victory. At present, the Conservatives, having a solid majority in their hands, are inclined to treat MacDonald, Thomas and Company, with a certain protecting condescension. But since the Conservatives are made of sterner stuff than the pseudo-socialists, they will immediately show their teeth and their claws when left in the minority. We may therefore not doubt that if the Conservatives cannot in one way or other—Parliamentary or otherwise—prevent the creation of an independent Government by the Labor Party—and this would perhaps be more favorable from the point of view of the peaceful development of the situation—the Conservatives left in the minority will do everything in their power to sabotage all the measures of the Labor Government with the aid of the officialdom, the courts, the armed forces, the House of Lords, and the nobility. The Conservatives, as well as the remnants of the Liberals, will be faced with the task of compromising at any cost the first independent Government of the working class. For this is a life and death struggle. We shall no longer be dealing with the old fight between the Liberals and the Conservatives, the differences between them remaining in the “family” of the possessing classes. Any reasonable, serious reforms by the Labor Government in the domain of taxation, nationalization, and true democratization of administration, would cause an immense outburst of enthusiasm on the part of the working masses, and, since appetite increases with eating, successful *moderate* reforms would inevitably serve as a stimulus for more *radical* reforms. In other words, each additional day would lessen the Conservatives’ possibility of returning to power. The Conservatives could not fail to be fully aware of the fact that they are not facing an ordinary change of Government, but the beginnings of the socialist revolution by Parliamentary methods. The resources of Government obstruction, of legislative and administrative sabotage, in the hands of the possessing classes are very large, for, regardless

of the Parliamentary majority, the entire governing apparatus from top to bottom is indissolubly bound up with the bourgeoisie. The latter owns the entire press, the most important organs of local government, the universities, the schools, the churches, countless clubs, and voluntary associations in general. In its hands are the banks and the entire system of national credit, in fine, the mechanism of transportation and trade, with the result that the daily food supply of London, including that of the Labor Government, will depend on the great capitalist organizations. It is self-evident that all these gigantic instruments will be set in motion with furious energy in order to block the activity of the Labor Government, paralyze its strength, frighten it, introduce dissension in its Parliamentary majority, in short, to bring about a financial panic, interruptions in the food supply, lockouts, to terrorize the upper ranks of the workers' organizations and cripple the proletariat. Only the most complete idiot could fail to understand that the bourgeoisie will move heaven, earth and hell itself if a workers' government should really come to power.

The so-called English Fascism of the present day has thus far been of interest only as a curiosity, but this curiosity is nevertheless quite symptomatic. The Conservatives are today too firmly in the saddle to need the aid of the Fascisti, but an aggravation of the inter-party conditions, a growth of the firmness and aggressiveness of the working masses and the prospects of a victory of the Labor Party will inevitably call forth a growth of the Fascist tendencies in the Conservative right wing. In a country that has been getting poorer year by year, its petty and middle bourgeoisie becoming gradually impoverished, with chronic unemployment, there will be no lack of elements for the creation of Fascist bands. We therefore cannot doubt that by the time the Labor Party obtains victory in the elections, the Conservatives will have behind them not only the official Government apparatus, but also the unofficial bands of Fascism. They will begin their work of provocation and blood before the Parliament has a

chance to hear the reading of the first bill for nationalizing the coal mines. What can the workers' government then do? Either capitulate shamefully or offer resistance. The latter decision is not entirely a simple matter. The experience of Ireland has shown that to be able to offer resistance it is necessary to have real material strength and a strong government apparatus. The Labor Government will have neither. The police, the courts, the army, the militia, will be on the side of the disorganizers, the saboteurs, the Fascisti. It will be necessary to break down the bureaucratic apparatus, substituting Labor Party members for the reactionaries. There is no other way. But it is perfectly obvious that such sharp Government measures, though they be entirely "legal", will extraordinarily aggravate the legal and illegal opposition of the united bourgeois reaction. In other words, this is the path to civil war.

But perhaps the Labor Party, once it is in power, will approach its task so cautiously, so tactfully, so ingeniously, that the bourgeoisie—how shall we put it?—will not feel the necessity of offering any active resistance. Of course, such a supposition is ludicrous; yet, we must not forget that precisely this is the fundamental hope of MacDonald and his friends. When the present pseudo-leader of the Independents says that the Labor Party will introduce only such reforms as are "scientifically" proved to be possible (we know MacDonald's "science"), he means that the Labor Government will look questioningly into the eyes of the bourgeoisie before it takes any step in reform. Of course, if everything depended on the good will of MacDonald and his "scientifically" founded reforms, things would never come to the pass of civil war, for the bourgeoisie would have no reason for resorting to such action. If the second MacDonald Government should be like the first, we should have no reason for taking up the question of bringing about socialism by a Parliamentary method, for the budget of the City has nothing in common with the budget of socialism. However, the policy of the Labor Government, even if it should retain its present membership, would suffer

some changes. It would be absurd to imagine that the powerful surge of labor, capable of lifting MacDonald into power, would at once recede respectfully after this accomplishment. No, the exactions of the working class would grow enormously, for it would no longer feel that it depended on Liberal votes. The opposition of the Conservatives, the House of Lords, the bureaucracy, the monarchy, would redouble the energy, the impatience, the spirit of the workers. The calumnies and intrigues of the capitalist press would drive them on. Even the most unfaltering energy displayed by their own Government under these conditions will seem insufficient. But to expect MacDonald, Clynes and Snowden to display revolutionary energy is as reasonable as to expect fragrance from rotten mangold roots. Between the revolutionary onslaught of the masses and the fierce opposition of the bourgeoisie, the MacDonald Government will be thrown from side to side, antagonizing some elements, failing to satisfy others, angering the bourgeoisie with their half-measures, redoubling the revolutionary discontent of the workers, kindling civil war and making every effort, at the same time, to deprive it of the necessary leadership on the proletarian side. Meanwhile, the revolutionary wing will inevitably become strengthened and more far-sighted; resolute and revolutionary elements of the working class will come to the top. On this path, the MacDonald Government sooner or later, owing to the alignment of power outside of Parliament, will have to yield place either to a Conservative Government, with Fascist and not with conciliation tendencies, or to a revolutionary government, truly capable of putting the thing through. In either case, a new outburst of civil war, a sharp clash between the classes, is inevitable all along the line. In the case of a victory of the Conservatives, there will be merciless destruction of the workers' organizations; in the case of a victory of the proletariat, the opposition of the exploiters will be crushed by measures of revolutionary dictatorship. You do not like this, gentlemen? What can we do about it? The

fundamental springs of action are as little dependent on us as on you. We are “decreeing” nothing; we are merely analyzing the situation.

Among the “Left” half-supporters, half-opponents of MacDonald, who, like MacDonald, stand on a democratic basis, there are some who will probably say: Of course, if the bourgeois classes attempt to offer resistance to the democratically elected Labor Government, the latter will not recoil from methods of the harshest compulsion, but this will not be a class dictatorship, but the force of the democratic state which . . . etc., etc. There is no use pursuing the argument on this plane. To imagine, indeed, that the destinies of society may be determined by the election to Parliament of either three hundred and seven Labor delegates, *i.e.*, a minority, or three hundred and eight, *i.e.*, a majority, and not by the actual alignment of power at the moment of the stern collision of classes fighting for their existence, would be equivalent to a complete surrender to the fetishism of Parliamentary arithmetic. But—we ask—suppose the Conservatives, faced with a growing revolutionary audacity and with the danger of a Labor Government, should not only refuse to democratize the election system, but, on the contrary, should introduce further limitations of it? “Not very probable!” reply those simple-minded folk who do not know that in matters of life and death *anything* is probable. In England there is already a tremendous preliminary scurry with regard to the reorganization and strengthening of the House of Lords. In this connection, MacDonald recently said that he could understand the concern felt by certain Conservative Lords, but he “could not understand why the Liberals should work in the same direction.” The sage does not grasp why the Liberals are strengthening a second line of trenches against the advance of the working class! He does not understand this because he is himself a Liberal, but of the highly provincial, petty, narrow-minded type. He does not understand that the bourgeoisie means business, that it is preparing for mortal combat, that the Crown and the House

of Lords will play a prominent part in this combat. If they are successful in reducing the rights of the House of Commons, *i.e.*, in putting through a legal *coup d'état*, the Conservatives, in spite of all the difficulties attending this enterprise, will be in a far more favorable position than if they were obliged to organize opposition against a successful Labor Government in process of consolidation. "Well, in that case, of course," some mouthing "Left" might exclaim, "we shall call upon the masses to offer resistance." You mean revolutionary violence? We must infer, therefore, that revolutionary force is not only admissible but even inevitable in case the Conservatives accomplish a preventive Government *coup d'état*, by *legal parliamentary methods*. Would it not be a plainer way of putting it to say that revolutionary force is useful whenever and wherever it strengthens the position of the proletariat, weakens or repels the enemy, accelerates the socialist evolution of society?

However, heroic promises to hurl thunderbolts of resistance if the Conservatives should "dare", etc., are not worth a single bad penny. It is futile to lull the masses to sleep from day to day with prattling about peaceful, painless, Parliamentary, democratic transitions to socialism and then, at the first serious punch delivered at one's nose, to call upon the masses for armed resistance. This is the best method for facilitating the destruction of the proletariat by the powers of reaction. In order to be capable of offering revolutionary resistance, the masses must be prepared for such action mentally, materially, and by organization. They must understand the inevitability of a more and more savage class struggle, and its transformation, at a certain stage, into civil war. The political education of the working class and the selection of the leading members must be in accordance with this understanding. The illusion of conciliation must be fought from day to day, war to the knife must be declared against MacDonaldism. That is the present state of the question.

Disregarding concrete conditions, for the moment, we may perhaps say that MacDonald did in the past have an

opportunity to facilitate considerably the transition to socialism, and to reduce to a minimum the commotions of civil war. This was on the occasion of the Labor Party's first accession to power. If MacDonald had confronted Parliament at once with a resolute program (liquidation of the monarchy and House of Lords, a high capital levy, nationalization of the most important instruments of production, etc.) and, after having prorogued Parliament, had appealed to the country with revolutionary courage, he might have hoped to catch the possessing classes, to a certain extent, unawares, before they could gather their strength, to crush them under the onslaught of the working masses, to conquer and reconstruct the government apparatus before British Fascism could succeed in organizing itself, and thus to bring about the revolution through the portals of Parliament, "legalize it", and lead it to victory with a firm hand. But it is perfectly clear that such a possibility is merely theoretical. For such a purpose, you would need a different party with different leaders, and this would in turn presuppose entirely different circumstances. If we set up this theoretical possibility in the case of the past, it is only in order to show the more clearly its impossibility in the future. The first experience of a Labor Government, in all its cowardly emptiness, was nevertheless an important historical warning to the governing classes. It is hopeless to take them unawares, they are now following everything that goes on among the workers with far more far-sightedness. "Under no circumstances will we shoot first," most unexpectedly declared the most humane, pious and Christian Baldwin, in his Parliamentary speech of March 5. And a few donkeys on the Labor benches actually applauded these words. Baldwin does not doubt for a moment that there will be shooting, but wishes only to shift the responsibility for the impending civil war in advance—at least in the eyes of the intermediate classes—to the shoulders of the enemy, *i.e.*, the workers. This is precisely the method used by the diplomacy of each country when war is impending; each country attempts to transfer the guilt to the

opposite side. Of course, the party of the proletariat is also interested in throwing the responsibility for civil war on the capitalist leaders and, in the last analysis, the Labor Party has and will have much more political and moral justification for this procedure. We may assume that the assault of the Conservatives on the House of Commons would be one of the “favorable” motives for agitation, but this is after all a matter of third or fifth importance. We are here not considering the question of the methods preceding revolutionary conflicts, but that of the methods of seizing the Government with the object of securing a transition to socialism. Parliament will in no wise assure a peaceful transition: the revolutionary force of the class will be necessary and inevitable. We must expect and prepare for this situation. The masses must be trained and tempered for revolutionary action. The first condition for such training is an uncompromising struggle with the corrupting spirit of MacDonaldism.

On March 25, 1925, a Committee of the House of Lords solemnly proclaimed that the title of Duke of Somerset should pass to a certain Mr. Seymour, who thus obtains the right to legislate in the House of Lords, which decision had depended on the solution of another Parliamentary question: when in 1787, a certain Colonel Seymour married, in order to give Great Britain a new lord after the lapse of several generations, was his wife’s first husband still living, or had the latter died in Calcutta?

This question, it appears, was of very great importance for the destinies of the English democracy. In the same issue of the *Daily Herald* which reports this instructive episode in the life of the first husband of the ancestress of legislator Seymour, the editors defend themselves against the accusation of desiring to introduce a soviet system in England; no, by no means; we are only for trade with the Soviets, not at all for a soviet system in England.

And what could be so very bad, we ask, about the

application of the soviet order to English technology and English industry, to the cultural habits of the English working class? Let the *Daily Herald* consider the consequences of the introduction of a soviet system in Great Britain. In the first place, the royal power would be abolished, and Mrs. Snowden would be relieved of the necessity of bemoaning the superhuman exertions put upon the members of the royal family. In the second place, the House of Lords would be abolished, together with Mr. Seymour, now obliged to legislate by virtue of a mandate given him by the timely death of the first husband of his great-grandmother in Calcutta. In the third place, the present Parliament would be liquidated, concerning whose dishonesty and impotence even the *Daily Herald* reports every day. The agrarian parasitism of the landlords would be destroyed for ever. The basic branches of industry would pass into the hands of the working class, which constitutes in England an overwhelming majority of the population. The powerful apparatus of the Conservative and Liberal newspapers and publishing houses might be utilized for the instruction of the working class. "Give me a dictatorship over Fleet Street (London's newspaper row) for a single month, and I shall destroy the hypnosis!" cried Robert Williams in 1920. Williams himself has since changed, but Fleet Street is still waiting for its proletarian master. . . . The workers would elect their representatives not on the basis of the dishonest election districts into which England is at present divided, but in their works and factories. The soviets of workers' deputies would renew the governing apparatus from top to bottom. Privileges of birth and wealth would disappear, together with the false democracy kept by the banks. A true workers' democracy would rule, combining the government of industry with the political administration of the country. Such a government, for the first time in the history of England, truly based on the people, would establish free, equal and fraternal relations with India, Egypt, and other colonies. It would immediately conclude a powerful political and military alliance with workers' and peasants' Russia.

Such an alliance would be designed for years in advance. The economic plans of the two countries would be adjusted to each other, in their corresponding divisions, a number of years at a time. The exchange of resources, products and services between these two countries, each supplementing the other, would raise to an unheard-of height the material and mental well-being of the toiling masses of both countries. That would not be so bad, would it? Why, therefore, defend oneself against the accusation of a desire to introduce the soviet order in England? By terrorizing the social opinion of the workers, the bourgeoisie wishes to inspire them with a wholesome fear of any attack on the present British system, and the Labor press, instead of mercilessly unmasking this policy of reactionary hypnosis, is basely adapting itself to the latter and thus supporting it. This also is MacDonaldism.

The English as well as the Continental opportunists have more than once said that the Bolsheviks arrived at their dictatorship only by virtue of their position and in spite of all their principles. In this connection, it would be extremely instructive to trace the evolution of Marxian thought, as well as of revolutionary thought in general, on the question of democracy. We shall content ourselves here with two cursory quotations. As early as 1887, Lafargue, Marx's closest disciple and related to Marx by close personal ties, outlined the general course of revolution in France in the following broad strokes: "The working class will rule," wrote Lafargue, "in the industrial cities which will all become revolutionary centers and will form a federation in order to win over the villages to the side of the revolution and put down the resistance that may be organized in such trading and seaport cities as Havre, Bordeaux, Marseilles. In the industrial cities, the socialists must seize power in the local institutions, arm the workers, and organize them in a military way; he who has the rifle also has the bread, said Blanqui. They will open the doors of the jails, in order to release the petty thieves, and will put under lock and key such great thieves as bankers, capitalists, great industrialists, large property-holders, etc.

Nothing will be done to these men, but they will be considered as hostages, responsible for the good conduct of their class. The revolutionary power is built up by the method of simple seizure and only when the new power is in full control of the situation will the socialists turn for a consolidation of their activities to the suffrage which is called universal. The bourgeoisie hesitated so long to admit the indigent classes to the ballot box that they should not be too much surprised to find all the former capitalists deprived of the suffrage right until such moment as the revolutionary party is assured of its victory.”^[15] The destinies of the revolution are not decided for Lafargue by appealing to any constituent assembly, but by the revolutionary organization of the masses in the process of their struggle with the enemy. “When the local revolutionary institutions have been established, they must organize, by the method of delegation or otherwise, a central power, upon which will be imposed the obligation to take general measures in the interest of the revolution and to prevent the formation of a reactionary party.”^[16] Of course, we do not find in these few lines any fully formulated characterization of the soviet system, but an inference from revolutionary experience. Yet, the construction of a central revolutionary power by the method of sending delegates from the local revolutionary organs which are engaged in the struggle with reaction, is a close approximation to the idea of the soviet system. And at any rate, as far as formal democracy is concerned, Lafargue’s attitude on this subject is indicated with remarkable clearness. The working class may only attain power by the path of revolutionary *seizure*. “The suffrage which is called universal,” Lafargue ironically remarks, “may be introduced only after the proletariat is in control of the apparatus of the state.” But even then, the bourgeoisie is to be deprived of the suffrage right, and the great capitalists are to be reduced to the status of hostages. Anyone even slightly aware of the character of the relations between Lafargue and Marx will be fully convinced that Lafargue developed his opinions on the dictatorship of the

proletariat on the basis of many conversations with Karl Marx. If Marx himself did not dwell exhaustively on the expounding of these questions, it is probable only for the reason that the character of the revolutionary dictatorship of the class appeared self-evident to him. At any rate, Marx's own words on this subject, not only in 1848-49, but also in 1871 on the occasion of the Paris Commune, do not leave any doubt as to the fact that Lafargue is merely developing Marx's thought on the subject.

However, Lafargue is not alone in favoring a class dictatorship in opposition to democracy. This idea was advanced with considerable fulness already in the time of Chartism. In the periodical, *The Poor Man's Guardian*, in connection with a proposed extension of the suffrage right, the following "sole true reform" was advanced: "It is but common justice that the people who make the goods should have the sole privilege of making the laws."^[17] The significance of Chartism is precisely in the fact that all the subsequent history of the class struggle is recapitulated concisely in the decade of its history. After this time, the movement in many ways lay dormant. It extended its base, and acquired new experience. On its new and higher basis, it will inevitably return to many of the ideas and methods of Chartism.

[14] June 3, 1907, when Stolypin introduced the so-called "organic reforms".

—TRANSLATOR.

[15] Paul Lafargue, *Complete Works*, vol. i, Russian ed., p. 330.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Quoted in Max Beer's *History of Socialism in England*, vol. i, p. 307.

CHAPTER VI

TWO TRADITIONS: THE GREAT REBELLION AND CHARTISM

THE editor of the *Daily Herald* not long ago expressed his doubts as to whether Oliver Cromwell might be called the “pioneer of the labor movement”. One of the newspaper’s writers supporting the editor’s doubts mentions the harsh lesson given by Cromwell to the Levellers. These thoughts and questions are extremely characteristic of the historical learning of the leaders of the Labor Party. We need not waste a single word to prove that Oliver Cromwell was the pioneer of *bourgeois* society and not of *socialist* society. This great revolutionary bourgeois was opposed to the universal suffrage right, for he saw in it a danger to private property. The Webbs literally infer from this the “incompatibility” of democracy with capitalism, closing their eyes to the fact that capitalism later learned how to get along well with democracy and to manage the instrument of the universal suffrage right as well as the instrument of its stock exchange.^[18] None the less, the English workers may learn incomparably more from Cromwell than from MacDonald, Snowden, the Webbs and the rest of the conciliation brethren. Cromwell was the great revolutionist of his time, who learned *to hesitate at nothing*, to defend the interests of the new bourgeois social order against the old aristocratic order. This must be learned from Cromwell; in this sense, the dead lion of the Seventeenth Century stands infinitely higher than many dogs still alive.

Following those contemporary anything-but-lions who write editorials for the *Manchester Guardian* and other Liberal papers, the leaders of the Labor Party customarily contrast with democracy all despotic governments, such as the “dictatorship of Lenin” or the “dictatorship of Mussolini”.

The historical ignorance of these gentlemen is nowhere expressed more clearly than in this juxtaposition. Not because we may be inclined to indulge in a belated denial of the “dictatorship of Lenin”; in actual fact, Lenin’s power over the entire course of events of a great state was an exclusive power. But can we really speak of a dictatorship without considering its social-historical content? History records the dictatorship of Cromwell, the dictatorship of Robespierre, the dictatorship of Arakcheyev, the dictatorship of Napoleon I, the dictatorship of Mussolini. A fool might consider the dictatorship of Robespierre and of Arakcheyev to be of the same type; we shall not argue with such a man. Various classes, in various situations, and for various purposes, find themselves obliged, in certain extremely critical and responsible periods of their history, to assign exclusive power and authority to such of their leaders as most clearly and fully advocate their fundamental interests in the given epoch. In speaking of dictatorship, we must first make clear what interests, of what particular classes, are historically expressed in this dictatorship. Oliver Cromwell for one epoch, Robespierre for another, expressed the historically progressive tendencies in the evolution of bourgeois society. William Pitt, also quite close to the practice of personal dictatorship, defended the interests of the monarchy, of the privileged classes, of the upper bourgeois circles, against the revolution of the petty bourgeoisie which found its highest expression in the dictatorship of Robespierre. The Liberal churls usually declare that they are opposed to dictatorship from the Left as well as to dictatorship from the Right, although in actual practice they rarely neglect an opportunity to support a dictatorship from the Right. For us, the question is decided by the fact that one dictatorship pushes society forward while another holds it back. The dictatorship of Mussolini is the dictatorship of the prematurely decaying, impotent, diseased Italian bourgeoisie: it is a dictatorship with a saddle-nose. The “dictatorship of Lenin” expressed the powerful onward sweep of a new historical class and its

superhuman struggle with all the forces of the old society. If Lenin must be compared with anyone, it is surely not with Bonaparte, and still less with Mussolini, but with Cromwell and Robespierre. We may say with a certain justification that Lenin is the proletarian Cromwell of the Twentieth Century. This comparison will serve as the best possible apology for the petty bourgeois Cromwell of the Seventeenth Century.

The French bourgeoisie, distorting the Great Revolution, adopted it, and have reduced it to petty coin, put it into general circulation. The English bourgeoisie has erased even the memory of the revolution of the Seventeenth Century, and recasts its entire past in the form of “gradual changes”. The vanguard of the English workers should discover the British Revolution and should find in it, under its ecclesiastical garment, the powerful conflict of social forces. Cromwell was by no means a “pioneer of labor”, but in the drama of the Seventeenth Century the English proletariat may find great precedents for revolutionary action. This tradition, which is also “national”, is fully justifiable and fully in place in the arsenal of the working class. The proletariat also has another great tradition in the Chartist movement. An acquaintance with these two epochs is indispensable to every class-conscious English worker. An explanation of the historical thought of the Seventeenth Century and of the revolutionary content of Chartism is one of the most important tasks devolving upon English Marxists.

A study of the revolutionary epoch in the history of England which extends, let us say, from the compulsory convocation of Parliament by Charles Stuart to the death of Oliver Cromwell, is particularly necessary for the purpose of acquiring an understanding of the place of Parliamentarism and of “law” in general, in living—not imaginary—history. The great “national” historian Macaulay distorts the social drama of the Seventeenth Century by veiling the internal conflict by means of commonplaces, sometimes interesting, always superficial. The French conservative Guizot goes

deeper into these events. In any case, no matter whose exposition we may accept, any man who is able to see under the cloak of history the living real bodies, classes, factions, will be convinced precisely by the experience of the English revolution of the extremely subsidiary, subordinate, conditional rôle played by law in the mechanism of the social struggle, particularly in a revolutionary epoch, *i.e.*, when *basic* interests of *basic* classes of society come into the foreground. In the 40's of the Seventeenth Century in England, we find Parliament based on a grotesque election law, and yet considering itself the representative of the people.

The lower house represented the nation, the bourgeoisie, and therefore also the national wealth. In the reign of Charles I it was ascertained, not without astonishment, that the House of Commons was three times as rich as the House of Lords. The king now prorogues the Parliament, and then summons it to assemble anew under the pressure of financial necessity. Parliament creates an army for its defense. The army gradually concentrates within it all the most active, manly, resolute elements. Just because of this fact, Parliament capitulates to the army. We repeat: *just because of this fact*. By this we mean that Parliament capitulates not merely to armed force (it did not surrender to the king's army), but to the Puritan army of Cromwell, which voiced the demands of revolution more boldly, more resolutely, more consistently, than did Parliament.

The adherents of the Episcopalian, or Anglican (half-Catholic) Church, were the party of the court, the nobility, and, of course, the higher clergy. The Presbyterians were the party of the bourgeoisie, the party of wealth and education. The Independents and the Puritans in general were the party of the petty bourgeoisie, and the petty independent landowners. The Levellers were the incipient party of the Left wing of the petty bourgeoisie, the plebs. Under the integument of ecclesiastical disputes, under the form of a struggle for the religious structure of the Church, there

proceeded a social self-determination of classes, a regrouping of classes on new, bourgeois foundations. In politics, the Presbyterian party stood for a limited monarchy; the Independents, also sometimes called “root and branch men”, or—in the language of our day—“radicals”, were for a republic. The lukewarm nature of the Presbyterians was fully in accord with the contradictory interests of the bourgeoisie, vacillating between the nobility and the plebs. The party of the Independents, which had dared to carry its ideas and slogans to their logical conclusion, naturally forced the Presbyterians into the midst of the awakened petty bourgeois masses of city and country, which had become the most important force of the revolution.

The course of events evolved empirically. Fighting for power and for property interests, both sides were hiding under the shadow of legality. Guizot presents this situation rather neatly:

“Then commenced, between the Parliament and the King (Charles I), a conflict previously unexampled in Europe. . . . Negotiations were still continued, but neither party expected any result from them, or even had any intention to treat. It was no longer to one another that they addressed their declarations and messages; both appealed to the whole nation, to public opinion; to this new power both seemed to look for strength and success. The origin and extent of the royal authority, the privileges of the Houses of Parliament, the limits of the fidelity due from subjects, the militia, the petitions for the redress of grievances, and the distribution of public employments became the subjects of an official controversy, in which the general principles of social order, the various nature of governments, the primitive rights of liberty, the history, laws and customs of England, were alternately quoted, explained, and commented upon. In the interval between the disputes of the two parties in Parliament, and their armed encounter on the field of battle, reason and learning interposed, as it were, for several months, to suspend the course of events, and to put forth their ablest

efforts to obtain the free concurrence of the people. . . . When the time came for drawing the sword, all were astonished and deeply moved. . . . Now, however, both parties mutually accused each other of illegality and innovation, and both were justified in making the charge; for the one had violated the ancient rights of the country and had not abjured the maxims of tyranny; and the other demanded, in the name of principles still confused and chaotic, liberties and a power which had until then been unknown.’^{19]}

As the civil war came nearer and nearer, the more active royalists deserted the Westminster House of Commons and the House of Lords, and escaped to York to Charles’s headquarters: the Parliament was split, as in all great revolutionary epochs. Whether the “legal” majority in one case or another happens to be on the side of revolution or of reaction, it is not a decisive element in such situations.

At the decisive moment, the political history of the destinies of “democracy” depended not on Parliament, but—what a frightful thought for the scrofulous pacifists!—on the cavalry. In the first period of the struggle, the Royalist cavalry, the most significant arm of the service in those days, put the fear of the Lord into the Parliamentary horsemen. It is of interest to note that we find similar situations in later revolutions, particularly in the Civil War in the United States of America, where the Southern cavalry in the first stages was indisputably superior to the Northern horse, and finally, in our revolution, in whose early stages the White Guard cavalymen inflicted a number of hard blows upon us before our workers learned to sit firmly in the saddle. By reason of its origin, cavalry is the most aristocratic branch of the army. The Royalist cavalry was therefore more close-knit and resolute than the Parliamentary horsemen who had been gathered hastily and at random. The cavalry of the Confederate States was, so to speak, the native arm of the Southern planter troops, while the trade-industrial North had to learn to ride a horse. Finally, in our country, the natural training-ground for the cavalry was the southeastern plains,

the Cossack Vendée. Cromwell very quickly learned that the destinies of his class were being decided by horsemen. He said to Hampden: "I choose people who will not lose the fear of God from their minds, who will know what they are doing, and I vouch for it they will not be driven back" (Guizot, *History of Charles the First*, London, 1854). The words addressed by Cromwell to the free landholders and artisans picked by him are very interesting: "I do not want to deceive you; I shall not try to convince you, as I am ordered in the instructions, that you will be fighting for King and Parliament. Whatever enemy I may be facing, whoever he may be, I shall shoot at him with my pistol, as at any other enemy; if conscience prevents you from acting thus, go serve elsewhere" (*ibid.*). In this manner, Cromwell constructed not only the army, but also a party; his army was to a great extent an armed party, and precisely this element gave it its strength. In 1644, the "holy" battalions of Cromwell were already winning splendid victories over the Royalist horsemen, earning for themselves the name of "Ironsides". Revolutions are always in need of "Ironsides". The English workers may learn much from Cromwell in this connection.

The remarks made by the historian Macaulay on the army of the Puritans are not without interest: "A force thus composed might, without injury to its efficiency, be indulged in some liberties which, if allowed to any other troops, would have proved subversive of all discipline. In general, soldiers who should form themselves into political clubs, elect delegates, and pass resolutions on high questions of state, would soon break loose from all control, would cease to form an army, and would become the worst and most dangerous of mobs. Nor would it be safe, in our time, to tolerate in any regiment religious meetings, at which a corporal versed in Scripture should lead the devotions of his less gifted colonel, and admonish a backsliding major. But such was the intelligence, the gravity, and the self-command of the warriors whom Cromwell had trained, that in their camp a political organization and a religious organization

could exist without destroying military organization. The same men, who, off duty, were noted as demagogues^[20] and field-preachers, were distinguished by steadiness, by the spirit of order, and by prompt obedience on watch, on drill, and on the field of battle” (Macaulay, *History of England*, New York, Harper and Brothers, vol. i, p. 120). And further on: “In his camp alone the most rigid discipline was found in company with the fiercest enthusiasm. His troops moved to victory with the precision of machines, while burning with the wildest fanaticism of Crusaders” (*ibid.*, p. 120).

All historical analogies must be drawn with the greatest possible care, particularly when we are comparing the Seventeenth and Twentieth Centuries; none the less, there is no harm in pointing out a few of the obvious traits of resemblance in the mode of life and character of the army of Cromwell and the Red Army. To be sure, in the former case everything was based on the belief in predestination, and on a harsh religious morality; here, in our country, we are animated by a militant atheism. But under the religious mantle of Puritanism, there proceeded a preaching of the historical meaning of the new class and the doctrine of predestination was the religious prelude to historical causality. Cromwell’s warriors felt themselves to be in the first place Puritans, in the second place soldiers, as our warriors feel themselves to be in the first place revolutionists and communists and in the second place soldiers. But the traits of difference are even greater than those of similarity. The Red Army, created by the party of the proletariat, is the latter’s armed organ. Cromwell’s army, embracing his party within it, was itself a decisive force; we have seen how the Puritan army begins to adapt Parliament to itself and to revolution. The army succeeds in excluding from Parliament eleven Presbyterians, *i.e.*, representatives of the Right wing. The Presbyterians, the Girondists of the English Revolution, try to raise an insurrection against the English Parliament. The truncated Parliament seeks safety with the army and thus subordinates itself still more to the latter; under the pressure of the army,

particularly of its Left, more resolute, wing, Cromwell is obliged to execute Charles I. The axe of the revolution is curiously wreathed with psalms; but the axe is more convincing. Then Cromwell's Colonel Pride surrounds the Parliament Building and drives forth eighty-one Presbyterian members by force. Only the rump of Parliament is left. It consists of Independents, *i.e.*, those sympathizing with Cromwell and his army; but for this very reason, Parliament having inaugurated an immense struggle with the monarchy, at the moment of success ceases to be the source of any independent thought and power. The concentration of both is in Cromwell alone, whose strength is in the army directly, but in the last analysis, his decisive strength is drawn from his bold solution of the fundamental problems of revolution. A fool, an ignoramus, or a Fabian may see in Cromwell *only* the personal dictator. As a matter of fact, we here find, under conditions of profound social upheaval, that the dictatorship of a class assumes the form of personal dictatorship, which alone is capable of freeing the kernel of the nation out of the ancient impediments. The English social crisis in the Seventeenth Century unites within it the traits of the German Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and those of the French Revolution of the Eighteenth Century. In the person of Cromwell, Luther clasps hands with Robespierre. The Puritans were not averse to calling their enemies Philistines, but the actual matter at issue was the class struggle. Cromwell's task was to inflict as many crushing blows as possible on the absolute monarchy, the court dignitaries, and the half-Catholic Church, which had been reduced to serve the needs of the monarch and the dignitaries. For such a blow Cromwell, the true representative of the new class, was in need of the strength and passion of the masses of the people. Under his leadership, the revolution acquires all the scope it needs. Whenever it exceeds—for instance, among the Levellers—the limits of the demands of the renovation of bourgeois society, Cromwell mercilessly berates the “madmen”. After his success, Cromwell begins to construct a

new state law, combining biblical texts with the pikes of the “holy” soldier; the decisive word being spoken always by the pikes.

On April 19, 1653, Cromwell threw out the remnants of the Long Parliament. Conscious of his historical mission, the Puritan dictator hurled biblical epithets at the retreating miscreants: “Thou art a drunkard,” he shouted to one; “thou art an adulterer!” he reminded another. Thereupon Cromwell created a Parliament of the representatives of the God-fearing elements, *i.e.*, essentially a class Parliament; the God-fearing people were the middle class, which, with the aid of an austere morality had achieved the work of accumulation and with the texts of holy writ on their lips, were proceeding to appropriate the world for themselves. But even this fastidious “Barebone’s Parliament” was under the thumb of the dictator, who deprived it of the necessary liberty of action in the difficult internal and international situation. At the end of 1653, Cromwell again purifies the House of Commons with the aid of soldiers. If the remnant of the Long Parliament, driven out in April, was inclined to lean to the right, to the side of the remnants of the Presbyterians, the “Barebone’s Parliament” was inclined in certain questions to follow in too straight a line the path of Puritan virtue and thus rendered more difficult for Cromwell the achievement of a new social equilibrium. The revolutionary realist Cromwell was building a new society. Parliament was not an end in itself; law is not an end in itself; Cromwell himself and his “holy” troops considered the realization of divine commands to be the true end, but in reality the latter were merely the ideological conditions for the construction of bourgeois society. Dispersing Parliament after Parliament, Cromwell thus revealed as little reverence for the fetish of “national” representation as he revealed an insufficient respect for the monarchy by the grace of God in his execution of Charles I. Nevertheless, it was Cromwell who paved the way for the Parliamentary and democratic methods of the two succeeding centuries. In revenge for Cromwell’s execution of Charles I,

Charles II had Cromwell's body suspended on a gibbet. But no Restoration could reestablish the pre-Cromwellian society. The work of Cromwell could not be liquidated by the predatory legislation of the Restoration. For the pen can never eradicate that which has been written by the axe. This reversal of the popular proverb is much more correct, particularly when we speak of the axe of revolution.

As an illustration of the relation between "right" and "might" in epochs of social upheavals, the history of the Long Parliament will always be of exceptional interest. This Parliament for twenty years experienced all the vicissitudes of events, it served as a target for the impact of class forces, was driven to the Right and to the Left, first rose against the king, and then suffered suppression on the part of its own armed servants, was twice dispersed and twice reconstituted, it dictated and was humiliated, before it was finally enabled to pass the resolution abolishing itself.

We do not know whether the proletarian revolution will have its "long" Parliament; it is quite probable that it will content itself with a *short* Parliament. However, it will achieve this end the more surely, the better it learns the lessons of Cromwell's era.

Of the second tradition, which is purely proletarian in nature, we shall only say a few words.

The period of Chartism is immortal for the reason that in the decade of its existence it affords us an abbreviated and systematic view of practically the entire course of the proletarian struggle—from petitions to Parliament down to armed insurrection. All the fundamental questions of the class movement of the proletariat—the relations between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities, the part played by the universal suffrage right, the trade unions and cooperatives, the importance of the general strike and its relation to armed insurrection, even the mutual relations between the proletariat and the peasantry—were not only crystallized in practice in the history of the Chartist mass

movement, but found their answer in it as far as principles are concerned. Theoretically this answer is not always well founded, the threads are not always properly united, the entire movement, as well as its theoretical expressions, present much of immaturity, of the unachieved. But the revolutionary slogans of Chartism to this day—if examined critically—are infinitely higher than the cloying eclecticism of the MacDonalds and the economic obtuseness of the Webbs. If we may resort to a rather far-fetched comparison, we might say that the Chartist movement may be compared with the prelude to a music drama, which presents a recapitulation of the musical themes of the entire work. In this sense, the English working class can and should read in Chartism not only its past, but also its future. Just as the Chartists discarded the sentimental preachers of “moral action”, having gathered the masses under the banner of revolution, so the English proletariat will be obliged to cast out from its midst the reformers, democrats and pacifists, and rally around the flag of a revolutionary act. Chartism failed, not because its methods were incorrect, but because it appeared too early on the scene. It served only as a historical prophecy. The revolution of 1905 also lost the battle. But its traditions were born anew after twelve years, and its methods were victorious in November, 1917. Chartism is by no means disposed of. History is liquidating liberalism and preparing for the liquidation of pseudo-labor pacifism for the very purpose of recreating Chartism on new, incomparably higher historical foundations. This is the true national tradition of the English labor movement.

[18] It is amusing to note that two centuries later, in 1842, the historian Macaulay, then a member of Parliament, protested against the general right of suffrage on precisely the grounds advanced by Cromwell.

- [19] Guizot: *History of Charles the First and the English Revolution*, London, 1854, vol. i, pp. 356-358.
- [20] Macaulay means revolutionary agitators.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRADE UNIONS AND BOLSHEVISM

THE fact that it is absurd to evaluate and define the fundamental tasks of a labor movement from the formal and ultimately legal point of view of democracy, is particularly clear from the most recent history of England itself, especially from a study of the question of the political contributions of the trade unions. This question, at first glance merely a practical one, is nevertheless of immense importance in principle, and this importance is—we fear—by no means understood by the leaders of the Labor Party. The trade unions have as their object the improvement of the working and living conditions of wage laborers. For this purpose, the members of the unions contribute certain fees. In political matters, the trade unions have been considered—at least in form—as neutral; in actual fact, they have often followed in the train of the Liberal Party. Needless to say, the Liberals, as well as the Conservatives, who sell honors of all kinds to the rich bourgeois in return for generous contributions to their party treasury, have not needed the financial aid of the trade unions, but only their votes. The situation changed as soon as the workers, through the trade unions, had created the Labor Party. Once having brought the latter to life, the trade unions were obliged to finance their party. Additional contributions were needed for this purpose from the trade organizations of the workers. The bourgeois parties unanimously raised a howl against this “crying violation of individual liberty”. “The worker is not only a worker, but also a citizen and a man,” MacDonald profoundly instructs us. “Precisely so,” is the echo from Baldwin, Asquith and Lloyd George. In his quality as a citizen, the worker, whether he supports the trade unions or not, has the right to vote for any party he likes. To collect from him a compulsory contribution to the Labor Party is a

violation not only of his purse, but also of his conscience. And finally, it is an outright violation of the democratic constitution which forbids any form of compulsion in the matter of support given to this party or that! As a matter of fact, these conclusions must have impressed the leaders of the Labor Party considerably, who would gladly have renounced the compulsory anti-Liberal, almost bolshevist methods of the trade organizations, had it not been for this cursed need of shillings and pounds, without which it is impossible to obtain a representative's mandate even in the Arcadia of Democracy. And it is the sad destiny of democratic principles that shillings and pounds are the weapons that give black eyes and bloody noses. Such is the imperfection of this best of all worlds.

The history of the question of political contributions by the trade unions is already quite full of turning points and dramatic episodes, which we shall not enumerate here. Only recently, Baldwin relinquished (for the present!) the new effort on the part of his conservative friends to forbid the collection of political contributions. The Parliamentary law of 1918, still in force, which forbids the unions from collecting political contributions, gave each member of a trade union the right to refuse to pay this contribution and simultaneously forbade the trade unions to prosecute such members, drop them from their lists, etc. If we may believe the report in the *Times* (March 6, 1925), about ten per cent. of all the members of the trade organizations of the workers have taken advantage of their right to refuse to pay the political contributions. Thus the principle of individual liberty has been saved at least in part. A full victory of "liberty" would be attained only if the contributions could be collected from those members exclusively who should declare their willingness to contribute. At present, wherever resolutions have been passed by the unions, all the members are obliged to pay the contribution, only such being exempted as have duly declared their intentions in the proper form. In other words, the Liberal principle has been transformed from a

triumphant rule to a tolerated exception. And even this partial application of the principle of personal liberty was realized—alas!—not by the will of the workers but by the compulsion brought to bear by bourgeois legislation on the organizations of the proletariat. This condition gives rise to the question: How does it happen that the workers, who constitute the great mass of the English population, and consequently of the English democracy, are driven by the very nature of their struggle into violations of the principles of “personal liberty”; while the legislating bourgeoisie, particularly the House of Lords, appears in the rôle of a champion of liberty, now by categorically forbidding “compulsion” against the persons of the trade unionists (decision of the House of Lords in 1919 in the Osborne case), now by seriously limiting this “compulsion” (Act of Parliament, 1918)! The essence of the matter is, of course, in the fact that the workers’ organizations, having established their anti-Liberal, “despotic”, bolshevik rule of compulsory collection of political contributions, are in this manner fighting for an actual, real, not merely metaphysical possibility of a Parliamentary representation of labor; while the Conservatives and Liberals, who advance the principle of “personal liberty”, are actually attempting to disarm the workers materially and thus to drive them over to the bourgeois parties. It is sufficient to consider the distribution of rôles: the trade unions are for the unconditional right of compulsory collection of political contributions; the House of Lords is for the unconditional prohibition of such collections, in the name of the sacred principle of personal liberty; finally, the House of Commons forces a concession from the trade unions, which amounts in fact to a rebate of ten per cent. in favor of the principles of Liberalism. Even a blind man can here perceive the purely class character of the principle of personal liberty which in the present concrete conditions means nothing more or less than an attempt by the possessing classes to expropriate the proletariat politically, by reducing its party to nothing.

The Conservatives defend against the trade unions the

“right” of the worker to vote for any party he may wish, these same Tories who for centuries refused to grant the worker any suffrage right at all. And though we have lived and seen much, we cannot read without considerable indignation the history of the struggle for the Reform Bill in the early 30’s of the Nineteenth Century. With what extraordinary stubbornness, with what tenacity, with what impudence, the slaveholding class of landlords, bankers, bishops, in a word, the privileged minority, fought off the attack on the parliamentary citadel by the bourgeoisie and the workers in its train. The Reform of 1832 was instituted only when it was no longer possible to avoid it, and the extension of the suffrage right was introduced as a matter of direct calculation, for the purpose of separating the bourgeoisie from the workers. There was in reality nothing that divided the Conservatives from the Liberals, who, having attained the Electoral Reform of 1832, left the workers in the lurch. When the Chartists demanded from the Tories and Whigs the granting of the right of suffrage to the workers, the opposition of the Parliamentary monopolists became positively furious. And when the workers finally secured the vote, the Conservatives come out in defense of their “individual liberty” against the tyranny of the trade unions. And this vile, disgusting, hypocrisy is not appreciated at its true value in Parliament. On the contrary, the Labor members thank the Prime Minister who benevolently declines to place a financial noose upon the necks of the workers but fully and absolutely reserves the right to do so at some more appropriate moment. Windbags who may be fed with such terms as “democracy”, “equality”, “individual liberty”, should be sent back to school and made to study the history of England, particularly the history of the struggle for the extension of the right of suffrage.

The Liberal Cobden once declared that he would rather live under the authority of the Bey of Algiers than under that of the trade union. Cobden was thus expressing his Liberal indignation against the “Bolshevist” tyranny involved in the

very nature of the trade unions. From his standpoint, Cobden was right. The capitalist who falls into the hands of the trade unions will fare very badly. The Russian bourgeoisie can tell a few tales in this connection. But the essence of the matter is that the worker actually has over him a permanent Bey of Algiers in the person of his employer, and the tyrannical power of this Bey can be weakened only through the activity of the trade unions. Of course, the worker must make some sacrifice for this purpose, not only in money, but also personally. However, "individual liberty" will in the last analysis gain incomparably more than it loses through the intermediation of the trade unions. This is the class point of view from which it is impossible to get away, and which is the basis of the right to collect political contributions. The bourgeoisie, in the mass, at present considers it necessary to *reconcile itself* with the existence of the trade unions, but it wishes to keep their activities below the line where the struggle with the various groups of capitalists becomes a struggle with the capitalist state.

The Conservative member, Macquisten, pointed out in Parliament that the refusal of the trade unions to pay the political contributions is observed chiefly in the small and scattered branches of industry, while in the concentrated branches of industry, he regrets to say, there is observed "moral pressure and mass intimidation". This observation is extremely interesting! How characteristic of the English Parliament that it should be spoken by an extreme Tory, the author of the proposed prohibitive legislation, and not by a socialist. This observation means that the refusal to pay the political contributions is met with in the most backward branches of industry, in which a powerful petty bourgeois tradition and consequently also petty bourgeois conceptions of individual liberty, are found usually coupled with voting for the Liberal and even for the Conservative Party. In the newer, more modern branches of production, class solidarity and proletarian discipline are found, which impresses the capitalists and their servants, the deserters from the workers,

as terrorism.

A certain Conservative member, trembling with rage, declared that in one trade union the secretary had threatened to post publicly a list of members refusing to pay the contributions to the party. The Labor members began indignantly to demand the name of this dishonorable secretary, and yet every trade union should have been advised to act in this manner. Of course, bureaucrats who, among the howls from both bourgeois parties attempt to eject communists from labor organizations, will never do this. As soon as communists are concerned, solicitude for individual liberty ceases; then we only hear talk of the security of the state. It is wrong to admit to the Labor Party communists who deny the holiness of democracy. Yet, during the debates concerning the political contributions, the author of the prohibitive legislation, Macquisten, who has already been mentioned, made a remark on the subject of this same democracy which was received by the opposition with gay laughter, but which should, as a matter of fact, not only be engraved on the walls of Parliament, but proclaimed and expounded at every workers' meeting. Elucidating with figures the significance of the political contributions of the trade unions, Macquisten declared that before the Liberal Bill of 1913, the trade unions had expended annually only about 100,000 pounds for political purposes, while now, owing to the legalization of the political contributions, they have in their hands a fund of 250,000 pounds. "Of course," says Macquisten, "the Labor Party has become strong. *When you have 250,000 pounds of annual income, you can create a party for any purpose.*" The infuriated Tory said somewhat more than he intended. His remark is a frank recognition that parties *can be made*, that they can be made with the aid of *money*, that funds play a *decisive part* in the mechanism of democracy. Must we point out that the financial resources of the bourgeoisie are incomparably more plentiful than those of the proletarians? This simple fact should be sufficient to disperse the hypocritical vapors of democracy. Every wide-

awake English worker should say to MacDonald: "It is not true that the supreme criteria for our movement are the principles of democracy. These very principles are under the thumb of financial resources, and may be distorted and falsified at will."

Yet we must admit, even adhering to the formally democratic point of view, and operating with the understanding of the ideal citizen, not the proletarian, capitalist, landlord, that the most reactionary gorillas of the upper house are far more consistent. Every citizen of course has the right to support freely with his purse and his vote the party indicated by his conscience. The only trouble is that this ideal British citizen does not exist in nature, being merely a legal fiction. Nor has he ever existed. Yet the petty and middle bourgeois to a certain degree has approached this ideal conception. The Fabian at present considers himself to be the standard of this ideal variety of citizen; he regards the capitalist and the proletarian merely as "deviations" from the ideal type of citizen. But there are not so many Fabian Philistines in the world, although there are more than there should be. In general, the electors may be divided into the wealthy, the exploiters, on the one hand, and the proletarians, the exploited, on the other hand.

The trade unions are—in spite of all the subtleties of Liberal casuistry—a class organization of wage workers for combating the greed and avarice of capitalists. One of the most important weapons of the trade unions is the strike. Members' contributions go to support strikes. In times of strikes, the workers are engaged in a fierce struggle with strike-breakers, who are the product of another Liberal principle, that of the "freedom of labor". In any great strike, the union needs political support, it must turn to the press, the parties, the Parliament. The hostile attitude of the Liberal press toward the trade union struggle was one of the causes impelling the latter to create a Labor Party. If we examine the history of the origin of the Labor Party, it will become clear that from the point of view of the trade unions, the party is

their political section. It needs a strike fund, an organization of reliable men, a newspaper, dependable members of Parliament. Expenditures on the election of members of Parliament are for these unions as legally necessary and obligatory an expenditure as that which goes to clerical and secretarial work. The Liberal or Conservative member of the trade union may say: "I pay regularly my customary trade union dues, but I refuse to pay the contribution for the Labor Party, since I vote, by reason of my political convictions, for the Liberals (or the Conservatives)," whereupon the representative of the trade union might say to him: "In times of strike for the improvement of working conditions—and that is the object of our organization—we need the support of the Labor Party, of its members in Parliament, of its press; but the party you vote for (Liberals or Conservatives) under such circumstances always falls upon us, tries to compromise us, sows dissension in our ranks, or even goes so far as to organize strike-breakers. Members who support strike-breakers are of no use to us!" Thus, what may appear from the point of view of capitalist democracy to be personal liberty, appears from the point of view of proletarian democracy to be the liberty of political strike-breakerism. The ten per cent. rebate obtained by the bourgeoisie is by no means such an innocent matter. It signifies that one out of every ten members of the trade unions is a conscious political (*i.e.*, class) opponent. Of course, some of these may be won over, but the remainder may be a priceless weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie, in the case of a real struggle, against the workers. We must therefore inevitably fight, in the further course of our struggle, against the breaches torn in the wall of the trade unions by the Act of Parliament of 1913.

Generally speaking, we Marxists hold that any honest, straightforward worker, regardless of his political, religious and other convictions, may be a member of a trade union. We consider the trade unions, on the one hand, as militant economic organizations, and as a school of political education, on the other hand. Although we favor, as a general

rule, the admission of backward and non-class-conscious workers to the trade unions, we do not start from the abstract principle of liberty of opinion, liberty of conscience, but from considerations of revolutionary expediency. But these very considerations tell us that in England, where ninety per cent. of the workers organized in trade unions pay the political contributions, some because of their direct desire to do so, others because they do not wish to disturb the spirit of solidarity, and where only ten per cent. decide to disregard the open appeal of the Labor Party, a systematic struggle becomes necessary against these ten per cent. They must be made to feel that they are deserters, and the trade unions must be given the right to exclude them as strike-breakers. In the last analysis, if the abstract citizen has the right to vote for any party he pleases, the workers' organizations have the right to refuse to admit to their ranks such citizens as show by their political conduct that they are hostile to the interests of the working class. The struggle of the trade unions for the exclusion of unorganized workers from the factories is already known as a manifestation of "terrorism" or—in present-day parlance—bolshevism. Precisely in England, these methods can and should be transferred to the Labor Party which is a direct continuation of the trade unions.

The debates already mentioned by us, which took place in the English Parliament on March 7, 1925, on the subject of the political contributions, are extremely interesting as an indication of the nature of Parliamentary democracy. Only in the speech of Prime Minister Baldwin do we observe guarded references to the real danger which is founded in the class structure of England. The old relations have passed away. There no longer exist any of the good old English enterprises with their patriarchal customs—Mr. Baldwin himself managed such an enterprise in his youth. Industry is concentrating and combining. The workers are uniting into trade unions, and these organizations may be a danger to the state itself. Baldwin spoke of united employers as well as of the labor unions. But of course, he sees a real danger to the

democratic state only in the trade unions. What the so-called struggle against the trusts amounts to, we have already learned from the example of America. The noisy anti-trust agitation of Roosevelt was mere empty gesturing. The trusts, under Roosevelt and after him, became stronger and stronger, and the American Government turned out to be their executive organ in a much more direct manner than the Labor Party is the political organ of the trade unions. If the trusts in England, as a form of organization, do not play the same great rôle as in America, the capitalists play a part which is equally important. The danger from the trade unions consists in the fact that they—hitherto only partly, irresolutely and in a half-and-half manner—are advancing the principle of a workers' government, *which is impossible without a workers' state*, as opposed to the capitalists' government, which can continue its existence at present only under the guise of democracy. Baldwin fully agrees with the principle of "individual liberty", which is the basis of the prohibitive bill introduced by his friends in Parliament. He also considers the political contributions of the trade unions as a "moral evil" but he does not wish to disturb the peace. The struggle, once it has begun, may have serious consequences:

"We shall under no circumstances shoot first." And Baldwin concludes: "Give us peace in our time, O Lord!" Almost the entire chamber greeted this speech with applause, including many Labor members; the Prime Minister, according to his own declaration, had made a "gesture of peace". Thereupon the Labor member Thomas rose, who is always on the spot when a gesture of abject servility is required; he congratulated Baldwin; he pointed out the truly human note in Baldwin's speech; he declared that both employers and workers had much to gain from a close cooperation between them; he referred with pride to the fact that not a few Left workers in his own union had refused to pay the political contributions by reason of the fact that their secretary was the great reactionary Thomas himself. And all the debates on this question, in which the life interests of

conflicting classes are in constant contact, are conducted in this tone of hypothetical statement, half-truths, official lies, purely English Parliamentary cant. The half-truths of the Conservatives have the quality of Machiavellianism; the half-truths of the Labor Party are the child of contemptible cowardice. The representation of the bourgeoisie resembles the tiger which hides its claws and cuddles amiably. The Labor leaders of the Thomas type are more like the beaten dog with his tail between his legs.

The hopelessness of the economic situation of England is best expressed in the trade unions. On the day after the conclusion of the war, when it seemed in the heat of the moment that Great Britain had become the unlimited ruler of the destinies of the world, the labor masses, awakened by the war, poured into the trade unions by the hundred thousands and millions. The peak was reached in 1919: then began the descent. At present the number of members of the trade unions has fallen very low and is still falling. John Wheatley, a "Left" member of the MacDonald Cabinet, at one of the meetings last March in Glasgow, said something to the effect that the trade unions are now a mere shadow of their former selves, and that they are equally incapable either of fighting or of conducting negotiations. Fred Bramley, General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress, came out boldly against this opinion. The discussion between these two men, who theoretically are equally helpless antagonists, is, however, of extraordinary symptomatic interest. Bramley referred to the fact that, the political movement being "more promising", *i.e.*, offering greater opportunities for career-making, draws away from the trade unions their most valuable workers. On the other hand, Bramley asks, what would the party be without the political contributions of the trade unions? At bottom, Bramley does not deny the decline in the economic power of the trade unions, which he explains with a reference to the economic situation of England. But we should seek in vain in the General Secretary of the Trade Unions Congress for any

indication of an escape from this blind alley. His ideas do not transcend the bounds of the concealed rivalry between the apparatus of the trade unions and the apparatus of the Party. And yet, the important question is by no means this. Underlying the radicalization of the laboring classes and consequently the growth of the Labor Party, we find the same causes which have dealt such severe blows to the economic power of the trade unions. One doubtless will soon develop at the cost of the other. But it would be extraordinarily careless to draw the conclusion that the rôle of the trade unions is a thing of the past. On the contrary, there is still a great future in store for the industrial unions of the English working class. For the very reason that within the framework of capitalist society, in the present situation of Great Britain, there are no great prospects for the trade unions, the industrial labor unions will be obliged to enter the path of a socialist reorganization of economy. Having reconstructed the latter in accordance with this need, the trade unions will become the principal lever for the economic reconstruction of the country. But a necessary presupposition for this is the seizure of power by the proletariat—not in the sense of the sad and wretched farce of the MacDonald ministry, but in the real, material, revolutionary, class sense. The whole apparatus of the Government must become an apparatus in the service of the proletariat. The working class, being the sole class interested in a socialist revolt, must be enabled to dictate its will to the entire society. The entire administration, all the judges and officials, must be as profoundly imbued with the socialist spirit of the proletariat, as the present-day officials and judges are permeated with the spirit of the bourgeoisie. Only the trade unions can furnish the necessary human personnel. Finally, the trade unions alone will supply from their midst the organs for the management of the nationalized industry. In the near future, the trade unions will become schools of education for the proletariat in the sense of socialist production. Their future rôle is therefore of infinite proportions. But they are at present undoubtedly in a blind

alley. There is no possibility of escaping this situation by means of palliatives and half-measures. The decomposition of English capitalism inevitably produces the impotence of the trade unions. Only revolution can save the English working class, and with it its organizations. In order to seize power, the proletariat must have at its head a revolutionary party. In order to make the trade unions capable of undertaking their later function, they must be freed from conservative office-holders, from superstitious fools, who ignorantly expect “peaceful” miracles from somewhere. In short, from the agents of large-scale capital, from the renegades of the Thomas type. A reformist, opportunist, liberal-labor party can only weaken the trade unions by paralyzing the activity of the masses. A revolutionary labor party based on the trade unions will, however, be a powerful weapon in their improvement and growth.

The compulsory, anti-Liberal, “despotic” collections of political contributions, contains, as the future stalk and ear are contained in the grain, all those Bolshevik methods against which MacDonald tirelessly sprinkles the holy water of his aroused mental limitations. The working class has the right and duty to place its deliberate class will higher than all the fictions and sophisms of bourgeois democracy. It should act in the spirit of revolutionary self-confidence with which Cromwell filled the young English bourgeoisie. Cromwell exhorts his Puritan recruits, as we have already seen, as follows: “I do not want to deceive you; I shall not try to convince you, as I am ordered in the instructions, that you will be fighting for King and Parliament. Whatever enemy I may be facing, whoever he may be, I shall shoot at him with my pistol, as at any other enemy; if conscience prevents you from acting thus, go serve elsewhere.” These are not the words of bloodthirsty despotism, but the consciousness of a great historical mission, permitting its bearer to annihilate all obstacles in his path. A young progressive class, first realizing its mission, speaks through the lips of Cromwell. If we must seek national traditions, then let the English proletariat

borrow this spirit of revolutionary self-confidence and aggressive manhood from the old Independents. The MacDonalds, Webbs, Snowdens, etc., are borrowing from Cromwell's fellow-fighters only their religious prejudices, and combine them with truly Fabian cowardice.

The proletarian vanguard must unite the revolutionary manhood of the Independents with the clarity of the materialist conception of the universe.

The English bourgeoisie is not mistaken in its view that the chief danger threatens it from the trade union side, and that only under the pressure of these mass organizations will the Labor Party, having radically altered its leadership, be able to transform itself into a revolutionary force. One of the new methods of struggle against the trade unions is the independent organization of the administrative-technical staff (engineers, managers, foremen) into a "third party in industry". The *Times* is conducting a very ingenious and clever struggle against the theory of the community of interests between physical and mental labor. In this as in other cases, the bourgeois politicians are artfully utilizing the very ideas that Fabianism has inspired in them. The opposition of labor to capital is ruinous for national growth, says the *Times*, together with all the leaders of the Labor Party, and the *Times* draws the inference that the engineers, managers, administrators, technicians, who stand between capital and labor, are more capable of grasping the interests of industry "as a whole" and of establishing peace in the relations between employers and employees. For this very reason, the administrative—technical staff should be segregated into a third party in industry. At bottom the *Times* is working directly into the hands of Fabianism. The basic principle in the position of the latter, which is a reactionary Utopian opposition to the class struggle, coincides best of all with the social position of the petty bourgeois and medium bourgeois intellectual, engineer, administrator, who stands between capital and labor, and who is in the last analysis an instrument in the hands of capital, but who wishes to consider himself

independent and therefore all the more emphasizes his independence from the proletarian organizations, all the more falls into the hands of the capitalist organizations. We may without difficulty predict in advance that as its inevitable exclusion from the trade unions and the Labor Party proceeds, Fabianism will more and more unite its destinies with those of the intermediate elements of industry, the trade and Governmental-bureaucratic apparatus. The Independent Labor Party, after its present temporary elevation, will inevitably be cast down and, having become a “third party in industry”, will find itself lost between capital and labor.

CHAPTER VIII

A FORECAST OF THE FUTURE

WHEN Mrs. Lloyd George, wife of the former British Prime Minister, lost a valuable necklace, the *Daily Herald*, the official organ of the Labor Party, called the attention of its readers to Liberal leaders who desert to the enemy's side and present their wives with costly necklaces. The following instructive inference is contained in this newspaper's leading article: "The existence of the Labor Party depends on its success in preserving labor leaders from pursuing this ruinous path." Arthur Ponsonby, a despairing Liberal, who has not ceased to be a Liberal though he has entered the Labor Party, in the same issue of the *Daily Herald*, gives free rein to his reflections on the destruction of the great Liberal Party by such leaders as Asquith and Lloyd George. "Yes," the editorial writer repeats after him, "the Liberal leaders have dropped their simple ways in exchange for the manners of the rich in whose company they constantly move; they have borrowed the arrogance of the latter toward the lower classes," etc., etc. As a matter of fact, there is nothing surprising in the bourgeois mode of life of the Liberal Party leaders, since the Liberal Party is one of the two bourgeois parties. But the Liberals in the Labor Party regard Liberalism as an abstract system of lofty ideas, and the Liberal ministers who purchase necklaces for their wives as traitors to Liberal ideas. It is instructive to read the reflections on how to preserve Labor leaders from entering on this path of ruin. Of course these reflections are merely timid and halting reminders addressed to semi-liberal Labor leaders by semi-liberal Labor journalists, who must pay some attention to the opinions of their readers. It is not difficult to observe the presence of the careerist distemper in the ministerial élite of the British Labor Party! It is sufficient to state that Mrs.

Lloyd George herself in a letter of protest written to the editor of the *Daily Herald*, mentions such incidents as the “royal” gifts bestowed upon MacDonald by his capitalist friend, after having been reminded of which the editor held his peace. Utterly childish seems the thought that the conduct of the leaders of the Labor Party may be guided by the use of moral tales about Mrs. Lloyd George’s necklace, as if politics in general could be patterned after abstract moral precepts. On the contrary, the morality of the class and of its party and leaders is an outgrowth of policy, in the widest historical sense of the word.

The *Daily Herald*, in its profound musings, has discovered the dangers of permitting Labor Party “leaders” to hobnob with the bourgeoisie, entirely overlooking the fact that such relations depend altogether on the *political* attitude toward the bourgeoisie. If we assume the point of view of an irreconcilable class struggle, there will be no fraternization of any kind. Labor leaders will not enter into bourgeois circles, nor would the bourgeoisie let them in. But the leaders of the Labor Party actually defend the idea of collaboration between classes and rapprochement between their leaders. “Cooperation and mutual confidence between employers and workers,” as Mr. Snowden said, for example, in one of his parliamentary speeches this year, “are the most essential requirements for the country’s prosperity.” Similar speeches have been delivered by Clynes, the Webbs, and all the other luminaries. The attitude of the trade union leaders is the same; we hear nothing from their mouths but reminders of the necessity of frequent meetings of employers and representatives of the workers around the “green table”. However, the policy of constant “friendly” relations between the Labor leaders and the bourgeois magnates, in their effort to obtain a common ground, *i.e.*, the elimination of what separates them, does constitute, as the *Daily Herald* says, a danger not only to the conduct of the leaders, but to the development of the party also. What else could be expected? When John Burns deserted the proletariat, he began to say:

“I have no more use for a special workers’ point of view than for the workers’ boots or the workers’ oleomargarine.” No one will doubt the fact that John Burns, when he became a bourgeois Minister, considerably improved both his butter and his boots, but it may hardly be said that his evolution into a bourgeois was likely to improve the boots of the dock-workers who had lifted Burns into power. Morality flows from policy. In order that Snowden’s budget may please the City, it is necessary for Snowden himself, both in his standard of living and in his moral conduct, to resemble bankers more than Welsh miners.

And how about Thomas? We have already mentioned the dinner given by the railroad magnates, at which Thomas, Secretary of the Railroad Workers’ Union, declared that his soul did not belong to the working class, but to “the truth”, and that it was in search of this truth that he, Thomas, had come to the dinner. It is worthy of note that this vile nonsense is all duly recorded in the *Times*, while the *Daily Herald* prints not a word of it. That unhappy paper prefers to moralize more abstractly. But you will never succeed in chastising Thomas with parables about Mrs. Lloyd George’s necklace. Thomas must be cast out, and that cannot be accomplished by keeping silent about Thomas’ embraces with the enemy at dinners and elsewhere, but by shouting them out loud, revealing them in all their nakedness, and calling upon the workers to purify their ranks ruthlessly. A change of morality will require a change of policy.

As I write these lines (April, 1925), the official policy of England stands under the sign of compromise, in spite of the fact that the Government is Conservative: “cooperation” is needed between the two factors of industry, mutual concessions must be made, the workers must be made to “participate” in one form or another in the profits of industry, etc. This frame of mind on the part of the Conservatives is illustrative of both the strength and the weakness of the English proletariat, which has forced the Conservatives to base their policy on an “acceptance” of the creation of an

independent Labor Party. But the proletariat, in putting such men as MacDonald and Thomas at the head of the Labor Party, enables the Conservatives to build their hopes on this "acceptance."

Baldwin delivers speech after speech on the necessity of mutual patience, in order that the country may emerge *without a catastrophe* from the difficulties of its present position. Labor "leader" Robert Smillie states that he is in complete agreement with these speeches: "a splendid summons to patience on both sides!" Smillie promises to follow the call implicitly, expressing the hope that the captains of industry will take a more humane course with regard to the demands of the workers. "This is a perfectly legal and sensible desire," assures the *Times*, with a straight face. And all these honeyed utterances are made in a period of industrial difficulties, chronic unemployment, with British orders going to German shipyards, threatening conflicts in many branches of industry, and this in England, with all England's experience of class wars. Surely the memory of the toiling masses is short, and the hypocrisy of the rulers is without parallel! The historical memory of the bourgeoisie is in the traditions of its rule, in the country's institutions and laws, in the cumulative art of government. The memory of the working class is in its party; the Reform Party is the party of poor memory.

While the Conservatives' policy of harmony is hypocritical, it is none the less based on sound reasons. The main efforts of the ruling parties in Europe are at present directed toward the maintenance of internal and external peace. The so-called "reaction" against the war and the methods of the early post-war period cannot be explained by psychological motives alone. The power and elasticity of the capitalist system, as revealed by the war, gave rise to the specific *illusions of military capitalism*. A bold, centralized leadership in the economic life, military conquest of lacking economic resources, living on debts, unlimited issues of paper money, the elimination of social dangers by means of bloody reprisals on the one hand and all sorts of concessions on the

other—it began to appear in the heat of the moment as if such methods could solve all questions and overcome all obstacles. But the economic reality soon clipped the wings of the illusions of military capitalism. Germany approached the brink of ruin. The government of wealthy France finds it impossible to escape from its thinly disguised bankruptcy. The English Government is obliged to maintain an army of unemployed almost twice as numerous as the army of French militarism. The wealth of Europe has been found to have limits. The continuation of the war and the upheavals would have meant the inevitable destruction of European capitalism. Thence the eagerness for “orderly” relations between governments and classes. The English Conservatives gambled precisely on this fear of upheavals, in the last elections. Now in power, they are for conciliation, agreement, social benevolence. “Security, that is the key to the situation,” says the Liberal Lord Grey, seconded by the Conservative Austen Chamberlain. The English press of both bourgeois camps lives on repetitions of such words. The desire for a state of peace, the establishment of “normal” conditions, the safeguarding of the gold standard, the resumption of commercial treaties, will not of themselves solve a single one of the contradictions that brought about the imperialist war and have been further aggravated by the war. But these efforts, and the political groupings based upon them, are sufficient to indicate the present internal and foreign policy of the ruling parties in Europe.

It is hardly necessary to point out that these pacific tendencies again and again encounter the obstacle of the post-war economic conditions. The English Conservatives have already begun to undermine the Unemployed Insurance Act. English industry, *as it is now*, cannot be rendered more capable of meeting competition except by lowering wages. And this is impossible if unemployment insurance be retained, for this insurance strengthens the opposition of the working class. Vanguard skirmishes have already taken place in this field, and they may lead to serious struggles. At any rate, in

this as in other fields the Conservatives will soon be obliged to come out under their true colors, and the situation of the Labor Party heads will thus be made more and more difficult.

It is well to speak here of the conditions produced in the House of Commons after the elections of 1906, when a large Labor membership first appeared in Parliament. For the two succeeding years, the Labor delegates were treated with every consideration, but the third year things changed for the worse. In 1910, Parliament was already “ignoring” the Labor members, not by reason of any irreconcilable attitude on the part of the latter, but because the working masses who were not in Parliament were becoming more and more exacting. Having elected many members to Parliament, they expected that real changes would be made in their own lives, an expectation that constituted one of the factors producing the powerful strike wave of 1911-1913.

These facts provide us with conclusions that are applicable to the present. The flirtation with the Labor members now being carried on by the Baldwin majority will turn into its opposite the more rapidly, as the pressure of the workers on their Parliamentary representatives, on capital, and on Parliament itself, becomes more persistent. We have already spoken of this in connection with the question of the rôle of democracy and revolutionary force in the mutual relations between the classes. We shall now consider the same question from the point of view of the *internal development of the Labor Party itself*.

The leading part in the British Labor Party is of course played by the heads of the Independent Labor Party, led by MacDonald. Not only before the war, but during its progress, the attitude of the Independent Labor Party was pacifistic, “condemning” social-imperialism and occupying in general a centrist position. Its platform was “opposed to militarism in any form”. The war ended; the Independent Labor Party seceded from the Second International. As resolved in the 1920 Conference, the Independents even began a

correspondence with the Third International, proposing to the latter twelve questions, each more profound than the other. The seventh question ran: "May Communism and the dictatorship of the proletariat be brought about only by armed force, or may parties also be admitted to the Third International which consider this question still open?" It is an instructive point of view; the butcher has his big knife, but the doomed calf has an open mind. At that critical time, however, the Independent Labor Party was considering the question of joining the Communist International, while now it excludes Communists from the Labor Party. The contradiction between the Independent Party's policy of yesterday and that of the Labor Party of today, particularly in the months during which it enjoyed power, is truly amazing. Today even the policy of the Fabians in the Independent Labor Party, now that the Fabians have entered the Labor Party, is different from their former policy. These contradictions are a feeble reflection of the struggle between centrist and social-imperialist tendencies. These tendencies meet, and are conjoined, in MacDonald himself, and we therefore find the Christian pacifist building light cruisers in anticipation of the time when he may build heavy ones.

The chief trait of socialist centrism is its non-committal, irresolute, and uncertain position. Centrism maintains itself so long as it is not obliged to draw the final inferences, to give outright answers to straight questions. In a peaceful "organic" epoch, centrism may maintain itself as the official doctrine of even a large and active labor party, as was the case with the German Social-Democracy before the war, for in that period the decision of the fundamental questions in the national life did not depend on the party of the proletariat. Generally speaking, however, centrism is most appropriate to small organizations, which, by reason of their insignificant influence, are freed from the necessity of giving a clear answer to all the questions of policy and of bearing the practical responsibility for such answers. Such was the centrism of the Independent Labor Party.

The imperialist war showed only too clearly that the labor bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy had during the preceding period of capitalist expansion undergone a profound petty bourgeois transformation, both in the sense of its habits of life and in its intellectual make-up. But the petty bourgeois will preserve the *appearance* of independence until the first blow is struck. The war, by a single stroke, revealed and consolidated the political dependence of the petty bourgeois on the big bourgeois and the biggest bourgeois. Social-imperialism was the form assumed by this dependence within the labor movement. Centrism, therefore, in so far as it was retained or reborn in the war period and the post-war period, was an expression of the terror of the petty bourgeois among the labor bureaucracy in the presence of their complete, and on the whole, frank surrender to imperialism. The German Social-Democracy, which for many years, even under Bebel, had been carrying on a fundamentally centrist policy, if only for the reason of its great strength, could not maintain itself in this position during the war; it either had to come out straight against the war, *i.e.*, enter upon an essentially revolutionary path, or for the war, *i.e.*, go over to the camp of the bourgeoisie. The Independent Labor Party in England, a propagandist organization within the working class, was not only able to preserve but temporarily even to strengthen its centrist qualities during the war, “renouncing all responsibility”, engaging in platonic protests, pacifistic preachings, thinking not one of its thoughts to the end, and providing not the slightest serious difficulty to the warring state. The opposition of the Independents in Germany was also of centrist character; they also “renounced all responsibility”, which did not prevent Scheidemann and Ebert, however, from placing the entire strength of the Labor organization at the disposal of warring capitalism.

In England, we have witnessed since the war a very unusual “compatibility” of the social-imperialist and centrist tendencies in the Labor movement. The Independent Labor Party, as the reader already knows, was remarkably well-

adapted for the rôle of an irresponsible centrist opposition, constantly criticizing, but causing no true embarrassment to those in power. Yet, the Independents were destined to become a political power within a short period, and thus changed simultaneously both their rôle and their physiognomy.

The strength of the Independents was due to two co-existing causes: in the first place, to the fact that history had faced the working class with the necessity of creating its own party; in the second place, because the war and the post-war period, having awakened the many-millioned masses, for the moment created favorable conditions for the reception of the ideas of a labor pacifism and reformism. Of course, the minds of the English workers were filled with plenty of democratic-pacifistic illusions even before the war. The difference, however, is a tremendous one. In the past, the English proletariat, in so far as it participated in political life, was attached, by reason of its democratic-pacifistic illusions—particularly during the second half of the Nineteenth Century—to the activities of the Liberal Party. The latter did “not justify” these hopes, and lost the faith of the workers. A separate Labor Party then grew up, a priceless historical achievement, which even now can never be nullified. But we must not overlook the fact that the working masses were disillusioned rather as to the good will of the Liberals than as to the democratic-pacifistic methods of solving social questions, the more since new generations, new millions, were for the first time being drawn into political life. They transferred their hopes and illusions to the Labor Party. For this reason, and for this reason only, the Independents were given an opportunity to head the party. Behind the democratic-pacifistic illusions of the working masses stands *their awakened class will, their profound dissatisfaction with their conditions, their readiness to support their demands by all the means that circumstances may require*. But the working class can build a party out of those ideological and individual leading elements, who have been

prepared by the entire preceding evolution of the country, by its entire theoretical and political culture. Here, generally speaking, is the source of the great influence of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, including of course the labor aristocrats and bureaucrats. The establishment of the British Labor Party became a necessity for the very reason that the masses of the proletariat were undergoing a profound shift to the Left. The political formulation of this change devolved upon those representatives of the impotent conservative-Protestant pacifism who happened to be available. But having transferred their general staff to a basis consisting of several million organized workers, the Independents were no longer able to remain themselves, or even to impress their centrist stamp on the party of the proletariat. Having suddenly become the leaders of a party of millions of workers, they no longer could content themselves with centrist commonplaces and pacifist passivity; they had, first in their capacity as a responsible opposition, and then in their capacity as a government, to pronounce a straight "Yes" or "No" in answer to the most ticklish questions in the national life. From the moment that centrism became a political force, it had to pass beyond the bounds of centrism, *i.e.*, it had either to draw revolutionary conclusions from its opposition to the imperialist government, or frankly serve that government. Of course, it did the latter. The pacifist MacDonald began to build cruisers, jail Hindoos and Egyptians, to engage in diplomatic manipulations with the aid of forged documents. Having become a political power, centrism as such was reduced to zero. The profound move to the Left on the part of the English working class, which had brought MacDonald's party into power with astonishing swiftness, produced in that party an open shift to the Right. Such is the relation between yesterday and today, and such is the cause which enables the small Independent Labor Party to look with amazement upon its success and to try to transform itself into a centrist party. The practical program of the British Labor Party, led by the Independents, is at bottom of Liberal character and,

particularly in its foreign policy, is a belated repetition of the Gladstone impotence. Gladstone was “forced” to seize Egypt, just as MacDonald was “forced” to build cruisers. Beaconsfield represented the imperialist demands of capital more truly than Gladstone. Free trade no longer decides issues. The giving up of the plan to fortify Singapore is meaningless when viewed from the point of view of the entire imperialist system of Great Britain. Singapore is a key to two seas. He who wishes to keep the colonies, *i.e.*, to continue the policy of imperialist domination, must have this key in his hands. MacDonald stands on the ground of capitalism, he introduces a few cowardly corrections which solve nothing at all, which mean nothing at all, but which increase all the difficulties and dangers. As to the question of the destinies of English industry, there are no essential differences between the three parties. The fundamental trait of this policy is a confusion born of the fear of social upheavals. All three parties are conservative and fear nothing so much as industrial conflicts. The Conservative Parliament refuses the miners the fixing of a minimum wage. The members elected by the miners say that the conduct of Parliament is an “outright call to revolutionary action”, although not one of these members seriously thinks of revolutionary action. The capitalists propose to the workers that they study together the condition of the coal industry, hoping thus to prove that which needs no proof, namely, that under the present system of the coal industry, disorganized by private ownership, it is expensive to mine coal even when wages are low. The Conservative and Liberal press sees salvation in this investigation. The Labor leaders pursue the same path. Everyone is afraid of strikes which may strengthen the preponderance of foreign competitors. And yet, if any sort of rational production is still possible in general, under capitalist conditions, it can never be attained except with the aid of the pressure exerted by great strikes of the workers. Paralyzing the working masses through the trade unions, the leaders are supporting the process of economic stagnation and decay.

One of the most outspoken reactionaries in the leadership of the British Labor Party, Dr. Haden Guest, a Chauvinist, militarist, protectionist, gloated mercilessly in Parliament over the line followed by his own party as to the question of free trade or protection: MacDonald's position, according to Guest, is purely negative in character and does not present any escape from the economic impasse. As a matter of fact, the impossibility of free trade is perfectly clear: yet the overthrow of the free traders also involves overthrowing Liberalism.

But England has just as little to hope for from protectionism. For a young capitalist country just beginning to grow, protectionism may be an inevitable and desirable stage in its development, but for an old industrial country, whose industry has been planned to fill the demands of a world market, which has been aggressive and belligerent in character, a resort to protectionism is a historical confession of an incipient process of dissolution and is practically equivalent to supporting those branches of industry which are less capable of maintaining themselves under the present world conditions, at the expense of other branches of English industry that are better adapted to the conditions of the world market and the domestic market. The program of the outlived protectionism of Baldwin's party cannot be opposed by the equally outlived and hopeless free traders, but only by the practical program of a socialistic transformation. But in order to proceed to this step, the party must first be purified not only of its reactionary protectionists like Guest, but also of its reactionary free traders like MacDonald.

From what beginning and by what path can the transformation of the policy of the Labor Party, which is inconceivable without a radical transformation of leadership, take place?

As the absolute majority in the Executive Committee and in other important institutions of the British Labor Party belongs to the Independent Labor Party, the latter is the ruling faction in the Labor Party. This mutual relation within

the English labor movement affords—it must be said—extremely valuable material on the question of the “dictatorship of the minority”, for it is precisely in this way, *i.e.*, as a dictatorship of the minority, that the leaders of the British Party picture the rôle of the Communist Party in the Soviet Republic. However, we find that the Independent Labor Party, counting about 30,000 members, obtains a dominant position in an organization based—through the trade unions—on millions of members. But this organization, *i.e.*, the Labor Party, thanks to the numerical strength and the part played by the English proletariat, comes to power. Thus, an insignificant minority of 30,000 members gains the power in a country having 40,000,000 inhabitants and ruling over hundreds of millions. The most outright “democracy” therefore leads to a party dictatorship of the minority. To be sure, the “dictatorship” of the Independent Labor Party is worth, in the class sense, not a single bad penny, but that is already an entirely different question. If, however, a party with 30,000 members, without a revolutionary program, without the experience of struggle, without serious traditions, merely through the intermediation of a heterogeneous Labor Party, based on the trade unions, can attain power by the methods of bourgeois democracy, why should these gentlemen be so displeased or surprised when the Communist Party, tempered by theory and practice, with entire decades of heroic struggle at the head of the masses of the people behind it, a party with a membership of hundreds of thousands, should come to power, based on the mass organizations of the workers and peasants? In any case, the obtaining of power by the Independent Labor Party is incomparably less grounded and rooted in the conditions, than the obtaining of power by the Communist Party in Russia.

But the vertiginous career of the Independent Labor Party is of interest not only from the point of view of polemics against considerations concerning the dictatorship of the communist minority. It is far more important to evaluate the

swift rise of the Independents from the point of view of the future destinies of the English Communist Party. Certain inferences force themselves upon us.

The Independent Labor Party, born in a petty bourgeois environment, and close to the circles of the trade union bureaucracy in its feelings and tendencies, naturally headed—together with the latter—the Labor Party, when the masses by their pressure obliged their secretaries to create such a party. Of course, the Independent Labor Party, in its fabulous emergence, in its political methods, in all its functions, is preparing and clearing the road for the Communist Party. In the course of decades, the Independent Labor Party succeeded in gathering about 30,000 members. But when the profound alteration in the international situation and in the internal structure of English society gave birth to the Labor Party, an unexpected demand for leadership by the Independents was at once displayed. The same course of political evolution is preparing for a still more powerful “demand” for communism at the next stage of development.

At the present moment, the Communist Party is extremely small. In the last elections it had altogether 53,000 votes a figure which, when compared with the 4,500,000 votes of the Labor Party, might seem distressing, if we did not understand the logic of the political evolution of England. To imagine that the communists in the course of subsequent decades will increase step by step, acquiring at each new Parliamentary election a few tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of votes more, would be a radical misunderstanding of the development of the future. Of course, during a certain comparatively prolonged period, communism will develop rather slowly, but then there will ensue an ineluctable crisis: *the Communist Party will occupy the position in the Labor Party which is now held by the Independents.*

What is needed in order to bring this about? The general answer is quite clear. The Independent Labor Party owes its unprecedented boom to the fact that it enabled the working

class to create a third party, *i.e.*, its own party. The last elections show with what enthusiasm the English workers regard the instrument created by them. But a party is not an end in itself. The workers expect from it action and results. The English Labor Party was born almost overnight, as a party aiming directly to seize power and it already has had some success in this. In spite of the profoundly compromising character of the first "Labor" Government, the Party at the new elections obtained more than one million new votes. However, there arose within the Party the so-called Left Wing, amorphous, spineless, without any independent future. But the very fact of the arising of an opposition bears witness to the growth of the demands of the masses and to the parallel growth of nervousness in the upper circles of the Party. Even a slight acquaintance with the qualities of the MacDonalds, Thomases, Clyneses, Snowdens, and all the rest, is quite sufficient to prove to us how catastrophically the contradictions between the demands of the masses and the obtuse conservatism of the leading upper circles of the Labor Party will grow, particularly if this Party should come to power again.

In sketching this prospect, we start with the assumption that the present international and domestic situation of English capitalism will not only not improve but—on the contrary—will grow worse and worse. If this prognosis should turn out to be wrong, if the English bourgeoisie should succeed in strengthening the empire, in giving back to it its former position on the world market, in reviving industry, giving work to the unemployed, raising wages, the political evolution would of course have a different character: the aristocratic conservatism of the trade unions would again be strengthened, the Labor Party would go downhill, its Right Wing would be fortified, and the latter would move closer to Liberalism, which in turn would experience a certain accession of living forces. But there is not the slightest foundation for such a conception of the future. On the contrary, whatever may be the partial fluctuations in the

economic and political situation, everything speaks in favor of a progressive sharpening and deepening of the difficulties which England is now passing through, and therefore, simultaneously, of a further acceleration of the speed of its revolutionary development. Under these circumstances, a new obtaining of power by the Labor Party, in one of the coming stages, seems extremely probable, and already a conflict between the working class and the Fabian leaders at its head is absolutely inevitable.

The present rôle of the Independents is due to the fact that their path intersected that of the proletariat. This by no means signifies that these paths will continue to coincide. The swift growth of the influence of the Independents is only an evidence of the exceptional strength of the impact of the working class; but this very impact, conditioned by all the circumstances, will bring the English workers into a clash with their Independent leaders. In the measure as this occurs, the revolutionary *quality* of the British Communist Party—assuming that it follows a correct policy—will be transformed into a *quantity* of many millions.

A certain analogy may be drawn between the destinies of the Communist Party and those of the Independent Party. Both look back upon a long record as propagandist organizations, rather than as parties of the working class. Then, in a profound crisis in the historical evolution of England, the Independent Party headed the proletariat. For a certain interval, the Communist Party^[21] will, in our opinion, undergo a similar boom. The path of its development will coincide at a certain point with the great historical road of the English proletariat. However, this combination will be effected in an entirely different way than was the case with the Independent Party; with the latter, the combining element was the bureaucracy of the trade unions. The Independents may head the Labor Party as long as the trade union bureaucracy weakens, neutralizes, distorts the independent class pressure of the proletariat. The Communist Party, on the other hand, can only stand at the head of the working

class by virtue of the latter's adopting an irreconcilable opposition to the conservative bureaucracy in the trade unions and in the Labor Party. The Communist Party will prepare itself for the function of leadership only by a merciless criticism of the entire dominating staff of the English labor movement, only by a constant unmasking of its conservative, anti-proletarian, imperialist, monarchic, lackeyish function in all the fields of social life and the class movement.

The Left Wing of the Labor Party represents an effort to re-create centrism within the social-imperialist party of MacDonald. It thus reveals the nervousness of a portion of the labor bureaucracy as to their relations with the masses moving to the Left. It would be a monstrous illusion to imagine that these Left elements of the old school are capable of heading the revolutionary movement of the English proletariat and its struggle for power. They represent an accomplished formation. Their elasticity is extremely limited. Their Leftism is throughout opportunistic. They will not and cannot lead the masses to struggle. Within the limits of their reformist narrow-mindedness, they reproduce the old irresponsible centrism, which does not prevent but which rather aids MacDonald in holding the responsibility for the leadership of the party, and, in certain cases, for the destinies of the British Empire.

This picture was presented clearest of all in the Gloucester Congress of the Independent Labor Party (Easter, 1925). Carping at MacDonald, the Independents approved the so-called "activity" of the Labor Government by a vote of 398 against 139. And even the opposition could permit itself the luxury of censuring the Government only for the reason that the majority for MacDonald was already assured. The dissatisfaction of the Lefts with MacDonald is the dissatisfaction of centrism with itself. MacDonald's policy cannot be improved by means of minor alterations. Centrism, having obtained power, will necessarily carry out a MacDonald (*i.e.*, capitalist) policy. Serious opposition to the

MacDonald method can be offered only by the method of a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat. It would be completely erroneous to imagine that the Independent Party is capable of developing into a revolutionary party of the proletariat. The Fabians must be driven out, "removed from their posts". This may be accomplished only by the method of an uncompromising struggle with the centrism of the Independents.

The more clearly and acutely the question of the seizure of power is put, the more will the Independent Labor Party attempt to evade the answer by substituting for the fundamental revolutionary problems certain bureaucratic lucubrations as to the best Parliamentary and financial modes of nationalizing industry. One of the committees of the Independent Labor Party arrived at the conclusion that the purchase of lands, works and factories is preferable to confiscation, since in England, according to the feelings of the committee, nationalization will take place gradually, by the Baldwin method, step by step, and it would be "unjust" to deprive one group of capitalists of their profits while another group was receiving dividends on its capital. "It would be different," says the committee's report (we are quoting the *Times*), "if socialism should be introduced in our country not gradually but suddenly, as a result of a catastrophic revolution; then our reasoning against confiscation would lose most of its force. But we," says the report, "do not think that this situation is probable, and we *do not feel ourselves called upon* to discuss this situation in our present report." Generally speaking, there is no reason for objecting in principle to a purchase of lands, factories and works. Unfortunately, however, the political and financial opportunities for such an operation never coincide. The condition of the finances of the United States of America makes such an operation quite feasible, yet, in America this is not at all a practical question, and there is not a single party that would dare seriously to propose it. And by the time such a party would appear, the economic situation of the United

States would already have suffered very sharp changes. On the contrary, in England, the question of nationalization is now put in all its baldness, as the question of saving English industry. But the state of the national finances is such that it is more than doubtful whether this purchase is possible. Besides, the financial side of the question is of secondary importance. The principal task is to create the political conditions for nationalization, whether by purchase or without purchase that is of no importance. In the last instance, it is a matter of life and death for the bourgeoisie. Revolution is inevitable for the reason that the bourgeoisie will never permit itself to be strangled by Fabian banking operations. Even a partial nationalization can be undertaken by bourgeois society in its present form, only by surrounding it with such conditions as would render the success of these measures extremely doubtful, thus compromising the principle of nationalization and with it the Labor Party. The bourgeoisie would oppose as a class every straightforward attempt at even a partial nationalization. The other branches of industry would resort to lockouts, to sabotage, to a boycott of the nationalized industry, *i.e.*, bring about a life and death struggle. However guarded the first steps might be, the task will nevertheless lead to the necessity of breaking the opposition of the exploiters. When the Fabians assure us that they do not feel themselves “called upon” to discuss “this condition”, we feel constrained to remark that these gentlemen are mistaken altogether as to their calling. It is quite possible that their most active leaders may be useful in some office or other of the future Labor Government, in which accountings are made of the various elements in the socialist balance sheet. But they are of no use at all when it is a question of how to create the Labor Government, *i.e.*, the fundamental condition of socialist economy.

In one of his weekly reviews in the *Daily Herald* (April 4, 1925), MacDonald delivers himself of a few rather realistic words: “The condition of the party in our days is such that the struggle will become hotter and fiercer. The Conservative

Party will fight to the death, and as the power of the Labor Party becomes more threatening, the pressure of the reactionary members will become more violent (Conservative Party).” This is quite true. The more immediate the danger that the working class will come to power, the stronger will become the influence of such men as Curzon (it was quite right for MacDonald to term him a “model” for future leaders) in the Conservative Party. MacDonald has this time given us a correct estimate of the future. But, as a matter of fact, the leader of the Labor Party does not himself understand the significance and import of his words. His reference to the fact that the Conservatives will fight to the death, and more fiercely as time goes on, was made only in order to show the inexpedience of inter-party Parliamentary committees. In the last analysis, the prognosis offered by MacDonald speaks not only against inter-party Parliamentary committees, but cries out against the possibility of solving the entire present social crisis by Parliamentary methods. “The Conservative Party will struggle to the death” (quite right!), but this means that the Labor Party will never defeat it except by displaying its own readiness for struggle. We are dealing here not with the rivalry between two parties, but with the destinies of two classes. And when two classes are fighting a life and death struggle, the question is never decided by counting votes. History presents no such case, and will present none while classes exist.

But the important point is not MacDonald’s general philosophy, nor his occasional slips of the tongue, *i.e.*, not the way in which he explains his activity to himself, nor his desires, but what he does and how he does it. If we approach the question from this angle, we shall find that the entire activity of MacDonald’s party is paving the way for a proletarian revolution in England, of gigantic dimensions and extraordinary harshness. For it is MacDonald’s party that is strengthening the self-confidence of the bourgeoisie and simultaneously testing the patience of the proletariat to the utmost. And when this patience breaks, the proletariat will be

brought face to face in its rebound with the bourgeoisie, which has only been strengthened by the party of MacDonald in the consciousness of its omnipotence. The longer the Fabians succeed in holding up the revolutionary development of England, the more ominous and dangerous will be the break.

The English bourgeoisie has been trained to mercilessness by all the conditions of its insular position, its Calvinist moral philosophy, its colonial practice, its national arrogance. England is being forced more and more into the background. This inevitable process is also creating a revolutionary situation. The English bourgeoisie, obliged to humiliate itself before America, to make concessions, to maneuver, to watch and wait, is being filled with extraordinary fury, which it will reveal in frightful forms in the civil war. Similarly, the hoodlums of the French bourgeoisie, having been defeated in the Franco-Prussian War, took their revenge on the Communards; similarly, the officers' corps of the shattered Hohenzollern army took its revenge on the German workers.

The cold cruelty displayed by ruling England in its relations with the Hindoos, Egyptians, and Irish, which has seemed to be an arrogance of race, will, in the case of civil war, reveal its true class character when directed against the proletariat. On the other hand, the revolution will inevitably awaken in the English working class the most unusual passions, which have hitherto been so artificially held down and turned aside, with the aid of social training, the Church, and the press, in the artificial channels of boxing, football, racing, and other sports.

The actual course of the struggle, its duration, its outcome, will depend entirely on the internal and particularly on the international situation at the moment the conflict breaks out. In the decisive struggle against the proletariat, the English bourgeoisie will receive the most powerful support from the bourgeoisie of the United States, while the English proletariat will draw its strength in the first place from the working class of Europe and the subject nations in the British colonies. The

character of the British Empire will inevitably impart to this gigantic struggle the scale of a world-wide conflict. It will be one of the most impressive spectacles of world history. The destinies of the English proletariat will be bound up in this struggle with the destinies of all mankind. The entire world situation and the rôle of the English proletariat in production and in society assures it of the victory, provided its leadership be truly and resolutely revolutionary. The Communist Party will expand and come to power as the party of the proletarian dictatorship. There is no roundabout way. He who believes in and preaches any such way will merely deceive the English workers. That is the most important lesson to be drawn from this analysis.

[\[21\]](#) Of course, prognoses of this kind are hypothetical and general in character and may in no case be compared with astronomical predictions of lunar or solar eclipses. The actual course of evolution is always more complicated than the necessarily schematic outline of prophecy.

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Page numbers have been corrected in the Index for all references in the Preface section.

[The end of *Whither England?* by Leon Trotsky (née Lev Davidovich Bronstein)]