
DISCUSSION

The Left in Crisis

Can British Socialism Survive?

By Stephen Haseler



NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, it was the revisionists of Social Democracy, succeeding as they did the "Cold-War" (1945-1951) Labour government of Attlee, Bevin, and Morrison who have dominated the life of British Centre-Left politics for two decades. Roy Jenkins, Anthony Crosland, and the late John Strachey—all drawing heavily upon the theories of Keynes, James Burnham and E. A. Durbin—so set the tone and what are now called the "parameters" of political debate that their conception of "Socialism" became the political consensus of the post-War epoch.

This new consensus was forming itself during the earthy and confident years of Harry Truman and Ernie Bevin. It broke upon us in the mid-1950s in the form of two seminal works, Crosland's *Future of Socialism* and Strachey's *Contemporary Capitalism*. Crosland's views were first presented in a series of ENCOUNTER articles: "Equality." At the time we were all tempted to believe that it represented the outgrowth of the grand tradition of anti-totalitarian Leftism which defined the ideology of organised labour in the Anglo-American world.

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Dr Haseler's recent book, "The Death of British Democracy" (Elek, 1976), aroused much polemical comment in the press, and we have invited him to use our "Discussion" department to restate his case and reply to the reviewers.

Yet in many respects this new socialist consensus was not really of the genre of traditional right-wing Labour, even though it appeared (in its early stages) as the Anglo-American intellectual wing of the AFL-CIO and the then moderate controlled TUC. For a start it was more systematic and less instinctive in its approach to politics than the "labourism" of the Trade Union Right. It was more Fabian and less populist; it was more prone to "middle-class" guilt, and not really at home with a visceral anti-communism; it was more amenable to the growth of collectivism and more critical, and less a part, of the capitalist system.

While ultra-sensitive to the excesses of capitalism (in a way in which no ordinary working man of the 1950s and early '60s would have been) this new Fabian Social Democracy was seen by many on the Left (and Right) as the "preserver of Capitalism" even as it extended "social justice." It was an ingenious political construct which fused "bourgeois freedoms" with a predilection for collectivist economics. In so doing it effectively excluded from polite intellectual discussion (except, perhaps, in the pages of ENCOUNTER) the extremisms of Marxism, on the one hand, and classical economic liberalism on the other. No wonder it became a consensus. It was tailor-made to express the post-War age of new affluence and stability in which workers and intellectuals were united within a "middle ground" of politics.

WHY IS IT THAT Revisionist Social Democracy is now, evidently, coming apart at the seams? Because, obviously, it is apparently unable to make much sense of a world in which economic dislocation and social tension (together with racial, religious, and separatist conflict) are shattering the stability which it requires for its continued existence. In this harsher atmosphere of breakdown, of which Britain is an extreme European example, the latent tension within Social Democracy between its declared first principle of *political freedom* and its acquiescence in the process of *economic collectivism* becomes obvious. Can it any longer be reconciled?

Social Democrats will, more and more, have to make the hard choice, one they have managed to put off for too long, between a philosophy of Individualism—the ideal of free men with rights and liberties—which has characterised the "bourgeois" epoch and that of a Corporate Collectivism which pervades most of the differing types of socialism on offer throughout the world. Is social democracy, we must now ask ourselves, essentially subversive of what remains of capitalism—and the mixed, pluralistic economy which is its present form—or is it broadly on its

side? Is social democracy a faction within what Daniel Patrick Moynihan called the "Party of Liberty", or is it slowly but perceptibly crossing the floor?

There will, of course, be Social Democrats, particularly those high in the political machines of Western Europe, who will deny the reality of this choice. They will continue to believe (or, at least, say they believe) that constitutional government and Western-type freedoms are in no way threatened by the arrival of Schumpeter's prediction of the West's "long march into socialism." They argue that an increasingly imbalanced mixed economy (at the last count public expenditure in Britain, as a percentage of GDP, was over 60% and probably rising) has no particular political consequences. They contend that just as at an earlier period of capitalist crisis the total system was "saved by Keynes," so now at a new potential capitalist cataclysm yet a further injection of collectivism will not ultimately threaten the values of the libertarian order of our civilisation.

THOSE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WHO are outside the tentacular embrace of the Left's political machines, and who can think critically about politics, will have to surmount two formidable intellectual problems before they can make the choice between staying within the Western tradition or sinking slowly into a socialist corporatism which will increasingly be indistinguishable from modern Marxism-Leninism. (Do we know exactly, after all, what the "cut-off point" is between the politics of Mr Anthony Crosland and those of the new democratic, constitutional, NATO-tolerating, Enrico Berlinguer?)

The first problem is the notion of "Equality." This has been a particular bugbear, as many Social Democrats have made common cause with varying types of Marxists by insisting that they believe in it. What this *equality* is that some Social Democrats believe in remains obscure, and intuitive; and there may be little wrong with that. Many men of the democratic Left simply dislike the petty snobberies which disfigure social and class relations in Britain. They feel more at home with intelligent working people than public-school, Oxbridge types; and they have a straightforward belief in a society of mobility and opportunity. (They rather like the sort of egalitarian atmosphere to be found in the United States; and curiously enough, they would like Britain, in this respect, to be more like the United States.)

Anthony Crosland, however, although partly sharing this view, went much further in the influential *Future of Socialism* (1956):

"under certain circumstances the creation of equal opportunities may merely serve to replace one remote élite (based upon lineage) by a new one (based upon ability and intelligence)."

He concluded that "equality of opportunity and social mobility . . . are not enough." It was this belief in some further dimension of equality, a sort of Total Equality to be enforced "all through the race, not just at the starting point", which led Social Democrats into an increasing intellectual fog. It also led those Social Democrats who agreed with this Croslandite view of equality into embracing state action through the educational system, taxation, public ownership (of various kinds), and centralised planning so as to achieve that "total equality." An increasingly all-pervasive State was to be the mechanism by which working-class people were to be allowed to better themselves.

The Revisionist Social Democrats, in this sense, were not really satisfied with attempting to create—a noble, formidable task!—a mobile, energetic, restless, neo-individualistic society of classless opportunity, in which working people could more easily escape from the drab and constricted working-class life. In fact, Crosland specifically rejected such a society as one in which

"the inevitable consequences are increased discontent in the lower ranks of society, psychosomatic diseases on a wide scale, and a maladjusted neurosis-prone community. The United States is already in the grip of these ailments, and Britain is showing distinct symptoms of infection."

How does this look, from hindsight and after twenty years of a Britain fairly crowded with nothing but well-adjusted people? We could have done worse than catch that particular American disease.

In fact, the rejection by Social Democrats of "equality of opportunity" as "not enough" was fateful. Their reliance upon the "big state" to enforce the elusive principle of total equality illustrated a propensity—in many cases it was doubtless unconscious—for a controlled, authoritarian classlessness and uniformity. Here was post-War Fabianism at its very worst. Here was the link between some of the Social Democratic theorists of the 1950s and those ineffable Webbs: an apparent concern for the injustices and deprivations of working-class life but under no circumstances were the captive working-class colonies of industrial Britain to be free from the supervision of the Fabian proctors. They might, otherwise, develop ulcers!

Just as the principle of Total Equality weakened the commitment to freedom, and particularly so for the Fabian-led masses, so too did the main-line Social Democratic response to the question of *common ownership*. The "Gaitskellites" around Hugh Gaitskell all professed

a belief in the Mixed Economy, and in the maintenance within that economy of a flourishing private sector. Yet when this belief was put to the political test by Hugh Gaitskell in 1959, in one of those rare moments when the contemporary British political class were faced by a Leader with having to make an unambiguous political choice, many of the so-called Social Democrats ran out on him; and they have been running ever since.

GAITSKELL'S STRATEGY involved the launching of a central attack upon the hostage to fortune that Labour's establishment had foolishly agreed to in 1918—the ultimate commitment of the Labour Party to “the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.” It was enshrined as Clause Four of the Party's Constitution. Gaitskell, no doubt, saw then what is now so obvious: that Labour could never seriously become the long-term advocate of the Mixed Economy while all of its members had to agree to this ultimate Marxian objective as a condition of joining the party. Of course, Gaitskell was attempting to do a “Bad-Godesberg” (the Brandt-Wehner-Schmidt anti-Marxian turn)¹ on a Labour movement which was considerably more conservative and tribalistic than its West German (SPD) counterpart. Even so, he should have deserved the backing of Labour's right wing. It was not, however, forthcoming. His “friends” had all manner of rationalisations ready to justify their intellectual and political cowardice.

The essence of the case against removing Clause Four put forward by the worried Gaitskellites was that the upheaval in the party which such a brutal challenge to the constitution would entail was not worth the candle. They argued that Labour could carry on regardless of this constitutional obligation but effectively ignore it in practice. Many of them considered Gaitskell's whole approach to this sensitive problem as “bull-headed” and “counter-productive.” It might split the party. Here, of course, was an early capitulation to the politics of Wilsonism; and it is little wonder that for the ensuing thirteen years after Hugh Gaitskell's death (1963) the remnants of the “Gaitskellite” wing of the party gave Harold Wilson (as he then was) such little trouble.

Allied to their weakness over Clause Four and Total Public Ownership, Labour's remaining Social Democratic revisionists have refused to grasp the nettle of public expenditure. They have sat back and watched as the percentage of British GNP spent by the public sector has risen

to over 60%. Lame-duck industry after lame-duck service has been subsidised by printed, or borrowed, money. A last-ditch Mixed-Economy strategy (proclaimed with fanfares at Chequers in late 1975) was overturned within weeks by the Chrysler fiasco; and Britain has developed the most lop-sided public/private, service/manufacturing economy in the Western world.

Even now (and much borrowing and printing later) Anthony Crosland can still argue that the principle—evidently an ideological end in itself—of high public expenditure “remains valid.” Yet at what point do we draw the line and say “enough is enough”—60%? 70%? 80%? Where is the Social Democratic sticking point? As in other areas of Social Democratic concern there may be for our “thoroughly modern moderates” (they no longer call themselves “right-wing”) no such point.

ONE THING IS CERTAIN. Any suggestion that Labour should now declare that it wishes to reduce substantially the public sector (say, to the level operating in West Germany under Helmut Schmidt) would not find favour among the intellectually debilitated Social Democrats at Westminster. Shouldn't the “roll back” of the public sector now be a central part of the Social Democratic strategy for national survival? The fact that this obvious need for a forward strategy for economic recovery cannot at the moment even be contemplated by Labour's right wing as an act of political will (although it may be forced upon them by our creditors at a later date) is but part of a process of philosophical attrition which is leading Britain's Social Democrats into an ideological popular front with the Marxist Left. No longer, except in some details of rhetoric or style, does there seem to be a cut-off point between democratic socialism in Britain and some of the key corporatist policies pushed assiduously by the totalitarians of the Left. Indeed it is a measure of the arrival of a popular front of ideas that the Italian Communist Party (with its position of *cuts* in public expenditure and even *de-nationalisation*) seems to be a shade to the right in its economic perceptions to that of the British Labour Party's National Executive Committee. It is all very confusing, and made even more so by those who cannot identify any sharp distinction between the democratic Left and the totalitarian Left. For instance, Bernard Crick, reviewing my recent book, believes that I see “all Marxists as totalitarians” and implies that this view is over-drawn. Christopher Hitchens, a young public-school Trotskyite journalist, implies that it is objectionable that I should have made “a whole book out of the idea” that there is a distinction to be drawn between the

¹See F. R. Allemann, “Farewell to Marx”, ENCOUNTER, March 1960.

"legitimate" and the "illegitimate" Left. Ken Coates is rather more specific. He suggests that Berlinguer, rather like any other democratic politician, "can't lead his [sic] masses where they don't want to go".² How comforting!—but a disturbing fact remains: in no society on the face of the planet where Marxists are in authority as opposed to where they are still competing for power, is totalitarian control absent.

PARALLEL WITH the merging "popular front in ideas" has gone a more insidiously formal and institutional popular frontism. Proper Social Democrats have historically been vigilant in separating themselves from the parties of Marxism-Leninism by carefully (and sometimes ruthlessly) drawing a distinction in organisational terms between themselves and other parties which purport to be "socialist." It was for this reason that Labour originally drew up a "proscribed list" of organisations. It precluded members of the Labour Party from retaining their membership if they joined what were, in effect, Communist-front organisations. Having rejected during the inter-War years affiliation overtures from the British Communist Party, this provision of a proscribed list made good sense if an organisational distinction was to be drawn between democratic and totalitarian socialism. Yet, and as a sort of fitting culmination of Harold Wilson's stewardship of the Labour Party, the Left-leaning National Executive Committee of the Labour Party abolished the list in 1973. The "moderates" decided not to make much of a fuss about it. Any such fuss was considered "counter-productive": it would indeed have endangered the new *détente* with the militant Left.

A number of disturbing developments have quite naturally flowed from the decision to abolish the proscribed list. For instance, it is now quite acceptable for members of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party to speak at the *Morning Star's* official rallies, and for the Labour Party to open up "party-to-party"

² Bernard Crick, "Doomsday Book", *The Observer*, 9 May 1976. Christopher Hitchens, "Laid Out", *New Statesman*, 7 May 1976. Ken Coates, "Death or Decay all around", *The Guardian*, 19 August 1976. Coates suggests, accurately, that "Stephen Haseler doesn't see things this way." Indeed I do not. I cannot, for the life of me, swallow Coates's proposition that Communists who "dispose of large popular support" are somehow more democratic than those who do not. As far as I understand it, mass support notwithstanding, the PCI continues to adhere to the central doctrines of Marxism-Leninism. If they, or their leaders, *no longer do so* there is an *honest* way out—they can renounce their "faith", wind themselves up, and join the Socialists, the Social Democrats, or indeed the progressive Christian Democrats.

contacts with East European Communist parties, none of which are members of the Socialist International. This development of Communist-Socialist party contact has been spearheaded by the French Socialist Party under François Mitterrand. It has even been welcomed by Chairman Brezhnev who (at the 25th Congress of the CPSU on 24 February 1976) singled out, amongst others, the British and French Socialist Parties as ones with which the CPSU's "contacts" had "noticeably expanded." These developments, with which the British Labour Party has been associated, are causing considerable anguish within the Socialist International. They have been condemned by Chancellor Bruno Kreisky of Austria as "very dangerous and wrong." He, like the old Labour Party, believes in contacts between *states*—and not *parties*—as far as East-West European affairs are concerned. Harold Wilson, while he was Leader of the Labour Party, did not condemn his National Executive Committee for establishing these contacts. Neither did anyone else in a senior position. Could these be the first signs of a possible "Finlandisation"?

EVEN SO, LABOUR STILL KEEPS its distance from the small and numerically insignificant British Communist Party. The basis in logic, ethics, or even ideology, whereby Labour's NEC can have fraternal dealings with the totalitarian parties of Eastern Europe yet not—as yet—with our own home-grown varieties, remains obscure. Perhaps, though, it is of little account as most of the intelligent and tactically astute British Marxists (and even Marxist-Leninists) are already in the Labour Party. Labour's Social Democrats now share their party not only with the dwindling band of old-fashioned Bevanite Utopian dreamers (and doesn't Nye Bevan now look like a proper Jeffersonian libertarian by comparison with his heirs?) but also with a harder and more sophisticated political class—some in the *Tribune* Group of MPs and others high in the trade-union movement, who, although in no way organised centrally, are all linked together by the grip which Left Totalitarian ideology impresses upon their minds.

CONTRARY TO MUCH OF THE OFFICIAL complacency and shallowness of contemporary commentary, the balance of forces within Labour's popular front is moving decisively against the beleaguered Social Democrats. In constituency Labour Parties the "Prentice Affair" in Newham (in which a leading Cabinet Minister, Reg Prentice, has in effect been "purged" by a small local central committee of militants) is simply the tip of an

iceberg. It is virtually impossible nowadays for anyone who holds openly to the policies and philosophy which sustained the Labourism of Clement Attlee, the revisionism of Hugh Gait-skell, or the liberalism of Roy Jenkins to get selected as a Labour candidate. Consequently, each new intake of Labour MPs swells the ranks of the *Tribune* Group to the point where Michael Foot can come within an ace of the Premiership of Britain. Similarly, the National Executive Committee now has an outright left-wing majority who, although for tactical reasons willing to take any amount of chiding from Labour Prime Ministers, still advance slowly, via every new party document, programme and manifesto, towards the goal of a Command or "Siege" economy. Indeed the latest offering, *Labour's Programme for Britain, 1976* is hardly recognisable as a Social-Democratic manifesto. It proposes pushing public expenditure ever higher, cutting defence expenditure further, extending dramatically the role of the controversial National Enterprise Board and introducing, if read carefully, what will amount to general import controls. My poor old social democratic friends are not fashioning Labour's future strategy any more—they have been reduced to a defensive action of watering down the more outlandish commitments, where they can, and then pitifully going along with the shabby result.

WHAT OF the trade unions? There is nothing quite so innocent (and tragic) as that body of "middle opinion" which now perceives, and proclaims, the trade-union heavy-weights as "responsible" and "moderate." Jack Jones has even been portrayed as "another Ernie Bevin." Would Bevin, or his successor Arthur Deakin, or indeed Frank Cousins, one is tempted to ask, have extended the fraternal brotherly hand to Russia's secret-police-chief Shelepin? Would they have opened up official trade-union contacts with

³ *Panorama* (BBC TV) Interview by Michael Charlton with Jack Jones (Monday, 3 May 1976).

⁴ Anthony King, "Doom Merchant", *New Society*, 29 April 1976. Eric Hoffer also takes me to task, from a less innocent stand-point, by suggesting that: "Today Hugh Scanlon, Jack Jones and Michael Foot are very much establishment figures, yet Mr Haseler continues to write about them as if they had not in any way changed their political positions" (*Labour Weekly*, 4 June 1976). In my defence I can find no evidence which could lend itself even to the tentative conclusion that any one of these three "establishment figures" have even reviewed, let alone changed, their ideological position these last 20 years. The fact that Mr Hoffer considers them to be "establishment figures" is more a commentary upon the changed nature of Labour's own establishment than it is upon the putative revisionism of Messrs Foot, Jones and Scanlon.

Party Commissars masquerading as "free trade union leaders" in Eastern Europe? Would they have ever threatened to refuse to cooperate with a future duly-elected Conservative government unless it adopted "socialist" policies?³ Would they have seen their *primary* duty as leaders of free trade unions in terms of advancing "socialism" by keeping a particular government in office or, rather, in terms of advancing as best they could the prosperity and conditions of their members within the society and polity in which they happened to exist? How many of the trade-union leaders of the 1950s and early 1960s (Will Lawther, Len Williams, Bill Carron, Jim Mathews) would have gone on television (*Newsday*, BBC TV, 17 May 1976), as did Hugh Scanlon recently, and proclaim that in their ideal society the *direction* of labour would be a key instrument of economic and industrial policy?

One must simply put on the record, even at the risk of upsetting and frightening the confused liberalism which still pervades the life of Westminster's Social Democracy, that all of this is the unadorned Marxist—and indeed Leninist—face of leading modern British trade-union bossism. The fact that some of these bosses can agree to limit the wages of their members in order to keep in power a government which they believe they control should not mask the ultimate *political* objectives of, arguably, some of the most philosophically totalitarian trade-union figures in the Western world.

Why are so many opinion-formers in the media unable to understand the political nature of such ideologies of the New Class? It arises essentially from their failure to separate the long-term objectives ("after the Revolution, comrades", then it could be possible to command labour, and to interdict strikes, etc.) from immediately economic tactics of so-called industrial action ("stop the Bosses, comrades", from pushing workers around and outlawing strikes, etc.). It also arises from a desperate need to think the best of those they now know to be in part control of the governmental processes of the nation.

How else can we explain Anthony King's assertion—made in the course of an attack upon my "shrillness" of style, and in the face of all the evidence—that "the leaders of Britain's trade unions are still overwhelmingly committed to constitutionalism"?⁴ For all we know Britain's trade union leaders may indeed spend their time in Eastern Europe praising the merits of our constitutional democracy—but somehow it seems unlikely.

In fact, over the last decade the governing ideology of the Labour movement and Party has passed from traditional social democracy

(only a handful of Labour Parliamentarians still believe in that!) to an uneven admixture of social bureaucracy and Marxism, with the Marxist component by far the larger of the two. The underlying assumptions of most of those who are now in control of the Labour party apparatus and of the unions are derived in greater proportion from the Marxist tradition than from any of the philosophies of the Western democratic tradition—Mr Tony Benn's recent flirtation with the 17th-century Levellers notwithstanding.

WHEN DR KISSINGER recently made the sophisticated distinction between two troublesome contemporary phenomena within European politics, General de Gaulle and the Italian Communist Party, he was touching a similar nerve. He suggested that, notwithstanding the difficulties De Gaulle posed for the West, when the chips were down De Gaulle was essentially a "man of the West." The same, according to Dr Kissinger, could *not* be said of the men of the PCI. You simply cannot be sure of their ultimate political loyalty to the basic traditions of Western liberal democracy. And for a simple reason: anyone who holds to a significant portion of Marxist analysis, and this goes for the varieties of the New Left as well, must as a fundamental principle of doctrine perceive the "Working Class" as set against, and exploited by, the Capitalist system of which Parliamentary and Representative Government is but a part. For Marxists the debate about whether to work *within* the Parliamentary system in order to break it, or to take the system on frontally by industrial action, is simply a "tactical question." It is resolved differently in different countries, and can be ingeniously re-formulated according to economic, social and political developments within each country. As far as Britain is concerned our internal Marxists have seen industrial action as the best method when Conservative governments are in power, but have reverted to "class collaboration" with the Parliamentary system when Labour governments have been returned—but at a certain price.

The price, of course, can be seen within the various "Social Contracts" that have governed British politics, in one form or another, since February 1974. In return for various forms of compliance with voluntary Incomes Policies the trade-union leaders have managed to usher in—the phrase is, I think, not too strong—a new British constitution under which the peoples of the United Kingdom now live.

This new constitution, which is still very fragile and may well be only temporary, has shifted power in the society away from what

remained of Parliamentary control towards a Trade Union/State Bureaucracy condominium. If one wants to know why the £ sterling continues to slide on the foreign exchanges when our commentators tell us that the economy is improving it is because—and how could it be otherwise, given a free Press—of the growing awareness abroad of this singular sea-change in the politics of Britain. The mere fact that Her Majesty's Government seems helpless before events, that we have to rely upon trade-union leaders to rescue sterling, is now a cause of its continuing decline. Observers abroad have worked out that real political power in Britain now almost exclusively resides with people whose ultimate political objectives are the forging of a Siege/Command economy and the slow withdrawal of a national-socialist, insular, and embittered Britain from the trading system of the West.

What chances are there of a return to long-term confidence in Britain as a viable member of the Western system? Can the soggy centre of British politics harden up to the point where it will possess the political will to roll back the bureaucratic public sector in order to create a sensible mix in the economy and to restore the authority and credibility of the elected government through Parliament? Unfortunately it would seem that this much-needed political will will not assert itself until events force it to. Only when the Westminster political class has to choose between the pressures of our disillusioned creditors in the West and the objectives of Britain's new class of ideologues will it do so.

BY A STRANGE STROKE of supreme luck we now have as a new Prime Minister a Labourist of the old tradition. It is unlikely therefore that if the crisis comes this side of the next election (as it may easily do) Jim Callaghan will choose the Siege-Economy option. Of course, the implication of rejecting the Siege/Command economy as a way out of our problems will be some sort of confrontation between Parliamentary monarchs and the trade-union Barons. But if Britain is not to become a "Peoples' Democracy" by the early 1980s some sort of conflict between democrats and Marxists is probably inevitable anyway. One positive outcome in this event will be the long sought-after re-alignment of British politics. Social Democracy may then, after years of timid defensiveness, be back on its historic course. We can create a Free Left, unencumbered by the adherents of the specious metaphysics of Marxism and free of the inertia-ridden, insular class tribalism which has disfigured Social Democracy.

Indeed it has made the face of current British socialism quite unacceptable.

LETTERS

Kennan's Despair

IT IS ODD that such an intelligent and sensitive person as George Kennan should, on balance, be so wrong-headed, to say nothing of what the French call "versatile"! And in saying this, I would certainly not criticise his gloomy estimate of the state of Western society and its ability—or even willingness—to defend itself. In particular he is quite right to emphasise the need for a more effective and coordinated conventional defence on the part of the European members of the North Atlantic Alliance, even though, at another point, he suggests that this might simply take the form of "resistance" in the manner of the Partisans! [ENCOUNTER, September.]

However, the suggestion that the Soviet Union presents no threat to the West because (a) it has internal difficulties of its own to cope with; (b) that it could not hold down the Western European democracies, or at least transform them into obedient satellites even if its armies were on the Rhine and the U.S. forces back in America; and (c) that it would never, in any circumstances, indulge in, or even threaten nuclear action is—to speak frankly—both foolish and perverse. What does he think the gigantic Soviet panoply is for? Does he really believe that Moscow's apprehension is that the U.S.A. is one day going to mount an offensive to "liberate" the Communist satellites in Eastern Europe? Can he have no fear that some Russian political domination of the European Continent would, in all probability, be the signal for war with China and a bid for the eventual leadership of the world?

In any case, Kennan's thesis rests largely on the probably valid assumption that, when it comes to the point, nobody will use, or even threaten the use of the nuclear weapon on a first strike. If that is so, then there would presumably be no military reason why, after the departure of the U.S. forces from Western Europe (which he advocates), the Russians should not (to start off with) make use of their overwhelming strength to force a change of government in Western Germany under the threat of the occupation of all or part of it following on some trumped-up revolt—secure in the knowledge that, even if the Western European democracies had nuclear weapons, they obviously could not, in such circumstances, threaten their use.

Should the Western Europeans, nevertheless, choose to fight "conventionally" they would, as things are, be easily overpowered. Even if by that time they had reinforced their "conventional" defences, they would—on the assumption that the U.S.A. was out of the war—quickly be reduced by naval and air blockade. Indeed, the whole logic of Kennan's attitude is that Western Europe must eventually come at least under some sort of Soviet political domination, and that it will not matter very much if it does. Indeed, it might be desirable: for only in that event will the Sodom and Gomorrah of a decadent Western Europe

be purged by discipline and suffering (*cf.* his evident attraction to the idea that a company of Russian troops might suitably clean up a crowd of Danish hippies).

IT IS QUITE TRUE that he seeks to guard himself against accusations of this sort by saying that the Russians will never be able—or even wish—to hold down Western Europe or even to impose their own kind of economic régime. But this simple-minded approach ignores the fact that the imposition of totalitarian régimes in Western Germany, France, and the U.K. will, no doubt, be accomplished under the shadow of a great conflict with America—or "Imperialism"—in which all Western Europe, under new "Left Wing" leadership, would inevitably participate. Based on Western Europe, the Soviet navy would soon command the Atlantic and since a nuclear "first strike" would no doubt be excluded owing to the come-back, a "conventional" war with the U.S.A. that would probably be initiated after the imposition of new governments on China and Japan, would very likely be won by "Eurasia" even in advance of 1984.

I don't know if Kennan would welcome such a defeat, which might enable his country also to repent of its decadent ways and be purged by suffering. (From his answer to George Urban's second question, it would seem that he would.) But I must say the almost certain and final destruction of all "free societies", however permissive, which would follow on the general adoption of his policies does not give me, personally, any pleasure. It may be inevitable; but I should prefer to put it off for as long as I could; and I am sorry that the great Mr. "X" has now, apparently, given up trying.

GLADWYN

*House of Lords,
Westminster*

Writers & Royalties

IT WOULD BE CHURLISH to carp over the details of David Lodge's "The Novel & the Market" (ENCOUNTER, September) since he so firmly supports PLR, but may we comment on one point before it passes into holy writ? He says

"the successful writer is probably more highly rewarded today than ever before, while the minority-appeal writer is arguably no worse off (in 1929, at the age of 47, Virginia Woolf was earning only £520 per year from her books)."

1929 is perhaps a bad year to cite for Virginia Woolf's earnings as a "minority-appeal writer." It is the year Leonard Woolf called the turning point in her career as a successful writer. In it her earnings reflected the fact that *Orlando* sold 8,000 copies in the first six months. The sale of *To the Lighthouse*, just under 4,000 in a year, was more typical of her "minority-appeal" days.

However, even if her earnings in earlier years were only, say, half of £520, she was still comparatively well paid. George Orwell records that in 1933 miners