

## HOW MODERN CIVILISATION MAY DECLINE

*A Graphic Warning Provided by the Inca Planned Economy*

Although the Planned Economy is currently presented as the modern solution for economic problems it is, in fact, a practice to which governments at all times have had recourse. The stagnant societies of Egypt and of Babylon could be quoted to illustrate this, but the Inca empire is probably the most perfect example known to history. Thus is introduced, in an editorial foreword, the latest of the excellently produced pamphlets issued by the *Association de la Libre Entreprise\**, a study by the eminent historian Louis Baudin of the Inca system established over what is now Peru and parts of Bolivia and the Argentine, as it was revealed to the Spaniards who came with Pizarro.

The Incas themselves first appeared on the high plateau country where modern Peru and Bolivia meet. They were evidently more imaginative and enterprising than their neighbours. They claimed to be of divine origin, "Children of the Sun," and their leader united in himself all spiritual as well as political authority. Thus, once his dominion had been accepted, his regulations were not likely to be disrupted by any religious "splinter groups" obsessed with the notion that each person is immediately responsible to God for an immortal soul. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the Incas had consolidated their system over twelve million Indians inhabiting a country five times the extent of France, all administration being centralised in the capital, Cuzco.

Possibly these Peruvian Indians were inherently disposed to submission. On the other hand, men of similar stock, such as the Aymaras of Bolivia and the Araucanians of Chile, showed an independent and unconquerable spirit. At any rate the Peruvians in their land system showed themselves to be, as M. Baudin points out, similar to all other primitive races. There was individual or family possession of the dwelling and its immediate site; common use of woods and pastures, and individual use of strips or plots of cultivable land, periodically re-distributed to ensure equal opportunity.

This was the system on which the Inca officials built their Planned Economy, and it started, of course, with the collection of statistics. Families dispersed during the conquest were collected in groups of ten, the head of one family being appointed overseer; these were again grouped in collections of 50, 100, 500, 1,000, 10,000, and 40,000. Meanwhile land was being surveyed and its fertility estimated by experts so that plots could be marked out, each capable of supplying the bare necessities of one person. These were then allocated to families of cultivators and in addition plots were given to officials, soldiers, artisans and all others who by the duties allotted to them would be unable to cultivate their own land. Finally, larger divisions were allocated to "the Inca" and "the Sun"—in other words to the supreme Planner and his ecclesiastical or propaganda department.

The cultivators worked their own plots and joined in communal cultivation of the other land. Idleness was severely punished; every house was uniform in size, construction and furniture; food and meals also were regulated; all movement of population was for-

\* 38 Avenue Hoche, Paris (8), 15 francs.

bidden. Everyone was constantly subject to supervision by overseers, each family being obliged to leave the door open for this purpose. But the overseers were themselves subject to the strictest supervision and obliged to render returns to an extraordinary degree of accuracy, arithmetical mistakes being punished with death. Although for some purposes the authorities at Cuzco dealt collectively with a district, on most occasions orders emanated from, and returns were made to, the capital direct. Writing was apparently unknown, but statistics were compiled by a highly developed system of tying knots in cords of different colours. The habit of furnishing statistics had become so ingrained that after the Spanish conquest penitents appeared at confession carrying cords knotted according to the number of their sins.

Each cultivator maintained himself from the produce of his holding, the produce of the other plots being collected in storehouses so numerous that these buildings remain the most prevalent evidence to-day of the Inca régime. These stores provided food for the immense armies of officials in the capital, the soldiers, the artisans working under official supervision, the carriers and messengers, the transporters of guano manure and the builders of roads, forts, temples and palaces for the Incas and their ministers. They also provided a reserve in case of famine or any miscalculation on the part of the Planners. In fact, the reserve was so large that great quantities of food used to become rotten. The system implied a static system of agriculture confined to the production, as far as possible, of food that could be stored for long periods. Under planned consumption uniformity of diet and other requirements was inevitable; anything like luxury or variety could only be provided—without disrupting the organisation—for a small proportion such as the Inca and his highest officials and ecclesiastics. Increase of population was offset by assembling the surplus into the regulation groups and sending them to settle on the confines of the empire, where, it seems, land capable of cultivation was always available.

The Planners made careful provision for what might be termed the necessities of human nature. At regulated intervals, on instructions from the appropriate authority and supervised by the overseer, the whole community would indulge in wholesale drunkenness and unrestricted debauchery.

Although the empire was sometimes disturbed by conflicts within the imperial family these did not interfere with the bureaucratic machine. The mass of the people showed no dissatisfaction with their lot and held obedience to authority in the highest esteem. Four hundred years afterwards their character has changed very little. Perhaps the qualities brought forth by self-reliance are more difficult to acquire than we think, and much more quickly lost.

On analysing the regulations of the Incas one is impressed by their success in achieving completely what modern Planners find so difficult to accomplish even in part. Full employment was universal; the profit motive was eliminated together with private ownership of capital; middlemen and competition

were abolished. Although money was not in use everyone participated in an all-embracing savings movement, personal saving becoming as unnecessary as it was impossible. Social security was established to such an extent that the exercise of foresight, thrift or risk was forgotten. Uniformity of food, houses, clothes and manner of life, with complete immobility of population enabled the directors to plan consumption with mathematical precision. Here was a civilisation(?) functioning without exchange in any recognisable meaning of that word, all "surplus" production going into the common pool for redistribution according to "the national interest." But the Incas' crowning success was to mould the character of the people to suit the Plan. The Spanish conquerors found the Indians passive, stupid and apathetic to a degree almost beyond description. They neither resented injuries nor reciprocated

benefits. No germ of personality, initiative or comradeship survived. Personal charity was dead. Each family remained indifferent to the misfortunes of its neighbour; sons and daughters regarded the illness and death of parents with complete detachment. Even the children did not smile.

And the outcome of this Planning success? In 1532 a band of Spanish adventurers appeared on the coast, in number so small they could all have been accommodated in three London omnibuses. They were indisciplined, constantly at odds with each other, and their leader was a ruffian who could neither read nor write. But their character had been formed in the unplanned chaos of a Spain which had scarcely fought itself free of foreign domination. By the following November Cuzco and its emperor were in their control and twelve million Planees lay hopelessly at their mercy.

F. D. P.

## RESIST COERCION AND REPEAL RESTRICTIONS

"The vice of Socialism in all its degrees is its want of radicalism, of going to the root," wrote Henry George in *The Condition of Labour*, and he made it clear that Protectionism is a degree of Socialism. Of recent years when socialistic proposals have had a virtual monopoly of popular attention a re-statement of the Radical case has been long overdue. For that reason alone *The Abominable No-Man*, by Oliver Smedley, recently issued by Alexander Publications\*, is welcome, but the merits of the little book itself are so high that its wide circulation would do much to dissipate loose thinking and infuse a healthy atmosphere of common sense into social controversy. In racy and vigorous style, with dashes of humour that never detract from his evident sincerity, Mr. Smedley has put the Radical case in a form particularly calculated to provoke and inspire. His exposure of current fallacies leads up to a programme of the immediate tasks that demand the attention of Radicals to-day. This programme is entitled "The Cheap Food Policy," but that description falls somewhat short of the ultimate objective, which is "to liberate the British people" and thus "bend the whole course of history."

Mr. Smedley gives some striking illustrations of the Radical character. "Radicals are not 'yes-men.' They are 'no-men'; the abominable 'no-men' of England. They are against the big battalions, concentrations of power, monopolies, vested interests, landlordism . . . They burn with a sense of injustice . . . They are not afraid of holding outrageous views . . . They refuse to sign census forms . . . They get sent to prison on matters of conscience . . . They insist in believing that what is morally wrong cannot be politically right."

Such characteristics make up a consistent character, but Mr. Smedley says, "it is not possible to define Radicalism which may take an entirely different form from one generation to the next." Perhaps this is liable to be misconstrued. Lady Megan Lloyd George is not the only person who in recent years has confounded Radicalism with paternalism.

"Radical: pertaining to the root or origin," says the dictionary, and although Radicals have not always

been consistent the record shows that they have on the whole followed their essential principle more closely than more regimented groups have followed theirs. To attack a social problem at its root is to simplify the whole question. Instead of proposing more interference to offset the effects of earlier interference, it is the Radical task to remove the original interference and provide for equal freedom. The Radical way is, therefore, to simplify not multiply legislation. Accordingly, the earlier English Radicals *repealed* legal restriction upon freedom of speech and discussion, *repealed* legal disabilities imposed on Non-conformists, Roman Catholics and Jews, *repealed* the legal prerogatives of slaveholders, prelates and closed corporations, *repealed* the Corn Laws and other economic privileges granted to sectional interests. They even succeeded for a time in repealing the Income Tax and always sought to reduce taxation and government expenditure to a minimum. To repeal the present clumsy and complex methods of taxation in favour of a simple and just method is obviously an essential Radical task. Although oppression and its ally, privilege, change their clothes according to the fashion of the age, although they are patronised sometimes by the many, sometimes by the few, they never change their essential character and the Radical task is always to penetrate their disguise and fight them. Never have these evils sheltered under a more disarming veil than the Protectionist Welfare State of to-day and nothing could be less Radical than this conception.

Under "Points of Attack" Mr. Smedley reviews Marx's ideas and their influence; Lord Beaverbrook and "the mean and sordid philosophy of Imperial Preference"; Lord Beveridge's propaganda for the Welfare State and World Government; Economic Planning; the "National Union of Bellyachers," *alias* the National Farmers' Union; and Compulsory National Service. Each analysis invites one to read it for the attractive style and then keep it at hand for reference to the up-to-date facts and figures. It is salutary to be reminded how Commonwealth countries by imposing higher duties on imports from America than from the United Kingdom are able to make a fulsome gesture of Imperial Preference while still preventing British goods from entering their ports

\* 4 Angel Court, Throgmorton Street, London, E.C.2. 2s. 6d.