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MAURICE DOBB



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ON MARXISM TO-DAY

I

INTRODUCTORY

It is usual for the Englishman, with the bluff common sense of a "nation of shopkeepers," to hold philosophies and broad generalisations in contempt. The tradition of our thought is empiricist. The pride of our thinkers is to be practical, to turn paradox into the obvious and to translate the mysteries of the universe into the language of the best-seller. The scepticism of Hume strikes us as eminently urbane and reasonable contrasted with the stupendous dogmatism of Hegel; and we prefer even to be frankly inconsistent if consistency means a striving after architectonic "systems" of thought in the manner of classic German philosophy. History, whether past or present, is a complex business, comprehended in intuition rather than in formulæ, and to the interpretation or the making of it theories are so many tools. To each use its appropriate tool, and the criterion of a formula its convenience. Uses are fashioned, and tools accordingly selected, by human purpose; and human purpose stands outside science and outside philosophy for practical-minded men.

This attitude must necessarily make a strong appeal

to a practical age ; and as a handmaid to science and an antidote to scholasticism it clearly has a great deal to commend it. Yet, despite its healthy appeal, there are evident inadequacies in such a view. A certain eclecticism and atomism to which it is prone serves frequently to deliver the logical battle into the hands of peddlers of the scholastic systems which its chief pride is to combat ; and to-day, indeed, it leaves an inviting door open to the fashionable pseudo-philosophies preached by certain of our leading scientific men. Its very obsession with means to particular ends leaves wider issues of more general ends to lie rooted in unquestioned traditional assumption or to be determined by a mystic teleology. Nowhere is this clearer than in the social sciences, where this very championing of the practical seems, on examination, to rest on assumptions as dogmatic as any of the philosophies for which our empiricist has such robust contempt. The very fact that these assumptions are tacit and hidden gives their dogmatism greater influence ; while to subordinate the practice, but not the general aims which rule the practice, to rational thought is to leave human purpose to be ruled by intuitive desires or by convention. That " experimentalism " which is so fashionable rests, in fact, on an irrational bias in favour of the *status quo*. So long as political issues touched the forms rather than the basis of the social order, as they did in nineteenth-century bourgeois England, this attitude sufficed well enough. Social purposes were synonymous with the particular needs of the extant bourgeois order. Sectional problems could be treated sectionally, with need for no more than a limited consistency. Fundamental purposes and values were sufficiently agreed to be treated as ultimate ; and a bourgeois society, prosperous and confident, had no

need to enunciate a philosophy of rights with which to challenge an old order, as had its continental neighbours, nor hardly even to establish its virtue by historical *apologia*.

To-day this is changing; and with the change perhaps an era of thought, as well as an era in economics, is coming to an end. Influences more permanent than Napoleonic Orders in Council are depriving us of our custom as shopkeepers of the world, just as they are depriving us of our rôle as brokers and bailiffs of the world. The nineteenth century is not only fading into a musty museum relic in subordinate particulars, like free competition and *laissez-faire* and free trade: to evaluate changes like these there is nothing inadequate in accepted modes of thought. It is not merely an unprecedented unemployment figure or the novelty of unprecedented political situations that is setting men questioning the very assumptions of traditional thought. It is, rather, the growth of unprecedented paradox, defying the power of thought to make sense or meaning of it. Previously sense ruled paradox in the paradoxical order of the nineteenth century; and the economists' doctrine of the economic harmonies explained how this was so. To-day paradox is dominant; and bourgeois thought finds itself plunged in an Alice-through-the-looking-glass sort of world. To make paradox stranger and nightmare more bewildering, Soviet Russia persists in performing such antics upon the historical stage as to confound virtually every interpretation and every forecast that conventional thought has placed upon it.

In time of crisis thought is driven to seek new perspectives on accustomed things. When a class system of centuries is in question, the very criticism or defence of that social order implies a philosophy of history;

for such a philosophy is nothing less than that system of assumptions (or their antithesis) implicit in thought and action for a generation made explicit and moulded to a form. The reason why it seems possible for the practical man to decide the issue of a tariff or the nationalisation of an industry on immediate empirical grounds alone is because so much that is implied in his decision can be taken for granted and remain in the realm of tacit unquestioned assumption. As soon as these assumptions are made explicit and are examined, the very act of thought insists that they shall be subjected to some principle of consistency. In doing so thought creates for itself those wider generalisations which the empiricist shuns : to shun such issues is not the sole alternative to the asking and answering of unreal questions. It is this urgent pressure to re-examine crumbling foundations and the desire for some new conceptual unity to avoid the barren " systems " of the schools that seems to be prompting a renewed interest in Marxism to-day.

II

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

THE objections to which a discussion of Marxism usually gives rise amount principally to a denial that a philosophy of history is possible at all. "One cannot generalise about history." "All abstract formulæ oversimplify the concrete process and distort it." "History is the complex product of the human spirit, and no ready-made laws could embrace so essentially a creative activity." With such a standpoint, of course, no further intellectual discussion is possible. If the comprehension of history partakes of the nature of an æsthetic activity, then logical categories are *ipso facto* debarred. Thought may afford guiding lines and isolated "canons of interpretation," throw this or that factor into truer perspective; but the criterion of truth itself is not for the intellect to give; and from this field thought must modestly withdraw. More often, however, the objection takes a cruder form. Here it is the objection of the scientist for whom traditional assumptions are adequate to all his needs in his own limited department of research. "What have we to do with philosophy?" Or again: "We know so little of the facts of history that to generalise is impossible." To which the answer is simply that any act of political judgment, still more clearly any act of historical fore-

cast, implies *some* conception of history in the background of the mind ; and it is, surely, preferable that such a conception should be made, at least, explicit and consistent.

Contesting the field with Marxism as a conception of this kind we can distinguish two broad types of notions ; and Marxism can best be defined, as it must necessarily be considered, in relation to these alternatives. The older of the two can be described as the idealist conception, depicting history as the unfolding of the spirit of man : the progressive embodiment in concrete particulars of some developing idea. The principles of such a process are necessarily ideal, and elude the search of science. The continuity of history lies primarily in the realm of thought and culture ; and stages of history are comprehensible simply as embodiments of successive stages in the development of thought.

There is little that can be shortly said of such a conception, except that it is increasingly at variance with the tendency of our age to apply scientific analysis even to social affairs. In the hands of a Hegel it can have unquestionable unity and architectonic grandeur. In the hands of lesser interpreters it so easily and customarily degenerates into a vague and meaningless verbalism. At any rate, for the practical-minded such a conception must seem, as Marx expressed it, to be "standing on its head." In this country it seems to have found few disciples. Incongruously blending with English empiricism, it has, rather, lent sanction to a departmental mode of treating history, which has admittedly constructed no conceptual unity and has left the central issue unresolved. To write history in separate departments—a political history, an economic history, a history of morals, a history of ideas—may be a convenient device for historical research, like a

card-index system or an author's chapter-headings. But it is unlikely to disclose much that is intelligible in the way of continuity and of process within the confines of such narrow departmental walls. Like an analogous view in philosophy of psychophysical parallelism, its dualism affords no solution of the central problem : the relation between the parts of which it is composed.

Increasingly popular to-day, and allied to current notions, is an opposite and materialist view. This type of conception, tracing descent through Buckle and assuming the dignity of a school among the German historical economists of last century, has been less explicit than implicit in the actual work of historical writing, at least in Anglo-Saxon countries. Part cause, part effect of the spread of interest in economic history in the last forty years, and of the accumulation of data in economic-historical research, it has represented an emphasis on the importance of the economic factor in social change and a challenge to the old departmental barriers by insistence on the influence of economic change upon political institutions and moral ideas. Where the conception has been framed explicitly, it has been as one of the forms of the economic interpretation of history—economic, rather than racial or geographical, since the former alone has shown sufficient change during recent centuries to be related to other spheres of historical progress. The ratio of population to human invention, the growing complexity of the division of labour, technological progress, have variously been treated as the ground-plan of different political and social epochs.

Such a view, so soon as it is framed explicitly, immediately invites criticism as a crude economic determinism, degrading to the rôle of human activity and

moral ideas. As the vitalists charge mechanists in biology, it is alleged that historical growth cannot be reduced mechanistically to terms of quantity, and to attempt to do so is either to falsify or at best a plain failure to explain. The economic determinist is usually thrust on to the horns of a dilemma : to be consistent, his view must either imply a mystical fatalism, or else reintroduce the very dualism of deterministic forecast and the creative-power of human activity which it had claimed to supplant. What requires explanation is those turning-points of history at which (like qualitative changes in a chemical composition) a completely new element appears to emerge. And, it is precisely this act of historical creation that a mechanical determinism can neither forecast nor explain.

The Historical Materialism of Marx shares with the economic determinist an insistence that history is to be interpreted in terms of material events. In other words, it shares with the mechanists their materialism. But this statement Historical Materialism intends in a purely practical sense : namely, that knowledge of history is given solely in scientific study of historical experience, and not in intuition or in *a priori* logic. By this insistence that history is to be explained in material categories, the Marxist does not intend to erect an abstract separation of events into "material" and "ideal," the former playing an active, and the latter only a passive, rôle in historical causation : the formulation of the issue in such terms, into which the economic determinist so frequently falls, is for the Marxist entirely barren and unreal. In so far as "ideas" are part of history, they are "facts" of historical experience as much as mechanical inventions or property-relationships, and they enter into the historical process in the same way as any other "facts." If

" ideas " are conceived, on the other hand, as some supra-historical *deus ex machina*, invoked from transcendental skies to shape the historical plot, the Marxist would emphatically deny them reality or significance. But in presenting the issue in this way, the Marxist does not play with misleading dogmas concerning the hen-and-egg problem of causal priority. While he conceives the historical process as having a certain necessary form, it is of the essence of Historical Materialism that the study of history alone can provide those generalisations about the sequence of events upon which forecast and action must rest.

Such a view, as it stands, therefore, affords no presumption that the causal chain from the economics to the politics and morals of an epoch has more importance than the chain of continuity between the political institutions and morals of yesterday and the politics and morals of to-day. Which has in fact the greater significance must be left to be empirically determined ; and an economic interpretation of history can have validity merely as an inductive generalisation about the order of importance of historical factors. Moreover, from one epoch to another the relative importance of different factors may change ; and no generalisation about the matter can be cast in any permanent or dogmatic form.

It is here that the Marxist parts company with the mechanist and carries the conception of history a crucial stage further. Historical Materialism does not share with the economic determinist the latter's emphasis on continuity and his assumption that the historical process can be reduced to terms of quantity : it does not treat historical interpretation as a matter simply of mechanistic calculation. Indeed, it takes over from the idealism of Hegel the conception that change

r and movement cannot (ultimately at least) be expressed in logical categories, consistently and in terms of continuity. In other words, change and development can only be conceptualised in terms of successive contradictions ; while, conversely, historical change cannot be conceived except as motivated by some concrete conflict and antagonism (what else causes development to take place?). To the idealism of Hegel this historical movement represented the passing over of an idea into its negation, and this in turn into a new idea, as the contradiction implied in each successive idea became explicit when that idea came into its own and was more fully and clearly defined. But for Marx this was no longer an ideal self-development of logical categories. It was a process of change motivated by the conflict of concrete factors. Through the wrestling of rival forces, and finally the resolution of the antagonism by the dominance of the new factor, history passed, by a revolutionary "jump," from one epoch to another. Hitherto in history these antagonistic factors had consisted of *classes* ; a class being defined, not as *any* sort of social grouping (according to which the definition would be meaningless) but a particular grouping, characterised by a peculiar type of relationship to the means of production (e.g. owning and ownerless, owners of realty and owners of personalty). Antagonism, indeed, defined a class rather than was defined by it ; and the antagonism which Marx conceived was actual rather than formal, explicable by the concrete circumstances of the time. As the *Communist Manifesto* had it as the key-note of its first section : " The history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggles." Without such struggles there would have been no process to interpret, and likewise no current politics. And since the process has

this form, each social order derives its features from the class antagonism which gave it birth, and not as an organic continuation of the institutions of the *ancien régime*.

But if Historical Materialism avoids a crude positivism, does it not do so by virtue of abandoning the very materialism on which it claims to rest? By abandoning deterministic explanation precisely at the turning-points of history, does it not relapse into a vague mysticism, concealing a *hiatus* of interpretation with general phrases about class struggle, which explain nothing at those very stages—the revolutionary emergence of a new epoch—where historical interpretation is most required? Certainly, such a criticism would be valid if Marxism postulated *no* relationship between the emerging element of the new stage and the existing elements of the old. True, it denies that the connection can be expressed purely mechanistically: the new composition is different from the sum of its constituent elements. Yet there exists a definable relationship between them; and the connection is neither arbitrary nor mystical: a relationship between the old and the new which has the form of a logical antithesis rather than of a syllogism, and can be fully inferred, not *a priori*, but only from concrete experience in the act of interpreting contemporary history which is politics. For example, chemistry, it is true, would relapse into magic if by mixing sodium sulphate with calcium carbonate the chemist could arbitrarily produce any new element he chose. But, in fact, while the chemist can effect an apparently divine act of creation, he knows that the new element must bear a particular (and not *any*) relation, even if no simple quantitative one, to the previous elements from which it has emerged. What that relation is only concrete

experience can define. So for the Marxist there is no mysticism in the fact that social revolution represents an act of historical creation, where the activity of the human spirit attains a sublime power. A particular revolution can arise only at a particular stage (not at any stage) of the historical process ; and what revolution creates must bear a definable (and partly forecastable) relation to pre-existing elements of which it is made. Historical purpose, in the contemporary moment, must always hold an apparently arbitrary element—an ideal plan or scheme : without this there would be no historical process. Of necessity there appears a contradiction between this plan and the objective *status quo*. This necessity arises because thought, in order to conceive of action, must for the moment abstract an arbitrary "subject" from the universe of objective forecast, this "subject" being the schemer and his scheme. Yet the more closely it approximates to an objective forecast the more "real" and efficacious is the plan.

III

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

FOR the validity of its notions Historical Materialism depends on the wider philosophy of which it is part ; and just as Historical Materialism is seldom distinguished from economic determinism, so one rarely meets appreciation of how radically Dialectical Materialism has departed from the type of question in terms of which the older forms of Materialism were framed. The old-fashioned issue between Materialism and Idealism was really a scholastic one ; what was the ultimate " nature " of reality ? The early Greek monists said it was variously fire or air or water ; the atomists said it was a multitude of indivisible and invisible variously shaped, but hard, atoms. Dr. Johnson kicked it and said it was solid ; Bishop Berkeley applied logic to it and declared it was Mind ; and Sir James Jeans has recently told us that it is probably a mathematical formula. What meaning can such answers have except as figurative analogies ? At any rate, on this plane of argument it is hard to get beyond Kant's separation of appearance, or the " thing-for-us," and the unknowable " thing-in-itself."

When Marx declared (in his Notes on Feuerbach appended to Engels' *Feuerbach*) : " All the mysteries which seduce speculative thought into mysticism find their solution in human practice and in concepts of this

practice," he virtually abandoned questions as to the "nature" of reality as meaningless. The only question about reality to which meaning could be given was in terms of human activity: what result will such-and-such activity achieve? To passive contemplation the "thing-in-itself" must remain forever unknowable. But this is because the very abstraction of the contemplating "subject" in a static manner gives the question of the relation between subject and object an entirely static and unreal form. Historical experience is a moving process in which man himself is an active agent. The "reality" of history, if it has a meaning, can only mean the totality of history itself; and precisely in activity—in making history—does man establish his relation to the objective world and learn what history is. "It is in practice that man must prove the truth," said Marx. And again: "In the past philosophers have interpreted the world variously: their task now is to change it." Precisely in acting upon the world, and hence changing it, is the world knowable, and only in this way; and all the questions of reality which have vexed philosophers acquire meaning only in terms of the efficacy of concrete activities. Moreover, it is an illusion to suppose that experience can exist as a purely passive contemplation of an object: still more illusory to assume that "I think" can be postulated except as conditional on "I am." Experience itself is inseparable from activity. As Labriola has it: "There are no historical experiences but those that history makes itself."*

It is in this emphasis on the knowability of the world through action that the double element of Marxism—its materialism and its dialectic—is unified. The insist-

* In his valuable *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*, pub. in an English trans. from the Italian by Kerr and Co. of Chicago.

ence on activity and the generalised results of p. activity (which is science) as the source of knowledge, and not on mystical intuition or the *a priori* processes of pure thought, is equivalent to what is commonly meant by the assertion of the objective existence of the external world. The assertion is made because the converse would be a negation either of action or of thought in relation to action. At the same time, the fact that activity is concrete, whereas thought is abstract—that the intellect draws merely pictures, as it were, in fewer dimensions than what it depicts—implies that reality cannot be fully represented in formulæ; and that thought expressed in the language of formal logic must remain merely a picture—a static and “flat” representation of something that is essentially moving and “round.” Hence the process of history (which is human activity) continually reveals at each successive stage an opposition between concrete reality and the abstract picture which thought has drawn from the past. Least of all can the contemporary moment of activity be embraced in a syllogism or reduced to a deterministic system: to attempt to do so is to deny history. The only way in which the historical process can be conceptualised and held in thought is not as logically continuous, but as a dialectical process—a process in which at each stage the contemporary activity of making history introduces a new and contradictory element, which is only reducible to logical order when it has already become, in contemplation, a dead item of the past. To understand, said Hegel, is to leave behind.

This essential character of Marxism as an attitude to action gives it its unity, but at the same time renders it hard to expound. It is of the essence of Marxism that it cannot be expounded as a set of propositions and

pract it cannot be learned as a dogma. Those who expect from it a final solution of enigmas or a recipe-book of political panaceas are searching in vain. Precisely because activity can only be comprehended in a concrete and not an abstract manner, Marxism can only be understood in its application : which is the secret of why Marx and Engels did not expound Dialectical Materialism in a treatise, but instead occupied their time with critical commentary on current topics and in the practical pursuits of current politics. For them theory and practice had a necessary unity.* Either apart must be unreal : thought abstract and scholastic, activity the impotent reflex-actions of a drunken man. History was a dead chronicle unless united with current politics ; politics was degraded to vulgar opportunism unless inspired by a philosophy of history. Only in Marxian politics can both history and Historical Materialism be learned.

* The first in this country, I believe, to emphasise this essential aspect of Marxism was D. S. Mirsky, implicitly in his *Lenin : a Biography*, more explicitly in an article in *The Labour Monthly*, July 1931.

IV

MARX AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

MARX's economic analysis, to be understood correctly, must be understood as a particular application of Historical Materialism. If each stage of history was characterised by a class antagonism, then the secret of contemporary history must lie in the peculiar nature of the dominant class relationship which marked capitalism as an historical type. To classical Political Economy the economic order was an harmonious system, explicable in the logical categories of "natural law." Ricardo with his love of paradox came nearest to depicting the economic system as basically, in its property relations, an unstable rather than a stable equilibrium: so much so that the American economist Carey characterised his system as "a system of discord" tending "to create hostility between classes and nations," and his *Principles of Political Economy* as "a veritable manual for demagogues."* But for Ricardo, who was the bourgeois economist *par excellence*, the rent *versus* profit antagonism dominated the field of vision; and in an age when progress seemed synonymous with the accumulation of capital an identity of interest, rather than antagonism, between profit and wages seemed the truth. For Marx on the other hand the "logic" of the new social order, so

* Carey, *The Past, the Present and the Future*, Philadelphia, 1848, P. 74.

soon as it had triumphed, must reveal a new contradiction, which in the fullness of time would bring that order to an end. As in the *Communist Manifesto* he was concerned to show the latent inconsistency of the bourgeois-democratic ideology of 1789 and 1830 and 1848—Liberty, Equality and Fraternity—so in *Das Kapital* he was concerned to show the unrevealed antagonism which lay behind the harmonies of the laws of Political Economy. The *Communist Manifesto* had described the antagonism concealed behind the "Freedom" and "Equality" of the new bourgeois order as the antagonism between propertied and dispossessed: between the class which monopolised the means of production and the proletariat, excluded from all other means of livelihood and from self-employment and therefore forced to hire its labour to a master-class for a wage. To characterise this class relationship and to give it meaning, some term of comparison must be found in which it could be expressed and defined by contrast with other types of relationship in some alternative social order. This was the significance of the Labour Theory of Value, which has been so grossly misunderstood by economists, especially in England, because its significance as a term of comparison has been overlooked and our academic Don Quixotes have tilted at it as though it were an empirical generalisation about price-equilibria. For Marx it represented an attempt to find a universal principle of social valuation (of social equivalence, or "real cost"), to which particular price-relationships could be referred. Under varying circumstances actual market-prices might tend to conform to this standard or they might diverge from it: with this he was less immediately concerned. But without such a conception as a standard of equivalence the

category of surplus-value, as an exploitation ¹⁰ : difference between the value of labour-power and labour's product, would have had no meaning. For without it, what was to preclude the income of capital representing some equivalent contribution which capital made (as Senior and Co. tried to assert)? What Marx was primarily concerned to demonstrate, true to his dialectic method, was that the peculiar antagonistic relationship of capital and wage-labour arose, not as an "exception" to economic law, but as an outcome of economic law—not because things were sold above or below their values, but precisely because under capitalism labour-power itself was reduced to a commodity and acquired a value, and labour-power when set to work produced a value greater than its own value (what it "cost"). Only by virtue of this fact—the appearance of labour-power on the market as a purchasable commodity—did the capitalist class acquire its privileged income. It was to mark its special historical character that Marx termed this income "surplus-value," and this special relationship between this purchaser and the commodity purchased he termed "exploitation" to mark its antagonistic character. This antagonism was not a "violation" of economic laws, but was contained within their apparent "logic" and harmony. Exploitation was not due to some special monopoly or the villainy of some abnormal taskmaster, paying labour below its market value, but was a normal feature of an historical epoch which had as its keynote the conversion of labour-power into a purchasable commodity. Without a proletariat no surplus-value: without surplus-value no capitalist income.

It is hard to think that one who has not a privileged axe to grind can soberly deny that such a characterisation of capitalism is more significant than that which

soon as Political Economy affords. For the latter all recipients of income are on a par : on a basis of equality of capital and labour each contribute a service and draw an equivalent income from a common pool. Yet can anyone but a casuist or a sycophant maintain that the " contribution " of a propertied magnate who graciously lends his thousands and the " contribution " of a labourer, labouring his eight-hour day, are anything but qualitatively distinct, if not at different poles ? Save by a casuistical " imputation " it is hard to see how the former can be called a personal " contribution " at all. Can it really be asserted that the man who inherits factories instead of slave plantations inherits so great a difference in the source of his income that one may reasonably term ownership of the latter a form of exploitation but ownership of the former one may not ? And when we view the contemporary world and mark its dominant social issues, can we deny to Marx greater reason for stressing the prime historical importance of the capital-wage-labour antagonism than Ricardo had for stressing the land *versus* capital issue of his day ? At least, is a Political Economy whose concepts hold no trace of such a contemporary antagonism still worthy of its name ?

For Marx the question of " exploitation " was not a matter of moral invective, still less a quibble over words. It was a vital issue of historical forecast. For bourgeois Political Economy the era of " economic freedom " represented the final term of progress. In individualism society had found its ideal economic basis just as in Parliamentary democracy it had found its ideal political form. " Organic " growth there would be, and adaptations of this or that particular ; but progress would be essentially on the basis which the nineteenth century had seen established. But for

Marx the capitalist order was essentially transient: like every previous social order, its very property-basis held a fundamental inconsistency. The very growth of the system would emphasise this inconsistency, until the equilibrium of society on the old basis was possible no more. In concrete terms, this inconsistency was a class antagonism, rooted in the relationship of exploitation; and solution, when it came, would neither fall from heaven nor be devised *a priori* from the minds of Nietzschean supermen. It would arise, as capitalism itself had arisen, precisely out of the new antagonistic element which the old order was developing in its womb. It would arise from the revolutionary pressure of the exploited class, bursting the confines of the system which maintained exploitation in the only way open to it—namely, by expropriation of the propertied class, which is socialism. Without the concept of exploitation such a revolutionary outcome, of course, would have had no meaning. Without it progress would have been a matter of experimental adaptation of social forms, not a matter of property and of class. But precisely because this capital-wage-labour relationship was destined to become the dominant feature of the capitalist order, eclipsing other social antagonisms which had marked earlier orders of society; and because for the first time in history the exploited class was being endowed with group-consciousness, discipline and education—the discipline and group-consciousness of mass-production, the education required for modern industrial arts—the proletariat, the new “fourth estate,” was destined to take the mantle of history on its shoulders and have the moulding of the future in its hands.

But if capitalism, like each class system in its turn, is basically unstable, how has it managed to maintain

a considerable stability for so long? What was to prevent the first breath of discontent from fanning class antagonism into revolution? Why did not the first wave of unemployment rouse the majority against the yoke of the relatively small ruling class? What, in other words, maintained coherence and consistency in an inconsistent social system for a whole historical epoch? It is when the question is posed in this way that the essential unity of Marx's economics and his politics appears; and it is in answer to this question that the Marxian theory of the State assumes its essential significance. Without his theory of the State this question would have no adequate answer; without his theory of exploitation his theory of the State would have little point. As conceived by Marx and Engels, the State is primarily the coercive apparatus by which an existing class system is kept stable. The recognised first duty of the State is to maintain order on the basis of existing social relationships as embodied in the fundamental principles of law; and this means to maintain intact existing property and class relationships. Hence, however democratic the forms adopted by the State may be, the State remains essentially the political instrument of the dominant class to preserve that dominance and its economic basis. In the earlier stages of its development the proletariat may, of course, be able to use democratic forms to its own advantage. But in the very degree that the proletariat, increasing in power, threatens the basis of the old order, the State is likely to appear more openly as a class instrument, and either discard or render nugatory the democratic forms of an earlier day. (If he were alive, could not Marx point triumphantly to Fascism or else the extra-Parliamentary forms of dictatorship growing in contemporary Europe in direct ratio to the threat of the

working class ?) It is for this reason that the transition from one class hegemony to another—particularly a transition that involves a challenge to the whole propertied class and not merely of one form of property to another—is marked by an apparent break of historical continuity: takes the form necessarily, not of a leisured game of political chess, but of a decisive general engagement in which the State challenges and is challenged by the organs of an upstart class.

For the same reason this new class, when it has triumphed, will in turn institute its own State apparatus to hold the key-positions against counter-attack, to carry through the process of expropriation and lay the foundations of the new socialist order. It was this period of the State shaped, for the first time in history, as the organ of the working class that Marx characterised as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. But by its very act of expropriation this new State would abolish the economic basis of the old class dichotomy and antagonism: it would itself prepare the soil of a new classless order, where its old coercive functions, maintaining a class hegemony, would progressively cease to be required. And in this sense Marx spoke of the old coercive functions of the State gradually "withering away," giving place to organs of voluntary association, which for the first time in history could be instruments of a democratic "general will" in a real and not merely a formal sense. Needless to say, Marx offered no "100 per cent. guarantee" of such an outcome, as those critics who deny the possibility of historical forecast are most fond of claiming he should have done. Clearly, there are no "100 per cent. guarantees" in history and cannot be; nor can historical forecasts, from their nature, deal in the high-grade probabilities of laboratory experiments. Yet to turn

one's back on historical forecasts for that reason is a doctrine of impotence: it is to deny the power of thought to make any sense of contemporary history and to negate political action of any but the most timid and short-sighted kind.

The movement in theoretical circles of German Socialism at the turn of the century, known as Revisionism, had its crux in an attempted modification of the perspective which Marx had sketched. It amounted to a denial that, as capitalism developed, class antagonism was sharpening or that capitalism was engendering periodic crises which would bring the class issue to a head. Marx had never rested his forecast, as some have imagined, on the assumption that the wage-position of the workers would necessarily worsen absolutely (just as he also never asserted, as many seem to think, that the revolution would necessarily come first in the most highly developed capitalist country: such a mechanical mode of forecast was alien to his whole spirit). He emphatically maintained that trade unionism had considerable (though not indefinite) potentialities*; and the "iron law of wages" belonged not to him but to Lassalle. But it is clear that he envisaged on the one hand a concentration of property into fewer hands and a tendency to *relative* decline in the share accruing to the working class. At the same time, he suggested that periodic crises and cycles of unemployment, growing in their devastation, would increase the instability of the worker's life and rob him alike of status and of patience. These things the Revisionists denied. Property was not showing pronounced concentration, but rather the reverse; the intermediate middle class was increasing in numbers;

* In *Value, Price and Profit*, being a reply, made before the International, to a Mr. Weston on this very point.

and crises were growing less ravastating forms—ter
 Moreover, the State, as it assumen and the boy-
 forms, was becoming less and less a tariff contests,
 Not a revolutionary break of the proleatately war.
 old order, but rather the conquest of exl.
 tions, the winning of the middle class and t.
 subjection of capitalism to social control was:
 of historical probability and of historical wisde
 effect, the Revisionists had reached a position idem
 with that of English Fabian Socialism, erected avowedly
 on a non-Marxist basis and in the idiom of orthodox
 Political Economy.

On the immediate evidence of statistics and a short-
 view survey of tendencies in the pre-war world, there
 was a good deal to recommend the Revisionist argu-
 ment, even if the extent of monopolistic concentration
 to-day, the dimensions of the post-war crisis, the im-
 poverishment of the middle class and the decline of
 democracy over large areas of Europe would seem to
 leave little standing of the Revisionist case. (An im-
 portant number even of Fabian Socialists to-day are
 increasingly sceptical of "the inevitability of gradual-
 ness.") But though discussion raged inconclusively for
 many years in continental Marxist circles, it was left
 for Lenin to shift the discussion on to a new plane.
 This he did in an unpretentious but important little
 book called *Imperialism: The Final Stage of Capitalism*.
 The significance of this study in the history of Marxist
 theory lies in its attempt both to account for the
 developments which had prompted the Revisionist
 discussion, and at the same time to sketch again the
 historical perspective which Marx had drawn, in altered
 particulars though in essentially the same general form.
 What had prolonged the life of capitalism in advanced
 industrial countries into a new era of prosperity was

one's back on historic field of exploitation by these doctrine of impotey and virgin soil. This occurred at thought to maken the early small-scale competitive and to negate s passing into large-scale monopoly-timid and shalism, and the latter turned its eyes to new

The moyloit, as markets, as sources of raw materials, Socialismes of investment. It was this which constituted ism, haçtacular new movement of economic imperialism persñe final decades of the nineteenth century—the 3scramble of each national group to carve out private “preserves” of its own in the technically backward sections of the globe. The fruits of this exploitation gave fresh prosperity to the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries, enriched a numerous *rentier* class, called into being a parasitic middle class of clerks and salesmen, technicians and lawyers and servants of Empire, found new outlets for surplus capital and surplus goods, even permitted the rise of a privileged “aristocracy of labour” in Western Europe and America, living on the tribute of Empire. But the respite for capitalism could be no more than temporary. New fields to conquer were limited, and when saturated led to increasingly acute rivalries between the imperialist powers, scrambling for “territory” like rival bootleg gangs in U.S.A. Export of capital to the colonies developed a primitive colonial capitalism *in replica* and a native proletariat whose competition undermined the privileged wage-standards of Europe and U.S.A. The fastening on these colonies of this external exploiting relation in the fullness of time stimulated a colonial nationalism, struggling for independence and shaking the pillars of Imperialism as provincial revolts had shaken those of ancient Rome. Moreover, in the age of large monopolistic groupings competition passes from the comparatively harmless price-cutting rivalries of the nineteenth

century to more violent and devastating forms—^{ter} advertising campaigns, discrimination and the boycott, even to affairs of States, with tariff contests, colonial intrigues and scrambles, and ultimately war.

V

PROLETARIAN POLITICS

INCREASINGLY in our modern age politics, so far as it means anything more positive than debating societies or club-room gossip or making a cross at a polling-booth every five years, seems to have become a thing apart from the mass of the community—distasteful to the intellectual, indifferent to the man in the street. But for Marx politics was neither an expert profession for gentlemen, nor was it an electoral caucus and a Tammany Hall intrigue. Politics was for him the advancing spear-point of history, in which theory and practice were fused, each enriching and enriched by the other. It was class-antagonism become conscious and endowed with an aim. To the extent that these aims were "scientific" and based on historical experience generalised in a theory, these aims would tend to approximate to (though never coincide with) the objectively probable outcome of events. But where such aims were imaginative or purely *a priori* products (like those of the French Revolution or of Utopian Socialism) aims and ideals would be sharply at variance with the real objectives which the movement was destined to achieve. Hence the efficacy of politics and the potency of human purpose depended on the ability to interpret historical forces aright. The greater this ability, the more circumscribed human choice became

(if it were rational) ; but at the same time the greater the influence of conscious action.

Marx's views on working-class politics received concrete shape during the period of the First International, in particular in the course of his controversy with the Anarchists.* The Anarchists, starting not from the basis of Historical Materialism but from certain ethical postulates, oscillated between a tendency to conspiratorial methods for waging war on the State by guerilla tactics crowned by a final *coup* and a belief in the spontaneity of the masses of the population, unled and undisciplined and unorganised, to create a new society based on voluntary association. In effect, they were extreme liberal democrats who desired to destroy capitalism and with it the State because these conflicted with their libertarian ideal. Politics for them consisted in conspiratorial activity against authority and disappeared with the disappearance of the State. Marx's conception of a proletarian political movement had nothing to do either with conspiratorial "Blanquism" or with a Utopian "spontaneity." This movement he conceived of as a mass movement. To some extent it would be mixed in its class composition, embracing *petit-bourgeois* and middle-class elements whom circumstances drove into a position of hostility to the ruling class, such as rent-racked and debt-ridden peasantry or other small producers, declassed intellectuals, and small salaried and professional men. But the spontaneous action of such a mass movement could not suffice, if only because it was heterogeneous in its class composition and mainly unconscious rather than conscious in its motivation. To trust historical creation

* The best detailed account available in English of these issues is to be found in G. M. Stekloff's *History of the First International* (Martin Lawrence).

to "spontaneity" would be to rest on a crude determinism—a kind of historical behaviourism reducing politics to a series of reflex-actions. The political movement, while being a mass movement, required a conscious and organised lead. This conscious element—the brain and nerve-centres of the movement—was the proletarian Party.

What was to be the nature and function of this Party? Was it to be a conspiratorial organisation such as the Anarchists conceived? Or was it, on the other hand, to be a propagandist and electoral organisation, preaching a certain programme of final aims? Many maintained that the socialist purity of the Party could only be preserved if it refused to tarnish its programme with agitation for petty reforms. But to Marx's view the Party was to be neither of these things. In either of these forms it would be something separate from the mass movement, largely indifferent to it: an abstraction standing above the battle of contemporary historical forces. This latter comprised a series of struggles over immediate concrete issues, often for purely limited and sectional aims—a wage-dispute, an agitation for legal rights of free speech or organisation or for factory legislation. If the politics of the Party was to be a concrete thing, it must take these concrete sectional issues as its constituent elements, as a chemist must take elements that are to hand and know by acquaintance how to handle them before he can produce a new synthetic compound. At the same time, to confine one's horizon to such purely sectional boundaries (the so-called "economism" of later Russian discussion) or to limit politics to such immediate ends would be to relapse into opportunism—to fail to pass over from the unconscious to the conscious or to raise current history from the blind to the purposeful.

Party strategy was only successful in so far as it continually fused immediate aims with final purpose and raised sectional issues on to a more general plane. Politics differed from sectional struggles (e.g. "industrial action") as the general from the particular. The latter passed over into the former when they began to assume a *class* character. In turn, politics became revolutionary politics when the struggle for immediate aims passed over into the struggle for power—the most acute phase of class struggle which inevitably implied a contest with the State. The programme of the Party, the basis of membership, must be a programme of final objectives; and in this strict unity and clarity must be preserved. But the basis on which the Party gathered round its large masses of the population must be a series of concrete and continually changing partial demands.

It is significant that the issue on which Lenin broke with his fellow social-democrats at the Brussels Congress of 1903—the issue on which the separation of Bolsheviks from Mensheviks arose—consisted in this crucial definition of a proletarian Party and its rôle. At first sight the issue seems a purely verbal matter, and Lenin's insistence appears a tiresome, doctrinaire "straining at gnats." But small as was the verbal difference of definition, the matter at issue was a crucial one. Roughly it was an issue between a broad and a narrow basis of Party membership: between a mixed and a pure Party composition. The Mensheviks wished to admit to the Party any who accepted the Party programme; and it was to this suggestion that Lenin made his famous retort, embodying a fundamental difference of conception: "It would be far better that ten men who worked (men who really worked and were not striving for office) should not

call themselves members of the Party than that one chatterbox should have the right and opportunity to become a member." The basis of Party membership he desired to be, not mere verbal acceptance of a creed, but justification by work. The immediate practical question was that there were springing up in various parts of Russia diverse forms of revolutionary organisation for particular activities—students' groups, study circles, trade unions and strike committees. The Mensheviks desired that all of these should be embraced within the Party. But to Lenin it was sufficient that members of the Party, here one, here two or three, should participate in these groups and secure influence in their activities. The groups themselves could desirably remain separate as sectional "contact" organisations, fighting for particular ends, through which large masses could be mobilised under the leadership of the Party. Indeed, it was essential that such groups should remain separate, lest the composition of the Party should be diluted by uncertain and vacillating elements.

It followed logically from this conception that the Bolshevik Party should grow as a highly select, disciplined and centralised organisation. Yet, it was not Lenin's idea that the Party should be a semi-military body, taking orders from a supreme bureaucracy, as for example the Fascist parties of Italy or Germany. The Party must be democratic, not merely in a formal, elective sense, but in the active sense that every matter of policy must receive full discussion throughout the organisation before decision was made. Only so could it be a live and intelligent developing organism and not an encrusted bureaucratic machine. At the same time, once the period of discussion was over, there must be complete unity in carrying out the executive orders necessary to carry that decision into effect.

Once a political decision had been taken, the decision of the Party must be that of all its members and there must be no individual reservations. The matter had already been foreshadowed in the final dispute which split the First International at its Hague Conference in 1872. The Anarchists and their supporters had favoured a federal basis, with autonomous local associations ; and they had charged Marx and the central committee in London with "centralism" and dictatorial practices. Marx retorted by emphasising the need for centralised organisation to secure unity of activity. The connection between this issue and Lenin's more explicit concept of "democratic centralism" is clear, and has very much greater importance in the development of political notions, in particular as embodiment of the unity of theory and practice, than is customarily observed. For Lenin, as for Marx, the building of such a Party was the first essential of working-class politics. Even in the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution (e.g. Russia 1905 and March 1917) it was essential for such a proletarian Party to secure the lead of the movement (even if only, at the moment, under the banner of purely bourgeois-democratic demands) and to cement a class alliance with sections of the *petit-bourgeoisie* (e.g. the peasant masses) as the sole assurance that this revolt against absolutism, instead of relapsing into Thermidor and Bonapartism, would go forward to an October 1917. But least of all was a Party, thus conceived, a matter simply of nomination-forms ; only an exaggerated faith in historical spontaneity could see it as created overnight on the eve of great events. Its creation was itself an historical process, building a tradition, woven of theory and experience, and striking roots deep into the mass movement, without which it must be extra-historical and sterile.

VI

SOCIALIST THEORY IN GREAT BRITAIN

UNLIKE continental Socialism, the theory which has dominated the official Labour movement in England has been consistently non-Marxian. It has prided itself on an empirical approach to special problems and has even made a virtue of eclecticism. Such Marxian strands as there were in pre-war English Socialism—in the Labour College movement and in syndicalist industrial unionism—were at best of a narrow “economist” kind, at their worst aridly sectarian. Yet, I believe, the outstanding fact of contemporary political thought in England is that Socialism, except in its Marxian interpretation, is losing, or has even lost, significance as a distinctive trend of thought and doctrine. Traditional Fabian Socialism flourished as an anti-*laissez-faire* doctrine of State-ism. The “capitalism” which it attacked had none of the class significance that it has in its Marxian definition: it was synonymous simply with the principle of economic individualism, embodied in certain forms of business enterprise which flourished in the conditions of nineteenth-century small-scale production. Such “socialism” is not, in the Marxian sense, an anti-capitalist doctrine: it is merely an advocacy of corporate *versus* individual enterprise and a glorification of the capitalist State. But to-day, as the Liberal Industrial

Report has well put it, the nineteenth-century issue of Socialism *versus* Individualism is largely obsolete. In this age of monopoly and large-scale production capitalism has already evolved through a series of half-way houses towards the Fabian ideal of the public corporation. It is strange that it should have seemed so novel, yet so apposite, a reflection when the Liberal Industrial Report pointed out that the rise of the semi-public corporation* (like the Bank of England, the railway companies and the Port of London Authority) had made the issue of State *versus* individual enterprise a matter, not of fundamental principle, but a matter of subordinate details of administrative convenience—a matter of degree like the issue between low and high-tariff parties or an extra twopence on beer or a shilling on the income tax. Matters such as these may give rise to an electoral caucus, a mushroom "newspaper party," a political society for conducting lobby-intrigue. But who would seriously treat such ephemeral issues as the *raison d'être* of an historical movement? Who would reasonably maintain that the appointment of the directors of the Bank of England by the Treasury to-day would make any more than a difference of detail and of form? Yet it is a minor issue of administrative form such as this that the contest of socialism *versus* capitalism, in its non-Marxian connotation, has become.

It is true that interest in Russia's Five-Year Plan is stimulating a certain revival of Fabianism in the shape of much talk and paper schemes for "economic planning" under the *ægis* of the State. Yet this attempt to shout "socialism" a little louder and more

* The Report declared that "measured by the amount of capital involved . . . two-thirds of what could be called the large-scale undertakings of the country" are of the type of the semi-public corporation (p. 74).

provocatively than before changes the real issue not one whit—makes it no degree more fundamental. In the general insistence on the need for “planning,” are we not “all socialists now”—from Sir Basil Blackett and the *Week-End Review* to Mr. Fenner Brockway’s “Five-Year Plan for Britain”? In so far as this new movement contains anything more than the old Stateism, it is as an attempt to “adapt” Russian ideas and institutions in an impermissibly unhistorical and eclectic way. To seek to graft the notions and methods of Russia’s Five-Year Plan ready-made to England is to neglect its significance as the creation of an historical process (a Russian Five-Year Plan would have been impossible in the Russia of 1917 or even of 1921). It neglects the fact that the elements in an historical epoch have significance as wholes: a significance which they lose when separated abstractly into their constituent parts. To conceive Russia’s Five-Year Plan apart from the new social complex which the Russian Revolution has created is a crowning example of impermissible abstraction of this kind. And if the ideas of Soviet Planned Economy are to be abstractly “adapted” to the different social complex of contemporary England—to the existing class relationship and the existing balance of class power; in short, abstracted from the proletarian revolution—then the degree of adaptation required seems necessarily to reduce it again to a matter simply of continuity of existing forms such as the Liberal Report described.

What else of Socialism is there as a distinctive body of political principle? As the frontiers of Liberalism and Conservatism have faded with the passing of the old pre-war issues, so to-day the parti-walls which separate the Labour Party from the older bourgeois groupings have become little more than paper. The position

in superficial respects bears a striking resemblance to the Parliamentary situation a century ago, when the old Whig *versus* Tory issue had become an anachronism and had left the old party structures hollow crumbling shells. True, there are schools of thought which seek to build a principle of socialism on certain ethical postulates—on the postulate of social equality or industrial democracy or the ethical value of each family owning its spinning-wheel and its acre and a cow. But schools of this kind may always be legion, limited only by æsthetic invention. On such ethical postulates the most elaborate social Utopias may be constructed, as those of a Saint Simon or a Fourier or a William Morris, and clubs and societies formed to preach and demonstrate their worth. But such trends of thought bear no necessary relation to historical actuality. Seldom are they more than John the Baptists to a main movement which alone is historically significant. More often they are simply noisy camp-followers of forces with which they have only an ephemeral connection.

The "crisis" in socialist theory to-day seems a genuine one, and as significant, if less noticed, as the disintegration of moral consciousness in the official Labour movement. Indeed, this "crisis" of socialist theory seems to be part of a more general "crisis" of thought: perhaps, the *fin de siècle* in the ideology of an epoch. In such circumstances the mind, sceptical of its old gods, turns eagerly to some new thing. There are even signs to-day of a peculiarly English type of Marxism, seeking to give *bouquet* to a poor vintage by taking "valuable ideas" from Marxism and eclectically mixing them with the traditional concepts of English thought. In these fatalistic days when various species of "economic interpretation of history" are growing fashionable there is even a pronounced

eagerness to welcome Marxism as providing (in Croce's words), not a philosophy of history, but certain useful "canons of interpretation." There is even a growing tendency to employ the concept of "class" and of "exploitation," at least in *salon* conversation, and to compose an indictment of capitalism in these terms. An example of this tendency is a significant and provocative piece of writing by a young Oxford historian, *Politics and the Younger Generation*, by A. L. Rowse. Here Marxism, with its emphasis on "class" and on the economic factor, is ingeniously mated as a "canon of interpretation" with ethical postulates about social equality and social control; and the ideology of the Russian Revolution is used as *rococo* enrichment to the organic continuity of historical processes and the English racial genius for "the inevitability of gradualism." Here we have "English Marxism" in its finest Oxford manner; and Mr. Rowse may well find himself soon surrounded by a whole "school."

To argue with eclecticism elevated to a philosophy is impossible, precisely because there is no common criterion where the charge of inconsistency has no sting. One can only affirm one's belief that thought must have unity to have meaning,* and deplore the added confusion which such an essentially eclectic treatment seems destined to bring. Moreover, it seems destined to achieve nothing more, except in reverse order, than continental Revisionism has already done; and this, as we have seen, left of Marxian politics little but Fabian experimentalism. It is characteristic of

* Mr. Rowse would appear to defend an eclectic method as being in the spirit of Marxian dialectic (e.g. pp. 242 *et seq.*). But there is nothing in the dialectic either of Hegel or Marx that glorifies an attempt deliberately to *think* contradictions. So soon as contradiction is explicit, thought can hold it no longer and must pass to a new synthesis: it cannot rest content with a contradictory position.

Revisionism of either type that it seeks to divide Marxism as history from Marxism as politics, even frequently to cut Marxian economics in half, discarding the concept of exploitation. The focus of the matter is usually the Marxian theory of the State, which is rejected as out of date (as Kautsky has it, declaring that Marx was referring only to the old feudal-militarist State) or as an historical half-truth. Consequently, for Revisionism Marxism may remain an academic pursuit—a canon for interpreting past history; but it has no place as a basis for a contemporary political movement.

But the essence of Marxism is that it cannot be treated in this piecemeal way. The essence of its claim is as a unity, in which history and politics, the theory of the State and the critique of Political Economy are interdependent parts of a conceptual whole. Each separately loses most of its meaning. Marxism must be accepted in the round or it must be rejected as inconsistent: there is immediately no third way. That is the alternative which the thought of this generation, it seems, inevitably must face and take its choice. Yet, except in terms of Marxism I believe that Socialism, as other than a Utopian pursuit, can have no distinctive definition in the contemporary world. Unless Socialism can be defined realistically as the politics of an exploited proletariat, an historical *raison d'être* is hard to find for it, adequate to fashion it into a significant historical movement with an ideology and a new moral consciousness creative of a new epoch. Indeed, apart from Historical Materialism, what other than a petulant desire for newness should demand a transformation of the basis of the existing social order? Save as Marxist Socialism, or Communism, Socialism seems emphatically to have no future as an historical force.

Suppose that we put Marxism to the test as a tool of interpretation of current history : what do we find ? In a word it is, of course, hard to say anything which does not sound dogmatic and questionable ; and such discussion, conducted summarily, so easily degenerates into a mutual repartee of " I told you so." But I think it is hard to deny that of most of the significant events of recent history the Marxist has made sense where ordinary bourgeois thought has made wrong forecast or has found only bewilderment. Among those who held some picture of the future, was it Marx or Nassau Senior, Bentham and James and J. S. Mill who were responsible for placing in relief what have proved to be the two dominant features of twentieth-century economy—the giant trust and the working-class movement ? When we look at the contemporary world, which forecast seems closer to actuality—a forecast of growing crises and instability, or the forecast of a broadening out of the nineteenth century into a future of prosperity, economic harmonies and social fraternity ? Has not the recognised *motif* of modern Imperialism come to be precisely that which the Marxist was emphasising twenty years ago ? Was the pre-war Marxist analysis of capitalism and war or that of *The Great Illusion* the more realistic ? Did the outcome of the war in the Versailles settlement justify the majority of European *savants* who interpreted the war as an ideal rivalry, a holy war to end war, in which the motives (at least of his own side) were uncommercial and pure ? Or have subsequent events justified Lenin and Liebknecht in describing it as a predatory war of rival imperialisms ? And who characterised most accurately the historical rôle of the League of Nations ? Did Lenin or the traditional historians of Empire and the apostles of " East is East and West is West " more

appropriately foreshadow recent developments in India and in China? Did not bourgeois observers right up to the eve of October 1917 rigorously deny any place to the conception of a proletarian revolution? Still less would they have dreamed in wildest delirium of the creative power as well as the lasting power which it has shown over fourteen years. Has not every species of traditional thought, for all its superior equipment, shown a crowning ineptitude in interpretation and in forecast at each turn of Russian events over those fourteen years—a haughty ineptitude fast turning to bewilderment and paralysis before the startling paradoxes of the present moment? There are points in history when traditional concepts come into conflict with contemporary experience; and at such times wise men think that history has gone mad. But it is thought, not history, that is unreasonable, and only the barrenness of thought that thinks otherwise.

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