

# Editorial Comments

**D**EEP international concern for the unity of the international Communist movement was reflected in the statement issued by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party at its mid-January meeting:

“Any split would be a disastrous set-back to the international working class and the cause of peace. It is unthinkable to any Communist Party worthy of its name. On the contrary, the most urgent duty facing every Communist Party is to do everything in its power to restore the unity of the world Communist movement and resolve its differences in a principled fashion on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.”

It emphasised that the basis of unity is the Statement of the 81 Parties, and, in a reasoned way, dealt with the differences of the British Party with the Chinese Communist Party on a number of issues.

The Executive of the Party took a clear stand in support of patient and serious preparation of a new international conference of Communist and Workers' Parties. But, at the same time, it emphasised that certain provisions were vital if the success of such a Conference was to be ensured.

In the first place, the present public polemic between Parties should stop and be replaced by serious international preparation for the Conference. In the second place, adequate time must be taken for its preparation:

“We need as much preparation as is necessary calmly and in a Communist fashion to examine and weigh up honestly held differences, to assess how far, in fact, they exist and what are the possible lines of solution.”

## *A Cosy Picture*

The survey *Social Change in Britain* brings together a good deal of useful information from the 1961 census and other Government statistics. Its background and purpose are, however, mysterious. It dribbled out—rather than was published—towards the end of 1962 and was issued to the press and M.P.s, many of whom were angered by its contents.

In the decade between the 1951 and 1961 censuses the population of the U.K. increased by 2½ million. But the most striking demographic

factor about Britain has been the continual drift towards the West Midlands and South Eastern counties. In Greater London the increasing population has exploded, leaping over the Green Belt and crowding into towns and villages as far away as Brighton, Reading, Luton and Colchester.

In these areas the number of houses built by private enterprise for sale has increased most. Herein lies a major cause of the growth of the nation's debt. The mortgage debt to the building societies rose from £1,582 million to £2,881 million between 1954 and 1961 (we are not told the amount by which mortgage interest increased, but it must have more than doubled) and the hire purchase debts incurred for the washing machines, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and televisions that filled the houses and cars standing outside them grew from £461 million to £927 million between 1955 and 1961.

To prove that things are getting better and better, we are told that the 23 million incomes below £500 p.a. after tax in 1949 had been nearly halved by 1961 and in the same period the number of incomes between £500 and £2,000 grew from 2,800,000 to 13,500,000. Presumably the source of these figures is the Inland Revenue and one must ask how much trust can be placed in conclusions derived from their statistics after the damning exposure of their limitations by Professor Titmuss in *Income Distribution and Social Change*.

The whole document builds up a cosy picture of “a swelling middle class, migrating when it can into outlying rural/suburban or small town areas round the great cities”. In this Britain “primary poverty has been virtually abolished” and the “old distinction between wage and salary earners is getting harder to define”.

The authors have chosen to ignore reports showing that every year nearly four million people have to seek aid from the National Assistance Board, while others with equal need are unwilling to submit to a means test. Nor do they appear to have heard about the growing number of homeless families who are in fact but a tiny fraction of the millions of inadequately housed families in the country.

The black spots in the otherwise cosy picture of the survey are the growth of crime, especially among young people, the deterioration of stan-

dards of morality especially among the young and the stupendous increase in gambling on football pools, bingo and through betting shops. You cannot help feeling that the authors of the Survey really believe that crime, sex and gambling are vices to which the working class is more prone and that they retard the transformation of Britain into a completely middle-class society.

The gem of the document is the statement that gambling among what it calls "the newly affluent" is more probably a basic discontent with what has become very strongly an era of materialism, and this discontent expresses itself in a grasping after unearned wealth. Think how discontented our captains of industry and property developing plutocrats must be.

Perhaps one aim in all this is to create the idea that we are now sufficiently well off to look after ourselves. The increase since 1953 in the number of people contributing towards provident societies which pay for private hospital beds and treatment is attributed to growing affluence and not to the deterioration in the National Health Service brought about by Tory ministers wielding their economy axes.

But its main aim is to persuade us that "we've never had it better" and it is not without significance that it has been issued on the eve of a year which may well see another General Election. However, life has not only caught up with but it has overtaken Tory prosperity mythology, and with the rapidly lengthening dole queues, the millions paying extortionate rent for inadequate accommodation and the plight of larger numbers of old people it will take more than this survey to get Macmillan out of his difficulties.

### *Berliner Ensemble*

The German Democratic Republic has always been treated with special spleen by "the West". But the latest ban on exchange visits by the Berliner Ensemble, and the Old Vic, goes beyond all previous incidents, both in viciousness and stupidity.

It is "because of the wall" we are told, as if any country anywhere any time had not the right and duty to control its own frontiers.

By all accounts, the Old Vic, especially its *Lear*, is an export of which we could be proud; and the Berliners will be deprived of one of the finest Shakespeare productions that Shakespeare's country has produced.

But the Old Vic will not grumble if we stress especially our *own* loss. The Berliner Ensemble was Brecht's own creation: the chosen vehicle through which the greatest dramatist of our age

presented his own and other writers' masterpieces to the world; and at the same time developed a concept of acting and production largely original, and, many would say, particularly appropriate to the 20th century when Socialism is replacing capitalism throughout the world. We were able to appreciate this when the Ensemble was here in 1956.

Magnificently though his widow Helene Weigel and the company have preserved his legacy, there must, as the years go by, be some reduction of personal impact. What English audiences are missing can never be replaced.

This does seem to be widely understood, as the protests from Sir Michael Redgrave, George Devine ("unquestionably the finest theatre company in the world"), Sybil Thorndyke, Peter Daubeny and Osian Lewenstein clearly show. The *Evening Standard*, in a most effective leader, accuses the Government of giving in to pressure from Adenauer which in 1956 they were prepared to treat with contempt.

It does look as if this is a decision in which the reactionaries have over-reached themselves; and a vigorous campaign can reverse it. Certainly those whose attention was riveted, and whose heads and hearts were moved, with characteristic Brechtian equality by *Mother Courage* in 1956—and this was the effect even on those who knew no German—should make their feelings heard.

### *Lesser Fabians*

The winter 1962 issue of *Our History*, quarterly publication of the History Group of the Communist Party, is an interesting short study by Eric Hobsbawm of the *Lesser Fabians* (Pamphlet No. 28, 1s. 6d.).

The Fabian Essays were first published in 1889 and have been reprinting on and off, ever since, though Hobsbawm rightly remarks that the book "like so many important books in the history of the socialist movement is more often referred to than read".

It is true as Marxists (and, incidentally, Edward Pease, the first official historian of the Fabian Society) always claimed that the Fabian Society's great "achievement" was to turn the British Labour movement away from Marx and towards reformism, and that, as Edward Bernstein, its founder, who knew the Fabians well acknowledged, they provided much of the ideological foundation of continental revisionism. But, as Hobsbawm correctly explains, the Fabians did not start off as a uniform gradualist reformist movement; they "only developed into one towards the end of the 1880's, largely under the

influence of Sidney Webb and his 'old gang', which dominated the society thereafter".

If you re-read the Fabian Essays today you will be struck with what a "mixed bag" the earliest Fabians were, how some of them were much more than reformists, and, as Hobsbawm remarks, how "dangerously radical" were some of their conceptions compared with the ideas of the right wing of the Labour Party today.

This particularly applies to some of the "lesser Fabians" like Hubert Bland, William Clarke etc., who are the subject of this pamphlet. One of the most interesting and best known of these is certainly Hubert Bland. "A Tory and imperialist by origin," who, "where others came from, or via Liberalism . . . came to Socialism via aestheticism and William Morris." Bland deeply distrusted the theory that all State control and collectivism was socialist, and described Sidney Webb's ideas as "sham socialism". He was a member of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.). He described Bismark's home policy as one of "erecting tricky legislative breakwaters against the swelling tide of socialism".

The pamphlet does not hide the weaknesses of Bland nor of the other "lesser Fabians", but it does bring out some of their positive aspects which are sometimes disregarded by those who have never troubled to read the *Essays* or other earliest Fabian writings or to appreciate what Hobsbawm calls "the complexity of the intellectual and social elements which went to form the early British Socialist movement of the 1880's and the original Fabian Society".

### *Mr. Balogh v. "New Thinkers"*

An interesting—and unexpected—attack on some of the main economic ideas of C. A. R. Crosland, Strachey and other so-called "new thinkers", and written by Thomas Balogh—an Oxford economist and orthodox Labour man, appeared in *The New Statesman* (December 28, 1962). Balogh attacks some of the main premises advanced by this whole group and proves not only that actual developments have, in fact, been in the opposite direction, but that given the continued existence of the capitalist economic order no other result was possible.

He starts with full employment and economic growth. Those familiar with Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, Strachey's *Contemporary Capitalism*, the pamphlet *Twentieth Century Socialism*, will be familiar with the fantastic claims advanced in these writings to the effect that capitalism has changed, that now economic crises are things of the past due to our knowledge of "Keynesian techniques" and that the state can

now plan the economy and that no government would dare to allow slumps and mass unemployment to recur.

Balogh punctures all this nonsense. He writes:

"Mr. Crosland's first volume [*The Future of Socialism*—Ed.] came out in 1952 at the precise moment when growth both in America and in this country slowed down. His recent collection of essays comes at a time when unemployment has become a live issue again. In large parts of the North of England unemployment is 8 per cent or over. In the U.S. there have been four recessions since the war and of increasing severity . . . the radical Kennedy administration has been unable to push recovery to a point where unemployment has fallen below 5 per cent and it is once more nearing 6 per cent."

All this, in spite of the fact that in the last twelve years some \$600,000 million have been poured out on defence.

He contrasts this dismal record with Soviet economic advance. Citing United Nations economic data he states:

"Russian industrial productivity (output per man) in the 'fifties increased by 7 per cent as against 4.5 per cent in Western Europe and less than 2 per cent in the U.S. and in the U.K. As a consequence Russian industrial output (according to semi-official U.S. findings) increased between 1955 and 1960 from 60 to 75 per cent of the American industrial output. At this rate the annual increase in Russian production is double the average American."

He also debunks another idea which has been repeated again and again by the "new thinkers". This is that there has been a "redistribution of income" and that extremes of wealth and poverty are tending to disappear, and that this is the result of "progressive taxation" and the institution of various social benefits—family allowances, old age pensions, etc.:

"All the countries . . . whose experience is triumphantly quoted as a vindication of liberal Keynesian distributivism have in fact had a violent redistribution of income in favour of the higher income classes and of profits . . . far from it being true that progressive taxation can of itself bring about social change, we must recognise that effective taxation demands such powers on the part of the state as can hardly be secured in an economy where the commanding heights of economic activity still remain in the hands of a tiny minority."

All this is very welcome and reinforces the consistent exposure of the false ideas of the Crosland/Strachey school made by Communist writers, especially the comprehensive critique made by Emile Burns in his *Right Wing Labour* (Lawrence & Wishart, 7s. 6d.).

Balogh's own solutions are in part mixed and confused, in part a reaffirmation of general socialist principles, though the class issues involved are never mentioned. His solutions for the immediate problems of economic stagnation and unemployment are his favourite "National Incomes policy". This is another name for the "national wages policy" which he has consistently advocated, and which has been as consistently rejected by the trade union movement. He recognises that his "National Incomes policy" involves "planned price and dividend policies". How these are to be achieved within the framework of a "democratic" (i.e. capitalist) society he does not indicate. But he seems to believe that it is possible.

He declares that he does not disagree with the aims of the "new thinkers", only with the means they advocate. He himself, however, says "state initiative and, indeed, social ownership, seem to be needed more rather than less".

### *Benjamin Britten's War Requiem*

Many people consider that this work by Britten, commissioned for the Coventry Festival, and performed in the Cathedral, and again recently in Westminster Abbey (another performance at the Albert Hall on January 9th) is a masterpiece, and the composer's finest work. It is anti-war, a plea for peace and the brotherhood of man; the words of the Requiem have been selected from the Mass for the Dead, interspersed with deep imaginative insight by poems by Wilfred Owen, killed in 1918 fighting in the first world war. In a Preface to his poems, Owen wrote, "My subject is war, and the pity of war. All a poet can do today is warn, that is why the true poet must be truthful."

Britten has matched up to this, and has written a hauntingly beautiful and profoundly disturbing work. Not only the vileness of war, but the comradeship of men are the dominating features, and the imaginative music is full of deep feeling, sorrow and anger. Each poem heightens the Latin text musically and verbally. As an example the tolling of the bells for the dead in Requiem Aeternam suggests Owen's "What passing bells for these who die like cattle?"

The Requiem was written to convince people of the indignity and vileness of war and it has achieved its purpose using huge forces, three soloists (soprano, tenor and bass), a mixed choir, a boy's choir, a full-sized orchestra including bells and gongs, as well as a chamber ensemble, the dramatic contrasts are enormous, and are employed with overwhelming effect. The result is music very much of this century, without gimmicks and understandable to everyone.

### *American Foreign Policy*

We have just received an important book—*American Policy and the Cold War* (New Century Publishers, New York). It is written by Herbert Aptheker, editor of our U.S. contemporary, *Political Affairs*, outstanding U.S. Marxist scholar and historian, leading American Communist who, along with all other Communists in the U.S.A. faces persecution and imprisonment as a result of the recent verdict convicting the Communist Party of the U.S.A. of being "an agent of the Soviet Union".

The chapter headings in this book themselves reveal the extraordinary breadth and variety of the subjects dealt with. The main political questions, the most important world events and many questions of controversy in the international labour movement, all seem to receive due treatment. Some examples—"The Summit Smash-up", "Imperialism and the Bomb", "The United States and Colonialism", "The Truth about the Korean War", "What Happened in Hungary", "The U.S. and China", "The Cuban Revolution", "The Middle East, Peace and Independence", etc., etc. The last section of the book contains a number of chapters devoted to a more detailed analysis of internal developments in the United States.

A first quick glance whets the appetite for deeper study. We hope to return to this book in more detail in a future issue. Readers, however, who may like to get it can through Central Books or Collet's Bookshop (price 38s.).

### *Utopian Socialism*

It is good to have available in English one of the most interesting works of Plekhanov, which, so far as I know, had not previously been translated into our language. I mean the short study on Utopian Socialism which he wrote in 1913 (*Utopian Socialism of the Nineteenth Century*, F.L.P.H., 1s. 3d.).

Readers of Plekhanov will always be impressed by his great erudition, by the breadth of his interests and of his reading. In this work which treats mainly the Utopian Socialists of Britain, France and Germany, he shows a very considerable degree of knowledge of English radicalism and early English socialists. It is not only that he seems well read in Robert Owen. That is not uncommon. But he seems to have studied Godwin, to be well acquainted with the Corresponding Societies, and to have a fair idea of the works of Dr. Charles Hall, John Gray, J. F. Bray and others, who still today are sadly neglected and whose works are, for the most part, only to be found as rare books in a few central libraries.

Interesting are the comparisons that Plekhanov makes between the British and French Utopian Socialists. Though the French perhaps painted a more vivid picture of the society of the future, Plekhanov considers that the British gave far more thought to the potential productive capacity of developing technique and therefore to the *practical* method of solving the problems of poverty:

“The English socialists attached tremendous historical importance to modern society’s possession of mighty productive forces. In their opinion the existence of such forces made it possible, for the first time, to refashion society in such a way that it should contain neither rich nor poor . . . the vast majority of French Utopian Socialists lagged far behind their English colleagues in an understanding of the *real nature of the social and economic consequences of contemporary technical progress.*”

Plekhanov had no illusions about the weaknesses of the Utopians, and provides some extremely interesting material of their rejection of the class struggle and opposition to working class *political* activity. But he did appreciate and pay tribute to their importance in the history of development of Socialist ideas. The Utopian critique of capitalism and the Utopian vision of the future society of Socialism inspired sections of the working class who went far beyond the Utopias and rejected in practice the Utopian rejection of class struggle.

### *Road to Freedom in S. Africa*

In spite of all the brutal repression of the Verwoerd Government, the South African Communist Party, though illegal, still exists and gives leadership. The new programme of the Party, just published under the title *The Road to South African Freedom* is a splendid testimony to a Party with a clear line and policy. The front section deals with the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, the present relation of world forces and the fight for Peace and Socialism.

Another section is devoted to the African Revolution and exposes “African exceptionalism”, while showing the special conditions and needs of the people and how they will best be met in most parts of Africa at the present time by the formation of states of national democracy, as a transitional stage to socialism.

Most of the programme is naturally devoted to South Africa, where there is a special type of colonialism, “in which the oppressing White nation occupied the same territory as the oppressed people themselves and lived side by side with them”. Racial differences and prejudices

have been cultivated by the South African and foreign monopolies and the large landowners “as their most effective instrument in their insatiable drive for cheap labour and high profits”.

The South African Party fully backs the “Freedom Charter” which has been adopted by all sections of the national liberation movement and, within the general terms of the charter, puts forward immediate proposals not for a socialist but for a national democratic state, as a basis for discussion by all patriotic and democratic people.

A most important section of the programme deals with the question of violence or non-violence. It shows that the national government is closing all the channels of normal political struggle, preparing for civil war and leaving the people no option but to “take up arms to defend themselves”. Nevertheless the Party does not rule out any prospect of non-violent transition but believes that the development of militant and revolutionary people’s forces increases the possibility of a peaceful transfer of power.

A spirit of confidence permeates the whole programme and the conviction is expressed that the victory of the South African democratic revolution is certain in the near future.

### *Week of Debate*

This journal is arranging in London in November a series of discussions under the general title, *The Challenge of Marxism—A Week of Debate*. A Sub-Committee is now at work on the programme and on the organisational details. It is hoped to have the programme complete and ready for public announcement in May.

Readers of *Marxism Today* will recall Phyl Griffith-Hentges’ report in our June 1962 number on the “Week of Marxist Thought” held in Paris December 1961. Our week will also be one in which, we hope, Marxists and non-Marxists will have public discussions covering a wide range of topics. Six of these will be “main” ones—that is, they will be held in large halls (St. Pancras Town Hall, Caxton Hall and Conway Hall). The remainder will be smaller gatherings.

It is hoped to be able to arrange other events like exhibitions and special book displays during the week. The aim is to bring together in a week of varied activities and events some thousands of people—workers, students and intellectuals—for the discussion of important ideological topics.

Readers of *Marxism Today* who have ideas and suggestions to offer are invited to get in touch with the secretary of the Sub-Committee: T. Ainley, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2.

# The Crisis and the General Election

*J. R. Campbell*

**N**EVER has a Government met with such an accumulation of disasters as the Tory Government in the recent period. Its demoralisation grows with each successive disaster. It reels around adopting some expedient or brazen stunt, in order to create the impression that it is really trying to do something constructive.

Its economic policy is in ruins. It has repeatedly adopted measures which have only served to worsen the situation. In the spring of 1961, when many observers were predicting the fall of demand, particularly in the private sector of the economy, the Government was painting the picture of a new wave of excess demand, overloading the economy and leading to a new and tremendous burst of inflation. Hence the ruthless application of the dear money policy, the wages pause and the extra taxes on consumers. In the subsequent months when the full effects of this were being reflected in a slackening of activity everywhere, the Government was still stressing the danger of the overloading of the economy, as a result of the alleged excess purchasing power in the hands of the people. In his 1962 Budget Mr. Selwyn Lloyd was still uttering dire warnings to this effect. Purchasing power in the hands of the people was growing and still represented the main danger, he insisted. If the condition of the economy did actually deteriorate the Government might do something, but it was not necessary meantime. His successor Mr. Maudling continued to bewail the danger of excess purchasing power. When he was forced finally to adopt a policy of stimulation, he applied it in a hesitant, uncertain fashion, which robbed it of any effect which it might have had. Post war credits releases were stepped up, the purchase tax on cars was reduced, increased investment allowances were granted, and at last a general cut in purchase tax made, but the economy continues to toboggan steadily downward.

At the beginning of 1962 the Government announced a five years "defence perspective". In a little more than six months the Skybolt project was abandoned and the Government was left without effective means of delivering its so-called

nuclear deterrent by the mid-60's. It is now going over to the Polaris missile, fired from submarines, in 1970, without any real idea of its cost.

Its foreign policy has received devastating blows. The United States embarked on its Cuban adventure, which might have resulted in thermo-nuclear war, without any real consultation with Britain and the rest of its allies. The Government had to follow meekly without having any voice whatever in the formulation of policy. The U.S. is steadily pushing Britain out of its traditional "spheres of influence" like the Yemen, or Katanga. The great over-boosted "cure-all"—the Common Market—is running into one snag after another, and it is clear that little or no concessions are going to be made to Britain. Yet so much propaganda has been done in business circles, about the Market as a "cure-all" that an immense crisis of confidence is raging, as entry is delayed.

Ever since the end of the war British policy has been directed to rebuilding London as the main financial centre in the world. Monetary measures have been repeatedly operated in order to strengthen the pound and advance nearer to this objective. Yet it is clear that Britain's "allies" are increasingly opposed to this project, and that the existence of London as a major financial centre and of the sterling area is being challenged. The United States seems to envisage the creation of two major financial centres in the world—the U.S.A. and the Common Market. The heavy economic sacrifices endured by the British people, to keep the pound sterling as one of the world's major currencies are likely to prove to have been in vain.

Yet at the very moment when the Government is reeling under a succession of reverses, the official Opposition is pulling its punches and is helping to prolong Macmillan's disastrous rule over the British people.

With this political crisis firmly in mind, let us look first at the international economic situation, then at some major aspects of the British economic situation and then at the political and economic tasks we must undertake, in order to develop the movement, bring down the Govern-