reliant, small enterpriser, seeking freedom for himself and privileges from none. And how did the law encourage him? It seems he was unable to produce the elaborate records of his transactions which the tax-collectors required. The nature of his business would hardly afford his organising a special department such as larger and more politically-influential undertakings maintain. The inspector assessed his income as £365. He appealed and the figure was reduced to £182. "He made payments as and when he could." Then his parents died and he had to pay £20 funeral expenses. Other men, returning from the war with the same urge for independence, and frustrated in so many other directions, caused unusual competition in the window-cleaning business. He was unable to keep up his income-tax payments. The tax-collectors sued him once; they sued him again. He finally became bankrupt. At Chelmsford Bankruptcy Court he stated he still wanted to carry on window-cleaning on his own account, and would "try to pay the Official Receiver in respect of the latter's interest in his equipment, *estimated value*, £5."

Of all the iniquities that man has inflicted upon his fellow-men what can be more ruthless, implacable and devastating than taxation as at present levied? Its ultimate victims are not those in high places; they are the most inarticulate, the most politically--defenceless and the most useful among us. It is not necessary to indulge in that sweeping condemnation of politicians which so often leaves only cynicism in its train, but if we would enlist saviours for all that is worthy in our society we should turn our eyes not so much to the declarations of the few as to the sufferings of the many. It is only by accident and partially that the veil is sometimes lifted. We need another Dickens or Coppée to paint these sufferings and their cause in words which will evoke a sympathy at present lacking. And let us have these stories every day at nine o'clock over the B.B.C.; they would constitute news of infinitely greater importance than the statistics listeners usually have to endure. Then the public conscience might call a halt to the process by which society seems bent on turning potential saviours into deadly enemies.

SLAVE SOCIETIES IN THE MAKING

By an Eastern Europe Georgeist now resident in Italy

THE methods of reconstruction in both divisions of Europe appear to take the form, not of raising the standard of life, but increasing the war potential—as if propaganda to convince the world of the superiority of the system could be more important than the results of applying it. The Eastern governments enjoy a monopoly of propaganda and information, but it would be suicidal for parliamentary States to apply the same method. One-sided demagogy must be defeated by the moral strength which comes of a system based on justice and truth.

Statistics are flung like projectiles from both sides, confusing the people's judgment and preventing them from clarifying their ideas. The Soviets do not publish facts, only percentual changes which cannot be verified. In the absence of an opposition and of freedom to criticise, the data of the satellite States also cannot be verified. It is not the truth of the report that matters, only its propaganda value. The governments decide what shall be publicly known. For example, where savings are stagnant or diminishing, reports are suspended; where prisoners of war, despite promises, are not sent home, no more figures are given; if there is great unemployment, data on this subject are no longer published.

In a Socialist economy the meaning of figures is changed. If, for example, a government can arbitrarily fix prices and wages, the nationalised industries which in private hands would have shown a deficit can be made to show a profit. If the State disposes entirely of the national wealth and income, it can expend more on cultural and social objects than another State whose citizens satisfy their demands according to their own wishes and with their own money.

The preliminary condition for a long-term State investment plan is the enforcement of exorbitant saving; and foreign trade must also be made to serve by reducing consumption imports as much as possible in favour of those required for production. When a poor country undertakes such a programme it can be fulfilled only by an omnipotent government not subject to control by a real parliament with opposition parties free to criticise. If the parliament could choose another government the plan would collapse. If the man in the street was free to decide how much he would save there would be too little saving, or none. If the workers could strike, they would endanger the prescribed programme of production. If private persons could decide how much and where they would invest their money, the State investment plans would be endangered. If trade unions could bargain freely on working conditions, if men were free to join independent unions, or to change their jobs, the workers could not be coerced to provide the maximum output. If the necessity for foreign credits should arise, a strict Socialist policy would become impossible.

The government is thus in a vicious circle. It cannot decide to stop at a given point, it must incessantly tighten the rope around its people. Every measure involves another. Any private enterprise which remains cannot defend itself against the anti-capitalist slogans, the pressure of the workers and the State officials. Surrounded with distrust, it knows its days are numbered. The capitalist or entrepreneur no longer invests, he tries to save his money and move it away. Nobody puts his savings in a bank; he does not want to declare what wealth he has, and he fears inflation, confiscation or taxation. Saving is therefore directed to household goods, gold or foreign money, or it ceases altogether. The government is compelled to go faster on the way of socialisation. It considers the few private concerns as hindrances, very difficult to control. It tries to nationalise almost everything. But the greater the degree of nationalisation the more difficult it is to pay compensation. The more the confiscations, the more embittered are the citizens; the more the sacrifices demanded of the workers, the greater their discontent. So the armed forces must be strengthened, the spy system enlarged, the judges' independence abolished. Impelled by the logic of these events, some governments of Eastern Europe have in a few years built up a dictatorship more complete than Hitlerism itself; the State itself becoming the only large-scale employer or entrepreneur. And under such a system spiritual life also must be ruled completely by the State.

It is easier in a rich country for the State to take over the investment of 20 per cent. of the national income than, in a poor country, to take over only 10 per cent.; and in the poor countries of Eastern Europe the State is investing more than 10 per cent. Despite promises that their burdens will yield fruit in the future the people are dissatisfied. They get tired of privations. Hence arises the need for increasing threats and stimulants. It is necessary to make the people believe they are living better than they lived in the past or than other people are living to-day.

In the Soviets there was great misery before Bolshevism, and a whole generation has grown up under the new régime. But where living conditions were relatively better not so long ago the possibility of comparing present with past conditions, or those in other countries must not arise. Hence a rigid censure of the Press, the movies, theatres, broadcasting and books. Eastern Europe has gone even further, having nationalised the radio, the film industry, the great printing and publishing houses, the paper mills, the schools and most of the theatres. Newsprint is allocated by the government; the government parties own the newspapers. "Fascist" books are confiscated—and anything anti-Bolshevist is called Fascist. Foreign papers and books can be imported only by permission of the government and State bank. Foreign news is controlled; listening to "enemy" broadcasts is forbidden and dangerous; new radio receivers are designed only for home broadcasts. Communication with foreigners is risky at home; abroad it is impossible as only official travelling is allowed. Letters and telephones are censored.

As there are still some East Europeans who were acquainted with foreign conditions it is necessary to disseminate news of the rapid deterioration of world conditions—outside the Soviet orbit. The ever-growing tide of fugitives from the East shows that so far this policy has not had much success.

For most of the antagonists of Communism and dictatorship this is enough. But, according to our principles we must go further. As the growing figures of German production could blind only those without principles, so we must not base our condemnation or approval of a system on statistics, true or false. Even supposing them to be true we must first enquire: What do the people pay for them? Our conviction that the greater the liberty, the greater must be the well-being is not a matter of statistics. When people to-day are impressed by figures issued by dictatorial governments we may warn them by the example of Hitlerism. Growing numbers are often used to conceal wrong principles.

We admit that parliamentary governments must also use propaganda; but in this respect they are in an inferior position; they cannot use the same weapons as their adversaries. They must therefore choose another direction of attack. False theories and demagogy are widespread in the West also; but here lies and errors can still be defeated; suppressed truth can be brought to light. The final victory here is with the propaganda which tells the whole truth, pleasant or unpleasant.

If we ask: Who are those who condemn the system outlined above? we see several groups. We find politicians who, when they were in power, condemned and attacked freedom of trade, free enterprise, and Western ideals with the same words Communists use now; we find economists who increased State interference and tried to abolish the remnants of economic freedom; we find Fascists who confiscated the property and ruined the existence of various groups on the ground of race, religion or language. (That explains how easily former Nazis became Communists.) We find Social Democrats who, before they fled, played a leading part in confiscatory socialisation; Czechs who used the weapon of collective responsibility against millions of Germans and Hungarians, and are now themselves the victims of collective responsibility; capitalists and industrialists who expropriated their compatriots through monopolies granted them by the State; great landowners who feared taxation of land values more than Communism; finance experts who, in their taxation mania, inflicted mortal wounds on private enterprise and increased the people's trend to seek refuge in State employment. And we find experts in social-economics who made the people believe that security comes before freedom and is opposed to it.

It is probable that Russia could have subdued all these people, whatever their former social systems and state of mind. But if the idea of freedom and its indivisibility had not faded or vanished from these peoples they would now perhaps show greater resistance in defending their human dignity. The full meaning of the word "freedom" is, of course, known only to a handful of men in those countries, as in others, and their voices were too weak to be heard among the roaring of slogans.

It would be easy to draw a parallel between the East and the West, but we think it unnecessary at the end of a long article. To readers of LAND & LIBERTY the conclusions must be evident. Many people in the East are still hoping that the West, on its way towards collectivism, can stop at a point where the almighty State does not destroy personal freedom and civil liberties; that Western evolution will proceed within the limits of the law, the constitution and humanity, and that, in the long run, the material and moral strength of the West will win a peaceful victory. The Georgeists in these countries are more sceptical. They know that the Western peoples still have the right of self-determination, to choose between right and wrong; but they fear that the West is travelling in the same direction as that which has led the peoples of Eastern Europe to where they are now suffering.

R. M.

At the Annual Parish Meeting (*Chester Chronicle*, March 26) the chairman spoke of the Council's unsuccessful effort to purchase the Town Hall, really a privately-owned building, for a village hall. He mentioned that the owners of the land behind, so necessary for future improvements, had refused to sell. Mr. J. Williams spoke of the blank refusal to all their negotiations for land, and added that the village hall question had been constantly considered. Other land was most difficult to obtain.

The Listener (March 10) reviewer of Sir Malcolm Lyall Darling's book on social conditions in India, *At Freedom's Door*, published by the Oxford University Press, says: "What the peasant wants even more than freedom is, the author insists, security, justice and 'cherishing.' After a stay in some villages of the United Provinces this reviewer would say emphatically that what the peasant, in that region and in many others, chiefly wanted was liberation from the oppressions of their landlords. This book, as shrewd in its observations as it is readable, deserves to rank with the record of Arthur Young's travels in France on the eve of the Revolution."