Week school 12-17 July 2016

Draft agenda

There will be two "seminars" each day, 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm (4pm on Sunday 17th). The rest of the day will be free for reading and informal discussion.

The agenda is based on two of our books: *The Fate of the Russian Revolution volume 1* for the earlier sessions, *Can Socialism Make Sense* for the later sessions. The *basic* reading for the school is those two books. We expect those attending will mostly have read the two basic books before the school starts, and will read varying amounts of the background reading in the course of the week. The starred items of background reading (or excerpts from them) are included in this pack.

Tuesday 12th - pm - BOLSHEVISM IN 1917 AND THE CIVIL WAR. Point 1 of FRR1 study guide. Background reading: Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*; Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*; David Footman, *Civil War in Russia*; * Radek on Kronstadt, http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2012/02/01/karl-radek-kronstadt

Wednesday 13th - am - SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY. Point 2 of FRR1 study guide. Background reading: * Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, chapter 12.

Wednesday 13th - pm - THE STALINIST COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND BOLSHEVISM. Part 3 of FRR1 study guide. Background reading: Trotsky, *Stalinism and Bolshevism* and *Their Morals and Ours* (which are in *Can Socialism Make Sense?*)

Thursday 14th - am - TROTSKY'S ANALYSES OF THE USSR. Parts 4 and 5 of FRR1 study guide. Background reading: Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*; Hansen and Novack (eds), *In Defence of Marxism*; Thomas, *Three Traditions on the USSR*, https://www.academia.edu/1555108/Three_traditions_on_the_USSR

Thursday 14th - pm - THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY: BOLSHEVISM AND ZINOVIEVISM. Part 7 of FRR1 study guide. Background reading: Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*; relevant sections of *The Two Trotskyisms*; Thomas, *Gramsci in Context*

Friday 15th - am - MILLENARIANISM. Part 9 of FRR1 study guide. Background reading: Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*; * Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*

Friday 15th - pm - HOW SOCIALISM WILL WORK. Parts 1 and 2 of draft CSMS study guide. Background reading: * Isaiah Berlin, *The crooked timber of humanity*; * Matt Ridley, *The rational optimist*

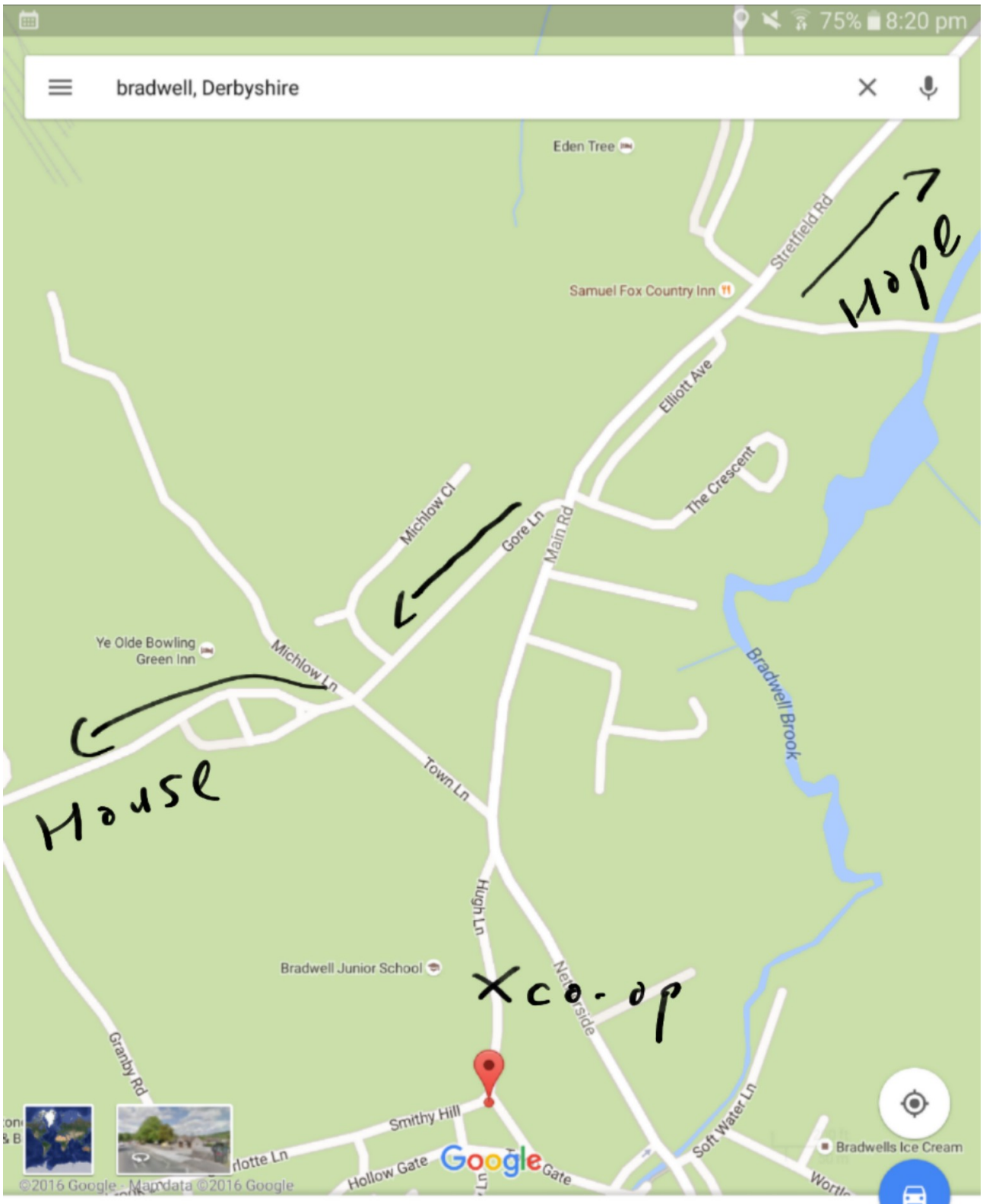
Saturday 16th - am - DEMOCRACY, THE WORKING CLASS, AND SOCIALISM. Parts 4 and 5 of draft CSMS study guide. Background reading: Michael Foot and Sean Matgamna, *Democracy, direct action, and socialism*; Isaiah Berlin, *The crooked timber of humanity*; Matt Ridley, *The rational optimist*

Saturday 16th - pm - HUMAN NATURE AND SOCIALISM. Part 6 of draft CSMS study guide. Background reading: Isaiah Berlin, *The crooked timber of humanity*; Matt Ridley, *The rational optimist*

Sunday 17th - am - DEBATING THE RIGHT. Parts 8 and 9 of draft CSMS study guide. Background reading: * Ludwig von Mises, *The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality*; * Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*

Sunday 17th - pm - WHY YOU SHOULD BE A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST. Part 10 of draft CSMS study guide.

Reading pack £2



Bradwell

Hope Valley, Derbyshire

3 hr 43 min

Karl Radek on Kronstadt

An article by the Bolshevik revolutionary Karl Radek about the Kronstadt sailors' uprising of March 1921,published in *Bulletin Communiste*, the organ of the French section of the Communist International, on 1 April 1921. Translated from the French by Ed Maltby.

A great joy seized White Guards all over the world when on the 2 March, news reached the outside world that that the sailors of Kronstadt had risen up against the Soviets.

"I have made you, and I shall kill you" — that was the caption below a cartoon that appeared in a big broadsheet in Paris, showing a tall, lanky sailor pointing his revolver at Trotsky. "The odious sailors of Kronstadt, who brought revolution into every corner of Russia, the maniacal enemies of the bourgeoisie, have broken from the Soviet government. Upon whom will the government support itself now?"

That is what was repeated by all the possible, imaginable organs of the Russian counter-revolution. And more than one was already banking on the end of the Soviet government. But things didn't work out as they had expected. The Kronstadt uprising, just as they proudly declared it, fled into the land of Canaan, into Finland, where grass had just begun to grow on the graves of 30,000 proletarians murdered by the Finnish Whites. They abandoned the sailors to the revolutionary tribunals of Soviet Russia.

Nevertheless, the crushing of this mutiny by military force did not erase its significance. The real character of the Kronstadt uprising does not only cast light on the current situation in Russia, it also illuminates at the same time one of the most important problems of the world revolution in general: the problem of the relationship between the Communist Party and the mass of the proletariat and the form of the dictatorship: dictatorship of the Party or dictatorship of the class (to employ the customary expression, which is in any case inexact).

The Kronstadt uprising was not a local event, although it naturally bore numerous local characteristics. The latter consisted first of all in the fact that it was not provoked by a very high level of material deprivation.

The sailors of Kronstadt live better than the rest of the army or the working class, they are well dressed and their other material conditions of life are without a doubt better than the average of those experienced by the rest of the Russian proletariat.

The local discontent of the sailors was directed first and foremost against the discipline and order established by the Soviet government. That is expressly confirmed by the central organ of the Whites, Les Dernières Nouvelles of Milyukov, who writes, according to a refugee sailor, that the discontent had already manifested itself the year before and that it had been stirred up by the radical measures taken by the Soviet government in order to arrest the degeneration of the fleet. Everywhere, but especially in Russia, sailors have always been a particularly ill-disciplined element and given to excess. It is a fatal consequence of their life and of the union which they form with their ship: once they come ashore, they run riot.

As a result of this undisciplined spirit and of the great number of highly qualified workers among their ranks, the Kronstadt sailors played an eminent role in the revolutions of both 1905 and 1917 as agents of the destruction of the bourgeois state. These highly qualified workers acted as a moral cement, transforming the indiscipline of the mass into a revolutionary factor.

But these revolutionary proletarian elements have been singularly weakened during the last three years. The former crews of Kronstadt have given the Soviet government thousands upon thousands of fighters, who, in all the armies, in all the services, have played the most glorious role in the defence and the reconstruction of Soviet Russia. Only an insignificant number of these former militants have remained at Kronstadt and all of these now occupy command positions. They constitute the Communist apparatus of the fleet and it is against them that the new crews have rebelled.

Where have these new crews of the fleet been recruited from? Finland and the Baltic provinces no longer belonging to Russia, there only remains Southern Russia and the coasts of the Black Sea. In the main, the fleet is now composed of peasant elements from the Ukraine.

Before, specialist sailors were principally metalworkers; the necessity of keeping the latter in war industries meant that many young bourgeois who had had to interrupt

their studies as a result either of the war or the revolution, were attracted into the fleet by the relatively good conditions that it offered them. If we add to this the fact that the Communist organisation in Petrograd has been badly weakened by the departure of tens of thousands of members going to literally guard the Revolution in all corners of Russia, we can understand that the work of politically educating the sailors had greatly suffered.

Finally, we must say that the Kronstadt sailors had a very clear idea of their own strength. They were still bathed in the halo of their revolutionary past; they guarded the gates of Petrograd; their little isle is like the Heligoland of revolutionary Russia. Such are the local particularities which made the Kronstadt uprising possible and which gave it its original colour.

In a general sense and in the first instance, it is the discontent of the peasant and the Ukrainian peasant which is expressed in this mutiny. After the liquidation of the fronts, the majority of sailors were off on leave at home. They had heard everywhere that there was no longer any danger from the Whites, and they had been struck by complaints about food requisitioning.

In the Ukraine, people spoke of the merciless struggle waged by the Soviet government against the bands which pillaged, burned and cut the rail-roads under the Anarchist flag of Makhno.

More than one sailor never returned at all from leave, and some went over to Makhno's side. In an article that a fugitive sailor wrote in Milyukov's newspaper, to characterise the uprising at Kronstadt, he frankly recognised that Makhno's calls to pillage pleased the sailors a lot and in any case played on their natures (17 March 1921). A characteristic fact is that four members of the "revolutionary committee" of Kronstadt are the children of Ukrainian peasants and that the more influential amongst them, Petritchenko, had been nicknamed "Petlioura" by his friends.

The peasant believes that he has nothing more to fear from feudal land-owners. He now demands of the Soviet government to reduce the demands placed upon him. The same tendency has had an impact on the little island of Kronstadt. The son of the peasant, held there on a ship under a rigid discipline, saw in the Communists in the fleet people who were demanding from him submission to discipline, when no more Entente squadrons were to be seen. And the Communists who were demanding this discipline of him were the same who were demanding the peasant give up his grain.

At the same time the Kronstadt sailor feels himself to be a born revolutionary; he does not have the slightest intention of aiding the capitalist, the Tsarist general or the fat landlord to regain their dominion. His protest against the demands placed on the peasant as well as against revolutionary discipline and order, is not in his opinion an expression of a counter-revolutionary tendency; on the contrary, this protest his, he thinks, surely an extension of the October Revolution. "We made the revolution, we proclaimed Soviet power; but who exercises power now? The Communist Party. It's the Soviets who should hold and exercise power, it is the masses. We must found a real Soviet power." This tendency had been determined by the public discussions over all the questions which had accumulated over three years of war within the Communist Party.

In the Communist press and in Communist meetings, it was openly said that over the course of long years of struggle the organism of the Soviets had developed a parasitic, bureaucratic tendency.

One often heard talk of the necessity of purging the Communist Party of all its careerist elements. Kronstadt had heard all that, and their essentially peasant psychology (albeit transformed by the conditions of life as sailors) conceived of these problems as being inherent in Soviet Russia.

In this general conception, there is a mixture of anarchism which rejects all bureaucracy and centralisation, of SR-ism, and a syndicalism which affirms that the worker, like the peasant, should be master of what he himself makes. All these tendencies are summed up in the demand for the re-election of the Soviets, re-election which would free them from the influence of the Communist Party in general. The syndicalist side has seduced a part of the workers of Kronstadt, for whom the direct domination of the proletariat over all factories is the same as the appropriation by the worker of the product of his work; the legal right to relieve his poverty through the sale of the instruments of his work and, eventually, of the produce of his labour as well.

Furthermore, the people at Kronstadt were isolated. They had heard talk of peasant movements about which exaggerated tales were being spread (they received White newspapers from Finland); they had heard of the poverty and the strikes which gripped Petrograd, among workers who had hoped that with the end of the war would come an improvement in their situation.

In this atmosphere, the clandestine organisations of Right SRs and Left SRs, of anarchists, of Mensheviks and, in the background and unbeknownst to the sailors, the Monarchist counter-revolutionary conspiracy of the artillery commander Kozlovski, all acted efficiently.

The sailors did not think to rise up, they assembled in stormy meetings where they met with the commissar of the fleet Kouzmin, much-respected by them, and Zinoviev.

On the very day of the uprising, Kalinin, president of the Executive Central Committee, to which they accorded great weight and importance, spoke to them in Anchor Square, in Kronstadt. At mid-day, the sailors' delegates met to discuss the re-election of the Soviet. During the discussion, news arrived that great detachments of soldiers were marching against them. This was nothing but a provocation, the means chosen by the SRs or even the Monarchists to transform the conflict into an armed confrontation. In order to guarantee themselves against any surprise, the sailors established patrols, it was insinuated to them that these would be useless, that the Petrograd Soviet would attack anyway, as the Communists did not want to concede the re-election; they had to, so the sailors were told, take some hostages in order to assure the re-election, i.e. arresting all the Communists and in preventing people from Petrograd from coming to Kronstadt.

The sailors placed an embargo on Petrograd and arrested the Communists. The struggle was provoked. The Soviet government naturally could not tolerate the arrest of its representatives, the seizure of the fortress which guarded the approaches to Petrograd. The radio-telegraphic station of the dreadnought Petropavlovsk sent coded telegrams to Reval and to Finland. It is clear that there was in Kronstadt a military staff for which the re-election of the soviets was merely a pretext, and which is capable of turning Kronstadt over to the Entente. The Finnish Whites hurried to make contact with Kronstadt.

The Soviet government ordered the sailors to lay down their arms, but they hoped that their example would be followed in Petrograd and Moscow. Their leaders promised them that in a few days the government would be obliged to hold new general elections which would end with a Soviet government without a party, a Soviet government which would put everything right and satisfy everyone. The peasant would no longer have to give over his produce, and the worker would no longer be hungry. Finally the sailors were persuaded that after rising up against the government they would be held to account for their actions, and they stiffened their resistance.

The government could wait any longer. It could not, for the simple reason that when the debacle spread across the gulf of Finland and the Neva, the counter-revolutionaries would be able to push the sailors into an assault on Petrograd. And fate followed its course.

The Gordian knot had to be cut by the sword. Troops brought from the front, led by the attack battalion of trainee Red Army officers and delegates from the Party Congress, set out one night over the ice of the Gulf of Finland which is already beginning to break up.

"Infantry has never before or since fought warships on ice", proclaimed the soldiers of the Red Army.

The example of Voroshilov, of Zatonsky and of Boubnov and so on, the example of the students of the military colleges, led the troops on, and by daybreak they were on the firm ground of Kronstadt in the fire of the street-fighting against the insurgents.

The resistance was bloody, but not as much as it could have been given the weapons that Kronstadt had at its disposal. During the final days the faith of victory had been shaken among the sailors and most likely even faith in the justice of their cause.

This was above all because the counter-revolution, at first hidden in the background, acted more and more openly. The SR Tchernov imposed on the sailors the demand for the Constituent Assembly. From Finland arrived, as representatives of the Red Cross, authentic Russian Whites, with the captain of the vessel, Wilkins, at their head, whom the old sailors knew as a military tyrant and who

had only been able to escape their vengeance in 1917 by fleeing abroad. All this enlightened the masses and sapped confidence in the correctness of their cause.

Kozlovsky's people demanded more and more obedience to their orders, because without discipline the defence of the positions could not be assured. Their spies in Petrograd informed them that their uprising had not only failed to bring the mass of the workers along with it, but on the contrary had singularly repulsed them, such that the factories where dissension and ferment had been strongest, had now gone back to work having heard the cannon from Kronstadt.

Thus was Kronstadt stormed. The dead were still being buried when White newspapers arrived from Paris, Berlin and Prague, and it was seen then just how well the Soviet government was right to not consider the insurrection as the beginning of a third revolution but to brand it simply as a new counter-revolutionary attack.

Once the Russian counter-revolutionaries received news of the uprising, they forgot about the [political] abyss separating them from Kronstadt.

Savinkov, aide to Kerensky, who had had 10,000 peasants shot on the Galician front when they refused to take part in the murderous June offensive of 1917, Savinkov, who in his Warsaw newspaper Svoboda, printed on Polish government money, boasts (24 February) "I fight against the Bolsheviks, I fight alongside those who have already struggled with Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel and even Petlioura, strange as that may seem", Savinkov, friend of Balakhovitch, the hero of the anti-Jewish pogroms of White Russia, wrote in his paper that the sailors of Kronstadt had absolved their sins thanks to their latest rising.

"When the cruiser Aurora fired on Petrograd [an imaginary event] it was an expression of repentance for the sin committed on 25 October 1917 with the bombardment of the Winter Palace, the seat of Kerensky's ministry."

The organ of the right wing of the Cadet Party, wrote "The uprising of Kronstadt is sacred, because it is an uprising against the idea of the November revolution".

The Society of Russian Industrialists and Financiers of Paris, when they heard the news from Kronstadt, decided to not worry about the extremist demands or the primitive cause of the mutiny ["les revendications extremistes... cause primitive de la mutinerie"] because its essential point was that "the sailors were for the overthrow of the Communist government" [Dernières Nouvelles de Paris, 8 March].

The Russian banks, with the former Tsarist minister of finance Kokovtsev at their head, began to collect money for Kronstadt. Goutchkov, the head of the Russian imperialist party, got in contact with the English and American governments to obtain food supplies.

The American and French governments immediately asked their agents in Helsingfors and Estonia to do all they could to provision the rioters of Kronstadt.

The counter-revolutionaries understood with an extraordinary clarity and breadth of mind the deeper significance of the events of Kronstadt.

Milyukov's paper Dernières Nouvelles as well as Bourtzev's Cause Commune did not stop at offering immediate and categorical support for the sailors at Kronstadt, they also elaborated a tactical plan regarding the adoption of the demands of Kronstadt.

This tactic was based on the recognition that every counter-revolutionary attack was doomed to failure as soon as it began to operate openly with the forces of the Entente and the old regime and had representatives of large landowners and capitalism at its head.

The popular masses would not believe in the pure and disinterested intentions of the allies; they know very well that when these allies march against Soviet Russia it is with the intention of making her into a colony.

The reason for the defeat of Denikin, Kolchak, etc., consisted, according to Milyukov, above all in that as representatives of the nobility they disgusted the peasants. The first conclusion that Milyukov draws from this fact is that the counter-revolutionary movement in Russia would only be able to win if it came from within and if it was purged (in appearance at least) of any feudal tendency.

But, based on the events at Kronstadt, Milyukov has made a second theoretical step: he recognises that for neither the peasants, nor the workers, nor the soldiers of the Red Army, is the demand for a Constituent Assembly attractive. The sailors had risen up in the name of real Soviet power, but at the same time they cried: Down with the Communists! This “Down the with Communists!” was the reason Milyukov accepted “real Soviet power”.

When the Communist government falls, so will the only force which supports Soviet Russia in the fight against global capitalism, the only force capable, at present above all because it has won peace, of reconstructing normal life, the only force capable, as the most mature party of the revolutionary peasants and workers, of steering a course between all the rocks and guaranteeing the achievements of the revolution.

Soviets without Communists would represent nothing more than masses of hesitant workers, tired and dispersed; and they would be obliged to allow freedom of operations to all those bourgeois forces and organisations which were severely controlled under the government of Communist Soviets.

The counter-revolutionary diaspora would begin to flow back into Russia, it would flood the organisations of the partyless Soviets with its own people, and would effectively take power. And so the moment would have arrived when real power was handed over to the juridical forms of the counter-revolution, when it judged this necessary.

Milyukov's organ is even engaged in polemic with a doctrinaire SR, defending the Soviets not merely as administrative organs, but as governmental power: “The Soviets are not just consultative or legislative organs, they are the organs of state power in its entirety. And it is not the case that they could replace the Bolshevik state and form the base of a more normal organisation of provinces without breaking with the population. It goes without saying that they will be unable to fulfil this role reliably until after their re-election” (8 March 1921).

Milyukov, founder and ideological leader of the liberal Cadet Party, who appeared to be a blind and doctrinaire supporter of European parliamentarism, has understood that the destruction of the Communist Party would have been the destruction of the only force which allows Russia to persist as a major world-revolutionary force. Soviet Russia without the dictatorship of the Communists would be prey to the counter-revolution. He thus shows the annihilation of the Communist Party to be a decisive goal of the counter-revolution, while saying “Do not repel the masses of peasants and workers by raising demands for a return to bourgeois state forms. The form doesn't matter — only the content does.”

In peasant Russia, after the annihilation of the Communist Party, the workers in the countryside would consolidate their power under the Soviet form as a conservative and bourgeois force, and the rest would follow on its own.

The tactic of the Russian counter-revolution which aims to break the power of Soviet Russia and overthrow the Communist Party, which seeks to lead the petty-bourgeois, semi-proletarian and peasant masses into struggle against the Communist Party, this plan of the Russian counter-revolution which is rushing to triumph in the name of a truly Soviet government and a “third revolution” will not succeed.

The Communist Party is sufficiently supple and prudent, it is sufficiently in contact with the masses that it can thwart this tactic. In profiting from respite from war, to diminish the size of the Red Army and reduce the demands upon the peasant, in contenting him at the same time with the produce of industry and foreign trade, the Party will re-forge links with the peasant.

It will excite the initiative of the proletarian masses, to improve their material situation and to bring up to the front, into the Party, the most backward layers.

From the present moment, several weeks after the Congress of the Communist Party, before all the consequences of its new policy can be seen, we can already feel a new wind blowing which is animating the popular masses, we can really feel that the Soviet government has ruined the counter-revolutionary plan to return on the back of the petty-bourgeoisie.

But the fact that the Russian counter-

revolution, in its struggle for power, has managed to use the demand for soviets, soviets under which it was earlier crushed, against the Communist Party, that is a fact of universal historic significance.

It is an expression of the revolutionary instinct of the western proletariat that, in solidarity with Soviet Russia, which is seen to be the centre of the world revolution, it cried, “My country, right or wrong!”, without allowing itself to be influenced by any idle gossip about the Communist Party's “terrorism”, or its “opportunism”.

It has understood that the question was not to what degree communism could be realised in Russia — because communism cannot be established either promptly or in isolation in an agrarian country — but that the only important thing is that Russia was taken out of the hands of the counter-revolution, and that 100 million peasants and the economic forces of the largest country in Europe can no longer be used to economically or militarily support capitalism as it fights for its life. On the contrary, they are being put to use in supporting the world proletariat fighting for a new social order.

The global proletariat has thus understood that insofar as this is the case, the Communist Party will always be in the right so long as it retains power.

All of its acts must be judged from this point of view, including when, in order to win out against the counter-revolution’s military assaults, the Party implacably rallies all of the resources of the country, including making certain concessions to petty-bourgeois elements, in order to break them from landlords and capitalists, agents of counter-revolution.

The advanced sections of the proletariat, with their revolutionary instinct, have understood all this and they can now see how right those were who said “it is impossible to simultaneously support the Russian Revolution and fight the Communist Party”. What Hilferding, Dittmann, Longuet, Bauer, have tried to do, i.e. to adopt one attitude towards the Communist Party and a different one towards the Russian Revolution — this in the context of the tactic adopted by the Russian counter-revolution during the Kronstadt events — appears like a deception, or, seen in the most favourable light, a self-deception.

“Long live the Russian Revolution! Long live Soviet Russia! Down with the Russian Communists! Down with the dictators of Moscow!”, cried Hilferding and Bauer, Longuet and Grimm. “Down with the dictators of Moscow!”, replied the Tsarist finance minister Kokovsev, Milyukov the hero of the Dardanelles, the Paris stock exchange and General Wrangel.

And they add: “Once the Russian Communist Party is beaten, the counter-revolution will, for a while at least, be able to dress itself up in the clothing of the Soviets”. It’s not the clothing that counts, but the person who wears it, and “Paris is worth a mass” [i.e. one should be prepared to cynically take part in a ritual in order to benefit politically].

The Hilferdings and Dittmanns, the Adlers, the Bauers, the Longuets and all these heroes of the two-and-a-half international appear here not as the right wing of the workers’ revolution, but as the left wing of the global capitalist counter-revolution.

The future historian of this great struggle to free the global proletariat will not omit to underline this fact, that when the Russian Communists filled with their bodies the breach made in the walls of Petrograd by the Kronstadt sailors, Freiheit wrote “Zinoviev, the corrupter of the Russian proletariat”; that Longuet and Bauer expressed their sympathies not with the Communists who were making a new rampart around Petrograd with their bodies on the ice of the Gulf of Finland — but with the unthinking tools of the world counter-revolution at Kronstadt.

The events of Kronstadt obliged the western proletariat to draw other conclusions as well. They drew to a conclusion our discussions with that section of Communists who wished to oppose the Russian dictatorship, the dictatorship of the Communist Party, and the idea of the proletarian dictatorship altogether.

The Laufenbergs and the Wolfheims who thought in 1919 that they could counterpose the dictatorship of the masses to the dictatorship of the Communist Party have explicitly passed over into the camp of

counter-revolution. In their last brochure, Moscow and the German Revolution, they openly declare themselves to be enemies not only of the Communist Party but of Soviet Russia, denouncing the Soviet government before the German working masses, as a bad new version of Tsarism.

The Ruhles and company have taken their hatred of the idea of a revolutionary party so far as to ally with Dittmann and Co to fight against the so-called “despotism” of the Russian Communist Party. They have even been denounced by the German Communist elements who had previously been morally in agreement with them, as counter-revolutionaries. But this evolution could only be led to a full conclusion if the Communist International, in all of its sections, could grasp the universally valid lessons of Kronstadt and of the new tactic of the Russian counter-revolution.

That which is specifically Russian in these events is that, firstly, the proletarian layer is much thinner in Russia than in the west; secondly, the petty-bourgeois layers are much more powerful in Russia than in England or Germany, and consequently their influence on the working class is stronger than it would be elsewhere, and for this reason, the petty-bourgeois oscillations of the working class are much greater in Russia than in Europe.

In the west, the struggle will be more difficult because the bourgeoisie is better organised than in Russia. Logistical difficulties will be ten times greater than in Russia, and there will arise situations where large masses of workers hesitate, and even consider capitulating before the bourgeoisie, or where the dictatorship of the proletariat will only be able to be sustained as the steel-hard dictatorship of its Communist vanguard.

For, as with the declaration of the centrists that they are for the proletarian dictatorship but against terrorism, which simply shows that these elements are not prepared to use all possible methods of struggle for the victory of the working masses and that they are ready to flee or betray; so in all difficult situations the cry of “For the dictatorship of the entire working class, against the dictatorship of the Communist Party!” is an indication that these elements are not ready to fight until even the most backward layers of the working class are already joining battle, i.e. when the struggle is already easy, when it is not necessary to spill blood or suffer hunger and cold. In our pamphlet, Dictatorship of the Working Class and the Dictatorship of the Communist Party, published in the summer of 1919, in response to Laufenberg and Wolfheim, we wrote,

“The Communist Party wil not renounce, after the conquest of power, its combat organs. It will strictly concentrate its members, the best representatives of the dictatorship; it will always consult them on the question of which measures the organs of power must take.

“The Communist Party will always march at the head of the masses and their organisations in order to guarantee the dictatorship. For the dictatorship of the proletariat will not be conquered once and for all: until the definitive victory, it will have to be conquered and reconquered every day.

“The working mass, today divided into layers of unequal ability to struggle, must be animated with the firm intention of fighting, in the course of the progress of the revolution, to make the dictatorship possible. But this combative spirit is very relative in its generality.

“Certain parts of the proletariat will always have, during the organisation of the proletarian dictatorship, a hostile or indifferent attitude. And the mass, which will celebrate on the day of victory, may well hesitate in the days of great difficulties, defeats, and it may even despair of victory and long to capitulate.

“The proletarian revolution does not bring with it an immediate relief of poverty, and in certain circumstances, it may even temporarily worsen the situation of the proletariat. The adversaries of the proletarian will take advantage of this opportunity to demand the government of the workers themselves; it is for this reason that it will be necessary to have a centralised Communist Party, powerful, armed with the means of the proletarian government and determined to conserve power for a certain time, even only as the Party of the revolutionary minority, while waiting for the conditions of the struggle to improve and for the morale of the masses to rise.

“Naturally, if the majority of the working class

is taken in by illusions that it would be better off even in the chains of capitalist slavery than in fighting for its freedom, and if this majority becomes active in a difficult situation, in fighting against the dictatorship of the proletariat which the Communist Party is upholding, then the latter will be incapable of retaining its position.

“But for as long as an improvement in the situation can be hoped for, the Party must steadfastly defend its position.

“When conditions improve, the working class will once again back the Communist Party and it will be able to fight on and achieve its decisive victory. The liberation of the working class can only be won by the workers themselves, by the fighting majority of the working class; but, in its struggle for liberation, there can arise situations where the revolutionary minority of the working class must shoulder the full weight of the struggle and where the dictatorship of the proletariat can only be maintained, provisionally at least, as the dictatorship of the Communist Party. And this situation has arisen more than once in Russia.”

We are convinced that in the light of the events at Kronstadt, the Communist elements which have so far not understood the role of the Party during the revolution, will at last learn the true value of these explanations, as well as the resolution of the 2nd Congress of the Communist International on the subject of the role of the party. We will not draw the full benefit of this lesson – that the Party of the proletariat has been able to preserve power in its hands in the face of a petty-bourgeois counter-revolutionary uprising, even when that uprising bases itself on working-class discontent — if it is only understood in Russia. It must be realised that, if the Communist Party can only triumph when it has the support of the mass of workers, there will nevertheless arise situations in the West where it will have to, for a certain period, keep power using solely the forces of the vanguard.

It must be understood at all times that the Communist Party is the soul of the revolution and the keystone of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The struggle which the Communist Party of Russia is currently fighting to strengthen its influence over the working masses who are not yet communists, for the awakening of initiative in these masses, is the complement of its firm decision to retain power by all possible means. And this decision must serve as an example to Communists in all other countries.

That is the greatest lesson of the Kronstadt events, the international lesson.

Appendix: note on La guerre civile russe, 1917-22, by Jean-Jacques Marie,. Editions Autrement, 2005.

Notice the dates: 1917-22. J-J Marie establishes that the conventional account, according to which the civil war was over by the start of 1921, and all the “emergency” measures by the Bolsheviks after that stemmed only from the Bolsheviks’ supposed lack of democratic understanding, is false.

In spring and summer 1921, the Bolsheviks faced huge peasant uprisings in Tambov and other areas, as well as the Kronstadt revolt. And this in a country exhausted by years of war, with a total of maybe 14 million deaths since the start of World War 1, over four million in the civil war alone, seven million abandoned children, and raging drought, famine, and disease. The Bolsheviks used ruthless force. Marie glosses over none of the horrors. He also shows that, for the Bolsheviks, force was always the second resort, in cases where they had failed to convince, and accompanied by attempts to convince. To try to “turn” the Tambov peasant rising in spring 1921, for example, the Bolsheviks printed 326,000 leaflets, 11 pamphlets, and 28 issues of a special magazine.

In that way they continued as they had started the civil war. On 31 October, only a few days after the Soviets took power, General Krasnov attempted to lead his Cossacks against the new government. Two Bolsheviks smuggled themselves into the Cossack barracks at 3am, spent five hours talking and arguing with the Cossacks, and eventually won them over to a neutral position. The next day, the Bolsheviks were able to arrest Krasnov. Not yet hardened by civil war, they released him when he gave his word of honour not to raise new counter-revolutionary risings. Krasnov immediately

went south to raise new White forces to fight Soviet power.

The Soviet government at that time rested almost exclusively on the power of political agitation. The Russian army was officially demobilised by the Soviet government on 12 February 1918, but in any case could not possibly have been used by the Soviets as their instrument. Police, civil service, courts – all had disintegrated or were hostile.

As a military power, the Soviet government did not exist – not until such time as it managed to build up a Red Army, and a minimal apparatus of administration and supply, by convincing workers and peasants to join the Bolsheviks in that effort. The early months of the Civil War went badly for the Bolsheviks mostly because of successive triumphs won by the Czech Legion – some 35,000 to 40,000 troops from the Austro-Hungarian Imperial army, taken prisoner under the Tsar, who, freed after the Revolution, decided to back the Whites. Even such a small “regular” force could at first overwhelm the improvised Red Guards.

The civil war was won only by heroic efforts of agitation – as when, a bit later, Trotsky single-handedly convinced 15,000 deserters in Riazan to adhere to the Red Army – but, as the war went on, it was coupled with increased ruthlessness.

The end result was a ruined, exhausted country, and a Bolshevik Party with its nerves wrecked. But the Bolsheviks had no choice, about the war, about the invasions by no fewer than 14 countries, or about the defeats and delays of the revolutions in Western Europe to which they looked for a way out.

This is a book worth reading, even though the style is curiously distant, and you will have to draw “the lessons” yourself from facts presented in the manner of a “flat” narrative.

Leon Trotsky

The Revolution Betrayed

Appendix: "Socialism in One Country”

The reactionary tendencies of autarchy are a defense reflex of senile capitalism to the task with which history confronts it, that of freeing its economy from the fetters of private property and the national state, and organizing it in a planned manner throughout the Earth.

In Lenin’s Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People – presented by the Soviet of People’s Commissars for the approval of the Constituent Assembly during its brief hours of life – the “fundamental task” of the new regime was thus defined: “The establishment of a socialist organization of society and the victory of socialism in all countries.” The international character of the revolution was thus written into the basic document of the new regime. No one at that time would have dared present the problem otherwise! In April 1924, three months after the death of Lenin, Stalin wrote, his brochure of compilations called The Foundations of Leninism:

“For the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the efforts of one country are enough – to this the history of our own revolution testifies. For the final victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist production, the efforts of one country, especially a peasant country like ours, are not enough – for this we must have the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries.”

These lines need no comment. The edition in which they were printed, however, has been been withdrawn from circulation.

The large-scale defeats of the European proletariat, and the first very modest economic successes of the Soviet Union, suggested to Stalin, in the autumn of 1924, the idea that the historic mission of the Soviet bureaucracy was to build socialism in a single country. Around this question there developed a discussion which to many superficial minds seemed academic or scholastic, but which in reality reflected the incipient degeneration of the Third International and prepared the way for the Fourth.

Petrov, the former communist, now a White émigré, whom we have already quoted [in previous chapters of the book], tells from his own memories how fiercely the younger generation of administrators opposed the doctrine of the dependence of the Soviet Union upon the international revolution. “How is it possible that we in our own country can not contrive to build a happy life?” If Marx has it otherwise, that means that “we are no Marxists, we are Russian Bolsheviks – that’s what!” To these recollections of disputes in the middle of the twenties, Petrov adds: “Today I can not but think that the theory of building socialism in one country was not a mere Stalinist invention.” Completely true! It expressed unmistakably the mood of the bureaucracy. When speaking of the victory of socialism, they meant their own victory.

In justifying his break with the Marxist tradition of internationalism, Stalin was incautious enough to remark that Marx and Engels were not unacquainted with the law of uneven development of capitalism supposedly discovered by Lenin. In a catalogue of intellectual curiosities, that remark ought really to occupy a foremost place. Unevenness of development permeates the whole history of mankind, and especially the history of capitalism. A young Russian historian and economist, Solntez, a man of exceptional gifts and moral qualities tortured to death in the prisons of the Soviet bureaucracy for membership in the Left Opposition, offered in 1926 a superlative theoretical study of the law of uneven development in Marx. It could not, of course, be printed in the Soviet Union. Also under the ban, although for reasons of an opposite nature, is the work of the long dead and forgotten German Social-Democrat, Vollmar, who as early as 1878 developed the perspective of an “isolated socialist state” – not for Russia, but for Germany – containing references to this “law” of uneven development which is supposed to have been unknown until Lenin.

“Socialism unconditionally assumes economically developed relations,” wrote Georg Vollmar, “and if the question were limited to them alone, socialism ought to be strongest where the economic development is highest. But the thing does not stand that way at all. England is undoubtedly the most developed country economically, yet we see that socialism plays there a very secondary role, while in economically less developed

Germany socialism has already such power that the entire old society no longer feels stable."

Referring to the multitude of historic factors which determine the course of events, Vollmar continued:

"It is clear that with an interrelation of such innumerable forces the development of any general human movement could not, and can not, be identical in the matter of time and form even in two countries, to say nothing of all ... Socialism obeys the same law ... The assumption of a simultaneous victory of socialism in all cultured countries is absolutely ruled out, as is also, and for the same reasons, the assumption that all the rest of the civilized states will immediately and inevitably imitate the example of a socialistically organized state ..."

Thus – Vollmar concludes – "we arrive at the isolated socialist state, concerning which I trust I have proven that it is, although not the only possibility, nevertheless the greatest possibility."

In this work, written when Lenin was eight years old, the law of uneven development receives a far more correct interpretation that that to be found among the Soviet epigones, beginning with the autumn of 1924. We must remark, incidentally, that in this part of his investigation Vollmar, a very second-rate theoretician, is only paraphrasing the thoughts of Engels – to whom, we are told, the law of unevenness of capitalist development remained "unknown."

"The isolated socialist state" has long ceased to be a hypothesis, and became a fact – in Russia to be sure, not in Germany. But this very fact of isolation is also a precise expression of the relative strength of world capitalism, the relative weakness of socialism. From an isolated "socialist" state to a socialist society once for all done with the state remains a long historic road, and this road exactly coincides with the road of international revolution.

Beatrice and Sidney Webb on their part assure us that Marx and Engels did not believe in the possibility of building an isolated socialist society only because neither of them "had ever dreamt" of such a powerful weapon as the monopoly of foreign trade. One can hardly read these lines from the aged authors without embarrassment. The taking over by the state of commercial banks and companies, railroads, mercantile marine, is as necessary a measure of the socialist revolution as the nationalization of the means of production, including the means employed in the export branches of industry. The monopoly of foreign trade is nothing but a concentration in the hands of the state of the material instruments of export and import. To say that Marx and Engels "never dreamt" of the monopoly of foreign trade is to say that they never dreamt of the socialist revolution. To complete the picture, we may note that in the work of the above-quoted Vollmar, the monopoly of foreign trade is presented, quite correctly, as one of the most important instruments of the "isolated socialist state." Marx and Engels must then have learned about this secret from Vollmar, had he himself not learned it earlier from them.

The "theory" of socialism in one country – a "theory" never expounded, by the way, or given any foundation, by Stalin himself – comes down to the sufficiently sterile and unhistoric notion that, thanks to the natural riches of the country, a socialist society can be built within the geographic confines of the Soviet Union. With the same success you might affirm that socialism could triumph if the population of the earth were a twelfth of what it is. In reality, however, the purpose of this new theory was to introduce into the social consciousness a far more concrete system of ideas, namely: the revolution is wholly completed; social contradictions will steadily soften; the kulak will gradually grow into socialism; the development as a whole, regardless of events in the external world, will preserve a peaceful and planned character. Bukharin, in attempting to give some foundation to the theory, declared it unshakably proven that

"we shall not perish owing to class differences within our country and our technical backwardness, that we can build socialism even on this pauper technical basis, that this growth of socialism will be many times slower, that we will crawl with a tortoise tempo, and that nevertheless we are building this socialism, and we will build it."

We remark the formula: "Build socialism even on a pauper technical basis," and we recall once more the genial intuition of the young Marx: with a low technical basis "only want will be generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and all the old crap must revive."

In April 1926, at a Plenum of the Central Committee, the following amendment to the theory of the tortoise tempo was introduced by the Left Opposition:

“It would be a fundamental error to think that in a capitalist environment we can go towards socialism at an arbitrary tempo. Our further approach to socialism will be ensured only on condition that the distance separating our industry from the advanced capitalist industry shall not increase, but clearly and palpably decrease.”

Stalin with good reason declared this amendment a “masked” attack upon the theory of socialism in one country, and categorically rejected the very inclination to link up the tempo of domestic construction with the conditions of international development. Here is what he said verbatim, according to the stenographic report of the Plenum:

“Whoever drags in here an international factor does not understand the very form of the question. He is either confused in the matter because he does not understand it, or he is consciously trying to confuse the question.”

The amendment of the Opposition was rejected.

But the illusion of a socialism to be built at a tortoise tempo, on a pauper basis in an environment of powerful enemies, did not long withstand the blows of criticism. In November of the same year the 15th Party Conference, without a word of preparation in the press, acknowledged that it would be necessary “in a relatively [?] minimal historical period to catch up to and then surpass the level of industrial development of the advanced capitalist countries.” The Left Opposition at any rate was here “surpassed.” But in advancing this slogan – catch up to and surpass the whole world “in a minimal period” – yesterday’s theorists of the tortoise tempo had fallen captive to that same international factor of which the Soviet bureaucracy had such a superstitious fear. Thus in the course of eight months the first and purest version of the Stalinist theory was liquidated.

Socialism must inevitably “surpass” capitalism in all spheres – wrote the Left Opposition in a document illegally distributed in March 1927 –

“but at present the question is not of the relation of socialism to capitalism in general, but of the economic development of the Soviet Union in relation to Germany, England and the United States. What is to be understood by the phrase ‘minimal historic period’? A whole series of future five-year plans will leave us far from the level of the advanced countries of the West. What will be happening in the capitalist world during this time?”

[…]

If you admit the possibility of its flourishing anew for a period of decades, then the talk of socialism in our backward country is pitiable tripe. Then it will be necessary to say that we were mistaken in our appraisal of the whole epoch as an epoch of capitalist decay. Then the Soviet Republic will prove to have been the second experiment in proletarian dictatorship since the Paris Commune, broader and more fruitful, but only an experiment ... Is there, however, any serious ground for such a decisive reconsideration of our whole epoch, and of the meaning of the October revolution as a link in an international revolution? No!

[…]

In finishing to a more or less complete extent their period of reconstruction [after the war] ... the capitalist countries are reviving, and reviving in an incomparably sharper form, all the old pre-war contradictions, domestic and international. This is the basis of the proletarian revolution. It is a fact that we are building socialism. A greater fact, however, and not a less – since the whole in general is greater that the part – is the preparation of a European and world revolution. The part can conquer only together with the whole.

[…]

The European proletariat needs a far shorter period for its take-off to the seizure of power than we need to catch up technically with Europe and America ... We must, meanwhile, systematically narrow the distance separating our productivity of labor from that of the rest of the world. The more we advance, the less danger there is of possible intervention by low prices, and consequently by armies ... The higher we raise the standard of living of the

workers and peasants, the more truly shall we hasten the proletarian revolution in Europe, the sooner will that revolution enrich us with world technique, and the more truly and genuine will our socialist construction advance as a part of European and world construction."

This documents, like the others, remained without answer – unless you consider expulsions from the party and arrests an answer to it.

After the abandonment of the idea of a tortoise tempo, it became necessary to renounce the idea bound up with it of the kulak's growing into socialism. The administrative extermination of kulakism, however, gave the theory of socialism in one country new nourishment. Once classes are "fundamentally" abolished, this mean that socialism is "fundamentally" achieved (1931). In essence, this formula restored the conception of a socialist society built upon a "pauper basis." It was in those days, as we remember, that an official journalist explained that the absence of milk for babies is due to a lack of cows and not the shortcomings of the socialist system.

A concern for the productivity of labor, however, prevented any long resting upon these sedative formulae of 1931, which had to serve as moral compensation for the devastations effected by complete collectivization.

"Some think," Stalin unexpectedly announced in connection with the Stakhanov movement, "that socialism can be strengthened by way of a certain material equalization of people on the basis of a pauper life. That is not true. [...] In reality, socialism can conquer only on the basis of a high productivity of labor, higher than under capitalism."

Completely correct!

However, at the very same time the new program of the Communist Youth – adopted in April 1936 at the same congress which withdrew from the Communist Youth its last remnant of political rights – defined the socialist character of the Soviet Union in the following categoric terms: "The whole national economy of the country has become socialist." Nobody bothers to reconcile these contradictory conceptions. Each one is put into circulation in accord with the demands of the moment. It does not matter, for no one dares to criticize.

The spokesman at the congress explained the very necessity of the new program for the Communist Youth in the following words:"The old program contains a deeply mistaken anti-Leninist assertion to the effect that Russia 'can arrive at socialism only through a world proletarian revolution'. This point of the program is basically wrong. It reflects Trotskyist views." – that same views that Stalin was still defending in April 1924.

Aside from that, it remains unexplained how a program written in 1921 by Bukharin, and carefully gone over by the Politburo with the participation of Lenin, could turn out after fifteen years to be "Trotskyist", and have to be revised to an exactly opposite effect! But logical arguments are powerless where it is a question of interests. Having won their independence from the proletariat of their own country, the bureaucracy cannot recognize the dependence of the Soviet Union upon the world proletariat. The law of uneven development brought it about that the contradiction between the technique and property relations of capitalism shattered the weakest link in the world chain. Backward Russian capitalism was the first to pay for the bankruptcy of world capitalism. The law of uneven development is supplemented throughout the whole course of history by the law of combined development. The collapse of the bourgeoisie in Russia led to the proletarian dictatorship – that is, to a backward country's leaping ahead of the advanced countries. However, the establishment of socialist forms of property in the backward country came up against the inadequate level of technique and culture. Itself born of the contradictions between his world productive forces and capitalist forms of property, the October revolution produced in its turn a contradiction between low national productive forces and socialist forms of property.

To be sure, the isolation of the Soviet Union did not have those immediate dangerous consequences which might have been feared. The capitalist world was too disorganized and paralyzed to unfold to the full extent its potential power. The "breathing spell" proved longer than a critical optimism had dared to hope. However, isolation and the impossibility of using the resources of world economy even upon capitalistic bases (the amount of foreign trade has decreased from 1913 four to five times) entailed, along with enormous

expenditures upon military defense, an extremely disadvantageous allocation of productive forces, and a slow raising of the standard of living of the masses. But a more malign product of isolation and backwardness has been the octopus of bureaucratism.

The juridical and political standards set up by the revolution exercised a progressive action upon the backward economy, but upon the other hand they themselves felt the lowering influence of that backwardness. The longer the Soviet Union remains in a capitalist environment, the deeper runs the degeneration of the social fabric. A prolonged isolation would inevitably end not in national communism, but in a restoration of capitalism.

If a bourgeoisie cannot peacefully grow into a socialist democracy, it is likewise true that a socialist state cannot peacefully merge with a world capitalist system. On the historic order of the day stands not the peaceful socialist development of “one country”, but a long series of world disturbances: wars and revolutions. Disturbances are inevitable also in the domestic life of the Soviet Union. If the bureaucracy was compelled in its struggle for a planned economy to dekulakize the kulak, the working class will be compelled in its struggle for socialism to debureaucratize the bureaucracy.

On the tomb of the latter will be inscribed the epitaph:

“Here lies the theory of socialism in one country.”

1. The “Friends” of the Soviet Union

For the first time a powerful government provides a stimulus abroad not to the respectable right, but to the left and extreme left press. The sympathies of the popular masses for the great revolution are being very skillfully canalized and sluiced into the mill of the Soviet bureaucracy. The “sympathizing” Western press is imperceptibly losing the right to publish anything which might aggrieve the ruling stratum of the Soviet Union. Books undesirable to the Kremlin are maliciously unmentioned. Noisy and mediocre apologists are published in many languages. We have avoided quoting throughout this work the specific productions of of the official “friends”, preferring the crude originals to the stylized foreign paraphrases. However, the literature of the “friends”, including that of the Communist International, the most crass and vulgar part of it, presents in cubic metres an impressive magnitude, and plays not the last role in politics. We must devote a few concluding pages to it.

At present the chief contribution to the treasury of thought is declared to be the Webbs’ book, Soviet Communism. Instead of relating what has been achieved and in what direction the achieved is developing, the authors expound for twelve hundred pages what is contemplated, indicated in the bureaus, or expounded in the laws. Their conclusion is: When the projects, plans and laws are carried out, then communism will be realized in the Soviet Union. Such is the content of this depressing book, which rehashes the reports of Moscow bureaus and the anniversary articles of the Moscow press.

Friendship for the Soviet bureaucracy is not friendship for the proletarian revolution, but, on the contrary, insurance against it. The Webbs are, to be sure, ready to acknowledge that the communist system will sometime or other spread to to the rest of the world.

“But how, when, where, with what modifications, and whether through violent revolution, or by peaceful penetration, or even by conscious imitation, are questions we cannot answer.”

This diplomatic refusal to answer – or, in reality, this unequivocal answer – is in the highest degree characteristic of the “friends”, and tells the actual price of their friendship. If everybody had thus answered the question of revolution before 1917, when it was infinitely harder to answer, there would have been no Soviet state in the world, and the British “friends” would have had to expand their fund of friendly emotion upon other objects.

The Webbs speak as of something which goes without saying about the vanity of hoping for a European revolution in the near future, and they gather from that a comforting proof of the correctness of the theory of socialism in one country. With the authority of people for whom the October Revolution was a complete, and moreover an unpleasant, surprise, they give us lessons in the necessity of building a socialist society within the limits of the Soviet Union in the absence of other perspectives. It is difficult to refrain from an

impolite movement of the shoulders! In reality, our dispute with the Webbs is not as to the necessity of building factories in the SOviet Union and employing mineral fertilizers on the collective farms, but as to whether it is necessary to prepare a revolution in Great Britain and how it shall be done. Upon that question the learned sociologues answer: “We do not know.” They consider the very question, of course, in conflict with “science.”

Lenin was passionately hostile to the conservative bourgeois who imagines himself a socialist, and, in particular, to the British Fabians. By the biographical glossary attached to his Works”, it is not difficult to find out that his attitude to the Webbs throughout his whole active life remained one of unaltered fierce hostility. In 1907 he first wrote of the Webbs as “obtuse eulogists of English philistinism”, who try to represent Chartism, the revolutionary epoch of the English labor movement, as mere childishness.” Without Chartism, however, there would have been no Paris Commune. Without both, there would have been no October revolution. The Webbs found in the Soviet Union only an administrative mechanism and a bureaucratic plan. They found neither Chartism nor Communism nor the October revolution. A revolution remains for them today, as before, an alien and hostile matter, if not indeed “mere childishness.”

In his polemics against opportunists, Lenin did not trouble himself, as is well known, with the manners of the salon. But his abusive epithets (“lackeys of the bourgeoisie”, “traitors”, “boot-lick souls”) expressed during many years a carefully weighed appraisal of the Webbs and the evangels of Fabianism – that is, of traditional respectability and worship for what exists. There can be no talk of any sudden change in the views of the Webbs during recent years. These same people who during the war support their bourgeoisie, and who accepted later at the hands of the King the title of Lord Passfield, have renounced nothing, and changed not at all, in adhering to Communism in a single, and moreover a foreign, country. Sidney Webb was Colonial Minister – that is, chief jailkeeper of British imperialism – in the very period of his life when he was drawing near to the Soviet bureaucracy, receiving material from its bureaus, and on that basis working upon this two-volume compilation.

As late as 1923, the Webbs saw no great difference between Bolshevism and Tzarism (see, for example, The Decay of Capitalist Civilization, 1923). Now, however, they have fully reorganized the “democracy” of the Stalin regime. It is needless to seek any contradiction here. The Fabians were indignant when the revolutionary proletariat withdrew freedom of activity from “educated” society, but they think it quite in the order of things when a bureaucracy withdraws freedom of activity from the proletariat. Has not this always been the function of the laborite’s workers’ bureaucracy? The Webbs swear, for example, that criticism in the Soviet Union is completely free. A sense of humor is not to be expected of these people. They refer with complete seriousness to that notorious “self-criticism” which is enacted as a part of one’s official duties, and the direction of which, as well as its limits, can always be accurately foretold.

Naïveté? Neither Engels nor Lenin considered Sidney Webb naive. Respectability rather. After all, it is a question of an established regime and of hospitable hosts. The Webbs are extremely disapproving in their attitude to a Marxian criticism of what exists. They consider themselves called to preserve the heritage of the October revolution from the Left Opposition. For the sake of completeness we observe that in its day the Labor Government in which Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb) held a portfolio refused the author of this work a visa to enter Great Britain. Thus Sidney Webb, who in those very days was working on his book upon the Soviet Union, is theoretically defending the Soviet Union from being undermined, but practically he is defending the Empire of His Majesty. In justice be it said that in both cases he remains true to himself.

* * *

For many of the petty bourgeoisie who master neither pen nor brush, an officially registered “friendship” for the Soviet Union is a kind of certificate of higher spiritual interests. Membership in Freemason lodges or pacifist clubs has much in common with membership in the society of “Friends of the Soviet Union”, for it makes it possible to live two lives at once: an everyday life in a circle of commonplace interests, and a holiday life evaluating to the soul. From time to time the “friends” visit Moscow. They note down in their memory tractors, creches, Pioneers,

parades, parachute girls – in a word, everything except the new aristocracy. The best of them close their eyes to this out of a feeling of hostility toward capitalist reaction. Andre Gide frankly acknowledges this:

"The stupid and dishonest attack against the Soviet Union has brought it about that we now defend it with a certain obstinacy."

But the stupidity and dishonesty of one's enemies is no justification for one's own blindness. The working masses, at any rate, have need of clearsighted friends.

The epidemic sympathy of bourgeois radicals and socialist bourgeois for the ruling stratum of the Soviet Union has causes that are not unimportant. In the circle of professional politicians, notwithstanding all differences of program, there is always a predominance of those friendly to such "progress" as is already achieved or can easily be achieved. There are incomparably more reformers in the world than revolutionists, more accommodationists than irreconciables. Only in exceptional historic periods, when the masses come into movement, do the revolutionists emerge from their isolation, and the reformers become more like fish out of water.

In the milieu of the present Soviet bureaucracy, there is not a person who did not, prior to April 1917, and even considerably later, regard the idea of a proletarian dictatorship in Russia as fantastic. (At that time this "fantasy" was called ... Trotskyism.) The older generation of the foreign "friends" for decades regarded as Realpolitiker to Russian Mensheviks, who stood for a "people's front" with the liberals and rejected the idea of dictatorship as arrant madness. To recognize a dictatorship when it is already achieved and even bureaucratically befouled – that is a different matter. That is a matter exactly to the minds of these "friends." They now not only pay their respects to the Soviet state, but even defined it against its enemies – not so much, to be sure, against those who yearn for the past, as against those who are preparing the future. Where these "friends" are active preparing, as in the case of the French, Belgian, English and other reformists, it is convenient to them to conceal their solidarity with the bourgeoisie under a concern for the defense of the Soviet Union. Where, on the other hand, they have unwillingly become defeatists, as in the case of the German and Austrian social patriots of yesterday, they hope that the alliance of France with the Soviet Union may help them settle with Hitler or Schussnigg. Leon Blum, who was an enemy of Bolshevism in its heroic epoch, and opened the pages of Le Populaire for the express purpose of publicly baiting the October revolution, would now not print a line exposing the real crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy. Just as the Biblical Moses, thirsting to see the face of Jehovah, was permitted to make his bow only to the rearward parts of the divine anatomy, so the honorable reformists, worshipers of the accomplished fact, are capable of knowing and acknowledging in a revolution only its meaty bureaucratic posterior.

The present communist "leaders" belong in essence to the same type. After a long series of monkey jumps and grimaces, they have suddenly discovered the enormous advantages of opportunism, and have seized upon it with the freshness proper to that ignorance which has always distinguished them. Their slavish and not always disinterested kowtowing to the upper circles in the Kremlin alone renders them absolutely incapable of revolutionary initiative. They answer critical arguments no otherwise than with snarling and barking; and, moreover, under the whip of the boss they wag their tails. This most unattractive aggregation, which in the hour of danger will scatter to the four winds, considers us flagrant "counterrevolutionists." What of it? History, in spite of its austere character, cannot get along without an occassional farce.

The more honest or open-eyed of the "friends", at least when speaking tete-a-tete, concede that there is a spot on the Soviet sun. But substituting a fatalistic for a dialectic analysis, they console themselves with the thought that "a certain" bureaucratic degeneration in the given conditions was historically inevitable. Even so! The resistance to this degeneration also has not fallen from the sky. A necessity has two ends: the reactionary and the progressive. History teaches that persons and parties which drag at the opposite ends of a necessity turn out in the long run on opposite sides of the barricade.

The final argument of the "friends" is that reactionaries will seize upon any criticism of the Soviet regime. That is indubitable! We may assume that they will try to get something for themselves out of the present book. When was it ever otherwise? The

Communist Manifesto spoke scornfully of the fact that the feudal reaction tried to use against liberalism the arrows of socialist criticism. That did not prevent revolutionary socialism from following its road. It will not prevent us either. The press of the Communist International, it is true, goes so far as to assert that our criticism is preparing military intervention against the Soviets. This obviously means that the capitalist governments, learning from our works of the degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy, will immediately equip a punitive expedition to avenge the trampled principles of October! The polemists of the Communist International are not armed with rapiers but wagon tongues, or some still less nimble instrument. In reality a Marxist criticism, which calls things by their real names, can only increase the conservative credit of the Soviet diplomacy in the eyes of the bourgeoisie.

It is otherwise with the working class and its sincere champions among the intelligentsia. Here our work will cause doubts and evoke distrust – not of revolutionaries, but of its usurpers. But that is the very goal we have set ourselves. The motor force of progress is truth and not lies.

CHAPTER IV

MILLENARIANISM I: LAZZARETTI

Of all the primitive social movements discussed in this book, millenarianism is the one least handicapped by its primitiveness. For the only thing really primitive about it is external. The essence of millenarianism, the hope of a complete and radical change in the world which will be reflected in the millennium, a world shorn of all its present deficiencies, is not confined to primitivism. It is present, almost by definition, in all revolutionary movements of whatever kind, and 'millenarian' elements may therefore be discovered by the student in any of them, insofar as they have ideals. This does not mean that therefore *all* revolutionary movements are millennial in the narrower sense of the word, let alone that they are primitive, an assumption which deprives Professor Norman Cohn's book of some of its value. Indeed, it is impossible to make much sense of modern revolutionary history unless one appreciates the differences between primitive and modern revolutionary movements, in spite of the ideal which they have in common, that of a totally new world.

The typical old-fashioned millenarian movement in Europe has three main characteristics. First, a profound and total rejection of the present, evil world, and a passionate longing for another and better one; in a word, revolutionism. Second, a fairly standardized 'ideology' of the chiliastic type as analysed and described by Professor Cohn. The most important ideology of this sort before the rise of modern secular revolutionism is Judeo-Christian messianism, but the view suggested in the first edition of this book, that such movements are virtually confined to the countries affected by the Judeo-Christian-Moslem tradition does not seem tenable.[1] Religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism produce different rationalizations of millennial expectations, but plenty

[1] Yonina Talmon's 'Millenarism' (*Int. Encycl. Soc. Sciences* 1968) still maintains the old view, but cf. J. M. van der Kroef, 'Javanese Messianic Expectations: Their Origin and Cultural Context' (*Comp. Stud. in Society and History* I, 4, 1959, 299–323).

of movements which are recognizably like millenarian ones. Third, millenarian movements share a fundamental vagueness about the actual way in which the new society will be brought about.

It is difficult to put this last point more precisely, for such movements range from the purely passive at one extreme, to those which skirt modern revolutionary methods at the other—indeed, as we shall see, to those which merge naturally into modern revolutionary movements. However, it may perhaps be clarified as follows. Modern revolutionary movements have—implicitly or explicitly—certain fairly definite ideas on how the old society is to be replaced by the new, the most crucial of which concerns what we may call the 'transfer of power'. The old rulers must be toppled from their positions. The 'people' (or the revolutionary class or group) must 'take over' and then carry out certain measures—the redistribution of land, the nationalization of the means of production, or whatever it may be. In all this the organized effort of the revolutionaries is decisive, and doctrines of organization, strategy and tactics, etc., sometimes very elaborate, are evolved to aid them in their task. The sort of things revolutionaries do is, let us say, to organize a mass demonstration, throw up barricades, march on the town hall, run up the tricolour, proclaim the Republic one and indivisible, appoint a provisional government, and issue a call for a Constituent Assembly. (This, roughly, is the 'drill' which so many of them learned from the French Revolution. It is not, of course, the only possible procedure.) But the 'pure' millenarian movement operates quite differently, whether because of the inexperience of its members or the narrowness of their horizons, or because of the effect of millenarian ideologies and preconceptions. Its followers are not makers of revolution. They expect it to make itself, by divine revelation, by an announcement from on high, by a miracle—they expect it to happen somehow. The part of the people before the change is to gather together, to prepare itself, to watch the signs of the coming doom, to listen to the prophets who predict the coming of the great day, and perhaps to undertake certain ritual measures against the moment of decision and change, or to purify themselves, shedding the dross of the bad world of the present so as to be able to enter the new world in shining purity. Between the two extremes of the 'pure' millenarian and the 'pure' political revolutionary all manner

of intermediate positions are possible. In fact, the millenarian movements discussed here occupy such intermediate positions, the Lazzarettists nearest to one extreme, the Spanish anarchists theoretically much nearer to the other.

When a millenarian movement turns into, or is absorbed by, a modern revolutionary movement, it therefore retains the first of its characteristics. It normally abandons the second at least to some extent, substituting a modern, that is in general a secular, theory of history and revolution: nationalist, socialist, communist, anarchist or of some other type. Lastly it adds a superstructure of modern revolutionary politics to its basic revolutionary spirit: a programme, a doctrine concerning the transfer of power, and above all a system of organization. This is not always easy, but millenarian movements differ from some of the others discussed in this book in opposing no fundamental *structural* obstacles to modernization. At any rate, as we shall see, such movements have been successfully integrated into modern revolutionary ones; just possibly also into modern reformist ones. Their interest for the historian of the 19th and 20th centuries lies in the process by which they are so absorbed, or in the reasons why sometimes they are not. This will be sketched in this and the two subsequent chapters.

It is not always easy to recognize the rational political core within millenarian movements, for their very lack of sophistication and of an effective revolutionary strategy and tactics makes them push the logic of the revolutionary position to the point of absurdity or paradox. They are impractical and utopian. Since they flourish best in periods of extraordinary social ferment and tend to speak the language of apocalyptic religion, the behaviour of their members is often rather odd by normal standards. They are therefore as easily misinterpreted as William Blake, who until quite recently was commonly regarded not as a revolutionary, but simply as an eccentric other-worldly mystic and visionary.[1] When they wish to express their fundamental critique of the existing world, they may, like the millenarian anarchist strikers in Spain, refuse to marry until the new world has been instituted; when they wish to express their rejection of mere palliatives and lesser reforms, they may (again like the Andalusian strikers of the early

[1] The modern view was pioneered by J. Bronowski, *William Blake, A Man without a Mask* (London 1944 and Pelican Books).

20th century) refuse to formulate demands for higher wages or anything else, even when urged to do so by the authorities. When they wish to express their belief that the new world ought to be fundamentally different from the old, they may, like the Sicilian peasants, believe that somehow even the climate can be changed. Their behaviour may be ecstatic to the point where observers describe it in terms of mass hysteria. On the other hand their actual programme may be vague to the point where observers doubt whether they have one. Those who cannot understand what it is that moves them—and even some who do—may be tempted to interpret their behaviour as wholly irrational or pathological, or at best as an instinctive reaction to intolerable conditions.

Without wishing to make it appear more sensible and less extraordinary than it often is, it is advisable for the historian to appreciate the logic, and even the realism—if the word can be used in this context—which moves them, for revolutionary movements are difficult to understand otherwise. It is their peculiarity that those who cannot see what all the bother is about are disabled from saying anything of great value about them, whereas those who do (especially when among primitive social movements) cannot often speak in terms intelligible to the rest. It is especially difficult, but necessary, to understand that utopianism, or 'impossibilism' which the most primitive revolutionaries share with all but the most sophisticated, and which makes even very modern ones feel a sense of almost physical pain at the realization that the coming of Socialism will not eliminate *all* grief and sadness, unhappy love-affairs or mourning, and will not solve or make soluble *all* problems; a feeling reflected in the ample literature of revolutionary disillusionment.

First, utopianism is probably a necessary social device for generating the superhuman efforts without which no major revolution is achieved. From the historian's point of view the transformations brought about by the French and Russian Revolutions are astonishing enough, but would the Jacobins have undertaken their task simply to exchange the France of the Abbé Prévost for the France of Balzac, the Bolsheviks to exchange the Russia of Tchehov for that of Mr. Khrushchev? Probably not. It was essential for them to believe that 'the ultimate in human prosperity and liberty will appear after their

victories'.[1] Obviously they will not, though the result of the revolution may nevertheless be very worth while.

Second, utopianism can become such a social device *because revolutionary movements and revolutions appear to prove that almost no change is beyond their reach.* If the revolutionaries needed proof that 'human nature can be changed'—i.e. that no social problem is insoluble—the demonstration of its changes in such movements and at such moments would be quite sufficient:

> This other man had I dreamed
> A drunken vainglorious lout . . .
> Yet I number him in the song;
> He, too, has resigned his part
> In the casual comedy;
> He, too, has been changed in his turn,
> Transformed utterly:
> A terrible beauty is born.

It is this consciousness of *utter* change, not as an aspiration but as a fact—at least a temporary fact—which informs Yeats' poem on the Easter Rising, and tolls, like a bell, at the end of his stanzas: All changed, changed utterly. A terrible beauty is born. Liberty, equality, and above all fraternity may become real for the moment in those stages of the great social revolutions which revolutionaries who live through them describe in the terms normally reserved for romantic love: 'bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very Heaven'. Revolutionaries not only set themselves a standard of morality higher than that of any except saints, but at such moments actually carry it into practice, even when it involves considerable technical difficulty, as in the relation between the sexes.[2] Theirs is at such times a miniature version of the ideal society, in which all men are

[1] M. Djilas, *The New Class* (1957), 32, discusses this point interestingly. This book by a disillusioned revolutionary is valuable for the light it throws on revolutionary psychology, including the author's own, and for very little else.

[2] Djilas, *op. cit.*, 153, 'Between men and women in the movement, a clean, modest and warm relationship is fostered: a relationship in which comradely care has become sexless passion', etc. Djilas, doubtless with the period of the partisan war in mind, also stresses the historical moment ('on the eve of the battle for power' when 'it is difficult to separate words from deeds'), but also notes, perceptively, that 'these are the morals of a sect'.

brothers and sacrifice all for the common good without abandoning their individuality. If this is possible within their movement, why not everywhere?

As for the masses of those who do not belong to the revolutionary élite, the mere fact of becoming revolutionary and of recognizing the 'power of the people' seems so miraculous that anything else seems equally possible. An observer of the Sicilian Fasci has correctly noted this logic: if a sudden vast mass movement could be stamped out of the ground, if thousands could be shaken out of the lethargy and defeatism of centuries by a single speech, how could men doubt that great and world-overturning events would soon come to pass? Men *had* been utterly changed and were being visibly transformed. Noble men who in their lives followed the dictates of the good society—poverty, brotherliness, saintliness, or whatever else they were—could be observed working among them even by the unregenerate, and provided further proof of the reality of the ideal. We shall see the political importance of these local revolutionary apostles among the Andalusian village anarchists, but every observer of modern revolutionary movements is aware of it in almost all of them, and of the pressure upon the revolutionary élite to live up to the role of moral exemplars: not to earn more or live better, to work harder, to be 'pure', to sacrifice their private happiness (as happiness is interpreted in the old society) in full public view. When normal modes of behaviour creep in again—for instance, after the triumph of a new revolutionary régime—men will not conclude that the changes for which they long are impracticable for long periods or outside exclusive groups of abnormally devoted men and women, but that there has been 'backsliding' or 'betrayal'. For the possibility, the reality, of the ideal relationship between human beings has been proved in practice, and what can be more conclusive than that?

The problems facing millenarian movements are or look simple in the intoxicating periods of their growth and advance. They are correspondingly difficult in those which follow revolutions or risings.

Since none of the movements discussed in this book have so far been on the winning side, the question what happens when they discover that their victory does not in fact solve *all* human problems does not greatly concern us. Their defeat does, for it

faces them with the problem of maintaining revolutionism as a permanent force. The only millenarian movements which avoid this are the completely suicidal ones, for the death of all their members makes it academic.[1] Normally defeat soon produces a body of doctrine to explain why the millennium has not come and the old world can therefore expect to go on for a while. The signs of imminent doom were not read right or some other mistake has been made. (The Jehovah's Witnesses have quite a large exegetical literature to explain why the failure of the world to end on the date originally predicted does not invalidate the prediction.) To recognize that the old world will continue is to recognize that one must live in it. But how?

Some millenarians, like some revolutionaries, do indeed tacitly drop their revolutionism and turn into *de facto* acceptors of the *status quo*, which is all the easier if the *status quo* becomes more tolerable for the people. Some may even turn into reformist ones, or perhaps discover, now that the ecstasy of the revolutionary period is over, and they are no longer swept away by it, that what they wanted really does not require quite so fundamental a transformation as they had imagined. Or, what is more likely, they may withdraw into a passionate inner life of 'the movement', or 'the sect', leaving the rest of the world to its own devices except for some token assertions of millennial hopes, and perhaps of the millennial programme: for instance pacifism and the refusal to take oaths. Others, however, do not. They may merely retire to wait for the next revolutionary crisis (to use a non-millenarian term) which must surely bring with it the total destruction of the old world and the institution of the new. This is naturally easiest where the economic and social conditions of revolution are endemic, as in Southern Italy, where every political change in the 19th century, irrespective from what quarter it came, automatically produced its ceremonial marches of peasants with drums and banners to occupy the land,[2] or in Andalusia where, as we shall see, millenarian revolutionary waves occurred at roughly

[1] The best known, but not the only one, of this type was the movement of Antonio the Counsellor in the backwoods of Brazil in 1876–7, which provides the subject of a literary masterpiece, Euclides da Cunha's *Rebellion in the Backlands*. The rebel Zion of Canudos fought literally to the last man. When it was captured, no defender was left alive.

[2] Cf. A. La Cava, 'La rivolta calabrese del 1848', in *Arch. Stor. delle Prov. Napoletane*, N.S. XXXI, 1947–9, 445 ff., 540, 552.

ten-year intervals for some sixty or seventy years. Others, as we shall see, retain enough of the old fire to attach themselves to, or to turn into, revolutionary movements of a non-millennial type even after long periods of apparent quiescence.

There, precisely, lies their adaptability. Primitive reformist movements are easily lost in a modern society, if only because the task of securing an equitable regulation of social relations within the existing framework, the creation of tolerable or comfortable conditions here and now, is technically specialized and complicated, and much better done by organizations and movements built to the specifications of modern societies: co-operative marketing organizations are better at the job of giving peasants a fair deal than Robin Hoods. But the fundamental object of social-revolutionary movements remains much more unchanged, though the concrete conditions of the fight for it vary, as may be seen by comparing the passages in which the great utopian or revolutionary writers make their critique of existing societies with those in which they propose specific remedies or reforms. Millenarians can (as we shall see in the chapter on the Sicilian Fasci) readily exchange the primitive costume in which they dress their aspirations for the modern costume of Socialist and Communist politics. Conversely as we have seen even the least millenarian modern revolutionaries have in them a streak of 'impossibilism' which makes them cousins to the Taborites and Anabaptists, a kinship which they have never denied. The junction between the two is therefore readily made, and once made, the primitive movement can be transformed into a modern one.

I propose to discuss three movements of different degrees of millenarianism, and adaptation to modern politics, the Lazzarettists of Southern Tuscany (from *c.* 1875 onward), the Andalusian village anarchists (from the 1870s to 1936) and the Sicilian peasant movements (from *c.* 1893 onwards). In the 19th and 20th centuries such movements have been overwhelmingly agrarian, though there is no *a priori* reason why they should not be urban, and in the past they have sometimes been so. (But urban workers in our period have normally acquired more modern types of revolutionary ideology.) Of the three chosen here, the Lazzarettists are a laboratory specimen of a medieval millenarian heresy surviving in a backward corner of peasant Italy. The second and third are examples of the millenarian characteristics of social movements

along an endemically revolutionary peasantry in very poor and backward areas. The anarchists are chiefly interesting in that they show millenarianism wholly divorced from traditional religious forms, and indeed in a militantly atheist and anti-Christian shape. On the other hand they also demonstrate the political weakness of millenarian movements which are transformed into imperfectly (i.e. ineffectively) revolutionary modern ones. The Sicilian Fasci, though in some senses much less 'modern'—for their members only abandoned their traditional ideology very incompletely—enable us to study the absorption of millenarianism into a modern revolutionary movement, the Communist Party, particularly clearly.

It only remains to note that the present account is sketchy and tentative, and that, in spite of considerable temptation, I have avoided all comparisons with the millenarian movements outside Europe which have lately received some very able scholarly attention.[1] My reasons for resisting the temptation are briefly outlined in the Introduction.

The Saviour on the Monte Amiata

The extraordinary impracticality of millenarian movements has often led observers to deny not only that they are revolutionary but also that they are social. This is very much so in the case of Davide Lazzaretti, the Messiah of the Monte Amiata.[2] It is argued, for instance, by Sig. Barzellotti, that the Lazzarettists were a purely religious movement. This is in any case an unwise statement to make. The kinds of community which produced millenarian heresies are not the ones in which clear distinctions between religious and secular things can be drawn. To argue about whether such a sect is religious *or* social is meaningless, for it will automatically and always be both in some manner. However, it is also clear that the Lazzarettists were passionately interested in politics. The slogan on their flag is variously

[1] E.g. in Peter Worsley's *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (London 1957), a first-rate study of the Pacific 'cargo' cults.

[2] My attention was drawn to this movement by Prof. Ambrogio Donini, who has talked to the existing Lazzarettists and collected some of their unpublished scriptures. Besides information from him, I have drawn on the full contemporary monograph by a local scholar, Barzellotti, and on some other works.

described as 'The Republic and the kingdom of God' or 'The Republic is the kingdom of God', Italy being at that time a monarchy. As they marched in procession they sang—probably echoing the songs of the Italian War of Liberation 1859–60:

> We go by faith
> To save our fatherland,
> Long live the Republic,
> God and Liberty[1]

And the Messiah himself addressed his people as follows and received the necessary responses:

> What do you want of me? I bring you peace and compassion. Is this what you want? (Response: Yes, peace and compassion.)
> Are you willing to pay no more taxes? (Response: Yes.)
> Are you for the Republic? (Response: Yes.)
> But don't think it will be the Republic of 1849. It will be the Republic of Christ. Therefore all cry with me: Long live the Republic of God.[2]

It is far from surprising that the authorities of the kingdom of Italy, as distinct from the Republic of God, regarded the Lazzarettians as a subversive movement.

The Monte Amiata lies in the extreme south-east of Tuscany, where it borders on Umbria and Latium. The Lazzarettist territory was and is composed partly of a very backward mountain area, pastoral and farming—there was also a very little mining—partly of an almost equally backward *maremma* or coastal plain, though the main Lazzarettist forces seem to have come from the mountains. Both economically and culturally it was extremely backward. About two-thirds of the population of Arcidosso, the chief town in the region, were illiterate: to be precise 63 per cent of its 6491 inhabitants.[3] Most inhabitants were peasant proprietors or *mezzadri* (share-croppers). There was little absolute landlessness or industry. Whether the Amiatini were desperately poor or merely very poor is a matter for debate. What is not open to doubt is that the coming of Italian Unity began to involve this extremely backward zone in the economy of the liberal Italian state, and to create considerable social tension and unrest.

The irruption of modern capitalism into peasant society,

[1] E. Lazzareschi, *David Lazzaretti* (Bergamo 1945), 248.
[2] Lazzareschi, *op. cit.*, 238.
[3] Lazzareschi, *op. cit.*, 262.

generally in the form of liberal or Jacobin reforms (the introduction of a free land-market, the secularization of church estates, the equivalents of the enclosure movement and the reform of common land and forest laws, etc.) has always had cataclysmic effects on that society. When it comes suddenly, as the result of a revolution, a wholesale change of laws and policies, a foreign conquest or the like, having been relatively unprepared by the evolution of local social forces, its effect is all the more disturbing. On the Monte Amiata the most obvious way in which the new social system impinged on the old was by taxes; as indeed it was elsewhere. The construction of roads, begun in 1868, was paid for by local rates, and local towns and villages bore its brunt. In Castel del Piano, Cinigiano, Roccalbegna and Santa Fiora the amount of the provincial and communal extra taxes was more than double the amount of the central state tax while in Arcidosso it was three times as high.[1] These were primarily taxes on land and cottages. It is not surprising that the collectors in Santa Fiora complained that some shopkeepers refused to pay them, because they had been promised by Lazzaretti that they would have to pay no more taxes.[2] Again, as usually happened, the introduction of Piedmontese law as the standard law of Italy, that is of an uncompromising code of economic liberalism, threw local society out of joint.[3] Thus the forest law, which virtually abrogated customary rights of common pasture, firewood collecting and the like, fell tragically on the marginal small proprietors, and incidentally exacerbated their relations with larger landowners.[4] It is thus equally natural to find Lazzaretti preaching a new order of things, in which property and land would be distributed differently, and leaseholders and share-croppers would enjoy a greater share of the crop.[5] (The struggle for a larger share of the crop remains to this day the dominating economic issue in rural central Italy, and perhaps the major reason why that region is one of the most strongly Communist, in spite of the virtual absence of *latifundia* or industry. The province of

[1] Barzellotti, *Monte Amiata e il Suo profeta* (Milan 1910), 77–8.

[2] Lazzareschi, *op. cit.*, 282–3.

[3] For the best discussion of this problem in general, E. Sereni, *Il capitalismo nelle campagne 1860–1900* (Turin 1949). The book mentions the Lazzarettians incidentally on pp. 114–15 n.

[4] Barzellotti, *op. cit.*, 79.

[5] Barzellotti, *op. cit.*, 256.

Siena, in which the Monte Amiata lies in part, has the highest percentage of Communist votes in all Italy, 48·8 per cent in 1953.) Conditions were therefore favourable for a movement of social unrest. And in view of the abnormal remoteness of this corner of Tuscany, such a movement was bound to take a rather primitive form.

Let us now turn to Davide Lazzaretti himself. He was born in 1834 and became a carter, travelling up and down the region. Though he claimed to have had a vision at the age of fourteen—in the year of revolution, 1848—he was known as a worldly-minded, not to say blasphemous man until his conversion in 1868. The year may be significant, for it was one of great popular unrest in Italy. The 1867 harvest had been bad, there was an industrial crisis, and above all, the milling tax which Parliament imposed in that year raised food-prices and created vast rural discontents.[1] In all but twelve provinces the imposition of this tax led to riots, and something like 257 people were killed, 1099 wounded, and 3788 arrested as a result.[2] Nothing would be more natural than for a peasant to pass through an intellectual and spiritual crisis in this year. Moreover, the impending Franco-Prussian conflict with its possible—and as it turned out actual—consequences for the Papacy greatly moved catholic minds. Lazzaretti was at this stage a papalist, though his preaching had certain left-wing and republican overtones, as was natural for a man who had fought as a volunteer in the national army in 1860. The papalists, being opposed to the godless government, were in any case at this time encouraging agrarian unrest—the riots were particularly marked in ex-papal provinces and Catholic slogans were heard—and it has also been argued that they protected the early Lazzaretti, whose preaching might form a counter-weight to secular liberal influence. Certainly he had quasi-official Church support for a long time.

While Lazzaretti became locally known after 1868 as a holy man, he now began to elaborate his doctrines and prophesies. He believed himself to be the remote descendant of a French king (France being at the time the chief protector of the Papacy). By the end of 1870 in the *Rescritti Profetici*, also entitled *The*

[1] N. Rosselli, *Mazzini e Bakunine (1860–1872)* (Turin 1927), for the best general account, pp. 213 ff.

[2] Sereni, *op. cit.*, 111.

Awakening of the Peoples, he foresaw a prophet, a captain, a legislator and a reformer of laws, a new pastor from Sinai, who was to arise and liberate the peoples now groaning 'as slaves under the despotism of the monster of ambition, hypocrisy, heresy and pride'. A monarch, whose task was to reconcile the Church with the Italian people, was to 'descend from the mountain, followed by a thousand young men, all of Italian blood, and these are to be called the militia of the Holy Ghost', and these were to regenerate the moral and civil order.[1] He soon set about founding communist colonies on the Monte Amiata, where the faithful constructed a church and a tower for him. These things led to accusations of subversive activities, but Lazzaretti managed to escape sentence thanks to some influential local supporters.

Increasingly he now left the old orthodoxy behind him. In the course of various fasts and travels he gradually evolved the final version of his doctrine. He, Lazzaretti, was to be the king and Messiah. The Lord would construct seven sacred cities, one on the Monte Amiata, the rest in various suitable countries and places. Hitherto there had been the Kingdom of Grace (which he identified with the pontificate of Pius IX). It would be followed by the Kingdom of Justice and the Reform of the Holy Ghost, the third and last age of the world. Great calamities were to presage the final liberation of men by the hand of God.[2] But he, Lazzaretti, would die. Connoisseurs of medieval thought, and in particular of the Joachite doctrines, will recognize the striking parallelisms of this doctrine with those of traditional popular heresy.

The crucial moment came in 1878. Early in that year both Victor Emmanuel and Pius IX died and hence—according to Lazzaretti—the succession of pontiffs came to an end. Moreover, it is equally useful to recall that the agricultural depression was upon Italy. Wheat prices and wages fell from 1875, and though there is no special reason to single out 1878—in fact, 1879 was the really catastrophic year, as in so many other parts of Europe—the preceding years of depression were quite enough to confirm the Tuscan peasants in the belief that the signs and portents of the end of the old world were at hand. Lazzaretti returned from

[1] Barzellotti, *op. cit.*, 193–4.

[2] Barzellotti, *op. cit.*, 208, 235–6. One would normally expect the third age to be that of Freedom.

France, where he had found some wealthy patrons, and declared himself to be the Messiah. When he informed the Vatican of this, he was very naturally excommunicated. But on the Monte Amiata his influence was very great. Men and women flocked to him, to the point where local churches were emptied.[1] He announced that he would descend from his mountain on the day before Assumption, August 14th. A crowd of 3000 gathered there, how many to watch, how many to support, we do not know. He had bought and made up for his followers a set of special costumes, which they wore as the 'Italian Legion' and the 'Militia of the Holy Ghost'. The flag of the Republic of God was run up. For various reasons the descent was postponed until August 18th. On that day the Lazzarettiani singing hymns descended from the mountain on Arcidosso, to be met by the *carabinieri*, who ordered them to turn back. Lazzaretti answered: 'If you want peace, I bring you peace, if you want compassion, you shall have compassion, if you want blood, here I am.' After a confused exchange, the *carabinieri* fired, and Lazzaretti was among the killed. His leading apostles and Levites were tried and sentenced, the court attempting vainly to prove that they had hoped to sack the houses of the rich or to make a worldly revolution. But of course they had not. They were setting up the Republic of God, the third and final age of the world, which was a far vaster thing than sacking the houses of the Signori Pastorelli. Only, as it had turned out, the time was not ripe.

This looked like the end of the Lazzarettists, except for the close disciples who lingered on, the last of them dying in 1943. And indeed a book written in that year talked of 'the last of the Giurisdavidici'. However, there is an epilogue. When in 1948 an attempt was made to assassinate Togliatti, the Italian Communist leader, communists in various places believed that the great day had come, and promptly began to storm police-stations or to take power in other ways until calmed down by their leaders. Among the scattered places in which such risings took place was Arcidosso. Later a historically-minded Communist leader, who held a public meeting there, could not resist the temptation to refer to the prophet Lazzaretti and the massacre of 1878. After the meeting he was taken aside by various persons in the audience, who said how glad they were that he had spoken as he had done.

[1] Barzellotti, *op. cit.*, 256–7.

They were Lazzarettiani, there were many of them in the area. They were naturally on the side of the Communists since they were against the police and the State. The prophet would certainly have taken the same line. But until that moment they had not known that the Communists themselves appreciated the noble work of Davide Lazzaretti. The original millenarian movement had thus continued underground—peasant movements are adept at existing below the level at which the townsmen take notice of them. It had been absorbed by a wider and more modern revolutionary movement. The Arcidosso rising of 1948 was a second, and somewhat rewritten, edition of the descent from the Monte Amiata.[1]

Who were or are the Lazzarettiani? As one might expect, few of them were rich. Few were landless. Their main strength seems to have lain among small peasants, share-croppers, artisans and the like in the smaller mountain villages. This is still so. The most recent information (1965) is that the nucleus of the faithful consists exclusively of small peasants, with the exception of the priest, a mason who is also a part-time peasant. Indeed, experience shows that the 'pure' heresies of the medieval type today tend to appeal perhaps less to absolutely landless men, who go straight to socialist and communist movements, than to small struggling peasants, agricultural craftsmen, village artisans and the like. Their situation pulls them both forward and backward: towards a new society and towards the dream of a pure past, the age of gold or the 'good old days'; and perhaps the sectarian form of millenarianism expresses this duality. At any rate the various heretical sects which have sprung up in Southern Italy, in an atmosphere which recalls the revolutionism of peasants in Luther's rather than Lenin's time, appear to show this tendency, though we cannot be certain until the much-needed study of southern rural heresies—older communities like the Valdensians or the 'Church of Christian Brothers', newer ones like the Pentecostal Church, the Adventists, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and

[1] 'Virtually the entire body of the Giurisdavidici voted for the Communist Party from the first (post-fascist) elections. . . . It is significant that all the most convinced Giurisdavidici maintain that support for the Communist Party is total, and that it could not be otherwise, since the C.P.s conception of social justice was analogous to their Church's.' Moscato-Pierini, *Rivolta Religiosa nelle campagne* (Rome 1965), 130.

Churches of Christ—has been seriously undertaken.[1] At all events Chironna the Evangelical, whose autobiography Rocco Scotellaro chooses as typical of this kind of peasant, is an agricultural craftsman and share-cropper 'born in a modest family of small direct cultivators'.[2] The famous Jews of San Nicandro seem to belong to analogous groups, their founder possessing at least a dwarf holding, and several leaders being artisans (shoemakers, etc.).[3] The Pentecostalists, according to Mrs. Cassin, have a special attraction for artisans, and the trade union organizers for the General Italian Confederation of Labour (C.G.I.L.) in the province of Foggia, Apulia, consider the Protestants as a body chiefly composed of small peasants; 'a sect of gardeners', as I was told by one of them.[4]

Nor is the affinity of the Lazzarettists for socialism or communism unique. Religious ferment, among southern peasants, is merely one aspect of their endemic revolutionism, though—if the experience of the Monte Gargano is a guide—one which tends to be particularly prominent where it has not yet found, or has been denied, political expression. Thus protestantism made its first important advances after 1922, i.e. after the defeat of the peasant leagues, the triumph of Fascism, and the closing of America to immigrants. Again, I am informed that in the province of Cosenza (Calabria) it has made most headway in the politically undeveloped zones of the North, and in Foggia there is a little evidence that sectarianism is rather stronger on either side of the Tavoliere plains, rather than in the plains with their strong and old socialist tradition. However, in conditions such as those of

[1] Meanwhile Elena Cassin, *San Nicandro* (Paris 1957)—a detailed study of the remarkable group of peasant converts to Judaism—contains invaluable material on the religious ferment in the Monte Gargano, the 'spur' of Italy, and also a distribution map of Pentecostal communities in Italy. A highly illuminating work. For the nature of the Pentecostal and other churches whose appeal has been greatest since the war, cf. the general description of the American cotton-mill sects in Chapter 8.

[2] Rocco Scotellaro, *Contadini del Sud* (Bari 1955), Vita di Chironna Evangelico.

[3] Elena Cassin, *op. cit.*, unfortunately only gives the social situation of five of the twenty-odd adult male members of the community.

[4] I am grateful to Mr. Lucio Conte and others of the Foggia provincial federation of the C.G.I.L. and to various members of the Communist Party in San Nicandro for information about the social composition and political allegiance of the sectarians in 1957.

Southern Italy it is virtually impossible for a heretic in religion not to be also an ally of the secular anti-clerical movements, and very difficult not to be some sort of revolutionary sympathizer, and no sharp line between peasant socialist/communists and peasant sectarians can therefore be drawn. I am informed that the great majority of the San Nicandro convert Jews voted for the Communist Party (the township is a left-wing stronghold), while the local Communists—some of whom are related by blood to the local Protestants—describe them as 'mostly ours'. Several Protestants are even Communist militants, and cases of Jehovah's Witnesses being elected as secretaries of local *Camere del Lavoro*, or what is even more embarrassing to higher party organizations, of local Communist Party branches, are known. However, the tendency of heretic peasants also to join left-wing movements must not be identified with pure religio-political millenarianism such as that of the Lazzarettists. This appears to be a rather exceptional phenomenon, at least in Western and Southern Europe, though perhaps further research would yield other examples to set beside the Messiah of the Monte Amiata.

ISAIAH BERLIN

FROM “THE CROOKED TIMBER OF HUMANITY”

The Pursuit of the Ideal

I

There are, in my view, two factors that, above all others, have shaped human history in the twentieth century. One is the development of the natural sciences and technology, certainly the greatest success story of our time – to this, great and mounting attention has been paid from all quarters. The other, without doubt, consists in the great ideological storms that have altered the lives of virtually all mankind: the Russian Revolution and its aftermath – totalitarian tyrannies of both right and left and the explosions of nationalism, racism and, in places, religious bigotry which, interestingly enough, not one among the most perceptive social thinkers of the nineteenth century had ever predicted.

When our descendants, in two or three centuries’ time (if mankind survives until then), come to look at our age, it is these two phenomena that will, I think, be held to be the outstanding characteristics of our century – the most demanding of explanation and analysis. But it is as well to realise that these great movements began with ideas in people’s heads: ideas about what relations between men have been, are, might be and should be; and to realise how they came to be transformed in the name of a vision of some supreme goal in the minds of the leaders, above all of the prophets with armies at their backs. Such ideas are the substance of ethics. Ethical thought consists of the systematic examination of the relations of human beings to each other, the conceptions, interests and ideals from which human ways of treating one another spring, and the systems of value on which such ends of life are based. These beliefs about how life should be lived, what men and women should be and do, are objects of moral enquiry; and when applied to groups and nations, and, indeed, mankind as a whole, are called political philosophy, which is but ethics applied to society.

If we are to hope to understand the often violent world in which we live (and unless we try to understand it, we cannot expect to be able to act rationally in it and on it), we cannot confine our attention to the great impersonal forces, natural and man-made, which act upon us. The goals and motives that guide human action must be looked at in the light of all that we know and understand; their roots and growth, their essence, and above all their validity, must be critically examined with every intellectual resource that we have. This urgent need, apart from the intrinsic value of the discovery of truth about human relationships, makes ethics a field of primary importance. Only barbarians are not curious about where they come from, how they came to be where they are, where they appear to be going, whether they wish to go there, and if so, why, and if not, why not.

The study of the variety of ideas about the views of life that embody such values and such ends is something that I have spent forty years of my long life in trying to make clear to myself. I should like to say something about how I came to become absorbed by this topic, and particularly about a turning-point which altered my thoughts about the heart of it. This will, to some degree, inevitably turn out to be somewhat autobiographical – from this I offer my apologies, but I do not know how else to give an account of it.

II

When I was young I read War and Peace by Tolstoy, much too early. The real impact on me of this great novel came only later, together with that of other Russian writers, both novelists and social thinkers, of the mid-nineteenth century. These writers did much to shape my outlook. It seemed to me, and still does, that the purpose of these writers was not principally to give realistic accounts of the lives and relationships to one another of individuals or social groups or classes, not psychological or social analysis for its own sake – although, of course, the best of them achieved precisely this, incomparably. Their approach seemed to me essentially moral: they were concerned most deeply with what was responsible for injustice, oppression, falsity in human relations, imprisonment whether by stone walls or conformism – unprotesting submission to man-made yokes – moral blindness, egoism, cruelty, humiliation, servility, poverty, helplessness, bitter indignation, despair on the part of so many. In short, they were concerned with the nature of these experiences and their roots in the human condition: the condition of Russia in the first place, but, by implication, of all mankind. And conversely they wished to know what would bring about the opposite of this, a reign of truth, love, honesty, justice, security, personal relations based on the

possibility of human dignity, decency, independence, freedom, spiritual fulfilment.

Some, like Tolstoy, found this in the outlook of simple people, unspoiled by civilisation; like Rousseau, he wished to believe that the moral universe of peasants was not unlike that of children, not distorted by the conventions and institutions of civilisation, which sprang from human vices – greed, egoism, spiritual blindness; that the world could be saved if only men saw the truth that lay at their feet; if they but looked, it was to be found in the Christian gospels, the Sermon on the Mount. Others among these Russians put their faith in scientific rationalism, or in social and political revolution founded on a true theory of historical change. Others again looked for answers in the teachings of the Orthodox theology, or in liberal Western democracy, or in a return to ancient Slav values, obscured by the reforms of Peter the Great and his successors.

What was common to all these outlooks was the belief that solutions to the central problems existed, that one could discover them, and, with sufficient selfless effort, realise them on earth. They all believed that the essence of human beings was to be able to choose how to live: societies could be transformed in the light of true ideals believed in with enough fervour and dedication. If, like Tolstoy, they sometimes thought that man was not truly free but determined by factors outside his control, they knew well enough, as he did, that if freedom was an illusion it was one without which one could not live or think. None of this was part of my school curriculum, which consisted of Greek and Latin authors, but it remained with me.

When I became a student at the University of Oxford, I began to read the works of the great philosophers, and found that the major figures, especially in the field of ethical and political thought, believed this too. Socrates thought that if certainty could be established in our knowledge of the external world by rational methods (had not Anaxagoras arrived at the truth that the moon was many times larger than the Peloponnese, however small it looked in the sky?), the same methods would surely yield equal certainty in the field of human behaviour – how to live, what to be. This could be achieved by rational argument. Plato thought that an elite of sages who arrived at such certainty should be given the power of governing others intellectually less well endowed, in obedience to patterns dictated by the correct solutions to personal and social problems. The Stoics thought that the attainment of these solutions was in the power of any man who set himself to live according to reason. Jews, Christians, Muslims (I knew too little about Buddhism) believed that the true answers had been revealed by God to his chosen prophets and saints, and accepted the interpretation of these revealed truths by qualified teachers and the traditions to which they belonged.

The rationalists of the seventeenth century thought that the answers could be found by a species of metaphysical insight, a special application of the light of reason with which all men were endowed. The empiricists of the eighteenth century, impressed by the vast new realms of knowledge opened by the natural sciences based on mathematical techniques, which had driven out so much error, superstition, dogmatic nonsense, asked themselves, like Socrates, why the same methods should not succeed in establishing similar irrefutable laws in the realm of human affairs. With the new methods discovered by natural science, order could be introduced into the social sphere as well – uniformities could be observed, hypotheses formulated and tested by experiment; laws could be based on them, and then laws in specific regions of experience could be seen to be entailed by wider laws; and these in turn to be entailed by still wider laws, and so on upwards, until a great harmonious system, connected by unbreakable logical links and capable of being formulated in precise – that is, mathematical – terms, could be established.

The rational reorganisation of society would put an end to spiritual and intellectual confusion, the reign of prejudice and superstition, blind obedience to unexamined dogmas, and the stupidities and cruelties of the oppressive regimes which such intellectual darkness bred and promoted. All that was wanted was the identification of the principal human needs and discovery of the means of satisfying them. This would create the happy, free, just, virtuous, harmonious world which Condorcet so movingly predicted in his prison cell in 1794. This view lay at the basis of all progressive thought in the nineteenth century, and was at the heart of much of the critical empiricism which I imbibed in Oxford as a student.

III

At some point I realised that what all these views had in common was a Platonic ideal: in

the first place that, as in the sciences, all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, all the rest being necessarily errors; in the second place that there must be a dependable path towards the discovery of these truths; in the third place that the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another – that we knew a priori. This kind of omniscience was the solution of the cosmic jigsaw puzzle. In the case of morals, we could then conceive what the perfect life must be, founded as it would be on a correct understanding of the rules that governed the universe.

True, we might never get to this condition of perfect knowledge – we may be too feeble-witted, or too weak or corrupt or sinful, to achieve this. The obstacles, both intellectual and those of external nature, may be too many. Moreover, opinions, as I say, had widely differed about the right path to pursue – some found it in Churches, some in laboratories; some believed in intuition, others in experiment, or in mystical visions, or in mathematical calculation. But even if we could not ourselves reach these true answers, or indeed, the final system that interweaves them all, the answers must exist – else the questions were not real. The answers must be known to someone: perhaps Adam in Paradise knew; perhaps we shall only reach them at the end of days; if men cannot know them, perhaps the angels know; and if not the angels, then God knows. The timeless truths must in principle be knowable.

Some nineteenth-century thinkers – Hegel, Marx – thought it was not quite so simple. There were no timeless truths. There was historical development, continuous change; human horizons altered with each new step in the evolutionary ladder; history was a drama with many acts; it was moved by conflicts of forces, sometimes called dialectical, in the realms of both ideas and reality – conflicts which took the form of wars, revolutions, violent upheavals of nations, classes, cultures, movements. Yet after inevitable setbacks, failures, relapses, returns to barbarism, Condorcet's dream would come true. The drama would have a happy ending – man's reason had achieved triumphs in the past, it could not be held back for ever. Men would no longer be victims of nature or of their own largely irrational societies: reason would triumph; universal harmonious co-operation, true history, would at last begin.

For if this was not so, do the ideas of progress, of history, have any meaning? Is there not a movement, however tortuous, from ignorance to knowledge, from mythical thought and childish fantasies to perception of reality face to face, to knowledge of true goals, true values as well as truths of fact? Can history be a mere purposeless succession of events, caused by a mixture of material factors and the play of random selection, a tale full of sound and fury signifying nothing? This was unthinkable. The day would dawn when men and women would take their lives in their own hands and not be self-seeking beings or the playthings of blind forces that they did not understand. It was, at the very least, not impossible to conceive what such an earthly paradise could be; and if it was conceivable, we could, at any rate, try to march towards it. That has been at the centre of ethical thought from the Greeks to the Christian visionaries of the Middle Ages, from the Renaissance to progressive thought in the last century; and, indeed, is believed by many to this day.

IV

At a certain stage in my reading, I naturally met with the principal works of Machiavelli. They made a deep and lasting impression upon me, and shook my earlier faith. I derived from them not the most obvious teachings – on how to acquire and retain political power, or by what force or guile rulers must act if they are to regenerate their societies, or protect themselves and their States from enemies within or without, or what the principal qualities of rulers on the one hand, and of citizens on the other, must be, if their States are to flourish – but something else. Machiavelli was not a historicist: he thought it possible to restore something like the Roman Republic or Rome of the early Principate. He believed that to do this one needed a ruling class of brave, resourceful, intelligent, gifted men who knew how to seize opportunities and use them, and citizens who were adequately protected, patriotic, proud of their State, epitomes of manly, pagan virtues. That is how Rome rose to power and conquered the world, and it is the absence of this kind of wisdom and vitality and courage in adversity, of the qualities of both lions and foxes, that in the end brought it down. Decadent States were conquered by vigorous invaders who retained these virtues.

But Machiavelli also sets side by side with this the notion of Christian virtues – humility,

acceptance of suffering, unworldliness, the hope of salvation in an afterlife – and he remarks that if, as he plainly himself favours, a State of a Roman type is to be established, these qualities will not promote it: those who live by the precepts of Christian morality are bound to be trampled on by the ruthless pursuit of power on the part of men who alone can re-create and dominate the republic which he wants to see. He does not condemn Christian virtues. He merely points out that the two moralities are incompatible, and he does not recognise an overarching criterion whereby we are enabled to decide the right life for men. The combination of virtù and Christian values is for him an impossibility. He simply leaves you to choose – he knows which he himself prefers.

The idea that this planted in my mind was the realisation, which came as something of a shock, that not all the supreme values pursued by mankind now and in the past were necessarily compatible with one another. It undermined my earlier assumption, based on the philosophia perennis, that there could be no conflict between true ends, true answers to the central problems of life.

Then I came across Giambattista Vico's Scienza nuova. Scarcely anyone in Oxford had then heard of Vico, but there was one philosopher, Robin Collingwood, who had translated Croce's book on Vico, and he urged me to read it. This opened my eyes to something new. Vico seemed to be concerned with the succession of human cultures – every society had, for him, its own vision of reality, of the world in which it lived, and of itself and of its relations to its own past, to nature, to what it strove for. This vision of a society is conveyed by everything that its members do and think and feel – expressed and embodied in the kinds of words, the forms of language that they use, the images, the metaphors, the forms of worship, the institutions that they generate, which embody and convey their image of reality and of their place in it; by which they live. These visions differ with each successive social whole – each has its own gifts, values, modes of creation, incommensurable with one another: each must be understood in its own terms – understood, not necessarily evaluated.

The Homeric Greeks, the master class, Vico tells us, were cruel, barbarous, mean, oppressive to the weak; but they created the Iliad and the Odyssey, something we cannot do in our more enlightened day. Their great creative masterpieces belong to them, and once the vision of the world changes, the possibility of that type of creation disappears also. We, for our part, have our sciences, our thinkers, our poets, but there is no ladder of ascent from the ancients to the moderns. If this is so, it must be absurd to say that Racine is a better poet than Sophocles, that Bach is a rudimentary Beethoven, that, let us say, the Impressionist painters are the peak which the painters of Florence aspired to but did not reach. The values of these cultures are different, and they are not necessarily compatible with one another. Voltaire, who thought that the values and ideals of the enlightened exceptions in a sea of darkness – of classical Athens, of Florence of the Renaissance, of France in the grand siècle and of his own time – were almost identical, was mistaken. Machiavelli's Rome did not, in fact, exist. For Vico there is a plurality of civilisations (repetitive cycles of them, but that is unimportant), each with its own unique pattern. Machiavelli conveyed the idea of two incompatible outlooks; and here were societies the cultures of which were shaped by values, not means to ends but ultimate ends, ends in themselves, which differed, not in all respects – for they were all human – but in some profound, irreconcilable ways, not combinable in any final synthesis.

After this I naturally turned to the German eighteenth-century thinker Johann Gottfried Herder. Vico thought of a succession of civilisations, Herder went further and compared national cultures in many lands and periods, and held that every society had what he called its own centre of gravity, which differed from that of others. If, as he wished, we are to understand Scandinavian sagas or the poetry of the Bible, we must not apply to them the aesthetic criteria of the critics of eighteenth-century Paris. The ways in which men live, think, feel, speak to one another, the clothes they wear, the songs they sing, the gods they worship, the food they eat, the assumptions, customs, habits which are intrinsic to them – it is these that create communities, each of which has its own 'lifestyle'. Communities may resemble each other in many respects, but the Greeks differ from Lutheran Germans, the Chinese differ from both; what they strive after and what they fear or worship are scarcely ever similar.

This view has been called cultural or moral relativism – this is what that great scholar, my friend Arnaldo Momigliano, whom I greatly admired, supposed both about Vico and about Herder. He was mistaken. It is not relativism.

Members of one culture can, by the force of imaginative insight, understand (what Vico called entrare) the values, the ideals, the forms of life of another culture or society, even those remote in time or space. They may find these values unacceptable, but if they open their minds sufficiently they can grasp how one might be a full human being, with whom one could communicate, and at the same time live in the light of values widely different from one's own, but which nevertheless one can see to be values, ends of life, by the realisation of which men could be fulfilled.

'I prefer coffee, you prefer champagne. We have different tastes. There is no more to be said.' That is relativism. But Herder's view, and Vico's, is not that: it is what I should describe as pluralism – that is, the conception that there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational, fully men, capable of understanding each other and sympathising and deriving light from each other, as we derive it from reading Plato or the novels of medieval Japan – worlds, outlooks, very remote from our own. Of course, if we did not have any values in common with these distant figures, each civilisation would be enclosed in its own impenetrable bubble, and we could not understand them at all; this is what Spengler's typology amounts to. Intercommunication between cultures in time and space is possible only because what makes men human is common to them, and acts as a bridge between them. But our values are ours, and theirs are theirs. We are free to criticise the values of other cultures, to condemn them, but we cannot pretend not to understand them at all, or to regard them simply as subjective, the products of creatures in different circumstances with different tastes from our own, which do not speak to us at all.

There is a world of objective values. By this I mean those ends that men pursue for their own sakes, to which other things are means. I am not blind to what the Greeks valued – their values may not be mine, but I can grasp what it would be like to live by their light, I can admire and respect them, and even imagine myself as pursuing them, although I do not – and do not wish to, and perhaps could not if I wished. Forms of life differ. Ends, moral principles, are many. But not infinitely many: they must be within the human horizon. If they are not, then they are outside the human sphere. If I find men who worship trees, not because they are symbols of fertility or because they are divine, with a mysterious life and powers of their own, or because this grove is sacred to Athena – but only because they are made of wood; and if when I ask them why they worship wood they say 'Because it is wood' and give no other answer; then I do not know what they mean. If they are human, they are not beings with whom I can communicate – there is a real barrier. They are not human for me. I cannot even call their values subjective if I cannot conceive what it would be like to pursue such a life.

What is clear is that values can clash – that is why civilisations are incompatible. They can be incompatible between cultures, or groups in the same culture, or between you and me. You believe in always telling the truth, no matter what: I do not, because I believe that it can sometimes be too painful and too destructive. We can discuss each other's point of view, we can try to reach common ground, but in the end what you pursue may not be reconcilable with the ends to which I find that I have dedicated my life. Values may easily clash within the breast of a single individual; and it does not follow that, if they do, some must be true and others false. Justice, rigorous justice, is for some people an absolute value, but it is not compatible with what may be no less ultimate values for them – mercy, compassion – as arises in concrete cases.

Both liberty and equality are among the primary goals pursued by human beings through many centuries; but total liberty for wolves is death to the lambs, total liberty of the powerful, the gifted, is not compatible with the rights to a decent existence of the weak and the less gifted. An artist, in order to create a masterpiece, may lead a life which plunges his family into misery and squalor to which he is indifferent. We may condemn him and declare that the masterpiece should be sacrificed to human needs, or we may take his side – but both attitudes embody values which for some men or women are ultimate, and which are intelligible to us all if we have any sympathy or imagination or understanding of human beings. Equality may demand the restraint of the liberty of those who wish to dominate; liberty – without some modicum of which there is no choice and therefore no possibility of remaining human as we understand the word – may have to be curtailed in order to make room for social welfare, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to leave room for the liberty of others, to allow justice or

fairness to be exercised.

Antigone is faced with a dilemma to which Sophocles implied one solution, Sartre offers the opposite, while Hegel proposes 'sublimation' on to some higher level – poor comfort to those who are agonised by dilemmas of this kind. Spontaneity, a marvellous human quality, is not compatible with capacity for organised planning, for the nice calculation of what and how much and where – on which the welfare of society may largely depend. We are all aware of the agonising alternatives in the recent past. Should a man resist a monstrous tyranny at all costs, at the expense of the lives of his parents or his children? Should children be tortured to extract information about dangerous traitors or criminals?

These collisions of values are of the essence of what they are and what we are. If we are told that these contradictions will be solved in some perfect world in which all good things can be harmonised in principle, then we must answer, to those who say this, that the meanings they attach to the names which for us denote the conflicting values are not ours. We must say that the world in which what we see as incompatible values are not in conflict is a world altogether beyond our ken; that principles which are harmonised in this other world are not the principles with which, in our daily lives, we are acquainted; if they are transformed, it is into conceptions not known to us on earth. But it is on earth that we live, and it is here that we must believe and act.

The notion of the perfect whole, the ultimate solution, in which all good things coexist, seems to me to be not merely unattainable – that is a truism – but conceptually incoherent; I do not know what is meant by a harmony of this kind. Some among the Great Goods cannot live together. That is a conceptual truth. We are doomed to choose, and every choice may entail an irreparable loss. Happy are those who live under a discipline which they accept without question, who freely obey the orders of leaders, spiritual or temporal, whose word is fully accepted as unbreakable law; or those who have, by their own methods, arrived at clear and unshakeable convictions about what to do and what to be that brook no possible doubt. I can only say that those who rest on such comfortable beds of dogma are victims of forms of self-induced myopia, blinkers that may make for contentment, but not for understanding of what it is to be human.

V

So much for the theoretical objection, a fatal one, it seems to me, to the notion of the perfect State as the proper goal of our endeavours. But there is in addition a more practical socio-psychological obstacle to this, an obstacle that may be put to those whose simple faith, by which humanity has been nourished for so long, is resistant to philosophical arguments of any kind. It is true that some problems can be solved, some ills cured, in both the individual and social life. We can save men from hunger or misery or injustice, we can rescue men from slavery or imprisonment, and do good – all men have a basic sense of good and evil, no matter what cultures they belong to; but any study of society shows that every solution creates a new situation which breeds its own new needs and problems, new demands. The children have obtained what their parents and grandparents longed for – greater freedom, greater material welfare, a juster society; but the old ills are forgotten, and the children face new problems, brought about by the very solutions of the old ones, and these, even if they can in turn be solved, generate new situations, and with them new requirements – and so on, for ever – and unpredictably.

We cannot legislate for the unknown consequences of consequences of consequences. Marxists tell us that once the fight is won and true history has begun, the new problems that may arise will generate their own solutions, which can be peacefully realised by the united powers of harmonious, classless society. This seems to me a piece of metaphysical optimism for which there is no evidence in historical experience. In a society in which the same goals are universally accepted, problems can be only of means, all soluble by technological methods. That is a society in which the inner life of man, the moral and spiritual and aesthetic imagination, no longer speaks at all. Is it for this that men and women should be destroyed or societies enslaved? Utopias have their value – nothing so wonderfully expands the imaginative horizons of human potentialities – but as guides to conduct they can prove literally fatal. Heraclitus was right, things cannot stand still.

So I conclude that the very notion of a final solution is not only impracticable but, if I am right, and some values cannot but clash, incoherent also. The possibility of a final solution – even if we forget the terrible sense that these words acquired in Hitler's day – turns out to be an illusion; and a very

dangerous one. For if one really believes that such a solution is possible, then surely no cost would be too high to obtain it: to make mankind just and happy and creative and harmonious for ever – what could be too high a price to pay for that? To make such an omelette, there is surely no limit to the number of eggs that should be broken – that was the faith of Lenin, of Trotsky, of Mao, for all I know of Pol Pot. Since I know the only true path to the ultimate solution of the problem of society, I know which way to drive the human caravan; and since you are ignorant of what I know, you cannot be allowed to have liberty of choice even within the narrowest limits, if the goal is to be reached. You declare that a given policy will make you happier, or freer, or give you room to breathe; but I know that you are mistaken, I know what you need, what all men need; and if there is resistance based on ignorance or malevolence, then it must be broken and hundreds of thousands may have to perish to make millions happy for all time. What choice have we, who have the knowledge, but to be willing to sacrifice them all?

Some armed prophets seek to save mankind, and some only their own race because of its superior attributes, but whichever the motive, the millions slaughtered in wars or revolutions – gas chambers, gulag, genocide, all the monstrosities for which our century will be remembered – are the price men must pay for the felicity of future generations. If your desire to save mankind is serious, you must harden your heart, and not reckon the cost.

The answer to this was given more than a century ago by the Russian radical Alexander Herzen. In his essay From the Other Shore, which is in effect an obituary notice of the revolutions of 1848, he said that a new form of human sacrifice had arisen in his time – of living human beings on the altars of abstractions – nation, Church, party, class, progress, the forces of history – these have all been invoked in his day and in ours: if these demand the slaughter of living human beings, they must be satisfied. These are his words:

If progress is the goal, for whom are we working? Who is this Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, draws back; and as a consolation to the exhausted and doomed multitudes, shouting ‘Morituri te salutant’, can only give the [. . .] mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth. Do you truly wish to condemn the human beings alive today to the sad role of caryatids supporting a floor for others some day to dance on . . . or of wretched galley slaves who, up to their knees in mud, drag a barge [. . .] with the humble words ‘progress in the future’ upon its flag? [. . .] a goal which is infinitely remote is no goal, only [. . .] a deception; a goal must be closer – at the very least the labourer’s wage, or pleasure in work performed.

The one thing that we may be sure of is the reality of the sacrifice, the dying and the dead. But the ideal for the sake of which they die remains unrealised. The eggs are broken, and the habit of breaking them grows, but the omelette remains invisible. Sacrifices for short-term goals, coercion, if men’s plight is desperate enough and truly requires such measures, may be justified. But holocausts for the sake of distant goals, that is a cruel mockery of all that men hold dear, now and at all times.

VI

If the old perennial belief in the possibility of realising ultimate harmony is a fallacy, and the position of the thinkers I have appealed to – Machiavelli, Vico, Herder, Herzen – are valid, then, if we allow that Great Goods can collide, that some of them cannot live together, even though others can – in short, that one cannot have everything, in principle as well as in practice – and if human creativity may depend upon a variety of mutually exclusive choices: then, as Chernyshevsky and Lenin once asked, ‘What is to be done?’ How do we choose between possibilities? What and how much must we sacrifice to what? There is, it seems to me, no clear reply. But the collisions, even if they cannot be avoided, can be softened. Claims can be balanced, compromises can be reached: in concrete situations not every claim is of equal force – so much liberty and so much equality; so much for sharp moral condemnation, and so much for understanding a given human situation; so much for the full force of the law, and so much for the prerogative of mercy; for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, sheltering the homeless. Priorities, never final and absolute, must be established.

The first public obligation is to avoid extremes of suffering. Revolutions, wars, assassinations, extreme measures may in desperate situations be required. But history teaches us that their consequences are seldom what is anticipated; there is no guarantee, not even, at times, a high enough

probability, that such acts will lead to improvement. We may take the risk of drastic action, in personal life or in public policy, but we must always be aware, never forget, that we may be mistaken, that certainty about the effect of such measures invariably leads to avoidable suffering of the innocent. So we must engage in what are called trade-offs – rules, values, principles must yield to each other in varying degrees in specific situations. Utilitarian solutions are sometimes wrong, but, I suspect, more often beneficent. The best that can be done, as a general rule, is to maintain a precarious equilibrium that will prevent the occurrence of desperate situations, of intolerable choices – that is the first requirement for a decent society; one that we can always strive for, in the light of the limited range of our knowledge, and even of our imperfect understanding of individuals and societies. A certain humility in these matters is very necessary.

This may seem a very flat answer, not the kind of thing that the idealistic young would wish, if need be, to fight and suffer for, in the cause of a new and nobler society. And, of course, we must not dramatise the incompatibility of values – there is a great deal of broad agreement among people in different societies over long stretches of time about what is right and wrong, good and evil. Of course traditions, outlooks, attitudes may legitimately differ; general principles may cut across too much human need. The concrete situation is almost everything. There is no escape: we must decide as we decide; moral risk cannot, at times, be avoided. All we can ask for is that none of the relevant factors be ignored, that the purposes we seek to realise should be seen as elements in a total form of life, which can be enhanced or damaged by decisions.

But, in the end, it is not a matter of purely subjective judgement: it is dictated by the forms of life of the society to which one belongs, a society among other societies, with values held in common, whether or not they are in conflict, by the majority of mankind throughout recorded history. There are, if not universal values, at any rate a minimum without which societies could scarcely survive. Few today would wish to defend slavery or ritual murder or Nazi gas chambers or the torture of human beings for the sake of pleasure or profit or even political good – or the duty of children to denounce their parents, which the French and Russian revolutions demanded, or mindless killing. There is no justification for compromise on this. But on the other hand, the search for perfection does seem to me a recipe for bloodshed, no better even if it is demanded by the sincerest of idealists, the purest of heart. No more rigorous moralist than Immanuel Kant has ever lived, but even he said, in a moment of illumination, ‘Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made.’ To force people into the neat uniforms demanded by dogmatically believed-in schemes is almost always the road to inhumanity. We can do only what we can: but that we must do, against difficulties.

Of course social or political collisions will take place; the mere conflict of positive values alone makes this unavoidable. Yet they can, I believe, be minimised by promoting and preserving an uneasy equilibrium, which is constantly threatened and in constant need of repair – that alone, I repeat, is the precondition for decent societies and morally acceptable behaviour, otherwise we are bound to lose our way. A little dull as a solution, you will say? Not the stuff of which calls to heroic action by inspired leaders are made? Yet if there is some truth in this view, perhaps that is sufficient. An eminent American philosopher of our day once said that there is no a priori reason for supposing that the truth, when it is discovered, will necessarily prove interesting. It may be enough if it is truth, or even an approximation to it; consequently I do not feel apologetic for advancing this. Truth, said Tolstoy, ‘has been, is and will be beautiful’. I do not know if this is so in the realm of ethics, but it seems to me near enough to what most of us wish to believe not to be too lightly set aside.

Matt Ridley: Prologue to The Rational Optimist

On my desk as I write sit two artefacts of roughly the same size and shape: one iscordless computer mouse; the other a hand axe from the Middle Stone Age, halfmillion years old. Both are designed to fit the human hand – to obey the constraints of being used by human beings. But they are vastly different. One is a complex confection of many substances with intricate internal design reflecting multiple strands of knowledge. The other is a single substance reflecting the skill of a single individual. The difference between them shows that the human experience of today is vastly different from the human experience of half a million years ago.

This book is about the rapid, continuous and incessant change that human society experiences in a way that no other animal does. To a biologist this is something that needs explaining. In the past two decades I have written four books about how similar human beings are to other animals. This book is about how different they are from other animals. What is it about human beings that enables them to keep changing their lives in this tumultuous way? It is not as if human nature changes. Just as the hand that held the hand axe was the same shape as the hand that holds the mouse, so people always have and always will seek food, desire sex, care for offspring, compete for status and avoid pain just like any other animal. Many of the idiosyncrasies of the human species are unchanging, too. You can travel to the farthest corner of the earth and still expect to encounter singing, smiling, speech, sexual jealousy and a sense of humour – none of which you would find to be the same in a chimpanzee. You could travel back in time and empathise easily with the motives of Shakespeare, Homer, Confucius and the Buddha. If I could meet the man who painted exquisite images of rhinos on the wall of the Chauvet Cave in southern France 32,000 years ago, I have no doubt that I would find him fully human in every psychological way. There is a great deal of human life that does not change.

Yet to say that life is the same as it was 32,000 years ago would be absurd. In that time my species has multiplied by 100,000 per cent, from perhaps three million to nearly seven billion people. It has given itself comforts and luxuries to a level that no other species can even imagine. It has colonised every habitable corner of the planet and explored almost every uninhabitable one. It has altered the appearance, the genetics and the chemistry of the world and pinched perhaps 23 per cent of the productivity of all land plants for its own purposes. It has surrounded itself with peculiar, non-random arrangements of atoms called technologies, which it invents, reinvents and discards almost continuously. This is not true for other creatures, not even brainy ones like chimpanzees, bottlenose dolphins, parrots and octopi. They may occasionally use tools, they may occasionally shift their ecological niche, but they do not ‘raise their standard of living’, or experience ‘economic growth’. They do not encounter ‘poverty’ either. They do not progress from one mode of living to another – nor do they deplore doing so. They do not experience agricultural, urban, commercial, industrial and information revolutions, let alone Renaissances, Reformations, Depressions, Demographic Transitions, civil wars, cold wars, culture wars and credit crunches. As I sit here at my desk, I am surrounded by things – telephones, books, computers, photographs, paper clips, coffee mugs – that no monkey has ever come close to making. I am spilling digital information on toscreen in a way that no dolphin has ever managed. I am aware of abstract conceptsthe date, the weather forecast, the second law of thermodynamics – that no parrot could begin to grasp. I am definitely different. What is it that makes me so different? It cannot just be that I have a bigger brain than other animals. After all, late Neanderthals had on average bigger brains than I do, yet did not experience this headlong cultural change. Moreover, big though my brain may be compared with another animal species, I have barely the foggiest inkling how to make coffee cups and paper clips, let alone weather forecasts. The psychologist Daniel Gilbert likes to joke that every member of his profession lives under the obligation at some time in his career to complete a sentence which begins: ‘The human being is the only animal that …’ Language, cognitive reasoning, fire, cooking, tool making, self- awareness, deception, imitation, art, religion, opposable thumbs, throwing weapons, upright stance, grandparental care – the list of features suggested as unique to human beings is long

indeed. But then the list of features unique to aardvarks or bare-faced go-away birds is also fairly long. All of these features are indeed uniquely human and are indeed very helpful in enabling modern life. But I will contend that, with the possible exception of language, none of them arrived at the right time, or had the right impact in human history to explain the sudden change from a merely successful ape-man to an ever-expanding progressive moderniser.

Most of them came much too early in the story and had no such ecological effect.

Having sufficient consciousness to want to paint your body or to reason the answer to a problem is nice, but it does not lead to ecological world conquest.

Clearly, big brains and language may be necessary for human beings to cope with a life of technological modernity. Clearly, human beings are very good at social learning, indeed compared with even chimpanzees humans are almost obsessively interested in faithful imitation. But big brains and imitation and language are not themselves the explanation of prosperity and progress and poverty. They do not themselves deliver a changing standard of living. Neanderthals had all of these: huge brains, probably complex languages, lots of technology. But they never burst out of their niche. It is my contention that in looking inside our heads, we would be looking in the wrong place to explain this extraordinary capacity for change in the species. It was not something that happened within a brain. It was some thing that happened between brains. It was a collective phenomenon.

Look again at the hand axe and the mouse. They are both ‘man-made’, but one was made by a single person, the other by hundreds of people, maybe even millions.

That is what I mean by collective intelligence. No single person knows how to make a computer mouse. The person who assembled it in the factory did not know how to drill the oil well from which the plastic came, or vice versa. At some point, human intelligence became collective and cumulative in a way that happened to no other animal.

Mating minds

To argue that human nature has not changed, but human culture has, does not mean rejecting evolution – quite the reverse. Humanity is experiencing an extraordinary burst of evolutionary change, driven by good old-fashioned Darwinian natural selection. But it is selection among ideas, not among genes. The habitat in which these ideas reside consists of human brains. This notion has been trying to surface in the social sciences for a long time. The French sociologist Gabriel Tarde wrote in 1888: ‘We may call it social evolution when an invention quietly spreads through imitation.’ The Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek wrote in the 1960s that in social evolution the decisive factor is ‘selection by imitation of successful institutions and habits’. The evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 coined the term ‘meme’ for a unit of cultural imitation. The economist Richard Nelson in the 1980s proposed that whole economies evolve by natural selection.

This is what I mean when I talk of cultural evolution: at some point before 100,000 years ago culture itself began to evolve in a way that it never did in any other species – that is, to replicate, mutate, compete, select and accumulate – somewhat as genes had been doing for billions of years. Just like natural selection cumulatively building an eye bit by bit, so cultural evolution in human beings could cumulatively build a culture or a camera. Chimpanzees may teach each other how to spear bushbabies with sharpened sticks, and killer whales may teach each other how to snatch sea lions off beaches, but only human beings have the cumulative culture that goes into the design of a loaf of bread or a concerto.

Yes, but why? Why us and not killer whales? To say that people have cultural evolution is neither very original nor very helpful. Imitation and learning are not themselves enough, however richly and ingeniously they are practised, to explain why human beings began changing in this unique way. Something else is necessary; something that human beings have and killer whales do not. The answer, I believe, is that at some point in human history, ideas began to meet and mate, to have sex with each other.

Let me explain. Sex is what makes biological evolution cumulative, because it brings together the genes of different individuals. A mutation that occurs in one creature can therefore join forces with a mutation that occurs in another. The analogy is most

explicit in bacteria, which trade genes without replicating at the same time – hence their ability to acquire immunity to antibiotics from other species. If microbes had not begun swapping genes a few billion years ago, and animals had not continued doing so through sex, all the genes that make eyes could never have got together in one animal; nor the genes to make legs or nerves or brains. Each mutation would have remained isolated in its own lineage, unable to discover the joys of synergy. Think, in cartoon terms, of one fish evolving a nascent lung, another nascent limbs and neither getting out on land. Evolution can happen without sex; but it is far, far slower.

And so it is with culture. If culture consisted simply of learning habits from others, it would soon stagnate. For culture to turn cumulative, ideas needed to meet and mate. The 'cross-fertilisation of ideas' is a cliché, but one with unintentional fecundity. 'To create is to recombine' said the molecular biologist François Jacob.

Imagine if the man who invented the railway and the man who invented the locomotive could never meet or speak to each other, even through third parties.

Paper and the printing press, the internet and the mobile phone, coal and turbines, copper and tin, the wheel and steel, software and hardware. I shall argue that there was a point in human pre-history when big-brained, cultural, learning people for the first time began to exchange things with each other, and that once they started doing so, culture suddenly became cumulative, and the great headlong experiment of human economic 'progress' began. Exchange is to cultural evolution as sex is to biological evolution.

By exchanging, human beings discovered 'the division of labour', the specialisation of efforts and talents for mutual gain. It would at first have seemed an insignificant thing, missed by passing primatologists had they driven their time machines to the moment when it was just starting. It would have seemed much less interesting than the ecology, hierarchy and superstitions of the species. But some ape-men had begun exchanging food or tools with others in such a way that both partners to the exchange were better off, and both were becoming more specialised.

Specialisation encouraged innovation, because it encouraged the investment of time in a tool-making tool. That saved time, and prosperity is simply time saved, which is proportional to the division of labour. The more human beings diversified as consumers and specialised as producers, and the more they then exchanged, the better off they have been, are and will be. And the good news is that there is no inevitable end to this process. The more people are drawn into the global division of labour, the more people can specialise and exchange, the wealthier we will all be.

Moreover, along the way there is no reason we cannot solve the problems that beset us, of economic crashes, population explosions, climate change and terrorism, of poverty, AIDS, depression and obesity. It will not be easy, but it is perfectly possible, indeed probable, that in the year 2110, a century after this book is published, humanity will be much, much better off than it is today, and so will the ecology of the planet it inhabits. This book dares the human race to embrace change, to be rationally optimistic and thereby to strive for the betterment of humankind and the world it inhabits.

Some will say that I am merely restating what Adam Smith said in 1776. But much has happened since Adam Smith to change, challenge, adjust and amplify his insight. He did not realise, for instance, that he was living through the early stages of an industrial revolution. I cannot hope to match Smith's genius as an individual, but I have one great advantage over him – I can read his book. Smith's own insight has mated with others since his day.

Moreover, I find myself continually surprised by how few people think about the problem of tumultuous cultural change. I find the world is full of people who think that their dependence on others is decreasing, or that they would be better off if they were more self-sufficient, or that technological progress has brought no improvement in the standard of living, or that the world is steadily deteriorating, or that the exchange of things and ideas is a superfluous irrelevance. And I find a deep incuriosity among trained economists – of which I am not one – about defining what prosperity is and why it happened to their species. So I thought I would satisfy my own curiosity by writing this book.

I am writing in times of unprecedented economic pessimism. The world banking

system has lurched to the brink of collapse; an enormous bubble of debt has burst; world trade has contracted; unemployment is rising sharply all around the world as output falls. The immediate future looks bleak indeed, and some governments are planning further enormous public debt expansions that could hurt the next generation's ability to prosper. To my intense regret I played a part in one phase of this disaster as non-executive chairman of Northern Rock, one of many banks that ran short of liquidity during the crisis. This is not a book about that experience (under the terms of my employment there I am not at liberty to write about it). The experience has left me mistrustful of markets in capital and assets, yet passionately in favour of markets in goods and services. Had I only known it, experiments in laboratories by the economist Vernon Smith and his colleagues have long confirmed that markets in goods and services for immediate consumption – haircuts and hamburgers – work so well that it is hard to design them so they fail to deliver efficiency and innovation; while markets in assets are so automatically prone to bubbles and crashes that it is hard to design them so they work at all. Speculation, herd exuberance, irrational optimism, rent-seeking and the temptation of fraud drive asset markets to overshoot and plunge – which is why they need careful regulation, something I always supported. (Markets in goods and services need less regulation.) But what made the bubble of the 2000s so much worse than most was government housing and monetary policy, especially in the United States, which sluiced artificially cheap money towards bad risks as a matter of policy and thus also towards the middlemen of the capital markets. The crisis has at least as much political as economic causation, which is why I also mistrust too much government.

(In the interests of full disclosure, I here note that as well as banking I have over the years worked in or profited directly from scientific research, species conservation, journalism, farming, coal mining, venture capital and commercial property, among other things: experience may have influenced, and has certainly informed, my views of these sectors in the pages that follow. But I have never been paid to promulgate a particular view.)

Rational optimism holds that the world will pull out of the current crisis because of the way that markets in goods, services and ideas allow human beings to exchange and specialise honestly for the betterment of all. So this is not a book of unthinking praise or condemnation of all markets, but it is an inquiry into how the market process of exchange and specialisation is older and fairer than many think and gives a vast reason for optimism about the future of the human race. Above all, it is a book about the benefits of change. I find that my disagreement is mostly with reactionaries of all political colours: blue ones who dislike cultural change, red ones who dislike economic change and green ones who dislike technological change.

I am a rational optimist: rational, because I have arrived at optimism not through temperament or instinct, but by looking at the evidence. In the pages that follow I hope to make you a rational optimist too. First, I need to convince you that human progress has, on balance, been a good thing, and that, despite the constant temptation to moan, the world is as good a place to live as it has ever been for the average human being – even now in a deep recession. That it is richer, healthier, and kinder too, as much because of commerce as despite it. Then I intend to explain why and how it got that way. And finally, I intend to see whether it can go on getting better.

Ludwig von Mises

from The Anti - Capitalist Mentality

Objections to Capitalism

I. THE ARGUMENT OF HAPPINESS

Critics level two charges against capitalism: First, they say, that the possession of a motor car, a television set and a refrigerator does not make a man happy. Secondly, they add, that there are still people who own none of these gadgets.

Both propositions are correct, but they do not cast blame upon the capitalistic system of social cooperation.

People do not toil and trouble in order to attain perfect happiness, but in order to remove as much as possible some felt uneasiness and thus to become happier than they were before. A man who buys a television set thereby gives evidence to the effect that he thinks that the possession of this contrivance will increase his well-being and make him more content than he was without it. If it were otherwise, he would not have bought it. The task of the doctor is not to make the patient happy, but to remove his pain and to put him in better shape for the pursuit of the main concern of every living being, the fight against all factors pernicious to his life and ease.

It may be true that there are among Buddhist mendicants, living on alms in dirt and penury, some who feel perfectly happy and do not envy any nabob. However, it is a fact that for the immense majority of people such a life would appear unbearable. To them the impulse toward ceaselessly aiming at the improvement of the external conditions of existence is inwrought. Who would presume to set an Asiatic beggar as an example to the average American? One of the most remarkable achievements of capitalism is the drop in infant mortality. Who wants to deny that this phenomenon has at least removed one of the causes of many people's unhappiness? No less absurd is the second reproach thrown upon capitalism - namely, that technological and therapeutical innovations do not benefit all people. Changes in human conditions are brought about by the pioneering of the most clever and most energetic men. They take the lead and the rest of mankind follows them little by little. The innovation is first a luxury of only a few people, until by degrees it comes into the reach of the many. It is not a sensible objection to the use of shoes or of forks that they spread only slowly and that even today millions do without them. The dainty ladies and gentlemen who first began to use soap were the harbingers of the big - scale production of soap for the common man. If those who have today the means to buy a television set were to abstain from the purchase because some people cannot afford it, they would not further, but hinder, the popularization of this contrivance.

2. MATERIALISM

Again there are grumblers who blame capitalism for what they call its mean materialism. They cannot help admitting that capitalism has the tendency to improve the material conditions of mankind. But, they say, it has diverted men from the higher and nobler pursuits. It feeds the bodies, but it starves the souls and the minds. It has brought about a decay of the arts. Gone are the days of the great poets, painters, sculptors and architects. Our age produces merely trash.

The judgment about the merits of a work of art is entire y subjective. Some people praise what others disdain. There' s no yardstick to measure the aesthetic worth of a poem or of a building. Those who are delighted by the Cathedral of Chartres and the Meninas of Velasquez may think that tho e who remain unaffected by these marvels are boors. Many students are bored to death when the school forces them to read Hamlet. Only people who are endowed with a spark of the artistic mentality are fit to appreciate and to enjoy the work of an artist.

Among those who make pretense to the appellation of educated men there is much hypocrisy. They put on an air of connoisseurship and feign enthusiasm for the art of the past and artists passed away long ago. They show no similar sympathy for the contemporary artist who still fights for recognition. Dissembled adoration for the old masters is with them a means to disparage and ridicule the new ones who deviate from traditional canons and create their own.

John Ruskin will be remembered - together with Carlyle, the Webbs, Bernard Shaw and some others - as one of the gravediggers of British freedom, civilization and prosperity.

A wretched character in his private no less than in his public life, he glorified war and

bloodshed and fanatically slandered the teachings of political economy which he did not understand. He was a bigoted detractor of the market economy and a romantic eulogist of the guilds. He paid homage to the arts of earlier centuries. But when he faced the work of a great living artist, Whistler, he dispraised it in such foul and objurgatory language that he was sued for libel and found guilty by the jury. It was the writings of Ruskin that popularized the prejudice that capitalism, apart from being a bad economic system, has substituted ugliness for beauty, pettiness for grandeur, trash for art.

As people widely disagree in the appreciation of artistic achievements, it is not possible to explode the talk about the artistic inferiority of the age of capitalism in the same apodictic way in which one may refute errors in logical reasoning or in the establishment of facts of experience. Yet no sane man would be insolent enough as to belittle the grandeur of the artistic exploits of the age of capitalism.

The pre - eminent art of this age of "mean materialism and money - making" was music. Wagner and Verdi, Berlioz and Bizet, Brahms and Bruckner, Hugo Wolf and Mahler, Puccini and Richard Strauss, what an illustrious cavalcade! What an era in which such masters as Schumann and Donizetti were overshadowed by still superior genius! Then there were the great novels of Balzac, Flaubert, Maupassant, Jens Jacobsen, Proust, and the poems of Victor Hugo, Walt Whitman, Rilke, Yeats. How poor our lives would be if we had to miss the work of these giants and of many other no less sublime authors.

Let us not forget the French painters and sculptors who taught us new ways of looking at the world and enjoying light and color.

Nobody ever contested that this age has encouraged all branches of scientific activities. But, say the grumblers, this was mainly the work of specialists while "synthesis" was lacking. One can hardly misconstrue in a more absurd way the teachings of modern mathematics, physics and biology.

And what about the books of philosophers like Croce, Bergson, Husserl and Whitehead? Each epoch has its own character in its artistic exploits.

Imitation of masterworks of the past is not art; it is routine.

What gives value to a work is those features in which it differs from other works. This is what is called the style of a period.

In one respect the eulogists of the past seem to be justified.

The last generations did not bequeath to the future such monuments as the pyramids, the Greek temples, the Gothic cathedrals and the churches and palaces of the Renaissance and the Barroco. In the last hundred years many churches and even cathedrals were built and many more government palaces, schools and libraries. But they do not show any original conception; they reflect old styles or hybridize divers old styles. Only in apartment houses, office buildings and private homes have we seen something develop that may be qualified as an architectural style of our age. Although it would be mere pedantry not to appreciate the peculiar grandeur of such sights as the New York skyline, it can be admitted that modern architecture has not attained the distinction of that of past centuries.

The reasons are various. As far as religious buildings are concerned, the accentuated conservatism of the churches shuns any innovation. With the passing of dynasties and aristocracies, the impulse to construct new palaces disappeared.

The wealth of entrepreneurs and capitalists is, whatever the anticapitalistic demagogues may fable, so much inferior to that of kings and princes that they cannot indulge in such luxurious construction. No one is today rich enough to plan such palaces as that of Versailles or the Escorial. The orders for the construction of government buildings do no longer emanate from despots who were free, in defiance of public opinion, to choose a master whom they themselves held in esteem and to sponsor a project that scandalized the dull majority. Committees and councils are not likely to adopt the ideas of bold pioneers. They prefer to range themselves on the safe side.

There has never been an era in which the many were prepared to do justice to contemporary art. Reverence to the great authors and artists has always been limited to small groups. What characterizes capitalism is not the bad taste of the crowds, but the fact that these crowds, made prosperous by capitalism, became "consumers" of literature - of course, of trashy literature. The book market is flooded by a downpour of trivial fiction for the semibarbarians. But this does not prevent great authors from creating imperishable works.

The critics shed tears on the alleged decay of the industrial arts. They contrast, e.g., old furniture as preserved in the castles of European aristocratic families and in the

collections of the museums with the cheap things turned out by big - scale production. They fail to see that these collectors' items were made exclusively for the well - to - do. The carved chests and the intarsia tables could not be found in the miserable huts of the poorer strata. Those cavilling about the inexpensive furniture of the American wage earner should cross the Rio Grande del Norte and inspect the abodes of the Mexican peons which are devoid of any furniture. When modern industry began to provide the masses with the paraphernalia of a better life, their main concern was to produce as cheaply as possible without any regard to aesthetic values.

Later, when the progress of capitalism had raised the masses' standard of living, they turned step by step to the fabrication of things which do not lack refinement and beauty. Only romantic prepossession can induce an observer to ignore the fact that more and more citizens of the capitalistic countries live in an environment which cannot be simply dismissed as ugly.

3. INJUSTICE

The most passionate detractors of capitalism are those who reject it on account of its alleged injustice.

It is a gratuitous pastime to depict what ought to be and is not because it is contrary to inflexible laws of the real universe.

Such reveries may be considered as innocuous as long as they remain daydreams. But when their authors begin to ignore the difference between fantasy and reality, they become the most serious obstacle to human endeavors to improve the external conditions of life and well - being.

The worst of all these delusions is the idea that "nature" has bestowed upon every man certain rights. According to this doctrine nature is openhanded toward every child born.

There is plenty of everything for everybody. Consequently, everyone has a fair inalienable claim against all his fellow men and against society that he should get the full portion which nature has allotted to him. The eternal laws of natural and divine justice require that nobody should appropriate to himself what by rights belongs to other people. The poor are needy only because unjust people have deprived them of their birthright. It is the task of the church and the secular authorities to prevent such spoliation and to make all people prosperous.

Every word of this doctrine is false. Nature is not bountiful but stingy. It has restricted the supply of all things indispensable for the preservation of human life. It has populated the world with animals and plants to whom the impulse to destroy human life and welfare is inwrought. It displays powers and elements whose operation is damaging to human life and to human endeavors to preserve it. Man's survival and well - being are an achievement of the skill with which he has utilized the main instrument with which nature has equipped him - reason. Men, cooperating under the system of the division of labor, have created all the wealth which the daydreamers consider as a free gift of nature.

With regard to the "distribution" of this wealth, it is nonsensical to refer to an allegedly divine or natural principle of justice. What matters is not the allocation of portions out of a fund presented to man by nature. The problem is rather to further those social institutions which enable people to continue and to enlarge the production of all those things which they need.

The WorId Council of Churches, an ecumenical organization of Protestant Churches, declared in 1948: "Justice demands that the inhabitants of Asia and Africa, for instance, should have the benefits of more machine production." * This makes sense only if one implies that the Lord presented mankind with a definite quantity of machines and expected that these contrivances will be distributed equally among the various nations. Yet the capitalistic countries were bad enough to take possession of much more of this stock than "justice" would have assigned to them and thus to deprive the inhabitants of Asia and Africa of their fair portion. What a shame! The truth is that the accumulation of capital and its investment in machines, the source of the comparatively greater wealth of the Western peoples, are due exclusively to laissezfaire capitalism which the same document of the Churches passionately misrepresents and rejects on moral grounds. It is not the fault of the capitalists that the Asiatics and Africans did not adopt those ideologies and policies which would have made the evolution of autochthonous capitalism possible.

Neither is it the fault of the capitalists that the policies of these nations thwarted the attempts of foreign investors to give them "the benefits of more machine production." No one contests that what makes hundreds of millions in Asia and Africa destitute is that they cling to primitive methods of production and miss the benefits which the employment of better

tools and up-to-date technological designs could bestow upon them. But there is only one means to relieve their distress - namely, the full adoption of laissez-faire capitalism.

What they need is private enterprise and the accumulation of new capital, capitalists and entrepreneurs. It is nonsensical to blame capitalism and the capitalistic nations of the West for the plight the backward peoples have brought upon themselves. The remedy indicated is not "justice" but the substitution of sound, i.e., laissez-faire, policies for unsound policies.

It was not vain disquisitions about a vague concept of justice that raised the standard of living of the common man in the capitalistic countries to its present height, but the activities of men dubbed as "rugged individualists" and "exploiters." The poverty of the backward nations is due to the fact that their policies of expropriation, discriminatory taxation and foreign exchange control prevent the investment of foreign capital while their domestic policies preclude the accumulation of indigenous capital.

All those rejecting capitalism on moral grounds as an unfair system are deluded by their failure to comprehend what capital is, how it comes into existence and how it is maintained, and what the benefits are which are derived from its employment in production processes.

THE ANTI - CAPITALISTIC MENTALITY

The only source of the generation of additional capital goods is saving. If all the goods produced are consumed, no new capital comes into being. But if consumption lags behind production and the surplus of goods newly produced over goods consumed is utilized in further production processes, these processes are henceforth carried out by the aid of more capital goods. All the capital goods are intermediary goods, stages on the road that leads from the first employment of the original factors of production, i.e., natural resources and human labor, to the final turning out of goods ready for consumption. They all are perishable. They are, sooner or later, worn out in the processes of production. If all the products are consumed without replacement of the capital goods which have been used up in their production, capital is consumed. If this happens, further production will be aided only by a smaller amount of capital goods and will therefore render a smaller output per unit of the natural resources and labor employed. To prevent this sort of dissaving and disinvestment, one must dedicate a part of the productive effort to capital maintenance, to the replacement of the capital goods absorbed in the production of usable goods.

Capital is not a free gift of God or of nature. It is the outcome of a provident restriction of consumption on the part of man. It is created and increased by saving and maintained by the abstention from dissaving.

Neither have capital or capital goods in themselves the power to raise the productivity of natural resources and of human labor. Only if the fruits of saving are wisely employed or invested, do they increase the output per unit of the input of natural resources and of labor. If this is not the case, they are dissipated or wasted.

The accumulation of new capital, the maintenance of previously accumulated capital and the utilization of capital for raising the productivity of human effort are the fruits of purposive human action. They are the outcome of the con· duct of thrifty people who save and abstain from dissaving, viz., the capitalists who earn interest; and of people who succeed in utilizing the capital available for the best possible satisfaction of the needs of the consumers, viz., the entrepreneurs who earn profit.

Neither capital (or capital goods) nor the conduct of the capitalists and entrepreneurs in dealing with capital could improve the standard of living for the rest of the people, if these noncapitalists and nonentrepreneurs did not react in a certain way. If the wage earners were to behave in the way which the spurious "iron law of wages" describes and would know of no use for their earnings other than to feed and to procreate more offspring, the increase in capital accumulated would keep pace with the increase in population figures. All the benefits derived from the accumulation of additional capital would be absorbed by multiplying the number of people. However, men do not respond to an improvement in the external conditions of their lives in the way in which rodents and germs do. They know also of other satisfactions than feeding and proliferation. Consequently, in the countries of capitalistic civilization, the increase of capital accumulated outruns the increase in population figures. To the extent that this happens, the marginal productivity of labor is increased as against the marginal productivity of the material factors of production. There emerges a tendency toward higher wage rates. The proportion of the total output of production that goes to the wage earners is enhanced as against that which goes as

interest to the capitalists and as rent to the land owners. (Profits are not affected. They are the gain derived from adjusting the employment of material factors of production and of labor to changes occurring in demand and supply and solely depend on the size of the previous maladjustment and the degree of its removal. They are transient and disappear once the maladjustment has been entirely removed. But as changes in demand and supply again and again occur, new sources of profit emerge also again and again). To speak of the productivity of labor makes sense only if one refers to the marginal productivity of labor, i.e., to the deduction in net output to be caused by the elimination of one worker. Then it refers to a definite economic quantity, to a determinate amount of goods or its equivalent in money.

The concept of a general productivity of labor as resorted to in popular talk about an allegedly natural right of the workers to claim the total increase in productivity is empty and indefinable. It is based on the illusion that it is possible to determine the shares that each of the various complementary factors of production has physically contributed to the turning out of the product. If one cuts a sheet of paper with scissors, it is impossible to ascertain quotas of the outcome to the scissors (or to each of the two blades) and to the man who handled them. To manufacture a car one needs various machines and tools, various raw materials, the labor of various manual workers and, first of all, the plan of a designer.

But nobody can decide what quota of the finished car is to be physically ascribed to each of the various factors the cooperation of which was required for the production of the car.

For the sake of argument, we may for a moment set aside all the considerations which show the fallacies of the popular treatment of the problem and ask: Which of the two factors, labor or capital, caused the increase in productivity? But precisely if we put the question in this way, the answer must be: capital. What renders the total output in the present~day United States higher (per head of manpower employed) than output in earlier ages or in economically backward countries - for instance, China - is the fact that the contemporary American worker is aided by more and better tools.

If capital equipment (per head of the worker) were not more abundant than it was three hundred years ago or than it is today in China, output (per head of the worker) would not be higher. What is required to raise, in the absence of an increase in the number of workers employed, the total amount of America's industrial output is the investment of additional capital that can only be accumulated by new saving. It is those saving and investing to whom credit is to be given for the multiplication of the productivity of the total labor force.

What raises wage rates and allots to the wage earners an ever increasing portion out of the output which has been enhanced by additional capital accumulation is the fact that the rate of capital accumulation exceeds the rate of increase in population. l~he official doctrine passes over this fact in silence or even denies it emphatically. But the policies of the unions clearly show that their leaders are fully aware of the correctness of the theory which they publicly smear as silly bourgeois apologetics. They are eager to restrict the number of job seekers in the whole country by anti-immigration laws and in each segment of the labor market by preventing the influx of newcomers.

That the increase in wage rates does not depend on the individual worker's "productivity," but on the marginal productivity of labor, is clearly demonstrated by the fact that wage rates are moving upward also for performances in which the "productivity" of the individual has not changed at all. There are many such jobs. A barber shaves a customer today precisely in the same manner his predecessors used to shave people two hundred years ago. A butler waits at the table of the British prime minister in the same way in which once butlers served Pitt and Palmerston. In agriculture some kinds of work are still performed with the same tools in the same way in which they were performed centuries ago. Yet the wage rates earned by all such workers are today much higher than they were in the past. They are higher because they are determined by the marginal productivity of labor. The employer of a butler withholds this man from employment in a factory and must therefore pay the equivalent of the increase in output which the additional employment of one man in a factory would bring about. It is not any merit on the part of the butler that causes this rise in his wages, hut the fact that the increase in capital invested surpasses the increase in the number of hands.

All pseudo~economic doctrines which depreciate the role of saving and capital accumulation are absurd. What constitutes

the greater wealth of a capitalistic society as against the smaller wealth of a noncapitalistic society is the fact that the available supply of capital goods is greater in the former than in the latter. What has improved the wage earners' standard of living is the fact that the capital equipment per head of the men eager to earn wages has increased. It is a consequence of this fact that an ever increasing portion of the total amount of usable goods produced goes to the wage earners. None of the passionate tirades of Marx, Keynes and a host of less well known authors could show a weak point in the statement that there is only one means to raise wage rates permanently and for the benefit of all those eager to earn wages - namely, to accelerate the increase in capital available as against population. If this be "unjust," then the blame rests with nature and not with man.

4. THE "BOURGEOIS PREJUDICE" OF LIBERTY

The history of Western civilization is the record of a ceaseless struggle for liberty.

Social cooperation under the division of labor is the ultimate and sole source of man's success in his struggle for survival and his endeavors to improve as much as possible the material conditions of his well - being. But as human nature is, society cannot exist if there is no provision for preventing unruly people from actions incompatible with community life. In order to preserve peaceful cooperation, one must be ready to resort to violent suppression of those disturbing the peace. Society cannot do without a social apparatus of coercion and compulsion, i.e., without state and government.

Then a further problem emerges: to restrain the men who are in charge of the governmental functions lest they abuse their power and convert all other people into virtual slaves.

The aim of all struggles for liberty is to keep in bounds the armed defenders of peace, the governors and their constables.

The political concept of the individual's freedom means: freedom from arbitrary action on the part of the police power.

The idea of liberty is and has always been peculiar to the West. What separates East and West is first of all the fact that the peoples of the East never conceived the idea of liberty.

The imperishable glory of the ancient Greeks was that they were the first to grasp the meaning and significance of institutions warranting liberty. Recent historical research has traced back the origin of some of the scientific achievements previously credited to the Hellenes to oriental sources.

But nobody has ever contested that the idea of liberty originated in the cities of ancient Greece. The writings of Greek philosophers and historians transmitted it to the Romans and later to modern Europe and America. It became the essential concern of all Western plans for the establishment of the good society. It begot the laissez-faire philosophy to which mankind owes all the unprecedented achievements of the age of capitalism.

The purpose of all modern political and judicial institutions is to safeguard the individuals' freedom against encroachments on the part of the government. Representative government and the rule of law, the independence of courts and tribunals from interference on the part of administrative agencies, habeas corpus, judicial examination and redress of acts of the administration, freedom of speech and the press, separation of state and church, and many other institutions aimed at one end only: to restrain the discretion of the officeholders and to render the individuals free from their arbitrariness. The age of capitalism has abolished all vestiges of slavery and serfdom. It has put an end to cruel punishments and has reduced the penalty for crimes committed to the minimum indispensable for discouraging offenders. It has done away with torture and other objectionable methods of dealing with suspects and law breakers.

It has repealed all privileges and promulgated equality of all men under the law. It has transformed the subjects of tyranny into free citizens.

The material improvements were the fruit of these reforms and innovations in the conduct of government affairs. As all privileges disappeared and everybody was granted the right to challenge the vested interests of all other people, a free hand was given to those who had the ingenuity to develop all the new industries which today render the material conditions of people more satisfactory. Population figures multiplied and yet the increased population could enjoy a better life than their ancestors.

Also in the countries of Western civilization there have always been advocates of tyranny - the absolute arbitrary rule of an autocrat or of an aristocracy on the one hand, and the subjection of all other people on the other

hand. But in the age of Enlightenment these voices became thinner and thinner. The cause of liberty prevailed. In the first part of the nineteenth century the victorious advance of the principle of freedom seemed to be irresistible. The most eminent philosophers and historians got the conviction that historical evolution tends toward the establishment of institutions warranting freedom and that no intrigues and machinations on the part of the champions of servilism could stop the trend toward liberalism.

In dealing with the liberal social philosophy there is a disposition to overlook the power of an important factor that worked in favor of the idea of liberty, viz., the eminent role assigned to the literature of ancient Greece in the education of the elite. There were among the Greek authors also champions of government omnipotence, such as Plato. But the essential tenor of Greek ideology was the pursuit of liberty.

Judged by the standards of modern institutions, the Greek city - states must be called oligarchies. The liberty which the Greek statesmen, philosophers and historians glorified as the most precious good of man was a privilege reserved to a minority. In denying it to me tics and slaves they virtually advocated the despotic rule of a hereditary caste of oligarchs. Yet it would be a grave error to dismiss their hymns to liberty as mendacious. They were no less sincere in their praise and quest of freedom than were, two thousand years later, the slave - holders among the signers of the American Declaration of Independence. It was the political literature of the ancient Greeks that begot the ideas of the Monarchomachs, the philosophy of the Whigs, the doctrines of Althusius, Grotius and John Locke and the ideology of the fathers of modern constitutions and bills of rights. It was the classical studies, the essential feature of a liberal education, that kept awake the spirit of freedom in the England of the Stuarts, in the France of the Bourbons, and in Italy subject to the despotism of a galaxy of princes. No less a man than Bismarck, among the nineteenth - century statesmen next to Metternich the foremost foe of liberty, bears witness to the fact that, even in the Prussia of Frederick William III, the Gymnasium} the education based on Greek and Roman literature, was a stronghold of republicanism ....

The passionate endeavors to eliminate the classical studies from the curriculum of the liberal education and thus virtually to destroy its very character were one of the major manifestations of the revival of the servile ideology.

It is a fact that a hundred years ago only a few people anticipated the over - powering momentum which the antilibertarian ideas were destined to acquire in a very short time. The ideal of liberty seemed to be so firmly rooted that everybody thought that no reactionary movement could ever succeed in eradicating it. It is true, it would have been a hopeless venture to attack freedom openly and to advocate unfeignedly a return to subjection and bondage. But antiliberalism got hold of peoples' minds camouflaged as superliberalism, as the fulfillment and consummation of the very ideas of freedom and liberty. It came disguised as socialism, communism, planning.

No intelligent man could fail to recognize that what the socialists, communists and planners were aiming at was the most radical abolition of the individuals' freedom and the establishment of government omnipotence. Yet the immense majority of the socialist intellectuals were convinced that in fighting for socialism they were fighting for freedom. They called themselves left - wingers and democrats, and nowadays they are even claiming for themselves the epithet "liberal."

We have already dealt with the psychological factors that dimmed the judgment of these intellectuals and the masses who followed their lead. They were in their subconsciousness fully aware of the fact that their failure to attain the far - flung goals which their ambition impelled them to aim at was due to deficiencies of their own. They knew very well that they were either not bright enough or not industrious enough. But they were eager not to avow their inferiority both to themselves and to their fellow men and to search for a scapegoat. They consoled themselves and tried to convince other people that the cause of their failure was not their own inferiority but the injustice of society's economic organization.

Under capitalism, they declared, self - realization is only possible for the few. "Liberty in a laissez-faire society is attainable only by those who have the wealth or opportunity to purchase it." Hence, they concluded, the state must interfere in order to realize "social justice" - what they really meant was, in order to give to the frustrated mediocrity "according to his needs." As long as the problems of socialism were merely a matter of debates, people who lack clear

judgment and understanding could fall prey to the illusion that freedom could be preserved under a socialist regime. Such self - deceit can no longer be nurtured since the Soviet experience has shown to everybody what conditions are in a socialist commonwealth.

Today the apologists of socialism are forced to distort facts and to misrepresent the manifest meaning of words when they want to make people believe in the compatibility of socialism and freedom.

The late Professor Laski - in his lifetime an eminent member and chairman of the British Labour Party, a self - styled noncommunist or even anticommunist - told us that "no doubt in Soviet Russia a Communist has a full sense of liberty; no doubt also he has a keen sense that liberty is denied him in Fascist Italy." The truth is that a Russian is free to obey all the orders issued by his superiors. But as soon as he deviates a hundredth of an inch from the correct way of thinking as laid down by the authorities, he is mercilessly liquidated. All those politicians, officeholders, authors, musicians and scientists who were "purged" were - to be sure not anticommunists. They were, on the contrary, fanatical communists, party members in good standing, whom the supreme authorities, in due recognition of their loyalty to the Soviet creed, had promoted to high positions. The only offense they had committed was that they were not quick enough in adjusting their ideas, policies, books or compositions to the latest changes in the ideas and tastes of Stalin.

It is difficult to believe that these people had "a full sense of liberty" if one does not attach to the word liberty a sense which is precisely the contrary of the sense which all people always used to attach to it.

Fascist Italy was certainly a country in which there was no liberty. It had adopted the notorious Soviet pattern of the "one party principle" and accordingly suppressed all dissenting views. Yet there was still a conspicuous difference between the Bolshevik and the Fascist application of this principle. For instance, there lived in Fascist Italy a former member of the parliamentary group of communist deputies, who remained loyal unto death to his communist tenets, Professor Antonio Graziadei. He received the government pension which he was entitled to claim as professor emeritus, and he was free to write and to publish, with the most eminent Italian publishing firms, books which were orthodox Marxian. His lack of liberty was certainly less rigid than that of the Russian communists who, as Professor Laski chose to say, "no doubt" have "a full sense of liberty." Professor Laski took pleasure in repeating the truism that liberty in practice always means liberty within law. He goes on saying that the law always aims at "the conference of security upon a way of life which is deemed satisfactory by those who dominate the machinery of state." '"' This is a correct description of the laws of a free country if it means that the law aims at protecting society against conspiracies intent upon kindling civil war and upon overthrowing the government by violence. But it is a serious misstatement when Professor Laski adds that in a capitalistic society "an effort on the part of the poor to alter in a radical way the property rights of the rich at once throws the whole scheme - of liberties into jeopardy."

Take the case of the great idol of Professor Laski and all his friends, Karl Marx. When in 1848 and 1849 he took an active part in the organization and the conduct of the revolution, first in Prussia and later also in other German states, he was - being legally an alien - expelled and moved, with his wife, his children and his maid, first to Paris and then to London. Later, when peace returned and the abettors of the abortive revolution were amnestied, he was free to return to all parts of Germany and often made use of this opportunity. He was no longer an exile, and he chose of his own accord to make his home in London. Nobody molested him when he founded, in 1864, the International Working Men's Association, a body whose avowed sole purpose was to prepare the great world revolution. He was not stopped when, on behalf of this association, he visited various continental countries. He was free to write and to publish books and articles which, to use the words of Professor Laski, were certainly an effort "to alter in a radical way the property rights of the rich.

THE ROAD TO SERFDOM

F A Hayek

Condensed version, published in the Reader's Digest, April 1945 edition. The Tory party wanted to do a mass print-run for distribution in the 1945 general election, but the project fell through. A further condensation was published as "The Road to Serfdom in Pictures" by General Motors.

The author has spent about half his adult life in his native Austria, in close touch with German thought, and the other half in the United States and England. In the latter period he has become increasingly convinced that some of the forces which destroyed freedom in Germany are also at work here.

The very magnitude of the outrages committed by the National Socialists has strengthened the assurance that a totalitarian system cannot happen here. But let us remember that 15 years ago the possibility of such a thing happening in Germany would have appeared just as fantastic not only to nine-tenths of the Germans themselves, but also to the most hostile foreign observer.

There are many features which were then regarded as 'typically German' which are now equally familiar in America and England, and many symptoms that point to a further development in the same direction: the increasing veneration for the state, the fatalistic acceptance of 'inevitable trends', the enthusiasm for 'organization' of everything (we now call it 'planning').

The character of the danger is, if possible, even less understood here than it was in Germany. The supreme tragedy is still not seen that in Germany it was largely people of good will who, by their socialist policies, prepared the way for the forces which stand for everything they detest. Few recognize that the rise of fascism and Marxism was not a reaction against the socialist trends of the preceding period but a necessary outcome of those tendencies. Yet it is significant that many of the leaders of these movements, from Mussolini down (and including Laval and Quisling) began as socialists and ended as fascists or Nazis.

In the democracies at present, many who sincerely hate all of Nazism's manifestations are working for ideals whose realization would lead straight to the abhorred tyranny. Most of the people whose views influence developments are in some measure socialists. They believe that our economic life should be 'consciously directed', that we should substitute 'economic planning' for the competitive system. Yet is there a greater tragedy imaginable than that, in our endeavour consciously to shape our future in accordance with high ideals, we should in fact unwittingly produce the very opposite of what we have been striving for? Planning and power In order to achieve their ends the planners must create power – power over men wielded by other men – of a magnitude never before known. Their success will depend on the extent to which they achieve such power. Democracy is an obstacle to this suppression of freedom which the centralized direction of economic activity requires. Hence arises the clash between planning and democracy.

Many socialists have the tragic illusion that by depriving private individuals of the power they possess in an individualist system, and transferring this power to society, they thereby extinguish power. What they overlook is that by concentrating power so that it can be used in the service of a single plan, it is not merely transformed, but infinitely heightened. By uniting in the hands of some single body power formerly exercised independently by many, an amount of power is created infinitely greater than any that existed before, so much more far-reaching as almost to be different in kind.

It is entirely fallacious to argue that the great power exercised by a central planning board would be 'no greater than the power collectively exercised by private boards of directors'. There is, in a competitive society, nobody who can exercise even a fraction of the power which a socialist planning board would possess. To decentralize power is to reduce the absolute amount of power, and the competitive system is the only system designed to minimize the power exercised by man over man. Who can seriously doubt that the power which a millionaire, who may be my employer, has over me is very much less than that which the smallest bureaucrat possesses who wields the coercive power of the state and on whose discretion it depends how I am allowed to live and work? In every real sense a badly paid unskilled workman in this country has more freedom to shape his life than many an employer in Germany or a much better paid engineer or manager in Russia.

If he wants to change his job or the place where he lives, if he wants to profess certain views or spend his leisure in a particular way, he faces no absolute impediments. There are no dangers to bodily security and freedom

that confine him by brute force to the task and environment to which a superior has assigned him.

Our generation has forgotten that the system of private property is the most important guarantee of freedom. It is only because the control of the means of production is divided among many people acting independently that we as individuals can decide what to do with ourselves. When all the means of production are vested in a single hand, whether it be nominally that of 40 4'society' as a whole or that of a dictator, whoever exercises this control has complete power over us. In the hands of private individuals, what is called economic power can be an instrument of coercion, but it is never control over the whole life of a person. But when economic power is centralized as an instrument of political power it creates a degree of dependence scarcely distinguishable from slavery. It has been well said that, in a country where the sole employer is the state, opposition means death by slow starvation.

Background to danger

Individualism, in contrast to socialism and all other forms of totalitarianism, is based on the respect of Christianity for the individual man and the belief that it is desirable that men should be free to develop their own individual gifts and bents. This philosophy, first fully developed during the Renaissance, grew and spread into what we know as Western civilization. The general direction of social development was one of freeing the individual from the ties which bound him in feudal society.

Perhaps the greatest result of this unchaining of individual energies was the marvellous growth of science. Only since industrial freedom opened the path to the free use of new knowledge, only since everything could be tried – if somebody could be found to back it at his own risk – has science made the great strides which in the last 150 years have changed the face of the world. The result of this growth surpassed all expectations. Wherever the barriers to the free exercise of human ingenuity were removed, man became rapidly able to satisfy ever-widening ranges of desire. By the beginning of the twentieth century the working man in the Western world had reached a degree of material comfort, security and personal independence which 100 years before had hardly seemed possible.

The effect of this success was to create among men a new sense of power over their own fate, the belief in the unbounded possibilities of improving their own lot. What had been achieved came to be regarded as a secure and imperishable possession, acquired once and for all; and the rate of progress began to seem too slow.

Moreover the principles which had made this progress possible came to be regarded as obstacles to speedier progress, impatiently to be brushed away. It might be said that the very success of liberalism became the cause of its decline.

No sensible person should have doubted that the economic principles of the nineteenth century were only a beginning – that there were immense possibilities of advancement on the lines on which we had moved. But according to the views now dominant, the question is no longer how we can make the best use of the spontaneous forces found in a free society. We have in effect undertaken to dispense with these forces and to replace them by collective and 'conscious' direction.

It is significant that this abandonment of liberalism, whether expressed as socialism in its more radical form or merely as 'organization' or 'planning', was perfected in Germany. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, Germany moved far ahead in both the theory and the practice of socialism, so that even today Russian discussion largely carries on where the Germans left off. The Germans, long before the Nazis, were attacking liberalism and democracy, capitalism, and individualism.

Long before the Nazis, too, the German and Italian socialists were using techniques of which the Nazis and fascists later made effective use. The idea of a political party which embraces 42 4all activities of the individual from the cradle to the grave, which claims to guide his views on everything, was first put into practice by the socialists. It was not the fascists but the socialists who began to collect children at the tenderest age into political organizations to direct their thinking. It was not the fascists but the socialists who first thought of organizing sports and games, football and hiking, in party clubs where the members would not be infected by other views. It was the socialists who first insisted that the party member should distinguish himself from others by the modes of greeting and the forms of address. It was they who, by their organization of 'cells' and devices for the permanent supervision of private life, created the prototype of the totalitarian party.

By the time Hitler came to power, liberalism

was dead in Germany. And it was socialism that had killed it.

To many who have watched the transition from socialism to fascism at close quarters the connection between the two systems has become increasingly obvious, but in the democracies the majority of people still believe that socialism and freedom can be combined. They do not realize that democratic socialism, the great utopia of the last few generations, is not only unachievable, but that to strive for it produces something utterly different – the very destruction of freedom itself. As has been aptly said: 'What has always made the state a hell on earth has been precisely that man has tried to make it his heaven.' It is disquieting to see in England and the United States today the same drawing together of forces and nearly the same contempt of all that is liberal in the old sense. 'Conservative socialism' was the slogan under which a large number of writers prepared the atmosphere in which National Socialism succeeded. It is 'conservative socialism' which is the dominant trend among us now.

The liberal way of planning

'Planning' owes its popularity largely to the fact that everybody desires, of course, that we should handle our common problems with as much foresight as possible. The dispute between the modern planners and the liberals is not on whether we ought to employ systematic thinking in planning our affairs. It is a dispute about what is the best way of so doing. The question is whether we should create conditions under which the knowledge and initiative of individuals are given the best scope so that they can plan most successfully; or whether we should direct and organize all economic activities according to a 'blueprint', that is, 'consciously direct the resources of society to conform to the planners' particular views of who should have what'.

It is important not to confuse opposition against the latter kind of planning with a dogmatic laissez faire attitude. The liberal argument does not advocate leaving things just as they are; it favours making the best possible use of the forces of competition as a means of coordinating human efforts. It is based on the conviction that, where effective competition can be created, it is a better way of guiding individual efforts than any other. It emphasizes that in order to make competition work beneficially a carefully thought-out legal framework is required, and that neither the past nor the existing legal rules are free from grave defects.

Liberalism is opposed, however, to supplanting competition by inferior methods of guiding economic activity. And it regards competition as superior not only because in most circumstances it is the most efficient method known but because it is the only method which does not require the coercive or arbitrary intervention of authority. It dispenses with the need for 'conscious social control' and gives individuals a chance to decide whether the prospects of 44 4a particular occupation are sufficient to compensate for the disadvantages connected with it.

The successful use of competition does not preclude some types of government interference. For instance, to limit working hours, to require certain sanitary arrangements, to provide an extensive system of social services is fully compatible with the preservation of competition. There are, too, certain fields where the system of competition is impracticable. For example, the harmful effects of deforestation or of the smoke of factories cannot be confined to the owner of the property in question. But the fact that we have to resort to direct regulation by authority where the conditions for the proper working of competition cannot be created does not prove that we should suppress competition where it can be made to function.

To create conditions in which competition will be as effective as possible, to prevent fraud and deception, to break up monopolies – these tasks provide a wide and unquestioned field for state activity.

This does not mean that it is possible to find some 'middle way' between competition and central direction, though nothing seems at first more plausible, or is more likely to appeal to reasonable people. Mere common sense proves a treacherous guide in this field. Although competition can bear some mixture of regulation, it cannot be combined with planning to any extent we like without ceasing to operate as an effective guide to production.

Both competition and central direction become poor and inefficient tools if they are incomplete, and a mixture of the two means that neither will work.

Planning and competition can be combined only by planning for competition, not by planning against competition. The planning against which all our criticism is directed is solely the planning against competition.

The great utopia There can be no doubt that most of those in the democracies who demand

a central direction of all economic activity still believe that socialism and individual freedom can be combined. Yet socialism was early recognized by many thinkers as the gravest threat to freedom.

It is rarely remembered now that socialism in its beginnings was frankly authoritarian. It began quite openly as a reaction against the liberalism of the French Revolution. The French writers who laid its foundation had no doubt that their ideas could be put into practice only by a strong dictatorial government. The first of modern planners, Saint-Simon, predicted that those who did not obey his proposed planning boards would be 'treated as cattle'.

Nobody saw more clearly than the great political thinker de Tocqueville that democracy stands in an irreconcilable conflict with socialism: 'Democracy extends the sphere of individual freedom,' he said. 'Democracy attaches all possible value to each man,' he said in 1848, 'while socialism makes each man a mere agent, a mere number. Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.' To allay these suspicions and to harness to its cart the strongest of all political motives – the craving for freedom – socialists began increasingly to make use of the promise of a 'new freedom'.

Socialism was to bring 'economic freedom' without which political freedom was 'not worth having'.

To make this argument sound plausible, the word 'freedom' was subjected to a subtle change in meaning. The word had formerly meant freedom from coercion, from the arbitrary power 46 4of other men. Now it was made to mean freedom from necessity, release from the compulsion of the circumstances which inevitably limit the range of choice of all of us. Freedom in this sense is, of course, merely another name for power or wealth. The demand for the new freedom was thus only another name for the old demand for a redistribution of wealth.

The claim that a planned economy would produce a substantially larger output than the competitive system is being progressively abandoned by most students of the problem. Yet it is this false hope as much as anything which drives us along the road to planning.

Although our modern socialists' promise of greater freedom is genuine and sincere, in recent years observer after observer has been impressed by the unforeseen consequences of socialism, the extraordinary similarity in many respects of the conditions under 'communism' and 'fascism'. As the writer Peter Drucker expressed it in 1939, 'the complete collapse of the belief in the attainability of freedom and equality through Marxism has forced Russia to travel the same road toward a totalitarian society of unfreedom and inequality which Germany has been following. Not that communism and fascism are essentially the same. Fascism is the stage reached after communism has proved an illusion, and it has proved as much an illusion in Russia as in pre-Hitler Germany.' No less significant is the intellectual outlook of the rank and file in the communist and fascist movements in Germany before 1933. The relative ease with which a young communist could be converted into a Nazi or vice versa was well known, best of all to the propagandists of the two parties. The communists and Nazis clashed more frequently with each other than with other parties simply because they competed for the same type of mind and reserved for each other the hatred of the heretic. Their practice showed how closely they are related. To both, the real enemy, the man with whom they had nothing in common, was the liberal of the old type. While to the Nazi the communist and to the communist the Nazi, and to both the socialist, are potential recruits made of the right timber, they both know that there can be no compromise between them and those who really believe in individual freedom.

What is promised to us as the Road to Freedom is in fact the Highroad to Servitude. For it is not difficult to see what must be the consequences when democracy embarks upon a course of planning. The goal of the planning will be described by some such vague term as 'the general welfare'. There will be no real agreement as to the ends to be attained, and the effect of the people's agreeing that there must be central planning, without agreeing on the ends, will be rather as if a group of people were to commit themselves to take a journey together without agreeing where they want to go: with the result that they may all have to make a journey which most of them do not want at all.

Democratic assemblies cannot function as planning agencies.

They cannot produce agreement on everything – the whole direction of the resources of the nation – for the number of possible courses of action will be legion. Even if a congress could, by proceeding step by

step and compromising at each point, agree on some scheme, it would certainly in the end satisfy nobody.

To draw up an economic plan in this fashion is even less possible than, for instance, successfully to plan a military campaign by democratic procedure. As in strategy, it would become inevitable to delegate the task to experts. And even if, by this expedient, a democracy should succeed in planning every 48 4sector of economic activity, it would still have to face the problem of integrating these separate plans into a unitary whole. There will be a stronger and stronger demand that some board or some single individual should be given powers to act on their own responsibility. The cry for an economic dictator is a characteristic stage in the movement toward planning.

Thus the legislative body will be reduced to choosing the persons who are to have practically absolute power. The whole system will tend toward that kind of dictatorship in which the head of government is from time to time confirmed in his position by popular vote, but where he has all the power at his command to make certain that the vote will go in the direction that he desires.

Planning leads to dictatorship because dictatorship is the most effective instrument of coercion and, as such, essential if central planning on a large scale is to be possible. There is no justification for the widespread belief that, so long as power is conferred by democratic procedure, it cannot be arbitrary; it is not the source of power which prevents it from being arbitrary; to be free from dictatorial qualities, the power must also be limited. A true 'dictatorship of the proletariat', even if democratic in form, if it undertook centrally to direct the economic system, would probably destroy personal freedom as completely as any autocracy has ever done.

Individual freedom cannot be reconciled with the supremacy of one single purpose to which the whole of society is permanently subordinated. To a limited extent we ourselves experience this fact in wartime, when subordination of almost everything to the immediate and pressing need is the price at which we preserve our freedom in the long run. The fashionable phrases about doing for the purposes of peace what we have learned to do for the purposes of war are completely misleading, for it is sensible temporarily to sacrifice freedom in order to make it more secure in the future, but it is quite a different thing to sacrifice liberty permanently in the interests of a planned economy.

To those who have watched the transition from socialism to fascism at close quarters, the connection between the two systems is obvious. The realization of the socialist programme means the destruction of freedom. Democratic socialism, the great utopia of the last few generations, is simply not achievable.

Why the worst get on top

No doubt an American or English 'fascist' system would greatly differ from the Italian or German models; no doubt, if the transition were effected without violence, we might expect to get a better type of leader. Yet this does not mean that our fascist system would in the end prove very different or much less intolerable than its prototypes. There are strong reasons for believing that the worst features of the totalitarian systems are phenomena which totalitarianism is certain sooner or later to produce.

Just as the democratic statesman who sets out to plan economic life will soon be confronted with the alternative of either assuming dictatorial powers or abandoning his plans, so the totalitarian leader would soon have to choose between disregard of ordinary morals and failure. It is for this reason that the unscrupulous are likely to be more successful in a society tending toward totalitarianism. Who does not see this has not yet grasped the full width of the gulf which separates totalitarianism from the essentially individualist Western civilization.

The totalitarian leader must collect around him a group which is prepared voluntarily to submit to that discipline they are to 50 5impose by force upon the rest of the people. That socialism can be put into practice only by methods of which most socialists disapprove is, of course, a lesson learned by many social reformers in the past. The old socialist parties were inhibited by their democratic ideals; they did not possess the ruthlessness required for the performance of their chosen task. It is characteristic that both in Germany and in Italy the success of fascism was preceded by the refusal of the socialist parties to take over the responsibilities of government. They were unwilling wholeheartedly to employ the methods to which they had pointed the way. They still hoped for the miracle of a majority's agreeing on a particular plan for the organization of the whole of society. Others had already learned the lesson that in a planned society the question can no longer be on what do a majority of the people agree but what the largest single group is whose

members agree sufficiently to make unified direction of all affairs possible.

There are three main reasons why such a numerous group, with fairly similar views, is not likely to be formed by the best but rather by the worst elements of any society.

First, the higher the education and intelligence of individuals become, the more their tastes and views are differentiated. If we wish to find a high degree of uniformity in outlook, we have to descend to the regions of lower moral and intellectual standards where the more primitive instincts prevail. This does not mean that the majority of people have low moral standards; it merely means that the largest group of people whose values are very similar are the people with low standards.

Second, since this group is not large enough to give sufficient weight to the leader's endeavours, he will have to increase their numbers by converting more to the same simple creed. He must gain the support of the docile and gullible, who have no strong convictions of their own but are ready to accept a ready-made system of values if it is only drummed into their ears sufficiently loudly and frequently. It will be those whose vague and imperfectly formed ideas are easily swayed and whose passions and emotions are readily aroused who will thus swell the ranks of the totalitarian party.

Third, to weld together a closely coherent body of supporters, the leader must appeal to a common human weakness. It seems to be easier for people to agree on a negative programme – on the hatred of an enemy, on the envy of the better off – than on any positive task.

The contrast between the 'we' and the 'they' is consequently always employed by those who seek the allegiance of huge masses.

The enemy may be internal, like the 'Jew' in Germany or the 'kulak' in Russia, or he may be external. In any case, this technique has the great advantage of leaving the leader greater freedom of action than would almost any positive programme.

Advancement within a totalitarian group or party depends largely on a willingness to do immoral things. The principle that the end justifies the means, which in individualist ethics is regarded as the denial of all morals, in collectivist ethics becomes necessarily the supreme rule. There is literally nothing which the consistent collectivist must not be prepared to do if it serves 'the good of the whole', because that is to him the only criterion of what ought to be done.

Once you admit that the individual is merely a means to serve the ends of the higher entity called society or the nation, most of those features of totalitarianism which horrify us follow of necessity. From the collectivist standpoint intolerance and 52 5brutal suppression of dissent, deception and spying, the complete disregard of the life and happiness of the individual are essential and unavoidable. Acts which revolt all our feelings, such as the shooting of hostages or the killing of the old or sick, are treated as mere matters of expediency; the compulsory uprooting and transportation of hundreds of thousands becomes an instrument of policy approved by almost everybody except the victims.

To be a useful assistant in the running of a totalitarian state, therefore, a man must be prepared to break every moral rule he has ever known if this seems necessary to achieve the end set for him. In the totalitarian machine there will be special opportunities for the ruthless and unscrupulous. Neither the Gestapo nor the administration of a concentration camp, neither the Ministry of Propaganda nor the SA or SS (or their Russian counterparts) are suitable places for the exercise of humanitarian feelings. Yet it is through such positions that the road to the highest positions in the totalitarian state leads.

A distinguished American economist, Professor Frank H. Knight, correctly notes that the authorities of a collectivist state 'would have to do these things whether they wanted to or not: and the probability of the people in power being individuals who would dislike the possession and exercise of power is on a level with the probability that an extremely tender-hearted person would get the job of whipping master in a slave plantation'.

A further point should be made here: collectivism means the end of truth. To make a totalitarian system function efficiently it is not enough that everybody should be forced to work for the ends selected by those in control; it is essential that the people should come to regard these ends as their own. This is brought about by propaganda and by complete control of all sources of information.

The most effective way of making people accept the validity of the values they are to serve is to persuade them that they are really the same as those they have always held, but which were not properly understood or

recognized before. And the most efficient technique to this end is to use the old words but change their meaning. Few traits of totalitarian regimes are at the same time so confusing to the superfi cial observer and yet so characteristic of the whole intellectual climate as this complete perversion of language.

The worst sufferer in this respect is the word ‘liberty’. It is a word used as freely in totalitarian states as elsewhere. Indeed, it could almost be said that wherever liberty as we know it has been destroyed, this has been done in the name of some new freedom promised to the people. Even among us we have planners who promise us a ‘collective freedom’, which is as misleading as anything said by totalitarian politicians. ‘Collective freedom’ is not the freedom of the members of society, but the unlimited freedom of the planner to do with society that which he pleases. This is the confusion of freedom with power carried to the extreme.

It is not difficult to deprive the great majority of independent thought. But the minority who will retain an inclination to criticize must also be silenced. Public criticism or even expressions of doubt must be suppressed because they tend to weaken support of the regime. As Sidney and Beatrice Webb report of the position in every Russian enterprise: ‘Whilst the work is in progress, any public expression of doubt that the plan will be successful is an act of disloyalty and even of treachery because of its possible effect on the will and efforts of the rest of the staff.’ Control extends even to subjects which seem to have no political significance. The theory of relativity, for instance, has been 54 5opposed as a ‘Semitic attack on the foundation of Christian and Nordic physics’ and because it is ‘in conflict with dialectical materialism and Marxist dogma’. Every activity must derive its justification from conscious social purpose. There must be no spontaneous, unguided activity, because it might produce results which cannot be foreseen and for which the plan does not provide.

The principle extends even to games and amusements. I leave it to the reader to guess where it was that chess players were officially exhorted that ‘we must finish once and for all with the neutrality of chess. We must condemn once and for all the formula chess for the sake of chess.’ Perhaps the most alarming fact is that contempt for intellectual liberty is not a thing which arises only once the totalitarian system is established, but can be found everywhere among those who have embraced a collectivist faith. The worst oppression is condoned if it is committed in the name of socialism. Intolerance of opposing ideas is openly extolled. The tragedy of collectivist thought is that while it starts out to make reason supreme, it ends by destroying reason.

There is one aspect of the change in moral values brought about by the advance of collectivism which provides special food for thought. It is that the virtues which are held less and less in esteem in Britain and America are precisely those on which AngloSaxons justly prided themselves and in which they were generally recognized to excel. These virtues were independence and self-reliance, individual initiative and local responsibility, the successful reliance on voluntary activity, non-interference with one’s neighbour and tolerance of the different, and a healthy suspicion of power and authority.

Almost all the traditions and institutions which have moulded the national character and the whole moral climate of England and America are those which the progress of collectivism and its centralistic tendencies are progressively destroying.

Planning vs. the Rule of Law

Nothing distinguishes more clearly a free country from a country under arbitrary government than the observance in the former of the great principles known as the Rule of Law. Stripped of technicalities this means that government in all its actions is bound by rules fixed and announced beforehand – rules that make it possible to foresee with fair certainty how the authority will use its coercive powers in given circumstances and to plan one’s individual affairs on the basis of this knowledge. Thus, within the known rules of the game, the individual is free to pursue his personal ends, certain that the powers of government will not be used deliberately to frustrate his efforts.

Socialist economic planning necessarily involves the very opposite of this. The planning authority cannot tie itself down in advance to general rules which prevent arbitrariness.

When the government has to decide how many pigs are to be raised or how many buses are to run, which coal-mines are to operate, or at what prices shoes are to be sold, these decisions cannot be settled for long periods in advance. They depend inevitably on the circumstances of the moment, and in making such decisions it will always be necessary to

balance, one against the other, the interests of various persons and groups.

In the end somebody's views will have to decide whose interests are more important, and these views must become part of the law of the land. Hence the familiar fact that the more the state 'plans', the more difficult planning becomes for the individual.

The difference between the two kinds of rule is important. It is the same as that between providing signposts and commanding people which road to take.

Moreover, under central planning the government cannot be impartial. The state ceases to be a piece of utilitarian machinery intended to help individuals in the fullest development of their individual personality and becomes an institution which deliberately discriminates between particular needs of different people, and allows one man to do what another must be prevented from doing.

It must lay down by a legal rule how well off particular people shall be and what different people are to be allowed to have.

The Rule of Law, the absence of legal privileges of particular people designated by authority, is what safeguards that equality before the law which is the opposite of arbitrary government. It is significant that socialists (and Nazis) have always protested against 'merely' formal justice, that they have objected to law which had no views on how well off particular people ought to be, that they have demanded a 'socialization of the law' and attacked the independence of judges.

In a planned society the law must legalize what to all intents and purposes remains arbitrary action. If the law says that such a board or authority may do what it pleases, anything that board or authority does is legal – but its actions are certainly not subject to the Rule of Law. By giving the government unlimited powers the most arbitrary rule can be made legal; and in this way a democracy may set up the most complete despotism imaginable.

The Rule of Law was consciously evolved only during the liberal age and is one of its greatest achievements. It is the legal embodiment of freedom. As Immanuel Kant put it, 'Man is free if he needs obey no person but solely the laws.' Is planning 'inevitable'? It is revealing that few planners today are content to say that central planning is desirable. Most of them affirm that we now are compelled to it by circumstances beyond our control.

One argument frequently heard is that the complexity of modern civilization creates new problems with which we cannot hope to deal effectively except by central planning. This argument is based upon a complete misapprehension of the working of competition. The very complexity of modern conditions makes competition the only method by which a coordination of affairs can be adequately achieved.

There would be no difficulty about efficient control or planning were conditions so simple that a single person or board could effectively survey all the facts. But as the factors which have to be taken into account become numerous and complex, no one centre can keep track of them. The constantly changing conditions of demand and supply of different commodities can never be fully known or quickly enough disseminated by any one centre.

Under competition – and under no other economic order – the price system automatically records all the relevant data. Entrepreneurs, by watching the movement of comparatively few prices, as an engineer watches a few dials, can adjust their activities to those of their fellows.

Compared with this method of solving the economic problem – by decentralization plus automatic coordination through the price system – the method of central direction is incredibly clumsy, primitive, and limited in scope. It is no exaggeration to say that if we had had to rely on central planning for the growth of our industrial system, it would never have reached the degree of differentiation and flexibility it has attained. Modern civilization has 58 5been possible precisely because it did not have to be consciously created. The division of labour has gone far beyond what could have been planned. Any further growth in economic complexity, far from making central direction more necessary, makes it more important than ever that we should use the technique of competition and not depend on conscious control.

It is also argued that technological changes have made competition impossible in a constantly increasing number of fields and that our only choice is between control of production by private monopolies and direction by the government. The growth of monopoly, however, seems not so much a necessary consequence of the advance of technology as the result of the policies pursued in most countries.

The most comprehensive study of this situation is that by the Temporary National Economic Committee, which certainly cannot be accused of an unduly liberal bias. The committee concludes: The superior efficiency of large establishments has not been demonstrated; the advantages that are supposed to destroy competition have failed to manifest themselves in many fields . . . the conclusion that the advantage of largescale production must lead inevitably to the abolition of competition cannot be accepted . . . It should be noted, moreover, that monopoly is frequently attained through collusive agreement and promoted by public policies.

When these agreements are invalidated and these policies reversed, competitive conditions can be restored.

Anyone who has observed how aspiring monopolists regularly seek the assistance of the state to make their control effective can have little doubt that there is nothing inevitable about this development. In the United States a highly protectionist policy aided the growth of monopolies. In Germany the growth of cartels has since 1878 been systematically fostered by deliberate policy. It was here that, with the help of the state, the first great experiment in 'scientific planning' and 'conscious organization of industry' led to the creation of giant monopolies. The suppression of competition was a matter of deliberate policy in Germany, undertaken in the service of an ideal which we now call planning.

Great danger lies in the policies of two powerful groups, organized capital and organized labour, which support the monopolistic organization of industry. The recent growth of monopoly is largely the result of a deliberate collaboration of organized capital and organized labour where the privileged groups of labour share in the monopoly profits at the expense of the community and particularly at the expense of those employed in the less well organized industries. However, there is no reason to believe that this movement is inevitable.

The movement toward planning is the result of deliberate action. No external necessities force us to it.

Can planning free us from care?

Most planners who have seriously considered the practical aspects of their task have little doubt that a directed economy must be run on dictatorial lines, that the complex system of interrelated activities must be directed by staffs of experts, with ultimate power in the hands of a commander-in-chief whose actions must not be fettered by democratic procedure. The consolation our planners offer us is that this authoritarian direction will apply 'only' to economic matters. This assurance is usually accompanied by the suggestion that, by giving up freedom in the less important aspects of our lives, we shall obtain freedom in the pursuit of higher values.

On this ground people who abhor the idea of a political dictatorship often clamour for a dictator in the economic field.

The arguments used appeal to our best instincts. If planning really did free us from less important cares and so made it easier to render our existence one of plain living and high thinking, who would wish to belittle such an ideal? Unfortunately, purely economic ends cannot be separated from the other ends of life. What is misleadingly called the 'economic motive' means merely the desire for general opportunity. If we strive for money, it is because money offers us the widest choice in enjoying the fruits of our efforts – once earned, we are free to spend the money as we wish.

Because it is through the limitation of our money incomes that we feel the restrictions which our relative poverty still imposes on us, many have come to hate money as the symbol of these restrictions. Actually, money is one of the greatest instruments of freedom ever invented by man. It is money which in existing society opens an astounding range of choice to the poor man – a range greater than that which not many generations ago was open to the wealthy.

We shall better understand the significance of the service of money if we consider what it would really mean if, as so many socialists characteristically propose, the 'pecuniary motive' were largely displaced by 'non-economic incentives'. If all rewards, instead of being offered in money, were offered in the form of public distinctions, or privileges, positions of power over other men, better housing or food, opportunities for travel or education, this would merely mean that the recipient would no longer be allowed to choose, and that whoever fixed the reward would determine not only its size but the way in which it should be enjoyed.

The so-called economic freedom which the planners promise us means precisely that we are to be relieved of the necessity of solving our own economic problems and that the bitter choices which this often involves are to

be made for us. Since under modern conditions we are for almost everything dependent on means which our fellow men provide, economic planning would involve direction of almost the whole of our life. There is hardly an aspect of it, from our primary needs to our relations with our family and friends, from the nature of our work to the use of our leisure, over which the planner would not exercise his 'conscious control'.

The power of the planner over our private lives would be hardly less effective if the consumer were nominally free to spend his income as he pleased, for the authority would control production.

Our freedom of choice in a competitive society rests on the fact that, if one person refuses to satisfy our wishes, we can turn to another. But if we face a monopolist we are at his mercy. And an authority directing the whole economic system would be the most powerful monopolist imaginable.

It would have complete power to decide what we are to be given and on what terms. It would not only decide what commodities and services are to be available and in what quantities; it would be able to direct their distribution between districts and groups and could, if it wished, discriminate between persons to any degree it liked. Not our own view, but somebody else's view of what we ought to like or dislike, would determine what we should get.

The will of the authority would shape and 'guide' our daily lives even more in our position as producers. For most of us the time we spend at our work is a large part of our whole lives, and our job usually determines the place where and the people among whom we live. Hence some freedom in choosing our work is probably even more important for our happiness than freedom to spend our income during our hours of leisure.

Even in the best of worlds this freedom will be limited. Few people ever have an abundance of choice of occupation. But what matters is that we have some choice, that we are not absolutely tied to a job which has been chosen for us, and that if one position becomes intolerable, or if we set our heart on another, there is always a way for the able, at some sacrifice, to achieve his goal.

Nothing makes conditions more unbearable than the knowledge that no effort of ours can change them. It may be bad to be just a cog in a machine but it is infinitely worse if we can no longer leave it, if we are tied to our place and to the superiors who have been chosen for us.

In our present world there is much that could be done to improve our opportunities of choice. But 'planning' would surely go in the opposite direction. Planning must control the entry into the different trades and occupations, or the terms of remuneration, or both. In almost all known instances of planning, the establishment of such controls and restrictions was among the first measures taken.

In a competitive society most things can be had at a price. It is often a cruelly high price. We must sacrifice one thing to attain another. The alternative, however, is not freedom of choice, but orders and prohibitions which must be obeyed.

That people should wish to be relieved of the bitter choice which hard facts often impose on them is not surprising. But few want to be relieved through having the choice made for them by others. People just wish that the choice should not be necessary at all. And they are only too ready to believe that the choice is not really necessary, that it is imposed upon them merely by the particular economic system under which we live. What they resent is, in truth, that there is an economic problem.

The wishful delusion that there is really no longer an economic problem has been furthered by the claim that a planned economy would produce a substantially larger output than the competitive system. This claim, however, is being progressively abandoned by most students of the problem. Even a good many economists with socialist views are now content to hope that a planned society will equal the efficiency of a competitive system. They advocate planning because it will enable us to secure a more equitable distribution of wealth. And it is indisputable that, if we want consciously to decide who is to have what, we must plan the whole economic system.

But the question remains whether the price we should have to pay for the realization of somebody's ideal of justice is not bound to be more discontent and more oppression than was ever caused by the much abused free play of economic forces.

For when a government undertakes to distribute the wealth, by what principles will it or ought it to be guided? Is there a definite answer to the innumerable questions of relative merits that will arise? Only one

general principle, one simple rule, would provide such an answer: absolute equality of all individuals. If this were the goal, it would at least give the vague idea of distributive justice clear meaning. But people in general do not regard mechanical equality of this kind as desirable, and socialism promises not complete equality but ‘greater equality’.

This formula answers practically no questions. It does not free us from the necessity of deciding in every particular instance between the merits of particular individuals or groups, and it gives no help in that decision. All it tells us in effect is to take from the rich as much as we can. When it comes to the distribution of the spoils the problem is the same as if the formula of ‘greater equality’ had never been conceived.

It is often said that political freedom is meaningless without economic freedom. This is true enough, but in a sense almost opposite from that in which the phrase is used by our planners.

The economic freedom which is the prerequisite of any other freedom cannot be the freedom from economic care which the socialists promise us and which can be obtained only by relieving us of the power of choice. It must be that freedom of economic activity which, together with the right of choice, carries also the risk and responsibility of that right.

Two kinds of security Like the spurious ‘economic freedom’, and with more justice, economic security is often represented as an indispensable condition of real liberty. In a sense this is both true and important. Independence of mind or strength of character is rarely found among those who cannot be confident that they will make their way by their own effort.

But there are two kinds of security: the certainty of a given minimum of sustenance for all and the security of a given standard of life, of the relative position which one person or group enjoys compared with others.

There is no reason why, in a society which has reached the general level of wealth ours has, the first kind of security should not be guaranteed to all without endangering general freedom; that is: some minimum of food, shelter and clothing, sufficient to preserve health. Nor is there any reason why the state should not help to organize a comprehensive system of social insurance in providing for those common hazards of life against which few can make adequate provision.

It is planning for security of the second kind which has such an insidious effect on liberty. It is planning designed to protect individuals or groups against diminutions of their incomes.

If, as has become increasingly true, the members of each trade in which conditions improve are allowed to exclude others in order to secure to themselves the full gain in the form of higher wages or profits, those in the trades where demand has fallen off have nowhere to go, and every change results in large unemployment. There can be little doubt that it is largely a consequence of the striving for security by these means in the last decades that unemployment and thus insecurity have so much increased.

The utter hopelessness of the position of those who, in a society which has thus grown rigid, are left outside the range of sheltered occupation can be appreciated only by those who have experienced it. There has never been a more cruel exploitation of one class by another than that of the less fortunate members of a group of producers by the well-established. This has been made possible by the ‘regulation’ of competition. Few catchwords have done so much harm as the ideal of a ‘stabilization’ of particular prices or wages, which, while securing the income of some, makes the position of the rest more and more precarious.

In England and America special privileges, especially in the form of the ‘regulation’ of competition, the ‘stabilization’ of particular prices and wages, have assumed increasing importance.

With every grant of such security to one group the insecurity of the rest necessarily increases. If you guarantee to some a fixed part of a variable cake, the share left to the rest is bound to fluctuate proportionally more than the size of the whole. And the essential element of security which the competitive system offers, the great variety of opportunities, is more and more reduced.

The general endeavour to achieve security by restrictive measures, supported by the state, has in the course of time produced a progressive transformation of society – a transformation in which, as in so many other ways, Germany has led and the other countries have followed. This development has been hastened by another effect of socialist teaching, the deliberate disparagement of all activities involving economic risk and the moral opprobrium cast on the gains which make risks worth taking but which only few

can win.

We cannot blame our young men when they prefer the safe, salaried position to the risk of enterprise after they have heard from their earliest youth the former described as the superior, more unselfish and disinterested occupation. The younger generation of today has grown up in a world in which, in school and press, the spirit of commercial enterprise has been represented as disreputable and the making of profit as immoral, where to employ 100 people is represented as exploitation but to command the same number as honourable.

Older people may regard this as exaggeration, but the daily experience of the university teacher leaves little doubt that, as a result of anti-capitalist propaganda, values have already altered far in advance of the change in institutions which has so far taken place. The question is whether, by changing our institutions to satisfy the new demands, we shall not unwittingly destroy values which we still rate higher.

The conflict with which we have to deal is a fundamental one between two irreconcilable types of social organization, which have often been described as the commercial and the military.

In either both choice and risk rest with the individual or he is relieved of both. In the army, work and worker alike are allotted by authority, and this is the only system in which the individual can be conceded full economic security. This security is, however, inseparable from the restrictions on liberty and the hierarchical order of military life – it is the security of the barracks.

In a society used to freedom it is unlikely that many people would be ready deliberately to purchase security at this price.

But the policies which are followed now are nevertheless rapidly creating conditions in which the striving for security tends to become stronger than the love of freedom.

If we are not to destroy individual freedom, competition must be left to function unobstructed. Let a uniform minimum be secured to everybody by all means; but let us admit at the same time that all claims for a privileged security of particular classes must lapse, that all excuses disappear for allowing particular groups to exclude newcomers from sharing their relative prosperity in order to maintain a special standard of their own.

There can be no question that adequate security against severe privation will have to be one of our main goals of policy.

But nothing is more fatal than the present fashion of intellectual leaders of extolling security at the expense of freedom. It is essential that we should re-learn frankly to face the fact that freedom can be had only at a price and that as individuals we must be prepared to make severe material sacrifices to preserve it.

We must regain the conviction on which liberty in the AngloSaxon countries has been based and which Benjamin Franklin expressed in a phrase applicable to us as individuals no less than as nations: ‘Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.’ Toward a better world To build a better world, we must have the courage to make a new start. We must clear away the obstacles with which human folly has recently encumbered our path and release the creative energy of individuals. We must create conditions favourable to progress rather than ‘planning progress’.

It is not those who cry for more ‘planning’ who show the necessary courage, nor those who preach a ‘New Order’, which is no more than a continuation of the tendencies of the past 40 years, and who can think of nothing better than to imitate Hitler.

It is, indeed, those who cry loudest for a planned economy who are most completely under the sway of the ideas which have created this war and most of the evils from which we suffer.

The guiding principle in any attempt to create a world of free men must be this: a policy of freedom for the individual is the only truly progressive policy.