

ROADS TO AND FROM COMMUNISM

It is almost a commonplace to say that the threat from Moscow is more dangerous in the sphere of ideas than in a strictly material sense. But it is a commonplace so important that it needs repetition. On a paper comparison of population and industrial development the United States and its dependencies appear far stronger than Russia and its satellites. But history is full of examples to show that in a contest of endurance the balance of material advantage soon shifts to the side of those who feel, *rightly or wrongly*, that there is a future worthy of present sacrifices. This does not imply absolute confidence on one side and entire lack of it on the other; the comparison is relative. The Russian people are probably by no means so contented as their Government would have us believe, but this is true of the people subject to any government. There is no evidence to show that the Russians, contented or not, have any leanings towards Western social systems. It cannot be denied that among all the Western States there exist in considerable numbers adherents of the "Communism that proclaims its gospel with a militant enthusiasm which expects to conquer the world," to quote the Lambeth Encyclical.

REAPING THE HARVEST

Mr. Chiffley, the Labour Prime Minister of Australia, must have many contacts among highly placed members of our own Government. Basing his opinion, according to the *Manchester Guardian* of September 2nd, on private correspondence and official documents, he declared: "European countries cannot stand any more wars—and that includes Britain." And it is evident that he was thinking in terms of *morale*, for he goes on to say, "If Europe were contented and had decent living standards Communism would have no foothold. Europe to-day is reaping the harvest from seeds sown *through hundreds of years*."

An examination of the Encyclical Letter from the Lambeth Conference shows misgivings very similar to those expressed by Mr. Chiffley, and this document, apart from its theological importance, is probably as authoritative and representative an expression of responsible opinion as anyone could quote. It recognises that "The social order is all the time being made by the thoughts men think. The battle is between that faith by which man is set free, and the creeds of materialism and the will to power, by which he is enslaved."

ANSWER THE MARXIAN CHALLENGE

To many people, Communism appears as a protest against social injustice. It seems to have inherited a concern for the depressed and downtrodden. It is a judgment on society. One of the gravest of modern problems is to secure that there shall be enough of the necessities of life for all. "But the solution," the Lambeth Encyclical says, "must not infringe man's personal freedom, for God has given man responsibility. To exercise it, he must have freedom, security of life and person, the right to work, to bring up a family, and to possess personal property. . . ." The challenge of Marxian Communism can be met only by "fearless witness against political, social and economic injustice," leading to "the example of a better way" which must abjure not only the Communistic will to power, but "other forms of economic domination, characteristic of our Western society, which

show something of the same ruthlessness and do not exhibit any clearer recognition of the moral law."

The above extracts from various parts of the Encyclical and Resolutions of the Conference summarise its political and economic recommendations. For the reasons already given we believe no task for any citizen could be more important than to translate these recommendations into practical measures. And he cannot do this by proxy; he must do this independently of the experts, journalists and politicians he so often allows to think for him. If delegated thinking could save us, the seeds of Communism would never have been sown. Social relationships depend on justice, and the application of justice depends upon the laws for which every man is responsible by his ability to think clearly.

Logical inconsistency is moral weakness. When a society tolerates this weakness in its leaders that society is not dealing honestly with itself; the foundations of its morale are sapped. And what would be more logically inconsistent than to believe that man is personally responsible to God for his own actions, but must depend for his existence upon allowances granted by the State; that he must be free to work, but his work must be directed by the State; that he must be free to own the property he has produced, but must give an ever-increasing proportion of it to the State?

Surely in these inconsistencies lies the cardinal weakness of our Western society. But it is not only in the direct dependence on and direct submission to the reactions of the State that the weakness lies. For hundreds of years as well as to-day some men have been subject in the same way, under our laws, to the indirect domination granted by the State in conferring privilege on non-officials.

CONSERVATIVES AGAINST FREEDOM LIBERAL HELPLESSNESS

Nothing can be more disturbing than to realise that the policy declarations of the three main political parties to-day show consistent belief in the principle of coercion of the will to power, as the solution of the problem of securing enough of the necessities of life for all. The Conservative *Agricultural Charter* and the Liberal *Programme for Britain* are recent examples. The Charter nowhere endeavours to discover if any of the difficulties of the agricultural producers have been due to economic domination in the past; it repudiates the principle of freedom in relation to men exchanging their goods with one another; it everywhere advocates the use of power to grant privileges to one section of the community at the expense of others. The *Programme* does in fact advocate an extension of freedom in the strictly political sphere, and it professes a regard for the principle of free exchange in the international sphere. But when one comes to look for specific proposals it does not seem to have confidence in its professions. And on the problem of poverty—understanding that word in its essential sense of economic helplessness—it resorts always to the principle of coercion, of granting money and privilege to some at the expense of others. On the conflict of taxation with the right to property it has nothing to say.

For those who regard social problems always with the eyes of partisans these Charters and Programmes will appear sufficient. But honest thinkers who are not dis-

posed to accept such documents as the *Encyclical* as mere subterfuges for hypocrisy will desire to explore further. We would direct their attention to that Resolution of the Bishops, which reads:—

“The Conference urges the statesmen of the world together with their people to do their utmost to frame a world policy for the fuller development and a juster distribution of the world's economic resources, to meet the needs of men and women of all nations.”

END PRIVILEGE AND BEAT COMMUNISM

But if this is necessary as between nations, is it not even more urgent as between men of the same nation? The economic resources of the earth are its natural material and forces, its minerals, its fertility, its latent electrical power, etc. To all of these, before they can satisfy any of his needs or desires, man must apply his labour, and before he can do this he must occupy some part of the earth's surface. It is obvious that the comparative ability to produce wealth on any given site must vary immensely between one site and another, and the comparative advantages of each site must be registered in its value in a free market, and this value increases in exact accordance with the presence and activity of the people, collectively. It is, in fact, their collective property. The power of monopolising any valuable site, therefore, confers an immense advantage upon the person

to whom the State grants this privilege, and it violates the first principle of property. And yet, for hundreds of years the Western peoples, and ecclesiastical organisations, have tolerated and condoned this privilege, as they have tolerated and condoned the robbery by State taxation of the wealth which men have produced by their labour. Here, surely is the ruthless economic domination that the Bishops rightly condemn; here, surely, is that fundamental breach of the moral law which they declare to be above the right of any State to ignore. To collect land value for public purposes, and to remit all the taxes which violate the individual's right to his own labour and its product will harmonise all the rights and duties which justice requires.

It is time responsible men and women gave up their obsession with isms. There is no such thing as Communism or individualism in the sense that one includes the other. There is only justice. Let the community be given all it produces, and leave with the individual all he produces; and justice will be done. Then only will the State cease from trying to usurp the functions of Providence; then only will it be possible to show the masses they are personally responsible not to the State but to God, or their own consciences.

And this will carry the war of ideas right on to the ground the Communists have chosen, and beat them there.

F. D. P.

THE W.E.A. AND PARTY PROPAGANDA

In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, November 9th, the Director of Political Education of the Conservative Political Centre complains that the Workers' Educational Association, which receives some public funds, is apparently working in collaboration with the Labour Party's electoral machine. Without entering into the merits of this controversy, the Socialist trend of thought in W.E.A. classes must be well known to many of our readers. This was certainly not the original purpose of the promoters of that Association and we think the underlying cause is not so much deliberate policy as the logical weakness of Conservative propaganda, which has almost a monopoly of anti-Socialist publicity. Conservative speakers, writers and politicians have done as much as any Socialist propagandists to repudiate and deride the principles of economic freedom and establish belief in privilege and monopoly. And if one believes that privilege or monopoly is necessary or inevitable it is only logical to believe that privilege should be made as universal as possible. This is Socialism, to which Conservatism is only the preliminary stage.

A correspondent has sent us a W.E.A. questionnaire for members of a group studying “The History of European Civilisation.” These questions are highly interesting and for the most part objective; but, nevertheless, some of them reveal the collectivist trend of thought, for example:—

“What is the general purpose of government? (Happiness, goodness, glory, prestige), or

“Should civilised life be based on co-operation or competition?

“How should a civilised society distribute the goods and services which have been produced? (According to status? work done? need?)

“How should production be arranged in a civilised world? (Problems of freedom, planning, State control, security, etc.).”

Underlying these questions might easily be the conviction that there can be no such thing as natural law in a society, that all its operations, or, at any rate, its main operations, must depend on some conscious direction, failing which the gain of one individual or section must be at the expense of another. The questionnaire does not suggest that the essential purpose of government is to establish justice; the possibility of harmonising co-operation and competition is ruled out; it seems to be suggested that the production and distribution of goods must be to some extent regulated by positive law.

Civilisation is difficult to define, but if it is taken to mean a state of society in which the arts of living, physical and mental, are developed to a considerable degree above animal existence, the history of any civilisation cannot be adequately understood unless one understands something of the method by which this development operates. The rise from animal to civilised existence could never have taken place by conscious human planning, and any further development must take place according to the principle by which it arose. Each man must himself develop his own mental and physical powers, profiting from his own experiment in living, assisted by his own observation of the experiments of others. He must be free himself, and his neighbours must be free if he is to have the maximum opportunity to develop that unit of civilisation which is himself. If some men are to order what they think is the happiness of others, and to plan the production and distribution of others' goods, then neither the planners nor the planees can have adequate opportunity to develop their own powers. In a régime of coercion the coerced as well as the coerced must be disciplined and restricted. Such a civilisation may have risen high under earlier comparative freedom, but with increased coercion it will become distorted and decline.

Man, in the animal stage of existence, produces all his own goods (or wealth) by applying his labour to land,